

# Alaoji's 450MW Return After Three Years Sparks Hope For Stable Power

MOHAMMED SHOSANYA,  
LAGOS

On Thursday, the 450-megawatt Alaoji Open Cycle Power Plant in Abia State roared back to life after a three-year shutdown caused

by disparities between metering and trading points – a billing dispute.

During the three year inactivity of the plant, debts also accumulated amid unresolved dispute, while the pipeline feeding the plant had faults that needed remedial works.

The plant had earlier endured

temporary suspensions, including prolonged force majeure events resulting from vandalism on major feed gas pipelines like the Northern Option Pipeline.

Apart from the stagnant dispute during the period, the plant also recorded zero generation for 36 months and negatively impacted the econo-

my of South-East Nigeria.

Sadly, Aba manufacturers / Distribution company lost a potential 450MW of power. The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission data of first quarter of 2024, also confirmed that the plant generated zero electricity in six months during the period, highlighting the de-

gree of its idleness.

Stakeholders say the return of the 450MW Aba Plant being managed by the Niger Delta Power Holding Company (NDPHC) is a boost for the country's erratic grid system which has lately caused national

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# APC Concludes Primaries Of Survival, Elite Bargaining

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The All Progressives Congress (APC) primaries across the country which ended on Saturday have opened a revealing window into the power calculations already shaping Nigeria's political future ahead of the 2027 general election.

Beyond the emergence of candidates and the routine victory speeches lies a deeper story of survival, elite bargaining, political resurrection and the growing influence of governors over the nation's democratic architecture.

From Lagos to Kano, Imo to Ogun, and Delta to Kogi, the APC primaries have exposed one unmistakable reality: the battle for political offices is no longer merely about governance. It is increasingly becoming a strategic battlefield for outgoing governors, returning political heavyweights, entrenched loyalists and power blocs seeking relevance, protection and influence in the next political dispensation.

In the Senate, the emerging list of candidates reads almost like a reunion of Nigeria's political establishment. Former governors, former ministers, ex-senators and influential party figures are posi-

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## Oyo School Kidnap: What Security Agencies Must Do – Stakeholders

### ● Lawyers Condemn Nationwide Insecurity, Seek Urgent Action

EJIKEME OMENAZU  
LAGOS

Julius Adegunna, a Lagos-based media executive, has lamented that the recent Oyo school abductions lasted over two hours without any intervention by security agencies, saying that it is understandable why security operatives always delay their responses to such attacks.

Recall that dare-devil terrorists on Friday, May 15, 2026 in an operation that reportedly lasted two hours, attacked Aho-ro-Esinele, Oriire Local Government Area of Ogbomoso, Oyo State, carted way over 40 students and teachers, including the principal, Mrs. Alamu Folawe, killing one teacher, named, Michael Oyedokun.

Adegunna, one of those who spoke to Sunday Independent on the development, maintained that it is a well-known fact that

the terrorists and bandits have superior weapons than those of Nigeria's security forces.

He maintained that the Nigerian security operatives facing the terrorists with inferior weapons would put their lives at risk, moreso as the government's support system for them cannot be trusted.

Adegunna stated: "Almost all Nigerians know what the government can do to

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tioning themselves for the Red Chamber in what many observers now describe as a carefully coordinated effort to consolidate political influence beyond state houses and executive offices.

## GODFATHER GOVERNORS

In many states, governors clearly dictated the outcome of the primaries, reinforcing long-standing concerns about the shrinking internal democracy within political parties. In others, old political warriors once thought to have faded into irrelevance suddenly resurfaced, proving once again that in Nigerian politics, retirement is often temporary.

Nowhere is this more visible than in Imo State, where Governor Hope Uzodinma is now at the centre of the state's APC structure with his emergence in the Imo West senatorial configuration. The development further underscores the declining influence of former Governor Rochas Okorocha, whose once formidable political machinery appears to have lost its grip on the state's APC dynamics.

Political analysts say the Senate is gradually becoming a preferred soft landing for outgoing governors who seek to maintain relevance after leaving office. Unlike the uncertainty that follows retirement from executive office, a Senate seat guarantees continued visibility, influence in federal appointments, control over political structures and proximity to national power.

The same pattern is visible in Ogun State where Governor Dapo Abiodun emerged in Ogun East, reinforcing speculations that governors are increasingly viewing the Senate as an extension of executive power rather than a separate arm of govern-

# APC Concludes Primaries Of Survival, Elite Bargaining

ment.

In Kwara, Governor Abdul-Rahman AbdulRazaq also surfaced in the senatorial calculations, while in Yobe, Governor Mai Mala Buni emerged for Yobe East. In Gombe, Governor Inuwa Yahaya similarly appeared in the APC senatorial line-up.

For many Nigerians, the trend raises difficult questions about the future independence of the National Assembly. Critics argue that if governors simply move from Government Houses into the Senate, the upper legislative chamber could become even more aligned with executive interests, weakening its oversight responsibilities.

In Abuja, a senior political strategist within the APC, who spoke on condition of anonymity, described the development as "a strategic continuity plan."

"Governors do not want to disappear after office," he said. "The Senate gives them visibility, protection and negotiating power. It also allows them to retain control of politics in their states."

## NOT TOO OLD TO RUN

But perhaps even more intriguing than the governors' movement is the dramatic return of old political actors many had assumed were nearing the twilight of their careers.

In Kaduna, the re-emergence of Shehu Sani under the APC platform has already generated intense conversations within northern political circles. Once a fierce critic of elements within the APC and a prominent opposition voice, Shehu Sani's return signals the fluid nature of Nigerian politics where yesterday's adversaries can quickly become today's allies.

In Kano, former governor

Ibrahim Shekarau has also staged another comeback attempt, reminding observers that political relevance in Nigeria often depends less on ideology and more on enduring networks, alliances and timing.

Benue State presents another fascinating scenario with the emergence of Gabriel Suswam. Once a dominant figure in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP),

Suswam's reappearance within APC political calculations reflects the growing migration of influential opposition figures toward the ruling party ahead of 2027.

Delta State may have produced one of the most politically symbolic developments with the appearance of former PDP vice presidential candidate Ifeanyi Okowa in the APC senatorial mix. For many analysts, Okowa's movement represents more than personal political survival; it highlights the APC's expanding capacity to absorb influential opposition structures across the country.

## RECONFIGURATION OF ALLIANCES

A university lecturer in political science at the University of Abuja, Dr. Samuel Adetunji, believes the primaries reveal a major transformation in the country's political ecosystem.

"What we are witnessing is not just a primary election," he said. "It is a reconfiguration of elite political alliances ahead of 2027. The APC is consolidating power by attracting influential politicians from different camps while governors are ensuring post-office relevance."

The outcome of the primaries has also revealed the shrinking space for younger politicians and grassroots actors within the

APC structure. In many states, candidates perceived to enjoy the backing of governors or influential national figures appeared to have overwhelming advantages.

In Kogi State, the return of former governor Yahaya Bello to the political frontline has further reinforced the dominance of established political figures. Despite controversies surrounding his tenure and ongoing legal battles, Bello's continued influence within the APC structure demonstrates the resilience of entrenched political networks in Nigeria.

The primaries have equally produced stories of silent political decline. Although several former senators and political heavyweights were not directly in contention, their diminished influence became obvious through the emergence of rival structures and new alignments.

Observers point to the reduced visibility of old political blocs in states such as Imo, Delta and Kogi as evidence that Nigeria's political landscape is undergoing another phase of transition where control increasingly rests with governors and their loyalists.

## EXCLUSIVITY OF POWER BROKERS

Yet beyond the elite calculations and strategic manoeuvres, ordinary Nigerians appear largely disconnected from the internal contests dominating party politics.

At Bodija Market in Ibadan, a trader, Mrs. Kemi Afolabi, expressed frustration over the growing distance between politicians and citizens.

"These people only remember the people during elections," she said. "Whether governor, senator or minister, it is the same faces every time while ordinary Nige-

rians continue to suffer."

In Beere area of Ibadan, a commercial motorcyclist, Isiaka Bello, questioned the obsession with political recycling.

"They leave one office today and enter another tomorrow," he lamented. "But has life improved for the common man?"

For many citizens battling inflation, insecurity and economic hardship, the political calculations unfolding within the APC appear disconnected from daily realities. However, political observers warn that the composition of the next Senate could have profound consequences for governance, economic reforms and democratic accountability in the coming years.

Security analyst Kabiru Adamu believes the Senate emerging from the current political trend may become one of the most powerful in recent history because of the calibre of political actors involved.

"When you have former governors, ex-ministers and entrenched political figures dominating the Senate, it changes the power equation completely," he explained. "Such a Senate can either stabilise governance through experience or weaken accountability if loyalty to political interests overrides national interest."

## FEAR OF VOTER APATHY

There are also concerns that the growing dominance of governors in candidate selection may deepen voter apathy and internal party crises. Already, reports of disputes, parallel primaries and disagreements have surfaced in several states where aspirants accused party leaders of imposing candidates.

Despite these tensions, the APC appears determined to enter the 2027 elections with a formidable political coalition built around incumbency, strategic defections and experienced political operators.

The inclusion of female candidates such as Idiat Oluranti Adebule, Muheebah Dankaka and Kene Chiedu Ngozi Benedicta has also drawn attention, though many advocates insist female representation remains far below expectations.

As the dust settles on the primaries, one reality is becoming increasingly clear: the APC Senate race is no longer merely about legislative representation. It is now a fierce contest for political survival, succession planning and long-term influence in a rapidly evolving power structure.

For President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the APC leadership,

the emerging Senate configuration could provide a strong support base for governance and policy implementation after 2027. But for critics, it also raises fears about the concentration of power among a familiar political elite whose dominance continues to shape Nigeria's democracy.

Whether the emerging Senate empire ultimately strengthens governance or deepens elite control remains uncertain. What is undeniable, however, is that the APC primaries have already redrawn significant parts of Nigeria's political map — and the battle for 2027 has truly begun.

## TINUBU'S VERDICT

President Bola Tinubu on Saturday described the conduct of the 2026 All Progressives Congress (APC) primaries nationwide as a strong demonstration of internal democracy within the ruling party.

President Tinubu stated this after he participated in the APC Presidential Primaries at Ikoyi-Obalende Ward L2 in Lagos, noting that the exercise has further deepened the democratic process.

The President, who arrived at the venue alongside his wife, Sen. Oluremi Tinubu, was received by the Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Lagos APC Chairman, Pastor Conerlius Ojelabi, Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, and former Minister of Finance, Wale Edun, among other party leaders.

The President commended party members for their orderly conduct, enthusiasm, and commitment to democratic values.

"This is a demonstration of internal democracy, and it has been going on very well according to plan. This is grassroots politics where every member of the party has the right to participate.

"It shows that we have internal democracy and it's peaceful and well organised.

On the conduct of the primaries across the states, President Tinubu said, "I am very satisfied that governors have done well in their various states, from the ward congresses to Local Government congresses to the delegate accreditation, validation, membership registration and the certification of the electoral process. It has been done very well, and with this, you could rate democracy at a high level."

He reiterated that APC remains committed to transparent and inclusive democratic processes that give party members at the grassroots the opportunity to freely choose their leaders and representatives, emphasising that their involvement remains the foundation for sustainable democratic development.



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (second right), acknowledging crowd during the All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential primary, held at Ward L2, Ikoyi in Lagos, on Saturday. PHOTO: STATE HOUSE

# ADC Faces Choice Between Serious Leadership, Recycled Politics – Hayatu-Deen

SAMUEL OGIDAN,  
ABUJA

Ahead of Africa Democratic Congress (ADC) presidential primaries scheduled for Monday, May 25, one of the three aspirants, Mohammed Hayatu-Deen, has declared that the party now faces a defining choice between "serious leadership" and "recycled politics."

Delivery what amounted to his closing argument to party stakeholders ahead of Monday's

presidential primary election, Hayatu-Deen said Monday is not merely about selecting a candidate, but also about determining whether the ADC is truly serious about rescuing Nigeria.

Speaking at the "MHD for ADC" North Central Townhall held in Abuja, Hayatu-Deen urged delegates and stakeholders to treat the primary not merely as an internal party exercise, but as a historic decision that could shape Nigeria's future direction

ahead of the 2027 general election.

"The ADC primary is now only two days away. Monday is not merely about selecting a candidate. Monday is about determining whether the ADC is truly serious about rescuing Nigeria and offering Nigerians a credible alternative to the failed politics they have endured for too long," he said.

In a speech that blended personal testimony, policy direction,

and a direct appeal for support, Hayatu-Deen positioned himself as the candidate best equipped to unite Nigerians across regions, generations, and religious divides, while also warning the party against presenting what he described as "a recycled candidate carrying old political burdens and failed ideas."

"I am not on the carousel of the same old faces that Nigerians have seen for decades. I carry no political baggage. I owe no godfa-

thers. What I bring is experience, credibility, integrity, calm leadership, and a practical recovery plan for Nigeria."

Addressing stakeholders from across the North Central region, Hayatu-Deen anchored much of his remarks on the worsening insecurity, displacement, unemployment, and economic decline affecting communities from Benue and Plateau to Niger, Nasarawa, and Kogi States. He described the continued attacks

on farming communities as both a humanitarian and economic tragedy, warning that "a nation cannot prosper when the region that feeds it is bleeding."

Drawing from his personal experience growing up in Borno State, where his sister was kidnapped and held captive for three years, Hayatu-Deen said security under his leadership would no longer be treated as a political slogan, but as the first responsibility of government.

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embarrassment on account of frequent blackout.

They also say the restoration of the plant came at the right time Nigeria needed stable grid and increased electricity to power its industrialization drive in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu administration.

### PATH TO REVIVAL

At a recent meeting to the governor of Abia State, Alex Otti, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Niger Delta Power Holding

Company (NDPHC), Engr. Jennifer Adighije, briefed her host on efforts being taken by her company to resuscitate the power plant for national use.

She told the governor that the plant's shutdown was further compounded by outstanding financial obligations, but she was not deterred by the inherent challenges to put the plant in good shape.

She hinted that the restoration of the Alaoji plant became

a top priority when she occupied the driver seat of the NDPHC in 2024.

She said: "The good news is that we have completed all remedial works on the defective gas line. We have also fully defrayed our outstanding obligations to TotalEnergies, and gas supply to the plant has now been restored."

She added that extensive electromechanical works had also been carried out on the plant, resulting in the successful restoration of three generating units: GT1, GT22 and GT23 which are now available to dispatch about 375 megawatts of electricity to the national grid.

She noted that the plant possesses adequate transmission infrastructure with no significant evacuation constraints, describing it as a strategic and viable generation asset capable of supporting improved electricity supply nationwide.

The NDPHC boss also lauded the Abia State Government for its reforms in the electricity sector, particularly the Aba ring-fenced power arrangement and the establishment of the state electricity regulatory agency.

She said the company was leveraging the provisions of the Electricity Act and the evolving bilateral electricity market to partner with states and eligible customers in improving electricity access across the country.

"We would love to form a strategic alliance with Abia State, considering your administration's strong commitment to securing uninterrupted elec-

tricity supply for the people of the state," she said.

### IMPACT ON ABIA ECONOMY

Governor Otti commended the management of NDPHC for restoring the Alaoji plant, saying the development was critical to economic growth and industrialisation in Abia State.

He said: "The last time I visited the Alaoji plant, it was regrettable that such huge capacity was lying idle. I am delighted to learn that the plant has now been brought back to life."

He disclosed that the plant could eventually be expanded from its current capacity to 800 megawatts and later to about 1,100 megawatts, subject to the availability of funding.

He told his guest that electricity remains one of the most critical drivers of economic development and noted that his administration had prioritised investments in power infrastructure since assuming office in 2023.

The governor further announced that the state government had ring-fenced the Umuahia electricity market and entered into an agreement with the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company to acquire electricity distribution assets covering Umuahia and surrounding areas.

The state would require about 100 megawatts to service the eight local government areas under the Umuahia ring-fence, while investments in renewable energy and mini-grid projects were also ongoing, he said.

He implored the state Commissioner for Power to work closely with NDPHC officials on modalities for wheeling electricity from the Alaoji plant to Umuahia and other parts of the state.

He promised the NDPHC management of the state government's support and urged the company to remain steadfast despite prevailing challenges in the power sector.

### PARTICIPATION, COMMERCIAL NEGOTIATIONS

The Abia state government and the management of NDPHC have expressed intent to tie commercial partnership that would bring about reliable energy supply in the state, apart from the resuscitation of the Alaoji Power Plant.

Speaking after a tour of the facility, the Abia State Commissioner for Power and Public Utilities, Engr. Monday Ikechukwu, assured Adighije of the state government's readiness to partner with NDPHC.

He said the state was prepared to commence commercial negotiations with the company, stressing that reliable electricity supply remains a major priority of the administration.

### WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Experts told SUNDAY INDEPENDENT that the restart of the 450 MW Alaoji Power Plant in Abia State, a key National Integrated Power Project (NIPP) facility, represents a plus to the current drive to light up Nigeria and make power accessible to Nigerians.

They also said the revival of the power plant is a litmus test to the effectiveness of the NIPP facility in closing electricity gap in Nigeria.

They emphasised the need

for the government to resuscitate similar NIPP facilities in the country with a view to putting them to maximal use in electricity value chain.

Rasheed Adeleke, an energy expert, believed that the revival of the Alaoji Power Plant was in order and would serve the intended purposes.

He told SUNDAY INDEPENDENT: "Rapid industrialization will return to the South-Eastern part of the country as Alaoji Power Plant returns. The return of the power plant also means the gradual death of youth restiveness and killings in the East, which will ultimately bring about robust economy."

"The impact will not be limited to the East alone, but also spread to other parts of the country because the return of the Alaoji Plant will woo more Nigerian investors and others outside the shores of the country."

He advised the government to consider reviving other idle or non-functional NIPP facilities in the country in order to ensure stable electricity and promote robust economy in Nigeria.

Corroborating Adeleke's position, another expert, Wale Sunmola, told SUNDAY INDEPENDENT that the return of the 450MW Alaoji Power Plant signals a paradigm shift in the management of power infrastructure in the country.

He cautioned the government against politicising the gesture and underutilizing the benefits it will offer the country's power sector.

Above all, stakeholders agreed that the restoration of the 450 MW Alaoji Power Plant is a huge boost for Nigeria's power sector which should be reasonably sustained and maintained.

## 2027: MCE To Engage Presidential Aspirants, Political Leaders, INEC, Others

### JOY ANIGBOGU

LAGOS

The Movement for Credible Elections (MCE) is set to convene a high-level emergency stakeholders' engagement on the 2027 general elections as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen Nigeria's democratic process and promote transparent and peaceful elections.

The parley, themed "Actualizing Credible 2027 Elections in Nigeria," is scheduled to hold on Monday.

A press Statement on Sunday signed by the Media Coordinator of MCE, James Ezema, noted that the engagement is designed to bring together eminent statesmen, political leaders, civil society actors, labour leaders, legal luminaries, former electoral officials, youth advocates and representatives of political parties to deliberate and build cohesion on critical issues capable of shaping the credibility of the 2027 electoral process.

According to the statement, discussions at the engagement will focus on the Electoral Act 2026, INEC Guidelines and Timelines, INEC's Role in Party Crisis, the Judiciary and Internal Affairs of Political Parties, growing insecurity and the 2027 elections, as well as the adoption of a Joint Action Plan for the 2027 Elections and other national concerns. Participants have also been encouraged to attend with prepared statements on the identified thematic areas.

Among distinguished Nigerians invited are former Presidents Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former Vice Presidents Atiku Abubakar, and Prof Yemi Osinbajo.

Others are former Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman, Prof Attahiru Jega; labour leaders Comrade Joe Ajaero, Comrade Ayuba Wabba and Comrade Fes-

tus Osifio; constitutional lawyers and senior advocates including Chief Wole Olanipekun, SAN, Dr. Olisa Agbakoba, SAN, Barr Femi Falana, SAN, MCE leaders, Dr. Usman Bugaje, Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, Prof Pat Utomi, Prophet Isah El Buba, Mr. Frank Nweke, Jnr, Comrade Ene Obi, Senator Shehu Sanni, Amb Nkoyo Toyo, Dr. Bilikisu Magoro, Prof Chidi Odinkalu, Barr Mike Igini, Veteran Olawale Okunniyi, alongside other leading voices in governance and pro-democracy advocacy.

Also expected to address stakeholders during the historic engagement are presidential aspirants and political leaders including Rt. Hon Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, Prince Adewole Adebayo, Comrade Omoyele Sowore, Rt. Hon Aminu Tambuwal, Dr. Gbenga Olawepo Hashim, Mr. Peter Obi, Engr Seyi Makinde, Gov Bala Mohammed, Hon Peter Agada, IPAC Chairman, Alhaji Yusuf Dantalle, as well as national officers of major political parties, civil society organisations, labour unions and pro-democracy movements.

According to the statement, Dr. Oby Ezekwesili said the initiative became necessary in view of growing national concerns surrounding electoral reforms, internal party democracy, judicial interventions in the electoral process and their security implications ahead of the 2027 general elections.

"MCE Head of National Secretariat, Olawale Okunniyi, noted that credible elections remain the foundation of good democratic governance, national cohesion and stability and economic prosperity of Nigeria, stressing that broad-based stakeholders' collaboration on credible elections is essential to restoring public confidence in Nigeria's electoral system ahead of the 2027 elections."



Governor of Abia State Alex Otti (middle) during the visit of Engr. Jennifer Adighije, the Managing Director, Niger Delta Power Holding Company (NDPHC), recently.

## Glo Pays Tribute To Awujale Adetona At 2026 Ojude Oba

Leading provider of digital and connectivity services, Globacom, is celebrating the legacy of the late Awujale of Ijebuland, Oba Sikiru Adetona, at this year's Ojude Oba festival. This marks the 21st consecutive edition of the cultural event supported by the company.

Themed, "Ojude Oba 2026: Celebrating the Legacy of Oba Sikiru Adetona", the event is taking place at the Festival Arena opposite the royal palace in Ijebu Ode.

The celebration honours the remarkable achievements of the revered monarch, who joined his ancestors on July 13, 2025, after an illustrious 65-year reign.

Globacom affirmed in a statement issued in Lagos that Oba Adetona's commitment to preserving and promoting Ijebu culture, traditions and values inspired the company's long-standing support for the festival.

According to the company, its involvement in this year's celebration goes beyond sponsorship and reflects a desire to honour the legacy of a monarch whose vision and dedication elevated Ojude Oba into one of Nigeria's most respected cultural events.

"For us, this year's edition is not just about sponsoring the festival as we have done over the

past twenty years. It is about celebrating the exemplary legacies of the revered father, Oba Adetona, who spared no efforts to place the festival on an enviable pedestal," the company stated.

During his reign, Oba Adetona transformed Ojude Oba into a unifying platform that brought together Ijebu sons and daughters from across the world, regardless of religious affiliation.

It was this commitment to unity and cultural preservation that inspired Globacom to begin supporting the celebration 21 years ago.

Over the past two decades, the company's support has helped the event grow into a globally recognized cultural gathering that attracts visitors, dignitaries and tourists from within and outside Nigeria.

Reaffirming its commitment to promoting Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, Globacom said it will continue to support Ojude Oba as part of its broader efforts to showcase the country's culture and traditions on the global stage.

Oba Adetona was enthroned on April 2, 1960, and reigned for 65 years. Under his leadership, Ojude Oba grew significantly in profile and popularity, cementing its place as one of Nigeria's foremost cultural festivals.

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## Oyo School Kidnap: What Security Agencies Must Do – Stakeholders

overpower the bandits, but it would not do it.

"Nigerians will never take the government seriously until they do the needful.

"The question then is: what is the needful? All apologists of banditry should be arrested and be prosecuted.

"Nigerian government should encourage the security forces by empowering them with superior weapons, and they should be appreciated where they have performed well.

"And this one; after due empowerment, wherever security forces fail to secure any community under distress, the military or police command in charge should be queried and punished, if found culpable.

"We can also add that the local communities under threat should be duly educated, empowered and mobilised to know how to maintain a temporary resistance against the attackers each time they come till the security forces arrive to take over."

Dr Victor Mathew, a human rights promoter and security expert, said the issue of late or no response by security agencies to crisis situations has been a recurring decimal and a hallmark of their activities.

Mathew, the Executive Director, Kingdom Advocacy Network (KAN), said the issue of late response could be seen as deliberate, prompted by the lack of valour to confront the terrorists.

Mathew, CEO, Nextstep Security Organisation, continued: "Some of our security agencies have cited lack of the requisite firepower because these terrorists most times have an edge when it comes to arms and ammunition.

"Most of the victims of terrorist attacks have this same story to tell, even when our military is notified well ahead of time.

"A case in point was the Kebbi kidnap of school girls, the military withdrew one hour before the attack took place. Till date nobody knows who gave the order for them to withdraw.

"The slow or lack of response from our security agencies will continue to impact negatively on the counter terrorism measures and is a dent on the security architecture of the nation.

"To combat terrorism and other violent crimes, our security agencies must reduce the time it takes them to re-

spond to attacks.

"The terrorists know that help hardly comes when they are operating. So, they are leveraging that to perpetrate their hurtful activities.

"I will suggest that specially trained personnel be posted to all formations. These could be deployed within the shortest possible time to respond to attacks.

"The current practice is just reactive, not proactive. I am an advocate of the full deployment of technology like drones, etc, to fight terrorism.

"To keep doing the same thing and expect a different result is insanity. It is time to begin to do things differently, if we are serious about tackling insecurity."

Tola Oresanwo, an activist, said that in terrorism or kidnapping situations, time is extremely critical because delayed response often gives attackers enough opportunity to escape with victims and weaken rescue efforts.

Oresanwo, Director of Administration and Programmes, Centre for Anti-Corruption and Open Leadership (CACOL), stated: "The Oyo incident exposes the need for a more proactive and intelligence driven security structure, especially in vulnerable rural communities.

"Security agencies must improve rapid response systems, strengthen local intelligence gathering, and deploy tactical units closer to high risk areas such as schools and isolated communities.

"There should also be stronger synergy among the police, military, local vigilantes, and community leaders.

"Moreover, the attack is a pointer to the fact that the time to introduce Community Policing is now, as the present arrangement is not yielding the desired fruits.

"We have dilly-dallied long enough on the issue and all the legislative and administrative modalities needed for the take off of Community Policing must be put in place.

"Beyond reacting after attacks occur, the government must invest in prevention through surveillance technology, better communication systems, and adequate security presence around schools to restore public confidence and protect lives."

Professor John Ebhomien, an economist and All Progressives Congress

(APC) chieftain, stated: "Based on reports of the Oyo school abductions on May 15, 2026, the response mechanism showed both operational challenges and structural problems common in Nigeria's counter-kidnapping effort.

On the delayed response, the Oyo Police PRO had stated: 'It did not take too long. The communities are deep inside the forest terrain. Immediately the report came, the Commissioner of Police directed the Area Commander, DPO, tactical teams, Amotekun operatives and local vigilantes to move in'.

"He added that operatives had to move cautiously because the abductors used victims as human shields.

