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Conscience, Nurtured by Truth

WEEKEND

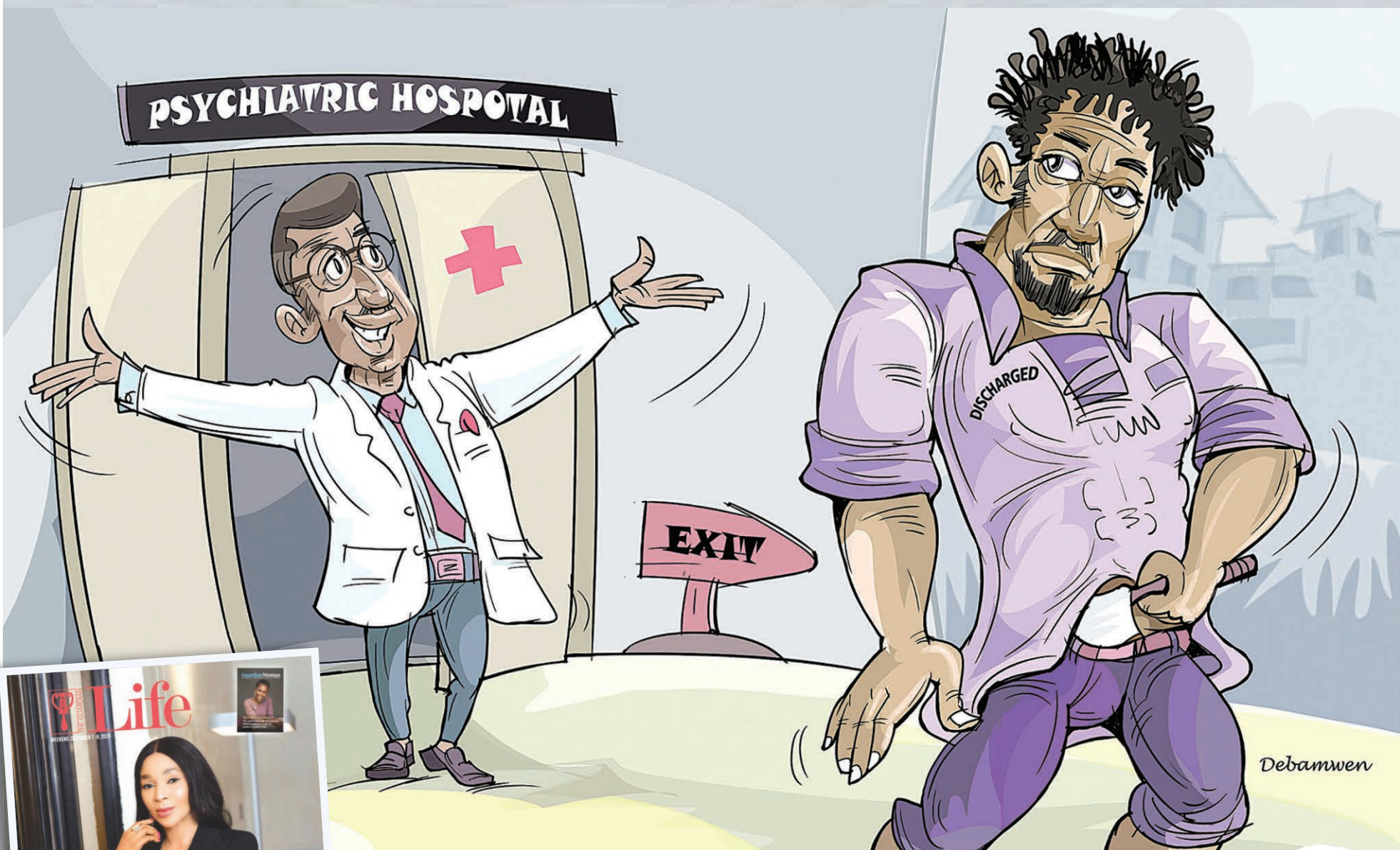
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AGF, Interior Minister, Others Renew Commitments To Correctional System Reforms

From Ameh Ochojila, Abuja

THE Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi (SAN) alongside the Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, and other stakeholders have reaffirmed their commitments to advancing Nigeria's correctional system reforms. They urged the state governments to take full advantage of recent legislative reforms to transform the country's correctional system.

The stakeholders spoke at a two-day dialogue on correctional administration, held from Thursday to Friday in Abuja, as part of the 30th-anniversary commemoration of the Prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA).

The dialogue was organised by PRAWA, Body of Attorneys General and Conference of Speakers in collaboration with the Federal Ministries of Justice and Interior with support from the European Union.

Speaking on the 'Model State Correctional Services Law', PRAWA President, Associate Professor Uju Agomoh, underscored the transformative potential of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 and the 2023 constitutional amendments, which moved correctional services from the Exclusive to the Concurrent Legislative List.

- **PRAWA Urges Roadmap For Sustainable Reforms**
- **Harks On Collaboration Between FG, States**

She described these reforms as rare opportunities to redefine correctional facilities as centres of rehabilitation, reformation, and reintegration, empowering states to establish and manage their correctional facilities for improved public safety.

PRAWA Board Chairman, Chris Enenya, also stressed the importance of collaboration between federal and state institutions in addressing systemic challenges in correctional administration.

Enenya noted that correctional services are central to justice, human rights, and security, stressing the need for a collective action to resolve issues such as overcrowding, underfunding, prolonged pretrial detention, and insufficient use of non-custodial measures.

He called for aligning policies to create a roadmap for sustainable reforms, emphasising that correctional administration should not only rehabilitate offenders but also enhance public safety and societal cohesion.

Enenya reflected on PRAWA's 30 years of service, acknowledging its contributions to building capacity

among correctional officers, creating operational guidelines for non-custodial measures, and supporting the reintegration of ex-offenders.

He praised the organisation's partners, including the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS) under Comptroller General Haliru Nababa, the Ministries of Justice and Interior, the body of Attorneys General, and the Conference of Speakers, for their efforts in fostering legislative and judicial reforms.

On his part, Fagbemi reiterated the Federal Government's dedication to promoting international best practices in correctional services, assuring stakeholders that the Ministry of Justice remains committed to ensuring that correctional centres uphold dignity and justice.

Similarly, Tunji-Ojo called for a change in the attitude and practices of correctional officers, urging them to view their uniforms as symbols of hope and protection rather than as instruments of oppression and intimidation.

He further disclosed President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's approval for the recruitment of more medical professionals to enhance healthcare for

inmates.

The stakeholders acknowledged that the progress in implementing the 2023 constitutional amendment granting states the authority to establish correctional facilities was slow.

In his remarks, Nababa outlined the urgent challenges facing the correctional system, highlighting the debilitating effects of overcrowding, with over 81,000 inmates currently held in various facilities nationwide, more than 50,000 of whom are awaiting trial.

He described the situation as an embarrassment to the effective management and administration of the correctional centres, calling for open-minded discussions to tackle the crisis.

"This dialogue is apt, timely, and crucial. The damage caused by overcrowding, especially among pretrial detainees, has significantly impacted the NCS's ability to fulfill its mandate. It is imperative for us to explore non-custodial measures as part of our strategy to decongest correctional facilities," Nababa said.

He emphasised the need to reevaluate practices that lead to the incarceration of individuals for minor offences, stating that such actions undermine the efficiency

of correctional administration. Nababa urged stakeholders to engage in positive and solution-driven discussions, adding that the outcomes would play a crucial role in shaping the future of correctional services in Nigeria.

"The situation where offenders are sent to correctional facilities for minor infractions is counterproductive. We must focus on implementing non-custodial measures to alleviate the pressure on our facilities. I am optimistic that the recommendations from this dialogue will guide future planning and reforms in our administration," he added.

The Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Reformatory, Chinedu Ogah, emphasised the need for state governments to support correctional services given the significant number of detainees convicted or charged with state offences.

"Even if this conversation had not come up now, the Federal Government would eventually need to address the issue of how states can assist in running correctional facilities," he said.

He disclosed that there were ongoing efforts to create a sustainable framework for state-level correctional systems.

From Owede Agbajileke, Abuja

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu has approved a N250 billion fund aimed at preparing Nigeria for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The Nigerian AfCFTA Coordination Office stated this on Friday in Abuja at an event organised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Nigeria, in partnership with the Women Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (WCCIMA).

Senior Trade Expert, Nigeria AfCFTA Coordination Office, Olusegun Olutayo, who made the revelation, said the office was working with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Bank of Industries (BoI) to fashion out how the Readiness Fund could be accessed.

The Trade Law Expert said the AfCFTA Readiness Fund is a strategic investment in Nigeria's participation in the AfCFTA, aimed at improving the country's ease of doing business, diversifying exports, aligning the AfCFTA agreement with Nigeria's national economic growth plan, and catalysing economic diversification and industrial expansion.

His words: "In principle, President Bola Tinubu has approved the AfCFTA Readiness Fund to the tune of N250 billion. The Fund is not available now but we are working on the modalities.

"Mr. President further said we should work with the CBN and Bank of Industry to work out the modalities for accessing the funds. But we are working to ensure that we put it in place and people will now begin to access it.

"Those that are to benefit are Nigerians; whether you are MSMEs, women, youths, farmers or a big manufacturer."

With a target market expected to reach 1.7 billion people and an aggregate GDP of \$6.7 trillion by 2030, the AfCFTA offers unprecedented opportunities for African

Tinubu Approves N250 billion AfCFTA Readiness Fund

- **To Gazette Nigeria's AfCFTA Protocol Soon**

economies.

It is the world's largest free trade area bringing together the 55 countries of the African Union (AU) and eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to create a single market for the continent.

It further aims to reduce trading problems such as different regulations from one African country to another.

Olutayo said there is a consensus that the Nigerian Customs Service should be the go-to authority, noting that under Bashir Adeniyi's leadership, Customs has undergone "significant transformation".

He stated that the Customs Service now prioritises trade facilitation, adding that its officers are eager to support, especially when it comes to the AfCFTA.

Olutayo further said that any moment from now, President Tinubu would gazette the country's AfCFTA

Protocol.

The event focused on strengthening the capacity of 100 women-led Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to capitalise on the trading opportunities available under the AfCFTA.

Under the theme, 'Empowering Women-led MSMEs for Continental Trade Opportunities', the forum brought together policy makers, entrepreneurs, ecosystem partners, and potential investors to explore how Nigerian women can thrive in regional and continental trade.

In her remarks, Director-General of WCCIMA, Weyinmi Eribo, said by addressing these critical challenges, the initiative empowered women-led MSMEs to navigate the complexities of cross-border trade, strengthen value chains, and enhance productivity in high-demand sectors.

"This collaboration with UNDP marks a pivotal moment in unlocking the full potential of women-led MSMEs in Nigeria. We are proud to be part of an initiative that not only builds capacity but also opens new avenues for women entrepreneurs to thrive in continental trade, driving economic growth and creating last-

ing change," Eribo said. Also, Senior Economist at UNDP, Tony Muhumuza, stated that the success of the HerAfCFTA Forum highlights the ongoing efforts of UNDP to empower women-led MSMEs across Nigeria.

Read the remainder of this story on www.guardian.ng

World Bank Strengthens Global Efforts To Combat Poverty, Climate Change With \$100b Financing

By Chinedum Uwaegbulam

THE World Bank Group on Friday unveiled a record \$100 billion financing package for the 21st replenishment cycle of the International Development Association (IDA21), the largest in the fund's history.

This commitment includes a joint contribution of \$23.7 billion from 59 donor countries. The IDA21 replenishment will provide critical

support to low-income countries over a three-year period, from FY2025 to FY2028, strengthening global efforts to address poverty, inequality, and climate change.

The final commitments were made during the replenishment meeting in Seoul, South Korea, held from this week, which brought together World Bank management, governments, and various other stakeholders. The IDA21 financing package surpasses the historic commitment of \$93 billion made during the previous replenishment cycle (IDA20).

This funding is vital for 78 countries including Nigeria and some of the world's poorest nations, as they work to tackle pressing challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, conflict, fragility, debt burdens, and climate resilience. It is particularly significant for Africa, a major recipient of IDA support. In 2023, nearly 70 per cent of all IDA financing went to African countries.

Earlier this year, African leaders called for a replenishment of at least \$120 billion in 2024. While the \$100 billion allocated falls short of these calls, it still represents an overall increase in funding.

Read the remainder of this story on www.guardian.ng



Minister of State for Defence, Bello Muhammed Matawalle (right); Special Adviser to President on Policy and Coordination/Head, CRDCU, Hadiza Bala Usman; and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Dr. Ibrahim Abubakar Kana during the engagement with Ministries on the 1st - 3rd Quarter 2024, Ship House, Abuja.

Nigeria’s Economy Grew 1.8% For Nine Years, Says Cardoso

From Collins Olayinka, Abuja

WITH an economy that grew at 1.8 per cent for nine consecutive years, money supply growing at about 13 per cent and Ways and Means that set a new world record, Nigeria’s economy requires stringent reforms to regain its strength, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Olayemi Cardoso, has said.

Addressing participants at the 2024 yearly Bankers’ Committee retreat in Abuja on Friday, Cardoso declared that there are no alternatives to the ongoing economic reforms of the current administration.

His words: “A situation where over the past eight and nine years, the economy grew on average at 1.8 per cent per annum and money supply grew at about 13 per cent; a situation where outstanding Ways and Means, as of the end of 2022, was about 11 per cent of GDP, arguably a world record. Now, with such challenges, the responses to those have to be equally robust and challenging.”

The CBN helmsman insisted that the Tinubu administration inherited the challenges, hence the unpalatable tools that have been adopted so far, adding: “Some of the tools may not necessarily be easy and palatable, but they are

• Insists No Alternatives To Reforms

necessary. We are not in a period of ordinary times.”

While urging the committee to design practical solutions to the ailing economy amid expansion of poverty, rising inflation, infrastructure deficits, insecurity, unemployment, among others, Cardoso maintained that the situation is not all bleak.

He explained: “In recent

times, we have witnessed significant strides made by both government and private partners in leveraging the immense opportunities before us to rewrite our nation’s story. However, while progress has been steady, it is evident that the road ahead remains long. The work before us requires focus, innovation and an unwavering resolve to re-

shape our collective future.”

The issues that require urgent attention, Cardoso said, include what steps must the stakeholders take to improve the business environment for all, how can they better leverage public-private partnerships for infrastructure development and what are the most effective ways to close skill gaps in the workforce?

In attendance was Vice Presi-

dent Kashim Shettima, who was represented by his Special Adviser on Economic Affairs, Dr. Tope Fasua.

While the Vice President charged banks to consolidate their role as catalysts of economic growth and development, he observed that the robust profitability that is declared by banks should be reflected in the GDP growth numbers posted by the country.



Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde (2nd right); his deputy, Barr Bayo Lawal (middle); Speaker, Oyo State House of Assembly, Hon Debo Ogundoyin (right); Commissioner for Energy and Minerals Resources, Barr Seun Ashamu (2nd left) and Managing Director, Elektron Energy Limited, Tola Talabi, during the commissioning of Phase I of the IIMW Ibadan Hybrid Power Plant, at Power House, Secretariat, Ibadan.

PHOTO: OYO GOV’S MEDIA UNIT

NNPC Begins Export Of LSSR From Port Harcourt Refinery

From Kingsley Jeremiah, Abuja

THE Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited has sold the first cargo of Port-Harcourt low sulfur straight run fuel oil (LSSR) to Dubai-based Gulf Transport & Trading Limited (GTT).

The company is expected to load in the coming days on-board the Wonder Star MRI ship to signal the commencement of operations of the plant and exportation of petroleum products.

The ship will load 15,000 met-

• PETROAN Seals Deals To Lift Dangote, NNPC Fuel

ric tons of the product, which translates to about 13.6 million litres.

Although the volume coming from the NNPC into the global market is still small, the development will potentially impact the Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (VLSFO) benchmarks in the future while changing the market realities for Atlantic Basin exporters into Nigeria and other regions.

The sulfur content of the export by NNPC stands at 0.26

per cent per wt and a 0.918 g/ml density at 15°C, Kpler, a data and analysis company, wrote.

The cargo was reportedly sold at a \$8.50/t discount to the NWE 0.5 per cent benchmark on a Free on Board (FOB) basis.

Kpler reported that the development would help displace imports from traditional suppliers in Africa and Europe, as Nigeria’s clean product imports are already falling, dragging imports into the wider

West Africa region lower too.

The Port Harcourt Refinery has been in the news following the announcement of the start of the refinery in late November.

According to the NNPC, the refinery is producing Straight-Run Gasoline (Naphtha), blending it with imported gasoline to produce 1.4 million liters of PMS (petrol), 900,000 litres of kerosene, 1.5 million litres of diesel, and 2.1 million litres of Low Pour Fuel Oil (LPFO) daily.

To achieve this, the NNPC has

imported two cargoes of 28,000 metric tons of Research Octane Number (RON) gasoline, which will be blended with components from Indorama Petrochemical.

Recent gasoline import data has shown that while Nigeria had relied on Europe and slightly Asia for petroleum products, importation has been nose-diving since mid 2024 following productions by the Dangote Refinery and the coming on stream of Port-Harcourt Refinery.

Police Arrest Suspected Killers Of Aiyedatiwa’s Campaign Coordinator In Ondo

From Adewale Momoh, Akure

MEN of the Ondo State Police Command have arrested suspected killers of the campaign coordinator of Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State, Excel Alaba, who was killed eight months ago.

The suspects, Mohammed Sheu and Abubakar Umar, were apprehended following the confession to the crime by one of the duo.

Excel, who was killed in April

2024 in Supare-Akoko, Akoko South West Local Council of the state, was a ward campaign coordinator for the Lucky Aiyedatiwa Campaign Organisation Foot-Soldiers (LACO-SF) in the build-up to the November 16 governorship election.

According to the police spokesperson in the state, Funmilayo Odunlami-Omisanya, the suspects had been involved in various kidnappings in the northern sen-

atorial district of the state as well as adjoining communities and neighbouring states.

Odunlami-Omisanya stated that one of the suspects, who was arrested during a stop-and-search operation, confessed to committing the crime along with his other gang members.

She disclosed that the style of operation of the suspects was to locate victims’ houses, after which they would go, attack and whisk them into the

bush, and subsequently demand the payment of ransom.

She said: “On November 14, 2024, men of the Special Anti-Kidnapping on Stop and Search at Ikare Junction at about 1520 hrs intercepted one Hiace vehicle, popularly known as the Hummer Bus, conveying passengers to Owo.

“During the search, Mohammed Sheu’s demeanour changed, and on reasonable suspicion, he was singled out

for a brief interrogation.

“During interrogation, a voice note dropped as a message on his phone; when opened, it was a reply from Sheu’s friend (on the run) who confirmed to have seen his message.

“A prior voice note sent by Sheu was opened; he told his friend that he is not financially buoyant and told him to contact him if there is any kidnapping job available that can fetch them some money.”

Defamation Against Me In Farotimi’s Book Can’t Be Remedied —Afe Babalola

From Ayodele Afolabi, Ado-Ekiti

ELDER statesman and legal icon, Afe Babalola (SAN), has said that the defamatory remarks made against him by a human rights activist, Dele Farotimi, in his book are too huge and destructive to be remedied by any award of damages.

The founder of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD), made this known on Friday at a press conference, held at the Afe Babalola Bar Centre in Ado-Ekiti.

Speaking on behalf the legal luminary, his lead counsel, Mr. Owoseni Ajayi, who is a for-

• Says Farotimi Will Be Free Once He Shows Proof Of His Assertions

mer Commissioner for Justice in Ekiti State, said there were various misleading publications, particularly in the social media, about the ongoing matter between the Nigerian Police and Dele Farotimi over his recent publication, titled, ‘Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System’.

He said: “Ordinarily, we would have kept quiet, since the matter is still in court. However, to prevent undiscerning members of the public from being misled by the obvious misrepresentations, it has become apposite for us

to respond to same.

“There is a dictum in law to wit: ‘Audi Altareum Partem’ which means the need to hear the other side. The Yorubas believe so much in this dictum, that they have a proverb that says ‘A gbo ejo enikan da, agba osika ni’ literally translating to mean that anyone who judges by the report of just one party is the most wicked. I have found this proverb to be true.

“Not long ago, many people on different social media platforms hailed Afe Babalola for speaking truth to power, like

he always does in the interest of our beloved nation.

“However, today, the same Afe Babalola and his family have been ferociously attacked on the internet because of the one-sided report by Mr. Dele Farotimi.”

He therefore said what Farotimi wrote about him in the said book could destroy what he had spent his entire life building.

The legal icon said it was in view of the above that he wrote a petition to the Police Commissioner in Ekiti State, requesting that he use his good offices to intervene. He added: “I wrote to request

that Farotimi must show proof of the truthfulness of his publication, failing which he should be prosecuted for criminal defamation, in accordance with the requirement of the extant laws of Nigeria, and confiscate all defamatory publications, until the investigations are completed.

“The petition also requested that Mr. Dele Farotimi, by himself, and/or his agents, be stopped from further publishing any defamatory contents to attack my hard-earned reputation, the reputation of my law firm, and that of my lawyers and of the Nigerian Judiciary.”

Ogun State Begins Public Health Reforms With Legal Framework Review

From Azeez Olorunlomu, Abeokuta

OGUN State has taken a significant step towards fortifying its public health infrastructure by launching a comprehensive legal framework review.

This initiative was inaugurated through a four-day Public Health Legal Assessment Workshop, held in Abeokuta.

Organised with the support of Health Ethics and Law Consulting (HELIC), the workshop aimed to align the state’s public health laws with the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005, ensuring a robust system capable of effectively addressing future public health emergencies.

The workshop, which took place at the Conference Hotel and Suites, Abeokuta, brought together a diverse array of stakeholders. Participants included representatives from the Ministries of Health, Justice, Agriculture, Environment, and Budget and Planning, alongside public health professionals, legal experts, and officials from the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC); underscoring a shared commitment to strengthening the state’s public health legal framework.

HELIC, in collaboration with Resolve to Save Lives (RSTL), played a pivotal role in facilitating the workshop. Utilising the Subnational Legal Assessment Tool for Public Health Law – developed in partnership with NCDC – the review process aimed to identify gaps and propose enhancements to the existing legal structures. Months of preparatory stakeholder engagement laid the groundwork for this initiative, ensuring that the perspectives of various sectors were considered.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Dr. Aladehinde Kayode, highlighted the critical importance of the workshop.

Speaking on behalf of the Commissioner for Health, he said: “The Ministry of Health is committed to ensuring that our state has a robust public health security law. This will better protect us from future public health events. This workshop is crucial to achieving that goal.”

His remarks underscored the state’s proactive approach to health security, reflecting a broader vision of preparedness and resilience.

The Ministry of Justice also emphasised its support for the initiative. Representing the Commissioner for Justice, Mr. James Olubankole pointed out the limitations of the current legal framework, noting that the last revision in 2020 focused primarily on penalties.

“This workshop offers us an opportunity to amend our existing laws to ensure we can better respond to public health events,” he explained.

He highlighted the need for a comprehensive overhaul that addresses structural and procedural deficiencies.

Managing Partner at HELIC, Prof. Cheluchi Onyemelukwe, expressed enthusiasm for contributing to the development of Ogun State’s health security law.

From **Bridget Chiedu Onochie** (Abuja Bureau Chief)

Tinubu: Strengthening Investment Ties With France Despite Sahel Africa Log Out

PRESIDENT Bola Ahmed Tinubu's recent visit to France has been a subject of discussions, not only on account of its economic benefits to Nigeria but the confidence reposed on him to reinforce the waning relationship between France and its former West African colonies.

For some economic and diplomatic reasons, some French-speaking members of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) have cut bilateral relationship with France. Initiated by Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso; Chad and Senegal are following suit with demands for apology over 1944 massacre. In fact, Senegal has asked France to close its military bases in the country.

President Macron had expressed optimism that President Tinubu was capable of strengthening, not only the relationship between France and Nigeria, but also that of entire Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including those shutting their doors against the country.

"We have confidence that you, Mr. President, will reinforce our relationship with Nigeria, and it will cover the West Coast region with ECOWAS playing the leading role. I will seek your leadership to work as partners of progress. You are the great leader of the great country in Africa," Macron said to Tinubu.

But looking at the reality of the situation, the assignment to stabilize ECOWAS appeared a herculean task before President Tinubu, considering that there is already a crack among ECOWAS members. Except for the last-minute intervention, the region is at the brink of losing Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to a new bloc - Alliance for Sahel States, which was masterminded by military juntas that govern the countries.

The three countries have, on January 27, announced their intention to withdraw from membership of ECOWAS. Some of the justifications given for their exit include the fact that the regional bloc provided no support against the jihadists, which have inflicted serious mishaps in the Sahel; imposition of "illegal" sanctions that were inimical to their survival, and the allegation that ECOWAS has fallen under the influence of foreign governments.

However, whether their threat was real or not would be determined in two months' time when their joint communication to ECOWAS will clock one year and thereafter, take effect.

For now, some member countries

believed that being landlocked counties, pulling out of ECOWAS will have severe socio-economic implications on the three coup countries. But with the creation of a new bloc - Alliance for Sahel States and the printing of new passport without ECOWAS logo by Burkina Faso, hope of reintegration dims further.

With these internal challenges, reconciliatory responsibility vested on President Tinubu as the Chairman of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government by Macron becomes an issue of worries.

With the level of romance with Russia, the gulf between France and its former colonies is widening. A lawyer, activist and political analyst, Mr. Frank Frank Tietie, believed that the visit suggested that President Tinubu was capitalising on the strained relations between France and some of its former colonies.

"This is evident from the new trade deals that have been established between France and Nigeria. It is possible that opportunities, particularly in sectors like mining, might have been limited if France still had strong relations with Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali.

"Furthermore, President Tinubu's inability to convince these three former French colonies to rejoin the ECOWAS bloc shows that his promises are more of a diplomatic façade", he added.

For an Abuja-based global affairs analyst, Mr. Paul Ejime, tasking President Tinubu to reconcile grieving ECOWAS member states was like "looking for a lost item in the bag of the person that reported the loss."

Ejime stated that as the Chairman of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, Tinubu had earlier designated Senegalese President, Diomaye Faye, as a mediator charged with the responsibility of bringing the three renegade junta leaders and their countries back to ECOWAS but that was to no avail.

"Unless President Macron's request is within this context, it is tantamount to the effort of a desperate France confused over the loss of influence over its former colonies.

"In line with ECOWAS regulation, the full impact of the Alliance of Sahel States' decision to leave ECOWAS will begin to manifest from January

2025, a year after their notice to quit. There are potential consequences of humanitarian crisis, chaotic movement and displacements of people across borders.

"Already, citizens of the three landlocked countries are suffering the socio-economic hardships of near isolation of their countries. The situation can only get worse compounded by insecurity sweeping across the Sahel and the ECOWAS region.

"The junta leaders themselves might be making secret plans to return to ECOWAS because their separation is untenable and unsustainable.

"ECOWAS made some mistakes in the sanctions and general management of rising military incursions but having pulled back the punches, the decision by the three countries to quit the block was ill-informed."

Ejime, therefore, urged France to recalibrate its African policy while ECOWAS engages in some critical house cleaning, especially on good governance and arresting corruption, political, constitutional and electoral or ballot box coups.

A Port Harcourt-based lawyer, Chief Festus Oguiche in his reaction, felt that Mr. President takes great relish in going out of his way to please France by pandering to its interests in whatever that is of value and importance to it.

According to him, the new found romance between Nigeria and France showcases good levers of enthusiasm between the two leaders in such dimension that it was not completely odd for emotions and fantasies to run wild.

He also believed that if the President had in his capacity as the Chairman of ECOWAS handled the case of Niger Republic with the tact and diplomacy it deserved, one will clearly state that he could apply his position and influence to effect reconciliation.

"Unfortunately, he lost it totally by the manner of his reaction or rather the reaction of the ECOWAS Community immediately upon the take-over by the military junta in Niger Republic.

"He threatened them fire and brimstone unless they relinquished power and returned the country to a democratic order. Massive sanctions were imposed on

the landlocked country, including blockage of their land and air spaces. Throughout what might be regarded as an ordeal by the people of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso stood by their sister country. "I think that would be the basis for ascertaining the possibility or rather, the capacity of Tinubu to reconcile these countries with their former

The junta leaders themselves might be making secret plans to return to ECOWAS because their separation is untenable and unsustainable. ECOWAS made some mistakes in the sanctions and general management of rising military incursions but having pulled back the punches, the decision by the three countries to quit the block was ill-informed. At this point, it will be desirable for France to recalibrate its African policy while ECOWAS engages in some critical house cleaning, especially on good governance and arresting corruption, political, constitutional and electoral or ballot box coups.

colonial master, and this points directly to his locus or position in the entire controversy of which I doubt if those countries would forget in a hurry.

"Then, consider also the fact that the three countries have exited the community as a veritable response to the difficult situations created by the regional body of which Tinubu is head and you will see that any move by Nigerian President in that direction would exacerbate or worsen the already fragile relations between France and those three other countries."

The National Secretary, Coalition of United Political Parties (CUPP), Chief Peter Ameh, said that if President Tinubu promised to help reconcile France and the three African countries that severed diplomatic ties with France, it was an empty diplomatic move.

"However, the question remains whether he has the power to do so. He made that promise to President Macron of France to reconcile what he knew would be absolutely impossible to achieve.

"Nigeria's relationship with France is complex, as a country, it is almost not at talking terms with all those countries that have booted France and renounced her as their colonial master.

"Because of their perception, either rightly or wrongly, this has led to strained relationships between Nigeria and several countries that have severed ties with France.

"However, it is essential to acknowledge that the task of reconciling France with those countries is almost in my view, unachievable, given the complexities of Nigeria's relationships with other African countries. As a seasoned politician, Tinubu should know that fulfilling this promise would be challenging, if not almost impossible.

"As the Chairman of ECOWAS, Tinubu has a significant role in regional diplomacy but his influence may be limited when it comes to countries that have already severed ties with France. The fact that he hasn't been able to convince these countries to reconsider their exit from ECOWAS suggests that his powers of persuasion may have limitations.

"Moreover, the issues underlying the diplomatic rifts between France and these African countries are complex and deeply rooted. They involve historical grievances, economic interests and geopolitical tensions that cannot be easily resolved, no matter how genuine is the intention of the Nigerian President."



Macron



Tinubu

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How Govt Frustrates Workers With HND Certificate

By Gbenga Salau

THOUGH, the Higher National Diploma/Bachelor of Degree (HND/BSc) dichotomy is still a strong challenge in the Nigerian civil service, there are indications that workers in Lagos State Civil Service Commission with HND are being double punished in their attempt to climb the ladder within the system.

It was gathered that many of them joined the civil service knowing they would not get to the pinnacle of their career with HND except they recalibrate with a university degree. Those who do not mind going through the recalibration efforts are either obstructed or punished in the process.

A staff, who pleaded anonymity, disclosed that she joined the service with HND and knowing that she has what it takes to get to the highest position available within the service: Her limitation being her HND certificate.

As a result, she decided to enroll for a Post Graduate Diploma. She added that when she applied to the appropriate ministry, Ministry of Establishment, Training and Pensions that she was ready for her master's, as its approval is critical to the certificate being recognised when she presents it for promotion.

She said she went through harrowing experience before it was accepted. She said that at a point despite her master's in a state owned university, the ministry claimed it did not

recognise the certificate from the institution until the issue was taken to the ministry of education, before it was finally accepted.

"It was not easy getting approval even to do my master's programme, which is the most important criteria to get my conversion accepted to move to the officers' cadre in the Lagos State Civil Service."

She further said that after the battles of getting the approval to do the master's and getting the certificate accepted, she has not been fully recognised.

"Now, I have had my conversion interview since last quarter of 2023, I have not received a letter of approval almost 14 months after. There has not been any particular reason given for this delay.

"Another policy that is disturbing and still ahead is that, even if I get the approval letter tomorrow, after having spent five years as Chief Executive Officer, I will still have to wait for another three years before sitting for promotion exam to Grade Level 15.

"It is just an experience I don't wish my children, and so, will never allow them go through the civil service let alone go to the polytechnic for their education."

She maintained that it is not because she is a female or that someone

wanted to take advantage of her as a female because the denial is not limited to her or females alone as many HND holders are going through the experience.

Another HND holder revealed that when he came in, he was admitted to level 7 while his friend was admitted to level 8.

He added that while his friend is on level 16 at present, he disclosed that he is still on level 14 hoping that he would soon be promoted to level 15 having gone ahead to get a university degree.

It was, however, learnt that when the immediate past Governor Akinwunmi Ambode came, he abolished all bottlenecks and the delays around the academic upgrade for HND holders, immediately he left, the bureaucratic bottlenecks were restored.

It was even gathered that many HND holders within the system out of frustration and unnecessary delay and denial usually would go ahead to do a bachelor's degree or masters' programme without approval from the ministry often had difficulty getting the certificate approved for their conversion to the officers' cadre.

It was also learnt that the additional certificates of many HND holders who had done one university degree or the other were only accepted during the build up to the 2023 general elections as part of efforts to garner votes and sympathy for the ruling party by the state government.

Attempt to get the state government to comment on the complaint as at press time was not successful. Both the ministry and the civil service commission were contacted but no response.

Lagos Ready To Host 72-hour Non stop Shopping, Entertainment Festival — Governor

By Gbenga Salau

LAGOS Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu has unveiled plans to hold the maiden Lagos Shopping Festival, a 72-hour non-stop shopping and entertainment event from December 23 to 25 at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Lagos Island.

Speaking at the unveiling, Sanwo-Olu, who was optimistic that the festival would create employment opportunities and drive commercial activities, said the inaugural Lagos Shopping Festival will drive commerce by supporting local businesses, attracting global brands, and creating direct and indirect employment opportunities.

The governor said the Lagos Shopping Festival, being organised by Lagos State government through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Arts in partnership with Tolaram Africa Group, Guinness Nigeria Plc, Zenith Bank Plc, and Chain Reactions Africa, would attract local and international tourists to the state.

He said: "We are a city of audacious people who dream big and think big. By this December, the City of Dubai will be holding the 30th edition of its yearly Dubai Shopping Festival. But we are just starting now, and we believe it is never too late."

The festival's Director of Organisation and Logistics, Ms. Damilola Pedro, who described Sanwo-Olu as the lead strategist and biggest sales person for the state, said the shopping festival would promote trade and commerce during the three days.

Earlier, the Special Adviser to Governor on Tourism, Culture and Arts, Mr. Idris Aregbe, narrated how the ministry had used a fair earlier organised in the month of April in conjunction with another private entity as proof of concept to test the waters ahead of the Lagos Shopping Festival, which is bigger in scope and scale.

He told the gathering comprising representatives of Zenith Bank Plc, Tolaram Group, and Guinness Nigeria Plc how the sales recorded in a period of three days surpassed the N250 million sales threshold the organisers had never crossed.

Sanwo-Olu Tasks MDAs On Reducing Mother To Child HIV Transmission Incidents To Zero

By Gbenga Salau

LAGOS State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has tasked Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to work towards reducing the 20 per cent incidents of pregnant mothers with HIV giving birth to infected children to zero percent.

Speaking at a World AIDs Day Symposium organised by the Lagos State AIDS control Agency (LSACA) themed: "Putting People First, take the rights path sustain the HIV Response and stop HIV among children to end AIDS in 2030", Sanwo-Olu said that it is

unacceptable that in 2024 mother to child transmission is still be experienced.

The governor, who was represented by Commissioner For Health, Professor, Akin Abayomi, said his administration is committed to reducing stigmatisation and discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDs through strengthening community-based support systems.

Sanwo-Olu said he was optimistic that the effort would ensure a brighter, healthier future for Lagos and achieve an AIDs-free generation.

The Chief of Staff to the Governor, Tayo

Ayinde, in his goodwill message, restated the commitment of the state government to shaping synergy and strategies, build on its successes while pushing forward with renewed vigor to eradicating HIV epidemic in the state.

The Head of Service, Bode Agoro, who spoke through Permanent Secretary Ministry of Youth and Social Development, Oluwatoyin Oke-Osanyintolu, said the government had been promoting and creating a culture of compassion as well as respect to secure the future of the people as it continued to champion the course to end the spread of HIV.

The Chief Executive Officer of LSACA, Folakemi Animashaun, said the agency had reached out to over 5000 traders, trained religious leaders and traditional birth attendants, as well as uplifted the livelihood of older people living with HIV in its commitment to creating awareness and eliminating new infections.

Present at the event aimed at discussing critical HIV issues, focusing on children and sustainable response strategies were representatives of the Wife of the Governor, Dr Ibijoke, Sanwo-Olu, Deputy Governor, Obafemi Hamzat, royal fathers among other dignitaries.

Lagos Warns Builders, Pledges Fierce, Firm Actions Against Substandard Construction Materials

By Gbenga Salau

LAGOS State government has said it has zero tolerance for use of substandard materials for construction works, warning builders and developers not to construct buildings with inferior and substandard materials because the government will be fierce and firm on every structural details use for construction works across state.

Speaking at a stakeholders' forum with the Association of Real Estate

Developers of Nigeria, the General Manager, Lagos State Materials Testing Laboratory Agency, Engr. Olayinka Abdul, urged developers, engineers, and builders to maintain the highest standards of quality and safety in all construction projects to ensure durable and safe structures across the state.

Abdul underscored Lagos State's position as a rapidly expanding metropolitan hub, highlighting the vital role of the real estate sector in driving economic develop-

ment.

However, she stressed that this growth comes with significant responsibilities.

"As developers, engineers, and builders, it is imperative that we uphold the highest standards of quality and safety in all construction projects."

"This requires a mutual understanding of the regulatory environment guidelines and their focal roles in the built environment," she stated.

She explained that the regulatory environment forms the backbone of real estate development, influencing how projects are conceived, developed, and executed.

Abdul added that policymakers and industry professionals must collaborate to create a framework that balanced public safety with innovation and investment.

She outlined the materials testing process, which involved scientific evaluations to ensure that soil, water, cement, granite, blocks,

sand, and other construction materials meet safety standards.

Abdul further announced that all construction materials entering Lagos State would be rigorously scrutinised, and that manufacturers would be required to meet set standards.

The Chairman of the Association of Real Estate Developers of Lagos State, Chief Bashiru Lawal, urged developers to prioritise safety, quality, and adherence to building codes in all construction projects.



Minister of Solid Minerals, Dele Alake (left); Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu and Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Musawa, at the Elysee Palace, Paris as part of President Bola Tinubu's delegation on state visit to France ...last week



Executive Producer, Megastar Man of the Decade, Adeniyi Ifetayo (left); Recipient, Media Luminary of the Decade/ Publisher, *Ovation* Magazine, Chief Dele Momodu; representing Governor Sule Abdullahi of Nasarawa State recipient "Special Recognition for Governance Achievement in Industrialisation for the Decade," Director General (DG), Strategic Commission, Mr. Yakubu Lamai and Nasarawa State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Laraban Shuaibu at the Megastar Man of the Decade Awards at Wells Carlton Hotel Asokoro Abuja



Sokoto State Governor, Ahmad Aliyu (fourth left); Ambassador of the United States of America to Nigeria, Richard Mills Jnr. (fifth right) and others during Mills' visit to the Governor in Sokoto... on Thursday.



African representative of the University of Brazil, Dr. Larry Ayodeji (left); an awardee/ Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Integrated Estate Services Ltd, Dr Kolawole Anunlopo, and representative of the institution's Vice Chancellor, Professor Abba Joel Michael, at the conferment of doctorate degrees/ award ceremony held at the Centre For Management Development (CMD) Magodo, Lagos

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Stakeholders Decry Shortage Of Equipment At Radiologists' Award

By Isaac Taiwo

INTANT Rad in partnership with the Association of Radiologist in Nigeria organised 2024 Radiologists Recognition and Award ceremony with the theme "Celebrating the extra-ordinary efforts of Radiologists in advancing healthcare service delivery".

Speaking at the event, the National President, Association of Radiologists in Nigeria, Prof. Ibukun Oyinloye, premised the collaborative event on the need to recognise and encourage radiologists for their resilience and immense contribution to health sector.

He, however, decried many challenges confronting the practitioners such as dearth of staffers as a result of radiologists travelling abroad after being trained; shortage and high cost of equipment among others.

He called on the government to recognise the vital roles played by radiologists by creating conducive environment for them to operate. Country Director, Instant Rad, Nigeria, Bayode Oke Thomas, said there were very few radiologists compared with Nigeria's population.

Experts Decry Increase In Sexual, Gender-based Violence

By Mary Inimfon

THE Founder of the Gnosis Health Initiative, Olumide Kayode Omosebi, has expressed concern over the alarming prevalence of Gender-based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria.

Speaking at the Justice Development and Peace Centre (JDPC) summit on

gender equity and the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence, Omosebi highlighted statistics showing that one in three women in Nigeria has experienced domestic or gender-based violence at some point in their lives.

The summit, held in Lagos under the theme

"Accelerating Gender Equity and Empowerment of Women and Girls," brought together participants from various organisations, including the Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF) and the Lux Terra Leadership Foundation.

Omosebi attributed the increase in sexual and gen-

der-based violence to entrenched traditional practices, religious beliefs, and a lack of political will to enforce laws.

"Domestic violence and abuse are common in many marriages, where women endure such hardships due to traditional and religious views on divorce," he said.

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

THE Seven-Up Bottling Company (SBC) has won two prestigious awards – the CSR Award for Educational Empowerment and the Sustainability Initiative of the Year Award, at the Social

Seven-Up Bottling Coy Wins Multiple Awards

Impact & Sustainability Awards (SISA) 2024.

The company received the CSR Award for Educational Empowerment for its Harvard Business School Scholarship Initiative, and

the Sustainability Initiative of the Year Award for its One Staff, One Tree Initiative.

The Managing Director of the company, Ziad Maalouf was also recognised as the Social Impact Personality of

the Year for his leadership role in advancing social responsibility at SBC and, nationally, across Nigeria, through the Food and Beverage Recycling Alliance (FBRA) and a commitment to SME growth.

European Union, UNDP Support Nerdzfactory To Empower 4,000 MSMEs

By Josephine Amaole

ALEADING capacity-building and innovation organisation, NerdzFactory Company, has successfully concluded the second phase of the Enhancing the

Capabilities of Cluster-Based Support for Improved Resilience and Growth Project.

This initiative, supported by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), targeted Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in seven Nigerian states, equipping them with vital skills and resources for sustainable

growth.

The second phase of the project focused on training over 4,000 business owners in cluster groups across Anambra, Bayelsa, Edo, Kano, Kebbi, Kwara, and Lagos states.

Sokoto: Aliyu's Nine-point Agenda Excites US Envoy

THE United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Richard Mills Jnr, has extolled the Nine-point agenda of Sokoto State Governor, Ahmed Aliyu.

He stated this, on Thursday, when he paid a courtesy call on Aliyu at the Government House, Sokoto.

According to a statement by the Press Secretary to the governor, Abubakar Bawa, the ambassador was in Sokoto to brainstorm with the governor on his areas of priority for the state.

Mills said: "I have heard and impressed with the nine-point agenda, which the gov-

ernor has laid out.

"It touches many areas that we feel are the most dear to you: security, education and youth empowerment, among others." He also said he was in the state to find out how the US programmes were going on.

He described Sokoto State as

very important in the religious and political spheres in the country.

Responding, Aliyu commended the US Government for the various initiatives it has introduced such as the USAID programmes that have made a lot of impact on the lives of people of the state.

Professional Food Service Providers Hold Fun Fair

By Sunday Aikulola

ASOCIATION of Professional Food Service Providers of Nigeria (APFSPN) will hold its yearly Fun Fair on Sunday, December 8, 2024 between 8 am and 10 pm at Grange School, 2, Harold Sodipo Street, Ikeja - GRA, Lagos.

The Chairperson, APFSPN/ Chief Executive, Sweethands Enterprises, Monioluwa Shonibare, said: "The Fun Fair will feature sports competition, food display, music and dance."

APFSPN Public Relations Officer, Folake Oba-Kasumu, added that, "the inter-house sports competition will be among Yellow, Red, Green and White houses".

It would be recalled that APFSPN recently inducted over 120 professional caterers as members during the third induction ceremony held in Lagos.

Shonibare urged the Federal Government to intervene in high cost of food items, adding that members found it difficult to drive their businesses profitably due to soaring prices.

"APFSPN is an association with the sole vision of impacting on the people, government and the environment, whose core values are inclusiveness, professionalism, dedication to culinary arts, among others."

Okeke Wins Inspirational Female Executive Of The Year Award

BUSINESSDAY has recognised Ambassador Amaka Diane Okeke as “Inspirational Female Executive of the Year” at the Nigerian Business Leadership Award. Okeke is an authentic business leader with over a decade of experience at Optiva Capital Partners. She has risen through the ranks, from being a trainee in 2013 to become the Executive Director of Business Development. Her earlier career at Optiva Capital Partners started from a single location to now 25 state-of-the-art branches and from

just 15 staff to currently 1,300 seasoned professionals. As a trailblazing director, Okeke has been providing leadership and strategic direction to the organisation, overseeing the development and implementation of business strategies, customer engagement, identifying potential locations for branch expansion, work tools for business development, team training and development, institutional operations, social media marketing and so on. Optiva Capital Partners is Africa’s foremost wealth retention and investment advisory firm

providing bespoke solutions in Investment Immigration, investment advisory, international real estate, and insurance services. With a network of elite global partners, the company has successfully assisted thousands of families with their evolving needs for global access and wealth retention. Okeke is an ambassador at large for the African Union, a member of the Women in Management, Business, and Public Service (WIMBIZ), and a Fellow of the prestigious National Institute of Credit Administration

(NICA). She has a B.Sc. in Sociology, obtained a Certification of Capability in Business Analysis (CCBA®), and a Certified Business Analysis Professional (CBAP).



