

Dangote Petroleum May Control Almost 30% Of NGX At Listing

KINGSLEY IGHOMWENGHIAN

Aliko Dangote, Nigerian billionaire and Africa's richest man is set to raise the stake a notch further in the coming weeks as his Dangote Group, on Friday, got the blessing of Nigeria's Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC)

to flag-off the process of transforming his Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals FZE from a private enterprise into a public limited liability company.

The company will, on September 14, open its formal order book to begin its Initial Public Offering (IPO) of 4.1 billion ordinary shares at ₦525

each, amounting to approximately ₦2.15 trillion. Proceeds of the IPO will be invested to more than double the refinery's capacity from 650,000 barrel per day to 1.4 million bpd, finance a newly proposed 700,000bpd refinery in Kenya, scaling out the Lekki Petrochemical infrastructure for production of polypropylene,

fertilizers, and sub-chemical derivatives, and to partly repay or restructure maturing operational debt estimated at \$3.65 billion to improve the company's debt-to-equity ratio ahead of its secondary listing on the London Stock Exchange (LSE).

However, the SEC also registered the company's existing 120.13

billion ordinary shares, bringing the company's estimated total valuation to about ₦63.07 trillion (or \$39.1 billion). The refinery's listing is expected to raise the Nigerian market capitalization to about ₦222.6 trillion, and account for nearly one-third of

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SUNDAY

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2027: Nigerians Raise Fresh Alarm Against Anti-Democratic Forces

- Threat Of Desperation, Electoral Violence Real — Analysts
- Task FG, Security Agencies, INEC On Adherence To Electoral Act

EJIKEME OMENAZU

LAGOS

Nigerians have called on the Federal Government, security agencies and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to consider seriously the recent warning by Dr Donald Duke, a former Cross River State and presidential candidate of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) against politics of desperation, human sacrifice and violence.

Barrister Olalekan Festus Ojo, a Lagos-based human rights lawyer and strong advocate of social justice, one of those who spoke to Sunday Independent at the weekend, said that Duke's warning against politics of desperation, human sacrifice, and violence is not merely rhetorical caution, but, also a constitutional alarm that demands institutional response of the highest urgency.

Duke's recent warning came against the backdrop of recent reports of politically related killings in different parts of the country, the quizzing of Osun Senator



IGP Disu



Prof. Amupitan

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Edo Decentralizes Power Sector, Issues Over Twelve Licences To Investors

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Lassa Fever, Cholera, Diphtheria Emergencies Expose Gaps In Nigeria's Health System

CHIOMA UMEHA

LAGOS

Nigeria's health-security system is facing a fresh test as Lassa fever, cholera and diphtheria expose dangerous gaps in disease detection, laboratory capacity, treatment, immunisation, sanitation and community surveillance.

The revelation comes amid a cholera outbreak that has produced more than 65,000 suspected cases

across 35 states and about 195 Local Government Areas this year; according to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

Despite a decline in weekly cases, the NCDC has warned that transmission remains ongoing and that Nigeria could face another surge between late August and October as the rainy season continues.

Flooding, unsafe water and poor sanitation threaten to reverse hard-won gains, raising fresh concerns over whether Nigeria is adequately

prepared to stop outbreaks before they become full-blown emergencies.

Similarly, Nigeria recorded 14 new confirmed cases of Lassa fever between August 10 and 16, 2026, bringing the total number of confirmed cases this year to 1,035, with 252 deaths recorded, according to NCDC.

With Lassa fever and diphtheria also placing communities under pressure, public health experts are warning that Nigeria can no longer

afford a predominantly reactive approach to disease outbreaks.

Professor Sunday Olajide Awofisayo, Public Health and Biomedical Research Advocate, said the country must urgently move beyond an over-reliance on emergency reaction and build a sustainable system capable of detecting, treating and containing outbreaks before they escalate.

His warning comes against the backdrop of continuing Lassa fever transmission, a recurring seasonal epidemic particularly during the

dry season.

By Epidemiological Week 8 of 2026, the NCDC had reported cases and deaths across 18 states and 67 Local Government Areas, with Bauchi, Ondo, Taraba, Edo and Benue accounting for more than 80 percent of confirmed cases.

Healthcare workers have also been affected, highlighting continuing weaknesses in infection prevention and control and placing front-

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who openly reportedly told his supporters at a campaign rally to kill their opponents and also Borno Commissioner and Abuja LG Chair, also equally issued such a threat to those who failed to vote for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) during the 2027 general elections.

Over 50 people were allegedly killed while several people were injured and maimed, while political parties had their properties including materials destroyed during campaigns for the August 15 Osun off-season governorship election.

Ojo, the Managing Partner, Platinum & Taylor Hill LP, one of the nation's major law chambers, stated: "That a presidential candidate feels compelled to publicly warn against ritual killings and political violence as campaigns gather momentum tells us everything about the dangerous direction our electoral politics is heading.

"The quizzing of a sitting Senator, a Borno Commissioner, and an Abuja Local Government Chairman in connection with these threats is a significant development that must be pursued to its logical conclusion, prosecution, not merely questioning.

"Nigerians have watched too many high-profile investigations

2027: Nigerians Raise Fresh Alarm Against Anti-Democratic Forces

evaporate into institutional silence. This must not be one of them.

"The authorities must adopt several immediate and concrete measures. Security agencies must establish a dedicated 2027 Electoral Violence Intelligence Unit that monitors, intercepts, and prosecutes threats before they materialise into actual harm.

"The Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) must publicly declare that political violence, including ritual killings connected to electoral ambition, will attract the full weight of the criminal law without exception or political interference.

"INEC must formally blacklist any candidate or party found by security agencies to be connected to electoral violence or related criminal conduct, making ineligibility the immediate consequence of established violent conduct.

"Traditional rulers and religious leaders must be formally mobilised as community intelligence assets, their proximity to grassroots political activities makes them irreplaceable early warning systems that the government must deliberately engage and resource.

"Most critically, the existing prosecutions must proceed transparently and publicly to conviction where evidence supports it.

"Nothing deters political violence more powerfully than watching its sponsors, regardless of political rank or social standing, face imprisonment. Impunity is the oxygen of electoral violence. Remove it and democracy breathes again."

Barrister Kenneth Udeze, the National Chairman of the Action Alliance (AA), who also spoke on the issue stated that in light of Dr Donald Duke's warning and the recent arrests of an Osun Senator, Borno Commissioner, and Abuja LG Chair, the authorities must act decisively before campaigns escalate.

Chief Udeze stressed: "First, INEC, DSS, and Police should set up a joint Election Violence Monitoring Taskforce with a hotline for real-time reporting.

"Secondly, enforce the Electoral Act strictly: immediate prosecution and public naming of any politician linked to thuggery, hate speech, or 'desperation tactics'.

"Thirdly, mandate political parties to sign a Peace Accord with sanctions attached, and

deploy security to hotspots early.

"Democracy cannot thrive where fear and bloodshed are tools. The law must be seen to work now."

Dr Victor Mathew, a security expert and human rights motivator, said that it is very unfortunate that Nigerian elections have been characterised by politicians who are very desperate and ready to go to any length in achieving their evil design and agenda, killings, intimidations, electoral violence.

Dr Mathew, the Executive Director, Kingdom Advocacy Network (KAN) and CEO, Next-step Security Organisation stated: "The Peace Committee comprising Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, former Head of State; Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, and other eminent Nigerians became necessary because our elections had become very toxic and frightening.

"Credit must go to former President Goodluck Jonathan who has gained international acclaim by saying that his electoral victory should not deserve any one's blood. "That is a very profound statement. He did not just say it. He acted it by accepting defeat and congratulated the late President Muhammadu Bu-

hari, instead of embarking on an electoral dispute that could have led to violence.

"Donald Duke is on point on his counsel. I hope he is not preaching water and drinking wine, because politicians never agree that they are involved in truncating democracy by their anti-democratic tendencies and actions.

"Without being pessimistic, I am sure so many lives and properties will be lost between now and the elections, except my recommendations will be adhered to.

"First and foremost, the politicians do not carry out their dastardly acts by themselves, but they use mostly the youths to perpetrate violence.

"I will advise the youths not to make themselves willing tools in the hands of the political class to cause chaos.

"These young ones are used and dumped after elections. Unfortunately, they use the arms and ammunition acquired for political assignment into violent crimes.

"Secondly, let aspiration for public office be for service and not getting there by all means. Our politicians should emulate former President Jonathan who refused to sacrifice the precious lives of Nigerians to remain in office.

"The politicians must emulate his brand of politics and political philosophy.

"Thirdly, our law enforcement agencies must and should cover themselves in glory by going after whoever it is, irrespective of party affiliation to answer for their actions, they must be made to be accountable for their actions.

"Politicians making threats should be banned from aspiring and holding public offices. Someone like the Council Chairman in the FCT has no business holding public office.

"The country must begin to treat such persons as enemies of democracy.

"Lastly, the voters should see their votes as their power to vote credible persons into office and vote out the bad ones."

Professor John Ebhomien, an All Progressives Congress (APC) chieftain, stated that Dr. Donald Duke's warning against "politics of desperation, human sacrifice and violence", coming alongside the quizzing of an Osun Senator, Borno Commissioner, and Abuja LG Chair, shows how quickly the 2027 campaign could turn volatile, if unchecked.

"Ebhomien, an economist, financial expert and a one-time former consultant to the United Nations Office on Project Services (UNOPS), said that he would appreciate that these further measures are adopted by the relevant authorities.

"Police, DSS, and EFCC should publicly investigate and prosecute not just foot soldiers but sponsors. When elites face real consequences early, it sends a signal that violence has a cost.

"INEC, Police, DSS, NSCDC, and the media should run a joint 'Election Violence Situation Room' from now till 2027. There should be Real-time tracking of hate speech, thuggery, and arms movement by LGA.

"Parties should sign and be bound to a peace accord with sanctions — withdrawal of public funding, or barring candidates whose structures are linked to violence.

"Every stakeholder should support community peace committees, traditional rulers, and CSOs to do grassroots de-escalation. Also, the judiciary and security agencies should fast-track prosecution of ritual-related crimes so that ritual killing is not used as a political tool.

"Violence thrives where youth feel excluded. Pair security with jobs, transparent party primaries, and campaign finance limits.

"If authorities can act now and not wait till December, we can keep 2027 as an election of ideas, not fear."

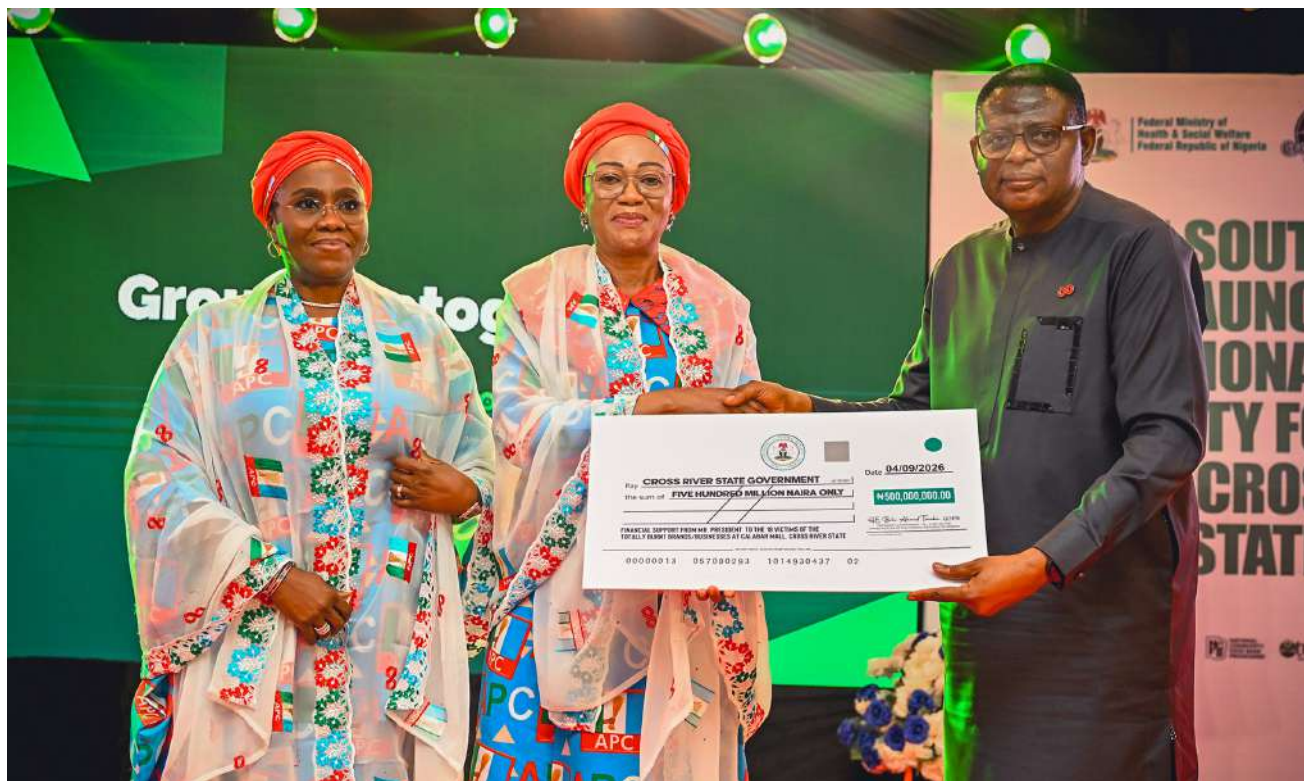
Tola Oresanwo, Director of Administration and Programmes (CACOL), said: "As campaigns gather momentum, the authorities must move from reaction to prevention.

"Security agencies should intensify intelligence gathering and early-warning mechanisms, particularly around political actors and identified hotspots, while promptly investigating and prosecuting anyone promoting violence, intimidation or politically motivated killings.

"It is not enough to just question them and allow them to 'go and sin no more'.

"Political parties and candidates must sign and genuinely enforce enforceable peace commitments, while civil society, traditional and religious leaders should facilitate continuous dialogue.

"Finally, authorities must protect whistle-blowers and witnesses and ensure that no politically connected individual is above the law."



Senator Oluremi Tinubu, First Lady (middle), presenting a cheque for the 18 business owners, the victims of Calabar Mall infeno, to Bassey Otu, Governor, Cross River State (right), and his wife, Eyoanwan-Itam, in Calabar, Cross River, at the weekend.

2027: I'll Take My Message To Every Corner Of Nigeria — Makinde

KAZEEM AWOJODU,
IBADAN

Oyo State Governor, Engr. Seyi Makinde, has said he would embark on a vigorous nationwide campaign ahead of the 2027 general elections to seek Nigeri-

ans' support for his presidential ambition.

Governor Makinde who also doubles as the Allied Peoples Movement (APM) Presidential Candidate, made the declaration on Saturday in Eruwa shortly after he was conferred with the chieftaincy title of Aare Asolude-

ro of Ibarapaland.

The colourful ceremony, held at the newly commissioned palace of the Eleruwa of Eruwa, drew traditional rulers, political leaders, government officials and other dignitaries.

Speaking after receiving the honour, the governor said his as-

piration would not be limited to any region.

"My aspiration to lead Nigeria will not be confined to any particular region. I am prepared to take my message of good governance and development to Nigerians across the country," he said.

KENNETH ATAVTI,
ABUJA

Chief Tunji Ogunyemi, a professor at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), has declared that 15 states in northern Nigeria would collapse within three months if petrol subsidy is restored as proposed by Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and presidential

Subsidy Removal: 90 Percent Of Northern States Will Collapse — Prof. Ogunyemi

candidate of African Democratic Congress, ADC.

Ogunyemi spoke during an interview on Open Forum 360, a podcast hosted by Dare Adekanmbi.

Atiku Abubakar, presidential

candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), had said he would restore petrol subsidy if elected president.

Ogunyemi, however, warned that restoring the subsidy would have serious impli-

cations for the finances of the country.

He said a return to the subsidy regime would reduce accruals to the Federation Account, on which most states depend to fund their operations.

Ikeja Club Elects Abayomi Omoyinmi President, Holds AGM

EJIKEME OMENAZU
LAGOS

Members of the prestigious Ikeja Club penultimate Saturday elected a new Executive Committee to run the affairs of the club for the next term during its Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Barrister Abayomi Akin Omoyinmi emerged as the new president, while Otunba Adebisi Ayinde Olaibi was elected vice president.

Other members of the new Exco are Mr. Babatunde Obakoya (General Secretary); Mr. Babatunde Olonade (Social Secretary); Mr. Mustapha Dawodu (Publicity Secretary); and Mr. Adefisayo Samuel (Financial Secretary).

Surv. David Taiwo was elected Treasurer; Hon. Obafemi Salami emerged Bar Secretary, and Mr. Oluwasegun Soloki will serve as Sports Secretary, while Mr. Shamsideen Solarin was elected Assistant General Secretary.

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line responders themselves at risk.

Diphtheria presents another major threat. Nigeria recorded the highest number of diphtheria cases in the WHO African Region, with more than 12,000 suspected cases, over 8,500 confirmed cases and 884 deaths between January and November 2025.

The NCDC has also disclosed more than 10,000 confirmed diphtheria cases this year, although the case fatality

Lassa Fever, Cholera, Diphtheria Emergencies Expose Gaps In Nigeria's Health System

rate has declined considerably compared with the same period last year.

Confirmed cases have been reported across 240 Local Government Areas in 30 states, while inadequate vaccination coverage remains a major driver of continued transmission.

Awofisayo said large num-

bers of under-immunised and zero-dose children represent a major vulnerability, with vaccine hesitancy, insecurity, displacement, population movement and difficulty reaching underserved communities further undermining protection.

Across the three diseases, he identified a troubling pattern of vulnerabilities: inadequate laboratory capacity and specimen transportation, limited specialised treatment and supportive care, shortages of essential medicines and vaccines, inadequate funding, weak surveillance, insufficient healthcare personnel and infection-control gaps.

The consequences can become deadly when patients arrive late.

Poor recognition of symptoms, self-medication, financial barriers and reliance

on informal care continue to contribute to delayed presentation, while late recognition and treatment can significantly worsen outcomes, particularly in Lassa fever.

Cholera, meanwhile, demonstrates the limits of relying on treatment after transmission has already taken hold.

NCDC Director-General, Dr Jide Idris, said the decline in cholera deaths was encouraging but should not create a false sense of security. He stressed that unsafe water, open defecation, damaged water infrastructure and poor sanitation in schools, markets and other public places remain major drivers of transmission.

The NCDC has strengthened surveillance, laboratory support, case management, infection prevention and con-

trol, community engagement and rapid-response operations, while cholera interventions include water-quality assessments, chlorination, rehabilitation of water sources and oral cholera vaccination in high-burden communities.

But Idris warned that federal intervention alone would not be sufficient, urging state and Local Government authorities to commit resources to high-risk communities.

Awofisayo called for continuous training of healthcare workers, expanded and adequately equipped regional laboratories, improved specimen transportation, stronger treatment readiness, real-time surveillance, contact tracing and community-based surveillance in high-risk areas.

He also demanded intensified routine and targeted

immunisation, identification of zero-dose children, stronger protection for healthcare workers and predictable domestic funding for outbreak preparedness.

For Awofisayo, preparedness must also be measured by results. Governments and response agencies should publicly report diagnostic delays, laboratory turnaround times, treatment initiation, case-fatality rates, vaccination coverage, contact tracing and outbreak-response times.

Every avoidable death, he argued, should trigger a review of what happened, where the delay occurred, and what must be corrected.

The crucial message is, Nigeria cannot afford to wait for outbreaks to escalate before acting.

"Lassa fever and diphtheria are not merely medical problems; they are tests of our health-security system," Awofisayo said, stressing the need for action before outbreaks become emergencies.

APM Knocks Tinubu, Musa Over Claims Of Improved Security

SAMUEL OGIDAN,
ABUJA

The Allied Peoples Movement (APM) has accused the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of living in denial over the worsening insecurity in Nigeria, alleging that the country has witnessed a sharp deterioration in its security situation under the present government.

The party, in a statement on Saturday in Abuja signed by its National Publicity Secretary, Abubakar Yusuf, said Nigeria's ranking as the fourth most insecure country in the world in the 2026 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) contradicts claims by the Federal Government that security has improved.

APM also faulted the Minister of Defence, Gen. Christopher Musa (retd.), for asserting that the country's security situation had improved under President Tinubu.

According to the party, Nigeria's position in the 2026 GTI represents a deterioration from its sixth-place ranking in the 2025

index.

The opposition party said it was particularly concerned that such claims were being made at a time when Nigerians were still grappling with killings, kidnappings, displacement, banditry and other forms of violent crime across several parts of the country.

"The comments by the minister further expose the Tinubu administration's insensitivity to the plight of Nigerians, who bear the pain of the daily killings, maiming, rape, abduction for ransom, and incarceration by bandits in dehumanising conditions in various parts of the nation," the statement said.

APM alleged that more than 600,000 Nigerians had been killed and about 2.2 million people abducted over the last three years.

The party also cited a recent incident in Niger State, alleging that about 600 residents, mostly women, children and elderly persons, were abducted from Dekera, Gidan-Zana and Sabon Gida communities and remained in captivity.

Police Arrest Suspected Killer Of Nursing Student In Anambra, Exonerate Earlier Suspect

CHUKWUJEKWU ILOZUE,
AWKA

The Anambra State Police Command has arrested a 26-year-old male suspect, Kosisochokwu Edward Ibekwe, in connection with the murder of Miss Vivian Chilaka, a 23-year-old nursing student, whose tragic death in Alor, Idemili South Local Government Area, on 14th June 2026, attracted widespread public concern.

The suspect was arrested on 4th September 2026 following credible and actionable information received by the Command, according to a press statement issued by the Police Public Relations Officer, Ikenga Tochukwu, a Superintendent of Police.

Before now the landlord of the late student was accused of the murder.

According to the police, pre-

liminary investigation revealed that the suspect allegedly gained access to the building by climbing the fence with the aid of a ladder, with the initial intention of sexually assaulting the victim.

According to his statement, the police said, a struggle subsequently ensued between him and the deceased, during which he allegedly used a knife to stab her, leading to her death.

The suspect has also allegedly made revelations linking him to other similar incidents within the community, claims that are currently being subjected to thorough investigation and corroboration by the Command.

The Command clarified that the landlord who was earlier suspected in connection with the incident has been exonerated following the ongoing investigation.



Sheriff Oborevwori, Governor, Delta State (left); Justina Otumara, wife of the late Joseph Otumara, APC chieftain (middle), and Roli Uduaghan, wife of former Governor, Delta State, during the funeral service of the late APC chieftain at Ugbugwangu, Warri, Delta State, on Saturday.

PHOTO: GODDY UMUKORO

2027 Poll: Don't Sit On The Fence – Falana Tells Religious Leaders

KENNETH ATAVTI,
ABUJA

A Constitutional lawyer and human rights activist, Chief Femi Falana, SAN, on Saturday, asked religious bodies to not sit on the fence but get up and save Nigeria's democracy as the nation prepares for the 2027 general polls.

Falana gave the charge at

the 25th Mike Okonkwo Annual Lecture, themed, 'Democracy at the Crossroads: Electoral Credibility, Judicial Integrity and the Future of Nigeria', held at the MUSON Centre in Lagos.

According to him, religious institutions could no longer afford to remain passive when government decisions directly affected the lives, welfare and rights of their members and other Nigerians.

The senior lawyer stated that churches should look beyond spiritual activities and pay closer attention to how public resources are managed at the federal, state and local government levels.

He further charged religious bodies to scrutinise government budgets and monitor the implementation of projects and programmes funded with public money, saying such involvement

would help strengthen accountability and good governance.

"Democracy should not be reduced to the conduct of elections. Accountable leadership, effective public service, citizens' welfare and security were also essential to a functioning democratic society.

"Religious bodies should not sit on the fence but get up and save Nigeria's democracy," he maintained.

KENNETH ATAVTI,
ABUJA

The federal Government and the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) has agreed to strengthen collaboration on women's leadership, child protection and access to justice for vulnerable in the country.

Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, made the call when the 33rd President of the

FG, NBA Settle For Strong Legal Framework On Women, Children

NBA, Oyinkansola Badejo-Okusanya, and members of the association's executive paid her a courtesy visit in Abuja.

Sulaiman-Ibrahim said the partnership was necessary to ensure that laws and policies protecting women, children and other vulnerable groups were effectively implemented across the country.

She identified the NBA as a critical accountability partner in translating legal instruments, including the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and the Child Rights Act, into practical protection at the state, local government and community levels.

She urged the NBA to support the ministry in strengthening Ni-

geria's child protection system, including adoption procedures, orphanage regulations and guidelines for childcare facilities.

The minister also called for improved access to justice through the establishment and effective operation of family courts, particularly at the local and community levels.

She said vulnerable persons,

children and the less privileged should not be denied justice because of gaps in the legal system or lack of access to appropriate institutions.

On women's participation in leadership, Sulaiman-Ibrahim congratulated Badejo-Okusanya on her election, describing her emergence as an inspiration to Nigerian women and girls.

The minister said the advancement of women required the support of both men and women, commending male members of the NBA who supported the association's first female president.

Badejo-Okusanya, on her part, assured the minister of the NBA's support for the ministry's initiatives.

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the entire value.

As wonderful as the significant increase in the Nigerian market may seem, market watchers say it poses an inherent danger, introducing severe structural risk to the NGX, such that with nearly 30% of the NGX All-Share Index, any little price movement in the shares price of new leader could swing the bourse, even when other heavyweights swing in the opposite direction. This, they argue, can heighten index concentration.

There is also the fear that Nigerian institutional investors such as Pension Fund

Dangote Petroleum May Control Almost 30% Of NGX At Listing

Administrators may not be able to invest significantly in the stock because of the regulation of the National Pension Commission (NAICOM) barring them from investing more than 10 to 15% of their total equity portfolio to a single stock. This leaves Dangote Petroleum mainly to foreign institutional investors and high net worth individuals and institutional players.

This, among others, was the major reason for the vis-

it by the board of the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX Group), led by the chairman, Dr. Umaru Kwairanga to President Bola Tinubu a month ago to help facilitate the listing of prime national assets including the upstream/downstream assets of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited valued at between ₦30 and ₦50 trillion; as well as the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited, a very profitable infrastructure asset worth be-

tween ₦15 and ₦25 trillion. Such high profile listings, they must have impressed upon their host, could significantly balance the influence of Dangote Petroleum Refinery on the bourse, besides ensuring a fairer representation of the economy on the NGX.

In a presentation to the President at the Aso Villa meeting, Temi Popoola, Chief Executive of the NGX Group listed other national economic asset that should

be considered as the Eleme Petrochemicals, Nigeria's unicorns and foremost private companies like OPay, leading financial technology companies (fintechs), consumer and infrastructural businesses for dual listing on the NGX, thereby "keeping Nigerian-earned value on the domestic exchange."

The NGX Group CEO assured that the bourse can act as a primary financing engine for the country's trillion-dollar ambition by funding manufacturers, agriculture, energy, technology and enterprise, using its bouquet of instruments including bonds, sukuk, infrastructure funds and asset-backed securities.

The market, he stressed, "can serve as the principal channel for domestic and international capital into national infrastructure."

Analysts also urge the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI) to partner with the NGX to list other already identified Government Owned Entities (GOEs) and Government Linked Entities (GLEs). This, they believe, will en-

hance corporate governance and provide proper oversight for such government entities through regular filings, regular statutory meetings and rendition of reports.

Sunday Independent recalls that the Managing Director and Chief Executive of MOFI, Dr. Armstrong Takang, said 40 corporate assets worth N18 trillion, had been enumerated at the time as part of enumerating the national asset register to help government determine what it really owns and thereafter how to extract greater value for national good.

Listing of such heavy weights among others, would significantly alter such economic ratios as the NGX's market capitalization to GDP, besides boosting the country's productive base as the many government owned companies contribute much more to the economy, helped by improving access to funding, following which they contribute to economic development by generating more employment, paying taxes and guaranteeing returns on investment.



Wiji Singh Gorwara, Chief Executive Officer of Vertu, London (left); Daniel Igali, Commissioner for Sports/representative of Douye Diri, Governor, Bayelsa State, the recipient of Outstanding Contribution to Grassroots Sports Development Award (middle), and Daniel Alabrah, Chief Press Secretary, during the 2026 Nigerian Universal Keystone Sports Awards (NUKSA), held at the Ham Polo Club in Richmond, London, on Thursday night.

Atiku Demands Probe Into ₦33.75bn FG's Cash Transfers

SAMUEL OGIDAN,
ABUJA

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar has described the Federal Government's cash-transfer programme for vulnerable Nigerians as an "audio palliative," demanding a comprehensive investigation into the disbursement of billions of naira earmarked to cushion the impact of economic hardship.

Atiku, in a statement issued on Saturday, in Abuja, by his Senior Special Assistant on Public Communication, Phrank Shai-bu, said findings attributed to the Auditor-General of the Federation had raised serious questions about the management and disbursement of funds meant for vulnerable households.

The former Vice President was reacting to reported audit findings concerning ₦33.75 billion said to have been paid to 3.29 million vulnerable households.

According to Atiku, dividing the reported amount among the beneficiaries translates

to approximately ₦10,258 per household, which he described as grossly inadequate considering the rising cost of food, transportation, electricity and other essential goods and services.

He argued that Nigerians who had been subjected to higher living costs following the removal of fuel subsidy deserved more than what he called inadequate and poorly accounted-for interventions.

"This is beyond a bookkeeping scandal. The intervention is insultingly small, yet even that small amount cannot be cleanly accounted for," Atiku said.

He accused the government of failing to provide Nigerians with a coherent account of the number of households that benefited from its intervention programme.

Atiku also questioned the disparity between previous government claims that about 15 million households were covered by the programme and subsequent claims that more than 10 million households had received over ₦600 billion.

"A ministerial announcement is not proof of payment.

A name on a social register is not a bank alert. If more than 10 million households received over ₦600 billion, government should be able to show who received the money, how much each household received and when the payments were made," he said.

The former Vice President commended the Auditor-General of the Federation, Shaakaa Chira, for raising questions over the expenditure, saying public institutions must prioritise accountability over political convenience.

Atiku cited reported audit queries involving ₦33.75 billion allegedly paid to 3.29 million beneficiaries, ₦36.74 billion in payments reportedly made without pre-payment audit and another ₦4.62 billion for which payment vouchers were allegedly not produced.

He said the figures warranted closer scrutiny because the funds were appropriated to support Nigerians facing severe economic hardship.

Atiku announced plans to constitute an independent team of financial, audit, technology

and public-accounting experts to examine available records surrounding the cash-transfer programme.

He said the team would investigate beneficiary figures, payment channels, reconciliation records, audit queries and other discrepancies surrounding the disbursements.

"I will deploy independent experts to follow the money, expose those who stole from the poor, furnish Nigerians with the evidence and ensure that everyone found culpable faces prosecution," Atiku said.

He demanded that the government publish verifiable payment records showing the identities of beneficiaries, amounts disbursed and dates of payment, arguing that any funds found to have been diverted or misappropriated should be recovered.

The former Vice President further criticised the Tinubu administration's economic policies, arguing that Nigerians needed increased purchasing power rather than what he described as temporary palliative measures.

Katsina Flags Off PBAT Door-To-Door Movement Initiative, Assures Landslide Victory

● Group Launches Grassroots Mobilisation For Tinubu's Re-Election In Ondo

**SEGUN OLANIYAN ;
BOLU-OLU ESHO**
KATSINA, AKURE

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has been assured of the state's support to secure a landslide victory in Katsina in the coming 2027 presidential election.

Governor Dikko Umaru Radda, made this declaration during the flag off and inauguration of PBAT Door-To-Door Movement structures in Katsina on Saturday.

According to him, the state remains firmly behind the All Progressive Congress (APC) and would do everything possible to support Tinubu's re-election bid.

The Governor expressed appreciation to the organisers of the initiative, especially High Chief Government Oweizide Ekpemupolo (Tompolo), the founder/Convener for choosing Katsina as the first state to launch the programme, stressing that the gesture has demonstrated the state's support for the APC-led administration and President Tinubu.

