Barclays Advises Switch to Nigeria's Shorter-dated Dollar Bonds

Global stocks drop as Trump reignites trade war risk with threat of 50% tax on EU goods *Nigerian stock market drops by N201bn*

Kayode Tokede with agency report

Barclays is recommending investors shift away from Nigeria's longer-dated dollar bonds, noting that yields in the mid-section of the curve now look more attractive.

Analysts led by Andreas Kolbe remain overweight Nigerian hard-currency bonds, but noted the yield curve has lagged the steepening momentum seen in other emerging markets, where short-dated bonds have rallied more than longer maturities. That leaves room for Nigerian shorter-dated securities to play catch-up, Bloomberg quoted Kolbe to have said, suggesting clients switch out of the bonds maturing 2049 into 2033 paper.

The Z-spread between the 2033 and 2049 issues — the volatility-adjusted yield premium above Treasuries over the life of the bond — has actually flattened by about 25 basis points year-to-date, Kolbe said. That means it "screens as too flat relative to the front-end," compared with high-yield emerging-market debt curves.

"We hence think value has shifted away from the long end and into the 8- to 10-year belly of the curve," Kolbe added.

Given the steepness of Nigeria's

Continued on page 5

Judge Temporarily Blocks Trump's Plan to Stop Harvard Enrolling Foreign Students... Page 5

THISDAY

TRUTH & REASON

www.thisdaylive.com

Saturday May 24, 2025
Vol 30. No 11003

N400



TIME CEO, Jessica Sibley (left) and President, Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, during the TIME Magazine Award where Dangote was honoured among the 100 most influential leaders shaping the future of philanthropy across the world at the inaugural 2025 TIME100 Philanthropy Dinner held in New York…recently

Fagbemi: Tinubu Will Not Falter in Anti-corruption Fight Despite Defections

Alex Enumah in Abuja

The Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Prince Lateef Fagbemi, yesterday assured

Continued on page 5

With Opposition at Crossroads, Atiku, Saraki Move to Heal Deepening Divide

Atiku meets Aregbesola in Osun to woo aggrieved politicians *Saraki upbeat about achieving reconciliation in PDP* *ADA coalition may launch on May 30*

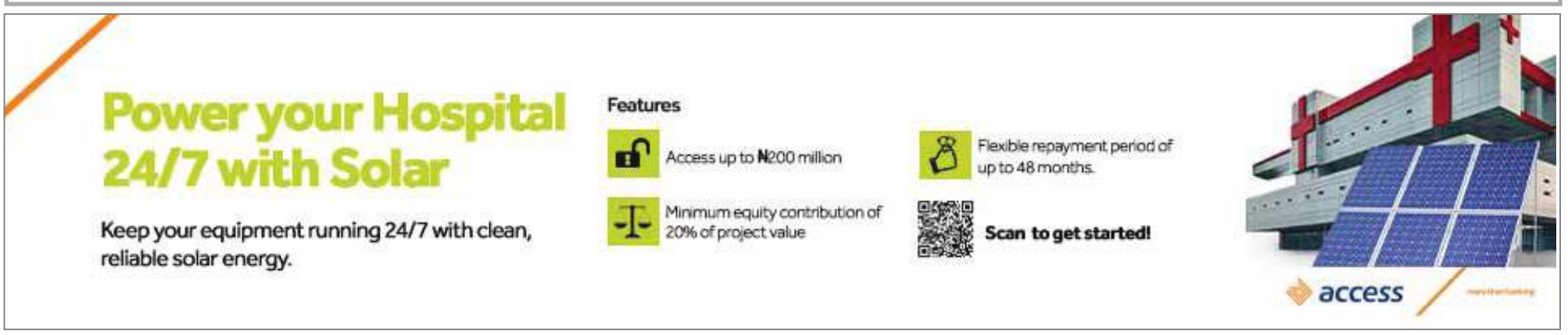
See story on page 5



IN SEARCH OF PEACE IN PDP...

L-R: Former Governor of Gombe State, Dr. Ibrahim Dankwambo; former President of the Senate and Chairman, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Special Reconciliation and Strategy Committee, Dr. Bukola Saraki; Governor of Enugu State, Dr. Peter Mbah, and former Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Seriake Dickson, during a meeting with the Enugu State Governor over PDP's crisis held in Enugu…yesterday

DSS, Police Apprehend 20 Suspects Over Hacking of 2025 UTME Results... Page 6



WE WILL TAKE YOUR LIFE SAVINGS AND INVEST THEM IN YOUR FUTURE, NOT OURS

Experience, foresight and discipline - these are what make us one of the nation's leading Funds Management Companies.

We guide our clients through industry-leading market insights and enhance their investment portfolios with simple solutions that put them in control of their finances.



Scan to Get Started

Proudly African, Truly International

Banking . Fund Managers . Pension Managers . Payments

GTCO

Guaranty Trust Fund Managers Ltd

EazyBanking
QUICK CODES

REGISTER
*966#

OPEN ACCOUNT WITH ZERO BALANCE
*966*0#

TRANSFER FUNDS
*966*Amount*AccountNo.#

BLOCK ACCOUNT
*966*911#

BUY AIRTIME FOR SELF
*966*Amount#

BUY AIRTIME FOR OTHERS
*966*Amount*MobileNo.#

USSD ON POS
*966*000#

PIN RESET
*966*60#

BVN UPDATE
*966*BVN#

VIRTUAL CARD REQUEST
*966*2273#

ZENITH



***966*911#** *(SELF-SERVICE EMERGENCY USSD CODE TO BLOCK ACCOUNTS)*

For enquiries and feedback, kindly contact ***ZenithDirect,*** our 24hr interactive Contact Centre:



+234 201 278 7000, 0904 085 7000, 0700ZENITHBANK
zenithdirect@zenithbank.com

Zenith Intelligent Virtual Assistant (ZiVA) - 0704 000 4422 (WhatsApp)

www.zenithbank.com

Introducing

Diamond Xtra 17

SEASON SEVENTEEN

Let the winning begin

NO NOISE. JUST SIGNS.

Every ₦5,000 in your account gives you a chance to win

Salary4Life ₦200k Every Month for 15 years

₦1m each for 12 winners

Free Digital Marketing Training

₦100k Referral Bonus

With lots of consolation prizes.

Promo runs from **May 1** to **December 31, 2025**

Visit the nearest Access Bank Branch or dial *901*5 # to open a DiamondXtra Account today

More Information:
0201-2712005-7, 0201-2273000-9
accessbankplc.com

Facebook.com/accessbankplc | Twitter.com/myaccessbank
Youtube.com/accessbankplc | LinkedIn/accessbankplc
Instagram/myaccessbank

access more than banking

* Terms and Conditions apply

PAGE FIVE

Judge Temporarily Blocks Trump's Plan to Stop Harvard Enrolling Foreign Students

Sunday Ehigiator with agency report

A judge has issued a temporary restraining order blocking the Donald Trump administration's plan to strip Harvard University of its ability to enrol foreign students.

The ruling came after Harvard filed a lawsuit - the latest escalation of a dispute between the White House and one of America's most prestigious institutions.

The university said the administration's decision on Thursday to bar international students was a "blatant violation" of the law and free speech rights.

The Trump administration said Harvard has not done enough to fight antisemitism and change its hiring and admissions practices – allegations that the university has strongly denied.

US District Judge Allison Burroughs issued a temporary restraining order in a short ruling yesterday, according to the BBC.

The order pauses a move that the Department of Homeland Security made on Thursday to revoke Harvard's access to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) - a government database that manages foreign students.

"With the stroke of a pen, the government has sought to erase a quarter of Harvard's student body, international students who contribute significantly to the University and its mission," Harvard argued in the lawsuit.

"We condemn this unlawful and unwarranted action," Harvard President Alan Garber said in a letter.

"The revocation continues a series of government actions to retaliate against Harvard for our refusal to surrender our academic independence and to submit to the federal government's illegal assertion of control over our curriculum, our faculty, and our student body," he wrote.

In response, White House deputy press secretary Abigail Jackson said: "If only Harvard cared this much about ending the scourge of anti-American, anti-Semitic, pro-terrorist agitators on their campus they wouldn't be in this situation to begin with.

"Harvard should spend their time and resources on creating a safe campus environment instead of filing frivolous lawsuits," Jackson said in a statement.

After the restraining order was issued, Jackson accused the judge in the case of having a "liberal agenda".

"These unelected judges have no right to stop the Trump Administration from exercising their rightful control over immigration policy and national security policy," she said.

'We did not sign up for this': Harvard's foreign students are stuck and scared

There are around 6,800 international students at Harvard, who make up more than 27 percent of its enrolled students this year."

NSIA: Why We Diversified Our Investments to Japan, Australia, Europe

Sunday Ehigiator

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA), Aminu Umar-Sadiq, yesterday, explained that the Authority decided to move its long-dated portfolio, away from the United States to Japan, to Australia, and Europe in order to get higher returns as well as with reduced volatility.

Speaking in an interview monitored on Bloomberg TV, at the Qatar Economic Forum held yesterday in Doha, Umar-Sadiq, who explained that the decision was taken last year, before President Donald Trump assumed office, also ruled out political considerations.

According to him, "The Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority is Nigeria's sovereign wealth fund. By law, we have three separate and ring-fenced funds. A stabilisation fund that offers stabilisation support during times of economic duress. We have a Future Generations Fund, which is a long-term fund and then we have a domestic Infrastructure Fund.

"Now, within the context of the Petroleum Industry Act of Nigeria, we have a royalty-backed price that allows asset under-management augmentation, particularly in instances where the oil price is $50 and above.

"And so, of course, as the oil price goes up and down, that affects the amount of inflows that come into NSIA that give us the recourse to invest."

He added: "So, on the Future Generations Fund side, at the end of last year, clearly valuation levels were high, and so we pivoted to cash. And that allowed us to do a couple of things at the beginning of this year. The first thing was that we decided to pivot away from alternatives into defensive assets, particularly growth assets, as well as investment-grade corporate bonds."

WITH OPPOSITION AT CROSSROADS, ATIKU, SARAKI MOVE TO HEAL DEEPENING DIVIDE

Chuks Okocha in Abuja and **Gideon Arinze** in Enugu

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and former Senate President and Chairman of Peoples Democratic Party Reconciliation Committee, Dr. Bukola Saraki, in separate moves yesterday, took steps to consolidate the opposition to make their planned ousting of President Bola Tinubu possible.

While Atiku went to Osun State, where he reportedly met former governor Rauf Aregbesola to woo him into the coalition opposition party, believing that as former governor of the State, he would command some following that would help swell the opposition, other consultations were going on across the country

Also yesterday, Saraki went with his team to Enugu State, where they met Governor Peter Mbah and had a closed-door meeting with him. Although the discussions were not made public, the visit will not be unconnected with the threat by the South East to exit the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) should their choice of Udeh Okoye as Secretary of the party not be respected.

The moves by Atiku and Saraki are coming as the new coalition in the making under the umbrella of All Democratic Alliance (ADA) has tentatively slated May 30th for the official declaration of the National Opposition against Tinubu and his ruling All Progressives Congress, APC.

The calculation of Atiku in meeting Aregbesola is that since he was a close ally of Tinubu, but has fallen out with him, all efforts should be made to bring into the fold everyone displeased with the ways of the President who also are abreast of his strategies to gather enough momentum to unseat the ruling party. However, details of their discussion was not made public.

In a post earlier, Atiku wrote: "I was warmly received by stakeholders on arrival at the Akure Airport in Ondo State, ahead of the coronation of the 49th HRH Owa Obokun Adimula and Paramount Ruler of Ijesaland, Oba Clement Adesuyi Haastrup today."

A video shared by Atiku on his X handle showed him driving into Aregbesola's home, where the former governor warmly received him. Both men were then seen walking into the residence together, accompanied by their supporters.

Those at the meeting were several notable Osun political figures, including former APC State chairman Lowo Adebiyi; Chairman of Omoluabi Progressives Alhaji Azeez Adesiji; former Secretary to the State Government Moshood Adeoti, and ex-House of Assembly Speaker Najeem Salaam.

However, for the PDP, other members of the Reconcillationa Committee that went with Saraki to meet Mbah who is the Leader of PDP in the region, were a former governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Seriake Dickson, and a former governor of Gombe State, Ibrahim Dankwambo.

Leaders of the PDP in the zone had in a communiqué issued after the South-East PDP Zonal Executive Council Meeting, announced the re-nomination of former PDP National Youth Leader, Udeh-Okoye, to serve out the remaining tenure of the National Secretary, threatening possible exodus should their decision not be respected.

"In the event that our position is not promptly implemented by the Party, the South East PDP, as a family, will be compelled to reconsider our relationship with the PDP going forward," part of the communique from that meeting had read.

However, addressing journalists after the closed-door meeting, Saraki said that they were in Enugu State to consult with Mbah, adding that Enugu was the first State they were visiting because the committee appreciates the importance of the South East in the PDP family.

"As you all know, the South East has played a key role as the bedrock of the popularity and the strength of our party. In recognition of that, we are here to consult with him and first to commend him on the leadership role he has been playing in the party. More importantly also, to commend what he is doing in Enugu State, which is a reflection for Nigerians to see what happens when you have a PDP government," he explained.

Saraki said that they discussed how to ensure that "we carry out the assignment given to us and go ahead to have our NEC and our convention. We will have one that is rancor-free and smooth, peaceful and lays the foundation for the PDP that we all are wishing for. With this, we can say here in Enugu we laid the foundation for a greater new PDP that is coming."

Speaking further, he said "What we have also seen today is that there is nothing insurmountable in the challenge ahead and the spirit, the commitment of all of us, especially our leaders, is very very inspiring."

Meanwhile, the new coalition is divided into three camps. The first camp is those who wants an entirely new political party formed. This group is headed by the former Rivers State governor, Rotimi Amaechi. The other is led by the Liyel Imoke committee that is charged with the chances of considering an existing political party to fuse into.

The other group seeking that the social democratic party be considered as an option. This group is led by the former governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai.

According to the secretary of the Amaechi committee, Dr. Umar Ardo, "coalition is seeking an entirely new party, The All Democratic Alliance, ADA with the aim of bringing something new, something that is not in any way tainted with the impunity of existing political party "

It was learnt that this committee is trying to avoid the mistake associated with the New Nigeria Peoples Party, NNPP, that has plunged it into crisis over leadership" struggle between Rabiu Kwankwaso and the founding national chairman, Boniface Aniebonam

It was gathered that while El-Rufai was pushing for Social Democratic Party (SDP) as the choice party for the coalition, the utterances of members of the party was discouraging to the coalition members

The former governor, who spoke with newsmen in Kaduna expressed confidence with the potential of the SDP after undertaking detailed evaluation of the party and found it worthy to join.

El-Rufai said, "I believe very strongly that, the SDP provides the potential to recreate a major political party. But with the support of some of the opposition groups, we will not get all. But most importantly, the people of Nigeria need a credible alternative.

"I use the phrase credible alternative very, very carefully because PDP has run the country for 16 years. Nigerians know what it is, even though it's a long time. Many may have forgotten."

However, buttressing why a new party must be formed, Ardo said, "In reviewing our discussion last night, and especially the report of the Gov. Amaechi Committee submitted to the National Opposition Coalition Group chaired by Senate President David Mark, it is clear that as prominent opposition leaders in Nigeria that are exploring forming a coalition to unseat the incumbent president in the forthcoming 2027 elections.

"The resolve to register a new political party is what most Nigerians are waiting in the wings to see from the opposition leadership as testament to pragmatic strategy, a bold political move and the right democratic renewal. Moreover, a move for registration of a new party through the collaboration and cooperation of all key opposition stakeholders can only result into a broad national democratic movement capable of being a catalyst for the desired change.

"As a matter of fact, Nigeria's political history is replete with examples of failed coalitions using existing platforms. In the First Republic, the coalition between the Action Group, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), UMBC and NEPU disintegrated under political pressure and ideological differences. Similarly, during the Second Republic, alliances between the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) and People's Redemption Party (PRP) proved ineffective due to lack of trust and common purpose. Even more recently in 2011, as a result of poor strategy, attempts by Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) to build coalitions in the Fourth Republic to defeat the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) fizzled out, unable to overcome individual ambitions.

FAGBEMI: TINUBU WILL NOT FALTER IN ANTI-CORRUPTION FIGHT DESPITE DEFECTIONS

Nigerians that President Bola Tinubu's administration will continue to uphold the rule of law and not falter in the fight against corruption no matter whose ox is gored.

He also dismissed claim that the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Solicitor General of the Federation and Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Justice, met a former and incumbent governor of a South-South state hours to their defection to the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Mr. Paul Ibe, media aide to former Vice President and candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 presidential election, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, had while speaking on a television programme insinuated that certain factors may have been responsible for the defection of the South-south governor and his predecessor.

Reacting, the AGF through his media aide, Mr. Kamarudeen Ogundele, described the allegations as "contemporaneous" and "from the pit of hell, and at best, a figment of imagination of Mr Ibe".

Ogundele in a statement yesterday, noted that, "Mr. Ibe had insinuated that the EFCC and the Solicitor General of the Federation and Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Justice, met a former and incumbent governor of a South-South state 48 hours to their defection to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC)".

The statement observed that, Atiku's media aide may not have mentioned the names of the former and incumbent governor who recently defected to the APC but that discerning members of the public know those he could have been referring to.

"We know as a fact that the EFCC chairman and the Solicitor General of the Federation never met any serving or former governor as alleged by him.

"We appeal to the members of the public to disregard the insinuation as it was a feeble attempt to discredit President Bola Ahmed Tinubu led administration's fight against corruption", he said.

BARCLAYS ADVISES SWITCH TO NIGERIA'S SHORTER-DATED DOLLAR BONDS

curve, the trade should also benefit from attractive rolldown, he said, referring to the strategy that profits from a rise in bond prices as they approach maturity.

The bond due Jan. 2049 is trading with a yield of about 10.8 percent, while the Sept. 2033 issue offers 10.4 percent. Yields on both bonds have slid more than 100 basis points since early-April as easing trade war tensions lifted emerging-market assets.

Nigeria's average yield premium over Treasuries stands currently at 571 basis points, down about 350 basis points since May 2023, when President Bola Tinubu took office and embarked on a series of reforms. Tinubu was endorsed this week as the ruling party's candidate for the 2027 presidential election.

Meanwhile, Stock markets have dropped sharply after US President, Donald Trump reignited fears of a trade war by threatening to impose high tariffs on the EU and smartphone giant Apple.

European shares fell 1.7 per cent, the US S&P 500 fell 1.1 per cent in early trading and the tech-heavy Nasdaq fell 1.6 per cent. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 408 points, or one per cent.

Equally, the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) this week dropped by N201 billion by market capitalisation (week-on-week) amid the massive volatility in the global stock market.

Trump threatened to impose a 50 per cent tax from next month on all imports to the US from the EU, including on pharmaceuticals and luxury items. He also warned Apple and Samsung of a 25 per cent tariff on any iPhones manufactured outside the United States but sold there.

"This latest threat is worse than the worst-case scenario," said Fiona Cincotta, senior market analyst at City Index.

US Treasury secretary Scott Bessent said Trump did not believe EU trade offers to the US were good enough and that he hoped the new tariff threat would "light a fire" under officials in talks with Washington.

In early April, Mr Trump unveiled high tariffs on nearly every country, with a minimum of 10 per cent, bringing the world to the brink of a trade war, although he later announced a 90-day suspension.

In response to the tariffs on China, Apple has been looking to move iPhone manufacturing to India.

The pan-European STOXX 600 index fell 1.9 per cent by early afternoon on Friday, and closed down 0.93 per cent to record a weekly fall for the first time in five weeks.

The Euro STOXX Volatility index spiked to its highest in more than four weeks. Stock indexes in France, Spain and Italy were down between 2.3 per cent and 2.8 per cent, UK-based Independent Newspaper reported. Also, UK's blue-chip FTSE-100 was down by 0.6 per cent after recovering slightly from a steeper drop. Similarly, the German DAX fell 2.1 per cent, after rising close to an all-time high earlier in the day, on economic news.

Shares in German carmakers and luxury companies, some of the most exposed to tariffs, fell. Porsche (3.93 per cent), Mercedes (3.99 per cent) and BMW (3.71 per cent) all finished down on the news.

The US president claimed on his Truth Social network: "The European Union, which was formed for the primary purpose of taking advantage of the United States on TRADE, has been very difficult to deal with."

He announced that Apple would be hit with 25 per cent tariffs if phones sold in the US were not made there, sending the iPhone maker's shares down almost 4 per cent in pre-market trading, later adding that it would also apply to other foreign phone companies.

In the meantime, the NGX this week dropped by N201 billion by market capitalisation. The market capitalisation dropped to N68.752 trillion yesterday, which was about N201 billion decline when compared with the N68.952 trillion the stock market opened for trading, while the NGX All-Share Index dipped by 0.62per cent WoW to close at 109,028.62 basis points from 109,710.37 basis points the market opened for trading.

The NGX ASI also dropped by 0.14 per cent to close at 109,028.62 basis points yesterday, from 109,183.02 basis points it opened for trading the previous day.

However, analysts at Cordros Research stated that investor sentiment in the Nigerian stock market turned negative this week, buoyed by reactions to the Central Bank of Nigeria's decision to maintain the Monetary Policy Rate at 27.5 per cent, alongside profit-taking in recent outperformers and a shift in capital flows toward the fixed income market.

NEWS

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



GLAD TO MEET YOU...
Director General, National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism, Dr. Abisoye Fagade (left) and Governor of Akwa Ibom, Umo Eno, during a courtesy visit to the Governor in Akwa Ibom…recently

Badaru: Nigeria Turning Tide Against Insecurity

Says Tinubu directed insecurity must cease by end of 2025

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

Minister of Defence, Mohammed Badaru Abubakar, has appraised the security situation in the country with a declaration that recent military gains signal Nigeria is turning the tide against insecurity.

In an interview for an upcoming State House documentary to mark President Bola Tinubu's second anniversary, Abubakar said the President had given a clear order: "End insecurity decisively and do it fast before the end of 2025."

According to him, "For the first time in years, Nigerians can travel the Birnin Gwari to Kaduna Road even at midnight. That's progress. Zaria to Funtua to Gusau is now peaceful, and Abuja-Kaduna Road has been largely secured."

He pointed to 'Operation Fasan Yama' and other ongoing military efforts in different theatres nationwide as driving forces behind improved security across several regions.

Abubakar revealed impressive results so far recorded by the security agencies. 13,543 terrorists and bandits were neutralised, 17,500 arrested, 9,821 hostages rescued, and 24,000 terrorists surrendered.

"These aren't just numbers. These are lives saved, villages reclaimed, and communities restored," the minister stressed.

He noted a remarkable return to normalcy in many parts of the North-east and North-west: "Markets are back. Farms are productive again. We've seen Fulani, Hausa, and other communities rebuilding trust. The progress is real and visible."

Abubakar also highlighted President Tinubu's approval of N18 billion to clear insurance arrears for military personnel and boost troop welfare.

"We've doubled troop ration allowances from N1,500 to N3,000. Life insurance now covers all soldiers, and I've personally visited frontline bases to hear their concerns and boost morale," he added.

Regarding military modernisation, the minister said, "President Tinubu has not turned down a single request for equipment. We now have attack helicopters, UAVs, MRAPs, APCs, and top-tier weaponry. Our armed forces are better equipped than ever."

He described the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) Bill as a game-changer. "We've signed over 100 local and international defence partnerships. We're producing ammunition here. Two MRAPs assembled locally are parked outside this office. This is the beginning of true defence independence."

Abubakar reported a drop in pipeline vandalism and oil theft in the South-south, with crude oil production rising from 1.4 million to nearly 1.8 million barrels daily.

"We've arrested six ships, destroyed 2,000 illegal refineries, and dismantled over 5,000 crude oil storage pits," he disclosed.

Looking forward, Abubakar said: "This President is not making empty promises. He's building the institutions, the morale, the partnerships, and the firepower to secure Nigeria. We are not relenting. The goal is total victory over insecurity by the end of 2025, and we are on track."

He called on Nigerians to remain hopeful and united: "Change doesn't happen overnight, but we're laying a solid foundation. Neutral observers will tell you that we've made real progress. The President's commitment is unwavering."

DSS, Police Apprehend 20 Suspects Over Hacking of 2025 UTME Results

Linus Aleke in Abuja

The Department of State Services (DSS) and the Nigerian Police Force have apprehended 20 suspected hackers for allegedly hacking the 2025 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB).

The apprehended suspects are part of a syndicate believed to have over 100 persons, who specialise in hacking the computer servers of examination bodies like JAMB and the National Examinations Council (NECO).

A source disclosed that the suspects have confessed to sabotaging the Computer-Based-Test system in order to discredit JAMB and discourage students from using CBT for future WAEC/NECO examinations.

According to the security sources, "one of the suspects confessed that the syndicate would install an attacking software on the examination body's hardware. The software, in turn, would remotely hack JAMB servers at any targeted CBT centre."

He listed suspects from Lagos, Edo, Anambra, Kano, Delta, among other states, adding that they would soon be charged to court.

He stated, "While the controversy raged, little did the public know that the DSS had been covertly monitoring and investigating this dangerous web of attacks. The investigations led to the arrest of over 20 persons across the country, with arrests still ongoing.

"The strategy of these hackers involved mounting routers within the vicinity of the targeted CBT centres. The routers would, in turn, override JAMB platforms at the centres, making it easy for the special candidates who paid to get answers to the questions.

"The intrusion of the ghost software by the syndicate distorted the system, making answers provided by candidates during the exam to be at variance with the questions. This eventually led to the recorded mass failure."

The entire hacking process was to influence high scores for special candidates who paid between N700,000 and two million Naira, he added.

NDLEA, US-DEA to Strengthen Collaboration on Drug War

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the Drug Enforcement Administration of the United States (DEA) have stressed the need to strengthen current collaboration between the two agencies on the fight against the menace of substance abuse and illicit drug trafficking.

This was the highpoint of discussion during a meeting between the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Buba Marwa (rtd) and the Country Attache of US-DEA, Ms. Daphne Morrison, yesterday at the NDLEA Headquarters in Abuja

Marwa, while appreciating the cordial working relationship and partnership between NDLEA and DEA, Ms. Morrison who was recently posted to Nigeria said, "I wanted to make this one of my priorities to come meet with you so we can continue to collaborate and work together.

