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**How I became King after
family line was abandoned
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NATIONAL TELESCOPE



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NATIONWIDE STRIKE LOOMS

Parents, Economists, others caution FG as ASUU threatens nationwide strike

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- **Lawyers warn against illegal strike**
- **CSO tasks govt on minimum wage**



The Vice President, Senator Kashim Shettima, (2nd left) and other board members at the inauguration of the Board of the Nigerian Christian Pilgrims Commission (NCPC) at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, on Tuesday.

**Atiku, Obi Desperate
To Be President,
Says APC**

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**Igbo not interested
in breaking Nigeria
– Ohanaeze**

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Reject Death Penalty Bill for Drug Offences, UN tells Reps

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Parents, Economists, others caution FG as ASUU threatens nationwide strike Lawyers warn against illegal strike, CSO tasks government on minimum wage

Olumide Chibuzor Alli, Funmi Ojo, Oyedunmola Olakunle, Taiwo Niyi and Paulinus Nta

The Parent Teacher Association of Nigeria, along with economists and other stakeholders, has called on the Federal Government to take immediate action to prevent an impending nationwide strike.

This comes in response to the threat by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to declare a strike over the government's failure to address their demands.

The ASUU has accused the government of ignoring their consistent appeals. Professor Adelaja Odukoya, the coordinator of the Lagos zone of ASUU, made this known while addressing journalists on Tuesday during a conference at the University of Lagos (UNILAG).

The conference was attended by all union branch leaders from the zone.

According to Professor Odukoya, the union is rapidly losing patience over what he described as the government's 'insensitivity' to the plight of its members and public universities. He stated that the only way to avert the proposed industrial action is for the federal government to address their concerns promptly.

This came following the union's National Executive Council (NEC) meeting held at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, from Saturday, May 11, to Sunday, May 12, 2024.

Professor Odukoya said, "Our union assessed the outcomes of its engagements with the State and Federal governments over the last few months, on matters pertaining to the status of developments around the renegotiated 2009 Agreement, payment of owed salaries and earned academic allowances (EAA), unremitted deductions made by the discredited disruptive and discredited IPPIS,

proliferation of universities, and a number of other matters.

"NEC also had a critical review of government policies and actions that had led to the present deteriorated living and working conditions across the country and in our universities particularly."

He noted that most of the issues mentioned had been lingering and unaddressed by the government for many years.

Professor Odukoya dismissed the threat of a 'no work, no pay' rule by the government, adding that the policy is not recognised in global labour laws to which Nigeria is a signatory.

Parent Teachers Association, Economists, others react

Speaking in an interview with NATIONAL TELESCOPE, the National President of the Parent Teacher Association of Nigeria, Haruna Danjuma urged the Federal Government to attend to ASUU requests to avoid the strike.

He said, "On behalf of the entire parents of the children in our institutions, whatever will be done should be done wisely. Let's sit down with the government and see to the end of this issue now."

"I also want to call on the Federal Government, to kindly give attention to ASUU to stop ASUU from this indefinite strike."

"Going on strike is not good for our children. So we know the government is so concerned about our children's future. So also, ASUU is very much committed to seeing to the development of the children's education."

"So we call on both parties to do the needful and make sure that the issue of indefinite strike should not be a reality."

An economist and professor at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Sheriffdeen Tella, has warned that the impending strike by ASUU will negatively impact Nigeria's economy.

"Strike usually results in a loss of manpower, which is

detrimental to the economy because it disrupts many activities. A loss of manpower means reduced productivity."

"The mere anticipation of a strike affects labour productivity, as the time that could have been used for productive work is spent discussing strike issues, leading to a decline in output."

"It is harmful for an economy like ours to frequently experience strikes. Unfortunately, the government seems indifferent. They appear to underestimate the importance of labour, given their behaviour."

"Even when addressing minimum wage issues, prices have surged by over 200 percent, in some cases 300 percent. Proposing a wage increase of just 20 or 25 percent for wages that were already insufficient is inadequate."

"They believe they can rely on borrowing and taxes instead of ensuring that people are productive and generating output."

"A strike typically hampers worker productivity, and we are already facing a shortage of output. By disrupting production, the government demonstrates a lack of seriousness."

"They often ignore labor concerns until a strike is underway, and then they

scramble for solutions. Even then, they treat the situation lightly, as if it doesn't matter, which is unfortunate. Constant strikes are damaging to the economy."

Similarly, a Professor of Economics at the University of Ilorin, Abdulfafar Ijaya, stated, "The investor climate will deteriorate. People conducting business in Nigeria will be affected. With the current high turnover, the situation will worsen."

"You can't neglect your former lecturers. They recently increased the salaries of the judiciary—judges who were educated by university lecturers."

"Judges' salaries are being raised, while those who taught them have been earning the same salary since 2008. It's a terrible situation we find ourselves in."

Meanwhile, legal practitioner Barrister Bisi Atolagbe has urged the union to follow legal procedures before embarking on a nationwide strike. He warned that strikes not conducted according to these procedures risk being deemed illegal by the National Industrial Court.

He stated, "There are procedures under the Labour Act, and if these procedures are not followed and the strike is challenged at the National

Industrial Court, the Court will likely rule the labour action illegal and order the workers to resume work. This has happened many times in Nigeria."

"But when the National Industrial Court has to intervene and rule a strike illegal, it's because the proper procedures were not followed. The court's involvement highlights that the crisis is long-standing and requires adherence to legal protocols."

Also, Abuja-based lawyer and human rights activist Barrister Tolu Babaleye expressed disappointment in the government's response to the ongoing crisis. He stressed concern over the President's failure to take decisive action to resolve the matter, adding that as the father of the nation, his role is to protect the interests of his citizens.

CSO tasks FG on minimum wage

A Civil Society Organisation, Network Advancement Program on Poverty, Disaster Risk Reduction (NAPPDRR), has called on the Federal Government to align the minimum wage with the current economic realities.

This comes in response to the Federal Government's offer of

N54,000 as the new minimum wage, a significant disparity from the N615,000 demanded by the Labour Unions.

In an interview with our correspondent, the National President of NAPPDRR, Hon. Al Mustapha Emem Edoho, stated that labour's demand was excessive and warned that such an amount could escalate the inflation rate in the country if implemented.

He also acknowledged that the government's offer does not align with the current economic conditions and suggested a minimum wage of N100,000 instead.

However, the President of United Action For Democracy, Emefa Georgewill, disagreed with Edoho's stance, supporting the Labour Union's demand for a N615,000 minimum wage.

He argued, "Nigerian lawmakers and ministers receive their substantial pay and allowances, directly or indirectly."

"The amount demanded by Nigerian workers is entirely justified. If the federal government cannot meet their demand, they should step down and let competent individuals take over. We stand in total solidarity with the Nigerian workers."

Army Launches Probe into Attack on Soldiers at Abuja Plaza

By Chibuzor Alli

The Nigerian Army has initiated an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the presence of its personnel at Banex Plaza and the subsequent attack that occurred. The probe aims to ensure the security of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and prevent similar incidents in the future.

The Army spokesperson, Maj.-Gen. Onyema Nwachukwu, announced this in a statement on Tuesday, May 21. According to The Nation, the altercation between soldiers and traders at the popular Banex Plaza in Abuja on Sunday, over the sale of phones, led to the plaza's closure by security agents to restore law and order.

Gen. Nwachukwu clarified that the soldiers involved in the incident were unarmed, did not engage in any aggressive behavior, and posed no threat, making the attack on them entirely unwarranted and unjustifiable. He stated, "A swift intervention by soldiers and policemen on internal security duties salvaged the situation and rescued the attacked personnel

from being lynched by the hoodlums."

In response to the incident, a meeting was held with Banex Plaza management to identify and apprehend the perpetrators. The plaza was temporarily shut down to ensure the apprehension of the hoodlums who have been using the area as a sanctuary, posing a security threat to the FCT. The investigation aims to uncover both the immediate

and underlying causes of the mayhem.

Maj.-Gen. Nwachukwu emphasized that such acts of violence against military personnel are condemnable and could lead to a breakdown of law and order, posing threats to national security. He urged the public to exercise caution and restraint when dealing with military personnel and other security operatives, especially

when they are in uniform. He also highlighted the established channels through which grievances or misconduct by personnel can be reported to the appropriate authorities.

This investigation is crucial for maintaining the security of the FCT and preventing future unwarranted attacks on military and security personnel, as seen in previous incidents such as the unfortunate attack in Okuama.

LP Crisis: Obi Backs Julius Abure-Led NWC, shuns NLC

By Lilian Edward

The former presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi, has endorsed the party's national chairman, Julius Abure, and the National Working Committee (NWC). This endorsement followed Obi's visit to the LP's national headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday.

The former Anambra Governor was received by Abure and other party leaders, marking a significant shift from his previous stance. Obi had earlier shunned the party's controversial national convention held in his home state, Anambra, amidst a

leadership crisis.

During his visit, Obi officially endorsed the newly elected NWC led by Abure. This decision could put him at odds with the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), which has called for the removal of Abure and the NWC. The NLC Political Commission had rejected the national convention that reinstated Abure as the national chairman.

In a statement by the National Publicity Secretary of the party, Obiora Ifoh, Obi urged aggrieved party members to prioritize the survival of Nigerians and the nation

above all other interests. He emphasized his commitment to uniting all warring factions within the party.

Obi stated, "For now, let us talk about how we are going to survive till then because we politicians always focus on the next election and not about human beings. For me, when they survive the next election, we can talk about the election. Let us focus on Nigeria and see that Nigeria works; if Nigeria is working, the Labour Party will work."

Abure expressed appreciation for Obi's visit and called for unity among the party members. He urged those still upset over the Nnewi convention to set aside personal grievances and work together for the party's success in the next election season.

Abure said, "I want to say this very clearly, the convention has come and gone; all those who are still angry with us over the Nnewi convention, we want to appeal to them to come together and work with us to build the party for a new Nigeria that has a vision. I believe very strongly that personal interests should be put aside in pursuit of a new Nigeria that will work for all."

Reject Death Penalty Bill for Drug Offences, UN tells Reps

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has called on the House of Representatives to reject the proposed death penalty bill for drug offenders.

UNODC criticised the National Assembly for proposing the death penalty for drug offences, stating that the bill is unreasonable.

The Senate has already passed the bill, which now awaits concurrence from the House of Representatives before being presented to President Bola Tinubu for assent.

During the 2024 Media Personnel Training on Anti-corruption, Police Accountability, Wildlife Crime, and Sensitisation on Drugs and Drug Prevention, Treatment, and Care, the UNODC Representative in Nigeria, Oliver Stolpe, made this call in Abuja on Tuesday.

The event was co-organized by the UNODC and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency to train journalists on drug-related

crimes, offences, and rehabilitation reporting.

Stolpe said, "Regarding the death sentence for drug traffickers as proposed by the Senate, it now needs to go back to the House. We expect the House of Representatives to vote this down."

Our stance at the UN is clear: we are fundamentally and categorically against the death penalty. From a practical standpoint, it doesn't make sense."

This statement comes just four days after the House of Representatives indicated its support for approving the death penalty for hard drug dealers and peddlers when the bill arrives from the Senate.

The Senate had approved the death penalty for those dealing in or importing cocaine, heroin, and other hard drugs into Nigeria.

The proposed capital punishment also applies to manufacturers and traffickers of hard drugs by any means.

UBTH to Conduct Mass Burial for 270 Unclaimed Corpses

By Paulinus Nta

The management of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) has announced plans to conduct a mass burial for 270 unclaimed corpses if they are not claimed within the next six weeks. This announcement was made by the hospital's Mortuary Services Coordinator, Ehizogie Adeyemi, in Benin City, Edo State, on Tuesday.

of the unclaimed corpses, stating that 201 are infants and 69 are adults. The hospital management had previously issued a statement on Monday, giving a six-week ultimatum for the owners to claim these corpses.

The statement from the hospital management reads in part: "This is to inform the general public that the management of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital has concluded plans to dispose of all

unclaimed corpses that have been in the hospital mortuary for a very long time.

"For the avoidance of doubt, such corpses include that of infants that have been in the mortuary since January 2023 and corpses of adults that have been in the mortuary from April 2021 to December 2022."

"Consequently, owners of such corpses are hereby given six weeks' notice from the date of this publication to claim their corpses."

Rivers Assembly Confirms Eight Commissioner Designates

The Victor Oko-Jumbo-led faction of the Rivers State House of Assembly screened and confirmed eight nominees for commissioner positions on Tuesday. The screening took place at the temporary legislative chambers within the state Government House.

The Oko-Jumbo-led three-member legislature is loyal to Governor Siminalayi Fubara. The commissioner designates are set to fill vacancies created by the recent resignation of nine commissioners who were loyal to Federal Capital Territory Minister, Chief Nyesom Wike.

During the session, Oko-Jumbo read a correspondence from the governor requesting the screening and confirmation of the nominees. He emphasized the assembly's commitment to supporting the governor in delivering democracy dividends to the people of Rivers State.

The factional speaker highlighted that the screening was part of the assembly's responsibilities in the governance of the state.

House Leader Mr. Sokari Good-boy and Deputy Speaker Adolphus Timothy unanimously adopted the governor's request. They noted that most of the nominees had previously served the state in various capacities without blemish.

The confirmed commissioner designates are Mr. Charles Bakee, Mr. Collins Onunwo, Dr. Peter Medee, Mr. Eloka Amadi, Mr. Basoene Benibo, Mr. Sydney Gbara, Dr. Ovy Chukwuma, and Mr. Solomon Eke.

A'ibom inaugurates governing council for skills center

By Paulinus Nta

A 7-member governing Council has been inaugurated to direct affairs at the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC), Ikot Ada-Idem, Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area with the core mandate to bring professionalism to bare in the management of the centre.

Akwia Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno, performed the inauguration at Government House, Uyo, to signal the formal opening of the Centre with commencement of full academic activities.

Inaugurating the board, Governor Eno charged the members to show leadership and deliver on the mandate expected of them, stating that the government will hold them responsible for the success or failure of the centre.

He announced that the State government will sponsor five students from each of the 31 local government areas as pioneer students and advised the board to engage the services of versatile marketing professionals to project the school in order to generate revenue.

The Governor further stated that the centre will only enjoy government subvention for a period of one year, after which it should be able to sustain itself.

He said, "Government will sponsor five students from each Local Government Area as pioneer students so as to provide the first set of students we want to work with. So you have to set your computer-based exams for them."

"For everything we want to do now, we want to be very transparent. So you will set your computer-based exams, let the students write the exams, and pass. But I am sure in each local government you will find the number that you want to become students in the school. Those should be your first in-takes," he said.

As part of the terms of reference for the Governing Council, he cautioned strictly against playing politics in the management of the centre and encouraged the team to strive for success.

The Board has Obong Churchill Udoh as Chairman of the Governing Council, Professor Enoidem Usoro, Rector, Mr. Aniedi-Abasi Udofia, Registrar, with Commissioner for Education, Commissioner for Labour and Manpower Planning and Commissioner for Agriculture as well the chairman, Akwia Ibom Investment Corporation, AKICORP as members.

Accepting the responsibility on behalf of the team, Chairman of the Governing board, Obong Churchill Udoh appreciated the Governor for the confidence reposed on them and pledged to put in their best for the success of the centre.

Dangote Cement, Kogi Govt Strengthen Ties for development

By Taiwo Niyi

The Government of Kogi State and Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, are strengthening their collaboration to enhance development within the state and Nigeria as a whole.

During a visit to the Dangote Cement Plc, Obajana Plant, the Commissioner for Commerce and Industry in Kogi State, Mohammed M. Shuaibu, emphasized the importance of fostering mutual cooperation under the leadership of Alhaji Usman Ododo.

Shuaibu commended Dangote Cement for its significant contributions to job creation, tax remittances, and philanthropic endeavors within the state. The Plant Director, Engr Azad Nawabuddin, expressed gratitude for the Commissioner's visit and underscored the necessity of a conducive business environment provided by the government for sustainable growth.

The Head of Human Assets Management, Mr. Adeniyi Azeez, highlighted the alignment of government and corporate objectives, noting that a significant portion of Dangote Cement's workforce hails from Kogi State. The collaborative efforts between the Kogi State Government and Dangote Cement Plc signal a promising partnership aimed at driving economic development and fostering prosperity within the state and beyond.



Rivers State Governor Siminalayi Fubara (5th left) and the newly inaugurated commissioners after they were swear-in by the governor on Tuesday

Shettima Inaugurates Christian Pilgrims Board

Vice President Kashim Shettima has underscored the need for dialogue, empathy, and reconciliation to strengthen the nation, urging Nigerians to uphold religious freedom and foster interfaith unity.

Shettima, speaking on Tuesday during the inauguration of the Board of the Nigerian Christian Pilgrims Commission (NCPC) at the Presidential Villa in Abuja, emphasized the critical role of faith in the nation.

He reiterated that Nigeria's spiritual fabric is essential for the comfort and stability of its citizens.