He added that Katsina has maintained a strong political relationship with Tinubu and the political family associated with the late Presidents Yar'Adua.

"Katsina State is an APC state. Every elected official in Katsina State is a member of the All Progressives Congress. I assure you that Katsina State will, by the grace of God, give President Bola Ahmed Tinubu a landslide victory in 2027. We will do everything humanly possible to support our dear President", Radda assured.

High Chief Government Oweizide Ekpemupolo Tompolo, the founder and Convener of

the initiative, in his remarks, said the relationship between President Bola Tinubu and the good people of Katsina State, cannot be over emphasized as it has been built over time on confidence and trust.

Tompolo Represented by Engineer Kesiem Tombi, urged them to go from door to door, ward to ward, community to community, market to market to inform the people about what the president did for Katsina State and ensure they vote for President Bola Tinubu in the forthcoming 2027 general election.

Similarly, in a move to ensure increase in the participation of the electorate in the forthcoming general elections, a political support group, Battalions For President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (Batts4BAT) has launched grassroots re-election campaign.

The support officially commenced its grassroots mobilisation campaign for the people to vote massively for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Temitope Iwagun, the Commander of the group, disclosed that the group's campaign strategy focuses on taking its message from the local government areas to wards, polling units and communities, with a door-to-door and house-to-house mobilisation drive.

The campaign, according to her, is aimed at securing support for the re-election of President Tinubu in 2027.

Iwagun disclosed that the campaign is sponsored by the Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo to ensure President Tinubu records higher vote count in the state in 2027 than he did in the last general elections.

FRANCIS ONOIRIBHOLO,
BENIN

Edo Decentralizes Power Sector, Issues Over Twelve Licences To Investors

The Edo State government has decentralized its power sector by enforcing the State Electricity Law under the newly operational Edo State Electricity Regulatory Commission (ESERC).

To this end, the State Ministry of Power, in its dual capacity, has issued out over twelve provisional licences to new electricity projects to generate and distribute power in the state since the commencement of the State's new regulatory framework.

The Commissioner for Power, Hon. Paul Usenbor, who disclosed this, in an interview with Sunday Independent, named GTL Power Ltd, who got a disco licence to distribute power in Edo South Senatorial District.

Others are CCETC Ogua Energy Limited – 100MW Independent Power Project (IPP) at Ologbo, Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area; Edo North Electricity Company Ltd – 200MW Independent Power Plant (IPP) covering the six Local Government Areas in Edo North Senatorial District.

Also given provisional licences, according to the commissioner, are Etin Power Limited - 2.5MW Mini-Grid Licence cutting across Ajakurama, Okomu, Nikorogha, Ugbolukanga, Gbele-

bu, Evbuwa and Iguemokhua (Orhionmwon, Ovia North East and Ovia South West LGA), and Halimatu Musa Hospital Limited – 3MW Mini-Grid Project at Okpella, Etsako East Local Government Area.

The Mid-Western Bulk Electricity Trading Company Ltd was issued a generation licence to generate 50MW in Iguigho, Ovia South West LGA, as well as others such as Victoria Power & Infrastructure Co. Ltd, Hydra Energy Solutions Ltd who want to aggressively engage in renewable energy solutions to meet the needed energy sufficiency for Edo State.

According to Usenbor, these licences demonstrate that Edo State is moving from a situation where electricity supply was largely dependent on the national grid and the existing distribution structure, towards a diversified electricity market involving generation, transmission, distribution, mini-grids and renewable energy.

Explaining the megawatts capacity the companies are expected to generate, the commissioner said they will generate between 100MW/200MW, making it one of the major new generation invest-

ments in Edo State.

"Its significance goes beyond the 100MW generation capacity because the accompanying transmission and distribution infrastructure will allow the electricity generated to be delivered to consumers.

"The Mini-Grid projects, although smaller in capacity, its importance is that it demonstrates the State's approach to decentralised electricity generation, particularly for communities and critical facilities that may not be adequately served by the conventional grid", he said.

The Commissioner also expressed concern over the present situation at Ossiomomo Power Company and noted the important role the company previously played in supplying electricity to government facilities, businesses, and communities in the state.

He however described the effect of no longer having the

services of Ossiomomo Power Company in government facilities as significant.

Usenbor recalled that Ossiomomo previously supplied electricity to residents of Edo State, SME, business owners, industries as well as several government facilities.

"The effect has been significant. Ossiomomo previously supplied electricity to residents of Edo State, SME, business owners, industries as well as several government facilities. Following the shutdown, the State Government had to reconnect some of its facilities to BEDC, while also dealing with the wider consequences of inadequate electricity supply. Reports indicate that Ossiomomo had been generating about 11MW before the shutdown.

"These concerns and the impact on businesses, industries, hospitals, artisans, households

and the overall economy draws the attention of the Government, who have indeed focused to proffer solutions to these issues.

"Every megawatt that is unavailable has an economic consequence. The Government's position is clear: we want the dispute resolved, the investment protected and electricity restored to consumers but this must be achieved in accordance with the law," Hon. Usenbor added.

On whether the government was aware that the people were unhappy with the inability of Ossiomomo Power Company to continue to provide them with electricity, the commissioner affirmed the concern of the people.

"Yes, we are aware of the concerns of the people, and we understand their frustration. Edo people want electricity. They do not want explanations; they want results.

"However, it is important to clarify that the State Government does not own or operate Ossiomomo Power Company. The Government cannot simply take over a

private company's facilities or impose a commercial settlement on parties involved in a dispute.

"What government can and is doing is to facilitate dialogue, provide regulatory support, protect lawful investments and work with security agencies and other relevant authorities to ensure that the rule of law prevails.

"Indeed, as recently as August 2026, there were reports that Ossiomomo was attempting to resume generation but encountered further disruption (by youths) at its Ologbo facility.

On how the government can intervene to bring Ossiomomo back to resume distribution of electricity to consumers, he said there are several things the government can do, including, "firstly, all parties must respect the rule of law and the sanctity of contracts and legitimate investments.

"Secondly, the State Government will continue to facilitate structured negotiations between the parties, without taking sides in a private commercial dispute."

New Twist In APM Crisis As Oyo Deputy Chairman, Four Others Drag Party To Court

RAJI ADEBAYO,
IBADAN

Five Oyo State Officers of the Allied People's Movement (APM), State Deputy Chairman, John Adejumo; Secretary, Oke Ademola; Assistant Secretary, Aderoju Bolatito; Treasurer, Babajide Musa and Assistant Treasurer, Lamidi Quadri, on Friday, approached the Federal High Court, Ibadan, seeking the removal of the National Chairman, Yusuf Mamman Dantalle, and the National Secretary, Oyadeyi Ayodele Adebayo, for currently serving a third term in office.

The Defendants in the Suit filed at the Federal High Court Ibadan are the Allied People's Movement (First Defendant); Yusuf Mamman Dantalle (APM National Chairman, 2nd Defendant); Oyadeyi Adebayo (APM National Secretary, Third Defendant) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as the Fourth Defendant.

The Plaintiffs, John Adejumo and four others in the originating Summons marked FHC / IB/ CS/ 122/2026, are suing the Allied People's Movement (APM); Yusuf Mamman Dantalle (APM National Chairman); Oyadeyi Ayodele Adebayo, (APM National Secretary); and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The Plaintiffs urged the court to remove the National Chairman, Yusuf Mamman Dantalle and the National Secretary, Oyadeyi Ayodele Adebayo, the APM National Chairman and National Secretary from Office because they had earlier served a second and final terms in office.

The plaintiffs are therefore praying the Court to "declare that

by a proper construction of Article 14(a) and 14(b) of the APM Constitution, the 2nd and 3rd Defendants who purport to be elected officers and who have served two consecutive terms of Four Years each in their respective offices is not eligible to contest or be re-elected for a third substantive term in the same office. Section 233 of the 1999 Constitution as altered, Article 14(a) and 14(b) of the APM Constitution, the tenure of office for an elected officer is four (4) years, renewable once for a maximum of two terms, and no officer who has served two terms, is eligible for re-election to the same office for a third substantive term."

The Plaintiffs are also "seeking an order of injunction restraining the 4th Defendant, (INEC) from accepting the re-election of the 2nd and 3rd Defendants as National Chairman and National Secretary of the 1st Defendant, (Allied People's Movement, (APM))."

They are asking the court to determine: "Whether having regard to the provision of Section 223 of the 1999 Constitution as altered, Article 1 and 14 of the Constitution of the Allied People's Movement, (APM) elected officers and members of the 4th Defendant are bound by and strictly required to act in accordance with the provisions of the said constitution.

"Whether a proper construction of Article 14(a) and 14(b) of the Allied People's Movement Constitution, an elected officer who has served two (2) consecutive terms of Four (4) Years each in a specific office is eligible to contest or be re-elected for a third substantive term in the same office."



Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Governor, Lagos State (sixth right, front row); his Deputy and APC Governorship candidate, Obafemi Hamzat (sixth left), and 2025/2026 Cohort of Lateef Jakande Leadership Academy (LJLA) during the LJLA graduation ceremony in Ikeja, Lagos, on Friday.

#EndBadGovernance Movement Condemns Police Attack On Pensioners, Seeks Sack Of Lagos CP, Others

EJIKEME OMENAZU
LAGOS

The #EndBadGovernance, Lagos Chapter, has condemned the reported use of teargas by officers of the Lagos State Police Command against pensioners who were carrying out peaceful protest last Monday August 31, 2026, at the Lagos House, Ikeja.

The movement called on the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Olatunji Disu, to sack the Lagos Commissioner of Police, Tijani Fatai, and all the officers involved in the attack against the protesting pensioners.

The pensioners were protesting over unpaid pension increases, wage awards, arrears and other entitlements owed to them by the Lagos State government.

In a statement made available to Sunday Independent, the group declared its solidarity with Lagos State pensioners.

The statement signed by Oloye Adegboyega-Adeniji and Hassan Taiwo Soweto for and on behalf of the Organising Committee, called on the Lagos State government to immediately issue an unreserved public apology to the protesting pensioners over

what they termed "this unprovoked and inexcusable assault".

It stated: "We also call on the government to immediately meet their demands and resolve all outstanding issues concerning pension increases, wage awards, arrears and other legitimate entitlements.

"It is outrageous that elderly Nigerians who spent decades working and serving the state could be met with such violence simply for demanding what is rightfully theirs.

"These are not criminals. They are retirees demanding the payment of their entitlements in the face of a brutal cost-of-living crisis.

"We condemn the conduct of the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, CP Tunji Fatai, and the officers under his command.

"The police are constitutionally obligated to protect citizens exercising their rights, not attack them. Nothing the Nigerian police offers as an excuse or explanation can justify this.

"We hereby demand the immediate sack of the Commissioner of Police, Tijani Fatai, and the arrest and prosecution of all police personnel involved in this condemnable assault on

the rights to freedom of assembly and in particular on elderly people who gave their prime to public service and thereby do not deserve to be treated in this manner.

"We are, however, worried about the consistent pattern of assault on civil liberties and utter disregard for citizens right on the part of the Lagos State Police Command aided and abetted by the Lagos State government.

"Indeed, what happened on Monday August 31, 2026 bore a disturbing resemblance to the police assault on peaceful protesters during the January 28 anti-eviction protest in Alausa.

"On January 28, protesters gathered peacefully to oppose the forced eviction and demolition of working-class communities.

"Rather than protect their right to peaceful assembly, the police deployed teargas and excessive force against protesters and passersby, with several people requiring medical attention.

"Protesters were arrested and their equipment and personal belongings were seized. Yesterday, pensioners demanding their unpaid entitlements suffered a similar fate.

"This is not a coincidence; it

is a pattern. Among the 36 states of the federation and the FCT, the APC-led government in Lagos has become the biggest threat to civil liberties in the country.

"From young activists protesting against anti-poor policies to elderly pensioners demanding their legitimate entitlements, the response of the Lagos state government and security apparatus increasingly appears to be: deploy the police, disperse the people and criminalize dissent. This is completely unacceptable under civil rule.

"The reality is that the right to peaceful assembly is under serious and growing threat in Lagos State. We hereby urge Amnesty International, human rights groups and people of good conscience to beam their searchlight on Lagos state in order to arrest this dangerous drift into authoritarianism in Lagos state.

"We also demand the setting up of an independent and democratically-constituted panel of inquiry to forensically investigate the conduct of the Lagos State Police Command when it comes to management of public protest and demonstrations in the state especially since August 1, 2024 till now."

NEWS

TITILOPE JOSEPH
LAGOS

Lagos Magistrates' Bill Raises Questions Over Law Officers Clause

A proposed amendment to the Lagos State Magistrates' Court Law has sparked controversy over the inclusion of state counsel in a provision dealing with the retirement of magistrates.

The development followed concerns raised by the Lagos Advocacy Group over what it described as an attempt to introduce provisions concerning Law Officers into legislation principally dealing with the Magistracy and Magistrates' Courts.

A copy of the proposed amendment cited by our correspondent shows that the bill seeks to amend the Magistrates' Court Law of Lagos State, 2015, including provisions on retirement, monetary jurisdiction and the jurisdiction of the Chief Judge.

One of the provisions attracting attention is the definition of a "Law Officer."

According to the document cited by our correspondent, the bill defines a Law Officer as "all Counsel appointed into the Lagos State Public Service".

The proposed amendment further provides that, notwithstanding the Lagos State Public Service Rules or any other law of the state, a Magistrate appointed

under Section 4 of the law and a Law Officer duly employed in the State Public Service shall cease to hold office upon attaining the age of 65 years or completing 40 years in service, whichever comes first.

It is this provision that the Lagos Advocacy Group has questioned, arguing that Magistrates and Law Officers belong to constitutionally and administratively distinct structures.

In a statement signed by its Convener, Comrade Yakubu Eleto, Esq., who is also Publicity Secretary of the Nigerian Bar Association, Epe Branch, the group said Magistrates are officers of the Judiciary, while Law Officers are public servants attached to the Ministry of Justice and operate within the Lagos State Public Service.

The group said it had no objection to efforts aimed at improving the conditions of service of Magistrates, including the proposed extension of their retirement age and years of service.

It, however, questioned the rationale for including state counsel in the same provision.

According to the group, if the government considers it necessary to extend the retirement age and years of service of Law Officers, such a policy should be

pursued through the appropriate legislative and administrative framework rather than through an amendment to legislation governing the Magistrates' Court.

The advocacy group also questioned whether extending the proposed benefit to Law Officers would create an issue of fairness when compared with other professionals working in the Lagos State Public Service.

It specifically mentioned doctors, healthcare professionals, engineers, teachers, accountants, planners, surveyors, architects and administrators, arguing that their expertise is also critical to the development and functioning of the state.

The group said: "If the argument is that Law Officers deserve an extension of their years of service from 35 to 40 years and their retirement age from 60 to 65 years, then the same question must be asked: What makes Law Officers so uniquely deserving that they should be singled out from other professionals serving the Lagos State Public Service?"

The organisation also urged the Lagos State House of Assembly to subject the proposed amendment to closer legislative scrutiny, particularly the provisions relating to Law Officers.

It called on the Governor of Lagos State and the Speaker of the House of Assembly to reconsider the provisions extending the retirement age and years of service to Law Officers through the proposed amendment.

However, the document cited by our correspondent shows that the bill contains other proposed changes that relate directly to the Magistrates' Court.

For instance, the proposed amendment to Section 28 seeks to increase the monetary limits contained in the relevant provisions from N10 million to N25 million.

The bill also proposes the deletion and replacement of Section 30 of the principal law under a new provision titled "Power to Increase Jurisdiction."

Under the proposed provision, the Chief Judge may, by notice published in the Gazette, increase the jurisdiction to be exercised under the law.

The Lagos Advocacy Group welcomed the proposed reforms relating to the Magistracy, particularly the increase in monetary jurisdiction.

It also said the proposal to extend the retirement age and years of service of Magistrates deserved consideration, citing

the importance of experience in the administration of justice.

The group, however, said reforms concerning Magistrates should be accompanied by improvements in their welfare.

It alleged that some Magistrates still do not have official vehicles and are compelled to commute themselves to work using motorcycles, tricycles, or taxis, despite having served for years.

The controversy therefore centres not on the proposed improvement of the Magistracy itself, but on the decision to define "Law Officer" broadly and place such officers within the retirement provision contained in the Magistrates' Court Law.

The bill, however, remains a proposal and its provisions could be amended, retained or withdrawn during legislative consideration.

AAC Campaign D-G Blasts Lagos Govt Over Poor Environmental Management

EJIKEME OMENAZU
LAGOS

Dr Benneth Eze, the Director-General of the African Action Congress (AAC) Campaign Committee in Lagos State, has tackled the Lagos State government over the poor management of the environment.

Speaking with Sunday Independent in Lagos at the weekend, Dr Eze, an educationist and former deputy governorship candidate of AAC in Lagos, said that the performance of the state administration is overrated.

Eze cited the poor drainage system, poor waste management, poor management of the waterways, roadsides and communities, stressing that Lagos deserves much more critical assessment than it currently receives.

The AAC chieftain stated: "I believe Lagos deserves a much more critical assessment than it currently receives."

"The APC has governed Lagos for 27 years, so it should be judged not by propaganda or iso-

lated projects, but by the overall quality of life of Lagosians.

"One area that particularly concerns me is the environment. I challenge anyone to move around Lagos and honestly assess the condition of our drainage systems, waterways, waste management, roadsides and communities. The environmental challenges are impossible to ignore."

He maintained that Lagos generates an enormous amount of waste every day, while environmental experts and residents continue to raise concerns about waste disposal, blocked drainage channels and flooding.

Eze stated: "This is not simply an aesthetic issue. It is an issue of public health, urban planning, economic productivity and human dignity."

"Lagos needs a comprehensive environmental strategy that includes efficient waste management, proper drainage, and protection of waterways, sustainable urban planning and effective enforcement of environmental regulations."

Protect People Living Around Petroleum Infrastructure, HOMEF Urges Federal, State Govts

FRANCIS ONOIRIBHOLO
BENIN

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) has called for urgent measures to protect people living in communities where petroleum activities and infrastructure are located.

The body made the request in a statement by its Executive Director, Dr Nnimmo Bassey, following reports of deaths at Okari Jetty Creeks in Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Initial reports claimed that as many as 37 people were feared dead after allegedly inhaling fumes from a petroleum product locally referred to as "Indorama fuel", and technically known as CRACK C5. There were also reports of an explosion.

According to the statement,

the Rivers State Police Command confirmed the incident and cited ongoing investigations, while the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) reported sighting four corpses and said the earlier casualty figure had not been fully verified.

Dr Bassey stated that the incident should serve as a warning about the dangers faced by communities in petroleum-producing areas.

He also observed that there are other unresolved petroleum hazards, including the wellhead fire at Oficina-Ama, Okrika, which has reportedly been burning since February 2024, and the Ororo-1 oil well fire off Awoye, Ondo State, which has been burning since May 2020.

He also cited methane bubbling reported in Bille, Rivers State, since December 2025.

report, effort to get Aniekan Umanah, the spokesman of the Akwa Ibom State government, to react to the allegation of the inadequate funding of the government ministries and other agencies in the state was unsuccessful as he neither answered a voice call nor replied to message sent to his mobile phone.

him, also assured that he is not going to be bossy to the people.

His words: "I am not going to humiliate my appointees, the elders and, even, women and the children. I will never steal Akwa Ibom money. I will never look down on anyone."

At the time of filing this



Local Government Area Coordinators of OKAY New Nigeria Movement Rallies after their recent strategic meeting held at Ogba, Lagos.

PBAT Sovereign Movement Visits Eshilokun, Seeks Recognition, Inclusion In Tinubu's Re-Election Campaign

CHIBUIKE CHUKWU
LAGOS

Members of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (PBAT) Sovereign Movement (PSM) visited Senator Eshilokun Sanni, the Senator representing Lagos Island Central and the National Director General of President Bola Ahmed Independent Campaign Group, as they officially introduce the movement, saying they came to him by virtue of his

position as the President's Independent Campaign DG.

While introducing the group, the lead National President Mrs Ayeku Olomu, said the group comprises of Christians faithful from various denominations, and it is driven by youths and young adults, who are already taking the campaign to the parents and elders of their different churches across the Nation in their various places of worship.

She stated that they are using

the strategy of One on One and My Brethren and I to reach out as they also create awareness of President Tinubu's reform, milestones, and social economic programs and policies which they say, are some of the reasons they are supporting his re-election bid.

They are also using this medium to reach out to President Tinubu whom they referred to as the father of the nation and the President's campaign council, to officially recognize and in-

clude PSM in the 2027 campaign schedule.

They said their members are drawn amongst Christian faithful across the nation.

Also in the team are Anthony Enahoro, who is the Lead National Coordinator, others in the team includes, Musa Odoshimokhe, Mike Jactor, Ejoro Johnson, Kaycee Adelanke laide Oladipupo among others. The group consists of members nation wide

Bush Promises To Empower Public Office Holders In Akwa Ibom

an exclusive interview with Sunday Independent.

Emphasising that he is not going to steal public funds, he promised that his appointees as well as ministries, departments and agencies of the state government would be adequately funded as part of measures to

enable public offices to achieve delivery in accordance with policies and programmes of the state government.

His promise of adequate funding for government's personnel and establishments seems to be a veiled reaction to unofficial talks among a

segment of Akwa Ibom population, alleging that Governor Umo Eno has been impoverishing quite a number of the state commissioners and other appointees.

Bush, who is fondly called 'The Boss' by media professionals who had tutelage under

NSIKAK EKANEM
UYO

Michael Bush, the Labour Party, LP, governorship candidate in Akwa Ibom State, has disclosed his intention to empower commissioners and other appointees if he becomes the state governor.

He made the disclosure in

NEWS

KAZEEM AWOJODU
IBADAN

Wale Oke Accepts Archbishop's Mantle After 27 Years As Bishop

The Prelate of the Calvary Grace International College of Bishops and the President of Sword of the Spirit Ministries, Bishop Francis Olubowale Oke, has been elevated to the Office of Archbishop in recognition of his more than 27 years of Episcopal service, spiritual leadership and mentorship of bishops across the world.

The honour was conferred on him by the Calvary Grace International College of Bishops, during the ongoing annual Holy Ghost Convention of the Sword of the Spirit Ministries in Ibadan, Oyo State.

This was contained in a statement issued by the Media Bureau of the Sword of the Spirit Ministries in Ibadan.

According to a copy of the press release made available to Sunday Independent, stated that Bishop Oke, who accepted the elevation at the programme attended by members of the College of Bishops and Christian leaders, described the honour as a call to greater responsibility in advancing the cause of Christ globally.

Accepting the elevation, the new Archbishop, who is the National President of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), said he had repeatedly declined the opportunity to become an archbishop since his consecration as a Bishop in 1999, preferring to concentrate on evangelism and preaching the gospel.

He, however, said he had now accepted the elevation because it was the will of God and the collective decision of the College of Bishops.

"I accept the elevation with all my heart. Since it seems good to you and to the Holy Spirit, it seems good to me also. I concur with you," Oke said.

The elevation was proclaimed by the Presbyter of the Calvary Grace International College of Bishops, South-West, Bishop Felix Adejumo, after Bishop Julius Abiola presented the statement of purpose for the elevation.

Bishop Abiola described the honoree as a father of fathers, pastor of pastors and bishop of bishops, saying his episcopal ministry had produced and strengthened other episcopal leaders.

According to him, Bishop Oke's elevation was not merely a conferment of a title but formal recognition of a ministry already tested by time, proven through service, demonstrated through spiritual fruits and manifested through the raising and strengthening of other leaders.

The College said Bishop Oke had, since his canonical consecration in 1999, demonstrated longevity, stability, maturity and faithfulness in episcopal ministry, with his influence extending beyond local congregations, denominations and national bound-

aries.

It noted that he had participated in the consecration and establishment of bishops in different parts of the world and had provided spiritual oversight and fatherly leadership to many of the more than 50 bishops associated with the Calvary Grace International College of Bishops.

The College said his ministry had become an episcopacy that has produced episcopacies, as he had identified, nurtured, mentored, affirmed, consecrated and commissioned other spiritual leaders.

It added that his new office would carry greater responsibility for spiritual fatherhood, episcopal oversight, unity, counsel, mentorship and preservation of the integrity and witness of the Church.

The College consequently charged him to strengthen the brethren, encourage bishops, defend the Christian faith, promote unity within the body of Christ, preserve godly Episcopal order and raise succeeding generations of faithful servants of God.

Bishop Oke, in his response, expressed gratitude to God and members of the College for the honour, stressing that the institution maintained strict standards in the selection and consecration of bishops.

He said prospective bishops were subjected to thorough examination by presbyters before

they could be admitted, stressing that the College was committed to admitting only people with proven integrity and impactful ministries.

"The door is still open to anyone who is interested, but the standard remains the same," he said.

Recalling his journey into the episcopacy, Bishop Oke said the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa had wanted to consecrate him as a bishop

as far back as 1988, but he avoided the elevation because of his passion for evangelism.

He also recalled that when Bishop David Oyedepo was consecrated a bishop in Kaduna, he participated in the consecration and was told by Archbishop Idahosa that he ought to have become a bishop.

According to Bishop Oke, Idahosa told him, "You are next," but he subsequently avoided opportunities for his own consecration for about a decade.

He said he eventually yielded to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and was consecrated a bishop in the United Kingdom in 1999, with the consecration repeated three months later at the Garden of Victory, Ibadan.

Oke traced the origin of the Calvary Grace International College of Bishops to his desire to mentor younger ministers, noting that his ministry began after he responded to God's call in 1976.

NFF/Eric Chelle Contract: Federal High Court Moves Case To Court 13

The Federal High Court in Abuja has reassigned the matter between Bob Etemiku, freelance journalist, and the Nigeria Football Federation, NFF, over the refusal of the NFF to make public the contract details with which Coach Eric Chelle was appointed in 2025 as Super Eagles of Nigeria Football Coach.

Sunday Independent gathered that the matter has been pending before the Federal High Court since May 2025 after a motion exparte was moved and granted in favour of the applicant on the 8th of May 2025.

Thereafter, the matter suffered a series of adjournments over the renovation of Court 2 of the Federal High Court under Justice GK Olotu.

The matter was initially filed

at Court 3 but was later withdrawn and refilled at Court 2 over the refusal of the applicant's former counsel to deliver a copy of the process to the claimant/applicant.

Subsequently, the applicant through a letter dated April 30, 2026 made an appeal to the Hon. Chief Judge of the Federal High Court for an "immediate reassignment" of the said matter over the "tight deadlines with which the applicant works as a key stakeholder in the journalism profession".

Court officials confirm that the NFF versus Bob Etemiku matter has been reassigned to Court 13, but as at the time of filing this story, a date was yet to be set for the further hearing of the matter.

NEPL/SEPLAT Energy To Train 500 Teachers In Edo

ANOLU VINCENT
OWERRI

The NNPC Exploration and Production Limited (NEPL)/Seplat Energy Joint Venture has reaffirmed commitment to strengthening quality education through sustained investment in teacher development, as it prepares to train 500 teachers across Edo State.

This was disclosed, in Benin, Edo State, by Chioma Afe, Director of External Affairs & Social Performance, Seplat Energy Plc, represented by Esther Icha, the General Manager, Corporate Social Investment & Social Performance, Seplat Energy Plc, during the 2026 Seplat Teachers Empowerment Programme (STEP), onboarding workshop.

The 2026 programme sees a significant expansion of STEP, which has, over the past six years, trained more than 2,000 teachers and education evaluators across Edo, Delta and Imo States. In this cohort, 500 teachers from Edo State will benefit from the knowledge-empowerment initiative.

Afe explained that the Seplat JV is investing heavily in the programme because education remains a critical part of Seplat Energy's contribution to nation building, noting that teachers play a vital role in shaping the future of the country.

In her words, "Seplat is very committed to education. It's critical to nation building, and everybody that is here has contributed in one way or the other to the life of one student or one child."

Continuing, Afe explained that the continued changes in education, including evolving curricula, technology and teaching approaches, make it necessary for teachers to continuously update their skills and adapt to emerging trends.

"Education is changing daily," she said. "This programme is to equip you with what you need to meet the changing trends," she added.

She pointed out that the STEP is designed to strengthen teachers both in the classroom, and their personal and professional development, by providing participants with access to facilitators, learning resources and platforms that expose them to developments in education and contemporary approaches to teaching.

Afe acknowledged the support of the JV Partner, NEPL, for consistently backing the initiative, and the Edo State Government for facilitating the participation of schools and teachers in the programme.

She encouraged the participants to make the most of the training and translate their learning into improved outcomes for their students.



Ayobami Adefioye, Programs Manager, The Engraced Ones Prayer Support and Advocacy Initiative (left); Becky Selekere, Programs Officer, Riaby Maria Autism Foundation (second left); Abdulazeez Musa, Country Director, CBM (second right), and Ijeoma Fynecontry, Legal Resources Person, Down Syndrome Foundation Nigeria, during a media parley in Abuja.

BOB MAJIRIOGHENE ETEMIKU
ABUJA

Cluster, Parents Seek Inclusion Of Persons With Intellectual Disabilities In FCT's Implementation Of Education Policies

The intellectual Disability cluster of the Right-in-Action - the Engraced Ones - Prayer Support and Advocacy Initiative, Down Syndrome Foundation of Nigeria, RIA by Maria Autism Foundation, in Abuja, has called for the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities in the implementation of educational policies in the FCT.

The cluster and parents of children with intellectual disabilities made the call during a media parley in Abuja with the theme: breaking the barriers

on the implementation of the inclusive education policies, guidelines and other legal instruments for Persons with Intellectual Disability in the FCT.

The inclusive education event concerning persons with intellectual Disability in the FCT was supported by the Finnish government.

Representatives of the Right-in-Action cluster - Ayobami Adefioye (Programmes Manager, The Engraced Ones Prayer Support and Advocacy Initiative), Becky Selekere (Programmes

Officer Riaby Maria Autism Foundation) and Ijeoma Fynecontry (Legal Resources person Down Syndrome Foundation Nigeria) all agreed that part of the reason why it is important for children with intellectual disabilities to be included in the same classrooms with regular children is that there are already in place constitutional and legal provisions that guarantee access to education and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

"In the past it was common

to campaign for separate classes for children with intellectual disabilities. That separation accounted for why many people in Nigeria don't understand the challenges that children with intellectual disabilities go through. Consequently, we need these children included in everything, we need inclusive education to be taken very seriously."

In addition to the call for inclusivity, the Cluster urged the FCT administration to increase budgetary allocation to the education sector in the FCT

by at least 50% by 2027 in line with UNESCO and AU global benchmarks of 20-26% of national budgets, more training for teachers working with children with intellectual disabilities, getting parents of intellectually disabled children represented in the policymaking process and functional national disability-in-education data system.

"We are also asking the media to tell our stories with a nuance that reflects inclusivity because people with disabilities are human first before their disability",

Earlier, country director of the Christian Blind Mission Global (CBM Global), Abdulazeez Musa urged the FCT to 'move beyond policies and ensure active implementation of inclusivity'.

A report by the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, JONAPWD, has estimated that Nigeria has about 7.8 million, while the overall population of persons with disabilities was estimated at about 22 million.

The cluster had technical support from CBM, with JONAPWD - Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities and Inclusive Friends Association - IFA as project Implementers.

SUNDAY
INDEPENDENT

THE MOST READ NEWSPAPER AMONG THE POLITICAL AND BUSINESS ELITE

Our View

NDC's Anti-Defection Panacea

It is interesting that the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC) had to announce a policy requiring its members to sign an undertaking that they would resign from the elective offices they won as NDC members if they crossed over to other political parties.

According to the National Secretary of NDC, IkennaEnekweizu, "A political party is like any other association, and every member who subscribes to the membership of the party is bound by the provisions of its constitution and decisions taken by its properly constituted authorities. Within the NDC, the decision to make people sign that affidavit is provided for in our constitution... We are trying to build a party that will last and stand the test of time - where people do not just say, 'Oh, because a particular person is contesting under this platform, let us go there, and the moment we win elections, we all leave.'"

We note that the party's scribe, curiously, stated that both Peter Obi and Rabiukwankwaso, the presidential and vice presidential candidates of NDC, are exempted from what looks like a "pre-nuptial agreement." He added that the primary targets are prospective party members who want to be legislators, the usual culprits that routinely decamp from their political parties on the floor of legislative chambers.