"And thank you so much for your support over the years, and we're ready to keep things going. I know you've been working well with the last Country Attaché, so I'm ready to get back in and collaborate and do some really great things with you."

She said efforts are ongoing to organise more trainings for officers and men of the Special Operations Units of the agency while looking forward to a number of joint operations with NDLEA in already identified areas of interests.

In his response, the NDLEA boss acknowledged the excellent relationships with Morrison's predecessors.

He said, "They've been very, very supportive, and I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that it will be the same, if not better, with you."

He acknowledged the recent evolution of NDLEA in the size of its workforce, expansion of operational and administrative structures as well as remarkable successes recorded in its drug supply reduction and drug demand reduction efforts.

Be Ruthless to Terrorists, Army Chief Orders Commanders, Troops

Troops foil terrorists' attack in Damboa, kill 16 fighters

Linus Aleke in Abuja

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lieutenant General Olufemi Oluyede, yesterday ordered commanding officers and troops of Operation Hadin Kai to be ruthless to terrorists to wind down the ongoing fight against insurgency, terrorism, and other emerging security threats in the country.

Also, the Nigerian Army said that troops of Operation Hadin Kai have foiled the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) terrorists' coordinated attack on Damboa town in the early hours of yesterday.

General Oluyede, who gave the order while declaring closed the COAS biannual conference in Maiduguri, further charged the troops not to show mercy to the sworn enemies of the state in their resolve to stamp them out of Nigeria's territory.

He noted that they sought to disrupt the way of life of the people and destroy the social and traditional fabric of the nation.

The COAS biannual conference assembled top generals to brainstorm on the way forward to safeguard national peace and security.

According to him, "There is no contesting our decision to completely neutralise these detractors to peace. Thus, I charge each and every officer and soldier to spare no quarter in running these terrorists and criminals to ground.

"They seek to disrupt our way of life and destroy the society that our forefathers built. We will not allow such to happen."

He stressed that every strategic decision made at the conference must be adopted to achieve the set objectives of the first Bi-Annual conference.

Oluyede, however, revealed that the Service will, in the coming weeks, induct more combat enablers into its operations.

He said, "As a fallout of our deliberations, we will, in the coming weeks, induct more combat enablers into our operations. We need to understand that the strength of the Nigerian Army does not solely lie in the weapons we place on the battlefield but more in the will of our soldiers who wield them.

"Accordingly, it behoves everyone seated here to show exemplary leadership, to mentor soldiers, and guide the next generation on the right path."

The Army Chief stated that the nation is today faced with an adversary that threatens the very fabric of the nation's socio-cultural heritage.

He noted that the depth of discourse and clarity of thought expressed during the sessions reflected the intellectual rigour and strategic foresight required to thrust the Nigerian Army into a future filled with unprecedented possibilities.

"I, therefore, make bold to say that the objective of this first biannual conference has largely been achieved, judging by the well-articulated inputs and contributions that have surpassed my expectations," he said.

Oluyede concluded that concerted efforts will be made to implement the suggested measures in current and future engagements.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Army said that they lost two soldiers of the Operation Hadin Kai that foiled the ISWAP terrorists' coordinated attack on Damboa town.

The Acting Deputy Director of Army Public Relations, 7 Division Nigerian Army, Lieutenant Colonel Ajemasu Jingina, in a statement yesterday, said the ISWAP terrorists launched a fierce attack on the Azir Bridge area in the 25 Task Force Brigade Area of Responsibility.

130 1894 2024

FirstBank Since 1894

Scaling Up?

Let's take Giant strides together

At FirstBank, we believe everyone has the potential to be a Giant. For over 130 years, we've been empowering individuals and businesses to achieve their dreams, no matter how big or audacious they may seem.

Let's take Giant strides together and turn your ambitions into reality.

SCAN HERE for more



FIRSTBANK IS AN FBN HOLDINGS COMPANY PREMIUM BOARD LISTED

You First

Contact us: 02014485500; 0700-34778-2668338 / firstcontactcomplaints@firstbankgroup.com / https://complaints.firstbanknigeria.com / RC 6290

NEWS



SCORECARD PRESENTATION...

L-R: Chairman, Statutory Audit Committee, Wema Bank Plc, Joe Annosikeh; Company Secretary/General Counsel,, Johnson Lebile; Chairman Board of Directors, Dr. Oluwayemisi Olorunshola; MD/CEO, Moruf Oseni and Deputy Managing Director, Oluwole Ajimisinmi, at the Wema Bank 2024 Annual General Meeting Held in Lagos…recently

FG Moves to Close Manpower Gap in Renewables, Trains 130

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The federal government yesterday moved to close the manpower gap in the renewables segment of the power sector, with the commencement of the inaugural training for 130 Nigerians under the NextGen RESCO Leadership Programme, powered by the Rural Electrification Agency (REA).

Speaking at the official launch in Abuja, the Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adelabu, reaffirmed the government's commitment to transforming Nigeria's energy landscape by investing in youth-driven innovation, capacity building, and sustainable solutions.

Describing the initiative as bold and efficient, Adelabu emphasised that the programme was coming at a crucial moment for Nigeria's energy sector reform. He urged the cohorts to see the platform as a launchpad, not only for their professional growth, but also for transformation of communities across Nigeria.

Represented by the Director, Renewable and Rural Power Access Department in the ministry, Owolabi Sunday, Adelabu stated that the event underscored the urgent need to scale renewable energy solutions that are locally adaptable, commercially viable, and environmentally sustainable.

He said, "The RESCO leadership programme is not just about training, it's about transformation. It recognises that the future of power in Nigeria lies in the ingenuity of our youth, resilience of entrepreneurs, and technical excellence of our professionals. We must also invest strategically in human capacity and leadership that will drive Nigerian sustainable energy transition.

"It also underscores the urgent need to scale renewable energy solutions that are locally adaptable, commercially viable, and environmentally sustainable. As the federal minister of power, we are proud to support this initiative that aligns with our national goal of energy access, climate responsibility, and economic empowerment.

"This programme is a strong example of how government, industry, and development partners can collaborate to unlock a new opportunity for innovation and impactful sustainable energy developments in the country," he stated.

Besides, the minister told the inaugural cohorts of leaders and innovators to see the platform as a launchpad, not only for your professional growth, but also for transformation of communities across Nigeria.

"The ministry stands ready to work with you and learn from your insights as we chart a bold, inclusive, and renewable energy power for the future," he stated.

Also speaking, the Managing Director of the REA, Abba Aliyu, underscored the agency's commitment to making Nigeria the renewable hub of Africa.

He emphasised that Nigeria, with the highest number of people without access to electricity, must turn the challenge into a significant opportunity.

"The country has the highest number of people that are without access. We need to turn this challenge into an opportunity. Rather than seeing it like we are facing a crisis, we should see it as an opportunity. An opportunity to address the access gap, an opportunity to localise the investment in renewable energy, and an opportunity to create a talent pipeline," Aliyu stated.

He highlighted the critical pillars necessary to achieve the vision, including: Financing, operational frameworks, localisation of manufacturing, and the development of a skilled talent pool.

On financing, Aliyu referenced the $750 million public sector renewable energy funding secured under President Bola Tinubu, with discussions ongoing for additional co-financing.

Tinubu Felicitates Ex-Ekiti State Deputy Gov, Adelabu at 75

Rejoices with Senator Magnus Abe at 60

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu felicitated a renowned educationist and former deputy governor of Ekiti State, Professor Modupe Adeola Adelabu, as she clocked 75 on May 23.

The President also rejoiced with a prominent politician, lawyer, and former Senator representing Rivers South-east Senatorial District Magnus Abe, as he marks 60th birthday on May 24, 2025.

A professor of education and princess of Ado-Ekiti, Adelabu served as deputy governor to former Governor Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State, becoming the third woman to occupy the position in the state.

The President, in a statement issued yesterday by his Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, commended Professor Adelabu for her commitment to improving the standard of education in Nigeria and for her meritorious service to Ekiti.

Highlighting the former deputy governor's contributions to the repository of knowledge, President Tinubu noted that her new book, 'Navigating the Politics of Universal Education Policies in Nigeria,' is a significant addition to the field, providing answers to some pressing challenges confronting policymakers.

While affirming that Adelabu remains a worthy role model for the womenfolk, President Tinubu wished her many more years of impactful work and God's abiding grace.

Senator Abe won his first election to the Senate in April 2011. In a 2016 rerun poll, he secured another term.

President Tinubu highlighted Abe's contributions to the country and his commitment to promoting peace and unity not only in Rivers State but in the entire Niger Delta region.

The President noted Senator Abe's invaluable work as Commissioner for Information and Secretary to the Government in Rivers State from 2003 to 2007.

President Tinubu described Abe as a political ally who has continued to partner with him in his cravings for a stronger, economically viable and more united Nigeria under his Renewed Hope Agenda.

The President extended his warmest wishes and hopes for many more years of impact and success for the Senator.

Fidelity Bank Clarifies CEO, Onyeali-Ikpe's Purchase of Additional 18 Million Shares

Kayode Tokede

Fidelity Bank Plc yesterday clarified the recent purchase of an additional 18,000,000 units of its shares at N20.35 each by its Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Mrs. Nneka Onyeali-Ikpe.

The shares were purchased in a transaction on May 19, on the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX).

In November 2024, Onyeali-Ikpe, had increased her stake in the bank by acquiring an additional 10 million shares, valued at N157.9 million.

However, the Divisional Head, Brand and Communications, Fidelity Bank, Dr. Meksley Nwagboh, in a statement posted on the NGX yesterday, stated, the lender was constrained to respond to a patently false, misleading and malicious publication against Fidelity Bank Plc and its MD/CEO, by an online platform.

He noted that the article, published on May 21, 2025, contained fabricated information about the bank and its CEO, that included blatantly "false allegations that its MD/CEO took personal advantage of material price sensitive information to engage in insider trading and used the bank's funds to purchase 18 million units of its shares."

According to him, "based on the fact that Fidelity Bank is a public quoted company regulated by the NGX and subject to the Listing Rules of the NGX as well as the Regulations issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), it unequivocally confirm that the given the gravity of the false allegations in the malicious publication, which were not only maliciously intended to impugn the hard-earned reputation of the bank and its MD/CEO, but to also mislead the investment community and general public.

"We by a letter dated May 22, 2025, formally requested that the NGX carry out an independent review of the referenced share purchase transaction based on extant trading rules by insiders and revert with its findings."

He noted further that in response to request for an independent review, the NGX by a letter dated May 22, 2025, confirmed unequivocally that: "Following the filing of the bank's 2025 Q1 UFS on 30 April 2025, the Directors and other insiders of the Bank became eligible to trade on the securities of the bank after 24 hours.

"Fidelity Bank remains a very strong, profitable and responsible financial institution and amongst the most capitalised banks in Nigeria today with international operations.

ActionAid Nigeria Condemns Criminal Charges against Akpoti-Uduaghan

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) has condemned the criminal charges levelled against Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan by the federal government, calling for an end in the abuse of state power.

ActionAid Nigeria, in a statement by its Country Director, Mr. Andrew Maedu, said it is alarmed by the federal government's decision to file criminal defamation charges against a sitting senator, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, over public allegations she made regarding her personal safety and political interference.

Mamedu noted that "It is a gross misuse of state power for the federal government to pour financial and institutional resources into criminally prosecuting a citizen who has made serious allegations against two political figures who have been the subject of widespread controversy, instead of investigating the claims and upholding justice. At a time when Nigerians are facing economic hardship, insecurity, and shrinking civic space, this prosecution raises serious concerns about the federal government's priorities and reflects a dangerous pattern of silencing dissent rather than pursuing accountability."

Mamedu added that: "President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's silence — as always — in the face of this unfolding crisis is not just disappointing, it is an abdication of moral and constitutional responsibility."

He also noted that the use of criminal defamation, a law increasingly discredited globally and being challenged even within Nigeria to shield powerful actors from scrutiny, marks an alarming regression for Nigeria's democracy.

He insisted that "This case is especially disturbing as it undermines years of advocacy for women's representation in politics. By singling out a woman lawmaker for criminal prosecution while shielding men like Yahaya Bello who is currently being prosecuted by the EFCC, a federal agency, on a 19-count charge bordering on criminal breach of trust and money laundering to the tune of billions of naira. Bello, despite facing serious allegations, is now positioned as a key witness in the same government's prosecution of a senator. This reality completely undermines the credibility of both the federal government and the EFCC.

"The contradiction is not only troubling, but also outrageous and exposes a selective approach to justice that erodes public trust.

"This is not a case where the federal government should be involving itself. The FG is fighting a battle that does not concern it. If Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan's claims are considered defamatory, Yahaya Bello and Senate President Akpabio should seek civil redress through the courts in their individual capacities.

POLARIS BANK

Make the most out of everyday

Get a Polaris Bank Credit/Debit card today



Download VULTe and request a card today

0700 POLARIS (0700 765 2747), 0806 988 0000,
01 297 9500, 01 448 2100
yescenter@polarisbanklimited.com
@polarisbankltd

GET IT ON Google Play
Download on the App Store

www.polarisbanklimited.com

NEWS



MARKETING AND TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE...

L-R: Founder, Eko Innovation Centre, Victor Gbenga Afolabi; Group Head, Brand Transformation, Bank of Industry, Jide Sipe; Country Business Manager, Nestle Waters, Tayo Olatunji; Head, External Communications, Media & Partnerships for Sub-Saharan Africa, Reckitt, Cassandra Uzo-Ogbugh;CEO, AT3 Resources, Tosin Adefeko; CEO of Godrej Consumer Products Limited (West Africa), Kayode Oladapo; CEO, Dochase Adx, Chibuike Goodnews, and Chief Executive Officer, Awesome Communications, and Joshua Ajayi, at the MarkHack 4.0, a Marketing and Technology conference organised by the Eko Innovation Centre and GDM Group held in Lagos…yesterday

FG Rests Plan to Establish National Carrier, Pledges to Support Domestic Operators

To impose fines on airlines flying passengers without valid visas, says Tunji-Ojo

Chinedu Eze

The federal government has announced that it would no longer push for the establishment of a national carrier; rather, it would now give full support to the growth and expansion of domestic airlines.

It also said that airlines airlifting passengers into Nigeria without a valid entry visa, Landing and Exit cards would be penalised.

The Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, who disclosed federal government's decision not establish a national carrier in Lagos yesterday during the launch of a book: '100 Years of Civil Aviation in Nigeria: History, Issues and Prospects' written by Wole Shadare, said that government would no longer fund the national carrier project; instead, it would focus on supporting local carriers to thrive.

Keyamo said the government of President Ahmed Bola Tinubu is committed to drafting policies that would support the growth and development of local airlines, citing recent policies that have enabled airlines to access aircraft for their operations, including the revised insurance regulation on leased aircraft and explained that the move was aimed at making aircraft more accessible for acquisition and lease by domestic operators, which would subsequently reduce airfares in Nigeria.

"We have shifted focus to ensure growth and development for local operators through our policies. Air Traffic Controllers have been trained and retrained, and revenue leakages have been addressed to boost earnings," Keyamo said.

The minister also disclosed that almost all foreign airlines have complied with his directive that they should patronise local caterers for inflight catering.

He promised to build a smart airport and would seek the necessary approvals from the President to make it happen.

Keyamo lamented the state of the old terminal of the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), which has not seen any improvement since 1997. He emphasised the need to pull it down and build a new one.

In her remarks, Olubunmi Kuku, Managing Director of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), highlighted the growth of the aviation sector.

She noted that Nigeria currently has 39 certified airline operators, 31 airports nationwide, and over 2,100 licensed pilots.

According to Kuku, the aviation sector contributes approximately $1.7 billion to the country's GDP, with private airlines connecting cities efficiently and international carriers recognising Nigeria as a critical market.

Kuku emphasised that despite challenges such as infrastructure deficiencies, regulatory frameworks, and financing requirements, there is still substantial potential for growth. She encouraged investors to see these challenges as opportunities.

The author of the launched book, Shadare, described the 25-chapter book as a comprehensive account of the aviation industry's evolution in Nigeria over the past 100 years. The book aims to aid scholars and researchers in understanding the industry's history and prospects.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, said that henceforth sanctions would be imposed on airlines that fly passengers into Nigeria without valid visas.

The minister made the disclosure at a sensitisation programme on the new e-visa policy, which commenced this month, hosted by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) in Lagos yesterday.

Tunji-Ojo said the decision to sanction the airlines was the outcome of consultations held with the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Keyamo, and the Director General of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Capt. Chris Najomo.

He said the airlines which frequently bring in passengers into Nigeria without visas cannot do the same in any other country as it is unacceptable anywhere in the world.

The minister also said Nigeria will no longer be a testing ground for practices prohibited in other parts of the world.

"We have issues with the airlines, and we have spoken to the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development and the Director General of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority about it.

"A lot of people come into Nigeria without visas, and airlines pick them up. It is not the right thing to do. You can't do this in any other country. If I want to travel to the UK and I don't have a visa, British Airways will not pick me up. They must see my visa. Recently, we had to turn some people back because they didn't have any visas. With the support of the NCAA, we will start to implement the law. Any airline that picks up passengers who do not have a visa will be fined.

Food Security: Plateau Mobilises 1,000 Youths for Agricultural Empowerment Programme

Seriki Adinoyi in Jos

The Plateau State Government has mobilised 1,000 youths under the Plateau Youth Agricultural Empowerment Programme (PLA-YEAP) hosted at BARC Farms in Jos, saying it's a way of ensuring food security and also engaging young people in meaningful and productive ventures.

Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Hon. Musa Ashom, disclosed this while presenting the scorecard of his ministry, assuring that the state is committed to youth empowerment.

Ashom highlighted the ongoing construction of the NYSC Permanent Orientation Camp in Jakatai, Mangu, which he described as one of the finest in Nigeria.

He also noted the government's support for the Central Working Committee (CWC) of the Plateau Youth Council (PYC), particularly during a retreat aimed at strengthening understanding of parliamentary procedures.

As part of broader empowerment initiatives, the ministry has also approved funding for entrepreneurship training for 250 youths at the National Youth Development Centre, Shere Hills, Jos.

While noting the importance of sports as a tool for development and international recognition, the commissioner praised the administration of Governor Caleb Mutfwang for its continued support of Plateau United Football Club and other teams, ensuring their survival amidst challenges.

Additional achievements include the acquisition of a CE65KWH 700W power generator to address power supply issues at ministry facilities, the ongoing distribution of sporting kits ahead of the Gateway Ogun National Sports Festival 2025, and the sponsorship of 346 athletes for the ongoing National Sports Festival.

Flutterwave CEO Appointed Jury at Inaugural Money20/20 Awards

Flutterwave Founder and CEO, Olugbenga "GB" Agboola, has been appointed as a jury member for the Payments Award category at the inaugural Money20/20 Awards.

This newly launched global awards programme recognises and celebrates excellence across the fintech and financial services industries.

This appointment underscores the growing global relevance of African contributions and impacts across multiple sectors, including payments, entertainment, and business. It also highlights Flutterwave's global presence and relevance in the payments industry.

As a jury member, Mr. Agboola joins an esteemed group of payment industry leaders from around the world. They include high-ranking executives and innovators from Mastercard, Adyen, Stripe, GCash, Checkout.com, Nium, Global Payments Inc., and more.

The Money20/20 organisers describe the jury as global experts, stating they are "straight from the biggest names in the game" and possess "sharp eyes, high standards, and a serious flair for spotting brilliance."

Together, they bring a wealth of insight and expertise to the judging process, which will culminate in a live awards ceremony at Money20/20 USA in Las Vegas this October.

Recently, the Flutterwave Founder and CEO was appointed to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art Advisory Board, a role that highlights his "continued commitment to supporting and celebrating African excellence across various sectors on the continent and beyond," as the company noted.

Agboola currently serves as the Vice Chair of the US-Africa Business Centre Board, and he represents Flutterwave in other prestigious organisations, like the Milken Institute's Africa Leaders Business Council.

These roles and his latest appointment further solidify his position as a thought leader at the intersection of finance, technology, and global development.

Customs Seizes Vehicles, Smuggled Petrol Worth N63m in Adamawa

Daji Sani in Yola

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has made a significant breakthrough in its efforts to combat smuggling in the country as the special team, 'Operation Whirlwind' has seized smuggled Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) worth N63.036 million and five vehicles at unapproved routes between Adamawa State and the Republic of Cameroon.

According to the Customs Comptroller-General, Adewale Adeniyi, the seizure was made possible by the team's repositioning of its officers across its area of responsibility, making it difficult for economic saboteurs to carry out their smuggling activities.

Adeniyi, represented by Hussein Ejibunu, National Coordinator, Operation Whirlwind, noted that the success was in line with the core mandate of President Bola Tinubu.

He said the seized PMS will be auctioned to the public immediately due to its inflammable nature, as provided in the NCS Act, 2023, and the Standard Operating Procedures. The proceeds from the auction will be remitted into the federation account.

Adeniyi appreciated security agencies and other stakeholders for their support and cooperation and called on communities to provide useful information towards addressing the menace of smuggling.

The federal government reiterated its commitment to ensuring that Nigerians get what they deserve, with the product made for consumption in Nigeria not for smuggling.

2025 Nigeria Prize for Science Kicks Off with 112 Entries

Innocent Megbolu

Adjudication has commenced for this year's Nigeria Prize for Science, with 112 entries officially submitted for consideration.

On Tuesday, May 13, the entries were presented to the prize's Advisory Board, which will forward them to the panel of judges for evaluation.

The 2025 edition focuses on the theme: 'Innovations in ICT, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Digital Technologies for Development'.

This year's prize aims to spotlight groundbreaking solutions that can drive the growth of Nigeria's digital economy.

Endowed with a $100,000 prize by Nigeria LNG Limited, the Nigeria Prize for Science attracts submissions from scientists around the globe, including non-Nigerians. The award seeks to recognise and reward groundbreaking innovations that drive industrial progress and promote sustainable development in Nigeria.

At a media briefing in Lagos, Sophia Horsfall, NLNG's General Manager for External Relations and Sustainable Development, officially presented the 112 entries to the Advisory Board, which is chaired by acclaimed scientist, Professor Barth Nnaji.

This handover signals the beginning of a rigorous evaluation process. A panel of distinguished judges will now assess each entry for merit, originality, and its potential to make a significant impact on Nigeria's development.

Congratulatory Message



On behalf of the Board, Management and entire staff of **Dozzy Oil & Gas Ltd**, we extend our sincere congratulations to **Dr. (Mrs.) Nonye Soludo**, the ***"Mmili Gulu-Egu N'Isuofia"***, the amiable First Lady of Anambra State on the conferment of an **Honorary Doctorate Degree (Honoris Causa)** by Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State.

Your Excellency, this venerable recognition is a tremendous testament to your exceptional humility, dedication to the welfare of others and visionary leadership as a foremost advocate for holistic wellness and community empowerment. Your selfless service and exemplary commitment to societal well-being continue to inspire admiration and emulation across all strata.

We celebrate this remarkable milestone and pray for continued strength, wisdom and grace as you advance in your noble mission of touching lives and shaping a healthier, more compassionate society.

Congratulations, Your Excellency.

DOZZY™

Signed:
Sir (Dr.) Daniel Chukwudozie
(Group Executive Chairman)
Dozzy Oil & Gas Ltd

NEWS



MARKETING AND TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE...

L-R: Chief Executive Officer, Black Heritage, Emmanuel Onwirdi; Ex-BBNaija House Mate, Actor, & Entrepreneur, Samuel Jacob; Director, Miss Motherland Nigeria Pageant, Timmy Abiri; and Ambassador Culture, Yoruba, Villager, Olamide Salami, during a media briefing on Miss Motherland Pageant 2025 held in Lagos... recently

EFCC Secures Conviction of 18 Foreign Nationals in Major Cybercrime Case

Wale Igbintade

A Federal High Court sitting in Lagos has convicted and sentenced 18 foreign nationals to one-year imprisonment each for cybercrime, fraud, impersonation, and attempting to destabilise Nigeria's constitutional structure.

The convicts, who initially pleaded not guilty, changed their pleas under a plea bargain agreement with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Justices Chukwujekwu Aneke and Yellim Bogoro delivered the judgments in two separate rulings.

The convicts were among 193 foreign nationals arrested by EFCC operatives in December 2024 at a seven-storey building on Oyin Jolayemi Street, Victoria Island, Lagos. In total, 792 suspects were apprehended in connection with a global cybercrime and cryptocurrency fraud syndicate.

Justice Aneke sentenced six defendants - Eliza Gapparova, Diana Kadyrbekova, Nasrine Chouaieb, Jiang Han Hua, Liao Zhang, and Genting International Co. Limited—on charges of cyberterrorism, identity theft, and using Nigerian youths to impersonate foreign nationals for financial gain.

The convictions were entered pursuant to a plea bargain agreement between the prosecution, led by Zeinat Atiku, and defence counsel Osuala Nwafbara, Z.S. Makinde, and Peter Taiwo.

Justice Bogoro similarly sentenced 12 Philippine nationals - Jean Calatar Maunfo, Donne Reges, Roseann Gonzaus, Mary Grace Dela Piazza Camara, Lari Jane Tayae, Jonilyn Agulto, Jonalyn Mendoza, Anjeannet Topacio, and Arramef Topacio - under the same terms.

The court's decision followed arguments by prosecution counsel Hanatu Kofanaisa and Temitope Banjo, while Bridget Omateno appeared for the defence.

According to the EFCC, the convicts were members of an international syndicate that operated a fraudulent network known as "HK".

The operation reportedly involved over 1,500 laptops and 4,000 phones and trained both Nigerian and foreign youths in romance and investment scams targeting victims in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Europe.

Genting International Company Limited, allegedly controlled by the syndicate's ringleaders, was incorporated in mid-2024 and employed 200 Chinese nationals to recruit and supervise Nigerian youths involved in the schemes.

The EFCC told the court that the suspects operated from the Victoria Island facility, which was disguised as a corporate financial headquarters, and used Nigerian VPNs to conceal their activities.

The scams were perpetrated via platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, and a fake investment website, www.yooto.com, which charged victims fees starting from $35.

One defendant's account allegedly received over N3.4 billion in fraudulent proceeds.

Under the plea agreement, the convicts were sentenced to one year in prison, retroactive to their arrest on December 10, 2024.

They are also to pay a fine of N1 million each. Upon completion of their sentences and payment of fines, they will be deported within seven days.