Hallmark University Appoints Fassy Yusuf Professor

THE Chairman of Ijebu Ode branch of the Nigerian Bar Association, Dr Fassy Yusuf, has been appointed a distinguished fellow/visiting professor by Hallmark University, Ijebu-Itele, Ogun State. Yusuf, a lawyer, holds a Ph.D from the University of Lagos. Aside a degree in law, he has degrees in Mass Communication and Business Administration as well as professional qualifications in marketing, public relations, advertising, journalism and communication studies. He once served as Ogun State Commissioner for Information, Sports and Culture. According to a statement by the Publicity Secretary of the Ijebu Ode NBA, Atinuke Akinsanya, Yusuf, who is a scholar

of note with many publications, is currently a distinguished fellow/ associate professor at the University of Lagos.



By Geraldine Akutu

MIRACLE Diamond, popularly known as Miradiamond, has won the 4th edition of Face of Rolemodel Nigeria. Sheu Zainab (Lagos) and Emmanuel Boma (Rivers) placed second and third, respectively. Miracle, a University of Lagos undergraduate, triumphed over 30 other contestants, emerging as the 2024 winner. She secured a 500,000 deal with 247 Stonewood Drink, along with prizes from sponsors

Miracle Diamond Crowned Miss Rolemodel Nigeria 2024

like Kosifila Autos, Maya Spa, and Fevy Collection. The top model will be managed by MHD Modeling Agency for the year. This year’s pageant introduced a gender-based format, with David Aghulor crowned the first Mr. Rolemodel Nigeria. Miracle expressed gratitude for the transformative experience, emphasising her commitment

to empowering women, promoting education, and advocating for mental health, leaving a legacy of compassion and leadership. Williams Hikanote, ED of Regal Guild Brand, a rebranding name from ROMA, highlighted the pageant’s goal to celebrate beauty, talent, and cultural heritage while em-

powering Nigerian youth as global role models and advocates for social change.

Centre Hosts Roundtable For Physicians To Unwind, Network

By Gbenga Salau

THE Nordica Fertility Centre, Lagos, hosted the 2024 Physicians Round Table (PRT) providing opportunities for health workers to unwind, learn and network. In his opening remarks, the CEO of Nordica Fertility Centre, Dr Abayomi Ajayi, disclosed that the evening of unwinding and networking

was held regularly before COVID came and stopped it. He said it is not just to share clinical knowledge but also an opportunity to ask questions and relax. He added that there are a lot of opportunities in Nigeria that are not being explored and other nationals are coming to the country to take them with Nigerians want to fly out. He said health workers

need to pay attention to financial literacy as it is critical to having a successful career. “The second is collaboration, doctors are poor in collaboration, doctors are not coming together to work together. The last is mentoring. The older ones should not be afraid to pass the baton to the younger ones and the younger ones should respect the older

ones. We need to cultivate the mentoring policy very serious.” Thereafter, Dr Victor Ajayi gave a talk around fertility saying that one in four young couples will experience delay in achieving pregnancy. He said a lady below 35 should seek help after trying to get pregnant for one year while those above 35 should seek help after six months.

SCFN Partners LUTH On Bone Marrow Transplant

By Paul Adunwoke

THE Sickle Cell Foundation Nigeria (SCFN) has partnered Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) to establish bone marrow transplant (BMT), for effective treatment for Sickle Cell Disorder (SCD) patients. Speaking at an event in Lagos, the foundation’s founder, Prof. Olu Akinyanju, said the foundation was established 30 years ago as an entity to address all aspects of sickle cell disease, from advocacy, training and research to prevention, treatment, care and support. He explained that the foundation is eager to bring the cure for the disorder to Nigerians in Nigeria. He stated that the foundation’s partnered with the Mediterranean Institute of

Haematology (IME) in Rome enabled 50 Nigerian children with SCD to undergo free successful bone marrow transplants in Italy. “Unfortunately, this partnership was discontinued in 2015 due to funding constraints in Rome. Akinyanju disclosed that in October 2024, SCFN has achieved a historic breakthrough by completing the first-of-its-kind Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) in Nigeria and West Africa, using advanced technology and expertise in partnership with LUTH. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), of the foundation, Dr. Annette Akinsete, said the foundation partnered with LUTH because Nigeria is the sickle cell disorder capital of the world.

RedCross, Stakeholders Launch Campaign To Reduce Road Crashes

By Moyosore Salami

IN a bid to curb the rising number of road accidents in Nigeria, the Nigerian Red Cross, in partnership with Prudential Zenith Life Insurance, has launched an initiative to train 10,000 commercial drivers across Lagos State. Speaking during the launch of the Safe Steps Road Safety Campaign, the General Manager of Resource Mobilization, Nigerian Red Cross, Gbubemi Uba, noted that the project aimed to address reckless driving and improve awareness of road safety rules. She explained that the initiative will not only train

10,000 drivers but also adopt 2,000 of them as first responders for road crashes. On her part, Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer for Prudential Zenith Life, Cherise Ige, emphasised the company’s commitment to social responsibility. Ige stated that the programme targets commercial drivers, particularly those operating damper trucks and taxis, who are often associated with road traffic incidents. By improving driver behavior, the initiative seeks to address the high rate of accidents in Nigeria compared to global averages.

By Josephine Amaole

A NON-profit, Amina Dikwa Foundation (ADF), has launched a multifaceted recovery initiative to address the needs of victims of the devastating floods that wreaked havoc across households in Borno State recently. ADF’s founder/CEO Amina Dikwa said its initiatives bordered on measures spread across the short-term, medium to long-terms. “We have achieved significant progress through our immediate response, providing emergency relief such as clean drinking water, blankets, long-lasting insecticidal mosquito nets, clothing materials, and sanitary kits to women, girls, and children in Internally Dis-

ADF Supports Flood Victims

placed Persons (IDP) camps,” Amina Dikwa explained. She said as part of its commitment, the foundation supported affected communities through medical care delivered through collaborations with other NGOs, while establishing communication with relevant authorities and stakeholders. “We also provided essential services, including sanitation kits and equipment, medical care, psychosocial support, educational support through school renovations and learning materials, and cash assistance to women for livelihood recovery,” Amina stated.

By Onyedika Agbedo

AS part of efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change on the environment, 10-year-old Kamsiyochukwu David Nnakenyi has launched a tree planting initiative in Lagos. An enrollee into the Boys to Kings programme, an online mentoring scheme for young boys across the globe, Kamsiyochukwu embarked on the project following values he imbibed from the initiative. Speaking at his inaugural tree planting exercise on Adetoro Adelaja Street, Magodo Phase II, Lagos, he said: “I decided to plant trees to beautify the environment and refresh the air. I particularly decided to plant soursop trees because of their health benefits. I learnt that soursop fruit helps cancer patients. So, when these trees mature and

10-year-old Kamsiyochukwu Launches Tree Planting Campaign

begin to bear fruits, people suffering from cancer can eat it and recover fast.” Kamsiyochukwu, who thanked all those that supported the exercise, promised to plant more trees as he grows older to preserve the environment and make it more habitable. Kamsi’s father, Mr. Stanley Nnakenyi, said the family supported the initiative to nurture the talent in him. “We support any talent we see in our children. We have a policy of supporting them once the intention is right. A lot of people at his age may not know the importance of the event. But I can guarantee you that in another five years, God keeping us alive, you

will see that it is a very impactful exercise. So, that is why we encouraged him and asked his friends to support him too,” he said. To the mother, Mrs. Uche Nnakenyi, the project has its foundation in Kamsiyochukwu joining the Boys to Kings programme. She said: “When Kamsi told me he was going to be planting trees, I was very excited considering the impact of climate change on the environment.” The Vice Chairman, Central Zone of the estate, Akintunde Ayandos, who participated in the exercise, said: “A 10-year old making this kind of move is quite visionary, impressive and he deserves all the support we can give.”



Special

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How Poor Psychiatric Care Heightens Fear

From dearth of hospitals and mental health professionals to lack of basic amenities and poor funding, it is glaring that psychiatric care in Nigeria is in dire strait, also as the number of mental cases has spiked by over 200 per cent in the last few months. In 2020, the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) revealed that there were only 350 psychiatrists for Nigeria's population of about 200 million people. Now, with brain drain and a lot of experts relocating abroad for greener pastures, it is expected that the number of psychiatrists to cater to the same population would have been far less than 350 with some consequences for the country, GBENGA AKINFENWA writes.



ON January 1, 2021, a middle-aged man, Peter Akinjogun, a psychiatric patient in Ogun State, was discharged on the claim that he had been certified sane and could return to the society to mingle with other people.

To his family, his return that morning was like a New Year gift, as the man had suffered mental disorder since 2017, and had been in and out of hospitals within Ogun and Lagos states.

It was joy unlimited because he reunited with the family at a time when everyone came home to celebrate the Christmas festivity with their aged parents. But the happiness that trailed the discharge of the patient was cut-short a few hours after his return. Around 5:30pm that day, Peter stabbed his step brother, a 42-year-old man, Femi Akinjogun, to death after a little misunderstanding.

The tragedy, which shook the entire Salami Ojerinde and adjoining streets at Powerline in Agbado-OkeAro area of Ifo Local Council, Ogun State, left a major scar in the family, and till date, the mare still haunts the family.

The incident occurred during the slaughtering of a ram to celebrate the New Year. Femi, who lived in the family house with his two sons and a pregnant wife, had sought the assistance of Peter in butchering the ram. Peter was not happy with the request and a minor altercation followed. In the process, Peter picked up a knife and stabbed his brother in the neck in the presence of everybody, including his wife, who was pregnant. Femi was rushed to the hospital, but he couldn't make it, as he died on the way.

The incident later became a matter of serious concern, as Nigerians, especially friends of the deceased raised questions on why and how a psychiatric patient would be certified fit and discharged when he was still mentally unstable.

The incident is one of the many tragic cases associated with psychiatric patients. There are reports that many similar cases have either been under-reported or swept under the carpet, making it difficult to address the preventable tragedies.

A victim of mental patient's brutality, Ruth Idowu, who shared her bitter experience with *The Guardian*, said the incident almost claimed her life. Still, the attack by a madman, which occurred when Idowu was 17 years old, left her permanently disfigured. She said the incident was enough to force her to commit suicide, but owing to 'will-power' and the drive to succeed, she kept on struggling with life. The attack led to

the cutting of her two wrists.

"On October 2, 2010, while I was assisting my mother in her restaurant at Oja-Odan, Yewa North Local Council, Ogun State, I stood at the entrance inward the restaurant. Suddenly, I noticed someone approaching the doorway, behold, it was a madman, holding a machete and was aiming straight for my head." Panic-stricken, she took to her heels to escape from the impending doom, but fell in the process. The man caught up with her and began to strike her with the machete.

"To prevent him from cutting off my head and neck, I used my two hands as defence and in the process my two wrists were completely cut off. By the time sympathisers rushed out to rescue me, it was already too late because he had succeeded in cutting off the two wrists and inflicted a deep cut on my neck," Idowu narrated her ordeal.

She revealed that street boys who were angry with the incident went after the madman who ran close to a nearby police station where they caught up with him. As the madman was trying to flee again, they set him ablaze because they thought Idowu was dead.

“

Physician burnout among psychiatrists is quite concerning. They may choose to migrate, or quit practice altogether, further depleting their number, and discouraging young doctors from choosing to specialise in psychiatry. For the country, we stand the risk of worsening brain drain on one hand, and poor economic growth on the other hand, as a mentally struggling workforce cannot successfully drive the economic growth that our nation's leaders are working on.

"I was taken to several hospitals to put the severed wrists back to position, but all efforts proved futile due to non-availability of fund. I spent eight months in the hospital before I returned to the village. Good Samaritans later came my way and I was flown to the United States of America (USA) for proper medical attention. I spent five months in America and came back with two artificial limbs," she recalled.

A lady, in her 30s told *The Guardian* on condition of anonymity that she was barely nine years old when a mentally deranged man violated her. Her family was helpless and ever since, she has continued to feel the pain, as she has not completely healed from the trauma.

The lady asked, "Who will ever believe that a madman took your virginity? Who will you tell this? Can you even open up to your husband to tell him this truth?"

Nigeria is reported to be grappling with a staggering mental health crisis, as millions of its citizens suffer from various mental disorders. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that a whopping 20 per cent of Nigerians, or around 40 million people, are affected by mental illness.

Although mental health problems are widespread in many African nations, they rarely receive the attention they deserve. And owing to the limited understanding of mental health disorders at the primary health-care level, caring for individuals with mental health issues is often left for family members.

While inadequate facilities stands as a major challenge, a check at the available mental health facilities across the country showed that while a few states can boast of having psychiatric hospitals, majority of the hospitals lack basic amenities.

It was learnt that majority of the facilities are struggling with inadequate bed spaces; outdated equipment; and limited access to medical imaging, resulting in inadequate care and long waiting times for patients.

Mental disorder, also known as mental illness or psychiatric disorder, has a pattern of behavioural, emotional or cognitive symptoms that cause distress that impairs daily functioning, and deviation from cultural norms. Its characteristics include abnormal thoughts, feelings or behaviour, persistent or recurrent symptoms and interference with daily life, relationship, or work.

Investigations and research have shown that the challenges facing the country's psychiatric care system include shortage

Feature

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Of Mentally Challenged Country

of psychiatrists and mental health professionals, poor funding, cultural and religious beliefs, inadequate infrastructure, lack of awareness about mental health issues and multigenerational trauma.

The *Guardian* investigations show that owing to infrastructure challenge and dearth of professionals, there has been a major hindrance to effective mental service delivery. Investigations show that mental health cases in the country are increasing at an alarming rate.

It was gathered that the funding for mental health care is limited, with only a small fraction of the central government's health budget (3 to 4 per cent) dedicated to mental health. Of this amount, over 90 per cent goes to a handful of neuropsychiatric hospitals, leaving a few resources for other facilities.

The Medical Director, Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba (FNPHY), Lagos, Dr Olugbenga Owoeye, confirmed that Nigeria has only 10 stand-alone psychiatric hospitals in 10 states, which, according to him, are grossly inadequate "because every state is supposed to have at least one psychiatric hospital."

According to Owoeye, the Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba is experiencing a drastic swell in the number of fresh cases. This revelation gave credence to the fact that the few psychiatric hospitals in the country are already burdened.

He noted that the hospital has seen a spike from between 150 and 300 monthly to between 750 and 900 currently.

"Before, we used to see, on average, five to 10 new cases of patients breaking down every day. But now, we are seeing 25 to 30 new cases every day, and they are not those people who are coming for check-ups," the medical director said.

A consultant psychiatrist, Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Aro, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Dr. Emmanuel Abayomi, who also stated that the country is challenged with dearth of psychiatric hospitals, said there are nine stand alone federal psychiatric hospitals, in addition to about 12 federal university teaching hospitals, with in-patient psychiatric services domiciled within their facilities.

He added that there are about 15 state-government run psychiatric facilities across the federation. He added that nearly all state government-run medical school teaching hospitals and privately run university medical school teaching hospitals provide some form of mental health care services.

"In addition to these, there are quite a good number of private mental health care facilities, especially in the urban centres." Despite these, experts say the facilities are grossly inadequate to cater for the growing number of patients.

It was learnt that the spike in the number of mental patients and inadequate infrastructure to cater for their treatment is gradually assuming a dangerous dimension in the country, as the number of those roaming the streets, markets, communities and highways are increasing astronomically.

Reports indicate that Nigeria has only 0.5 beds per 1,000 people, far below the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended four beds per 1,000 people, while over 60 per cent of x-ray equipment is obsolete, as some are dating back 10 to 60 years. The country could boast of only 58 Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machines as of 2018.

The painful aspect of this development is the growing number of patients besieging these facilities.

As a confirmation of this, the World Health



Organisation (WHO) reports that one in seven adolescents suffer from one mental illness or another and the number increases as they move to adults, where one in four adults suffer from one mental illness or another. This further compounded the problems associated with these mental health facilities.

Abayomi, who attested to the rising number of patients, argued that the trend is not peculiar to Nigeria, it is a global situation. He lamented that the sharp rise in mental health care needs of patients, is far beyond the available facilities and trained mental health personnel.

On the growing number of new patients, he said: "This increase happens in two ways. Firstly, the number of persons who newly report having mental health struggles is on the increase. On the other hand, people who have been previously diagnosed with a mental health condition are suffering more relapses by the day."

The issue of shortage of psychiatrists and mental health professionals seems to have defied all possible solutions, especially with the mass exodus of health officials to foreign countries.

Beyond psychiatrists, there is also a shortage of psychologists in the country. Psychologists are key professionals in providing services for people with mental conditions such as behavioural problems, learning difficulties, depression, and anxiety.

This development has also been aggravated by brain drain, with many mental health professionals leaving the country in search of greener pastures.

Experts claim that aside from funding, the issue of brain drain in the sector is also majorly caused by poor state of infrastructure, driving many mental health professionals to seek better opportunities abroad.

Abayomi, who rued the untoward development, said with the meager number of psychiatrists, a doctor would be catering for over one million patients.

"Nigeria currently has one psychiatrist to cater for the mental health needs of over one million people! And this is precarious, both for the psychiatrist and the country. The psychiatrist is at risk of increased stress and burnout. And don't forget, the psychiatrist is also a human being, who is equally at risk of mental health struggles.

"Physician burnout among psychiatrists is quite concerning. They may choose to migrate, or quit practice altogether, further depleting their number, and discouraging young doctors from choosing to specialise in psychiatry. For the country, we stand the risk of worsening brain drain on one hand, and poor economic growth on the other hand, as a mentally struggling workforce cannot successfully drive the economic growth that our nation's leaders are working on."

On his part, Owoeye said the concern for professionals is due to the growing inability of the care facilities and their workforce to adequately meet the rising demands for mental well-being. He acknowledged the gross inadequacy of mental health experts globally, which is one of the factors promoting the brain drain of health professionals in Third World countries like Nigeria.

The medical director grieved that Nigeria currently has less than 300 psychiatric doctors and even lesser number of occupational therapists, a few number of clinical psychologists, as well as a few psychiatric nurses and social workers.

"That means that there are less than 300 psychiatrists to take care of over 200 million people. Some states do not have a single psychiatrist, while the majority of these numbers are

in Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, and Enugu, because we are so small in number, we know ourselves."

He listed other challenges compounding the inadequate manpower in the country to include high cost of education, long duration of training, as well as inadequate infrastructure.

On the negative effect of this development on the society, Abayomi said: "Sadly, not only is it a fact that we don't have enough psychiatric facilities and new ones are not being built, the few available trained mental health professionals are either actively relocating abroad in search of greener pastures, or retiring from public service.

"And this has numerous negative on the society. First is the overall health and wellbeing of individuals that constitute the society. As a society is the sum of its individual persons and more, a mentally unwell individual who's unable to access quality healthcare makes for a mentally unhealthy society. In other words, if the society is sick today, it is perhaps her people are going through mental health struggles, with no sufficient resources to help them.

"Second is the negative impact of this on family health. Undiagnosed and untreated mental health conditions can lead to family conflicts, marital separation and divorce, not to mention intimate partner violence or domestic violence, and the untold harm this does to children raised in such families. Such children may grow up to bear the scars of childhood trauma - leading another gamut of mental health struggles - continuing another cycle of psychiatric disorders.

"A third negative impact is on the workplace and education. Students with mental health struggles who are unable to get treatment may suffer poor grades and failures in school, and eventually withdraw from school. Some persons fail to get advanced degrees because of anxiety disorders for example. And for the employed, patients with schizophrenia, for example, may resign from their jobs without full awareness of their actions, perhaps because they heard a voice telling them to do so.

"Bosses may unknowingly make the work environment toxic, further exacerbating the already fragile mental health of their staff. And this sometimes spirals out of control. There is a gale of resignations, a high staff turnover, dwindling company finances, mass retrenchment, and eventual company collapse, leading to unemployment and its own attendant mental health risks," Abayomi said.

He noted that the issue affects the society at large and there is a heightened state of anxiety, low morale, undue suspiciousness and paranoia. "We all feel unsafe in a hostile world. The health and safety of our world rests solidly on how compassionately we care for those among us with mental health struggles."

A sociologist, Mr. Dokun Gabriel, warned that the development portends great danger to the society.

"Majority of these psychiatric patients act violently, and are very aggressive with uneven emotional temperaments. We have had stories of psychiatric patients attacking people, with records of death, while some are left with permanent injuries.

"The dearth of mental health facilities and shortage of manpower will endanger the lives of Nigerians as these patients will continue to roam the streets, board same bus with sane people and also transact business with others in the same market."

Read the remaining part of this interview on www.guardian.ng



Interview

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How Sokoto Governor Is Changing State's Water Supply Narrative – Maccido

Alhaji Yusuf Mohammed Maccido is the Sokoto State Commissioner for Water Resources. A Prince of the Sultanate, he is the son of the late Sultan Muhammadu Maccido. He had served as the Secretary of the Sokoto Local Council and Principal Private Secretary to his father. Maccido has a deep passion for service to the people and this must have informed Governor Ahmad Aliyu Sokoto's decision to bring him onboard his administration. In this encounter with journalists, which featured The Guardian's ADAMU ABUH, the commissioner shares key insights on the significant achievements recorded so far in the water sector by the administration, especially the improvement of water supply across Sokoto State with the completion of the 40 million gallons per day water project. He also speaks on other sundry issues in the state, including the shortfalls of the immediate past Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) administration in the state and how the governor is addressing them through well thought-out policies and programmes. Excerpts:

We know it would be extremely difficult to avoid reacting to the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) orchestrated media attacks against the Governor Ahmad Aliyu Sokoto administration. But can we start from what you have been doing as the Commissioner for Water Resources to ensure that the people of Sokoto State have access to potable water?

I want to reaffirm that my name is Yusuf Mohammed Maccido, the Commissioner for Water Resources, Sokoto State. I absolutely agree with you that we should as much as possible try to ignore the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and concentrate on the difference that Governor Ahmad Aliyu Sokoto is making in governance unlike what our dear state suffered for eight years in the hands of Aminu Tambuwal. But like you know, they are mischievous and we have a duty to debunk their infantile lies. If we keep quiet, Nigerians would believe their propaganda.

It's really unfortunate that PDP has refused to accept that we not only defeated them but have completely buried them by doing the things they refused to do like providing water for the people, building roads, schools etc. The PDP's plan is to

bury our efforts with their negative publicity but thankfully the good people of Sokoto State are well informed about our governor's efforts to change their dependency to hope. Again, as much as I don't want to talk about the opposition PDP, I really can't keep quiet because they committed murder by their failure to work for the people.

When we came

The governor deserves commendation for the immediate steps he took, including the sinking of emergency boreholes and procuring water tankers to supply water to the people. This is what leadership is all about. And once I was appointed, the governor's unambiguous mandate to me was to ensure that I resolve the situation and going forward ensure that this never happens

on board, the water supply system in Sokoto State had virtually collapsed; even the ministry of water resources lacked water. So, how can a ministry that can't take care of itself take care of the people? What they (PDP) did in denying people access to water was criminal. Can you imagine a place like Sokoto State that's very hot without water? The situation we met was a total disaster.

So, before appointing his commissioners, the governor constituted a committee to immediately restore water supply to the people. The other challenge was that the state account was in red but the governor had to source money to finance the committee to buy chemicals for water treatment and to fix broken down equipment that were critical for the operation of the water corporation. The governor deserves commendation for the immediate steps he took, including the immediate sinking of emergency boreholes and procuring water tankers to supply water to the people. This is what leadership is all about. And once I was appointed, the governor's unambiguous mandate to me was to ensure that I resolve the situation and going forward ensure that this never happens again. The governor did fantastically in confronting the challenges. So what's the mandate of the Ministry of Water Resources?

The Sokoto State Ministry of Water Resources is responsible for improving water supply in the state. Its other statutory responsibilities include establishing an emergency committee to address water supply challenges, ensuring the smooth operation of water treatment facilities, providing safe drinking water to the public, extending and improving water supply infrastructure, collaborating with the Federal Government to improve water supply and ensuring that all the 72 dams in the state are fully functional.

Allow me to say, with all modesty, that we have so far given a good account of ourselves in terms of my ministry's responsibility to provide clean, potable water for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes. We are not where we want to be but there is a road map and an unflinching commitment by the governor to ensure that our people have access to water. You talked about the emergency committee that the governor was forced to put in place...

The committee was a child of necessity and it performed creditably. As you know, the water in Sokoto State, like some other places in Nigeria, is hard. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Nigeria Standard for Drinking Water Quality (NSDWQ), the underground water in Sokoto State has a hardness that exceeds the permissible limits due to a number of factors. The most important takeaway is that it's a matter of concern because hard water is not safe for drinking and impacts negatively on the efficiency and lifespan of appliances like electric kettles, baths and others that require water for operation. It even prevents soap from lathering. So, it is important that it's treated because it also causes dry and itchy skin; it has taste etc. This is why treating hard water is very expensive. This background is very important so that people can

understand the situation because even at the National Council on Water, most of my colleagues don't seem to understand why the North gets some priority in water projects.

Working with the governor, the committee restored power after payment of the outstanding bills. They equally addressed the issue of obsolete equipment, which I met on my appointment. It's scandalous that no pumping machine was working and this affected the pumping of raw water for treatment; same with other critical equipment and machineries. To worsen matters, these equipment cannot be bought off the shelf and they are extremely expensive. You need to open letters of credit and then the equipment will be manufactured to your specifications. So, in the interim we had to fix them because there was no budgetary provision to buy new ones.

I respect the governor's prudence and insistence on due process and his appreciation of the challenges and finding solutions to the problems. He supported our efforts to get experts from anywhere to overhaul the equipment, which we did. The governor also ensured funding for the purchase of chemicals. Without treating the water, it is as good as not giving the people water.

So how have things changed?

Since my assumption of duty as commissioner, every month, without any delay, the funds for procurement of chemicals for water treatment are released as is expected of a responsible government. During the Aminu Tambuwal administration, funds were released whenever the governor felt like; because he was hardly around he didn't know the state of affairs. That administration was a tragedy. Again because Governor Ahmad Aliyu Sokoto cares about the people, he has entered into a partnership with the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and luckily for us the former Minister of State for Water Resources is from Sokoto State and he was of tremendous assistance in several respects. The only problem is the delay in the procurement process.

The 40 million gallons per day water project was initiated by our father, Senator Aliyu Wamako, during his administration. As at the time he left office the project was 70 per cent completed. Unfortunately, the Aminu Tambuwal administration that came after recklessly abandoned the project in the eight years it held sway. Governor Ahmad Sokoto has rightly decided to complete the project because completing the project will surely go a long way in addressing the lingering water shortage in the metropolis and environs. And again because if he refuses to complete the project not only would the tax payers money already sunk in the project be wasted, the cost would drastically increase.

The other project is the expansion of water supply to the new areas of the capital. As you know, Sokoto is rapidly expanding, and there is a need to service the new areas. I saw a report in one newspaper that the former administration of Tambuwal awarded the contract to a Chinese company for the supply of water to the people and for the construction of the 40 million gallons of water per day project, but he characteristically abandoned the project. Unlike Tambuwal who abandoned every project that he inherited when he took over, Governor Ahmad Aliyu Sokoto has continued with the project and indeed every project that is of benefit to the people because it will help ensure constant water supply.

This government sees itself as a continuation of the Wamako administration. So, we are completing the projects that he started, which Tambuwal abandoned for no reason. And this is the reason I am very angry with officials of the Tambuwal administration for criticising this administration when they achieved absolutely nothing. Quote me that the Tambuwal administration was a disaster. He was a big flop and this is why he lost in 2019. That's why the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory Wike mocked him. Wike couldn't understand how an incumbent governor would win his reelection with a mere 342



Maccido

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votes. Tambuwal promised to build houses for the people but as usual failed to build one unit in eight years while governor Ahmad Aliyu Sokoto has completed the 500 housing units started by Wamakko and commenced the construction of another 500 housing units; bringing the total of number of houses under one and half years to 1,000. And remember



that the governor Maccido bought some houses from the Federal Government. So, the administration of Governor Ahmad Aliyu Sokoto is not in any way comparable to the inept administration of Aminu Tambuwal. The governor is focused, responsible and God fearing, which is why he has achieved in less than two years what Aminu Tambuwal couldn't achieve in eight years. Can you kindly complete your answer on the water project...

I want to assure you that once the project is completed we will have the capacity to supply 100 per cent water to the people of Sokoto State. We are working on power supply, which is critical in water supply just like chemicals. We hope to get sufficient power because it is very important in our plans to deliver water round the clock. I want to use this opportunity to appeal to our consumers to promptly fix leakages and ensure that water is not wasted because it costs money to produce water and we can never recover our cost from their payment. I am extremely grateful to the governor for the unprecedented investment in the water sector. The last time we witnessed this was during the administration of Wamakko. We are embarking on an enlightenment campaign, using religious and traditional leaders to reach the people on the need to pay their bills.

What other critical projects are you working on?

The other project we are working on is a rural scheme that would ensure that the rural areas where our people live have access to water, which the governor promised during the campaign. Hopefully, by December, the project will be completed. Apart from water supply, this government has done a lot in building roads, in the rehabilitation of healthcare facilities and has invested billions in agricultural projects because our state is largely an agrarian state. We are definitely keying into President Bola Tinubu's agricultural policy. Under the programme, about 5,000 acres of land would be prepared for farming. The programme - Sustainable Power and Irrigation in Nigeria (SPIN) - which is a nationwide scheme, is a joint initiative of the state government, the Federal Government and the World Bank. It is about 780 million dollars and when converted into naira would be running into trillions. Officials of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources have been to Sokoto to identify the dams that we are going to use for the project.

We have applied to use four dams of which two are owned by the Federal Government - the Goronyo and Kware - and the other two by the state government - the Lugu Dam. Part of the project is the repair of the dams and reinvigoration to make the land more arable.

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Why Underdeveloped, Developing Countries Should Avoid Aligning Their Currencies To Major International Currencies – Okoroafor

Dr. Emmanuel Okoroafor is the Managing Director/CEO of Hobark Consultant Management Services Ltd, a business primarily focused on the full-suite of Human Capital Management. He possesses a B.Sc (Hons) in Physics, University of Ife, Nigeria; Dip d'Ing Nuclear Engineering, Institut National des Sciences et Techniques Nucleaires, Grenoble, France and PhD in Materials Science, Universite Denis Diderot, Paris VII, Paris, France.

A director in RUTA E&P Ltd and FACEATO E&P Ltd, he has worked for 33 years in academia and industry in Nigeria and overseas. Okoroafor is the Founder of MEPON Ltd, a company that provides online platforms for global equipment and facilities rentals; the Founder of Frempi Spring Water Company Ltd; and also the Founder of IExport Afrique Ltd, which specialises in providing and exporting locally sourced food products from regions around Nigeria and the entire African Continent.

He is a UK Engineering Council registered Chartered Engineer (CEng), FEANI registered Engineer (Eur-Ing), and Fellow of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mines (FIMMM). In this interview with ONYEDIKA AGBEDO, he speaks on the prevailing exchange rate crisis in Nigeria, explaining why underdeveloped and developing countries should avoid aligning their currencies to major international currencies.

There have been debates about whether or not it is appropriate for developing countries to align their currencies with major international currencies. How should Nigeria approach this?

ALIGNING currencies to major international currencies like the US dollar, euro, pound sterling, or yuan has become a common practice among underdeveloped and developing economies. However, this strategy often undermines economic stability, leading to inflationary pressures, reduced competitiveness, and dependency on foreign economies. Countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Argentina illustrate the adverse consequences of currency alignment, particularly how it distorts local markets in ways that defy economic logic.

But most countries in the world align with stronger economies. What are the pitfalls of currency alignment?

When a country pegs or heavily aligns its currency with a major international counterpart, it effectively relinquishes control over its monetary policy. This significantly limits its ability to respond to local economic conditions. For instance, in Nigeria, the naira's value is heavily influenced by its exchange rate with the US dollar. Consequently, economic decisions made in the United States - such as interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve - directly affect Nigeria, despite the stark differences between their economic realities.

How does that affect locally produced goods?

One perplexing consequence of currency alignment is its inflationary impact on locally produced goods that do not rely on foreign inputs. In Nigeria, vendors frequently cite the dollar-to-naira exchange rate to justify price hikes,

even for goods entirely produced domestically.

For example, agricultural products like yams, maize, and cassava are cultivated locally without imported materials. Yet, when the naira depreciates against the dollar, the prices of these goods often rise dramatically. This occurs because sellers preemptively increase prices, assuming that higher exchange rates signal broader economic instability or rising costs. This psychological inflation creates a ripple effect, eroding purchasing power and exacerbating poverty.

Secondly, currency alignment can lead to overvalued currencies, making exports less competitive while encouraging imports. In this way, it distorts trade dynamics. In Nigeria, where oil is the primary export, efforts to maintain a favourable dollar exchange rate for oil revenues have overshadowed the need to diversify the economy. As a result, non-oil exports struggle to compete globally due to high costs, deepening dependency on imported goods and external financing.

Speculative behaviour further exacerbates the problem. In Nigeria, for example, the black market exchange rate often diverges sharply from the official rate. Businesses and individuals hoard foreign currencies, anticipating further devaluation, which accelerates the naira's depreciation and fuels economic instability.

What are the empirical examples of these currency alignments?

In 2009, Zimbabwe adopted the US dollar as its de facto currency to combat hyperinflation. While this temporarily stabilised inflation, it made Zimbabwe's goods more expensive compared to those in neighbouring countries with weaker currencies. Local industries, such as textile and food processing, struggled to compete with cheaper imports, leading to widespread factory closures and job losses.

The reliance on dollarisation also drained foreign currency reserves, as the economy depended heavily on imported goods. Instead of boosting local production, authorities implemented measures such as bond notes and currency controls, eroding trust in the monetary system and deterring foreign investors.

Another example

can be made of Argentina and its failed experiment at currency pegging. Argentina's history of currency pegging during the 1990s highlights the risks of aligning with a major currency. By pegging the peso to the US dollar at a one-to-one rate, Argentina initially stabilised prices. However, the fixed exchange rate overvalued the peso, making exports expensive and imports cheaper. This devastated local manufacturing, leading to factory closures, unemployment, and a dependence on foreign goods.

When the system became unsustainable, Argentina abandoned the peg in 2001, triggering a debt crisis, capital flight, and a collapse in investor confidence. Throughout the peg, the central bank prioritised exchange rate stability over structural economic reforms, ultimately deepening the crisis.

Generally, what are the broader impacts of currency alignment?

From the experiences of Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Argentina, we can see several common consequences of currency alignment.

The first impact is often inflationary pressures, whereby local goods experience price hikes due to perceived economic instability, even when production costs remain unaffected.

Secondly, it stifles innovation. How? Overvalued currencies make imports cheaper, discouraging local industries from innovating and competing.

Thirdly, it leads to monetary policy constraints, whereby the central banks focus disproportionately on maintaining exchange rate stability, neglecting pressing domestic needs such as unemployment reduction and infrastructure investment.

It also deters foreign direct investment. While currency alignment may initially attract foreign direct investment, long-term instability and unpredictable devaluations dissuade investors.

What alternatives to currency alignment can developing countries explore?

Developing countries can adopt several strategies to mitigate the risks associated with currency alignment. One such strategy is to strengthen local economies by investing in infrastructure, agriculture, and technology. Doing these will reduce reliance on imports and build economic resilience. Another strategy is to diversify reserves. In this way, holding reserves in a basket of currencies and commodities like gold can minimise exposure to any single currency. The country can also float its exchange rates. Allowing market forces to determine currency values ensures a better reflection of domestic economic conditions.

Additionally, establishing regional currency unions or trade agreements can provide stability without over-reliance on major international currencies. For instance, the proposed West African Eco offers a potential model.

In the same vein, creating a stable, predictable business environment through transparent governance and infrastructure development can attract investors without relying on currency alignment.

Overall, it may be said, while currency alignment may offer short-term benefits, such as stabilising inflation or attracting FDI, the experiences of Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Argentina highlight its long-term consequences. These include the erosion of local industries, imported inflation, loss of monetary sovereignty, and economic instability. To ensure resilience in the face of global economic uncertainties, underdeveloped and developing countries must prioritise policies that strengthen their domestic economies, enhance competitiveness, and promote sustainable growth.



Okoroafor

Editorial

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Towards An Effective National Sports Commission

THE decision by the Federal Government to bring back the National Sports Commission (NSC) was received with jubilation by stakeholders in Nigerian sports. This is understandable as the stakeholders have watched agonisingly as the country stumbled from one failure to another in international sports competitions for over nine years, despite the availability of highly multitalented Nigerians in various departments of sports. This fact is easily discerned from the large number of Nigerians making waves for other countries, as demonstrated even in the last Olympics. The task before the new NSC is herculean; it will include not just steering Nigeria back into winning ways that the country was once noted for, but also to re-stimulate the interest of Nigerians in sports and galvanise the huge business potential in that sector. Surely the sports sector alone can make a substantial difference in lifting the country's economy and impacting hugely and positively on individual's standard of living.

Apart from the occasional successes by the national football teams, which are managed semi-independently by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Nigerian sports under the now scrapped Federal Ministry of Sports had been floundering for so long that many, who knew how the sector fared under the NSC regime, clamoured for a return to the past. The outcry became more deafening each time the country returned from an international competition without medals, as exemplified by the recent Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

The argument for a return to the NSC model of administration was hinged on the fact that the NSC model is manned by professionals in various fields of sports, who are not given to extraneous considerations in running the sector. The NSC system, according to its protagonists, gives room for more robust designs and rigorous evaluation of programmes, eliminates the red tapes of the ministry system and challenges its leadership to creativity and resourcefulness, with their sustenance anchored on the principle of performance.

The National Sports Commission system also employs a pseudo-corporate management system, requiring less politics, clear professional approach to operations and constructive actions for the delivery of targets and goals, as against the ministry system in which the authorities feel no challenge because they have nothing to lose in whatever situation.

Unlike the ministry system, which gives the minister so much powers, including influencing and/or appointing boards for the various federations, the NSC allows for democratically-elected boards to control the federations and reduce the manipulations by those with access to top government officials.

However, the National Sports Commission (NSC) cannot succeed in lifting the country's sports in isolation. Producing top class athletes and future world champions requires proper institutionalisation of the NSC with the appropriate mandate to change the sector.

Peopled by specialists in the various segments of sports development, an NSC with clear mandate and the needed personnel will likely fast-track a sustained production of champion athletes deriving from the expected outcomes from the application of knowledge in key areas of programme management, sports medicine, deployment of funds and engagement of available facilities.

Still, there are those who believe that the NSC cannot become the magic vehicle many expect it to be if the only thing that changes is the name from Ministry of Sports to NSC. These are people who believe that the frequent changes in name and nomenclature since 1962 have not led to the expected Promised Land.

The belief is that Nigerian sports can only be as good as those who run it and the environment in which it operates. They believe that giving qualified people opportunity to run the show without recourse to ethnicity, religion and/or political affiliation will ensure that the country regains its place in the comity of sporting nations.

It is instructive that the Federal Government decided to change from the ministry system to the NSC because it wants to grow sports as business. By extension, it is expected that government will take into consideration the peculiar needs of the sector in choosing the leadership of the Commission.

Already, the government has started on the right footing by choosing Mallam Shehu Dikko as chairman of the commission with Bukola Olapade as the director general. These gentlemen have shown over the years in their various engagements that they are capable of running the commission.

While Dikko is a former Vice President of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) and chairman of the League Management Company, which managed the Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL), Olapade was once a commissioner for sports in Ogun State. He metamorphosed into one of the biggest sports marketers in the country, with the famed Access Bank Lagos City Marathon one of his signature projects. It is therefore safe to presume that the NSC is in the right hands. But the duo cannot operate in isolation.

To actualise the dreams of the Federal Government, the first step in making the NSC virile is by removing the bureaucratic bottleneck that usually ensure that programmes are not executed as projected. So, ensuring that all the departments of the commission are manned by experts who know the importance of doing things as at when due should be one of the first things needed to empower the NSC to effectiveness. The idea is to separate sports from politics and enthrone professionalism in the sector.

The success of the NSC at sustainably achieving its mandate depends on essentially the aggregate of inputs from all its affiliate institutions whose contributions largely determine the type of results the country achieves at international competitions. These institutions include the states' ministries of sports, schools, the military, police para-military agencies and Diaspora Nigerians.

More importantly, the number of professional sports officers must be, at least, 70 per cent of the staff strength of the NSC to make for effective management of the body.

LETTER

Sapele/Safarians: Hungry But Not Angry

"The Comrades Of Ulysses Loved Their Slavish Conditions And Perpetually Luxuriated In Them". (Homer's Illiad - Greek mythology)

SIR: Concrete growth and development are the fundamental fulcrums upon which the transformational potency of any individual, state, town and nation must rotate to produce better life for the people. This is achieved through phenomenal socio-economic, political and educational programmes and developmental projects executed sincerely within responsible and definite time frames. But the way projects in Sapele, Delta State are abandoned and haphazardly executed smacks of mesozoic regression.

Sapele is a globally ubiquitous name because of its past glory. It was one of the Ordinance Towns alongside Calabar, Kano and Abeokuta statutorily recognised by the colonial masters in 1946. But today, Sapele is like a deserted village and a crepuscular landlocked dungeon forgotten by the march of civilisation.

Ever since the creation of Delta State (The Big Heart/Finger Of God) on August 27, 1991, very few development projects have come to Sapele. The very few ones that came are either abandoned halfway or are not started at all. We are waiting to see

the commencement of work on the 15 or 16 Roads promised by the Governor Sheriff Oborevwori's Administration. The Sapele Township stadium project has become an embodiment of official gobbledegook as all kinds of explanations have been given on why a project awarded and re-awarded several times cannot be completed. This is wicked.

The Sapele Main Market got burnt some years ago and up till the year 2024, the market is yet to be completed. The socio-economic consequences on the traders and people of Sapele town are too gruesomely ghoulis to be recounted here. The traders have resolved to pitching their shops on the Main Market Road, Hausa Road and McPherson Road, blocking half the road. The result is a terrible traffic situation. It is a pity that one of the largest towns in Delta State remains without a market for so many years.

The so-called Urban Area and Uguaja have become concrete jungles, quintessential ghettos and shanty towns with no motorable roads, no light (Sapele harbours two power generating plants), no water, dilapidated hovels and rickety school structures. It is frightening to see new Colleges of Education, new Polytechnics and new Universities spring-

ing up in Sapele's neighbourhoods, but nothing in Sapele. They even refused to upgrade the Sapele Technical College to a University of Technology or a Polytechnic. The Sapele Port is a rebarbative marine and nautical terra firma. The roads are unspeakably bad and they adorn all the nooks and crannies of Sapele Town.

We call on the Delta State Governor Sheriff Oborevwori and others, to please rise to deliver Sapele from the asphyxiating hold of these Methuselah projects and crass underdevelopment. After all, the prime purpose of any sincere government is the pursuit of the greatest good for the largest number and our elected and appointed leaders in Sapele continue to theatricalise the Emperor Nero's idiosyncratic turgescence, who slept whilst Rome burnt.

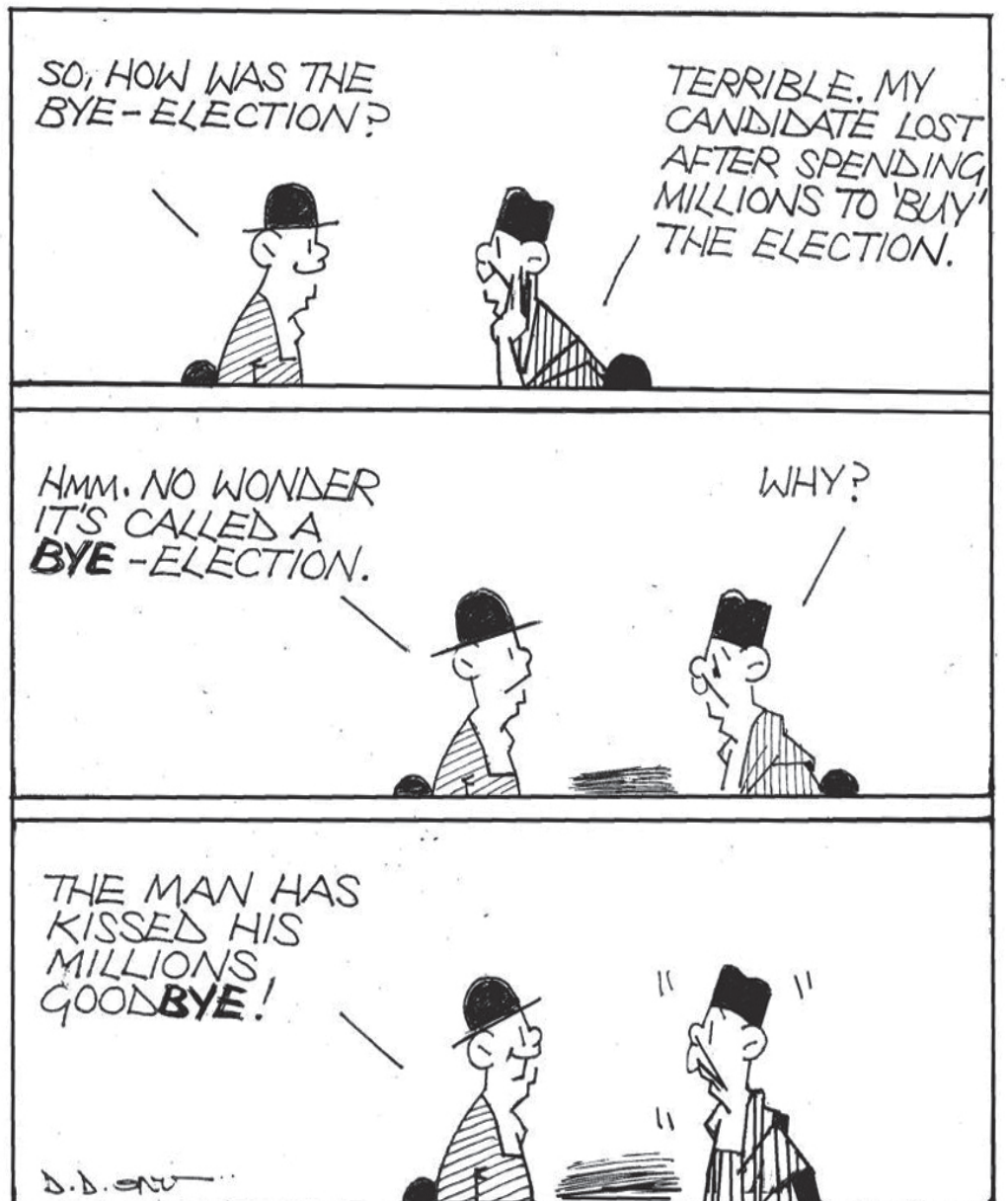
Where are our safarians and our political leaders and traditional rulers etc?