"The IGP later deployed additional detectives and the DHQ said the Armed Forces were deploying resources.

'Rescue efforts were also disrupted by IEDs planted by the attackers, injuring several operatives.'

"My take on the response mechanism: The two-hour delay is a symptom, not the full story, but it is still a problem.

"Reports mention a two-hour gap before police reached the scene. Police attribute this to the location being 'deep inside the forest terrain' and the need for caution due to human shields.

"Both are real constraints. In rural Oyo/Kwara border areas, poor road access and limited forward bases mean tactical teams cannot teleport to the scene.

"But, two hours is still

too long for an active mass abduction. By that time, attackers had moved into the forest and begun using hostages as cover.

"It highlights Nigeria's urgent need for decentralised rapid response capability at the LGA level.

"Strengths: Multi-agency activation and follow-through: Once mobilised, the response involved Police, Amotekun, local vigilantes, and later the military."

### DISQUIET OVER INSECURITY

Meanwhile, a team of human rights lawyers operating under the Platinum & Taylor Hill LP, has condemned nationwide insecurity, demanding an immediate state action to check the trend.

The lawyers' call followed the recent mass abduction school pupils and teachers on Friday, May 15, 2026, at Ahoro-Esinele, Oriire Local Government Area of Ogbomoso, Oyo State on Friday, May 15, 2026,

The team, in a statement made available to Sunday Independent, expressed profound concern and deep dismay over the unchecked escalation of banditry, kidnapping and violent disturbances plaguing the nation, epitomised by the recent, horrific events in Oyo State.

The group, in the statement signed by Barrister Olalekan Festus Ojo, Managing Partner, lamented: "The vulnerable state of our national security was tragically laid bare on Friday, May 15, 2026, during a

coordinated onslaught in the Ahoro-Esinele, Oriire Local Government Area of Ogbomoso, where heavily armed terrorists invaded Community High School.

"This heinous raid resulted in the cold blooded murder of two educators and the forceful abduction of over 40 pupils and staff members, including Community High School principal, Mrs. Alamu Folawe."

It further stated that the was further compounded by the fact that the body of Mr. Michael Oyedokun, one of the slain teachers, was being circulated publicly, further exposing the horrifying reality of the nation's insecurity crisis

It added: "The subsequent release of a distressing video from the dense terrain of the Old Oyo National Park, showing traumatised children and Mrs. Alamu making urgent, emotional appeal for rescue, is a harrowing testament to the depths to which public safety has plummeted.

"As a firm anchored on the rule of law, we view this unfolding national security crisis as a severe and systemic infringement upon the fundamental human rights of the populace, specifically violating the Right to Life (Section 33), the Right to Personal Liberty (Section 35) and the Right to Freedom of Movement (Section 41) as explicitly guaranteed under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), alongside equivalent protections un-

der the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

"We must explicitly remind the government that under Section 14(2)(b) of our Constitution, the security and welfare of the people is declared to be the primary purpose of government; as the sole custodian of the state's instruments of coercion, the government's failure to repel these criminal elements and protect sacred educational sanctuaries represents a fundamental breach of its constitutional social contract.

"The continuous terrorisation of innocent civilians, displacement of families and destruction of livelihoods demand immediate and decisive intervention from state and federal authorities to protect lives and preserve fundamental human rights.

Platinum and Taylor Hill LP stands in absolute solidarity with the resilient people of Ogbomoso during this dark period, while extending its deepest concern to every corner of Nigeria currently grappling with grave security challenges and persistent threats to human safety.

"We reiterate that no society can thrive where fear overtakes freedom, schools become hunting grounds and insecurity undermines the dignity of human life."

The team stated that educational institutions must never become theatres of terror and urgent measures must be implemented to guarantee the safety of schools, students and academic personnel nationwide.



Tobore Oborewori, wife of Governor, Delta State/ founder, You Matter Charity Foundation (right), presenting a cheque to Omonigho Oborewori, the founder, Ruby Awareness Initiative Foundation, during the 2026 Mental Health Conference, held at the Unity Hall, Government House, Asaba, Delta State. PHOTO: GODDY UMUKORO

### APATA OYENIRAN, LAGOS

Excited at the spontaneous mobilisation by state coordinators, the National Central Working Council (NCWC) of Tourism Vanguard for Tinubu 2027 has commended its Zonal and State Coordinators for their swift response in establishing functional structures across the country ahead of the movement's inaugu-

## 2027: TVT Applauds Zonal, State Coordinators For Nationwide Mobilisation

ral national meeting.

Hon. Apata Samson Nunayon, the National Coordinator of the group, in a statement, praised the dedication, sacrifice and commitment demonstrated by coordinators in strengthening the organisation's presence nationwide.

Apata explained that the rapid mobilisation effort reflects the passion and determination of members toward building a formidable and united structure

in support of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2027 political ambition.

TVT noted that several zones and states had already activated operational councils in line with directives issued by the NCWC, describing the development as a major step towards consolidating the movement's grassroots network.

Part of the statement read: "The National Central Working

Council (NCWC) of Tourism Vanguard for Tinubu 2027 sincerely appreciates all our committed Zonal and State Coordinators who have swiftly responded to the directive of the NCWC by putting functional councils and structures in place across their various zones and states.

"Your dedication, sacrifice, commitment, and prompt coordination efforts clearly demonstrate your passion for the

growth and success of this great movement. We are proud of your leadership and unwavering support towards building a strong and united TVT National structure across Nigeria.

"Together, we move with one vision, one movement, and one destiny towards TINUBU 2027. Thank you all for your commitment and cooperation."

However, he urged coordinators and leaders who are yet to

complete or activate their state and zonal structures to do so without delay as preparations intensify for the forthcoming inaugural meeting involving the NCWC and other state and zonal executives.

Tourism Vanguard for Tinubu 2027 is one of the emerging support groups mobilising political backing and grassroots engagement ahead of the 2027 general elections in Nigeria.

# Orlu Senate Seat: Analysts Pick Holes In Uzodimma's Primary Election Victory

● **Insist He Can't Hold Two Positions Same Time**

**EJIKEME OMENAZU**  
LAGOS

Some political commentators have taken a critical look at the recent victory of Governor Hope Uzodimma of Imo State, who emerged the All Progressives (APC) candidate for the Orlu Senatorial District after winning the party's primary for a legislative seat that is expected to become active at a time his tenure as the state's Chief Executive will not have expired.

Recall that Governor Uzodimma, the incumbent Chairman of the Progressives Governors' Forum, had already spent eight years in the Senate before contesting to become the Imo State Chief Executive.

Barrister Olalekan Festus Ojo, one of those who spoke to Sunday Independent on the issue, stated that the development raises a constitutional issue as the constitution prohibits one from occupying two positions at the same time.

Barrister Ojo, Managing Partner, Platinum & Taylor Hill LP, stated: "The facts are not in dispute. Governor Hope Uzodimma's tenure as Imo State governor runs until January 15, 2028.

"The 11th National Assembly is expected to be inaugurated in June 2027, which is a full seven months before his governorship expires.

"He has nonetheless won the APC senatorial primary for Imo West. The constitutional question this raises is stark and unambiguous.

"Section 183 of the 1999 Constitution is categorical: a Governor shall not, during the period he holds office, hold any other executive or legislative office.

"If Uzodimma wins the 2027 senatorial election and the 11th Senate is inaugurated in June 2027, he cannot simultaneously occupy the Government House, in Owerri and a seat in the Red Chamber. One must yield.

"The Constitution is not ambiguous on this point and no amount of political sophistry can cure it.

"Is it an aberration? Constitutionally, the primary participation itself is not prohibited, as Section 65 guarantees every qualified Nigerian the right to contest.

"The aberration lies not in the letter of the law, but in its spirit and in the emerging scheming behind it."

Ojo, a human rights lawyer and a promoter of good gov-

ernance, hinted that credible insiders indicated that Governor Uzodimma is considering either installing a 'placeholder' senator, a surrogate who would warm the seat and vacate it upon his arrival in January 2028; or resigning his governorship prematurely to take his Senate seat.

Ojo, however, warned that both options are constitutionally alarming.

According to him, the first corrupts the democratic mandate of the electorate of Orlu Zone, while the second abandons the people of Imo State who gave him a mandate to govern through January 2028.

Ojo continued: "What does this say of Nigeria's ruling elite? It reveals a political class that treats public office as personal property and the electorate as a necessary inconvenience to be managed, not a sovereign to be served.

"When a governor who was himself restored to office by the Supreme Court; after the very democratic mandate, he now casually contemplates abandoning, schemes to use that office as a springboard to the next, he inadvertently confirms what critics have long alleged: that for Nigeria's elite, the office matters; the people who confer it do not.

"This is the real aberration and it is one of democratic character, not merely constitutional procedure."

Barrister Kenneth Udeze, the National Chairman of Action Alliance (AA), said that Uzodimma's action could be described as an aberration in the sense that it clashes with the spirit of separation of powers between the executive and legislative arms, even if it is not illegal.

Udeze, however, maintained that legally, Nigeria's Constitution and Electoral Act do not bar a sitting governor from contesting a National Assembly seat.

But he stressed: "The problem is the timing. If Hope Uzodimma wins the Orlu Senatorial seat in 2027, he will be elected while still serving as governor until January 2028.

"That creates a 'dual mandate' scenario: you can't hold both offices. In practice, the winner either resigns as governor early, or declines the Senate seat, triggering a by-election.

"That means voters in Imo State would elect someone who likely never intends to serve the full term. It also concen-

trates power—one person influencing both state and federal structures simultaneously, the ruling elite's selfish attitude.

"This reflects three things: Power hedging: Contesting multiple offices is a way to secure a landing spot regardless of the outcome. It reduces political risk for the elite.

"Instrumental view of mandates: The electorate's vote is treated as a stepping stone, rather than a mandate to serve a defined term. It treats public office as personal insurance.

"Weak internal party discipline: The APC allowed it because incumbents with federal connections often face little resistance in primaries. It shows primaries are still more about elite bargaining than party rules or public interest.

"It is not unique to Uzodimma or the APC—similar moves happen across parties. But each time it happens, it reinforces the perception that public office is a personal asset, not a public trust."

Barrister Emeka Iheonu, another Lagos-based lawyer, said: "Though the Nigerian Constitution does not specifically prohibit a sitting governor from contesting for Senatorial primaries, it is morally wrong and an aberration for such to occur.

"It is not right for the Imo State governor to contest for Senatorial primaries when he knows that he will still be governor when the incoming Sen-

ate resumes plenary come 2027.

"The level of impunity being exhibited by most Nigerian politicians is scandalous. I wonder why governors rush to become Senators after spending eight years as governors.

"There must be ulterior motives necessitating such moves. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Dr Rexkennedy Saltlove, a human rights activist, stated that Uzodimma's action and the fact that his party, the APC allowed it, "speaks volumes of a bunch of power hungry desperadoes as individuals and political party more concerned about themselves being in public office to be 'relevant', rather than being in office to serve the people and the masses.

Saltlove, President/Executive Director, Citizens Rights and Empowerment Advocacy Initiative (CREMA Initiative), stated: "First, the constitution does not prevent a serving governor from contesting for other elective positions.

"However, he cannot hold the two portfolios together. Even if he wins the senatorial seat, he must relinquish the office, before he can take an oath and be sworn into the new office.

"Secondly, the political elites and groups like rotating themselves to show they are 'relevant' and will keep telling the citizens that 'they are foolish and not smart enough to decide my political fate based

on their performances while in office, because they are not politically enlightened'.

"Thirdly, Hope Uzodimma is clearly telling his party, the APC and its leadership, citizens of Imo State, Nigeria and the world, that they do not know that his action is an abuse and insult to democratic accountability.

"This is because he was elected to serve a maximum of two terms and give account of his stewardship in those two terms before venturing into other fields.

"He is showing how unfocused he is, irresponsible, unreliable and democratically unaccountable. He wants to be counted as one who cannot be trusted to finish a task judiciously.

"This is where the electorate needs to exercise their franchise and fundamental rights of holding leaders and governments accountable by denying him the benefit of that greed.

"Fourthly, Hope Uzodimma's action reflects elite dominance of party structures, they being the only ones that bring fresh ideas and blood into the system.

"That is partly responsible for the political, economic and security quagmire we find ourselves in as a nation today.

"Lastly, Uzodimma's action, which was clearly allowed by his party and its leadership, leaves a big question mark about their moral soundness.

"Because, using the constitutional freedom to contest, they will legally justify such

action, but indirectly indicate that they are not the bunch of people the citizens can count on, on moral soundness."

Hon. Dennis Adikwuru, a seasoned politician and chief-tain of the APC in Imo State, stated: "There is no aberration in the case of a sitting Governor whose tenure elongates beyond the commencement of the Senate where he is contesting while on seat.

"Simply, the governor will resign and cease to function as such once he wins the Senatorial election and before the inauguration of the new National Assembly.

"You see, people have their points of view depending on their sitting positions. The question should not be whether it is aberration or not, but the propriety, the impact and the expediency of Governor Hope Uzodimma returning to the Senate after taking the portion of governor, or while his tenure as governor is yet to elapse.

"I will tell you here that he is returning to the Senate with full load of Executive experience, coupled with his eight years in the Senate.

"As Chairman of the ruling party's Governors' Forum, holding strategic positions in the scheme of governance aside his resume as governor, Senator Hope Uzodimma is in a vantage position to lead the National Assembly and create best feature of Executive and Legislature relationship in Nigeria."



Austine Anyanwu, Relationship Manager, Personal Pension Plan, Leadway Pensure PFA (left); Muda Yusuf, Chief Executive Officer, Centre for the Promotion of Enterprise/keynote speaker (second left); Idu Okwuosa-Okeahialam, Group Managing Director/CEO, Royal Exchange Plc (third left); Ibrahim Buwai, Head of Corporate Communications/representative of Director-General, National Pension Commission (middle); Tom Ogboi, Chairman, STI Leasing Ltd/Chairman of occasion (third right); Julius Odidi, Head, NAICOM Lagos Control Office (second right), and Chuks Udo Okonta, Publisher, Inспенonline/Promoter, Retirement Summit, during the Inспенonline Retirement Summit 2026, held in Lagos, on Wednesday. PHOTO: KINGSTON DANIEL

**SAMUEL OGIDAN,**  
ABUJA

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has moved into a decisive phase of its internal political contest as it clears a total of 702 aspirants to participate in its forthcoming primaries across various elective positions, setting the stage for a wide-ranging selection process ahead of the next general election cycle.

According to figures released within the party structure, 513

## ADC Clears 80 Govs, 109 Senate, 513 House Of Reps' Hopefuls

aspirants have been cleared to contest for seats in the House of Representatives, while 109 candidates will compete for senatorial tickets.

In the governorship category, 80 aspirants have been approved to seek the party's tickets. At the presidential level, three aspirants have emerged as contenders under the platform.

The party has fixed its presidential primary for Monday, May 25, a development that signals the climax of weeks of internal screening, consultations, and po-

litical alignment within the ADC. The presidential contest has drawn particular attention due to the calibre of individuals seeking the party's ticket.

Among them is Atiku Abubakar, a long-standing figure in Nigeria's democratic politics with extensive experience in national governance and repeated bids for the presidency under different political platforms.

Also in the race is Rotimi Amaechi, a prominent political actor with executive experience at both state and federal levels,

whose entry into the contest adds a strong organisational and political network dimension to the race.

The third aspirant is Hayatu-Deen Mohammed, a technocratic and private-sector-oriented contender whose campaign narrative has generally been associated with economic reform, governance efficiency, and institutional restructuring.

Within party circles, the contest is being viewed as a defining moment for the ADC, as it seeks to position itself as a competitive

alternative in the national political landscape.

In line with established electoral procedures, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) requires all political parties conducting primaries to adhere strictly to guidelines governing internal party democracy.

These include proper notification of primary elections, transparent delegate selection processes, accreditation of observers, and submission of candidates' names within stipulated deadlines using official nomina-

tion forms.

INEC also mandates that parties ensure that their primaries are conducted in a peaceful, verifiable, and inclusive manner, consistent with the provisions of the Electoral Act.

The timetable for party primaries across the political space has largely been shaped by INEC's broader election programme, which compels parties to conclude internal nominations within specified windows ahead of general election timelines.

## NEWS

BOLU-OLU ESHO  
AKURE

For Africa to tackle challenges posed by climate change, it has been projected that the continent would need an estimated \$2.8 trillion between 2020 and 2030.

Harrison Rehoboth Consulting presented this in its new policy analysis on what it would take to effectively meet the Paris Agreement.

According to the analysis, Africa needs about \$277 billion annually to implement climate adaptation and mitigation projects which is aimed at reducing the devastating impact of floods, droughts, desertification and other environmental challenges threatening livelihoods across Africa caused by climate change.

Spokesperson to the consulting firm, Femi Sekoni, disclosed that such a huge fund is

## Climate Change: Africa Needs \$2.8trn As Debt Profile Worsens

required with a view to helping African nations strengthen their infrastructure, protect vulnerable communities, improve food security, expand renewable energy and transition to cleaner and more sustainable economies.

He noted that Africa relies on foreign support for financing despite the rising climate crisis, noting domestic investors only contribute a little fraction towards financing the fight against climate challenges.

The analysis revealed that local institutions, including banks, pension funds, insurance firms and private investors contribute only about 10 percent of climate finance flowing into Africa, while international organisations and development partners are responsible for the larger

shunk.

Further revelations in the report stated that climate financing is unevenly distributed across African nations, stating that countries such as South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, Morocco and Kenya attract a significant percentage of available funding due to their stronger financial systems and investment structures.

Many African countries are noted to be facing severe climate threats yet are unable to attract large-scale funding as a result of weak institutions, limited project preparation capacity, policy uncertainties and concerns over investment risks.

Concerns are raised on the financing available to African countries, warning that a large portion of the funds comes in the

form of loans rather than grants or concessional financing.

The report noted that this type of financing could aggravate the debt burden of several African nations, which are already struggling with rising debt-servicing obligations and economic pressures.

It stated that repayment of such loans are difficult because climate adaptation projects such as flood control systems, drought resilience programmes and coastal protection infrastructure often provide social and environmental benefits and generate little direct revenue.

The report noted there is a need for wealthier nations to provide more grant-based support to vulnerable countries to face the harsh effects of climate change.

## IBAN Backs NBC's Digital Switch-Over Initiative

TOR VANDE-ACKA  
MAKURDI

The Independent Broadcasting Association of Nigeria (IBAN), in the interest of National Sovereignty, has thrown its weight behind the National Broadcasting Commission's (NBC) revamped Digital Switch-Over (DSO) initiative.

The development is a dismissal of the objections raised by the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON), as misleading and potentially harmful to Nigeria's long-delayed digital migration efforts.

Furthermore, the move by the NBC is seen by broadcast organizations to have exercised the authority vested in it and is also considered as its effort to move the digital transition process forward after years of limited progress.

In a statement signed by the IBAN Chairman, Dr Ahmed Tijjani Ramalan, and made available to newsmen in Makurdi, weekend, he argued that the NBC's new "Big Picture" strategy represents the most credible pathway yet for achieving a successful transition from analogue to

digital broadcasting after years of setbacks and stalled implementation.

While the association recom-

mended an immediate technical engagement involving BON, IBAN, signal distributors and equipment manufacturers to resolve outstanding issues, it called a formal review of the 2012 DSO White Paper to align policy with current technological realities and called on stakeholders to work towards the proposed June 17, 2026 national rollout and a fourth-quarter 2028 analogue switch-off deadline.

According to IBAN statement, "The positive, we must say, is that when viewed from the standpoint of regulatory intervention, the NBC appears to have exercised its "discretionary powers" in an effort to revive and accelerate the "long-stalled DSO process".

"From that perspective, the immediate upside for the industry may lie in how effectively broadcasters utilise the proposed "18-month free-access window" to "reorganize", "strengthen their digital capabilities",

"expand audience reach", and position themselves for "long-term sustainability" under whatever commercial framework eventually emerges.

"It is also important to acknowledge that regulators do possess "certain interventionist powers" within the broader "public-interest and sector-development mandate.

## Ex-Anambra Guber Candidate Emerges AAC Senatorial Candidate

EJIKEME OMENAZU  
LAGOS

Chioma Ifemeludike, the 2025 governorship candidate of the African Action Congress (AAC), in the last Anambra State governorship election, has emerged as the party's senatorial candidate for the Anambra Central Senatorial District ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Ifemeludike, the AAC's Deputy National chairperson for South East, clinched the ticket through a consensus arrangement during the party's primary election held in Awka on Thursday.

According to a statement made available to Sunday Independent, the exercise was monitored by officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), with the party's officials, delegates, aspirants, members, observers and stakeholders in attendance.

Declaring the results, the Returning Officer, Obianuju An-

iche, commended party members for their orderly and peaceful conduct throughout the exercise.

Speaking shortly after her emergence, Ifemeludike thanked party faithful for the confidence reposed in her, pledging not to disappoint them.

She restated her commitment to quality representation and vowed to continue fighting for the people and amplifying their voices at the national level.

She said: "I appreciate the party faithful for giving me their consensus acceptance. I promise not to compromise my stand or disappoint them.

"We will not give up on our pursuit of quality representation. The AAC may not boast of massive structures like the 'bigger' political parties, but it remains committed to principles and people-oriented governance.

"Yes, we may not be controlling crowds, but one person can effect change. I prefer staying with a few to get things right instead of joining a bigger party and compromising.



Biodun Oyebanji, Governor, Ekiti State (middle), and members of All Progressives Congress (APC), during the party's Presidential primary and affirmation of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu as APC Presidential candidate, held at Ward 6, Ikogosi-Ekiti, Ekiti State, on Saturday.

## PRP, ADP, AAC Pledge Commitment To Ekiti We Deserve: Women, Youth Manifesto

VICTORIA OJUGBANA  
LAGOS

AdvoKC Foundation, a youth-led civic technology organisation that leverages cutting-edge technology, and art, to deliver transparency and accountability in the Nigerian democracy, has secured commitments from three governorship aspirants representing the People's

Redemption Party (PRP), Action Democratic Party (ADP), and African Action Congress (AAC) in Ekiti State to 'The Ekiti We Deserve: Women and Youth Manifesto'.

A statement signed by Luqman Adamu, Communica-

tions Officer, AdvoKC Foundation, said that the commitments were made during a high-level political roundtable organised by The Kukah Centre and the National Peace Committee ahead of the forthcoming gubernatorial election in the state.

As part of the engagement, Adamu said that the AdvoKC Foundation introduced 'The Ekiti We Deserve: Women and Youth Manifesto', to political stakeholders and engaged directly with aspirants on the need for inclusive governance and citizen-centred leadership in Ekiti State.

According to Adamu, a roundtable, held in Ado-Ekiti, convened political

aspirants, party representatives, members of the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), civil society organisations, peace-building actors, youth advocates, and electoral stakeholders to promote peaceful political participation, issue-based campaigns, and violence-free elections.

Adamu said that following strategic advocacy engagements during the roundtable, the aspirants committed to the manifesto and its core demands for responsive governance, youth participation, women's representation, and inclusive development.

"Developed through extensive grassroots consultations, the manifesto captures the

voices, experiences, and policy priorities of more than 1,600 residents across all the 16 local government areas of the state. It presents clear and practical policy recommendations focused on infrastructure and utilities, economic inclusion, healthcare, education, social development, political participation, transparency, accountability, and the inclusion of women and young people in governance," statement added.

While speaking on the significance of the engagement, Zayyad Musa, Programme Manager at AdvoKC Foundation, noted that the commitments reflect growing recognition among political stakeholders on the importance of policies that directly address the realities and aspirations of women and young people in Ekiti State.

## Court Affirms Prince Eloho-Eke As President General Of Uzere Kingdom Pending Appeal

FRANCIS ONOIRIBHOLO  
BENIN

A High Court sitting in Oleh, Delta State, has ordered that Prince Sunday Eloho-Eke continue in office as the substantive President-General of Uzere Kingdom pending the determination of an appeal.

The court also barred rival claimants from taking over

leadership positions in the community.

The ruling was delivered by Justice C.O. Emidoniye in Suit No. HCO/M/26/2026.

The court directed all parties in the protracted leadership dispute to maintain the status quo as it existed before a controversial letter dated December 3, 2025.

The order specifically restrained the 4th to 6th defen-

dants/appellants; Raphael Odorewu, Edafemako Agbaka, and Solomon Ogueri from parading themselves or acting as members of the Central Executive Committee of Uzere Kingdom until the determination of the appeal.

Justice Emidoniye also granted an interlocutory injunction restraining the Delta State Ministry of Women Affairs, Community and Social Devel-

opment, and other respondents, from implementing or acting on directives contained in the disputed December 3, 2025 letter.

The court which ordered a temporary suspension of those directives pending the outcome of the appeal however awarded costs of N1million against the 4th to 6th respondents in favour of the applicant, Christiana Okrunu.

It further directed the gener-

al public, including companies operating in Uzere Kingdom, to continue official dealings with Prince Eloho-Eke as the substantive President-General.

This ruling marks the latest development in the ongoing controversy surrounding the tenure of the Uzere Community Executive Council.

An earlier judgment delivered on December 20, 2024, in Suit No. MCO/26/2024, had re-

affirmed the supremacy of the Delta State Community Development Association (CDA) Law over the Uzere Constitution in regulating leadership tenure within the community.

According to the Delta State Gazette dated January 22, 2022, Article 9, Section 4 provides that: "All officers of the CDA shall hold office for a period of three years and may be re-elected for another term of three years."

## Dettol Cool Campaign Shows Nigerians The Easy Way To Stay Protected

ISAAC ASABOR  
LAGOS

Building on the momentum of its inaugural edition, which introduced the #OwnTheSweat campaign to communities across the country, Dettol Cool returned with an even more immersive approach.

In a report, the company said that with #OwnTheSweat 2.0, the focus was on deeper, more engaging experiences within environments where movement and physical activity are part of everyday life.

“Over the past two months, soaring temperatures across Nigeria have made staying fresh and comfortable more difficult. From navigating crowded spaces in sweltering conditions to repeatedly wiping away sweat, the discomfort has been widespread.

“For those with active lifestyles or constantly on the move, maintaining proper hygiene has become even more demanding,”

it said.

It disclosed that at the centre of this experience is the Dettol Cool antibacterial bar soap. It is designed to support active lifestyles with triple-action benefits: 99% germ protection, a cooling sensation that lowers skin temperature by up to five degrees, and long-lasting defence against body odour, even during intense physical activity.

“The initiative came to life through a series of pop-up activations engaging participants in real time and reinforcing the connection between active living and everyday hygiene.

“Rather than simply promoting freshness, the initiative demonstrated how it fits seamlessly into daily routines. The campaign kicked off in key fitness hubs across the country.

“At each location, participants took part in interactive fitness challenges led by trained instructors, transforming routine workouts into engaging experiences.

## Nnamdi Kanu: Group Tasks S'East Governors, Igbo NASS Members, Harps On Imo Charter Of Equity

ANOLU VINCENT  
OWERRI

The ‘ISU NATION’, a socio-cultural organisation in the Imo West Senatorial District, has called on the governors of the Southeast region to put up persistent formidable appeals to the presidency for the release of the detained leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Mazi Nnamdi Kanu.