Indeed, legislators are the guiltiest of party switching, even though many elected state governors are

also known to have crossed the carpet without any qualms.

Sections 68(1)(g) and 109(1)(g) of the Nigerian Constitution respectively provide that a federal and state legislator "shall vacate his seat in the House of which he is a member if... he becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that House was elected:

"Provided that his membership of the latter political party is not as a result of a division in the political party of which he was previously a member or of a merger of two or more political parties or factions by one of which he was previously sponsored."

Sections 65, 106, 131 and 177 of the Constitution insist that a person shall be qualified for election to the office of Federal legislator, state legislator, President or Governor "if he is a member of a political party and is sponsored by that political party."

Also, Section 77(1,2,4,5,6) of the Electoral Act, 2026 requires that "A political party registered under this Act shall... maintain a digital register of its members... and shall make such register available to the (Independent National Electoral) Commission not later than 21 days before the date fixed for the party primaries, congresses or convention..."

"(And) only members whose names are contained in the register shall be eligible to vote and be voted for in the party primaries, con-

gresses, and conventions... (and) a party shall not use any other register for party primaries, congresses, and conventions except the register submitted to the Commission."

These constitutional and Electoral Act provisions underscore the importance of political parties in Nigeria. However, given the gale of defections and political prostitution that characterize every election cycle, are there political parties, properly so called, in the country?

Regrettably, for Nigeria's contemporary political parties, the answer is in the negative. As we have had cause to observe in the past, what we have currently as political parties appear to be amorphous collections of strange bedfellows, with only 'ideology' to capture power and its benefits at all costs. There is hardly anything to choose between the ruling All Progressives Congress and the opposition Peoples Democratic Party, Africa Democratic Congress, Labour Party, New Nigeria People's Party and of course, Nigeria Democratic Congress.

The distinguishing characteristics of a political party include ideology, manifesto, leadership, membership goals and objectives. Unfortunately, there is practically nothing to choose among the aforementioned parties. This has led to the inescapable conclusion that the current parties in Nigeria are mere special-purpose vehicles for elections and nothing more. This, in turn, reflects the level of degen-

eration in the Nigerian society.

In the days of yore, we had ideology-based political parties such as the Action Group (AG), National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), and Northern Peoples Congress (NPC). While not unheard of, cases of crossing the floor were few and far between. For instance, following the motion on self-government tabled by Anthony Enahoro of Action Group in the House Representatives in 1953, the central Council of Ministers decided by a majority that Enahoro's motion should be opposed while the amendment proposed by Ahmadu Bello of Northern Peoples Congress should be supported. The four AG ministers in the central Council of Ministers resigned in order to be able to vote on the motion along the party line!

Such was the level of sanctity accorded to party ideology and the premium placed on discipline and principle in the past. It is difficult to recall in contemporary Nigerian politics such demonstration of party fidelity, especially when it touches on having to abdicate "juicy positions"!

While the intentions of NDC may appear noble, especially in the light of political prostitution across party lines, its novel idea may be superfluous or an overreach, since the Nigerian Constitution has adequate provisions with regards to defection of legislators. In addition, given the political trajectories of its leading aspirants, the NDC should rather lead by example.

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"Industrialisation is not just about factories, it is about creating a national ecosystem of productivity where skilled labour, reliable infrastructure, access to finance, and supportive policies work together." — Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG)

For any country to enjoy sustainable economic growth the factors that facilitate as well as boost industrial production must be firmly put in place. These include availability of high quality raw materials, deployment of advanced technology, along with top-notch skilled labour. Others are strong and stable infrastructure under a safe and secure environment. But sadly, Nigeria is currently grappling with most of these critical issues.

Yet, these have become more compelling for a country such as Nigeria with a poverty rate estimated at approximately 63% (representing about 140 million people), youth joblessness and underemployment reach over 50% according to civil society reports, and a Human Development Index (HDI) which stands at 0.548 to 0.560, placing it in the low human development category in the world.

In fact, the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) has consistently highlighted severe structural and macroeco-

omic hurdles that cumulatively stifle industrial growth and threaten factory survival in the country.

The first of such complaints, of course, is the severe infrastructure deficit of inadequate and unreliable electricity supply. This forces several factories to rely heavily on expensive alternative energy. This, along with poor operational conditions along major industrial hubs and corridors such as Agbara, Ota, and Sagamu and congested port logistics, further worsens operational and transport expenses.

Next in the list of complaints by MAN is that of multiple taxation, combined with excessive regulation: it has been discovered for years that most of the large scale manufacturers in Nigeria have faced persistent harassment from multiple tax collectors and overlapping regulatory agencies. MAN has specially noted that a rash of new tax laws and reform acts have yet to eliminate arbitrary levies, compliance costs, and aggressive revenue-driven enforcement by both the federal and state governments.

Further to these are the debilitating issues of high cost and scarcity of credit facilities. With commercial lending rates rising above 35% as driven by high monetary policy rates, these have priced most manufacturers out of affordable bank loans. That perhaps, explains why MAN has reported sharp contractions, specially in commercial credit allocated to the industrial sector.

And as for Foreign Exchange (FX) volatility, the unstable exchange rates and difficulties in sourcing reliable foreign exchange make it expensive and complicated to import essential raw materials, spare parts, and industrial machinery.

Added to all of these are rising tariffs

and port charges: The frequent upward adjustments, especially in customs duties, import levies, and port terminal tariffs, most of which are implemented without adequate stakeholder engagement, further erode profit margins and domestic market competitiveness.

As for insecurity, it has adversely affected the production of raw food items in states such as Benue, Plateau, Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and Kwara. It has similarly, devastated mining of minerals across different states of the country. Persistent insurgency, banditry, and general insecurity in parts of the country have compelled a significant percentage of manufacturing plants to shut down operations completely due to broken supply chains. These important issues have contributed to the exodus of some multinational corporations from Nigeria.

For instance, over the last 10 years, more than 25 major international and multinational companies have completely exited, ended physical manufacturing. Some have significantly scaled down their direct on-ground operations in Nigeria. While smaller firms and local manufacturing entities add up to hundreds of closures, the departure of prominent blue-chip multinationals has accelerated sharply—particularly between 2023 and 2024. But what were their reasons for the exit?

That is the million,- naira question. The answers according to them were predicated on foreign exchange scarcity, currency devaluation, high operational costs, and of course, unreliable power supply. Painfully, these challenges remain with us till this day.

Notable amongst the international companies that left our shores are GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Consumer Ni-

geria. It ended over 50 years of direct operations in 2023.

Also, Procter & Gamble (P&G) shut down its physical manufacturing operations in late 2023, converting Nigeria into an import-only market. As for Unilever Nigeria it stopped local manufacturing of its main home care and skin-cleansing categories with popular brands such as Omo and Sunlight) in 2023. So, what is the best way forward?

According to experts on the economy, we have to prioritize the building of strong infrastructure, beginning with stable electric power supply, that of potable water and good access roads. As an Energy and Industrialization Commentary rightly stated: "Nigeria will never witness an industrial revolution until she fixes her power sector. Electricity is the fuel that drives factories, startups, agriculture, and modern economies."

For the federal government's policy to coordinate industrial, trade, and investment strategies, which targets a 15% reduction in trade costs, and boost export volumes by 30% by 2028, to succeed there should be focus on modernizing ports, upgrading roads, and implementing the National Single Window platform to streamline trade and lower business overhead.

There should also be sustained support for MSMEs by prioritizing micro, small, and medium enterprises—which account for over 80% of jobs—through mandatory procurement policies for local goods and targeted financing access. Initiatives such as expanding domestic steel production capacity toward 10 million metric tonnes annually to support import substitution and reduce foreign exchange pressure are of necessity.

The Unsung Lifeline In Nigeria's Food Inflation Crisis

ELVIS EROMOSELE

Ikeja. A roadside stall. The evening air thick with the aroma of sizzling suya, steaming amala, and pepper soup. I sat there, one of those occasional roadside meals that still feel like a small act of normalcy in a country where the cost of living has rewritten daily life. Then a well-dressed woman approached the seller. She explained that she was expecting a transfer that had not yet landed. She would pay as soon as it came in.

For a moment I thought the seller would refuse. Instead, without blinking, she sold and packed the food for the woman to take away. I was aghast. "Do you know her?" I asked. "She comes here on occasion," the seller replied simply.

That small act of trust, repeated across countless street corners, markets, and junctions in Lagos and beyond, captures something profound about this moment in Nigeria. Grocery stores and formal food sellers have become lifelines for many families. But the real MVPs of this season are the street food sellers. These are the women and men who stretch ingredients, keep prices affordable, and extend credit quietly when the bank alert refuses to come.

Today, food inflation remains stubbornly high. The National Bureau of Statistics reveals that food inflation stood at 20.31 per cent year-on-year in July 2026, up from 17.52 per cent in June. This is the highest reading in about ten months. Month-on-month, it accelerated to 5.56 per cent. Headline inflation eased slightly to 15.43 per cent, but the divergence is telling: overall prices are moderating while the cost of the food that dominates household budgets continues to climb. Rice, tomatoes, garri,

plantain, beef, eggs, onions, pepper and other staples drove the latest rise.

This crisis is not new. The difference now is that multiple forces have converged. Think rising insecurity in key farming regions; climate shocks (floods/drought) and the perennial massive post-harvest losses. To these, add high fuel costs which feed directly into transport and logistics; imported inputs (fertiliser, seeds, machinery, agro-chemicals) which are priced in foreign currency; and structural low productivity, rain-fed farming with limited mechanisation. Together, it becomes obvious why supply struggles to keep pace with demand and population growth.

The government has not been idle. The Tinubu administration granted temporary import duty and levy waivers on selected staples and inputs to ease

immediate supply gaps. Thousands of tractors and equipment have been rolled out under the Renewed Hope Agricultural Mechanisation Programme. Farm input support schemes, subsidised seeds and fertiliser, and efforts to recapitalise the Bank of Agriculture aim to reach smallholders.

Yet the recent uptick shows the limits of current interventions. Breaking the cycle of food inflation requires a coordinated approach that treats food inflation as both a supply and a structural problem. Monetary policy alone cannot grow more tomatoes or secure a farm in Zamfara. The government must consider other options.

One, make farming safe again. This means prioritising security in major food-producing local government areas through community-based intelligence, better coordination between security agencies and local leadership, and targeted protection of farming communities and transport corridors. Without this, other investments leak away.

Two, scale climate-smart and year-round production. Expand solar-powered and other decentralised irrigation to reduce dependence on rainfall. Promote drought- and flood-tolerant seed varieties, soil health practices and weather-indexed insurance. Indeed, it is time to move dry-season farming from pilot to national programme.

In addition, everything possible must be done to slash post-harvest losses. Begin by investing aggressively in rural storage (including airtight silos and community warehouses), processing facilities near production zones, and rural road rehabilitation. Every tonne saved is a tonne that does not need to be imported or priced higher due to scarcity.

Moreover, efforts must be expended to strengthen value chains and reduce intermediary costs. Among other things, improve market information systems, reduce multiple taxation and unofficial levies on food transport, and support agro-processing so more value is retained domestically. In addition, there has to be backward integration incentives for food manufacturers to create reliable demand for farmers.

Furthermore, targeted social protection is indispensable. So, while structural reforms take root, the government must maintain well-targeted cash transfers, food banks or school feeding that protect the most vulnerable without creating permanent dependency. Since street food sellers themselves form an informal safety net, policies that enable rather than harass them (hygiene support, access to finance, secure trading spaces) multiply impact. KAI, take note!

These steps are not new ideas. Many appear in existing government plans and expert recommendations. The difference between plans and results lies in execution, sequencing, security, and sustained political will across election cycles.

The woman in Ikeja who received her meal on trust is not an isolated case. Across Nigeria, street food sellers absorb delayed payments, adjust portions, and keep feeding families when formal systems strain. They are the visible face of resilience. But resilience has limits. Nigerians should not have to rely indefinitely on the goodwill of roadside vendors to eat.

Eromosele, a corporate communications expert and sustainability advocate, writes via elviseroms@gmail.com

The woman in Ikeja who received her meal on trust is not an isolated case. Across Nigeria, street food sellers absorb delayed payments, adjust portions, and keep feeding families when formal systems strain

Jumoke Uwagba: It's Wrong For Christians To Say Politics Is Dirty Game

EJIKEME OMENAZU

For many Christians, politics and governance remain uncomfortable territories, often dismissed as too corrupt or 'worldly' for people of faith. Mrs. Jumoke Uwagba, a Bible scholar disagrees.

She believes Christians must stop calling politics a dirty game and begin to see governance as a sphere where their faith, values and competence should make a difference.

This conviction is at the heart of her recently released four-volume series: 'Gods and Politics: Gods in Governance' (Book 1); 'Gods and Politics: The Systems of Power and the Responsibility of the Gods' (Book 2); 'Gods and Politics: From Governance to Legacy' (Book 3), and 'God and Government' (Book 4).

The books explore the relationship between Christian faith, leadership, politics, governance and nation-building. Uwagba is well positioned to address these issues.

Born into a Christian family with several ministers, pastors, deacons and ministry leaders, she has served in various leadership capacities in Foursquare, NIFES and presently Fountain of Truth Assembly, FOTA.

She holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Economics and Business Administration, respectively, from Lagos State University. She also studied Ministry at Patmos Bible School of Faith and Theology at Berean Bible College, where she served voluntarily as Registrar and later as a Lecturer.

Her experience across academia, ministry and leadership gives her a distinctive perspective on the relationship between the Church and society. Speaking with Sunday Independent, she explains why Christians should engage politics, the lessons they can learn from biblical leaders, the role of Bible schools in preparing leaders, the place of women in governance, and what Nigeria needs from the next generation of Christian leaders.

Mrs. Uwagba, who spoke on her burden or conviction that led you to write this four-volume series on 'God and Governance', she said: "The burden grew gradually from years of observing the relationship between faith, leadership, power and society.

"Even as a child, I had a basic understanding that politics was simply about participation in the affairs of one's community and one's state. So, when I heard Christians repeatedly say, 'Politics is a dirty game', something in me questioned that conclusion. I remember asking myself, even at that young age, whether politics itself was really the problem.

Over the years, that question became a burden. I watched Christians increasingly withdraw



Uwagba

from politics and governance because of the belief that these were dirty or worldly spaces.

"Yet, I kept asking: If Christians who claim to carry godly values withdraw from the systems that shape people's lives, who will influence those systems? I came to see that withdrawal was not neutrality. It had consequences. "I also began to understand that we had created an unnecessary divide between the spiritual and the so-called secular. We are comfortable talking about God in church, but sometimes uncomfortable asking how godly principles should influence leadership, justice, institutions, education, economic life and national development."

According to her, that burden became a call as she eventually realised that the Church cannot continue to pray about a society it refuses to understand and influence. As she puts it, "That became one of the driving convictions behind the series." Thus, across the four books, one recurring message is that Christians should engage society rather than withdraw from it.

However, many believers still see politics and governance as 'worldly'. On this Uwagba, stated: "I think many Christians have inherited a narrow understanding of spirituality. We have sometimes confined the things of God to prayer, preaching, evangelism and activities within the Church.

"But God's concern is much broader. He is concerned about justice, leadership, honesty, stewardship, families, education, communities and nations.

"Look at the biblical examples. Joseph served in government. Daniel served in Babylon. Nehemiah was involved in administration and national rebuilding. Esther exercised influence at a critical moment, and Deborah provided leadership in her generation. None of these people ceased to be people of faith because they engaged society. The problem is that many believers have

confused engagement with compromise.

"Yes, politics can be corrupt. But abandoning a difficult system does not make that system better. In fact, the absence of responsible people can create more room for irresponsible people. I am not saying every Christian must become a politician. That is not the message.

"The message is that Christian faith has implications beyond private religious life. We should be asking: How can the values we profess influence the spaces in which God has given us responsibility?

"How much of what happens in your country, Nigeria, has influenced this book? Are you happy with Nigerian Christians in politics? Are they doing well?

"Nigeria has influenced these books tremendously. You cannot observe Nigeria's enormous potential alongside our struggles with leadership, corruption, insecurity, poverty, institutional weaknesses and social inequality without asking serious questions. Nigeria is deeply religious, and Christianity has a very significant presence. "So, we must honestly ask: Why has the presence of so many Christians not always translated into the national transformation we desire? That question is not intended to condemn Christians. It is intended to challenge us."

According to her, she is encouraged by some Christians in politics, as there are people serving sincerely, courageously and sacrificially. But, she expressed concern about others.

She said: "Christian identity does not automatically guarantee good governance. Being a churchgoer is not the same thing as possessing political competence. Quoting Scripture is not the same thing as understanding public policy. Having a good heart is not a substitute for knowledge, preparation and administrative ability.

"If Christians enter public office, I believe we should demonstrate integrity, competence, courage, justice, accountability and genuine service. There are also fundamental issues that government must protect: freedom of religion and conscience, the right to life and security, justice, equality before the law and the dignity of every citizen."

She maintained that the real question is not: How many Christians are in politics? She said the more important question is: What are they doing with the influence they have for the poor showing of pastors in Nigeria, if the daily criticisms of pastors are anything to go by?

Uwagba maintained: "I think we need to approach this question carefully and fairly. Bible schools have played, and continue to play, an important role in preparing men and women for Christian ministry. Many institutions are doing excellent work, and we should not dismiss theo-

logical education because of the failures of some individuals.

"However, every educational system must periodically ask whether it is adequately preparing its students for the realities they will face. My concern is that many Bible-school curricula have historically placed much greater emphasis on theology and ministry than on leadership, governance, public responsibility and the ethical management of influence.

"Theological education should not merely produce people who can preach sermons, explain doctrines and perform religious duties. It should also help produce people of character who can engage in governance.

"We need ministers who understand accountability. We need leaders who understand financial stewardship. We need pastors who understand the dangers of power. We need ministers who know how to handle people without manipulating them.

"We need leaders who can distinguish genuine spiritual authority from personal ambition. We need to teach that leadership is service, not entitlement. But should all the blame be placed on Bible schools? Certainly not. A Bible school can teach integrity, but it cannot force a graduate to live with integrity.

"A seminary can teach servant leadership, but it cannot make someone humble. The Church, mentoring relationships, family values, society and the personal choices of individual leaders all play important roles.

"Nevertheless, Bible schools should continue to examine themselves. Are we teaching leadership as seriously as we teach theology? Are we helping students understand money, power, accountability and ethics? Are we preparing them for the temptations that accompany influence? These are important questions. The Church does not only need gifted ministers; it needs formed leaders."

Advice To Intending Christian Politicians

According to her, before a Christian enters into politics, her first advice is: "Do not enter politics merely because you want power. Power is attractive, but power also reveals people. Before entering politics, ask yourself: What problem do I want to solve? Do I understand the people I want to serve? Do I understand policy, budgeting, legislation and how government works?"

"Good intentions alone are not enough. Christians entering politics should prepare spiritually, intellectually and professionally. Politics will test your convictions through pressure, compromise and opportunities to take shortcuts. The real question is: What will remain of your convictions when the pressure becomes intense?"

Adewale-Martins Charges Newly Ordained Priests To Shun Unchastity, Avarice

As the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos recently ordained six priests and 14 deacons, the Archbishop, His Grace, Alfred Adewale-Martins, has enjoined them, as ministers of Christ, to look upon all unchastity and avarice as a worship of false gods, since no man can serve two masters at the same time.

At the altar of Catholic Church of the Ascension, Airport Road, Ikeja, he sounded it to them that like the men the Apostles chose for works of charity, they should be of good reputation filled with wisdom.

With the gospel reading taken from Mark 1:14-20 and Isaiah 6:6-8, he asked the ordainands should show before God and mankind that they are above every suspicion of blame, true minis-

ters of Christ and firmly rooted in faith.

"Hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience, express in action what you proclaim by word of mouth. Then the people of Christ, brought to life by the spirit, will be an offering God accepts.

"By your own free choice, you seek to enter the order of Diaconate. You shall exercise this ministry in the celibate state, for celibacy is both a sign and a motive of pastoral charity, and a special source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world. By your life and character, you will give witness to your brothers and sisters in faith that God must be loved above all else, and that is whom you serve in others."

To the congregation, he advised that they Vote must not become so despondent as to sur-

render their lives to those who don't have their interests at heart.

As Christians, he added, they must interrogate those who aspire to power and with the understanding that veto power rests with the people, they must strive to sustain democracy by exercising their civic responsibility during electioneering periods.

On behalf of the Archdiocese, he thanked the various groups and individuals who have been sponsoring and supporting them, it means a lot, he said.

Rev John Aniagwu in his vote of thanks, appreciated all who made it to the event as well as the Archbishop whose good leadership he said has been seeing them through.



Adewale-Martins

Believing

Nigerian Leaders Must Understand That Power Isn't Opportunity For Personal Enrichment – Rev Otuomachi

Rev Dr Chi Prayerson Otuomachi is the Lead Pastor, Life Embassy, a.k.a. Gospel of Redemption, celebrated its 10th anniversary last Sunday. He spoke with **EJIKEME OMENAZU** on far reaching issues, including the state of nation, 2027 elections, State Police, challenges facing young men in ministry, among others. Except:

Can you introduce yourself briefly to our readers?

I am a servant of God, a teacher of His Word, and a passionate advocate for the advancement of God's Kingdom and the transformation of lives. My passion is to see people discover their identity and purpose in Christ, grow spiritually, and become instruments of positive transformation in their families, communities, and nation.

Over the years, God has given me the privilege of serving His people, raising leaders, and contributing my little part to the expansion of His Kingdom. I consider ministry not merely a position, but a divine responsibility and a privilege to serve God and humanity.

Congratulations on Life Embassy's 10th anniversary. You recently received an award from Fabulous International Magazine for your excellent contributions to the Kingdom of God. How do you feel about the award?

First, I give all the glory to God, because every good thing accomplished through my life and ministry is by His grace. I am deeply humbled and sincerely grateful for this recognition from Fabulous International Magazine. I see it as a call to greater commitment, greater service, and greater impact. I dedicate the honour to God. I appreciate everyone who has supported and believed in the vision of Life Embassy over these ten years.

What informed the theme of the anniversary, 'Glory Realm'?

The theme, 'Glory Realm' came from our desire to celebrate not simply 10 years of existence, but 10 years of God's manifest presence and faithfulness. For us, glory speaks of the tangible manifestation of God's presence, power, beauty, and excellence. We believe that God is calling His Church into a deeper dimension of intimacy with Him, where believers do not merely talk about His glory but become carriers and expressions of that glory.

'Glory Realm' therefore represents our desire to move deeper in God, deeper in His presence, deeper in His Word, and deeper in Kingdom impact. It is both a celebration of where God has brought us and a prophetic declaration concerning where He is taking us.

How has it been in the last 10 years? How would you describe the journey so far?

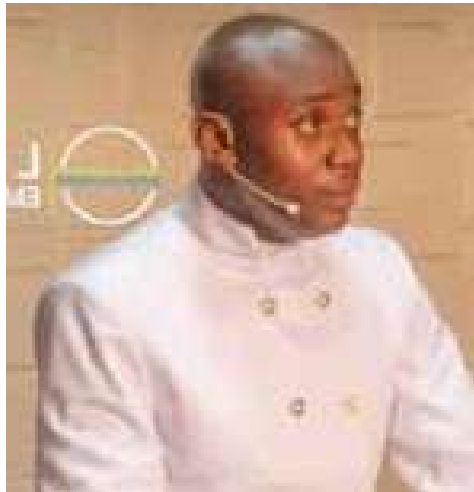
The journey has been a combination of faith, sacrifice, lessons, challenges, victories, and undeniable divine intervention. The last 10 years have taught me that ministry is not built overnight. There have been seasons when we celebrated great victories, and there were also seasons when we had to trust God deeply and keep moving despite difficulties. Looking back, I can say that God's faithfulness has been greater than our challenges. We have seen lives transformed, people discover purpose, families strengthened, and believers grow in their relationship with God.

If I were to summarise the journey in one sentence, I would say: "It has been ten years of God's faithfulness, human obedience, and continuous growth."

When you were called by God at an early age, how did you feel?

Being called by God at an early age is both a privilege and a great responsibility. At the beginning, you may not fully understand the weight of the assignment, but as you grow, you begin to appreciate that God's calling requires discipline, obedience, character, and sacrifice.

Personally, I have always considered the call an honour. It has shaped my choices, my priorities, and my understanding of life. The earlier you discover God's purpose for your life, the earlier you can begin to invest your life in



Otuomachi

something greater than yourself.

Did you experience discouragement or encouragement early in your ministry? How did you cope?

Yes, like anyone serving God, there were moments of discouragement. Ministry involves dealing with people, expectations, challenges, limited resources, and sometimes misunderstanding. But there were also many moments of encouragement when I saw God change lives and when people testified of what God was doing through the ministry.

What helped me was learning to keep my eyes on the One who called me rather than on people's opinions. I constantly remind myself that if God gave the assignment, He will also give the grace to fulfil it. Prayer, the Word of God, wise counsel, and remembering past testimonies have been important sources of strength.

How would you describe the current state of our nation before God?

Nigeria is a nation with enormous potential, but we are also facing serious spiritual, moral, economic, and security challenges. From a spiritual standpoint, I believe this is a season the Church must examine itself while also interceding for the nation.

We cannot blame everything on government or politics. There is a need for repentance, righteousness, integrity, justice, compassion, and a renewed fear of God. At the same time, I refuse to look at Nigeria only through the lens of its problems. I believe God has a purpose for this nation, and the Church has a major role to play in that purpose.

In view of the increasing wave of Boko Haram attacks, kidnapping and terrorist incursions, do

Our leaders must understand that power is not an opportunity for personal enrichment; it is an opportunity to serve. Business leaders should pursue profit without sacrificing integrity, while political leaders should pursue the welfare of the people rather than personal interests

you think establishment of State Police will curb insurgency?

State Police could potentially strengthen local security because people within a community often understand its security realities better and may be able to respond more quickly to emerging threats.

However, State Police alone will not solve Nigeria's insecurity. It must come with strong oversight, professional training, adequate funding, intelligence sharing, respect for human rights, and safeguards against political abuse.

Security should never become a political weapon. What Nigeria needs is a coordinated security architecture where federal, state, and community-level institutions work together effectively to protect lives and property.

How best should the Body of Christ handle the situation in Nigeria?

The Church must pray, but prayer must be accompanied by righteous action. 2 Chronicles 7:14 gives us a powerful principle of humility, repentance, prayer, and seeking God. We should therefore intensify intercession for Nigeria, but we must also teach integrity, responsible citizenship, justice, compassion, and accountability. The Church should raise people of character who will influence politics, business, education, media, technology, and every sphere of society.

We must not only pray for Nigeria to change; we must raise Nigerians who will become agents of that change.

What's your church's attitude towards the growing attacks on churches nationwide? Do you support foreign intervention?

Our attitude is first and foremost one of prayer, vigilance, compassion for victims, and responsible engagement with the authorities. The Church must never respond to violence with hatred or vengeance. At the same time, protecting innocent lives is a serious responsibility, and government must do everything within the law to protect citizens and religious communities.

Regarding foreign intervention, I believe Nigeria should welcome legitimate international cooperation, intelligence sharing, humanitarian assistance, and technical support where necessary. However, such cooperation should respect Nigeria's sovereignty and ultimately strengthen our own capacity to secure the nation.

What are the root of spiritual and moral issues fueling poverty, insecurity, and corruption today?

At the root of many of these problems are greed, dishonesty, injustice, lack of accountability, moral compromise, and the loss of the fear of God. However, we must be careful not to reduce complex national problems to spirituality alone. Poverty and insecurity also have economic, institutional, educational, political, and social dimensions.

The spiritual dimension is that when people lose a sense of accountability before God, corruption can become normal. Therefore, the Church must raise people whose private character is consistent with their public confession of faith.

What biblical principles should guide political and business leaders right now?

Integrity, justice, servant leadership, accountability, compassion, diligence, and stewardship. The Bible teaches that leadership is ultimately stewardship. Leaders are entrusted with people, resources, and opportunities, and they will be accountable for how they use them.

Our leaders must understand that power is

not an opportunity for personal enrichment; it is an opportunity to serve. Business leaders should pursue profit without sacrificing integrity, while political leaders should pursue the welfare of the people rather than personal interests.

Many youths feel hopeless and are seeking to leave the country. What word of counsel do you have for them?

My message to young Nigerians is: do not allow the difficulties around you to convince you that your future is finished. If you have an opportunity to travel abroad for legitimate reasons, there is nothing wrong with seeking opportunities. But, do not leave with a mentality of hopelessness. Wherever you find yourself, carry your values, your faith, your skills, and your purpose with you.

At the same time, Nigeria needs young people who will stay, build, innovate, create businesses, serve with integrity, and become part of the solution. Your present environment may influence you, but it does not have to define your destiny. Seek God, develop yourself, acquire valuable skills, and refuse to surrender your future to despair.

If you were to deliver one prophetic word to the nation today, what would it be?

My prophetic word to Nigeria is: "Do not lose hope; your story is not over." I believe we are in a season where God is exposing what must be corrected, awakening the conscience of a generation, and raising people who will carry righteousness and excellence into positions of influence.

There will be challenges, but I believe Nigeria's greatest days are not behind her. My prayer is that righteousness will rise, competent leadership will emerge, and a new generation will refuse to normalize corruption, violence, and injustice. I believe Nigeria will yet fulfil her God-given potential.

With the ruling party controlling more than 31 states, do you think Nigeria is sliding towards a one-party state?

The concentration of political power in one party is something Nigerians should watch carefully because a healthy democracy requires strong institutions, credible opposition, accountability, and genuine political competition.

However, the presence of one dominant party does not automatically mean Nigeria has become a one-party state. What matters is whether citizens are still able to freely organize, participate, contest elections, express their views, and choose their leaders.

Rather than focusing only on which party controls the most states, we should strengthen democratic institutions so that political power remains accountable to the people.

What do you think the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should do to ensure free and fair elections?

INEC must continue to strengthen transparency, independence, professionalism, and public confidence in the electoral process. There should be clear and consistent enforcement of electoral laws, timely publication of election information, effective use of technology, proper training of electoral officials, and transparent handling of complaints and results.

But, INEC cannot do it alone. Political parties, security agencies, candidates, the judiciary, civil society, religious leaders, and voters all have responsibilities. Free and fair elections are not only an INEC responsibility; they are a national responsibility.

Believing

Apostle Johnson: Cleric With Burden To Change African Minds Through Unchained Africa Movement

EJIKEME OMENAZU

Apostle Oladele Johnson, the Founder and General Overseer of Jesus Liberation Ministries (JLM), Lagos, and also Founder, Unchain Africa Movement, addressed select Christian journalists to unfold his new movement, which he says is meant to address the mental and psychological chains that continue to limit Africa's capacity to realise its enormous potential.

Listening to him, one could observe the enthusiasm always seen in people with new ideas and things that are new and unique.

The vision for Unchain Africa

According to Apostle Johnson, the vision emerged from what he described as a divine assignment that became clearer to him after he turned 65 in 2025. He said the movement is intended to address the psychological dimension of Africa's liberation, arguing that political and economic emancipation cannot be complete without mental emancipation.

Beyond Political Independence

For the founder, the central question is not simply whether African countries are politically independent, but whether Africans have become sufficiently confident in their identity, history, culture, intellectual capacity and ability to determine their own future.

Unchain Africa therefore, he says, seeks to broaden the conversation about African development beyond government policies and economic statistics.

Its philosophy, he explains, is that the continent's challenges are interconnected. Poverty, corruption, poor governance, youth unemployment, abuse, exploitation, cultural erosion, weak institutions and social inequality cannot be sustainably addressed without also confronting attitudes, values



Johnson

and perceptions that perpetuate them.

The movement, he reveals, consequently proposes a comprehensive programme of awareness, enlightenment, education, advocacy, research, documentation, media engagement, leadership development, cultural renewal and strategic partnerships.

According to its proposal, Unchain Africa's overarching vision is to see an Africa where every person lives with dignity, freedom, responsibility, justice and hope, while Africans collectively reclaim ownership of their history, identity, resources and future.