The court also ordered the forfeiture of all mobile phones, laptops, and routers used in the crimes to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Abiodun Affirms Collaboration with Sister States to Enhance South-west Development

James Sowole in Abeokuta

Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun, has reaffirmed his administration's resolve to continue collaborating with sister states in the South-west towards harmonising economic and social policies that reflect shared values and common aspirations.

He noted that the South-west is at the forefront of Nigeria's economic development, adding that if the economic development drive of the region becomes lethargic, the entire nation will bear the brunt.

Governor Abiodun stated this in a goodwill message at the presentation of a book, 'Proposed Action Plan for the Economic Development of Southwest Nigeria', authored by the Association of Retired Heads of Service and Permanent Secretaries - Southwest Nigeria (ARHOSPS-SWN) in collaboration with the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission, held at the Oyo State Local Government Training School, Secretariat, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Abiodun, represented by the Head of Service, Mr. Kehinde Onasanya, said the event underscores the enduring relevance of experience in shaping policy, thus reaffirming a shared commitment to purposeful governance, strategic development, and intergenerational collaboration in the six states that constitute the South-west.

The book, he said, is coming at a critical time when the region is at a crossroads of opportunities and challenges and becomes highly imperative as it provides the intellectual pillar for the economic development of the region.

He stated that the proposed Action Plan complements and amplifies efforts, not only by identifying actionable steps to transform the economy of the South-west but also by creating a framework for synergy among member states to leverage their comparative advantages, harmonise policies, and build regional value chains in areas such as agriculture, industrialisation, digital innovation, tourism, and human capital development.

"For us in Ogun State, your timeless effort aligns perfectly with the vision and trajectory of our administration under the 'Building Our Future Together' agenda.

"Since inception, our government has been guided by the belief that sustainable development must be inclusive, evidence-based, private-sector-driven, and people-centred; and we have walked the talk through strategic investments in our five developmental pillars, anchored in the I.S.E.Y.A. mantra, which stands for Infrastructure, Social Welfare and Well-being, Education, Youth Empowerment and Job Creation, as well as Agriculture and Food Security," the governor said.

While commending the association, which comprised a body of distinguished technocrats whose legacy in the public service has continued to enrich the region's development discourse, Abiodun applauded their passion and resolve to remain actively involved in policy development after retirement and described it as lifelong service to the community.

Raise Doctors' Remuneration to Attract Investments in Health Sector, FMC MD Tells FG

James Sowole in Abeokuta

The Medical Director of the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Abeokuta, Ogun State, Prof. Adewale Musa-Olomu, has said that government's increased investment in health sector, especially efforts towards increasing production of medical services personnel, cannot yield results unless health services professionals are well remunerated.

Musa-Olomu said the current brain drain in the health sector, popularly known as "Japa" would continue until welfare of professionals are well taken care of by the government.

The Medical Director who is rounding up his eight-year tenure as the chief executive of the hospital, made the assertion in Abeokuta, Ogun State, while addressing journalists on his eight years of stewardship on the health institution.

He said the ratio of doctor to patients, would continue to wide because of the brain drain in the industry.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) had in a 2025 research, estimated that Nigeria has a doctor-to-patient ratio of approximately 1:9,083, meaning that there is a severe shortage of doctors in the country.

Although the WHO recommended ratio of doctor-to-patient is 1:600, the medical director, commended the federal government investment in the health sector, including the setting up of the Federal University of Medical Sciences in Abeokuta.

He noted that for the country to harness the full potential of its home grown trained medical practitioners, the federal government must also ensure adequate salary structure, in tandem with world best practices is put in place.

He said, "The problem we had was that they have condemned medical services to nothing in this country, though, government is really taking the measures.

"They are increasing admission into medical schools, building pharmacies, laboratories. Those things are increasing, not that they are reducing the numbers of doctors, relocating to US, UK and Europe.

Emergency Rule: Ex-Federal Lawmaker Faults Transfer of Suits from Port Harcourt to Abuja

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

A former federal lawmaker and 2023 governorship aspirant in Rivers State, Dr. Farah Dagogo, has faulted the process of the transfer of cases challenging declaration of emergency rule in the state from Federal High Court in Port Harcourt to the Abuja Division.

The Chief Judge of Federal High Court, Justice John Tsoho, had directed the transfer of the cases to the Abuja Division, following request by the Attorney-General of the Federation, Lateef Fagbemi (a Senior Advocate of Nigeria).

President Bola Tinubu had declared a state of emergency in Rivers State and subsequently suspended Governor Siminalayi Fubara, his Deputy, Prof. Ngozi Odu and Members of the state legislature, as a result of a long lasting political crisis in the state.

A document sighted by THISDAY listed the transferred cases to include; Dr. Farah Dagogo vs President & 4 others in Suit number FHC/PH/CS/50/2025, and Pilex Centre for Civic Education Initiative & Another vs The Administrator with suit number FHC/PHC/CS/46/2025.

Others affected are: Incorporated Trusted of Rivsbridge Peace vs President & others in Suit no FHC/PH/SC/43/2025, Incorporated Trustee of People's life improvement foundation & others vs the President & 2 others in Suit no FHC/PH/SC/2025, Belema Briggs & 4 others vs the President and others Suit no FHC/PH/SC/51/2025, and Samuel T. O. Amatorje Esq vs President & others in Suit no FHC/PH/SC/53/2025.

At NOGOF 2025, Solewant Group Restates Commitment to 10-year Strategic Vision

Peter Uzoho

In a renewed commitment to his company's 10-year strategic vision, the Group Chief Executive Officer of Solewant Group, Mr. Solomon Ewanehi, has announced the unveiling of 'Solewant Group Roadmap Plus' to deepen its advancement in technological innovation and also boost its contributions to Nigeria's industrial development and energy transition.

Ewanehi, who presented a goodwill message at the opening ceremony of the just-concluded Nigerian Oil and Gas Opportunity Fair (NOGOF) 2025, held at the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) Headquarters in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, also restated the company's commitment to Nigerian Content Development through the advancement of indigenous capacity and capability in the oil and gas sector.

While hailing the NCDMB for its continued leadership in promoting local content, Ewanehi also lauded the efforts of the Petroleum Technology Association of Nigeria (PETAN) and the Oil and Gas Trainers Association of Nigeria (OGTAN) in deepening local capacity development.

"Twenty-five years ago, we began with a singular vision—to become a national leader in pipe coating technology, guided by a 10-year roadmap.

"That vision, backed by passion, innovation, and the support of institutions like NCDMB and PETAN, has transformed into something far greater; that is the reason why we are evolving in strategy with the unveiling of 'Solewant Group Roadmap Plus' for the next 10 years," Ewanehi said.

INSIGHT



One too many...

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.

Can Humans Turn Into Animals?

This question has agitated my mind since I first watched a video on social media where someone claimed that a man turned into a goat somewhere in Edo State, Nigeria. I mean, do humans turn into animals? As usually the case, the video had little or no real content in terms of proof and evidence. It showed an innocent goat tied with a red cloth to a pole and a commentator recounting what happened. The video did not show the image of the man who reportedly turned into a goat nor when the man transformed into an animal. All these important links were missing. Also, there was no detailed information about the man- his full name, height, complexion, residence, profession, family status, etc. It was not the first time Nigerians shared photos and videos on social media, recklessly claiming some people turned into birds, goats, or dogs. Nobody bothers to query these claims; no one critically examines these reports.

In 2021, a man was arrested for allegedly turning two students of Bashorun High School into tubers of yam in Ibadan Oyo State. Yes, into tubers of yam! Some people claimed that the suspect was beaten to death. They later discovered that the claim was false; that nobody turned students into tubers of yam. Nigerians do not take these claims lightly Meanwhile they seldom bother to inquire or verify these claims.

On my '87 Old Boys WhatsApp group, one of my former classmates said he saw someone turn into yam in Owerri. This guy studied philosophy and knew about logical principles. I asked him what eventually happened to the 'man' and the 'yam'. Whether the man's family published an obituary announcing his death after he turned into a tuber of yam? He never responded. In many cases, when challenged Nigerians who make these senseless and irresponsible claims often resort to insults and ad hominem attacks. I have kept wondering how we got to this decadent mental or intellectual stage as a society. How did many Nigerians come about this belief that is outright absurd and balderdash? Why do many Africans strongly and publicly profess notions that defy logic, science, and common sense? Interestingly, some take offense when one tries to challenge or highlight the absurdity of their claims. Why is it difficult for Africans to abandon this irrational and superstitious idea? The sad thing is that many who peddle this claptrap are young people, students who have studied sciences in schools. They learned biology and were taught that living things reproduce their kind. Humans give birth to humans. Humans do not turn into birds goats or dogs. So what happened to the science and philosophical education they received in school?

Look, when I shared this man-turned-to-goat video on a human rights WhatsApp platform, someone replied that it was a demonstration of the power of "African mystical science". What? African mystical science? What I find curious is that those who try to defend this African science contraption do so with authority, as if they know what they are talking about. But they don't. Now when I challenged this guy to prove or demonstrate any of the so-called African mystical science claims and earn a significant sum?

Leo Igwe directs the Advocacy for Alleged Witches.

No to Tenure Extension for Civil Servants

This is to draw attention to a growing practice which threatens the credibility, renewal, and fairness within the Nigerian Civil Service, and that is tenure extensions beyond statutory retirement age in the Federal Civil Service.

Let us all be warned that if the practice is not checked, it may quietly institutionalize injustice and weaken the very reforms the current administration's Renewed Hope Agenda seeks to achieve.

It is an increasing trend where certain career civil servants are granted tenure extensions beyond their statutory retirement period thus drawing serious concerns to the drawbacks of this nefarious practice.

Though occasionally rationalized on the grounds of continuity, this practice undermines succession planning, stalls institutional rejuvenation, and denies deserving officers opportunities to serve and grow.

This pattern also contravenes the Public Service Rules (PSR) and retirement protocols, erodes morale and institutional equity, risks fostering favoritism and undermining accountability.

Accordingly, if not checked, it may quietly institutionalize injustice and weaken the very reforms the Renewed Hope Agenda seeks to achieve.

It is imperative that this administration and all relevant authorities discourage, reject, and investigate such anomalies wherever they exist.

Strict adherence to civil service regulations must be enforced, and mechanisms to detect and prevent tenure abuses strengthened.

President Bola Tinubu should immediately wade into this as Nigeria's future lies in systems that reward fairness, discipline, and forward planning—not selective privileges.

We look forward to an anticipated action on this matter of urgent national importance.

Emmanuel Udom, Kwali, Abuja

THE SATURDAY NEWSPAPER
EDITOR OBINNA CHIMA
DEPUTY EDITOR AHAMEFULA OGBU
MANAGING DIRECTOR ENIOLA BELLO
DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR ISRAEL IWEGBU
CHAIRMAN EDITORIAL BOARD OLUSEGUN ADENIYI
EDITOR NATION'S CAPITAL IYOBOSA UWUGIAREN
THE OMBUDSMAN KAYODE KOMOLAFE

THISDAY

THISDAY NEWSPAPERS LIMITED
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CHAIRMAN NDUKA OBAIGBENA
GROUP EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS ENIOLA BELLO, KAYODE KOMOLAFE, ISRAEL IWEGBU
DIVISIONAL DIRECTORS SHAKA MOMODU, PETER IWEGBU, ANTHONY OGEDENGBE
DEPUTY DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR OJOGUN VICTOR DANBOYI
SNR. ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR ERIC OJEH
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR PATRICK EIMIUHI
CONTROLLERS ABIMBOLA TAIWO, UCHENNA DIBIAGWU, NDUKA MOSERI
DIRECTOR, PRINTING PRODUCTION CHUKS ONWUDINJO

TO SEND EMAIL: first name.surname@thisdaylive.com

Watch Carefully

President Trump's false attack on South Africa seems to be based on a video of people calling for attacks on the farmers.

If a video is the basis for condemning a country what do the videos of the January 6 attack on the US Capitol building?

Another poor treatment of a country's leader.

Dennis Fitzgerald, Melbourne, Australia

NEWS XTRA



COURTESY VISIT...

L-R: Director of Communications Afro Flavour, Phillip Isakpa; South African Consul General, Prof. Bobby Moroe; Director of Administration, AfroFlavour, Bimbo Maduka and CEO, AfroFlavour, Lucky Idike, after a visit by the envoy to AfroFlavour in Lagos…recently

FCTA to Exercise Ownership on 4,794 Revoked Properties over N6.9bn Debt

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

Starting from May 26, the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) will begin to exercise ownership over 4,794 properties revoked for non-payment of Ground Rent amounting to N6.9 billion.

Senior Special Assistant on Public Communications and Social Media to the Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Lere Olayinka, Director of Land Administration, Chijioke Nwankwoeze and Director Department of Development Control, Mukhtar Galadima, stated this while briefing the media yesterday.

Those affected were individuals and organisations, who had defaulted in paying ground rent on their properties in the Central Area, Garki I and II, Wuse I and II, Asokoro, Maitama and Guzape districts for between 10 and 43 years.

Even though FCTA officials confirmed that some of the defaulters had started to comply by paying, it is feared that opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Nigeria Port Authority (NPA), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Independent National Electoral Company Limited (INEC), the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPCL), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), National University Commission (NUC) and the M.R.S Investment Company Limited (owners of MRS Petrol Stations) were among the defaulters.

The FCTA officials said the ownership of the properties had reverted to the FCTA, adding from next Monday, the government would begin to exercise its rights of ownership on the affected landed properties using its relevant enforcement agencies.

They added that the titles of the properties in default were revoked in March 2025 in contravention of the terms and conditions of grant of the Rights of Occupancy, in line with the provisions of Section 28, Subsections 5(a) and (b) of the Land Use Act.

"As usual, this will be done without consideration as to ownership of the affected landed properties. It will be purely in line with extant laws and regulations guiding the process," Galadima said.

He noted that affected properties would be sealed up and access to them restricted, adding the FCTA would decide what to do with the affected properties in due course.

Also, Nwankwoeze stated that there was no court decision on the revocation, adding there was no restriction on the FCTA in the discharge of its lawful functions on the affected properties.

He said the FCTA was already compiling records of compliance and non-compliance of title holders that were in default of payment of Ground Rent for between one and 10 years, who were given a 21 days grace to effect payment.

He vowed that the government would act accordingly as soon as the records were fully compiled and analysed.

He stressed that payment of Ground Rent on landed properties in the FCT is predicated on extant legislation, clearly stipulated in the terms and conditions of grant of Right of Occupancy, due for payment on the first day of January, each year, without demand.

Ekiti Stakeholders Unite to Strengthen Gender-Based Violence Policy Implementation

In a significant move toward creating a safer and more inclusive society, the Ekiti State Directorate of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) joined other key stakeholders at a State Validation Workshop to address the critical role of social norms in combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The workshop, which held at the All Saints Anglican Church Guest House Hall, PETIM Estate, Ado-Ekiti, on Tuesday, was organised by the Gender Mobile Initiative and brought together traditional rulers, civil society organisations, law enforcement agencies, government officials, and media representatives to validate the GBV Policy Implementation Gap Report.

The NOA State Director, Mrs. Oluwakemi Akomolede, who was a special guest emphasised the agency's commitment to reshaping public values and narratives around GBV.

She noted that collective responsibility and intentional advocacy are key to transforming communities into safer spaces for women and girls.

"Changing harmful social norms begins with awareness and action. The National Orientation Agency is committed to working with grassroots stakeholders to ensure that the messages of equality, respect, and justice are not just heard but lived," she said.

Participants at the workshop identified several social norms that continue to sustain gender-based violence and called for stronger enforcement of community bylaws that reflect zero tolerance for such practices.

Representatives from the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and the Local Government Affairs Commission also made significant contributions, urging for survivor-centred justice and government-backed support systems.

Don't Be Distracted, PAP Phase 2 Leaders Urge Otuaro

Stakeholders of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) under the auspices of the Phase Two Camp Leaders have restated support for the Administrator of the programme, Dr. Dennis Otuaro.

They expressed satisfaction for his remarkable achievements in the first year of his appointment.

The ex-agitators urged him to remain focused and not distracted by the mischievous activities of his detractors and serial blackmailers who did not mean well for the peace, stability and development of the Niger Delta.

The PAP phase two camp leaders' National President, Mr. Salvation Ibena, who stated this when he led a delegation of the group on a courtesy visit to Otuaro in Abuja, yesterday, noted that the administrator's innovative leadership and policy of inclusivity were responsible for the outstanding achievements.

Ibena said that Otuaro had brought the programme to the people of the Niger Delta and expanded its educational, vocational and stakeholders' engagement initiatives, among other areas, to engender a huge sense of belonging among the region's people.

He explained that their visit was to appreciate and encourage the PAP Administrator, and to express their support and solidarity to encourage him to do more.

Ibena also commended Otuaro for promptly addressing the challenges affecting several beneficiaries, including biometric verification number issues, which did not occur in his tenure.

He said, "We have come as a delegation of the beneficiaries to greet you and thank you for what you are doing, and your great achievements so far. Evidence abounds.

"Do not be distracted by whatever, whoever, individual or groups that may be saying negative things about you and the programme under your leadership. You have done very well.

"You know, this kind of meeting, most times comes with complaints and all that. But this meeting, purely, is to come and appreciate and encourage you.

"Don't be distracted. Continue to do what you are doing. Continue with the good plans you have for the programme and for your people."

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS CYRIL PRECIOUS CHIDERA now wish to be known and addressed as MRS AUSTIN PRECIOUS CHIDERA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.

I, formerly known and addressed as BADMUS MODUPE RIANAT, now wish to be known and addressed as DAVID MODUPE BADMUS. All former documents remain valid. The general public please take note.

HR Experts Urged to Rethink Work Culture Through Mindset Transformation

Mindset is fast becoming a key factor in how professionals adapt, grow, and lead in the workplace. As the demand for transformation increases, more attention is being paid to how people think, not just what they do.

The HR GEMs Coaches Network has hosted an event centred on the theme 'Mindset Transformation: Becoming a Transformed Professional'. The event brought together HR professionals, coaches, and thought leaders to explore the link between internal mindset shifts and professional growth.

Lara Yeku, Founder of the HR GEMs Coaches Network, said the decision to expand the initiative was driven by the need for greater visibility and collaboration.

"Our vision is clear, our message is clear, but we needed to scale up," Yeku said.

"In today's world of work, mindset is a critical factor. This year, we went bigger so that we can reach more people."

She further explained the rationale behind the theme: "The mindset is very powerful. Unfortunately, a lot of people undermine the power of the mind. Our culture has conditioned many to think in a certain way, and that becomes a barrier. May is a month where we celebrate workers, and it's important that workers begin to transform how they think so they can become better."

Grooming Centre to Reward Customers in June

Grooming Centre has announced that this year's edition of its client empowerment initiative, Grooming Splash, will hold on Saturday, June 21, 2025.

A statement said "Since we launched Grooming Splash in 2011, the initiative has rewarded more than 30, 000 clients via raffle draws with essential business tools such as tricycles, generators, freezers, refrigerators and commercial coolers to ease daily struggles and help entrepreneurs grow sustainably.

"To qualify, clients must have completed at least three cycles without default, a clear sign of their discipline and commitment.

"Speaking ahead of this year's edition, our Executive Director of Administration, Isoken Nwabunka, said 'Every item we provide through Grooming Splash is designed to remove real business barriers, like lack of power or storage, and give our clients the push they need to thrive. We are proud of what this initiative has achieved over the years.'

"As we prepare for the 14th edition, what stands out is not the number of winners of over 1, 000 prizes, but the spirit of enterprise we see, especially among our women. Their resilience, vision, and ability to turn opportunity into impact is what Grooming Splash is about."

NIHOTOUR Hits Back at HOMAL Over Allegations of Usurping State Powers

In a significant twist to the ongoing debate around statutory regulation of the hospitality and tourism industry in Nigeria, the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR) has dismissed claims made by the association of hotel managers in Lagos State that the institute is usurping the powers of state governments.

In a rejoinder made available to THISDAY, NIHOTOUR described the allegations by Hotel Owners and Managers Association of Lagos (HOMAL) as "misleading, unfounded, and legally erroneous."

The institute maintained that its enabling Act, passed in 2022, is a valid federal law that was enacted after extensive stakeholder engagement and public hearings.

NIHOTOUR insists that HOMAL lacks the legal standing to declare a federal law unconstitutional, maintaining that only courts of competent jurisdiction have the authority to make such declarations.

Reiterating commitment to the implementation of the provisions of its enabling Act, the institute noted that it has the responsibility of oversight over various aspects including certification and registration of personnel, assessment and grading of hospitality practitioners, and enforcement of national professional standards in the industry.

Goodwill Message

From the Chukwudozie Family
To Our Beloved Wife and Mother (Lady Ada Chukwudozie)
On the Occasion of the Conferment of an Honorary Doctorate Degree (Honoris Causa)
By Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State.

Today, the world pauses to honour you and as your family, your closest companions in life's journey we rejoice with joyful hearts, watching you step into a moment so richly deserved, so beautifully earned.

The conferment of this Honorary Doctorate Degree (Honoris Causa) by Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State is not just a recognition of your public achievements, it is a reflection of the woman we know intimately. The woman who rises every morning with purpose, who carries both her dreams and the dreams of others with grace, who stands tall in boardrooms but bows her head in prayer for her family and associates.

Over the years and through God's grace, we have watched you rise, breaking barriers and lighting paths not just in business and public service but in the quiet strength with which you have taken care of our home and lives. Your tireless pursuit of excellence, compassion for humanity and strong belief in the power of purpose is enviable.

This honour is not a surprise, it is a confirmation. It affirms what we have always known and today, as the world applauds your brilliance, we hold you closer in admiration, grateful that we get to call you ours. As you receive this well deserved recognition, may you be surrounded by the love you have sown, the respect you have earned and the legacy you continue to build with dignity and devotion. Amen.

Congratulations, we are proud of you.



Signed:
Sir (Dr) Daniel N. Chukwudozie
and the Children

NEWS XTRA



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING...

L- R: Company Secretary, Champion Breweries Plc, Chief Tosan Aiboni; Independent Non Executive Director, Alhaji Shaibu Ottan; Non-Executive Directors, Thompson Owoka; Eric Idiahi; Board Chairman, Mr. Imo Abasi Jacob; Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Inalegwu Adoga; Non Executive Director, Samson Aigbedo, and Finance Director, Mr. Rasheed Adebiyi, during Champion Breweries Plc's 49th Annual General Meeting held in Uyo…recently

NSIB Begins Investigation into Crash-landing of Trainee Aircraft in Ilorin

Chinedu Eze

The Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) said it has commenced investigation into the crash-landing of a Diamond training aircraft operated by the Aviation Training School, Ilorin.

The incident occurred at 17:28 local time yesterday, during a simulated instrument approach on Runway 05 at Ilorin International Airport.

According to the agency, the aircraft veered off the runway and came to a stop on the grass verge, as two occupants on-board sustained serious injuries and were swiftly evacuated to a medical facility, coordinated by the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA).

In response, the NSIB Go-Team is currently preparing to depart from Abuja to Ilorin to conduct on-site investigations. The team will secure the site, collect physical evidence, interview witnesses, and retrieve operational data to establish the cause and contributing factors of the incident.

Speaking on the incident, the Director General of the NSIB, Captain Alex Badeh Jr., said: "Our thoughts are with the injured, and we commend the swift medical and emergency response. Now, our focus is on understanding exactly what went wrong. Every investigation is an opportunity to improve safety. We are deploying our team to Ilorin to ensure that no detail is overlooked.

"The Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau is a multimodal transport agency charged with promoting transport safety and conducting objective, comprehensive, and accurate investigations into transport accidents and incidents in Nigeria. We aim to identify probable causes and advocate for safety improvements based on our findings."

First Lady Earmarks N50m Grant to Assist 250 PLDs Recapitalise Small Businesses

Emmanuel Ugwu-Nwogo in Umuahia

Nigeria's First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, has pledged to support 250 persons living with disabilities with N50 million in order to enable them recapitalise their existing small businesses.

She said that the business grant would be offered to 250 PLDs selected from across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), under the economic empowerment programme of the Renewed Hope Initiative(RHI).

Mrs. Tinubu made known her plans for the business-inclined PLDs yesterday in Umuahia at the Food Outreach event for Abia State under the Social Investment Programme of the Renewed Hope Initiative.

The First Lady, who was represented at the ceremony by the wife of the Vice President, Hajia Nana Shettima, formally handed over essential food commodities to the wife of Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Chidinma Otti, for distribution to Abia's vulnerable groups.

She stated the food outreach scheme for vulnerable families, which began in Abuja on March 8, 2024 has covered 11 states across the six geopolitical zones, and Abuja while Abia has now become the number 12 state to benefit from the scheme.

The First Lady listed the states that have so far received food items for the vulnerable ones to include Benue, Cross River, Oyo, Delta, Edo, Ekiti, Gombe, Kano, Kogi, Kwara, and Nasarawa states.

Mrs. Tinubu attributed the success of the food outreach scheme of the RHI to the generosity of two donors, the Abdul Samad Rabiu Africa Initiative (ASR Africa) and an anonymous donor, that together have maintained a steady supply of food items to RHI every month.

She said that Enugu and Kaduna states would be the next beneficiaries of the food outreach scheme, adding that "since inception in 2023, the Renewed Hope Initiative has made significant progress in our efforts to support our people."

According to her, the RHI programmes are meant to assist people "particularly women and youth towards building a better life for their families."

"I want to assure you that there will be more activities this year under the five scopes of the Renewed Hope Initiative," the First Lady said.

Greener Future: Transcorp Expands Environmental Initiative with Donation of Waste Bins to Schools

Transnational Corporation Plc (Transcorp Group), Nigeria's leading, listed conglomerate with strategic investments in the Power, Hospitality, and Energy sectors, has executed the second phase of its environmental Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, donating segregated waste bins to schools across Lagos, Delta, and Rivers states.

This initiative reinforces the group's commitment to sustainable waste management and environmental stewardship.

Aligned with Transcorp's mission to improve lives and transform Africa, this initiative empowers young Nigerians to champion environmental sustainability by partnering with secondary schools and Recycle Points, a leading waste recycling social enterprise and Tony Elumelu Foundation alumnus. The Group aims to instil a culture of responsibility and innovation in the next generation, equipping them with practical tools to reduce ecological footprints.