The Vice President, as revealed by Stanley Nkwocha, Senior Special Assistant to the Vice President on Media and Publicity, emphasised that Nigeria's diversity of faiths is its strength. He assured that under the Tinubu-led government, there would be no room for discrimination.

He said, "Our duty is to provide a safe space for all faiths and uphold the rights and freedoms enshrined in our constitution," he affirmed. Shettima highlighted the NCPC's role in facilitating pilgrimage affairs for Nigerian Christians, stressing the importance of prioritizing this sacred tradition.

He pledged that Christians would have access to optimal privileges in their spiritual journeys, urging the new NCPC board members to promote interfaith harmony through compassion, justice, and mutual

respect.

Shettima emphasized the need for dialogue, empathy, and reconciliation to strengthen the nation, urging Nigerians to recognize that diversity is a source of strength, not weakness.

Prof. Cletus Gotan, the newly appointed Chairman of the NCPC board, expressed gratitude to the President for sponsoring pilgrimage journeys. He pledged the board's commitment to enhancing pilgrimage services and fostering greater understanding and unity among Nigerians of different faiths.

The board's composition includes bishops, senior clerics, pastors, former EYN presidents, and individuals of integrity across Christian denominations. Representatives from various government

ministries and agencies are also part of the board, ensuring broad representation and oversight. Bishop Stephen Adegbite serves as the Executive Secretary of the NCPC. Shettima Inaugurates Christian Pilgrims Board, Emphasizes Religious Harmony

Vice President Kashim Shettima has underscored the commitment of President Bola Tinubu's administration to uphold religious freedom and foster interfaith unity.

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Tinubu urged to Enhance Food Security, Economic Growth

By Promise Adagba

Stakeholders have urged President Bola Tinubu to prioritize initiatives aimed at boosting food security and driving economic prosperity in Nigeria.

The call was made during a training session for women farmers in Ijebu North Local Government, focused on the Agric Food Value Chain and Non-Agric Sector. The training was organized by the Omo Ogun Women Support Initiative.

The initiative has been actively involved in strengthening the capabilities and involvement of women in the agricultural food value chain. Various initiatives have been implemented to enhance women's participation in market-oriented production and value addition. Additionally, efforts have been made to promote enterprise development, facilitate business-to-business connections, and improve access to finance for women farmers.

Speaking at the event, former

Deputy Governor and Senator representing Ogun East (2011-2015), Sefiu Kaka, appealed to President Tinubu to direct his economic team to provide farmers with low-interest loans. He emphasized that supporting small-scale farmers with financial assistance would help alleviate rural poverty and address food insecurity.

Kaka also advocated for grants to be provided to farmers in the form of agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and equipment, to enhance productivity and support rural livelihoods.

Chairing the event, Senator Lekan Mustapha (Ogun East, 2019-2023), called on the Federal Government to lend support to women in agriculture. He stressed the importance of encouraging and supporting women-oriented economic recovery projects and activities, such as those promoted by the Omo Ogun Women group.

The training, held in honour of the group's patron, was attended by Abolaji Odusanya, the Chair of Ijebu North Local Government, who pledged to collaborate with the group on its various programs.

Lagos Boat Operators Decry Increase in Waterway Crimes

The Association of Tourist Boat Operators and Water Transport of Nigeria has expressed concern over the escalating criminal activities on the Lagos State waterways, urging for immediate action.

Speaking to the News Agency of Nigeria in Lagos on Tuesday, the President of ATBOWATN, Tarzan Balogun, highlighted the urgent need for increased presence of marine police officers to counter the rising threat.

Balogun emphasized that amidst the security challenges in Nigeria, criminals have turned to the waterways as alternate escape routes.

He stressed the importance of both federal and state governments deploying more officers and ensuring they are adequately equipped for effective operations.

Proposing solutions, Balogun advocated for the provision of new speedboats with powerful engines and enhanced maintenance practices. He also called for improved lighting along the waterways and the supply of advanced ammunition to strengthen security measures.

Pointing to recent incidents, including the kidnapping of a sand dredger in the Eti-Osa area, Balogun underscored

the grave implications of unchecked criminal activities on the waterways. He urged swift and concerted efforts from both levels of government to address the situation before it worsens.

Last November, the Western Naval Command launched "Operation Water Guard" in the Badagry area to combat smuggling, piracy, and oil theft. Rear Admiral MB Hassan, Flag Officer Commanding Western Naval Command, emphasised the operation's importance in safeguarding the nation's economy against illicit maritime activities.

National Telescope gets Editorial Board, name Professor Aduba as Chairman

By Deborah Odekola

The Governing Board of National Telescope Newspaper has approved the establishment of a new Editorial Board for the organization.

This move according to the organisation is poised to elevate the quality and credibility of the newspaper's coverage while also providing a unique position on issues of public interest.

Leading the Editorial Board is the esteemed Professor Nnamdi Aduba, a renowned human rights lawyer and a professor of International Law at the Faculty of Law, University of Jos.

With decades of experience in the public space, Professor Aduba's appointment as Chairman signals a new era of excellence for the National Telescope Newspaper.

Other distinguished members of the Board are: Dr Abdulraheem Malik, Dr JohnBosco Chika Chukwuorji, Dr Francis Amenaghawon, and Mr Abraham Amah. Visiting members are the News Editor, Mr Olumide Olusegun, and the Managing Director/Editor-in-Chief, Mrs Christie Doyin.

The board however held its inaugural meeting on Sunday, May 19, 2024.

Atiku, Obi Desperate To Be President, Says APC

By Oyedunmola Olakunle

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has dismissed any potential merger between Atiku Abubakar, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate in the 2023 election, and Peter Obi, the Labour Party's standard-bearer. The ruling party described both politicians as desperate and untrustworthy.

On Tuesday, the APC's National Publicity Secretary, Felix Morka, released a statement in Abuja titled "Atiku, Obi United by Mutual Desperation." Morka expressed confidence that the meeting between Atiku and Obi would yield no significant results, attributing their actions to a shared desperation to prevent President Bola Tinubu from securing a second term in 2027.

Morka acknowledged that the recent meeting between the two opposition figures had intensified speculation about a possible alliance between their respective parties ahead of the next election. However, he questioned whether Obi would return to the PDP or if Atiku would abandon his party for Obi's Labour Party.

He remarked, "The news of Peter Obi's return to the PDP would be hardly surprising. His reputation as a political wayfarer is only dwarfed by Atiku's track record as a veteran political wanderer. News of Atiku joining the Labour Party will shock no one as he will be living up to his well-established reputation as the country's most itinerant politician. For now, Utomi's mega party remains a figment with no offering of tangible accommodation for both men."

"Atiku and Obi are united by their mutual desperation to be President of Nigeria and their ignoble disdain for President Bola Tinubu's focused and extraordinary commitment to transforming our nation. Their restless drift in search of convenient party platforms to execute their presidential run only belies the self-indulgent and opportunistic essence of their aspirations."

Morka argued that Nigerians could not trust either Atiku or Obi with power, claiming they lacked the ability to handle national challenges.

"Men without the staying power to build or fix their own parties, who flee at the slightest flicker of internal crisis, cannot possibly be trusted by Nigerians to tackle serious and complex national, political and economic challenges that confront our nation. We urge Nigerians to stand fast in their invaluable support of our great party and President Bola Tinubu's determined commitment to deliver a stronger, secure and more prosperous country for us all."

Oyo Assembly approves Makinde's N10bn Loan Request

By Funmilayo Ojo

The Oyo State House of Assembly has granted Governor Seyi Makinde's request to access a N10 billion loan to serve as counterpart funding for World Bank-assisted projects in the state.

During Tuesday's plenary session, Speaker Adebo Ogundoyin read out Makinde's request letter, detailing the need for counterpart funding to facilitate the disbursement of donor funds to Oyo State.

The letter emphasized that the World Bank-assisted projects aim to complement the state government's efforts to enhance the welfare of its citizens.

The loan, which will be sourced from Fidelity Bank, is set to be repaid over a 30-month period.

During deliberations, lawmakers expressed concerns about the challenging economic situation nationwide, noting its adverse effects on the populace's well-being.

They urged Makinde to prioritize projects and initiatives aimed at uplifting the living standards of Oyo State residents.



LR: Commissioner of Jamaica to Nigeria, Mr. Lincoln G. Downer, Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu during a courtesy visit at the Lagos House, Marina, recently.

Reps to Create Committee for Faulty Presidential Aircraft

The House of Representatives Committee on National Security and Intelligence has decided to form a technical committee to tackle the persistent malfunctions of the presidential aircraft.

On Monday, May 20, 2024, the committee held a closed-door meeting with Air Vice Marshal Olayinka Olusola, the Commander of the Presidential Air Fleet, at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja. The discussion focused on recent incidents where President Bola Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima had to resort to chartered planes due to the presidential aircraft's issues.

In April, President Tinubu used a chartered plane to travel from the Netherlands to Saudi Arabia for the World Economic Forum. More recently, Vice President Shettima canceled his trip to the United States, where he was supposed to represent the President at the 2024 US-Africa Business Summit, due to aircraft problems.

During the session, initiated by a motion of urgent public importance from Ahmad Satomi, the Chairman of the House Committee on National Security and Intelligence, the lawmakers decided to summon the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, and the commander of the presidential fleet. They are to provide explanations on the status of the aircraft, given the significant annual budget allocations for their maintenance.

Minority Whip Ali Isa

suggested that the President and Vice President consider traveling by road to assess the condition of Nigeria's road infrastructure.

After the executive session, Satomi briefed journalists, announcing the formation of a technical committee to engage with the presidential air fleet officials and develop a comprehensive resolution.

"The committee has engaged the commandant of the presidential air fleet, the NSA, and a lot has been discussed. It is a very sensitive national security issue that has to do with our President. And looking at our role in the foreign policy position of Nigeria, this is not something that we will come out publicly and discuss. Nevertheless, a lot

has been explained.

"The committee resolved to set up a small technical committee to interface with the NSA, commandant, and all the stakeholders within a short period of time to come up with a final resolution that will foster the best for Nigeria, our President, and the entire team of the presidential air fleet.

"So, I think for now the technical team will engage all the stakeholders in the presidential air fleet who have something to say. In the end, we will come up with a final resolution. But for now, we have not taken the decision. But we must have something that will represent Nigeria as a country."

When asked about whether the planes need repairs or replacement, Satomi said, "For now, we have not resolved on that."

"The entire presidential air fleet is okay for now. It is not the issue of either to repair or to think of getting new ones. All that we know is that as a country, our position in global policy — we need something that will represent our image because our pride will show how Nigeria is."

"So, we are yet to conclude or finalise but they have explained enough. Some of the incidents are just media propaganda. It is not what we expected or what we thought happened. It is something different."

FG, Labour Resume Wage Negotiations Today as NLC Rejects N54,000 Offer

Wage negotiations between the Federal Government and labour unions will resume today. Yesterday, the Federal Government raised its minimum wage offer from N48,000 to N54,000.

Labour unions, however, have stood firm on their demand for N615,000 and declined to lower their proposal.

In previous discussions, the private sector had offered N56,000 as a potential minimum wage.

Governors are expected to present their offer today, following consultations by their representatives at yesterday's meeting.

A labour representative at the meeting deemed the Federal Government's new offer of N54,000 unacceptable.

Labour unions also criticized the governors for their absence from the Tripartite Committee meetings.

Oil Theft: Tantita Security Seizes Crude-Laden Vessel

Men of Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited on Tuesday morning apprehended a speedboat with a V6 200 horsepower engine carrying an unquantified amount of illegally-refined crude oil stored in sacks.

Samson Uwatse, Tantita Security Coordinator for Ugbodede and Iffiekporo

Communities, reported that the boat was intercepted at the Ogunu Creek in Warri South Local Government Area, Delta State.

Speaking to journalists, Uwatse said that the suspected oil thieves on the vessel fled upon sighting the security team, abandoning the boat and its illegal cargo.

"In the course of our working visit today, May 21, 2024, we came across this W23 200 horsepower fibre boat carrying illegally refined crude oil. We saw about four to five guys inside the boat. They took off on sighting us, but we were able to apprehend the boat and the exhibits," Uwatse stated.

He added, "We are taking the boat and the exhibits to our base. There is no more mercy for oil thieves. The boat shall be treated like others as standard practice entails. There are still others doing this illegal bunkering business in the river."

Kano Assembly to amend Emirate Council Law

The Kano State House of Assembly has adopted a motion to recall the Kano State Emirate Councils Amendment Bill.

This decision followed deliberations on the floor of the House during a plenary session presided over by Speaker Alhaji Isma'il Falgore on Tuesday.

The motion, presented as one of urgent public importance, was moved by the Majority Leader, Alhaji Lawan Dala. He urged the House to

support the motion to advance the state's development. The motion was seconded by Shu'aibu Rabi'u, the member representing Dawakin Tofa.

In 2019, during the administration of the immediate-past governor, Abdullahi Ganduje, the Assembly approved the creation of four additional emirate councils, increasing the number of first-class Emirs in the state to five.

Additionally, in September 2020, the House passed the

Emirate Councils Amendment Bill 2020. This legislation stipulated that the Emir of Kano would serve as the Chairman of the Council of Chiefs, ending the practice of rotational leadership.

However, former governor Rabi'u Kwankwaso, leader of the current ruling party in Kano State, the New Nigeria People's Party, has vowed to revisit and potentially revise the emirate law.

Politics Feature

Fubara/Ododo: Different Paths of Political Loyalty

In the complex landscape of Nigerian politics, loyalty plays a crucial dual role in shaping the welfare of a state. **Olumide Olusegun** delves into the similarities and impacts of the loyalty exhibited by Rivers State Governor **SIMINALAYI FUBARA**, his Kogi State counterpart **USMAN ODODO**, and their predecessors.

In Nigerian politics, loyalty is often seen as essential for leadership. The relationship between governors and their predecessors significantly impacts governance, policy continuity, and political dynamics within states.

However, this relationship can sometimes lead to corrupt practices being overlooked, affecting the state's well-being. The recent political drama between Rivers State Governor Siminalayi Fubara, his Kogi State counterpart Usman Ododo, and their predecessors can be seen as a political test of loyalty, with the two governors taking opposite paths.

While Ododo demonstrated loyalty to his immediate predecessor, Yahaya Bello, Fubara is locked in a power struggle with Nyesom Wike over what is being described as a battle for 'state might'.

A 'unique' aspect of both governors is that they were reportedly handpicked and supported by their predecessors before becoming governors.

Their rise to power in their respective states was 'effortless' due to the endorsement and backing of their former governors.

Rivers State Conflict:

In a display of loyalty, Fubara, shortly after being sworn in, appointed four of Wike's loyalists to cabinet positions.

The appointees, who had served in Wike's cabinet, included Prof. Zachaeus Adangor (Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice), Isaac Kamalu (Finance), George Des-Kelly (Works), and Prof. Chinedu Mmom (Education), all of whom retained their positions.

However, tensions arose when Fubara allegedly faced restrictions in appointing commissioners and was not allowed to exceed a specific amount of money from the monthly allocations.

This conflict is reportedly rooted in Wike's desire to maintain control over Rivers State politics and governance even after his tenure ended on May 29, despite now serving as the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory.

Many commissioners in Fubara's government and several lawmakers were Wike loyalists, leading to ongoing crises.

Fubara recently made a strategic decision effort to assert control over his government by reappointing and deploying Pro-Wike commissioners. However, five of these reappointed officials have since resigned.

The resignations, defections of PDP lawmakers to APC, the bombing of the State Assembly, and the appointment of a new Speaker are all part of the unfolding drama between Fubara and Wike.

The governor has also accused Wike of financial misappropriation in the handling of state projects, stating that most of the projects during his administration, were not fully funded.

The FCT minister on his part, expressed regrets for supporting his former godson, Fubara to become state governor.

Wike's selection of Fubara faced opposition from several notable figures within the People's Democratic Party (PDP) who felt he was unworthy of the position.

Among these prominent figures were Dr. Abiye Sekibo, Senator Lee Maeba, and former Deputy Governor Tele Ikuru.

They argued that Fubara had not significantly contributed to the party and was a political novice compared to them.

Despite their objections, Wike's influence prevailed, and Fubara not only secured the party's candidacy but also won the governorship election.

Speaking at a function in Ogu/Bolo Local Government Area of Rivers State, Wike said, "I respect people who appreciate what God has done for them, who appreciate what God has

used people to do for them. God does not come down, God uses people to help people.

"So, when you are helped you appreciate them and then God will know that you have also appreciated him. I have never told anybody to worship me, nobody can worship man.

"All of us believe that we only have one God and it is only that God we worship and we will continue to worship that God. But as politicians, you appreciate people who have helped you."

"I want to say this clearly, in life when you have made a mistake, you say I have made a mistake, there is nothing you can do about it. I



have made a mistake, I own it up and I say God forgive me and I will say all of you forgive me, but I will correct it at the appropriate time.

"I am a human being, and I am bound to make mistakes, my judgment can be wrong, so forgive me for making a wrong judgment. That is life, so nobody should kill himself." Lately, Governor Fubara conveyed his appreciation to Wike for aiding his ascent to governorship but emphasized that he wouldn't venerate him.