President of the organisation and a former deputy speaker of the Imo State House of Assembly, Chief Okechukwu Dike, made a call in an exclusive interview with our correspondent.

The former law maker equally challenged members of the National Assembly of Southeast extraction to join hands with Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe in his vociferous agitations and principled stance for the release of the IPOB leader.

Dike, a renowned pharmacist regretted that appeals by

such prominent notable Igbo leaders as the late Mbazulike Amaechi and Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu for Kanu to regain his freedom proved abortive thereby leading to his prolonged predicament.

“We need more of the Abaribes who are courageous enough to speak for the release of Nnamdi Kanu and governors of the Southeast should speak out and take a common position on the issue.”

Chief Dike who decried the recrudescence of insecurity in some states of the Southern part of the country advised Nigerians to always be security conscious and to report any suspicious movement to law enforcement agencies for necessary action.

He explained that the ‘ISU NATION’ as a socio-cultural organisation was formed by a former deputy governor of the state, the late Dr. Douglas Acholonu to bring all sons of ‘ISU NATION’ together for a common purpose.

## ISPON Renews Call For Stronger National Safety Reforms

### ● Unfolds Plans For 12th Anniversary

EJIKEME OMENAZU  
LAGOS

The Institute of Safety Professionals of Nigeria (ISPON) is marking its 12th anniversary with a renewed call for stronger national safety reforms.

ISPON President, Dr. Stephen Udezi, who addressed a press conference on Friday ahead of the anniversary, which will be held in Warri, Delta State, stressed the need for a cultural shift towards safety prevention.

He urged collaboration among government agencies, schools, industries, and the media to reduce accidents and promote safety awareness.

Udezi, who said the anniversary, has the theme, ‘Health and Safety Management in Nigeria: Prospects and Retrospects’, dis-

closed that ISPON was determined to reduce industrial accidents, promote safety compliance and enhance professionalism in Nigeria’s safety space.

He commended the Lagos State government for setting up the State Safety Commission, even as he urged other state governments to emulate the laudable venture.

He warned that poor safety culture and growing activities of unqualified practitioners continue to fuel accidents across workplaces and communities.

Elaborating on the penalty for non compliance with ISPON safety regulations, Udezi spoke on the measures the Institute would take against the Managing Director of any organisation which employs a non safety employee.

CHIBUIKE CHUKWU  
LAGOS

The youth forum of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Kwara State has rejected the outcome of the party’s primary election.

The youth forum, in a statement by its convener;

Comrade Ayuba Bako Marufdeen, said it can no longer remain silent in the face of injustice, manipulation and the subversion of democratic principles within the party in Kwara State.

According to the statement, the recent APC governorship primary election has left thousands of party faithful deeply disappointed, shocked, and disillusioned.

The forum said: “As youths who have worked tirelessly for the growth, stability, and electoral successes of the APC across all wards and local governments in Kwara State, we categorically reject the outcome of the governorship primary and refuse to accept the announced candidate as the true reflection of the wishes and aspirations of APC members in the state.

“Democracy is built on fairness, participation, transparency, and the collective decision of

## Kwara APC Youth Rejects Outcome Of Gubernatorial Primary

the people. Democracy cannot survive where the voices of the majority are ignored and where political interests are placed above justice and equity.

“What transpired during the primary election is a direct affront to the democratic values our great party claims to uphold.

“We are gathered here today to send a clear message to the national leadership of our party and all critical stakeholders that the future of the APC in Kwara State cannot and must not be sacrificed on the altar of political manipulation and selfish ambition.

“The youths of Kwara State reject every form of candidate imposition. We reject every arrangement designed to silence the people and deny party members the opportunity to freely choose their preferred candidate.

“Without fear or hesitation, we boldly declare that the most acceptable, most popular, most experienced, and most people-oriented aspirant in this race remains Ambassador Abdulfatai Yahaya Seriki Gambari, MFR.

“Ambassador Yahaya Seriki has over the years built endur-

ing relationships across every part of Kwara State through his humility, generosity, humanitarian interventions, grassroots mobilisation, and unwavering commitment to the welfare of the people.

“His popularity cuts across political, ethnic, religious, and generational divides. From the youths to the elders, from market women to community leaders, from students to artisans, the overwhelming support for Ambassador Yahaya Seriki across the state is visible, organic, and undeniable.

“It is therefore unacceptable that such a widely embraced aspirant could be sidelined through a process many party faithful consider questionable and lacking in credibility.

“We want the APC leadership to understand clearly that the strength of any political party lies in the trust and confidence of its members.

“Once the people lose faith in internal democratic processes, the unity and future of the party become seriously threatened.

“If the APC truly desires victory in the 2027 general elections,

then the party must listen to the voice of the people and correct the mistakes arising from this flawed primary exercise.

“Kwara people are politically conscious, enlightened, and courageous. They will resist every attempt to force a candidate upon them against their collective will.

“The party must not ignore the growing anger, disappointment, and frustration among loyal supporters, especially the youths who form the backbone of political mobilisation in the state.

“We therefore passionately call on the national leadership of the All Progressives Congress, the Appeal Committee, and all relevant stakeholders to urgently intervene and review the outcome of this governorship primary in the interest of justice, fairness, party unity, and electoral success.

“Anything short of justice at this critical moment will further divide the party, discourage committed supporters, weaken grassroots structures, and create avoidable political consequences that may ultimately benefit the opposition.”



Stephen Udezi, President, Institute of Safety Professionals of Nigeria (ISPON) (left); Ben Modebe, Registrar (middle), and Olushola Ogunleye, Chairman, Lagos branch, during a press conference to announce the 12th anniversary of the institute in Lagos.

## Tinubu Will Sweep The Polls In Imo — APC Chairman

ANOLU VINCENT  
OWERRI

Ahead of the nation’s 2027 general elections, the chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), the Imo state chapter, Hon. Austin Onyedebelu, has predicted a landslide victory for the party in all stages.

He boasted that President

Bola Ahmed Tinubu would have a smooth ride to victory with massive votes from Imo State.

Onyedebelu, who briefed newsmen at the party secretariat in Owerri on the outcome of the party’s primaries conducted in the state said that the exercise was free, fair and transparent in line with democratic principles and guide-

lines as outlined by the NWC of the party.

He said that the broom symbol party (APC) is now more cohesive, fortified and prepared to face the on-coming general elections and was sure to sweep the polls.

The politician commended Governor Hope Uzodimma for his outstanding leadership,

guidance and commitment to the sustenance of the party in the state.

He congratulated those who emerged victorious at the primaries and enjoined those who could not make it to accept their defeat in good faith and join hands with the victors to secure victory for the party in the main election.

FRANCIS ONOIRIBHOLO  
BENIN

The Catholic Bishop of the Uromi Diocese, Most Rev. Dr. Donatus Ogun, has said that justice remains the foundation for genuine peace in any society, calling on the citizens, institutions, and governments to embrace fairness, compassion, and human dignity in all dealings.

Bishop Ogun made the declaration during the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Uromi Justice Development and Peace Caritas Initiative (JDPCI), the social arm of the Catholic Diocese of Uromi.

## Justice Remains Foundation For Genuine, Sustainable Peace — Bishop Ogun

While speaking at the event, the bishop emphasized that justice is not optional, but a divine responsibility entrusted to all people irrespective of religion or status.

According to him, “Justice is the right of all and is what Jesus expects us to do. We explain justice in the words of Jesus: do unto others what you would want others to do unto you. So, all of us, without distinction, are called to be agents of justice. Unless there

is justice, there can be no true peace.”

The bishop described Uromi JDPCI as “the face of the diocese,” noting that the organisation has consistently responded to the suffering of the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized over the past two decades.

“Wherever people suffer, you call the bishop. Wherever people are hungry, you call the bishop. The bishop says, ‘Go to JDPC,’” he stated.

Earlier in his welcome ad-

dress, the Executive Director of Uromi JDPCI, Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Fidelis Oriabure Arhedo, described the anniversary as “a celebration of mission, sacrifice, resilience, partnership, and impact.”

According to him, the organisation was founded 20 years ago to advance social justice and improve the lives of the poor and marginalised through faith-inspired interventions rooted in Catholic social teaching.

## WEEKEND COCKTAIL



## A Crown Of Grace: Celebrating Olori Atuwatse III At 40

In the heart of Warri, where the Niger meets the sea, a light shines with quiet strength—Olori Atuwatse III, the Queen Consort of Warri Kingdom.

She is more than royalty; she is the Mother of Warri Kingdom, whose compassion weaves through every palace courtyard and fishing village along the creeks.

With grace as her crown and wisdom as her scepter, she walks beside His Majesty, Ogiame Atuwatse III CFR, Olu of Warri, as his steadfast anchor and “supportive machine.”

Where the King leads with vision, she builds with love—lifting women, nurturing children, and preserving the culture that makes Warri immortal.

This time, the drums beat differently. The kingdom rises as one to sing: “Happy Birthday to our Great Queen!”

May your years multiply in good health, in wealth, and in God’s wisdom. May your laughter echo through the halls of Ode-Itsekiri for generations.

There are celebration and ap-



**ROSEMARY UGIOMOH**  
08055151150

plause from the indigenes of Warri saying, “Our mother, our pride, our Olori. Long may you reign in hearts as you reign in grace.”

## Don't Wait For Eulogy: Be Human While People Can Hear You — Etinosa Idemudia

The studio lights were off but the small room at the back of the BTC Podcast set still hummed. Etinosa Idemudia leaned forward, her eyes scanning the faces of the younger actors sitting on the floor.

“Alright, let me leave you people with one thing,” she said. Her voice was low, but it cut through the chatter like a cue line.

“You know what annoys me? This thing we do when someone dies.” She shook her head. “Person dey alive, you no dey reply their message. You dey see their DM for months, blue ticks dey shine like torchlight. You no get time. Too busy. Too big.”

She paused, letting it land.

“But the moment dem hear say the person don kpai, ah! Instagram go turn obituary board. ‘Rest in peace, legend.’ Then you screenshot the DM you never answered from 2019 and post am with crying emoji. ‘We were supposed to work together. I was looking forward to it.’”

A nervous laugh ran through the room. Etinosa wasn’t smiling.

“Don’t play with me like that,” she warned. “If you post my DM when I die, I swear, I go wake up. I go slap you, and go back to the grave. Don’t try it.”

She pointed at one of the actors. “And you, Mr. Producer, who said you can’t work with her because ‘her energy is not it’... suddenly after she’s gone, you’re giving interview. ‘Ah, she was so talented. I had plans for her next year.’ Plans where? For your clout?”

Etinosa sat back, crossing her arms. “Listen. If you respect people, respect them while they can hear it. Send the reply. Take the call. Offer the role. Don’t wait until there’s no chance to answer back, then use their death for engagement.”

She smiled then, sharp and real. “Life is short. Be human while people are alive to receive it. That DM that you didn’t reply? My enemy go die now. So reply it today. Or delete it and let the dead rest.”

The room went quiet. Nobody reached for their phone to record. For once, everyone just listened.



## Stepping Out Of The Story: Katherine Obiang Chooses Peace Over Noise

The comments are loud again, but Katherine Obiang isn’t listening.

She sat on the balcony of her Lagos apartment, phone in hand, scrolling through the latest batch of photos she’d uploaded an hour earlier. Sunlight caught her face as she smiled at the screen. No long captions. No clapbacks. Just a shot of her laughing, another of her holding a coffee with the Lagos skyline behind her, and one of her feet kicked up, captionless, at peace.

For years, silence had been her answer.

Since her marriage to TV host Frank Edoho ended, and the old drama resurfaced online, people had opinions. They’d blamed her. They’d forgotten she worked at NTA, that she built a career long before the headlines. She’d let them talk. Twelve years

of quiet will do that to you.

But lately, something shifted.

The photos started coming more often. Not for clout, not to explain, just small glimpses of a life moving forward.

Katherine never said much online, and she wasn’t starting now. The radiance in her eyes did the talking.

Friends noticed first. “You look light,” one wrote under a photo. She replied with a heart emoji and left it there.

The brouhaha between Frank and his other ex kept trending. Katherine kept posting. Not as a statement, but as a reminder to herself and anyone watching: you can step out of a story that tried to define you.

She closed the app, set the phone down, and poured another cup of coffee. The light was still good.



## NEWS

INNOCENT OWEH,  
ABUJA

## Tinubu To Receive APC Certificate Of Return, Party Flag For 2027 Presidential Poll

President Bola Tinubu will on Sunday receive the Certificate and Flag of the All Progressives Congress (APC) as its Presidential candidate for the 2027 elections.

The Presidential Primary Elections Committee will present the certificate and flag at the

Bola Ahmed Tinubu International Conference Centre in Abuja after nationwide collation of the primary election results.

APC governors, members of the National Executive Committee, the National Working Com-

mittee, and the National Assembly, along with party stalwarts, will attend the event.

Recall that Tinubu is standing as Sole candidate of the ruling APC for the 2027 presidential election.

Tinubu who is marking his third year in office as President was elected in 2023.

He emerged as the consensus candidate of the party, following primary elections conducted at the various ward and state levels.

## OYRLEA Intensifies Enforcement Against Illegal Livestock Trading, Open Grazing In Ibadan

RAJI ADEBAYO,  
IBADAN

The Oyo State Rule of Law Enforcement Authority (OYRLEA) has intensified enforcement activities against the illegal sale and open grazing of livestock in unauthorized areas across the state.

This follows the continuous public sensitization jingles jointly circulated by OYRLEA and the Association of livestock dealers and breeders, warning residents and livestock traders against selling sheep, rams, and goats at un-

approved locations.

The jingles also advised traders and livestock owners to obtain the list of authorized trading points from the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development.

In continuation of the enforcement exercise, officers of the Authority on Friday stormed the Liberty area and Elekuro High School axis along Akanran Road, Ibadan, where enforcement actions were carried out against individuals who failed to comply with the directive and continued trading of livestock in unauthorized places.

## Renowned Naturopathic Doctor Admonishes Nigerians To Embrace Alternative Medicine, Natural Food

CHIBUZOR EMEJOR  
ABUJA

Pharm(Dr.) Ignatius Onah, has admonished Nigerians to embrace alternative medicine and natural food for their health and wellness.

In an exclusive interview with our Correspondent in Abuja, Onah, a registered pharmacist, nutritionist and renowned natu-

ropathic doctor, underscored the need for Nigerians to return back to nature and eat natural food for their wholesome wellness.

According to him, “It is what people are eating that is killing them. It is wrong food people are eating that is causing them fever, inflammation, sleepless night and dirty mouth, among others.

“All “local” foods – natural,

whole, unprocessed, as taken by our ancestors of old—all of them are good, healthy, and even cheap.

“We are referring to all unprocessed animal products from domestic animals, all tropical oils, all tubers (yams, cassava, potatoes etc) and all indigenous grains, among others.

“On the other hand, all processed foods (semo, rice, vegetable oils), along with all bottled

drinks – yes, without exception – are unhealthy; in fact, deadly.

Onah, a 1979 Pharmacy graduate of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, who pointed out the shortcomings of conventional or orthodox medicine, maintained that the healthiest food is the natural food which the ancestors survived on.

Quoting “Smart Choices in Alternative Medicine”, edited

by Dr Samuel Benjamin, a medical doctor, he said, “One of the major shortcomings of conventional medicine is that it sees the body simply as a sum of separate parts.

“This is reflected by the fact

that we have different doctors for each of these parts — cardiologists for the heart, gastroenterologists for the GI system, pulmonologists for the lungs, and so on —and they rarely work together.

# Our View

**VISION***To be Nigeria's First Truly Independent National Quality Newspaper***OUR MISSION***To produce a quality, vibrant and viable newspaper that will inform and form the nation's present and aspiring political, business, economic and cultural leadership; challenge and inspire the nation's journalists to advance and defend the public good; and deliver superior value to all stakeholders.***EDITORIAL POLICY***We shall be independent on all matters, but shall never be neutral on any matter, especially those concerning the well-being of Nigerians.**© Independent Newspapers Limited, October 1, 2001*

## The Menace Of Big Government

**T**he nuisance of Big Government will not go away very soon because the causes are embedded in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, with the equal opportunity charter placed smack within the Second Chapter of the Constitution.

Section 14(3) provides: "The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few States or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies."

Section 147 puts a shot in the arm of the President: "(1) There shall be such offices of Ministers of the Government of the Federation as may be established by the President. (2) Any appointment to the office of Minister of the Government of the Federation shall, if the nomination of any person to such office is confirmed by the Senate, be made by the President. (3) Any appointment under subsection (2) of this section by the President shall be in conformity with the provisions of section 14(3) of this Constitution:- Provided that

in giving effect to the provisions aforesaid the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each State, who shall be an indigene of such State."

To the dismay and chagrin of those who do not approve of Big Government, this provision did not provide a cap to the number of ministers that the President can appoint from any of the states, including the Federal Capital Territory.

The United States of America, for instance, with a population of 347 million (2025 estimate), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$30.51 trillion and Per Capital Income of \$72,479, has a Federal Cabinet of 25 members. It is most instructive that the US has just 15 ministries. But Nigeria, with a population of 237 million (2025 estimate), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$585.9 billion and Per Capital Income of \$1,628, has a bloated Federal Cabinet of over 40 members and 29 federal ministries! What is more, the names (and number) of the ministries keep changing!

And, to ensure that no one loses sight of the constitutional provision for federal character, Paragraph 7 of Part I of the Third Schedule of the Constitution provides for a Federal Character Commission with a board comprising one Chairman and one person representing each state of the Fed-

eration and the Federal Capital Territory.

Paragraph 8 (1,b,c) provides that "In giving effect to the provision of Section 14(3) and (4) of the Constitution, the Commission shall have the power to – (b) promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principles of proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government; (c) take such legal measures, including the prosecution of the head or staff of any Ministry or government body or agency which fails to comply with any federal character principle or formula prescribed or adopted by the Commission."

If the Federal Character Commission has been empowered to enforce the provisions of equal opportunities, as enshrined in bold relief in the Constitution, there is no way to avoid a Big Federal Government in a country with 36 states, a Federal Capital Territory, 774 local governments and more than two hundred linguistic and cultural tendencies.

We can only imagine the personnel and financial resources that must be invested in the Federal Character Commission itself as it applies itself to the job of monitoring and enforcing the equal opportunity requirements on the ministries, departments and agen-

cies of the Federal Government!

Other federal bodies contributing to Big Government or cost of governance through proliferation of administrative offices across the federating states include the Code of Conduct Bureau, Independent National Electoral Commission, National Population Commission and Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission.

The financial implication of these constitutional provisions and agencies is in the high personnel emoluments bill of the unwieldy number of government employees.

Another drain on the economy entrenched in the system via the constitution is in the number of federal lawmakers and the humongous resources they draw from the exchequer. Whereas the US has 100-member Senate, Nigeria has 109 members in the Upper Chamber! Why would the US, the model of our presidential democracy, have a Vice President that doubles as the Senate President while Nigeria, a very poor country, has a separate Senate President?

Therefore, there is urgent need to remove from the 1999 Nigerian Constitution the provisions that trap ginormous financial resources on Big Governments across the federation, leaving only a pittance for development.

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**HONOURABLE DO YOU  
KNOW NIGERIANS ARE  
BEING KILLED IN SOUTH  
AFRICA DAILY?**

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**THAT'S WHY MOST OF  
YOU REMAIN POOR.  
I THOUGHT YOU  
CAME TO TALK BUSINESS  
WITH ME!**

T

Etenwaka



# Your Views

Articles should be a maximum of 750 words and sent to: [opinion@independentng.com](mailto:opinion@independentng.com) and [densityshow@gmail.com](mailto:densityshow@gmail.com)

## Oyo Schools' Tragedy: One Bloody Abduction Too Many!

### DRUM BEATS

with

AYO OYOZE BAJE

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*"Securing Nigeria's future begins with the protection of classrooms. The Schools Protection Squad (SPS) is fully on ground."*  
- Olukayode Egbetokun (Former Inspector General of Police)

precisely on April 29, 2015, when yours truly delivered a lecture on School Safety on the invitation of Gate of Knowledge Services, as led by Pastor John Ajowale, renowned educationist and author, the warning was given. That was to the teachers, school proprietors and students in attendance, that if care was not taken kidnapping of students and teachers in schools would escalate. Now, over a decade later, it has happened.

The event, which took place at the Multi-purpose Hall, Ado-Odo, in Ota, Ogun state, provided an opportunity for the stakeholders to cross pollinate ideas on the best way out of the twisted and thorny wood of swirling insecurity in Nigeria. The lecture based on one's experience in the field of secondary school education for over two decades was delivered in view of the spate of the kidnapping and killing of defenceless Nigerian pupils/ students by terrorists.

You can, therefore, understand why words such as "terrifying, reprehensible and yet another preventable insecurity" came to mind soon after reading through the recent heady headline of the bandits beheading the abducted Oyo teacher, and a father of two, Michael Oyedokun. His killing along with another teacher and an okada rider happened after being kidnapped in Ahoro-Esi-

ele, Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo State. A horrendous spectacle, was it not? Of course, it was!

My dear fellow Nigerians, the attacks have since triggered some flaming questions. What were the offences of those killed? What gave the heartless killers the audacity to wreak such havoc on innocent citizens? And what were they aiming to achieve as well as what would they tell our Creator on the Judgement Day? Perhaps, they do not believe in the existence of our Maker or that of standing before Him someday to give account of what we have thought about, said and done.

It would be recalled, that on that black Friday of May 15, 2026, gunmen suspected to be bandits unleashed coordinated attacks on three schools in the Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo state, southwest. The attackers targeted Baptist Nursery and Primary School (Yawota), Community Grammar School (Esiele), and L.A. Primary School. The ruthless attacks occurred around 8 a.m. while school activities were just beginning to unfold for the day.

According to media reports the gunmen, wearing on camouflage uniforms and riding motorcycles, fired shots, creating panic before kidnapping students and teachers. At the end of the deadly attacks over 40 to 48 people, including pupils, with some as young as four years old as well as students, and teachers, were taken away.

Subsequently, the Oyo state Governor Seyi Makinde confirmed that 32 people, including 25 pupils and 7 teachers, were initially abducted. In terms of fatalities: an assistant headmaster identified as Mr. Adesiyun was reportedly killed during the raid, along with a motorcyclist.

Meanwhile, rescue operations involving security forces, including Amotekun operatives and local hunters, were deployed to the Old Oyo National Park area, where the suspects were believed to have gone. So far, police confirmed the arrest of six suspects in connection with the attack, who are cur-

rently aiding with investigations.

Although the state government stated the it would not bow to pressure but is open to dialogue to ensure the safe release of the captives, there are still more questions than answers to be provided by the governments both at the state and federal levels. For instance, why were there no vital security information to have alerted both the police and soldiers about the recent onslaught, despite the humongous sums said to have been expended on security? Why are the governments more reactive than proactive; always ready to shed crocodile tears on the voiceless victims whose priceless lives they are supposed to have protected from every manner of harm?

Why are they grossly failing in their primary purpose of being sworn into power, going by Section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 constitutional provisions (as amended) which include guaranteeing our security and providing for our welfare? Why are the masterminds behind the wanton wasting of human life being treated with kid gloves, with some of them having the audacity to dictate to the government how they should be treated? And why can they not decipher the pattern of the terrorists beginning from the North East and swinging from there to the North West, North Central to the South East and currently South West? From Kwara to Kogi now down to Ondo, Ekiti and Oyo? Are they heading to the coastal city of Lagos or not?

Worse still, is that of the hideous attacks unleashed on defenceless school children and their lowly motivated teachers!

Expectedly, the recent attacks have sparked an escalating wave of widespread fear and panic, leading to temporary closures of schools in the affected communities. Parents are taking their children away from the schools. With this happening in a country that tops the global ranking of out-of-school children, with estimates ranging between 10.2 million and 18.3 million calls for serious concern.

Also troubling is that since the rise of Boko Haram's insurgency in 2009—and ac-

celerating rapidly with mass school kidnappings beginning in 2014—more than 1,600 Nigerian school children have been abducted. While the 2014 Chibok abduction was the initial, major incident, mass kidnappings of students in Northern Nigeria have become a recurring ugly decimal of security crisis, with over 1,400 students taken in the decade following 2014. In fact, back on November 23 2025 Nigeria recorded the highest school abduction. According to the Christian Association of Nigeria some 303 students and 12 teachers were taken from St Mary's School in Papiri, Niger state - substantially more than previously estimated.

According to the Oyo state police, six suspects, who are currently in police custody and assisting security agencies in ongoing investigations into the incident.

The conversations reportedly contained information on routes within the National Park and locations used as hideouts by the criminals. So, what is the way forward?

The Safe School Initiative should be practised more than preached. For instance, it has transferred students from high risk areas in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states to safe schools in other parts of the country. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has contributed 2 million EURO towards this component.

The first step is to ensure that a holistic approach involving proprietors, parents teachers association, the students, the communities and security forces is taken.

Solutions to student kidnapping in Nigeria should also focus on strengthening security through technology and intelligence informative gathering and acting on them. Enhancing school safety should include tackling poverty, and implementing stricter legal penalties.

The key measures include deploying anti-kidnapping squads, such as the SPS, using NIN/SIM monitoring for tracking, securing borders to curb arms proliferation, and fostering community policing.

## Rethinking Africa As The Centrepiece Of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

TOCHUKWU JIMO OBI

Nigeria adopted Africa as the centrepiece of her foreign policy at independence in 1960, during the government of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in the First Republic. Balewa strongly believed that Nigeria belonged to Africa and should therefore give priority to African affairs in its external relations. His administration pursued policies aimed at promoting African unity, decolonisation and peaceful coexistence among African states.

The policy was later officially articulated and consolidated under the military government of Murtala Mohammed and subsequently Olusegun Obasanjo in the mid-1970s. In 1976, the Murtala/Obasanjo regime formally declared Africa as the "centrepiece" of Nigeria's foreign policy. This doctrine shaped Nigeria's diplomatic engagements for decades and established the country as a major force in African politics and peacekeeping.

Over the years, Nigeria committed enormous resources towards the liberation and stability of African countries. The country supported anti-apartheid struggles in Southern Africa, funded peacekeeping operations, provided financial assistance to struggling African states and sent security personnel and professionals across the continent to maintain peace and order. Nigeria proudly assumed the role of the "Big Brother" of Africa, often placing continental interests above narrow national gains.

However, recent realities have forced many Nigerians to question whether this



Bianca Ojukwu

foreign policy direction still serves the national interest. Nigerians living in different parts of the world, including African countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Cameroon and Kenya, increasingly face discrimination, harassment and hostility. Many have complained of unfair treatment despite Nigeria's longstanding contributions to African development and unity.

Particularly disturbing are the recurring xenophobic attacks against Nigerians in South Africa. For years, violent protests and targeted attacks have result-

ed in the destruction of Nigerian-owned businesses, loss of properties and even the deaths of innocent Nigerians. Many Nigerians residing in South Africa have also reported being denied access to hospitals and other public facilities, further worsening their suffering and insecurity.