Truly, we are like the comrades of Ulysses who loved their slavish conditions. We are indeed hungry for development, but lack the courage to pragmatize our convictions.

Sapele must rise again and all hands must be on deck.

Enough is enough!!!

• Okakuro Bobson Otomiefe Gbinije, Mandate Against Poverty (MAP), Sapele-Warri.



Opinion

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Nigerian Tribune At 75: Awolowo's Testament Of Immortality

By Tunji Olaopa

THE *Nigerian Tribune* was established in 1949 by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Being seventy-five years old in 2024 and hence achieving the status of Nigeria's oldest surviving privately-owned newspaper is a testament not only to the foresight of Chief Awolowo and the managerial acumen of those who have kept its legacies afloat all these years. It is also an indictment of all that has gone wrong with nation-building in Nigeria since independence in 1960.

My time at the Nigerian Tribune was one of the best I have ever had in terms of intellectual stimulation and engagement. The editorial board meeting was always an intense one that tasked our critical perspectives on issues surrounding Nigeria's economy, political status, democratic governance, international relations, and all sundry matters that relate with the founding vision of the newspaper.

An Editorial Board that had the imprint of Alhaji Lateef Jakande, Aiyekooto Chief Olabisi Onabanjo, Abba Saheed Akogun Tola Adeniyi, Mr. Felix Adenaike, Mr. Biodun Oduwole, Mr. Folu Olamiti, Chief Ebenezer Babatope, Dr. Dokun Bojuade, Prof. Ebenezer Obadare, Prof. Wale Adebani, Prof. Farooq Kperogi, my colleague at the National Institute (NIPSS), Kuru, the late Dr. Obadiah Mailafia, Edward Dickson, Dr. Lasisi Olagunju, Debo Abdulai, Sina Oladeinde, Prof. Adeola Adenikinju, Dr. Festus Adedayo, Dr. Wale Are-Olaitan, and so many other worthy gladiators of the journalistic guild. The Nigerian Tribune had to guard its ramparts against an encroaching debilitation of journalism as the fourth estate of the realm. At the height of the administrative violence of consecutive military regimes in Nigeria, the press and the media became the whipping boys that were subjected either to the culture of silence under the jackboot, or were lured into the warm arms of corrupt tendencies. It therefore takes only a fearless newspaper to keep churning out editorials that are sufficiently pungent and incisive to retain the sense of what an intrepid and ethical journalism ought to look like.

It was not surprising therefore that the Tribune would be one of the outlets for my intellectual restlessness and my coming of age in terms of reform advocacy. I was then a public servant that was struggling with the challenge of being neutral and anonymous while also passionately trying to push the fundamental elements of institutional reform and administrative matters into the public consciousness. And being in the midst of eminent scholars, academics, journalists and personalities was all the encouragement I needed to contribute my own quota to the critical enunciation of what ails Nigeria's postcolonial status and how it could be resolved. I am a development thinker and institutional reformer, and Nigeria's predicaments cannot be divorced from the lackluster performance of her civil service system and its capability readiness to capacitate democratic governance.

The significance and continuing relevance of the Nigerian Tribune cannot be dissociated from the ideological sophistication and foresightedness of Awolowo's nationalism and patriotic commitment to the Nigerian state. Awolowo's intellectual and political engagement with the Nigerian state was one of tough love. Even though for him, Nigeria was "a mere geographical expression," it was the responsibility of Nigerian nationalists and statesmen and women to fill out its potential and responsibilities to its masses of citizens. And

Awolowo had to grab the dilemma of being a Yoruba leader and a Nigerian nationalist by the horn. Being Yoruba, in his reckoning was a necessary plank in holding up Nigeria to its plural essence, rather than a divisive ethnic element. To prove his commitment to fashioning a truly significant ideological framework that would ground democratic governance, Awolowo insisted on democratic socialism as Nigeria's ideological way out of her postcolonial national morass.

Democratic socialism is a unique ideology. For democratic socialists, capitalism cannot be trusted to guarantee essential freedom and equality. Hence, there is the need for the state to interfere in the economy while also facilitating political and economic democracy. Awolowo's brand of democratic socialism is even more unique. He advocates a limited form of social or public ownership of resources and a decentralized system that permits limited central government. This fits into his understanding of the plural nature of the Nigerian state and the significance of a federal system that allows the federating regions and states to develop at their own pace. The state and its federating units must however facilitate state-led infrastructural development that channels the state's resources into education and others.

A good ideology requires a mouthpiece that could stand as a critical intermediary between the state and the society, and between the government and the governed. The Nigerian Tribune, within Awolowo's governance and political vision, was supposed to constitute a gadfly that continually and consistently stings the government of the day into an incessant awareness of its responsibility to the masses. Awolowo was convinced of the relevance of his ideological predisposition for the political well-being of the Nigerian state, and so he was determined to pursue that ideological imperative through the establishment of a privately owned newspaper as a platform for disseminating the elements of democratic socialism, critique consecutive governments on their many governance deviations, and keep alive the challenge of making life meaningful for Nigerians.

Of course, we cannot turn a blind eye to the immediate reason that led to the establishment of the Nigerian Tribune—a reactive development that sought to counteract Nnamdi Azikiwe's West African Pilot and its ethnic triumphalism. That was the prerogative of Awolowo and the rest of the Yoruba political class, to undermine the self-righteous pursuit of Igbo nationalism by Azikiwe. However, it was not only Azikiwe that suffered the untoward consequences of a devastating critical pen. The Tribune was also deployed in the internal rivalry between Awolowo and S. L. Akintola, Awolowo's nemesis in the Western Region. The unfortunate result is the role that the newspaper played in stoking the fire that conflagrated the region. But the Awolowo-Akintola could also be seen from an ideological perspective, the conflict between democratic socialism and the capitalist path favored by Akintola. And it would seem that Awolowo won out because he understood the power of the media, and Tribune not only constructed Awolowo as he wanted to be constructed, but also constructed the ideological reality he wanted Nigeria to adopt for the betterment of the people.

The Tribune's metamorphosis over the years is a testament to its sturdy resilience and a self-reflexive capacity to keep rethinking its objectives within the context and challenges in time and space. While other competitors of a bygone era have been swept under the carpet of history, The Tribune has nestled itself

into relevance through a consistent articulation of the relevance of Awolowo's nationalist call for a responsible government with an ideological vision for making Nigeria work for Nigerians, thus conferring on it the remarkable garland of being Nigeria's oldest privately-owned newspaper. And that essentially is its own legacy especially in a generation that is technology-driven and social media focused. The influence of the social media today speaks to a form of epistemological relativism that challenges the significance of truth. The social media fragments reality in a way that has implications for journalism. Now, everyone with a phone and internet-access can report any news from any angle and perspective. The sensational rated by virality has obliterated the objective.

The critical question is how do we begin to understand journalism in a context of postcolonial political predicament and in a post-truth world? Can journalism afford to be dragged into the turbulence of post-truth reporting? While not discounting the significance of social media as a platform for resistance and political mobilization, we cannot also ignore its capacity for the fragmentation of fact and the capacity to sensationalize truth. When we situate journalism between the ethical responsibility to mediate influence and facilitate action, then we immediately see how journalism is conjoined to ethics; indeed, we see how journalism that lacks ethics becomes a dangerous handmaid of a post-truth world. We begin to see the dire challenges of reporting the facts within a postcolonial context like Nigeria where facts are sacrosanct to the determination of the well-being of Nigerians and the forging of a strong nation. Outside of an ethical responsibility to gatekeep journalism, what happened as the crisis of the Western Region becomes almost inevitable in a state experimenting with democratic governance and needing an ethical journalism to make sense of it.

This is where it makes sense to locate the future prospects of the Nigerian Tribune in contemporary Nigeria. To overcome its sordid past and consolidate its current achievements, the Tribune must situate itself at the forefront of ethical journalism that keeps alight the ideological underpinning of the role that journalism can play in articulating the imperatives of democratic governance, the challenges of serving as a watchdog that consistently puts democracy under vigilance, and the necessities of gatekeeping the professional ethic of patriotic journalism. Henry Anatole Grunwald, former United States ambassador to Austria, aptly sums the dilemma of journalism in today's world: "Journalism can never be silent: that is its greatest virtue and its greatest fault. It must speak, and speak immediately, while the echoes of wonder, the claims of triumph and the signs of horror are still in the air."

Traversing the line between virtue and vice, for journalism in Nigeria today, demands a significant reflection on the governance structure of any newspaper. In its contemporary iteration, the Nigerian Tribune seems to have hit upon a critical understanding of staffing eminent personalities, from academics and scholars to astute journalists and editors with the acumen for excellence. It is to the governance structure one must then look for a consistent objective that navigates the terrible terrain of politics with an ethical compass and the standard of objectivity. This is both the legacy that the Nigerian Tribune has left for print journalism in Nigeria, and the responsibility it must keep shouldering to uphold its service to democracy.

• Prof. Olaopa is the Chairman, Federal Civil Service Commission, Abuja (tolaopa2003@gmail.com)

By Sola Adeola

MY recent visit to Lagos in October for a wedding sparked a mix of nostalgia and dismay. After the wedding, I embarked on a journey from Lagos to Akure via the Ore Road, a route I hadn't taken in nearly 29 years. The deplorable state of the road left me wondering what had happened to the region's infrastructure.

I pondered what the former Governor of Lagos State, Babatunde Fashola, who served as Minister of Works for eight years, did to maintain or expand the crucial Lagos-Ibadan, Ibadan-Ife, and Lagos-Ore roads, especially compared to his counterpart Rotimi Amaechi's efforts in extending the railroad to Katsina State.

As I navigated the poorly maintained Ore road, I couldn't help but think about the economic implications of such neglect. The roads that generate significant revenue for Nigeria's economy seemed to have been overlooked. This realization, though troubling, wasn't the primary focus of my trip.

My experience on this road is a story for another day. As I left Lagos, my mind kept drifting back to Broad Street, once the vibrant epicenter of

Rise And Fall Of Nigeria's Economic Hub, Broad Street

Nigeria's economic activities. I began to think about how it was neglected in favor of purpose-built residential areas like Victoria Island, Ikoyi, and Lekki because Broad Street became choked, suffocated and strangled due to lack of responsible planning for inevitable expansion, growth and change associated with human activities.

Just as the Lagos-Ibadan-Akure Road has been neglected in favour of the Lagos-Ore Road, Broad Street has been abandoned for these residential areas. This trend is fast becoming a norm.

In the 1980s, Broad Street, located in the heart of Lagos, was Nigeria's economic nerve centre. This iconic street was home to towering skyscrapers housing financial institutions, insurance companies, government institutions, and conglomerates. It was the epicenter of business activity, attracting foreign investors and entrepreneurs.

Many ideas of today's conglomerates were born on this street or around it. As a restless

youth, Broad Street was like America to me. Looking back now, I want it all back, better than the way it was. However, today, Broad Street has lost its former glory.

The once-impressive buildings now serve as markets for traders selling various goods, while many companies have relocated to other areas. Landmarks like Bristol Hotel and the LSDPC Building a symbol of prosperity stand abandoned, symbolizing the street's decline. Neighboring streets, such as Kakawa, Marina, Martins, Mandilas, Oluwole, and Balogun, have also succumbed to neglect.

In 1986, during my time working in Campus Square, Broad Street was the place to be. My office, located on the 24th floor of Night Frank & Rutely Building, a ten-storey building mainly occupied by entrepreneurs, is an architectural piece.

Among them were the children of notables, including Wale Babalakin, Lola Abiola-Edewor, Rita Kuku (former wife of Chief Dr. Bayo Kuku, now Rita Chris Garba), and oth-

ers. These young entrepreneurs then and professionals were thriving in their respective fields.

Notable landmarks included NIDB Building (now collapsed), Savanah Bank, Union Bank on 40 Marina, Merchant Bank, Investment House, and CMS Bookshop House, which housed Mobil Oil before it relocated to old Maroko in 1987. Successful bankers like the late Chief Subomi Balogun of First Monument Bank and Pascal Edozien of Diamond Bank, Fola Adeola of GTB, and his brother Yinka Adeola (formerly of Pacific Merchant Bank owned by the Adelekes) the Adedoyins, started their careers from here.

Other recent memories include Gamji Bank, North South Bank (my sister's office), and Lady Cobblers on Abibu Oki. Broad Street was the hub of activity, with businesses interconnected with its environs.

• Princess Sola Adeola is doctoral student of Criminology

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SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS



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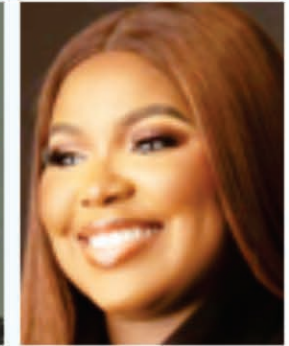
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OLUFUNMILOLA ALUKO
Chief Brand & Marketing
Officer, Union Bank



NNENNA AKAJEMELI
National Coordinator/CEO,
SERVICOM

ACCORDING to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), studies have shown that GDP can be increased by as much as 35% if level playing fields are created for both men and women in labour force participation. Women constitute half of Nigeria's population, and thus, a critical mass in the potential labour force of the country. In an increasingly dynamic world that we live in today, it is necessary that women be well integrated into the labour force so that the country can reap the full economic benefits deliverable from women due to their enormous contributions to economies.

Educated and informed women can drive prosperity and innovation just as they can help to improve the

quality of the society. For this reason, they are needed in every sphere of the economy if Nigeria is to achieve greatness. Therefore, having qualified women in the workforce would definitely translate to higher standards, hence more aggregate output.

The Guardian is showcasing some selected female professionals who occupy the front row based on depth of their knowledge in their chosen fields and who have distinguished themselves in a string of notable ways in the course of their careers.



SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

Marketing Has Allowed Me Combine Problem-Solving With Creativity And Storytelling

- Ifeanyi Orabuche, Category Manager, Beverages Nestle Nigeria

MRS. Ifeanyichukwu Orabuche, the Category Manager for Beverages at Nestle Nigeria has over 12 years' experience in marketing, category, brand and business management, driving innovation of world class brands within Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. She has led and managed the growth of successful powerhouse brands within the food and fast moving consumer good sectors in these places.

But interestingly, she is not all about brand building, for her work has spanned the development of sustainable food systems through an agripreneurship platform that encourage youth participation in agriculture. More recently however, she has been engaged in the development and execution of grassroots sports initiative for the Milo brand in the country.

According to her, within the space of time she has worked in Nestle she has had the opportunity to work on amazing brands like Golden Morn and Milo within Nigeria and other dairy brands outside Nigeria.

On why she took to marketing as a profession, she had this to say: "Marketing has allowed me to combine the art of problem-solving, creativity and storytelling all in one, like a match made in heaven. I enjoy the challenge that comes with understanding people, delving into their needs especially those that don't even know how to derive insights that can drive meaningful results. In today's



Ifeanyi Orabuche, Category Manager, Beverages, Nestle Nigeria

context, the job of marketing and managing of portfolio is very challenging. I enjoy the intensity of dealing with several moving parts all at once."

One of her memorable moments on the job, she hinted, was when she was entrusted with the marketing of one of the most successful and iconic brands in Nigeria and which is in their stable. Another indelible experience was when some members of her team attained senior management positions in the company. As a leader, she said she was over the moon for their accomplishments.

Declaring her recipe for success, Orabuche offered; "Today, success lies in always finding the sweet spot between consumer needs, your value proposition and business results. It is important to maintain the highest quality standards but at the same time ensure that you are driving efficiency in the system. Staying in time with the

evolving landscape and remaining relevant to your customers is key".

Expatriating on the challenges being encountered on the job, she noted that this includes the challenge of rising input costs, forex issues and security. For them, however, she declared that their focus is always to deliver and communicate a clear value proposition to consumers. This is because every time shoppers stand at the shelves there's always a battle for a share of the wallet and since they always have this in mind, they have always striven to give consumers the best.

Driven by an innate need to empower youth in the corporate world, Orabuche is passionate about equal opportunities, youth, community service, and creating an enabling environment for kids to thrive. These activities she does through her volunteer work with several community and faith-based organizations.

As for her advice to aspiring female professionals, she offered: "In the workplace, I see myself as a human being working towards my goals, I don't focus on gender labels. Own your voice and embrace what makes you unique, don't be afraid to ask questions and treat any failure or setback as a learning opportunity. Build strong relationships and connections, don't try to do it all alone, it does take a village. Don't be afraid to take calculated risks. But most of all don't be too stuck on the destination".

MATILDA SHADO: THE FORCE OF RESILIENCE AND IMPACT

In a world that often underestimates quiet strength and unwavering resolve, Matilda Shado stands tall as a beacon of inspiration. Like her literary namesake from Roald Dahl's Matilda, she embodies brilliance, resilience, and an unshakeable optimism that inspires everyone fortunate enough to encounter her. With a career spanning over 13 years across diverse sectors, Matilda has transformed challenges into opportunities and carved a niche as one of the most accomplished human capital leaders of her generation.

Born to Captain Felix and Olu Omogbara, Matilda grew up in an environment that prized knowledge, discipline, and excellence. Her father, a distinguished academician, instilled in her an early belief in education as a tool for transformation. Her mother—a powerhouse who balanced a thriving career with grace and resilience—taught her the art of harmonizing professional and personal aspirations. Together, her parents laid the groundwork for a life driven by purpose and achievement.

Matilda's journey to the pinnacle of human capital management began with her academic brilliance. Graduating as the best student in Microbiology, her initial ambition was to excel as a laboratory scientist. However, life had other plans. A chance encounter with Ajibola Bamidele of Certification Edge awakened a passion for connecting with people. She chose to pivot her career and pursue human resource management, a decision that



Matilda Shado, Senior Human Capital Partner, Sterling Bank

would redefine her life and legacy.

In 2010, Matilda embarked on her professional journey, gaining valuable experience in telecommunications and FMCGs before transitioning into the banking sector. Her career trajectory took a definitive turn in 2015 when she joined the Human Resources Division as an Employee Welfare Officer. It was here that Matilda discovered her calling—to align people strategies with business objectives, driving both financial success and employee satisfaction.

Over the years, Matilda has risen through the ranks as a Senior Human Capital Business Partner, earning a reputation as a trusted advisor and strategic partner. She has successfully led culturally diverse, cross-functional teams, nurtured growth ambitions, and co-created transformational business solutions. Her innovative solutions and collaborative leadership have

resulted in measurable outcomes, including increased revenue, improved retention, and enhanced employee engagement, earning several accolades and industry recognitions.

Beyond her academic and professional accolades, Matilda is skilled in stakeholder communication, business restructuring, negotiation, change management, talent retention, employee engagement, process optimization, strategy formulation, project management, and business and people management. She takes pride in delivering top-line and bottom-line success while fostering a high-performing, engaged workforce.

One of her most notable achievements was spearheading initiatives that earned her organization prestigious awards for corporate social responsibility and workplace excellence.

Matilda's career is not without its share of challenges. From navigating male-dominated spaces to overcoming leadership dynamics that tested her resilience, she has emerged stronger, wiser, and more committed to her mission. One of her most memorable milestones was receiving the Excellent Human Capital Business Partner Award for her transformative work in the organization. Her strategic alignment of human capital with business priorities led to remarkable financial and employee outcomes—a testament to her ability to marry vision with execution.



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SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

I Am Particularly Passionate About Initiatives That Support Girl Child Education - Mariya Aliko Dangote, ED Operations, Dangote Sugar Refinery

A very profound thinker and strategic business professional, Mariya Aliko Dangote, the Executive Director Operations of Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc is a woman who has combined her academic background excellently with professional expertise to drive impactful initiatives that is contributing effectively to business success at the sugar firm.

With a degree in Law, an MBA with specialization in Management and various Executive Programmes to cap them, it is no gainsay that Mariya is well fitted for the role she is playing in the firm today. A leader who has gathered extensive experience in business strategy, planning, digitization, as well as backward integration projects, little wonder she has functioned as Executive Director Operations to the admiration of all stakeholders.

She says: "As the Executive Director of Operations at Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc, my primary role involves overseeing the day-to-day operations of the company, ensuring that production processes are efficient and aligned with our strategic goals. I am responsible for managing backward integration projects, leading initiatives in digitization and mechanization and driving operational excellence across the organization."

She continued: "My degree in law has provided me with critical analytical skills and a strong understanding of regulatory frameworks which are essential in navigating the complexities of the business environment. My legal background enables me to assess risks effectively, ensure compliance, and make informed decisions that align with both corporate governance and industry regulations. It has also enhanced my negotiation skills, allowing me to manage contracts and partnership more effectively."

"In addition, my MBA with a focus on management has equipped me with a comprehensive understanding of business principles, strategic planning and operational management. The knowledge gained from my MBA helps me to

analyze market trends, develop effective business strategies and implement processes that drive efficiency and performance within the organization. Together, these qualifications allow me to approach my role as Executive Director of Operations from a balanced perspective, blending legal insights with strategic business acumen. The combination has been instrumental in driving successful initiatives at Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc ensuring that our operations not only meet financial targets but also adhere to ethical and legal standards."

Reeling out her achievements since she came into the saddle, Mariya, daughter of Africa's richest man, Aliko Dangote stated that the successful implementation of digitization has significantly enhanced their operational efficiencies by streamlining processes, reducing costs, improving productivity and ultimately contributing to their bottom line. Additionally, she informed that she has led several backward integration processes that have strengthened their supply chain and reduced dependency on external suppliers. She equally revealed that she has prioritized team development by implementing training programmes that empower their workforce, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. This has resulted in higher employee engagement and better overall performance.

Overall, she considers her innate ability to drive strategic initiatives while nurturing a collaborative work environment to be her key accomplishment and maintains that she remains committed to further advancing the firm's operational goals.

On the factors posing as challenges to the firm, Mariya identified supply chain disruption as one of them stating that fluctuations in the availability of raw materials and external dependencies have impacted their production schedules. To tackle this however, she says she has focused on their backward integration process

es to enhance self-sufficiency. Also, she noted that navigating the regulatory landscape has presented unique challenges. To overcome this, she hinted that a dedicated team has been established to monitor regulatory requirements and ensure the company's adherence to compliance standards. And because the sugar industry is highly competitive, she revealed that she has had to encourage a culture of creativity and innovation in the company to stay ahead of the curve.

She is happy about the fact that the level of girl child education in Nigeria has seen notable improvements in recent years, but insisted that significant challenges remain. "Access to quality education for girls has increased due to various initiatives and advocacy efforts, but disparities persist, particularly in rural areas and among marginalized communities. Cultural norms, economic barriers, and safety concerns often hinder girls from pursuing their education," she says. "As a result, the quantum of female professionals produced in Nigeria has not yet reached its full potential."

Furthermore, she emphasized, "While we have seen a growing number of women entering fields such as law, medicine, and business, the representation of women in leadership and specialized roles still lags behind that of their male counterparts. Investing in girl child education is crucial for driving change. Educated girls are more likely to become empowered women that can contribute to their families, communities and the economy. Education equips them with the skills and knowledge needed to pursue careers, advocate for their rights, and inspire future generations."

Proffering solutions to enhancing the level of girl child education in the country, she offered: "We need to address systemic barriers and promote policies that support girls' education, such as scholarships, mentorship programmes, and safe learning environments. Additionally, engaging communities to change perceptions about women's roles and the value of education is essential."

As regards her philanthropic bent, she contends that her decision to engage in philanthropy stems from a deep-seated belief in the importance of giving back to society and making a meaningful impact in the lives of others. She pointed out that philanthropy allows her to leverage her resources, skills and networks to address challenges faced by underserved communities particularly in areas like education, healthcare, and women's empowerment. She contends: "I am particularly passionate about initiatives that support girl child education, healthcare access and skills development for young women".

For Me, HR Is More Than A Job; It's A Passion - Diana Ussher-Eke, Group Head, Human Resources, Continental Reinsurance

"My entry into Human Resource wasn't planned. Initially, I was drawn into politics and economics, but I soon realized they weren't the right fit for me. HR resonated more deeply with my aspirations because it combines my interest in human behavior, organizational structures and institutional dynamics. It offers a lens to view organizations in their complexity where strategy, culture and human capital intersect. For me, HR is more than just a job, it's a passion".

THE above was Mrs. Diana Ussher-Eke's response when asked why she decided to pick on human resource management as a profession. Diana Ussher-Eke, the current Group Head of Human Resources at Continental Reinsurance thrives most when helping others grow and develop even as she is passionate about upskilling and societal development. And at Continental Re, she says she is focused on helping the organization align its human capital strategy with its business objectives whilst implementing human resource practices that attract, develop, and retain top talent. Towards this end, she has introduced a number of initiatives to ensure a robust pipeline of future leaders that align with the company's strategy and values through comprehensive succession planning and leadership development programmes just as she has been working closely with executives to shape organizational culture, promote well-being and ensure compliance with labour laws across the firm's operating countries. By investing in employees' growth, she reasoned, the right people will have been cultivated to lead the company.

Before joining Continental Reinsurance five years ago, Ussher-Eke had worked in a number of companies where she honed her ability to build consensus and work collaboratively towards common goals. A professional naturally motivated to engage, learn and achieve tangible outcomes, she started her career at a boutique search firm in London where she was tasked with the job of identifying talent for global law firms. This role, she says, sharpened her instincts for spotting potentials and understanding organizational needs. She thereafter transitioned to an educational role as Assessor and Verifier of City & Guilds qualifications also in London, a function through which she developed expertise in learning, development and performance management.

On returning to Nigeria in 2011, she took up a senior role at IBM where she was tasked with executing the company's five-year Africa expansion people agenda focusing on talent development, organizational management, diversity and culture. Here, she led the deployment of 30 workforce related policies and processes across 34 countries in the Middle East and Africa impacting 6500 employees, and resulting in the roll-out of the cloud-based HRMS Workday. She then advanced into

strategic positions in Samsung and Interswitch before eventually berthing at Continental Reinsurance. Each step for her was driven by a commitment not just to fill roles, but to strategically enhance organizational capabilities, she says.

One indelible experience at Continental Reinsurance was her successful spearheading of the creation of an academy dedicated to enhancing reinsurance industry professionals. She said, "For two decades, Continental Reinsurance has been at the forefront of enhancing insurance professionals across Africa in capacity building in the industry through client programmes. I successfully spearheaded the creation of an academy dedicated to educating, developing and inspiring industry professionals. The academy offers a comprehensive curriculum combining face-to-face instructions, learning modules and modern learning methods tailored to industry needs".

She continued: "By offering customized programmes, we've deepened skills development and enhanced competencies across Africa. This initiative contributes to the sector's growth and sustainability by preparing a skilled workforce for emerging challenges".

She considers promoting gender balance in the company as one of her achievements too. This is especially because the industry is a male-dominated one. According to her, female representation in the company has increased as the male-to female ratio is now 59% to 41% with about 20% of women in leadership and management roles. This, she explained, reflects their commitment to diversity and inclusions, for which she says she is proud of.

Operating across multiple countries with diverse labour markets and regulations has been a major challenge for her, Ussher-Eke informed. Building a future-ready workforce amid technological advancements and changing market demands is another, she says. To manage these, she focusses on fostering organizational agility through skilling and reskilling programmes to prepare employees for the future of work. Promoting a culture of continuous learning, she reasoned, empowers their workforce to navigate change effectively.

Stressing that her goal is to cultivate a high-performing, engaged and diverse workforce that can drive the company's objectives, Ussher-Eke declared that by investing in employees' growth, they are sure to continuously have the right people to lead the company forward.

Acknowledging the role her mother played in her life, she says she has been her greatest influence. Her incredible self-discipline, perseverance and approach to career advancement left an indelible mark on her professional ethos, she confesses. Also stories of numerous female leaders that have overcome adversity and how they did it has often served as an inspiration and helped in fueling her dedication to professional excellence, she said.

Ussher-Eke asserted that she had also faced gender bias and stereotyping in her career maintaining that navigating leadership as a woman has posed challenges. Aside this, balancing the dual demands of advocating for employees while meeting objectives has been complex to tackle. To overcome these, she says she has focused on leading with integrity and transparency. Implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives have also helped challenge the status quo and promoted equity, she stated.

Advising aspiring female professionals, she told them not to shy away from roles that demand more as these are the ones that often lead to significant growth. She said further, "Invest in your professional development through mentorship, education and networking. Build a strong support system within and outside your organization. Remember, leadership isn't just about authority, it's about influencing positive change and inspiring others through your actions."



Mariya Aliko Dangote



Diana Ussher-Eke



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SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

We Have Championed Customer-Centric Innovation By Leveraging Data-Driven Initiatives To Improve Customer Satisfaction -Olufunmilola Aluko, Chief Brand & Marketing Officer, Union Bank

Can we have an insight into your background?

I currently serve as Union Bank of Nigeria's Chief Brand and Marketing Officer and Head of Customer Experience. In this role, I am responsible for driving the bank's Customer Experience, Marketing, Brand Management, Sustainability, CSR, and Corporate Communications strategy. I design and implement marketing strategies for Union Bank to enhance its brand and engage key target audiences. I also encourage organisational collaboration to ensure optimal customer experience through a consistent 'customer-first' approach and brand compliance, all aimed at advancing the bank's revenue, policy, and programmatic goals.

I have over 23 years of experience spanning Banking and Brand Management Consulting, having worked in several leadership roles in Customer Experience (CX) Management, Contact Centres, Corporate Strategy, Brand Management, Product Management, Business Process Management, Agent Banking, International Operations, and Sales and Marketing across various banks/organisations.

I have an MBA from Warwick Business School of the University of Warwick, United Kingdom and a first degree from Lagos State University, Lagos. I am a Certified Customer Experience Professional (CCXP) and a member of the global Customer Experience Professionals Association, the American Marketing Association, and I am an Associate Registered Practitioner of Advertising(arpa) with the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria(ARCON).

You are a marketing professional; what made you take to marketing?

Marketing has influenced my career as much as I have chosen it. My passion for storytelling, creativity, and human connection made marketing a natural fit for me. Early in my career, I realized that I thrive in roles where I can understand people's needs and aspirations while crafting solutions that resonate with them.

A key aspect of marketing is enhancing customer experience and addressing customer issues. I find great fulfillment in developing strategies that not only engage customers but also effectively resolve their concerns. This focus on customer satisfaction is essential for building loyalty and trust, which impacts the brand promise.

Marketing provides a unique platform that combines both analytical and creative thinking. The excitement of creating strategies that tap into people's emotions and directly impact business performance is unmatched. I am particularly drawn to how effective marketing and communications can foster lasting relationships between organisations and their audiences. As the field continues to evolve, I am dedicated to remaining at the forefront of innovation.

Can you tell us about your career trajectory?

My career has spanned over 23 years, and it's been an exciting journey of learning and growth. I started in roles focused on customer engagement and problem-solving, which taught me the importance of really understanding what customers need and how to create solutions that work for them. Those early experiences gave me a strong foundation in building relationships, managing operations, and delivering outstanding service.

As I moved forward, I took on more challenging roles, like setting up and managing contact centres for two banks in Nigeria, improving how organisations handle customer complaints, and creating customer experience frameworks that transformed how teams deliver value to customers. I also established business process improvement teams, streamlining operations and driving efficiency. Alongside these, I worked on developing new products and expanding offerings, helping businesses grow and connect with more people. These roles were all about finding better ways to work and assisting teams to achieve more together.

In recent years, I have broadened my focus to encompass customer advocacy, consumer protection, corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability, and strategic communication. My work has involved initiatives designed to amplify customers' voices and protect their interests while aligning organisational objectives with impactful social goals. I have successfully led crisis communication efforts, maintained reputations during challenging times, and

With a career spanning over 23 years in banking and brand management consulting and having worked in several leadership roles in customer experience management, contact centres, corporate strategy, brand management, product management, business process management, agent banking, international operations, sales and marketing across various organisations and banks, Olufunmilola Aluko is definitely a square peg in a square hole with her current role as the Chief Brand and Marketing Officer & Head of Customer Experience at Union Bank.

A marketer par excellence, she finds great fulfilment in developing strategies that not only engage customers but also effectively resolves their concerns. In particular, she is drawn to how effective marketing and communications can foster lasting relationships between organisations and their audiences. And as marketing continues to evolve, she says she is dedicated to remaining in the forefront of innovations.

crafted strategies that position organisations as trusted, customer-centric brands. Throughout these endeavours, I have aimed to foster meaningful connections between my organisations and the communities they serve, delivering results that create a lasting impact.

Additionally, my recent focus has shifted towards leadership in branding, marketing, and customer experience. I have spearheaded initiatives to refresh organisational identities, launch innovative marketing campaigns, and ensure customers feel appreciated at every stage of their journey.

I truly enjoy collaborating with teams to bring ideas to fruition and witnessing the positive effects on customers and the business. Ultimately, my career has been committed to enhancing experiences—whether for my colleagues or the customers we serve—striving continuously to make meaningful improvements in our collective endeavours.

Who and who has been most influential in your life and career?

My mum was my earliest influencer. She instilled in me the values of resilience, discipline, and an unwavering belief in my potential and God, no matter the challenges. By watching her, I learned the importance of grace under pressure—a lesson that has served me well throughout my career.

Professionally, I've been blessed with mentors who recognised my potential and provided guidance. These individuals encouraged me to embrace innovation, think strategically, and focus on measurable outcomes.

My husband has also been my greatest cheerleader, reminding me of the importance of balance and providing unwavering support in my pursuit of excellence.

What are the challenges you have faced in your career as a woman, and how did you manage them?

As a woman in leadership, one of the most significant challenges has been navigating unconscious bias and societal expectations. I've often had to prove my capabilities in ways my male counterparts did not. Balancing career demands with family responsibilities has also been a recurring challenge, particularly in a culture that sometimes places disproportionate care-giving responsibilities on women.

To overcome these challenges, I focused on building credibility through results. I ensured that my work consistently delivered value, leaving little room for doubt about my abilities. Additionally, I've developed an innate sense of reading the room and understanding power dynamics within the workplace. This awareness has allowed me to navigate complex interpersonal relationships more effectively. Building a solid support system at home and investing in time management has been critical in achieving balance.

What would you say have been your achievements as the Chief Brand and Marketing Officer of Union Bank?

Under my leadership, the bank's marketing function has evolved into a strategic driver of growth and innovation. One key achievement has been the repositioning of Union Bank's brand identity, further enhancing its modern, customer-focused appeal and boosting brand

achieve.

These experiences are deeply meaningful because they highlight both the personal satisfaction of career milestones and the broader impact of working with a committed team to make a tangible difference in the lives of customers and the community.

What are your plans for the Brand and Marketing Department going forward?

The future of my team and the organisation as a whole lies in embracing adaptability and innovation to stay ahead in an ever-evolving market. My vision focuses on four key pillars:

Digital Leadership: Expanding our digital footprint by leveraging data analytics, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies to create personalised, impactful customer engagements. This will not only enhance brand visibility but also ensure we remain relevant in a digitally driven world.

Sustainability Integration: Embedding ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) principles into every aspect of our marketing efforts. This involves crafting campaigns and narratives that resonate with stakeholders, emphasising long-term value creation while addressing critical societal and environmental challenges.

Capacity Building and Innovation: Developing a future-ready team through continuous training, exposure to global trends, and fostering a culture of creativity and innovation. I believe a team equipped with the right skills and mindset will not only keep pace with trends but also set new benchmarks for the industry.

Seamless Customer Experience: Bridging the gap between marketing and customer experience to create a unified narrative across all touch points. This ensures that every interaction with our brand reflects our values and delivers measurable value to customers.

These plans are designed to position Union Bank as a leader not only in financial services but also in customer engagement and societal impact.

What advice do you have for aspiring female professionals?

To aspiring female professionals, my advice is this: own your journey and define success on your terms. Don't let societal norms or biases dictate the boundaries of your ambition. Don't sweat the small stuff, and never, ever apologise for being the smartest in the room. Your story is yours to write, and believing in your ability to achieve your goals is the first step.

Commit to lifelong learning because the world changes rapidly, and staying relevant requires constant growth. Seek out mentors and build a

network of supportive peers, as collaboration and guidance are invaluable in navigating challenges and seizing opportunities. Remember, you are not just pursuing success for yourself but paving the way for others to rise alongside you. Finally, always appreciate the importance of balance. Strive for excellence in your career, but also prioritise your well-being and personal life. It's possible to thrive professionally without compromising on the things that matter most to you. By breaking barriers and excelling in your field, you are helping to redefine what leadership looks like for the next generation.

equity. This milestone was supported by the excellent rebranding groundwork laid by my predecessor. Additionally, we have championed customer-centric innovation by leveraging data-driven initiatives to improve customer satisfaction scores and deepen client relationships. Our strides in digital transformation have integrated advanced tools and strategies, enhancing customer engagement and operational efficiency. These accomplishments reflect the hardwork of my team and the bank's collective commitment to delivering excellence.

What are the challenges you have faced and are facing in this role, and how are you tackling them?

One major challenge is the rapid pace of change in the digital and financial landscapes, requiring constant innovation to remain competitive. Customers are increasingly demanding seamless, digital-first experiences, and meeting these expectations while maintaining a human connection is a balancing act. Another challenge is aligning cross-functional teams to deliver a unified vision. Achieving this requires clear communication, mutual accountability, and shared goals. We tackle these by staying adaptable, fostering a culture of collaboration, and investing in cutting-edge tools and training to keep our team ahead of the curve.

Can you relate some memorable experiences that you have had in the course of your career?

There are a lot! Some of the more recent experiences were receiving multiple awards that reflected the hard work and dedication of my team. These include global recognitions like the Euromoney Award for Best Bank in Diversity & Inclusion in Nigeria in 2023 and the IFC Nigeria2Equal Gender Leader Awards, where we were recognised for Gender Diversity in Supply Chain and as Gender Equality Champions, among others. Additionally, being named one of the top twenty global leaders in customer experience by a leading international publication in 2022 was profoundly fulfilling, showcasing the global relevance of customer-centric innovations from Nigeria. Another standout experience was building on the solid rebranding efforts already established to strengthen Union Bank's position as a modern, customer-focused institution. It was incredibly rewarding to see how our subsequent initiatives, such as data-driven campaigns and enhanced customer engagement strategies, resonated positively with customers and stakeholders. This was a powerful reminder of what teamwork and strategic focus can



Olufunmilola Aluko, Chief Brand & Marketing Officer, Union Bank

Trailblazing Women in Leadership: Odiri Erewa-Meggison's Impact on BAT and Beyond

Can we have an insight into your background?

I hold a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree from the University of Buckingham and a Master's degree with Honors in International Relations from the University of Kent at Canterbury, England. My academic journey has equipped me with a strong foundation in both legal principles and the complexities of global relations.

Before joining British American Tobacco (BAT) in 2006, I gained diverse experiences across various sectors, including oil and gas and telecommunications. This exposure has contributed to my comprehensive expertise in external relations and corporate communications, allowing me to navigate complex environments effectively.

At BAT, I made history as the first West African black female to assume strategic roles not only in BAT Nigeria but also across the Asia Pacific, Middle East, and Africa (APMEA) regions. I was further seconded to the Americas and Sub-Saharan region as a Senior Regional External Engagement and Campaign Manager. These roles have provided me with invaluable insights into international business practices and stakeholder engagement.

I am passionate about leveraging my expertise to promote effective communication strategies and drive positive engagement with stakeholders in our markets.

Can you take us through your career trajectory?

It has been an interesting journey after I joined BAT. I initially worked within the legal unit, where I quickly rose through the ranks due to my commitment and expertise. Following the merger of the Legal and External Affairs departments, I was appointed as the 1st Head of Government Affairs for the West Africa Area from 2015 to 2017. Subsequently, I served as the Head of Legal from 2017 to 2018. My career took a significant turn when I was given an expatriate assignment in Indonesia within the Asia Pacific Region. There, I held dual roles: first as Head of Marketing, Legal, and later as Senior Regulatory Special Projects Manager. Thereafter, I was appointed as the Regional External Engagement and Campaign Lead for the Americas and Sub-Saharan Africa region. This international exposure broadened my perspective and enhanced my capabilities in navigating complex regulatory environments.

I returned to Nigeria and was promoted to my current position as Director of External Affairs, BAT West and Central Africa. In this role, I am responsible for driving BAT's external affairs and communications strategy across the West and Central Africa cluster, ensuring alignment with BAT Group's objectives.

In addition to my responsibilities at BAT, I am

honored to serve as the Chairman of the Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria Export Promotion Group (MANEG), a sectoral group dedicated to fostering government relations and advocating for exporters by influencing non-oil-related policies, securing incentives, and protecting exporters from unfavorable policy actions. I am also the Chairman of the Private Sector ESG Forum Technical Committee, an advocacy platform committed to empowering manufacturing organizations in their journey towards sustainability and responsible practices.

In my career journey so far, I have been driven by a commitment to excellence and a passion for fostering positive stakeholder engagement. My journey reflects not only my professional growth but also my dedication to making meaningful contributions in every role I undertake.

Who and who have been most influential in your life and career?

Throughout my life and career, I have been profoundly influenced by several key individuals, particularly my family. My mother and mother-in-law have played crucial roles in managing the home front, allowing me to focus on my professional endeavours. They have been my steadfast prayer warriors, especially during challenging times, providing me with the emotional support needed to navigate my career.

My father has also been a significant influence in my life. He offered invaluable career counsel and instilled in me the values of integrity and kindness. He often reminded me that there is no glass ceiling and encouraged me to always aim for excellence. His teachings emphasized the importance of doing good and being known for uprightness, which have guided me throughout my journey.

Additionally, my husband's unwavering support has been instrumental in my growth. His encouragement to push past barriers has motivated me to pursue opportunities and challenges that have shaped my career trajectory.

These individuals have not only supported me but have also inspired me to strive for success while maintaining strong ethical values. Their influence has been critical in helping me achieve my goals and navigate the complexities of both personal and

professional life.

Can you relate some memorable experiences that you've had in the course of your career?

I have had several memorable experiences that have significantly shaped my professional journey. One of the most transformative periods was my deployment to Indonesia, where I spent three years.

This assignment required me to immerse myself in a new culture, navigate social dynamics, and gain the trust of my team while remaining authentic. The language and cultural barriers were challenging, but I succeeded by adapting and maintaining humility. This experience not only enhanced my professional skills but also broadened my perspective on a global business practice.

I have been fortunate to contribute to impactful initiatives that have driven BAT's direction, particularly in sustainability and industry innovation. These initiatives reflect our commitment to environmental sustainability and responsible business practices.

What are the challenges that you have faced as a female professional and how have you tackled them?

I have faced various challenges in the workplace, one of which involved navigating biases and perceptions from colleagues. A particularly memorable experience was working with a colleague who initially viewed me as a threat. This situation could have led to tension and conflict, but I chose to approach it with humility and a spirit of collaboration. By focusing on building trust and fostering goodwill within the team, I was able to change the dynamic of our working relationship.

This experience reinforced my belief in the importance of emotional intelligence and adaptability as essential leadership qualities. In addition to interpersonal challenges, I have also encountered systemic issues related to gender discrimination. I believe that equal opportunities often exist more in theory than in reality. As a woman, I've had to work twice as hard to prove my worth and overcome biases that can hinder career progression. Staying focused on my goals, building strong networks, and consistently delivering results have been crucial tools for my success.

These experiences highlight the broader challenges that many women face in the workplace, including being perceived as less capable or being passed over for important assignments. However, I have learned that resilience and a strategic approach can help navigate these obstacles by encouraging collaboration and demonstrating my capabilities. I aim to create an environment where all voices are valued and where women can thrive alongside their male counterparts.

While biases may exist, they can be navigated through humility, emotional intelligence, and a commitment to building strong relationships.

My Main Goal Is To Have Continuous Improvement In Africa Re's Regional Office - Temitope Akinowa, Regional Director, Anglophone West Africa, Africa Re

MRS. Temitope Akinowa, the Regional Director of Africa Reinsurance Corporation's Anglophone West Africa is a graduate of Insurance of the Ibadan Polytechnic. She equally has a Post Graduate Diploma and MBA both from the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. She capped these with the Associateship of the Chartered Insurance Institute in 2002, just as she became a fellow of the institute in 2023.

Akinowa secured her first job as a marketing executive in the motor insurance department of Lasaco Assurance Plc in 2000, but this was short-lived as she moved over to Cornerstone Insurance a few months later. There, she rose through the ranks to become the head of the

oil and energy department. After 8 years in the company, and having deepened her knowledge on

the practical aspects of insurance very well, she crossed over to Africa Re in 2008 as an Assistant Underwriter. Over the years, she assumed other roles with increasing responsibilities until her appointment as Regional Director in 2020, the position which she still occupies today.

Taking about the people who have influenced her life and career, she informed that her biggest cheerleaders have always been her dad and her husband, adding that she had also been blessed with great bosses and people who mentored and encouraged her to fly. These, she says, include Mr. Victor Akintunde, Mr. Ayodeji Olusina, Mrs. Funmi Babington-Ashaye, Mr. Ken Aghoghobia and Mrs. Ibukun Awosika.

She pointed out that the day she went to check the result of the last paper needed to qualify her as an Associate of the Chartered Insurance Institute of Nigeria readily comes to mind as inedible. My heart was beating faster than someone running and I actually felt the people standing next to me by the board where the results were posted could hear my heart pounding. The relief I felt when I saw my number in the list, meaning I had qualified as an associate are beyond words, she recalled.