He said, "God can do anything He wants to do when He wants to do it. It is only for us to realise that. God will not come down from Heaven but will pass through one man or woman to achieve His purpose.

"So, for that reason, when we act, we act as humans; human vessels that God has used, and not seeing yourself as God.

"I want to say this clearly that we appreciate the role our leaders, most especially the immediate past governor, played. But that is not enough for me to worship a human being. I can't do that."

Recently, Governor Fubara expressed appreciation to Wike for his support in securing the governorship position but emphasised that he wouldn't idolise him.

The crisis between both governors continued to deeply affect the political climate of the state, with politicians and elders taking sides and engaging in verbal confrontations.

Speaking on the matter, the Convener of the Coalition of Rivers State Leaders of Thought expressed support for the governor's firm stance.

He added, "When a man stands by his convictions, he should uphold principles of justice."

Additionally, a member of the Rivers Elders' Council, Chief Asukewe Iko-Awaji, advised the governor to prioritise his duties. He emphasised that this is a time for governance, not politics.

He warned that failure to deliver the dividends of democracy could pose challenges for the governor's reelection bid.

Usman Ododo's Loyalty:

In contrast, Kogi State Governor Usman Ododo has shown unwavering loyalty to his predecessor, Yahaya Bello.

Endorsed by Bello, Ododo emerged as the APC governorship candidate and won the

election.

At the APC primary election in Kogi State held on April 14, Ododo, the former Local Government Auditor-General, defeated notable contenders including Smart Adeyemi, the prominent lawmaker representing Kogi West senatorial district, Stephen Ocheni, and Sanusi Ohiere.

Ododo eventually won the governorship election on November 11, 2023, and was sworn in as the 5th Executive Governor of Kogi State on January 27, 2024.

After taking office, Ododo retained nine of the 16 commissioners from Bello's cabinet and expressed his loyalty to Bello in his inaugural address, describing Bello as his mentor and leader.

He said, "I thank His Excellency, Governor Yahaya Bello, the father of modern Kogi State.

Wike

= Bello

= Fubara

Your Excellency sir, words are not sufficient to appreciate the pivotal role you played in the cause of this transition that has formerly taken off. As your governor, I do not take this for granted.

"I want to appreciate my mentor, my leader. I want to appreciate him for training me mentally, for administratively, for training me politically."

He added, "Kogi State remains your (Bello) Baby. Kogi State needs your attention and care at all times.

"As a student of yours, very committed. I wish to ride on that trajectory. But one thing you should know is that people are calling for my contact, I am giving it alongside your own so that you should know that Kogi State remains your baby.

"Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. I want to sincerely appreciate you and let you know that as His Excellency the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, please Yahyah Bello will decode then we will be here to activate."

Ododo's loyalty was further demonstrated when he reportedly shielded Bello from an arrest attempt by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The EFCC laid siege to Bello's residence in Abuja on April 17, 2024, but Ododo, along with security operatives and supporters, allegedly helped Bello evade arrest.

Ododo arrived at Bello's residence at about 2:30 pm, alongside several security operatives and youth supporters protesting against the siege to the former governor's home.

A top source in the EFCC confirmed to Channels Television that the embattled former governor was whisked away from his Abuja residence by Ododo.

But the Kogi State Commissioner for Information and Communications, Kingsley Fanwo, denied the allegations, calling them spurious.

He said, "It's unfortunate that Kogi State is being dragged into this. The accusation by the EFCC is laughable. Were they sure that the former Governor was in his residence? They were not sure that Governor Ododo whisked him away. So, the allegation is false.

"What I am saying is that the Governor didn't whisk him away from anywhere." However, many have alluded that the act by

the governor is an indication that he is truly loyal to his predecessor.

The governor was also once quoted to have said if he gave a directive contrary to Bello's, the people should follow that of the former governor.

Reacting, a chieftain of the ruling All Progressives Congress in Kogi State, Isah Ozovehe Abdulbaki, said there is nothing wrong in the governor's loyalty to his predecessor.

He added, "It is only natural that such a leader who is admired by all in the party is accorded the respect and loyalty. Nonetheless, Yahaya Bello performed excellently as governor of Kogi State in the areas of security, infrastructure, human capital development, and inclusiveness, amongst others."

Political Analysts react

Speaking in an interview with NATIONAL TELESCOPE, Professor Hassan Saliu of the University of Ilorin and President of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA), described the situation as a political rigmorole, indicating that things could change rapidly in both states.

He noted that most governors work hard to install successors to continue benefiting from state resources.

"Nigerian politicians can be predictable in some ways and unpredictable in others. The current situation in these states might change because politics in Nigeria has become a lucrative business," he said.

"The main issue in Rivers State revolves around the sharing of resources, both human and material. Resolving this conflict is challenging because it involves maintaining loyalty to the power structure that brought one to office. There's an attempt to build a supportive structure for the governor, but its effectiveness remains uncertain."

Professor Saliu added, "Is there any state where an ex-governor installs a successor without expecting loyalty? The idea behind picking a successor is often driven by material benefits. A governor who handpicks a successor does so not out of love for the people but for the continued benefits from the state."

"Even in the Kogi State scenario, who says things are settled? Anything can happen over a four-year term. The political landscape can shift at any time."

"How long will Usman Ododo continue with the notion that if his directive conflicts with Yahaya Bello's, his own should be dropped in favor of Bello's?"

"In Nigeria, governors wield significant power. They can manipulate situations due to vast resources and low accountability. They are often unaccountable despite existing laws. Once in power, they transform into something else," he added.

Also, speaking to our correspondent, Professor Makodi Nnia Biereenu-nnabugwu, a political science expert from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, highlighted that the election process which brings a governor to power significantly influences their loyalty.

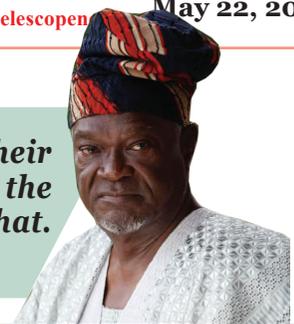
He stated, "A governor has to meet the expectations of the people. However, the process that brought him to power often dictates where his loyalty lies. If a governor didn't emerge through a free and fair election, it would be challenging for them to act independently and justly. Such a person is more likely to remain loyal to those who helped them gain power."

The NPSA vice president added, "The ever-changing dynamics of politics cannot be ignored. The ideal scenario is to have a free and fair election, which would result in a governor committed to the people and able to manage the state effectively."

When asked about the impact of loyalty on investigating previous administrations, he said, "It's unlikely that a governor would probe their predecessor successfully. Politics often involves mutual back-scratching. This political class has a deep understanding of one another."

6 Politics Interview

'I think that in the recess of their minds, the NLC knows that the government will not pay that. They are just flying a kite.'



Yoruba Nation agitators mean well – Oyo Commissioner

Oyo State Commissioner for Information, PRINCE DOTUN OYELADE, talks to **Funmi Ojo** on the recent local government election controversies, the attack on the state secretariat by separatist agitators, Bodija explosion, and other issues.

There has always been nationwide controversy over the issue of local government autonomy. What is the position of the state government on it? The issue of local government autonomy is raging now, but it has always been there for a very long time. A time when local government autonomy was in true practice. Then, I think, it was around 1999 that the current status began. The stand of the Oyo State Government is basically that the local government, with the kind of experience we have had not only in Oyo State, the current administration in Oyo State is trying to hold the bull by the horns so that we don't have to deceive ourselves. About 20 years ago, during the tenure of Governor Lamidi Adesina, some local governments were unable to pay the salaries of their workers. At that time, some owed 13 months, while others owed 11 months. So, this pointed to the inability of the stakeholders at the local government level to approach the issue of handling worker's motivation. But the State Government in Oyo State is looking at these things in a very holistic and practical manner. In the past four and a half years, the position of the State Government on this has been justified because there has never been a time that the people at the local government level, grassroots, enjoyed more dividends of democracy than now. Out of the 33 local governments, name one area that we have not touched in terms of infrastructure, and prompt payment of whatever is due to the workers. The local government chairmen who have just won their election into the 33 local government areas, will play a very active role in whatever the state government will do, and they will be the principal carriers of the dividends of democracy to the grassroots.

The local government election was held recently, but the All Progressives Congress claimed it wasn't free and fair. What is your take on it? No, their comments are very unserious and typical. You will recall that even before the election was conducted on that day, April 27, I believe, the APC said that they would boycott the election. It was later, just on the eve of that election, that they rescinded their decision and decided to go ahead and contest. When journalists asked them why they were not all about campaigning publicly, like the PDP was doing, the answer they gave was that they were engaged in tactical and strategic mobilisation, house to house, which is a euphemism for not doing anything at all. So this floppy manner of approaching the election is a clear signal that they knew they were going to lose the Local Government election. On the day of the election, barely 30 minutes after the election started, the APC spokesman was all over the

airwaves, crying blue murder, saying that the election had already been rigged and all that. It was true that people did not come out as they did during the gubernatorial election or the presidential election, but those who came out voted. It's the only election in this state that 19 political parties participated in it. The election before it was boycotted. The one in 2017 was equally boycotted. So this was a very credible election. But the opposition is saying what it should be saying.

The Nigeria Labour Congress has presented a N615,000 minimum wage proposal to the Federal Government, but some have described it as unrealistic. What is your take on it?

Well, everybody knows that the Nigerian worker is being shortchanged, and the removal of the oil subsidy and petroleum subsidy has only aggravated the situation. Now, equally, everyone tries to have more than a passing interest and analytical mind on the government-NLC relationship over the period. Since 1977, when the new amalgamated NLC was established and headed by Comrade Hassan Sumonu, the relationship has always been that of the cat and the mouse. So everyone knew that what the Nigerian Labour Congress is proposing, 615,000 is unrealistic. They had earlier proposed one million naira but the government should endeavour to keep discussing with the workers so that, at the end of the day, a realistic compromise can



be reached. And my take is that, whatever agreement springs forth from the final negotiation, labour must be made to realise that the Nigerian workers must up their game and their commitment to the people. And the government itself must cut all the flabby areas that are draining the economy and give the better parts to the politicians.

Do you think the government will be able to pay such an amount?

Not 615,000. I don't think the government can pay it. And I think that in the recess of their minds, the NLC knows that the government will not pay that. They are just flying a kite.

Recently, some Yoruba nation agitators attacked the state

secretariat, but they were apprehended. What is the current situation?

There has been nothing else. It was a flash in the pan. They have been apprehended, and they have been arraigned. About 30 of them have been arraigned, and I think a new date has been fixed for the hearing. But that is not to detract from the original concept of the Yoruba nation's agitation and the founders of that idea. They mean well. They still do. However, some people did not think

through the entire gamut of the implications of their actions, and they tried to present a very frivolous front for genuine agitation.

What is your take on the Yoruba nation's agitation?

In a democracy, people have very divergent views on issues. So the agitation of those people clamouring for such must be respected, and they must not be discontinuance. But it has to go through a legitimate legal framework.

Part of their reason for the call was that the Fulani herdsmen wanted to take over Yoruba land. How does the Oyo state government ensure that the activities of the herdsmen are monitored in rural communities?

That one is being done actively. As I talked to you, the deputy governor just came back from interland, where he physically led a team on the inspection of the illegal miners, because these are some of the people that are undermining the security of our people. But Oyo State remains the most peaceful of all the states in the Federation. And this is not only coming from us. All the security chiefs posted to Oyo State can attest to this fact.

Following the Bodija explosion, the state government commenced an investigation. What is the outcome of the investigation?

Three people were arraigned and they are still in court. We are a law-abiding government, and we will continue to do everything according to the dictates of the law. But as for the people who were victims, to show the magnanimity of the state government, we still have some people in hospitals. Even after the January incident, these people are still being catered for by the state government. We still have some people whose houses were blown up or were too risky to occupy. We still lodge them in hotels, even as I talk.

There were reports that the state government had abandoned the victims of the explosion. However, the state government has also denied the claims. What is the current situation with the welfare of the victims?

No, the government has not forgotten them, and the government is playing an active role in their welfare daily.

State governors have commenced the process of establishing the state police, according to the directive of the President. However, some experts have kicked against this, saying that it will turn the governor into a mini-god, as they will use state police against the opposition. What is your take on this?

In the same manner, you can say that the federal government has been using it to fester their net. There is nothing wrong with state policing. Having state police is inevitable because of the situation we have found ourselves in. I would hope that the governors will stand very steadfastly in this regard, as well as the federal and state legislatures so that we can fully realise its establishment.

'This floppy manner of approaching the election is a clear signal that they (APC) knew they were going to lose the Local Government election. On the day of the election, barely 30 minutes after the election started, the APC spokesman was all over the airwaves, crying blue murder, saying that the election had already been rigged and all that.'

Politics Interview

We know that they (Ikwerre) are Igbo. Their names, ways of life and everything points to the fact that they are Igbo. But when they now deny that they are not Igbo, it becomes strange. But we are very sure that eventually, they will retrace their steps.



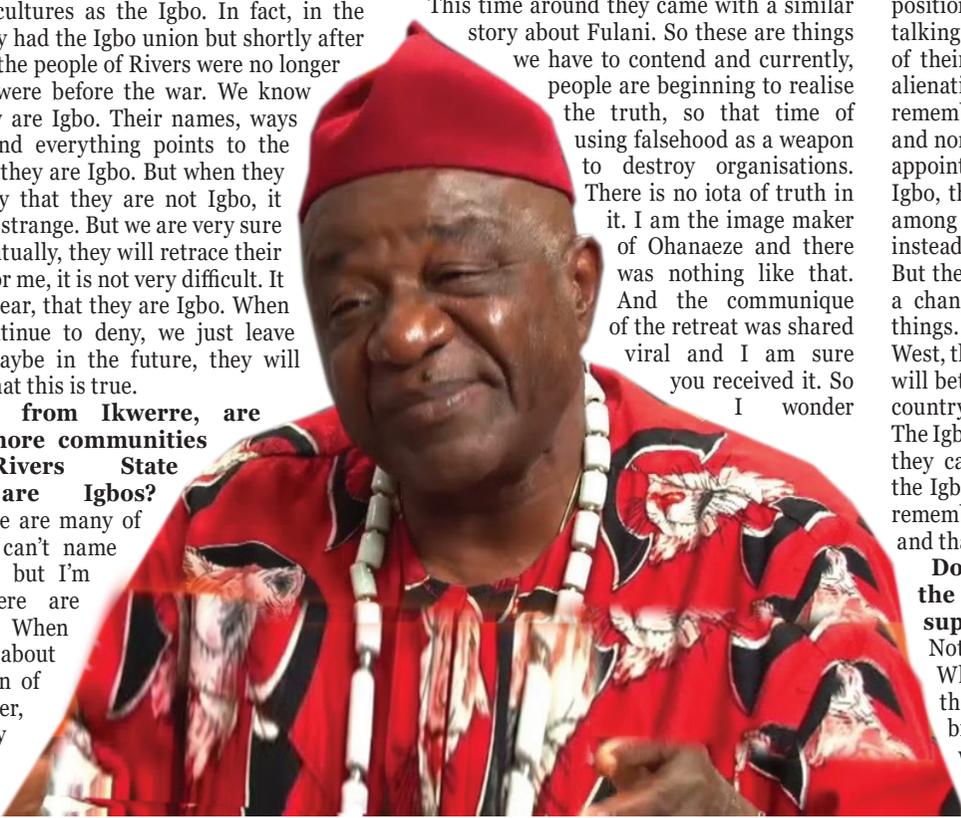
7

Igbo not interested in breaking Nigeria – Ohanaeze

National Publicity Secretary of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, DR. ALEX OGBONNIA, speaks with **Olumide Olusegun** about the organization's stance on separation, the Fulani controversy, the alleged plot to unseat President Bola Tinubu in 2027, and the recent threats against the association's president, among other issues.

It was reported that a group known as the Ohanaeze Reconciliation Committee is planning to remove President Bola Tinubu in 2027 but your organisation has debunked it. Does it mean that your organisation does not recognise the group and what is your take on their decision?
 We are aware of the Ohanaeze Reconciliation Committee. It is a committee. Whatever they do will be submitted to the leadership of our organisation. We are not bound to accept whatever recommendation or report they give. The leadership of Ohanaeze is not under any obligation to accept a report from a committee or to reject it. As far as I know, whatever they have has not been submitted to the leadership of the Ohanaeze Ndigbo. Their terms of reference as a committee is to reconcile the various elements and groups among the Igbo. To develop a concrete relationship across the Niger, the South-South, the Middle-East, and the North. They are supposed to commence action and when they finish, they report back to us.
For a committee that is an arm of your organisation, is it not worrisome that they are saying they will oust President Bola Tinubu in 2027 when the national leadership of your organisation is not aware of such a decision?
 As I said, they have not submitted their report. If they are saying that, they are on their own. It is only when they submit their report that we will be able to know the one they will adopt, accept, or reject. Meanwhile, we are not aware of what they are saying.