Restoring African Confidence

A major concern behind the movement is what Johnson describes as a lingering mentality of inferiority and dependency.

In his recent public comments, he has argued that Africans must overcome the tendency to regard themselves, their culture and their achievements as inferior to those of other parts of the world. He has particularly emphasised the need for Africans to rediscover their history and recognise the continent's contribution to human civilisation.

That argument forms one of the philosophical foundations of Unchain Africa. The movement, he stresses, believes that a people who do not understand their history may struggle to define their future.

"It therefore intends to promote African history, indigenous knowledge, cultural heritage, literature, languages, arts and positive traditional values, while simultaneously encouraging science, innovation, entrepreneurship and modern education," he explains.

A Movement, Not Just an Organisation

According to him, Unchain Africa is designed to operate as a movement capable of engaging people across national, ethnic, religious, professional and institutional boundaries.

He maintains that its proposed programmes will target young people, students, educators, families, community leaders, religious institutions, traditional institutions, academics, civil society organisations, government agencies, corporate organisations and international development partners.

Youth Priority To Youth Engagement

The movement, he states, proposes the establishment of an Unchain Africa Youth Ambassadors programme through which young Africans can be trained and mobilised around responsible citizenship, cultural confidence, leadership, entrepreneurship, education, digital responsibility, child protection and community service.

He says: "The objective is to move young people from being passive observers of Africa's problems to becoming active participants in solving them."

Education as Tool of Liberation

Another major component of the initiative is education.

According to Apostle Johnson, Unchain Africa proposes engagement with schools, universities, polytech-

tics, Colleges of Education and other institutions to promote educational content capable of developing responsible, confident and socially conscious African citizens.

He reveals: "The proposed areas include African history, civic responsibility, ethics, leadership, human dignity, child protection, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, environmental responsibility, peace building and conflict resolution."

"The movement also proposes partnerships with curriculum developers and educational authorities to explore appropriate ways of strengthening African-centred content within existing educational frameworks."

The Role of the Church

Apostle Johnson argues that although Unchain Africa is not presented merely as a church programme, the Christian faith is central to its founder's understanding of the movement.

However, Johnson repeatedly argues that the Church has a major responsibility in Africa's moral and mental emancipation.

He described the Church as having a significant role in Africa's liberation and argued that religious institutions must become more responsive to the social and intellectual challenges confronting the continent.

Consequently, the movement intends to work with churches, mosques, interfaith organisations and other faith-based institutions.

The objective, according to the proposal, is to encourage religious institutions to contribute to moral education, human dignity, peace building, social responsibility, community development and protection of vulnerable people.

Child Protection and Human Dignity

Human dignity is another important pillar of the initiative. Unchain Africa, he says, proposes programmes addressing child abuse, exploitation,

trafficking, violence and other threats to vulnerable persons.

Hear him: "It also intends to promote safeguarding standards and responsible practices among participating institutions."

"The movement's broader philosophy is that Africa cannot claim meaningful development if its most vulnerable citizens continue to experience abuse, exploitation and exclusion."

Research, Documentation and CUAM

Apostle Johnson informs that to provide intellectual and institutional support for the movement, Unchain Africa proposes the establishment of the Centre for Unchain Africa Movement (CUAM).

He says: "CUAM is envisaged as the research, training, documentation, policy and programme development hub of the movement. Among its proposed functions are research into African social and developmental challenges, leadership training, documentation of African history and oral traditions, production of documentaries and establishment of an African heritage library."

"It is also expected to support policy research and generate reports and publications capable of contributing to public debate."

"The proposed centre could eventually become a repository of African experiences, research, stories, cultural materials and knowledge for future generations."

Building Partnerships

The founders recognise that transforming Africa is beyond the capacity of any single organisation. Unchain Africa, he discloses, therefore plans to develop partnerships with governments, universities, corporate organisations, foundations, international development agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious bodies, traditional institutions and cultural organisations.

LAGOS 2026 CWC: Aina, Oyegbola, Johnson Advocate Women's Rebirth, Honour

EJIKEME OMENAZU

The Convener of Women on Assignment Ministries, Pastor Tinuola Oye-Johnson, has advised women to have a solid understanding of their identity before becoming wives or taking up positions in governance, the workplace, the marketplace, the church, or wherever

er they find themselves.

She gave the advice as a guest speaker at the 16th edition of the Christian Women's Conference, 2026, organised by the Chapel of Christ the Light, Alausa, and the Lagos State Public Service Christian Fellowship, Women's Wing.

The conference was held at the Chapel of Christ the Light, Alausa,

Ikeja, with the theme: 'B.I.R.T.H — Becoming, Influential, Radiant, Transformational and Honourable'.

She described a woman's becoming as the process by which God introduces the woman to the original woman He sees.

Pastor Oye-Johnson stressed that identity matters and that women

must discover who they are, adding, true identity is first discovered in God, their Creator, to know His opinion about them and His plan for their lives.

The Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Wealth Creation and Employment, and Chairperson of the 2026 Christian Women's Conference Planning Committee, Mrs. Lolade Aina, said that for women to be at peace, they must arise and become what God wants them to be. She made the point in her address at the well-attended conference.

Mrs. Aina reminded participants of the conference theme's foundation scripture, Proverbs 4:18, and emphasized that every meaningful birth begins long before it is seen — with vision, nurtured by faith, and refined through seasons of preparation and perseverance.

The Permanent Secretary, Public Service Office, Office of the Head of Service, Lagos State Government, Mrs. Sunkanmi Oyegbola, remarked that it is time for women to arise and become, to birth a new generation that will win its generation for Christ.

The Convener of the 2026 Christian Women's Conference, Pastor Mrs. Fo-

lashade Ajayi, in her welcome address, said birth signifies new beginnings and represents hope, possibility, purpose and the emergence of something new. Likewise, she said, the conference marks the beginning of a new chapter for every participant — a season to rise beyond limitations and become women whose lives illuminate generations and bring glory to God.

Other guest speakers at the conference were Apostle Ruth Ese Essien, Pastor Mrs. Boade Akinola, Pastor Mrs. Sumbo Adeoye, Dr. Mrs. Omolara Oyadotun, Coach Bukola Oladeji, Engr. Mrs. Titilola Oluwadare and Mrs. Taiwo Lillian Taiwo.

Other highlights of the three-day conference included the presentation of Education Support Funds to 11 student beneficiaries and N250,000 medical support to a staff member.

There was also a cooking competition, where winners from 1st to 4th position received prizes ranging from N150,000 and a giant air fryer to N50,000.

In the pageantry competition, the 1st position winner received N200,000, while winners from 2nd to 5th position received prizes ranging from N150,000 to N50,000.



Lagos 2026 CWC: L-r: A state government official with, Rev Dr Oluremi Hunsu (President, LSPSCF) & wife, Mrs Tolulope Hunsu, Mrs Lolade Aina (PS, Lagos State Ministry of Wealth Creation & Chairperson, 2026 CWC Planning Committee), Rev Dr Oladele Ajayi (Presiding Chaplain, CCTL, Alausa) & wife, Pastor Mrs Folashade Ajayi (Convener, 2026 Christian Women's Conference), Bishop Funso Awe (fmr Chaplain, CCTL, Alausa), Pastor Mrs Tinuola Oye-Johnson (Guest Minister), Mrs Sunkanmi Oyegbola (PS, Lagos State Public Service Office, Office of the HoS), Rev Dr Olurotimi Taiwo (Chaplain, CCTL, Alausa) & wife, Mrs Taiwo Lillian Taiwo, and Mrs Faderera Koko (a member of the 2026 CWC Planning Committee) during the cutting of 16th edition of Christian Women's Conference held at the CCTL, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Pastors, Church Leaders, and Believers, to promote your church programmes and events such as Crusades, Thanksgivings, Birthdays, Special Announcements, Prayer Programmes, Launchings, Book Presentations, etc, please, contact: 08060766311.

Believing

National Read A Book Day

September 6 is the 249th day of the year and 116 days to the end of the year. Today is National Read a Book Day. It was a day created to encourage people to read a complete or start a book. This day's celebration encourages people to put down their phones, step away from screens, and spend time reading books.

A book is a set of written or printed pages bound together inside a cover, or an action used to reserve something in advance. It is also used for documentation and note keeping. Books are divided into two main groups: fiction and non-fiction. Fiction books use made-up characters, settings, and plots to entertain readers; whereas Non-fiction books are based on fact, real-world events, and actual people.

Today, as we celebrate National Read a book day, we shall highlight some of the benefits of book read-

ing. To start with, reading the best channel of acquiring knowledge. We acquire knowledge, wisdom and understanding through reading. Besides, it can reduce heart rate and muscle tension. It improves focus. Concentrating on a narrative sharpens one's attention span and memory and helps one to be focused.

Reading reduces stress. Good stories can lower one's heart rate and ease muscle tension. It promotes better sleep. It signals the body that it is time to wind down, unlike bright phone or tablet screen. Reading expands one's vocabulary. It exposes one to new words and it improves one's writing and speaking skills. Reading, especially fictions, builds empathy. It lets one experience life from different perspectives, helping one to relate better to other people.

Regular reading stimulates mental activity and helps maintain cog-

nitive function as one age. Hence it boast one's brain health. It strengthens the brain. It acts like a workout for one's mind, building neural pathways and keeping cognitive functions sharp. Reading sharpens the memory. It enables one to remember past characters, events and other details. Above all, reading, especially bible reading, activates one's spiritual faculty.

Pope Leo XIV strongly encourages everyone to read physical books, especially in the digital age, because reading nourishes the mind and protects against ideological extremes. Marking the centenary of the Vatican Publishing House on May 7, 2026, Pope Leo XIV explained three main values of reading. Physical books encourage deep study and reflection, serving as an antidote to superficial scrolling and closed-mindedness. Hence, it enables one to think rationally and accurately. It connects one to

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the author, past readers, and future readers.

Essentially, Spiritual readings, especially the life of the saints and the scriptural reading offers one an Opportunity to encounter and to proclaim Christ.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 109 declares, "In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.

Whereas in paragraph 110 of the catechism of the Catholic Church

declares, "In order to discover the sacred authors' intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current. "For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression." Every book has its own context and that context must be taken into consideration while reading the book. As you continue to enjoy your reading, I wish you happy National Read a Book Day!

When Nations Forget God

There is a dangerous moment in the life of any nation when it begins to forget the God who gave it existence, preserved it through storms, and sustained it through generations. The greatest tragedy of a nation is not merely economic decline, political instability, or social disorder. The greatest tragedy is when a people lose their consciousness of God and begin to live as though they are accountable to no higher authority.

History repeatedly reveals that nations do not collapse only because of external enemies. Many nations have fallen from within because they abandoned truth, justice, morality, and reverence for God. Civilisations that once appeared powerful eventually weakened when pride replaced humility, corruption replaced integrity, and pleasure replaced righteousness.

Nigeria stands today at a critical spiritual crossroads. We are a nation known for religious expression. Our streets are filled with churches. Our homes are filled

with prayers. Our songs speak constantly about God. Yet a painful question must be asked, have we remembered God only with our lips while forgetting Him with our actions?

A nation can mention God's name frequently and still drift far from His ways. True remembrance of God is not measured by the number of religious gatherings, but by the transformation of character. It is seen in justice, honesty, compassion, humility, and righteousness. When these disappear, religious activities become an empty appearance without spiritual substance.

The warning signs are everywhere. Corruption continues to weaken institutions. Injustice frustrates ordinary citizens. Violence destroys communities. Young people are increasingly exposed to moral confusion and Yahooism and varied forms of rituals! Greed is celebrated. Dishonesty is sometimes rewarded. Many now admire success without questioning the methods used to achieve it.

The danger is that a society

eventually becomes what it repeatedly tolerates. This nation has tolerated so much that it is gradually drifting into a state of nature! When corruption becomes normal, conscience becomes weak. When immorality becomes entertainment, purity becomes mocked. When truth becomes inconvenient, deception becomes acceptable.

The Bible repeatedly warns about nations that forget God. Forgetting God does not always happen suddenly. It happens gradually. A generation begins by neglecting prayer. Another begins by questioning moral standards. Another removes God from public consciousness. Eventually, a society finds itself dealing with the consequences of choices made over many years.

The church has a significant responsibility in this hour. It cannot merely provide religious comfort while ignoring national decay. The prophets of old did not only announce blessings. They confronted kings, challenged injustice, and called nations back to righteous-

THE APOSTOLIC TOWN CRIER

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ness. The church must recover this prophetic responsibility.

Nigeria does not only need more religious programmes. It needs a spiritual awakening that produces transformed lives. We need leaders who fear God more than they fear public opinion. We need citizens who understand that integrity is more valuable than quick success. We need families that restore the fear of God as the foundation of upbringing.

Yet, despite the darkness, hope remains. God has never abandoned nations completely. Throughout history, He has always preserved a remnant, men and women who refused to compromise even when society moved in the opposite direction. They became voices of correction, examples of righteousness, and instruments of restoration.

The challenge before Nigeria

is clear. Will we continue down the path of forgetting God, or will we return to the foundations that made societies strong? Over the years I have consistently called for a day of national prayer and fasting for Nigeria. A day for sober reflection and repentance of both leaders and subjects.

A nation that forgets God eventually forgets itself. It loses direction, purpose, and identity. But a nation that humbles itself before God can experience restoration, healing, and renewal.

The cry of heaven to Nigeria today is not merely for more buildings, more wealth, or more achievements. It is for a return of the heart. It is a call to remember the God we claim to worship.

For when nations forget God, they begin to lose their way. But when nations return to God, they discover the path back to life.

How A White Man Used And Dumped Me

Sandra was promised an all-expense visa process to the USA. That was the only thing that mattered to her. She was happy and did the white guy's sexual biddings. She told everyone, including her family, about him. She even flaunted him on her social media handles. Her life had changed for good, or so she must have thought in her mind. Unknown to her, the white guy was just toying with her, and when he was satisfied, he broke up with her.

"I met this white man on a dating app. During the first week, he sent me money because he said I made him happy. He asked for a video call and sex on the phone, and he was very happy. That was how we started dating. We were always on call, and he always wanted to know where I was, who I was with and everything I was doing. I told him from the beginning that I am a tattoo artist and also a visual artist. But these days, I do more tattoos, and I also do hookups to support my lifestyle. He told me I had to quit hookups because he didn't want to see me with any other man. He promised to marry me and take me to America if I changed. As soon as I heard America, I promised him I would

change, and I did. Besides, he didn't give me breathing space. He was always on a call with me. He was a generous giver. Whatever I asked him for, he always gave me. He turned me into an overnight Lagos big girl. That was what I had always wanted. I moved into a good apartment in the Ajah area, and he also got me a car. He promised to come to Nigeria so we could have a proper marriage. All of these felt like a dream to me. I thought he would never come. In November, last year, he came down to Nigeria with his brother. They both stayed in my house, but that was when I discovered that the man was a sex freak. He wanted oral sex and other things I could not imagine. He also wanted his friend to sleep with me while he watched. He said that if I did not agree, he would break up with me. Because I did not want to lose the opportunity to travel to the US, and we had already started the process, we did a court marriage here in Nigeria. I agreed to do everything he asked for. These two men turned me into their sex toy. We travelled to Tanzania and spent a week there. I enjoyed being around them except for the sex part. I

kept assuring myself that once I got to the US, I would be free from them. In January, they travelled back, but my visa was denied. The relationship continued, but the people around me did not know what I was going through. They all admired me because I had married an Oyibo man, but they did not know that I was depressed. A few months later, he broke up with me. He said he was no longer interested. It was as if my whole world had shattered. After all the public display, my family members knew that I was married. I had flaunted him everywhere, even on my social media pages. Now, I am depressed. This guy made me do things I cannot even talk about, unimaginable things. Each time I remember them, I become traumatised. This is what desperation has caused me. Now my rent will soon be due, and I don't have money to renew it. I have not been working, and even if I resume my tattoo business, it cannot sustain the lifestyle I have become used to. I have been crying. The visa denial pained me even more because I had already built my whole future around the hope of going to America and starting a new life with him."

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Dear Sandra, there is no need crying over spilled milk. Obviously, the guy may not come back, so it is time to put yourself together. There is no shame in starting over. If you continue to live in denial, you will only get more depressed. Go back to work and start again with whatever is left in your hands and heart. It is good that you spoke up, and finally, forgive yourself and learn to live again.

Hello readers, thanks for reading through. You can inbox your opinions or share your own experiences.

THE LITERARY ORBIT

Eight Simple Rules For Dating Your Historical Fiction

PARAIC O'DONNELL'S

Consider these opening lines. Their source is far from obscure, so there's a good chance you'll recognize them right away. Take a moment over them anyway:

"So now get up."

Felled, dazed, silent, he has fallen; knocked full length on the cobbles of the yard. His head turns sideways; his eyes are turned towards the gate, as if someone might arrive to help him out.

One blow, properly placed, could kill him now.

The excerpt is taken, of course, from the first page of *Wolf Hall*, for which Hilary Mantel won the Booker Prize in 2009. Not exactly a deep cut as historical fiction goes, but for my purposes a near-ideal example.

Of what? Well, in the rules I'm about to set out, I warn of the ways in which we can get historical fiction wrong. And *Wolf Hall* — from its opening lines to its final page — is as complete a demonstration of technical excellence as we could wish for. We'll discuss some examples in just a moment, but first a bit of procedural housekeeping.

You will object, I'm sure, that literary craft is infinitely nuanced and that rules like the ones below are reductive and arbitrary. Plus, you might argue, they get broken all the time, and by unassailable giants of the genre.

The thing about literary giants, though, is that they tend to know what they're doing. When they break a rule, they generally understand it thoroughly and weigh their decision carefully. When you break one you're just doing it wrong. Good? Good.

Also, one last thing: In case anyone missed my tiresome play on words, the "dating" in the title refers to the various techniques you can use to situate your novel in time and place. You may be familiar with some or all of these, but you should still pay attention. Most require a light touch and a clear notion of the desired effect. Some, though, should be approached like they just oozed from a meteorite in a puddle of hissing slime.

Okay, team, let's have fun out there!

Rule No. 1: Go Easy on the Period Diction

Language is what books are made of, and all prose and dialogue must be outfitted in some sort of style. If your setting comes stocked with pungently recognizable idiom — with prithees and sires and by-your-leaves — there's a temptation to help yourself in great armfuls.

But look again at the Mantel excerpt. Her chosen milieu is Tudor England, and she has a scholar's intimacy with the flavors of Early Modern English then in use. But a modern novel crusted stiff with pre-Shakespearean locutions would no longer be a modern novel; it would be a wearying parlour trick.

Mantel cleaves instead to a felicitous simplicity, to constructions that achieve consonance with the period but stop short of mimicry. She begins as she means to go on. The boy on the ground is Thomas Cromwell, who will one day be Lord Privy Seal and the unspar-



Paraic

ing architect of the English Reformation. His public utterances will brim with courtly niceties, and with legal and ecclesiastical arcana. Mantel will show us just enough of all that when the time comes.

For now he is just a boy, cowering before his brutish father. His world was not wide before, and now it has shrunk to a few miserable particulars: a blunt taunt, a cobbled yard, a beating. Now as then, the words for such things are simple.

Rule No. 2: Spell Like a Normal Person

Say you've pitched up in England at some point from the early Georgian era onwards, or in America a little later on. You'll have made the exciting discovery that your primary sources include actual novels.

Let's imagine, too, that in a spirit of dauntless thoroughness you've sought out the unmodernized editions of Defoe or Fielding or whoever. It's a worthy philological undertaking, if nothing else. Our modern conventions of orthography, typography and speech-marking took a long time to solidify, and it's instructive to see that process unfold.

It's not without its perils, though, particularly when you reach the relatively familiar climes of the nineteenth century. Here you'll feel mostly at home, and when your eye is caught by such archaisms as Jane Austen's spellings you might find yourself wondering what harm it could do. You certainly wouldn't be the first.

But listen, this is not the way. You are not going to fast-track your way to authentic Regency by putting "chuse" for "choose." Yes, Susanna Clarke did it, but (a) she

did a lot more besides, and (b) you are not Susanna Clarke.

Rule No. 3: Don't Use Your Research to Accessorize

You're writing a historical novel, which means you've been putting in some serious hours at the library. (You have, haven't you? Because this is in no way optional.)

And having done all that research, you might form the view that none of it should be wasted. Like, that one detail about the turning radius of Shillibeer's Omnibus — that has to go somewhere, surely? The answer, alas, is usually no.

You should read widely about your period and deeply about those particulars that naturally arise in your story. Most of that reading, though, should be kept off the page or confined to the gentlest cross-hatching. That way, the reader will attend gladly to the details you do alight on, having come to trust that they matter.

Treat the rest of your shiny trinkets like in that mirror-twirl trick when you're getting ready to go out. If it catches your eye immediately, take it off.

Rule No. 4: The Past Is Another Country, but Your Characters Live There

Choosing a point of view is a consequential decision for any novelist, but in historical fiction the stakes are heightened. Omniscient narrators are a thing, to be sure, and they were much more of a thing in centuries past, along with chatty and freely moralizing perorations to the Gentle Reader. However, managing such conspicuous anachronisms requires consummate skill (see Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries* for how it's done), so don't say you weren't warned.

In most cases, though, you'll be using either the first person or the near-default close third. This means that in any given scene, you'll be relating the proceedings from the perspective of a specific individual shaped by highly particular circumstances. That individual should want, care about and notice a closely circumscribed subset of things.

Her own clothing? Maybe, if some occasion requires it and she has the means and leisure to change it. The streetscape, the shopfronts, the hansom cabs, the coal smoke, the gaslights, the stink? Unless she's new here, then not without some particular reason. Just like you, she's probably preoccupied with something (so tell us that instead), and just like you, most of what she sees every day is all but invisible. Choose carefully.

Rule No. 5: Stop Worldbuilding Like It's Westeros, Dammit

All this pontificating might give you the wrong impression, so I should make it clear that I, too, am a trash human with terrible habits. Exhibit A: Your boy watches way too many video essays on YouTube. These are all far too long, and too many are about fantasy fiction and its weird fixation on the Everlasting Medieval.

I bring this up because I've developed a pet theory, which is that the quasi-historicism of fantasy fiction has opened a portal to a parallel genre, infecting historical fiction with Certain Tendencies. Among these are the egregious outbursts of exposition that are tolerated in the cause of "worldbuilding," as if having an official term somehow makes it okay.

This carry-on usually occurs under flimsy pretexts. "We had all heard the tales," someone will begin, and the tales that follow will bespeak an oral tradition of near-miraculous efficiency. We will learn of the ills wrought by this or that king; such-and-such a usurper; one bunch or another of interlopers, of idolaters, of haughty conquerors, of benighted rabble. The glories of some former age may be lamented, and our sympathies directed to parties judged righteous or wronged.

Decades, even centuries, may be encompassed by these marvelously comprehensive surveys. Some readers may even welcome them, on the grounds that there's just so much to cover and it's, like, hell, convenient. That's no excuse. This isn't Elden Ring, and there isn't supposed to be a hotkey for lore. Reveal your world as someone experiences it, or don't reveal it at all.

Rule No. 6: Stop Set-Dressing Like It's Downton Abbey

Again, I don't issue this edict from some kind of high horse. I still know every single number in that one musical episode of *Buffy*, so it's not like I don't love me some high-fructose TV. I'm not coming for anyone's comfort reads either. There's a place in this world for book covers with someone's lush décolletage and a font from a wedding menu.

Given that you're six points deep into this particular list, however, I'm going to assume that Bridgerton is not the vibe you're going for. And at the grownup table, sad to say, you don't get to blow the budget on wardrobe and production design then call it good.

No one's saying your text has to be barren of ornament. There can be sumptuous frocks and silk wall hangings, but the gaze that gets drawn to them should not be your own. Because again, who is doing the seeing here?

Is it someone awed and out of their element? Someone briskly assessing workmanship or disparaging a social inferior? Someone taking brusque possession while sneering at all this decadence?

Moments like these may occur, but they must arise in the natural course of your story. Otherwise, make do like the rest of us and save your fire takes on eveningwear for posting about the Met Gala.

Rule No. 7: Your Characters Aren't Tour Guides

Worldbuilding aside, you should be wary of any explanations that arrive at oddly convenient moments. There is the common practice, for instance, whereby some minor character is briefly seconded to a protagonist's service, only to be dispensed with again once the required payload of information has been delivered.

These are perfunctory roles by definition, so lackeys of one kind or another are often favored. Innkeepers may be pressed into service, or drivers, porters, errand boys or grooms. Discontented domestics are perennial favourites too, as are enterprising sex workers. Anyone will do, really, as long as they stay long enough to say something useful, but not so long that they become a nuisance.

And look, I get it: exposition is hard and perfect verisimilitude is neither possible nor desirable; we all make our small accommodations. There's no excuse, though, for wheeling in some talkative NPC just to explain why the townsfolk are acting skittish. As with most technical problems, find a solution that's natural and unobtrusive. That's pretty much your whole job.

Rule No. 8: Historical Fiction Is Still Contemporary Fiction

I've saved this rule for last because it's the one nearest my heart. If I have indulged myself elsewhere in this list, veering now and then towards puckishness or provocation, in this I am entirely sincere.

As historical novelists, like writers of any kind, we should be faithful to our subject and to our reader. Yet subject and setting are not the same, only closely entwined. We do justice if we can to the substrates of our chosen worlds, but we make no claims to true scholarship. We are inventors of moments, of days, of lives, and truthful only after our own fashion.

We are attentive visitors to the past, yes, and we tread its ground carefully, but we are not museum-keepers or archaeologists. We do not unearth cities but remake them; do not raise the dead but summon in their place the newly living.

In doing so, we never conjure the same spectre twice, and it is no fault that we catch our own voices in theirs; that they wear our many skins and tremble with our many kinds of love. We honor their imagined worlds, but we make them for the one we live in.

Source: LITERARYHUB (<https://lithub.com>), August 26, 2026.

KALEIDOSCOPE

What are the aims and objectives of the group? What is the link between Tourism and PBAT's second-term bid?

The Tourism Vanguard for Tinubu (TVT) is a platform of tourism professionals, stakeholders, enthusiasts and supporters who believe that tourism can play a much greater role in Nigeria's economic transformation, national development and international image.

Our objective goes beyond political mobilisation. We want to use the opportunity provided by the 2027 political process to place tourism, culture, heritage, creative industries and destination development firmly within the national development conversation.

There is a very strong relationship between tourism and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope agenda. Tourism is one of the sectors capable of contributing significantly to economic diversification, employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, investment attraction, youth empowerment, community development and the promotion of Nigeria's cultural identity. However, for tourism to achieve its full potential, the industry requires strong political will at the highest level of government.

Tourism cannot be treated merely as entertainment or leisure. It is an economic sector that requires deliberate government policy, infrastructure, security, investment incentives, destination development and sustained institutional support.

Our support for President Tinubu is therefore based on our belief that his administration can consolidate existing economic reforms while giving tourism an even stronger position as a pillar of Nigeria's non-oil economy.

If given a second term, we want to see a stronger political commitment to tourism, with measurable programmes that can transform our attractions into globally competitive destinations.

How national or widespread is this group? What measures have been put in place for mobilisation, even in states not controlled by the ruling APC?

TVT is conceived as a national movement, not an organisation restricted to states controlled by the APC. Tourism itself is fundamentally non-partisan. Every state of the federation has tourism assets, cultural heritage, festivals, natural resources and destinations capable of contributing to Nigeria's economic development.

Our mobilisation strategy therefore goes beyond partisan political structures. We are building relationships with tourism professionals, destination managers, tour operators, hospitality practitioners, cultural workers, travel stakeholders, young people, women, community-based tourism organisations and other people whose livelihoods or interests are connected to tourism. In states where the APC is not the governing party, we will engage people through the language of tourism development, economic opportunity, cultural preservation and national interest.

Our message is that tourism belongs to every Nigerian. A person can have his or her political preference and still support policies that will develop tourism, create employment and promote Nigeria. Our ambition is to make TVT a truly national platform that demonstrates that tourism can unite Nigeria even when politics sometimes divides us.

Political Leadership Must Recognise That Tourism Investment Is Not Luxury — Nunayon

Hon. Apata Samson Olatunji Nunayon is National Vice President, Association of Tourism Practitioners of Nigeria (ATPN), South West Region. Also, he is the National Coordinator, Tourism Vanguard For Tinubu (TVT) Movement. In this interview with APATA OYENIRAN, he explains the link between TVT and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's second term bid. Excerpts:



Nunayon

Many groups are springing up in support of Tinubu. Many Nigerians believe their aim is to see what they can get. What efforts are you making to ensure that the group gets into the mainstream and is not forgotten or disappointed after the 2023 elections?

That concern is understandable, particularly given the experience of several support groups after previous elections. For TVT, our objective is not to create another election-time structure that disappears when the election is over. We are building a sustainable tourism advocacy platform whose relevance should continue beyond 2027.

Our approach is to document the needs of the tourism industry, develop policy recommendations and maintain structured engagement with government and other relevant stakeholders. We are not approaching government with the mentality of "what can we get?" We are asking a much bigger question: what can tourism contribute to Nigeria, and what policy environment does the industry require to deliver that contribution?

Our greatest reward should be a functional tourism industry—one capable of creating jobs, generating revenue, attracting investment and improving the livelihoods of people working across the tourism value chain. We also believe that political will must translate into institutional continuity. Tourism programmes should not begin and end with election cycles.

One of the initiatives through which TVT intends to sustain its voice is the development of a national tourism magazine, which will be unveiled soon. The magazine will serve as an additional platform for telling Nigeria's tourism story, showcasing our destinations, promoting our cultural heritage, highlighting

not be interpreted as an attempt to force political choices on tourism professionals. Rather, we are exercising our democratic right as stakeholders to support a political direction that we believe can advance our industry. We intend to maintain a clear distinction between political advocacy and professional responsibility. TVT will not be a platform for attacking tourism professionals because of their political opinions. Neither will we encourage ethnic, religious or partisan divisions.

Our advocacy will remain issue-based, focusing on tourism investment, infrastructure, security, destination marketing, cultural preservation, skills development, domestic tourism, international tourism promotion and job creation.

Indeed, tourism can become one of Nigeria's strongest instruments for national cohesion. When people travel, they experience different cultures, languages, traditions, cuisines and histories. Tourism therefore gives Nigerians an opportunity to understand one another beyond political narratives. So, our political participation should ultimately serve a larger national purpose: using tourism to build bridges, not walls.

What would the group identify as the contributions of the President to the tourism sector in his first term?

We should be fair in acknowledging the fact that tourism does not operate in isolation from the broader economy. One of the important opportunities presented by the Tinubu administration has been its emphasis on economic diversification and private-sector participation. Tourism fits naturally into that agenda because it has the capacity to create economic activity across several sectors simultaneously. We also recognise the administration's attention to the creative economy and its broader recognition that Nigeria's cultural and creative assets are economic resources and not simply recreational activities.

However, as tourism practitioners, we must also be honest enough to say that there is still a lot of work to be done. We need stronger destination development, improved tourism infrastructure, better access to tourist sites, greater investment in heritage assets, stronger domestic tourism promotion, improved destination marketing and better coordination between the Federal Government, states and local governments.

This is why I continue to emphasise political will. Nigeria does not suffer from a shortage of tourism attractions. What we have lacked over the years is the sustained political commitment to systematically develop, package, market and monetise those attractions. Our position is therefore supportive, but constructive: acknowledge progress, identify gaps and continue to advocate for what needs to be done.

President Tinubu has been embarking on health tourism since his first term. Why is it that the administration has failed to pay special attention

to the health sector to check medical tourism among top Nigerians?

Medical tourism is a complex issue that should be addressed beyond politics. Nigeria has excellent medical professionals. Our challenge is that we have not sufficiently developed the infrastructure, technology, specialised facilities, research capacity and supporting ecosystem required to retain Nigerians who seek sophisticated medical services abroad. Government therefore needs to continue strengthening healthcare infrastructure, specialist hospitals, medical technology, research and the welfare and retention of medical professionals. At the same time, I believe we should distinguish between medical tourism and health and wellness tourism. Nigeria has enormous potential to develop a competitive health and wellness tourism industry if we deliberately integrate healthcare, hospitality, wellness centres, natural attractions and specialised services.