Another memorable experience for her was

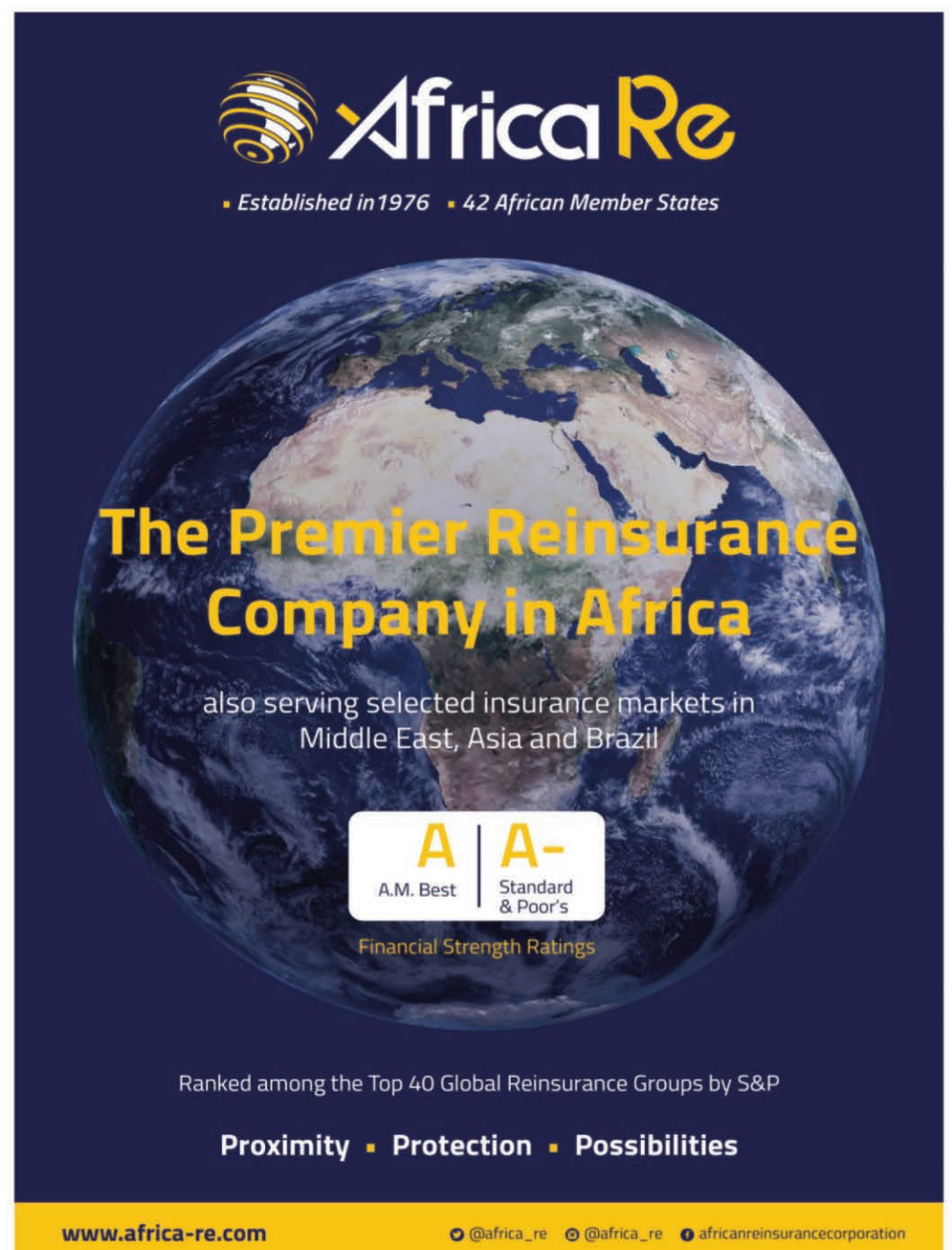
when she got elevated to Regional Director in the company, she said.

Akinowa who believes adding value in any organization should be tangible contributions towards fulfilling its mission, actualizing its vision, upholding its core values and delivering result which meet shareholders and stakeholder expectations maintained that as Regional Director she has consistently surpassed expectations in these areas through inspirational leadership that births innovation among her team even as she has adopted a customer-centric approach to operations. "Leveraging my skills in resource optimization and strategic planning, I have successfully implemented effective and efficient operating measures that have enhanced staff productivity and positively impacted our bottom line" she asserted.

She contends that people management is the greatest challenge she faces daily but that as a leader she deploys the art of observation, listening and questioning to tackle it. Her main goal for the Regional office is to continuously improve its top and bottom lines as well as the quality of staff because she firmly believes that human resource is the greatest asset of any organization.



Temitope Akinowa



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Odiri Erewa-Meggison



As A Female Professional, I Am Often Held to Higher Standards Than My Male Counterparts - Dr Roli Bode-George, CEO, MGP Prints.

SHE is an experienced Entrepreneur, a public administrator, and a trained law enforcement executive. She possesses a Masters and Doctorate in Business Administration and was the first female to hold the position of Director General of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, an agency where she later became its Acting Chairman. Before then, she previously served as a federal commissioner representing Lagos State at the National Population Commission even as she had functioned as a member of the boards of the Federal Housing Authority and the Nigerian Christian Pilgrims Commission.

Dr. Roli Bode-George who currently runs MGP Integrated Prints, a one-stop solution to all printing needs firm, is a chip off the old block. Asked why she went all out for a doctorate degree knowing she wasn't going to be an academic, she replied: "My father has always been my mentor and he obtained a Doctorate in Engineering. I have all my life aspired to be like my dad, a professional par excellence. I was inspired by his accomplishments and always told myself that I'll also obtain a Doctorate myself one day. God being kind has granted my heart's desire."

Declaring that her father, Dr. Madedor, had been the most

influential person on her life, she said he instilled in her the values of faith and resilience. "He taught me everything I know about God and how to navigate and excel in a difficult and unjust system", she remarked. However, in her later years, she said it is her husband that has emerged as a significant mentor and supporter, encouraging her in all her chosen paths. Said she: "Together, they have provided unwavering guidance and inspiration, shaping me into the person I am today."

As a former Law Enforcement Officer and now an entrepreneur, she was asked about the challenges she had encountered in her life and career journey. Hear her: "As both a female Law Enforcement Officer and a female entrepreneur, I often find myself held to higher standards and subjected to greater scrutiny than my male counterparts. This disparity was quite challenging, leading one to feel the need to consistently over perform to prove my capabilities and assert my competence. To cope with these pressures, I have focused on continuous self-improvement through professional development and networking with other women in similar fields. Additionally, I prioritize self-care and seek mentorship to navigate the unique challenges I face, ensuring I remain resilient and empowered in my dual roles".

Asked of the memorable experiences she had had in her career, she informed that one of the most indelible experiences was the establishment of Nigeria's first online drug counseling initiative within the NDLEA, which marked a significant step towards enhancing mental health support and accessibility for those in need.

The other one was while at the National Population Commission. Till today, she says she takes great pride in leading the team of seasoned professionals in revamping the Lagos Data Center which positioned it as the only fully functioning data center during her tenure. This accomplishment, she noted, was a testament of the

collaborative effort of the Lagos staff, and it culminated in the Lagos Population Commission receiving essential IT infrastructure upgrades from foreign partners.

Aside from MGP Integrated Prints which she manages, Dr. Roli Bode-George has a pet project called RBG Concept. According to her, the firm was birthed as a result of her creative side in fashion and the store stocks Nigerian brands mostly from young entrepreneurs who need a platform to showcase and sell their products. She contends that the company has done quite well within its short time of establishment considering the current economic headwinds in the country.

She however hinted that the firm's greatest challenge is power. "It's outrageously expensive and the service is epileptic which hampers operational efficiency and affects productivity across various sectors," she fumed. "Coupled with this is the unstable and volatile economic landscape, which creates uncertainty for businesses and complicates strategic planning. These challenges make it difficult for RBG to maintain accelerated growth, requiring innovative solutions to navigate the complexities of the environment". In the nearest future, she however plans to hand over the firm to her daughters who both have exhibited creative skills so that she would be able to concentrate well on managing MGP Prints.

A unity school alumnus and a pioneer student of the Federal Government College Ijanikin, Lagos, where she obtained her O' and A' Level certificates, Roli went ahead to earn a Bachelors at the University of Benin, graduating with a second class upper in Geography. Aside from a Masters and Doctorate in Business Administration she also has an Advanced Diploma in Terrorism, Security and Intelligence Studies including certifications in Executive Leadership in Law Enforcement.

To all aspiring young female professionals, she advises them to prioritize training and education in their chosen fields because a solid foundation is key to success. She urged them to always remember that it's never too late to educate themselves and that lifelong learning can enhance their skills and open new doors.

"Additionally, place your trust in God, for while human support is valuable, the arm of the flesh is prone to fail. Cultivate resilience and adaptability, and surround yourself with mentors and supportive network that can guide you on your journey. Stay committed, remain focused, and believe in your potential to make a difference," she further sermonized.

I'm Passionate About Being A Role Model For Women In Sustainability Space - Lovelyn Okoye, Sustainability Manager, Seven-Up Bottling Co.

Can we have an insight into your background?

I grew up in Aba, Abia State. My educational journey began at Constitution Crescent Primary School (also known as Santa Maria), where I earned my First School Leaving Certificate.

I then attended Girls' Secondary School Umuahia, a model secondary school in the capital of Abia State, where I excelled and emerged with the second-best result in SSCE. After completing my secondary education, I pursued higher education at the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) in Enugu, where I earned an OND and HND in Chemical Engineering, graduating with distinctions.

At NYSC my passion for community based social responsibility was birthed and I advocated for millennium development goals impacting skills and contributing to their development earning me national recognitions at the highest levels, including awards from the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas) in 2012.

I began my career journey and later got admission to study Mechanical Engineering at Bells University of Technology, Ota where I bagged a B.Eng. (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering. I then proceeded to earn a Master's degree in Business Administration from Ajayi Crowther University and am currently pursuing a Doctorate in Business Administration at the same institution.

I firmly believe that learning is a lifelong process. Once you stop learning, you start dying. Continuous learning enables growth, new knowledge acquisition, and impactful contributions hence in addition to formal education I have acquired numerous professional certifications along the way.

You are an engineer, as a woman what made you study engineering?

Growing up, I never thought I would become an engineer. In primary school, I had this dream of being a banker, drawn to their corporate outfits. However, in secondary school, my interests shifted to sciences when I noticed many students struggled with mathematics, integrated science, chemistry, biology, and physics so I wanted to help.

As someone who enjoys providing solutions, I excelled in these subjects, becoming the best in chemistry, physics, and mathematics in my school. I even represented my school in physics competitions. My desire to support others and make a positive impact drove my interest in the sciences.

When I gained admission to study chemical engineering, I knew it was the perfect fit. As a chemical engineer, I'm fascinated by the conversion of matter from one form to another to create something useful. My passion for providing solutions and making a meaningful impact aligned perfectly with the core definition of chemical engineering.

Throughout my journey, I've

approached challenges with a unique perspective, breaking down complex problems into manageable solutions. My background in chemical engineering has enabled me to proffer solutions to problems that others might find insurmountable.

I've always been drawn to daring and tough challenges which studying Engineering is one. Also proving that perceived impossibilities can be achieved drove me to excel even in that space. I emerged as one of the best graduating students in my OND and HND program at IMT graduating with distinctions and showcasing how I've consistently pushed myself beyond bounce.

In conclusion, my journey into engineering was driven by a desire to provide solutions, support others, and make a positive impact. I'm proud to be a chemical engineer, and I hope my story inspires others to pursue their passions, no matter how tough they may seem.

Can you take us through your career trajectory?

During my higher institution days, my passion for simplifying complex problems and tackling challenges earned me the nickname "Iron Lady." This passion drove me to make a positive impact during my National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program.

While serving, I joined the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) group, focusing on zero hunger and poverty eradication. I facilitated skills acquisition programs for community members empowering them to become self-reliant. My efforts earned me an award from Federal government as an outstanding MDGs advocate.

My dedication and passion caught the attention of a general marketing manager from the oil and gas sector, who recommended me for a role in Dozzy Oil & Gas

and after a brief experience I proceeded to Nestle Nigeria limited for a technical training program (NTTC). This marked the beginning of my career journey.

Dangote Cement Plc later admitted me as part of the pioneer Dangote Academy graduate engineerin

g trainees and after completing the program, I joined Dangote Cement as an employee and began my 12-year journey with the company.

During my tenure, I transitioned from core production to process engineering, where I optimized plant operations and identified solutions to downtimes. I also managed particulate emissions, estimated organization's carbon footprints, was a Learning & Development Ambassador and led the Dangote Women Network of the plant.

As the first sustainability lead in the plant in 2018, I championed sustainability integration, initiatives and best practices growing to DCP group Environment Manager, and after an accomplished career in Dangote, I joined Seven-Up Bottling Company, a leading Food and Beverage Manufacturing Company to lead their sustainability efforts, manage environmental and social sustainability performance and drive stewardship programs.

Who and who would you say have been most influential on your life and career?

The most influential person in my life is my late mother. Growing up in a poor household, she instilled in me the values of hard work, responsibility, and diligence. Despite the challenges we faced, she remained graceful, respectable, and carried herself with dignity. Her words of encouragement and teachings have had a lasting impact on me.

My mother's influence shaped me into the person I am today.

She taught me that diligence is key to success, and that has been my guiding principle. Unfortunately, she passed away before seeing the fruits of her labour and the realization of the dreams she had for me.



Dr Roli Bode-George



Lovelyn Okoye

FOR SERVICOM, ITS SERVICE COMPACT WITH ALL

WITH a mission to improve citizen satisfaction by promoting service excellence in public services, SERVICOM is a solemn compact as well as an institutional mechanism conceptualized to fight against service failure by ensuring that organs of government in Nigeria deliver to citizens and other residents in the country, the services to which they are entitled to.

Established in 2004 as the outcome of a three-day special Presidential retreat on Service Delivery with the President, Ministers, Special advisers, Presidential aides and Chief Executives of major extra-Ministerial Departments and Parastatals.

SERVICOM, an acronym for Service Compact with All Nigerians, is an initiative of the Federal Government of Nigeria conceived to promote effective and efficient service delivery in MDAs to ensure customer satisfaction and to manage the performance expectation gap between government and citizens as well as other members of the public, on issues of service delivery.

It equally gives the public the right to demand good services as contained in MDAs' Service Charter, with a view to ensure that service takers understand their rights to public services, the service standards they should expect and how to demand for that service or speak up where it is deficient or lacking.

It operates through a network of Ministerial SERVICOM Units (MSUs) established in all MDAs to refocus every institution in the public service towards better service delivery and supports these MSUs to formulate and implement Service Charters, establish Complaints Systems at service frontlines as well as develop Service Improvement Plans.

In its 20 years of existence, and with 500 nodal officers, it has done 15,000 evaluations and 1,000 compliances. With a vision to be the foremost change agent for service excellence, which was lacking in Nigeria before, in June 2003, President Olusegun Obasanjo had observed and declared: "Nigerians have for too long been feeling short-changed by the quality of public service.

"Our public offices have for too long been showcases for the combined evils of inefficiency and corruption, whilst being impediments to effective implementation of government policies, Nigerians deserved better. We will ensure they get what is better."

The President and Ministers thus entered into a Service Compact with all Nigerians by declaring: "We dedicate ourselves to providing the basic services to which citizens are entitled, in a timely, fair, honest, effective and transparent manner"

Hence, all MDAs were mandated to prepare and publish Service Charters whose provisions will include: Quality services designed around customers' requirements, List of fees payable and prohibit illegal demands, commitment to provision of services within realistic timeframes, specify officials to whom complaints may be addressed, publish these details in conspicuous places accessible to the public; conduct and publish surveys of customer satisfaction.

What we do at SERVICOM:

To coordinate efforts by Ministries, Departments & Agencies (MDAs) to formulate and implement service charters in MDAs, Regularly monitor and report to his Excellency, the President on the progress made by each of the Ministries and Agencies in performing their obligations under this charter.



To carry out independent surveys of the services provided to citizens by the MDAs, their adequacy, their timeliness, customer satisfaction and widely publicize the results to keep citizens fully informed, to heighten public awareness of the damaging effects of service failure to the Nigerian society and social structures.

To promote attitudes by which citizens would recognize the need to challenge service failure as their civil rights as well as responsibility; and To build capacity of public servants to deliver excellent services by promoting best practice in service delivery.

The core values of the agency include, excellence, integrity, accountability, efficiency and commitment. As an agency of the government, it is dedicated to giving the best and world class services and achieving excellence in the process.

It also acts with honesty and integrity, not compromising the truth and also accepts individual and team responsibilities. It aims at being efficient and effective in approach to improving service delivery as well as providing service that impacts lives of the citizens.

The guiding principles of SERVICOM are: Affirmation of commitment to the service of the Nigerian nation; Conviction that Nigeria can only realize its full potential if citizens receive prompt and efficient services from the state; Consideration of the needs and rights of all Nigerians to enjoy social and economic advancement and Dedication to deliver services to which citizens are entitled in a timely, fairly, honest, effective and transparent manner.

Steering the ship of SERVICOM is Mrs. Nnenna Akajemeli. She is the National Coordinator and Chief Execu-

tive Officer of SERVICOM Office, Presidency and hails from Orlu Local Government Area of Imo State.

She was born into the family of Nze and Mrs. A.A. Nwosu of Umuna Orlu in 1965 at Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. She attended Federal Government Girls' College Abuloma, Rivers State (1982) and Federal Government College, Rumola, Port Harcourt for her Lower 6th Form.

She is a graduate of English and Literary Studies from University of Calabar (1987) and has obtained a master's degree in English Literature from the University of Abuja (2007). She joined the services of the Federal Government in 1989 as a Personnel Officer II with the National Directorate of Employment and rose to the position of an Assistant Chief Personnel Officer before her secondment to SERVICOM Office in year 2004 as one of its pioneers staff.

She held key positions of Team lead, Head of Operations, Chief SERVICOM Officer and acted as National Coordinator SERVICOM from 2015 till her present appointment in April 2017. Mrs Akajemeli has attended several courses and programmes and has obtained many certificates, which include Certificate on Train the Trainer (SERVICOM Institute) 2007; Certificate in Management Consulting Essential (Institute of Management Consulting, UK) 2007.

She also obtained a Certificate in Monitoring and Evaluation (RIPA International, UK) 2008; Executive Development Programme in Facilitating Effective Service Delivery in Nigeria (GMSI, UK) 2012; Basic/Advanced MANDEV Certificate (CMD, Nigeria) 2017 and Certificate of Service Excellence Experience Exchange Programme for Senior Government Officials in Paris France, December 2018.

She further attended a Capacity Growth Development Exchange Programme for CEOs, Senior Government Officials Dubai, November 2019. She is also ISO 9001:2015 Certified. She is a devout Catholic, a Lady Knight of St John International with its supreme Headquarters in USA.

She belongs to and serves in many societies in the church including National Women Organisations, St Jude Thaddeus and her basic Catholic State Community Association known as St Patricks Enugu, Anambra, Ebonyi Catholic Community of CKC Parish Kubwa, Abuja FCT.

She was happily married for 33 years to Late Sir Okwudili Akajemeli from Uli in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State and the marriage is blessed with four children and four grandchildren.

A professional in her field of studies, she's competent, an achiever, an upright personality, she's a global icon who believes in global standards, she's passionate for service excellence, she's a good team lead, an astute crusader, a trailblazer, and a pathfinder.

She believes in fighting for the right of Nigerians who have been short-changed. She's an outstanding and accomplished administrator. A woman with great ideas, an exceptional principle and exemplary character. She was awarded Woman of the Year 2022 by the Nigerian News Publication.

She is well known as madam SERVICOM. Her hobbies include reading, cooking, Mediation, Strategic engagement with people, giving back to society and humanitarian services. For SERVICOM, It's Service Compact with All Mrs Nnenna Akajemeli, National Coordinator SERVICOM

Working At Zedcrest Group Has Been Incredibly Rewarding

— Oyinkansola Adeye, Group Head, Human Resources And Admin, Zedcrest Group

A proud Ijebu Ode lady, Oyinkansola Adeye, the Group Head of Human Resources and Administration of Zedcrest Group, a rapidly growing organization with focus on diverse business areas including asset management, fixed income and equities trading, consumer and business financing, as well as proprietary investments is an HR professional that definitely knows her onions. In fact, HR management is second nature to her and is her passion.

As Group Head of Human Resources at Zedcrest Group, she has been adding value to the firm in no small way. Hear her: "Last year, we launched our maiden Graduate Trainee Program - The Zedcrest Launch pad- which saw us onboard 30 exceptional graduates from over 3,000 applications. Today, I am a proud mentor, watching my once fledgling trainees now functioning as analysts and key team members achieving major feats in their various roles".

She added: "In building our business for success, I have also been at the forefront of introducing core system and policy upgrades, including a new performance management system and a new HRIS. Additionally, we've introduced a rich pool of employee benefits, improved remuneration, enhanced employee development initiatives, expanded our business presence across Nigeria, and rolled out employee engagement programmes among many other initiatives."

Revealing that her overarching goal is to position the HR function as a strategic



Oyinkansola Adeye, Group Head, Human Resources & Admin, Zedcrest

partner in driving business growth and employee success, she intends to work on workforce development, foster a high performance and inclusive culture whilst creating opportunities for employees to thrive as well.

On how she came into the profession of HR, Adeye said it was the profession that chose her. According to her, she stumbled on it in her 300/400 level years at University of Benin where she studied Political Science and Public Administration. She said she took HR courses at that level and found them relatable, making her to research on the field and discover the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management as the professional body regulating the profession. This made her love the profession and decide to come into it no matter the odds.

As regards those that have influenced her career, she gives God the greatest glory. Aside from God, she says that she has been fortunate to work with

exceptional leaders and colleagues who have become mentors and friends. Amongst these mentors, she noted that Aanu Iyiola-Jacobs, her first HR manager who has been a steadfast supporter throughout her journey as well as Tolulope Agiri are two people who stand out as they have inspired her to dream big in the profession.

Asked about the challenges she has come across in her professional journey as a woman, she stated: "Thankfully, human resources is a field that's welcoming to women to a good extent, so I've not faced as much gender - related challenges. However, I've had to navigate issues around career advancement and work - life balance such as managing a heavy workload. I address these challenges as they come. I seek help if needed. Some become lessons going forward. Life has also taught me to believe in myself and my abilities, so no matter how many times I stumbled, I get back up."

Oyinkansola has had many memorable moments but the most special moments are the heartfelt appreciation she has received from employees. She confessed that getting to know one's efforts are seen and valued is deeply fulfilling. And to aspiring female professionals, she has these words of advice: "Define your goals at every stage and go for them. Keenly learn, unlearn, relearn. Let the quality of your work speak clearly. The little details matter, pay attention; celebrate your wins, set boundaries. Don't be too hard on yourself when you fail or face a road block, get moving, no one is perfect."

We Aim To Be Africa's Preeminent Asset Manager

— Renah Osiemi, Managing Director, Zedcrest Wealth.

RENAH Osiemi began her career in banking at Access Bank before transitioning to AXA Mansard Investments, where she moved into investment management. At AXA Mansard, she was tasked with establishing the corporate wealth management team and eventually led the entire team. Due to her passion for tech enabled solutions, she was later appointed to create and lead the solutions development team which was responsible for automating the processes and distributing products through digital channels. These experiences in building and leading teams are what has equipped her with the expertise and role she is playing today at Zedcrest Wealth.

For over 17 years now, Osiemi has been consistently in the forefront of driving business goals. And at Zedcrest Wealth, it is not a different story. Actually, she has been a priceless asset there. "My focus is on empowering my team to excel while ensuring we consistently deliver value," she says. "My key considerations are very simple: Are we simplifying the process? Are we making an impact? Are we leveraging technology to drive that impact?"

Stating that a typical day for her is often filled with challenges, she revealed that each day involves checking market trends, engaging with her team, setting goals, attending meetings, prospecting and collaborating with marketing to define their next agenda.

Admitting that challenges are inevitable in any work, she informed that the most



Renah Osiemi, Managing Director, Zedcrest Wealth

challenging yet rewarding aspect of her career has been working with people. According to her, she's constantly mindful of the diverse backgrounds, experience and strengths that individuals bring to the table. Stressing that through she had worked with both difficult and easy personalities, she posited that each experience had taught her valuable lessons as they have made her wiser, more empathetic, and deliberate about building connections.

On the unforgettable experiences she had had at Zedcrest Wealth, she recounted: "I vividly remember the months leading up to the launch of our Zedcrest Wealth App. We were tasked with launching a digital asset management app that only worked seamlessly but also offered our clients access to the best investment products and rates in the market. Those days

were extremely tasking, especially as they coincided with the 10th anniversary of our mother brand, Zedcrest Group.

"I recall how we would tirelessly solve one problem only for another to arise. There were days when the team had to push themselves to the limit to achieve our goals. We had to secure apartments to lodge our developers and keep them focused, double up on recruitments to fill critical roles for the new proposition, and simultaneously plan a full-blown five-day anniversary event. The energy I got from the team? Absolutely priceless. On several nights when we had to stay late at the office to wrap up tasks, we turned those moments into mini celebrations. We played loud music, stocked up on foods, shared stories and worked tirelessly through the night leaving no stone unturned."

She also recalled her first coding class at Axia Mansard, saying that she was baffled by the Python raised to power OJava 1-2 go' coding jargon and literally had to go dancing afterwards just to clear her head.

On her vision for Zedcrest Wealth, she pointed out that it is to simplify finance making it as intuitive and integral to everyday life as possible adding that the company will like to help people understand and embrace the art of investing. Also, she aims to make the company the preeminent asset manager in Africa which would be renowned for simplifying wealth creation and building the best investment app on the planet.

Dr. Jane Francis Duru: A Seasoned HR Professional Impacting ACI Holdings With Her Expertise

A human resource management and administration expert of over 30 years standing, Dr. Jane Francis Ijeoma Duru holds Master's and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in Public Administration specializing in Human Resources from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. As a matter of fact, she received the Council for the Development of Economics and Social Research in Africa, CODESRIA award for her Master's Thesis titled: Management of Communication Problems in Organizations. And over the years, she has acquired vast experience in leadership, communication, entrepreneurship development, business advisory, Environmental Impact Assessment, gender, health and reproductive health.

Duru, a seasoned facilitator and trainer is a certified ILO Entrepreneurship Development Trainer on "Start and Improve Your Business Package" and a certified Clarity 4D Personality Development Trainer in UK. She is equally a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management, Nigeria, fellow of the Nigeria Institute of Management and fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Training and Development.

A consultant to international development agencies including WHO, UNDP, EU, UNICEF, Federal Ministry of Environment and several other organizations, Duru informed that her interest in human resource management was sparked by her love for people-oriented issues. "I have a



Dr. Jane Francis Duru, Director, Shared Services ACI Holdings Ltd.

combination of personal interests, values and skills that align with the responsibilities of the role, including an interest in people and organizational dynamics, passion for helping others, problem-solving and conflict resolution, focus on employee development, broad influence and strategic impact. My experiences over the years have proved that it was a good decision."

Saying that HR often involves navigating sensitive situations such as handling difficult colleagues, resolving conflicts, addressing discrimination or harassment, and managing challenging employee reactions, she hinted that she has had challenging situations in her career journey. "I have occasionally encountered situations where my authority was questioned or undermined, particularly if I was managing male employee or senior leaders. But by establishing clear, respectful

communication from the outset, demonstrating empathy and actively listening while being firm about expectations and policies, I have been able to build trust and authority".

She also pointed out that gender bias and stereotyping were other challenges she had faced in her career. This is more rampant in leadership or decision-making roles where her contributions are underestimated. Besides, as a woman, she said she also faced the challenges of advancing to senior leadership positions, and even when given, she noticed deliberate efforts to limit her access to decision-making circles even as she was often not notified of higher-level meetings where strategic and major decisions are taken.

At ACI Holdings, Duru's professional acumen has been brought to bear exceedingly as the Director, Shared Services. Knowing the importance of succession planning, she has ensured that the group has a pipeline of leadership talent ready to take on senior roles as they become available. This is to minimize disruption during long term strategic goals. Similarly, she has ensured that employees' health and well-being are well taken care of in order to achieve organizational goals.

On the level of girl-child education in Nigeria, she expressed her dissatisfaction with the rate. According to her: "Nigeria has approximately 20 million out-of-school children, making it the highest number in the world.

Girls make up 60% of this number. Regardless of mandatory basic education, girl child education in Nigeria is facing many challenges.

Seye Kolawole: Using Her Professional Acumen To Drive Value Creation in Aruwa Capital.

SEYE Kolawole, an accounting graduate of Covenant University, Ota is an investment and strategy professional with experience spanning private equity, M&A advisory, investment strategy and corporate development across Africa, Europe and Asia. Aside from her degree, she is a CFA Level III candidate and possesses several certifications in investment, private equity and fund management from institutions such as the African Private Capital Association Academy and Harvard Business School online. These qualifications have all helped in honing her ability to lead investments and drive value creation and growth across leading businesses.

Commencing her career at PricewaterhouseCoopers West Africa, she transitioned to Alpha African Advisory where she managed and led several capital-raise and debt restructuring engagements. She was subsequently appointed as an investment advisor by the Ogun State Government, working with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment. Here, she contributed to the structuring and appraisal of high impact public-private partnership projects like African Development Bank Special Agro-Processing Zone project which is being executed in partnership with leading private sector investor, Arise IIP and with a 4-million-dollar commitment.



Seye Kolawole, Investment & Portfolio Mgr. Aruwa Capital Mgt.

Thereafter, she joined CAP Plc as the Strategy and Transformation Manager. In this role, she was responsible for driving the regional expansion initiatives of the company as well as its operational optimization efforts which all helped in improving its production efficiency and profit margins. Currently the Investment and Portfolio Manager at Aruwa Capital Management, she leads deal origination, execution and active portfolio management in essential sectors like consumer goods, healthcare, clean energy and fintech.

Revealing those who have impacted her career the most, she says: "I have been privileged to have had incredible bosses who have been pivotal to my growth and

development, constantly cheering me on, and believing in me from the very beginning. I am especially grateful for Akintunde Olumide and Tosin Oyedele who were my first bosses as an intern at KPMG. I am grateful to Bola Adigun and Kunle Amida who led exemplarily at PWC and have continued to be incredible support. I am grateful to Ijeoma Taylaur and Kikelomo Longe, who keep setting the bar higher. I'm grateful to Adesuwa Rhodes who keeps showing that yesterday's success is only an encouragement to aim higher."

On the challenges she had encountered in the course of her career, she hinted that she had been fortunate to work with leaders who prioritized competence over gender. She adds: "Growing up, I was never told my gender was a limitation, and as such, I grew up dreaming big dreams and aiming for the highest goal achievable. These have helped shape the trajectory of my career, and as such, my experience. I was nominated for opportunities with guys and my gender was never a limitation."

As to her plans going forward, she remarked that she is committed to leveraging private equity to drive sustainable growth in Africa adding that she is inspired by the opportunities that Africa presents and is consequently driven to mobilize capital to bridge the productivity gap on the continent.

Tributes Galore As Renowned Islamic Scholar, Muhydeen Ajani Bello Passes On

Tinubu, Makinde, Oyetola, Others Mourn Late Cleric

From **Terhemba Daka** (Abuja), **Seye Olumide, Rotimi Agboluaje** (Ibadan) and **Sulaimon Salau, Shakirah Adunola** (Lagos)

PRESIDENT Bola Ahmed Tinubu has mourned the passing of Sheikh Muhydeen Ajani Bello sharing in the pain of loss with the Muslim Ummah over the passing of the Islamic scholar.

Tinubu affirmed that the cerebral scholar lived to serve Almighty Allah and humanity with his unusual insight into the Holy Quran, depth of wisdom, and the gift of interpretation, which provided peace, comfort, and guidance for many.

The president said Sheikh Bello’s discovery of divine purpose at an early age and commitment to long hours of prayers, studying, and meditation shaped his message and the destiny of many Muslims within and outside the country.

He acknowledged the Islamic cleric’s unwavering position on charity, peace, and civil order, frequently counselling leaders on the importance of trust, honesty, and fairness as cornerstones for good governance.

Also, Oyo State Governor, ‘Seyi Makinde, on Friday, described the death of Bello as shocking and unexpected.

Makinde, in a statement in Ibadan, condoled with the immediate family of the Sheikh, the Aare Musulumi of Yorubaland, Edo and Delta states, Alhaji Dawud Makanjuola Akinola; the Chief Imam of Ibadanland, Sheikh Abdulganiyu Abubakry Agbotomokekere; the Muslim Ummah in Nigeria, especially Oyo State, where the Ibadan-born Islamic preacher and leader was a major figure until his death.

The governor extolled the virtue of the renowned cleric, describing him as a courageous, forthright and patriotic religious leader, who set good examples for others.

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State has also mourned the passing of the renowned Nigerian Muslim scholar and preacher, Sheikh Alhaji Muyideen Ajani Bello.

Sanwo-Olu described the death of Sheikh Bello as a great loss to the country, particularly the Muslim community.

In a statement issued on Friday by Mr. Gboyega Akosile, his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Sanwo-Olu said the late Sheikh Bello left an indelible mark on the Muslim community and his followers across the world and would be sorely missed.

Sanwo-Olu also condoled with the deceased’s family, Muslim faithful, friends and Muslim community across the country over the demise of the renowned Islamic cleric.

He said: “Sheikh Alhaji Muyideen Ajani Bello lived a fulfilled life. He dedicated his life to the service of the people and the propagation of Islam. His death is a great loss, but we are consoled by the good life that he lived and the legacy that he left behind.

“On behalf of my family, the people and the Government of Lagos State, I commiserate with the immediate family, friends, associates and the entire Muslim community over the passing of elder statesman and Islamic scholar, Sheikh Alhaji Muyideen Ajani Bello, who passed away at the age of 84 years.”

Similarly, the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola, commiserated with Ansar-Ud-Deen Society in particular, and the Muslim ummah in general, over the death of Sheikh Muhydeen Ajani Bello.

Describing the death as shocking and devastating, the former Osun State governor also commiserated with the people of Ibadan, the governor of Oyo State, the immediate family, friends of the deceased and the Muslim Ummah of South West Nigeria (MUSWEN).

Oyetola, in a statement by his media office, expressed shock at the passage of the cleric,

saying the late Bello lived a pious and exemplary life that was devoted to the service of Allah and humanity.

“Sheikh Bello was a friend and supporter of our administration while we were in Osun and did not withdraw his love when we got to the Federal as he continued to extend to us wise counsel. He will be greatly missed. On behalf of the APC family in Osun State, I join family members, friends, the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, and the people of Ibadan to mourn the death of Sheikh Muhydeen Ajani Bello.”

The immediate past Chairman of Senate Committee on Local Content, Teslim Folarin, in a condolence message, said: “Baba was a great father and advisor. I can’t find the appropriate words to express my sadness, but I take solace in the fact that Baba came, saw and conquered.”

He said Nigeria and Africa Muslim Ummah has lost a legend. “Sheik Bello was an international Islamic preacher, scholar and peace ambassador. He lived a selfless and fulfilled life where he gave his all for the propagation of Islam. His usual pieces of advice and wise counsel to political, religious and traditional leaders will be greatly missed.

“I convey my deepest condolences to the bereaved families, Muslim Ummah and Nigerian Government. May Almighty Allah forgive his shortcomings and reward his good deeds with Aljannat Firdaus.”

Equally, National President, Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria and Overseas, Alhaji AbdulRafiu Ademola Sanni, in a statement, said Sheikh Muyideen Ajani Bello was a towering figure in the Islamic community renowned for his eloquence, scholarship and tireless devotion to propagating the teachings of Islam.

“As Missioner of the Northern State Council, he played an instrumental role in promoting unity, faith, and moral values across diverse communities. His exemplary leadership, profound knowledge, and unwavering commitment to the cause of Allah have left an indelible mark on the lives of countless individuals.

“On behalf of the Board of Trustees, National Executive Council and the entire Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Alhaji AbdulRafiu Ademola Sanni, the National President, extends heartfelt condolences to his family, the Northern State Council, and the entire Muslim Ummah.

“As we bid farewell to our beloved Sheikh Muyideen Ajani Bello, let us honour his legacy by emulating his dedication to faith, service, and humanity. We urge all members of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society Nigeria and Overseas and the wider Muslim Ummah to keep him in their prayers,” Sanni said.

For the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), the whole Muslim community of Nigeria will miss Sheikh Bello.

The Executive Director of MURIC, Prof. Ishaq Akintola, described the Islamic scholar as one in a million, a rare gem, a genius of all time and the most fearless of all preachers.

“Sheikh was so generous he could give his right eye to the needy. Even as an Islamic scholar, he gave scholarships to a large number of indigent students,” he stated.

Akintola continued: “There is no Islamic scholar so loved by South West Muslims like Shaykh Muhyideen Bello. Every Islamic organisation in the region yearned to listen to his insightful lectures while young and old Muslims listened to his recorded speeches for guidance and inspiration. Mammoth crowds attended his gatherings in their thousands.”

Akintola prayed to Allah to grant him Aljana Firdaus, while also praying to God to uphold the immediate family, friends and well-wishers of the cleric.

Bello died in the early hours of Friday at the age of 84. He hailed from the Arolu com-

pound near Oranyan in Ibadan North East Local Council in Oyo State.

The Islamic cleric lived most of his life in Kano before he finally came back to his hometown, Ibadan, recently.

His death was announced by Alfa Aribidesi of At-Tawdeeh Islamic Da’awah and confirmed by Ibadan-based cleric Sheikh Almudeer Ajiginni.

Sheikh Bello was born in 1940 into the family of Alhaji Bello Ajani and Alhaja Ubaidat Bello of Arolu Compound, Ita Olukoyi, Ibadan.

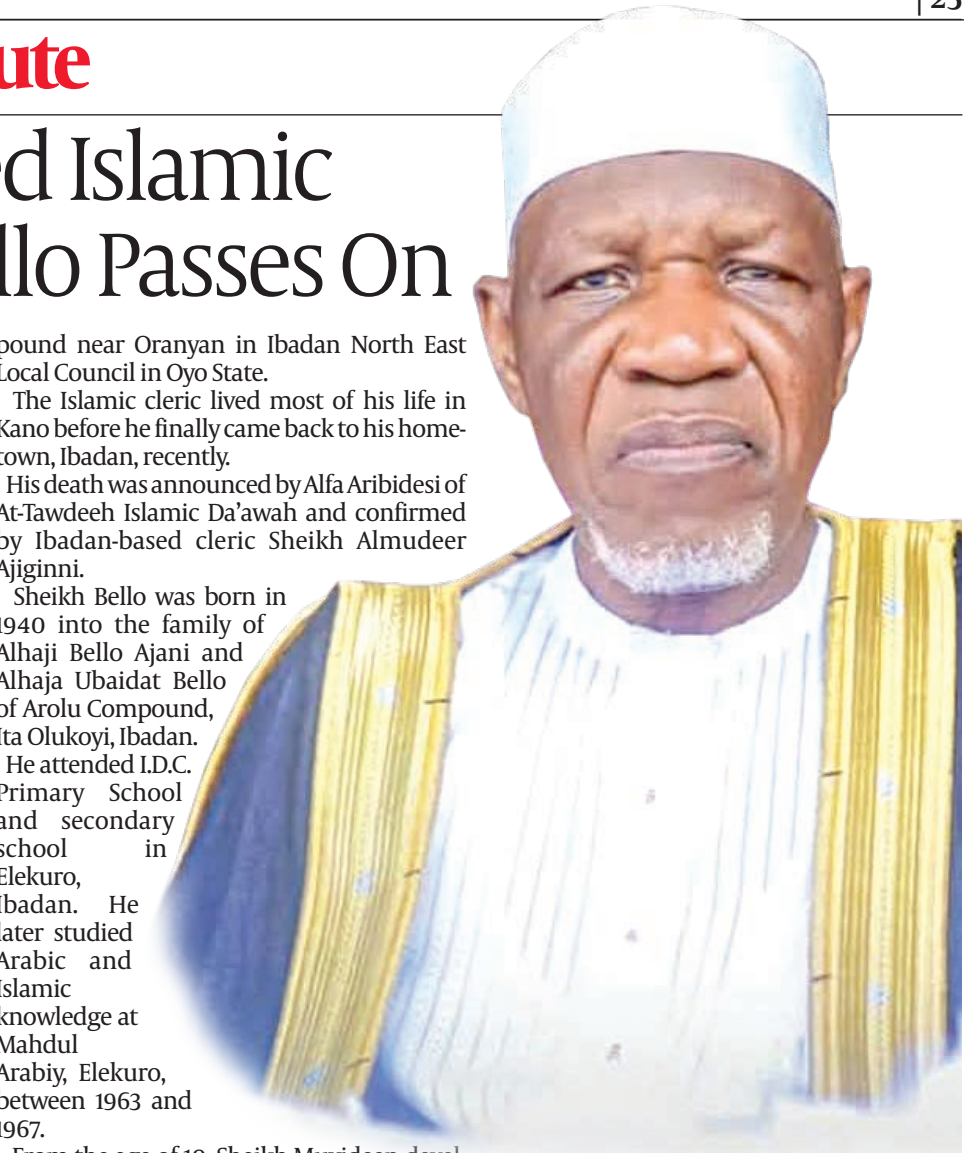
He attended I.D.C. Primary School and secondary school in Elekuro, Ibadan. He later studied Arabic and Islamic knowledge at Mahdul Arabiy, Elekuro, between 1963 and 1967.

From the age of 10, Sheikh Muyideen developed a passion for Islamic propagation, preaching across Ibadan and beyond. He taught at various secondary schools in Oyo, Ogun, and Kano states and served as the Missioner for the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria.

Known for his fearless Quranic teachings, Sheikh Muyideen was invited to preach internationally, including in the UK, US, and neigh-

bouring African countries.

The great scholar was laid to rest in his residence at Akobo Ojuirin in Ibadan at 5.30 pm. The Janazah prayer was conducted by the Chief Imam of Ibadan and was witnessed by the Deputy Governor of Oyo State, AbdulRaheem Lawal, Muslim clerics, faithful and representatives of Muslim organisations.





Piecing Success Together

ACI Holdings Limited is a diversified conglomerate, made up of well-carved interlocking jigsaw pieces that seamlessly fit together to drive the success of our operations. With operations spanning oil and gas, logistics, marine, feed milling, mining, construction, and environmental management, our subsidiaries operate independently yet thrive on shared expertise and synergies.

Together, these pieces form a unified whole, delivering exceptional value across industries.

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**Rt. Hon. Sheriff
Oborewori**

on being inducted into the prestigious

Urhobo Progress Union (UPU) Worldwide Hall of Fame!

This well-deserved recognition is a testament to your tireless efforts at promoting the welfare, peace and progress of the Urhobo nation in particular and all Deltans in general.

Your transparent and inclusive leadership style is changing the narrative. We therefore, cannot but wish you greater success in your quest to improve the lives and well being of your people.

May this induction inspire you to continue on the path of excellence in your service to all Deltans.

Congratulations once again Your Excellency!



SIGNED:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Mr. Sonny A. Ekedayen, | 4. Mr. Jamani Tommy Ejiro | 8. Hon. Onoriode Agofure |
| 2. Ekemejero Ohwovoriele, SAN | 5. Prof. Nyerhovwo Tonukari | 9. Hon. Chief, Peter Okagbare |
| 3. Cmrdr. Izeze Rume Yakubu | 6. Mrs. Rose Ezewu | Uviejitobor, JP |
| Reuben Esq. | 7. Mr. Etacherure Ejiro Terry | |

If You Put Your Mind To Do Things That Are Right, You Will Be Good Example To Lots Of People — Okunowo

By Gregory Austin Nwakunor

FOR 20 minutes when Olufunmilola Okunowo sat in his living room waiting for this interview to begin, the atmosphere was enervated with laughter, as he took his guests on a journey of his involvement in community development.

The former President of the Chartered Institute of Directors, Nigeria, Okunowo will be installed as the leader of Christians in Ijebu, the Asiwaju Onigbagbo Akile Ijebu on December 7. The day also coincides with his 77th birthday and 50th wedding anniversary.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu had already congratulated Chief Chris Olufunmilola Okunowo, the Bobasuwa II, and his wife, Erelu Morenikeji Okunowo, on their investiture as Asiwaju Onigbagbo Akile Ijebu and Yeye Asiwaju Onigbagbo Akile Ijebu.

A statement by the President's Spokesperson, Bayo Onanuga, conveyed President Tinubu's appreciation to the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) for recognising the Okunowos' decades-long dedication to advancing the work of God and humanity across Ijebuland.

President Tinubu said that the remarkable investiture further confirms the Okunowos' legacy as pillars of their community, reinforcing their unwavering commitment to service and leadership.

In addition to his new title, Okunowo holds the chieftaincy titles of Akowajo of Awo-Ekiti and Bamolu of Egba Land. He has served as the Bobakeye Age Group Baba Egbe in Ijebuland for over two decades.

He confesses, "I love music and dancing. I am involved in the entertainment industry. Fela, Lagbaja, Shina Peters and so many other major artists went through Sonic Music and Premier Music. I live my life in a very simple, but meaningful, way. I enjoy myself within a limit that is acceptable. I have a family that is very supportive. The worst thing in life is to go outside and conquer the world and not be able to hold your home. You will never have peace. I have peace and my family has always supported me in whatever I do."

He formerly served as the Chairman of Sony Music Entertainment (Nigeria) Limited, an affiliate of Sony Music International, USA, where Erelu Morenikeji Okunowo made significant contributions as the CEO. They later co-founded Mastersound Ventures.

For over two decades, he and his wife, Erelu Morenikeji, have sponsored the yearly Community Hymn service of the African Church Cathedral, Bethel. On July 28, the African Church Holy Trinity Cathedral, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State also hosted praise-fiesta in Ogun, tagged "Throne of Praise "ITE IYIN".

The hosting of this event was the high point of the Okunowos' love for music, youth development, and selfless service to God.

The event, no doubt, is expected to change the musical landscape of Ijebu Ode and indeed the entire Christian communi-

ty, as it featured seven prominent choirs/groups and two guest artistes from Ijebu Ode and Lagos axis.

Chief Okunowo, a distinguished lawyer, philanthropist, and community leader, is set to join the ranks of illustrious Ijebu sons, such as the late industrialist Chief Timothy Adeola Odutola and the late banking titan Chief Michael Olasubomi Balogun, to be so honoured.