In a concerted effort to promote environmental sustainability, Transcorp Plc donated a fabricated waste bin each to Falomo Junior and Senior High Schools, as well as Ireti Junior and Senior High Schools in Ikoyi, Lagos.

Similarly, TransAfam Power Limited extended the same gesture to the Community Secondary School and Community Primary School in Okoloma, Rivers State, while Transcorp Power Plc replicated the eco-friendly donation at Erhavwen Secondary School, Ekrerhavwen and Adagwe Grammar School, Eruemukohwowarien in Delta State.

This CSR project affirms the Group's commitment to fostering cleaner, healthier learning environments, starting from their host communities.

Alternative Bank Secures $15m Financing Line to Power Nigeria's Non-Interest Finance Growth

The Alternative Bank (AltBank), a non-interest bank, has announced the successful signing of the terms for a US$15 million Murabaha financing line with the Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC).

The deal was signed with Sterling Bank Limited and The Alternative Bank as the Executing Agency.

This was finalised at the Annual Meetings of the Islamic Development Bank Group holding in Algiers, Algeria.

"This is more than a financing deal. It is a statement of confidence in Nigeria's growing non-interest financial ecosystem," said Dr. Jekwu Ozoemene, Group Executive at The Alternative Bank.

"With this partnership, we are unlocking vital funding that empowers our partners and reinforces our role as catalysts for ethical and inclusive financial solutions across the country."

Also commenting on the strategic significance of the deal, Mr. Gbenga Awe, Group Head, Structured Trade and Commodities Finance, noted: "This facility from the ITFC expands our capacity to support the real sector, particularly in trade and commodities financing where ethical and sustainable financing has proven to be transformative. It brings us one step closer to creating a more resilient economic landscape in Nigeria."

Over the years, The Alternative Bank has established itself as a trusted partner in Nigeria's trade and commodities finance space, delivering tailored non-interest financial instruments to agribusinesses, cooperatives, and SMEs. This new financing line will further enhance the Bank's capacity to offer timely, scalable solutions that support critical sectors particularly agriculture, solid minerals, and export-oriented enterprises.

By deepening access to international trade finance, AltBank is not only supporting

Orijin Named Official Sponsor of Ojude Oba Festival

Alcoholic beverage brand, Orijin has been announced the official alcoholic beverage sponsor of the Ojude Oba Festival.

Orijin's tie with the iconic festival holding on June 8, highlights its deep connection with Africa's rich culture and tradition.

The Ojude Oba festival stands as one of Nigeria's most vibrant cultural festivals, representing the pride, unity, and timeless traditions of the Yorubas.

It is being celebrated annually to revere the paramount ruler of Ijebu land, often addressed as Awujale of Ijebuland.

The annual occasion graced by thousands of eminent personalities and tourist around the globe packs spectacular displays of colour, captivating age-grade processions (Regberegbe), and spirited celebrations,amongst others.

Managing Director/CEO of Guinness Nigeria Plc, Girish Sharma speaking on the deal described Orijin as a bold statement of cultural pride, more than being a beverage brand.

"Our mantra 'My Roots, My Power' speaks directly to our unwavering belief in the strength of African traditions. Sponsoring Ojude Oba embodies our purpose of celebrating life, every day, everywhere, by bringing people together in honour of shared heritage and identity.

"We're excited to support this remarkable expression of Nigerian culture and reinforce the values that bind us as a community," he said.

Sahara Group Boosts Future Upstream Talent With Graduate Programme

Sahara Group's Upstream subsidiary, Asharami Energy, has opened applications for its prestigious Sahara Upstream Graduate Engineer Program (SUGEP), in line with its commitment to shaping, transforming, and sustaining Africa's upstream oil and gas expertise.

Bethel Obioma, Head, Corporate Communications said the programme will steer bright engineering graduates through critical learning activities, preparing them for strategic technical and leadership positions across Sahara's upstream operations.

"This is a M.A.D opportunity, one that gives future leaders of the upstream sector a platform for making a difference in the industry. Our graduate trainee programmes are highly sought-after and celebrated for producing outstanding alumni who have become notable leaders across the oil and gas value chain," he said.

According to Leste Aihevba, Chief Technical Officer at Asharami Energy, "this is the launch pad young engineers need for seamless career progression in the upstream sector as the program offers an immersive experience into all aspects of upstream operations, with the ultimate goal of making participants globally competitive business leaders."

Emilomo Arorote, Group Head, HR, Sahara Group said successful applicants will experience seamless "career acceleration". She added: "We are shaping professionals who will ultimately drive Africa's energy future, reinforcing our dedication to leading sustainable development. Graduates from our GMT programs are already driving critical aspects of Sahara's operations across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East."

Osahon Hamid-Osazuwa, an alumnus of the program said, "my rotation across work streams at Sahara Group has been a rewarding journey. Working as a Geoscientist deepened my understanding of subsurface evaluations, while my current role in Well Engineering has broadened my perspective on well delivery and drilling operations. The experience has made me more versatile, deepening my understanding of the upstream value chain."

Another alumnus, Anna Aribatise, said, "going through the program gave me the opportunity for top-level exposure and pushed me beyond my comfort zone to achieve what once seemed impossible. Sahara gives you platforms for growth and excellence."

Helen Erina Aziken, 85, for Burial Today

The matriarch of Azikens of Omumu, Agbor, in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State, late Mrs. Helen Erina Aziken (Nee Imaru), will be buried today.

Late Helen Aziken, mother of the former Group Politics Editor of Vanguard newspaper and revered public analyst, Mr. Emmanuel Aziken, was described as a God-fearing and caring mother at service of songs held in her honour at her family's compound, No. 29 Mariere Street, Agbor, Delta State.

At 9a.m. the deceased's body departs Central Hospital Agbor Mortuary for her family compound for a brief lying-in-state. The funeral service will take place by 10a.m. at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Festus Agholor Street, Agbor.

Her remains will be committed to mother earth by 12p.m. at her family compound at Omumu-Agbor, Delta State.

Guests will be entertained at the Government Field, by College Junction, Agbor. On Sunday, May 25, at 8a.m. there will be family thanksgiving at Emmanuel Baptist, Festus Agholor Street, Agbor.

Late Mrs. Helen Erina Aziken was survived by children, grandchildren, in-laws and many others.

Ferdinand Ekechukwu - 08035011394
Email: ferdi_adthisday@yahoo.com

SHOWBIZFLAIR

Kayode Kasum: Collaborating with Young, Old Filmmakers Impacted My Career

Filmmaker/director, Kayode Kasum won the 2025 Africa Magic Viewer's Choice Awards Trailblazer Award for his remarkable contributions and innovative approach in the industry. However, the award, which mostly had been given to emerging filmmakers, seems to have sparked some sort of conversation this year. Kasum speaks to **Ferdinand Ekechukwu** on the recognition, why he felt it raised questions and more. Excerpts:

Congratulations on winning the 2025 AMVCA Trailblazer Award. Where were you on that night as you missed receiving the award personally and taking the shine on the continental stage?

I was somewhere in Enugu working on a project. I tried to make it to the event but I could not. I missed my flight. But thank God I won.

How does it feel to win the 2025 AMVCA Trailblazer Award?

I feel on top of the world. It's a big stage, you know. When I started making films I remember one day I was working overnight during the AMVCA when they were showing it on TV and I was working at Wale Adenuga Productions and I watched it, that was the year Tope Tedela won Best Actor (2014) and I kind of told myself that one day I wish that I'm going to win an AMVCA award. I'm happy to see that dream come through. It's a big deal, I thank God. I'm elated, I'm happy for the recognition, and I respect everything Africa Magic has been doing over the years. To be mentioned on that stage was a blessing.

The award seems to have sparked some curiosity, interest this year following your recognition as the Trailblazer. Some have argued that why you? Unlike previous winners who had just one or two credits to their names. What do you think?

I think if you look at what the AMVCA is doing, the award has also been given to up and coming young filmmakers. So people kind of look at it and say Kayode is not up and coming. But it's also recognition; I feel its recognition for all the years of hard work. So, I also think there was a speech Gloria Young (award presenter) was saying on stage where she was mentioning the type of things my team and I had done in terms of different styles of filmmaking, different styles of marketing our films to audiences. I would say that we have created a new niche in filmmaking, and I guess that was what Africa Magic was trying to recognise.



Kasum

So far in total now how long have you been in the industry for like say, ten years, or say how many?

No, it's not up to ten, since 2018, so it's not up to ten. Like seven years… I never old like that abeg o!

But you have made a remarkable impact with the number of film credits as a filmmaker/director that one looking at it would think you have stayed that long in the industry…

Yes, now I understand why people are saying I don't deserve the AMVCA.

Do you envision any impact the Trailblazer award would have on your career?

I'm hoping that it would be a good impact (laughing), I'm hoping that it should be great. I'm staying hopeful and just being thankful. It's not something I was expecting. But really I'm thankful to God for the recognition.

Can you talk about your journey as a filmmaker/director?

My journey started with, I guess, trying to make a film Dog-napped which was like my first feature film with the legendary Julius Agwu and I learnt a lot from making the film. After that, I went on to make other films like Oga Bolaji, which was a film I wanted for it to travel festivals and it did. Then I would go on to make Sugar Rush which would be my introduction to Nigerian cinema. And ever since then, I have done a lot of collaborations with different production companies. I would say one thing that helped my journey was not collecting money upfront, not been paid for my services, but collaborating to make films along with producers. That helped put me on the map. And that made me understand the business of filmmaking which has helped me to continue to make films till today. My journey has also evolved working with different actors from different age groups I have worked with the legends, the young, the up and coming and I have got to experience Nollywood up, close and personal.

Read full Article online - www.thisdaylive.com

Kokopelli Art Gallery Presents Ronke Komos' 'What Endures, What Fades'

Ferdinand Ekechukwu

In an evocative solo exhibition that invites viewers to reflect on the customs, trends and cultural memories that shape communal identity, Kokopelli Art Gallery, Lagos, will be debuting "What Endures, What Fades" by Ronke Komos.

This body of work navigates the tension between preservation and transformation, nostalgia and, more importantly, evolution in a time of constant flux. The exhibition, which kicked off 11th May, will run daily till June 13th, 2025.

Komos explores the delicate balance between continuity and change, questioning how customs, fashion, and cultural identity evolve across generations. 'What Endures, What Fades' is not only an exhibition; it is a space for remembrance, redefinition and renewal.

Drawing from her archive of photographs, she revives and reimagines visual fragments of history, creating a poignant dialogue between collective memory and individual identity through a series of vibrant, mixed-media works.

The exhibition delves into the fluidity of tradition, why certain elements endure while others fade into distant recollection. Pieces like Box TV – "Apoti Fedeko Age" and "Village Christmas Age" speak to familial nostalgia, while "Kori-Kosun, 5&6 Age" contemplates the shifting dynamics of friendship and community in a digitally connected world.



Kokopelli Art image

Nigerian R&B Artist Rukmani Unveils Debut Album '3XL'

Sunday Ehigiator

Rukmani, a rising star in the Nigerian music scene, has officially released her debut album titled '3XL'. According to a statement from her management, the highly anticipated project is a soulful and introspective body of work that explores themes of love, vulnerability, and self-discovery.

"3XL is a masterful blend of mellow R&B tones and Afro-fusion textures, creating a soundscape that is both deeply personal and universally relatable. The album features tracks like 'From Softie to You', 'Woman Joseph', and 'Gen Z Lifestyle', each offering a unique perspective on love, identity, and empowerment.

"To coincide with the album's release, Rukmani has also unveiled a stunning monochrome video for 'Gen Z Lifestyle'; a visually appealing visual, which is a testament to Rukmani's artistic vision and creativity.

"3XL is now available on all major streaming platforms, allowing listeners to experience Rukmani's soulful and introspective sound. With this debut album, Rukmani is poised to significantly impact the music industry, and fans can expect great things from this talented artist."



Rukmani



Princess Otieyeke Ojo

Wale Ojo Celebrates Late Mum

Ferdinand Ekechukwu

Actor, Wale Ojo, has paid tribute to his dearly beloved mother Princess Teresa Otieyeke Ojo (Nee Anao), who passed on a year ago, aged 85. The filmmaker eulogized his late mum, recalling the unforgettable contribution she made in the lives of her children.

The award-winning actor, during a chat described her impact on their lives as "unpayable debt". Wale Ojo recalled the beautiful and indomitable spirit and the memories of the late Otieyeke Ojo. According to the renowned thespian, "A year has gone by already since you left. It's like as if it were only just yesterday.

"Mama we miss you terribly, and our hearts are still heavy, but God knows best. Everyone praises your beautiful and indomitable spirit and the memories they have of you will never die. We, your children would never forget the contribution you made to our lives. An unpayable debt. Carry on resting, Mama in the sweet bosom of the Lord."

He also shared this, reflecting the life and times of his late mum. "Forever caring, forever loving that was our mother. There are three of us, my eldest sister June, my brother Niyi and I was the last born. Mama was born Princess Teresa Otieyeke Anao to the Royal family of Ewohimi, in Edo State. She had three sisters and three brothers."

Ojo disclosed that he would be celebrating with a service of Catholic Mass in Ewohimi, Edo State. He wishes to mark the day with cultural dance, drumming and singing after the morning Mass. Although his elder brother Niyi is unable to attend, Niyi has guaranteed full support to his younger brother as they celebrate their late mother.

Both Wale and his elder brother Niyi, are planning to open a charitable foundation in their mother's name called, The Princess Teresa Otieyeke Ojo Foundation. The late Otieyeke Ojo was renowned in Nigeria's travel and tourism industry.

INTERVIEW

Ernst-Lothar Frank: We are Taking Nigerian Cuisine to Another Level

With many years of culinary experience from Europe, Asia and now Africa, Executive Chef of Lagos Continental Hotel, Ernst-Lothar Frank, says their kitchens and restaurants bring guests who want to experience local and international cuisines. **Charles Ajunwa** brings excerpts

What is the culinary strength of Lagos Continental Hotel?

First, I want to say that our services at Lagos Continental Hotel are world-class. In terms of location, accommodation, dining and entertainment, sports and recreation, service and meeting facilities we offer the best. In Lagos Continental, we are trying to bring different people inside to widen our portfolio. We have Nigerians and foreigners working with us. For example, when you go to Ekaabo Restaurant on the ground floor, we have a spread of food - Nigerian, French, British, Asian, South African and others which gives it an international flavour. This is the strength of Lagos Continental. It also has something to do with the vision of the management and the support, I guess, of the owners. You can have a lot of people coming, if you do not give them an opportunity to buy things, try out things, it's not worth it.

Different countries have different food cultures. How has what you prepare and how you prepare been influenced by the Nigerian food culture?

For me, I will listen to the Nigerian chefs which we have. I didn't come here to reinvent Nigerian food. That is already here. What we do with the Nigerian food, we actually try to tap into the experience of Chef Chiamaka Nwakalor-Egemba, who has done that already. She has created contemporary Nigerian food. For example, she created Agege Roll made with Ewa agoyin butter; Stir Fried Cous-cous Salad made from pickled sumbo, balsamic cherry tomato and yaji dressing; Seared Seabass With Coconut Ofe Akwu Risotto which made from Ehuru chili oil, efrin oil, kpekere and greens; Pami and Curry Leaf Granita; and Dodo Ikire Ice Cream and Robo Cake made from sweet agbo reduction, kokoro cookie crumble stewed strawberries. Now, what we have in the hotel is more traditional Nigerian food. I try to learn about it. It is very regional. That's what I found out. Unfortunately, it's not very well documented. So, I think there is a need to document it, but there is also a need to recognise what it is. Every national kitchen doesn't matter. This is now Nigeria. I have never been to Ghana,



Frank

but probably Ghana is the same thing and Egypt is the same thing. You have to concentrate on what you have as a national food. And like a language, like culture, it's evolving. So, it's part of the wider culture. If the culture is changing, normally the food is changing as well. I think this is not as much recognised as it should be here in Nigeria. You have to go to Lagos and everybody can tell you where is a good Italian restaurant, or where is a good restaurant like this. You ask them where the best Nigerian restaurant is, who celebrates it, who you can go out with, you do a kind of fine dining, and you can pair it with wine or spirits, whatever you want to. It's not that easy to answer, because I ask this question and I don't really get an answer. Yes, everybody has a favorite joint somewhere, but it's not in the same part as the restaurants here in Victoria Island. They all concentrate on foreign food. So, that is something which we were thinking of, and also which we should not try to change. We cannot change Lagos. But we want to tap into, and we want to also take Nigerian food into another level. We don't want to invent the potato again or something like this, but the way it is presented, the way it is looked at, that it can be at par with any other national food in the world as well. I truly believe it can, yes.

How do you see your food contribute to the revenue of the hotel?

It contributes to the revenue quite a lot. We have a strong banquet department. So, a huge part of the revenue of the food is from the banquet. Now, the food in banquet, yes, it is important, but there are other things around the banquet. People have to come here in a big number. It's about logistics, it's about organisation. That's a big part. In the restaurant, it's a little bit different. You expect a different service.

But the reputation of the food and the F&B is making the hotels. Most of the time, wherever you go and you discuss a hotel, everybody has rooms and they are nice and they are well kept and their condition is running all the time. What actually makes the difference between one luxury hotel and another luxury hotel? They are all built the same. A lot of money. Okay, you have white marble, you have black marble. That's the difference. It is certainly the people and the F&B department, which gives it a kind of excitement. You go to the lobby and you expect that your lobby has to be beautiful, but if you want to drink coffee or beverage, you want to get the cake. The food and beverages department is very important to drive the hotel as well. In this hotel, about 40 per cent of the revenue comes from the food and beverage. One has to say in Africa, for example, you will find hotels that have a bigger selection of restaurants because it's easier. Once you have a city that is saturated with restaurants, you kind of have to look again at what you want to do with the hotel. Take the example of Lagos.

Read full Article online - www.thisdaylive.com

Project iCommunity, NNPC Arm Teens with Skills for Digital Economy

Stories by Omolabake Fasogbon

As technology continues to shape the future, a timely investment in children's digital skills is deemed crucial to prepare them for tomorrow's challenges to become relevant.

In pulling through, organisers of Project iCommunity/ Co-founder of 9ijakids, Titi Adewusi, have stressed the need for concerted efforts to address the challenges of digital divide that may hinder efforts and exclude children from underserved communities.

In addition to equipping younger ones with critical 21st-century skills, Adewusi spoke of Project iCommunity as been a deliberate effort to promote digital inclusion amongst younger ones, informing the extension of the gesture to 15 public secondary schools in underserved communities at ensuring that no one is left behind.

The initiative, implemented in collaboration with like-minded partners, including Chevron Nigeria Limited, CNL and Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), saw over 750 students selected from 15 schools across Lagos, Delta, and Ondo States improved their know-how in artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), design thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.

Adewusi asserted further that the project underscored the weight of public-private partnerships in building education, declaring that uniting for a common cause would significantly foster innovation and engender local and national development.

Participants underwent an intensive five-week training, engaging in hands-on and real-world problem-solving challenges.

Commenting further, she said, "We are deeply grateful to Chevron and NNPC for their commitment to Nigerian youth, as well as our partners, STEMMETs, The Creative Kids (TCK) Zone, Robotics 4 Kids and SeedDev. The greatest reward is seeing these students, many of whom are from underserved communities, gain skills to thrive in a digital economy and break cycles of poverty."

The project culminated in Demo Day competitions, where top teams from each school showcased AI solutions addressing community challenges before panels of judges comprising sponsors, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and private sector leaders.

Winners across each state were handsomely rewarded with prizes valued at N1million.

In Lagos State, Badore Community High School secured 1st Place with its project "Attend AI," a smart classroom attendance system utilising facial recognition, Ilasan Senior Secondary School took 2nd place implementing "Smart pajec classroom attendance system using AI," while Gbara Community Senior Secondary School clinched 3rd position with project "Edubot", a virtual assistant using AI for students' assignment."

Indomie's Initiative Empowers over 150,000 Teens in 20 Years

No fewer than 150,000 children across the country have experienced a life-changing transformation by virtue of their membership of the Indomie Fan Club (IFC).

IFC, an initiative of Indomie noodles, provides children with opportunities to participate in hands-on activities, fostering their interests and passion while empowering them to become the most skilled versions of themselves as they transition into adolescence.

The initiative, which recently clocked 20 years, saw Indomie brand reflected on some of its accomplishments over the last two decades at a packed event in Lagos, themed, "A Journey of Love: Friendship Through the Years Built on Love."

Speaking at the event, the Coordinator of IFC, Faith Joshua, pointed out how the initiative had impacted over 150,000 children in areas such as education, entertainment, and values-driven engagement in alignment with the company's objectives.

Speaking on this milestone, Joshua said, "The 20th anniversary is a monumental moment for us. Launching the theme song today is a symbolic way to mark it.

"The anthem captures the spirit of what this club means to our children. With over 150,000 members nationwide, our journey has only just begun."

General Manager, Corporate Communications and Events at Dufil Prima Foods, Temitope Ashiwaju, described IFC's 20th anniversary as a breakthrough, noting that the initiative was built on the foundation of love, trust, and community.

The event featured appearances by the indomitable superhero mascots, and concluded with a group activity where children left painted handprints on a designated wall.

Brand Positions Local Interior Designs for Global Relevance

Interior designers across the country have been tasked to fully integrate locally-sourced raw materials into their craft as a way to promote Nigeria's ingenuity and develop local economy.

The Chief Executive Officer of Design Tactics Interiors, Aisha Yusuf Ishaku, reiterated this during the launch of a Lagos-based Jowel's Place, a creative studio designed for photography and content creation, at the same time implored Nigerians to prioritise local finished goods to encourage producers.

Ishaku, boasted about the skillfulness of Nigeria's artisans and richness of the country's resources, noting, however that Nigerians' apathy to their own continues to stifle sector's progress.

"Nigerians are still largely driven by the craze for imported goods, and very much consider local produce as inferior, however, this does not turn out to be true. As a manufacturer who used to rely on foreign materials, I can tell boldly that local material is unrivalled in terms of strength, quality and durability," she informed.

She thus cried out to governments across the three tiers to encourage local producers by patronising Nigeria's own and create market for entrepreneurs to stimulate activities in the sector.

She disclosed that her latest venture, Jowel's Place was inspired by a need to further spotlight local creative ingenuity and potential.

"This is a dream come true for me, not just because it's one of my pet projects, but because it represents the realisation of our vision to create a platform where creators can collaborate and paint a picture of the future of media and story-telling.

"We are proud to say that everything used in this hub is made in Nigeria at our factory, and we are grateful to God for bringing us this far. We're excited to see the impact this will have on our community and the future of Nigerian creativity."

Also present at the launch, Executive Director at Sultana Nabilah's Cerebral Palsy Foundation (SNCPF), Raliat Ibrahim Oyetunde, highlighted the need for consistent government policies and a more robust measures to stabilise business environment.

"Maintaining the import ban on furniture will give local interior decorators a chance to thrive and grow, "she stated.

President of Interiors Designers Association of Nigeria (IDAN), Mrs. Jacqueline Aki, commended Ishaku on her new venture, tasking designers to think globally to unlock opportunities and improve the sector.

GBFoods Unveils New Products

In satisfying consumers' culinary preferences, GBFoods has expanded its portfolio with five new products to further enrich taste of meals.

Managing Director of GBFoods Nigeria, Vincent Egbe, revealed the new range of products as Bama Shawarma Mix, Gino Asun-Flavoured Seasoning Cubes, Gino Asun-Flavoured Tomato Mix, Gino Red Hot Pepper Powder, and the relaunched Jago Mayonnaise, reiterating that the latest were in response to the yearning of diverse Nigerians.

Speaking at the launch of the products in Lagos, in the presence of food stakeholders, Egbe informed that the products aligned with the company's ongoing effort to support food vendors and home cooks with cost-efficient and accessible culinary solutions.

"Whether it's helping food vendors save time and cost, or giving families access to affordable, hygienic, nutritious, and great-tasting food options, we are innovating with purpose.

"We remain committed to creating solutions that improve lives today and support a sustainable and flavourful future for generations to come," Egbe added.

Also at the event, culinary expert/ ambassador of GBFoods, Hilda Baci, described the new range, especially the Bama Shawarma Mix packed as all -in -one blend, as a breakthrough for chefs, food vendors and home cook.

"These products capture the rich, smoky flavor of the traditional delicacy, bringing its essence to everyday meals without the time and complexity of traditional preparation.

"As someone who's constantly creating meals that balance taste, quality, and time, Bama Shawarma Mix comes handy in cooking Shawarma and other dishes without compromising flavor. Beyond Shawarma, it's a game changer for anyone wanting to elevate everyday meals easily," she stated.

Marketing Director of the firm, Oreoluwa Atinmo added, "We are creating a flavour that was never industrialised before. This is about bringing intense flavours and convenience

INTERVIEW

Souza: New Diagnostic Technologies Key to Improving Accuracy, Accessibility

This June, Lagos will become the hub of healthcare innovation, with the return of WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos, presenting a bold new vision for West Africa's future. The 2025 edition, led by the Conference Director Rubina Souza, is envisioned to ignite transformative conversations, unite industry trailblazers, and spark solutions to the region's most urgent health challenges. Souza reveals how WHX Lagos is reimagining what's possible for healthcare and laboratory science across the continent, and why the world should be watching. **Sunday Ehigiator** brings the excerpts:

Can you give us an overview of what attendees can expect from this year's editions of WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos?

This year, we have built an even more dynamic program for WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos. Attendees can expect a rich blend of insightful discussions, interactive workshops, and hands-on experiences covering the most critical healthcare and laboratory science issues today. We're delving into topics like the future of digital health, innovations in diagnostics, and new strategies for tackling healthcare access and equity in the region. More than just talks, we're offering real, actionable takeaways for healthcare professionals and lab scientists to drive change in their fields. This is a space for collaboration, innovation, and moving forward with purpose.

How does the rebranded WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos enhance value for West Africa's healthcare ecosystem?

The rebrand to WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos reflects our commitment to taking the conversation to a more integrated level. We recognise that healthcare and laboratory science are deeply connected, and that's something we want to highlight this year. Instead of focusing on these sectors in isolation, we've designed the event to encourage cross-pollination between healthcare providers and laboratory professionals. This approach allows us to tackle challenges from all angles—whether it's improving diagnostic accuracy or leveraging new technology for better healthcare delivery. It's about bridging these two ecosystems to accelerate progress and find solutions that can truly make a difference.