Ikwerre people in River State have disassociated themselves from the Igbo and this led to controversy. What is your position on the matter?
 We are aware that the people of Ikwerre have various cultures as the Igbo. In fact, in the past, they had the Igbo union but shortly after the war, the people of Rivers were no longer as they were before the war. We know that they are Igbo. Their names, ways of life and everything points to the fact that they are Igbo. But when they now deny that they are not Igbo, it becomes strange. But we are very sure that eventually, they will retrace their steps. For me, it is not very difficult. It is very clear, that they are Igbo. When they continue to deny, we just leave them. Maybe in the future, they will realise that this is true.
Aside from Ikwerre, are there more communities in Rivers State that are Igbos?
 Yes, there are many of them. I can't name them all but I'm sure there are many. When you talk about the origin of the River, originally Port



like that. Somebody fabricated the story, it developed wings and it began to fly all over, and they collected like truth. And of course, it has been said, that when falsehood when repeated several may look like truth. And that is what is happening there with that. It's not true. But this allegation is not new to some of us who have been in Ohanaeze for a long time. I remember when Nnia Nwodo was there, they said that he made the remarks which were directed to the Fulani and because of that, they burnt his house. John Obiozor was there, he made some remarks and they said it was an apology to the Fulani, and they burnt his house. This time around they came with a similar story about Fulani. So these are things we have to contend and currently, people are beginning to realise the truth, so that time of using falsehood as a weapon to destroy organisations. There is no iota of truth in it. I am the image maker of Ohanaeze and there was nothing like that. And the communique of the retreat was shared viral and I am sure you received it. So I wonder

of the Ndigbo general? The Ndigbo generals are interested in one Nigeria and in a federalist relationship where each person should have authority over their revenue and expenditure profile. That has been the position of the Igbo from the beginning. We are not interested in separating from Nigeria. We have always told our youths that we are one Nigeria. The difference is that we should have authority over our mineral resources, revenue, and expenditure profile. And also grow at our own pace because we discovered that before the war, we had one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa. That is the position of the Igbo. For people who are talking about separation and Biafra, the basis of their agitation is the marginalisation and alienation from the centers of power. Do you remember when they appointed service chiefs and none of them were? There was some other appointment of substance that didn't get to the Igbo, that was sufficient to raise the agitation among the youth. Our youth are saying that instead of this thing to continue, let us go. But the elders are saying, Nigeria should have a change of approach and attitude to these things. We believe that with a coalition of the West, the Middle Belt, and the South-South, we will better achieve results of restructuring the country so that we will have true federalism. The Igbo position is one of Nigeria's under what they call true federalism. If you go through the Igbo General Assembly, right from 1949, I remember Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe made a remark and that is where we stand up till now.

Does this in any way suggest that the Ndigbo worldwide is not in support of the position of the IPOB?
 Not all of them we are not in support of. What they are saying is that instead of them taking indignity, Nigeria should break up where the Igbo will find their way. Everybody is in support of that philosophy. We are hoping that it (marginalisation) will stop, but if it continues, everybody is thinking that way. That is IPOB. It is also a general philosophy and it is not only the Igbo, but the Yoruba, Middle Belt, and South-South. Instead of the suffocation continuing they would rather take a bow and leave. Not until the Yoruba became the president, it was the same philosophy everywhere. It is not just the IPOB. Even you would not prefer to stay in a place where they would continue to suffocate you.

The President General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, has raised an alarm alleging that some Igbo people are out to destroy him despite being one of their own. Why is this so?
 It is natural. Was it not Jews that killed Jesus Christ? It is like that all over the world. The American President that was shot, was it not the Americans that shot him? It is not strange.

What steps have been taken to ensure this issue does not end in the loss of lives?
 The point is that I am very sure of the fact that good will always overwhelm evil. Good people are more important in society than bad people. So, as we go on, humanity in us will continue to improve on our relationship with the leadership. That's the reality. Eventually, we will come to terms with the need for us to have a stronger Ohanaeze and also to assist the leadership to achieve more for the Igbo. I am sure things will improve because bad things do not last. President Bola Tinubu will be one year in office on May 29. How would you describe his performance since his emergence? Ohanaeze will hold a meeting very soon where they will take a position on his one year in office.

Harcourt was Igbo. There's no doubt that the people of Ikwerre Igbo and other people who were living in Port Harcourt went to court before the war. It was ruled that Port Harcourt belonged to the Ikwerre people. There was a judgment on that. With that, a lot of Igbo people were established in Port Harcourt. I know that all these strange behaviours and double standards started after the war. I want to be clear to all Nigerians that no matter the pretension, it will be clear later and eventually they will relocate.

What do you think is the reason why they are disassociating themselves from the Igbo? I am not in a position to prove why they are doing it. They know better, I don't know why.

Some are saying it is because they don't want to belong to the Biafra if perhaps the decision comes that Igbo should have its nation. How true is that?
 I am just hearing it. I cannot confirm because I am not the person who is perpetrating this story. So, I don't know if that is true or false.

What is your reaction to viral audio alleging plans by Ndigbo to apologise to the Fulani community over the 1966 coup in Nigeria? That one is very clear also. There was a retreat and we had a committee, the Ohanaeze Ndigbo committee. They had their terms of reference. They came out with a communique and they ended the meeting. Many Igbo indigene were present and the communique was issued from where where person got his story, we don't know. The leadership of the organisation has also made it known that there were no discussions

where the person got the report of begging the Fulani community.

Why do you think somebody would want to share such a falsehood with such a noble organization as Ohanaeze Ndigbo?
 Naturally, you will sometimes see such things but their reason for doing such is best known to them. Maybe it was because somebody was not happy with the leadership or maybe somebody had an organisation with a particular plan. It happens, it is not new to us. We also know that the truth will always prevail.

The President General of Ohanaeze, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, recently said all Igbo governors were calling for IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu to be released from custody. What informed this decision after several years?
 It is not new. The report is all over. Whether it is governors making the calls or not. We have been asking for the release of Nnamdi Kanu for a while.

But why do you think the Federal Government is finding it difficult to release him? The question would be better answered by Buhari. He has had a running battle with the former president while in office. And also, you don't ask why somebody would detain his enemy with his power. Everybody is aware that they are not the best of friends. So it is not difficult to know why Buhari detained Nnamdi Kanu. Tinubu just came, and we are very confident that his approach must be different from that of Buhari.

The calls for the separation of the Igbo people from Nigeria have been there for a long time. What is the current position

What is the expectation in 2027?
 Until we get to the bridge, we will know how to cross it. We can't take a position now. The political parties have not even determined their candidate. When it's time we will take a position. And of course, whatever position we are going to take, it's not I as the National Publicity Secretary that will make that decision. It is above one person. It is always the National Executive Committee do comes together to make decisions.

8 Feature

50-years neglect: Lagos community suffers bad road



Amid nationwide calls for infrastructural development, a once flourishing community, Ogunniyi of Lagos State now languishes in despair. While some residents and property owners have abandoned their belongings and dispersed the community, others endure unimaginable hardship due to poor road conditions and frequent flooding, CHIBUZOR ALLI writes.

Residents of Ogunniyi, a community in the Badagry axis in the Ajeromi-Ifelodun Local Government Area of Lagos State, are lamenting the poor state of the road linking the area to the Lagos-Badagry expressway. Our correspondent, who visited the area on Friday, noticed that the poorly constructed road had pools of foul-smelling water accumulated in different parts, posing serious health risks to the residents of the community.

The trip from Oshodi to Ogunniyi presented a varied experience. The expressway, used by our correspondent for the initial leg of the journey, was in good shape.

The properly kept expressway enabled smooth travel, ensuring he reached his destination promptly.

Upon entering Ogunniyi, however, he encountered a striking difference. The road, crucial for the community's connectivity, was in dire condition.

It was gathered that the 2-kilometer road has been abandoned by the Lagos State Government for over 50 years.

Many vehicle owners have stopped plying the road while those that do, struggle to navigate the numerous potholes on the road.

Also, the stench from stagnant water makes life unbearable for both residents and road users.

The once-thriving street is now a nightmare, with potholes and craters that seem to multiply by the minute.

The constant rains have made matters worse, turning the road into a flooded mess. The properties of many are also left in shambles during the rainy season.

As this correspondent made his way through the streets, he couldn't help but feel a sense of frustration and empathy for the residents of Ogunniyi, a once-thriving community now plagued by poor road infrastructure and flooding.

Many residents have lost their livelihoods due to the frequent flooding, which has destroyed their homes and businesses.

Speaking with separate interviews with NATIONAL TELESCOPE, some of the residents lamented, saying they had been abandoned by the state government.

It was disclosed that the situation worsened after developers acquired properties within where the drainages were channeled.

A resident and former roadside trader in the area, identified simply as Titilope has become jobless after losing some have her goods to flooding.

According to her, she no longer has anything to sell and could not afford to purchase any goods for sale for fear of flood reoccurrence.

She said, "I used to sell foodstuff on the roadside, but now I am forced to stay at home because I don't want to lose my goods again."

Another resident, Mr Ismaila Yusuf said, "This has become a long-time problem. I have been in this area for the past eight years. It is as if this area is not part of Lagos State because we cannot feel the presence of government."

He added, "My brother, you have not seen anything, at least you can

don't understand why we are left to suffer like this. They have constructed Alaji Gbaja, Ifelodu, Owoduni, and others that were in better condition than ours before construction. Yet, Ogunniyi Street has been neglected for decades.

"I have lived here since I was a child, and now at almost 56 years old, the road is still in terrible condition. My father lived and died here, and despite promises, the road was never fixed. We endure this suffering daily."

"We vote in large numbers here, but they don't take care of us. During the rainy season, it's like we are living in a river. No matter how high you fold your trousers, the water still reaches you. My wife sells at our gate, and I am the one who comes out in the rain to clear the water when it's unbearable."

"If I don't clear the gutter, the situation remains dire for days, making it feel like we need canoes to leave our houses. We are forgotten. Many have sold their inherited properties and left, but those of us without money remain in the homes our fathers left us."

"We have nowhere else to go, which is why we have stayed here so long. Lagos State government, please help us. The suffering here is immense," he pleaded.

Another house owner, Aweda Ganiu, pleaded with the state government to intervene and bring an end to their suffering.

He said, "We don't have drainage on the road, so when it rains, the water overflows. We are pleading with the government to help us with this situation that is unbearable and inhumane."

The General Secretary of Alafia Community Development Association, Ugochukwu Onala, who also owns a house in the area, revealed that the stagnant polluted water in the community is causing illness among both adults and children.

"The area was in good condition until all the houses around were sold, including the canal. The canal got blocked, and water started spreading everywhere. Buildings were abandoned because of the blockage. I had to demolish my house, fill it to escape the water a bit, and then rebuild it. Those who couldn't do that were forced to sell their homes."



still pass

through now. You need to come when it's raining, you will feel sorry for us living here."

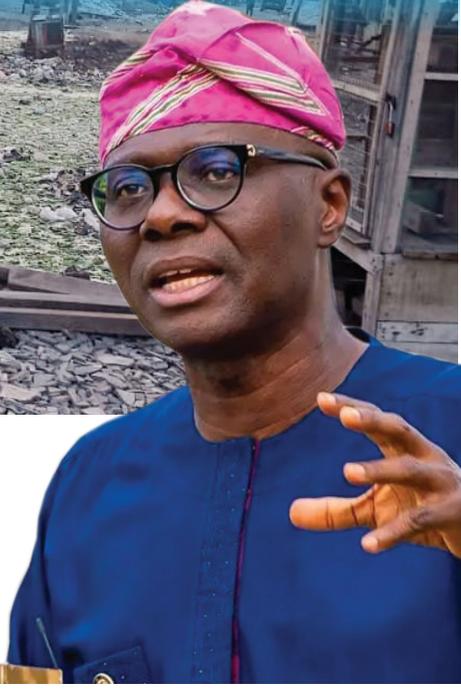
When asked why he didn't relocate to a better area in the state, he said, "Where do you expect me to go? All we can do is appeal to the state governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu not to abandon us. It has taken too long and we are all suffering. They shouldn't wait until people begin to die on this road before they come and attend to it."

On his part, 56-year-old house owner, Isiaka Abayomi told our correspondent that the road has been in a deplorable state since he was a child.

According to him, while other roads were considered and constructed theirs have been abandoned despite the worsened state.

He also said that many residents have abandoned their homes and properties to move to more developed areas in the state while others have stayed behind because they lack the financial means to relocate.

He said, "The government has been working on the streets near us, but we



"No development has come to the area despite voting for the APC, they abandoned us. Since 1972, I have been living there, there has been no government presence. They only come to collect money at the Mable market."

"They did Alhaji Rahimi, Owoduni, Pamu, and others, but instead of doing ours, Ogunniyi, they took it to a state road. We have been abandoned and let down repeatedly, even after being promised development for our votes."

"The water on the road, after just each rain, caused ailments on our legs, leading to swelling and wounds due to the polluted water we have to wade through."

The Chairman of Ogunniyi Community, Mr Ganiu Owoyemi, also lamented the unbearable situation residents face in the area.

He stated that while the road was listed for construction alongside others in the past, it has been left out.

"When they (Government) came about two years ago, we thought we would finally benefit from the road project since our road was listed for repair."

"We were told it was a World Bank project, and they came to survey the land. They've been telling us for years that they would come back, but despite our road being in their files, nothing has been done."

"You can see how we live, with water everywhere. Some people came around two months ago to take another survey, and still, nothing has happened."

"We are pleading with the government to consider our families and properties because those of us who live here have nowhere else to go."

Speaking in an interview with NATIONAL TELESCOPE, the Lagos State Commissioner for Information, Mr Gbenga Omotoso, stated that recent reviews have been conducted on road projects, and new projects are currently under construction across the state. He emphasised the state government's commitment to infrastructure development.

"Lagos is a rapidly growing city, the fifth largest in the world, and expanding every day. Construction is a necessity as communities continue to spring up and expand. The government is dedicated to doing more."

"Recently, at a press conference held by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, we outlined our achievements from last year, which are visible for all to see. These include new hospitals, markets, roads, and bridges, including a link bridge at Ojota. Numerous projects are ongoing, and you can find detailed updates online."

Interview

How I rejected street begging for Lagos Bus Conductor – Enugu man

In the face of life's challenges and navigating through the rough waters of hardship, CHIDIOFOR FELIX, a 34-year-old physically challenged man from Ebonyi State, now works as a bus conductor in Lagos. In this interview with Lilian Edward, he opens up about his journey since losing his right leg in an accident.

without eating except when some friends supported me. So one day, I told myself that cannot be living like that. That was when I decided to join the conductor job.

How long have you been a bus conductor and what has been the experience with passengers?

I started the job in September 2023. There are different types of passengers, some passengers could make you angry while some others are understanding.

Some people become street beggars when they are disabled. Why did you decide to work?

Honestly, begging is not an option for me. That someone is crippled does not mean he should be a street beggar. There is no dignity in that. I give beggars money. It is not good for me to be begging.

Do you experience any form of discrimination among people because of your condition?

Discrimination is everywhere. But Nigerians are beginning to understand lots of things. You may want to enter a place and you are not allowed because you are physically challenged. Some levels of discrimination we experience are killing. That notwithstanding, we are loving people. If you stay in their midst when they are together you will enjoy yourself. We work conveniently with those who are not disabled. For instance, most of our bus drivers

are not

physically challenged, and we get along so well.

If you had the opportunity to turn back the hands of time, what would be your heart's desire?

My heart desires would be to have my two legs and be able to walk around again without crutches. If I have a dream tomorrow to turn back the hands of time I will take my feet back. Because if I have that foot, I am a goal-getter. I pursue my goals till I get them.

What is your plan now and how to do plan to achieve it?

Currently, I plan to have my Bus to be able to effectively run the transportation business to have a good quality of life.



Tell us about your family yourself and background.

My name is Chidiofor Felix. I am an indigene of Ebonyi State. I am not married, and I am the first in a family of seven; four boys and three girls. I attended Baptist Primary School and Ojota Secondary School both in Lagos. However, I couldn't complete it because of the incident. When the incident happened, I had to stop school. I didn't stop just because of the incident but because there was no money to further my education.

Can you describe the incident that made you disabled?

The accident happened when I was 12 years old. I went to the school and when we closed in the afternoon, I left the school. We live very near to the market and between my school and house there is a major road and I must cross over before I can get home. I was about to cross the road when a truck swerved to my side and climbed my leg. It was a terrible experience. I didn't know what happened after that. But only to find out later at the hospital that my right leg was cut off. Just as I said earlier, I was very young and it was a terrible experience.

Was it at the hospital that the leg was amputated?

No. At a point, I traveled to the village, hoping that my leg would not be amputated. I believed that something positive would come out of the journey but as fate would have it, this is the situation. I later came back to Lagos. The government supported the amputation process.

Did you get support from your family and friends?

No friends at the time that the incident happened. I was always secluding myself from

people when it happened. I would not talk to anyone and always sit alone. Also, I was living at my aunt's place. My family and my aunt were supportive but refused to support the amputation.

How did you become a bus conductor in Lagos?