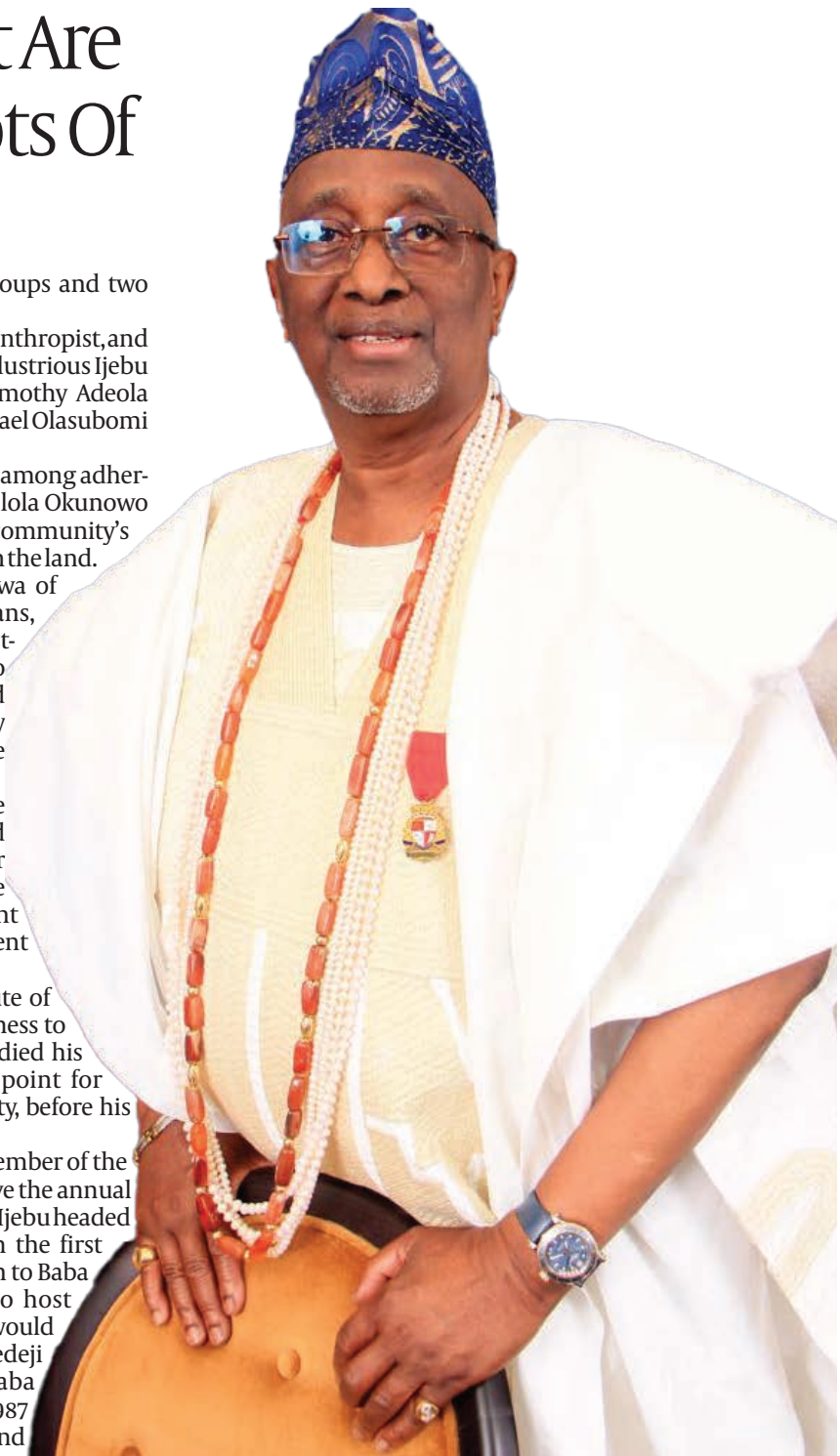
Describing the cordial relationship existing among adherents of the different faiths in Ijebu, Chief Funlola Okunowo said it owes to the hard work put in by the community's present and past leadership, to ensure peace in the land.

Chief Okunowo, who is also the Bobasuwa of Ijebuland, stated that for decades, Christians, Muslims and traditionalists had been coexisting under the umbrella of Ajumosepo Onigbagbo, a development, he believed had enhanced social cohesion in the community and made it the most religious tolerant in the country.

He expressed the optimism that his new role as the Asiwaju Onigbagbo Akile of Ijebuland will provide him the opportunity to further push the cause of Christianity and enhance the fortunes of Ijebu Christians and further cement the relationship existing among the different faiths in the land.

The 16th President of the Chartered Institute of Directors of Nigeria also expressed his readiness to take on the new task; having fully understudied his father, who had also served as a rallying point for Christianity and Christians in the community, before his demise in 1987.

"My father had always been a very strong member of the movement that later became the CAN. We have the annual week of prayer, the universal week of prayer in Ijebu headed by the Awujale who hosts all Christians on the first Monday of the year. The second day was given to Baba Odetola, who then was the Ogbeni Oja, to host Christians on Tuesday, and then my father would host on Wednesday. Thereafter, Prof. Bayo Adedeji became a host on Thursday and late Baba Oduwale on Friday. My father passed on in 1987 and I became the beneficiary of that exercise and have been hosting it on behalf of my father. But I did not think that it would ever come to this. Do not forget that Ijebuland is the only part of Nigeria, and perhaps in the world, where there is no religious conflict. Christians, Muslims and traditionalists are all united and do things together. My grandfather was formerly a Muslim but later converted and became Daniel. We have always been involved with Christian activities," he retorts.



He says the title, now going beyond Ijebu-Ode to incorporate every Christian in Ijebuland, will avail him the opportunity to serve all Christians in Ijebuland.

"The Ijebu people have always cooperated in worship. Otunba Subomi Balogun became the second Asiwaju Onigbagbo of Ijebuland. But, this is the first time in the history of Ijebuland that the title Asiwaju Onigbagbo Akile-Ijebu, is going beyond Ijebu-Ode. Before, it was only in Ijebu-Ode.

Celebrating Intersection Of German, Nigerian Music

By Sunday Aikulola

FOR guests at the Harmony Across Cultures (HAC) 2024 Concert, it was a memorable experience as students from the British International School LAGOS & Corona Secondary School Agbara performed alongside the Vesta Orchestra Lagos, serenading the guests with soul-lifting Nigerian and German classical tunes.

Some of the songs rendered were from great composers such as, Wolfgang Mozart, Victor Uwaifo, Seun Owoaje and Franz Schubert.

Others were, Johann Pachelbel, Godwin Sadoh, Samuel Akpabot and Gabriel Adedeji.

In his remarks, Principal British International School Lagos, Kevin Donnelly, said every culture has an array of things, using dance, arts and food.

To Donnelly, 'this evening, we are celebrating what we have in common and what we have in common is the desire and appreciation of music. Every school must ensure their children

get the best opportunity."

Similarly, Director Goethe Institut Nigeria, Nadine Siegert, noted music has the ability to break barriers, foster creativity and inspire hope.

Saying the institute goes beyond teaching German, she added, 'we believe we can share something about the Nigerian and German cultures. HAC Concert brings together the two schools to celebrate the rich culture of Nigerian and German classical/art music.'

CEO Vesta Orchestra and Opera Foundation, Rosalyn Aninyei, recalled the Orchestra was founded in 2017 to provide a performance stage and opportunities for the highly talented young performing arts professionals in the country.

With support of committed colleagues, Aninyei added the foundation had grown over the years from performing "Classical Wednesdays" Concert Series to presenting an "AfriClassical Concert Series" at

which art and highlife music by African composers is performed alongside European classical music.

In a most exciting development, she disclosed some members of the Vesta Foundation now teach After School Music to 120 JSS1 students at five Government Colleges in Ikoyi.

She highlighted objectives of the programme as, helping students reimagine their future through music; preparing them for the Association of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) exams; holding competitions to further cement the progress made at exams; encouraging particularly gifted student and to establish a 'Lagos State Public Schools Band', to give the children exposure and a goal.

In collaboration with Carnegie Hall, New York, she disclosed Vesta Orchestra and Opera Foundation is participating in Link Up "The Orchestra Moves", a music education programme provided by Carnegie Hall's Weill

Music Institute (WMI), during the 2024–2025 season and beyond.

She added the nearly 150 students participating in the Link Up curriculum will attend a culminating concert in June 2025 at the Alliance Française Mike Adenuga Centre, Ikoyi Lagos, where they will sing and play the recorder or the violin with the orchestra from their seats.

Aninyei said this programme is targetted at students from low income households, whose only chance of getting out of their circumstances would depend on extra-curricular activities such as music, theatre, sports and literature.

In his closing remarks, Principal Corona Secondary School, Agbara, Innocent Oaikhena, said, "when schools come together, it shows how we are able to transcend boundaries. We have our own roles to play in building shared understanding and humanity. Tonight's event will inspire your minds to enrich our community."

Broadcast Content Across Border

Compiled by Shaibu Husseini

Tom Tykwer Opens 75th Berlin International Film Festival with *Das Licht*

THE world premiere of Tom Tykwer’s latest feature film *Das Licht* (*The Light*) will open the 75th Berlin International Film Festival on February 13, 2025. The German-French production *Das Licht* will be presented as a *Berlinale Special Gala* out of competition in the Berlinale Palast. “We knew as soon as we saw *Das Licht* that we wanted to have it open the 75th Berlinale. Tom Tykwer finds beauty and joy in our often fractured and challenging world, and magically captures the essence of our modern life on screen. It is our great pleasure to welcome Tom back to the Berlinale with *Das Licht*,” says Festival Director, Tricia Tuttle. Starring the internationally acclaimed German star Lars Eidinger (*Dying, About Joan, Babylon Berlin*) and the renowned actor and director Nicolette Krebitz (*A Cloud in Our House, AEIOU-A Quick Alphabet of Love*), *Das Licht* tells the story of the Engels family. Tim (Lars Eidinger), Milena (Nicolette Krebitz), their twins Frieda (Elke Biesendorfer) and Jon (Julius Gause) and Milena’s son Dio (Elyas Eldridge) are a family that lives more side by side than together and nothing holds them together until the housekeeper Farrah (Tala Al-Deen) enters their lives. The mysterious woman from Syria puts the Engels’ world to an unexpected test and brings to light feelings that have long been hidden. In the process, she pursues a plan all of her own that will fundamentally change the family’s life. Director and screenwriter Tom Tykwer shows the everyday life of a German middle class family in a world that is spinning fast and has become unstable. Tom Tykwer has opened the Berlinale twice previously: in 2002 with his first international production *Heaven* and in 2009 with the political thriller *The International*. “I’m over the moon to open next year’s Berlinale with *Das Licht*,” says Tom Tykwer. “The Berlinale is the festival of my life. The city is my destiny. This film is my longing.” *Das Licht* was produced by X Filme Creative Pool, in co-production with ZDF, ARP Sélection, Gold Rush Pictures, Gretchenfilm and B.A. Filmproduktion.



Tricia Tuttle

2024 Zuma Fimfest Ends In Abuja

THE 14th edition of the Zuma International Film Festival (ZUFF), organised by the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) ended in Abuja on December 7. The festival, which had as theme, ‘Digital Renaissance: Embracing the Future’, opened on December 1 with a light up ceremony at the Jabi Mall, Abuja and the premiere of Nigeria’s entry to the Best International Film Category of the 2024 Academy Awards (Oscars) *Mai Martaba*, as produced and directed by Prince Daniel Aboki. The five-day long festival, which was hosted by the Chief Executive of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC), who also doubles as the Chairman of the Festival’s Central Planning Committee, Alli Nuhu, featured panel discussions, film screening and a talent development programme. There was also a public lecture delivered on behalf of the Vice President Kashim Shettima by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Musawa. The lecture, which focused on *Ecosystem: Redefining Africa*



Jeremiah Gyang

Cinema, examined Nigeria’s role in shaping the future of Africa cinema, addressing key challenges, opportunities and strategic directions. The lecture outlined a vision of Nigerian cinema as a global leader in innovation and cultural pride. Stakeholders were urged to embrace digital tools and collaborative partnership to overcome challenges and seize emerging opportunities. Vice President Shettima maintained that Nigeria’s place as the world’s second largest film industry by volume, holds significant potentials to drive Africa’s cinematic evolution. However, the VP stressed the importance of prioritising quality over quantity to achieve global competitiveness. The VP noted that digital technologies were essential tools for advancing African cinema. He noted that the persistent issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited funding and distribution barriers can be addressed by expanding cinema infrastructure nationwide and adopting alternative distribution models, including virtual reality and online platforms. An award ceremony brought the festival to a close. Kenneth



Osezua Stephen

Gyang’s *This Is Lagos* was awarded the best picture of Zuma 2024 by a well peopled jury chaired by star actress and producer, Stephanie Okereke-Idahosa.

African Indigenous Language Film Festival To Close Nigeria Festival Calendar

THE 2024 edition of the African Indigenous Language Film Festival (Ailff’24) is probably the last film festival that will feature in the Nigerian film space for 2024. The festival is scheduled to hold as from December 12 to 14 in Asaba, Delta State. Former Executive Secretary of the National Institute For Cultural Orientation and current Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua Professor Barclays Ayakoroma is to deliver the keynote speech at the 2024 edition of the Pan African film festival which debuted in Lagos in 2023. Festival founder Osezua Stephen Imobhio confirmed that Asaba, Delta State, will play host to the festival from December 12. According to Osezua, this year’s festival centres on the theme ‘Showcasing Africa’s Cultural and Tourism Riches Through Filmmaking’ and it will feature panel discussions, film screening and award ceremony.

Nigerian Artists Shine At BIC’s Art Master Africa Ballpoint Pen Competition

By Opeyemi Babalola

TWO regional and national winners have emerged from the sixth edition of BIC’s flagship ballpoint pen art competition, Art Master Africa.

The competition, launched earlier this year, called on creatives to depict their interpretation of *Ubuntu* (One Africa), which was the theme for this year’s competition, using the iconic BIC ballpoint pen.

This year, the event held in partnership with Alliance Francaise, Lagos and hosted numerous local artists, government stakeholders and members of the Nigerian art community. At the end of the event, Nigerian artist, Joseph Akpan was awarded the title of regional winner for his inspiring piece, themed *Stronger Together*, while Joshua Makinde emerged as the national winner with his artwork, *Ayodeji*. These exceptional creations, along with other finalists’ works, beautifully interpret the philosophy of Ubuntu, underscoring Africa’s interdependence and cultural resilience.

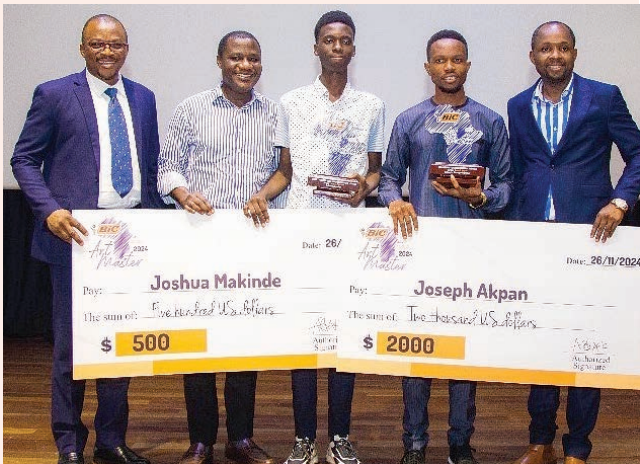
Art Master Africa selected three regional winners and six national winners across the continent. The top regional winner received a grand cash prize of USD 2,000, an exclusive feature in the Art Master Africa Metaverse Gallery and an opportunity for inclusion in BIC’s global art collection.

The second and third-place winners were awarded \$1,000 and \$500 respectively. Each national winner, including Nigeria’s Joshua Makinde, received USD 500 in recognition of their outstanding talent and creativity.

Speaking, Marketing Director for BIC Middle East and Africa

and Art Master Africa’s custodian, Gregory Alibaux, stated, “The competition has come a long way, starting in South Africa in 2017 and expanding into the wider region. It has brought to life, phenomenal talent from across the region and is a testament to our commitment to unleashing creativity using writing tools and living up to our vision of bringing simplicity and joy to everyday life through our products. We continue to be in awe every year after seeing the submissions we receive from the region, and we are confident that we will continue to help more talent surface through this flagship competition.”

Also commenting, Judge Gary Eric added, “The artworks we received are a testament to the incredible talent and creativity on the African continent. Each piece reflects the artist’s individual talents while connecting to the broader message of unity and harmony across African communities. As the judging panel, we were very impressed with this year’s submissions.”



Theatre For Value Initiative Holds Inspirational Dance, Drama

By Omiko Awa

THE Theatre for Value Initiative (TVI) will December 13, 2024, thrill its audience to an extraordinary seven-hour non-stop performance that include dances and drama at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Akoka, Yaba, Lagos.

With theme, *Beyond The Stage: 7-hour Inspirational Dance And Drama*, the founder of the troupe, Matilda Azum, disclosed that the ticket-free show is put up to give back to the society and also to appreciate all lovers of live theatre across the world.

Shedding light on the event, the thespian revealed that the TVI drama tours Initiative clocked seven on November 8, which is what informed the seven-hour theatre show.

According to her, the plays lined up for the show will showcase diverse societal ills with emphasis on the effect of abuse of hard drugs, especially among the youths.



Actors on stage

Gbadamosi Deepens 3D With Surreal Compositions, Relatable Concept

By Gregory Austin Nwakunor

RASHEED Gbadamosi is a Nigerian 3D artist known for his surreal compositions, which often depict black characters within vibrant environments. He has developed a unique visual language that evokes various emotions through relatable concept art. He holds a master's degree from Middlesex University, London, where he focused on graphic design. This formal training helped develop key principles, which he continues to build upon through experimentation with his ongoing practice.

Drawing inspiration from his environment, emotional experiences and video games, Rasheed's work explores themes of transformation, identity and many more. Each piece is meant to evoke curiosity and deep reflection. Inviting viewers to interpret and find personal resonance within the work.

On how he encountered 3D, he had this to say: "In my final year at the university, that was when the COVID-19 lockdown happened, I was in Ghana and suddenly had a lot of free time to myself. I decided to learn something new and because I'm a huge fan of gaming I leaned towards 3D so I could have a glimpse into a portion of how games are made and that's where it all started. Over the duration of the lockdown I practiced and honed my skills and in the long run it paid off heavily as in late 2021 during the peak of the NFT (digital collectibles) hype, I was selling my work for thousands of dollars that eventually went towards paying for my master's degree in London, where I currently live."

Since he began he has gone on to exhibit as part of several group shows in different countries, across different continents. He has participated in Art Basel Miami 2021, in Partnership with FTX, Miami, United States; NFT. NYC 2022, in partnership with Coinbase & Lethabo Huma, New York, United States and Google Black History Month, in 2022, at London, United Kingdom and Mona Gallery, also in 2022, in Lisbon, Portugal.

In his 3D process, Rasheed combines basic



colour theory with exquisite world building to create pieces that are both visually arresting and relatable. The process is often intuitive, allowing spontaneity and emotion to guide each piece's evolution, resulting in work that feels raw.

How does he approach the concept of colour in his work, especially given the vibrant environments he creates?

Rasheed says, "colour is one of the most powerful tools in my work. I approach it intentionally, using it not only to create visual impact but also to evoke emotion, tell stories, and build immersive environments. Here's how I think about colour in my process: I choose colour palettes based on the mood or emotion I want to convey. For example, warm, vibrant hues like gold, pink, and oranges evoke joy, vitality, or a sense of magic, while deeper, cooler tones like greens and blues bring calm, introspection, or mystery. I often blend contrasting tones to create tension or balance, reflecting the complexity of emotions in the scene."

The vibrant environments he creates are often a backdrop to emphasise his characters. "I use complementary or contrasting colours around them to draw attention to their presence, ensuring they stand out while remaining part of the world. The interplay between skin tones and surrounding colours is especially important to me, as it creates a harmonious yet striking composition that celebrates beauty and individuality."

He adds, "I push beyond realistic colours to heighten the sense of fantasy and surrealism. By using unexpected or exaggerated hues in skies, foliage, or objects, I create dreamlike worlds that feel otherworldly yet emotionally resonant."

Rasheed is inspired by a lot of things so his creative process varies for each piece he has worked on, sometimes, his work is inspired by music, "often instrumentals of a piano, violins and sometimes chants. Some of these sounds evoke certain feelings or moods and I try to visualise what that sound looks like to me and it results in a new artwork. I'm also inspired by my own personal feelings & experiences, my artwork 'Self care' was made as a visual reminder to always take care of myself regardless of my situation. On the technical side of my process, I start by visualising what my character would look like and then I build the world that I want them to exist in. The world that I feel best visualises the mood / feeling of the piece."

Through his compositions, he evokes a mix of emotions—wonder, introspection, empowerment, connection, and, most importantly, relatability. He says, "I want viewers to feel like they are stepping into another world, one that is vibrant and surreal, but still grounded in emotions and experiences they can identify with. The wonder comes from the magical elements I incorporate—glowing threads, dreamlike colors, or objects that defy reality. These elements are there to inspire a sense of awe and imagination, encouraging viewers to look beyond what's tangible and step into a realm of infinite possibility."

At the same time, he strives to create moments of introspection and reflection. According to him, "my characters often carry subtle, deeply personal expressions or body language that speak to universal emotions—vulnerability, resilience, joy, or longing. By layering these emotions into my work, I hope viewers can find pieces of themselves within the scenes, allowing them to pause and reflect on their own journeys and inner worlds. Even in the most fantastical settings, I aim to keep that emotional core intact."

For the artist, who uses Daz Studio, Marvelous Designer, Blender and Photoshop and after effects for his 3D art creation, he says, "I hope my work will be remembered as a celebration of imagination, identity, and connection—a body of art that challenges boundaries and offers new ways of seeing. I want future generations to look at my work and feel that it was fearless in its exploration of Black identity, surrealism, and the human experience. Through vibrant colors, rich textures, and deeply personal storytelling, I want my art to inspire others to dream, to question, and to see the beauty in themselves and the world around them."

For future generations, he hopes his work becomes a source of inspiration and reflection—something that sparks creativity and introspection in others. He wants them to see it as a testament to the power of blending the surreal with the relatable, and the extraordinary with the everyday. If his work encourages someone, decades from now, to embrace their own creativity, to feel seen, or to imagine a better, more inclusive world, then he would have accomplished something truly meaningful.

Gbadamosi's work is deeply influenced by Afrofuturism, a movement that merges cultural heritage with futuristic and speculative narratives. "Afrofuturism inspires me to reimagine Black identity in ways that transcend time, space, and traditional boundaries. It allows me to place black characters in surreal, limitless worlds where they are celebrated, central, and thriving, pushing against the historical lack of representation in these spaces. This influence drives my desire to create art that is both empowering and transformative," he says.

Bamigbaiye, In *Imperfectly Awesome*... , Reinforces Tenacity Of Hope, Resilience

Title: *Imperfectly Awesome: Embracing And Becoming A Wholesome You*

Author: Omotola Bamigbaiye

Year of Publication: 2024

Pages: 201

Genre: Non-Fiction

DEFINITION. Restless. Nervous. Pensive. Such terse words are often used after going through well-written books, especially memoirs, biographies and non-fiction.

Dr. Omotola Bamigbaiye's inspiring and thought-provoking memoir, *Imperfectly Awesome: Embracing And Becoming A Wholesome You*, is one of such books that echo the feeling of deep classification.

A memoir is a personal account of a specific part of the author's life, written from their perspective. It is different from (auto)biography, which is a detailed account of someone else's entire life, usually with extensive research involved. Essentially, a memoir focuses on personal experiences and emotions, while a biography aims for a more objective portrayal of facts about a person's life. A memoir typically focuses on a specific period or theme within the author's life, whereas a biography covers a person's entire life story.

The book is an elegant and poignant coming of age account that considers intense experiences. It details both the ordinary and extraordinary. It is a bracing memoir about growing up, and about moving through the world in search of meaning and belonging: A search for self, and the solace that can be found in logic personal narratives.

Divided into eight chapters, a foreword, introduction and conclusion, written in an honest, relatable tone, the author shares her life's journey in a way that is both honest and inspiring. Through stories of resilience, self-acceptance, and growth, she shares her stories of becoming to help people love, reinvent themselves and bloom—just the way they were designed to do.

Written in the first-person narrative, she captivates readers

with her simple yet elegant writing style, weaving vivid imagery of her experiences that will undoubtedly inspire.

Bamigbaiye opens up herself to scrutiny of hawks as she budes through the pages, sometimes, with tears from broken trust, as events cobble her heart, and burying the words in a lair.

Each chapter opens with a compelling encounter, ranging from humorous to daring. For example, in the Introduction, she recounted attending a job interview while heavily pregnant, leaving the interviewers in a perplexed state as they wondered if she could endure the interview or if the baby would arrive before its conclusion.

The memoir, a gripping tale of travails and triumphs, and moments of introspection, takes the reader through 201 pages of emotional catharsis.

"Every chapter of this book is about an experience that had happened to me, and how I overcame it, a bit of advice to people who might also be in the same situation and how they can stand strong for themselves," she says.

Through stories of resilience, perseverance, self-acceptance and growth, Bamigbaiye shares her experiences of facing life's challenges head-on and finding strength through self-love. She suggests that imperfection can be a launchpad, a force that pushes people toward becoming their best selves. Each chapter in the memoir is complemented by a profound life lesson, inspiring readers to navigate their own challenges with resilience and perseverance.

Imperfectly Awesome transcends being just a book. It is a rallying cry for anyone who has ever felt inadequate, struggled with imposter syndrome, or lost in the corporate world. With its relatable narrative and practical advice, it promises to be a source of inspiration, hope, and comfort for readers on their journey towards self-love and fulfillment.

One of the highlights of the book is page 104, where the author describes her short-lived romance with a man named Kabir.

Also, in chapter six, titled, "Good Enough," Bamigbaiye

reflects on how society's standards makes her to doubt herself. She reveals the pressures of trying to meet those expectations, especially as a Black woman, and shares how she learned to start each day by reminding herself of her worth. With her head raised high and a glance in the mirror she reminded herself of who she is: "When I began to know to recognise my worth, I woke up each morning with a sense of purpose knowing that I was the captain of my life. 'I can't' only fuels my desire to subdue limitations and surpass expectations."

Most readers of the book would be enthralled by the author's vivid descriptions and concrete imageries. As you read through some of the pages and chapters of the book, every sentence is soaked with emotion, drawing listeners into her world.



WeekendBeats

By Daniel Anazia

BENINESE music icon and five-time Grammy award winner, Angélique Kidjo, is one of the greatest artistes in the music circuit today, and a creative force with 16 albums to her name. Her influence on the African music scene is immeasurable, just as her exceptional artistry and astute showmanship have resulted in a career that stands alongside the greats of



40 Years On, Angélique Kidjo Still Raising The Bar

this century, yet, she isn't stopping. Known for the resonant power of her voice – both as a lyrical storyteller and as an advocate for women and girls in Africa, working with UNICEF and the Batonga Foundation, Kidjo has been a charismatic presence on the global stage for four decades. Forty years on, album-after-album, the multiple Grammy award winner has trans-

formed a dazzling kaleidoscope of influences, keeping in touch with modern sensibilities while reflecting her own long-held standards. Born in Ouidah, Benin Republic, Kidjo made her musical debut in 1981 with the album, *Pretty*. Following a political coup in 1983, she moved to Paris, France, to pursue a career in music without fear of political persecution. Kidjo's first international album, *Parakou*, first released in 1989, was the beginning of a series of collaborations with producer and composer Jean Hébrail and featured Jasper van't Hof. She rose to

international fame in the 1990s with albums such as *Lo-gozo*, *Ayé*, and *Fifa*. She immigrated to the United States in 1997. In Brooklyn, New York, she began work on a trilogy of albums, exploring the African roots of the music of the Americas with Oremi, Black Ivory Soul and Oyaya. "I had to take my student loan as a loan to come and record in Paris," Kidjo told an interviewer. The music great has continued to write, record, and tour extensively, winning five Grammy awards for her albums *Djin Djin*, *Eve*, *Sings*, *Celia*, and *Mother Nature*. Her approach to music and her activism are linked: Both come from a profound understanding of the human spirit, and a desire to use her voice to empower and inspire others.

Shegzy Marley Eyes The Big League With *Make It Out*

By Daniel Anazia

FOLLOWING the success of his hit songs, *Sugar* (2017), *Grind Don't Stop* featuring O'Teezy (2017), *Not Ah Likke Vibe* (2018), *Beloni* featuring Trod (2023) and his attainment of the hood hero status in his Awori hometown, Lagos-based rapper, Shegzy Marley, who is fondly lauded as the 'Lil Durk Awori', has released a new tune, titled, *Make It Out*. Being his first release for 2024 and coming during the highly festive end-of-year period, the new single, which is a soulful

and uplifting track, is sure to resonate with music lovers everywhere. It's evident that with the thumping instrumentals, the fast-rising artiste who is not merely gunning for the big leagues but fully equipped to take his sound beyond the spheres of his neighbourhood is poised to ruffle shoulders with the established acts in the music industry. In the compelling Yoruba drill anthem choke-full with a level of grit and tenacity, Shegzy Marley whose real names are Akinloye Segun

Emmanuel, weaves his hopes and aspiration for wealth and pomp into punchy lines that speak for the average young Nigerian whose goal is to rise above their unfair socio-economic odds and elevate their social status. The song features exciting street-hop act

Ariyo Awodele Ezekiel popularly known as Areezy, who delivered a boisterous hook on the collaboration. Its catchy and upbeat melody, and Shegzy Marley's soulful vocals, delivering a powerful message of hope and resilience, makes the record a testament to his growth and maturity as an artiste.



Rapper JeriQ Thrills Massive Crowd At Onitsha Concert

By Daniel Anazia

ENUGU-born rapper, Ani Jeremiah Chukwuebuka, professionally known as JeriQ, recently delivered an electrifying performance at the Chuba Ikpeazu Stadium in Onitsha, Anambra state. The event, which is the second edition of the 'JeriQ Hood Concert', attracted thousands of music lovers, creating a spectacle that celebrated music, culture, and the renowned trap king of the East's deep connection to his Igbo roots. The Iyoo, Hood Boy Dreams, Last Last crooner, performed his hit tracks, celebrating resilience, ambition, and identity while showcasing his pride as an indigenous rapper. Other performers at the concert included Blaqbonez, Bella Shmurda, Aguero Banks, and comedian Mr. Sabinus. Fast-rising singers like Lord Zeus, Ema Odia, Mr. Bady, and Hevene also entertained the audience. The music show debuted in 2022 at Okpara Square in

Enugu, but this year's edition in Onitsha aimed to expand its reach and impact. The choice of Onitsha, JeriQ's hometown, was to "add a layer of an emotional connection for the artiste and his fans." The Onitsha concert was a homecoming for JeriQ, who earlier in an interview said "Growing up in Onitsha exposed me to unexpected things as a kid. We washed cars; sold bottled herbs. If it rains, we go into the expressway and wait for travellers to get stuck in the mud so we can help push the vehicle for a fee."



Colgate Unveils Ali Nuhu As Brand Ambassador

To deepen awareness of good oral care among Nigerian consumers, Colgate-Palmolive, an oral care company, has unveiled a popular *Kannywood* and *Nollywood* actor, Ali Nuhu, as its brand ambassador for the northern part of Nigeria. Nuhu, who is the Managing Director, Nigeria Film Corporation, was unveiled during the 'Yanga with Your Smile' market activation held recently at the ever-busy Bata Market, Kano State. The activation exercise, which consisted of a series of activities, saw residents troop out in their numbers to do dental checks. Speaking during the exercise, the Regional Sales Manager, Colgate North, Abdul Musa, explained that the choice of Nuhu was informed by his wide acceptability and recognition in the North, considering his role and influence in the Nigerian movie industry. Musa noted that he remains the best fit to communicate and promote the importance

of good oral care and the benefits of using the products in a way that resonates with local audience. "We are quite excited to have Ali Nuhu as the face of the brand particularly for the northern part of Nigeria. This is someone who resonates easily with the local audience. We know how much he is respected and revered here and will be glad to leverage his influence to promote oral hygiene. As a brand, we remain committed to helping Nigerians get back their confidence and smile," he said. In his response, Ali Nuhu said he is proud and excited to join hands with Colgate as their brand ambassador. "I am committed to using my role and influence to encourage the use of Colgate among consumers owing to its far-reaching effect of addressing cavity issues and improving oral health in general. I hope to take this message to every nook and cranny of the North.

Bella Shmurda, Others Thrill Fans At 'Press Play' Owerri

By Ngozi Egenuka

IT was party like never had as boisterous partygoers in Owerri, the capital city of Imo State, the eastern heartland, immerse themselves in the epic atmosphere of Press Play Owerri, an unforgettable evening that electrified the city with performances from renowned artistes like Bella Shmurda, Vicoka, Big Man Tara, Cruzlife and Westy Crypto, and explosive Disc Jockeys such as DJs Bombay, Ice Sleek, Chizzy, Smallpepper, Henry Miles, Kelly Sneh, BigSquare, 007, and Qpid. Organised by Monkey Shoulder, in partnership with Wave Szn, the event saw

guests thrilled from start to finish with music and fun games like balloon-popping challenges, slippery soccer, water slide, and FIFA tournament. From the very first beat to the final track, the energy was off the charts, as the stage was ablaze with a mix of the hottest hits, creating the perfect vibe for a night of pure excitement and non-stop partying. Just when the guests took the energy was at crescendo, DJ Bombay took the reins and delivered a sensational mix that kept the dance floor buzzing, while music acts Vicoka, Big Man Tara, Cruzlife, and Westy set the stage on fire and won over the audience with their boundless energy.



Chioito Excites Fans With New Single, *Kalo Jaiye*

NIGERIAN music lovers are in for fun times as Chioito releases her new single, *Kalo Jaiye*, which dropped on major music streaming platforms on Saturday, November 30, 2024. The song, which is an afro-pop fusion, draws a lot of inspiration from the need to unwind in the spirit of the season and sets the US-trained lawyer on a path of music relevance with her unique lyrics and rhythm as well as singing style. *Kalo Jaiye*, produced in the United States by Okithewizard, is coming on the heels of two earlier songs by Chioito, *Hold The Melody* and *Right Here*.

Speaking on her new work, Chioito says: "With this song I wanted to create something fun to end the year, because 'omo' we deserve it. With my last song, *Right Here*, I showed a lot of my passionate side and with this song I just leaned into my Nigerian side because at the end of the day, I have to have fun. I love Yoruba and our pidgin and how it really just lights any mood you are in; so, I decided to pay tribute to Nigeria and make the hook. I'm a pop artiste as well, so you could see my pop influence in my verses. I really wanted to create a space of both hardcore Afro and hardcore pop without watering either down.

Jazzhole To Screen New Docu On Lijadu Sisters, Fela Kuti, Others

By Chinonso Ihekire

ALL roads lead to Jazzhole at Victoria Island, Lagos, this Sunday, as the culture and record store is set to celebrate Nigeria's music legacy with a screening of *Kokombe: The Nigerian Pop Scene*. The documentary explores the role of Afrobeat, Juju and Highlife in the evolution of the country's present pop music scene. The event, which also commemorates Lijadu Sisters' 75th birthday anniversary, as well as their recent re-issue of their 1975 album, *Horizon Un-*

limited, which was their last record together before one of the twins, Kehinde, passed on in 2019. "Fueled in large part by the month-long, globally-influential FESTAC '77 festival, Konkombe captures the outspoken yet overlooked Lijadu sisters at the centre of the movement, alongside contemporaries like Benjamin "Kokoro" Aderounmi, King Sunny Adé, I.K. Dairo, and the sister's second cousin Fela Anikulapo Kuti," the organisers said.

Yinka Bernie's Egwu Records To Host Vinyl Festival In Lagos

By Chinonso Ihekire

EGWU Records, founded by Nigerian singer Yinka Bernie, is set to hold the country's first-ever Vinyl festival on December 23, at the Bature Brewery, in Lagos. The event is set to feature a live performance from Sir Shina Peters, as well as special Vinyl disc jockeying sets from acts like Kem Kem, Dibs, Majid, DJ Tommy, Baddest-DJEver-

Liveth and Yinka Bernie himself. "This is more than a festival; it's a celebration of iconic music genres from the '70s and beyond. Egwu Records is on a mission to reintroduce vinyl's rich, tactile experience to a generation increasingly immersed in digital streaming," the organisers said. Founded in 2021, Egwu Records is a vinyl collective and enterprise that presses and sells vinyls, as well as their players and speakers.



Made Kuti, Kelly Rae, Dotti The Deity, Others Light Up Jameson Yard Launch

By Daniel Anazia

IN a bid to seamlessly blend creativity, entertainment and bring its vibrant, community-driven spirit to life, Irish blended whiskey, Jameson recently unveiled the Jameson Yard, its first-ever branded residence in Lagos. Located in Lekki, friends of the brand, influencers, ambassadors, partners and celebrities came together for a one-of-a-kind experience at the immersive hub, where creativity, connection and a good time are always on the agenda.

The evening was star-studded with music acts like Made Kuti and his wife, Nedo; Big Brother Season 9 winner, Kelly Rae, Dotti the Deity, Larry Hector, Callheruche, Ebuka

Nwobu of Vogueboys, Tobi Mohammed of Mainland Block Party, Bisilola of AfroVibes, and many more joining the fun. The evening, filled with excitement, good vibes and even



better conversations, saw guests gathered to savour expertly crafted Jameson cocktails with fun, quirky names like Rebirth, TIM and Date Night, which were perfectly paired with mouthwatering gourmet bites. Speaking at the event, Pernod Ricard's Head of Portfolio, Bodam Taiwo, said, "Jameson Yard reflects our commitment to creating safe spaces for our community and being an integral part of their journey. It's not just about the whiskey; it's about the people, the stories and the memories we create together."

Optiva, MBR, Bi-Courtney Light Up MMA2 To Launch Christmas Festival

By Daniel Anazia

THE festive season began in grand style at the Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal 2 (MMA2) as Africa’s premier wealth management and retention firm, Optiva Capital Partners, alongside MBR Signature and Bi-Courtney Aviation Services, lit up the terminal in a dazzling display of Christmas lights and decorations.

Aptly dubbed the ‘Light-Up Show’, the event transformed MMA2 into a radiant wonderland. Guests marveled as the once-familiar terminal was reimagined into a festive haven, complete with stunning ornaments, towering Christmas trees, and breathtaking installations that captured the magic of the season.

The lighting up was complemented by enchanting Christmas carols with a standout performance of That’s Christmas to Me, a song originally performed by the Pentatonix Group. Adding to the festive cheer, Precious Emmanuel, a talented and rising music sensation, delivered soulful renditions that beautifully aligned with the spirit of the season.

Known for his rich, melodious voice and emotive performances, Precious captured the hearts of the guests with songs that

evoked the warmth and joy of Christmas. Flash mobs thrilled audiences in the departure lounge, seamlessly blending into the excitement with spontaneous dance routines, while renowned comedian Kenny Black added a dose of laughter, rounding out a perfect evening that set the tone for the celebrations ahead.

A first-of-its-kind event in Nigeria, the Christmas Festival is a collaboration that

underscores the power of partnerships – an embodiment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 17 (UNSDG17).

Expressing excitement at the event, CEO of Optiva Capital Partners, Dr. Jane Kimemia said, “this lighting ceremony is symbolic of what this festival represents – hope, joy, and connection. At Optiva Capital Partners, we believe in creating memorable experiences that go beyond wealth creation.



“Through this festival, we are giving back to the community where we operate, bringing the magic and wonder of Christmas, and the richness of its culture, proving that the magic of Christmas can be experienced right here at home.”

Also expressing his excitement as the festival officially commenced, the Managing Director of MBR Signature and the visionary behind it, Stanley Ezeani, said, “The magic of Christmas is alive once more, and we’re thrilled to welcome members of the public to experience it firsthand.

Adding to the sentiments, Acting Chief Operating Officer of Bi-Courtney Aviation Services, Kola Bamigboye, said: “This partnership with Optiva Capital Partners and MBR Signature is proof of what we can achieve when we work together. The Light-Up Show and the activities to come will spread joy and unite our community during the most wonderful time of the year.”

Families can explore the enchanting Santa Claus Grotto, a magical space for children and parents to create joyful memories together. Guests will also enjoy festive treats and a free-to-play grand piano for skilled travelers who personally wish to give fellow travelers a melodious experience.

Oge Kimono Rallies Anioma Youths To Village Square With Flavours Of Olona

By Daniel Anazia

IT is said that the apple does not fall far from the tree. This certainly rings true in the case of Ogechukwu Nwamaka Onwubuya better known as Oge Kimono, Nigeria’s fast rising reggae artiste and the daughter of late reggae icon, Oseloke Augustine Onwubuya popularly known as Ras Kimono.

Like her father, Oge has since embarked on a journey with reggae music, as she is a regular face at reggae events across Nigeria. Straight upon her father’s demise, she inherited his 13-man band and commenced the bold move to etch her name in the minds of reggae faithful in the country and around the world.

Before now, the performing artiste, songwriter, humanitarian, and entrepreneur who started singing at the age of 10 has acted as back up vocalist for a number of international music stars including Ade Bantu, Tuklan, Uwe Banton and Rocky Dawuni, while performing at key reggae events like Summer Jam, Reggae Jam, Ruhr Reggae and others in Africa and Europe.

In 2019, the Onicha-Olona indigene, whose exploits have earned her recognition including a place on the board of the Copyright Society of Nigeria (COSON), released her debut album titled, Good Ole Days, with tracks like Drum and Bass, Addicted, Safe and Main Chick; titillating reggae faithful in Nigeria and beyond. There is also Sojourner, adopted by the Nigerian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration as their theme song.

Like most reggae crooners, Oge’s songs revolve around love, equality and justice themes that exercised the imagination of her father and undergirded his music. “It is the same conscious music. I cannot deviate from that; I don’t know anything less or better. That

is the lineage I come from. That is how I have been raised.

“People will not play Fela’s music or my father’s music if there are no messages in them. Those kinds of music are evergreen music and that is why I intend to keep doing,” Oge said in a recent interview.

According to her, her songs are about speaking the truth. “Basically, it is just me speaking the truth. There is nothing extra or out of the ordinary. What makes it unique is the melody, the delivery and of course the message. When people can listen to my music and relate with it, I have delivered my message.

“That to me is what it is – relatable messages – and that is what I am bringing. I am not trying



to give you more party tracks with no message. I am particular about the message I dish out,” she added

As passionate as she is about her music, Oge is perhaps more preoccupied with promoting her cultural heritage. For her, connecting with her roots and getting young people of her home town Onicha-Olona to do the same is a project she holds dear.

This passion has led her to create the “Flavours of Onicha-Olona”, a yearly event to connect and celebrate the town’s illustrious sons and daughters, highlighting their remarkable talents through arts and entertainment.

According to her, the event aims to celebrate and preserve the rich culture and heritage of Onicha-Olona as well as educate the younger generation on the importance of community building and inclusivity.

Using the platform of entertainment (music), which is a world she is born into, the event which is bill to hold December 28, in the town, aims to showcase the talents of people in fashion, music, dance, and art with vibrant activities that will involve all age brackets.

From the kids’ corner to arts and crafts sections, career pep talks, captivating performances, the authentic flavours of Onicha-Olona will be unleashed on indigenes and visitors alike.

She continues: “The idea of Flavours of Onicha-Olona is to showcase, harness and celebrate our rich culture and heritage through the arts in the form of fashion, music, dance, arts/sculpture, and everything entertainment.

“As we all know, the saying that implies that a village raises a child. Here I am as a daughter asking for help and guide to bring my brothers and sisters home and begin to sensitise the younger ones better on the need and essence of identifying with home.”

Ascend Studios, USAID Partner To Reshape Africa's Creative Landscape

ASCEND Studios has announced a strategic partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for a groundbreaking initiative, the Africa Creative Blueprint (ACB).

ACB aims to empower 3,500 emerging and professional creative talents across Nigeria by providing innovative, hands-on training to elevate Africa’s creative economy. Upon completion, 200 top participants will join the production of a 13-episode TV drama, creating over 200 full-time and part-time jobs during production.

Other collaborators include Venture Garden Group, the renowned Ralph Simon, and Paramount Nigeria—trailblazers dedicated to reshaping Africa’s creative landscape.

The training, which will be virtual and in-person will hold in Lagos, Abuja, Enugu, Kano, Benin and Asaba.

The programme is designed for emerging and working talent in the following fields: Directors, writers, producers, production coordinators/managers, actors/actresses, editors, cinematographers, production designers, costume designers, sound designers, assistant directors, accountants, music professionals, lawyers, production finance professionals (sales agents, distributors) and talent agents/managers. Apply now and get more details: bit.ly/acb2025, Deadline is December 15, 2024.

TEETH 4 TEETH ... With Justin Akpovi-Esade

Egungun: When A Lagos Masquerade Was Stripped Naked

THAT content creator fella, Egungun of Lagos, should be more careful next time when he is on a mission, well, when he is ‘playing away’ because what happened to him some couple of days ago was an ‘accidental discharge’ and in the world of ‘active’ men, that kind of mishaps do happen.

He is lucky he has a ‘loving’ and ‘understanding’ wife who has vowed to stick with him no matter what busybodies say and T4T agrees with her. ‘Husband scarce for outside. Ask people like May Edochie wey use hand troway dia husbands bcos say dem marry second wife, as if dat one na crime for Africa. What really happened to Egungun of Lagos sef? Well, he was caught pants down, so the story went and his story is akin to how the identity of the person inside the masquerade costume was known. Let T4T explain better. A masquerade that limps into a room and minutes after, a man who limps comes out all dressed in a regular clothes... Do you still want to know the identity of the masquerade again? By the way, Egungun means masquerade.

EFCC Got It Right!

T4T was initially among Nigerians that vilified the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC for hiding the identity of the embattled government official who the anti graft agency secured a final forfeiture of the biggest property owned by an individual, perhaps in Africa, against.