What are some of the major themes and issues that will be discussed at the conferences this year?

At this year's edition, we will be addressing a variety of pressing issues this year, all of which are essential to the future of healthcare in West Africa. One major focus will be on innovation in diagnostics. With a shortage of skilled professionals in the region, new diagnostic technologies are key to improving accuracy and accessibility. We'll also be exploring digital health transformation, from telemedicine to mobile health solutions, and how they're



Souza

reshaping patient care. Healthcare access and equity will be another critical topic, especially in underserved communities where healthcare infrastructure is still limited. Finally, we'll highlight the importance of sustainability in laboratory practices—specifically, how laboratories can reduce their environmental footprint while increasing operational efficiency.

How will your speakers and partners shape the healthcare conversations at WHX Lagos 2025?

The calibre of speakers we have this year is remarkable, and each one brings a unique perspective to the table. From healthcare professionals to technology innovators and policy leaders, these voices will guide our discussions and challenge conventional thinking. Their expertise will help us dig deep into the issues at hand, offering both high-level strategic insights and practical solutions that attendees can take back to their organisations. In bringing together such a diverse group of experts, we are ensuring that the conversation isn't one-sided. Instead, it's a comprehensive dialogue that includes all facets of the healthcare ecosystem, encouraging collaboration and the exchange of ideas.

Beyond the conference sessions, what other opportunities will be available to attendees and exhibitors?

Networking is at the heart of WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos. This year, we have made sure that there will be plenty of opportunities for attendees to connect. Whether it's through designated networking sessions, one-on-one matchmaking, or informal gatherings, we want to create spaces where professionals can share experiences, discuss ideas, and form partnerships. We're also offering opportunities for exhibitors to meet potential clients and collaborators, ensuring that all attendees have the chance to forge meaningful connections that extend well beyond the conference.

How will WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos address West Africa's healthcare challenges?

Events like WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos are critical because they bring the right people together to start solving the region's toughest healthcare challenges. By bringing healthcare leaders, innovators, and policymakers into one room, we can move the conversation forward and focus on actionable change. These conversations are an opportunity to highlight the issues, like the need for better diagnostic tools or more accessible healthcare services, and create the collaborative environment needed to find solutions. It's also a platform for advocating for the policy changes that will help create a more robust healthcare system in West Africa.

How will strategic partnerships enhance the impact of WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos 2025?

Strategic partnerships are vital to the success of WHX Lagos and WHX Labs Lagos. Working with respected organisations like ABCHealth and the West African Institute of Public Health gives us the ability to strengthen the conference's impact and ensure that we address the real needs of the healthcare community.

What Nigeria's Event Industry Can Learn from Tech Ecosystem

Fisayo Beecroft

For many years, the Nigerian event industry has been largely synonymous with weddings. Lavish ceremonies, flamboyant décor, and cultural flair have long been the hallmark of our event narrative. But this perception, while rooted in truth, only scratches the surface of a much broader, rapidly evolving landscape.

Today, events in Nigeria are no longer just about celebrations; they are about experiences, strategy, and impact. The industry now spans concept creation, logistics, vendor management, budgeting, experiential design, and execution, transforming it into a key economic driver that intersects with hospitality, tourism, and entertainment.

Globally, the events industry was valued at a staggering $1.19 trillion in 2022 and is projected to grow to $1.75 trillion by 2032. This trajectory underscores a global recognition: events are no longer auxiliary, they are essential. For Nigeria, a nation brimming with youthful energy and creative ambition, this presents a golden opportunity. But to truly stake our claim on the world stage, we must go beyond being service providers. We must innovate, adapt, and place the customer experience at the center of everything we do.

As the Managing Director of Eventful, one of Nigeria's premier event management companies, I've seen firsthand how the application of continuous innovation and operational excellence can redefine what's possible in our space. Interestingly, the tech sector offers a powerful blueprint for this transformation. Take Flutterwave, for example. This fintech giant didn't rise to prominence by doing what everyone else was doing. Instead, it listened, adapted, and built localised solutions to solve global problems. The result? A game-changing brand that is not only shaping Africa's financial future but influencing the global tech narrative.

At Eventful, we've taken a similar approach, one rooted in curiosity, bold thinking, and a willingness to challenge the norm. Our EventfulPlus platform is a prime example. Designed to meet the evolving tastes of millennials and Gen Z audiences, it creates immersive, lifestyle-driven experiences that reflect the values of a new generation.

We've also expanded into hospitality with our bespoke beach house space in Ilashe, offering a serene, curated destination for intimate events and creative gatherings. This move, like many of our strategic shifts, reflects our belief that the future of events lies in personalization, exclusivity, and authenticity.

Beyond that, our Eventful Souks, particularly Fashion Souk Nigeria, have become cultural mainstays. These gatherings combine exhibitions, runway showcases that promote homegrown fashion and beauty brands. With Fashion Souk Global, we're now exporting this creative energy beyond Nigerian borders, empowering local entrepreneurs to access international markets. What makes these efforts work isn't just creativity; it's structure. We operate with flexible frameworks that allow ideas to flourish without compromising on accountability and execution. It's the same agility that has made tech companies successful: balancing vision with performance.

There's also a deeper lesson we can draw from tech's playbook: the importance of investing in people. Kenya's Silicon Savannah has shown what's possible when local talent is nurtured and supported. Similarly, at Eventful, we've prioritized capacity-building through partnerships like the one with Terra Academy for the Arts (TAFTA), where we train young creatives in event management. One of our proudest moments? Seeing a former intern grow into a valued member of our team, now two years strong. Our collaboration with Nollywood, on the movie The Wait, which topped Netflix charts, is another way we're fusing event execution with storytelling, film, and entertainment, expanding the boundaries of what the event industry can be.

Through EventfulPlus, we've also powered events like Africa Gaming Expo, Our Homecoming, Street Souk, Cade Africa



Beecroft

Gaming Esports (CAGE), Fourward by Chef Fregz, and Awa Bike on Atlantic. These aren't just events, they're platforms for youth engagement, digital creativity, and economic empowerment. And that's what excites me most. The Nigerian event industry is at an inflection point. We've come a long way, but the next chapter requires more than tradition. It demands that we think like innovators, operate like strategists, and serve like visionaries. We must study what makes tech companies agile, resilient, and scalable and apply those insights to craft unforgettable human experiences.

At Eventful, we're committed to this future. We believe Nigeria is not just a participant in the global event ecosystem it can be a leader. The next decade holds immense promise. By combining innovation with collaboration, empowering talent, and embracing new formats, the Nigerian event industry can become a continental force and a global standard. Just as technology has transformed the way we live and work, events will shape the way we connect, celebrate, and create meaning in the world. And we're proud to be among the pioneers lighting that path.

Beecroft is the Managing Director of Eventful

ANALYSIS

Eking Fair Share of $900bn Global Diaspora Remittances

In this piece, **James Emejo** writes that the Central Bank of Nigeria's new diaspora remittance initiative could positively reset the economy and promote inclusive growth and development, among others

With a solemn declaration that "We must do everything to get our own share of global diaspora remittances," the CBN Governor, Mr. Olayemi Cardoso has effectively committed the bank to one of its most audacious policy paths that could significantly cure the economy of the persistent challenge of Foreign Exchange (FX) inflows.

are money or goods that migrants send back to families and friends in origin countries and are often the most direct and well-known link between migration and development.

According to the World Bank, remittance flows increased by 4.6 per cent to $905 billion in 2024, from $865 billion in 2023.

Also, $656 billion was distributed to low- and middle-income countries while 6.4 per cent was the global average cost of sending $200 in the fourth quarter (Q4) 2023, which more than doubled the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10.

According to the Bretton Woods institution, remittances continued to be greater than Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), having increased by 57 per cent in the last decade in contrast to a 41 per cent reduction in FDI.



Nigeria's Meagre Share

However, despite having a significant number of its citizens abroad, Nigeria's share of the global diaspora remittances over the years remained low at about $20 billion, most of which are distributed through informal channels - promoting the latest CBN's efforts.

NRBVN as Game-changer

Driven by the need to have a fair share of the global diaspora remittance portfolio, Cardoso, in collaboration with the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System (NIBSS) formally launched the Non-Resident Bank Verification Number (NRBVN) platform recently. The innovative digital gateway, which is projected to actualise the CBN's $1 billion monthly diaspora remittances target - about $12 billion annually, allowing Nigerians in the diaspora to obtain a BVN remotely without the need for a physical presence in the country.

The initiative could also have diaspora remittances quadruple in the coming years.

Speaking at the launch attended by stakeholders in the financial ecosystem, including chief executives of commercial banks in Abuja, the CBN governor hailed the initiative as a milestone in the country's financial inclusion journey and a critical bridge connecting the country to its global citizens.

He said, "By providing investment accounts, diasporans will have access to a variety of growing investment opportunities in our debt and equities markets, as well as products such as mortgages, insurance, and pensions. Importantly, diasporans will also have the flexibility to fully repatriate the proceeds of their investments in accordance with existing regulations, ensuring confidence and convenience in managing their assets.

"We strongly encourage Nigerian banks to proactively develop and offer products specifically tailored to meet the unique needs and preferences of our diaspora community.

"Offering innovative and attractive financial solutions can greatly enhance diaspora participation, deepen financial inclusion, and significantly boost remittance inflows."

The initiative ensures that no matter where they live, Nigerians abroad stay connected, empowered, and confident in contributing to the country's future.

The central bank governor also hinted that the initiative could reduce the high cost of remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa and ensure continued engagement with stakeholders to optimise the platform.

He said the CBN remained committed to reducing the cost of remittances, currently averaging over seven per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa, adding that lowering these costs will enhance the safety and appeal of formal channels while amplifying the socioeconomic impact of diaspora remittances on Nigerian households and the broader economy.

The NRBVN is part of a broader framework that includes the Non-Resident Ordinary Account (NROA) and Non-Resident Nigerian Investment Account (NRNIA) - enabling access to savings, mortgages, insurance, pensions, and investment opportunities in Nigeria's capital markets.

Under current regulations, Nigerians in the diaspora will retain the flexibility to repatriate the proceeds of their investments.

Essentially, the NRBVN system has been built with global standards in mind, incorporating stringent Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and KYC compliance protocols to ensure the integrity, transparency, and security of Nigeria's financial system.

Every NRBVN enrollment undergoes comprehensive verification checks to safeguard against illicit financial activity, bolstering international confidence in the platform and the broader financial ecosystem.

Cardoso said, "For too long, many Nigerians abroad have faced difficulties accessing financial services at home due to physical verification requirements.

"The NRBVN changes that. Through secure digital verification and robust Know Your Customer (KYC) processes, Nigerians worldwide should now be able to access financial services more easily and affordably."

He said, though not the final destination, the NRBVN represented the "beginning of a broader journey."

Remittance flows through formal channels increased from $3.3 billion in 2023 to $4.73 billion in 2024 due to recent reforms and policy shifts, including the introduction of the willing buyer, willing seller FX regime.

With the NRBVN in place, the CBN is optimistic about reaching its monthly remittance target.

Cardoso said, "We are building a secure, efficient, and inclusive financial ecosystem for Nigerians globally. This platform is not just about financial access. It's about national inclusion, innovation, and shared prosperity.

"With the introduction of NRBVN and complementary policy measures, we are optimistic about achieving our ambitious target of $1 billion in monthly remittance flows, a goal we believe is entirely achievable given the growing trust and convenience in formal remittance channels.

"To meet these targets, collaboration and compliance with established regulatory frameworks remain essential. All stakeholders must adhere strictly to the FX Code and other relevant regulatory guidelines."

He said, "This is critical to ensuring market stability, integrity, and overall confidence in Nigeria's financial system. "We also invite IMTOs to integrate with the NRBVN platform as part of our shared vision to build a secure, efficient, and inclusive financial ecosystem for Nigerians globally."

"A fully connected system will ensure that every Nigerian in the diaspora can confidently contribute to national development through trusted and cost-effective channels."

Vital Source of External Financing

Augusto & Co, in its 2024 Diaspora Remittance Industry Report, maintained that diaspora remittances - funds transferred by Nigerians residing abroad, played a crucial role in the Nigerian economy, supporting households, enhancing welfare, and stimulating local investments.

The report noted that remittances continued to be a vital source of external financing for many low and middle-income countries (LMICs), including Nigeria, contributing to economic stability and development.

The Pan-African credit rating agency further stated that, notwithstanding global economic challenges, remittance flows to LMICs have demonstrated resilience, driven by strong ties between diaspora communities and their home countries.

It however, noted that in 2023, global remittance flows are projected to experience modest growth due to inflationary pressures and rising living costs in major remittance-sending regions, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Eurozone.

Augusto & Co pointed out that the harsh economic climate, coupled with job losses in key markets, had impacted the disposable income of many migrants, influencing their remittance patterns.

Collaboration, Compliance Key for Success

According to Cardoso, with the growing trust and convenience in formal remittance channels, the NRBVN and complementary policy measures by the central bank, achieving the bank's ambitious target of $1 billion in monthly remittance flows remained entirely achievable.

However, to meet these targets, he stressed that collaboration and compliance with established regulatory frameworks was critical.

He said, "All stakeholders must adhere strictly to the FX code and other relevant regulatory guidelines. This is critical to ensuring market stability, integrity, and overall confidence in Nigeria's financial system.

"We also invite IMTOs to integrate with the NRBVN platform as part of our shared vision to build a secure, efficient, and inclusive financial ecosystem for Nigerians globally.

"A fully connected system will ensure that every Nigerian in the diaspora can confidently contribute to national development through trusted and cost-effective channels."

According to him, the unveiling of NRBVN was not the "final destination, but the beginning of a broader journey.

"The NRBVN is a dynamic initiative, one that will continue to evolve in response to the needs of its users. It presents a unique opportunity to learn, to innovate, and to adapt."

It is noteworthy that the banking industry has already embraced the initiative and given their commitment to its implementation especially because of its win-win proposition. Banks are expected to boost their earnings sources through the diaspora inflows.

Group Managing Director/Chief Executive, Zenith Bank Plc, Adaora Umeoji and Manging Director/Chief Executive,

Access Bank Plc, Roosevelt Ogbonna, have all commended the NRBVN, while a representative of Keystone Bank to the gathering that one transaction had pulled through under the new diaspora policy

Surmounting Barriers of Distance and Payment Complexit

According to Cardoso, historically, Nigerians in the diaspora have faced significant hurdles when seeking access to financial services in Nigeria.

He pointed out that the mandatory physical verification required for obtaining a BVN often incurred considerable costs in terms of time and financial resources, especially for individuals residing in remote locations.

He said, "The NRBVN platform addresses these very concerns. Through digital verification and robust Know Your Customer (KYC) processes, Nigerians across the globe can now remotely obtain their BVN swiftly and securely.

" This single digital gateway will enable seamless access to banking services, including opening accounts and securely sending funds, dramatically enhancing convenience and reducing costs.

"In developing this solution, we draw valuable lessons from countries such as India and Pakistan. India's Non-Resident External (NRE) and Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) accounts have significantly simplified banking processes for its diaspora, and Indian banks currently hold approximately $160 billion in diaspora deposits, achieved by providing attractive and tailored products and services. Similarly, Pakistan's innovative Roshan Digital Account, offering fully online onboarding and investment opportunities, has successfully attracted nearly $10 billion since its inception.

"These examples underscore the power of digital financial inclusion and specifically tailored products in driving meaningful engagement and substantial economic inflows from diaspora populations." According to him, the NRBVN platform is similarly designed to offer "more than access, it is about opportunity. "

Also, in his remarks at the launch, CBN Deputy Governor, Economic Policy Directorate, Mr. Muhammad Sani Abdullahi, described the NRBVN as a significant stride forward for the apex bank as it strives to create a more inclusive financial ecosystem, "ensuring that every Nigerian, regardless of where they reside across the globe, can actively participate in and contribute to our nation's economic landscape".

He said, "Today, we are breaking down barriers of distance and complexity, paving the way for a more connected and empowered diaspora.

"The NRBVN stands as a transformative tool, meticulously designed to enhance the banking experience for our diaspora community. By providing secure, remote access to financial services, this platform simplifies the process of maintaining robust banking relationships, facilitating meaningful investments in Nigeria, and supporting the seamless flow of remittances.

"It is our firm belief that this initiative will not only strengthen economic ties but also foster a sense of pride and belonging among Nigerians worldwide, encouraging them to play an even greater role in our nation's development."

POLITY

NSF: When Ogun Gave the World a Grand Opening

Kayode Akinmade

Even before Vice President Kashim Shettima, standing in for President Bola Tinubu, declared the largest edition of the National Sports Festival (NSF) in the last 52 years open, it was already clear that the Opening Ceremony was going to be out of this world.

The MKO Abiola Sports Complex, venue of the ceremony, surged with crowds as drummers, dancers, choreographers and athletes gave a performance that dwarfed anything ever produced anywhere in Africa. For more than four hours, the MKO complex witnessed pure joy.

The opening ceremony of the Gateway Games 2024 left everyone, including the 10,000 or more spectators, completely spell-bound as stagecraft met artistry, and drum, song and poetry stretched athletics to elastic limits. The stage, superb in every essence, exuded uncommon brilliance, from costume to positioning, and from mime to the blaring of national hits and, lest we forget, unbeatable performances by some of Nigeria's best artists. Never in the history of sporting competitions had the nation witnessed such a masterful opening. Still, Nigerians cannot forget that the Ogun State Governor, Prince Dao Abiodun, promised an opening to remember, only that he surpassed expectations with dazzling brilliance.

With 626 gold, 626 silver, and 898 bronze medals up for grabs, the 22nd edition of the multi-sport event widely regarded as Nigeria's version of the Olympics is indeed epoch-making.

The competitions are being held in Abeokuta, Ikenne, Sagamu and Ijebu-Ode. Well, back to the opening ceremony. The beautiful rendition of the National Anthem and the Ogun State anthem by Afro-soul singer, Asa, only set the stage for the energetic drama of the night during which the hosts Team Ogun (hosts), defending champions Team Delta, Team Lagos, Team Bayelsa, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and other contingents showed exceptional class, as did the Invited Junior Athletes, classified as the 38th state at the festival. And attendance was stellar: former Olusegun Obasanjo graced the event declared open by President Bola Tinubu through VP Shettima.

The roll call of Governors included Ademola Adeleke (Osun State), Ahmed Ododo (Kogi) , Lucky Aiyedatiwa (Ondo State), Charles Soludo (Anambra), Mai Mala Buni (Yobe State), and Hope Uzodimma (Imo). Monday Onyeme, the Deputy Governor of Delta State and his Ekiti State counterpart, Monisade Afuye, were there. Members of the National Assembly, Ogun State Executive Council and House of Assembly graced the event at which the sweet, baritone voice and presence of Nobel Laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka, were unmistakable. Former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dimeji Bankole, and former Ogun State governors, Olusegun Osoba and Gbenga Daniel, now a senator, were present, as was the Inspector General of Police, Dr. Kayode Egbetokun.

Ogun State, arguably the capital of Nigerian music, is never lacking in beautiful tunes, and that much was demonstrated last Sunday as the home state of world class athletes such as Muda Lawal, Segun Odegbami, Falilat Ogunkoya, Tobi Amusan, Anthony Joshua, Tunde Onakoya hosted the world.

Taking the podium, Governor Dapo Abiodun spoke with deep conviction. His words: "Ogun state is no stranger to visitors or participants in this festival, strategically located and deeply integrated into Nigeria's national development story. Our state has produced many notable figures across various sectors.

This underscores our viral place in Nigeria's socio-economic and political landscape. Over the past six years, our administration has pursued holistic development under the theme Building Our Future Together, guided by five strategi pillars captured in the acronym Iseya. We have invested in modern sports infrastructure and provided the necessary support to ensure a memorable experience for all athletes, officials and guests. Ogun state stands ready to deliver a festival that inspires, unites and uplifts."

The National Anthem was followed by the hoisting of the flag by military and police personnel. And then stagecraft and choreography took over. Traditional drummers, dancers, maidens, sportsmen and women put up a stellar performance as the lighting of the Flames of Unity took place.

"This is an exceptional night. History is being made here ni ilu Abeokuta (in the city of Abeokuta)," bellowed the compere, visibly enraptured as the event co-sponsored by Premium Trust Bank and Betnaija took shape. Discotheque. Discography. Filmography—name it. The night was replete with wonders. The stage design was beyond superb. And when the speakers blared the hit Gospel tune, Olori Oko sin n bo wa, the ambience had become quite electric.

Fire was blazing forth from the stage as the lead performer sang of Ogun State and its beauty, of Remo, Yewa, Egba, Ijebu, to gripping sounds of gbedu, agba, bate, omele, apala, and other drums handled by masters in the craft. And then, as the performers gyrated, out came the rich, domineering voice of Soyinka, master of poetry. Soyinka spoke of the ancestors, the dead who are not dead but are in the rhythms of everyday living; and of the Gateway State's fabric, adire, and the throbbing of the drums. He spoke of Ogun State as the place "where the gods of craftsmanship and language walk side by side," as "the rock of protection," and of Abeokuta where the rocks don't just stand. "Ogun is the origin of it all. Ogun is home," Soyinka intoned.

From adire to talking drums, the parade of home-spun and home-woven craft wowed the audience that had become a vital part of the performance. The stage was now the stadium. Maidens in native colours glowed with the night, and then the Afropop singer 9ice's signature tune, Gongo Aso, blared forth, followed by the singer Asake's golden voice.

On the stage, horse riders make deft moves. Then came Fuji maestro Adewale Ayuba with his iconic Ijo Fuji Larinrin track and by now everyone seemed to be totally immersed in the music as the stadium went haywire. Then K1 de Ultimate's hit track: Ma womi o, ma womi" surged forth and



Abiodun

the stadium became transfixed. And in a display of bedazzling brilliance, Eyo masqueraders were actually on the stage as the Fuji lord's lines, "Igba to d'Eko lo meyo" (It's because haven't been to Lagos that you do not know Eyo) sounded.

Like Ayuba, K1 is from the Gateway State, and his music captured the stadium even as talking drummers ran round the stage, minting melody on that evening of pure delight. Then came the hit track: Ara nbe ti mo feda. This was when athletes young and old in tracksuits staged their acts: a boy joyriding his bike, another racing a ball; athletes bending and twisting; moving around. Then a voice beamed out the history of the NSF. Acrobatics. This was when the evening reached a climax: Afrobeats Lord Davido took the stage, singing track after track and sending the stadium into ecstasy.

Skelewu. I want to lowo. N30bn for the account o. I'm unavailable. Fireworks are in the air. Amazing! But Davido then dropped great hits off from his newly-released 5ive album!! Bam!!

The Opening Ceremony was indeed an opening for the ages. And what is more, the Ogun economy is already prospering as the festival gets underway. Hear the Chairman of the Main Organising Committee (MOC) of the NSF and Director General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Hon. Bukola Olopade, speaking on Tuesday: "Sports business is my forte, and I can assure you that the local economy is feeling the impact of the sports festival as we speak. I gathered reliably that Adire, our cultural export, is no longer in stock in Abeokuta." This is just a tip of the iceberg.

Akinmade sent this piece through kayodeakinmade809@gmail.com



L-R Nosa Francis Edo-Osagie, Mrs Ronke Bello- Osagie, The celebrant Rasaq Bello-Osagie, His amiable wife Tessy Bello-Osagie, Fatai Bello-Osagie and Osayaba Osarenren at the 70th Birthday Party of Hon. Rasaq Bello-Osagie an accomplished Banker, Entrepreneur and Politician held at his palatial residence in Benin City recently.



L-R: Managing Director, The Seaside Schools, Agbara, 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



When Honourable Afolawe Sipasi-Aluko , the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor of Ondo State, Lucky Aiyedatiwa on Mining paid a courtesy visit to the State Comptroller of NIS F.A Anara in Akure recently.



L-R : Chief Marketing Officer, Tolaram, Manpreet Singh; National Coordinator, Indomie Fan Club, Karishma Rustagi; Manager and Coordinator, Indomie Fan Club, Faith Joshua; and General Manager, Corporate Communications and Events , Dufil Prima Foods, Temitope Ashiwaju; with Children of the Indomie Fan Club as part of activities to mark the 20th year anniversary of the Indomie Fan Club held at the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos,

FOCUS

AfroFlavour: Promoting African Culture, One Plate a Time

Sunday Ehigiator

In an age where cultural identities risk being diluted by globalisation, initiatives like AfroFlavour are a necessary breath of fresh air.

Much more than a culinary showcase, AfroFlavour is fast emerging as a vibrant cultural platform, one that celebrates African heritage, reconnects the diaspora, and brings the rich flavors, sounds, and stories of the continent to global audiences.

From the sizzle of suya to the soulful beats of Afrobeat, AfroFlavour embodies a full sensory experience. It is not just about the food, although the cuisine is a major draw. It's about storytelling through spices, history served in stews, and pride baked into every bite. Each dish served at an AfroFlavour event is a cultural ambassador, introducing attendees to the depth and diversity of African culinary traditions—from jollof rice wars to the lesser-known but equally rich dishes from East, Central, and Southern Africa.

AfroFlavour's recent success in Washington, D.C., was proof that the appetite for authentic African culture is not only growing—it is thriving. The event attracted not only Africans in the diaspora but also a multicultural audience eager to explore Africa beyond the headlines. With music performances, fashion exhibitions, art displays, and traditional dance, it became a melting pot of identities and cultures anchored by African excellence.

Importantly, AfroFlavour is helping to reframe the African narrative. For too long, global perceptions of Africa have been shaped by conflict, poverty, and corruption. AfroFlavour offers a counter-narrative—one that is flavorful, rhythmic, joyful, and proud. It positions African culture not as something to be rescued, but as something to be celebrated, preserved, and exported.

Commenting on the outcome of the Washington DC event, the Chief Executive Officer and Founder AfroFlavour, Lucky Idike, explained that the intention of the "A Taste of Africa DC" event was to put a celebration of African cuisine on the sidelines of the recently held World Bank/IMF Spring meetings.

"And it was an amazing event. The biggest contributor to its success was our Afrolovers community. All the AfroLovers who attended the event and brought their energy to the food, networking and discussions were indispensable to the success.

"Many thanks to our DC partners, Ike Nwaneri of Zend Capital, Swahilli Village DC, the Afroflavour US team Dr Osa and Toks Omoruyi, Dr Lillian Agbeyegbe, and Bayo Oyewole. The authenticity of the experience was also key.