What makes the situation even more troubling is the perceived lack of accountability. There are hardly any public records showing that perpetrators of these attacks have been seriously prosecuted or punished. This has created the widespread impression that the attacks enjoy tacit state support or, at the very least, official indifference. Such developments naturally provoke anger and disappointment among Nigerians who remember the sacrifices their country made in the struggle against apartheid and in stabilising several African nations.

The painful reality is that many Af-

rican countries have not reciprocated Nigeria's goodwill and generosity. While Nigeria opened its doors and resources to fellow Africans, many Nigerians abroad continue to suffer humiliation and abuse. Foreign policy should ultimately protect national interests and safeguard citizens, not merely pursue symbolic continental leadership without tangible benefits for the people at home.

Nigeria must therefore adopt a more reciprocal approach to foreign diplomacy. Countries that fail to protect Nigerians within their borders should not expect preferential treatment from Nigeria. Diplomatic relations should be guided by mutual respect, protection of citizens and shared responsibility. The Nigerian government must demonstrate that the dignity and safety of Nigerians are non-negotiable in all bilateral and multi-lateral engagements.

The time has come for the Federal Government to rethink Africa as the unquestioned centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy and place Nigeria and Nigerians first. A foreign policy built primarily on national interest will restore the dignity of Nigerians abroad and send a clear message that violence and discrimination against our citizens will no longer be tolerated. Nigeria can still support African unity and development, but such commitments must never come at the expense of the welfare, security and respect of Nigerians. Enough is enough.

Obi writes from Obosi in Idemili North LGA of Anambra State

**Nigerians living in different parts of the world, including African countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Cameroon and Kenya, increasingly face discrimination, harassment and hostility**

# Bishop Ajose: God's General, Global Intercessor Passes On

EJIKEME OMENAZU

It was shocking when this writer, who had known Bishop Dr Theophilus Taiwo Ajose for over 20 years, was last Sunday morning woken up by a phone call from a ministerial associate with the sad news that an Iroko had fallen.

We had a standing appointment for a chat on many issues, state of the nation, as well as a national programme he and other ministers of God under the auspices of the Renewed Ministers of Christ (RMC) were planning, slated for Lagos by the end of this month.

Thus, the Church in Nigeria was thrown into mourning on Saturday, May 16, 2027, with the sudden death of Bishop Ajose.

Bishop Ajose, who celebrated his 60th birthday last year, reportedly died in his house on Saturday afternoon. There was no report of any illness.

Bishop Ajose, one of the leading voices for Christians in the country, was until his death, a renowned intercessor and global prophet with connections across the globe.

The widely travelled and amiable minister of God, was the Presiding Bishop of Bishop Ajose International Ministries.

Until his death, Bishop Ajose, who had been playing major roles in encouraging Christians to join politics, belonged to several Christian groups, including the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CAN) and the Renewed Ministers for Christ (RMC) of which he was the National Secretary.

Ajose was the pioneer Director, Directorate of Politics and Governance (DPG), the political arm of the Lagos PFN, and the Director General, Centre for Politics and Governance (CPG), the political arm of the RMC.

He was also the Special Adviser (General Duties) to Bishop Stephen Adegbite, the Lagos CAN Chairman and Executive Secretary, National Christian Pilgrims Commission (NCP), among several other key positions.

Although the cause of death is still unknown, he was reportedly well, strong and hearty. Condolences have continued to pour in to the Ajose family, the PFN, CAN and RMC.

Bishop Ajose celebrated his 60th birthday last year, an event that drew thousands of men of God from every part of the country and from various denominations. Here are some of the tributes by some of his close friends, which they penned down to Sunday Independent.

**Tireless Global Prophet, Intercessor - Archbishop Adejola**

His Eminence, Joseph Adebayo Adejola aka The Unstoppable Oracle, Prelate and Presiding Archbishop, The Lord's Triumphant Ministries & Towers Inc (Solution Centre), Blessed Chapel, wrote:

Tribute to a God's General, very good friend of over 20 years, a tireless Leader Of Leaders, His Lordship, Bishop Dr. Taiwo Theophilus Ajose (JP).

"With heavy heart, I mourn the passing of a good friend and brother to glory. Few hours after your passing, we chatted about many deep things and how your day went on that same Friday.

"You told me to give you few minutes to take your dinner. Then we continued our conversation on phone until you said, 'Good-night, Your Grace Sir'. I did not know that you



Ajose

were bidding me farewell.

"I got to know Bishop Ajose through a great father, Bishop Aniete Etukudor about 20 years ago. Then, we became so close that Pastor Kenny Ajose (his late twin) himself, and I lived together in the house at Ijaiye and Raimi Street, Grammar School, Ojodu, Lagos.

"Bishop Ajose, a tireless global prophet and intercessor; a juggernaut and spiritual caterpillar; a voice in Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

"Well, death is a necessary end of all of us. Hebrew 9:27 says: 'And as it is appointed unto men once to die...' Good night, My Bishop. Adieu my great friend. May your soul rest in peace."

**He Was A Man Of The People, Benevolent – Bishop Robinson**

Bishop Dr Saint Robinson, General Overseer, Abode of Christ Assembly, Lagos, wrote: Bishop Dr Theophilus Taiwo Ajose was a great man of God; and a man of the people. My personal close relationship with him as friend and brother for over two and half decades makes his sudden departure very saddening. He was benevolently benevolent, a man who will always give and share with everyone whatever he has.

"He was a selfless man of unequal match. He was a rallying point for a large pool of people. He would be greatly missed. His death left a vacuum no one can fill.

"His demise is brutally shocking to me and hard to understand. Why him and why now? But, I rest my faith and solace in Isaiah 57: 1-2: 'When a righteous man dies, and no one takes it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, no one considers that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. Those who live good lives find peace and rest in death.'

"Eternity with Him and in Him, your Maker and Saviour is surely sure. Rest on in Christ until we meet to part no more in the beauty of endless glorification with Jesus Christ our Lord. Adieu my friend and brother."

**He was A Loyal Hand On The Plough – Apostle Akinyemi**

Apostle Dr Bolaji O. Akinyemi, Convener, The Apostolic Round Table (ART) and Pres-

ident, Voice of His Word Ministries, stated: "Writing has always been one of the easiest things for me to do.

"But, since the painful departure of my friend, whose passing was broken to me by Rev. Dr Stephen Oyinlola, the pen has become unusually heavy and my mind deeply clouded.

"There are moments in life when words lose their usual obedience. This is one of such moments. How does one suddenly begin to speak in the past tense of a man whose face still fills the mind and whose presence still echoes strongly within the heart?"

"Bishop Theophilus Taiwo Ajose was not merely a friend; he was one of those rare men God sends into one's life to make the journey lighter, steadier and more meaningful.

"I met him in the early 90s through Apostle Tim Iwowari, and from that moment, Ajose became impossible to forget.

"He was emotionally secure, fiercely loyal, and remarkably dependable. One thing about Bishop Ajose: once he embraced you, he never let go of you.

"He understood relationships, understood ministry, and understood politics with uncommon depth and maturity. Many watched his political wisdom at work, especially in how he quietly, but effectively strengthened institutions and supported leadership.

"The vision and institution he hoped to build for the Church now rest in our collective care and responsibility. My heartfelt condolences go to his dear wife, children, ministry family, PFN/CPFN, CAN, and especially to the man on whose right hand he functioned faithfully as Very Special Assistant on Special Duties, Bishop (Prof.) STV Adegbite, the man I fondly call 'Four Man'.

"Sir, if indeed you have lived up to that name and stature, it is because faithful hands like Ajose kept theirs firmly on the plough beside you.

"May strength be added to your strength. And may the Faith of Christ entrusted into your custody never know reproach. Rest well, dear Bishop Ajose."

**A Quintessential Leader – Pastor Mathew**

Pastor Dr Victor Mathew (JP) Lead Pastor, Divine Channel Ministries International, Ikeja, Lagos: "William Shakespeare sounded metaphorical in his famous quote, 'The world a stage, All the men and women merely players, They have their exits and entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts.'

"The curtain closed in on our amiable, loving, caring, lover of God and lover of men, an Episcopal and Charismatic leader, a known strategist, well-schooled, intelligent and very importantly, a prophetic intercessor.

"I have known 'His Lordship', as I fondly called him, for over 15 years when I joined the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN, Ikeja), when he was the chairman.

"At first, our relationship was just that of a religious leader and a follower, but it later without any prompting, metamorphosed into a close relationship of a mentor and mentee, sports marketing business, etc, and of course, great and giant strides in CAN and PFN at the state level.

"Through him, I quickly climbed the rungs of leadership which exposed me to interact with fathers of faith at different levels of which, on my own, would have been very

impossible.

"I appreciate you, His Lordship, for holding my hand and giving me platforms that are very strategic. Bishop Ajoae had so many parts I can explore because of my closeness to him and his family.

"Many people do not know Bishop Ajose. He is not just a prophetic intercessor; but a man who carried so much grace in predictive prophecy, with accuracy.

"I witnessed that severally when we went on ministrations together. He was a of very serious depth in spiritual mysteries apart from being a world-class Theologian.

"Everyone who knows him knows his annual 40 days of fasting and prayers, accompanied by prophecies. Bishop Ajose was highly cerebral; he could hold his own with and among the best in different fields of human endeavour.

"He acquired specialty in different fields, especially Software Engineering, ICT, Digital Marketing, etc. He is a known author of many books and a voracious reader.

As a leader, he was a colossus. I consider him to be a grandmaster of leadership because he mastered the art of leadership.

"He was a strategist and was consulted by many leaders, a leader of leaders. Most of his mentees are leaders. He was a leader many willfully followed.

"He was a giver, very compassionate and caring; he was always going out of his way to be a blessing to many.

Lastly, whatever he knows was helping, he was ready to share with others. I know many are shocked by his sudden exit. So I am.

"I know he still had many things to offer the Body of Christ and the world at large. Bishop Ajose, you lived an impactful life; no one can dispute that.

"Rest in peace, Your Lordship. We miss you. We love you, but God loves you more. Continue to rest in the bosom of the Lord."

Bishop Ajose, who was born on May 31, 1965, in Badagry, Lagos, and married to Rev. Dr Nkechi Ajose, was an ardent chess player; one-time member of the Badagry Chess Club and Lagos State University Chess Association, where he served as Secretary. He participated in the Nigerian Chess Olympic Qualifiers in the 1980s.

He was a vegetarian, and ate more plant-based foods. He was a Certified Health Coach, who promoted healthy living. He was Fellow, Institute of Management Consultants (FIMC), a Certified Management Consultant (CMC), as well as a Certified Management Specialist (CMS) with Distinction in Time Management (London Graduate School).

Also, Bishop Ajose held an Honorary Georgia Citizen Award by the State of Georgia (2017); □US President's LifeTime Achievement Award (2024) by President Joe Biden, as well as an FCBA (Fellow, Chartered Board of Administrators of Nigeria), □(Fellow, Maranatha Bible University (FMBU) as well as President, Africa College of Bishops and Apostles (AFRICOBA), USA & Nigeria.

Bishop Ajose has travelled to Jerusalem and other holy lands for about 15 times, during which he prayed for the country and encouraged Nigerian Christians to be there also. The PFN, CAN and other stakeholders are putting heads together to come out with the funeral programme which will take place soon.

# Believing

## I'm Worried About Gospel Commercialisation By Nigerian Clerics – His Holiness Emmanuel Adeonigbagbe

Could you please briefly tell us about yourself and your ministry?

I am Emmanuel Adetunji Abiodun Akanji Adeonigbagbe. I was born on Christmas Day, December 25 over seven decades ago to a royal family from Ilesha, Osun State. My father died when I was very young. He pampered me a lot as I was told by family members, maybe I would not have become what I am today if he was still alive. I moved to live in Ayesan in Odigbo Local Government Area, Ondo State with my grandmother. I enjoyed my childhood in the rural area and my grandmother's modest house till my late elder brother came to take me to Ijebu-Ode. I attended Anglican Primary School, Ayesan, Muslim College, Ijebu-Ode and Bishop Phillips Academy, Ibadan, for my secondary school education. I later proceeded to the Apostolic Teachers Training College, Ilesha, for my Grade II Certificate.

I was divinely called at age 7. I worshipped in the Anglican and Cherubim & Seraphim Churches before joining the Celestial Church of Christ. After many years in the Celestial Church, the Lord gave me a vision of a "new golden cup". By the Special Grace of God, I am the one the Lord used to establish Celica Church of Christ Worldwide.

The journey began on November 15, 1992, in Ibadan, following a divine mandate (the symbolic new golden cup) to establish a ministry. Our song is 'Hosanna'—the shout of joy and salvation. Our ministry is rooted in the White Garment tradition and our garment has a blue cross on the left hand side. It focused on the power of the Holy Spirit, the efficacy of prayer and the absolute authority of the Word of God. Over the last three decades, we have been evolving, focusing on holiness, salvation, spiritual liberty and the physical well-being of our members and non-members alike.

My journey in ministry has been a testament to God's grace. There have been challenges though, His covenant with me has been kept and the Lord Jesus Christ has never failed me since He called me. I am grateful to God for His mercies in this spiritual journey since the age of 7.

At your age, sir, you are still very active in ministry. What are the secrets?

The secret is simple: Divine Grace of God. I have always believed that if you honour God with all your heart, soul, spirit and time, he will renew your strength like the eagle's. My passion for salvation of souls keeps me energised. When you see the lives of people being transformed and the captives being set free, it provides a spiritual tonic that defies biological age.

How do you coordinate the affairs of the several branches of your ministry?

It is not an easy task, but this is achieved through cooperation and commitment of officials of the church. There is a hierarchical order and authority which is guided by through the dictates of the Holy Spirit. We ensure that the doctrine of Celica remains untainted across our various parishes. We organise periodic retreats, seminars and anniversaries that serve as our roadmap for uniformity in worship and administration.

You are now in the United States of America. How is your ministry doing there?

The ministry is moving well to the glory of God. The spiritual hunger among Nigerians and other nationals abroad is immense. We want to be a centre of spiritual refuge, helping people maintain their faith while navigating the complexities of life.

What is your view on the church in Nigeria in general?

His Holiness, Rev. Emmanuel Adetunji Akanji Adeonigbagbe, is the Founder and Leader of the Celica Church of Christ Worldwide, a ministry that has branches all over Nigeria and overseas. Rev. Adeonigbagbe, now in his 70s spoke to EJKEME OMENAZU on several issues concerning the Nigerian Church, even as he touched on some aspects of governance in the nation. Excerpt:



Adeonigbagbe

The church in Nigeria is vibrant but it is currently at a crossroads. While we may have the largest congregations in Africa, there is a growing concern about the commercialisation of the Gospel. I have often warned that many 'men of God' have replaced the message of the Cross with worldly messages. Many religious leaders have become part of the nation's problem, silent, compromised, and focused on worldly knowledge rather than the Holy Spirit. There is also a need for greater unity beyond denominational lines. My view, as I have shared in past interviews, is that the Nigerian church must return to its first love, deep, uncompromising holiness, a commitment to social justice that reflects the heart of Christ for the poor and the oppressed, and be the conscience of the nation.

Would you say the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and its affiliate blocs are giving the church the good leadership it desires? In what areas should they improve upon?

CAN has tried its best, but there is always room for improvement. The organisation can sometimes become entangled in internal politics and power struggles among its blocs, which distracts it from its primary mission. The leadership must focus on the unity of the Body of Christ, rather than the interests of specific denominations. They should improve on their advocacy for the persecuted church and ensure that they are a unified voice when addressing the Government on matters of social justice and national development. The association needs to be more proactive, vocal and less political. I believe CAN needs greater boldness, speaking God's mind to authorities without fear or favour, exposing occult influence, and acting as the nation's compass.

What is your take on the various reforms of the President Bola Tinubu administration?

The reforms, particularly the economic ones like the removal of the fuel subsidy and the floating of the Naira, have brought significant hardship to the masses. While the government argues these are "necessary

evils" for long-term growth, the immediate suffering is real. As a cleric, my counsel to the administration is to ensure that the 'palliatives' reach the truly vulnerable and poor, and that the reforms are tempered with a human face. The success of these reforms will not be measured by economic indices alone, but by the tangible improvement in the lives of the citizenry. Also, the reforms alone will not bring relief without national repentance and divine guidance.

Would you say the Federal Government is doing enough to check insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria?

The answer will be a resounding 'no' as long as citizens cannot sleep peacefully in their homes; as long as farmers cannot go to their farms, and as long as school children can be abducted from their classrooms. Insecurity remains a thorn in the flesh of our nation. While the security agencies are making efforts, the results on the ground, kidnappings, banditry, and insurgency suggest that their strategy is failing and needs a total overhaul. It is not just a military problem, but it is also a socio-economic one. The Government must sincerely address the root causes of desperation that make young people susceptible to recruitment by evil forces. We must also go back to God for spiritual guidance and strictly follow his directives. Our messages from the Celica Church since 1992 have repeatedly called for the formation of a "National Spiritual Council" made of genuine prophets of God from both Christian and Islam faiths. This will be replicated at State and local government level. The spiritual council will seek the face of God on the various issues confronting the nation and give solutions from the Lord to those in authority. As a church, we will continue to pray for the protection and well-being of the nation.

What is your take on the level of corruption in the country? Would you say the anti-corruption agencies are doing enough to check corruption in Nigeria?

Corruption is the 'cancer' of Nigeria. The

anti-corruption agencies like the EFCC and ICPC are trying, but the agencies are underfunded, sometimes interfered with politically, and the judicial process for corruption cases can be painfully slow. The fight has often appeared selective and politicised. We see high-profile cases drag on for years, and the lack of strong and swift convictions diminishes the deterrent effect. What we need is a holistic war against corruption that starts in the mind and the heart. To truly check corruption, the law must be a "respector of no one". There must be a holistic and strict pursuit of justice. The church also has a crucial role to play in preaching a gospel that produces men and women of integrity who will fear God and not steal, whether they are in public office or private business. Until we have a national culture that abhors corruption, the agencies will always be fighting a losing battle.

Would you say the National Assembly is fulfilling its role of checking the excesses of the Executive?

Our National Assembly is often perceived as a "rubber stamp" for the Executive. The relationship has often been one of scratching each other's back, rather than true oversight. We have seen many instances where the legislature has not acted as a robust check, particularly during investigations or oversight functions. There is also a widespread public perception that the National Assembly is most times more interested in its own privileges and the size of its allowances than in its constitutional duties. The "rubber stamp" allegation is one that hangs over many sessions of the Assembly. For our democracy to thrive, the legislature must be independent. They are the representatives of the people, and their primary loyalty should be to the Nigerian citizens, not to the whims of the Presidency. This is a matter of constant prayer as a church as we desire Godly leadership in all arms of Government.

How do you see the Nigerian Judiciary under the current dispensation?

The judiciary remains the last hope of the common man, and its role cannot be overstated. We have witnessed some landmark judgments in recent times that have shown courage and a willingness to assert the judiciary's independence, even in politically charged cases. This is commendable and gives hope that the institution is not completely compromised.

However, we must not ignore the persistent challenges. The perception of corruption within the system, the issue of "judicial rascality" where conflicting judgments are issued by courts of coordinate jurisdiction and the painfully slow pace of justice delivery are major concerns. For the common man, justice delayed is often justice denied.

The judiciary needs a thorough internal cleansing and modernisation to restore full public confidence. As a man of God, I believe that for justice to flow like a mighty stream, it must be built on the foundation of truth and righteousness. These are qualities that must be upheld by every judge and judicial officer. We will continue to pray for divine wisdom for our justices and judges to act based on righteousness and truth knowing there is a divine judge watching their actions.

# Believing

NGOZI UMA

The Senior Pastor of Straightgate Family Worship Centre, Rev. (Dr.) Paul Ndeobi, has said that Africa, especially Nigeria, must stop depending on America and Europe for economic and political liberation, insisting that the continent's future lies in the hands of its own people.

Speaking during an interview in Lagos, the cleric and public affairs analyst argued that Western powers have no genuine interest in the progress of African nations, adding that many of the continent's challenges are tied to foreign influence and poor leadership.

According to him, many African countries continue to suffer because their leaders implement policies that favour foreign interests rather than the welfare of their citizens.

"Nigeria's destiny is not in the hands of Americans or Europeans," he said, adding, "Liberation will not come from them. Africans must understand that they have to build their nations themselves."

Ndeobi claimed that Western nations prefer Africa to remain dependent on them economically, especially in the area of production and manufacturing.

He pointed to countries such as America, Germany, Japan, China and South Korea, saying their economies grew because they focused on producing goods and developing industries.

"You don't grow an economy by trading alone. You grow an economy through manufacturing and production," he stated.

He lamented that despite Nigeria's vast natural resources, many citizens still live in poverty because of what he described as "wrong government policies."

According to him, hunger, unemployment and insecurity have continued to worsen across the country, while ordinary Nigerians bear the

## Africa's Liberation Won't Come From America, Europe – Rev. Ndeobi



Ndeobi

burden of economic hardship.

The cleric also alleged that global institutions controlling the world economy do not prioritise Africa's development, claiming that foreign powers often influence African politics and elections.

He argued that external financial support for elections gives foreign countries leverage over political outcomes in Nigeria and other African nations.

"When outsiders fund elections, they naturally want the process to go in a direction that suits them," he said.

On the 2027 general election, Ndeobi urged Nigerians not to lose faith in the electoral process despite widespread public frustration.

He dismissed claims that votes do not count, insisting that citizens must participate actively in elections if they want meaningful change.

"The lie that our votes do not count is not true," he said. "If votes do not matter, why are politicians desperate to buy votes and influence the process?"

He encouraged Nigerians to mobilise their families and communi-

ties ahead of the polls, stressing that democracy can only work when citizens actively defend their mandate.

According to him, Nigerians must resist intimidation and refuse to surrender their future because of temporary inducements.

"People are hungry and suffering, and politicians take advantage of that by offering small gifts in exchange for four years of leadership," he said.

Speaking on concerns that Nigeria may gradually drift into a one-party state, the pastor alleged that many politicians defect to the ruling party out of fear rather than conviction.

He claimed that threats, political pressure and fear of losing political positions were responsible for the wave of defections currently being witnessed in the country.

"The defections are not based on ideology or better policies. Many politicians are joining the ruling party because they are afraid of losing their seats," he stated.

Ndeobi also called for stronger support for local industries and small businesses, particularly through institutions such as the Bank of Industry.

He accused the institution of politicising support meant for small-scale businesses, adding that Nigeria cannot achieve economic stability without empowering local manufacturers.

Reflecting on the growing migration of young Nigerians abroad, he said many parents are unhappy seeing their children leave the country permanently in search of better opportunities.

"My children are abroad, but I am not happy about it," he said. "We need to build a country where young

people can stay, work and succeed without feeling forced to leave."

He urged religious leaders and political stakeholders to prioritise the collective interest of Nigerians over personal or political gain.

According to him, the focus should be on creating a better future for coming generations rather than supporting politicians for selfish reasons.

"We must think about the common good and the future of our children," he said. "Nigeria can still become better if the people rise and take responsibility for the country."

Ndeobi also appealed to religious leaders and influential Nigerians to think beyond personal or political interests and focus on the common good of the country.

According to him, the future of Nigeria depends on collective sacrifice and responsible leadership.

"This is not the time for selfishness," he said. "We must think about the future we are leaving behind for our children."

On his expectations for the 2027 elections, the cleric warned that Nigerians must remain vigilant if they want change.

"If Nigerians do not rise up and participate actively, the election may go against the wishes of the people," he said.

He insisted that meaningful change would only happen when citizens become more involved in the democratic process and continue to demand accountability from leaders.

"This is the time for Nigerians to wake up," he added. "We cannot continue crying and complaining without taking action. The power still belongs to the people."

## Preserve Human Voices, Faces In Digital Age, Bishop Odetoyinbo Urges Media Practitioners

CELESTINE AMOKE

The Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Abeokuta, Most Rev. Peter Olu-kayode Odetoyinbo, has called on journalists, media practitioners and content creators to use Artificial Intelligence responsibly and ethically, warning against its use for misinformation, manipulation and harm.

Bishop Odetoyinbo gave the

charge on May 17, 2026, during a Holy Mass held at SS Peter & Paul Cathedral, Abeokuta, to mark the grand finale of the 60th World Communications Week celebration, which commenced on May 10.

The theme of this year's celebration was 'Preserving Human Voices and Faces'.

In his homily, Bishop Odetoyinbo stressed the need for journalists and media professionals to

uphold human dignity, truth and authentic communication in an era increasingly shaped by Artificial Intelligence and digital media.

He urged media practitioners to embrace the ethical use of digital platforms in promoting truth, fostering empathy and combating the spread of misinformation in society.

The second part of the celebration featured a symposium

that attracted technology experts, media professionals, media executives and veteran journalists from different parts of the country to examine and discuss the Pope's message for the World Communications Week.

The symposium was co-organised by the local chapter of the Catholic Media Practitioners Association of Nigeria to promote ethical standards and professional growth among media practitioners.

In his opening remarks, Bishop Odetoyinbo charged communicators to use their platforms to inspire hope and preserve human dignity despite prevailing political and socio-economic challenges.

He emphasised that Artificial Intelligence and media platforms should serve as tools for evangelisation and social good rather than instruments of division and misinformation.

Summarising the message of Pope Leo XIV for the 60th World Communications Day, participants noted that the Pope described human faces and voices as sacred gifts from God that reflect human identity and divine image.

According to the message, while Artificial Intelligence can imitate voices and faces, it cannot replace genuine human presence, relationships and compassion.

The Pope also warned against excessive dependence on technology and social media, saying it could weaken creativity, critical thinking and human relationships.

He cautioned against fake information, online manipulation and digital practices capable of dividing people, urging media users to think critically and remain committed to spread of the truth.

The Pope further called for responsibility from technology companies, governments and media organisations in safeguarding human dignity, while also advocating cooperation among families, schools, the Church and society in guiding digital innovation responsibly.

He equally stressed the need for media and AI literacy, especially among young people, to ensure that technology serves humanity and not the other way round.

Discussants at the symposium agreed that while Artificial Intelligence could greatly assist journalism and communication, media professionals must continue to verify facts thoroughly before publication in order to avoid the spread of false or misleading information.



Bishop Odetoyinbo flanked by with media practitioners on the occasion

## Believing

# The Hidden Treasure

**T**reasure is the most valuable thing in people's lives. In 1 Kings 3:5-12, King Solomon was given an open cheque to ask whatever he wants from God. Instead of choosing wealth or power he chose Wisdom. Today, he is known as the wisest king in Israel. For King Solomon, Wisdom is the most treasure-able thing in life. Child of God, what is the most treasure-able thing in your own life?

In Matthew 13:44-52 our Lord Jesus Christ gave three parables to prove that the Kingdom of heaven is a hidden Treasure. According to him, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Heaven is indeed a hidden treasure!

The best investment anyone can have while on earth is heavenly investment. Unfortunately, people spend their money, their time and even their energy on earthly treasures and investments. Yet, when they die, they are not buried with any of those investments.

In Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus told His followers, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Child of God, where is your treasure – on earth or in heaven?

Jesus used a second parable to describe the kingdom of heaven.

According to him, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Child of God, if you have not made any sacrifice for heaven, then you have not started!

Our family members are the most important people in our lives yet, Jesus told his followers, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26) Child of God, like the merchant who sold everything for his treasure, you must be ready to make the necessary sacrifices as long as heaven is concerned.

In the third parable Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown

### Fr. John Damian Adizie, PGB

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into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." All that glitters is not gold. To be valuable in God's sight you must live righteously! Just as our Lord Jesus Christ declares, "Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a

householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." Child of God, you are trained and destined for heaven and for God's glory.

As St. Paul rightly declares in Romans 8:28-30 as you make heaven your ultimate treasure, all things will work together for your good! God has predestined you for greatness. He has also called and justified you. Through Justification you will be glorified and it shall well with you in Jesus name – Amen!

Happy Sunday from Rev. Fr. John Damian Adizie

## The Secrets In The Sacristy Of Pentecostal Churches In Nigeria: A Call To Repentance

Hear ye! Hear ye! Let the bell of the town crier echo through sanctuaries, prayer halls, cathedrals, and crusade grounds across Nigeria, for there are secrets hidden behind church curtains that the congregation rarely sees. Before the choir ascends, before the pastor mounts the pulpit, before the "fire" falls and the microphones roar, another atmosphere often brews in the sacristy. It is not always the fragrance of holiness. Sometimes it is the stench of carnality, envy, manipulation, and hidden compromise.

The sacristy, once meant to be a place of prayer, preparation, and consecration, has in many places become a theatre of gossip, rivalry, bitterness, and performance management. Ministers who moments later will preach unity often sit behind closed doors tearing each other apart. Choir leaders exchange hatred beneath forced smiles. Protocol officers insult one another

while rehearsing honour for the altar. Assistants jostle for visibility, influence, and closeness to power. Before the first "Praise the Lord," wounds have already been inflicted in secret.

Hear ye! The town crier cries aloud that some churches have become houses of spiritual contradiction. There are ministers who preach holiness publicly yet privately indulge in immorality. Some are trapped in secret addictions, pornography, alcoholism, adultery, and financial manipulation. Others flirt with occultic tendencies, seeking shortcuts to power, influence, and crowd-pulling miracles. Strange rituals are whispered about in corners. Fear replaces faith. Manipulation replaces prayer. Performance replaces genuine power.

The tragedy deepens because many congregants are hypnotized by spectacle. Once the lights shine, the choir sings, and miracles are announced, discernment disappears. Members defend

what they do not understand and celebrate what they should question. The preacher's charisma blinds them to the preacher's contradictions. The altar becomes untouchable, even when corruption is obvious. Thus, deception grows comfortably inside the Church.

What causes this decay. The answer is painful. There is too much ambition and too little consecration. Many entered ministry for relevance, wealth, fame, or escape from poverty rather than divine calling. The pressure to maintain crowds and sustain influence pushes some ministers into dangerous compromises. Prayer closets are abandoned for strategy rooms. Brokenness before God is replaced by branding before men.

The consequences are devastating. Genuine believers become wounded and confused. Young people, watching the contradictions, slowly lose respect for the Church. Some walk away from

### THE APOSTOLIC TOWN CRIER

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Christianity entirely, not because Christ failed them, but because hypocrisy exhausted them. The gospel becomes mocked in society because the messengers have contaminated the message.

Yet hear this, the town crier does not sound the bell merely to condemn, but to awaken repentance. The Church can still recover. Ministers must return to the fear of God. Sacristies must again become places of prayer rather than politics. Preachers must choose integrity over image. Choirs must value holiness above performance. Church workers must stop worshipping titles and start pursuing truth.

Congregants too must awaken from blind loyalty. Every miracle must not suspend discernment. Every loud sermon must not silence wisdom. Christians must

learn the Scriptures for themselves and stop surrendering their conscience to personalities. The Church belongs to Christ, not to empires built around men.

Scripture declares in 1 Peter 4:17 that "judgment must begin at the house of God." The time has come for repentance in the sanctuary. The altar must be cleansed. The hidden works of darkness must be confronted. Ministers must weep again between the porch and the altar, not for performance, but for purity.

Hear ye, Nigeria! The future of the Church cannot be built on hidden corruption and polished hypocrisy. The bells are tolling. The alarm is sounding. Let ministers repent. Let congregants awaken. Let the sacristy return to holiness before the pulpit loses its voice entirely.

He that hath ears, let him hear.

## Everybody Is Against Our Relationship Because My Boyfriend Is An Amputee

Juliet is having a hard time with her boyfriend's family because they think she is only with him because he is rich not because she truly loves him and wants to stay with him. The problem started after her boyfriend had a terrible accident that led to the amputation of his leg. Since then, many people around them started to believe that Juliet has remained in the relationship because of what she is gaining and what she still stands to gain in the future.

"We were high school sweethearts. We met at a JAMB lesson center where we studied together. We both passed our exams and gained admission into the same university. From the beginning, we were very close, like best friends and siblings. After our first year in school, his feelings for me became stronger. He used to get jealous whenever another guy tried to ask me out. But at that time, I didn't see him that way. To me, he was just my best friend. Still, he continued to tell me how much he loved me and wanted us to be together. At first, I was not interested because I was a few months older than him, and I felt I

needed a more mature man. But he was willing to grow and become the kind of man I wanted. With time, I fell in love with him, too. We officially started dating in our third year at the university when we were both 22 years old. Our relationship became very serious, and after graduation, he told me he wanted us to get married.

"He had a terrible accident that led to the loss of his right leg. That was when all our problems started. Even after the accident, my love for him never changed. He was still the same caring, loving, and kind person I knew. God also blessed him with a good job, and he continued to do well in life. But our families became a problem. My family believed I am only staying with him out of pity. They keep telling me that one day I would get tired of his condition and become frustrated in the marriage. His own family also doubts me. They believe I am still with him because of his money and success. Almost every day, we are trying to prove that our love is real. I especially feel pressured to prove myself to his family. His sister once asked me if I would still love

him if he had not gotten a good job after the accident or if he had become poor. What hurts me most is that they seem to have forgotten all the sacrifices I made for him when he was in the hospital. I stayed by his side throughout that difficult period and never abandoned him. Sometimes, I feel they are unhappy because he always puts me first in his plans. Recently, he bought me a car and, since then, the tension has become worse. Honestly, I am tired emotionally. I don't like the way his family sees me and, whenever I am around them, I feel uncomfortable and careful about everything I do. Someone even warned me that if I eventually marry him, his family may frustrate me out of the marriage. Right now, I don't know what to do."

Dear Juliet, you should not allow the opinions of other people to affect your relationship with your man. What matters most is the love and understanding both of you share. At the same time, you need to honestly check yourself and see if there are certain things you say or do that may be making

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*his family feel you are with him because of his money. If there are, try to correct them and prove their assumptions wrong through your actions. You do not need to pretend or walk on eggshells around them. Just continue to show genuine love and care for your man, and also treat his family with kindness and respect. Let them see through your actions that you truly care about him and his wellbeing. Since both of you were together long before the accident happened, stay committed to your relationship if you truly love him. With time, people will gradually understand your intentions and adjust to the situation.*

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

## THE LITERARY ORBIT

SUSAN BRUNS ROWE

# The Importance Of Play: On Finding Joy In Your Writing Practice

## *How to Approach Your Work with Open Hands, Not Closed Fists*

On the last morning of a writers' retreat I went to a year ago, there was a tiny bell lying on the seat of every chair in the spacious conference center. The weekend was unlike any gathering of writers I'd ever been to: for two days, we attendees had listened, enthralled, to one heresy after another. "Find a hobby that isn't writing," one speaker said. "Take walks. Do yoga. Don't be literary. Be a human being." Another went further. "It doesn't take that much time to get writing done," she said, and a gasp rippled through the audience. Here were writers who took their art seriously, but not themselves—at least, not all the time.

I was charmed to find the little trinket on my seat. What was it for? While the auditorium began to fill, people traded them, pocketed them, bounced them from hand to hand.

One of the workshop leaders took the microphone. He asked us to take our bells, hold them as tightly as we could, and give them a shake. Nothing happened, although several faces turned red with exertion.

"Now take your bell," he said, "hold it loosely in your hand, and shake it."

Lovely tinkling music filled the giant room up to its vaulted ceiling.

"That's how you need to approach writing," he told us—not with clenched fists, but with open hands.

Relaxed. Playful. Open to possibility.

I returned home from the weekend, set the bell on my desk, and told myself the next hour or two was just for fun. Then I started to write—with results that surprised me. I began to wonder if other writers knew something I didn't. Could writing be as enjoyable at the outset as at the conclusion? Could it be—dare I say it?—something close to play?

I interviewed four of my favorite writers to find out, and, although they didn't all use (or even like) the word play, some clear themes began to emerge. Themes like surprise, laughter, and a willingness to let go of self-consciousness and convention. These writers have discovered ways to bring joy into their work, so perhaps it's no surprise that their writing is a delight to read.

**Brenda Miller**

One of the workshop leaders at the retreat was Brenda Miller. As she walked us through the steps of writing short, powerful pieces, like her much-anthologized apologia "Swerve" and the sensory-rich "What I Could Eat," she couldn't stop smiling. On the last day of the conference, I asked her about her generative writing group, which meets every week to do a series of unusual exercises: first, five minutes of subject-verb-object sentences; then, ten minutes of linking sentences; and finally, one long, continuous run-on sentence for twenty minutes. I was puzzled by so much prescription.

"It's an interesting paradox," she said.

Sometimes, the more constraints we give ourselves, the more fun we can have. Think

about the rules of a sport or a game: while a free-for-all may sound like fun, we often prefer to have rules and guidelines, and to see how much creativity and mastery we can accomplish within those guidelines. For these particular exercises (which were taught to me by the artist and writer Nancy Canyon), the rules give your intellectual mind something to concentrate on, and then your subconscious mind can come out to play. The time limit quiets the inner censor and forces you to keep writing whatever comes out.

Miller said she also plays in her writing practice by trying pieces as "hermit crab" essays:

In a hermit crab piece, you are adopting already existing forms to tell your story, such as a recipe, a how-to article, etc. I've written pieces in the forms of rejection notes, field guides, a table of figures, and how-to pieces. I end up having so much fun developing and playing with the voices of these forms that the writing barely seems like work. In the rejection note piece, titled, "We Regret to Inform You," I begin by cataloging all the rejections one receives from grade school on, so it starts on a lighthearted note and gets progressively more serious as the chronology goes along, including my experiences with two miscarriages in my early twenties.

Miller has talked about seasons in her writing life—writing in solitude, writing in community, and, most recently, writing in collaboration: I've been doing two different collaborations over the last year: one with my colleague and friend Lee Gulyas and one with my friend Julie Marie Wade. With Lee, we've been trading photographs and writing to the images, sometimes together and sometimes individually. You never know what the image will trigger, how our two perspectives will either mesh or diverge.

With Julie, we've written many different kinds of essays, usually with one of us starting on a specific topic and lobbing the essay back to the other. In this way, the essay builds bit by bit, shifting directions, always surprising us. Sometimes, it feels like a conversation with each section referring directly to something that came before (such as the essay "Toys" in CNF #60); sometimes, it feels more like parallel play.

I asked if she had always approached writing with this attitude of play.

I can say that after writing for more than thirty years, and teaching for almost twenty, I had to find some new ways to approach the writing process, or I would have stopped writing altogether. As a creative nonfiction writer, it can be easy to feel like you've used up your material, so the emphasis becomes finding new perspectives and forms. And yes, this approach makes me very happy to write. I get that thrill of writing something new and

unexpected almost every time I come out to play.

**Brian Doyle**

I first met Brian Doyle at a writers' workshop fifteen years ago and have been a fan ever since. He had a handout that suggested writers think sideways: What does grass mean? How does winter smell? In "Playfulness: A Note," Doyle argues that the essay is "the most playful of forms, liable to hilarity and free association and startlement."

I recently asked him if he thinks he brings those qualities to his own writing.

Hmm—I do think it's true, and immediately think of my sister saying I am congenitally wonder-addled because I got spectacles at age seven and have never recovered from that wash of wonder. I suppose I am also sort of addicted to the salt and swing and song of the American language, which is a bruised dusty lewd brave vibrant language, and trammelling it carefully seems disrespectful to me, as long as I am clear. I set out with an idea and try to hammer sentences that have loose ends; does that make sense? I never know where a story or an essay or a poem is going to end up, or even go, quite. . . . I just start, and I have in mind that I want to write like people talk and think, in loose-limbed, free, piercing, entertaining ways, and things go from there—sometimes utterly to the dogs.

I had to ask: what does it mean to hammer sentences that have loose ends?

I am trying to stay open to surprise, to spin, to swerve, to deepen—I want to start and then see what happens. I suspect that if you know exactly what you want to say, or exactly how a piece should end, then you have put yourself in a polite jail cell. I have the utmost respect for op-eds and editorials and reports and journalism, but I also love and am much more deeply moved by pieces that are open to surprise. An example for me is a long essay called "The Meteorites," which started out simply as a list of all the weird summer jobs I'd had, and morphed into a piece about being a counsellor at a summer day camp, and finally into a piece very much about the spangle and spatter of light and love.

Language isn't the only thing Doyle doesn't "trammel carefully." He also plays with form, and I asked him about his poems—the word he uses to describe his box-shaped pieces that are part poem, part prose, part prayer.

With the poems, I want to get to some place between prose and poems, because while poems at their best are the form closest to music and swing and rhythm and cadence, at their worst, they are artsy-fartsy selfish elusive self-absorbed muddles; can you make a thing that's alert to music but also clear as a bell, in unadorned conversational lines? And as regarding forms, there



Susan Rowe

are so many: the story that's all one voice; a paragraph in which two stories are being told alternately, as happens in my novel *Mink River*; the essay that is clearly wildly hyperbolic but also totally true because you waved the hyperbole flag, somehow. . .

Doyle has advised new writers to "type fast and tell a story with your fingers."

Newer writers very often sit down with expectations and plans and programs and outlines and assumptions as to form, and I think all those things are little jail cells. You shut off so much possible when you insist on what must be. And so much poor writing is just news and memory and explanation and persuasion and report and data and airy opinion; whereas stories are bigger deeper wilder unforgettably. For me, I think it was years as a journalist on magazines and papers in Boston and Chicago that made me yearn for what was under mere reporting and accounting. Could I catch and share moments, images, the deeper story? Could you use one tiny story to carry a thousand bigger stories on its shoulders?

**David Quammen**

I met David Quammen a year ago when I interviewed him about his book *Ebola* in the wake of the 2014 outbreak. A literary journalist who specializes in ecology and evolutionary biology, Quammen told me, then, that his purposes "are divided about halfway between education and vaudeville" as he tries to make science writing accessible to a broad audience. When I recently asked him about approaching writing with an attitude of playfulness, he made it clear he didn't like that word:

First thing I want to say is that I distrust programmatic approaches to writing. It can't be taught. A person is funny or playful if he or she has that capacity. Or not. It's not a recipe. I love humor. I love surprise. I tend to be a smart aleck. "Playfulness"? Meh.

I pressed him. While playfulness may not be the right word in every case, how writers escape "programmatic" approaches to writing to keep returning and delighting in their work was exactly what I was interested in. How, for instance, does he find

# THE LITERARY ORBIT

← CONTINUED FROM P15

moments of relief while writing about infectious disease? He acknowledged the challenge:

The world right now is grim. Problems are dire. It's rotten, catastrophic. But also filled with wonders, joys, amazing places and things, heroic behaviours. Pratfalls and ridiculousity. It's always important to be able to laugh in the face of gloom, and in the face of time. I've learned that from some of the masters—Samuel Beckett; Faulkner; Ed Abbey; Dorothy Parker; my Irish mother, Mary Egan Quammen.

Quammen noted his humour can be dry and oblique. In *Spillover*, about the growing incidence of zoonotic diseases (infections that spread from animals to humans), he recounts an instance in which a Texas lab euthanized forty-nine monkeys as a precaution because they shared the same room as one that died and tested positive for Reston virus. Most of the monkeys, later screened posthumously for the virus, tested negative. Without missing a beat, Quammen writes, "Ten employees who had helped unload and handle the monkeys were also screened for infection, and they also tested negative, but none of them were euthanized."

Gallows humour is helpful, too, if you're writing about something like Ebola or HIV or herpes B. There's always room, if it's done with irony about the brutality of life and with sympathy for the victims' side. Why not laugh darkly? We need laughter as much as we need pharmaceuticals.

Surprise is something Quammen said he relishes in his work. For him, it comes not from plumbing the depths of memory, but from the people he interviews.

I get interested, immediately, in their whole lives, their whole stories. I wait and hope for them to surprise me. I never ever ever say to a source, "Give me a quote on yadda yadda." I ask genuine questions. I wait and hope for them to tell me a story because they suddenly feel they can trust me with something they have never told any other person—or, at least, any other writer. Jack Horner did that with me, 35 years ago: dyslexia led him to dinosaur bones. Kelly Warfield did it more recently: working in a 7-Eleven at Fort Detrick led her to Ebola research.

## Abigail Thomas

At the writing retreat, Brenda Miller introduced me to Thomas's first memoir, *Safekeeping*. She presented it as an example of memoir that—with its tiny micro-chapters, third-person accounts, and soliloquies from Thomas's sister who comes in now and again to explain the action (a move Miller likened to a Greek chorus)—doesn't follow convention. It's a memoir about loss, and yet there are moments when it's impossible not to laugh. I asked Thomas about the book's playful tone.

Well, lots of my memories were hilarious, as were the conversations with my sister. Life is full of loss but also a lot of laughs, thank god. And yeah, probably because I had no set plan, no outline, no nothing, anything and everything came

# The Importance Of Play: On Finding Joy In Your Writing Practice

marching in. Or slithering. Life is so very funny, right in the middle of everything awful. That's how we survive, I think.

The way I wrote *Safekeeping* was determined by the way my memory works (or doesn't). My memory is terrible, but what I do remember, I remember well. There usually isn't any interstitial material. After [my second husband] Quin died, these hundreds of little pieces came more or less flying out of me. It wasn't a plan. I really didn't know why I was doing what I was doing, didn't for a long time think it would be a book. I was writing down moments, mostly—moments and feelings I remembered well.

I do think that if you have a memory, and you get it right, you leave it alone. You don't need to put in the weather report or whatever else is lying around on the grass. Hit it, hit it as best as you can, and move on. And I couldn't have done it without my sister. Wonderful, the Greek chorus description. Perfect.

Thomas is known for assigning her students "two pages" exercises as a way into a story "they may be staring too directly in the face," she writes in her book *Thinking about Memoir*. She recalled a workshop in which she asked students to write two pages about a time they were dressed inappropriately for the occasion:

One woman described what had happened to her first husband. He had been helping load a truck for a neighbour, someone he barely knew, but that was the kind of generous man he was. The truck moved unexpectedly, and her husband was thrown to the ground. By the time they got him to the hospital, he was declared brain-dead. She remembered walking back and forth on the roof of the hospital with her husband's brother, trying to decide whether or not to take him off life support, and thinking she was wearing the wrong clothes to be making such a decision: cutoffs, a T-shirt, sandals. It was the first time she'd ever written about this, and it was the assignment that gave her a side door. Extremely moving.

Two pages makes it less intimidating. If it goes longer, fine. But it doesn't have to. We're not on guard.

There's a line in *Thinking about Memoir* that reminds me of the object lesson at the writers' retreat with the bell: "We do better when we're not trying too hard," Thomas writes. "There is nothing more deadening to creativity than the grim determination to write." How does she avoid the writerly tendency toward grim determination?

Doing absolutely nothing helps. Keep quiet. Take note of what you notice. See what happens. Get out of the way. Stop thinking. Wait for the unlikely pair to couple. Take naps. Especially take naps. If something strikes you while you're beginning to drift off (and it will), get up immediately and write it down. For me, painting is a won-

derful way of using a different part of what's left of my brain. I just wait for the accident, wait for the thing to reveal itself to me. I'm NOT in charge.

What's the most fun you've ever had writing?

## Brenda Miller:

The most fun I've ever had writing was when I wrote my first hermit crab piece, "How to Meditate." I loved poking fun at both myself and the earnestness of the meditation community while still getting at the heart of some essential experiences. It was the first time I felt so immersed in a voice not my own, and I wrote the entire piece in one twelve-hour writing day on retreat at the UCross Foundation in Wyoming.

## Brian Doyle:

Oh man, a nonfiction book about a year in a vineyard: *The Grail*. That was fun for all sorts of reasons, not just the wine. To write loose and free about a real place and people and science, to write a fun book about wine in a world filled with so many somber, lugubrious books about wine...

## David Quammen:

In *Spillover*, I used the techniques of fiction (which I had once used in writing novels) to give the reader an imagined (truth in advertising) version of how the fateful passage of HIV from a forest-dwelling chimpanzee to the big cities of Central Africa may have happened. It was risky, this movement in a nonfiction book from carefully reported scientific fact into a mythic mode—and it was liberating, and maybe a bit provocative. I can still remember the thrill as my hypothetical story of that event, featuring a character I called the Voyager, unfolded for me each day on the page. It was great fun, in roughly the same way that running a Class V stretch of whitewater in a kayak is fun—dangerous, exhilarating, worth-the-risk fun.

## Abigail Thomas:

Well, I had a lot of fun with "Sixteen Again," the account of a date where I feel madly in love with the guy who did not return the compliment, and got over it very quickly. The essay changed in the course of the writing from a lament to a sort of triumph, and I wound up laughing.

## About The Author

Susan Bruns Rowe lives in Boise, Idaho, where she teaches at The Cabin and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Boise State University. Her writing has been published in the *American Oxonian*, *Penny*, *Quest*, *DiscRespect*, and *Fighting the World's Fight: Rhodes Scholars in Oxford and Beyond*. A graduate of University of Oxford, she is working on a memoir about growing up on a farm in the Idaho desert.

Source: *LITERARY HUB* (<https://lithub.com>), February 2, 2017.



Brian Doyle



Yilwatda

# How APC Primaries Exposed State Of Internal Democracy In Nigeria

EJIKEME OMENAZU

The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) has held its primaries ahead of the 2027 general elections. However, feelers from across the country show that the event has not been smooth at several areas, both in the North and South. In several places, there are allegations of rigging, vote-buying and other forms of manipulation. Many have wondered if the party would indeed survive the crises that are emerging.

The crises were not really unexpected as many had predicted such with the massive defections to the ruling party from opposition parties, especially the crisis-ridden Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Given the hullabaloo trailing the APC primaries, many people are predicting a possible implosion of the ruling party at the post primary period, during or after the general elections.

The defectors were said to have displaced the legacy members of the party, especially where the state governors joined the APC with all their state apparatus and

structures, including the state executives and the legislatures.

The party, according to a guideline for the primaries, adopted the direct primary mode that would allow all registered members participate in choosing those who will fly the party's flags in the various elective offices.

However, media reports indicate that the primaries, although smooth in several states, were riddled with crises in some states, such as Kwara, Delta and even some parts of Lagos.

The Surulere State Constituency 1 was on the spotlight as several social media postings showed the incumbent House of Assembly members and Nollywood actor, Desmond Elliot, making statements and even begging his constituents.

But, at the end of the day, Elliot reportedly withdrew from the race, alleging intimidation. His withdrawal enabled a former aide to Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Barakat Odunuga-Bakare, to emerge unopposed.

**CLAIMS AND COUNTER-CLAIMS**

In Surulere Constituency II, a lawyer, Damilola Ayinde-Marshall, daughter of Fuji music icon Wasiu Ayinde Marshall, emerged as APC candidate. Several aspirants reportedly stepped down to enable Damilola, Senior Special Assistant to Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu on Tourism, Arts and Culture, to emerge victorious.

In the Delta North Senatorial District, a bitter war of words is still raging over the defeat of the incumbent, Senator Ned Nwoko, by former Governor and ex-Senator, Ifeanyi Okowa.

Nwoko, who defected to the APC long before Governor Sheriff Francis Orohedor Oborewori took all the PDP structures to the ruling party, has been crying foul, claiming that the election was manipulated and rigged in favour of former Governor Okowa.

This is as the Okowa's camp and the party's state executive claim that Nwoko shunned the party's leadership, the stakeholders and even the royal fathers, without 'consulting' anybody. They stated that on the contrary Okowa had maintained

'good relationship' with the party leaders, the stakeholders and royal fathers, even attending burials to empathise with the people.

In Kwara State, the primaries were not as peaceful, as there has been palpable tension following the rejection of the primaries by some of the aspirants. They have called President Bola Tinubu to save the party from disintegration in the state.

However, the party seems to have managed its governorship primaries better, although most of the candidates emerged through consensus, following serious negotiations which saw almost all the incumbents returned except in Rivers, where the Governor, Siminalaye Fubara and the APC candidate in the 2023 election, Toye Cole withdrew.

Their withdrawal followed the realisation that there was no way they could win the primaries following the alleged takeover of both the APC and PDP structures in the state by former Governor Nyesom Wike and his supporters in what is being

## Politics

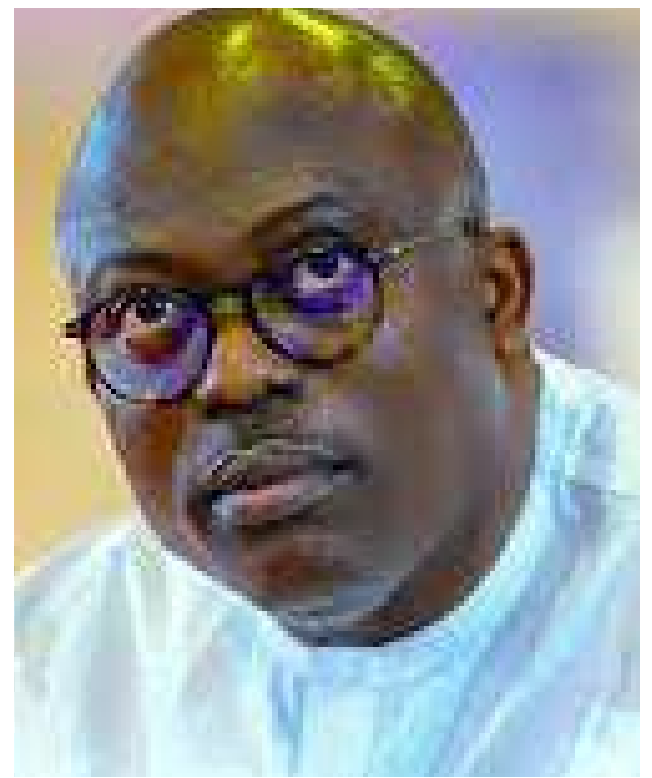
# Anxieties Over Outcome Of Troubled Primaries



Nwoko



Akume



Fubara

CONTINUED FROM P.17 →

termed as Rainbow Coalition.