Even the richest man in Africa, Alhaji Aliko Dangote; T4T doubts, has the kind of single property like the one the EFCC took from that ‘unidentified’ government official. After reading the careful explanation of the anti graft agency’s spokesman, one cannot help but understand why the name of ‘government official’ was not mentioned. The person is still a subject of an ongoing investigation(s) and mentioning his name would jeopardise the investigation, the EFCC said. However, one must commend the agency, the feat of tracking and securing forfeiture of that massive property, EFCC do dis one! But sha, the government must be transparent in carrying the public along when they want to put that estate to use for public good. Nor be say dem go siddon share those duplexes among themselves and even dash dia babes sef as feared by ordinary Nigerians.

That ‘Victor Osimhen’

THERE is this guy who looks very much like Nigeria and Galatasaray’s striker, Victor Osimhen, and he has been very busy on social Media entertaining people. T4T saw a video on Wednesday where a young man was interviewing a young girl. He showed the girl the picture of Victor Osimhen who she admitted to knowing, very well. And the man then told her he had a surprise for her and she should close her eyes. That was the moment the Osimhen look alike appeared from his hiding place and the girl went crazy, screaming and running around in excitement. She actually thought it was Osimhen. The frighten-

ing part was when she was asked if she would leave her boyfriend for this ‘Victor Osimhen’, her reaction even without words, said it all. How on earth did that guy look like Victor Osimhen that way? He even tries to walk like Osimhen, you know, that Osimhen waka wey im dey scatter im two legs na. But the only difference is, he is slightly shorter but it takes a professional eye to spot the difference. Well, the young man now has a ‘career’ of being Osimhen’s doppelganger. If he manages it well, he can make a lot of money online of it, sha make im nor use am do bad tin.

What Was That, Timaya?

A FRO pop star, Timaya should come clean and tell Nigerians that he was paid to market an oncoming Christian crusade because T4T does not understand his comment online about how he bought his first Bentley because he attended that year’s edition of the yearly crusade! So, if anybody wan buy Bentley or build house for Banana Island, make im follow Timaya attend this year crusade or what exactly is Timaya telling us?

The lives millions of people that attend the yearly event don better finish abi? See, Timaya, be bold to come out that you are now an ‘Ambassador’ of that crusade, dis cona cona marketing nor fly. Don’t attempt to deceive people using faith, it is cheap! You bought a Bentley with money from your hard work (you were about the biggest star in Nigeria that period), not because you attended a certain crusade.

Lafete

Tourism Is A Social Bitcoin Everyone Needs To Tap Into—DG NIHOTOUR

By Maria Diamond

DIRECTOR General (DG) of National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR), Dr. Abisoye Fagade, has said tourism is a social bitcoin everyone needs to tap into as it not only boosts the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of the country but also creates a thriving opportunity for other sectors as well as provide jobs for a lot of people.

The new NIHOTOUR boss said this during a briefing in Lagos recently to announce a free national registration

of all personnel working in the tourism industry in Nigeria from December 1, 2024 to January 15, 2025.

Fagade who raised the need for the sector to be organised, said, “the ideology of this registration is to have a data of all hospitality personnel at all levels in the country. The portal for registration opened on December 1, 2024 and for a month and half, the registration is free after which it would be paid for. I am starting my tenure with registration of personnel in the industry to restore standard and sanity to the

industry. We want to build a strong structure that would be difficult to discontinue when I leave.”

Speaking on the mandate of NIHOTOUR, Fagade said, “we want to identify, register, certify, train and re-train a l l

the personnel in the hospitality and tourism industry. We would unveil other activities of the institute as we proceed but let's begin with registration of all personnel. The segment needs organisation and that's where we are starting from. In my four years, we will ensure to bring standard and sanity to the industry.”



Clive Christian, Seinde Signature Launch Exclusive Artistic Fragrance

By Maria Diamond

ICONIC world renowned niche fragrance brand, Clive Christian, has collaborated with Nigeria's topmost artistic perfumes brand Seinde Signature to unveil an ultra-exclusive range known as 'Clive Christian Absolute' in Africa for the first time ever.

The collaboration event, which is tagged 'Clive Christian X Seinde Signature', launches the Absolute range would hold on December 13, 2024.

Remarking on the collaboration and launch, founder and CEO, Seinde Signature, Olaseinde Olufemi Olusola, said: “This is the pinnacle of partnership and luxury, and because Seinde Signature is the Crème de la crème of perfume we collaborate with the best around the globe. Backed by a rich heritage, the Clive Christian Absolute range, as the name readily suggests, is at the peak of the creations by the renowned Clive Christian brand. The ab-

solute range is made from the most exclusive raw materials available and then packaged exquisitely too to showcase luxury and exclusivity. Clive Christian is a self-named, luxury perfume brand with headquarters in the United Kingdom, known for creating the finest, most exclusive, most expensive range of perfumes in the world including regularly creating fragrances for the

British Royal family.”

Also Speaking, Brand Manager Seinde Signature, Oroluwa Olusola, “The Clive Christian Absolute range is a bespoke collection that is personal and customised. It is 100 per cent oil. There is no alcohol or additives. They have to source for ingredients they use for this perfume specially. The Clive Christian Absolute range cost starts from £7000 Pounds

upwards. The processing and packaging is why it costs so much and when you are done using the perfume, you can get it refilled and the price will reduce. There is a diamond in the bottle.”

The Seinde Signature brand is known to have the largest collection of niche fragrance brands in Nigeria with a choice of at least 40 international brands from around the globe.



By Shakirah Adunola

THE Nigeria Community Action for Resilience and Economic Stimulus (NGCARES) Lagos State Livelihood Support Delivery Platform (13) has empowered about five thousand vulnerable persons in five council areas of Lagos State.

The empowerment, which was done in collaboration with the Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, WAPA, was set up by the Federal Government to assist indigent persons across the country.

The empowerment programme was held in five cen-

NGCARES Empowers 5,000 Vulnerable Persons

tres across the state namely Alimosho, Somolu, Badagry, Ibeju Lekki, and Ojo. Grants were distributed to all 5,000 beneficiaries, marking a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to provide sustainable support to vulnerable individuals across Lagos State.

Speaking at the event held at the Women Development Centre, Agege, the Head of the Livelihood Delivery Platform, Lagos Cares, Toyin Salami, said the empowerment pro-

gramme is to eradicate poverty, as well as strengthen small and medium enterprises which is the bedrock of the country's economy.

Salami noted that the previous editions have impacted over three thousand beneficiaries and the ongoing edition is targeted at five thousand beneficiaries, with about three thousand, three hundred trained on day-one of the event.

On her part, the Facilitator, Bukky Femi-Ajala, explained

that the beneficiaries were trained in business management skills, bookkeeping, and other managerial skills for a thriving business enterprise. “They have to be empowered in terms of business management skills such as how to keep books, expand my businesses and manage the given grant.”

One of the beneficiaries, Aratu Bamidele-Ige, a person with challenge and pastry vendor from Ojokoro in Ifako-Ijaye Local Government Area, hinted at incorporating the training she has acquired into her business and also reinvesting her capital into her business for growth.

NDDC Holds Two-Day Retreat For Directorate Of Legal Services Personnel

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

THE Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has concluded a two-day retreat for its Directorate of Legal Services (DLS) staff to promote professional development, team cohesion and strategic planning among the staff.

Held in Lagos, with the theme: “Promoting Legal Service Efficiency And Excellence In The Public Sector,” the retreat was tailored towards ensuring that the participants learn new concepts to aid their service delivery, and to reposition them for better efficiency.

In his welcome address, the Director, Directorate of Legal



Services, Stephen Ighomuaye, said the retreat was particularly fitting as it reflected the directorate's avowed commitment to continue to raise the bar of excellence in all aspects of its service delivery.

“The role of the Directorate of Legal Services remains piv-

otal and centrally important in the operations of the NDDC and will continue to be so in the years to come.

“Therefore, we cannot afford to drop our guard of excellence, hard work and effective service delivery to the commission and the region. We

must continuously strive to be the best not just as a directorate but also as individuals. We must embrace the ideals of continuous personal development and teamwork while making giant strides. The Commission and the region require nothing less from us,” he said.

In his keynote presentation, the Principal Attorney of Malachy Ugwummadu's Chamber, Malachy Ugwummadu, urged the commission to ensure that effective collaboration and professional networking are properly coordinated and enhanced for high level delivery systems approximating international best practices.

Cinemax Unveils Thin Line

By Suliyat Tella

AS the countdown begins for the highly anticipated release of the movie, *Thin Line*, a murder mystery that delves into the complexities of faith, morality, redemption, others, excitement and expectations are soaring among fans and movie enthusiasts alike.

The movie, starring and produced by Mercy Aigbe Adeoti, which is set to hit cinemas on December 13, 2024, tells the gripping story of Pastor Raymond, a charismatic leader known for his spirit-filled sermons and practical views on relationships and marriages.

He, however, finds himself in the clutches of sin after a chance encounter with an escort named Annie. Torn between faith and fear, Raymond wrestles with his secret, and tragedy strikes when Annie is found murdered.

As the plot thickens, viewers are left questioning whether Raymond was framed or if

his fall from grace led him down a dark path. The search for Annie's killer becomes a desperate race for Raymond's soul, forcing him to confront his own humanity and the consequences of a single, fateful mistake.

Following the success of Mercy Aigbe's previous film, *Ada Omo Daddy*, movie lovers are eager to see the new project.

With its gripping storyline and stellar performances, the film promises to take viewers on a journey through a beautiful and complex narrative, exploring the thin line between trust and temptation.

The buzz surrounding *Thin Line* has only intensified since the press screening held on November 26, where cast, crew members, cinema representatives, and various press houses gathered to catch a glimpse of the film.

The energy in the room was electric, with everyone eager to witness the unique storytelling that Mercy Aigbe is known for.



Producer of *Thin Line*, Mercy Aigbe Adeoti (left); Chief Executive Officer of Cinemax, Opeyemi Ajayi and a movie marketer and husband of Mercy Aigbe Adeoti, Alhaji Kazeem Adeoti.

Over 5,000 Elderly Benefit From Heart Of Love Foundation In South Africa

• As Foundation Celebrates 12 Years Of Selfless Service

IN commemoration of its 12th anniversary, the Heart of Love Foundation, which was founded by wife of the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Pastor Mrs. Folu Adeboye, has provided for over 5,000 elderly in Alexandra, South Africa.

Through the inspiration of Pastor (Mrs.) Adeboye, the foundation has empowered 5,000 elderly individuals helping them gain financial independence and renewed purpose by providing holistic support including spiritual growth through bible study and material aids like food, clothing, winter supplies and skills & acquisition programmes.

Pastor (Mrs.) Adeboye who has continued to amplify the need to foster a community that selflessly serves the elderly through the foundation, during the 12th anniversary in South Africa reiterated the need for the love of Christ to be spread to the elderly. She said: “For over a decade, Heart of Love has selflessly served the elderly community in Alexandra, South Africa, extending the love of Christ to

over 1,000 “go-go’s” (elderly women) and “madala’s” (elderly men) through monthly prayer meetings and grocery support. However, this idea came up when I visited the Consul General of Nigeria embassy in South Africa, Hon. Okey Emuchay, in 2011 when he was giving a report of how old people are dying in South Africa. However, later the Holy Spirit ministered to me that I have a rescue mission to do in this place from South Africa to Nigeria. I then prayed that God should lead me to somebody who will hold fort and Pastor Tunde Obokhai was revealed to me. He is always full of love and compassion so I reached out to him and we zoomed into action. We began to enrich lives both physically and spiritually.”

Speaking, Coordinator, Heart of Love Foundation, Pastor Tunde Obokhai, said: “Pastor (Mrs) Folu Adeboye right from the beginning she's been the sole funder of this foundation, through this initiative the foundation has empowered 5,000 elderly individuals helping them gain financial independence and renewed purpose.”



Again, Leading Moviedom Ladies Seize Big Screen This December

By Shaibu Hussein

THEY seized the big screen last year — Funke Akindele, Toyin Abraham and Mercy Aigbe — when they took full charge of the big screen last December. Three of the big budget films that graced the cinema screens nationwide from December 15, 2023 were executive-produced by these three leading screen queens. Akindele who was then still smarting off the success of her box office hit, *Battle on Buka Streets*, produced and shared directing credit on her new effort, *A Tribe Called Judah*, while Mercy Aigbe and Toyin Abraham are credited as producers of *Ada Omo Daddy* and *Malaika* respectively. There was excitement all around moviedom last year. The ladies are back and set to do what they know best. Critics are of the view that rather than see it as competition for the crown of the big screen space, the decision by these leading Nollywood ladies should be seen as a collective attempt to make cinematic statements and to reshape the narrative of movie production in the Nigerian film and digital media space. Here is a preview of the much-anticipated movies by the leading ladies...

Mercy Aigbe (Thin Line)

ACTRESS and producer, Mercy Aigbe, is returning to the big screen this December with a new offering, titled, *Thin Line*. The new project followed the success of her big budget film, *Ada Omo Daddy* — released in December 2023. Executive Produced by Kazim Adeoti, produced and directed by Akay Mason, fans anticipate the star studded and thrilling movie, which stars notable actors such as, Olaiya Igwe, Iyabo Ojo, Cute Abiola, Daniella Peters, Nkechi Blessings, Yvonne Jegede and Jaiye Kuti.

Funke Akindele (Everyone Loves Jenifa)

CURRENT box office queen, Funke Akindele, will return to the big screen this December with another offering that fans predict will do more than her last December offering, *A Tribe Called Judah* at the box office. This new project billed for nationwide release on December 13 is titled, *Everybody Loves Jenifa*. The actress, producer and later day director has flooded the social media and bill boards with promotional materials ahead of the December 13 release. The movie stars actors such as, Nancy Isime, Stan Nze, Bisola Aiyeola, Patience Ozokwor, Chimezie Imo, Jackie Appiah, Folarin Falana, and Isaac Olayiwola (Layi Wasabi).

Toyin Abraham (Alakada! Bad and Boujee)

THE award winning actress and producer, Toyin Abraham, returns to the big screen this December with a sequel to her successful comic series, *Alakada*. The actress titled this sequel *Alakada! Bad and Boujee* and it portrays a young girl, Yetunde (Toyin Abraham) from a poor family background with an inferiority complex who makes up stories and lies about her financial and social status to fit in with the crowd. Fans say they cannot wait to see what the actress and her crew will make of the fifth film in the popular *Alakada* film series, after the first *Alakada* in 2009, *Alakada 2* in 2013, the third, *Alakada Reloaded*, in 2017, and *Fate of Alakada: The Party Planner* in 2020.



Mercy Aigbe



Funke Akindele



Toyin Abraham

MoviedomExtra and More...

Censors Board Boss Canvases More Support For Faith Based Films

As the Nigerian film industry continues to grow and evolve, it is essential that we acknowledge the importance of faith-based films and the unique challenges they face. Executive Director of the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), Dr. Shaibu Hussein, emphasised this point in his keynote speech at the opening of the Kingdom Film Festival 2024 in Lagos. Hussein noted that “faith-based films have the power to inspire, lift, and challenge our assumptions. They bring people together, foster empathy and understanding, and promote positive social change.” However, the Executive Director lamented that faith-based filmmakers often struggle to secure funding and distribution, navigate censorship and cultural sensitivities, and develop their craft. He said that it is desirable for the contributions of faith-based filmmakers in Nigeria be recognised and valued for their contributions to movie industry and society. He advocated for a future where faith-based filmmakers have access to resources and support to create high-quality, engag-

ing films. To achieve this future, he identified the need to create opportunities for faith-based filmmakers to develop their craft through training programs, workshops, and mentorship initiatives. “We must also promote faith-based films and celebrate their successes through film festivals, awards ceremonies, and marketing campaigns,” Hussein stated. The Executive Director reiterated that NFVCB is committed to supporting faith-based filmmakers and promoting faith-based films in Nigeria. According to him, “we believe that faith-based films have the power to inspire and uplift, and we are dedicated to creating an enabling environment that supports their growth and development.” The censors’ board boss, who was honoured with a special recognition award at the festival which, stated that structuring a desirable future for faith-based filmmakers in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. According to him, it demands a collaborative effort from all

stakeholders in the industry. “We must work together to create an enabling environment that supports faith-based filmmakers, promotes faith-based films, and celebrates our rich cultural heritage” he said. Founded a years ago by Ewoma Luther-Abegunde, the Kingdom Film Festival aim at celebrating and empowering Christian filmmakers all over the world, whilst building an ecosystem that will influence the larger society through storytelling and films. This edition showcased faith-driven films and there were panel and masterclass sessions that equipped filmmakers with the knowledge and tools to navigate the evolving film landscape effectively. Held under the theme ‘Influence’ and hosted by Ebonylife Place, notable sessions that held during the festival include, “Producing Success,” by Mr. Chris Odeh, “Creative Visionaries in Directing,” with Biodun Stephen, and “Acting for Impact,” by Blossom Chukwujekwu. There was also an immersive screenwriting workshop with Damilola Bamiloye and a practical class on smartphone filmmaking with Oladipo O-Fresh.

LAGOS x PARIS Accelerator Programme Returns, To Train, Fund 10 Designers



France Ambassador to Nigeria, Marc Fonbaustier (middle) with some guests at the launch of the second cohort of the Lagos X Paris Accelerator Programme held in Lagos...recently.

By Tobi Awodipe

AFTER a successful maiden edition, the LAGOS x PARIS Accelerator Programme, has returned for a second year and is set to train, mentor and fund 10 fashion and design brands and expose them to the international market. Founded by the French Embassy in Nigeria, the first edition delivered a year of training and mentorship to 10 brands (Eki Kéré, Lagos Space Programme, TJWHO, Obida, Elexiay, Waf., Maliko, Ethnik Africa, Omi Collective and Aga Culture), helping them sharpen their business strategies, refine brand positioning, enhance commer-

cial tools and strengthen overall business structures. According to the Ambassador of France to Nigeria, Marc Fonbaustier, he said this year's programme includes an initial in-depth audit of each brand, personalised mentorship, comprehensive training to prepare for investor pitches, opportunities to showcase products in Paris and grants of up to 32 million Naira. These grants he said, have allowed the brands from the first cohort create new collections, train their teams, invest in marketing, improve their e-commerce platforms and establish new spaces. In this new edition, the programme will continue its

collaboration with French experts, Emmanuelle Courrèges and Nelly Wandji alongside CcHUB. Zara Odu, a specialist in sustainable brand development will also join the programme. Fonbaustier said through this platform, their aim is to celebrate Nigerian creativity and initiatives centered on cultural preservation, sustainable practices and cross-cultural collaborations; while equipping creatives with the tools and skills needed to achieve sustainable and long-lasting financial business growth. "France is a well-known country for both sectors and Nigeria is full of talents and energy, so we match well.

Rays Of Love And Blood! (2)

By Segun Durowaiye (08055356855)

Continued from GUARDIAN WEEKEND, Nov. 30-Dec. 1, 2024. L EKAN lived in a two-bedroom flat at Olaifa Street, Surulere, Lagos. He was the Administration Manager of West Coast Manufacturing Company, Ikeja. That eventful Saturday afternoon, he was watching a movie while relaxing on a three-seater couch. Chioma knocked and entered the living room, with stress and confusion boldly written on her face. "What is the problem, dear?" Lekan asked the completely distraught young lady. "My parents have disowned me, Lekan, because of you..." she said in tears. "They have sent me packing from home...they even threatened to kill me if I come back to their house. Lekan, I am in trouble...you know I am pregnant for you..." "God! Good God, what kind of problem is this?" he said rhetorically. He switched off the television set and hugged her. Then, in a flash he remembered what his own parents always said about the relationship; how they disapproved of the whole thing. The words of his parents the previous day came to his memory. "Lekan," his dad called, "we don't want you to marry that Igbo girl. This is the joint decision of your mum and I. We sent you to school, isn't it? And we are your rightful biological parents, if we come to your house again and meet this Igbo girl you call your fiancée, you had better forget you have parents living. We'll disown you as our child, no more, no less." "Added to this," his mum cuts in, "we have a very responsible, well-mannered, pretty Yoruba girl from a reputable family we want you to marry. Her name is Adetoun, Toun, for short. We'll bring her to your house this weekend, on Sunday. You can't marry an Igbo girl...lailai, over my dead body!"

"But mum, dad," he protested, "you can't marry a woman for me...that's impossible! We just won't cope. I am an adult. I am free to choose whosoever I want as wife. I am in love with Chioma and she is my heart's desire. This Toun or whatever you call her is a stranger to me. I don't know her from Adam. And sincerely mum, dad, you want to destroy a happy relationship. Chioma is already pregnant for me and I am honestly in love with her." "Whether you like her or not, we shall see when we bring Toun to your house this coming Sunday. You good-for-nothing son that has forgotten his roots," his mum concluded. Lekan reflected on the words of his parents for a moment, shook his head sorrowfully and was lost for words. He wondered if he should tell Chioma the pressure he was getting from his own parents, too. He knew this would break the heart of Chioma, who had no place to go since he had already put her in the family way. She was two months pregnant at the moment. They were both between the devil and the deep blue sea. He made up his mind to say what had transpired between him and his parents the previous day so that she wouldn't be shocked when she sees his (Lekan's) parents come in with a lady the following day. Lekan sat her down and explained in details how his parents were opposed to their relationship. Chioma broke down in tears and cried when she realised the dilemma and confusion that had become her lot. "Your parents will make trouble with me when they see me here tomorrow," she said between sobs. "What will I do? Lekan, tell me the next line of action? I love you, Lekan. I don't want to lose you..."

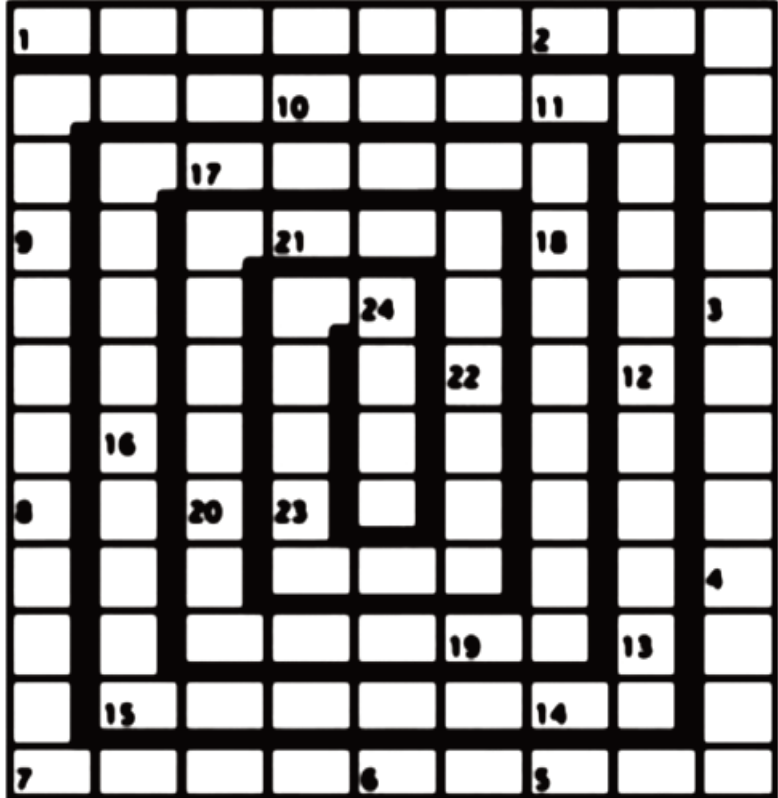
To be continued . Interested sponsor/sponsors for this SHORT STORY column should please contact: 08023015115 or 08055356855.

Overlapping Word Game

with OLULANA KAYODE 08023183727 olulana3@yahoo.com

Solution 16

- 1 Olympic
- 2 Chariot
- 3 Truth
- 4 Hostile
- 5 Leg
- 6 Ghost
- 7 Torch
- 8 Humid
- 9 Define
- 10 Else
- 11 Edible
- 12 Evict
- 13 Two
- 14 Orange
- 15 Endow
- 16 Wallet
- 17 Teller
- 18 Receptor
- 19 Redeem
- 20 Muggle
- 21 Equal
- 22 Lantern
- 23 Noise
- 24 East



Overlapping Word Game

- 1 Capable of waiting, (7).
- 2 Distinctive character, (7).
- 3 More than usual, (5).
- 4 Assert something without proof, (6).
- 5 Hearing organ, (3).
- 6 Arrive at place, (5).
- 7 Joint, (5).
- 8 Compel someone to leave, (5).
- 9 Make fun of, (5).
- 10 Solid earth, (4).
- 11 Separating device, (7).
- 12 Scrape out written material, (5).
- 13 Long thin fish, (3).
- 14 Scalpel, (6).
- 15 Beat rapidly, (5).
- 16 Large monkey, (6).
- 17 Take small quick bites, (6).
- 18 Somebody who implements a will, (8).
- 19 Return money to somebody, (6).
- 20 Educational title, (6).
- 21 Soil, (5).
- 22 Product of ten and ten, (7).
- 23 End of being alive, (5).
- 24 Bent metal piece, (4).

Word Search

Type of Cars-2

Isuzu	Lotus	Oldsmobile
Jaguar	Mazda	Panoz
Jeep	Mercury	Pontiac
Kia	Mini	Mercedes Benz
Lexus	Mitsubishi	Land Rover
Lincoln	Nissan	Lamborghini

Z	I	K	I	N	A	S	S	I	N	T	I
I	N	J	A	Y	R	U	C	R	E	M	E
H	I	E	N	I	S	S	A	P	O	N	L
S	H	E	B	L	I	N	C	O	L	N	I
I	G	P	E	S	M	I	K	N	J	A	B
B	R	M	L	G	E	F	A	T	A	C	O
U	O	B	O	N	I	D	T	I	G	T	M
S	B	Z	T	I	O	N	E	A	U	S	S
T	M	O	U	Z	U	S	I	C	A	U	D
I	A	N	S	U	Z	K	R	M	R	X	L
M	L	A	N	D	R	O	V	E	R	E	O
E	T	P	O	A	D	Z	A	M	D	L	M

(c) Olukayode Olulana

The Best Approach To Solve African Problems Is To Adopt African-oriented Solutions —Okodogbe

United Nations Positive Livelihood Award Centre (UN-POLAC) recently named Dr. Lydia Okodogbe, the founder of SpeakOut and MD/CEO of Eleo Design Centre, as Peace Ambassador. The recognition was given for her continuous efforts in providing women, girls and the vulnerable or abused individuals with a platform for self-expression, aside from empowering them with skills that would enable them to be financially independent. In this interview with **OMIKO AWA**, the International Peace Advocate discussed her plans to uphold the principles of the UN and UN-POLAC, her readiness to address security challenges and other crises across Africa.

What exactly led to your appointment as UN-POLAC Peace Ambassador?

The appointment came as a complete surprise to me because such awards are often given to prominent individuals — those in the global spotlight, individuals working with the United Nations (UN) or those involved in significant government roles. The appointment mandated me to enroll for a rigorous training to be a certified peace mediator from the UN-POLAC Peace College. I deeply value the principles of UN and UN-POLAC, which I have adopted in my organisation, SpeakOut, a non-profit outfit dedicated to supporting girls, teenagers, women and individuals who are abused or have been abused, bullied or vulnerable. SpeakOut empowers people to stand up against societal injustices, gives a voice to the voiceless and addresses societal ills and challenges.

Were these all that earned you the appointment?

I cannot say for sure, but certainly, they would not grant the appointment to someone who is not making any positive impact on his or her community. More so, the letter I received stated that my nomination was made following an extensive review of my track records in community impact and development.

With your appointment, how do you plan to impact African communities?

The ultimate goal is to make a significant and lasting impact. My education project for a start aims to boost education in Africa and around the world. I am taking a hands-on approach in the execution of my duties as a certified Peace Mediator and a Peace Ambassador. Naturally, I have a deep passion for education and recently, I received an honorary doctorate degree in recognition of my efforts to encourage learning and enhance knowledge among young people. I will be launching a nationwide initiative to support the education of the underprivileged youths. My objective is to ensure that every Nigerian child, irrespective of his or her family's low financial status goes to school. This project will support students from primary school level to the university. It will also be extended to homeless youths living in slums and under the bridges.

What are your plans for war-torn African countries?

To effectively address the issues, one requires both understanding and confidence. Often, we look to foreigners to handle African problems and to mediate issues affecting Africans. While these external experts bring valuable knowledge and experiences, their understanding is inherently limited. The knowledge of these foreign experts ends where the knowledge of the local people begins and this shows that foreigners cannot fully grasp the intricacies of African cultures. Therefore, the best

approach to use to solve African problems is to adopt African-oriented solutions, which can only be achieved by appointing Africans themselves as mediators. While foreigners can derive theories and solutions from history and other human experiences, their practical application will never match the insight of someone on the ground. This distinction highlights why practical, on-the-job experience is more valuable than theoretical knowledge. My familiarity with local conditions and culture gives me an advantage in peaceful mediation across Africa. I am aware of the facts and factors through my involvement with the UN-POLAC, which to my best knowledge is an organisation that is well equipped and experienced in the area of conflicts resolution and peace mediation. A testament to this is the number of crisis cases that are referred to the organisation by other UN agencies for resolutions.

In dealing with crises that include terrorism and banditry, understanding the human elements behind these anti-social actions is crucial. Those involved are citizens of the various African nations and resolving these issues will start with the understanding of their motivations and backgrounds. I strongly believe that the perpetrators of violence are not beyond human reasoning; they are capable of being engaged in a dialogue if they are rightly approached and also, if the right methods are employed. There are several instances of governments trying to engage them in dialogue through insiders. This is because to confront an adversary, one must first understand them.



Conversations can sometimes lead to unexpected resolutions, as understanding the other side can shift perspectives and foster practical solutions.

Some people see the girl child as being disadvantaged and regret having girls. Reflecting on this persistent bias, how do you intend to change this narrative?

I have always been an advocate for girl child and women empowerment. To me, women represent wealth. Show me a woman and I will show you the wealth around her. Point to me a girl child and I will show you where the future wealth from her will emerge. In the past, there was the belief that a girl child would not bring any tangible benefit to her family, while the boy child was seen as a source of prosperity and a medium to continue their family lineage. This has turned out to be a misconception. Women are now heads of businesses and they are excelling. They are excelling because of their meticulous organisational skill and the ability to pay attention to details. I am not against any gender, but it is important not to underestimate the power of the girl child. Women are patient, resilient and know how to “get water out from a rock.”

How will your position be of benefit to Nigeria and Nigerians?

My youth project will start from Nigeria before expanding it to other African countries. I believe in the principle of charity begins at home. Given the high poverty rate in the country, providing a child with quality education will potentially break the cycle of poverty in his or her lineage. Attaining the goal of ensuring that every child gets a good education is the first step towards addressing many problems. The project will enable children to progress from primary school to secondary school and later to university without financial strain on their parents.

How do you intend to address the issue of child soldiers in war-torn zones on the continent?

Child soldiers are not from another continent; they are Africans and have families; so, our efforts will start from their families. We will collaborate with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a key regional organisation in West Africa, to reach out to their families. We shall use the Back-to-School project and also partner with parents, local organisations and religious groups to address the issue of child soldiers. We shall design policies that will engage parents, community leaders and facilitate the flow of UN programmes through ECOWAS to individual countries, local authorities, schools, religious institutions and even homes. This strategy will prepare every child for positive change and to foster improvements in their communities. Changing the mindset of these child soldiers to something more positive will take away their interest from carrying weapons to building their communities for good.

Additionally, we will look into the reasons these children are involved in local conflicts and work with their parents to bridge the gap between the home and the society, while helping the children to see the bright future ahead of them.

What is your take on Nigerians in the Diaspora?

I am deeply filled with joy each time I see or hear of Nigerians achieving great success and breaking new barriers around the world. I always wish they could make such valuable contributions at home too. If everyone contributes his or her quarter to the development of our country, Nigeria would be great. The truth is, Nigeria has immense human and natural resources that are yet to be harnessed.

By Joshua Ocheja

Nigeria And Lessons From Germany

A recent news report caught my attention, highlighting the complex and sensitive relationship between Turkey and Germany. According to reports, German federal prosecutors are pursuing a Turkish national, residing in North Rhine-Westphalia, suspected of collaborating with Turkish police and intelligence agencies. The accused allegedly provided information on individuals linked to Fethullah Gulen, the late cleric accused of masterminding the failed 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. This incident raises concerns about Turkish intelligence operations outside its shores and the potential risks to individuals perceived as opposing the Turkish government.

Germany's response to this incident underscores the importance of protecting individual rights and freedoms, even amidst diplomatic pressure. The country's commitment to upholding the rule of law and safeguarding human rights serves as a valuable example for other nations, including Nigeria. The Turkish government's secret profiling of Hizmet movement members in other countries is a concerning phenomenon. While the exact motive is unclear, it suggests that the Turkish government may have sinister intentions, potentially aimed at silencing perceived opponents and suppressing dissenting voices.

Given the global presence of the Hizmet movement, it's possible that such activities could be happening in other countries. The movement has a significant presence in various parts of the world, including Africa, Asia, and Europe, with a focus on education, interfaith dialogue, relief, and healthcare. The Turkish govern-

ment's narrative linking the Hizmet movement to the failed coup plot is questionable and worthy of academic research. Many experts argue that the movement's focus on education, dialogue, and social services is incompatible with the idea of a violent coup.

The Turkish government's narrative remains unconvincing. A coup plot is a military action. However, the Hizmet movement is not a military organisation. It is a humanitarian organisation. So far, the Turkish government has failed to establish any credible links between the Hizmet movement and the coup attempt. Instead, it has undertaken a scathing persecution campaign that transcends its shores, resulting in loss of lives, untold economic losses and agony for members of the Hizmet movement.

The incident also raises concerns about the extent of Turkish intelligence operations in countries, and the potential risks to individuals perceived as opposing the Turkish government. In terms of lessons from Germany, one key takeaway is the importance of protecting individual rights and freedoms, even in the face of diplomatic pressure. The stance of Germany should serve as a valuable example. It is worthy of note that Germany has been critical of Turkey's crackdown on Gulen's followers, and this case may exacerbate the existing diplomatic tensions between both countries.

This also presents valuable lessons for Nigeria given the presence of Hizmet movement members in Nigeria actively involved in the educational and health sectors. They may also be undergoing such profiling by agents of the Turkish government. Nigeria's security agen-

cies have a crucial role in protecting the safety and dignity of individuals and organisations that contribute positively to national development. This includes movements like Hizmet, which have been instrumental in promoting education, healthcare, and interfaith dialogue in Nigeria. The relevant security agencies must be vigilant and proactive. It's also important for Nigeria to learn from the experiences of other countries, such as Germany, which has taken a strong stance against foreign interference in its domestic affairs.

Ultimately, protecting the safety and dignity of individuals and organisations that contribute positively to national development is not just about safeguarding one group, but about upholding the values that define Nigeria as a nation, including hospitality, tolerance, and justice. By working together, security agencies, government, and citizens can ensure that the country remains a safe and welcoming place for all.

It is important to highlight that around the world, the values of education, dialogue, and interfaith understanding remain crucial in fostering global harmony. For decades, Hizmet movement affiliate institutions have championed education as a vital catalyst for societal progress. In Nigeria, schools and institutions affiliated with the movement have established a reputation for academic excellence, moral integrity, and interfaith cooperation. These institutions provide a well-rounded education that cultivates future leaders while instilling values of mutual respect, empathy, and understanding.

Beyond education, the movement's hospitals

and dialogue initiatives have made significant contributions to societal well-being. By creating bridges between diverse communities and promoting peaceful coexistence, these initiatives have fostered a culture of tolerance, compassion, and social responsibility.

Nigeria's response to Turkey's request to close down schools affiliated with the Hizmet movement is a testament to the country's commitment to upholding its sovereignty and protecting the interests of its citizens. In 2016, Turkey requested that Nigeria close down 17 Turkish schools and other institutions due to their alleged links to the Hizmet movement. However, the Nigerian government refused to comply, stating that the institutions were legally established and had not violated any Nigerian laws.

This decision was guided by the government's commitment to protecting the rights of law-abiding residents in the country. The country was not willing to compromise its sovereignty or the interests of its citizens to appease Turkey's demands. Nigeria's commitment to independence and pluralism is truly commendable, and it's essential to protect this stance by resisting foreign interference in our domestic affairs. The Turkish government's attempts to discredit and dismantle Hizmet-affiliated institutions in Nigeria are a prime example of such interference. These institutions, including schools and organisations, have become an integral part of Nigeria's educational and cultural landscape. They provide exceptional opportunities for young Nigerians, fostering harmony and understanding among the country's diverse ethnicities and religions.

• Ocheja, a military historian, is an alumnus of the Nigerian Defence Academy.

Greener Pastures: Navigating Identity In The Diaspora

By Aisha Mobolaji-Okoya

THE pursuit of greener pastures is never a straight path. It is a pilgrimage of hope, struggle, and unexpected discoveries. When I left Nigeria for the United Kingdom (UK), I held onto dreams bigger than my suitcase, excited for opportunities that would transform my life, the greener grass of the West. Unknown to me, the true transformation would not happen on the land I sojourn, but in understanding of identity, belonging and resilience.

Is to be far away from Nigeria and her many problems the reason we 'japa' and seek better opportunities in the UK? My fellow diasporans, the pursuit of opportunities come with many invisible burdens. We mustn't be disillusioned by the so-called greener pastures. As we enter this foreign land, there is no welcome sign or information desk warning us of the not so sunny side of the UK living. I'm talking about the inner struggle of retaining your Nigerian identity and yet, integrating into British culture. No one really talks about the drain of the constant culture shock! You will soon find yourself standing dumbfounded and asking, 'Is it that I don't know anything?'

My journey began in a small town in Kent, where the most exciting attraction was the grocery store. I arrived bright-eyed, ready to take on this new chapter in my life and experience new people and culture. I was

the main character in this multicultural narrative. Me, the exciting international student, dazzling the locals with stories from my homeland. I was filled with hopeful trepidation here to start a new and better life. Reality was not the script I signed on for!

Lesson one: Life is not like the movies! Kent showed me 'shege'. In this small town, diversity was a rarity, with us six international students at its forefront. We were shiny objects for the rest of the students to gawk at, subjects of curiosity - and often ignorance.

My first day in school was a downpour of cultural dissonance. I spent the day answering odd questions like 'how many elephants are in your backyard?' and 'do you swing on trees to get to school?' The ignorance of the locals was dumfounding; a revelation of the deep-rooted misconceptions about the African, about me.

It all came to head in Literature class. A classmate, seemingly innocent, asked me 'how come you speak English so well?' In that moment I looked around, she couldn't have been talking to me.

When you leave your home, your culture and everything you know to seek opportunities, you go with hope. At that moment, when this girl asked me about my English, hope felt like a dimming light in the distance. This was a backhanded question and a microaggression that sobered me. Maybe

I could have tolerated all the differences England showed me: the weird food, the accents that made me listen harder, the perpetual grey sky; but I knew I wasn't going to fit in here.

Soon enough the interest in the 'new kids' stopped entirely. And the six of us - Nigerian students - were relegated to invisible bodies in the sea of Englishness.

I began to struggle with anxiety because everything I did or said, which would have been normal in Lagos, was odd. The way I pronounced 'accommodate' will earn me looks in class. My loud roaring laugh resulted in sneers. And my inability to appreciate the bland British cuisines made me 'stuck up'. I retreated into myself, a shell of the vibrant Lagosian I was.

The harder I tried to understand the culture I would live in for the next few years of my life, the more marginalised I was. So, I kept my head down, surrounded by the pain of my rejection by England.

Alas, this is not a tragic story, my people. For where there's a will, there's a way. And the way came in form of community. We Nigerian students built our safe haven. Our games night was more than entertainment; it was our way of cultural preservation. We'd keep up with latest Nigerian trends. The night Olamide dropped 'Science Student', we didn't just listen; we debated the song's ban from Nigerian radios and its cultural impact.

We shared home cooked meals our parents sent us and revelled in our freedom to speak freely in Nigerian slangs and accents. We teased each other about the fake accents we had adopted, as self-preservation, yelling 'gbagaun' when someone stumbled on their words.

The otherness, England relegated us, created a deep longing for the motherland and we satisfied our longing by having each other's back. Therefore, resisting forced assimilation and erasure we faced daily.

The UK taught me that greener pastures are not just geographical locations, but internal resilience. While no welcome entourage awaits immigrants at the airport, community becomes that warm reception. You may be running from the challenges of Nigeria, but you will find that running towards Nigerian people in this foreign land offers a comfort you didn't know you needed. Our diaspora isn't just about survival. Our diaspora is the bridge between cultures, a pocket of home. A Nigeria away from Nigeria.

To my fellow sojourners, our 'japa' is not about escaping but about flourishing. We do not just seek greener pastures, but we cultivate our gardens of cultural awareness and preservation. The grass might seem greener on the western side, but true growth is in how we nurture our roots, no matter the soil.

* Mobolaji-Okoya contributed this piece through aishaokoya@yahoo.com

Business

Why Tertiary Institutions Should Be Insulated From Political Activities – Echono

ONE of the major hurdles tertiary institutions in Nigeria face is the ongoing tug-of-war between them and political office holders. This conflict stems from various factors, including political interference, funding issues, and differing priorities.

On one hand, tertiary institutions strive to maintain their autonomy and academic freedom, allowing them to make decisions that benefit the educational community. On the other hand, political office holders often try to exert control over these institutions, sometimes for personal or political gain.

Although the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has traditionally relied on academics, including vice-chancellors, to serve as returning and collation officers during elections due to their perceived integrity and impartiality, the Executive Secretary of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Arc. Sonny Echono, has expressed strong reservations about this practice, labeling it as an anomaly that should be stopped immediately.

Echono's concerns were rooted in the potential risks of compromising the neutrality and integrity of the electoral process.

He argued that by involving university administrators in election duties, there is a risk of creating conflicts of interest or perceptions of bias.

The Executive Secretary spoke in Owerri while delivering the 36th Convocation lecture of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

Titled, 'Impact of Leadership Selection on Governance in Public Universities in Nigeria', the convocation lecturer said: "As much as possible, universities should be insulated from political activities such as vice-chancellors serving as returning officers in elections. Otherwise, a randomised process excluding vice-chancellors should be put in place. Consideration may be given to nominations by staff unions or attestations by them."

"Our universities should promote diversity in leadership by encouraging and supporting the representation of women, minorities, and individuals from diverse back-



grounds in university leadership positions. Employing a merit-based selection process will foster gender equality and social justice.

"Universities should foster collaboration and seek both international and local part-

INEC involvement of university leaders in the conduct of elections has become counter-productive as politicians now sponsor candidates for the position of vice-chancellor in anticipation of returning the favour either to them or their preferred candidates to various electoral offices.

nerships leading institutions with private companies and organisations to support research, innovation, academic exchange and student internships.

"They should also explore avenues to engage with alumni and communities to create awareness, mobilise support, and build a strong network of advocates for public universities."

On challenges in the leadership selection process, Echono expressed worries that political affiliation has assumed overarching importance in the selection process.

"Ordinarily, due process that is devoid of political and financial influence should be allowed to reign, thus allowing universities the right to screen and appoint candidates without any form of bias or external influence."

"Despite the structured framework, the selection process is often times marred by extraneous issues, which include external influences, political pressure and nepotism, can affect the selection process. Ogunode et al. (2023) described university

education politicisation as the application of politics in the administration and management of universities. Our universities have become increasingly local with majority of academic and non-academic staff sponsored by local politicians and other leaders from the host communities.

"Tribalism and favouritism sometimes undermine the pursuit of meritocracy. The selection process is to attract, secure, create, promote, and assemble a team of competent, professional, efficient, career-minded, and productive human resources, but this is often hindered by factors relating to ethnicity and religion. The role of federal universities as melting pots to foster national unity and integration has been lost in the process. The federal character principle is observed more in the breach than in practice."

"The selection process for principal officers (Vice Chancellors, Bursars, Registrars etc) is now riddled with corruption as competition is fierce and ruthless. Members of Governing Councils view this assignment as the most lucrative aspect of their duties and often bow to the highest bidder. Principal Officers exert enormous influence especially in procurement (Tenders Board) and payments for projects, goods and services. Contractors have been known to sponsor candidates for vice-chancellor in return for patronage."

"INEC involvement of university leaders in the conduct of elections has become counter-productive as politicians now sponsor candidates for the position of vice-chancellor in anticipation of returning the favour either to them or their preferred candidates to various electoral offices," he added.

He underscored the need for the prioritisation of academic excellence, adding that this entails implementing robust, transparent systems for hiring and promoting faculty based on merit, expertise, and scholarly achievements and sustaining investment in faculty development through professional development, research training, and skill-building programmes as well as encouraging a research culture and fostering innovation are key success factors.

From The Rector

Ibru International Ecumenical Centre, Agbarha-Otor Delta State. www.ibrucentre.org

Participants Extol Alex Ibru's Legacies At Memorial Lecture

By Stephen Wolemonwu

PARTICIPANTS at a lecture held in honour of the late Dr. Alex Uruemu Ibru have eulogised the gentleman for establishing Ibru International Ecumenical Centre, Agbarha-Otor, Delta State.

Titled, "Keeping Dreams Alive: The Power Of Bridge Building," the lecture was held at the Ibru centre from November 25 to 30.

Participants passionately appealed for the lecture to be a continuous exercise, enjoining the management of the facility to keep the founder's dream alive. They prayed to God to raise people, like Dr. Alex Ibru in this generation, whose legacies transcends the shores of their immediate families and communities.

The week-long leadership school and memorial lecture was organised by the management of the Ibru Centre headed by the Rector, the Venerable Stephen Wolemonwu.

Venerable Gabriel Kpangba, who served as Chaplain, St. Peters Chapel, Ibru Centre for almost ten years delivered the leadership lecture.

The Rector appreciated Dr. Cecilia Michael Ibru for her support, encouragement and contributions towards the success of this year's events. He also prayed for the Ibru family and dynasty, all those that made the memorial lecture a success.