I am an athlete but there are several challenges and having seen some of my teammates who also engage in conductor jobs to sustain their families. They go for the job after training. Initially, I couldn't because I was doing a shoemaker's job until the CDA (Community Development Association) shut my shop. Then I decided to give the bus conductor job a trial. I can't be asking people for money, or begging on the street.

Why was your shop shut by the Community Development Association?

I don't know the reason. They usually lock it when am not around and I also break the keys but I realised I couldn't continue to break the key, so I left. I was hoping that by October when I raise enough funds, I will find how to settle the issue of the shop and continue my shoe cobbler work.

You said you are an athlete and a shoe cobbler, tell us about it.

I played amputee football (Para-athletics), and like I said earlier am a shoemaker (cobbler). But it wasn't fetching enough money and again the shop was locked. My shop was locked up finally when I went to a competition in Asaba. I was hoping to get some money from the competition but I was not paid. When that happened, I began to stay at home, go for training, come back, and sleep. That became my daily routine. Sometimes, I would be at home without anything to eat. I slept most time

Newsextra

127 Arrested for Ignoring Pedestrian Bridges in Lagos

Operatives of the Lagos State Environmental Sanitation Corps (KAI) have arrested 127 individuals for offences related to the non-use of pedestrian bridges across the state.

Despite government directives, many residents continue to cross highways instead of using the designated pedestrian bridges, particularly at night. This

practice, often blamed on security concerns, has led to increased enforcement measures.

The Commissioner for the Environment and Water Resources, Tokunbo Wahab, recently condemned this behaviour, emphasising that violators would face prosecution.

On Monday, Wahab

announced on his X handle that government officials conducted a sting operation resulting in several arrests of those flouting the law.

During the operation at Oshodi, a total of three women and 23 men were apprehended for allegedly harassing pedestrians on the bridge. Additionally, two miscreants, 31 street traders, and 68

individuals were arrested for not using the pedestrian bridges.

The Lagos State government

reiterates its commitment to ensuring the safety and compliance of all residents with the use of pedestrian

bridges to prevent accidents and maintain order.

Unilorin VC Congratulates Yusuf Ali on FUNAAB Appointment

By Taiwo Niyi

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, Prof. Wahab Olasupo Egbewole, SAN, has extended his heartfelt congratulations to the esteemed legal expert, Mallam (Professor) Yusuf Olaolu Ali, SAN, on his recent appointment as Chairman

of the Governing Council of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB).

Professor Ali's appointment, along with 114 others, was announced last weekend in a statement by the Permanent Secretary of the Federal

Ministry of Education, Didi Walsan-Jack.

Describing the appointment as well-deserved, the Unilorin Vice Chancellor expressed confidence that FUNAAB will benefit immensely from Ali's extensive experience. In a statement issued by the University's Director of Affairs, Mr. Kunle Akogun, Prof. Egbewole praised the versatile senior lawyer's new role.

Egbewole highlighted that Professor Ali is well-suited for this position, having previously served with distinction as Chairman of the Governing Council at Osun State University.

He concluded by extending his best wishes to Professor Ali, invoking Allah's guidance in his new role, and expressing certainty that he will elevate FUNAAB to greater heights during his tenure.

Enugu Railway Workers Threaten Lawsuit Over Demolition of Quarters

On Tuesday, Nigerian Railway Corporation workers staged a peaceful protest in Enugu, threatening to sue the state government over the demolition of their offices and staff quarters. They have given Governor Peter Mbah a seven-day ultimatum to negotiate the replacement of the demolished structures.

Governor Mbah's administration began demolishing properties inside the Railway Corporation in the Holy Ghost area as part of

its urban renewal programme for the proposed Enugu Central Station. Among the demolished properties were the Our Saviour Institute of Science, Agriculture and Technology, the College of Education, Oha Micro-Finance Bank, and the Ogbete Main Market branches of ECOBANK and First City Monument Bank.

Despite some occupants obtaining court judgments against the demolition, the state government claimed it had a Memorandum of Understanding with

the Railway Property Management, who had leased the property to the occupants, and had paid compensation to both the Railway Property and some occupants.

During the protest, workers expressed their anger over the demolition, which they claimed was done without any provision for alternative accommodations or facilities. They marched through the demolition site carrying placards with various inscriptions and chanting labor solidarity songs.

FG to review national blockchain policy

The Federal Government is poised to reassess the regulations guiding the execution of the National Blockchain policy. This move is aimed at adapting to new emerging technologies and economic dynamics, with an emphasis on extending its application to sectors like land registration, health, and education.

The Director-General of the National Information Technology Development Agency, Kashifu Inuwa, disclosed this during a three-day co-creation workshop held on Tuesday in Abuja to deliberate on the implementation of the National Blockchain Policy.

10 ROYALTY Corner

“The problem is that there is an over-concentration of developmental programmes in the state capitals. There must be a deliberate policy to create satellite development centres.”

How I became King after family line was abandoned for 350 years – Ekiti monarch

His Royal Majesty, OBA DR SUNDAY AIKUIRAWO ANIYI, the Obaleo of Erinmope, Ekiti State in this interview with **Olumide Olusegun** shares his kingship journey, and community development among other issues.

Tell us about yourself?

I attended St. John's Primary School, Erinmope and I proceeded to Erinmope High School. Thereafter, I relocated to Niger State and lived there for about eight years. I then attended Niger State Polytechnic where I obtained a diploma in accounting. However, I didn't like the course because every household had an accountant in my community. While other Ekiti people were craving to have a professor in their family, Erinmope people were producing accountants. So we have a large number of chartered accountants in our community. I probably have 15 of my age mates who are chartered accountants, and we have over 70 chartered accountants in this community. So, I thought I didn't want to be where everybody was running to be. Particularly, the political environment of that time also influenced my career choice. I finished secondary school during the June 12/Abiola-Abacha crisis. What I noticed then was that the public opinion molders, and people who got reported in the newspapers were primarily lawyers, journalists, academics, and then a few labour leaders who were not employees of the government. Many businessmen and other professionals were silent for self-preservation. In those days, the major people whose views were heard, and whom we were reading every day were people like Bola Ige, Frank Kokori, Abraham Adesanya, Pa Adekunle Ajasin, Femi Falana, Olisa Agbakoba, Gani Fawehinmi of blessed memory, Keyamo, GOK Ajayi, Tunji Abayomi and host of other courageous lawyers who confronted the military junta through sociopolitical activism. I believed most of them could speak courageously because they were private lawyers. And then in the media, I probably learned the English language from the newspapers reading people of like Kunle Ajibade, Babafemi Ojuda who later became a senator, late Bagauda Kaltho, Osifo Whiskey, Kayode Fayemi, his wife, Bisi Fayemi, Publisher of The Source Magazine, Comfort Obi who also became a senator among other

notable journalists, some of whom are dead now.

How did they influence you?

They were critical voices and the mobilisers you would hear in the media. So, I wanted to be like them. I can say I had in me a furnace of activism, but never radical to be violent. So, I left accounting and decided I was going to study law. So I applied for law, despite that I had good JAMB scores, for some reason I was disappointed along the line but I decided to study English. Thereafter my interest moved from law to journalism. I attended Adekunle Ajasin University and I was among the first set, so we had the opportunity to pioneer almost everything from the University Union, Church, and others. On campus, I co-founded The Paragon magazine with some mates like Sandra Dickson who was the Editor in Chief. I was the Production Editor or so.

How did your journey into kingship start?

I was appointed by the immediate past governor of the Ekiti State (Dr Kayode Fayemi) as a Senior Special Assistant for Special Projects in 2019; before that, I was a lecturer at Elizade University where I taught courses in Mass Communication. I worked as SSA Special Projects for about six or seven months. Later, I was upgraded to become the Principal Private Secretary to the Governor. Being the secretary to the governor allowed me to coordinate his daily meetings, and his office, interact with his guests, review documents, and write his drafts be it letters, speeches, or lectures. You know, he is a highly sought-after scholar-politician, so I was always busy with one intellectual assignment or the other. I was there when my predecessor, Oba James Olaifa Aina joined our ancestors after 45 years in the saddle and died in May 2021. I had thought I was too radical for the traditional role but a lot of people thought I had

always exhibited kingship in character, traditional knowledge, native intelligence sage behavior, and service to the community. While I was trying to run away, a lot of people kept dragging me into it. At a time, I had to succumb but I said since Ifa would be consulted by the ruling house as jointly determined, I was convinced Ifa would not want to pick a radical intellectual who is also a committed Christian. I assumed Ifa would not prefer someone who would come to the throne and begin to seek reform because I had always felt a King should be one who would be a core traditionalist and I was not one. I was a Christian. So I thought Ifa would take someone that would do his bidding. Unfortunately, Ifa decided that I was the one that Eledua (God) had ordained for the role. The initial response was shock and emptiness. I knew the course of my life and that of my immediate family would never remain the same. It was a sobering moment. All the same, I accepted my fate and thanked God while preparing for the unknown future. So I became the king on December 27, 2021. And here to the glory of God, people say we are doing well.

What were the processes that surrounded your kingship?

Modern kingship in Yoruba land, especially in Ekiti, is governed by Chieftaincy Law. Thus, every community will have what is called a chieftaincy declaration which is more or less like the official gazette of how a king should be selected. In Ekiti, the process is common and like the standard Yoruba process. In our culture, when a king passes away, the rite of passage is 90 days. When the 90 days were completed, traditionally, before the government came in, there used to be what is called a council of Irewo, which is like the convocation of the elders of the ruling houses. They know the next ruling house that will bring a prince. They then consult Ifa and whoever Ifa picks would be the person that will be King. That was in ancient times. In modern times, after 90 days, the community will notify the government that they have completed the rite of passage and that the process of installation of a new king can begin. Then, the government will write a letter to the local government, telling them to inform the next ruling house. These ruling houses are already listed in our declaration according to rotation. So, we don't have a crisis of which house should be the next king. We have three ruling houses in Erinmope. The Iloye, Iworoaro, and Ijewu ruling houses. The historically significant thing about my appointment is that my ruling house had been out of the throne for over 350 years for one reason or another. When the gazette was being made in 1976, some people felt that since we had been away from the throne for centuries, we should be removed as one of the ruling houses, but very reasonable elders disagreed and said that it was impossible to do because the first Obaleo came from this particular ruling house and rites of installation

are performed within the Iworoaro Quarters for all Obaleo. Chief Afin and Obapetu are the two principal chiefs of Omo Owa and it is they who are responsible for the installation commissioning of an Obaleo to the throne as well as the ones to decommission him when he passes away. Both are from my Quarters, the Iworoaro ruling house. So, that way, we were not removed as one of the ruling houses in 1976 despite some conspiracy to do so. To commence the process, the local government wrote to the ruling house that they should produce a candidate or candidates to the Kingmakers for consideration to fill the vacant stool. When that was done, there were six of us who indicated interest by obtaining the form, and we were screened. We also wrote exam and were interviewed. After which they subjected us to Ifa consultation. So, at the end of Ifa Consultation, I was declared the most suitable candidate for the throne. Subsequently, the ruling house submitted my name to the kingmakers for consideration. I was appointed on October 8, 2021 by the majority of the kingmakers. I must put on record that in a thing like this, not everybody will support your nomination. So, out of the five Kingmakers, two were not in our support but we had three supporting us, which is what the law prescribed as valid majority.

How have these changes of becoming a King shaped your perspective of life?

I grew up with two of my father's uncles. They fostered my father. Because my paternal grandmother was their elder sister, but she died young, they took over the responsibility of taking care of my father. I grew up also in that family. After some time, my father came back to his father's quarters in Iworoaro but he left me with his uncles. So, I grew up with elderly people. I was the youngest boy in that family and that me the errand boy for everybody. The two uncles built houses together, and their wives cooked and sponsored their children in school together. I learned a lot from them. The senior between the two was the oldest person in the family called Olori Ile (The oldest person in the family quarters). They called the quarters Odo Ikole. So, because he was the oldest, all the people of that quarter came to him for meetings every nine days. Issues concerning their immediate quarters such as land management, disputes, cultural issues, and others formed their areas of discussion. I was always made to stay with them during the meetings to serve palm wine and go on errands for them. Most of the time, I was not happy because my friends would be in the field playing football. I would be there in their meetings that I didn't have any interest in. But I later understood that God was preparing me for this role. Through them, I was exposed to tradition and elderly wisdom to manage the complexity of issues. When I became king, even from day one, people asked if I had been practicing how to be a king before because it was more or less like I just came out of an induction class. People hardly had to tell me where to put my leg or where to put my hand. But no matter how well prepared you are in a role when you get there, you will still become more or less like a newborn



ROYALTY Corner

*“As a lecturer and intellectual, you query everything...’
But in a traditional system, you are not supposed to dig deep.”*

‘Practice of ancient taboos have become impracticable’

baby who had to acclimatise.

Tell us about your community, Erinmope.

The name of our town should be Erimope-Ekiti But just like many communities were wrongly spelled and written during the colonial time, our name is written as Erinmope and that has caused a lot of confusion. People had to create a very popular story of ‘Ha Erin ni mo pe’ to justify the “Erinmope” spelling error. In our dialect around here, we call Ori (head) as Eri. Ours is a very ancient community. In size, we are not that big, but we have a very huge history behind us. And so we know that we couldn’t have been here for anything less than 700 years. At least, if you count the number of Obaleo, and you decide to give them maybe 25 or 30 years average. We have a big history. Unlike some communities that create very funny stories to link themselves to Ile-Ife. We don’t have to create stories. We are of the Ejio dynasty in Ile-Ife. That is why our market here is called the Ejio Market and that is why I am Obaleo Elejio Oraufe. Here we have a chief, she is called Abalufe. Even though she is a woman, we call her Abalufe. We have Oraufe Groove here, which is the highest deity and we have Onan Ufe here. During my coronation, Oni of Ife was here and he told our people what many had not known. He said our name originated from the Olomomope. That Olomomope was the mother of the first Oni. Indeed, we have a unique heroine who had the status of a masquerade but not a masquerade.

What differences do you observe in being a King and your former life?

As a lecturer and intellectual, you query everything. Your training is to question so-called established knowledge and beliefs, to cast doubt, and to be cynical about assumptions. And this is the thing with the journalist also. Even when things seem right, you still have to look beyond the surface. But in a traditional system, you are not supposed to dig deep, you are not supposed to question tradition and you are not supposed to be scientific in your views because it is a form of rebellion against sacred beliefs. But, beliefs are phantoms in reality. They have no basis. All beliefs, either Christianity, Islam, or whatever, are just a collection of unfounded assumptions. In all these, you will always find fault, you will wonder if what they are saying on a particular issue is meaningful. You would want to challenge and tell them that there is no substance in what they are saying. But you dare not do so because it would seem you want to spoil things. And a king must not spoil things. As somebody from that kind of background that I had, it could be challenging trying to reconcile logicality with taboos. You are just to believe what they say as it is.

What are some of the taboos?

For instance, you will be told that a certain water is not to be seen by certain people and you begin to wonder what happens if they see it? They will just make sure nobody sees the water. So, you won’t even know what will happen to the person who sees the water. So, you just have to accept and give peace a chance and allow people to live in their delusional world as they want it. As a traditional king in Africa, Nigeria, and Ekiti in particular, your job

is everything. You are a spiritual leader, a judge, a mediator, a lobbyist, and a politician in the context of understanding the politics of your environment. You have to know how to position your people so that you are not disadvantaged politically. You are an economist, town planner, and pastor, and some people want to make you an imam, a priest, and you are everything. People expect you to be rich to take care of the community. So, in other words, you are supposed to be an entrepreneur. You must have a sustainable source of livelihood. Yet, they don’t want you to work because nobody wants to see his king struggling to cultivate tubers of yam. People don’t want you to be yourself. You cannot just wear your shorts and move around town. For instance, by tradition, I am forbidden from entering my family house. I can no longer enter the home where my people are. If I go there, I will stay outside and they will come outside to greet me or they create a canopy outside to welcome me, I find that too stressful for them but that is part of the tradition. Sometime last year (2023), a rainstorm removed the roof of our family house and I contracted some people to fix it when they finished it, I was supposed to go there to see if they had done the job to my satisfaction but I couldn’t enter the place. These are what kings do. There can be a lot of taboos in the institution. In fact, in ancient times, the person who pounds the yam for the king would do so in a dedicated room naked and would not talk throughout for the sake of the sacredness of the Oba.

Does that still happen now?

No, the system of living now has changed such that no one can do that again. For instance, we no longer fetch water in streams, there are boreholes everywhere including my palace and I drink table water. And we are in the generation of pounding machines.

Does this mean that ancient taboos have become irrelevant?