We should aspire to a Nigeria where citizens do not need to travel abroad for services that can be competitively provided at home, while also creating facilities capable of attracting international visitors. That would allow us to transform medical tourism from an economic leakage into an economic opportunity. Again, this requires political will, strategic investment and long-term policy consistency.

What has been the development impact of the present government on the tourism sector for sustainable economic gains for the country?

The present administration's emphasis on economic diversification and private-sector participation creates a significant opportunity for tourism. Tourism has one of the strongest multiplier effects in the economy. A tourist does not spend money only at an attraction. The visitor requires transportation, accommodation, food, entertainment, shopping, tour guides, cultural experiences and other services. Consequently, tourism expenditure circulates through multiple sectors and can directly and indirectly support thousands of businesses and jobs.

But, Nigeria must move from simply having tourist attractions to developing commercially viable tourism destinations. That requires infrastructure, security, access roads, aviation connectivity, digital visibility, investment incentives, professional skills and effective destination management. Above all, it requires strong and sustained political will. Political leadership must recognise that tourism investment is not a luxury. It is an investment in employment, local economic development, foreign exchange, national branding and sustainable economic diversification.

The Federal Government cannot do everything alone. States, local governments, private investors, communities, traditional institutions and professional associations must work together. That is where organisations such as ATPN and TVT have an important role to play.

investment opportunities and projecting Nigeria positively to the international community. That initiative demonstrates that TVT is not only interested in political mobilisation; we are equally interested in national image-building and tourism promotion.

Above all, it requires strong and sustained political will. Political leadership must recognise that tourism investment is not a luxury. It is an investment in employment, local economic development, foreign exchange, national branding and sustainable economic diversification

tion.

What efforts are the leaders making to ensure that the group's involvement in campaign does not politicise and polarise the tourism sector?

Tourism must remain a professional sector that serves Nigeria, regardless of political affiliation. Our support for President Tinubu should

Sowore Vs DSS: Matters Arising Over 2027 Election Campaign

EJIKEME OMENAZU

The rights activist, Omoyele Sowore, is not new to controversies. One way or another, he has been a subject of controversies since he started the #RevolutionNow campaign as the way to bring total change to the nation's polity and governance.

The #RevolutionNow is a Nigerian political and social protest movement launched in August 2019 by human rights activist and African Action Congress (AAC) presidential candidate, Omoyele Sowore.

It campaigns against bad governance, corruption, widespread insecurity, and economic hardship, holding regular demonstrations that often face heavy security crackdowns.

Since launching the RevolutionNow Movement, the security agencies, especially the Police and the Department of State Service (DSS), have arrested and detained him at on uncountable occasions. Also, Sowore, the publisher of the popular online medium, Sahara Reporters, the National Leader and presidential candidate of the AAC, has been hosted by several detention centres and Correctional Centres, thus making him one of the most detained political activists in the present democratic dispensation.

But as the 2027 general election is gathering momentum, a major controversy has come up. This time, it was prompted by the DSS, which has been prosecuting the activist and politician on Cybercrime charges for allegedly insulting President Bola Tinubu on his social media platform.

The case has been going on at a Federal High Court in Abuja. According to reports, the DSS has concluded its case, while Sowore's legal team has started his defence.

Suddenly, last Sunday, The DSS issued a statement to the effect that it had instructed its lawyers to 'suspend' Sowore's trial till after the presidential election. The reason it gave was that it wants to allow Sowore to carry out his presidential campaign without hindrance. Again, it does not want to be seen as partial or political.

The DSS' Statement

Although several media outlets carried snippets of the DSS statement, this particular version is comprehensive. It reads: "The Department of State Services (DSS) has directed its counsel, Akinlolu Kehinde, SAN, to take steps to suspend the cybercrime case instituted against human rights activist and African Action Congress (AAC) presidential candidate, Omoyele Sowore, until after the 2027 presidential election.

"The development followed a meeting between the Director-General of the DSS, Mr. Oluwatosin Ajayi, and Mr. Kehinde, alongside senior officials of DSS' Legal Directorate, on August 20, 2026.

"A source close to the DSS legal team said the meeting was convened to consider putting the case on hold, in view of the commencement of campaigns for the 2027 presidential election, scheduled for January 16, 2027.

According to the source, Ajayi directed the legal team to explore ways of suspending the proceedings to enable Sowore to participate fully in the electoral process without the case constituting a distraction or hindrance.

"The DSS boss told the Senior Advocate and his directorate of legal Services that, with the commencement of presidential campaigns, it would only be fair to pause the court case in order to enable Sowore fully participate in



Sowore

the upcoming elections without let or hindrance," the source said.

"It was gathered that the DSS leadership was of the view that suspending the proceedings for a few months would not prejudice the case, which has already been before the court for almost a year.

"The DSS boss told the lawyers that, since the matter had been in court for nearly a year, suspending it for another four months wouldn't make much difference," the source said.

"The case against Sowore was adjourned to September 20, 2026. However, the proposed suspension of the case is expected to be formally communicated to the Federal High Court from September 14, 2026, when the court is scheduled to resume normal sittings following its annual judicial vacation.

"It was gathered that the DSS lawyers would ask the court for a long adjournment from next month till January or February 2027, during which time the presidential electioneering and election would have been concluded.

"The DSS had approached the Federal High Court over social media posts made by Sowore on August 25, 2025, in which he reportedly referred to President Bola Ahmed

The way the statement was concluded, it is like giving the impression that the DSS is in control of the court and determines what happens in court. I beg the DSS that they should get professionals who will communicate well. Once you are in court, you allow the court to determine what happens. If you want an adjournment, you let the other side know and give reasons



Tinubu

Tinubu as a 'criminal' on his X handle and Facebook page.

"The post said: 'This criminal @officialABAT actually went to Brazil to state that there is no more corruption under his regime in Nigeria. What audacity to lie shamelessly'.

"The DSS is seeking judicial determination of whether it is lawful for an individual to arbitrarily describe the President, or any other person, as a criminal without a judicial pronouncement to that effect.

"The intelligence agency had argued that the case is intended to obtain judicial interpretation of the issue, in a manner similar to its earlier request for the court's determination on the legality of Professor Pat Utomi's proposed 'Shadow Government'.

"Before going to court, the DSS gave Sowore seven days to remove the post. When the activist declined to comply with the directive after the expiration of the ultimatum, the agency instituted the case at the Federal High Court on September 16, 2025.

"In a September 6, 2025 letter to the chairman of Meta Corporation, the DSS reportedly stated that its statutory responsibility to protect the President extended beyond physical threats to what it described as psychological attacks."

Sowore's Legal Team Reacts

This DSS' statement prompted an urgent rallying of some journalists the next day at the chambers of Sowore's Lead Counsel, Barrister Adeyinka Olumide-Fusika (SAN), in Lagos the next day.

Addressing newsmen in the company of Sowore in Ikeja, Lagos, on Monday, the Lead Counsel, Adeyinka Olumide-Fusika (SAN), said the law did not give the DSS the power to prosecute anybody.

He said he had gone through the law establishing the DSS, stressing that there was nowhere it empowered the agency to prosecute Sowore or anybody.

The lawyer was reacting to the statement of the DSS on Sunday that it had instructed its lawyers to suspend Sowore's case till after the 2027 general elections to enable him prosecute his campaign.

Sowore's lawyer said that that action of DSS by asking its legal team to 'suspend' till after

the election was strange in law, adding that it should drop the cybercrime case against the activist.

He stressed that the DSS is a spy agency on the nation's internal security and should only focus on investigation of cases.

Mr Olumide-Fusika said the best the DSS should have done was to hand over the matter to the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), if it felt that there were reasons to prosecute Sowore. He said the DSS should stop encroaching on the powers of the Judiciary as it is making mockery of the system.

The lawyer also said that the DSS, having discovered that it lacked powers to prosecute was hiding behind the 2027 general elections to tell Nigerians that it was not partial, where as its actions had been political.

Olumide-Fusika stressed that by its involvement in political issues instead of concentrating on its roles as a spy agency, the DSS is losing the respect of Nigerians who now see it as a tool of the government against political opponents.

He maintained that the DSS should therefore drop the case against Sowore or hand it over to the Attorney General of the Federation to show that it is impartial.

He also wondered why the DSS should use a press statement in the media to announce its intention to 'suspend' the case, an action it described as strange, stressing that adjournment of cases is a matter between the prosecution counsel and the defence counsel.

Olumide-Fusika stated: "The way the statement was concluded, it is like giving the impression that the DSS is in control of the court and determines what happens in court. I beg the DSS that they should get professionals who will communicate well. Once you are in court, you allow the court to determine what happens. If you want an adjournment, you let the other side know and give reasons."

He therefore advised the agency to engage professionals who understand how things should be done, wondering why the DSS, as an institution which has many intelligent people, should be taking such strange and shoddy decisions.

He, however, noted that he has no issue against the decision of the DSS to shift the trial till after the elections.

During question and answer, a reporter asked Olumide-Fusika what would happen if his client, Sowore, wins the presidential election. He smiled and responded: "Your guess is as good as mine. When Trump was campaigning, some courts found him guilty of some offences. What happened when he won the election?"

Sowore Speaks On Agenda

Responding to questions from the media, Sowore said that when he became the nation's president, denial of human rights would be a thing of the past.

He maintained that institutions would also be made to function as they should, even as he added that the security and welfare of Nigerians would be uppermost in his agenda.

Sowore said the intention of his traducers was to keep him behind bars even before the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) released the time table for the elections.

He maintained that since the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced the commencement of campaigns, it suddenly dawned on the DSS that it could not stop him from taking part in the election as it would be seen as partial and a tool against the opponents of the government in power, hence the move to 'suspend' the trial.

Politics

CDHR NEC'S Lamentations Over State Of The Nation

EJIKEME OMENAZU

In an effort to play its roles as the conscience of the nation at this critical time, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of foremost human rights body, the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) on Saturday August 29, 2026 held a crucial meeting in Lagos.

The meeting, which was held at the Rights House on Adeniyi Jones Avenue, Ikeja, Lagos, attracted the 'Who's Who' among leaders of the human rights body who came to Lagos from different parts of the country.

At the end of the meeting, the body issued a thought-provoking communiqué was issued by the body. The communiqué which was made available to Sunday Independent, was signed by Comrade Debo Adeniran

National President; Comrade Deji Adebawale; National General Secretary; Comrade Onyibe Jeremiah and National Publicity Secretary.

The group stated that it remains Nigeria's foremost Civil Society Organisation, and one indivisible organisation, although like any other body, it may have its internal squabble, but it remains committed to resolving its internal problems.

State Of The Nation

Taking a look at the state of the nation, the CDHR called for independent investigations on fake agencies. It expressed deep concern over the alarming level of decay and corruption that has eroded the nation's institutions. The organisation condemned the growing institutional failures and insisted that urgent steps must be taken to restore accountability, transparency, and public confidence.

It stressed: "CDHR therefore calls for independent and credible investigations into the factors responsible for these disturbing trends.

"Such inquiries must be conducted transparently and monitored by credible civil society organisations to ensure that they are free from political interference and capable of identifying those responsible for the deterioration of our institutions.

"The findings of these investigations should be made public, and anyone found culpable—regardless of status or affiliation—must be held accountable in accordance with the law.

"The nation cannot afford to allow corruption, impunity, and institutional decay to become entrenched. CDHR urges all stakeholders to act decisively to safeguard democratic institutions, uphold the rule of law, and restore the confidence of citizens in governance."

Security Complicity in Nigeria's Insecurity

Another issue that caught the attention of the CDHR was the alleged security complicity in the security challenges of the country. On this it called for independent investigation into to unearth the true situation.

The communiqué stressed: "CDHR is deeply concerned by the growing allegations that elements within Nigeria's security architecture may be contributing, directly or indirectly, to the country's worsening insecurity.

"We are particularly disturbed by the allegations raised by Martins Vincent Otse, popularly known as VeryDarkMan (VDM), at the 2026 Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Annual General Conference in Port Harcourt.

"He alleged that some police officers stationed at highway checkpoints profile travellers, identify persons considered financially capable of paying ransom, and allegedly pass information about their movements to criminal networks.

"The Nigeria Police Force has rejected these allegations and challenged VDM to provide verifiable evidence. We believe that allegations of this magnitude should not simply be dismissed, nor should they be accepted without investigation. They demand an independent, transparent and credible inquiry.

"CDHR is equally concerned about a broader question: How are kidnappers and armed criminal groups able to obtain such detailed information about the movements, identities



CDHR BoT Chairman, Mr Olasupo Ojo, Esq., being received by the President, Debo Adeniran, and some members of the NEC.



Members of the CDHR National Executive Committee (NEC) after the meeting in Lagos.

and locations of their victims?

"There have been several disturbing cases involving security personnel or persons with access to security information being implicated in criminal activities."

The CDHR provided several examples. According to the group, in April 2025, the Nigeria Police Force reported the arrest of three suspected informants in Katsina who were allegedly providing information and logistical support to bandits. (incb.police.gov.ng)

In June 2026, the FCT Police Command reported the arrest of suspected kidnappers and logistics suppliers following intelligence-led operations in the Abuja area. (The Guardian Nigeria).

In August 2026, two security operatives were reportedly among suspects arrested in Plateau State over an alleged plot to kidnap the wives of two prominent bishops. The allegation remains a matter for investigation and due process. (The Cable).

It also stated that police investigations into a major kidnapping network in Enugu in August 2026 also identified individuals providing intelligence that allegedly enabled criminals to evade security surveillance and select suitable targets. (Premium Times Nigeria).

CDHR stated: "These cases do not, by themselves, prove that the Nigeria Police Force or other security agencies are institutionally collaborating with kidnappers. However, they demonstrate that criminal infiltration, information leakage, insider assistance and security-sector misconduct are legitimate national-security concerns that deserve serious investigation.

"CDHR is also troubled by the recurring experiences reported by Nigerians of being stopped at security checkpoints and subsequently encountering criminal attacks shortly after passing through such locations. These accounts should be investigated rather than casually dismissed."

It therefore demanded answers to several questions. These are: "Who has access to information about travellers stopped at security checkpoints? Are records kept of persons and vehicles stopped at major checkpoints? Are officers deployed to checkpoints subjected to regular integrity and lifestyle checks?

Are CCTV cameras or body cameras being

used at strategic checkpoints to create an auditable record of interactions? How frequently are officers rotated to prevent the establishment of relationships with criminal networks? How many security personnel have been investigated, disciplined or prosecuted for providing information or assistance to kidnappers and bandits? When credible intelligence is supplied to the military or other security agencies, what mechanisms exist to prevent the information from being compromised? Why are some criminal groups repeatedly able to anticipate the movement of security personnel and evade operations?"

CDHR said it is particularly concerned about reports of situations in which victims or informants appear to have been located and attacked shortly after providing intelligence to security authorities.

According to it, if verified, such incidents raise serious questions about intelligence protection, operational security and possible information leaks.

It maintained that the recent escalation of mass kidnapping in Nigeria makes this issue even more urgent. It noted that Reuters reported in August 2026 that approximately 600 people were abducted from a mosque in Niger State, while a separate SBM Intelligence assessment reported 7,825 kidnapping victims between July 2025 and June 2026.

These figures, it stated, demonstrate that Nigeria's kidnapping crisis has reached a level that requires more than conventional security responses. (Reuters)

CDHR, therefore called for an independent investigation involving civil society, the National Human Rights Commission, relevant parliamentary committees and other credible oversight institutions into allegations of security-sector complicity, intelligence leakage and negligence in kidnapping and banditry operations.

It added: "We also call on the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies to protect honest officers from blanket accusations while ensuring that any officer found to have aided criminal networks is prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

"The Nigerian people deserve security agencies they can trust. Security checkpoints must be places where citizens receive protection—

not places where criminals obtain information about potential victims.

"CDHR will continue to demand transparency, accountability and respect for the fundamental rights and security of every Nigerian.

"We will not state as fact that 'security officers are responsible for insecurity' or that the General was definitely betrayed by someone inside the military unless there is evidence establishing that. The stronger human-rights position is: 'These allegations are serious enough to require an independent investigation.' That makes the statement harder to dismiss as an unsupported accusation."

Casino On INEC Website: CDHR Demands Answers Before 2027

CDHR said it is alarmed by reports that casino and gambling content was hosted on the official website of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

It maintained that this is more than a website embarrassment, as it raises serious questions about the security and integrity of INEC's digital infrastructure as Nigeria approaches the 2027 elections.

It stated: "If unauthorised persons can access INEC's official platform to publish casino content, Nigerians have a right to ask: Who had access? How did this happen? And could the same vulnerability be exploited to manipulate electoral information?"

"CDHR also demands accountability for the enormous public funds allocated to INEC's technology and digital infrastructure. How can billions be spent on maintaining an electoral website while it is being used to host casino content?"

"We call on INEC to immediately undertake an independent forensic audit of its digital systems and publicly explain how this breach occurred and what measures have been taken to prevent a recurrence.

"Deleting the casino pages is not enough. Nigerians deserve answers. The integrity of the 2027 election must be protected both at the polling unit and in the digital systems supporting our democracy."

Concluding the rights body stressed: "CDHR demands transparency. CDHR demands accountability. CDHR demands secure elections."

Nigeria Must Transit From Campaign Democracy To Performance Democracy – Akinyemi

Dr Bolaji O. Akinyemi, a Christian activist and Apostle of Nation Building, is the Chairman, Board of Trustees (BoT), Project Victory Call Initiative, aka PVC Naija, and Convener, The Apostolic Roundtable (TAC), and the author of the book, 'Global Leadership Code: Donald J. Trump as a Case Study'. He spoke to **EJIKEME OMENAZU** on what he terms Performance Democracy, including the recent altercation over the visit of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) to President Bola Tinubu and issues relating to 2027 general elections. Excerpt:

The recent engagement between the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu appears to have generated a different kind of political conversation. What do you think this engagement signifies for Nigeria's democratic journey?

I believe the significance goes beyond the meeting itself. The Catholic Bishops occupy a unique moral position in Nigerian society. When such a body engages the political leadership of the country, it creates an opportunity to move political conversation beyond partisan rhetoric and towards questions of national responsibility. What interests me particularly is the possibility of a new dynamic in which political leadership is engaged not merely as an object of criticism, but as a responsibility that must continually be interrogated against the welfare of citizens. That is very close to the philosophy of Performance Democracy. Democracy should not be reduced to who won the last election or who will win the next one. The fundamental question must always be: What is government doing with the mandate entrusted to it by the people? If the Bishops' engagement helps deepen that kind of conversation, then it is important for Nigeria.

The Catholic Bishops are now coming to Osogbo for their Synod, shortly after the Osun State governorship election. Is there a connection between the two developments?

I believe there is a remarkable opportunity for connection. Osogbo has become, almost unexpectedly, a meeting point between two important conversations: the moral conversation about the Nigerian nation and the practical conversation about how citizens judge governance. The Catholic Bishops are coming with their moral and spiritual responsibility at a moment when Osun has just demonstrated the power of the electorate. That makes the Synod an opportunity to ask a larger question: What kind of citizens and what kind of leadership does Nigeria require before 2027? The timing is almost providential. The Church can help Nigeria move from electioneering to citizenship, from political mobilisation to civic responsibility, and from merely seeking peaceful elections to building accountable governance after elections.

You have described the Osun election as a victory of the people, rather than simply the victory of Governor Ademola Adeleke or his political party. Why?

Because democracy should ultimately be judged by what it does for the people. Governor Adeleke was certainly a principal beneficiary of the electoral outcome, and he deserves commendation for the stewardship that citizens had the opportunity to evaluate. But, I would resist reducing the election to a partisan victory. The deeper story



Akinyemi

The citizen must become an evaluator of governance. This is why I describe Performance Democracy as the transition from Campaign Democracy. Campaign Democracy asks citizens to listen to promises. Performance Democracy asks citizens to examine results

is that the people exercised their constitutional authority to judge political leadership. That is Performance Democracy. The voter says: "I have seen what you have done. I have considered the evidence. I have compared it with what you promised. I will now make my decision." That is a much more mature democracy than one in which citizens vote because of party loyalty, ethnicity, religion, inducement or propaganda. So, yes, commend Governor Adeleke where performance deserves commendation. But, let us also celebrate the citizens who are beginning to understand that their vote is an instrument of accountability.

What does Performance Democracy demand from citizens after an election?

Performance Democracy demands that they remain citizens. Voting is not the end of citizenship. It is the beginning of another phase. Citizens must monitor budgets, projects, policies and outcomes. They must ask: What was promised? What was budgeted? What was delivered? What changed? Who benefited? What remains outstanding? And what evidence supports the government's claims? The citizen must become an evaluator of governance. This is why I describe Performance Democracy as the transition from Campaign Democracy to

Performance Democracy. Campaign Democracy asks citizens to listen to promises. Performance Democracy asks citizens to examine results.

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah will be one of the speakers at the Synod. How does his work fit into this emerging conversation?

Bishop Kukah has made an extraordinary contribution to Nigeria's democratic conversation. His work has consistently connected faith, citizenship, peace and national responsibility. Through The Kukah Centre and his engagement with democratic and civic questions, he has contributed significantly to the intellectual infrastructure of responsible citizenship. His role in the National Peace Committee is also important. We must commend him and the institutions with which he has worked for promoting peaceful electoral conduct. But I believe Nigeria must now move from peaceful elections to purposeful democracy. It is not enough that Nigerians do not kill one another because of elections. We must also create a democratic culture in which Nigerians can disagree peacefully, choose responsibly, monitor government continuously and hold leaders accountable without violence. That is where I see Performance Democracy complementing the work already being done by

Bishop Kukah, The Kukah Centre and the National Peace Committee.

How can the lessons of Osun be converted into something useful for the 2027 general elections?

We must refuse to allow Osun to become merely an election story. It should become a national case study. That requires an intellectual and technical effort to document what happened, identify the lessons and convert them into practical instruments of civic enlightenment. We need a multidisciplinary intellectual committee involving civic educators, researchers, communication professionals, technologists, development practitioners, media organisations, faith communities and citizens. Their task should be to produce tools that ordinary Nigerians can use. We need: Candidate Performance Profiles, Citizen Scorecards, Manifesto-to-Performance Trackers, Public Project Monitoring Tools, Citizens' Budget Guides, Electoral Accountability Dashboards, and simple educational materials explaining how citizens can evaluate political leadership. We should stop telling Nigerians merely to "vote wisely." We must give Nigerians the tools with which to vote intelligently.

Does this mean you are proposing that every candidate in 2027 should be subjected to a Performance Democracy test?

Precisely. And the test must be applied fairly. For an incumbent, the first question is performance. For a new candidate, the questions are competence, character, capacity, clarity of vision and evidence of previous achievement. Every major promise should be measurable. Every manifesto should be capable of becoming a scorecard. Every public commitment should eventually be tested against evidence. Imagine a Nigeria where, before voting, citizens can examine a candidate's record and ask: What has this person achieved? What does the person propose? How realistic is the proposal? How will it be funded? How will success be measured? And who will monitor delivery? That would fundamentally change Nigerian politics.

What role should the Catholic Bishops Conference play in taking this conversation beyond Osun?

The Bishops can help Nigeria make citizenship a moral responsibility. The Church possesses an enormous network of people, institutions and communities. The Bishops can encourage Nigerians to see political participation not simply as a right but also as a responsibility. Imagine if every diocese, parish, school and Catholic institution became a centre for civic education, peaceful political engagement and responsible citizenship. That would be transformative. And it should not be partisan. The Church should not tell citizens

whom to vote for. It should help citizens understand how to judge those asking for their votes. That distinction is extremely important.

You have spoken about the need for a national citizens' compact for 2027. What would such a compact contain?

It would establish a simple principle: The mandate belongs to the people. Political parties are vehicles. Candidates are trustees. Public office is an assignment. Citizens are the sovereigns. The compact would therefore ask candidates to commit themselves to measurable governance objectives, peaceful political engagement, transparency, accountability and regular reporting to citizens. It would also ask citizens to make commitments of their own: to reject political violence; to reject the sale of their votes; to examine evidence; to participate in civic monitoring; and to hold elected officials accountable. The objective is to create a relationship of mutual responsibility between the governed and those who govern.

Finally, if you were to leave Nigerians with one message as we move towards 2027, what would it be?

I would say: Do not give your vote away. Your vote is not a favour to a politician. It is the temporary transfer of your sovereign authority. Use it wisely. But do not stop there. After voting, stay engaged. Monitor. Question. Encourage. Challenge. Hold government accountable. And let us learn from Osun. I congratulate the people of Osun State because they have given Nigeria something worth studying. I commend Governor Ademola Adeleke for the stewardship that the people have had the opportunity to evaluate. I commend the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria for bringing its Synod to Osogbo at this significant moment. I commend Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, The Kukah Centre and the National Peace Committee for their sustained contribution to peaceful electoral engagement and democratic citizenship. But the time has come to take the next step. Peaceful elections must produce accountable governance. Accountable governance must produce measurable performance. Measurable performance must produce citizen confidence. And citizen confidence must ultimately produce a democracy that works for the people. It was not simply Adeleke that won in Osun. The People won. And that is the lesson Nigeria must carry from Osun to 2027. The Catholic Bishops, Governor Adeleke as the host governor, Bishop Kukah and the institutions he represents, civil society, the media, political actors and ordinary citizens can all play their part in taking that lesson forward. Let us build the intellectual instruments. Let us build the civic tools. Let us build the culture. Let us build the accountability architecture. And let us enter the 2027 general elections with a different understanding of victory. The question should no longer be: Which candidate won? Nor: Which political party won? The question should be: Did Nigeria win? That is the ultimate test of Performance Democracy. And in 2027, the victory must belong to the Nigerian People.

Politics

You are a one-time running mate to a governorship candidate in Lagos under the African Action Congress (AAC). Since after that election, no one seems to be hearing about you. What happened?

I think that is a misconception. I have not disappeared, and I have certainly not abandoned politics. Since the 2023 election, I have remained actively involved in the affairs of the African Action Congress, particularly in Lagos State. Politics is not only about appearing on television or attending public events. There is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes, organising, mobilising, engaging with communities and strengthening party structures. At present, I serve as the Director-General of the AAC campaign in Lagos State. So, rather than disappearing, I have actually remained engaged in the political process. My conviction has not changed. I believe the political table in Nigeria will definitely turn in favour of the masses, but that will only happen when people who genuinely desire change continue to organise and participate in the political process.

Would you say you are still a strong chieftain of the AAC, as you have not been appearing at the party's fora?

Absolutely. My commitment to the AAC is unquestionable. My absence from some public fora should not be interpreted as withdrawal from the party. I have continued to participate in party activities and political engagements, and my current responsibility as Director-General of the AAC campaign in Lagos State speaks for itself. For me, politics is about commitment to an idea and to the people, not about seeking personal visibility. I remain firmly committed to the AAC and to its vision of building a Nigeria where public resources are used for the benefit of the majority rather than a privileged few.

The AAC has been around for some time and has taken part in three election seasons without much success, both at federal and state levels. What would you consider the major challenges of the party?

The AAC has certainly faced electoral challenges, but I would not define the party solely by its electoral numbers. We have consistently challenged the political establishment and introduced issues that other parties sometimes prefer to avoid. One of our biggest challenges is the nature of Nigerian politics itself. Elections are often heavily influenced by money, incumbency, political patronage and access to enormous resources. For a relatively young party operating outside the traditional political establishment, building structures across thousands of polling units is a huge undertaking. There is also the challenge of convincing Nigerians that politics can be different. After decades of broken promises, many citizens have become understandably cynical. But, I believe these challenges are temporary. The AAC is building, learning and expanding. We are not in Nigerian politics for one election cycle. We are building a political alternative for the long term.

Majority of the party's membership are youths, with a higher percentage being males, most of whom do not occupy critical positions in the private or public sector. Don't you see this as a major disadvantage for its growth and expansion, as well as its inability to attract winning votes during elections?

I see the youthfulness of the AAC

AAC Not In Nigerian Politics For One Election Cycle – Benneth Eze

Dr Benneth Eze, an educationist, is a former Deputy Governorship candidate of the African Action Congress (ACC) in Lagos State and currently the Director-General of the AAC campaign in the state. As Nigerians get set for the 2027 general elections, he speaks to **EJIKEME OMENAZU** on the party's efforts towards victory in the coming elections. Excerpt:



Eze

as one of its greatest strengths. Nigeria is a young country, and young Nigerians are going to determine the future of this nation. We should therefore not regard youth participation as a weakness. Having said that, I believe every political party should continue to broaden its membership. We need more women, professionals, entrepreneurs, community leaders, workers and people from different generations and backgrounds. But, let me make an important point: occupying a top position in government or the corporate world does not automatically make someone a better politician. What Nigeria needs is competence, integrity, courage and a genuine commitment to the people. It is important to state that as at June 2026, Nigeria's population was estimated to be 242.4 million, with a median age of 18.3 years. This implies that the bulk of our masses are youths. Therefore, the youthful membership of AAC is an electoral asset. The AAC is open to Nigerians from every social class. We want people who are prepared to contribute to building a better country.

As Nigerians are gearing up for the 2027 elections, why do you think AAC will perform better this time around?

Because the political consciousness of Nigerians is changing. Peo-

ple are no longer interested only in political slogans. They are asking very practical questions: Can I afford food? Can I afford transportation? Can I pay my children's school fees? Can my business survive? Can I access electricity? Can I live in a safe environment? The AAC has consistently positioned itself on the side of ordinary Nigerians. We have presented vibrant, people-oriented candidates across the country, and we are strengthening our structures. We have also gained valuable experience from previous elections. Most importantly, Nigerians are beginning to understand that voting for an alternative is not wasted effort. I have no shred of doubt that the AAC will perform significantly better in 2027.

What do you think should be the AAC's selling point in the coming general elections, which the candidates will use to convince the electorate?

Our selling point should be simple: putting the Nigerian people first. We must offer practical solutions, not merely criticise the government. Our candidates should tell Nigerians exactly how they intend to address unemployment, food insecurity, transportation, electricity, healthcare, education, housing and insecurity. We should also be honest with Nigerians about the country's

resources. Nigeria is not a poor country. We have enormous human and natural resources. The problem is that those resources have not been managed in a way that benefits the majority. The AAC's position on petrol subsidy is a good example. The AAC was the major political party that promised to put a transparent petroleum subsidy structure in place. We also vowed to fight subsidy thieves. This is because, we know that removing subsidy abruptly, without first providing adequate alternatives, was bound to create hardship. Nigeria has an inadequate mass transportation system. Electricity supply remains unreliable, forcing households and businesses to generate their own power. Virtually everything in our economy moves by road. So, when the price of petrol rises sharply, the consequences go far beyond the filling station. Transportation becomes more expensive, food prices rise, manufacturing costs increase and the entire economy feels the shock. Our message should therefore be that reforms must be designed around the welfare of the people.

What is your take on the reported emerging alliance between the AAC, SDP and Accord Party? Do you see this alliance succeeding and making a great impact on the 2027 general elections?

First, I am not opposed to alliances among progressive and socialist political forces. In fact, I believe there is value in bringing together political organisations that genuinely share a commitment to social justice, economic fairness and democratic development. But, an alliance must be based on principles, not desperation for political office. The Nigerian people have seen several political coalitions come and go. If an alliance is merely about personalities, positions and the sharing of political offices, it will not survive. What we need is a genuine people's alliance, one based on a clear ideological direction, credible candidates, grassroots mobilisation and a programme that addresses the material conditions of Nigerians. My position is straightforward: I welcome any alliance that puts the Nigerian people before political ambition.

Would you say the AAC presidential candidate, Omoyele Sowore, stands a better chance of victory in this election, considering that he has continued to face arrests, detentions and trials in the hands of security agencies?