"We showcased authentic African cuisine: bold, layered, and deeply soulful. Many thanks to the South African, Mauritanian and Nigerian Embassies for their support. The turnout, the energy, the feedback, all of it affirmed that there's a hunger for Africa that's more than just aesthetics. People want to taste, feel, and understand Africa," he added.

Now, as the next edition of AfroFlavour is set to hold in Nigeria on May 31, expectations are high. And rightfully so. This is more than a festival—it is a homecoming. Hosting the event on African soil adds an extra layer of authenticity and pride. It's an opportunity to showcase African culture to Africans themselves, many of whom have become disconnected from their roots due to urbanisation, westernisation, or sheer economic hardship.

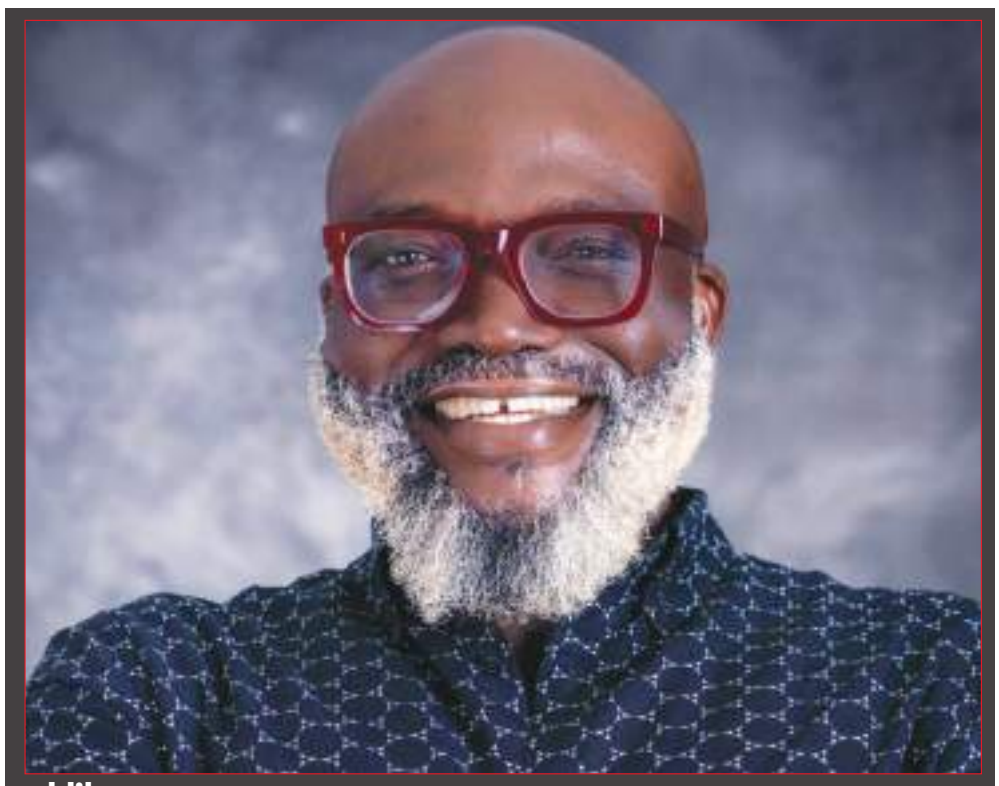
Already, the South African Consulate General in Nigeria, Prof. Bobby J. Moroe, has officially endorsed the event.

In a letter addressed to Idike, the Consul General expressed enthusiasm about the initiative, stating that it aligns with the consulate's mission to foster cultural exchange and promote mutual understanding between South Africa and Nigeria.

The letter read partly: "I am writing to express the enthusiastic endorsement by the South African Consulate General in Lagos for your upcoming cultural event and food festival, which aims to promote South African cuisines in Nigeria. This event aligns perfectly with our diplomatic mission to foster cultural exchange and promote mutual understanding between South Africa and Nigeria.

For his part, Idike, in an interview with THISDAY, noted that, "For Flavours of Africa: The South African Edition in Lekki, we're taking that momentum and refining the curation while dialing up the storytelling. This isn't just another food festival. It's an immersive heritage experience that stays with you. One critical output of this event will be a 6-part television series, titled "Flavours of Africa: The South Africa Edition."

According to Idike, his organisation chose the month of May because it's Africa's Month.



• Idike

"In Lagos we will celebrate the continent by spotlighting one of its most dynamic cultures. South Africa has a rich culinary heritage, a vibrant music scene, and a powerful artistic voice. This edition gives us a chance to highlight the culinary diversity within Africa. It's not just about biltong, samp and amapiano. It's about promoting unity between two of Africa's largest economies by exploring the full texture of South African identity and how it connects with the broader African story.

"We are incredibly grateful to the Consulate General of the Republic of South Africa for their partnership on this journey. We salute Professor Bobby Moroe, the Consul General for his commitment to building bridges between South Africa and Nigeria. He will be speaking on "Food and Friendship" at the event. We are also grateful to our culinary partners Chef Atara Imbizo of Imbizo Cuisine and Chefdee, Nigeria's Food General," Idike added.

Speaking further on the forthcoming event, he pointed out that, "For the South Africa edition, we're moving from a showcase to a full-on sensation. We're designing the event to activate all the senses. Guests can expect a culinary journey to South Africa and authentic South African cooking, immersive soundscapes, and interactive spaces where they can connect. We're also showcasing a collaboration between Chef Atara and Chefdee to demonstrate the power of cross-cultural storytelling and trade."

For him, his organisation is focused on reshaping global perceptions about the continent, saying: "We're flipping the script. Africa has always been more than wars, struggle, or survival. It is innovation, joy, resilience, and a wellspring of cultural wealth. Flavours of Africa is about reclaiming the narrative. We're not waiting for external validation. Each event becomes a vehicle to introduce people to African excellence and shift how they see and engage with the continent."

However, putting together such events on the global stage comes with its own challenges. He identied funding as a major challenge, saying, "funding, logistics across countries, coordinating vendors, unpredictable weather, and occasionally skeptical partners.

"All of it has tested us. But it's made us sharper. This year, we've streamlined roles, improved communication, and focused on building relationships that go beyond surface level. The challenges forced us to become more intentional in every aspect of planning."

Idike, nevertheless, noted that responses to his events have been incredible and very telling.

"Diasporans are craving connection. Locals want to feel seen and celebrated. That insight has shaped our programming, marketing, and even our location choices. We're not just showcasing culture. We're building a bridge across borders and creating a space where people feel proud of where they come from."

On expectation for the May 31st event, he said: "We have a South African chef joining us for this edition. Her name is Chef Atara Imbizo. We look for creatives who understand that this is more than just a gig. It's a cultural exchange and an opportunity to tell a deeper story alongside their Nigerian counterparts.

Read full Article online - www.thisdaylive.com

Sodiq Ishola: Talent Not Enough to Succeed in Music Industry

Sodiq Badmus Ishola is not your average rapper; he's a street-bred storyteller with a lyrical instinct and an uncompromising sense of integrity. Born in the late 1990s and raised in the musically rich neighbourhood of Surulere, Lagos, Ishola, also known as Ziro Kingin, found his voice in the corridors of adolescence, kicking off his music journey as early as 14. He speaks with **Tosin Clegg** about growing up and his journey in the industry so far

Growing up in Surulere must have had a huge impact on your style. How did the environment shape your music?

Surulere raised me, rolling out from the slang to the street philosophies. Everything I rap about is real. I saw struggle early, and I also saw resilience. That blend shaped the way I write. I learned to speak both the language of pain and of hope. That's why I rap in both Yoruba and English, as it's how we survive here.

You dropped your first mixtape at just 14. What inspired you at that age to start making music?

I saw what my people were going through. The older boys were either getting locked up or hustling to feed their families. I wanted to be a voice. Hustle was my way of showing that even at 14, I understood the streets. I recorded it with small resources, but the heart was there. The streets of Surulere felt it, and that was all I needed to keep going.

What are some of the hardest lessons you've learned about the industry?

The biggest lesson? Talent is not enough. The industry is about timing, management, politics, and loyalty, or the lack of it. I've shot videos that never got released. I've had tracks buried because of label issues. But I've also stayed grounded. I refuse to play dirty or chase clout. That's why people respect me, even in silence. If you're real, you know there's space for everyone. My journey is different. I'm not in a rush to be viral. I'm building something solid that will outlive trends. I believe when it's my time, it will be undeniable.



Ishola

You're currently working on a movie project, can you tell us more about it?

It's still under wraps for now, but I can say it's a deep story rooted in the realities of the Lagos youth. I'm not just acting, I'm involved in the soundtrack and the creative direction. It's another way of telling my story, off the mic. But I also want people to know that the music never left me. I've been recording, building, and reflecting. A new project is coming that is raw, reflective, and street-approved. No release date yet, but when it drops, they will know ZIRO KINGIN is back for real.

As an indigenous rapper blending Yoruba and English, what does authenticity mean to you?

Authenticity is doing you and not what the industry wants. It's speaking your truth in your own language. Yoruba is not just my mother tongue, it's my rhythm, my soul. I don't chase global but chase viable connections. But I want to be remembered as the guy who stayed real, no matter what. A voice for the streets, a student of life, and an artist who never sold his soul. That's the legacy I'm building.

FEATURE

Nigeria's Bold Push to Bridge Housing Deficit, Empower Citizens

Victor Benjamin

Nigeria stands at a critical juncture in its journey towards providing adequate shelter for its burgeoning population. The stark reality of a 20-million-unit housing deficit casts a long shadow, impacting not just individual well-being but also the nation's socio-economic progress.

Recognising the urgency and scale of this challenge, the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has unveiled a comprehensive and ambitious strategy under the Renewed Hope Agenda, placing affordable housing within reach for millions of Nigerians.

This multi-pronged approach, spearheaded by the Renewed Hope Housing Initiative and bolstered by innovative financing mechanisms, offers a beacon of optimism in a sector long plagued by systemic obstacles. For too long, the dream of homeownership has remained elusive for a significant portion of the Nigerian populace.

Several interconnected challenges have contributed to this protracted crisis. Sky-high property prices, often driven by land speculation and exorbitant construction costs, place housing far beyond the reach of average citizens.

Compounding this issue is the underdeveloped state of the mortgage market. Access to long-term, affordable financing remains limited, with high interest rates and stringent eligibility criteria effectively excluding a vast majority of potential homeowners. The informal nature of a significant portion of the economy further complicates matters, as many individuals lack the formal employment and consistent income streams often required by traditional mortgage lenders.

Furthermore, infrastructural deficits across the country exacerbate the housing problem. Inadequate road networks, unreliable power supply, and limited access to clean water and sanitation not only make new developments more expensive but also detract from the quality of life in existing residential areas. The bureaucratic hurdles and complexities associated with land titling and approvals also contribute to delays and increased costs for developers, ultimately impacting affordability for buyers.

Against this backdrop of formidable challenges, the Renewed Hope Housing Initiative emerges as a significant and potentially transformative intervention. Its three core components – the Renewed Hope Social Housing Programme, the Renewed Hope Housing Estates, and the Renewed Hope Cities – are strategically designed to cater to different segments of the population and leverage diverse funding models.



Tinubu

The Renewed Hope Social Housing Programme, with its ambitious goal of constructing 100 units in each of the 774 local government areas within a year of launch, directly addresses the needs of the most vulnerable. By earmarking 80 percent of these homes for local residents earning a living wage, with monthly contributions capped at a third of their income, the program prioritises affordability and accessibility for low-income earners.

The allocation of the remaining 20 percent to the most vulnerable citizens, free of charge, underscores a commitment to social inclusion and providing a safety net for those most in need. The inclusion of essential amenities like schools, clinics, and security outposts within these estates further enhances their liveability and fosters community development.

The Renewed Hope Housing Estates, targeting state capitals with a plan to build 250 units in each of the 30 states, represent a crucial step towards providing more affordable housing options in urban centers. Leveraging government budgetary allocations, infrastructure subsidies, and free land from state governments allows for significantly lower pricing, with one-bedroom apartments ranging between N8 million and N9 million. This initiative aims to bridge the gap for individuals and families with modest incomes who aspire to homeownership in urban areas.

The Renewed Hope Cities, developed through Public-Private Partnerships in seven strategic locations, tap into private sector expertise and capital to deliver large-scale housing projects. While the resulting prices are higher, reflecting the private developers' investment in land and infrastructure, these cities are expected to offer a wider range of housing options and contribute significantly to reducing the overall housing deficit. The ongoing construction of 3,500 units in Lagos and Kano demonstrates the tangible progress being made under this component.

Complementing these direct housing programs is the Ministry of Finance Incorporated Real Estate Investment Fund (MREIF), a critical enabler for sustainable and affordable housing finance. The successful pilot fundraising, securing N250 billion, underscores the confidence of institutional investors in this innovative approach. MREIF's ability to provide long-term, low-cost mortgage financing at interest rates as low as 12 percent with extended repayment tenors up to 20 years directly tackles one of the most significant barriers to homeownership in Nigeria. Furthermore, by offering off-take guarantees to developers, MREIF helps de-risk large-scale projects and unlock crucial financing. The integration of MREIF with commercial banks, mortgage providers, and developers promises to create a more robust and efficient housing finance ecosystem.

The vision underpinning the Renewed Hope Housing Initiative is one of a Nigeria where decent and affordable housing is not a privilege but a right accessible to all citizens. By adopting a multi-pronged approach that addresses the diverse needs of the population and leverages both public and private sector resources, the government aims to not only bridge the housing deficit but also stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and foster social stability. Empowering low-income earners with affordable housing options can improve their quality of life, provide a foundation for wealth building, and contribute to a more equitable society. Similarly, enabling middle-income families to access affordable mortgages can unlock their economic potential and contribute to overall national development.

While the Renewed Hope Housing Initiative holds immense promise, its success will hinge on effective implementation, transparency, and sustained commitment. Addressing the underlying challenges of land administration, infrastructure development, and bureaucratic efficiency will be crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability and impact of these programs. Nevertheless, the bold vision and the comprehensive strategy embodied in the Renewed Hope Agenda offer a renewed sense of optimism that Nigeria is finally embarking on a transformative journey towards housing its citizens and building a more prosperous and inclusive future.

Benjamin is the West/South South Director at YP4T.

Financing Africa's Future: The Role of Pan-African Banks

Oluchi Chibuzor

Africa's infastructure deficit has been well documented. Friends and foes of the continent, across disciplines, are unanimous not only on infrastructure's paucity but agree that bridging the gap is sine qua non to Africa's economic development and prosperity.

Meeting the continent's infrastructure needs, analysts have concluded would attract more investment into Africa, accelerate inter and intra Africa trades, enhance Africa's competitiveness and reduce cost of doing business.

In a report commissioned by Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) in 2010, closing Africa's infrastructure gap will cost around $360 billion between 2020 and 2040. This is barely 15 years away and not much has been achieved.

Reeling out some brief statistics, PIDA in same report claimed that "Africa's road access rate is only 34 percent, compared with 50 percent in other parts of the developing world, while transport costs are 100 percent higher. Only 30 percent of Africa's population has access to electricity, compared to 70 – 90 percent in other parts of the developing world. Water resources are underused with only five percent of agriculture under irrigation. The Internet penetration rate is a mere six percent, compared to an average of 40 percent elsewhere in the developing world."

Because of its humongous costs, which are beyond the financing capacities of governments and donors, financial institutions are considered strategic for financing the much-needed projects in transport, energy, and housing. These projects are necessary to jump-start the socio-economic developments that have punctured the continent for centuries.

Critical to achieving this is the role the pan-African financial institutions with shared aspiration, would play in providing the financial intermediation, project financing, business advisories, accentuating microeconomic stability which would guarantee growth and prosperity.

Banks' roles as financial intermediaries, mobilisers of savings and channels of scarce funds to sectors in need are critical in hitting the right nails on the coffin of underdevelopment in Africa, considering the impact paucity of infastructure poses to the continent

To catalyse developments, Africa countries would rely on financial institutions to bankroll infastructure projects, facilitate payments, deepen financial inclusion and support trade and investments.

Why would the continent with about 97 percent of the world's chromium, 90 percent of the world's cobalt, 85 percent of the word's platinum, 70 percent of the world's cocoa, and 60 percent of the world's coffee, be poor and remains at the periphery of the world finance ecosystem.

Many factors have been deduced, including colonialism, slavery with distortions both created and sustained; dependence on primary commodities subject to the vagaries of the world economic powers; vulnerability of Africa's economies due to global market fluctuations; weak governance and corruption; infastructure deficits; limited access to health and education, hampering human capital development; incessant conflits and wars and climate crisis.

Despite all these challenges, the continent has huge potential. Africa is growing rapidly and is poised to transform itself into an economic success. With its abundant resources, huge youth population, Africa provides a potential destination for global investment and trade, infastructure financing, human capital development. If the challenges tackled heads on, Africa can unlock its potentials, galvanising economic growth and development.

Catalysing such needed development is critical to unlocking Africa's hidden potentials. African banks should be capacitated in financing infrastructure, enabling intra-Africa trade, promoting access to quality education and healthcare and enabling micro and macroeconomic stability.

Few African financial institutions have played a significant role in promoting economic development, facilitating trade and economic integration. They have developed products and services, committed resources towards scaling intra-Africa and regional trade, fostering monetary cooperation and financial stability, financing projects with catalysing credentials, which have run into hundreds of billions of dollars.

They have supported the private sector via finance and technical assistance with diverse impacts in the economies.

As we celebrate Africa Day, it is important to recognise the efforts of African Development Bank (AfDB), African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), Africa Finance Corporation(AFC), among others in the roles they have played in this space. While AFDB and AFC provide capital and advisory services for projects and programs that have promoted growth and development, Afreximbank have supported businesses involved in international trade on the continent among other needs.

The mentioned institutions have mobilised capital for landmark projects across energy, transport, health and natural resources on the continent, impacting trade and macroeconomic stability on the continent.

Apart from these development banks, some lenders and commercial banks with roots in Africa have played strong, facilitating intra-Africa trade, financing projects and infastructure within and cross-border and deepening financial inclusion. The United bank for Africa(UBA) Group, is in that category.

The Group, founded in 1949 in Nigeria, has become Africa's Global Bank, promoting economic development and integration, facilitating trades, deepening financial inclusion and capacitating resources on the continent

UBA Group, with presence in 20 African countries and major world finance capitals of New York, London, Paris and Dubai, known for its innovation and disruption have challenged foreign banks, becoming systemic, important bank in many countries.

With over 45 million customers and over1000 business offices, UBA provides trade finance solutions, enabled businesses and individuals to access new markets and opportunities. Tailored products such as AfriCash, a money transfer service provided by UBA across 20 African countries allows customers to send and receive money quickly and securely between various countries where UBA operates.

UBA Group has committed billions of dollars to financing infrastructure in transport, energy, and other essential sectors, powering economic growth and development. Roads have been financed in Senegal, energy infrastructure in Congo, sport facilities in Cameroon. Known for its innovation, UBA offers digital banking solutions, increasing access to financial services and products and promoting financial inclusion.

The pan-African financial institution offers a range of support and financial solutions for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), including loan options, capacity building, and advisory platforms. They also have a dedicated SME account and initiatives like the UBA X AfCFTA to help SMEs across Africa access financing and technical solutions. UBA pledge $6 billion over three years to support SMEs in key sectors through a partnership with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat. African banks should emulate UBA Group and champion sustainable finance on the continent. It is heartwarming that African Banks are taking up these challenges with increased participation in key projects on the continent.

Read full Article online - www.thisdaylive.com

PERSPECTIVE

Economic Patriotism: The Abdul Samad and Aliko Dangote Example

Otega Ogra and **Temitope Ajayi**

There is a particular kind of silence that greets progress in Nigeria—when food prices fall, inflation slows, the country is positively recognised, debts paid, or things begin to work. It is the kind of silence that would rather keep a good story buried than be told. But make no mistake. What we see in the market today is not magic. It is the outcome of vision, backed by execution, from the Tinubu-Shettima administration.

When President Bola Tinubu signed off on a six-month waiver to allow the importation of select food items, it was not an act of political showmanship. Rather, it was a visionary economic strategy at play. That singular decision broke a cartel of hoarders who had turned food insecurity into an immoral enterprise. But strategy alone does not and cannot lower the cost of rice. What does is when industry leaders respond with urgency.

Last week at The Aso Villa, the seat of the Presidency in Abuja, Abdul Samad Rabiu, did not just show up to thank President Bola Tinubu. He came prepared and showed up with results. He brought evidence—bag by bag, commodity by commodity—of how Mr. President's policy met action. Rice that once sold for N110,000 for 50kg bag now sells for less than N70,000. Flour is down. Maize is down. And for once, the loudest people in the room are the ones who used to profit from scarcity, not the ones out to end the criminal profiteering.

What happened here was disruption. The BUA team, as well as other major Nigerian manufacturers and industrialists who heeded President Tinubu's call, understood the assignment. They flooded the market, shattered the economics of hoarding, and exposed a truth few want to say: sometimes, the real enemy is not the system. It is the silence and sabotage that follow reform.

But Alhaji Rabiu did not stop at food. He announced a second move upon the advice of fellow billionaire industrialist Aliko Dangote, which was just as consequential. In an economy that is recovering from FX volatility, energy price surges, and imported inflation, cement manufacturers have decided to freeze the price of cement, not for everyone, but for every contractor working under the government's Renewed Hope infrastructure projects. This is not charity at play. This is alignment. Our two big businessmen understand the time, and they are doing their businesses conscious of the need to balance profitability with social responsibility. We have Aliko Dangote and Abdul Samad Rabiu to thank for leading the way and showing how to be worthy examples to Corporate Nigeria. The truth is that the business environment has been quite challenging. While this is so, there is also the problem of arbitrariness in how prices of goods and services have moved in the last two years. Many businessmen and women have taken undue advantage of Nigerians to engage in price gouging, unduly raising the cost of living for average Nigerians.

Cement isn't just a product. It is the bloodline of infrastructure. By holding the price steady for public works under the Renewed Hope Agenda, Dangote Cement, BUA Cement, Lafarge, and new entrant like Mangal Cement didn't just make a corporate gesture. They bought the government fiscal room, time, and momentum. That is what nation-building looks like when it wears a private-sector face.

It gets deeper. Working with Aliko Dangote, Abdul Samad Rabiu in the same spirit of putting country first, other cement manufacturers are partnering with the two prime movers in the cement manufacturing sector to resuscitate the Cement Technology Institute of Nigeria, pledging up to N20 billion annually to train artisans, real human capacity, not PowerPoint plans. We live in Nigeria, where, for the longest time, conversations about growth rarely touch skills. This novel move is, therefore, a bet on people because when people are trained, projects do not just get built but they endure.



Dangote



Rabiu

President Tinubu alluded to something important during that meeting. He did not just commend BUA, he called the actions of the private sector who have taken a bet on Nigeria throughout this period, "economic patriotism." Whilst many sit on the sidelines waiting for stability before they act, it matters when Nigerians step in to create it.

Nigeria does not just need big men, it also needs bold moves. What Rabiu, Dangote, and their peers are doing from freezing prices and disrupting hoarding to funding technical skills is not corporate PR. It is policy execution, and that is what separates firms that extract value from those that build it.In this phase of Nigeria's transformation, we will need more of the latter. Our country can make do with more businessmen and women who understand that the private sector is not a spectator sport; that stability is not gifted but engineered. And that to win the confidence of 250 million people, you must show, not tell, that the future of Nigeria is under construction.

And if we tell these positive stories loud enough and well, if we stop whispering good news while bad actors shout, we may just shift the national mood from that of despair and hopelessness to productivity.

We make bold this statement because, when industry starts to move like this, it is more than just a market correction. It is a clear signal that the tide is turning positively.

Our country must be a nation of strong, hopeful, and productive people. While some of the challenges of nation-building still persist, we must never shy away from telling those who take undue advantage of fellow citizens that businesses can still make fair and decent profit and not overburden citizens.

President Tinubu knew from his first day in office that the task of reforming and retooling our economy for optimum performance would not be easy. He also knew what would be his place in history if he refused to take the difficult but necessary decisions that would create medium - and long-term sustainability and prosperity for Nigerians.

Truly, the last two years have posed some economic challenges for Nigerians. As the reforms kick in, the macroeconomic variables are turning positive. The fiscal space is becoming more robust. National and subnational debts are being repaid, investors' confidence growing faster at higher rate than last decade. Nigeria is getting more favourable credit rating from global institutions, inflation slowing down and the country is in stronger balance of trade position with more robust foreign reserves.

All these positive indicators point to how effective the policy prescriptions have been. The government is also working hard to tackle insecurity across the country with remarkable progress. At the same time, the government is investing in critical infrastructure such as roads, energy, rail, ports, irrigation, and social services.

Overall, the economy recorded 3.84 percent GDP growth in Q4 2024, the highest in three years. The President Tinubu-led administration restored a new wave of final investment decisions into the oil and gas sector by signing an executive order that shortened the contracting cycle and free up more fiscal incentives. On the back of these, the hydrocarbon economy has been bolstered by over $8 billion in new investments from SHELL, ExxonMobil, and TotalEnergies.

The economy prospects are very bright, and the shared prosperity promised by President Tinubu is crystalising. Nigeria only needs more patriotic and passionate citizens who will always commit to national development and advancement.

As the President has always said, the future of Nigeria will be one built by Nigerians, for Nigeria, and indeed, for Africa. No one, but ourselves, will build the Nigeria of our collective dream or Africa for us. The time to build together is now!

-Ogra and Ajayi are senior aides to President Bola Tinubu

Tayo Edun's Nigerian Dream: On, Off the Pitch

Tosin Clegg

For many footballers, the pinnacle of their career is representing their country on the international stage. For Tayo Edun, football has always been more than a job. It's been a thread connecting identity, purpose, and ambition. Born in Islington to Nigerian and Saint Vincentian parents, Edun cut his teeth in the high-speed youth circuits of English football, but his eyes are set firmly on Nigeria. His dream is clear: don the green and white of Nigeria. Edun's heart beats for Nigeria.

Edun said: "First of all, it's a goal of mine to play internationally. That's one of my targets. It would be an honour to play at the highest level internationally. In terms of my preference, I would love to play for Nigeria. Genuinely, I would love to."