The principles are not irrelevant but the practice is practically impracticable. For instance, the principle is that when you want to pound the yam or make food for the king, it must be done with the highest level of hygiene and this is still effective. They don’t want people to know how the food of the king is prepared, who prepares it and they don’t also want people to meet them cooking. They created a mystery around how the king feeds. Even when the king is eating and you come to visit, they won’t tell you that he is eating. This is so as it is believed that the place of a king is that of Alase ikeji orisa (Second in command to the gods). So, he must be fenced from what is associated with ordinary human beings. It is a system of creating myths around the king to retain the authority and respect that he would need to be able to command people. When people see the king as just any other man around the street, he will lose the power of leadership because he does not use the power of the police or soldiers to enforce the law. He has a moral and divine authority. That is why he must position himself in a place of divine authority; a place of serious discipline. A king cannot be drinking in the beer parlour. There is a festival I do here. Once I sit at about 5 pm, I will have to be there till it ends by midnight. Once I take my seat, I cannot stand up even

if you are pressed for urine. That is the test of your resilience and discipline as well as your ability to give your totality to your community. In the past, I would question such and say what is that for but when you understand the principle, then you will do it.

Tell us about your wife, Olori, how you met, and the marital journey.

We met at the Adekunle Ajasin University about 20 years ago during my first degree. While I was rounding off at the university, she just entered as an undergraduate. So we were living in the same compound. The day I first saw her, she caught my attention, and the first thing I did was to ask her where she was from, and she stylishly said Lagos. That was after I scolded her for not greeting me. I expected her to snob or to talk to me angrily like a typical Eko girl would do but she apologised. Later in the evening, she apologized again (E ma bi nu e kan oo), and from there, we became friends, and then from friendship, we courted for about five years and when she was in her final year, we got married, in Lagos.

How is your relationship with your kinsmen and the experience of managing people amidst these challenging times?

I must tell you I am about the luckiest king around. My election and installation were received with overwhelming support, and I can tell you I am an envy of many kings around here, and in Ekiti in particular, because my subject put in their best to support me. I built a new palace within nine months. If you had been here like five years ago, you would not believe that such a transformation could take place in the palace. And all of these were done by the same people who were there before but who maybe did not feel motivated. But that motivation is there now. I was hosted last year by Erinmope Indigenes in Ikorodu, Lagos. It was a big carnival at Ayanbure’s palace. By God’s grace, some of them are already talking about sponsoring my trip to North America and Europe to visit them. So, I have a very beautiful relationship with them. They are all very supportive, generous, and kind to me. They make life easy for me. I cannot tell them I have a challenge, even when there is, I sometimes tell them there is none so as not to overburden them.

How do you

navigate the expectations placed upon you by both traditional and modern governance structures?

In Ekiti State, we are very educated and Erinmope people in particular are highly educated. Our people are well travelled across the diaspora and this comes with a lot of enlightenment, civilisation, and modernity. Our people know how they must uphold the culture and maintain the limitations. It is those who understand the intricacies of modern life that can navigate it. Yes, we have a community of maybe about 70% Christians, 20% Muslims, and 10% traditionalists. But, the Yoruba are generally syncretic and ambivalent in religious practice. In mathematics, there are the principles of intersect in Ven theory. People can believe and practice both. There are certain things you cannot do away with, especially those things that people think are not fetish, and they bring happiness and joy, unity, and excitement to our people. Meanwhile, whatever things are not practicable or suitable for modern life, we enlighten people against it. For instance, you cannot declare a curfew that the governor is not aware of. Only the governor has the power to declare a curfew. In another scenario, we give limits to traditionalists, churches, and mosques to ensure there is no clash. You cannot say you are doing vigil and then you begin to make noise that will disturb other people. We enlighten them that air pollution is a serious offense. We all have this understanding and it brings peace.

Since you have been on the throne what has been your most challenging moment?

Every day comes with its challenges. When I was to host my coronation, I was two years as a King. I wanted it to be the best coronation ceremony. The template was to

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12 Interview

‘Almost every youth has a plan B. They are processing something. Some of them are still around probably because their travel document is not yet perfected.’



FG should protect student loans from politicians – PCU Vice Chancellor

Amid pressing challenges in Nigeria’s education sector, the Vice Chancellor of Precious Cornerstone University (PCU), PROFESSOR TIMOTHY ADEJUMO, speaks with **Funmi Ojo** on the prospects of the student loan programme, the impact of TETFund, and the recent directive from the Minister of Education on the admission of underage students, among other crucial issues.

Former Chairman of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of State-Owned Universities, Yusuf Ali, recently said private universities should not benefit from TETFund because they are established to earn into the private purse and not government coffers. What is your take on it?

It is not true. The fear of the Federal Government is that if the private universities benefit from TETFund, the money will just go into private pockets. It is not true. Before I joined this institution (PCU) as the vice chancellor, I used to have the wrong impression about private institutions. And it is high time people really got to know the real situation of things. It is generally believed that the parents of students in private institutions are rich. It is not true. Up to now, about three-quarters of our students have not paid. You know, we put up our payment of school fees at 50%, 70%, then 90%, and then 100%. Presently, we are in the second semester, and some of our students are at home because we don’t encourage them to come to school if they have not paid certain parts of the school fees. School fees are the major source of income for private institutions, which come from either proprietor or non-proprietor sources.

The Minister of Education, Prof. Tahir Mamman, recently said that underage students are causing progress in universities. How is that possible?

Well, I read in the report that he is actually proposing that the age for admission to university should be 18 to tally with the 6-3-3-4 education. If you add 6-3-3-4, you will see that this is 18 years old, but it has not been approved by the lawmakers. Presently, you know, it is assumed that underage students admitted to universities are not mature and can be easily influenced. But for younger students that are so brilliant, even more brilliant than those that are 18; they should make them fly. They should allow them to proceed with their education.

The minister warned that parents should stop registering underage children for JAMB. Is it not the responsibility of the institution not to admit underage children?

Well, for now, I don’t think there is any regulation that universities should not admit students below 18 years of age, and because I just talked to the admission officers and I was reliably informed that they have not obtained any regulation that potential students below the age of 18 should not be admitted.

What is the minimum age that can be admitted into your university?

I think it’s from 16 years old and above that is the required age everywhere, but if the Federal Government mandates every institution not to admit any student below 18, so be it.

How is your institution handling student’s misbehaviors?

The private university is where you can get a real education. Here, we train students to be Godly and to be God-fearing. Our institution is unique. We take God as the head in everything. We imbibe in them the culture of truth and honesty. We do not tolerate cultism or irrational behaviour. Here, there is no cultism, no taking of illicit drugs, and no irrational behaviour. We thank God that for the few who are going outside the rules and regulations of the university, we are able to discipline them appropriately. So private universities are better than public institutions run by the federal and state governments.

What are the new academic programmes that your institution is planning to introduce?

As part of ensuring the best in our academic activities, we will be commencing new postgraduate programmes soon. Postgraduate studies in microbiology, biochemistry, computer science, accounting, and business administration. And for undergraduate studies, God willing, by the next academic session we want to start two faculties; Faculty of Arts, in which we have Christian Religious Studies, Creative and Performing Arts, and Music. While for the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, we want to have medical lab science, we want to have nursing, we want to have public health, and we want to have human nutrition and dietetics. So these are the four major courses that we want to have, and by the grace of God, the location will be at KASUMU. PCU is noted for having zero tolerance for cultism, promiscuity, vandalism, and all forms of immorality in society. One thing that sets private universities apart is their stable academic calendar. No interruption. The day you receive your admission letter to the university, you can project that after four years, if it is a four-year course, you will graduate. There’s no strike, no disruption of the academic calendar at all. For us, we have flexibility in the payment of our school fees. As I told you earlier, 50 percent, 70 percent, 90 percent, and 100 percent are in four installments, and that’s why students and parents prefer us.

corruption in student loans?

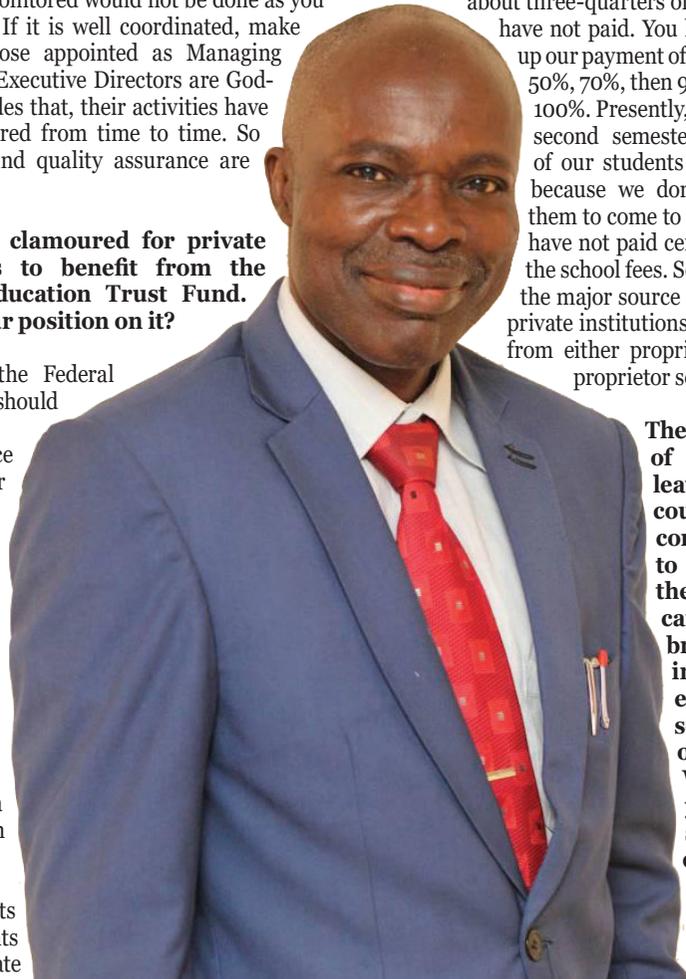
The government has to make sure that it is well monitored. A task or project that is not adequately monitored would not be done as you conceived it. If it is well coordinated, make sure that those appointed as Managing Directors or Executive Directors are God-fearing. Besides that, their activities have to be monitored from time to time. So monitoring and quality assurance are the keys.

Some have clamoured for private institutions to benefit from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund. What is your position on it?

I feel that the Federal Government should reconsider its stance on whether private institutions should benefit from the TETFund. Because the private university is helping the government in the area of human capacity development. Also, parents of students in private institutions

pay tax. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. The Federal Government should understand that private universities are helping them do their jobs. Because of the establishment of private institutions, we have 274 universities in the country. There 63 state universities, 62 federal universities, and 149 private institutions in the country. These institutions are helping the Federal Government to absorb the students. Moreover, we have been told that in 2050, the population of the country will skyrocket. So, we have to make sure that there are adequate provisions for the universities that will take care of the students. Recently we were told that about 50% of those who sat for JAMB were not admitted into universities.

‘It is assumed that underage students admitted to universities are not mature and can be easily influenced. But for younger students that are so brilliant, even more brilliant than those that are 18; they should make them fly. They should allow them to proceed with their education.’



The number of Nigerians leaving the country has continued to increase, thereby causing a brain drain in the education sector and others. What do you think should be done to tackle this menace?

As long as the

There had been concerns over the level of funding for tertiary institutions by the federal government. What’s your take on this?

As you are aware, this is a new government with the emergence of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu who has presented to Nigerians the ‘Renewed Hope Agenda’. I want to believe that he is doing more than his predecessors because in January this year, we learnt that he approved N683 billion to support the education sector. And recently, we heard that he has inaugurated the committee that is working on student loans. However, that is for the federal universities. They are trying a pilot scheme of the programme (loan) with federal universities. So we are still expecting what he is going to do for private institutions. Essentially, he is trying, however it is not up to the recommended level by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). They recommended that 26 percent of the national budget of a country should be voted to education and this is because education is very important to citizens’ development as well as building human capacity.

The Federal Government has commenced the process for the implementation of the student loan. What is your observation on this?

Yes, it’s a good step in the right direction. But the Federal Government should make sure that these things don’t go into the hands of politicians because we know what they normally do. They make a mess of the whole thing. So it’s a good development. And the area that I was not satisfied with was that when students graduate, they will begin to pay back the loan. What of those who are unable to secure a job? I hope that the first procedure for assessing this loan has been modified.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities, (ASUU), said the loan is part of the plan by the federal government to enrich a few individuals who own private universities in the country. Do you agree with that?

No, it’s not correct that the student loan is for private purses in private institutions. It’s not correct. To the extent that I know, our institution is faith-based. We make sure that our students have spiritual soundness in addition to academic excellence. So everything that we do here is to the glory of God. We make sure that we don’t do irrational things that are going on elsewhere. And as you know, private universities are better than conventional universities because we specially train them to be employers of labour. Immediately, they graduate at the 300 level, we ensure that they register a business with the Corporate Affairs Commission. We believe that by the time they graduate, they would have set up something that will contribute to the economy and that will make them entrepreneurs.

Due to the level of corruption among political office holders, what do you think should be done to guide against

13 BUSINESS Interview

“The Central Bank interest rate hike to combat inflation is tantamount to the endless chase of one’s tail.”



Rice will hit N700,000 with N615,000 minimum wage – Economist, Alaje

Amidst the current economic challenges facing the country, Chief Economist of SPM Professionals, MR PAUL ALAJE (PhD), talks to Joseph Oluwatobi about monetary policy, the national minimum wage, and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission’s crackdown on cryptocurrency, among other pressing issues.

The Central Bank of Nigeria recently increased the Nigerian monetary policy rates. What are the potential effects on the private sector?

Increasing the MPR (Money Policy Rate) is the effect that the Central Bank wants to tame inflation. That is what economic theory taught. In taming inflation, there are many methods or tools at the disposal of the Central Bank of Nigeria. So, in increasing it, we hope that inflation will relax. Unfortunately, Nigeria is battling with an all-time stubborn inflation that is induced by excess money supply as a result of many reasons. One is because of ways and means that were bastardised under the previous regime. I cannot guarantee you that that is not even going on right now. Secondly, there is an increase in food inflation which remains the major driver. It occupies the driver’s seat of inflation in our country as food inflation is now over 40%. We have not had such a hard time in a very long time in our history. Thirdly, in the urban center, prices of prices continue to show face from one product to the other and that is why the theater of this inflation is at the urban center. All of these account for the continuous, galloping, growing, consistent energy that inflation has had over the years. Now, will monetary tools alone solve this problem? The answer is no. Central Bank has used different tools within the monetary coffers, which include adjustment of liquidity ratio, and monetary policy rate. Most importantly, the Central Bank has also adjusted CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio). Rather than inflation rebating, it has remained stubborn because of another major factor. Nigeria is highly import-dependent in consumption and pricing is a function of purchase for consumption. Now, because we have a highly volatile, highly susceptible exchange rate in Nigeria, Naira, No matter what you do, if you don’t stabilise your currency, the country will bleed with high inflation.

What do you mean?

The government says the subsidy is gone. They forgot that when you devalue with a subsidy, you find yourself in a roller coaster effect because you want to gain more money for government revenue, but you have now said, let’s vote. So, all government purchases that are imported, we also have to pay more. So, government expenditure would increase without necessarily increasing the value. This is what I mean. Now, all of these are going on. So, I have shown you the effort the Central Bank made, but the effort did not yield so much result. Not because the Central Bank intended to not yield results, but because I don’t



the policy. What therefore happened? We now have what we call the trade-off effect. Now, what is the effect? The effect here is that while you do that, it will generate several trade-offs. Because you are increasing MPR, the private sector will be crowded out. Banks that are supposed to lend to the private sector will prefer to give the money to the government or prefer to buy bonds instead of giving money to the private sector to invest. That means that we crowd out investments. If there is no investment, what happens to unemployment, poverty, and hunger? They will grow. What happens to the supply side? It will reduce. What happens to inflation? It will increase. Do you see where we came from? It was not properly connected. When you now do that and continue to increase MPR, banks will write those who have borrowed from them before, that their rates will now be higher. They will now be faced with the challenge of laying off staff because they need to pay for their interest for them to remain in business. When they lay off staff, we go back to the cycle of poverty increasing, hunger increasing, inflation increasing, and supply side reducing, which will now lead to high inflation again. That is why we are chasing our tail using some of this policy. The Central Bank interest rate hike to combat inflation is tantamount to the endless chase of one’s tail. A dog wants to pick his tail and is running after his tail. It will soon fall. For the first time in recent history, the central bank adjusted its belief that inflation should be between 6% to 9% to about 26%. How do you reconcile this? It is because we are engaging in a case of our tale endlessly.

Considering the nation’s current economic challenges, is the demand by Organised Labour for a new national minimum wage of N615,000 feasible and what is your take on it?

For me, labour people have the right to make a demand for a new minimum wage. But if you demand 600,000, a bag of rice will be 700,000. Don’t believe me, Try it. I told this nation that this year, this economy may be on its knees. You will be faced with various economic challenges, some of which we are seeing. High unemployment, poverty, and crime rates, all over. People snatching food on trailers, and it’s not endSARS. Hunger to its heights. Labour, I strongly advise should request a new minimum wage but should stay within the boundary of \$100 to \$200. It is not because labour doesn’t have rights. It is because the economy cannot sustain it. If labour demands 615,000 and is paid, it will become a money illusion. Money illusion is not a payment in the real sense of it. My strong advice to governments and labour leaders is to consider an amount between \$100 to \$250. And if the dollar stabilises around 1,000, If it does not stabilise around 1,000, they should be looking for N150,000. It is insane that anybody still pays 30,000, 50,000, or 70,000 today. In a nation where the cost of transportation has increased. How much is a litre of PMS and a bag of rice? Labour should demand between N150,000 to N300,000 but this is the challenge; the gains that we have made from subsidies, even if you pay N100,000, will all disappear. At least half of the 36 states of the Federation will find their treasury empty if they pay. At least 10 to 15 states will not be able to pay anything above 70,000.