Omoyele Sowore has demonstrated an extraordinary level of consistency. You may agree or disagree with his politics, but you cannot accuse him of abandoning his principles because of political convenience. He has continued to speak about issues affecting ordinary Nigerians and has remained committed to his political convictions despite the enormous pressure he has faced. His political journey has also made him a recognisable figure nationally. The important thing now

is to translate that recognition into a much stronger grassroots political organisation. Elections are ultimately won through a combination of a compelling message, strong structures, effective mobilisation and the confidence of voters. I believe Sowore has the consistency and courage required to lead the kind of political alternative Nigerians are increasingly demanding. The task before us is to take that message to every ward, polling unit and community. I challenge you to interact with the man on the street, you will agree with me that Sowore is loved across the country.

Could you give a brief critique of President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms and the Renewed Hope Agenda, and explain why they have not been able to usher in improved life for Nigerians?

My problem is not with the word 'reform'. Nigeria desperately needs reforms. My problem is with the direction, sequencing and consequences of the reforms. You cannot impose enormous economic shocks on a population that is already struggling without putting adequate safety nets and alternatives in place. Take petrol subsidy removal. If you remove the subsidy in a country where mass public transportation is inadequate, where businesses depend heavily on petrol and diesel, where electricity supply is unreliable and where almost everything is transported by road, you should expect the consequences to spread throughout the economy. That is exactly what Nigerians have experienced: higher transportation costs, increased food prices, higher production costs and enormous pressure on household incomes. Government cannot tell a struggling family that an economic reform is successful simply because some macroeconomic indicator has improved. The real test of economic policy is whether ordinary citizens can afford food, transportation, housing, healthcare and education. An economy is not truly improving if the people who produce the wealth are becoming poorer. The Renewed Hope Agenda must ultimately be measured by the lived experience of Nigerians. If millions of citizens are struggling to survive, then government has a responsibility to reassess its policies and make necessary adjustments. The AAC's position has always been that we should fight corruption, waste and subsidy theft, while ensuring that economic policies do not punish the majority for the failures of the political elite. In summary, President Bola Tinubu's government has failed woefully. The more allocation to governors, that he usually presents as his major achievement, has not translated to better life for the common man. The masses are impoverished and the cost of living is killing the living. The reality is that Tinubu is making Buhari to look like a superstar. I can confidently say that Tinubu's government is the worst since Lord Lugard amalgamated the Northern protectorate and the Southern protectorate in 1914.

The AAC is building, learning and expanding. We are not in Nigerian politics for one election cycle. We are building a political alternative for the long term

Democratic Institutions In Nigeria Must Inspire Confidence – Muwhe

Olorogun (Dr.) Joshua Oghenejiru Muwhe is the Acting Managing Director of Delta Mortgage Trust Bank. In this Interview with **EJIKEME OMENAZU** he spoke on crucial issues in the polity, especially as they pertain to the 2027 general elections. Excerpt:

Nigeria has a largely youthful population. Do you see the votes of Nigerian youths as the deciding factor in the 2027 elections?

First, I want you to note that my views on the state of the nation are personal based on my analytical and observations and does not represent the official position of Delta Trust Mortgage Bank Limited. Potentially, yes. In the 2023 register, Nigerians aged 18 to 34 constituted approximately 39.65 per cent of registered voters, making youths the largest single age category. That is considerable electoral power. But demographic strength does not automatically translate to political influence. Youths must register, obtain the necessary voter documentation, turn out on election day and participate peacefully. Young Nigerians are also not politically homogeneous. A young farmer in Kebbi, a graduate in Lagos, an entrepreneur in Delta and a student in Enugu may have very different priorities. Therefore, the candidate who understands youth concerns—jobs, education, technology, cost of living, security and access to capital—could enjoy a significant advantage. The greatest challenge is converting youth enthusiasm, particularly online, into organized and sustained civic participation. Beyond voting, what are the real chances of youths winning elective office in 2027? What are the barriers? The legal environment is more accommodating today because reforms such as the Not Too Young To Run initiative lowered constitutional age barriers. But, the biggest barriers are increasingly economic and institutional rather than age-related. Politics is expensive. Nomination processes, campaigning, logistics, media exposure and grassroots organisation demand considerable resources. Young aspirants must also navigate established party hierarchies and powerful political networks. Research on youth participation has similarly identified high campaign costs and inadequate support within political parties among the major obstacles confronting young candidates. Political parties can change this by reducing nomination costs for credible young aspirants, conducting transparent primaries, creating leadership-development programmes and deliberately opening decision-making structures. Youths must also understand that political leadership requires preparation. Social-media popularity alone cannot replace community engagement, competence, integrity and organisation.

Politics in Nigeria has been described as a 'do-or-die' battle and 'winner-takes-all'. Do you agree? How can we ensure a level playing field?

Unfortunately, elements of our political culture sometimes justify that description. Politics becomes "do-or-die" when political office is perceived as the principal gateway to economic opportunity, patronage and influence. We must reduce the



Muwhe

Electoral institutions must inspire confidence. INEC must be transparent and technologically prepared, while security agencies must demonstrate complete neutrality. Polling-unit results, accreditation figures and collation processes must be transparent enough that citizens can independently follow how the final outcome emerges

stakes by strengthening institutions rather than individuals. INEC must be independent and transparent; security agencies must remain neutral; political parties must respect internal democracy; campaign-finance and electoral laws must be enforced; and election petitions should be determined expeditiously. The President himself recently committed the governing party to peaceful, transparent and issue-based campaigning under the 2027 Peace Accord and emphasised that elections should not become a do-or-die affair. That commitment should apply equally to every political party. Democratic elections are competitions, not wars. The loser today must remain confident that he can contest again tomorrow. That is the essence of a level playing field.

What has been the impact of fall-outs from party primaries on party unity? Can you cite examples from APC, PDP or other parties?

Post-primary disputes remain one of the greatest weaknesses of Nigerian party politics. Primaries are supposed to strengthen parties by allowing members to choose candidates. When aspirants perceive the process as predetermined, manipulated or unfair, the result is litigation, defections, factionalism

and sometimes anti-party activity. We have recently seen complaints following APC primaries in several states, involving allegations ranging from candidate imposition to irregularities. Within the PDP, factional disputes have resulted in competing claims over candidates and nomination documents in some instances. The ADC has also experienced internal disputes following its primaries in several states. The lesson is straightforward: you cannot build national democratic credibility on weak internal democracy. Parties that manage grievances transparently usually enter general elections stronger than parties that simply suppress dissension

Groups like the G-15 in Kwara and other aggrieved blocs have emerged post-primaries. Are these realignments a threat or an opportunity for democracy?

They can be both. They become a threat where disagreements degenerate into violence, ethnic mobilisation, political sabotage or purely transactional bargaining. But, they can also represent an opportunity because internal dissent reminds political parties that members and aspirants cannot simply be taken for granted. The developments sur-

rounding the Kwara G-15 emerged from disagreements following APC primaries, with reports of negotiations and possible political realignments involving opposition interests. In a genuine democracy, people must retain the freedom to disagree, reorganize and pursue alternative political platforms. The crucial issue is whether such realignments are driven by ideas and demands for internal democracy or merely negotiations for political positions. When dissent forces political parties to become more transparent, it strengthens democracy. When it becomes purely transactional, its democratic value becomes considerably weaker.

Is the call for restructuring and true federalism still a viable solution to Nigeria's unity challenges, or a distraction at this time?

Restructuring remains a legitimate national conversation and should not be treated as a distraction. However, the word 'restructuring' means different things to different Nigerians. We therefore need to move from slogans to specifics. For me, productive restructuring includes greater devolution of responsibilities, fiscal accountability, stronger subnational economies, effective local government, decentralised security arrangements and allowing states to develop according to their comparative advantages. Interestingly, the ongoing national discussion on state policing itself represents an aspect of restructuring because it involves reconsidering the existing distribution of security responsibilities. Significant constitutional steps have already been taken towards a framework for State Police. Restructuring should never mean weakening Nigeria. Properly designed, it should make the federation stronger by enabling each level of government to become more responsible, productive and accountable.

Insecurity persists in the North, South-East, and in farmer-herder clashes. What is the missing link in government's security strategy?

One of the missing links is local intelligence backed by rapid response and accountability. Nigeria is an enormous and diverse country. Security information is often generated at community level, so policing must have strong local knowledge while retaining national coordination. We must also improve intelligence sharing among agencies, technology and surveillance, border security, prosecution of offenders and community confidence in law-enforcement institutions. On State Police, I support the concept in principle, but it must come with strong constitutional safeguards. There must be mechanisms to prevent abuse by state political authorities; professional recruitment; adequate funding; independent oversight; national standards; protection for opposition parties; and clearly defined federal and state jurisdictions.

The State Police proposal has made substantial legislative progress but remains part of an ongoing constitutional process rather than a completed reform. Properly regulated, decentralised policing can bring law enforcement closer to the people. Poorly regulated, it could simply decentralise abuse. The safeguards are therefore as important as the reform itself.

Looking ahead to 2027, what two things must happen for Nigeria to have more credible, peaceful and issue-based elections?

First, electoral institutions must inspire confidence. INEC must be transparent and technologically prepared, while security agencies must demonstrate complete neutrality. Polling-unit results, accreditation figures and collation processes must be transparent enough that citizens can independently follow how the final outcome emerged. Secondly, political actors must change the character of campaigning. Campaigns should debate the economy, security, education, agriculture, healthcare, electricity, federalism and employment—not ethnicity, religion and personal insults. The Peace Accord signed ahead of the 2027 campaign provides a useful framework, but agreements matter only when political actors honour them in practice. If the electoral umpire earns public confidence and politicians accept that Nigeria is greater than any election, we will have taken two enormous steps towards a credible and peaceful 2027 election.

What are your final words? What message do you have for politicians, youths and citizens ahead of 2027?

My message to politicians is that power is a trust, not an entitlement. No political ambition is worth the blood of a Nigerian. Campaign with ideas, accept legitimate outcomes and where genuine grievances arise, seek lawful remedies. To Nigerian youths: your future cannot be outsourced. Register, vote, participate, contest elections, organise peacefully and interrogate every candidate. But reject violence, misinformation, ethnic hatred and politicians who see young people merely as instruments for electoral confrontation. To citizens generally: do not sell your conscience. The money offered for a vote lasts perhaps one day; the consequences of leadership last four years and sometimes generations. Nigeria belongs to all of us. APC, PDP, Accord, ADC and every other political organisation are platforms; Nigeria is the permanent institution. As we approach 2027, our collective prayer and responsibility should be that whoever emerges does so through the freely expressed will of Nigerians. Let us disagree without becoming enemies, compete without destroying one another and always remember that after every election, we remain one people with one country and one shared destiny. Nigeria must ultimately be the winner.

Politics

Otti: A Steward Borrowed To Nations

How One Governor's Governance Philosophy Helped Give Birth to a New Democratic Conversation—Performance Democracy.

BOLAJI O. AKINYEMI

There are birthdays that mark the passage of time. And there are birthdays that become milestones in a man's journey with his nation.

My 60th birthday, celebrated on 5 August 2026 at the National Citizens' Conversation in Lagos, became more than a personal celebration. It became a national conversation about the purpose of government, the responsibility of citizens and the future of democracy.

At the centre of that conversation stood the Governor of Abia State, His Excellency, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, OFR.

He came to my birthday as a guest. He left the podium, in my estimation, as a steward borrowed to nations.

THE GIFT OF A GOVERNOR

Governor Otti's presentation at the National Citizens' Conversation was not merely a birthday lecture. It was a governance proposition.

His intervention challenged us to think differently about the relationship between government and citizens and, more importantly, about what citizens should expect from those entrusted with public office.

The question before us was simple: What should determine the renewal or rejection of a government in a democracy?

The answer was implicit in the practice Governor Otti presented: Performance.

That is why, in retrospect, I consider his contribution one of the defining moments of my 60th birthday.

He did not simply speak about Abia State. He gave us a governance proposition with implications for Nigeria and, potentially, developing democracies across the world. His intervention helped give language to what I now call Performance Democracy. And for that, Your Excellency, I say: Thank you.

OTTI: A STEWARD BORROWED TO NATIONS

There is something profoundly different about leadership when a public office holder understands that the office is not his possession. It is a trust. It is stewardship.

The resources belong to the people. The mandate belongs to the people. The office belongs to the people. The leader is therefore a steward.

This is what I saw in Governor Otti's presentation. And this is why I describe him as a steward borrowed to nations. The phrase is not merely complimentary. It is a statement of responsibility.

When a state demonstrates a working model of governance, that experience should not remain within its borders. If a governor demonstrates that public resources can be converted into public value, other governments should study it. If citizens experience the difference between government that merely exists and government that performs, democracy itself acquires a new vocabulary. That is the significance of Otti's contribution.

THE PANACEA TO CAMPAIGN DEMOCRACY

For too long, our political system has been trapped in what I call Campaign Democracy.

Political parties mobilise. Candidates make promises. Campaign machines are activated. Resources are deployed. Voters are courted. Election day arrives. Victory is celebrated. And almost immediately, the political class begins preparing for the next election.

The tragedy is that the system can become more interested in winning power than demonstrating the value of power once won.

This is the wasteful nature of Campaign Democracy.

Governor Otti's governance philosophy points us towards another possibility: Performance Democracy. Campaign Democracy asks: "How do I win?" Performance Democracy



Otti

racy asks: "What have I done?" Campaign Democracy sells promises. Performance Democracy presents evidence. Campaign Democracy seeks votes. Performance Democracy earns renewal. Campaign Democracy treats election day as the destination. Performance Democracy treats election day as the audit of the previous tenure. This is why I believe the practice Governor Otti presented to us may offer a panacea to the wastefulness of Campaign Democracy.

FROM THE PODIUM TO OSUN

What makes the story even more compelling is what happened ten days later. On 15 August 2026, the people of Osun State went to the polls. An incumbent, Governor Ademola Adeleke, stood before the electorate seeking a renewed mandate. The voters had the power to say yes.

They also had the power to say no. They said yes.

Adeleke was declared the winner with 511,067 votes, defeating Bola Oyebamiji, who polled 444,815 votes. Whatever other factors influenced the election—and there are always many in a democratic contest—one fact remains central: An incumbent went before the citizens seeking renewal, and the citizens made a judgment. That is the essence of Performance Democracy. On 5 August, we discussed the possibility. On 15 August, Osun gave us an example to examine. The conversation had moved from the podium to the polling booth.

THE CITIZEN AS THE FINAL AUDITOR

For decades, we have treated elections primarily as contests for power. Performance Democracy asks us to treat them also as audits of power. The citizen must become the final auditor. Not the party chairman. Not the godfather. Not the campaign strategist. Not the political commentator. The citizen.

The citizen who lives with the road that was built—or not built. The citizen who enters the hospital. The parent whose child attends a public school. The farmer who needs security. The entrepreneur who needs an enabling environment. The young person searching for opportunity. The taxpayer whose money finances government. These citizens are not spectators. They are the shareholders of democracy. When election day comes, they should ask: What did this government do with the mandate we gave it? That is a much more mature democratic question than: Who made the best promises?

DATA IS LIFE

This was why the theme of my 60th birthday conversation was so deliberate: "Data Is Life: Government's Roles and Citizens' Pact."

Data is not simply numbers. Data represents lives. Behind every education statistic is a child. Behind every healthcare statistic is a patient. Behind every unemployment figure is a young Nigerian.

Behind every insecurity statistic is a family. Behind every budget line is public money. Therefore, if government is to be judged by performance, performance must be measurable. We must know what was promised. We must know what was budgeted. We must know what was delivered. We must know who benefited. And we must know what changed. That is how evidence replaces propaganda. That is how performance replaces rhetoric. That is how accountability becomes real.

THE OFFICE OF THE CITIZEN

One conviction has grown stronger throughout my years of public engagement: The highest office in a democracy is the Office of the Citizen. Presidents emerge from citizens. Governors emerge from citizens. Legislators emerge from citizens. Governments derive legitimacy from citizens. And every political mandate ultimately belongs to citizens. But citizenship is not merely the right to vote. It is the responsibility to watch, question, demand evidence, participate and, when the time comes, renew or withdraw the mandate.

This is the Citizens' Pact. Government must commit to competence, transparency, justice and measurable performance. Citizens must commit to informed participation, responsibility, integrity and accountability. Democracy becomes stronger when both sides honour their part of the pact.

FROM ABIA TO NIGERIA

This is why Abia matters in this conversation. It is why Otti matters. And it is why his intervention at my 60th birthday deserves to be remembered beyond the occasion. The significance of Governor Otti is not simply that he governs Abia. It is that the experience of governance in Abia can contribute to a larger Nigerian conversation about what government should look like. A state can become a laboratory. A governor can become a case study. A governance philosophy can become a national proposition. And a national proposition can become a global democratic idea. That is how ideas travel.

A NEW STANDARD FOR DEMOCRACY

At sixty, my assignment is changing. I have spent years speaking truth to power. I have challenged governments, institutions and political actors. Sometimes I was applauded. Sometimes misunderstood. Sometimes criticised. But the motivation was never bitterness. It was love for

Nigeria. At this stage of my life, however, criticism must increasingly give way to construction. The elder does not merely identify what is wrong. He points towards what can work. That is why I am investing this new season in the conversation around Performance Democracy.

I believe Nigeria must move from a democracy that primarily rewards political mobilisation to one that increasingly rewards public performance. The question should no longer be only: Who can win an election? It must become: Who can govern? And after four years:

Who has governed well enough to deserve another mandate? That is the democratic culture we must build.

A NEW NIGERIA IS RISING

Nigeria's greatest challenge is not the absence of resources. It is the quality of governance. We possess oil, gas, land, a vast youthful population, extraordinary entrepreneurial energy and immense intellectual capital at home and abroad. Our problem is not what God has placed in our hands. Our problem is what we do with it. Good governance transforms resources into prosperity.

It transforms budgets into infrastructure, policy into opportunity and leadership into confidence.

It transforms citizens from victims of the state into partners in national development. That is why I remain hopeful. Nigeria's best chapters have not been written.

OTTI'S LEGACY TO THE CONVERSATION

Perhaps history will judge Governor Alex Chioma Otti by many things: the roads he built, institutions he strengthened, policies he introduced and lives his administration touched. But for me, there is another contribution I hope will endure.

On 5 August 2026, he stood on the podium at my 60th birthday and helped move a conversation from governance as political administration to governance as measurable stewardship. Ten days later, Osun provided an electoral moment that allowed us to see the citizen exercising the power of judgment over an incumbent.

These events may ultimately prove connected by a larger democratic principle: If it does, democracy becomes more than a mechanism for changing leaders. It becomes a mechanism for improving lives. That is the promise of Performance Democracy.

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC QUESTION

For decades, politics has asked: "Who will win?"

The new democratic question must be: "Who performed?"

And after performance has been measured: "Who deserves another term?"

This is not merely a Nigerian question. It is a question for Africa. It is a question for developing democracies. It is a question for every society struggling to convert electoral mandates into human development. My 60th birthday therefore ended not with a conclusion, but with a commission: To build a culture in which governance is measured. To make data central to citizenship. To make performance central to political legitimacy. To make accountability continuous. And to restore to citizens the dignity of being the ultimate judges of public leadership.

Governor Otti came to my birthday as a Governor. He stood before us as a practitioner of governance. He left us with a proposition.

And in the unfolding of this conversation, I believe that proposition deserves to travel.

Otti: A Steward Borrowed to Nations. May his example inspire more stewards. May Performance Democracy inspire better governments. May informed citizens demand better leadership. And may Nigeria finally discover that the greatest resource of a nation is not what lies beneath its soil, but the quality of leadership and citizenship above it.

Let government perform. Let citizens measure. Let democracy decide. Welcome to the age of Performance Democracy.

Cocoa Revival: Can Nigeria Hit 500,000 Tonnes, Reclaim Global Market?

SEYI TAIWO-OGUNTUASE

The Federal Government's distribution of one million improved hybrid cocoa seedlings has been widely welcomed by stakeholders as a major boost for Nigeria's cocoa industry.

However, industry players insist that while the initiative marks a significant turning point, it can only achieve its ambitious objectives if backed by sustained investments in financing, farm rehabilitation, extension services, traceability, market reforms and stronger public-private collaboration.

Their views come as the government seeks to increase cocoa production, improve export earnings, ensure compliance with the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), and reposition Nigeria among the world's leading cocoa-producing nations.

For many stakeholders in separate interviews with Sunday Independent, the latest intervention differs from previous seedling distribution programmes because it is being introduced at a time when sustainability, traceability and compliance have become critical requirements for participation in the global cocoa market.

Oba Dokun Thompson, the Olofin of Eti-Oni Osun state said the intervention comes at a defining moment for Nigeria's cocoa sector, particularly with the EUDR taking effect from January 1, 2027.

According to him, the government is simultaneously developing a national traceability framework and data warehouse that will strengthen commodity monitoring and improve export readiness.

He noted that Nigeria currently produces about 330,000 tonnes of cocoa annually and explained that the improved hybrid seedlings developed by the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN) possess significant advantages over existing varieties.

Unlike traditional cocoa trees that take between five and seven years before fruiting, he said the new varieties begin producing within about two years, are pest resistant, possess high flavour quality and have higher yield potential.

Oba Thompson explained that while Nigeria's average cocoa yield is about 400 kilograms per hectare, improved agronomic practices could raise productivity to about 1.5 tonnes per hectare.

If properly implemented, he said, Nigeria could increase cocoa production to about 500,000 tonnes within the next five years.

James Oyesola, a member of the National Cocoa Management Committee (NCMC), shares similar optimism but cautions that improved seedlings alone cannot transform the sector.

He described the programme as a commendable and timely inter-



Abubakar Kyari, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security

vention, noting that many cocoa trees across Nigeria are ageing, less productive and increasingly vulnerable to pests, diseases and climate change.

According to him, the improved hybrids mature within about two-and-a-half to three years compared to four to five years for conventional varieties while delivering higher yields and improved tolerance to pests and diseases.

Drawing comparisons with Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, Oyesola said those countries achieved productivity gains by combining improved planting materials with broader farmer support programmes.

He described the one million seedlings as an important first step in what should become a long-term cocoa development strategy.

He estimated that the seedlings could rehabilitate approximately 1,000 hectares annually but stressed that many more farms across Nigeria still require replanting and rehabilitation.

Beyond seedling distribution, stakeholders argue that farmers require a comprehensive support system if the programme is to succeed.

Oba Thompson who is also the Founder of the International Cocoa Diplomacy (ICD), said federal and state governments, alongside international development agencies, have already begun training farmers on improved agricultural practices that address not only pests and diseases but also the growing impacts of climate change.

He added that the National Traceability and Sustainability Framework under development would incorporate satellite and remote sensing technologies capable of monitoring crop health, predicting yields and warning farmers about emerging threats.

According to him, discussions are also ongoing with the Federal

Beyond production, stakeholders say the future competitiveness of Nigeria's cocoa industry depends heavily on meeting increasingly stringent international sustainability standards

Government on blended finance models and green insurance mechanisms that would de-risk agricultural investments and encourage greater private sector participation.

"When properly implemented, it will greatly benefit farmers and completely transform the country's agricultural sector," he said.

Oyesola, who is also the State Cocoa representative and Director Tree Crops and Climate Change Ministry of Agriculture, Ogun State believes access to affordable finance remains one of the most pressing needs because cocoa production requires substantial investment before farmers begin earning income.

He called for low-interest loans, credit guarantees and financing mechanisms designed specifically

for cocoa's long production cycle.

He also stressed the importance of strengthening agricultural extension services to train farmers on planting techniques, pruning, soil fertility, pest management, harvesting, fermentation, drying and climate-smart production methods.

In addition, he said ageing cocoa plantations require rehabilitation alongside seedling distribution, while farmers must have access to quality fertilizers, certified agrochemicals, improved farm tools and irrigation support where necessary.

Market incentives are equally important, he added, arguing that farmers are more willing to invest when they receive fair prices through stronger market linkages, certification programmes and organised cooperatives.

Oyesola further advocated sustained investment in research and digital technologies to improve traceability, farm advisory services and market information across the cocoa value chain.

Beyond production, stakeholders say the future competitiveness of Nigeria's cocoa industry depends heavily on meeting increasingly stringent international sustainability standards.

Oba Thompson, who serves on the National Task Force on Nigeria's EUDR compliance and the Joint Steering Committee that produced the Federal Government's white paper leading to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA), described the programme as a carefully designed strategy rather than a simple seed distribution exercise.

He explained that seedlings would be distributed only to accredited farmers through recognised associations, allowing government to monitor production practices, maintain traceability and generate the data needed to unlock blended finance and other programme objectives.

Oyesola also maintained that EUDR compliance extends far beyond improved seedlings.

He said Nigeria must invest in GPS farm mapping, digital traceability systems, farmer registration, reliable data management and institutional monitoring to ensure continued access to European markets.

According to him, the National Cocoa Management Committee has already established a National Task Force to drive implementation.

While acknowledging that Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana became global cocoa leaders through years of sustained investment and policy consistency, Oyesola believes Nigeria has begun on the right path.

He added that members of the NCMC visited Ghana in 2022 and

Côte d'Ivoire in 2025 to study successful cocoa development models.

Ayo Akinola, a member of the NCMC and Country Focal Person for the ICCO-led African Cocoa Exchange (AfCX) Programme, describes the one million seedling initiative as far more than an agricultural intervention.

He argues that although it is not a "silver bullet," it represents a major catalyst capable of rekindling public, private and development-sector partnerships across Nigeria's cocoa ecosystem.

According to him, the initiative provides an opportunity to deploy climate-smart agriculture, precision farming, digital technologies, biodiversity protection, carbon credit opportunities and modern agribusiness models that align with global sustainability expectations.

He believes the programme could consolidate fragmented certification and sustainability initiatives already undertaken by private companies and development partners.

From a policy standpoint, Akinola sees the intervention as a call to dismantle the longstanding institutional fragmentation that has hindered Nigeria's cocoa industry.

He argues that Nigeria remains the only major cocoa-producing country without a central mechanism responsible for coordinating regulation and management across the sector, despite cocoa being the country's leading non-oil foreign exchange earner.

Looking beyond the current intervention, Akinola said the one million seedlings form only a small component of the proposed 10-year National Cocoa Plan aimed at raising production beyond 500,000 metric tonnes, restoring premium prices for Nigerian cocoa, expanding domestic consumption and strengthening competitiveness.

To achieve those goals, he called for the speedy resolution of the legislative process establishing the Nigerian Cocoa Management Board and the creation of a cocoa-driven commodity exchange platform capable of supporting price discovery, geo-referencing, block-chain-enabled traceability and a more competitive cocoa economy.

Collectively, the stakeholders agree that the Federal Government's seedling distribution programme has created fresh momentum for Nigeria's cocoa industry.

However, they maintain that achieving higher production, stronger export earnings, EUDR compliance and global competitiveness will depend not simply on distributing improved seedlings, but on implementing a comprehensive, well-coordinated cocoa development strategy that addresses production, sustainability, finance, traceability, value addition and institutional reforms simultaneously.

Business

Egbin Power Pledges Increased Investment In Education

MOHAMMED SHOSANYA

The Chief Executive Officer of Egbin Power, Mokhtar Bounour, has reaffirmed the company's commitment to investing in education as a driver of sustainable development in its host communities.

He spoke at the commencement of the 11th edition of the company's annual scholarship programme.

He said his company believes that education is one of the most powerful and sustainable ways to create that impact, adding that scholarship programme is a deliberate investment in the future of our communities.

The programme aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education and life-

long learning opportunities for all.

He added: "At Egbin Power, we believe our responsibility goes beyond generating electricity. We also have a responsibility to help generate opportunities, nurture potential and enable dreams. Through this programme, we are investing in young people who will become the leaders, professionals and change-makers of tomorrow."

"The legacy we want to build is one of lasting value—where quality education becomes a foundation for individual progress, stronger communities and a better society. This is our commitment to shared success."

"Parents, teachers and community leaders continue to play an active role in the programme, providing valuable support and serving as partners in the educational development and progress

of participating students."

The company reaffirmed its commitment to advancing quality education and creating meaningful opportunities for young people in its host communities.

The scholarship programme reflects Egbin Power's commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which calls for "inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all."

Launched as part of the company's Personal Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) initiative, the scholarship programme provides free, quality education to outstanding students selected from primary and secondary schools across Egbin Power's host communities.

The 2026 edition begun with a pre-test exercise attended by

more than 250 students from the host communities, the company said in a statement on Wednesday.

The programme will also feature an education fair, boot camp, mentorship sessions and playgroup activities, designed to strengthen participants' academic performance while developing essential life skills, discipline, confidence and leadership qualities.

Beyond education, Egbin Power continues to implement impactful corporate social responsibility initiatives focused on healthcare, youth empowerment, community infrastructure and human capital development, reinforcing its commitment to creating sustainable value in its host communities.

Through these initiatives, Egbin Power remains committed to being not only a leading power generation company, but also a catalyst for opportunity, development.

New MD Of Ingentia Assumes Office, Promises Growth, Operational Excellence

MOHAMMED SHOSANYA
LAGOS

Indigenous oil and gas company, Ingentia Energies Limited, has announced the appointment of seasoned industry professional, Engr. Victor Agbaroji, as its new Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer.

His appointment took effect on September 1, 2026, with a commitment to consolidate existing achievements and drive the company into a new phase of growth.

The unveiling ceremony, held in Lagos, marked the formal transition of leadership from the outgoing Interim Managing Director, Engr. Charles Odita, who successfully steered the company over the past six months.

Speaking, Engr. Odita described his tenure from March to August 2026 as an exciting and productive period during which the company recorded significant milestones.

"It is my privilege today to hand over the affairs of Ingentia Energies Limited to the incoming Managing Director, Engr. Victor Agbaroji. The company has achieved a lot within the last six months; it is our desire that the new Managing Director will take us to the next level and I am confident that as an industry veteran, he would 'hit the ground running' and accelerate the company's growth trajectory."

In his acceptance remarks, Engr. Agbaroji mentioned the achievements recorded under Odita's leadership and pledged to

build on the solid foundation already established.

He said: "Our immediate focus is to consolidate and sustain the gains we have made. Ingentia Energies has set the pace among its peers in growing the company since the acquisition of its licence, and we intend to maintain that momentum, holding in high esteem our company's greatest assets—people, and taking into recognition the importance of safety, talent development, innovation and cost competitiveness. IEL will ensure that our people work safely and return home to their loved ones every day."

"At the same time, we will continue to develop talents, improve efficiency, embrace innovative ways of creating value, and deliver strong returns to our shareholders and stakeholders while affirming our commitment to supporting Nigeria's energy aspirations, including the national target of increasing crude oil production to three million barrels per day."

Engr. Agbaroji brings over 31 years of extensive experience spanning the entire oil and gas value chain. He began his career as a well test engineer, working across several fields before joining Shell as a Reservoir Engineer. During his distinguished career, he held key positions in operations engineering, corporate petroleum engineering, corporate planning and economics, where he contributed to portfolio optimisation initiatives that supported the emergence of Nigeria's indigenous marginal field operators.

APWEN Honours NAMA's First Female Engineering Director

ISAAC AGBER

The Lagos Chapter of the Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria (APWEN) has honoured the Director of Safety Electronics and Engineering Services at the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Engr. Terese Ihenachor, with its Outstanding Public Service Award.

The award was presented to Ihenachor during the maiden APWEN Lagos Engineering Summit 2026, in recognition of her contributions to engineering excellence, public service, women's empowerment and professional development.

According to the association's citation, Ihenachor was recognised "for her outstanding commitment to engineering excellence, empowerment of women engineers and sustainable professional development."

The honour celebrates her growing influence within Nigeria's engineering and aviation sectors, particularly her leadership of one of the most critical technical directorates responsible for maintaining infrastructure that supports the safety and efficiency of air navigation services across the country.

APWEN said the award was aimed at celebrating women whose leadership and professional achievements were positively influencing other women while

advancing engineering, innovation and efficiency in public service.

Ihenachor made history in December 2023 when she emerged as NAMA's first female substantive Director of Safety Electronics and Engineering Services.

Her appointment represented a major milestone for women in Nigeria's aviation and engineering industries, particularly in a sector traditionally dominated by men.

Since taking office, Ihenachor has provided strategic leadership for the maintenance, modernisation and improvement of the reliability of NAMA's Communications, Navigation and Surveillance/Air Traffic Management infrastructure nationwide.

The directorate plays a crucial role in ensuring that the technical facilities required for aircraft to operate safely and efficiently within Nigerian airspace remain functional and reliable.