The APC, indeed, declared House of Representatives Minority Leader, Kingsley Chinda, said to be the anointed candidate of Wike, who interestingly is still a PDP member, although working under President Tinubu as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister as its governorship candidate after both Fubara and had withdrawn.

### ALLEGED INTIMIDATION

In all these states, several aspirants were allegedly forced to resign having realised that there was no way they could win the primaries if they were allowed to go into open contest. The fear now is that these people who lost out in the primaries may work against the party as the time of the elections proper.

In Benue, the two warring camps of the governor, Fr Hyacinth Alia, and the Secretary of the Government of the Federation (SCF), George Akume, hurriedly patched the existing cracks for the governor to emerge unopposed, with members of his camp emerge by consensus while only Akume's wife Hon. Regina Akume, emerged out of respect for him.

Speaking with Sunday Independent on the happenings in the APC, Chief Kenneth Udeze, the National Chairman of the Action Alliance, (AA), maintained that an outright implosion of ruling is unlikely right now, even as he stressed that the APC is under real stress, and that the next few weeks will determine if it stays contained.

On why an implosion of APC is not imminent, Udeze, a lawyer stated: "Power concentrates disputes: As the ruling party, the APC still controls federal patronage and the presidency. That gives the national leadership leverage to broker deals, offer concessions, and pull aggrieved aspirants back in.

"History of managed chaos: The party has gone through messy primaries in 2015, 2019, and 2023 and still held together for the general election. The 'hullabaloo' is partly standard intra-party bargaining.

"Time pressure: With timelines tight before the next election cycle, defections carry a high cost. Most politicians prefer to negotiate a soft landing inside the party than run as outsiders.

"Where the risk comes in: Defections and sabotage: If high-profile losers feel the process was rigged and do not get placated, you could see quiet defections to

opposition parties or reduced mobilisation for the official candidates.

"Factional entrenchment: Repeated primaries disputes in key states can harden factions that operate as parallel structures, weakening campaign coordination.

"Voter perception: If the public sees the primaries as illegitimate, it erodes the party's 'discipline and order' brand and depresses turnout.

"What to watch next: Whether the National Working Committee moves fast on reconciliation, how Tinubu uses his influence as party leader, and if losers accept compensatory positions.

"The 'hullabaloo' around the APC primaries reflects real friction, but a full implosion of the ruling party is unlikely in the short term.

"What is driving the tensions are reports from the May 2026 primaries which show widespread complaints of imposition, disqualification of popular aspirants, and committees populated by loyalists of national officers.

"In Zamfara, aspirant Sani Shinkafi warned of a repeat of 2019 when irregular primaries cost APC all elective positions. The North-Central Forum said over 50% of members were angry, alleging targeted disqualification of frontrunners.

"High-profile losses and 44 disqualified senatorial aspirants have also fuelled protests in Ekiti, Lagos, and Edo. This is unacceptable.

### NO CHANCE OF IMPLSION

On why implosion is not imminent, Udeze maintained that APC has absorbed a wave of defections from PDP, LP, and NNPP, including five governors and 50 lawmakers.

He added that the numerical strength gives the party leverage and access to state machinery. President Tinubu has also directed the national leadership to review allegations of imposition, and party officials insist internal reconciliation mechanisms are working.

The risk: "If grievances are not addressed, aggrieved members could defect or sabotage the party in 2027. My candid advice is that APC should not be seen as an election-winning vehicle rather than a cohesive ideological platform, making it vulnerable once patronage and power-sharing break down.

"The outlook is that we may expect

continued infighting and legal battles, but not a collapse—unless the party fails to manage consensus disputes and excludes too many stakeholders ahead of 2027.

"My appeal to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is to ensure that these disputes are resolved amicably with dispatch."

Hon. Dennis Adikwuru, an APC chieftain in Imo State, said: "I will not agree with you on any hullabaloo in the APC primaries across the country. I will rather state that the APC primaries have rekindled internal democracy based on popular choice through the consensus arrangement.

"There have been no reports of skirmishes and violence of any kind trailing the APC primaries, but rather voluntary withdrawals by aspirants who subsequently endorse the popular choice.

"Even in few areas where the consensus arrangement failed, elections conducted still saw credible candidates emerge without rancour. Notwithstanding the consensus option, elections were conducted through Option A4 in all Ward Collation centres.

"Option A4 undoubtedly represents the most transparent electoral mode, representing free and fair elections. I do not see any implosion or foresee anyone in the party because the primaries have united the aspirants and promoted loyalty and discipline in the party."

"Hon. Dr John Okoro Kome, who believed that the APC is destroying democracy in Africa, stated that before the hullabaloo that trailed the recent APC primaries nationwide, it is well known by the generality of Nigerians that "a leopard cannot change its skin. There is this adage that says: What smells in a goat is actually inside the goat. "The All Progressive Congress (APC) has shown that decorum is not a part of the game in its operational values.

### DOUBTS, DISCONTENT

Hon. Kome stressed that except the leadership of the party gets 'Born Again' and puts its house in proper order, there is possible implosion awaiting the party no matter how much they pacify its members, which will in turn strengthen the opposition in readiness for APC defeat in the 2027 general elections.

He stated: "You cannot predict what political revolution might take place hereafter. Pacifying people with money might eventually empower the aggrieved to financially fight the ruling party at the 2027 polls.

"You cannot deceive Nigerians with po-

litical positions afterwards and they will believe you because they know what APC is capable of doing after acquiring Power ... "Once beaten, twice shy", goes the saying.

"With the political happenings in the ruling party in Nigeria, other African countries who usually copy from the Giant Of Africa and are learning very fast on how to rig primary and general elections in their respective counties inasmuch Nigeria gets away with it, thereby destroying democracy in Africa.

Prof John Ebhomien, a chieftain of the APC, stated: "The 'hullabaloo' around the APC primaries reflects real friction, but a full implosion of the ruling party is unlikely in the short term.

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"Why implosion is not imminent: APC has absorbed a wave of defections from PDP, LP, and NNPP, including five governors and 50 lawmakers. That numerical strength gives the party leverage and access to state machinery.

"President Tinubu has also directed the national leadership to review allegations of imposition, and party officials insist internal reconciliation mechanisms are working.

"The risk: If grievances are not addressed, aggrieved members could defect or sabotage the party in 2027. My candid advice is that APC should not be seen as an election-winning vehicle rather than a cohesive ideological platform, making it vulnerable once patronage and power-sharing break down.

"The outlook is that we may expect continued infighting and legal battles, but not a collapse—unless the party fails to manage consensus disputes and excludes too many stakeholders ahead of 2027.

"My appeal to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is to ensure that these disputes are resolved amicably with dispatch."

# The Problem With A US Military Base In Nigeria

As a regional military powerhouse, Nigeria is an ideal location for a US military base. However, establishing a foreign military base in Nigeria could reinforce neo-colonial dynamics and compromise Nigeria's sovereignty.

OLAKUNLE MOHAMMED

The Sahel, a vast swathe of semi-arid land south of the Sahara desert, has become a breeding ground for violent extremism in recent years. Insurgent groups like Boko Haram, Islamic State Sahel Province (IS Sahel)—formerly known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)—and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), capitalizing on poverty, weak governance and ethnic tensions, have established a foothold across the region. These groups, along with Islamic State in the West African Province (ISWAP) and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), have launched brutal attacks on civilians and security forces, destabilizing countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Despite regional counterinsurgency efforts by the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), these countries remain under siege. The situation worsened with military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger between 2021 and 2023, further crippling regional cooperation to combat extremist groups.

The subsequent withdrawal of the United States troops from Niger in April 2024, due to strained relations, leaves a gap in regional counterterrorism efforts and raises questions about the future of US military presence in the Sahel. Nigeria, as a regional powerhouse with a sizable military, is an ideal alternative location for a base. However, the establishment of a foreign military base in Nigeria could reinforce neo-colonial dynamics, compromise Nigeria's sovereignty, and create long-term dependencies that could weaken the country's ability to manage its own security.

In a WhatsApp interview with Adebayo Adeleke, a retired US major and an African security and supply chain expert, he pointed out that a US military base is unnecessary in Nigeria. Echoing his perspective, Nigeria and other African nations should not rely on external military presence. Instead, they need to pursue an independent foreign policy that prioritizes regional leadership and self-reliance, thereby strengthening their security and enhancing their counterinsurgency capabilities.

## THE CONFLICTING LEGACY OF FOREIGN MILITARY BASES IN AFRICA

The presence of foreign military bases in Africa is not a new phenomenon. Russia, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Turkey, China, India and several other non-African countries have military presence in Africa, including bases. Until the French military was recently expelled from former colonies such as Niger, France and Britain used their colonial ties to ease base establishment in African countries. Despite not having colonial ties to the continent, the US has established 29 bases in 15 African countries or territories. Meanwhile, China and India are expanding their African military presence.

Military base installations in Africa include land-based facilities such as bases, ports, airstrips, training camps, semi-permanent facilities and logistics hubs. Security, strategic and economic considerations have historically motivated the establishment of foreign military bases on the



Collage by Dami Mojid / THE REPUBLIC. Ref: HARANDANE DICKO / UN PHOTO

continent. During our discussion, Adeleke stated that US military bases are often strategic in nature with the major one being in Djibouti, while the rest are temporary bases that usually belong to the host countries.

Nonetheless, the consequences of African countries hosting foreign military bases are complex, with an often-contradictory narrative. While some bases have demonstrably bolstered regional security like France's military intervention in Mali in 2013, which temporarily pushed back militant groups in the Sahel region—almost a decade before the same French forces were forced to leave the region in 2022 due to growing dissatisfaction and strained tensions—other foreign military bases have become flashpoints for tension and instability. Case in point: the recent expulsion of French troops from Burkina Faso and Niger in 2023, amid accusations of neo-colonial interference and limited effectiveness in combating extremism.

## FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE CONTINENT: EMPOWERING OR A NEW SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA?

In 2016, the African Union's (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) expressed concerns over the proliferation of foreign military bases on the continent and the inability of African governments to trace the movement of weapons in these military bases. The PSC urged member states to be circumspect when entering into agreements that would lead to the establishment of foreign military bases in their countries. This stance reflects African governments' growing awareness of the potential implications of hosting foreign military forces.

The Horn of Africa has become a strategic focal point. It hosts the military bases of France, the US, China, Japan, the UAE and Turkey due to its proximity to the Middle East and Asia, and the subsequent security challenges in the Red Sea. A 2019 Institute of Security Studies (ISS) report revealed that France had an estimated 7,550 military personnel deployed across Africa, while the US maintains a more extensive network with 34 known outposts.

Security concerns have played a major role in situating foreign military bases in Africa. Nations facing regional instability, terrorism, kidnapping for ransom and internal conflicts see the military bases as a way to bolster their own security capabilities and counterinsurgency efforts. The US drone strikes in Somalia have contributed to reducing

al-Shabaab's influence, creating space for peacebuilding efforts. Similarly, French troops have played a role in capacity building for national armies and pushing back jihadist groups in the Sahel. However, the overall impact of these foreign military interventions remains contested.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa worsened Africa's security landscape and created opportunities for foreign military intervention. The Sahel region, in particular, has been destabilized by the illicit trade of these weapons, fuelling conflicts and empowering non-state actors. A 2022 United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report found evidence of firearms trafficking to the Sahel, with the vast majority of the weapons procured within Africa. The region's proximity to Libya, where the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi's regime led to the rapid increase in the number of weapons in circulation further compounded the issue.

Strategic and economic considerations have also brought foreign military presence to Africa's doorstep. A 2019 report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) revealed an ongoing competition for influence and access to African resources and routes among countries outside the region has led to the growing number of these military bases. Countries like Djibouti have leveraged their geographic location to the Red Sea to generate substantial revenue, earning over \$300 million annually from hosting foreign military forces.

Africa's vast natural resources, particularly oil and minerals, coupled with its position at the crossroads of key trade routes in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, also give it significant geopolitical and economic importance. The economic capital, and the resulting incentive from partnering with foreign powers, has driven many African nations into leasing their territory to these non-African countries. However, the presence of foreign military bases raises complex questions about African sovereignty and the potential for external interference in domestic affairs.

## NIGERIA'S STANCE AND ITS SECURITY CHALLENGES

As Africa's most populous nation with a substantial military, Nigeria is a strategically appealing location for counterterrorism operations within the Sahel region. Nigeria, however, has a history of rejecting foreign military base proposals.

A former minister of foreign affairs of Nigeria, Bolaji Akinyemi, emphasized this stance recalling: 'After all, when we turned down the British base in 1960, our relationship did not come crashing down. It continued.' With regards to a US military base and the enduring cordial relationship between the two nations, Akinyemi noted that: 'This is not the first time that Nigeria and the United States would have a conversation on this issue of having a military base.' He further explained, 'There was a time when the United States raised this issue of having a West African base... Nigeria turned down the proposal.' The recent rumours of a potential US or French military base in Nigeria have also been swiftly debunked, reaffirming across different administrations, Nigeria's long-standing cautiousness and stance against such foreign installations.

Nevertheless, over the years, the Nigerian military has engaged in numerous joint military exercises and training programs with foreign partners, including the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy. The Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program, a US collaborative military training initiative that Nigeria occasionally participates in, exemplifies this cooperation. Adeleke, while speaking on this revealed he was a participant in an earlier JCET in 2008, stating that there was no US base in Nigeria at that time but US personnel were accommodated in Nigerian military facilities.

Despite the Nigerian military's efforts to combat insurgency and violent extremism, the country faces significant challenges. Its diverse ethnic and religious composition fuels tensions and conflicts in certain regions, while groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP continue to perpetrate attacks on civilians and security forces. The humanitarian crisis resulting from this violence, with over 3.3 million displaced persons last year, is compounded by armed banditry and kidnapping. Additionally, underlying economic factors continue to worsen the security situation.

Given these complex security and economic challenges, any decision to establish a US military base in Nigeria requires careful consideration of potential benefits and risks. As Adeleke pointed out: 'The polity is not in dire need of a foreign military base. All they need is more training and more capacity building assistance to enhance their counterterrorism capabilities, which the US has been working with Nigeria for so long to provide.'

## WHY NIGERIA MUST REJECT A US MILITARY BASE

Insecurity in Africa is fundamentally driven by several deep-seated issues. Weak governance is a significant factor in the ongoing conflict and instability plaguing African nations. Adeleke explained that 'the institution that is currently in Nigeria is fragile'. Additionally, the porous borders across West Africa facilitate the movement of terrorist groups and illicit goods, exacerbating the security situation.

On 11 July 2024, a jailbreak occurred in Niger at Koutoukale prison, which houses numerous jihadist insurgents who have targeted the West African nation for years. Koutoukale prison is located in the Tillaberi re-

gion, a vast and unstable border area linking Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. The region is prone to attacks by rebels with connections to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Qaeda. Adeleke, commenting on the jailbreak, noted that 'there are enablers inside and outside these institutions, which indicates severe systemic weaknesses, and escaped jihadists pose a significant threat to neighbouring countries like Niger and Chad'. It goes without saying that incidents like this reveal the delicate and deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region and West Africa.

While the temptation to allow a US military base in Nigeria may stem from the aforesaid security concerns, the long-term consequences of such a decision could be detrimental to Nigeria's sovereignty and stability. The historical and operational context of foreign military bases in Africa reveals a pattern of neo-colonial influence, economic disruption, and potential civil unrest. The presence of a US military base in Nigeria could also inflame anti-Western sentiments, lead to civilian casualties, and create dependencies that could compromise Nigeria's ability to govern and secure itself independently.

Adeleke agrees that situating a US military base in Nigeria or elsewhere in Africa is not a panacea for the region's security problems, citing the historical and operational contexts of the French in its former colonies. Instead, he advocates for using soft power and strategic partnerships to mitigate security risks in the Sahel region. The retired US major further explained that the US military typically creates its own supply chains, which can disrupt local systems. This self-sufficient approach may bypass local economies and create unsustainable dependencies, potentially fostering resentment among local populations who may view it as economic exclusion or neo-colonialism. He emphasized that the US military's need to control its supply chain in a 'contested environment' like Africa makes establishing a base problematic. The complex geopolitical landscape, with multiple foreign interests, complicates ensuring a seamless and secure supply line.

If we look deeper, there is a more sustainable solution that could mitigate Africa's security challenges. Adeleke stressed the importance of 'more training and more capacity building assistance' for African security forces rather than establishing permanent foreign military bases. Intensifying the training to enhance the capabilities of local forces through joint programs and continuous support would be more effective in the long term.

By rejecting the establishment of a US military base, Nigeria can reaffirm its commitment to African autonomy and leadership. Strengthening domestic security institutions, investing in economic development and fostering regional alliances are the paths to a secure and self-reliant Nigeria. In the long run, these efforts will enable Nigeria to not only secure its borders but also lead the continent in establishing peace and stability in the Sahel region without external military dependence.

Source: THE REPUBLIC (<https://rpublic.com>), Nov. 6, 2024.

## Politics

# Nigeria Has Intelligent, Visionary Women Who Can Lead Effectively – Hon. Maduka

**Would you like to say something about yourself?**

I am Hon. Blessing Maduka, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of BMS GLOBAL. I am a real estate entrepreneur, a public speaker, a women advocate, and wealth creation strategist committed to helping individuals and families build sustainable wealth through real estate investment. Over the years, I have dedicated my life to empowering people, creating opportunities, and contributing to nation-building through housing and economic empowerment initiatives.

**Your company, BMS GLOBAL was one of the leading real estate companies that bagged awards at the recent Real Estate Conference and Recognition Award 2026 held in Lagos. What does this award mean to you and your team?**

Thank you so much. This award is not just a personal recognition; it is a celebration of hard work, consistency, excellence, and the dedication of the entire BMS GLOBAL team. It reminds us that our efforts in transforming lives through real estate and empowerment are being noticed and appreciated. It inspires us to do even more.

**What was your immediate reaction when you received the letter for this award?**

Honestly, I felt deeply grateful to God. I was excited, humbled, and encouraged at the same time. Awards like this remind me that hard work, integrity, and service to humanity still matter. My immediate thought was gratitude to everyone who has supported our vision over the years.

**As a recipient of this prestigious award, how do you hope to use your platform to make a positive impact on your community or industry?**

I believe recognition comes with greater responsibility. I intend to use this platform to continue advocating for youth empowerment, women inclusion, financial literacy, and affordable housing opportunities. Through our initiatives and mentorship programmes, we want to inspire more people to believe in the possibilities within Nigeria's real estate sector.

**As a real estate practitioner, what do you consider as the major challenges facing Nigeria's real estate sector?**

Some of the major challenges include high cost of building materials, land documentation issues, inadequate infrastructure, multiple taxation, and limited access to affordable mortgage financing. There is also a need for stronger policies that encourage private sector participation and make home ownership more accessible for average Nigerians.

**How does your work address housing affordability and accessibility in Nigeria?**

At BMS GLOBAL, we inten-

Hon. Blessing Maduka is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of BMS GLOBAL. She is also the Founder of Real Estate Executive Club (REC), a club designed to build a network of financially empowered individuals who can create wealth in real estate. BMS GLOBAL was recently adjudged one of the leading real estate companies in Nigeria at the Real Estate Conference and Recognition Award 2026 held in Lagos. She spoke with **EJIKEME OMENAZU** on challenges facing the real estate sector, the call for State Police, Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, among other issues. Excerpt:



Maduka

tionally create flexible payment plans and affordable property packages that allow low and middle-income earners to own land and properties without unnecessary pressure. We also educate people on the importance of early investment and financial planning, helping many Nigerians become property owners who ordinarily may have thought it impossible.

**You are the Founder of the Real Estate Executive Club. What is the vision behind this exclusive club?**

The vision behind the Real Estate Executive Club (REC) is to build a network of financially empowered individuals who can create wealth through real estate. It is more than a realtor platform; it is a wealth-building movement designed to train, empower, and reward mem-

bers through opportunities in property marketing, personal development, and investment education.

**What is your advice to aspiring real estate practitioners?**

My advice is simple: build credibility, stay consistent, and never stop learning. Real estate is a business of trust. Be patient, maintain integrity, understand your market, and focus on solving problems for clients rather than chasing quick profits. Success will definitely come with persistence and professionalism.

**What is next? Now that you have received this recognition, what are your goals and aspirations for the future?**

This recognition is only a motivation for greater works ahead. Our focus is to expand our reach

across Nigeria and beyond, develop more affordable housing projects, empower more young people financially, and position BMS GLOBAL as one of Africa's leading real estate brands.

**What are the biggest opportunities in Nigeria's real estate market right now?**

Nigeria remains one of the fastest growing real estate markets in Africa. Opportunities exist in affordable housing, smart estates, commercial real estate, short-let apartments, agricultural real estate, and emerging locations around major infrastructure projects such as the Lekki Free Trade Zone and coastal developments. Investors, who position themselves early, stand to benefit greatly.

**How do you see the industry evolving in the next five years?**

I see greater technology integration, smarter housing solutions, increased urban development, and more interest from diaspora investors. The demand for housing will continue to rise, and companies that embrace innovation, transparency, and customer-focused services will dominate the future of the industry.

**How do you give back to the community through your work?**

Giving back is very important to me. Through empowerment programmes, mentorship, advocacy, and community-based initiatives, we support youths, women, and aspiring entrepreneurs. We also create opportunities for people to earn legitimate income through our real estate network and empowerment platforms.

**How do you see the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration?**

I believe every administration should be supported where there are genuine efforts toward economic growth, infrastructure development, and national stability. The Renewed Hope Agenda presents opportunities for reforms and development, particularly in infrastructure and housing. However, I believe Nigerians also expect policies that directly reduce hardship and improve living standards for ordinary citizens.

**What are your views on the proposed creation of State Police?**

Security is a critical issue in Nigeria. I believe conversations around State Police should be approached carefully and strategically. If properly structured with accountability and con-

stitutional safeguards, it could improve local security response and community policing. However, there must be measures to prevent abuse or political misuse.

**You are an advocate of women's adequate representation in politics. What informs your passion for this cause?**

Women are highly capable and have consistently proven themselves in leadership, business, and governance. My passion comes from the belief that society progresses faster when women are given equal opportunities to contribute meaningfully. Inclusion brings balance, innovation, and stronger representation of societal needs.

**Do you foresee a woman president emerging in the Nigerian political space?**

Yes, absolutely. I foresee a Nigerian female president in future. Nigeria has competent, intelligent, and visionary women who can lead effectively. I believe it is only a matter of time before the country embraces female leadership at the highest level. The important thing is continuous advocacy, political participation, and creating opportunities for women to rise.

**What strategy do you think the opposition parties can use to defeat the incumbent government?**

Strong leadership, unity of purpose, issue-based campaigns, and genuine connection with the people are very important. Nigerians are increasingly interested in competence, credibility, and practical solutions to national challenges. Any opposition that wants to succeed must focus on national interest rather than division.

**What is your guiding philosophy?**

My guiding philosophy is: 'Success is most meaningful when it creates opportunities and transforms lives'. I strongly believe in integrity, hard work, service, faith in God, and continuous growth.

**Who are your role models or mentors? Who are the people that support and inspire you?**

I draw inspiration from visionary leaders, successful entrepreneurs, and individuals who have used their platforms to positively impact humanity. I also deeply appreciate the support of mentors, family, friends, my team, and everyone who believes in the BMS GLOBAL vision. Their encouragement continues to inspire me every day.

**Nigeria has competent, intelligent, and visionary women who can lead effectively. I believe it is only a matter of time before the country embraces female leadership at the highest level**

# Real Reason Obi, Kwankwaso Left ADC – Funso Awe

Archbishop Funso Awe is a retired Church Father, a human rights activist, a social commentator, and a one-time governorship candidate in Lagos State. Dr. Awe, a patron and Board of Trustees member of the oldest Ecumenical Forum in Nigeria, Fellowship of Christian Ministers Nigeria, speaks to **EJIKEME OMENAZU** on the current jostling of politicians for elective positions, even as he touches the chances of the major presidential aspirants so far and the politics of Lagos. Excerpt.

**Could you tell us your view on the state of the polity presently?**

We are in a season of politics now. No doubt about it. As it is, by the end of next week, we will have a clear view of who and in what party are running for political positions. The new Electoral Act is very clear on deadlines. By now, the political parties should have compiled their party membership lists. If a name is not on the party membership list, that particular person cannot contest the party primary. That is why people are jostling, moving from one party to the other to ensure that all these have been taken care of by the deadline. By now, we have seen those who have collected the nomination forms of the various political parties for the various elective offices. Therefore, the state is set for party primaries. Interestingly, a party member complained that the consensus agreements by the ruling APC had shortchanged the members of the party from making money. So, those who would have taken part in the primaries are not spending money on the members. So, money is not circulating to the public. Even posters are not being printed by the contesters. Advertising agencies are also lamenting.

**Do you think that INEC under Professor Joash Amupitan, by its conduct so far, could be said to be independent and can conduct a generally accepted general election?**

INEC, by its conduct so far, has not done anything wrong. Therefore, parties have their individual leadership and structural problems. INEC is an establishment of law and it has to obey court judgments. The problem is not with INEC. The problem as I see it is with the Judiciary. First, different courts keep making different pronouncements on the same issues and dissatisfied party members are exploiting these judgments. I strongly believe that the Judiciary should check itself. It is good that the Supreme Court makes a judgment. But, when the Supreme Court makes judgments, it is still throwing such matters to the lower courts. So, we are not seeing the dead end of these issues. So, INEC can make a pronouncement based on a judgment, but when the judgment changes, INEC will still make another pronouncement based on the latest judgment. So, I don't see any wrong on the part of INEC. The onus is on the parties to resolve leadership crises. But, because some people are moles in the parties to destroy the parties, the crises seem difficult to resolve.

**The Supreme Court judgment on the ADC case seems to have led to the defection of the party's stalwarts to the NDC. Do you think the ADC with Atiku Abubakar and Rotimi Amaechi as flag presidential bearers can go far in the election?**

It is not the court judgment



Awe

**It was obvious to them that when the die is cast, in the primary of the ADC, they cannot defeat Atiku. They thought that ADC would take a stand by ceding ADC presidential ticket to the South, but since they made it an open issue, they left the party before it was too late for them to do so**

that made Obi and Kwankwaso to defect to the NDC. It is actually the stand of the ADC on Abubakar Atiku that made them defect to the NDC. It was obvious to them that when the die is cast, in the primary of the ADC, they cannot defeat Atiku. They thought that ADC would take a stand by ceding ADC presidential ticket to the South. But, since they made it an open issue, they left the party before it was too late for them to do so. Definitely, Atiku and Amaechi have taken presidential forms. Atiku may decide to pick another person as running mate as he did by appointing Okowa in 2023 instead of picking Wike, a decision that led to crisis in PDP which the party is yet to recover till date. Until the end of the INEC deadline, we will not know who is contesting and who will be running mate.