You can check what they are currently sharing and check the labour in their state. Assume 30% or 40% of their labour force is on minimum wage which is for level one. Most of the big people in government have level eight graduates, level nine, as they progress to level 15 or level 14 as the case may be. Check how much they will be paid. When you look at that, with what they earn, and the state’s IGR that is very small, you would see that they cannot afford it. So we have gotten ourselves to. We are back at chasing our tail.

Amid the economic hardship, the Federal Government increased the electricity tariff. What is your take on this?

Electricity is a very important part of every economy and I am not saying that because the minister, you know, was one-sided when he said 20 hours, 16 hours, and he used hours to measure electricity. He shows that he is not so very knowledgeable about electricity. I will not speak to you now just as an economist. I will also speak to you as a manufacturer. Even if you have a 24-hour power supply, the quality of electricity in Nigeria today is down to damaged equipment. It has damaged most of our equipment because the quality is very poor. And that is even in an industrial area. To increase the price or tariff of what is destroying equipment with poor quality, I think is hypocrisy. No matter the plan, it shows a higher level of insensitivity for a monopolistic product organised with the involvement of the state. How do you say that you want to classify electricity into bands? Most lower bands don’t have access to electricity again because we have turned it into a commercial. We show that band A will give money, therefore, those who are in other bands, are voiceless, people don’t hear them, and people don’t see them. We no longer supply electricity to them and we are paying with our bands. Now, congratulations to those in band A. How many hours have they been getting? Have they been getting up to 20 hours? And I mentioned in an interview I granted that they increased the price by over 200%. Even if it’s over 1,000%, we are not paying to have more electricity. No. We are paying for the devaluation of the Naira. Do you know why? How much was gas before? How much is gas today? That exchange rate that got devalued is what we are now paying for. So we are not paying for an increase in output. No. We are not paying for an increase in anything other than that. They want to be compensated for what they have lost before the devaluation.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission began a crackdown on currency speculators and cryptocurrency platforms. Do you think this will have a positive impact on the Nigerian economy?

I am a Nigerian. I don’t have any other passports. Everything that we make our currency stabilise, I will stay with it. And it is within the ambit of the law. I have told people doing cryptocurrency, I have never done any cryptocurrency. I will never do any cryptocurrency. I am not saying crypto is bad. I am not saying crypto is good. I have maintained an indifferent position to crypto. From the first time I heard about it in 2009 to date. If EFCC says it’s cracking down on them, my question to the government is can it be transparent? Can EFCC, SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission), and Central Bank request that the process be transparent? Because we don’t want to throw away the baby and the bathwater. How can we also get inflow in Nigeria? I saw the Central Bank try to compete with cryptocurrency by bringing the E-naira. I was very vocal in saying that we head in oblivion because whether it is digital Naira or physical Naira, whatever affects the value of digital will affect the value of physical. It doesn’t make sense. Today, who talks about E-Naira again? With billions of Naira, we’ve wasted on it. So, my advice to EFCC is that, yes, clamp down on currency speculators, but do it within the ambit of the law.

What policy could the Federal Government implement to ensure that the cryptocurrency platform operates to the benefit of the Nigerian economy?

The government should have a policy of transparency. For instance, if somebody says he has a cryptocurrency, or digital currency platform and is trading, do you have the money? So, A is trading with B. A says he sends digital currency worth \$20,000. No problem. Where is the vote? Can we see the movement happen? We don’t want to know who buys what, but with your vote, can we see something physical defending that movement? If nothing is defending the movement, then we are at risk. Our citizens will be giving you money, but we cannot access your votes. American votes will publish what they have. Nigeria, we publish what they have. What does crypto have? All the banks are publishing what they have in their vote. You know the central bank is having that record. Cryptocurrency owners, where are they publishing? So, if they make their report available to the governments of the countries where they operate, it’s fine. That also helps the government with appropriate taxes. Some of the persons that have speculated, put their money in crypto. If they put their money in crypto, what happens? So, they are converting, hurting our economy, which is in the eye of the government. So, they take that money to the digital platform. Honestly, if I were in government, I would not say don’t trade, but I would say I want to see your votes. I want to see the movement. And I will take a sample of participants at a time and I will be able to check. And that is why it is dangerous to put people without digital skills to lead us. It will be like men with eyes being led by a blind man. We must look for people with digital skills. We cannot avoid it. Men with digital skills must lead us. And if they don’t have, they have to hire men with strong digital backgrounds to investigate what is going on the other side of the world.

Also, the Federal Government has given POS operators till July 7th to register with CAC. Don’t you think a clampdown on those who could not afford to register before the deadline would affect currency circulation?

I have seen that report by the Corporate Affairs Commission, and that those who could not should register. I think what the Corporate Affairs Commission wants to do is to also see, some transactions that happen on POS machines. We really may not know who is responsible for what. I am somebody who supports transparency a lot, but in doing that, I think CAC should also consider an extension for those who may not be able to afford it now. It might be a short-term or medium-term extension for those people who cannot afford it. So, at the end of the day, what we are interested in is to see how many people we have been able to bring to the cover.

How can Nigeria prevent its economy from slipping to fourth place in Africa, as forecasted by the International Monetary Fund, following currency devaluations?

Nigeria needs to boost its GDP by making its currency stable. It’s not that we pack out all the wealth in Nigeria to South Africa or Egypt. No, what we did was that our economy got devalued and we are compared in dollar terms. If our currency gets back to 500 Naira with the dollar today, we will be back in the first position. So, without doing anything, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu does not need to do anything. Can that currency go back to 500? Nigeria will maintain a strong economy. But to do that, you have to do exports, your manufacturing sector must go up, you have to grow your finances, your market will have to be very strong, and quite a lot of other work. Are we doing the work? It’s obvious for all to see.

FX: Cardoso Assures Return of Investor Confidence after Market Cleanup

The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Olayemi Cardoso announced on Tuesday that investors are showing renewed interest in Nigeria, thanks to the series of measures implemented by the apex bank to sanitize the foreign exchange market.

Among these measures is the drive to enhance transparency in the market and the resolution of outstanding foreign exchange obligations totaling \$7 billion to industries and foreigners.

Cardoso made these remarks during a press briefing following the two-day meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which, for the third consecutive time this year, raised the benchmark interest rate by 150 basis points to 26.25 percent. This move aims to combat inflation and stabilize the faltering naira.

The MPC also maintained the asymmetric corridor around the MPR at +100/-300 basis points, Cash Reserve Ratio of Deposit Money Banks at 45.00 percent, and Liquidity Ratio at 30.00 percent.

The meeting took place against the backdrop of concerns about the weakening naira and rising

inflation, which reached 33.69 percent in April 2024, up from 33.20 percent in March, driven by both food and core components.

Cardoso emphasised the MPC's commitment to achieving price stability through effective use of available monetary tools to curb inflation. He acknowledged recent volatility in the foreign exchange market, attributing it to seasonal demand and the interplay between supply and demand.

Responding to concerns about investor hesitancy, Cardoso dismissed such notions, asserting that investor confidence is, in fact, growing. He highlighted efforts to enhance market transparency and the positive response from foreign portfolio investors to these initiatives.

The prioritisation of clearing foreign exchange backlogs aims to instill confidence in potential investors. Cardoso also mentioned the recent upgrade to a positive rating by agencies like Fitch, which further boosts investor confidence.

Regarding inflation, Cardoso reassured that while inflation figures may appear alarming, there are signs of moderation and deceleration, particularly



in food and core inflation.

Addressing the controversial cybersecurity levy, Cardoso clarified that it was introduced through the Cyber Crime Act of 2015 after extensive parliamentary debate and public hearings. The CBN's role was to implement the law, and upon the federal government's amendment, the circular on levy collection was withdrawn.

Meanwhile, on bank recapitalisation, Cardoso emphasised the need for a resilient banking system in line with the government's goal of anchoring the economy. He assured that the banking system is strong and safe, with a recapitalization programme set to conclude within two years, aimed at enhancing stability and resilience.

Petrol price increased by 176.02% in 12

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) yesterday said the prices of a litre of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), petrol, rose by 176.02 per cent in one year. This was contained in its document titled: Premium Motor Spirit (Petrol) Price Watch (April 2024). The document noted that the price increased from N254.06 per litre in April 2023 to N701.24 per litre.

NBS said, "The average retail price paid by consumers for Premium Motor Spirit (Petrol) for the month of April 2024 was N701.24, indicating a 176.02% increase when compared to the value recorded in April 2023 (N254.06)."

The report said likewise, comparing the average price value with the previous month (i.e. March 2024), the average retail price increased by 0.64% from N696.79.

On State profile analysis, NBS

said Kogi State had the highest average retail price for Premium Motor Spirit (Petrol), at N797.78, Nasarawa and Zamfara States were next, with N778.89 and N754.29, respectively.

It added that on the other side, Lagos, Niger and Ogun States had the lowest average retail prices for Premium Motor Spirit (Petrol), at N602.55, N633.75 and N647.14 respectively.

The data also said on Zonal profile, the North East Zone had the highest average retail price of N734.70, while the South West Zone had the lowest price of N655.66.

Similarly, the bureau said the average retail price of Automotive Gas Oil (Diesel) paid by consumers increased by 68.01% on a year-on-year basis from a lower cost of N842.25 per liter recorded in the corresponding month of last year (i.e., April 2023) to a higher cost of N1415.06 per liter in April 2024.

Telcos' Dependence on Local Banks Soars as Loans

Telecommunications and other information and communication technology (ICT) companies in Nigeria significantly ramped up their borrowing from local banks in 2023. This move was largely driven by Nigeria's challenging economic environment and the devaluation of the naira, which made foreign loans prohibitively expensive.

According to data from the Central Bank of Nigeria's Deposit Money Banks' Sectoral Distribution of Credit, loans to these companies skyrocketed by 207.12 percent, reaching N768.54 billion, compared to N250.24 billion in 2022. This increase boosted their total credit from banks by 63.56 percent, bringing it to N1.98 trillion by the end of 2023.

The surge in borrowing coincided with a broader rise in private sector credit, which climbed from N15.09 trillion in 2023 to N44.54 trillion. The information and communication sector, which includes telecommunications, information services, publishing, film production,

sound recording, and broadcasting, played a significant role. Notably, the telecoms segment contributed 84.68 percent of the sector's GDP, highlighting its dominant position.

The increase in local

MTN and Airtel reported losses due to the naira's devaluation.

The depreciation of the naira, which lost over 40 percent of its value following the removal of the rate cap in the foreign exchange market, pushed these companies to seek more local

a loss of \$89 million for the year ending March 2024, while MTN Nigeria posted a loss of N137 billion for 2023. Both companies attributed these losses to the devaluation of the naira, rising inflation, and deteriorating macroeconomic conditions in Nigeria.

In its first-quarter report for 2024, MTN indicated steps to reduce its exposure to dollar volatility. Alongside an increased appetite for local loans, MTN also expanded its use of commercial papers from N22.44 billion to N234.11 billion within the year.

Despite the rise in local borrowing, the industry's overall financial performance remains under pressure. The GSMA has warned that mobile service providers need to generate sufficient revenue to cover their operating costs and sustain capital expenditures. Without this, there may be cutbacks in both capital and operating expenses, potentially leading to a decline in service quality and delayed network expansion.

loans. By July 2023, telcos' local borrowings had surged from N1.38 trillion in April to N1.74 trillion. This increased reliance on loans is tied to the industry's weakening financial performance.

For instance, Airtel reported



borrowing occurred alongside a sharp 70.5 percent decline in foreign investment in the telecom sector, which fell from \$456.83 million in 2022 to \$134.75 million in 2023. This drop in foreign investment came as major players like

Student Loan: 1.2 Million Students as Scheme Commences Friday

By Funmi Ojo

The anticipated student loan program is set to commence this Friday, extending aid to 1.2 million students enrolled in federal tertiary institutions nationwide, revealed Akintunde Sawyerr, the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of the Nigeria Education Loan Fund.

In a press briefing held in Abuja on Monday, Sawyerr announced the launch of the program's first phase, benefiting students in federal universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, and technical colleges.

According to data sourced from the National Universities Commission, Nigeria boasts 226 federal tertiary institutions, encompassing 62 universities, 41 polytechnics, 96 monotechs, and 27 colleges of education.

President Bola Tinubu signed the Student Loans (Access to Higher Education) Act (Repeal and Re-Enactment) Bill, 2024, into law on April 3, following legislative deliberations by both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The Act establishes the Nigerian Education Loan Fund to offer financial aid to eligible Nigerian students for tuition, fees, charges, and maintenance during their studies in accredited public tertiary institutions and vocational establishments within the country.

Emphasising inclusivity in education, President Tinubu affirmed that every Nigerian, irrespective of socio-economic status, deserves access to quality education for a brighter future.

September launch, the scheme encountered delays attributed to Tinubu's directive to broaden its scope to encompass vocational skills training.

Last Thursday, the Nigerian Education Loan Fund announced May 24 as the official portal opening date for loan applications.

Sawyerr urged students in federal tertiary institutions to seize the opportunity by applying through the website www.nelf.gov.ng starting May 24, with provisions for students in state universities and vocational centers to apply at a later stage.

Application requirements include JAMB admission letter, National Identity Number, Bank Verification Number, and completed application forms downloadable from the Fund's website.

Innovatively, the loan application process eliminates physical interaction between applicants and NElfund, boasting a user-friendly online portal for seamless submission.

Furthermore, successful applicants will receive interest-free loans and monthly stipends for living expenses, with fees disbursed directly to institutions per session.

The Fund collaborates with educational institutions and security agencies to ensure data accuracy and prevent fraudulent activities. In a related development, the Federal Government urged state governments to responsibly utilize matching grants allocated for Universal Basic Education Commission programs, stressing the importance of transparency and integrity in financial management.

Minister Advocates Gas Concessions for Cement Manufacturers

The Minister of Industry, Trade, and Investment, Doris Nkiruka Uzoka-Anite, has called for extending gas

concessions, currently enjoyed by electricity companies, to cement manufacturers to tackle the recent price hike in cement products. This call was made during an investigative hearing conducted by the House of Representatives Joint Committee on Solid Minerals, Industry, Commerce, and Special Duties, where the Minister's views were represented by the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Ambassador Nura Rimi.

Uzoka-Anite emphasized the importance of providing

cement manufacturers with favorable gas pricing, similar to the "gas to light" price enjoyed by electricity distributors. She



stressed that extending the gas-to-power concessions to cement companies could help

alleviate the challenges posed by rising prices in the industry.

Highlighting the challenges faced by cement manufacturers, Uzoka-Anite cited the high cost of gas, steep import duties on spare parts, inadequate road infrastructure, currency fluctuations, and the issue of cement smuggling to neighboring nations. Despite these challenges, she noted that Nigeria boasts significant self-sufficiency in cement production, with major manufacturers such as BUA Group, Dangote Industries Limited, and Lafarge Holcim.

In response to queries from the House of Representatives Committee Chairman, Gaza Gbewfi, regarding the responsibility of cement manufacturers in road maintenance, Uzoka-Anite reiterated the importance of corporate social responsibility. She acknowledged existing incentives for cement companies and pledged to provide detailed records of pioneer status grants issued to them and a comprehensive list of available incentives.

The Minister stressed the need for collaborative efforts between the government and cement manufacturers to address challenges and ensure a conducive environment for the industry's growth.

Reminiscence



15

We are here with the memories by
Chrisite Doyin
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Celebrating Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti: Champion of Women's Rights

NIGERIA is truly blessed with women varied outstanding achievements and they're in droves. However, amidst constellation of exceptional women that include late Dora Akunyili, Chimamanda Adichie, and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, one woman remains prominent and outstanding though often overlooked.

This is no other than late mother of the enigma, Fela (Ransome) Anikulapo-Kuti, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. Beyond being hailed as Fela's mother, the first Nigerian woman to drive a car in Nigeria, or as mother of Olikoye, a former minister and Bekololari Ransome-Kuti, her indelible imprint as an activist, politician, educator, and champion

of women's rights deserves center stage. Several years after her death, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, tagged as the "Lioness of Lisabi," transcended stereotypes.

Born in 1900 as Frances Abigail Olufunmilayo Thomas, and married to Reverend Israel Ransome-Kuti, Funmilayo shattered barriers as the first female student to be admitted into Abeokuta Grammar School, the first grammar school in Nigeria. She enrolled as a student in 1914, pioneering female education in Nigeria though five other female students joined the school same year. Following her education in London and marriage to Reverend Israel Ransome-Kuti, of Abeokuta, present day Ogun state in 1932, she established the Abeokuta Ladies Club (ALC), exclusive to only western-educated women, which metamorphosed into the feminist and political powerhouse. Earlier, In 1918, colonial rule brought changes that made life particularly difficult for everyone, especially for women. One of these changes was tax imposition on women considered to be of marriageable age. This affected girls who were as young as 14 years old. They were required to pay a tax of three shillings yearly.