Under her leadership, NAMA said significant progress had been made in the upgrade and deployment of critical communication, navigational and surveillance facilities across the country.

The agency said she had also strengthened maintenance procedures for safety-critical systems and improved technical planning and operational coordination within the directorate.



Senator Godswill Akpabio, Senate President (left); Pastor Umo Eno, Governor, Akwa Ibom State (middle), and Captain Ruth Adebawo, Chief Pilot, Ibom Air, during the reception of a new Airbus A220-300 aircraft into the fleet of Ibom Air, held at the Victor Attah International Airport, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, on Tuesday.

ISAAC AGBER

The Gambian Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Abdoullie Jobe, will lead a high-level delegation from the country to the 2026 edition of Akwaaba African Travel Market in Lagos, as The Gambia intensifies efforts to promote its tourism potential and expand its presence in Nigeria and the wider African travel market.

The travel trade exhibition is scheduled to be held from September 13 to 15, 2026, and will bring together major stakeholders from Africa's tourism, travel and aviation industries.

The Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard) said its participation in the event would provide an important opportunity to showcase the country's tourism products, strengthen commercial relationships and develop new partnerships across the continent.

Ahead of the main exhibition, Team Gambia will host a Destination Gambia Promotional Cocktail Reception on September 12, bringing together travel agencies, tour operators, airlines and aviation stakeholders, logistics

Gambia Tourism Minister Leads Delegation To Akwaaba 2026

companies, investors and other professionals within the tourism value chain.

The reception is expected to serve as a strategic networking and business platform through which the Gambian delegation will engage directly with key players in the African travel industry, promote the country's tourism offerings and explore opportunities for investment, partnerships and increased visitor traffic.

Minister Jobe will be accompanied by the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Mrs Amie Njie; Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Gambia Tourism Board, Mr Momodou Bamba Saho; and the Director General of the Gambia Tourism Board, Mrs Ida Jeng Njie.

Other tourism stakeholders and industry operators from The Gambia are also expected to form part of the delegation.

A major component of The Gambia's participation at the 2026 Akwaaba Travel Market will be

the promotion of the country as an emerging destination for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism in Africa.

With demand for business events, conferences, exhibitions and corporate gatherings growing across the continent, The Gambia is seeking to broaden its tourism appeal beyond its traditional leisure market.

The country plans to leverage the gathering of travel professionals, tourism operators and industry decision-makers at Akwaaba to showcase its capacity to host business events and attract corporate travellers.

The Gambian delegation will highlight the country's hospitality facilities, tourism infrastructure and opportunities for hosting conferences, corporate meetings, exhibitions and other business-related gatherings.

The MICE tourism strategy is also expected to open the door for stronger collaboration

between Gambian tourism businesses and their counterparts in Nigeria and other African markets.

Such partnerships could help stimulate increased business travel, encourage the development of joint tourism packages and strengthen commercial ties between The Gambia and Nigeria.

Akwaaba African Travel Market has become a major meeting point for stakeholders in the West African and broader African tourism industry, bringing together destinations, airlines, hotels, tour operators, travel agencies and other players seeking to establish and expand commercial relationships.

For The Gambia, participation in the 2026 edition represents an opportunity to improve destination visibility in Nigeria, one of the region's significant travel markets, while also deepening engagement with the wider African tourism industry

Foreign Affairs

Why The World's Last Frontier May Be The Biggest Geopolitical Anxiety For The West

BISHOP DR. JOSEPH
IGHALO-EDORO

History often conceals its deepest truths beneath the polished language of diplomacy, commerce and civilization. Nations rarely acknowledge the full forces that shaped their rise until the passage of time makes denial impossible. Africa represents one of those enduring truths. It is the birthplace of humanity, home to extraordinary cultural diversity, custodian of immense biodiversity and one of the most richly endowed continents on earth. It possesses abundant reserves of oil, natural gas, gold, diamonds, platinum, cobalt, copper, manganese, lithium, uranium, rare earth minerals and vast arable land. It is also home to the world's youngest and fastest-growing population. Yet, despite these remarkable advantages, Africa has long been portrayed as a continent defined by poverty, instability, disease and dependence. This contradiction raises an important question. Why has a continent blessed with such extraordinary human and natural wealth remained economically underpowered? More importantly, why have successive global powers continued to compete so intensely for influence across Africa? Is the renewed international race for Africa genuinely about partnership, or is it another chapter in a much older struggle for strategic advantage?

No serious examination of Africa's place in the modern international system can ignore the transatlantic slave trade. The prosperity that accompanied the rise of Europe and the Americas cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the enormous contribution of millions of enslaved Africans whose labour transformed agriculture, commerce and industry. They cultivated sugar, cotton and tobacco, expanded plantations, enriched merchants, strengthened financial institutions and generated wealth that later fuelled industrialisation. Scientific innovation and technological advancement undoubtedly contributed to Western development, yet the economic foundations upon which those achievements were built were also reinforced by centuries of coerced African labour. While distant economies accumulated unprecedented wealth, many African societies experienced demographic decline, political disruption and economic dislocation whose consequences continue to shape development today.

When slavery gradually became morally indefensible, imperial ambition simply adopted a different form. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 established the framework through which European powers partitioned almost an entire continent with little regard for existing kingdoms, ethnic communities or long-established trade networks. Borders were drawn with rulers rather than history. Communities with distinct identities were merged into single colonial territories while others with shared histories were divided by artificial frontiers. Those colonial boundaries remain largely intact and continue to influence political tensions, security challenges and questions of national identity across Africa.

Colonialism was fundamentally an economic enterprise. Africa supplied rubber, cocoa, palm oil, gold, copper, diamonds and countless other raw materials required by Europe's expanding industries. Railways, roads and ports were designed primarily to transport

resources from the interior to coastal ports for export rather than to stimulate integrated African economies. The result was an extractive economic structure in which colonies exported raw materials while importing finished products. Although political independence dismantled the colonial administration, many African economies inherited this pattern and continue to wrestle with its consequences.

The striking reality is that history appears to be repeating itself, although the methods have changed. Gunboats have largely been replaced by investment agreements, infrastructure financing, commercial partnerships, digital technology and long-term resource contracts. The transition towards renewable energy, electric vehicles, artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing has created unprecedented demand for strategic minerals such as cobalt, lithium, graphite, manganese, copper and rare earth elements. Once again, Africa occupies the centre of a global economic transformation because beneath its soil lies many of the resources essential for the industries of the future. The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains the world's leading source of cobalt. Zimbabwe possesses important lithium reserves. South Africa dominates global production of platinum group metals and manganese, while countries such as Guinea, Zambia, Namibia and Nigeria possess significant deposits of bauxite, copper, uranium and emerging lithium resources. Control of these supply chains has become a strategic priority for every major economy.

This renewed interest inevitably provokes legitimate questions across Africa. Is today's engagement truly based on mutual development, or does it represent a more sophisticated version of historical extraction? The answer is neither entirely optimistic nor entirely cynical. Unlike the colonial era, African governments now negotiate with multiple international partners, diversify investment sources and increasingly exercise collective influence through regional institutions. Yet unequal bargaining power, illicit financial flows, debt pressures, weak institutions and limited domestic industrial capacity still allow enormous wealth to leave the continent without creating sufficient value at home. The challenge is therefore not whether Africa should engage the wider world. Modern economies cannot flourish in isolation. The real question is whether Africa will negotiate from a position of strategic confidence rather than historical vulnerability.

Perhaps Africa's greatest asset is not found beneath its soil but within its people. While many developed societies confront ageing populations, declining birth rates and labour shortages, Africa is becoming progressively younger. By the middle of this century, roughly one in every four people on earth is expected to be African. Such demographic momentum represents one of the defining geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century. If matched with sustained investment in education, healthcare, industrialisation, technology and vocational skills, Africa's youthful population could become one of the world's greatest engines of innovation and economic growth. If neglected, however, the same demographic advantage could deepen unemployment, migration pressures and instability. Population alone is not destiny. Leadership determines whether demographic potential be-

The decisive question therefore is not whether Africa will matter. That debate has already been settled. The real question is whether Africans themselves will transform immense potential into enduring prosperity through unity, integrity, visionary leadership and strong institutions

comes national prosperity or a missed historic opportunity.

Africa's greatest transformation may ultimately emerge not from its mineral wealth but from the ingenuity of its people. Across the continent, scientists are advancing medical research, engineers are developing financial technologies that have transformed digital payments, entrepreneurs are modernising agriculture, software developers are building globally competitive applications and universities continue to produce scholars whose influence extends well beyond national borders. In many cases, innovation has flourished because necessity demanded it. Limited traditional infrastructure has encouraged technological leapfrogging, enabling several African countries to adopt new digital solutions without first passing through older industrial models. Technology hubs in Lagos, Nairobi, Kigali, Cape Town and other rapidly growing cities now attract international investors searching for the next generation of global innovation.

Africa's cultural influence has become equally impossible to ignore. Music, literature, fashion, film and visual arts have reshaped global perceptions of the continent far more effectively than decades of official diplomacy. Nigerian Afrobeats, South African Amapiano and other contemporary African musical movements dominate international charts and festivals. African authors command worldwide readership, while filmmakers, designers and artists increasingly shape global creative industries. This growing cultural influence demonstrates that soft power can be every bit as consequential as military strength or economic size. Narratives shape perceptions, perceptions influence policy and creativity itself has become a valuable economic resource.

Sport offers another compelling example of Africa's contribution to the modern world. European football clubs depend heavily on African talent, athletics continues to be enriched by competitors from Kenya, Ethiopia and

many other African nations, while African athletes increasingly excel in basketball, boxing, rugby and numerous Olympic events. Yet many observers continue to question why a continent that consistently produces world-class athletes captures only a fraction of the commercial value generated by global sport. Some attribute this imbalance to structural inequalities within international sporting institutions, while others point to inadequate domestic investment and governance. Whatever explanation one accepts, Africa continues to export exceptional talent while retaining comparatively little of the economic rewards.

The debate about Africa's future ultimately returns to leadership. History repeatedly demonstrates that natural resources alone do not create prosperous nations. Institutions, discipline, vision and accountable governance determine whether wealth becomes a blessing or a burden. Some of Africa's most influential statesmen understood this reality long before it became fashionable. Kwame Nkrumah argued that political independence would remain incomplete without economic emancipation and continental unity. Julius Nyerere championed self-reliance, education and human dignity. Patrice Lumumba became an enduring symbol of African sovereignty, while Thomas Sankara challenged dependency and insisted that Africans should define development according to their own priorities rather than external prescriptions. Nelson Mandela demonstrated that reconciliation, justice and moral authority could become instruments of national renewal. Though their philosophies differed, they shared a common conviction that Africa should become an active author of world history rather than merely one of its subjects.

That aspiration continues to find expression in the African Continental Free Trade Area, an ambitious effort to integrate the continent's economies into a more dynamic common market. If successfully implemented, greater regional trade, stronger manufacturing capacity, improved infrastructure and coordinated economic policies could significantly strengthen Africa's collective bargaining position in an increasingly competitive global economy. The objective extends beyond commerce. It seeks to retain greater value within Africa, create employment, expand industrial production and reduce excessive dependence on external markets.

Encouragingly, several African countries demonstrate that effective institutions and long-term planning can deliver remarkable progress. Botswana has built one of Africa's strongest records of political stability through prudent management of its mineral wealth. Rwanda has attracted international attention through investments in technology, public administration and urban development, even as debates about political freedoms continue. Mauritius has diversified its economy well beyond tourism, while Cape Verde has shown that limited natural resources need not prevent sound governance or economic resilience. These examples are not perfect models, but they illustrate that geography alone does not determine national destiny.

A new generation of African entrepreneurs, innovators, researchers and business founders is also redefining leadership beyond government. Increasingly, young Africans are building technology companies, renewable

energy enterprises, agricultural innovations and creative industries that compete internationally while remaining rooted on African soil. Their confidence reflects a profound psychological transformation. Previous generations often viewed emigration as the principal path to opportunity. Today, many increasingly seek to create opportunity within Africa while engaging confidently with global markets. Nations rise not only through investment but through belief in their own possibilities.

Nevertheless, optimism must remain balanced with realism. Corruption continues to divert resources from development. Electoral disputes weaken democratic institutions in some countries. Armed conflict, violent extremism and unconstitutional changes of government still threaten stability in parts of the continent. Educational systems often struggle to equip rapidly expanding populations with the skills demanded by modern industries, while infrastructure deficits and dependence on commodity exports continue to constrain economic transformation. These challenges require African solutions, African accountability and African political courage. To attribute every difficulty solely to external interference would underestimate Africa's own capacity for reform. Equally, to ignore the continuing influence of international strategic interests would misunderstand the realities of global politics. Both truths exist simultaneously.

This brings us back to the question that frames this discussion. Who is afraid of Africa? Perhaps the answer is more nuanced than the question itself. Nations rarely fear prosperity. They fear the redistribution of influence that accompanies changing economic and political power. Every established power seeks to preserve strategic advantages, secure access to critical resources and protect markets that sustain its prosperity. As Africa's population expands, as its consumer markets deepen, as its technological capacity grows and as its control over strategic minerals becomes increasingly indispensable to the industries of the future, global competition for influence across the continent will inevitably intensify.

The decisive question therefore is not whether Africa will matter. That debate has already been settled. The real question is whether Africans themselves will transform immense potential into enduring prosperity through unity, integrity, visionary leadership and strong institutions. The nineteenth century underestimated Africa's resilience. The twentieth century underestimated Africa's determination to reclaim political sovereignty. The twenty-first century must not underestimate Africa's economic, demographic and intellectual awakening. The continent that once supplied labour for distant empires now supplies world-class athletes, globally celebrated artists, technological innovators, critical minerals and one of the youngest workforces on earth. Africa is no longer merely a participant in global history. It is steadily becoming one of its principal architects. The future will belong to Africa not through historical entitlement or demographic inevitability, but through the choices Africans make today. If those choices are guided by courage, discipline and vision, the question will no longer be who is afraid of Africa. The question will instead be who recognised early enough that Africa's rise had become one of the defining realities of the twenty-first century.

The Environment

How Ice And Rock Triggered Nepal's Catastrophic Flood

UMESH HARITASHYA

The catastrophic flood that killed hundreds of people in Nepal on Aug. 26, 2026, and left many more missing likely began with falling ice and rock crashing into the river below, but that wasn't the end of the disaster. Days later, a new lake pooled behind the debris and then burst, sending more water streaming through the valley.

The destruction represents two of the ways rising temperatures, thawing permafrost and melting ice are increasing the risk of destructive floods in the Himalayas and other high mountain regions around the world.

I am a geologist and part of an ad hoc international group of 50-plus scientists who meet quickly after mountain disasters to analyze satellite images and field data to get information out to the public. This is what we've learned so far about the disaster and the region's rising risks from climate change.

The flood disaster in Nepal

Evidence from satellites and seismic data we have reviewed suggest that an enormous mass of bedrock and glacier ice broke off a slope north of Langtang Lirung and slammed into the valley about 4,000 feet (1,200 meters) below – that's a distance roughly three times the height of the Eiffel Tower. The landslide shook the earth hard enough to register as a magnitude 5.2 event on seismometers, the U.S. Geological Survey confirmed.

The result was a slurry of melting ice, rock and water that quickly flowed into the river.

We have a rough idea of how much ice fell, and it likely wouldn't have been enough to trigger the magnitude of the flood that followed. One theory is that the rock and ice briefly dammed the valley, allowing water to back up in the river.

When that blockage broke, a wall of water rushed downstream – reaching towns, taking hundreds of lives and destroying infrastructure. Hundreds more people were stranded by the flood.

Second threat: The lake that formed, then burst

The disaster wasn't finished when the first wall of water passed. Within a day, authorities warned that a new "barrier lake" estimated to hold a few million cubic meters of water had developed behind avalanche and flood debris where two rivers meet in Tibet, a region of China, before crossing into Nepal.

On Aug. 28, the barrier lake broke its bank and the river rose again. Helicopter search operations were briefly sus-



pending while rescuers and residents on the lower banks scrambled to high ground. The immediate danger eased only when the barrier drained gradually rather than collapsing all at once.

This is the crux of why these events are so dangerous: A temporary, debris-choked dam can form in minutes, hold for hours or days, and fail with little warning. An avalanche-dammed lake often appears and disappears too quickly for conventional monitoring to catch.

Risks are rising

We're seeing disasters like this happen frequently.

In 2021, a similar rock and ice avalanche in India's Uttarakhand state sent about 950 million cubic feet (27 million cubic meters) of rock and ice – roughly 80% rock, 20% ice – cascading down from Ronti Peak. It destroyed one hydropower plant, badly damaged another and killed or left missing about 200 people, many of them dam workers.

In 2025, roughly 335 million cubic feet (9.5 million cubic meters) of rock and ice fell from the Birch Glacier in the Swiss Alps, burying most of the village of Blatten; only advance monitoring and the evacuation of more than 300 residents kept the death toll to one.

The number of glacial lakes has also increased around the world, raising the risk of outburst floods. And more mountain slopes are now at risk of landslides than in the past.

In 2023, thawing permafrost led to a rock collapse into South Lhonak Lake in Sikkim, India, generating a wave that burst through the moraine holding back the glacial lake. The outburst flood sent more than 13 billion gallons (50 million cubic meters) of water rushing down the mountain, damaging several dams, more than 25,000 buildings and more than 30 bridges.

Climate change is one major contributor to rising disaster risk.

The last 10 years have been the warmest on record globally, and that has accelerated snow and glacier melt.

Populations are growing, too, and these valleys are increasingly being used to generate hydropower. As countries build more infrastructure in these places, the hazard risk rises because more people and development sit in the flood's path.

The valley where the latest disaster occurred held multiple hydropower plants – Nepal's electricity authority said the flood knocked about a dozen major generation and transmission facilities offline. Bridges and a major border crossing, the Gyirong Port gateway between Nepal and China, were also destroyed. It became a catastrophe because of where the water, rock and mud landed.

Thawing permafrost, geology raise flood risk

Together with the neighboring Hindu Kush mountains, the rugged Himalayas that stretch across Asia contain one of the world's largest volumes of ice.

They're sometimes called the "third pole" for that reason.

As temperatures have risen, their ice loss rates roughly doubled since 2000, according to studies from the Nepal-based International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, or ICIMOD.

And it isn't only the glaciers that are melting. High mountain slopes are also held together by permafrost – ground that stays frozen year-round – with ice filling the cracks and joints in the rock like a natural cement. As that frozen ground warms and ice inside thaws, the cement weakens, and slopes that stood for thousands of years can lose their grip.

Meltwater from snow and ice seeps into cracks in the rock. Where it refreezes, it can pry those cracks wider. Where it stays liquid, it acts as a lubricant along the surfaces where rock and ice meet.

On a steep cliff, these water-filled fractures can sometimes be the difference between a face that holds and one that gives way all at once – sending millions of tons of rock and ice into the valley below in seconds.

Not every thaw ends in disaster. But rising temperatures steadily load the dice: more slopes lose their frozen glue, more meltwater works its way into the cracks, and the odds of a catastrophic collapse rise year after year.

In the 2021 disaster in Uttarakhand, thawing likely contributed to the collapse of a large slab of rock and ice on the face

of Ronti Peak.

Early indications in Nepal point to a similar story: a large mass of rock and ice detaching from a mountainside and falling, triggering the August 2026 flood. Comparing satellite images of the site from before and after, first posted by my colleague Dan Shugar, we have also noticed that a lot of snow had disappeared in the days preceding the flood. That snow-melt had to go somewhere – and it may have supplied the water that lubricated the rockfall.

How to lower the risk

From a risk standpoint, some areas of these mountains are extremely dangerous today.

To help protect people, early warning systems are crucial. When a flood starts, people living farther down the valley might have several minutes to get to safety before the water arrives – and minutes are enough to save lives.

Nepal has warning systems in place, and they have been credited with preventing casualties in the past. But the warning systems rely heavily on river-level gauges, which work far better for monsoon floods than for a wall of water moving tens of meters per second – and the flood itself likely destroyed the very gauges the warning systems depend on.

Building redundancy into the system would help, such as adding seismic sensors that detect a large mass movement the instant it happens, sirens and loudspeakers in valley-bottom settlements, radio and satellite-based cell broadcasts that don't rely on a single tower that a flood can sweep away, and automatic alerts triggered when an avalanche and sudden water and sediment level in the river jumps.

Knowing the risks can also improve permit decisions for hydropower dams, roads and buildings in high-hazard corridors – and it can push monitoring beyond the familiar checklist of large glacial lakes to hanging glaciers, steep ice-and-rock slopes, permafrost, and the short-lived debris dams that can be just as deadly.

Regional cooperation is also important. When rivers cross borders or a transboundary glacial lake has potential to fail, the disaster doesn't stop at the border. The water that devastated Nepal began on the Tibetan side, and the barrier lake that threatened a second surge sat right on the frontier.

Umesh Haritashya is Professor of Earth, Environment and Sustainability, and Director of Sustainability Programs, University of Dayton.

Source: THE CONVERSATION (https://theconversation.com), August 29, 2026.

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Can Chelsea's Free-Scoring Attack Breach Arsenal's Mean Defence?

The reigning champions meet the assigned closest challengers in today's Premier League main event, which sees Arsenal welcome Chelsea to the Emirates Stadium for a mouth-watering London derby.

Neither side has slipped up in any competition yet this season, but at least one 100% record will cease to exist when Mikel Arteta and Xabi Alonso shake hands.

On-field elation and off-field exasperation has been the theme for Arsenal since the new campaign kicked off, as a gritty 1-0 triumph over Aston Villa on August 31 was soon overshadowed by an activity-less transfer deadline day.

While Mikel Arteta and Andrea Berta sanctioned multiple attacking exits - Gabriel Jesus, Ethan Nwaneri and new record sale Gabriel Martinelli - not a single reinforcement arrived on September 1, as the Gunners failed to seduce Julian Alvarez into a U-turn and opted not to firm up their interest in Malick Fofana.

One all-too common injury in the final third now has the potential to derail Arsenal's title defence - at least in the eyes of glass-half-empty Gooners - but three wins, three clean sheets and seven goals from the current crop is hardly bad going.

However, there is both a crowd and a collector's item for Arsenal, who have only won their first three matches of a Premier League season once in the last 21 years - that streak came in the 2022-23 campaign.

Capital clashes have been the hosts' forte in recent years, though, as Arsenal have avoided defeat in each of their last 16 Premier League London derbies, earning 12 victories and playing out four stalemates.

At the opposite end of the perfection scale, Chelsea's unblemished record in 2026-27 thus far has been built on an astounding attack rather than a diligent defence, evidenced by a league-high 12 goals being scored in the Blues' two outings.

Chelsea's unmissable 4-3 success over Brighton & Hove Albion belongs in the 'Prime Barclays' category, as Xabi Alonso's men raced into a 3-0 lead, were pegged back to 3-2, restored a two-goal advantage and survived an injury-time scare to prevail.

Only goal difference is keep-



ing the visitors below Arsenal in the Premier League table at the time of writing, and Chelsea could now win their opening four games of a season in all tournaments for the first time since 2016-17 - Antonio Conte's title-winning campaign, if they can overcome the champions at the Emirates Stadium today.

Fast starts have been key to the Blues' success so far, as Alonso's men are just the second Premier League team in history to score in the first four minutes of their opening two games of a season, following in the footsteps of the 2002-03 Bolton Wanderers unit.

However, Chelsea have been bested in each of their last three matches against Arsenal, who have gone over five years without suffering defeat to their London rivals, last ending up on the wrong end of the scoreline in August 2021.

FORM & INJURIES

The champions' success at Villa Park did come at a cost, as

both Declan Rice and Cristhian Mosquera were forced off before the end, and the latter was missing from Arsenal training on Thursday alongside Bruno Guimaraes.

Mosquera's concern should open the door for Ezri Konsa to make his full debut in the heart of defence, but Rice was observed on the practice pitches during the week and is expected to be given the green light.

Meanwhile, Jurrien Timber (groin) is back in individual training but will not be ready for the London derby, and the same goes for William Saliba, likely to spend months more out with a back problem.

On Chelsea's end, the £125m sale of Enzo Fernandez to Manchester City - while inevitable - was untimely, as Moises Caicedo aggravated a previous injury in the win over Brighton and is not guaranteed to feature on Sunday.

The clash with the champions should have marked Lamine Camara's likely debut

date, but after Monaco astonishingly pulled the plug on the midfielder's transfer - leaving Chelsea seething - Malo Gusto and Romeo Lavia could hold the fort in the engine room again.

Jordan Henderson (wrist) and Marco Palestra (unspecified) are also out of contention for Chelsea, whose talisman Cole Palmer could bag his 50th Premier League Blues goal on his 99th appearance this weekend.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Since the start of 2022, these two London rivals have met 11 times, with Arsenal winning eight of them and losing none. This is quite the contrast compared to what came before. Between 2004 and 2015, the pair met 28 times across all competitions, which produced a miserly four Arsenal wins.

That though has flipped dramatically. Since a 2-1 win for Frank Lampard's team in 2019, this coming in only Mikel Arteta's second game in charge, the

Blues have won only one of 16 encounters with the Gunners, while Arteta and his team have enjoyed 11 victories. Of the 18 clubs Arteta has met ten or more times as a manager, only against Leeds United, Leicester City, Crystal Palace and Wolverhampton Wanderers does he boast a higher points-per-game.

Arsenal and Chelsea clash in the Carabao Cup semifinals earlier this year, with Arsenal 3-2 winners at Stamford Bridge, before a last-gasp 1-0 victory at home sparked wild celebrations.

That was Havertz's third goal for Arsenal against Chelsea at the Emirates, which is more goals than the Blues themselves have scored in N5 for over five years. Chelsea's only two goals at the Emirates since 2021 have been Piero Hincapié's own goal, while the other was scored by Noni Madueke.

Arteta's team have drawn their last three Premier League

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Sports

"Blues Have Announced Themselves As Title Contenders"



Action during the two teams outing last season

visits to Stamford Bridge, a streak they'll be seeking to end when the pair clash on the King's Road in early-March. At home however, it has been pure dominance against Chelsea, with Arsenal winning their last five encounters at the Emirates, including a 5-0 demolition in 2024. Before this sequence of five in a row, Arsenal had won only six of 21 home matches against their hated cross-city rivals since the Invincibles season.

So, what will happen in today's blockbuster encounter? So far this year, Alonso's team, as said earlier, had enjoyed a 3-2 victory at Craven Cottage, before last weekend's crazy 4-3 win over Brighton & Hove Albion at Stamford Bridge. Of course, the Morgan Rogers, Cole Palmer and João Pedro front three has looked exhilarating and frightening, but Arteta will surely be looking forward to facing a side that has shipped five goals in two games.

Across these matches too, the Blues' opponents, Arsenal, have racked up seven big chances, attempted 29 shots, of which 12 have been on target, and accumulated an xG figure of 1.74. Most interesting of all though is the fact that Chelsea had just 38% possession against Fulham, and then only 26% a week ago.

The latter was the lowest they have ever recorded in any Premier League match since records began. These are both partially due to the fact Chelsea have gone in front after just 30 seconds and then three and a half minutes, changing the

game-state.

On the flip side, Arteta's team are yet to concede a goal in three matches this season, while Aston Villa who they last defeated mustered zero shots on target on Monday.

This sets up a fascinating fixture today, one that Gooners will hope goes the same way as Chelsea's recent visits to North London.

Meanwhile, ex-England striker, Peter Crouch, has backed Chelsea to get the better of Arsenal and throw a 'cat amongst the pigeons' in today's game.

"Great game! Two teams looking good as well,' Crouch said on That Peter Crouch Podcast while previewing the clash.

"Joao Pedro, for me, I love watching him play football. He's a player that enjoys his football and he just looks like he enjoys his football.

"I've been thinking about this since the first game against Fulham, I think he'll get goals this season. I just think he'll score goals.

"Pedro Neto looks sharp and creative. They've got some creative players in that team."

Chelsea have looked to bring some stability at the back by capturing Aston Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez as a replacement for the error-prone Robert Sanchez.

But Crouch believes the Argentine's arrival alone may not be enough to stop the Blues shipping goals against Arsenal.

"The only problem here [for Chelsea] is defensively, I think Chelsea will concede," the for-

mer Liverpool and Tottenham forward added.

"I love the Emiliano Martinez signing, I think it's a brilliant signing. How you get a World Cup-winning, dominant leader for £7million in this climate... I think that's unreal, that's a great signing.

"I think Chelsea will concede goals, Brighton scored three against them.

"I think they'll concede goals but I think there will be goals, it

will be interesting to see.

"I'm going to put the cat amongst the pigeons and I'm going to go for a 3-2 Chelsea win. I think they've announced themselves as title contenders."

However, Sports Mole analysis believe differently, admitting that Arsenal have upper hand in the contest. To Sports Mole, if there was ever a match that screamed defence versus attack, Arsenal versus Chelsea is the dictionary definition,

saying the Gunners' perfect rearguard record in 2026-27 is surely destined to end on Sunday.

"The hosts have undoubtedly left themselves too light in attack, but with a clean bill of health in the final third - for now - Arteta's side still have our vote to expose Chelsea's defensive vulnerabilities and pass the first major test of their title credentials," read the comments from the team.



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100 Influencers Invited To US Open Spark Debate On 'Tennis Etiquette'



Arthur Ashe Stadium, the US Open's main arena, has a capacity above 23,000



Naomi Osaka won the US Open in 2018 and 2020

Lights. Camera. Quiet please.
When it comes to etiquette in tennis, there are a fair few unwritten rules. Apologising after winning a point from a net cord. Honesty around line calls, double bounces and double-hits. Post-match handshakes. As for the spectators, it is common courtesy not to disturb the players during points. Around 100 influencers and content creators have been granted accreditation for the tournament in New York - double the amount from last year. Their presence has led to debate over how to balance bringing tennis to a new, different audience while respecting the game's etiquette. "I definitely think it's cool to have a new demographic and I definitely think it helps grow the sport," world number four Coco Gauff said. "But if you're being invited to a red carpet, you wouldn't show up in jeans. I think it's just follow the etiquette of the sport. That's all." During two-time champion Naomi Osaka's first-round match on Arthur Ashe Stadium, one group held a photo shoot in their hospitality suite while

play was going on. The group turned on a portable ring light while Osaka was serving, leading to a reprimand from the umpire. When Osaka returned on Thursday, the umpire had to remind the crowd several times to be quiet. "Today the umpire told everyone to be quiet more than I've ever heard an umpire tell a crowd to be quiet," Osaka said. "I tell people I normally just focus on the match and the court, but there was a moment where there was people shouting and you could hear it quite clearly. I think it bothered my opponent, too." In one video, which has gone viral, a group can be seen speaking loudly as they film themselves during Osaka's first-round match on Tuesday, which led to the chair umpire calling for them to stop. "I think obviously if you come to a sporting event, you have to respect the sport," Osaka said. "I feel like it's common courtesy to read up on the sport, especially the etiquette. It could be a good thing for people

to make the sport of tennis popular to their specific audience, but I think it has to be managed a lot better, especially in the situation like my first-round match. "Overall, I think there are huge positives. You want people to continue to grow the sport. "I just think it has to be in a way that everyone knows the rules and the etiquette." Arthur Ashe is the biggest tennis stadium in the world, and matches are often accompanied by a buzz of noise from conversations around the arena. Some players love it. Some do not. Men's seventh seed Daniil Medvedev, who has had a tricky relationship with the New York crowds in the past, believes whatever brings more eyes to tennis can only be a good thing. "I think the more we try to raise awareness about tennis, the better it is, the more popular the sport is," the Russian said. "The more the sport grows, the better it is. I trust USTA [tournament organisers the United States Tennis Association] with what they are doing. I think [there is] a lot more upside than downside, so go for it."

Kyrgios Gets One-Month Ban For Positive Cocaine Test

Nick Kyrgios is eligible to return to tennis after accepting a one-month ban for testing positive for cocaine. The Australian, 31, was provisionally suspended on August 4 after a sample he submitted during the Mallorca Open in June was found to contain benzoylecgonine, a metabolite of cocaine. Kyrgios told investigators from the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) that he used cocaine at a nightclub in Magaluf in the early hours of June 20.