**What is your take on the possible Obi/Kwankwaso ticket of the NDC?**

Obi/Kwankwaso ticket of the NDC, I don't see it as a challenge to the ruling party. I don't see Obi maintaining the die-hard Obidients that he had in 2023. Obi's hold on the South East in 2023 cannot repeat itself in 2027. The interest of the ruling governors in the South East and South South will water down the number of votes Obi had in South East and South South in 2023. Kwankwaso already has his own problems with his people in Kano. He will still carry along the Talakawas in Kano. Kwankwaso having lost his governor to the APC who is still running, and with the influence of Ganduje, Kwankwaso's influence in Kano will not be as strong as before. In Lagos, the power of incumbency will come to play and Peter Obi will not get what he had the other time. Nigerians

seen any candidate. The opposition parties are still looking for good Christians to square up with Hamzat. It is after the primaries that we will know who will contest against Hamzat. For now, no other party, except APC has a visible governorship candidate in Lagos. There is no other party in Lagos.

**Religion is one of the determining factors in the politics of Lagos. Is the Christian block in Lagos not being shortchanged by the endorsement of Deputy Governor Hamzat?**

Some people will say that the arrangement we have is eight years of Tinubu and eight years of Fashola make 16 years of Muslim governorship of Lagos. At the same time, we have had four years of Ambode and eight years of Sanwo-Olu, making 12 years of Christian governorship of Lagos, the Christian block may want another four years to make the number of years to become eight apiece. Other groups may say we have had two governors for both Muslims and Christians. So, let them revert to a Muslim governor. Personally, I do not think the candidacy of Hamzat amounts to shortchanging the Christian block. First, we have had a situation of good religious interaction between the Christians and Muslims in Lagos. Hamzat himself, having been in government for a very long number of years, understands the rules. I cannot see him shortchanging the Christian block in Lagos. So, we should be prepared to work with him.

**Could you give an assessment of the performance of the incumbent Lagos governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu?**

Actually, Sanwo-Olu has not performed badly. In the area of infrastructural development, he has done his bit. New roads have been opened up. Old projects under Ambode have all been completed. In the area of Agriculture, Lagos, not having much land, Sanwo-Olu has been able to bring about food processing of agricultural products from other states, especially rice. He has set up food hubs, spread all over Lagos. For the civil service, Lagos continues to maintain its lead in having the most effective civil service in the federation. In the area of security, Lagos remains the safest state in Nigeria. Generally, in his eight years in government, we give Sanwo-Olu a very good rating. He has done well.

**What are your closing remarks?**

We cannot but continue to pray for Nigeria. God is the one that puts government in place. As much as we as citizens have the voting power, we should leave things in the hands of God. Let Him be our guide. Once we have prayed for good governance, we should then accept whoever God made to win the election.

have a way of predicting the results of elections. As the election goes on, they lose interest in the opposition. So, if Obi loses supporters in the South East, South South and South West, his influence in the Middle Belt and his Northern support will not be so strong. However, the state of the economy may be a deciding factor in the elections. The economy is not smiling at all and people are really suffering.

**Do you still believe that with what is happening in both the NDC and ADC the ruling party will still win the election with President Bola Tinubu as its flag bearer?**

Tinubu will still win the election. With all the analysis above, I think the ruling party will still sail through in the election come 2027. All the opposition parties may as well be working for the victory of the ruling party. AS the saying goes, the more, the merrier. The opposition will split their own votes while Tinubu will retain his block votes.

**As one who has special interest in Lagos politics, how do you see the endorsement of Lagos Deputy Governor Obafemi Kadir Hamzat by the Governor's Advisory Council (GAC) of Lagos APC?**

Right now, every other candidate within the APC has withdrawn from the race. Ambode, Jide Adeniran, Gbajabamila and Speaker Obasa too have endorsed Hamzat and withdrawn from the race. Obasa is going to the House of Representatives. In the opposition, we have not

## Politics

# Boko Haram Attacks On Chibok Have Not Stopped – Happiness Gungzaar

Mrs Happiness Emmanuel Gungzaar is a lawyer from Chibok in Borno State. In April 2014, after Boko Haram attacked her village and kidnapped 270 school girls, world outrage put Chibok on the global map and attention. Many Nigerians assumed that the attention and outrage which the attack brought should have mitigated the state of fear and insecurity in Chibok, but that expectation has turned out to be wishful thinking. In this interview with **Bob MajiriOghene Etemiku**, Mrs Happiness Emmanuel Gungzaar said that her decision to start an NGO, Voice for Chibok Girl Children, was triggered by the need to highlight the continued terrible conditions of Chibok, especially that of its women and girls. Excerpt:

**The Chibok incident happened in 2014. Has anything changed?**

Chibok is a Local Government Area in the southern part of Borno in Nigeria with over 66,105 individuals, a vibrant and resilient community with a rich cultural heritage Chibok is known internationally for the tragic 2014 abduction of schoolgirls by the Boko Haram. Chibok itself carries a painful legacy. In April 2014, more than 276 schoolgirls were abducted from their dormitories by insurgents, drawing global condemnation and exposing the scale of insecurity in northeastern Nigeria. Over a decade later, while some of the girls have been rescued or escaped, others remain missing, and the trauma continues to affect the community. Residents are even now in constant fear of the continuation of persistent attacks and insecurity. Local leaders are urging the Nigerian government and security agencies to respond swiftly, warning that inaction could embolden attackers and deepen the humanitarian tragedy.

**Describe any changes that occurred after that Boko Haram attack and describe as well what has not changed. There are rumours that large-scale killings and kidnappings are still going on?**

The only change that occurred so far is the government giving out scholarships both internationally and locally for those rescued girls to be able to complete their tertiary institution. But they have failed to tackle the source/root of the situation till date, which is insecurity as the main problem of the community leaving it exposed to the terrorist to invade and still cause havoc till date. Recently on the 4th of April 2026 fresh terror struck Kwapul community in Chibok Local Government Area, Borno State, as insurgents carried out a late-night raid on Saturday that extended into the early hours of Easter Sunday. This thing still happens. Even though these attacks are not always in the news, Chibok my community needs help.

**As director of Voice for Chibok Girl Children, VFCGC, what exactly are you doing to draw attention to some of the things that have not changed. Take our readers through a day in the life of the residents of Chibok.**

We seek a safe, inclusive society where every Chibok girl child, and indeed every Nigerian girl and woman thrives with dignity, education, and empowerment. We want to further raise our voice for Chibok girls by providing basic needs, education, psychosocial support, and advocacy for their rights. Chibok is home to the Kibaku people, an ethnolinguistic community with a distinct language and cultural identity anchored in the landscape of southern Borno. Life in Chibok today remains marked by fear and resilience. Residents wake up to uncertainty as Boko Haram continues to burn homes, loot food, and displace families, forcing many to flee into the bush or nearby towns for safety. The striking things about this group of terrorists is that they are of different categories that still often attack our people: some specialize with the killing and abduction of the young ones leaving the old ones alive; another group kill just the males - our fathers, brothers, sons, husband and uncles, knowing full well that they are head of the families and warriors to our community. Yet another group often come in to take the women and girls. Chibok residents still live under constant threat. As dusk falls, fear deepens, our families huddle indoors,



Gungzaar

whispering prayers. Many sleep lightly, ready to flee into the bush at the sound of gunfire. Recent attacks in Awapul and Kautikari villages saw insurgents arrive around 1:30 a.m. on motorcycles, firing sporadically and burning homes. Residents often plead for protection, saying: Muqatan abu ne mai sauqi, ba abinci ko tufafi muke buqata ba, abunda muke buqata kariya ne kawai domin mu iya gudanar da aikin mu na yau da kullum which translates in English thus: "Our plea is simple—not food or clothes. What we need is protection so we can go about our daily activities."

**You are a lawyer and one from Chibok. What aspects of the law in Nigeria can be used to address the Chibok condition?**

I do believe that the best law to be used is humanitarian law to address the ongoing in-

security and trauma. Key legal frameworks include the 1999 Constitution, the Child Rights Act 2003, and the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022, which together provides avenues for protection, prosecution, and compensation for victim. Relevant legal frameworks for instance, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria guarantees Right to Life & Dignity. Sections 33 and 34 of the constitution guarantee protection from unlawful killings and inhuman treatment. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria also guarantees the right to education and Section 18 obligates the state to provide free, compulsory education. This is to include the protection of children under the Child Rights Act 2003. Even though this law applies nationwide, implementation depends on every state government in Nigeria. Under this law, we hope to use it to protect chil-

dren from abduction, trafficking, forced marriage, and recruitment into armed groups. We also seek to activate the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022, which establishes a comprehensive framework for detecting, preventing, and punishing terrorism, on behalf of our work in the northeast of Nigeria. That Act also criminalizes recruitment of children into terrorist groups, provides for compensation of victims of terrorism and grants courts extra-territorial jurisdiction to prosecute offenders even outside Nigeria. We plan to work with relevant bodies, CSOs in a broad coalition to implement community-based prevention and reintegration programs, strengthen unlimited access to justice for rural communities and use strategic litigation to demand enforcement of constitutional rights of women and girls in Nigeria and Chibok especially. We plan as well to push for state-level adoption of the Child Rights Act in Borno state and advocate for victim compensation funds under the Terrorism Act.

**What do you think that the Borno state and federal government can do about putting an end to the attacks on Chibok community?**

The Borno State government can establish local vigilante groups under legal supervision, trained and equipped to complement military efforts. It can complement this with Rapid response units where they deploy mobile security teams to rural villages like Awapul and Kautikari, which are often targeted. Borno state can also strengthen the Safe Schools Initiative by building fortified classrooms and providing escorts for students. This is in addition to the creation of trauma centers and livelihood programs for displaced families, ensuring survivors are not left behind. The Federal government of Nigeria can as well increase presence of the Nigerian Army and Civil Defence Corps in Chibok, with night patrols to deter raids. There should be effective intelligence gathering; the Federal government must strengthen collaboration between the DSS, military intelligence, and community informants to intercept attacks before they happen. We also recommend strongly victim compensation and a full implementation of the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022, which provides for compensation of victims of terrorism.

**Many people say that it is not only Chibok that kidnappings are taking place. What makes Chibok special with relation to insecurity in Nigeria.**

You're right—kidnappings and attacks are not unique to Chibok. Communities across Borno, Yobe, Jos and Adamawa have suffered similar tragedies. But Chibok holds a special significance for several reasons: the April 14, 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Government Secondary School, Chibok, became a global headline. The #BringBackOurGirls campaign drew international attention, with world leaders, celebrities, and activists demanding action. All of this made Chibok a symbol of the girl child's vulnerability in conflict zones. Chibok is special not because it suffers more than others, but because its tragedy became a global rallying cry for justice, education, and child protection. It represents the intersection of terrorism, gender, and education, making it a lasting symbol in Nigeria's fight against insurgency.

**Life in Chibok today remains marked by fear and resilience. Residents wake up to uncertainty as Boko Haram continues to burn homes, loot food, and displace families, forcing many to flee into the bush or nearby towns for safety**

SYLVESTER ENOGHASE

For most corporations, an 11% drop in revenue is a red alert, a signal for immediate retrenchment, panic, and grim forecasts.

But in the high-stakes world of Nigerian manufacturing, BUA Foods Plc has just rewritten the rulebook.

In the first quarter of 2026, the food giant demonstrated a masterclass in corporate alchemy: turning less top-line income into significantly more bottom-line profit.

On April 29, 2026, when the company released its unaudited financial results for the quarter ended March 31, 2026, industry analysts did a double-take. Amidst persistent global supply chain volatility and geopolitical headwinds, BUA Foods reported a striking 14% increase in Profit After Tax (PAT), leaping to N142.32 billion from N125.28 billion in Q1 2025.

The twist? Revenue actually contracted by 11%, falling to N394.6 billion from N442.1 billion in the previous year.

Yet, far from signaling distress, this revenue moderation revealed a deliberate and sophisticated corporate strategy: the relentless pursuit of efficiency, cost discipline, and margin expansion.

#### The Mechanics of Resilience

To understand how BUA Foods achieved this feat, one must look beyond the top line. The first quarter of 2026 brought a unique economic paradox: easing inflationary pressures and a more stable foreign exchange environment. While this was a relief for consumers, it meant that manufacturers could no longer rely on simply hiking prices to sustain growth.

BUA Foods adapted swiftly. Instead of maintaining high prices to increase revenue, the company aligned with strategic and competitive market pricing.

This led to a slight dip in revenue from its core segments. Flour (down to 35% of revenue from 40%) and Sugar (down to 43% from 48%). But this was a feature, not a bug.

The real story lies in the cost of sales. By reducing input costs and streamlining operations across all business divisions, BUA Foods saw its gross profit rise by 9% to N175.65 billion.

More impressively, operating profit surged by 11% to N154.6 billion, while the operating profit margin expanded by a massive 800 basis points, hitting 39%.

In layman's terms, BUA Foods learned to do more with less. Every single naira of revenue in 2026 worked harder than it did in 2025.

#### The Pasta Paradox and the Rise of Rice

While the flour and sugar segments adjusted to market realities, two other divisions stole

# How BUA Foods Increased Profit Despite Lower Revenue



Rabiu Chairman of BUA group

the show. The Pasta division was a standout star, contributing 18% to total revenue in Q1 2026 compared to just 9% in Q1 2025. Revenue from pasta exploded by 70%, jumping from N41.5 billion to N70.6 billion.

This wasn't a fluke. It was a response to shifting consumer demand. As families across Nigeria look for affordable, filling, and easy-to-prepare meals, pasta has become the go-to staple.

BUA Foods capitalised on this hunger, ramping up production and distribution to ensure that shelves remained stocked.

Similarly, the Rice division, often the quiet sibling in the BUA portfolio, showed steady progress.

Revenue increased to N14.9 billion, driven by consistent milling operations. While rice currently accounts for only 4% of revenue, its steady upward trajectory signals BUA's long-term bet on Nigeria's rice self-sufficiency agenda.

To get a clearer picture of this strategic navigation, it is expedient to quote the Managing Director of BUA Foods, Engr. Ayodele Abioye.

In his commentary accompanying the results, Abioye painted a picture of vigilant optimism and disciplined execution.

"BUA Foods delivered resilient earnings in Q1 2026, underpinned by strong margin performance despite a challenging operating environment," Abioye stated.

"Profit After Tax increased by 14% year on year to N142.32 billion, notwithstanding an 11% decline in revenue and modest volume growth. EBITDA rose by 11% to N157.13

**Our 2025 performance reflects the strength of our growth strategy and our ability to consistently scale revenue in a dynamic operating environment. The significant increase in our proposed dividend to N28 per share underscores our commitment to delivering enhanced value to our shareholders while continuing to invest in the future of the business.**

billion, reflecting effective cost containment, pricing discipline, and sustained margin expansion across core product portfolios."

The Managing Director's words underscore a critical shift in corporate philosophy. In an era of uncertainty, growth isn't just about selling more; it's about protecting the profit you make on what you sell. By focusing on "effective cost containment" and "pricing discipline," BUA has insulated itself from the kind of volume-driven shocks that frequently devastate less agile competitors.

#### Balance Sheet Strength and the Future

Perhaps the most reassuring metric for shareholders and analysts alike is the company's balance sheet strength. Despite the volatile operating environment, BUA Foods grew its total assets by 12% to N1.555 trillion, up from N1.387 trillion at the end of the 2025 fiscal year.

This growth is driven primarily by capacity expansion, a signal that BUA is not just surviving; it is building for the future.

Earnings per share (EPS) also provided a reason for investor cheer, rising 14% to N7.91. For the retail and institutional investors who have stuck with the stock, this represents tangible value creation in a market where real returns are often hard to find.

#### Navigating Geopolitical Storms

Of course, the road ahead is not without potholes. Engr. Abioye was careful to note the external risks that loom on the horizon. "Looking ahead, while geopolitical risks continue to impact energy markets and

global supply chains, the business remains well positioned for growth," he said.

Energy costs remain a significant variable for any manufacturing giant in Nigeria. The war in Eastern Europe, tensions in the Middle East, and fluctuating crude oil prices all have a direct impact on the cost of production, logistics, and raw material sourcing. However, BUA Foods' integrated operations, controlling much of its value chain from refining to packaging, provide a natural hedge against these external shocks.

#### The New Standard for Nigerian Manufacturing

As the first quarter of 2026 closes, BUA Foods Plc has sent a clear message to the Nigerian business community: top-line obsession is outdated. In a mature, volatile market, the victors will be those who master operational excellence and margin management.

By leaning into reduced input costs, optimizing its product mix (especially the high-demand pasta segment), and maintaining rigorous cost discipline, BUA has proven that a revenue decline does not have to spell disaster. Instead, it can be an opportunity to showcase resilience.

Engr. Ayodele Abioye's closing remarks in the release capture the spirit of the moment perfectly: "Supported by a resilient operating model and disciplined execution, BUA Foods is focused on delivering sustainable, long term value for investors, shareholders, and other stakeholders."

For the millions of Nigerians who consume BUA's flour, sugar, pasta, and rice daily, the company's stability means food security. For the investors, it means a reliable return. And for the competition, it means the bar for efficiency has just been raised, again.

Abdul Rabiu, the Chairman of BUA Foods, while speaking on the financial performance, said: "Our 2025 performance reflects the strength of our growth strategy and our ability to consistently scale revenue in a dynamic operating environment."

"The significant increase in our proposed dividend to N28 per share underscores our commitment to delivering enhanced value to our shareholders while continuing to invest in the future of the business."

As BUA Foods continues to leverage its scale and invest in capacity expansion, one thing is clear: in the business of feeding a nation, margins matter just as much as market share. And right now, BUA Foods has mastered both.

# Business

## Interswitch Deepens Support For Federal Revenue Collection On RevOP Platform

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH  
LAGOS

Interswitch, one of Africa's leading integrated payments and digital commerce company, has reinforced its role in supporting Federal Government revenue collection through its continued participation as a Payment Service Solution Provider (PSSP) on the Revenue Assurance and Optimization Platform (RevOP).

The move underscores Interswitch's ongoing contribution to strengthening public sector payment infrastructure and supporting Treasury Single Account (TSA) collections in Nigeria. It also reflects the Federal Government's sustained push to improve transparency, en-

hance revenue assurance, and enable real-time visibility into collections across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs).

Through its integration with the RevOP platform, Interswitch continues to enable secure, end-to-end processing of payments initiated via the portal.

Transactions are seamlessly routed into the TSA framework, ensuring compliance with Federal Government financial regulations while supporting efficient and accountable revenue management.

Leveraging its robust payment infrastructure, Interswitch facilitates multiple payment channels, including card and digital payments, delivering a seamless and reliable experience for citizens,

businesses, and government agencies fulfilling their payment obligations.

Speaking on the development, Muyiwa Asagba, Managing Director, INCLUSIO at Interswitch, said the company remains committed to supporting government-led financial reforms through secure and efficient payment solutions.

"Interswitch is proud to continue supporting the Federal Government's drive toward greater transparency and efficiency in public revenue management. Our role on the RevOP platform reflects our commitment to delivering secure, seamless, and compliant payment infrastructure that enables all stakeholders to meet their obligations with confidence," he said.

Interswitch's continued

role on the platform builds on its longstanding experience in supporting critical national payment infrastructure and collaborating with regulatory and financial institutions to drive digital transformation across Nigeria's public sector. Its infrastructure is designed to ensure high transaction uptime, real-time processing, and secure data handling, all essential for effective public revenue collection.

By deepening its participation on the RevOP platform, Interswitch further strengthens its position as a trusted partner within Nigeria's evolving digital payments ecosystem, while continuing to support initiatives that promote fiscal transparency, operational efficiency, and sustainable governance across government institutions.

## NCSP Reaffirms Nigeria's Position On One-China Principle

The Nigeria-China Strategic Partnership (NCSP) has reaffirmed Nigeria's unwavering commitment to the One-China Principle, stating that the country's position on Taiwan remains a settled and non-negotiable matter of national policy.

The statement comes as global attention turns once again to China's insistence on the One-China Principle, following the visit of a United States delegation led by President Donald Trump in Beijing, accompanied by America's most powerful business executives.

The visit underscored the enduring centrality of the Taiwan question in China's diplomatic engagements, and Beijing's consistent position that the People's Republic of China is the world's only legitimate Chinese government and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of its territory.

Nigeria's commitment to this principle spans more than five decades, dating to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing in 1971.

It was most authoritatively expressed during President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's meeting with President Xi Jinping in Beijing in 2024, where both governments issued a joint statement affirming Nigeria's adherence to the One-China Principle, recognising

the PRC as the sole legal authority representing the whole of China, and expressing full support for China's pursuit of national reunification.

The NCSP says it will continue to leverage Nigeria's long record of diplomatic reliability as a foundation for deeper economic engagement with Beijing, with a focus on manufacturing investment, technology transfer, industrial development and export-oriented production befitting Nigeria's scale as Africa's largest economy.

Joseph Tegbe, Director-General of the Nigeria-China Strategic Partnership, noted that China has already made significant contributions to Nigeria's railway corridors, port and energy infrastructure, telecommunications networks and industrial capacity, and emphasised that the partnership must now advance further, into Nigeria's digital economy, solid minerals sector; agro-processing capacity and consumer market, to deliver a more productive and balanced economic relationship.

The NCSP remains committed to strengthening bilateral collaboration with China across trade, investment, technology transfer, infrastructure, and capacity building, with a clear mandate to deliver measurable, tangible value to Nigeria's economy



Rear Admiral Abdullahi Mustapha, Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) Western Naval Command/representative of Chief of Naval Staff (left); Dayo Moberleola, Director-General, Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) (middle), and Tal Spector, Chief Executive Officer, HLSI, during the Deep Blue Maritime training graduation ceremony in Lagos.

## Second Cohort Of Moniepoint DreamDevs Bootcamp Set For Demo Day

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH  
LAGOS

Moniepoint has announced that the second cohort of its flagship DreamDevs Bootcamp is set to culminate in a Demo Day celebration on May 26, 2026, at its Ikeja facility.

The event, themed "Training Done! Demo Up!", will showcase the capstone projects built by participants following nine weeks of intensive, industry-grade software engineering training.

The DreamDevs Bootcamp is Moniepoint's commitment to identifying and developing the brightest engineering talent across Africa.

The nine-week intensive pro-

gramme is designed to immerse participants in real-world, practical software engineering through a curriculum spanning Java OOP Foundations, Data Structures & Algorithms, Testing, MySQL & JDBC, Spring Boot APIs & System Design, Docker & Messaging Queues, Frontend UI & Cloud Infrastructure, and core Practical Software Engineering Concepts. In recognition of their commitment and effort, cohort participants are paid monthly throughout the duration of the programme.

The curriculum was developed by the Engineering Unit at Moniepoint and delivered in partnership with Semicolon, a leading technology education institution.

Admission to the DreamDevs Bootcamp is highly competitive, with only top performers advancing through multiple stages of assessment, including a HackerRank technical test and an in-person code challenge, before earning a place in the programme.

Felix Ike, Co-Founder and CTO of Moniepoint, reflected on what the programme means to the company and the country, "Engineering excellence is a curated and intentionally built process that requires the right systems, resources, and time."

"The DreamDevs Bootcamp is our way of taking that responsibility seriously. We designed a programme that does not just teach syntax or frameworks,

but develops engineers who can think, solve, and build at the highest level. Seeing graduates from our first cohort already thriving within our engineering team tells us we are on the right track, and we are excited to see what this second group brings to Demo Day."

Some of the first cohort's successful graduates are now active members of the Moniepoint engineering team, a testament to the programme's effectiveness and its role as a genuine pipeline for world-class engineering talent.

The DreamDevs Bootcamp reflects Moniepoint's broader mission to invest in Nigeria's talent and build engineering capacity that can compete and lead on a global stage. Moniepoint looks forward to welcoming the second cohort to the fold and witnessing the innovative solutions they have built.

## Train 7 Key To Sustainable Industrial Development In Nigeria

Nigeria LNG Limited (NLNG) says its Train 7 project is a catalyst for Nigerian Content development and industrial growth.

According to Anne-Marie Palmer-Ikuku, Manager, Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, NLNG, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Adeleye Falade made the remark during a panel on Nigerian Content support, lessons, experiences and success stories at the Nigerian Oil & Gas Midstream & Downstream Summit (NOGMDS) 2026 in Lagos.

Falade was represented on the panel by Train 7 Project Manager, Ali Uwais.

Falade described Train 7 as more than an LNG expansion; he called it "a practical model for intentional localisation of expertise," and a compelling example of how Nigerian Content can drive industrial capability and deliver projects at global scale.

He also commended the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) for organising the summit and sustaining efforts to advance growth across Nigeria's oil and gas sector.

Speaking further at the panel session, Uwais outlined the project's achievements, saying Train 7 has recorded over 120 million man-hours and achieved roughly 92 percent Nigerian Content participation—evidence, he said, of NLNG's deliberate strategy to strengthen local capability and broaden participation across the project value chain.

He attributed the success to extensive industry engagement, structured Nigerian Content plans, and targeted investments

to build local capacity.

Drawing on lessons from earlier trains, he said the Train 7 team used a strategic, data-driven approach to assess local capabilities and identify meaningful participation opportunities that meet international standards.

That structured approach, Uwais said, enabled higher local involvement and ensured Nigerian companies were integrated into project execution from the outset.

"Several fabrication activities typically carried out abroad were successfully executed in-country. Nigerian firms fabricated pressure vessels, structural steel components, valves, blocks, pipes, lighting systems, cables, and painting materials for the project.

NLNG deliberately identified local manufacturers with growth potential and provided targeted support to help them reach international quality-assurance standards, rather than relying solely on conventional quality-control checks," he said.

Uwais also recalled collaboration with foreign technical partners to help Nigerian firms transition from asbestos-based gaskets to safer carbon-graphite alternatives.

The initiative included equipment support and international testing certification to strengthen local manufacturing capability.

"These interventions reflect NLNG's broader philosophy of treating Nigerian Content not merely as a compliance obligation but as a long-term development opportunity capable of delivering sustainable value beyond project execution," Uwais said. "Our focus has been on building lasting value.

# Morocco And Nigeria: The Atlantic Brotherhood Forging Africa's Diplomatic Future

BISHOP DR JOSEPH IGHALO EDORO

**D**ynamism in the arena of global diplomacy, where nations jostle for relevance, prestige and strategic influence, the relationship between Nigeria and Morocco has quietly matured into one of Africa's most intriguing diplomatic partnerships. It is a relationship built not merely on handshakes between statesmen, but on history, economics, energy cooperation, continental ambition, cultural curiosity and a shared vision of Africa rising beyond dependency. Today, as the world gradually shifts toward multipolar diplomacy, Morocco and Nigeria stand as two strategic bedrocks linking West Africa to North Africa, the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, and Africa to Europe and the Middle East.

The etiology of this relationship is soaked in mutual recognition of strategic importance. Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and one of its largest economies, has long occupied a leadership role in West African affairs through ECOWAS, peacekeeping, oil production and continental diplomacy. Morocco, on the other hand, has cultivated a reputation for stability, strategic foresight, tourism excellence, renewable energy leadership and diplomatic sophistication. Though the two countries experienced periods of diplomatic divergence in earlier decades, especially regarding the Western Sahara question, the last decade has however, witnessed a remarkable recalibration and rapprochement.