The Chairman, Ughelli North Local Council of Delta State, Olorogun Jaro Movudu Egbo,



Dr. Alex Uruemu Ibru

praising the late Dr. Ibru as a good Urhobo man and a worthy Nigerian said, the contributions of the late Ibru Centre founder to the Urhobo nation and Nigeria at large will not be forgotten, adding that Dr. Ibru was among the few whose effort placed the minority groups in the country on a world map.

In attendance were pastors and the clergy from within and outside the Anglican Communion. Other participants came from Rivers, Anambra, Abia and Delta states.

Other highlights of the lecture included practical sessions with questions and answers, presentation of certificate and awards to some individuals and partners of



Participants @ Leadership School

By Emmanuel A.S. Egbunu

"Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near," (Luke 21:28).

THANKS be to God who has taken us full circle and brought us to the beginning of another Liturgical Year: Advent.

Even though most people look to the Gregorian calendar to catch the excitement of a new beginning at the New Year, a good number of others have special times of the year in which they celebrate new beginnings such as birthdays, anniversaries and other religious calendars. For some Christian denominations, Advent begins the

Advent 1: Time To Look Up

Liturgical Year when preparations are made for the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ: Christmas! It also looks forward to the necessary preparations for His promised return. How people choose to relate with Advent should not be a matter for much argument, but rather an opportunity for reflection, evaluation, amendment of life and re-visioning. It is an opportunity to assess our lives and set new goals for our walk with God and devotion to Him.

Let's take a closer focus on one of the statements of the Lord Jesus Christ as He prepared His disciples for His

exit and for the close of the age. The immediate setting for this verse we are looking at, was the disciples' astonished question when Jesus made the shocking revelation that the beautiful Temple would be razed to the ground: "Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 'these things which you see — the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down,'" (Luke 21:5-6).

Herod's temple was the temple in use during the ministry of Jesus. Constructed by

the wick Herod, the Great (37-4 BC), its construction details — both architectural and engineering were a display of genius. How could such a solid structure be brought down? This is where we must pause for meditation. We have had so many solid structures in different spheres of human endeavour through different generations right to our day. Some of these structures have become the foundations upon, which philosophies, worldviews, analyses, theories, among others, have been propounded and established.

We can further stretch it to include iconic personalities,

and celebrities who command the limelight any day, anywhere. They are everywhere both in religion, media, business, sports, academia and science, among others. Whatever they say wins the day with cultic followership. Some benefits notwithstanding, the tragedy is also that some of these feats have moved men to tamper with unchangeable truths about God and His commandments for life. The gender confusion and controversies of our day were bizarre and unthinkable not long ago. The defiant posture now seems to be: how dare God tell us how to live?



Most Reverend Emmanuel A.S. Egbunu is the Bishop of Lokoja

Streams In The Desert (2)

By Austen C. Ukachi

IN the first part of our series, we said that in the Bible, "streams in the desert" is a metaphor for God's abundance for us in times of dire need. We also noted that what God promises us is streams in the desert and not an oasis. A stream flows, while an oasis is stagnant. The water that nourishes an oasis is from underneath the earth, while God is the source of the river that nourishes us. The river of life flows from God to those thirsty (Revelation 22:1-2; Psalm 46:4-5).

In Isaiah 41:17-20, we read about a captivating promise from God applicable in this moment of famine. It reads: "The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in des-

olate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, the myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine and the box tree together, that they may see and know, and consider and understand together that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it."

Our attention is drawn to the word pictures contained in these promises. Firstly, the promise is to the 'poor' and 'needy' who are thirsty. God says he will quench their thirst, not with water, but he "will hear them." Many hardly receive from God because they are not thirsty.

Secondly, verse 18, speaks of "rivers," "fountains," "pools of



Ukachi

water" and "springs in a desert." These are images of sustenance.

Thirdly, in verse 19, God promises to plant trees in the wilderness, myrtle and oil trees, cypress and pine, and the box trees in the desert. Trees represent nations and individuals in the Bible. God is indirectly saying that he will bring nations and peoples together.

Lastly, God says what he will do, will be seen as a miracle, "the hand of the Lord will do it."

•Contact: pastoracukachi@g

SOME years ago, a young, highly educated and well brought up Christian young man introduced his fiancée to me, it did not take me long to know that his case was the case of a good person marrying from a bad family. Apart from the family bride price conditions being beyond the already hard bride price conditions of the community the lady hails from, the lady's family members were already displaying traits of wickedness.

The preparation for the wedding was turbulent. When after the wedding, the man could not meet the financial appetite of his wife's people; they started calling him all sorts of names. They instigated his wife and anyone that cared against him. The marriage eventually broke up and they took their daughter home. But it did not end there. The family went to the extent of secretly sending evil

How To Avoid Marrying A Bad Person From A Good Family

reports about the man to the organisation where the man work, so that, they would sack him. This is an example of a good man who married from a bad family.

Sometime ago, a man closed from work only to get home and discovered that his in-laws had invaded his house and forcefully taken his wife and her properties away just because of a minor marital disagreement.

Search out his or her family before you say, "I do."

A young man in one of the assemblies of our ministry met the pastor that he would like to propose marriage to another lady in the same congregation.

When the lady came to find



Ighele

out from the pastor his opinion about her suitor, the pastor made it clear that the final decision was hers. In the congregation, the handsome man was known to speak in tongues and lifting up his hands in worship.

The pastor's mind was, therefore, secretly in support of the union, but his regenerated human spirit took control. He advised the young lady to search out about the man's family back in his village.

Love you!

Total Transformation Through Jesus Christ(2)

THE concept of total transformation through Jesus Christ emphasises the profound change that takes place in the life of a believer upon receiving Jesus as Lord and Saviour. It is more than superficial change; it is a complete inner renewal that impacts every aspect of life—spirit, soul, and body. This transformation is a journey where believers grow into the image of Christ, moving from their old way of living into a new, Christ-centred life. Below, are some of the key points involved in total transformation through Jesus Christ.

New Identity In Christ

When someone believes in Jesus, he becomes a new creation. **2 Cor. 5:17-18**, says: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. **18:** Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation," (NKJV).

This new identity means that the believer is no longer defined by his/her past mistakes or sins. They are now seen as children of God, forgiven and accepted by grace. The old patterns of guilt, shame and sin no longer have control over them. His desire at this juncture is to please God in all that he does. The things of the flesh or world do not have control over him again.

Renewal Of The Mind

Transformation through Christ involves a change in the way we think. **Romans 12:2** says: "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

The believer's thoughts begin to align with God's truth through prayer, study of the Scriptures and meditation on God's word. This renewal allows them to see the

world from God's perspective, resulting in peace, clarity and purpose.

Sanctification, which is inner purity and which **1 Thess. 4v3** says: "It is the will of God that will begin to manifest in the believer, as against negative, corrupt, immoral and wicked thoughts. **Freedom From Sin And Strongholds**

In Christ, believers are empowered to overcome sin. **Romans 6:6** explains: "Knowing that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." The transforming power of Christ gives freedom from addictions, negative habits and destructive behaviours. With the help of the Holy Spirit, believers experience victory over areas that once held them captive.

Living By The Spirit

A total transformation through Christ means living by the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. **Rom 8v14** says: "For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." **1 Cor. 2v14-15** declares: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they spiritually discerned, But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things yet he himself is judge by no man."

Galatians 5:22-23 describes the fruit of the Spirit thus: "Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

As believers surrender to the Spirit's leading, they display these godly characteristics, reflecting Jesus Christ in their relationships and actions. The Holy Spirit works to sanctify, mould and mature them into the likeness of Jesus Christ daily.

Restoration Of Relationships

Transformation in Jesus Christ affects not only the individual, but also their relationships. **2 Corinthians 5:18** says: "And all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."

As believers experience God's forgiveness and

Living Waters

By Pastor Lazarus Muoka

Founder/General Overseer
The Lord's Chosen Charismatic
Revival Ministries Worldwide

• For more messages and testimonies visit: www.tlccrm.org 08056889396



love, they are empowered to forgive others, restore broken relationships and become agents of peace in their communities.

Living With Purpose And Hope

A transformed life in Jesus Christ brings a renewed sense of purpose.

Jeremiah 29:11 says: "For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, not of evil that I may give you an expected end."

Believers no longer live aimlessly, but are driven by the mission to glorify God, serve others and fulfill His calling. They are also sustained by the hope of eternal life with Jesus Christ.

Perseverance Through Trials

Transformation through Jesus Christ equips believers to endure life's challenges with faith. **James 1:2-4** says: "My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations, knowing that the trying of faith worketh patience."

Even in trials, believers are not shaken because they trust God's goodness. Their faith deepens and they grow stronger, knowing that God is working all things for their good. **Romans 8:28** says: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Engaging In The Great Commandment

Mark 16v15-17: "And he said unto them, 'go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved. ...'"

Who are the people that will go? The answer is; those that are transformed through Jesus Christ. Any one that has received total transformation through Jesus Christ will

not like his fellow man to go to hell, therefore, he does everything necessary to bring such individual to Christ and thus prepare him/her for heaven at the end of this life.

Conclusion

Total transformation through Jesus Christ is a radical process that changes a person from the inside out. It is not achieved by human effort, but by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. As believers walk daily with Jesus Christ, they are transformed to reflect His character and carry out His mission. This transformation is ongoing and culminates in eternal life, where they will be made perfect in His presence. Transformation through Christ is an invitation to leave behind the old life and embrace the fullness of life in Him—a journey marked by grace, growth and the promise of everlasting joy.

At this juncture, examine yourself. Have you been transformed through Christ? If not, there is still ample opportunity to do so now. There is no repentance in the grave. **Heb. 9v27** says: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die and after this, the judgment." Do not delay, because procrastination is a thief of time; repent now, because tomorrow might be too late. Do not allow the things of this world to distract you or make you to be too busy to forget your creator. "Therefore, thou art inexcusable o man," (**Rom 2v1**). There is no amount of excuse that can save any man on that day, so beware!

Mark 8v36-37: "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange of his soul?"

Matt 6v33 says: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto ye."

Testimony Of The Lord's Doing

How Two Bottles Of Groundnut Business Trained My Daughter In University

MY name is Mercy Nwchukwu; I am from Edo State. I want to thank God for what He has done for me. Promotion comes from God, but it is for them who trust in Him, serving Him with all their hearts in truth and righteousness. This is exactly my portion as God lifted me from grass to grace through my daughter.

By the grace of God, I am a petty trader, dealing on groundnuts. I started this business with only two bottles of groundnut. This made me a laughing stock among in my neighbourhood. Even among friends, relatives and some brethren, but I did not mind the ridicule. During that period, my daughter secured admission into the university, but there was no money to pay for registration and others and she missed that year. The next year, she sat for JAMB again and still secured admission, though there was still no money, but I trusted in the God of Chosen whom I serve with all my heart.

Within some time, money began to come in little by lit-

tle through the sale of my groundnut. The business began to grow gradually, and in the process, money started coming and I was able to sponsor my daughter through university.

On graduation, she served the nation—went for her National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)—and secured a job with Fidelity Bank. She works in one of the branches in Lagos.

When my daughter secured a job in the bank, she started helping me, my mode of dressing changed remarkably; I no longer wear rags, but dress decently.

Now, I travel by air to Lagos and back to Benin City. She has also secured a very decent accommodation for me. God of Chosen is very great.

I am grateful to God for what He has done in my life and that of my daughter.

May His name be highly exalted in Jesus' name... Amen! I pray for our General Overseer, his family and all the members of Chosen worldwide, that God will grant us the grace to make heaven at the end of this life in Jesus' name... Amen!



Participants at the crusade titled: "Wonderful Move Of God As Of Old" held at the Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministries' headquarters in Ilesha, Lagos

Our Need Of Cleansing (2)

YOU cannot begin the journey to holiness without first acknowledging your sins and the corruption in your heart. Recognising your depravity is essential to genuine confession, which pleases God and precedes cleansing. To truly confess, you must systematically, patiently, deliberately and analytically acknowledge your guilt, pleading for God's mercy. As Scripture promises, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When you sincerely confess and plead for mercy, God forgives your sins, cleanses you from all unrighteousness and transforms your life. Just as David demonstrated, sincerity of heart attracts God's forgiveness and cleansing. With a clear conscience, you must then live a life of holiness, free from hypocrisy. God's gracious forgiveness should compel you to maintain a clear conscience. With your past forgiven, nothing remains, but to live in holiness and sincerity for the rest of your life. Confession, cleansing and holiness are not isolated events, but a continuous process of surrendering, transformation and obedience.

Springs Of Wisdom

By Pastor
W. F. Kumuyi



The goal of every believer should be to pursue clear conscience and a life of genuine holiness, free from hypocrisy. Such decision, desire and determination require a personal commitment to integrity and righteousness. Sadly, many individuals focus on urging others to make amends, while neglecting their need for restitution. They prioritise others' spiritual well-being over their own, failing to examine their

lives.

In contrast, our aim should be to "always have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Striving for a clear conscience eliminates sin, disobedience, guilt and condemnation from our lives.

We must be different from those that rationalise wrongdoing and ignore the prompting of their conscience. True transformation begins with making amends, restoring what has been taken unjustly and renouncing "the hidden things of dishonesty." As we surrender to God's cleansing and righteousness, holy thoughts and actions will follow. Corruption often starts with our thought patterns, but by focusing on righteousness, we maintain holiness of heart and life. As we begin to count down towards the end of the year, "think on these things" (Philippians 4:8), and intentionally pursue a lifestyle of integrity that pleases God.

• **Further reading (King James Version):** Psalms 139:23,24; 19:12; Job 34:31,32; Isaiah 1:16-18; James 4:6-8. 1 John 1:7-10; 2:1-6; Psalms 51:1-17; 24:3,4. Acts 24:16; Luke 19:8-10; 2 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Peter 3:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Colossians 3:16,17,23; Philippians 4:8.

RESTORATION HOUR

By Abel Ukachi Amadi

Text: Isaiah 40:29-31

Key Verse: "Psalm 62:5, 'For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him,' (ESV)."

PROFESSOR Zacharias Tannefomum, gave a four-point description of what a spiritual retreat is:

i. Spiritual retreat is a time when a lover of God obeys the call of God to come apart and be alone with Him, and so finds himself alone with God.

ii. It is a time when one withdraws from people and from all else to get lost in God, listen to Him, hear Him, make plans to obey Him and do something with Him, which

is best done in seclusion; iii. It is a time when all other voices and noises are shut out of the heart and mind and all attention is directed to the Lord on hearing His voice and doing His bidding. iv. It is a time when a person goes away from the presence of men and their distractions to be alone in order to concentrate on a God-given task.

Retreats afford us the opportunity to reflect on who we have been, who we are now and who God desires us to be in the future.

Some have situated retreats in the precincts of love, when the human spirits responds to God's craving for communion. Others have said it

Spiritual Retreat 3

in the place of service and problem-solving, involving the application of God's perspective as a winning edge. Yet, others have located it in the power need, the ability to command the divine influence into natural situations and circumstances.

Whatever concept anyone accepts, the important thing is that retreats demand:

- Withdrawal from the world and its activities.
- Cleaving to God and Godly activities.

Retreat is a time of communion with God and it is that kind of communion that existed from the Garden of Eden between the first man, Adam and his creator-God. Adam would retire to

God in the "coolness of the day" (Genesis 3:8) to interact with Him on diverse issues.

The Almighty God, Himself, told His chosen people Israel, that "in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shalt be your strength and ye would not," (Isaiah 30:15). Yet not many Christians today realise the need for the inward peace available only when one goes apart to commune with God. This peace is supremely necessary to catching great visions and revelations needed to survive and thrive in a jet age bursting with a cacophony of highly distractive sounds and activities.

Wisdom demands, therefore, that one who wants to

make it in life above his worldly contemporaries must seek the secrets of the same in Christ in whom is hidden all knowledge of the glory of God. When we retreat to God, we catch the light of revelation that affects the world for Christ.

Paul wrote glowingly to the Corinthian believers saying: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," (2 Corinthians 4:6).

From the text, we discover that the amount of light a person carries is a function of the volume of Christ in him or her. How much of the face of Jesus do you see in a day, in a week or in a year? Be sure, those who do not seek His face do not also see it. What



Amadi

you see in His face is what you will have. And where is the best way to seek Him? It is in a spiritual retreat.

• **Today's nugget: Retreat is a place of communion with God**

Prayer: Lord help me to seek your face. Prayer lines: 08033299824. E-mail: amadi-abelukachi@gmail.com. Rev. Abel Ukachi Amadi. General Superintendent, Assemblies

God's Responses To Our Prayers (1)

Conditions that result in answered prayers

GOD hears the prayers of the righteous. "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry," (Ps 34:15). "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. 19. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer," (Ps 66:18,19).

"The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth," (Ps 145:18). "Near to all who call upon him." All who call upon God in truth (that is, with a sincere and upright heart) may be assured that He is near.

He will hear their prayer, fulfill their desire for help and work for their deliverance (v.19). "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us," (1 John 5:14). "Ask anything according to His will." Our prayers (like our lives) are presented to God in submission and confidence according to His will as revealed in Scripture or otherwise by the Holy

Biblical Womanhood

By Emeritus
Prof. Mercy Olumide



Spirit. We know God's will in many instances because it is revealed in the Scripture. At other times, it becomes clear only as we earnestly seek His will. Once we know His will about any given issue, then we can ask in confidence and faith. When we do this, we know that He hears us and that His purposes for us will be accomplished.

"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore, I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. 15. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him," (Ps 91:14,15). "Because he has set his love upon Me.

Here, the Lord Himself addresses His faithful followers. Because they truly love Him, He, Himself, promises to come to their aid in times of trouble. The secret for receiving God's protective care is a

heart that is intimately attached to the Lord in gratitude and affection. He knows who such believers are, and He will be with them in trouble, hear their prayers, and give them lives full of His divine presence and provision (see John 14:12-21; 15:1-10). "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight," (1 John 3:22). "Because we keep his commandments."

Why are some prayers answered and others are not? John declares that an effective prayer life is related to our devotion to God. Obeying, loving and pleasing God (John 8:29; 2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:10; Heb 13:21) are indispensable conditions to receiving what we ask for in prayers (cf. Ps 50:14-15; Prov 15:29; Is 59:1-2; Mat 6:15; Mark 11:25; Jas 5:16).

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By Chris Irekamba

A MEMBER of the Centre Executive Council of Loveworld Inc, Christ Embassy, Rev. Tom Amenkhenan, has called on churches, corporate organisations and individuals to be part of the campaign to distribute the December edition of 'Rhapsody of Realities.'

Amenkhenan made the call during the Reachout World Day press conference held to announce the December 2, 2024 edition of the publication in 8,123 languages and over 4,000 dialects of the world and the commencement of its distribution. He said the President of Love-

Rhapsody Of Realities: Why We're Distributing 10 Billion Copies Across Nations

world Inc, Rev. Chris Oyakhilome authored it.

The event was witnessed by other senior members of the church such as Clinical Director, Loveworld Medical Centre, Pastor Emeka Eze; Director, Church Growth International, Loveworld Inc. Pastor Lanre Alabi; member of

the Centre Executive Council Loveworld Inc, Rev. Tom Amenkhenan; member of the Centre Executive Council Loveworld Inc, Pastor Tuoyo Temisan; member of the Centre Executive Council Loveworld Inc, Evang. Eddy Owase, and Director, Corporate Affairs, Loveworld Inc. Zonal Director, Christ Embassy Lagos Zone 1, Pastor Ifeoma Chiemeka.

Amenkhenan noted that for the first time, a physical event like ReachOut World Day organised by the Christ Embassy is simultaneously happening in every city and community around the world.



Clinical Director, Loveworld Medical Centre, Pastor Emeka Eze (left); Director, Church Growth International, Loveworld Inc. Pastor Lanre Alabi; member, Centre Executive Council Loveworld Inc, Rev. Tom Amenkhenan; member, Centre Executive Council Loveworld Inc, Pastor Tuoyo Temisan; member, Centre Executive Council Loveworld Inc, Evang. Eddy Owase, and Director, Corporate Affairs, Loveworld Inc. Zonal Director, Christ Embassy Lagos Zonal, Pastor Ifeoma Chiemeka at the Reachout World Day press conference in Lagos... on Monday.

100 Years Of Catholicism In Isolo-Opin

By Thaddeus 'Dele Adewumi

THE Catholic Church took a foothold at Isolo-Opin, in Ekiti local council of Kwara State, in 1924. This year, therefore, marks its 100th existence in the community. This is remarkable. And credit must be given to the priests of the Society of African Missions (SMA Fathers) who came to Nigeria in 1880, for their resilience and audacious missionary efforts.

The SMA pioneered the activities leading to the establishment of the Catholic Church in Nigeria with the support and fraternal collaboration of the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA Sisters) who arrived in Nigeria later in 1886. The persistent efforts and dogged determination of these organisations served as necessary impetus for numerous lay men and women who gave their best in laying a solid foundation for the church in Nigeria.

The priests in the then apostolic vicariate of the Gulf of Benin were also instrumental to bringing the faith to the ancient city of Abeokuta, from where it spread across the country.

The faith eventually spread to many communities in the hinterland including, but not limited to Onitsha, Benin City, Ondo, Ado-Ekiti, Ilorin, Oro and even to our own Osi Mission, from where, St. Michael's Catholic, Isolo-Opin Parish came into being, and up to the northern part of the country. Interestingly, the conversion of Isolo compatriots must have been largely influenced by their sojourns to other parts of the country in search of a better life. It is possible that they also introduced their new found-faith to Isolo-Opin.

It is noteworthy that from the time of the first foreign missionaries till now, the Church in Isolo-Opin has experienced dynamic apostolic activities (testimonies) in the spread of the Good News, with the efforts of the clergy and the collaboration of the lay community. Their work, experience and achievements need to be applauded not only for historical purposes, but because their selfless efforts



led to the quantum growth of the Church, which has continued to influence the younger generation of the community and the old alike.

Kudos must be given to the pioneer parish priest, Rev. Fr. Emmunel Okami, who did a very good groundwork in the establishment and promotion of the nascent parish for which his successors, Rev. Frs. Anthony Atoyebi, Michael Olaifa Oluwaseun and Thomas Oluwaseun solidly leveraged on.

It should be mentioned here, however, that all of the founding members of the faith in Isolo-Opin may have passed to the great beyond, but dead or alive, a few of them should be highlighted for posterity and as an encouragement to the people, especially those generations who came after them for helping in the propagation and stabilisation of the faith. Although not in a chronological order, they include, but not limited to Pa Gabriel Omopariola (Asoju-Ijo); Pa Gabriel Abebayo (Baba-Isale); Mrs. Juliana Ajayi Adesoro-Ojuda (Iya Egbe-Ijo) fondly called

Yeye-Elepo; Pa Michael Bamidele (Lay-Reader); Pa Fasusi acclaimed as the first Catechist and Pa Jerome Adewumi, foremost Catechist known to most people of this generation before the emergence of the latest Catechist of the church, Mr. Lawrence Aare. All are now with the Lord. It should be emphasised as well that Messrs William Kumuyi, Lucas Bayo Dada, William Alabi, Emilius Adewumi, the late Michael S. Ayeni and Hon. M. B. Adaramola and others took much of their time and energy to organise sporting activities, as well as drama presentations drawn from scriptural passages to teach children some moral and to entertain and sensitise parents on the import of sending their children/wards to school.

Oba Michael Dada Oyedele of blessed memory championed the cause of community development in Isolo-Opin and later became the Asolo of Isolo-Opin land. The late Chief Joseph D. Olowa is fondly remembered for his activism and enthusiasm as community and educational mobiliser, while the late Elder

John Bernard Yusuff (The trailblazer) served as an interpreter to many of the white priests who visited the fledgling station for occasional masses and teaching catechesis and the coaching the Legion of Mary group in the church. This writer was the secretary of Isolo-Opin Student Union at a period, with others like Messrs William Omopariola, Gabriel Afolayan, the late Messrs Thaddeus Obebe and William Bamidele, Mr. Joseph Kumuyi and Sir Michael Oladele, while Mr. John Ayodele and a host of others engaged in business enterprise.

Education has been a major vehicle for evangelism, which is a cardinal objective of the church and the Catholic Church has been at the forefront in this direction and providing educational facilities for the formation and training of the young people. Through this, the church nurtured the spiritual needs and material wellbeing of converts. This contributed immensely to active evangelism and the sustenance of the church.

At Centenary Celebration, Bishop Ike Tasks Nigerians On Faithfulness

From Lawrence Njoku, Enugu

ANGLICAN Bishop of Enugu Diocese, Rt Rev Prof Samuel O Ike has charged Nigerians not to allow current economic difficulties to override their faith. He urged them to work hard with the fear of God at all times in order to overcome, assuring that the times would get better.

At the 100 years centenary celebration and thanksgiving of St. Bartholomew's Church, Asata, Enugu, Bishop Ike, charged the members to redouble their efforts in the service of God and sustain the spirit of Evangelism that had seen the church multiply and raise several Bishops.

"God has been very gracious to us at St Bartholomew's Church, Asata which has given birth to many other churches. And many Bishops, who are pioneer members, are piloting the affairs of other Dioceses. And this church has given birth to many choir masters of renown. It has given birth to evangelism, pioneering evangelical fellowship. This church was the pioneer Cathedral of the Enugu Diocese and so I pray that in its pioneering efforts, they will not go back in Jesus name. They will rather maintain it and take it to another level; particularly the youths. They have to wear their armor of evangelism and be at the forefront as I have fought for evangelism over the years. I have trained some people and the youths have to train some younger people and sustain and maintain the evangelism as they are the instruments in God's hand to actualize his work. The youths should go through worship, through evangelism and bring true revival and the search for holiness and Godly presence in the church; the youths should fear the Lord, love the Lord and respect his word for the empowerment purpose of the church; the youths should strive to work ahead of this church and ahead of any other for the glory of God in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen", he stated.

Archdeacon Enugu East Archdeaconry and Vicar-in-Charge, St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church, Asata, Venerable Uchennageme Ugwu, while appreciating God for the strides made by the Church, prayed God to continue to direct the minds of the members into proper worship and repentance.

"Our main goal here is to preach the raw word of God. I repeat the raw word of God because many things are going wrong, where people are meant to believe in what is not biblical. Most importantly, however, we are still in unity. We have not had quarrels here but they have strengthened us", he stated.

Explaining that the church became the first headquarters of the Diocese of Enugu, he listed retired Bishop of Ihiala, Rt. Rev. Dr. Ralph Okafor; retired Bishop Emmanuel Ugwu of Awgu/Aninri Diocese; retired Bishop Samuel Chukuka of Diocese, Rt Rev. Aloysius Agbo as some of the Priests produced by the Church.



Anglican Bishop of Enugu Diocese, Rt Rev. Prof. Sam Ike with priests and members of the St. Bartholomew Church, Asata, Enugu, during their Centenary celebration on December 1, 2024.

PHOTO: LAWRENCE NJOKU

Birthdays

OBATALA, J.K, former Astronomy Columnist & Freelance Feature Writer for *The Guardian* Newspapers is 83. Born on December 5, 1941, he had B.A in History at the California State University, Los Angeles; and M.A in Africa Area Studies at the University Of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He had his Doctoral work on African History at the UCLA; and his Post Graduate Research at the University of Ghana, Legon and University of Ibadan 1969-1970.

He is a former External Advisor to the Vice Chancellor, Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State; former Columnist and freelance feature writer for *The Guardian* Newspapers; Public Lecturer; Archaeoastronomical Research for the Cross River State Tourism Bureau; External Advisor to the National Space Research & Development Agency (NASRDA); and former Contributor, *Vanguard* Newspaper.

His astronomy column appeared on Thursdays, in the Science section of *The Guardian*, for 16 years. He was

the first black man, on either side of the Atlantic, to write such a column – which drew heavily, both from his academic training in Africa Area Studies and from four decades of experience as an Amateur Astronomer (Naked Eye).

He contributed to *The Guardian* (Nigeria) for 28 years (1989-2017); worthy of note is the fact that after one heart attack and two strokes, he was still contributing to *The Guardian*. He was Consulting and Features Editor at *The Niger Delta Standard* (Port Harcourt, now defunct), 2005-10. His film criticism appeared weekly in “Nollywood Corner,” while “Explorations” consisted of occasional features on nature, wildlife and local lifestyles.

He conducted Archaeoastronomical Research for the Cross River State Tourism Bureau. Wings, the in-flight magazine of Arik Airlines, featured him as one of Nigeria’s “Culture Preservers”.

He was Palace Secretary to Ogiame Atuwatse II, the late Olu of Warri (in charge of Public Relations and Protocol) for five years (1989-94) and the first, and only, none-Itsekiri, to hold that position, among



Obatala

other portfolios.

He had served as Advisor to Delta State’s representative to the Presidential Commission On National Security, under the Obasanjo Administration; Senior member of the Warri Club (though many years in arrears!); appointed to the Board of Directors, Port Harcourt Jazz Festival (now defunct) in the 1980s; occasionally sat on the Editorial Board of *The Los Angeles Times*, by invitation; and Student Representative on the Advisory Committee to the California State Legislature’s Joint Committee On Higher Education; among others.

He had lived in four U.S. states—Georgia, Alabama, California and Connecticut—and



Sanusi

has traveled widely in the country. In Europe, he had visited Luxemburg, London, Madrid, Paris and Barcelona. The African countries he had visited include Cameroun, Morocco, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Togo and Liberia.

SANUSI, Alhaji (Dr) Teslim A SOFR, a quintessential Professional, frontline Manufacturer, Educationist, and Philanthropists, will be 82 on December 23, 2024. Born on December 23, 1942, in Erin-Ile, Kwara State, he attended Baptist Primary School, Kaduna State and Eastern Academy, Onitsha, in the then Eastern Nigeria. He also attended Leeds

Polytechnic, England and Kensington University U.S.A.

Dr. Sanusi had his early working life at the Institute for Agricultural Research of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Guinea Insurance Company Limited, Kaduna before travelling for overseas course.

On return, Dr. Sanusi picked up an appointment with Gateway Insurance Company Ilorin, Kwara State and later the Nigeria Airways where he rose to the position of Deputy Director (Risks Management & Insurance), before leaving the company to pioneer his own broking company.

Dr. Sanusi is presently the Chief Executive Officer of Cosmic Insurance Brokers Ltd, and Chairman of Federated Loss Adjusters, Alfa International Group, Cibod, as well as Chairman, Santex Drinking Water. He was the Interim Chairman of CRIB (now merged with Oak Pensions) Pensions Fund Managers and a Director of Oil, Gas and Energy Insurance Brokers (OGE), as well as Chairman/Proprietor Benchmark Montessori School (BMS). He is the Past President, Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers; Past District Governor, Lions

Clubs International, District 404B Nigeria; Past Council Chairman (PCC) Lions Clubs International, District 404 Nigeria; Life Trustee of Lions Clubs International, Multiple District 404, Nigeria; Member of Lagos Island Club; Vice President & Trustees of De Fellow Club of Nigeria (FCN); Past President, Trustee Erin-Ile Progressive Union (EPU); Chieftaincy Title Holder in Lagos, Kwara and Ogun States; Patron, Nigerian Union of Journalists, Kwara State Chapter, as well as Patron or Adviser of some Social, Sports and numerous Islamic Organisations, among others.

He also holds Certified Board of Administrators of Nigeria Fellowship Award; Nigeria Merit Gold Award for Productivity 2011; Distinguished Leadership in National Development Gold Award 2011; Melvin Jones Fellows Award (MJF); *TimeNEWS* Lifetime Achievement Award 2009 & 2011; Distinguished Service Award; Outstanding Service Award; Pillar of Service Award; and Consistent Excellence Award, among others.

Compiled by Gbenga Akinfenwa, oluwagbenga.akinfenwa@guardian.ng or gbengaherkin@yahoo.com

Events



Recipient, Advertising Agency of the Year, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Reigh Advertising and Consulting, Ikenna Nicholas Ukwu (left); Recipient, Media Personality of the Year, CEO, Megastar Media Communications, Adeniyi Ifetayo and Recipient, Exceptional Service to International Relations of the Year, Prof. Tunji Asaolu during Nigeria’s Most Influential Awards 2024 at Transcorp, Abuja



Groom’s family: Lady Deborah Tomololu, Elder Olatunji Tomololu, Groom’s parents Aremo Ben and Lady Caroline Tomololu and Venerable Superior Evangelist Ojo Adesuyi blessings the marriage.

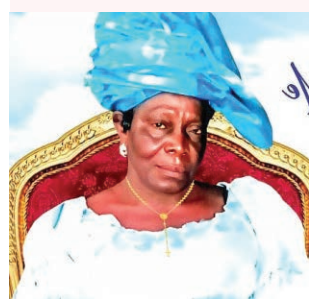
Senior Brand Manager, Grand Oak Ltd, Nnenna Uche-Onyenacho; Beneficiary, Orisadare Damilola receiving Tailoring equipment from Oyo State Commissioner of Trade and Industry, Mr. Adebisi Adeniyi; Convener of Nigerian Artisans & Technicians Conference, Mr. Dayo Bello and Trade Marketing Manager, Grand Oak Limited, Doyinsola Ogunlana during the Grand Oak Seaman’s Schnapps Artisans CSR Campaign held at Adamasingba Stadium Ibadan, Oyo State



Deputy Group Head, Media Relations, Integrated Indigo Ltd, Olamide Bakare (left); Publisher, *BusinessDay* Media Limited, Frank Aigbogun; Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Integrated Indigo Ltd, Bolaji Abimbola; Assistant Public Relations (PR) Manager, Integrated Indigo, Temitope Lavender and Account Director, Integrated Indigo, Ademola Adebisi during the recognition of Indigo as the Outstanding Integrated Marketing Communications Firm of the Year at the 2024 *BusinessDay* Nigerian Business Leadership Awards held in Lagos

Lolo Okanazu-Dike For Burial December 12

EZINNE Lolo Veronica Okanazu-Dike (nee Okafor), who died recently,



The late Okanazu-Dike

will be buried in her hometown, Isulo, Orumba-South Local Council of Anambra State on Thursday, December 12, after a funeral mass at 10 am at Queen of Peace Catholic Church, Isulo. A Christian wake holds on Wednesday, December 11, in Isulo, at 5 p.m. and thanksgiving mass on Sunday, December 15, at 7 am at Queen of Peace Catholic Church, Isulo. She is survived by children, among whom is Vera Sam-Anyagagu.



Past District Governor, Omotunde Lawson (left); District Governor-elect, District 9112, Lanre Adedoyin; District Governor, District 9111, Dr Wole Kukoyi; Chairman, Rotary Sports Festival District 9111, Uche Okafor; and Past Assistant Governor, Ade Oyekan at the unveiling of Mascot and lighting of torch of Rotary District 9111 Sports Festival (ROSFE) held in Lagos.

Wife of Osun State Governor, Ambassador Erelu Ngozi Adeleke (right), presenting the Social Impact Personality of the Year Award to the Managing Director, Seven-up Bottling Company, Ziad Maalouf, at the Social Impact & Sustainability Awards (SISA) 2024...recently.



Fuel Distributors Demand Industry Reform, Decry Unlawful Levies

By Sulaimon Salau

As Nigerians grapple with the rising costs of petroleum products, the Association of Distributors and Transporters of Petroleum Products (ADITOP) has voiced strong opposition to the arbitrary charges and regulations that plague the supply chain, staging a major march in Lagos to advocate for a more equitable and sustainable industry.

The group held a march in Lagos to address the ongoing challenges

posed by arbitrary charges and regulations imposed by various unions and associations at petrol depots and tank farms, as well as on the roads.

ADITOP South West Zone Secretary, Ayo Abiola, in a chat with the media, said ADITOP, established in 2012 under Nigerian law, aims to uphold the principle of equity within the petroleum products distribution value chain.

He said the group is taking a firm stand against the exploitation of its members and the consuming pub-

lic, condemning practices that hinder fair business operations and inflate costs for consumers.

"We refuse to be complicit in the activities of associations that ignore the pressing issues plaguing our industry.

"Today, we declare 'Enough is Enough!' We will no longer pay levies to unions beyond what is legally required, as we reclaim our right to manage our members' welfare and livelihoods," he said.

The association emphasised its

commitment to collaborating with the Federal Government and other responsible unions to reform the petroleum industry. By discouraging unjust strike actions driven by greed, ADITOP aims to foster a business environment that prioritizes the needs of consumers and supports fair practices.

ADITOP also expressed gratitude to participants of the march, acknowledging the support from various stakeholders, including the leadership of the Market Traders

Association of Nigeria (MATAN) and BENHAM Integrated Resources. Together, they aim to combat the negative implications of unscrupulous activities within the oil sector that adversely affect the Nigerian populace.

"We are resolute in our mission to create a better Nigeria by standing against exploitation in our industry.

"Our actions today signify a collective call for integrity, fairness, and renewal in the petroleum sector," he said.

Interswitch Plots To Reshape Financial Services In Africa

By Sulaimon Salau

INTERSWITCH, an integrated digital payments and commerce companies, has successfully concluded the fourth edition of its TechConnect series, marking the culmination of an impactful journey across five major Nigerian cities of Enugu, Asaba, Abuja, Ibadan, and Lagos.

The grand finale held in Lagos epitomised Interswitch's commitment to shaping the future of financial services in Africa.

The series has served as a powerful platform for advancing high-level discussions on technology, innovation, and financial inclusion, fostering collaboration across the finan-

cial services ecosystem.

In his keynote address, the Managing Director, Payment Processing & Switching, Interswitch Purepay, Akeem Lawal, highlighted the transformative potential of digital payment solutions in Nigeria.

He said: "At Interswitch, we are deeply committed to financial inclusion, recognising that digital payment solutions are pivotal in expanding access to underserved populations. By enabling broader participation in the economy, we believe we can create a rising tide that lifts all boats, empowering individuals, businesses, and financial institutions alike."



Director, Solutions Architecture, MainOne, Solutions by Equinix, Oluwasayo Oshadami (left); President, Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria (ATCON), Tony Emoekepere; Director, Supply Chain Management, Airtel Nigeria, Raghvendra Gupta; Director, Service Providers, MainOne, Solutions by Equinix, Dolapo Onah; incoming Managing Director, Equinix West Africa, Wole Abu and, Managing Director, 9Mobile, Obafemi Banigbe during an evening with Equinix and customers.

NB Wins Best Excise Trader At Customs Awards

By Sulaimon Salau

NIGERIAN Breweries Plc has been adjudged the Best Excise Trader at the maiden edition of the Comptroller General of Customs Awards.

The company was awarded for its outstanding compliance with excise tax payments to the Federal Government, emerging tops out of other nominees, including British American

Tobacco and International Tobacco.

Speaking at the award ceremony, the Comptroller General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi, described Nigerian Breweries Plc's emergence as Best Excise Trader as a well-deserved recognition given its significant contribution to revenue collection in Nigeria in the last year.

Adeniyi stated that NB Plc remained one of the reputable companies

that wholly comply with the regular payment of excise tax to the Federal Government.

Shortly after receiving the award, the Corporate Affairs Director, NB Plc, Sade Morgan, noted that the recognition underscores the strong partnerships between the company and the Nigeria Customs Service as well as its unwavering commitment to contributing positively to the economy.

Morgan expressed the company's pride in being the only brewery company nominated in any of the award categories, adding that the achievement highlights the dedication of the entire team and reflects its ongoing efforts to "Winning With Nigeria."

She pledged the company's commitment to continue to fulfill its obligation through prompt payment of its excise tax to the agency.

GB Foods Launches Peppered Chicken Seasoning Cubes

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

GB FOODS Nigeria has launched two groundbreaking products – the Gino Peppered Chicken Seasoning Cube and the Gino Peppered Chicken Tomato Paste to transform everyday meals into unforgettable culinary experiences.

Speaking during launch, Managing Director, GB Foods Nigeria, Vincent Egbe, said Ginos' dedication to innovation and consumer satisfaction was at the heart of the launch. "At GB Foods, we combine tradition with modern convenience to create innovative products that resonate with our consumers. The Gino Peppered Chicken Seasoning Cube and Tomato Paste embody our mission to bring bold flavours and joyful

cooking experiences to Nigerian kitchens."

The culinary expert and one-time Guinness World Record holder for the longest cooking marathon, Hilda Baci, took the centre stage to unveil the Gino Peppered Chicken seasoning cubes. The Gino Brand ambassador, known for her passion for Nigerian cuisine, collaborated with Gino to create the seasoning cubes to elevate the cooking experience of Nigerian households.

Baci described the cubes as a product that empowers cooks to infuse meals with vibrant flavour and celebration. Marking the arrival of the seasoning cubes, the event went to an all-time high with an electrifying performance from Afrobeats Legend, D'banj.

Foundation Pursues Transformational Agenda With Public Leaders Programme

By Sulaimon Salau

As part of its mission to elevate the effectiveness of public service across Africa, the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation has launched the fourth cohort of the AIG Public Leaders Programme (PLP).

Delivered in partnership with the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, this initiative has successfully empowered 169 public sector leaders since 2021, advancing the foundation's mission to train 3,000 public sector leaders by 2030, through equipping them with the essential skills to drive impactful reforms and strengthen service delivery in their Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs).

The programme has already showcased remarkable results. Programme alumni have implemented transformative reform

projects in their various organisations, a core element of the curriculum, creating a ripple effect of positive change across sectors.

One of such change project was implemented by the Director and Chief of Staff to the CEO of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit and a Cohort 1 AIG PLP alumnus, Mohammed Ahmed, who has made strides in combating financial crimes in Nigeria.

Ahmed's reform project focused on fostering partnerships between the government and the private sector to enhance financial intelligence aimed at tackling financial crimes. Today, his efforts are reshaping financial crime prevention strategies in Nigeria through strategic public-private collaborations that empower the nation to address complex financial crimes more effectively.

'Infrastructure Investment Is Vital To Unlock Potential Of Nigeria's \$20b Film Industry'

By Sulaimon Salau

SUPPORTING Nigeria's multi-billion-dollar film industry, a critical component of the creative economy, through financing infrastructure development is seen by experts as crucial to the development of the industry, job creation and economic growth.

The experts, who spoke at the maiden edition of Africa Film Finance Forum in Lagos, described the industry as capable of generating up to 200 percent return on investment for investors.

Some of the speakers identified poor infrastructure, distribution of content, piracy, monetisation of

content, lack of access to cheap capital as hurdles in the industry.

On supporting the industry to unlock its potentials and impact the economy, Founder of Silverbird Group, Ben Murray Bruce, who described the industry as one that has great value to the economy, said: "What is important is for the gov-

ernment to make bonds available for the industry to develop it and save lives."

He said that the government needs to take a position on the industry and make funds available at rates that are affordable and accessible to people who have basic intelligence and can turn the economy around.

Industry Women Conference Holds December 13

By Suliyyat Tella

THE leading brand marketing publication in West Africa, The Industry Newspaper has announced the theme and speakers for the 2024 Industry Women Conference scheduled for Friday, December 13, 2024 in Lagos.

The theme for 2024 women's conference is 'Tools Nigerian women need to compete and succeed' and the lead speakers are Group Head, Brands & Marketing Communications, Wema Bank Plc, Mrs. Mabel Adeteye and Group Head, Women Bank/ W Initiatives, Access Bank, Mrs. Abiodun Olubitan.

The organisers also announced

Group Head, Marketing & Corporate Communications, UBA Group, Mrs. Alero Ladipo and President, Felix King Foundation, Dr. Felix King Eiremiokhae as chairperson of the conference and co-chairman respectively.

The 2024 Industry Women Conference (tinW) comes on the heels of a successful inaugural edition last year with the theme; 'She wins'. The Convener of The Industry Women Conference, Mr. Goddie Ofose said: "We arrived at this theme and the speakers this year because we believe the theme resonates well with Nigerian women at this time, particularly with the country's economy

going through a bad patch. So, we must equip women for the present and the future.

"Women-led businesses are important for many reasons, and this including: diversity and innovation. Women entrepreneurs bring unique perspectives and insights that can lead to better decision-making and more innovative solutions."

On the side line of the 2024 conference, which is also titled the PINK session, The Industry Newspaper will recognise and celebrate Top 50 Industry Women in Nigeria that have exhibited tenacity, resilience, innovation and industry in the course of the year.

Business Agro

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Staccato Voices Against GMOs Keep Pulsating

From Joke Falaju, Abuja

AMID the growing controversies trailing the adoption of Genetically Modified Crops (GMOs) in Nigeria, experts, farmers, civil societies and other critical stakeholders in the agricultural sector have emphasised the need for government to, as a matter of urgency, ban the proliferation of these crops in the country.

They are making urgent appeal to the National Assembly to come up with a bill to stop further introduction of GMOs into the country.

The experts who took turn to speak during a press conference organised by the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), posited that the introduction of GMOs in Nigeria has not only distorted the ecosystem, but has also negatively impacted on crop yields.

While the GMOs promoters have presented the technology as a game changer in mitigating hunger, as well as solution to socioeconomic problems plaguing the country, the antagonists say no country has achieved self-sufficiency in food production through the crops.

From research, in Africa, only Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria have reportedly adopted the technology, which most developed countries have rejected and embraced other sustainable means to boost their food production.

Available evidence on the website of the Biosafety Clearing House of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as at June 2024, revealed that Nigeria has within 10 years of assenting to the Nigeria Biosafety Management Act, has approved 25 GM products, comprising of 11 for field trials; four for commercial release; and 10 for food, feed and/or processing.

The four varieties approved for commercial release and market placement are two varieties of cowpea, cotton, and maize. It was reported last September that Nigeria is warming up to approve GM Potatoes for commercial release in 2025.

Other varieties include Cotton for lepidopteran insect pest resistance approved in 2016; Cowpea for lepidopteran insect pest resistance was approved in 2019; Maize for Drought Tolerance, Resistance to Stem Borer and Fall Armyworm was approved in 2022; and in 2024 Cowpea containing Cry2Ab gene conferring Resistance to Maruca Pod Borer in Cowpea (Institute for Agricultural Research, Zaria) was released.