By 1944, the Abeokuta Ladies Club became open to market women who were illiterate and suffering under colonial rule. In 1946 the club became open to all Abeokuta women and changed its name to the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) challenging colonial policies, such as unjust multiple taxes and oppressive regulations. By 1948, the women had finally had enough. Since protests were banned,

they gathered at the palace of the then-traditional ruler of Abeokuta, Oba Ladapo Ademola II, for "picnics" and "festivals", demanding the removal of Oba Ladapo Ademola II for implementing the colonial policies. Their agitation thereafter culminated to the victorious abolition of taxes and the abdication of the traditional ruler for two years. In the area of international advocacy, Ransome-Kuti, known for her brain and brawn as the sole woman in Nigeria's 1947 delegation to London, boldly confronted colonial authorities, highlighting the plight of Nigerian women and the adverse effects of colonialism on their socioeconomic status.

Nigerians often celebrate independence patrons like Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikwe among others for their roles in the country's struggle for independence without mentioning the roles played by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti as a member of the 1947 National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) delegation to London to table demands before the colonialists.

However, her tireless efforts earned her global recognitions, which earned her the prestigious Lenin Peace Prize in 1970, a testament to her unwavering commitment to peace and justice.

As a loud voice for the women and after AWU's victory against tax imposition in 1948, beautiful Ransome-Kuti created the Nigerian Women's Union (NWU) to support women's rights across the country. She set up branches around Nigeria and ensured educational opportunities for girls and women. She also worked towards improving the participation of Nigerian women in politics, this led to her appointment as a Member of the Order of the Niger (MON) in 1965 in recognition of her hard work.

With so many firsts to her credit, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti lived a full life that expressed her passion about Nigerian women and their representation in the country. With everything she did and achieved, it's a great disservice if we remember her only for her motor skills or simply as "Fela's mother".

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's life epitomizes resilience, courage, and unwavering commitment to the advancement of Nigerian women.

Obviously, her third son, the famous Fela Anikulapo-Kuti took much of his activism from her, so did Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti. Unfortunately, during a military raid of her son's house in 1978, soldiers threw her out of the two-storey building and died at 78 as a result of the injuries she sustained.

It is therefore imperative that her memory be preserved not merely as a footnote in history, but as a beacon of generations recognizing her contributions to come by multifaceted

"Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's life epitomizes resilience, courage, and unwavering commitment to the advancement of Nigerian women"

Nigerian Women blazing the trail in Men's world

While Fatima Abiola Isa was acknowledged to be the first female train driver that was trained in China, Serah Abiarah was trained in Zaria, Kaduna State. Serah was particularly trained to drive the electric train. It will be an understatement to say they are good. They are actually very good and up their professionalism in both locomotive and Electric trains and have proved their worths in the mail dominated profession as male train drivers.

First China trained Female Train Driver, Fatima Abiola Isa



FATIMA Abiola Isa made history as Nigeria's first female train driver, blazing a trail in a male-dominated field after undergoing rigorous training in China.

Fatima Isa is one of the few Nigerians and the first female to be trained as a train driver in China.

Despite facing skepticism from her male counterparts, who mostly teased her that she would abandon the work within a year, but she persevered, stunning them by remaining dedicated to her role for four years.

Her journey began with humble beginnings,

working as a domestic staff for the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation. However, her fascination with trains, sparked during her childhood, as a 12-year-old in Ilorin, Kwara State, drove her ambition to become a train driver.

In an interview on BBC pidgin, in Kano, Isa said, "My aspiration to drive train started when I was young and went out with my grandfather, then I saw a train passed in my town, Ilorin. I then asked him, what was that? The old man told me it was a big long car, then I told him I would like to drive it when I grow up, he then laughed. So after my secondary education, I joined a company, China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation as domestic staff".

Through determination and the support of her employer, Fatima received training in China, where she honed her skills as both a driver and an assistant. According to her, "I got admission in to a higher institution and I became confused on what to do, but surprisingly, the company (CCECC) then gave me the opportunity to go to school in the morning and come to the office in the evening after closing from school".

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Breaking Barriers: Serah Abiarah, Pioneering Nigeria's Female



Originally envisioning a career as a top engineer at the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), Serah Abiarah's path took an unexpected turn when she became Nigeria's first female electric train driver.

Graduating with a degree in Electrical Electronics Engineering from the Federal Polytechnic, Mubi, Yola, Serah stumbled into the role after applying for a job at the Nigerian Railway Corporation

Despite initial surprise upon receiving the offer, she embraced the opportunity and underwent four months of rigorous training in Zaria, Kaduna State, before her posting

to Ibadan, where she was mentored by a seasoned senior driver who encouraged her to take the reins during her first trip.

Overcoming initial apprehensions and challenges, Serah successfully navigated the journey, marking the beginning of her groundbreaking career as she found joy and fulfillment in her role, especially as it aligned with her love for traveling.

Born in a male-dominated environment as well as navigating a male-dominated profession, Serah acknowledged both the encouragement and challenges she faces. And despite the risks involved, she finds happiness in her work, viewing it as an adventure that allows her to explore new places and meet people.

Her story sheds light on the resilience and determination required to break gender barriers in traditionally male-dominated fields. Serah's journey serves as an inspiration, showing that with determination, courage and perseverance, one can defy expectations and pursue their passion, regardless of gender.

As a matter of fact, her dedication

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16 Entertainment

Betrayal of Friendship: Whaleswavy Exposes Seyi Vibe's

Unfollowing Seyi Vibe, the popular Nigerian singer, has been called out by his childhood friend, whaleswavy, on Instagram. According to whaleswavy, Seyi Vibe unfollowed him on the platform after achieving success and wealth. In a heartfelt post, whaleswavy shared throwback videos of their childhood moments, highlighting the support he provided to Seyi Vibe during his humble beginnings. Despite congratulating Seyi Vibe on his achievements, whaleswavy expressed disappointment at being unfollowed by his former friend. Whaleswavy's post



read: "Hey, Seyi Vibe, I've been watching your rise to fame and I am genuinely happy for you. Just surprised how easily you have forgotten those who were there with sweats

balance or paved the way for me. That being said, I congratulate you on all your success! It's been amazing to see how far you've come."

Whaleswavy's post has sparked a lot of interest and debate among fans and followers, with many calling out Seyi Vibe for his alleged betrayal. The singer has yet to respond to the post or address the issue publicly. Meanwhile, fans are divided on the issue, with some expressing support for

and energy, also a little shocked with how you hit that unfollow button. You unfollowed me WHALES. "However, there is nothing I want to do with you following me. It has never for once added a penny to my account

Seyi Vibe and others calling him out for his perceived ingratitude. The drama has sparked a heated conversation on social media, with many weighing in on the situation.

Parents & Kids with Anty Debby

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Which Parenting Styles do you adopt?

In this maiden edition, we will examine different parenting styles you can adopt in raising your kids. To start with, which style do you use? Parenting is a journey filled with challenges, joys, and uncertainties.

At the heart of this journey lies the approach or style parents adopt to raise their children. Parenting styles encompass the strategies, behaviors, and attitudes parents use to interact with their children and guide their

development.

While every parent may have their unique blend of parenting styles, let's examine the three levels of parenting, and you can determine which one you practice with your kids.

Authoritative Parenting:

This style is often seen as the gold standard. It combines warmth and responsiveness with clear expectations and boundaries. It involves nurturing and supporting while also setting reasonable rules and consequences. Authoritative parents strive to foster independence and self-discipline in their children while maintaining a close and loving relationship. Open communication is key; they listen to their children's perspectives, validate their feelings, and encourage them to express themselves freely, providing guidance without harsh discipline or control.

Permissive Parenting:

This style is characterised by high levels of warmth and indulgence with few demands or expectations placed on children. Permissive parents are lenient and often avoid using discipline or setting firm boundaries. They prioritise their children's happiness and autonomy above all else, sometimes at the expense of structure and accountability. Children raised with this style may struggle with boundaries, authority, and delayed gratification, and they may have difficulty coping with frustration and setbacks due to the lack of clear guidelines.

Uninvolved Parenting:

Also known as neglectful parenting, this style is characterised by low levels of warmth, responsiveness, and control. Uninvolved parents are emotionally detached and disengaged from their children's lives, often prioritising their own needs or interests over their parental responsibilities. They provide minimal supervision, guidance, or support to their children, leaving them to fend for themselves. Children raised in uninvolved households may experience feelings of neglect, abandonment, and insecurity.

As parents, I strongly advise you to adopt the style that best suits you while ensuring the well-being, growth, and discipline of your child.

I look forward to hearing about the progress you've made in your parenting journey.



Junior Pope's Betrayal: Yul Edochie Breaks Silence on Absence from Burial

Nollywood actor, Yul Edochie, has finally spoken out on his absence at the burial of his late colleague, Junior Pope. According to him, the late actor betrayed him multiple times, which led to his decision not to attend the burial ceremony.

In a recent post on his Instagram page, Edochie explained that he had been quiet about the issue until now because he didn't want to stir up unnecessary

drama. He admitted that Pope was like a brother to him and that he had been there for him when he needed him. However, he revealed that Pope had repeatedly stabbed him in the back.

He wrote, "I didn't want to say anything till after his burial. I know many asked why I wasn't there. Why I haven't said anything about it since.

"I took him like a brother



and good friend. I was there for him when

he needed me. But he stabbed me in the back, repeatedly. That's life! Edochie's post has sparked a lot of interest and debate among fans and colleagues, with many wondering what could have caused the rift between the two actors. Although he did not provide specific details about the betrayal, he promised to share

more information in the future. "I'll drop the full details soon so others can learn from it. Be careful what you wish people, it could come to you," Edochie added. Meanwhile, Edochie used the opportunity to caution his followers against wishing harm on others. He warned that their wishes could come back to haunt them and that they should be careful what they wish for people.



“Each time you increase tariff, it leads to another inflation which within few months, they would see demand for another tariff increase. And this is happening on and on and there is no control over it.”

President of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Joe Ajaero said on Channels Television’s The Morning Brief show on Tuesday, May 14, 2024.



“The argument of this new tariff having the capacity of increasing the cost of production and raising the prices of goods and services is not logical.”

The Minister of Power, ADEBAYO ADELABU, stated this at the 8th Africa Energy Market Place in Abuja on Thursday, May 16, 2024.

Voice of Reason

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Tackling Nigeria’s Electricity Deficit for Economic Growth

For over a month, Nigerians, the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), and power distribution companies (Discos) have been embroiled in disputes over an increase in electricity rates. This came after consumers were classified into vague band categories, leaving many areas without power despite the steep price hike. This situation reflects Nigeria’s inadequate electricity generation and supply, which still hovers around 6,000 megawatts after more than 60 years of independence.

Nigeria, Africa’s most populous nation and one of its largest economies struggles with a chronic electricity deficit. This shortfall not only disrupts daily life but also hinders the country’s economic growth potential. In the absence of reliable power, many manufacturers have resorted to using diesel generators to power their operations. The high cost of diesel, deregulated by the government over a decade ago to make it cheaper and more accessible, has worsened the situation, further burdening manufacturers who inevitably pass these costs onto consumers.

In recent months, several notable multinational companies have exited the Nigerian market, citing various factors, primarily the unreliable electricity supply, and high exchange rates, which compound the already high cost of doing business. In such a dire situation, it’s challenging to envision how the President’s current efforts to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) will be successful. Investors are unlikely to flock to a country where longstanding multinationals are departing.

The inadequate power supply severely impacts small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), the main drivers of the economy. These enterprises employ millions of youths, more than large corporations, and many of today’s advanced and emerging companies owe their success to government support. In Nigeria, these enterprises struggle with the lack of reliable power and excessive taxation from all levels of government.

Many SMEs that secured loans from public and private credit agencies have shut down due to the financial burden of sourcing private power in the absence of national electricity. Those that manage to stay afloat cannot compete with imported products because their manufacturing costs are higher.

Across sectors such as health, education, tourism, entertainment, telecommunications, ICT, and households, inadequate power supply

continues to be a significant challenge. Unfortunately, the government seems to have exhausted ideas on how to revitalise the sector and make it more effective in driving economic growth. In 2015, Nigeria was recognised as Africa’s largest economy, but by 2024, it had fallen to fourth place, behind South Africa, Egypt, and Algeria.

A closer look at government efforts reveals that corruption has been the primary impediment to progress in Nigeria’s power sector. Between 1999 and 2007, former President Olusegun



Power distributor engineers are working on the damaged pole in Lagos Nigeria, 23rd June 2019. Source: Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Abuja

Obasanjo invested over a billion dollars in attempting to revive the power sector. However, this money disappeared into private pockets, and to this day, no one has been held accountable.

The deregulation of the sector was marred by a lack of transparency, with the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) handing over assets of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) to cronies and associates who were ill-equipped to manage the complex power business. Today, these companies are mired in debt and seeking federal bailouts, while Nigerians continue to suffer.

Compounding the problem, the Federal Government retained full ownership of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), the sole transmission entity in the electricity value chain. This has hampered efficiency, as TCN operates as a government parastatal subject to bureaucratic red tape, causing delays in essential maintenance and downtime responses.

Communities that have paid for transformers often wait for between six months and a year for installation, even though they are not meant to pay for them in the first place. This inefficiency extends to other components needed to provide electricity for both private and industrial consumption.

Additionally, the national grid infrastructure urgently needs upgrading, as frequent collapses result in significant economic losses. In one month alone, the grid collapsed three times, leading to substantial disruptions.

Despite successes in other countries, Nigeria struggles to replicate these models. Economies like Egypt, Vietnam, South Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have seen massive economic growth by investing heavily in the private sector. These stories are well-known in Nigeria, prompting questions about why the Nigerian Government cannot follow suit. At the end of Muhammadu Buhari’s administration, the electricity sector was unbundled and moved to the concurrent legislative list, allowing both federal and state governments to legislate on it. Some states are now taking advantage of this to build their own generating plants. While this is a positive development, the current administration must ensure that no obstacles hinder this progress. If states generate power but leave transmission solely in the hands of TCN, it would undermine the policy’s effectiveness.

Gas is a crucial component of electricity generation, and Nigeria has the largest gas reserves in Africa. However, the country has struggled to supply its generating plants with this abundant resource. Many turbines remain inactive because their specifications do not match Nigeria’s gas supply models. Future power plants must align their models with Nigeria’s gas types to avoid frustrating plant owners who have invested billions only to find they cannot power their plants.

As the government strives to provide uninterrupted power to households and businesses, it must also consider renewable energy, which is gaining global traction. Many countries are now focusing on renewable energy for electricity supply. While Nigeria addresses its current challenges, it must also invest in renewable energy to leverage opportunities in

this emerging sector. This will help ensure a steady power supply for personal use and drive economic growth, maintaining Nigeria’s status as Africa’s largest economy and true giant.

To tackle Nigeria’s electricity deficit, several critical measures must be implemented. First, addressing corruption within the power sector is essential. Transparent and accountable practices must be established to ensure funds allocated for electricity projects are used effectively. This includes holding individuals accountable for past misappropriations and ensuring future investments are protected from corruption.

Second, the government must prioritise upgrading the national grid infrastructure. Modernising the grid will reduce the frequency of collapses and improve efficiency. Investments should be made in advanced technologies and maintenance practices to ensure the grid can handle increased power generation and distribution.

Third, the private sector must be empowered to play a more significant role in electricity generation and distribution. Encouraging private investment in the power sector can lead to increased competition, innovation, and efficiency. The government should provide incentives for private companies to invest in renewable energy projects, which can help diversify the energy mix and reduce reliance on traditional fossil fuels.

Fourth, state governments should be encouraged to develop their power generation capabilities. By decentralising power generation, states can tailor their energy solutions to meet local needs and reduce the burden on the national grid. This approach can also promote regional economic development and create jobs within the states.

Fifth, there should be a focus on training and capacity building within the power sector. Investing in the education and training of engineers, technicians, and other professionals will ensure a skilled workforce capable of maintaining and operating advanced power systems. This can also foster innovation and drive the development of new technologies within the sector.

Lastly, public awareness and engagement are crucial. Educating the public about energy conservation and efficient usage can help reduce the overall electricity demand. Additionally, involving communities in the planning and implementation of power projects can lead to more sustainable and accepted solutions.

In conclusion, addressing Nigeria’s electricity deficit is imperative for the country’s economic growth and development. By tackling corruption, modernising infrastructure, empowering the private sector, decentralising power generation, investing in human capital, and promoting public awareness, Nigeria can overcome its electricity challenges. These measures will not only improve the quality of life for Nigerians but also attract foreign investment, stimulate economic growth, and restore Nigeria’s position as Africa’s largest economy. The journey towards a stable and reliable power supply is complex, but with concerted efforts and strategic planning, it is achievable.

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