His multicultural background has profoundly influenced his personal and professional life. His football journey began at Fulham's academy, where he honed his skills and developed into a promising left-back and midfielder.

His talent earned him spots in England's youth national teams, culminating in a victorious 2017 UEFA European Under-19 Championship campaign, where he was named in the Team of the Tournament.

His club career has seen him don the jerseys of Ipswich Town, Lincoln City, Blackburn Rovers, Charlton Athletic, and currently, Peterborough United. His recent freekick winner in the fiery Cambridgeshire derby against Cambridge United was just the latest chapter in a career defined not by spotlight moments but by steady growth. At Peterborough, Edun has become a consistent presence, a player teammates trust, and fans have come to appreciate for his industry and maturity.

But it's what he's doing away from English stadiums that's drawing real attention. In April, he travelled to Nigeria on a personal mission to engage with grassroots footballers in the places most forgotten such as Ikorodu, Oshodi and Mafoluku.

Places where the game is still played on dust and concrete, not manicured grass. Places where dreams often stop at the street corner. During these visits, he donated jerseys and provided mentorship to young players, emphasising the importance of hard work and resilience amidst encouragement, and a willingness to listen.

"Everywhere in Nigeria that I go, the love of football is there. So this just brings me back to show me how it's humbling really for me because it shows the love and the passion that they have for it." Edun remarked.

Community leaders and players alike have lauded Edun's efforts, noting the inspiration and motivation his presence brings. One community representative stated, "To us it is a plus having such a wonderful person coming to visit us and coming to tell us a word of encouragement. It's not just about giving kits. It's about showing them that someone who was once in their shoes sees them. Really sees them."

BACKPAGE CONTINUATION

HONEST ASSESSMENT OF TINUBU'S MINISTERS

in Katsina, and Kaltungo in Gombe, Nigerians have stressed the need for a lot of the Ministers to do more, while commending the high-flyers.

The Bright Spots

Hate or love his combative style of politics, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, has undeniably delivered on several fronts. He is reviving long-abandoned infrastructure projects, enforcing urban development regulations, and injecting a renewed sense of urgency into the FCT's administration. His leadership style may polarise opinion, but his results are difficult to ignore. His leadership of the Ministry has been marked by rapid development, extensive road rehabilitation, urban expansion, and a commitment to executing long-overdue projects.

For Festus Keyamo, the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, since assuming office, he has continued to give the aviation sector a facelift and despite challenges in the sector, he has remained committed to revamping airport infrastructure, has prioritised safety standards, and has been pushing forward long-overdue reforms aimed at improving operational efficiency and restoring public confidence in Nigeria's air transport system. Unlike his immediate predecessor, who had a frosty relationship with domestic airline operators, Keyamo has been a strong advocate and supporter of operators of domestic carriers.

Equally, since assuming office, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Tuggar, has made notable efforts to bolster Nigeria's foreign policy. He is reinvigorating the country's diplomatic relations, pursuing economic diplomacy, and repositioning the country on key global platforms. While his approach reflects a renewed commitment to proactive engagement, tangible outcomes in terms of trade partnerships, diaspora engagement, and global influence are still unfolding and will require sustained strategy and coordination.

In the same vein, the Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani, has championed digital inclusion and fostered tech innovation through strategic partnerships, and laying the groundwork for a more robust digital economy since his appointment. He recently disclosed that the sector has witnessed massive growth under Tinubu, attracting $191 million in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the first quarter of 2024—a ninefold increase from $22 million in Q1 2023. However, industry stakeholders emphasise the need for faster policy implementation, broader internet penetration in underserved regions, and sustained support for local tech talent to ensure long-term impact.

Also, the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun is spearheading fiscal reforms aimed at reducing the country's budget deficit, improving revenue generation, and promoting transparency in public finance. He has been one of the most impressive. He has carefully coordinated the three phases of the President's reform agenda that include, first removing major economic distortions in the economy through petrol subsidy and forex liberalisation, then the pursuit of macroeconomic stability, and now focused on a medium term rapid, sustained, and inclusive growth, with a target of seven percent. The recent upgrade by Fitch and growing investors' confidence in the Nigerian economy are a testament to his relentless pursuit of macroeconomic stability necessary for future growth, jobs, and reduction in poverty. Edun is also focused on the critical role of private sector investment in Nigeria's growth target in the medium.

For want of editorial space, others in this category of performing Ministers include the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare – Muhammad Ali Pate; Minister of Information and National Orientation – Mohammed Idris Malagi; Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation – Lateef Fagbemi; Minister of Solid Minerals Development – Dele Alake, and Minister of Works – Dave Umahi.

Not Pulling Their Weight

The Minister of Power, Adebayo Adelabu, a first-class accountant who has deep banking experience, is a round peg in a square hole. He is a classical example of engaging a plumber to fix a damaged car. Adelabu would have done better in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment or even in Finance. In almost two years, his comments have largely centred on buck passing, blaming every other group(s) for his inability to improve the sector. If he is not blaming the past administration, it is the power distribution companies, the Transmission Company of Nigeria, or even vandals. He is obsessed with the idea that suffering Nigerians need to pay more for electricity. Unfortunately, I see no improvement in sight as in the coming days his ambition to govern Oyo State will further distract him from his ministerial assignment.

Similarly, the Minister of Interior, Dr. Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, has no doubt done a lot to improve the passport application and collection process since he assumed office. He has gotten tremendous applause in this aspect of his job. Unfortunately, he has done very little to address internal security and the poor state of the Nigerian Correctional Services, which are also his responsibilities. He should be disturbed by the number of jailbreaks under his watch. The horrific conditions prevailing in Nigerian prisons degrade humanity such that after spending long jail terms, inmates come out as hardened criminals. Besides, over the years, the provision of welfare services to inmates in Nigerian prisons has been far from satisfactory.

Equally, the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Ahmed Musa Dangiwa, who laces almost everything about the Ministry with the 'Renewed Hope' mantra, continues to outline ambitious plans for affordable housing and urban renewal. However, beyond policy announcements and ground-breaking ceremonies, tangible progress on large-scale housing delivery remains limited. This raises concerns about the gap between rhetoric and real impact in addressing Nigeria's housing deficit.

Other Ministers under this category who are yet to take advantage of the low-hanging fruits around their Ministries include the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security – Abubakar Kyari; Minister of Art, Culture and the Creative Economy – Hannatu Musawa; Minister of Budget and Economic Planning – Abubakar Atiku Bagudu; Minister of Defence – Mohammed Badaru Abubakar; Minister of Education – Tunji Alausa; Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment – Jumoke Oduwole; Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation – Prof. Nentawe Goshwe Yilwatda; Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil) – Heineken Lokpobiri; Minister of Steel Development – Shuaibu Audu; Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas) – Ekperikpe Ekpo, and the Minister of Youth – Ayodele Olawande.

Sleeping Ministers

A troubling aspect of this administration is the near-total silence from some of the ministers. Some of them are colourless, underwhelming, and disturbingly passive in the face of pressing national challenges. Some of them have not demonstrated the kind of leadership required to drive meaningful change in their respective Ministries. Some have become invisible figures in the public space, offering the usual 'Renewed Hope' mantra on any pulpit they mount and photo ops.

The leading figure among them is the Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Uche Geoffrey Nnaji. Nnaji has been largely absent from public discourse to the extend that a lot of persons mistake Bosun Tijani as the person in charge of his Ministry. At a time when Nigeria desperately needs forward-thinking leadership to harness technology for national development, his performance has been underwhelming. Many observers view his tenure so far as disappointing, marked by a lack of visibility and measurable progress. Nnaji has remained colourless and far from inspiring.

Others in this category are the Minister of Environment – Balarabe Abbas Lawal; Minister of Labour and Employment – Muhammadu Maigari Dingyadi; Minister of Special Duties and Inter-governmental Affairs – Zephaniah Jisalo; Minister of Transportation – Sa'idu Ahmed Alkali; Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation – Joseph Utsev, and Minister of Women Affairs – Hajiya Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim.

Fierce Urgency for Performance

President Tinubu must be reminded that history is kinder to leaders who prioritise performance over political loyalty. The Nigerian people, who endure daily hardship, cannot afford more years of mediocrity. Cabinet reshuffles should be on the table, not as a political tool, but as a performance audit mechanism. It is not enough to be loyal to the President; loyalty to the people must come first. That is why the President must encourage Hadiza Bala-Usman and her team by implementing the outcome of their evaluation of the respective Ministers. Nigeria needs ministers who are innovative and willing to do the heavy lifting to propel economic growth and national progress. Ministers who produce tangible results should be encouraged and those who, according to Afrobeats singer, Davido, are full of "cho cho cho, no workings," should be shown the exit door.

THE INSIDE STORY: HOW IT ALL WENT DOWN IN ROME

giant mountain out of a mini mole hill, so let's let this one chill.

Like I mentioned before, the Vatican, most specifically, Mass, at St Peter's Basilica is a leveler. No matter who you are, you are sitting out in that square under the scorching sun. No special luxury tents or canopies for dignitaries. No air conditioners or fans. People routinely faint and pass out from sunstroke/ heatstroke and have to be evacuated in stretchers or wheelchairs.

In fact, the man seated in front of me slumped during the mass. It was Seyi Tinubu who saved the day . The. bottle of water he had 'travelled' all the way to the vestibule to procure was what he then offered to the man, who we were trying to hold from hitting the ground until the emergency medical team arrived with a wheelchair to evacuate him.

What is instructive is that, unlike what obtains in our climes of recent, nobody rushed to whip out their phones to record an individual in distress to start posting all over social media. Folks were just busy trying to help stabilize the man.

I found it amazing that President Tinubu effortlessly sat and stood through the entire mass, observing every rite as it should sans partaking in holy communion for close to three hours under that flaming sun, even declining a sun shield when we offered to search for one.

After the Mass, he chatted and took selfies with several young Nigerian priests and seminarians who came to greet him, refusing to turn any of them away even as his aides felt he needed a break.

The main deal was of course was the power suit which the President wore to the papal installation ceremony. Many Nigerians who saw him in Rome, normally used to seeing him mostly in our native attire exclaimed that he looked so dapper and debonair. As he walked so stridently to meet with the new pope, it was clear that this was a pivotal moment. A Muslim being present at a historic mass in St Peter's Basilica, Home of the Catholic Faith; a symbolic demonstration of the values of co-existence and a potent demonstration of the fact that religious differences do not necessarily lead to conflict.

Well, I am pleased to note that my humble phone camera took some of the most iconic images of that momentous occasion shown here, being that entry into the venue was so severely restricted on that day. It was a stellar outing for Nigeria.

It's great to be back home.

In those good days, the familiar caption used to scream at the end of those M videos ' Clarence shot it !'

On this beat, ' Ms B shot it!

Vatican'25 has been a profound experience. I am truly blessed to share in these sacred papal events. Veni, Vidi.

Odumegwu-Ojukwu is the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

AUTO WORLD

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

Nigeria-First Policy Good for Struggling Local Industries, Will Attract Fresh Investments, Says Innoson

Founder of Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing Company Ltd (IVM), Chief Innocent Chukwuma, CON, has said that the Federal Government's newly approved Nigeria-First policy will revitalise the country's struggling local industries and attract global investors to it's manufacturing sector.

Chukwuma, while discussing the policy on a national television, said the policy, which prioritises the use of locally made goods and services in all government procurement processes, could mark a turning point for Nigeria's industrial growth.

Chukwuma, who has been championing indigenous manufacturing, highlighted the impact this policy could have on encouraging both local and international investors to set up operations in Nigeria.

He said, "If the Nigerian policy on local manufacturing is strong, more people will set up industries. But when investors see that we, the manufacturers, have suffered so much just to survive, it discourages them. With this policy, more people will invest. I've been getting calls from across the world—people who want to partner with me to take advantage of this opportunity.

"I felt so good when I heard about this policy. Now, Nigeria has found the way forward because it is good to tell ourselves the truth. If we start telling ourselves the truth, Nigeria will become great. This government is different from others because a lot of truth is coming out, especially in urging Nigerians to patronise locally made products."

He said, "How can you be paying workers in other countries while working in Nigeria? When you import, you are paying their workers. But when you buy locally made, you are supporting your fellow Nigerian. Nigeria pays for Nigeria."



Buses and fire trucks produced at Innoson's vehicle manufacturing plant in Nnewi, Anambra State

The IVM founder explained that Nigeria has the potential to become a leading hub for automotive production in Africa, provided the right environment is created for new factories and component manufacturers to thrive.

"I'm not saying only Innoson should be doing this. I want more people to join. Motor manufacturing is the industry of industries—it has many components. Some can go into component production, and Nigeria can become the hub of motor manufacturing in Africa. That will help our nation," he noted.

He added, "We are not doing this for personal gain alone. It's about supporting our country so it becomes great. If it were just about money, there comes a time when you have enough and stop working. But we are building a future for Nigeria."

When asked whether Innoson is considering listing on the Nigerian Stock Exchange to raise capital and scale operations, Chukwuma confirmed that plans are already in motion.

"We are 97 per cent through the process of going public," he revealed. "You don't just walk in and do it—it's a process, and we've almost completed it. Very soon, you'll hear that Innoson is listed on the stock market.

According to him, international interest in the company is growing, with both foreign automakers and Nigerian investors expressing readiness to partner with IVM.

"Some auto factories overseas want to join me because they see how I create. Nigerians also want to invest, so I'm now in the position of choosing the right partners to move forward. I've worked hard for this, so I must make the right decision," he said.

Nigeria-First Policy

The Nigeria-First policy was approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) on May 5 and aims to prioritise indigenous production in public sector procurement.

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, said the policy would soon be backed by an executive order.

"This policy means Nigeria comes first in all procurement processes. No foreign goods or devices that are already being produced locally will be procured without a clear and justified reason," Idris told journalists at the State House in Abuja.

He explained that the policy is designed to "foster a new business culture that is bold, confident, and very Nigerian", while ensuring that government spending drives investment in local industries.

Idris added that the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) has been directed to revise and enforce new guidelines that will give preference to local manufacturers and service providers.

Meanwhile, the Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment, John Enoh, had stated on May 12 that the economic value of implementing the "Nigeria First" policy is about N3 trillion annually.

SAGLEV Pioneers Electric Vehicle Manufacturing in Nigeria, NADDC Lauds Firm

The National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDC) has lauded SAGLEV Electromobility Nigeria Limited, the first fully Electric Vehicle assembly plant in sub-Saharan Africa, for pioneering Electric Vehicle manufacturing in Nigeria.

The NADDC Director General, Mr. Oluwemimo Joseph Osanipin gave the commendation recently, during NADDC familiarisation tour of SAGLEV EV assembly plant located in Imota, Ikorodu, Lagos.

Speaking through the councils Deputy Director, Media and Protocol, Mrs Felcia Oyebolu, who represented him at the occasion, Osanipin described Saglav assembly plant as a facility that meets all international standards.

He stressed: This plant is of international standard with a capacity to assemble different categories of electric vehicles, including buses.

The familiarization tour, according to the DG spokesperson, is aimed at showcasing the achievements of the nations auto assemblers and manufacturers.

She stated: There are many Nigerians who do not know they can easily buy brand new locally assembled vehicles in Nigeria. They need to know what our assembly plants are doing.

"Our visit to them will also afford us an opportunity to know their challenges. As a matter of fact, we've just finished from South East. We are going to visit all the six geographical zones. We are in Southwest zone now. Next week, we are going to Northwest. So like I said, the essence is to showcase our automotive industry. In line with Nigeria First policy, we are telling Nigerians not to import but patronize made in Nigeria vehicles.

The programme is free of charge for stakeholders. The Federal Government is paying. Our happiness is that all the stakeholders are ready.

Also speaking at the event, the Chairman of SAGLEV Incorporated, a US-based company and also SAGLEV Electromobility Nigeria Limited, Dr. Samuel Faleye praised NADDC for promoting Electric Vehicle manufacturing in Nigeria.

Dr. Faleye, who described his relationship with NADDC as one with a long history, recalled that his company had been working with the council for over five years.

Despite the nations economic challenges, he pointed out, reviving Nigerias auto industry has always been paramount to the council. NADDC has really been pushing EV for a while.

"Apart from ensuring we are a certified assembler and inspected us when we started, anytime we have problem with Import Duty Exemption Certificate (IDEC), they come to our aid.



SAGLEV electric vehicle assembly plant in Imota, Ikorodu, Lagos

SAGLEV boss also extolled NADDC for supporting the nations auto industry through capacity building.

According to him, 80% of technicians working in SAGLEV EV assembly plant were products of NADDC capacity building scheme organized in collaboration with Automedics, a board member of the council.

He stated: For over eight years, Nigeria has got a curriculum for electric vehicle technician training, which was developed by Automedics, a company working with NADDC for capacity building.

Jetour X70 Sets Standards in Affordable Luxury Versatile Family SUV



Jetour X70

The Jetour X70, a Crossover Sports Utility Vehicle, introduced in 2018, takes its place of pride as the first product of the Jetour brand. It was developed under the iPeL (intelligent platform of e-network and lightweight) chassis and aimed at the growing demand for spacious family SUVs. The X70 has since become a key model in the Jetour lineup, with subsequent editions and variants.

Today, Jetour Nigeria has formally introduced the newest edition of the Jetour X70, an award-winning model that has traversed several markets in different parts of the world.

Among other enviable security features, it comes with a Driver and Passenger Airbag, Vehicle Stability Control System, Electronic Parking Brake and Auto Hold System as standard features.

The 360° Surrounding Camera Option eliminates the trouble of manually checking the vehicle while parking and while driving, just as the Parking Sensors, Auto Lockout System, Automatic Door Lock, Power Window and Alarm System give the model an edge over some of its competitors.

To enhance comfort and improve the ground clearance, the SUV is equipped with a 20-inch rim tyre. The Smart Entry feature ensures easier entry into the vehicle. It also comes with a Push Start button.

As a driver of the X70, you have a choice of driving with the Sport mode or the Normal mode, even as the Cruise Control feature is at your disposal.

That is not all, the vehicle comes with an impressive Display Audio, Phone Mirror and Bluetooth all parked under one Panoramic Roof.

The Automatic air conditioning system offers both front and rear vents making it easier for driver and passengers to adjust to their desired air conditioning.

Also provided is an automatic Outside Rear View Mirror fold, so you don't need to fold the rear-view mirror manually; a Power Driver Seat; Leather Option for the seats and 6 Speakers boosting the listening pleasure of vehicle's occupants.

GLOBAL SOCCER



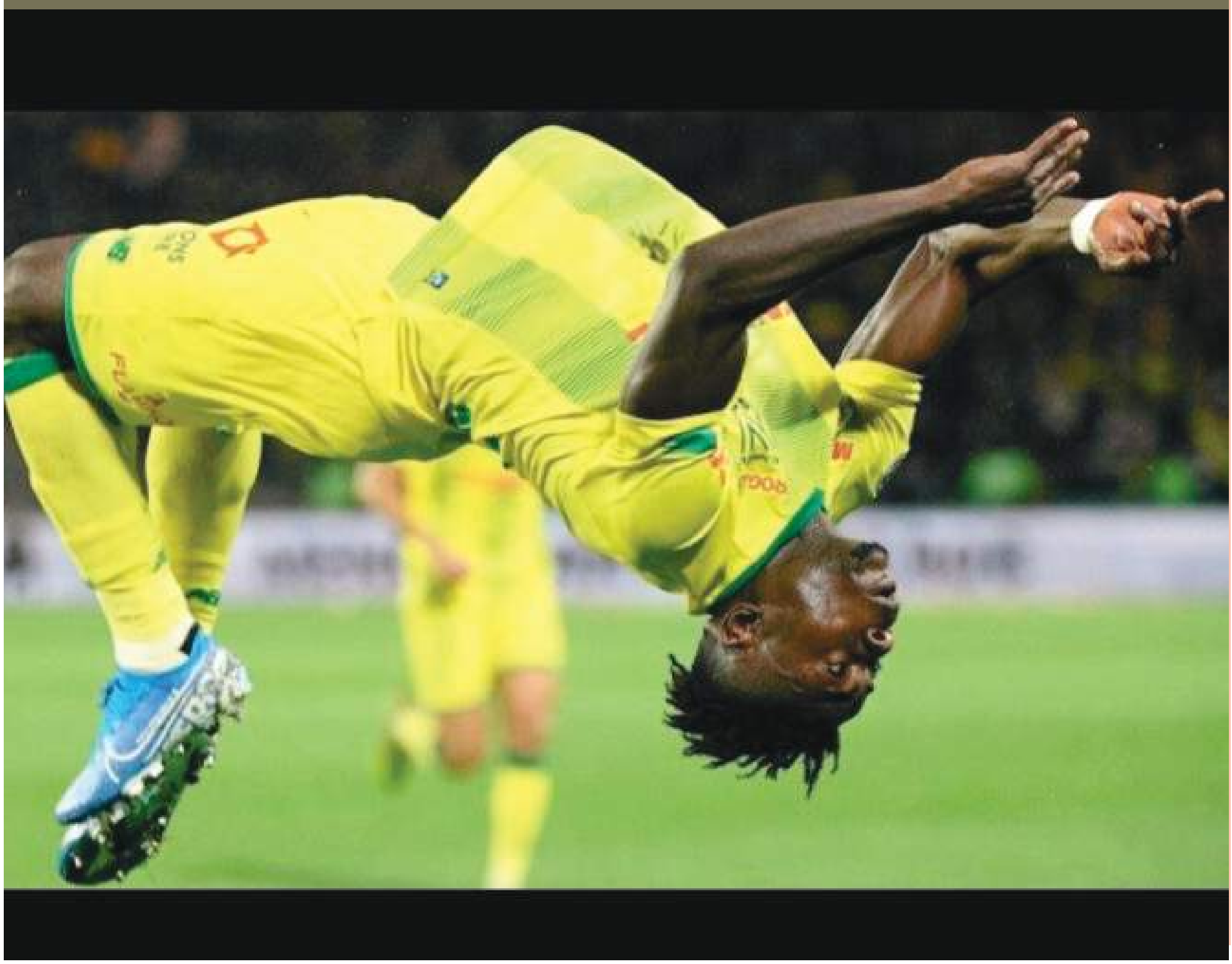
TRIO BOOST FOR NFF

A THISDAY WEEKLY PULL-OUT 24.5.2025

PAGE. 27

Moses Simon

Will He Take The Big Leap?



GLOBAL SOCCER

Moses Simon
Will He Take The Big Leap?

At 29 , Super Eagles winger, Moses Simon is definitely at the wrong side of his football career. After being an obedient servant with Ligue I side, Nantes for over five years and with Premier League club-Everton showing sincere interest in the Nigerian international, who was his club's shining light this season with 18-goal contribution, this may be the last big opportunity for Moses to cross the 'Red Sea'

Though Moses Simon had admitted, severally, his interest to play in the Premier League, he has also said he wasn't desperate to move to the English top tier.

The Super Eagles winger has admitted that he will leave Nantes if a good offer comes this summer.

Simon has been great for Nantes since he joined the club from Levante in 2019. And in the past two seasons, he has been the club's best attacker.

So far, Simon has contributed 37 goals and 42 assists in 201 appearances across all competitions.

This season, Nantes have scored 39 goals in the Ligue 1, and Simon has been involved in 18 of them.

His brilliance has seen him linked with bigger clubs in recent years. Marseille and Leeds United have been touted as potential destinations in previous years, but nothing serious came from those speculations.

Now, Simon is set to enter the final year of his contract at Nantes, and it is looking increasingly likely that he would leave soon.

Premier League club Everton have been heavily linked with the €12 million-rated star, but nothing concrete has come out yet.

Speaking about his future, Simon made it clear that he is very comfortable at Nantes. But he is aware of interest from abroad and can't rule out an exit if he gets a good offer.

"Yes, I've heard about the interest, and I know my agent is in contact with some clubs. Right now, I'm still a Nantes player," Simon told SportsBoom, per Liverpool Echo.

"I've always given my best for this club, and I respect my contract. But of course, every player wants to play at the highest level.

"The Premier League is one of the best in the world. If the right offer comes, and it's good for me and my family, then why not? But I'm not desperate.

"I have peace here in France. It has to be the right project."

Moving to Everton would be a big step up for Simon in every ramification. He will get a wage bump, he will work under David Moyes who knows how to bring out the best in his players, and he will rub shoulders with other top players.

Also, playing in the Premier League will put him in the eyes of more fans. Moreover, only few players will say no to the allure of the English top-flight.

With his quality, Simon could help Everton improve. The 29-year-old Super Eagles star is unpredictable, as he can send pin-point crosses or cut in to shoot.



Will Simon finally bid Nantes goodbye?

Simon is also a good dribbler, and a bit of flair in a blunt Everton side will be a breath of fresh air.

Simon's terrific performances in the just-concluded French Ligue 1 campaign has seen him top the statistics table for players with the most take-ons in the entire top-flight, with a total number of 65 take-ons.

The 29-year-old winger was an important player for Les Canaris over the course of the season, making 32 appearances for coach Antoine Kombouare's side, scoring eight goals and registering 10 assists for the French outfit, as they finished in 13th position in the 18-team table.

Nantes managed to win a paltry eight matches, drew 12 and lost a whopping 14 to end up with 36 points, just three points shy of the relegation places.

Despite Les Canaris' less than impressive campaign, which culminated in the team winning only one of their final five games to end the season, it was still a worthy campaign for Simon.

Nonetheless, Everton might be skeptical about the transfer, as Simon hits 30 years in July, so he won't be able to offer them a lot of years. The club might look for a younger player who has similar qualities.

Meanwhile, former coach of the senior national team of Nigeria, Gernot Rohr has celebrated the milestone achieved by Nigerian international winger Moses Simon at French Ligue 1 side Nantes after he clocked 200 appearances for the club.

Simon, who has been at the club since 2019 when he initially joined on loan before making a permanent switch the next season from Levante, was once again pivotal to the club maintaining their top flight status.

He picked up a goal and an assist in the 3-0 win over Montpellier that kept them away from the drop zone and took his season's tally to 10 assists and 8 goals. Only two players in the league had more assists than the 29-year-old in the recently concluded season.

Looking back at his performance since joining the club, Rohr said no Nigerian player has stayed that consistent in the French Ligue 1 for a sustained period like Simon. A feat which made him to rank the Kaduna- born forward as the best ever Nigerian player in the history of the league.