Kyrgios has won one and lost three of his four singles matches this year

He played his first-round match at the Mallorca tournament two days later, losing in straight sets to compatriot Adam Walton. The ITIA accepted he used cocaine outside of competition after consulting with an independent expert. Kyrgios could have faced a maximum three-month ban, but it was reduced after he entered a treatment programme. His one-month ban ended on Thursday. Kyrgios, who has fallen to 918 in the world rankings, will also lose his prize money of 6,570 euros (£5,650). When the positive test was announced, Kyrgios said he would step away from social media and public life for the next 28 days to "focus on getting myself right". The former world number 13 has played only four singles matches this season, having struggled with knee and wrist injuries in recent years. He last played in the men's doubles at Wimbledon, where he and partner Alexander Bublik lost in the first round. After his initial suspension was announced, Kyrgios said the past few years of injuries had taken "a huge toll on me, both mentally and physically".

"My body hasn't been able to do what my mind expects it to do," he wrote in a lengthy statement on Instagram. "Coming to terms with being near the end of my career has been harder than I ever imagined. "None of that excuses what I did." Cocaine is classified as a stimulant and substance of abuse on the World Anti-Doping Agency's prohibited list. Kyrgios has long been a controversial figure in tennis. His behaviour on court has been widely criticised and he has been given numerous large fines for smashing racquets, making audible obscenities and arguing with the umpire. In 2023 he admitted assaulting an ex-girlfriend two years earlier. He avoided a criminal conviction. He was criticised further for making a series of comments which have been considered misogynistic. In 2024 he shared a post from controversial influencer Andrew Tate. He later said he had gone "to all lengths" to distance himself from the self-proclaimed misogynist. Kyrgios was also critical of the handling of two high-profile anti-doping cases involving top players Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek, calling them "disgusting" for tennis. Kyrgios has won seven ATP Tour singles titles and reached the Wimbledon final in 2022, losing in four sets to Novak Djokovic.

Tennis Circuit

No Britons In US Open Singles As Dart, Jones Lose

Harriet Dart and Francesca Jones fell to seeded players as British interest in the US Open singles ended in the second round. Dart said she felt "under the weather" during her 6-2 6-2 defeat by Czech 25th seed Marie Bouzkova as temperatures reached 30C in New York. Her loss meant Jones was the last Briton standing in either singles draw, and she acquitted herself well before falling 6-4 6-4 to 14th seed and rising American star Iva Jovic. Nine British players competed in the US Open main draws - the most since 1981 - with four coming through qualifying. Five of them reached the second round, but Jacob Fearnley was the only player to win a set as they all fell to seeded players. Lucky loser Fearnley fell in four sets to 27th seed Tomas Martin Etcherry, while qualifier Toby Samuel was beaten by 18th seed Jiri Lehecka. Katie Boulter lost to Wimbledon runner-up Karolina Muchova in only 58 minutes on Wednesday.

In the men's draw, Cameron Norrie, Arthur Fery, Harry Wendelken and Jan Choinski exited in the first round. Jones, ranked 90 places lower than Jovic, made her work for one hour 54 minutes to reach the third round. Humid conditions meant both players frequently dashed to the back of the court between points to dry their hands and face. It was 18-year-old Jovic who started on the front foot, opening up a double break and a 3-0 lead as she controlled the rallies with deep hitting from the baseline. Jones snatched a break back and kept in touch with Jovic, but could not make the most of a break point as Jovic served for the set. After wrapping up the opener, Jovic raced into a 4-1 lead in the second, only to once again be dragged back by Jones. Jones saved three match points on her own serve but Jovic produced one of her best service games to seal victory and set up a meeting with friend Alexandra Eala, from the Philippines.



Dart is ranked 131st in the world

ITTF, WTT Unveil 2027 Table Tennis Calendar

The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) and World Table Tennis (WTT) have unveiled the 2027 international calendar, setting the stage for a year featuring the sport's biggest global events, from World Cups and World Championships to a WTT circuit spanning four continents. The standout addition is the ITTF Doubles World Cup, a brand-new event on the calendar running from April 19 to 25. Featuring Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles, the event will bring all three disciplines together at World Cup level for the first time. Its introduction comes as Men's and Women's Doubles prepare to return to the Olympic programme at Los Angeles 2028, joining Mixed Doubles in an expanded Olympic doubles programme and giving players a brand-new pinnacle event to aim for on the road to LA28. The ITTF Singles World Cup follows in March, while the ITTF World Championships Finals take centre stage in May in Astana, bringing one of the sport's most prestigious global titles to the Kazakh capital. October will see the ITTF family week bring the table tennis community together at the regional levels and continental levels. The year's final stretch will see the ITTF Mixed Team World Cup take place in late November, giving the world's best teams a chance to book their place at the Mixed Team event's Olympic debut at Los Angeles 2028. The ITTF World Youth Champion-

ships in mid-December will then give the sport's next generation their moment on the world stage. WTT will play a central role throughout the 2027 international calendar, bringing elite table tennis to fans across four continents with a packed programme of Grand Smash, Champions and Finals events forming the backbone of the professional season. The season opens with WTT Champions in Asia from 19-24 January, followed by WTT Singapore Smash from February 18 to 28 and WTT Champions Chongqing from March 9 to 14. The pace remains relentless throughout the year, with United States Smash taking place from June 25 to July 4, before a busy stretch across August and September sees Europe Smash, WTT Champions Astana, WTT Champions (Japan), WTT Champions (Asia) and China Smash run in quick succession, five events in just six weeks. The season then heads towards its conclusion with WTT Champions (France) from November 2 to 7, before all eyes turn to Hong Kong, China where the WTT Finals from December 7 to 12 will crown the WTT Series' champions for the year. Further dates and locations, including the WTT Star Contender, Contender, Feeder, Youth and Para Series, will be announced soon on ITTF and WTT's websites. ITTF President and WTT Chair Petra Söring said, "2027 is shaping up to be an ambitious year for our sport."

Sports

D'Tigress Fall Short Again As Hungary Edge Nigeria 71–67 In Berlin Thriller

AYO BADA

Nigeria's D'Tigress suffered a second successive defeat at the 2026 FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup, falling narrowly to Hungary 71–67 in a fiercely contested Group B encounter in Berlin on Saturday.

After opening their campaign with a 99–81 defeat to South Korea, D'Tigress were desperate for a response against Hungary, but the reigning African champions were again left disappointed as Hungary held their nerve in the decisive moments.

The four-point defeat represents a particularly painful setback for Nigeria, who remained competitive throughout the contest but could not produce enough offensively to turn their effort into victory.

Nigeria struggled from the field, converting 17 of 44 two-point attempts (39%) and just 7 of 25 attempts from three-point range (28%). They were also 12 of 23 from the free-throw line.

Hungary, meanwhile, were more efficient inside the arc, shooting 24 of 41 for 59 per cent, while making four of their 14 three-point attempts.

The result leaves D'Tigress without a win from their opening two Group B matches, putting their hopes of progressing to the knock-out stage under significant pressure.

Nigeria's situation had already become delicate after the opening-day defeat to South Korea. FIBA's qualification permutations showed that D'Tigress needed a victory over Hungary to keep their progression hopes firmly alive.

The defeat also means Nigeria will now have to produce a major response against France in their final Group B game on Monday, with the reigning African champions facing one of the toughest challenges in the group.

D'Tigress arrived in Berlin carrying high expectations after their historic run at the Paris 2024 Olympics, where they became the first African women's basketball team to reach the Olympic quarter-finals. They also qualified for the World Cup as reigning FIBA Women's AfroBasket champions.

Their return to the World Cup was seen as an opportunity to improve on their historic eighth-place finish at the 2018 tournament, when Nigeria became the first African team to reach the quarter-finals of the competition.

Instead, Rena Wakama's side now find themselves fighting for survival in Berlin.



Team Nigeria boxer, Patricia Mbata, in Blue, bows out after narrow defeat

Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2026: Stakeholders Blame NBF For Poor Outing

IKPO IGBINOBA

Stakeholders have accused the Nigeria Boxing Federation (NBF), for the country's poor outing at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

Nigeria, which has a rich boxing history and a former powerhouse on the global stage failed to win even a medal at the quadrennial Games with six boxers on parade.

The stakeholders who spoke to DAILY INDEPENDENT in separate interviews expressed the same sentiment that the federation should be held accountable for the country's worst outing in recent history.

Former secretary of the NBF, Mr. Peter Omagbemi said Nigeria failed at the Games because the federation didn't pick the best team.

Omagbemi, blamed the federation for the poor selection of the coaches and boxers.

"It was very clear from the selection that the federation was not prepared to have a good run at the Games.

"For example, they brought a man that has long retired from the sport, Sabo Mohammed to be the coach and dropped the national boxing

coach Tony Konyegwachi."

"With his record, Konyegwachi is one of the best coaches in the country"

The former secretary revealed that the National Sports Commission (NSC) invested a lot in the preparation of the Commonwealth Games team.

"We should give credit to the NSC for giving the entire team the kind of preparation which we have not had for a very long time.

"The camping was top notch both in Nigeria and in Aberdeen".

On the boxers picked, Omagbemi said the trials were highly controversial and outcomes were disputed.

"Unfortunately, the federation had the final say over who should go and who should not go.

"And today, we are discussing Nigeria's worst outing in Commonwealth Games history"

Veteran sports journalist, Mr. Ifeanyi Eduzor who has covered boxing for over two decades said the federation should take responsibility for the failure in Glasgow.

"Before they travelled, it was clear that they won't make any impact at the

Games" Eduzor said, citing poor selection of the boxers and the technical crew.

"The problem with the boxing team was poor selection and the sidelining of the National coach, Tony Konyegwachi, who they replaced with those without the technical expertise required to perform at the Commonwealth Games level."

He insisted "As for the Trials, it was a sham.

"Boxers who could have made the trip were rigged out and the federation travelled with their preferred boxers who ended up giving Nigeria the worst result in history".

Eduzor said some of the aggrieved boxers couldn't complain openly for fear of being victimised by the Federation.

One of the boxers who claimed he was rigged out said some of the board members were more interested in pursuing their personal ambition rather than the national interest.

The boxer who prayed that he should not be named said: "With the way they raised the Commonwealth Games team, it is very clear that this present board doesn't have any plan for boxing.

"They dropped the medal hopefuls for those in their

private plans which would be revealed soon"

The boxer appealed to the NSC to probe the performance of the Nigerian boxing team.

Technical Director of the federation, Babatunde Laguda who dismissed claims of poor selection said the boxers couldn't win anything because they didn't have enough exposure and experience.

"As regards the selection, all the boxers who made the team emerged winners during the Trials.

"They were just unlucky to have met opponents who were more experienced and exposed"

He revealed "Of the six boxers, only two had tasted action at the International level and that was during the last All Africa Games."

Mr. Laguda said apart from lack of exposure, the boxers also didn't have enough local competitions.

Rather than despair over the results, the Technical Director said the federation has learnt some lessons from the Games.

"We have a lot of work to do and the federation is on course to address the shortcomings which the Glasgow Games exposed".

CAF Confederation Cup Preliminary: El-Kanemi Set For UDIB

Nigeria's President Federation Cup champions, El-Kanemi Warriors FC will today lock horns with UDIB FC of Guinea-Bissau in the preliminary round of the CAF Confederation Cup.

The match is billed for 4pm at the Remo Stars Stadium, Ikenne, Ogun State.

The Babagana Umara Zulum Boys are in high spirits and fully prepared for the important continental encounter.

The team currently has no major injury concerns, with the players reported to be in stable condition and ready to give their best for the badge.

El-Kanemi Warriors FC will be hoping to make a strong statement in their CAF Confederation Cup campaign and secure a positive result.

The club is therefore soliciting the prayers and support of its loyal fans and the entire football fraternity for victory and, most importantly, an injury-free encounter.

Meanwhile, the Honourable Commissioner for Youths, Sports and Poverty Alleviation in Borno State, Comrade Saina Buba, paid a morale boosting visit to the team at the Remo Stadium, Ikenne on Saturday.

The Commissioner watched the team's training session and interacted with the players and technical crew, encouraging them ahead of the crucial continental fixture.

His presence and words of encouragement have further boosted the confidence and determination of the players as they prepare to represent Borno State and Nigeria on the African stage.

PL Results
Newcastle 2
Bournemouth 2

Fulham 2
C. Palace 3

Man City 1
Coventry 0

N. Forest. 0
Spurs. 0

Brighton 1
Leeds Utd. 1

Brentford. 1
Sunderland. 1

Everton, Man Utd In David Moyes Derby

The David Moyes derby takes centre stage at 2pm this Sunday, when Everton welcome Manchester United to the Hill Dickinson Stadium in Premier League gameweek three.

The Toffees maintained their unbeaten record in 2026/27 with a 1-1 stalemate at Bournemouth last time out, while the Red Devils got off the mark in emphatic fashion with a 5-2 crushing of Ipswich Town.

Man United losing to a newly-promoted team in their first Premier League game of the

season was already unheard of - that unwanted first was achieved against Hull City - and Ipswich briefly appeared capable of following in the Tigers' footsteps at Old Trafford.

However, Leif Davis's shock opener did nought but galvanise a Bruno Fernandes-inspired Man United, who witnessed their clinical captain strike a hat-trick alongside a Jacob Greaves own goal and Bryan Mbeumo lob in a seven-goal spectacular.

In a transfer market awash with £100m+ deals, simply retaining the services of PFA

Player of the Year Fernandes represents one of the best bits of business for Man United, who sneaked into the top half of the Premier League table last weekend.

The Red Devils' triumph over the Tractor Boys took them up to 42 points since Carrick took over from Ruben Amorim - more than any other team in that time - and the Englishman could now become just the sixth Premier League manager to win 45 points from his first 20 matches during a single spell

at a club.

Even if Man Utd fall behind again on Sunday, disaster may not strike; the last time the visitors conceded the first goal in their first three Premier League games of the season was in 2012-13, the last time they conquered the land.

Then again, one of Red Devils' matches in that sequence 14 years ago was a 1-0 reverse to Everton at Goodison Park, several months before Moyes swapped Merseyside for Manchester and failed to fill Sir Alex Ferguson's boots.

Tony Eluemunor

Abuja Notes

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Atiku, Tinubu, Subsidy Removal And Azu Ishiekwe's Devilnomics

September 3, 2026: Mr. Azu Ishiekwe served Nigeria his poisoned chalice; an opinion piece titled HAS ATIKU CORNERED TINUBU ON PETROL SUBSIDY? Just as the title appears to be a harmless inquiry into the effects of presidential election candidate Atiku Abubakar's campaign promise to reintroduce petrol subsidy on President Bola Tinubu's re-election chances, anyone could be misled into thinking Mr. Ishiekwe was embarked on middle of the road wholesome interrogation of the subjects. Instead, the body of the article was a devil's brew of deceptive philosophy exemplified. He offered his readers a one-sided fusillade of thunderbolts against the former Vice President Atiku Abubakar's ideas. Worse still, he gave reasons aplenty (six in all, yes, he actually numbered them) why it is impossible to effectively and effectually reintroduce petrol subsidy in Nigeria. The most inexcusable failure in Ishiekwe's treatise which any Tinubu spokesman would have been proud to produce is that he refused to grant in his piece that refined petroleum products importation bazar is the only way open to Atiku. Before we proceed to the other options, let's quickly throw off Ishiekwe's unreasonable reasons energetically out of the window.

Ishiekwe: "First, I'm not sure how many local refineries will be left if subsidies return. The Walter-smith Refinery, the Edo Refinery, the Aradel Refinery, and the Dangote Refinery (the most consequential in terms of output) were all built with zero subsidies, a regime that profited the state-owned NNPC by encouraging racketeering in import licences. A return to petrol subsidy will damage investments in local refineries and hand the future back to the racketeers". My reply: Which 11th Commandment of God has decreed that any subsidy regime must depend on import of refined petroleum products? And is Ishiekwe the Black Moses to whom God Almighty, in his infinite wisdom, handed the tablet on that law was etched? On which Mount Sinai did he receive it?

Why was he so confident that no new formula could be worked out with the local refineries? What if they received crude petroleum on a subsidized rate first of all?

Ishiekwe: Second, there is no legal basis to return the subsidy. In March 2022, Senate President Ahmad Lawan said that an amendment to the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) would be required to extend the subsidy regime because the law contained no such provision. My reply: Please, dear Ishiekwe, who made that law? If the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) was passed in 2022, which law in heaven and earth has banned it from being amended or repealed? Or is it not a man-made law, enacted here by members of the National Assembly? Haba, Ishiekwe, haba!

Ishiekwe: Several sections of the PIA, specifically Section 205(1), make this point clearly: "Subject to the provisions of this section, wholesale and retail prices of petroleum products shall be based on

unrestricted free market pricing conditions." My reply: Come on, man, come on! This is pure deceptive philosophy; it is so deceptive it would be loved by the devil himself. The NNPC Plc will produce the refined products in detailed business relationships with local refineries, including any of Nigeria's refineries that could still be repaired and put to work as part of the "unrestricted free market pricing conditions." Then, any Seye or Azu or Sidi could import petrol all they like from Malta blending facilities and import same to Nigeria...and the open market would welcome them with open arms to sell such imported petrol at any price. In fact, that would give the buyers the real choice to make: to buy the imported blended one or the truly locally refined one.

Where's the crude?

Ishiekwe: Third, even though Nigeria's oil production has risen from about 1.2 mdp to about 1.6 mdp, about 30 per cent of this stock set aside and managed by the NNPC has been pledged in forward deals for many years. There's hardly any headroom left, which explains why the NNPC cannot even meet its current obligation to the Dangote Refinery. My reply: This is outrageous. I have to grope for a most civil way to put this, because this insults our collective intelligence. We could begin by reexamining such deals and check our jurisprudence books for how any who caused such a misfortune, of anyone is found liable. Then the real answer is that nothing is written in stone. Part of what failed leaderships have forced Nigeria into is to mortgage her future for her yesterday. Yet, what could be remedied must be remedied. The loan incredible load sitting on Nigeria's bare head, the repayment of which we have been doing with crude oil, could be lightened by using the cash we could save when any leader, not just Atiku, could get the NNPC Plc to enter into crude oil for refined petrol deals with the local refineries and by that time, we could even begin to export refined petrol. God did not forbid Nigeria from exporting petrol. In fact, the Dangote refinery is showing us that way.

Ishiekwe: Four, for nearly 10 straight years until 2023, there was no new investment, onshore or offshore, largely due to the delay in passing the PIA. Even with recent commitments, it would take some time before significant onshore production could start, limiting supply and hampering the redemption of any subsidy promissory notes. My reply: That was Ishiekwe's deceptive at its most virulent, outrageous and diabolical level. This is enough to make anyone weep. This is devilish, and that is putting it mildly. The Punch newspaper, which Ishiekwe edited and headed published on the 13th of August 2026 that Nigeria had met her OPEC quota for three straight months. I know that there are lies, damned lies and sta-

tistics but even those who have embraced devilnomics should at least pay due homage to bare facts.

I wrote the above paragraph based on the knowledge that even if Nigeria had the capacity and capability to produce 10 million barrels of crude oil daily, it must stay fidel to her OPEC-given quota. To do otherwise is to bust OPEC's quota regime, which would be sabotage of an organization to which we belong. So, once we mage to meet our production quota, all that remains is to manage the quantity we produce and apply the returns from our quota.

As we are now meeting our OPEC quota, the issue of more or "new investment, onshore or offshore" is just for future guarantee that we would not miss our future quotas and that would also help us shore up our strategic reserve – a reserve I guess we neither have nor have we planned for.

Ishiekwe: Five, the NNPC, the industry's rotten core, is a dead horse. It was dead even before the Obasanjo government, of which Atiku was a part, sold it to Bluestar in 2007. Yet, the attempts to give this carcass another life since the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua government revoked the sale have cost billions of dollars, the most recent of which was \$1.5 billion for the Port Harcourt Refinery.

My reply: The administrations which awarded the contracts should be asked what came of the contracts they awarded. If government-owned refineries work elsewhere and are operated by say, Petrobrass of Brazil or ARAMCO of Saudi Arabia, then only corruption or sheer ineptitude should have made ours not to work. This is not a lost cause; even as late as last month, President Tinubu himself vowed to get the refineries working.

Ishiekwe wrote: And six, while the NNPC has become a hotspot for issuing petrol import licences mainly to benefit insiders, a major regulator, on which Atiku may rely for information about exactly how much petrol the country's consumers consume daily, relies on dubious estimates. It only gets worse when Atiku added that he would "open the borders!"

My reply: I don't speak for Atiku. Yet, I make bold to say that the way I read Atiku, he was talking about local refining of petrol as opposed to the importation of blended petrol products out outrageous prices.

And here is my real grouse with Ishiekwe's Devilnomics: He has applauded the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which President Tinubu reintroduced at his inauguration. Does Mr. Azu Ishiekwe not remember how Military President Ibrahim Babangida's SAP, especially his removing the petrol subsidy, made Nigerians to go into mourning? IBB introduced SAP in 1986; 40 years ago, as vended by World Bank and IMF in the

1980s. And Ishiekwe wants it to continue. Look it up on the internet and you will see that it is generally agreed that it caused severe social hardships across Africa. It shifted state-controlled economies toward free-market capitalism, local currency values were reduced to boost exports. Austerity resulted when governments cut spending on public goods and removed subsidies. SAP gave Nigeria Negative Rising poverty, sparked hyper-inflation, loss of jobs, and higher food prices even as healthcare, water, and education provision declined. Local manufacturing industries that could not compete with cheap imports died.

Ishiekwe gloried in the short-term illusory growth because it enhanced GDP growth temporarily in countries like Ghana and Nigeria during early implementation. He mentioned how the President asked the state Governors to eschew constructing Flyover bridges and face projects. Interrogating the increased quantity of money accruing to the states as well as the value of the Naira today as against what it could buy prior to the Tinubu inauguration actually deserves an article on its own. All I quip here is that if the monthly Federal Allocation has placed more money in the state Governor's hands as Ishiekwe implied, it has also placed more money in the Federal Government's hands.

They say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. So, President Tinubu should be helped to lead Nigeria in the right direction by warning him when his policies are backfiring for nobody is mistake-proof. If he had the "courage", as he termed it, to remove petrol subsidy, he could also summon the "courage" to reintroduce it.

But to argue that it is not possible to effect it is to spit on the human spirit and the ingenuity that has made man who he is. Introduction

Beginning in the 1980s, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) became a focal point for the implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) mandated by international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. These policies were designed to stabilize struggling economies and facilitate development. However, they required significant alterations to existing economic structures, and these measures have spurred an ongoing debate about their efficacy and consequences. While proponents argue that the reforms were essential and effective, critics assert that SAPs paid insufficient attention to social aspects of development and caused more harm than good.

In 1986, Nigeria implemented SAPs after suffering an economic crisis due to falling oil prices. Between 1986 and 1992, GDP increased by an average of 5.4% per year. Productivity also increased which was demonstrated by a 9% growth in output by the end of adjustment in

1992. Total investment went from 7.37% of GDP in 1986 up to 12.4% of GDP in 1990 (World Bank, 1994). Proponents of SAPs cite the "reversal of negative economic growth trend of the early 1980s, substantial increase in price of agricultural exports, improvement in external payments arrangements, and international credit worthiness" as other positive effects of SAPs (Danladi & Naankiel, 2016).

However, increasing the price of agricultural exports through methods such as the removal of subsidies and import bans on certain items led to negative impacts on Nigeria's agricultural and manufacturing sectors. The measures led to price hikes for local produce and increased output but reduced profitability for farmers due to subsidy withdrawal and the higher cost of imported inputs. The devaluation of Nigerian Naira heavily affected its manufacturing sector, which largely relies on imported machines. Unemployment also worsened because many workers lost their jobs due to the downsizing of the public sector, and the private sector growth was generally not enough to absorb the excess labour.

Proponents of SAPs argue that structural adjustment helps countries achieve economic independence by fostering conditions conducive to innovation, investment, and expansion. The use of conditional loans is therefore justified because unconditional loans would encourage recipient countries to borrow without addressing the underlying issues that led to their financial problems. This would theoretically lead to more borrowing in the future, creating a cycle of reliance. Advocates for SAPs also argue that some of the failures of SAPs fall on the governments of these countries, citing they have institutional weaknesses and are riddled with corruption. Blame should not be on the policies themselves, but on the governments that failed to implement them properly. Despite some unfavorable outcomes, many indicators point to the success of these reforms and these steps being necessary to steer SSA toward development.

However, structural adjustment programs have faced intense criticism for a lack of effectiveness and widening social inequalities from forcing austerity measures on already impoverished countries. Opponents contend that the impact of structural adjustments is disproportionately felt by women, children, and other vulnerable populations, especially in terms of public health (Crisp & Kelly, 1999). They also depict conditional loans as an instrument of neocolonialism because wealthy countries that fund the IMF and World Bank offer loans to developing countries in return for reforms that expose these countries to multinational corporation investments. While foreign investment is beneficial in many cases, there are countless instances of human rights violations and resource exploitation. Going forward, other struggling countries will have to weigh the effects of these policies when considering how to help their economies.

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Dele Sobowale On The Other Hand

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One Party = A Dictator And End Of June 12

Note: This article was first published in June 2025. Recent occurrences on the political scene have made this repetition necessary. Most of those who end up being victimised by a dictator, were once his fervent promoters.

"When a nation has allowed itself to fall under a tyrannical regime, it cannot be absolved from the faults due to the guilt of the regime." - Sir Winston Churchill, 1874-1965.

"The face of tyranny is always mild at first." - Jean Racine, 1639-1699.

Most African and Nigerian leaders are often too busy hustling to make as much money for themselves and family that they have no time to read. They certainly don't engage staff who can undertake the most casual review of historical precedents in order to guide their actions. Let me confess that it appears as if the rest of the world is catching up to us as we drift gradually towards World War III. Only God knows what this planet will look like after mankind would have done its worst to annihilate the species from the face of the Earth.

Just last week, it was announced on this page that WORLD WAR III has started and only the official declaration and shooting remains. Two days after Israel attacked Iran, justifiably or not, and has exonerated Russia from invading Ukraine; and excused China if it chooses to forcefully annex Taiwan. The Chinese invasion, which is only a matter of time, will present America with a dilemma: face China based on its treaty obligations or accept the loss of an ally and the humiliation that entails. Given Trump's instincts, confrontation and conflict will be his response. There lies the danger. Escalation will surely follow; and a full scale war might result – with nothing off the table as weapons to be deployed.

Just in case you are wondering what the preamble has to do with Nigeria, let me summarise it this way. Gradually, the entire world is defecting from governments based on strong institutions to nations governed by strong men and one party. Democracy and governments characterised by rule of law is giving way to rule by one man. The checks and balances entrenched in classic democracies have been severely eroded. As Benvenuto Cellini, 1500-1571, reminded us "The law can't be enforced against the man who is the law's master." When



Olusegun Obasanjo

self-deluded political leaders embark on creating an individual who is so powerful as to be above the law, they inevitably fail to understand that they might become victims of the tyranny that will follow.

AFRICAN HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

"What experience and history teach is that people and governments never have learnt from history or acted on principled deducted from it." - Gorge Hegel, 1770-1831, VANGUARD BOOK OF QUOTATIONS, VBQ p 92.

I must have read over 300 history books, partly or fully, among nearly 6,000 while compiling materials for the book of quotations which took me about 34 years from the start to finish. I waded through virtually all the stories of empires from 500 years before Christ till the wars, big and small up to 2006 when I started the manuscript. I also followed the history of rulers across the world; the personalities who made every age in human history. The most astonishing fact is the frequent recurrent of dictators – those who wield absolute power over their fellow men. When Lord Acton, 1834-1902, proclaimed that: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely" – a

line which most people quote – they forget the second line. "Great men are almost always bad men". Later, Saul Bellow, 1915-2005, a 1976 Nobel Prize winner in Literature, warned the whole world that: "Invariably, the most dangerous people seek power." That statement is to some extent true irrespective of time, place, the form of government and the people involved.

I have chosen to focus on Africa and some of the historical precedents that we have established with one party, one man and millions of citizens-slaves that inevitably emerge. Despite the overwhelming evidence available to all of us, that one party, one man dictatorships have left the continent mostly under-developed, Africans everywhere still embrace one party and one man dictatorships – whether military or civilian.

Ghana, Guinea, Cameroun and Zimbabwe started out in the 1960s as democracies – when the wind of change blew all over Africa bringing independence to former colonies of European nations. By 1970 there were very few democracies left. The heroes of the struggle for independence – had turned their nations, first into civilian dicta-

torships; and finally into military tyrannies.

Kwame Nkrumah, 1909-1972, and Sekou Toure, 1922-1984, late Presidents of Ghana and Guinea, respectfully, serve to remind us of how multi-party democracies when independence was granted, were transformed into one party and one man dictatorships until they were both topple by another one man dictatorship – the military. They were not the only ones. Africa is littered with the one man dictatorships.

Nothing demonstrates that people and governments never learn from history than the fact that in most cases, the politicians who helped the megalomaniacs to achieve absolute power frequently become victims of the monster they have created. It is one of the verdicts of history that "This is a sickness rooted and inherent in the nature of [dictatorships], that he that holds it does not trust his friends." (Aeschylus, 525-456 BC). I always pity all those who on account of cowardice, selfishness, political expediency or just plain stupidity, join the bandwagon to help created a dictator; which is another name for one party state.

In less than four years, many of those who helped Nkrumah and Toure were sacked from their top level jobs; some were jailed; other died under mysterious circumstances; the lucky ones died in self-exile in foreign lands.

One of my mates at the university in the USA, George Saitoti, became first Finance Minister, then Vice President to Kenya's dictator, Arap Moi, 1924-2020, after helping the tyrant to gain absolute power. Then rumours started about George being the heir apparent to Moi, who was not yet ready to go. George suddenly mysteriously disappeared. Irrespective of how close anybody can assume to be to a tyrant, they are only one step away from political downfall – which can sometimes be fatal.

SYCOPHANTS, HISTORICAL AND INTERNATIONAL

"...If I had served God as diligently as I have served the King (Henry VIII, 1491-1547), he would not have given me over to my enemies in my grey hairs. This is my just reward." - Cardinal Wolsey, 1475-1530.

Cardinal Wolsey started his career in serving the King as a middle level officer. He quickly established himself as the ultimate sycophant who proclaimed that the King could do no wrong – despite the several marriages of the monarch and a forceful divorce. He quickly be-

came Henry's man to call upon to propose, execute and justify all the atrocities of the dictator – who in the meantime was getting entangled in numerous conflicting and unprincipled situations each of which still required absolute loyalty from his subjects. In the end, Wolsey was caught in a web of intrigues from which he could not escape the King's wrath.

He was credited with those words just as he was led away to suffer the same harsh fate he had plotted for others in order to please Henry VIII.

THE END IS ALWAYS PREDICTABLE

"History never repeats itself; man does." - Barbara Tuchmann, Harvard University History Professor.

Those promoting a one party, and by extension, one man dictatorship, might become the first victims of the demon they would have created. The first beneficiary of the evil contraption might even find himself a victim of the system he nurtured. There is a national precedent.

General Obasanjo was subordinate to General Gowon until the Murtala Mohammed coup. Shortly after, Mohammed was assassinated and Obasanjo became the military dictator. Gowon, in absentia, was convicted of complicity in Dimka's failed coup. The Decree Obasanjo signed to nail Gowon, without success, was later slightly amended to almost get OBJ executed by Abacha.

Just as only God saved Gowon; it was the Almighty who saved Obasanjo from his own Decree. Dictators invariably are short sighted and obsessed with suppressing the people, they seldom consider what would happen if they lose grip on power. Remember Mugabe? He spent his last years receiving the lashes others suffered under him.

I know that those nurturing a dictatorship in Nigeria would not listen to words of caution. Obasanjo has twice been responsible for disasters which befell him personally and the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP; he drafted his own death warrant as Military Head of State. As civilian President, he and people like Bode George, encouraged unconstitutional transfer of mandates from other political parties to PDP. Short-sighted as usual, it never occurred to them that their party would ever become a victim of the precedents established. APC is also falling into the same manhole now....

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