For food, feed and processing, the varieties

approved include Soybeans for herbicide tolerance (Syngenta South Africa (pty) limited); Maize Events-3272 and MZIR093-Pest and disease resistant; Herbicide tolerant; Biofuel Production Syngenta South Africa Pty Ltd) were approved in 2019; Wheat (Trigall Genetics), processing of edible oil soybeans (Rom Oil Mills Limited now known as Premium Edible Oil Products Limited (PEOPL).

However, a market shelf survey conducted by HOMEF in 2018, 2019 and 2023 revealed the presence of over 50 imported food products made with genetically modified ingredients. Although these products are labeled to contain GMOs, majority of Nigerians are not aware of their presence or the implications they may have on human health.

The products include cereals, vegetable oil, noodles, food spices, cake mixes, syrups, mayonnaise, and ice-cream, which Nigerians regularly consume, which are made from genetically modified plants, such as corn and soy. The products were also found to be mostly imports from USA, China, India and South Africa.

The question of who is checking the importation of these processed foods with genetically modified ingredients is left unanswered, as there is no evidence of independent, long term risk assessment including feeding trials conducted by the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) before the approval of the varieties.

It was also discovered that the approvals did not take into account objections to some of the applications sent in by experts/researchers.

Meanwhile, the NBMA Act enacted at the twilight of former President Goodluck Jonathan's administration is said to be fundamentally flawed, particularly with the absence of provisions for strict liability and redress, which would require biotechnology companies to take responsibility for both the immediate and future negative effects of their products.

Other concerns include limited access to information, inadequate public consultation and participation, the lack of provisions for appeals and reviews, and absence of enforceable measures for applying the precautionary principle and decision-making processes.

During the press briefing, Prof Johnson Ekpere, maintained that the previous government ratified GMOs without understanding the basic precepts that guide the crops, which is the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

He stressed that the government must ensure that the basic tenets guiding this protocol is understood by those implementing the law.

Prof Ekpere also called on the government to set up a biosafety research facility that will help them understand what they are doing and take drastic risk assessment the country's biotechnology.



The Deputy Director, Centre for Food Safety and Agricultural Research, Prof. Qrisstberg Amua, who stated that NBMA should be a biosafety regulatory agency not a management agency, added that the misapplication of their names has translated them into a promoter of foreign technology that are at the detriment of Nigerians.

He pointed out that recent studies have raised concerns about the unintended ecological consequences of genetically engineered crops, including the development of super weeds and resistance among pests.

Similarly, he said the inappropriate adoption of GMOs, which are tantamount to gain-of-function research, from externally promoted research that is funded by foreign commercial interests, poses a tangible risk to food safety, human health and ecological conservation.

He warned that the unregulated biosafety research can exacerbate biosafety challenges, which is what is currently manifesting in Nigeria as the chemical pesticides used are known disruptors of echo systems.

On her part, the HOMEF's Programme Manager, Joyce Brown mentioned that NBMA is yet to conduct clinical trials on the GMOs being brought into the country, saying that what is seen on their website is the applications for bringing-in GMOs into the country with no assessments report to actually certify that the crops are safe.

Capacity Building On Post-harvest Handling Of Plantain, Pineapple For Ekiti Women Farmers

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

THE Federal Government has trained and empowered 30 women farmers in Ekiti State on Plantain and Pineapple postharvest handling and value addition in line with the initiatives of employment generation and wealth creation.

The training, conducted by the National Horticulture Research Institute (NIHORT), Ibadan, Oyo State, held at Oye Local Council, Ekiti State, covered postharvest handling of plantain and pineapple, as well as methods to expand their shelf-life. It also considered the economics of plantain and pineapple value added products, record keeping and marketing of value-added products.

The CEO/Executive Director of NIHORT, Prof. Muhammed Lawal Attanda, represented by the Assistant Director/Acting Head, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Department, NIHORT, Dr I.O. Amao said horticulture is one of the most viable and sustainable sources of household income, employment generation, enhanced gross domestic product and government revenue.

He brought to fore, the relevance of postharvest handling in reducing postharvest losses from harvesting to distribution and consumption with the use of technologies that ensure that the quality of the crop is not compromised and maintained as high as possible till it gets to the final consumer.

Prof. Attanda stated that engaging in value addition of plantain and pineapple are areas that could be tapped into as a means of livelihood.

He enjoined the participants to make good use of the training opportunity and lessons learnt to improve their wellbeing.

The representative of the Attah of Aiyede Kingdom, Chief Joseph Osasona, who appreciated the participants for attending the training, enjoined them to take the training serious, as well as disseminate the knowledge gained to their friends and families.

Two of the participants, Mrs Ikupolusi Mojisola and Mrs Adenike Osasona lauded the opportunity to participate in the training and empowerment programme. They attested to the fact that the training served as a means of enhancing their previous knowledge on postharvest handling and value addition of plantain and pineapple.

'Collaboration Of Farmers, Research Institutions Is Vital To Boost Food Sufficiency'

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

THE Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi has called for collaboration between research institutes and farmers to boost food sufficiency in the country.

Abdullahi, who stated this during the commissioning of Kabba-Bunu outstation of the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (IAR&T), said food sufficiency is one of the key focus of President Tinubu-led administration.

Represented by his Special Adviser on Crops, Mr. Aminu Fisayo, the minister commended the management of the Institute for working tirelessly to bring the dream of the North Central region outstation to reality and for working in tandem with the focus of President Tinubu in the area of boosting food security.

"The Institute's goals aligns with the Ministry's strive to ensure food security in the country and I believe the pres-

IAR&T Commissions Kabba- Bunu Outstation

ence of the station here in Kogi State would further ensure the confidence of farmers and other stakeholders in this locality and neighbouring states. This is because government is relatively closer to us in terms of knowledge sharing, skill development and mutual benefit.

"I therefore want to appreciate the host community for accommodating the Institute, I will also want to plead for synergy among all key stakeholders to facilitate a model of collaboration built around common interest of improved livelihood of all inhabitants of the community and the country at large," he said.

Earlier in her welcome address, the Director of IAR&T, Prof. Veronica Obatolu highlighted the set goals of the outstation, which includes fostering collaboration with local farmers, extension agents and stakeholders, while it will enable them to perform cutting-edge research

on soil health and fertility improvement and utilisation of industrial crops, such as Kenaf and Jute and development of climate resilient crops and annual varieties.

She also disclosed that the outstation will provide state-of-the-art training for farmers, students, industrialists and various stakeholders along the agricultural value chain.

Some of the features of the outstation according to her include, office complex, modern research laboratories, advance greenhouse irrigation system, demonstration plots for best practices among training facilities and conference rooms.

"Despite achieving the first critical feature, the station remain incomplete, I respectively request for government intervention, most especially the state, members of the Senate and House of Representatives and other stakeholders to facilitate the completion of the out-

standing four key features of the station.

"As the Distinguished HMS commission this first building of the outstanding station, every staff member of the institute is recommitted to excellence in research and innovation, partnership, collaboration and impact-driven programme," She said.

The representative of the Executive Secretary, Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria, Dr Charles Ebuje affirmed that IAR&T is one of the big stakeholders in the agricultural value chain in the country, noting that the operation of the Kabba-Bunu Outstation will further engender the goal of food security and sufficiency across the country.

A community leader and a Retired diplomat, Ambassador Lewu who donated the take-off land to the Institute enjoined the Federal Government to provide Agro-rangers for enhancement of security against the rots of herders in the community.

Abiodun Seeks Foreign Investment In Livestock, Timber Processing, Other Sectors

By Azeez Olorunlomu

Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun, has said investment opportunities abound in the state that require the buy-in of foreign investors.

Abiodun spoke at a meeting with the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina at the ongoing Africa Investment Forum (AIF) Market Days, in Rabat, Morocco, on Friday.

The governor listed some of the projects to include livestock value addition, timber processing, renewable energy, and investments in the power sector.

Abiodun also said Ogun State is exploring opportunities for the establishment of an automotive assembly plant as well as extending the Lagos red and blue rail lines from Agbado to Kajola and from Okokomaiko to Agbara/Lusada, as well as the Purpleline.

Abiodun praised the commitment of the AfDB president in connecting sub-national entities on the continent to investment opportunities.

"Our meeting earlier today (Friday) in Morocco with the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) group, Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, focused on key projects we plan to embark on in Ogun State.

NiMRA Seeks Collaborations To Strengthen Market Research

By Moyosore Salami

THE Nigerian Marketing Research Association (NiMRA) has stressed the importance of collaboration and collective effort to overcome challenges hindering its growth in recent years.

This was disclosed at its first Annual General Meeting (AGM) themed 'Rebuilding Better, Together', held at Radisson Hotel, Ikeja.

The NiMRA President, Seyi Adeoye, described the AGM as a pivotal step in revitalising the association and shaping its future.

He noted that for years, mutual distrust and lack of coordinated actions had stunted the association's progress.

Adeoye added that the new leadership was committed to fostering unity, providing platforms and enhancing global exposure for its members by setting industry standards, offering educational resources, and establishing international partnerships to support growth.

He explained the critical role of market research in driving informed decision-making for businesses and governance.

"We are the custodians of data analytics for the nation. Businesses rely on data to make better decisions, identify growth opportunities, and launch new products effectively."

Kano Kicks As Security Agencies Mount Barricade, Restrict Emir Sanusi's Movement

By Murtala Adewale, Kano

THE Kano State government, on Friday, issued a stern warning against interfering in the traditional and political affairs of the state.

The warning follows heavy deployment of armed security men and armoured tanks mounted at the entrance of Kofar Kudu palace of the Emir of Kano on Friday morning. Similar deployment was witnessed at the palace of the Emir of Bichi, in Bichi Local Council of the state, a development that triggered tension and fear in the ancient

city.

The Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II, who was slated along with the entire emirate council to install the new Emir of Bichi, Munir Sanusi, was restricted by the security deployment.

Bichi has been another hotbed in the emirship battle after the sack of Nasiru Ado Bayero from the district. Nasiru, alongside his elder brother and the 15th Emir of Kano, Aminu Ado Bayero, were removed as emirs by the state government.

In a statement, Secretary to

the State Government, Abdullahi Baffa Bichi, condemned the interference, asserting that the state government would not tolerate any intrusion into the kingdom's affairs.

Bichi expressed surprise at the presence of security forces at the Emir's house, stressing that there was no indication of violence that would warrant such a response.

"The actions of the security forces are unfounded," Bichi stated, "and we will not accept the interference in the

peaceful matters of our kingdom."

He further claimed that certain individuals in Abuja were supporting those attempting to disrupt the peace in Kano, stressing that the state government remains resolute in its stand.

Efforts to speak with the Police on the development were not successful as the spokesman of the Kano State Command, SP Abdullahi Haruna Kiyawa, did not respond to calls and a text message sent to his mobile phone.



Toyota Prado winner in Globacom's Festival of Joy promotion, Ayobami Adejumo; displays the car's keys with other winners who received sewing machines, generators, grinding machines and tricycles (Keke Marwa) at the presentation of prizes to winners of the promo in Lagos on Thursday.

NNPP Insists On Kwankwaso's Expulsion, Condemns Alleged Destabilisation Plot

From Adamu Abuh, Abuja

THE crisis rocking the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) is yet to abate as a faction of the party led Dr. Agbo Gilbert Major has insisted that the presidential candidate of the party in the 2023 elections, Sen. Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, remains expelled from the party.

At a press conference in Abuja on Friday, Major accused Kwankwaso and his Kwankwasiyya group of orchestrating blackmail and attempting to destabilise the party.

The faction reaffirmed the

expulsion of Kwankwaso and his group from the NNPP, warning against illegal actions that could disrupt public order.

Major alleged that the Kwankwasiyya group recently wrote to the Speaker of the House of Representatives requesting the replacement of the Deputy Minority Leader, Aliyu Sani Madaki, with someone unknown to the party.

Citing concerns about potential breaches of public peace, Major called on security agencies, particularly in Kano State, to investigate and prevent any disruptive ac-

tions by the Kwankwasiyya group.

He further revealed that petitions have been submitted to security agencies against Senator Kwankwaso, Buba Galadima, and other leaders of the Kwankwasiyya group to prevent a breakdown of law and order.

The NNPP leader referenced a recent Abia High Court ruling that returned the party's management to its Board of Trustees (BOT) led by its founder, Dr. Boniface Okechukwu Aniebonam. He stressed that only letters signed by the BOT Chairman or the recognised party lead-

ership would be valid for communication with the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

"We urge the Honourable Speaker to act only on letters signed by Dr. Boniface Okechukwu Aniebonam, or the duo of Dr. Agbo Gilbert Major and Comrade Sunday Olaposi Oginni as National Chairman and Secretary respectively," he added.

Major condemned what he described as the Kwankwasiyya group's illegal moves to summon Madaki and Kabiru Alhassan Rurum for disciplinary actions.

NSCIA Bemoans Economic Hardship On Nigerians

By Sulaimon Salau

THE Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) has raised concerns that Nigerians are suffering from the harsh economic climate, urging government at all levels to address the concerns of the citizens by making the environment more conducive to businesses.

The highest Islamic body in Nigeria made this call at the 10th meeting of the Expanded General Purpose Committee (EGPC) of NSCIA held in Abuja.

In a communiqué signed by the Deputy Secretary-General of NSCIA, Prof. Salisu Shehu,

Opposes Private Airstrip Licence For Religious Leader

the body stated that the meeting, which was presided over the President-General of NSCIA and Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, urged governments across the three tiers to prioritise food security and education in order to safeguard the immediate and ultimate wellbeing of the citizens.

The group also advised the governments to immediately deflate the current unnecessary tension and unwarranted polarisation, noting that what is urgently needed

are trust building, extensive consultation and mature, genuine dialogue on the tax reform bills before the National Assembly.

The NSCIA, however, commended the Federal Government, traditional and religious leaders for the remarkable decrease in cases of communal clashes across the country. It encouraged Muslims to get involved in harnessing economic opportunities that would boost their financial independence and explore innovative ways of empowering the youth across the country.

Commenting on the issues of licencing of airstrip to religious leaders, the NSCIA called for the revocation of the private airstrip licence approved for a religious leader, describing it as "an aberration of the highest order that could threaten the peace and security of the country."

The NSCIA, however, decried the non-recognition of Muslim marriage certificates by certain authorities within and outside Nigeria thereby compelling Muslim couples to supplement valid Islamic Marriage certificates with official marriage certificates.

PSHAN Pledges N3.87b To Support Family Planning Access By 2034

By Gbenga Salau

PPRIVATE Sector Health Alliance of Nigeria (PSHAN) has committed to investing 3.87 billion (approx. \$2.3 million) by 2034 to improve access to family planning (FP)/child spacing services across Nigeria.

Announced at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Family Planning Conference, this groundbreaking commitment underscored PSHAN's dedication to addressing critical gaps in FP services through sustainable private sector engagement and innovative solutions.

Through the flagship Adopt-a-Health Facility Programme (ADHFP), PSHAN will establish 774 world-class primary healthcare centers (PHCs), one in each local council of Nigeria.

These facilities aim to provide integrated child spacing services to over 30 million women and girls directly by 2030 and an additional 50 million people indirectly.

The initiative is expected to reduce maternal mortality by 30 per cent and increase modern contraceptive prevalence rates (mCPR) by 25 per cent, significantly contributing to Nigeria's healthcare improvement goals.

Enugu Extends Submission Deadline For Expression Of Interest In Raffle Project

By Adeyemi Adepetun

ENUGU State Gaming Commission (ESGC) and Rangers International Football Club have announced an extension of the submission deadline for expression of interest in the Rangers Dream Big Raffle Project to December 20, 2024.

This strategic extension, according to them, is in response to growing interest from investors and stakeholders eager to align with the initiative.

The Rangers Dream Big Raffle Project offers private sector partners a unique opportunity to participate in a pioneering venture that combines sports, gaming, and economic development in a structured and regulated environment.

According to the Public Relations Officer, Enugu State Gaming Commission, Nwanneka Ude, the recent Supreme Court ruling affirming state governments' exclusive authority to regulate gaming activities in Nigeria has created a more predictable and stable investment environment.

Ude said for the first time, investors can engage with the gaming sector free from the jurisdictional uncertainties that previously hindered growth.



CHANGE OF NAME

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ACCIME: I formerly known as Darlene F. Accime now wish to be addressed as Darlene Oloyede. All former documents remain valid. General Public take note

ADDITION OF NAME: I, formerly known as Oriakhi Eghe Faith, now wish to be addressed as Oriakhi Eghe Oghomwentiti. All former documents remain valid. General Public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME: I, formerly known as Dike Chiononso Jennifer now wish to be addressed as Louis - Dike Chiononso Jennifer. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

ADEGUNJU: I, formerly known as Miss Adegunju Mary Oyindamade now to be addressed as Mrs Oyeneke Mary Oyindamade. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

ADEMAKIN: I, formerly known as Miss Ademakin Aderonke Christianah now wish to be addressed as Mrs Akinlotu Aderonke Christianah. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

ADESUWA: I formerly known as Sonuga Adesuwa Temiyemi now wish to be addressed as Ejayokah Adesuwa Temiyemi. All former documents remain valid. General Public take note.

AKANJE: I, formerly known as Miss Akanje Taiwo Monsurat now addressed as Mrs. Abdulkareem Taiwo Monsurat. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

ALADE: I, formerly Alade Peju Esther now wish to be addressed as Alade Adepeju Seun. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

ALOGBA: I, formerly known as Alogba Raimat Kofoworola now wish to be known as Seriki-Alogba Raimat Kofoworola. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

AMAKA: I, formerly known as Loveth Amaka Nwanokwara now wish to be addressed as Loveth Amaka Chukwukereuba. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

AMOO: I, formerly known as Miss Amoo Lola Mabel now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Ogunyemi Lola Mabel. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

CHARLES: I, formerly known as Charles, Precious Adanna now wish to be addressed as Adaninduro, Precious Adanna. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

CHINNED: I, formerly known as Confidence Glory Chinnied now wish to be known as Confidence Friday. All former documents remain valid general public note.

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: I, Adereti Temitayo is the same person as Adereti Temitayo Folasade. Hence, I wish to be addressed as Adereti Temitayo Folasade. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public take note.

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: That I, Chimezie Nonso is same person as Chimezie Nonso Paul. All former documents remain valid. Banks, NIN, general public take note

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: That I, Musa Ketimu Abdulkadir, Musa Ketimu and Musa Abdulkadir Ketimu Omole is same person as Musa Ketimu Omole, now wish to be addressed as Musa Ketimu Omole. All documents remain valid. Public note

CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH: I, Oluseyi Fumiso Aweye that My correct DOB is 18th September 1967 and not 18th September 1971. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME & DOB: My name was wrongly written on BVN as Eronini Adauko Chinyere instead of Eronini Chinyere Adauko. Date of birth was wrongly written on BVN as October 7, 1977 instead of October 7, 1975. All former documents remain valid. Banks, immigration, NIN & Public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH: My name was wrongly written as Okolie Stella Chinyere instead of Okolie Chinyere Stella. My DOB is 24-07-1983, not 24-07-1982. All former documents remain valid. Banks, public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly written as Akhidenor George Ehidiamen, instead of Akhidenor George Ehidiamen. Former documents remain valid. Public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly written as John Bassey Felix Ufeme instead of John Bassey Felix Ufeme. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly written as Paulina Ehibor instead of Paulina Omonzusi Ehibor. DOB is 02/10/1971 not 06/10/1977. All former documents remain valid. Banks, public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly written as Paulina Nil Ehibor instead of Paulina Omonzusi Ehibor. DOB is 02/10/1971 not 06/10/1977. All former documents remain valid. Banks, public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was erroneously written on my BVN as Elvis Chukwuka Nwosu. Instead of Elvis Josephat Nwosu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

DAVID: I, formerly Precious Oyeibuchi Davis-Akanjo now wish to be addressed as Precious Oyeibuchi David. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

EBUZOEME: I formerly known as Ebuzoeme Ogechukwu Maryjulet now wish to be addressed as Ebuzoeme Ogechukwu Maryjulet. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

EKEKA: I formerly known as Miss Ekeka, Rita Olukebube now wish to be addressed as Mrs Nwafor, Rita Olukebube. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

EKWUBIRE: Formerly Miss Blessing Kelechi Ekwubiri now wish to be addressed as Mrs Blessing Kelechi Nio-makolam. Former documents remain valid public take note.

EMEKA: I, formerly known as Emeke Peters Obili-Mathew now wish to be addressed as Terry Peter Jackson-Obili. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

EMILY: I, formerly known as Emily Ebeonyia Ekharor now wish to be addressed as Emily Ebeonyia Osanebi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

ENEH: I, formerly known as Miss Christiana Chinyere Eneh, now wish to be known as Mrs. Christiana Chinyere Udeh. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

EWUOSHIO: I, formerly known as Justina Utoma Ewuoshio now wish to be addressed as Justina Utoma Samuel. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

EZEHAMONU: I formerly known as Ezehamonu Chukwunna Victor now wish to be addressed as Ezeonyemah Chukwunna Victor. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

GBADEBO: I, formerly known as Ibironke Oluwakemi Gbadebo now wish to be addressed as Ibironke Oluwakemi Ologunuba. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

IDIONG: I, formerly known as Idiong Victoria Nsikan now wish to be addressed as Mrs Mac-Joshua Victoria Nsikan. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

IHAMMA: I, formerly known as Ihama Nekpen Milicent now wish to be addressed as Ekoma Nekpen Milicent. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

IKHUREIGBE: I, formerly known as Ikureigbe Amina Blessing now wish to be addressed as Iepu Blessing. My DOB is 08-09-1991 not 08-09-1984. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

IWUAHA: I, formerly known as Iwuala Oluuchi Chibuzo, now wish to be addressed as Okeke Oluuchi Chibuzo. All documents remain valid. Public note

JOSEPH: I, formerly known as Joseph Okebukola Yetunde now wish to be addressed as Okebukola Yetunde Sar. My DOB is 05/05/1982. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

LUCKY: I, formerly known as Lucky Chibugwu Favour, now wish to be addressed as Dickson Chibugwu Nnenna. All documents remain valid. Public note

MATTHEW: I, formerly Miss Matthew Simisola Elizabeth now wish to be addressed as Mrs Lawal Simisola Elizabeth. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

OCHULOR: I, formerly Chidinma Scholarstich Ochulor now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Chidinma Scholarstich Danjumbo. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

OGBUGHA: I, formerly known as Miss Otisi Kalu Ufewuori, now to be addressed as Mrs. Kalu Otisi Ogbugha Nne Ufewuori. All documents remain valid. General public note.

OGUNGBE: I, formerly Abiola Kafilat Olabambo now wish to be addressed as Ogunbe Olabambo Kafilat. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OJO: I, formerly known as Miss Marvis Goodness Ojo now wish to be addressed as Mrs Marvis Goodness Nnaji. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OKOH: I, formerly known as Miss Joy Nkem Okoh now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Joy Nkem Ibe. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

OKUSANYA: I, formerly known as Miss Olamide Oludayo Okusanya now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Olamide Oludayo Babatunde. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

ONWU: I formerly known as Onwu Angela Ifeyinwa now wish to be addressed as Kara Angela Ifeyinwa. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

OSSAI: I formerly known as Miss Ossai Ijeoma Judith now wish to be addressed as Mrs Bolaji Ijeoma Judith. All former documents remain valid. General Public take note.

OSUNKWO: I formerly known as Miss Osunkwo, Chioma Lauretta now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Chukwu, Chioma Lauretta. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

OYEDOKUN: Formerly Miss Oyedokun Oyebola Elizabeth now wish to be addressed as Mrs Ayantoye Oyebola Elizabeth. All former documents remain valid. Public note

OYEDOKUN: Formerly Miss Oyedokun Oyebola Elizabeth now wish to be addressed as Mrs Ayantoye Oyebola Elizabeth. All former documents remain valid. Public note

REARRANGEMENT OF NAME: I, formerly known as Victor Jidenna Orabuchi, now wish to be addressed as Jidenna Victor Orabuchi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

UBAH: I, formerly Ubah Ruth Chiemerie now wish to be addressed as Chukwuma Ruth Chiemerie. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

UKWUBILE: I, formerly known as, Ukwubile Abel now wish to be addressed as Arinze Abel. My DOB is, 05-06-1987 not 07-06-1985. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

VIRGINIA: I, formerly known as Miss Ochola Virginia, now wish to be addressed as Miss Ochola Virginia. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

WILLIAMS: I, formerly known as Mr. James Edwin Williams now wish to be known and addressed as Mr. James Abayomi Carew. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

YISA: I, formerly known as Yisa Taiwo now wish to be known as Taiwo Yisa Olaitan. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

News

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APGA Open To Alliance With Interested Political Parties, Soludo Declares

From Nkechi Onyedika-Ugoeze, Abuja

ANAMBRA State Governor, Chukwuka Soludo, has expressed the determination of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) to go into an alliance with any interested political party.

Speaking at the National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting of the party on Friday

in Abuja, the governor stated that APGA is growing stronger, adding that it is poised, more than ever, to provide good leadership in the country.

The NEC meeting was the first to be held by the party since the Supreme Court affirmation of Sly Ezeokenwa as the party's National Chairman.

Soludo commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for

his exemplary leadership, saying that for the first time, APGA is having a minister in the federal cabinet in the person of Mrs. Bianca Ojukwu.

He said: "It is on record that under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, APGA has its first ever minister in the person of our own Ambassador Bianca. Please extend our unreserved

appreciation to Mr. President.

Tell him that we say in APGA that he is a true leader; and the mark of a leader is a person or a leader that understands that the moment you cross the threshold of election, you become the president of the entire country, not just your political party. The President has demonstrated that; we commend him and APGA will support him to ensure that our country works."

The governor commended the judiciary for always rising up to the occasion to salvage the nation's democracy.

Soludo, who reflected on the tortuous leadership crisis and litigations the party has been through over the years, added: "For me, all through this while, not one second did I have doubt that after all the madness, reason will prevail and the judiciary will rise up to their feet.

Oyagbola Highlights Barriers To Women In Politics, Calls For Change

By Michael Akinadewo

RENOWNED advocate for women's empowerment, Aminat Oyagbola, has identified funding and multiple roles women play as major barriers to their participation in politics.

Oyagbola noted that the political governance structure and system are flawed, with money politics being a significant obstacle.

She emphasised that billions of naira is required to participate in politics, making it difficult for women to compete.

Besides, Oyagbola identified the issue of godfatherism, saying women are often judged for having a godfather.

She also questioned the need for midnight meetings, suggesting that political conversations and meetings could be held during the daytime. According to her, women make

up only 6.7 per cent of the Nigerian National Assembly.

She emphasised the importance of increasing women's representation in politics, citing the need for a more inclusive and representative democracy.

To address these challenges, Oyagbola suggested that conferences and workshops could provide a platform for women to share their experiences and challenges.

CJID, DUBAWA Intensify Efforts To Protect Integrity Of 2024 Ghanaian Elections

AS Ghana approaches its 2024 general elections, the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID) and its fact-checking subsidiary, DUBAWA, are scaling up their initiatives to ensure a transparent, credible, and inclusive electoral process.

CJID has deployed 19 observers, fact-checkers, and

OSINT analysts to monitor and verify information circulating ahead of the December polls. These personnel are working through the organization's Media in National Elections (MINE) initiative and verification campaigns, focusing on countering misinformation and disinformation that could undermine public trust in the

electoral outcome.

In two newly released reports, CJID provides insights into citizens' perceptions of the electoral environment as well as patterns and threats posed by misinformation and disinformation.

Additionally, CJID's Digital Technology, AI, and Information Disorder

Analysis Centre (DAIDAC) has identified online trends threatening electoral integrity. In the latest article published by DUBAWA Ghana ("Agyapadie Circus: A Make-Believe Toxic Politico-Ethnic Document for Election"), DUBAWA found evidence of political propaganda spreading on social media ahead of the polls.

Tinubu Makes Key Appointments At NUC, NERDC, NEPAD, SMDF

From Terhemba Daka, Abuja

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu on Friday announced the appointment of chief executive officers for the National Universities Commission (NUC), the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD).

The President also approved the renewal of the appointment of Fatima Umaru Shinkafi as the executive secretary of the Solid Minerals Development Fund/Presidential Artisanal Gold Mining Initiative (SMDF/PAGMI).

She was first appointed into the job by President Muhammadu Buhari and is said to be one of the driving forces of the changes in the solid mineral sector.

President Tinubu appointed Prof. Abdullahi Yusuf Ribadu, a visiting professor at the NUC, as the organisation's Executive Secretary.

Ribadu is an expert in veterinary reproduction and has served as vice chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Yola, and the Sule Lamido University, Jigawa State.

President Tinubu appointed Prof. Salisu Shehu as Executive Secretary of the NERDC.

Shehu is a renowned aca-

demic in educational and human Psychology. He was instrumental in establishing the School of Continuing Education at Bayero University, Kano, and was the Vice-Chancellor of Al-Istiqamah University, Kano.

The President also announced Jabiru Salisu Abdullahi Tsauri's appointment as the National Coordinator of NEPAD.

Tsauri holds a Master's in International Affairs and Diplomacy from Ahmadu Bello University. He is a seasoned administrator with expertise in legislative affairs, global affairs, and democratic governance and vast experience in public service.

The earlier announcement about the appointment of Yazid Shehu Umar Danfulani as the Executive Secretary of the SMDF/PAGMI, has been cancelled as there is no vacancy in the agency.

According to a statement issued by the Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, the appointees' experience and track record will bring a new sense of commitment, progress, and positive outcomes to fulfill Nigerians' expectations of their respective organisations.

TheGuardianSports

www.guardian.ng

New Beginning For Delta Sports — Oborevwo

By Gowon Akpodonor

AFTER a long wait, a new chairman has been sworn in to stir the affairs of Delta State Sports Commission for the next four years. He is Onoriode Oborevwo, a former player of Frangers Football Club of Warri. He took over from Chief Tonobok Okowa, who vacated the position in February, this year, after the completion of his eight-year tenure.

Immediately after his inauguration, Oborevwo assured all athletes, coaches and staff of the Delta Sports Commission that the new board would ensure the success of Team Delta at the fast approaching 22nd National Sports Festival in Ogun State in January 2025.

Delta is the defending champion of the sports fiesta a title the state has won eight times since the return to democracy in 1999. Team Delta also dominated the National Youth

Games since it began in 2013.

Speaking with *The Guardian* shortly after a reception organised in honour of the new board at the Squash Club in Asaba, graced by prominent government officials,

renowned sports administrators, family members, friends and staff of the commission, Oborevwo stated that his board is committed to sustaining the state's remarkable strides in sports development across various disciplines.

He acknowledged the significant responsibilities entrusted in him and his team by the government and people of Delta State, just as he promised to ensure the welfare of staff and athletes are well taken care of.

"Our athletes and coaches are our strength, and they must be encouraged and motivated to always defend the State colours in all competitions and championships.

"We will also improve on the quality of our infra-structural facilities across the State to ensure op-

timum performance, train and retrain our sports technocrats and staff of the Sports Commission," he stated.

Speaking further, Oborevwo said: "There will be prudent utilisation of funds for sports programs and activities of the various Associations in the State, and there will be synergy with the Ministry of Education, Local Government Councils and Corporate bodies in driving our grassroots programmes."

He also promised to work with the management of both Warri Wolves FC to ensure its promotion from the Nigerian National League (NNL) to the elite Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL). "We will also give the needed support to players and officials of Delta Queens FC," he stated.

He thanked the Governor for giving him the opportunity to contribute his quota to sports development in Delta State.

Other board members of the newly inaugurated Delta Sports Commission are former Super Eagles defender Sam Sodje, Herita Ehiabor and Oghale Ofremu.

Speaking with *The Guardian*, Sodje said: "It is great to be picked as one of the board members, and together, we aim to foster talent, promote healthy competition and create opportunities for our athletes to shine."



Delta State Governor Sherriff Oborevwo congratulates the new chairman of Delta Sports Commission, Hon. Onoriode Oborevwo

Victor Ochei's Support 'll Boost Nigerian Paralympics Teams, Others, Says Olopade

By Gowon Akpodonor

THE Director General of the National Sports Commission, Chief Bukola Olopade, has said a partnership with Rt. Hon. Victor Ochei, a renowned philanthropist, investor and supporter of professional and grassroots sports in Nigeria will be a major boost for the nation's Paralympics teams.

In a move to reposition sports as a cornerstone of Nigeria's economy and culture, Olopade embarked on an aggressive campaign to market sports as a national asset, securing Victor Ochei's support.

Ochei, a former Speaker of Delta State House of Assembly and former Governorship aspirant under the APC, is the chairman Davnotch Nigeria Limited.

Among his contributions to the nation's sports in recent years was sponsorship of the Victor Ochei International Wheelchair Basketball Championship, which attracted many Nigerian players from local and international scene. For over seven years, the championship produced many stars for the country, just as Ochei also sponsored Nigerian Wheelchair Basketball teams to various international competitions, including the Rio 2016 Olympics Games qualifiers in Algeria, where the country fielded both male and female teams.

With Olopade as Director General of the NSC, Victor Ochei will do everything for Nigeria's sports development as enshrined in President Tinubu's Renewed Hope agenda.

Speaking with *The Guardian*, Olopade stated that Rt. Hon. Ochei, not only accepted an invitation to serve as a patron of the Paralympics Committee of Nigeria (PCN), but equally pledged to expand his investments in Nigeria's Sports sector.

Reflecting on the significance of Olopade's



Hon. Victor Ochei and the Director General of National Sports Commission, Chief Bukola Olopade during the visit by the NSC to woo sponsorship for Nigeria sports

appointment as NSC DG, Ochei remarked; "President Tinubu's decision to entrust Sports administration to seasoned professionals led by my brother and friend, Bukola Olopade, signals a transformative era and I thank Mr. President for shopping for highly experienced professionals to address the developmental needs of our nation and to close existing gaps."

"I consider your appointment as a renewed opportunity for Sports-loving individuals and corporations to collaborate in building a thriving economy from sports, particularly through championing initiatives that promote grassroots competition in track events, gymnastics, ball games and aquatic sports."

During the meeting, Rt. Hon. Ochei pledged to broaden his investment scopes, particularly in underfunded sports like tennis, cricket, and paralympics. He emphasised that with the trust placed in Olopade's professional leadership, Nigerian sports development is poised for global competitiveness with prospects of rapid economic transformation.



Delta State athletes and officials jubilate after winning the 2024 edition of the National Youth Games. The new chairman, Onoriode Oborevwo has promised to carry everyone along in Delta Sports commission

LASUSTECH VC Tennis Cup Ends In Lagos Amid Funfair

THE 2024 edition of Lagos State University of Science and Technology (LASUSTECH) Vice Chancellor's Cup will end today.

The two-day event sponsored by NEM Insurance, Sovereign Trust Insurance and Mutual Benefit Insurance started on Friday, December 6 inside the tennis section of the LASUSTECH Sports Centre in Ikorodu, Lagos.

This year's event brought together tennis players from three other clubs for the inter-club competition including the FAAN Tennis Club, the Police College Tennis Club and Sky Tennis Club, all of Ikeja.

According to the Club Public Relations Officer, Engr. Chijioke Okafor, on Friday, was a

day set aside for all participants to familiarise themselves with one another, while today is the real competition. The players will be competing for various prizes.

Okafor hinted that LASUSTECH Vice Chancellor, Prof. Olumuyiwa Omotola Odusanya, is among top dignitaries expected to grace today's final.

Club President, Alhaji Mojeed Sanni, had assured that today's closing ceremony will be filled with funfair.

Over 250 tennis players will contest for various prizes in this year's LASUSTECH Vice Chancellor's Cup.

Captain of LASUSTECH Tennis Club, Mr. Gafar Tayo Oyewopo hinted that this year's tournament would be better than all past editions.

'Armor Tanka' Eyes Knockout Win Against Olowu At GOTV Boxing Night 32

EXPLLOSIVE featherweight boxer Jafaru 'Armor Tanka' Suleiman has declared that his aim is to floor his opponent, Taiwo 'Gentle Boy' Olowu at GOTV Boxing Night 32.

The two knockout specialists will face each other in a super featherweight challenge bout at the event scheduled for Tafawa Balewa Square, Lagos, on December 26.

Tanka, who suffered the first defeat of his professional career earlier this year, said Gentle Boy is an opponent he ranks highly, promising to beat him by knockout.

"Olowu is not at my level and he is not even on the list of opponents I consider tough. My

name and record speak for me. I don't talk much. I will knock him out like I always do opponents," he said.

Tanka has a record of 16 wins and 13 knockouts, while Gentle Boy boasts of 18 wins, 12 knockouts, and three losses from his 21 professional fights.

The night will feature five other bouts with music and comic performances in between. Raheem "Badoo" Animashaun and Hammed "Ese" Ganiyu will square up in the light welterweight category; Lateef "Enuoshe"

Azeez and Rasheed "Fally Boy" Adeyemo will battle for the national super wel-

terweight title; Sikiru "Omo Iya Eleja" Shogbesan will confront Imole "System" Oloyede in the national super featherweight challenge; Akintunde Abolade will square up against Emmanuel Abimbola in the national super flyweight category, while Kehinde Owuoye and Emmanuel Bamidele will face-off in the amateur flyweight category.

The boxing showpiece sponsored by GOTV will be broadcast live on SuperSport channels across 50 African countries.



Featherweight boxer, Taiwo 'Esepo' Agbaje, punching his way to the top prize at a GOTV Boxing Night in Lagos. All roads will lead to Tafawa Balewa Square on December 26 for another edition

Saturday's Premier League Fixtures

Everton Vs Liverpool 12:30
Aston Villa Vs Southampton 15:00
Brentford Vs Newcastle 15:00
Crystal Palace Vs Man City 15:00
Man United Vs Nott' Forest 17:30

Saturday's Spanish La Liga

Las Palmas Vs Real Valladolid 13:00
Real Betis Vs Barcelona 15:15
Valencia Vs Rayo Vallecano 17:30
Girona Vs Real Madrid 20:00



INSIDE STUFF WITH MARTINS OLOJA

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When Will Our National Greed Collapse? (3)

THE discussion point of the second part of this serial harped on when we could develop a 'national creed' to deal a blow on this enemy called *national greed*, whose effects have continued to destroy our *national grid*.

We need to get back to this discussion point because some of the power elite who need to develop a *national creed* for the most populous black nation on earth just returned from three powerful nations, France, Brazil and South Africa where the governments cannot ignore the expediency of reducing energy cost to boost business and enhance welfare of the people. I hope they are deepening their understanding about why we need a national creed to destroy national greed that has also diminished the stature of Africa's most populous country.

As I ponder the perpetual darkness that has become the norm in our beloved country, I am again reminded of the age-old adage: "greed is the root of all evil." It seems that our collective greed has become the primary obstacle to enjoying a reliable and efficient national electricity grid. The other day, I was at Ilupeju SPAR (supermarket) for a haircut at my usual salon. I was shocked to discover that **Black&White** unisex salon that had a thriving shop of many young professional hairdressers, barbers, manicurists, pedicurists, facial beauticians, etc had disappeared from the premises of the biggest mall in Ilupeju. I called the **Black&White** salon manager who apologised profusely to me. He said, "Uncle, sorry, we had to close that shop because we couldn't cope with the electricity bills there. Everything we were making couldn't pay the electricity bills. Sadly, we haven't got a new place. All of our professionals are jobless now..."

For decades, Nigeria has struggled to provide stable electricity to its citizens and entrepreneurs. Despite the abundance of natural resources, including oil, gas, and hydroelectric power, our national grid remains in shambles. The consequences are dire: businesses suffer, industries stagnate, and the overall quality of life deteriorates.

So, what's the root of this problem? Is it corruption, incompetence, or a lack of investment? While these factors certainly play a role, I firmly believe as I have been saying that our '*national greed*' is the primary culprit.

Greed, in this context, refers to the insatiable desire for power, wealth, and influence that seems to drive our national agenda. It's the same greed that leads politicians to embezzle funds meant for infrastructure development. It's the same greed that prompts business leaders to prioritise profits over people. And it's the same greed that encourages individuals to sabotage the system for personal gain.

Until we address this '*national greed*', our electricity grid will continue to suffer. The grid is not just a physical infrastructure; it's a symbol of our collective well-being. When it fails, we all suffer.

So, when will our national greed collapse, allowing our electricity grid to work efficiently? The answer lies in our collective willingness to prioritise the greater good over personal interests.

A call to action

To achieve this, we need a fundamental shift in our national mindset. We must recognise that our individual successes are inextricably linked to the success of our nation. We must prioritise investments in critical infrastructure, including



Minister of Power, Adebayo Adedun

the electricity grid that keeps collapsing amidst 'Band A' fallacy.

Furthermore, we need to hold our leaders accountable for their actions. We must demand transparency and accountability in the management of our national resources that have been wasted on the power sector's dubious expansion. We must also support policies and initiatives that promote the greater good, even if they require short-term sacrifices.

The collapse of '*national greed*' requires a new era of cooperation and collective responsibility. We must work together to build a Nigeria where the electricity grid is a symbol of our national pride, not a source of shame. As we strive towards this goal, we must remember that the collapse of national greed is not a destination; it's a journey. It requires patience, perseverance, and a commitment to the greater good by our leaders who keep pursuing frivolous projects such as overhead bridges and water boreholes that can't enhance humanity and human development indices.

As I reflect on this topic again this week, I'm reminded of the wise words of Nelson Mandela: "The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." Nigeria has fallen many times, but it's time for us to rise again. Let us rise above our national greed and work towards a future where our electricity grid is a symbol of our national pride. Let us rise above our individual interests and prioritise the greater good. Here are some good examples of what the governors of the 36 states and Abuja can do now that there is power sector freedom in federalism.

Deliverables and lessons from Redemption City and Covenant University

The examples of Redemption City of RCCG Mission and Covenant University/Canaan Land, Ota, both in Ogun State, Nigeria, demonstrate the feasibility of independent electricity power generation and distribution. These institutions have successfully implemented self-sufficient power systems, providing 24/7 electricity to their communities.

The deliverables

***Decentralised Power Generation:** Both institutions have invested in decentralised power generation, using a combination of diesel generators, gas turbines, and renewable energy sources. This approach allows them to generate power independently, reducing reliance on the national grid.

***Private Sector Participation:** The success of these institutions' power systems is largely due to private sector investment and management. This highlights the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in developing and operating power infrastructure.

***Community-Based Power Distribution:** Redemption City and Covenant University have established their own power distribution networks, serving their respective communities. This approach ensures reliable and efficient power supply, with minimal transmission losses.

***Regulatory Framework:** The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) has played a crucial role in enabling these institutions to generate and distribute power independently. The regulatory framework has provided a level of certainty and stability, encouraging private sector investment in the power sector.

Implications for State Governors:

The examples of Redemption City and Covenant University demonstrate that state-based power generation is feasible and can be effective. State governors can explore similar initiatives to address power shortages in their respective states.

***Public-Private Partnerships:** State governors can leverage PPPs to develop and operate power infrastructure, reducing the financial burden on state governments. Oyo state has begun this in the capital city, Ibadan.

***Decentralized Power Distribution:** State governors can consider decentralised power distribution models, where power is generated and distributed at the local level, reducing transmission losses and improving efficiency.

***Regulatory Support:** State governors can work with NERC and other regulatory bodies to create an enabling environment for private sector investment in the power sector.

Post-Deregulation Opportunities

***State-Based Power Markets:** With the deregulation of the power sector, state governors can explore the creation of state-based power markets, where power is generated, transmitted, and distributed within the state.

***Independent Power Producers:** State governors can encourage independent power producers (IPPs) to invest in power generation projects within their states, providing a reliable source of power.

***Mini-Grids and Micro-Grids:** State governors can support the development of mini-grids and micro-grids, which can provide power to rural and underserved communities.

In the main, the examples of Redemption City and Covenant University/Canaan Land

demonstrate the potential for independent electricity power generation and distribution in Nigeria. State governors can learn from these examples and explore similar initiatives to address power shortages in their respective states. The post-deregulation landscape provides opportunities for state-based power markets, IPPs, and mini-grids/micro-grids, which can help to improve the overall efficiency and reliability of the power sector in Nigeria. Let's ask what the governors are waiting for?

As I noted in the first part of this serial on March 20, 2022, let's not get it twisted, unless there is a collapse, yes collapse of this public enemy number one, called national greed, we will not be able to sing any redemption songs in the energy sector comprising electricity and oil and gas resources. It is bad enough for our country that now after 25 years of unbroken democratisation and politicking (29 May, 1999-29 May 2024) couldn't lead to credible revival of our oil refineries. What is worse, our power (electricity) sector too hasn't raised what Ngugi wa Thiong'o calls, "hope of a better tomorrow as 'the only comfort you can give to a weeping child'". So, instead of praying for restructuring and revival of our accident-prone national grid, we should pray fervently for the collapse of national greed at all levels of leadership and followership here.

Greed is an uncontrolled longing for increase in the acquisition or use of material gain; or social value, such as status, or power. Greed has been identified as undesirable throughout known human history because it creates behaviour-conflict between personal and social goals... An example of greed is when you are obsessed with getting more and more money. A selfish or excessive desire for more than is needed or deserved, especially of money, wealth, food, or other possessions. It sometimes drives inordinate ambition and so that is where we find people's greed for power.

This is the cause of near absence of common good in Nigeria. Most people who seek power in Nigeria are driven by this uncontrolled longing for increase in the acquisition or use of material gain, or social value or power, not for the purpose of service delivery or public good. The powers, I mean the business elite that acquired the electricity power stations from former President Goodluck Jonathan were largely driven by this same common disease called national greed, because they were just obsessed with getting more and more money than is needed or deserved. They artfully bamboozled the nation for what they thought were lucrative power stations. They didn't intend to invest more to get our national grid working. They were supported and shielded by the very federally greedy power elite in Jonathan's government.

The national greed in all of them is the reason our electricity national grid will continue to collapse. So, until the national greed in all of the business and power elite in Nigeria is made to collapse through a national creed and revolutionary movement to make the world's most populous black nation an entrepreneurial nation, we will continue to read from the book of lamentation called constant collapse of national grid. Oh yes, it is the national greed of our leaders and their business elite collaborators that should be made to collapse, 'lest we should be the last' in the new world order as the iconic Kwesi Brew warns.

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