Widely expected to leave the club in the summer, his goal tally of 79 in 200 games is something that Rohr sees as a huge feat, considering the size of the club he is playing for in the placement of French football.

"A lot of Nigerian players have played here and made really good memories, but Simon is different. He will go down as one of the best ever in the history of Nantes and also to me the best Nigerian player ever in the history of Ligue 1, Rohr told an online publication.

"He (Simon) has survived so many coaches at the club and sources will tell you he is the best behaved in the team. The numbers are there and when you look at where Nantes were before he came, then you will understand better. Remember he helped them to win the French Cup," the coach of Benin Republic concluded.

It however remains to be seen whether Simon would be bold enough to take the final leap from Nantes.

GLOBAL SOCCER



Top runners going through the registration process for the MASA Isonyin Marathon

NFF Handed Murphy, Adarabioyo, Nwaneri's Boost after Trio Snub from England Squad

The Nigeria Football Federation have received a timely boost in their efforts to recruit several English-born Premier League players following their omission from the latest England squad announced by the English FA yesterday morning.

England manager, Thomas Tuchel has left Jacob Murphy (Newcastle United), Tosin Adarabioyo (Chelsea) and Ethan Nwaneri (Arsenal) out of his squad for next month's fixtures — a decision that could open the door for Nigeria to step up their pursuit of the players.

Super Eagles coach, Eric Chelle is monitoring all three players, who are eligible to represent Nigeria through heritage.

While Murphy and Tosin had been assessed by Tuchel during Premier League matches in April and May, neither has been selected for the Three Lions' upcoming matches — a 2026 World Cup qualifier against Andorra in Barcelona on June 7, and a high-profile friendly with Senegal at the City Ground, Nottingham on June 10.

Nwaneri, 18, has been included in the England U21 squad for the 2025 European Championship.

All three players enjoyed standout 2024–2025 campaigns, with Murphy recording 23-goal involvements in 40 appearances for Newcastle, Nwaneri contributing 11 in his breakout season with Arsenal's first team, and Tosin scoring a career-best four goals from central defense.

Of the trio, only Tosin remains uncapped at any level by England in competitive fixtures, while Murphy and Nwaneri are provisionally cap-tied to England through appearances for youth teams.

Meanwhile, Bukayo Saka, Eberechi Eze and Noni Madueke — all of Nigerian descent, have been included in Tuchel's squad for the June internationals.

Top Runners Set for MASA Isonyin Marathon, as Organisers Launch Sponsorship Campaign

Registration is in full swing for the 2025 MASA Isonyin Marathon (MIM), with top-tier Nigerian athletes signing up in anticipation of one of the most exciting new road races in the country.

As interest builds, organisers have also launched a sponsorship campaign, inviting brands and organisations to support and add vibrancy to the event scheduled for August 23, 2025.

The half marathon, themed "Running for Exposure," is drawing national attention with its whopping 1.5 million prize for winners in both the male and female categories.

The runner-up will earn 1 million, while third-place finishers will take home 750,000 — placing the event among the most generously rewarded half marathons in Nigeria.

According to the organisers, registration is ongoing at www.masaisonyinmarathon.com and at physical outlets in Isonyin, Abeokuta, Sagamu and Ijebu Ode.

Over 2,500 participants are expected to compete.

"This is a huge opportunity — not just for the prize, but for the visibility," said Bala Musa, a national -level runner from Plateau State. "It's a platform that serious athletes will not want to miss."

The MIM is an initiative of the MASA Foundation, led by Dr. Muideen Adegboyega Salami (MASA), with a vision to promote youth empowerment, community development, and healthy living.

The route has been officially certified by the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN).

As preparations progress, the organising committee has extended an open invitation to corporate sponsors, institutions, and private sector players to partner with the event.

Nottingham Forest Gives Awoniyi Recovery Update

Nottingham Forest head coach, Nuno Espirito Santo, has ruled Super Eagles striker, Taiwo Awoniyi, out of his side's final game of the Premier League season against Chelsea.

The Reds have defied the odds in the English top-flight this season, and are set for a place in European football for the first time in the 21st century. However, they'll be without Awoniyi.

The 27-year-old suffered a clash with the woodwork in Forest's 2-2 clash against Leicester City and needed surgery on a ruptured intestine. He was placed in an induced coma, but he's now out, on his way to full recovery.

The two-time UEFA Champions League winners welcome Chelsea to the City Ground this weekend, but Awoniyi will not be able to play, although he'll most likely be in the Stands.

He will definitely be an inspiration to his teammates who wore T-shirts during their warm-up against West Ham United with Awoniyi's name on, and Morgan Gibbs-White held up his teammate's jersey after opening the scoring against Graham Potter's side.

"He's much better. He's already been able to walk. The doctor has informed us that he's starting his normal life in terms of food, so he's much better," Nuno Espirito Santo said in quotes revealed by Nottingham Post.

"I cannot answer whether he will be at the City Ground. I don't know. It's about the medical (information), so I'm not sure, but he's OK.

"We are going to be playing for T again. He is not going to be with us. It was a big issue that happened to him, and it is in our minds.

Genk Coach Backs Arokodare to Finish League's Top Scorer

KRC Genk head coach, Thorsten Fink has thrown his full support behind Tolu Arokodare as the Nigerian forward targets the Belgian Pro League's top scorer title ahead of the club's final match of the season against RSC Anderlecht.

Arokodare currently sits joint-top in the league's scoring charts with 21 goals but leads on away goals.

Fink believes one more strike in tomorrow's game will settle the race once and for all.

"In fact, he is already top scorer at the moment, because he has scored more away goals," Fink told Genk's official webiste.

"But if he scores one more goal tomorrow, he will be top scorer all by himself."

The 24-year-old has been a standout figure in Genk's attack throughout the 2024-2025 campaign, delivering consistent performances and vital goals.

His ability to perform under pressure has earned praise from both fans and staff, and his determination to finish the season on a high has not gone unnoticed.

"He was very sharp and eager in training this week. He is very motivated to end the season in style," the German added.

With the final match taking place at a sold-out Cegeka Arena, the stage is set for Arokodare to cement his status as the league's most prolific forward.



R-L:Honourable Commissioner, Youth and Social Development, Lagos State, Mobolaji Ogunlende, Director General of, Lagos State Sports Commission, Lekan Fatodu and an official of the Sports Commission

Lagos Won't Dump Grassroots Sports Development Initiative, Says Fatodu

The Director General of the Lagos State Sports Commission, Lekan Fatodu, has reiterated that the state wouldn't lose sight of its developmental initiative of grooming young athletes for the sustainable future of not only the state, but the country as a whole.

Lagos has been in the forefront of championing qualitative grassroots sports development programmes, targeting breeding and grooming of young athletes and giving them opportunities and platforms to develop their talents.

This has been the norm since the administration of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, to the governments of Babatunde Raji Fashola, Akinwunmi Ambode and the incumbent Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

"This has been our tradition in Lagos. We won't cut corners because of winning medals. Our outing is not about winning at all cost. This is counterproductive and anti-development.

"Our target in Lagos is to give these athletes an all-round capacity building for them to develop their talents and give them life that will sustain them even after their retirement," said Fatodu, while speaking with sports journalists at the ongoing 22nd National Sports Festival in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

Fatodu, a versatile administrator, said that Lagos looks beyond the present to plan for the future, adding that "we are dealing with our athletes with sincerity and transparency and we believe that states must compete with fairness in competition such as the National Sports Festival and others.

"It's unfair that we groom and breed athletes while other states come to poach them. I think it is high time sports authority in the country take a look at this issue of poaching and address it," he said.

On the issue of rewards for the athletes, Fatodu believes the states must be cautious because big monetisation will have negative effects on the focus of the athletes sooner than expected.

"You can't believe that some of the athletes that were poached by other states have been clamouring to come back to Lagos because they saw what we have been doing since I came on board as the Director General of the Sports Commission.

"Mr. Governor listens when we present our issues.

"We are doing a lot to improve the welfare of our athletes and coaches. We are also running an open government that carries everybody along. I am very close to my athletes and coaches because I see them as partners in progress.

"We are giving our athletes greater attention and well-being than before and I am happy that they are responding to this positively.

Guinness Brings Premier League Trophy Home, Inspires Youth

Guinness Nigeria has reaffirmed its legacy as a cultural connector and community champion as it brings the iconic Premier League Trophy to Lagos state in a historic tour celebrating 75 years of impact.

This visit was also a highlight of Guinness' Premier League Trophy Tour in Nigeria, underscoring the brand's deep-rooted connection with Nigerian passion points, particularly the unifying power of sports.

Receiving the trophy at the state house in Marina, recently, Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu praised Guinness Nigeria's enduring commitment to sport, development, and nation-building, noting the brand's pivotal role in using football to unite and energise communities.

"It is exciting to see Lagos as part of this historic tour. Guinness has long been a part of our story, from being the first destination for its brewery outside the UK, to its decades of social impact. It also feels great to have the real Premier League Trophy in Lagos.

"This does reinforce something positive about our enthusiasm, and it is gratifying to know that this is specially brought to us by none other but a 75-year-old Guinness Nigeria. As Lagosians, we are excited to identify with this brand as a socially responsible organisation," he said.

Guinness' visit to Sanwo-olu wraps up its three -day trophy tour which kicked-off in Enugu, in collaboration with Premier League.

Upstream Commercial Asset Emerges Winner, to Represent Nigeria in China

WORLD CORPORATE GOLF CHALLENGE



L-R: Upstream Commercial Assets Team, Pat Ozoemene, Remi Olukoya of Falcon Golf Development Company and representative of World Corporate Golf Challenge in Nigeria, Akeem Lawal

Playing like a team infused with the winning spirit, Upstream Commercial Asset stole the show at the World Corporate Golf Challenge (WCGC) 2025, winning the coveted tournament trophy for the second year in a row. The two-day tournament took place at the golf section of Ikoyi Club 1938 over the weekend.

Represented by the high-flying Akeem Lawal and perennial winner, Pat Ozoemene, the duo carded a combined score of 78 Stableford points, defeating Team GTI Group, represented by Bayo Alli and Rtd. Gen. Musbau Amolegbe, on countback.

The fiercely contested 36-hole tournament also saw Team Tim Maguire and Pierre Sebillet finishing third, also with 78 Stableford points, while Team Davisther Insurance Brokers, represented by Sopriye Iketubosin and Olubanwo Latilo, claimed fourth place.

Team Jotun, featuring former captain, Uwem Udoh and Jagdish Jethvani, rounded off the top five with a combined score of 76 Stableford points, setting a record of 46 Stableford points in a single round to achieve the feat.

Speaking shortly after being presented with their trophies, Team Upstream promised to be worthy representatives at the World Finals in Shanghai, China, scheduled to take place from October 19-23, 2025.

According to them, the experience gained at last years World Finals in Haikou, where Nigeria finished ninth out of over 35 participating countries, along with renewed team spirit, puts Team Upstream in a strong position for this years global event.

EXPRESSION

Speak Volumes, Not 'Volume'



MEDIAGAFFES BY EBERE WABARA
ewabara@yahoo.com, 08055001948

YOU are welcome to this week's edition of our language clinic: "Customs deputy comptroller slumps, dies at Reps (Reps') investigative hearing"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daily Independent online of February 28 signed off the month of passion: "There are times necessity breed (breeds) invention…."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No Tyre Is Worth A Child



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

The bullet that ended the life of 14-year-old schoolboy, Kehinde Alade in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, didn't come from the battlefield. It wasn't the aftershock of a robbery gone wrong. It didn't ricochet from a hoodlum's gun in a neighbourhood skirmish. No - it came from a man in uniform. A man licensed by the state to protect, not to destroy. A man who, on that fatal morning, pulled the trigger not on a criminal, but on a car's tyre - and hit a boy instead.

Let's be clear: there was no war. No ambush. No shootout. Just a father driving against traffic. Just another of our countless daily acts of civic misconduct - foolish, wrong but rarely deadly. This time though, it turned deadly. And as Kehinde slumped inside the black Honda Accord, bleeding from a state-issued bullet, a tragic line was crossed - again.

On Tuesday, 20 May 2025, at about 7:45 a.m., Kehinde Alade's school day never began. He was seated in the back seat of his father's car as they tried to navigate the Alakia-Adelubi/Airport Road, in Ibadan's bustling Egbeda LGA. His father, Odunayo Alade, allegedly drove against traffic - a familiar transgression in the madness of Nigerian roads. Based on viral video evidence seen, the driver exhibited manic recklessness in trying to avoid capture, as is common with some of our bus drivers. But what followed was anything but common.

A team from the Oyo State Road Traffic Management Authority (OYRTMA), backed by police officers, tried to stop the car. The driver reportedly attempted to evade arrest. In response, an officer - trained, armed, and supposedly disciplined - fired his weapon. A bullet meant for rubber tore through flesh. It missed the tyres and hit the teenager behind the driver. No warning. No protocol. No justification that makes moral or professional sense.

The outcry was instant. Protests erupted in Alakia. Residents marched to the state secretariat with Kehinde's corpse in tow - a grotesque but necessary protest of grief and rage. What else could they carry to get the attention of a system so deaf to the cries of the living?

Let's not be distracted by the official hand-wringing. The Oyo State Government called the act "sad, shocking and painful." The Police Command said they suspected an abduction or criminal intent because of the father's erratic driving. They spoke of barricades rammed and patrol vehicles damaged. They explained, excused, obfuscated. But no explanation can cleanse the image of a bleeding child in school uniform, caught in the crosshairs of enforcement turned execution.

We must ask: What sort of training emboldens a police officer to shoot at a moving vehicle in a crowded civilian space - because of a traffic violation? How have we created an enforcement culture that sees bullets as corrective tools for disobedience? And more damning - how many of these officers are ever truly held accountable?

The officer who pulled the trigger is reportedly in custody. Investigations are said to be ongoing. The Commissioner of Police has promised justice. But Nigerians have heard it all before. From Apo to Ajegunle, Port Harcourt to Iyana Ipaja, bodies have fallen under the fire of poorly trained, trigger-happy officers - most of whom walk free after the hashtags fade and the protests tire out.

And here lies the deeper tragedy: Kehinde's killing is not an anomaly - it is a pattern. A national illness. One that thrives where there is no consequence. Where uniforms offer impunity instead of responsibility. Where the life of a child is no more sacred than a dented Hilux. Where tyres are worth more than tears.

We must break this cycle. Not just with statements, but with action. The officer must be prosecuted swiftly and transparently - not posted to another command or quietly retired. The leadership of OYRTMA and the police must revise their enforcement protocols. Firearms should never be part of traffic enforcement. Ever. And above all, justice must not just be done - it must be seen by every grieving mother, every protesting neighbour, and every frightened schoolchild.

Kehinde Alade could have been anyone's son. He died not because his father was right, but because a man with a gun thought his duty was to punish with bullets. And if that doesn't shake the conscience of this nation, perhaps nothing ever will.

Until then, may his blood continue to ask the question Nigeria seems reluctant to answer: how many more?

Of Presidents, Popes and Priorities

So, the Nigerian President packed his bags - and his son - and flew off to Rome for the inauguration of a new Pope. A momentous event by all accounts, no doubt, but one wonders: in a nation teetering on every edge known to civil society - hunger, insecurity, institutional rot, currency collapse - is this the pilgrimage that best defines our urgency?

Let's be clear: diplomatic courtesy, especially to the Holy See, carries symbolic weight. Nigeria, after all, boasts the highest number of Catholics in Africa. The Vatican is no small corner of the global stage. But when the presidential delegation begins to look like a family field trip - complete with the president's son, Seyi, in tow - it tilts toward something less official and more indulgent.

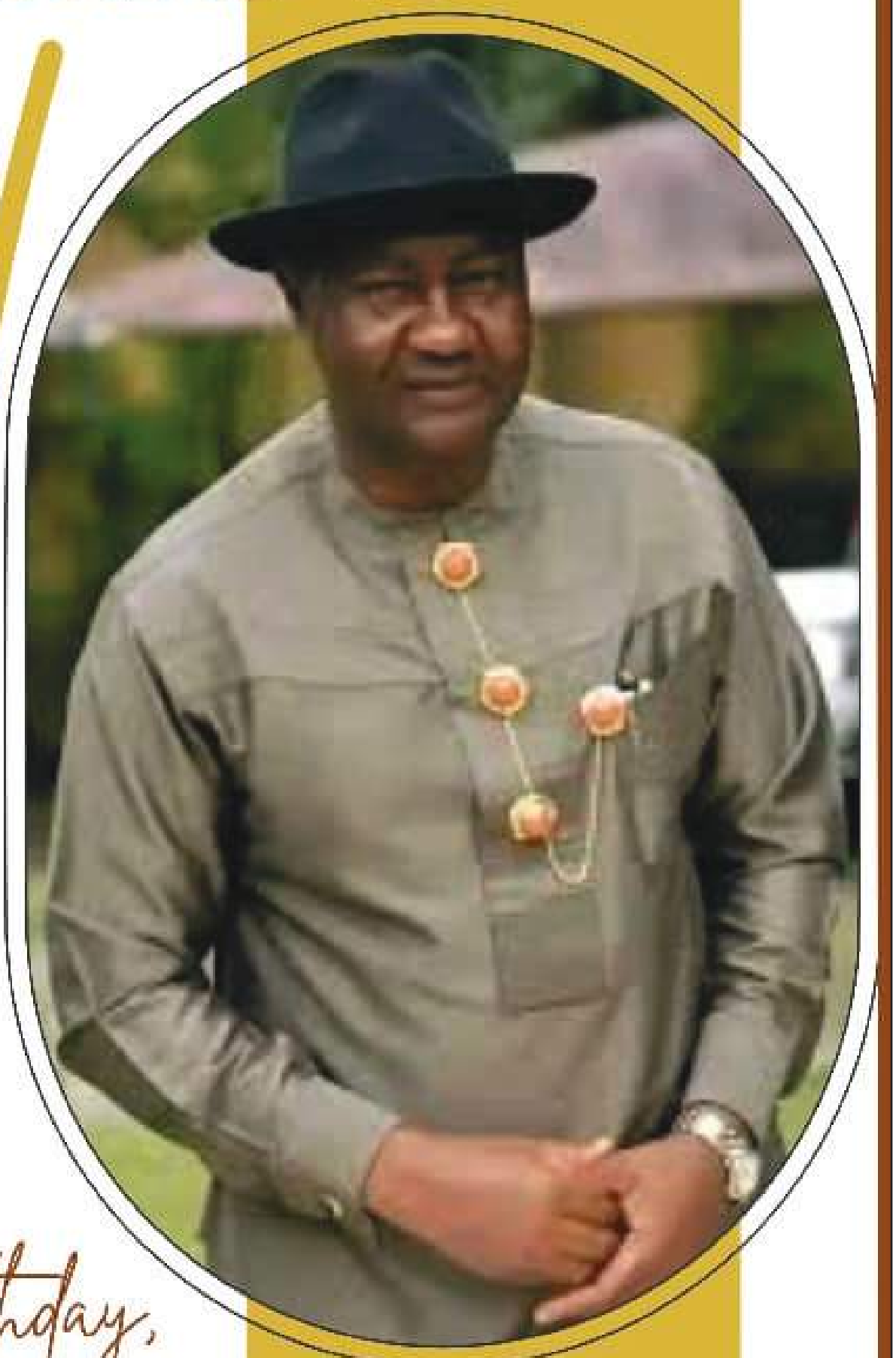
What exactly was Seyi's portfolio on this spiritual expedition? Special Adviser on Pontifical Applause? Or perhaps Minister for Papal Optics? Jokes apart, the matter is far from funny. In a season when fuel prices have refused to fall like stubborn pests, when university graduates hawk sachet water, and when the naira exchanges humility for humiliation - our leaders must learn that perception is policy.

It's not about whether a son travels with his father. It's about optics in a republic where even civil servants can't afford to send their children across state lines, let alone continents. Symbolism matters. Frugality must not only be practised, but paraded - especially by a president who rose on the wings of "renewed hope."

This Rome trip might have been well-intentioned, diplomatically sound, even spiritually edifying. But in the eyes of a weary populace, it was yet another procession of privilege, tone-deaf and tin-eared, missing the spirit of servant leadership.

Until public office begins to reflect public service - sober, selfless, sacrificial - we'll keep jetting toward reverence abroad while losing relevance at home.

Hurray! Our friend is 60!



Happy Birthday to
Distinguished Senator
Magnus Ngei Abe,
Mene Suanu 1 of Ogoni Land

We celebrate your life,
strength, and the values you
bring to our friendship.
Your journey in politics shows
resilience and true leadership.

May God bless you with good
health and peace always.

Happy 60th Birthday, Distinguished Senator!

Distinguished Senator
Magnus Ngei Abe,
Mene Suanu 1 of Ogoni

Marcus Nle Ejii
Isobo Jack
Felix Nwaeke
Fred Igwe
Victor Giadom
Frank Ohor
Mpigi Barinada
Wisdom Wakama

BACK PAGE LEAD PHOTOGRAPH



STAKEHOLDERS SENSITISATION ON E-VISA…

L-R: Chairman, House Committee On Interior, Hon. Ifeoluwa Ehindero; IATA Representative in Nigeria, Mr. Samson Fatokun; Director-General, NCAA, Capt. Chris Najomo; Minister for Interior, Dr. Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo; Representative of the DG of FAAN, Mrs. Joke Olatunji; Comptroller General, NIS, Kemi Nanna Nandap; Representative of NIDCOM Chairperson, Mr. Dipo Samson, and Chairman, Aviation Operators Committee, Mr. Kingsley Chima, at a stakeholders' sensitisation and engagement programme on the implementation of the E-Visa, Landing and Exit Cards in Lagos...yesterday

OBINNA**CHIMA**

READING THE TEA LEAVES

obinna.chima@thisdaylive.com



Honest Assessment of Tinubu's Ministers

Next Thursday will make it two years since President Bola Ahmed Tinubu assumed office and promised Nigerians bold reforms, decisive leadership under his 'Renewed Hope' agenda. While he has not disappointed in terms of the reforms, his 'Renewed Hope' mantra, however, fills the air more than anything and may choke Nigerians with the way it is being echoed by most of his Ministers in speeches at any ceremony they find themselves. A lot of them keep chanting 'Renewed Hope' without backing it with results.

Ultimately, the performance of President Tinubu's Ministers serves as a direct reflection of his administration's effectiveness. That is why it is important



Tinubu

for us to evaluate the contributions of his Ministers as he prepares to mark his second year in office.

The President has 48 ministers, the largest since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999. While the first set of Ministers was sworn in, in August 2023, calls for a cabinet rejig saw him reshuffle the Ministers the following year, and some others were sworn in in November 2024, and a few were sacked.

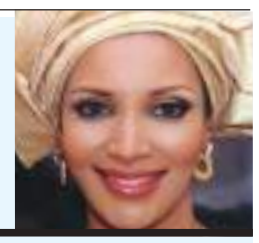
I do not envy Hadiza Bala-Usman, the President's Special Adviser on Policy and Coordination Central Delivery Coordination Unit (CDCU). As someone saddled with the responsibility of assessing and grading the ministers based on their performance, she stands at the confluence of political scrutiny, public expectation, and bureaucratic resistance. The weight of her responsibilities is immense. Tasked with objectively assessing the effectiveness of these big men and women in a highly politicised environment, she must navigate a labyrinth of vested interests, underperformance, and public impatience — all while preserving credibility and institutional integrity. The pressure is not only intense—it is unrelenting. I fully appreciate the formidable challenges faced by the former Managing Director of the Nigerian Ports Authority, given that many of the individuals she must evaluate are former governors, ex-federal lawmakers, and ego-filled billionaires.

With a few days to his second year as President, it is important to assess how these men and his ministers have fared. This assessment stems from interactions with Nigerians across the country. From Ekeremor in Bayelsa, to Ojo Local Government in Lagos, Ohaji in Imo State, Gwagwalada in the Federal Capital Territory, Marte in Borno, Jibia

Continued on page 25

BIANCA**ODUMEGWU-OJUKWU**

DIPLOMATIC DISPATCHES



The Inside Story: How It All Went Down in Rome

The Vatican has a way of setting everyone on an even keel. I remember how dazed I was on my last trip during the Funeral mass of Pope Francis some weeks before, when President Donald Trump had walked into the Basilica and was led to his seat at the square.

A number of dignitaries lined up to go to exchange pleasantries with him, causing a bit of a stir and a crowded scene. To my surprise, a middle-aged prim-looking priest walked up to them and addressed them rather tersely, 'scusi,(meaning Excuse me in italian) This is St Peter's, not the White House. Kindly



Peter Obi

take your seats please'.

He clearly didn't give a hoot who was likely to be offended but was more concerned that the order and solemnity of the event was not torpedoed by boisterous politicians.

The Nigerian delegation for the installation mass of Pope Leo XIV at St Peter's Square led by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu arrived early enough when there was ample time for exchange of pleasantries.

As we entered, I sighted Former Governors Peter Obi and Kayode Fayemi already seated, and I went to greet them after the President was seated.

Being patriotic citizens, they both decided to come up with me to pay their respects to Mr President.

The President very warmly and graciously received them both in a relaxed and humorous mood after which they both returned to their seats (Thankfully, no 'Scusi' from any ushering priests like the scenario during the Funeral mass of Pope Francis. Our delegation kept things nice and orderly !)

I was therefore taken aback by all the buzz and flak that something as simple as a polite greeting to one's elder, not to mention President, an intrinsic part of our African culture generated across social media space with all manner of innuendos and interpretations.

Let's just agree that many people just had the casual urge to create a

Continued on page 25

Printed and Published in Lagos by **THISDAY Newspapers Limited. Lagos:** 35 Creek Road, Apapa, Lagos. **Abuja:** Plot 1, Sector Centre B, Jabi Business District, Solomon Lar Way, Jabi North East, Abuja .
All Correspondence to P.O. Box 54749, Ikoyi, Lagos. **EMAIL:** editor@thisdaylive.com, info@thisdaylive.com. **TELEPHONE Lagos:** 0802 2924721-2, 08022924485. **Abuja:** Tel: 08155555292, 08155555929
24/7 ADVERTISING HOT LINES: 0811 181 3085 0811 181 3086, 0811 181 3087, 0811 181 3088, 0811 181 3089, 0811 181 3090. **ENQUIRIES & BOOKING:** adsbooking@thisdaylive.com. (**ISSN:** 1117-871X)