The turning point came with deeper economic engagement and the heralding of a common continental vision. Morocco increasingly saw Nigeria not merely as an oil giant, but as a gateway into sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria, likewise, recognized Morocco as a diplomatic bridge to Europe, North Africa and the Arab world. This mutual strategic awakening birthed one of the most ambitious infrastructure visions on the African continent, the Nigeria Morocco Gas Pipeline project. The proposed multibillion dollar pipeline stretching across West Africa toward Morocco and Europe has become both an economic and symbolic pipe of African integration. Developments show that feasibility studies have been completed and both nations are advancing toward implementation through joint institutional structures.

The pipeline is more than an energy project. It is a geopolitical masterpiece. It seeks to connect over a dozen West African nations, expand regional energy access, stimulate industrialization, create employment and redefine Africa's role in global energy markets. At a time when Europe searches for diversified energy sources, Nigeria's gas reserves and Morocco's geographic advantage have formed a natural alliance. Experts increasingly describe the project as one of the clearest examples of transregional African cooperation in modern times.

Diplomatically, Morocco has demonstrated unusual seriousness toward Nigeria. The Moroccan Embassy in Abuja continues to expand its influence and engagement. Plans for a new Moroccan embassy complex in Abuja further underline Nigeria's long term commitment to Rabat. Morocco's Ambassador to Nigeria, a career diplomat and one time diplo-



Moroccan PM, Aziz Akhannouch

mat to Senegal, Poland, Carpe Verde and Guinea Bissau, Mr. Moha Tagma, has consistently emphasized the importance of stronger Abuja Rabat relations and urban partnerships between the two capitals.

Visa diplomacy has also played a subtle but powerful role in strengthening ties. Morocco has become increasingly accessible to Nigerian entrepreneurs, students, tourists and investors. Thousands of Nigerians now travel to Morocco yearly for education, commerce, tourism and religious interactions. Morocco's universities attract African students through scholarship diplomacy, while Nigerian traders continue to explore Moroccan markets and logistics opportunities. The cross-cultural exchange between both nations has deepened through music, fashion, cuisine, football, Islamic scholarship and migration networks.

One striking diplomatic semblance between the two countries is their shared understanding of strategic sovereignty. Neither Morocco nor Nigeria desires complete dependence on any single global bloc. Instead, both countries have embraced multipolar diplomacy, balancing relationships with the West, China, the Gulf States, Europe and emerging powers. Morocco maintains strong ties with Europe and the United States while simultaneously deepening African partnerships. Nigeria similarly balances Western engagement with growing relationships across Asia, the Middle East and the Global South. This diplomatic flexibility has allowed both countries to remain influential without becoming trapped within rigid ideological camps.

Morocco's governing organigram deserves particular admiration. Under the leadership of King Mohammed VI, Morocco has carefully blended monarchy, modernization and institutional continuity. A governance model so unrivaled. The country has become known for infrastructural discipline, tourism management, renewable energy expansion, urban planning and diplomatic refinement. Unlike many developing nations struggling with instability, Morocco has projected calmness, continuity and administrative elegance. Rabat,

**Rabat has positioned itself as both African and Mediterranean, Islamic and modern, traditional and innovative. It speaks to Europe with confidence while embracing Africa with intentionality. This dual identity has given Morocco unusual diplomatic leverage.**

Casablanca, Marrakesh and Tangier increasingly symbolize an African modernity that preserves heritage while embracing innovation.

The world's admiration for Morocco is not accidental. Morocco has mastered the art of national branding in a contemporary world where tourism will be and it is a money spinner for nations. Its tourism industry is globally celebrated. Its cities are aesthetically curated. Its rail transport system, including the Al Boraq high speed rail, ranks among Africa's most advanced. Its renewable energy investments, especially in solar infrastructure have elevated Morocco into global climate conversations. Its agricultural modernization, phosphates industry and export driven manufacturing further reinforce its economic resilience.

Morocco also ranks prominently



Tinubu

in African diplomacy and soft power. It is regarded as one of Africa's leading tourism destinations and among the continent's most stable investment hubs. It has excelled also in its film and cinematography, staging world class teaching forums and networking in that industry. Its ports, especially Tangier Med, have become strategic maritime gateways linking Africa to Europe and global trade routes. Moroccan banks, airlines and telecommunications companies continue expanding across Africa with deliberate precision.

Nigeria has profound lessons to learn from Morocco's developmental philosophy. One such lesson is strategic continuity. Morocco's long term planning transcends political cycles. Infrastructure projects are pursued with consistency and clarity of purpose. Another lesson lies in urban organization and tourism preservation. Morocco turned culture into economic capital. Its ancient architecture, markets, crafts and hospitality systems were not abandoned to decay. Instead, they became global attractions generating revenue, employment and prestige.

Nigeria can also learn from Morocco's investment in soft power diplomacy. Morocco understands symbolism. It understands presentation. It understands how architecture, hospitality, sports and diplomacy can shape international perception. While Nigeria possesses immense cultural power through Nollywood, Afrobeats and literature, Morocco demonstrates how state coordinated image management can elevate national prestige globally.

Trade relations between both countries continue to expand through banking, fertilizer cooperation, agriculture, energy and manufacturing. Morocco's phosphate industry holds enormous importance for Nigeria's agricultural ambitions. Partnerships involving fertilizer production have helped strengthen food security cooperation. Likewise, the energy partnership anchored on the Atlantic gas project represents one of Africa's boldest economic dreams.

Morocco's diplomatic affinities also deserve recognition. Rabat has positioned itself as both African and

Mediterranean, Islamic and modern, traditional and innovative. It speaks to Europe with confidence while embracing Africa with intentionality. This dual identity has given Morocco unusual diplomatic leverage. In recent years, Morocco has strengthened relations across the Sahel and Atlantic Africa, presenting itself as a stabilizing and economically attractive partner.

Why then does the world increasingly gravitate toward Morocco. The answer lies in consistency, elegance, strategic patience and vision. Morocco projects stability in a turbulent region. It presents itself as a country of culture rather than chaos, architecture rather than anarchy, diplomacy rather than desperation. It has mastered the language of international engagement without losing its indigenous soul.

Yet, the Morocco Nigeria relationship is not one sided admiration. Nigeria brings enormous demographic strength, entrepreneurial vitality, intellectual capital, entertainment influence and energy resources into the partnership. Together, both nations represent a powerful Atlantic African axis capable of reshaping continental economics and diplomacy.

In many ways, Morocco and Nigeria embody two different African energies converging into one strategic future. Nigeria represents dynamism, population, raw ambition and continental influence. Morocco represents structure, strategic refinement, global positioning and infrastructural elegance. Their partnership therefore carries profound symbolic significance for Africa itself. Africa seeking integration without losing identity, modernization without cultural erasure, and global relevance without surrendering sovereignty.

As the twenty first century unfolds, the Rabat Abuja connection may very well become one of the defining diplomatic corridors of Africa. From energy to trade, culture to geopolitics, education to tourism, the relationship continues to strengthen with remarkable momentum. Morocco's rise offers inspiration. Nigeria's scale offers opportunity. Together, they reveal an African possibility too important for the world to ignore.

## Healthline

# Training Women To Live Long In Akwa Ibom

NSIKAK EKANEM

“We do not want any woman to die. Whether she is somebody’s daughter, sister, granddaughter, mother, wife or girlfriend, no woman deserves to die!” Those words with the tone of alarm for quick response and due diligence constituted the admonition uttered by Ekem Emmanuel John, a medical doctor and Akwa Ibom State Commissioner for Health, while addressing participants at a three-day master training of trainers on the management of postpartum haemorrhage in Uyo, the state capital.

The “we” in the commissioner’s words refers to the Akwa Ibom State government under the headship of Governor Umo Eno. Often used PPH, the abbreviated form of postpartum haemorrhage, in common parlance, means “bleeding after birth”. It is widely said to be the major cause of maternal mortality.

The three-day workshop is part of a 10-month training programme embarked upon for training of healthcare workers on how best to handle PPH. The training, which started in April is done in collaboration with SCIDaR, an acronym of Solina Centre For International Development and Research. SCIDaR is a Nigerian non-profit non-governmental organisation focusing on health and education largely through consulting and programme implementation, as well as research.

Like some other indices of human development or underdevelopment, available statistics on maternal mortality ratio, MMR, does not situate the sub-Saharan Africa in a position to relax. For instance, a report indicates that in 2023, 197 deaths occurred per 100,000 live births across the globe, 80 per cent of which was occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, largely through PPH. Within the period under consideration, 10 per cent of global maternal deaths happened in Nigeria.

Worldwide, brighter picture of MMR is in Finland, which has three to eight per 100,000 live births, and Sweden, with a record of four deaths per 100,000.

Chinedu Obikili, a maternal health specialist, who works with SCIDaR, told SUNDAY INDEPENDENT that “in Nigeria, maternal mortality is higher in the northern part of the country, hence a lot of intervention started there.”

SCIDaR, which has its spread across Nigeria’s 36 states and Abuja, Nigeria’s capital, works on maternal health in 11 states. According to Obikili, the NGO “started work on maternal health in Niger, Lagos and Kano states and later expanded to Plateau, Ebonyi, Delta and Katsina States.”

With data showing that Akwa Ibom has 774 deaths per 100,000 live births, the state is rated one of the highest in MMR in Southern Nigeria. Regarding the grim picture, the commissioner told SUNDAY INDEPENDENT that “Nigeria is a far cry to the United Nations’ Sustainable Develop-



Gov.Eno

ment Goal, UN-SDG, and since whatever affects the country affects all within it, Akwa Ibom cannot be an isolated case.”

“The beautiful thing”, in the words of Dr John, “is that we recognise there is a problem and we are working towards the solution of that problem. In what seems to be a veiled reference to the COVID-19 era, in which stakeholders in Akwa Ibom health sector were controversially singing in discordant tunes over statistics on the pandemic, John said, “where we used to quarrel in time past was where there was a problem and we played the ostrich by not agreeing there is a problem.” Referring to methodology of the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Health under his watch, John said, “we identify and design pathways to solving problems.” Still on the necessity of rolling out the training programme, the commissioner rationalised thus: “When we find out there are health indices that are disturbing, we owe a duty to the government and the people of Akwa Ibom to take steps to correct such.”

While disclosing that “there is a lot of investment in maternal healthcare made by the federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare”, Obikili also revealed that “Akwa Ibom is among one of the places that have not got a lot of the PPH intervention yet.”

Lauding the commissioner for facilitating the state to play its collaborative role effectively, Obikili explained to SUNDAY INDEPENDENT that “the Akwa Ibom State government has been central to everything SCIDaR does, even before coming to the state.”

Justifying the necessity for the training further, Dr Dachun Alexander of the federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, who admitted that “Postpartum haemorrhage remains one of the leading causes of maternal mortality in Nigeria”, expressed displeasure that “despite progress over the years, far too many

**With data showing that Akwa Ibom has 774 deaths per 100,000 live births, the state is rated one of the highest in MMR in Southern Nigeria**

women still lose their lives to preventable complications related to childbirth.”

As observed by this reporter, the three-day training exercise, could be said to be a classroom and laboratory outside a school environment. Referring to what is called EMOTIVE, Alexander explained that the intervention strategy designed to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity caused by excessive bleeding after birth “emphasises early detection, timely response and coordinated care to prevent and



John

manage PPH effectively.”

Asserting that “the training is coming at the right time” Dr Aniedi Etuk, a Chief Nursing Officer, listed important aspects of the training to include “provision of guidelines, standard precaution on what to do – the standard order on how to handle any patient having PPH”, among others. She said: “The training has made us to know when to start action, when to call for help, when to look for other trained personnel.”

On meeting the UN-SDG, which is targeting drastical reduction of maternal mortality, Obikili, however, opined that it may be difficult to get to the target.” He pointed to inaccurate data, which he said constituted hindrances in ascertaining how close one is to the goal. Saying that it would not be easy to arrive at the SDG, he stressed the need for continuous push.

To Aniekan Abasiattai, a professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, the training has been “very significant to reducing maternal mortality.” Although he opined that achieving the SDG target is in the realm of probability, Abasiattai, sees hope because “all hands are on deck.” Specific on Akwa Ibom, Mrs Etuk told SUNDAY INDEPENDENT thus: “If we can step down the training to everywhere in Akwa Ibom, down to community health workers, as scheduled in the programme, the rate of maternal mortality will greatly reduce in the state.”

Another problem identified in the case of Akwa Ibom revolves around indulgence of unethical practices, such as the preference of many to go for child delivery at non-medical places like “spiritual” homes and churches, Abasiattai mentioned that “one of the reasons women do not go to hospitals, which forms barrier for women accessing health care services has to do with attitude of healthcare workers and respective maternity care.” According to the professor, that poor behaviour is “one of the

things that has been noticed and well documented.” He added that much was emphasised on that in the course of the training.

The envisaged objectives of the exercise may have much to do with what Alexander, who represented the Director and Head of Reproductive Health at the federal ministry of health, Dr Samuel Oyeniyi, told participants at the event: “The success of this programme depends not only on what is learned but how effective it is translated into practice.”

The unwell situation, particularly at the circumstance of maternal mortality rate in Akwa Ibom, as said by sources close to the commissioner, has contributed in making Dr John, who always appears restless on healthcare matters, not to relax. The commissioner told SUNDAY INDEPENDENT thus: “We are bracing up to the challenge.”

He added: “Medicine is a professional space in terms of speciality. It requires continuing medical education, training and retraining for doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other health workers. So, the state government, right now, is not just focusing on employing people and sending them to places, but on training them, giving them the right skills and equipping them to do the work. That is what informs the workshop.”

It was gathered that the workshop for women to live long in Akwa Ibom is one of the measures put in place by John towards ensuring efficient and effective health care delivery in Akwa Ibom.

Dr Eddiong James of the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Health, who coordinated the workshop disclosed to SUNDAY INDEPENDENT that the next phase of the 10-month programme will include “stakeholders engagement and sensitisation.” According to him, it will include parleying with traditional rulers at all levels and women groups, mostly at market places and churches.

## EPL Final Day:

# Spurs, West Ham Face Uncertainties As Arsenal Set For Coronation



CHIBUIKE CHUKWU

Despite mountain expectations that Manchester City, playing at the Vitality Stadium against the host, Bournemouth, would extend Arsenal's celebrations to the final day, The Citizens left it late to draw 1-1 to hand over the 2025/26 English Premier League title to the Gunners, with the latter finally ending their 22-year wait for the coveted silverware.

However, while Crystal Palace, who will host Arsenal today at the Selhurst, will be mounting a guard of honour for the new English champions, nothing more than a pride will be at stake for the UEFA Conference League finalists, just as nothing more than points increment will be at stake for Arsenal who will understandably be expected to rest a number of their players ahead of the Champions League

final against holders, Paris Saint Germain.

Prior to that Man City slip, the Gunners had earlier put themselves on the verge of the crown with Monday evening's 1-0 win against Burnley. They were able to celebrate just 24 hours later as Pep Guardiola's Manchester City held Bournemouth to a draw.

That result also saw Bournemouth seal a place in the top eight of the Premier League which will likely be enough to see the Cherries qualify for Europe.

As a result, attention today will be turned to the relegation state of play as Tottenham and West Ham battles goes to the last day on who will join both Wolves and Burnley in the Championship next season.

Tottenham and West Ham United face a tense final day with the final relegation battle

set to be decided following the former's draw with Chelsea

It's set to be a final-day shootout between the two London Clubs as both clubs remain in real danger of slipping into the Championship. Roberto De Zerbi's Spurs had a real chance of confirming their spot in the Premier League on Tuesday evening against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge. All they needed to do was avoid defeat at Stamford Bridge to rubber-stamp their place and relegate West Ham in the process.

But goals from Enzo Fernandez and Andrey Santos saw the North Londoners slip to another defeat despite Richarlison pulling a goal back. Fortunately for Spurs however, it's a simple equation heading into the final day of the campaign.

All they need to do today is avoid defeat against Everton and hope West Ham don't win and

score 12 goals against Leeds in their own final game - to stay up. A win would guarantee themselves a Premier League place regardless if the Hammers win.

If Spurs lose, they need to keep their fingers crossed that West Ham do not beat Leeds. If that happens, it will be West Ham instead of Spurs that stay up.

Speaking after the defeat to Chelsea on Tuesday night - when Spurs could have secured safety with a point - recently returned from injury, James Maddison, called Tottenham's plight "embarrassing".

He said: "We have to give everything for the club, for the badge, for the fans. It's a bit embarrassing that we're in this position. We're going to need our fans, who were unbelievable tonight. I think we have the best away following in the league."

Former Spurs midfielder,

Danny Murphy, admitted he had a "bad feeling". Giving his prediction to Talksport, he said: "I think it will be a tiny margin on the day, a lot will depend on Tottenham's start to the game, I think if they were to go a goal down, the nerves would kick in. One of Tottenham's biggest problems is their creativity, chances, they can't score goals."

"I think West Ham will beat Leeds and I've got a bad feeling here. I want Tottenham to stay up but I've got a bad feeling they're going to go."

Earlier in the campaign it looked as if it would be either West Ham or Nottingham Forest that would follow those two to the Championship, but both enjoyed a resurgence and Tottenham were dragged into the battle at the bottom.

## Sports

## It's Dramatic Right Now — Redknapp



← CONTINUED FROM P27

**WHAT TOTTENHAM NEED TO DO**

Tottenham's fate is very much in their hands. With two points clear of the drop and with a superior goal difference, a draw should be enough for the north London side to consolidate their Premier League status.

Indeed, playing against Everton today, they've won more games against the Toffees (32) in the Premier League era, and have won more home matches against Everton (21) than any other team.

The issue, though, is that Spurs are not very good at home this season. They've won only two of their 18 home league matches this season - one of which was against Burnley - while no team has collected fewer points in front of their fans than Spurs (12) in England's top tier this term.

Winless in 10 at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, you have to go back to a 2-0 win over Brentford in December for their last league win in north London.

Even a defeat may be enough to stave off relegation provided West Ham fail to beat Leeds at the London Stadium this weekend. However, De Zerbi will want to see out a dreary season on a high and give supporters something to cheer about.

**THEIR CHANCES**

They win and West Ham beat Leeds; They win and West Ham draw with Leeds; They win and West Ham lose to Leeds; They draw and West Ham beat Leeds without a 12-goal swing; They draw and West Ham draw with Leeds; They draw and West Ham lose to Leeds; They lose and West Ham draw with Leeds; They lose and West Ham lose to Leeds.

**WHAT WEST HAM NEED TO DO**

West Ham will feel hard done by that they sit two points off safety rather than one following the 1-0 loss to Arsenal earli-

er this month. Callum Wilson's stoppage-time equaliser was chalked off for a foul on David Raya, which proved a crucial moment in both the title race and the battle to beat the drop.

Even so, the Hammers put in a limp display at Newcastle last weekend, crashing to a 3-1 loss at St. James' Park which essentially resigned the east London side to their fate.

There is still a glimmer of hope for West Ham, but they'll need to do something they've only done five times this season and win a league match at the London Stadium. Two of those five wins have come against relegated pair Wolves and Burnley, and even then; victory may not

be enough for West Ham.

They have won three of their last five home games against the Yorkshire side, which bodes well, though conversely; Leeds have lost just one of their last 11 away league matches, including impressive results at Liverpool, Chelsea, Manchester United and Tottenham.

Either way, there is only one realistic way that West Ham remain in the Premier League at Spurs' expense. We're unlikely to see West Ham win by 12 goals and Spurs fail to beat Everton at home, though stranger things have happened.

**WEST HAM WILL STAY UP IF...**

They win and Tottenham lose to Everton; They win with a 12-

goal swing and Tottenham draw with Everton.

Jamie Redknapp, former England international who once laced his boots for Spurs, recalled how his former side started the slip into relegation.

"They are sleepwalking towards relegation. I said it earlier this season," Redknapp said on Sky Sports.

"The only thing that's saved them is a couple of good results.

"When I say good, they beat Wolves, and they beat an Aston Villa side who had seven players out at the time."

He charged them to rise up and beat Everton at home if they must escape the drop.

"Now they've got to find a way

to win a game at home. Their home form has been horrendous all season. They've had no quality and no character to win a football match. Now they've got to find a way to beat Everton.

"David Moyes will be fuming after the weekend and he'll be going there thinking, 'We've got to get something out of this game.'

"I'd rather be playing Leeds at home than Everton. I think there's a chance they could draw at the weekend..."

Despite this, Redknapp has backed Spurs to just about do enough to stay up.

"Do I still think they survive by the skin of their teeth? Maybe, because I think there's a chance they could draw at the weekend," Redknapp added.

"But can they win? They haven't won at home since December. December!

"They've got the best away record. If they were going away to Everton, I'd maybe give them more chance, but somehow they might just scrape a draw and survive by the skin of their teeth.

"But can you imagine North London if Arsenal win the title and Tottenham go down? How would that feel to Tottenham fans? They don't deserve that." But then it is a whole lot of drama right now but I expect Spurs to finish the job."

Meanwhile, away from the relegation fight, Bournemouth's draw against Manchester City was not a bad one for them after all. A win would have put them in a last-day battle for a Champions League spot but they now need a six-goal swing on the final day to swap places with Liverpool.

Sticking with Europe, there are a number of clubs still in the conversation for a continental competition. Brighton, Chelsea, Brentford and Sunderland could all sneak into the top eight on the final day.



## Ayo Bada

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Bolton joined the AELTC in 2016 as head of corporate affairs

## Bolton To Step Down As All England Club Chief

Sally Bolton will step down as the All England Lawn Tennis Club's (AELTC) chief executive after Wimbledon following six years in the role.

Bolton became the first female chief executive of the All England Club when she was appointed in December 2019, replacing Richard Lewis.

The 51-year-old oversaw Wimbledon's return after the tournament was cancelled in 2020 because of the Covid pandemic.

The AELTC said that financial director Richard Atkinson will take up the role on an interim basis and a new chief executive will be announced in due course.

"I am proud of what we have achieved together - particularly bringing the Championships back

following the pandemic and in shaping a clear path for the future," Bolton said.

"The All England Club is a very special institution, and I look forward to seeing it continue to flourish in the years ahead."

Bolton has backed the AELTC's plans to expand the Wimbledon site and oversaw the tournament's transition from a 13-day to a 14-day event in 2022, with the introduction of play in its middle Sunday.

Deborah Jevans, the chair of the All England Club, said: "I'd like to thank Sally for her hard work and dedication over that time and commend her for guiding the organisation through a period of significant change."

Wimbledon takes place from Monday, June 28 to Sunday, July 12.

## French Open: GB's Gill Loses In Final Round Of Qualifying

Britain's Felix Gill will have to wait to make his Grand Slam singles debut after he fell at the final hurdle in French Open qualifying.

World number 237 Gill was unable to join compatriot Toby Samuel in the main draw at Roland Garros as he suffered a 7-6 (7-5) 6-3 defeat by France's Kyrian Jacquet.

The first round of the men's and women's singles starts in Paris on Sunday.

Samuel, who has never played in the main draw of a singles major before, is the only one of 12 Britons to make it through the three qualifying rounds.

There will be six British players in the singles main draw, with Samuel joining Cameron Norrie, Jacob

Fearnley, Emma Raducanu, Katie Boulter and Francesca Jones.

There was little to separate the players in the first set on Court Suzanne Lenglen, with Gill breaking back immediately after dropping serve in the third game.

But Jacquet opened up a 3-0 lead in the tie-break and Englishman Gill could not claw his way back as the Frenchman secured the opener to the delight of the home crowd.

Jacquet carried his momentum into the second set and struck the decisive blow at 3-2 before serving out victory on his second match point four games later.

Of the six British players in both singles draws, only Norrie is seeded.

Norrie will open against Paraguay's Adolfo Daniel Vallejo, while Fearnley faces Argentina's Juan Manuel Cerundolo with the likely prospect of world number one Jannik Sinner waiting in round two.

Samuel, meanwhile, will face Australia's eighth seed Alex de Minaur.

Raducanu has been handed a tricky first-round test against Argentine clay-court specialist Solana Sierra as Boulter starts against American wildcard Akasha Urhobo, and 25-year-old Jones plays Brazil's 2023 semi-finalist Beatriz Haddad Maia.



Gill is ranked 237th in the world

# 'I Broke The Curse' - The Fall, Rise Of A Teenage Grand Slam Champion

**B**ianca Andreescu stood with the US Open trophy aloft, smiling as glittering confetti fell all around her on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

It was September 2019. The teenager had just beaten the great Serena Williams and, at 19 years old, reached the pinnacle of tennis.

In that moment, she could not have thought it would be more than 2,300 days before she would win another title - nor that the one she did would have a prize of \$3,000 (£2,200), less than 0.1% of her \$3.9m (£2.9m) earnings at Flushing Meadows.

She might not have expected to return to the lower tiers of professional tennis, where there are no free towels at tournaments and players often have to retrieve their own balls.

But after years of injuries, that was where the Canadian headed in a bid to rebuild what had been such a promising career.

Andreescu's US Open victory capped off a year that also included an Indian Wells title and a Canadian Open win in her hometown of Toronto, and had propelled her up the world rankings.

She had announced herself to the world - but then it all started going wrong.

A knee injury enforced a break at the start of 2020 and the tennis calendar was then paused because of the Covid pandemic. When she walked out to play in February 2021, it was her first time on the court for 16 months.

She also admits she had not been ready for life as a Grand Slam champion.

"I don't think it's possible to really prepare yourself [for a Grand Slam victory], especially if you haven't gone through that before, but I wish I had a little bit more guidance after the US Open," Andreescu, now 25, tells BBC Sport.

"You think you know everything at 19, and I just remember I'm not one to ever ask for help, but I am a little bit better at that now. So maybe if I did, things would have been different."

Her current coach Dusan Vemic added: "She had to grow up fast from a carefree teenager to a young woman that she is now."

"You have a different outlook, different points of view on challenges or fun stuff."

"Being a tennis player, being an athlete, you suddenly have a different role. You become a role model for many youngsters."

Andreescu was plagued with injuries - issues with her abdomen and ankle kept her away from the court, and her 2025 season was delayed by appendectomy surgery.

Her form suffered and she has failed to go beyond the fourth round at a Grand Slam since her US Open triumph, with her ranking tumbling from a high of world number four in 2019 to 228 earlier this year.

At the start of 2026 she decided to return to an environment where she hadn't played since 2018, swapping life on the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Tour for that on the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

The tournament rankings work from W15 - the lowest level - up to W100. Andreescu was competing in W35 and W75 editions, with the total



Bianca Andreescu

prize pot for a W35 tournament about £26,000.

The make-up of the ITF tour tends to be youngsters who are trying to make their mark on the sport, women who were unable to break on to the WTA Tour or players who are using it to regain previous form.

The crowds might be tiny and line judges rare, but competition on the court is fierce.

"The hunger the women had that I was playing against, every match was so difficult, and I feel like maybe on the WTA Tour, the athletes are maybe a bit more comfortable with certain things," Andreescu says.

"Certain things are getting paid for [on the WTA Tour]. But on that [ITF] level, nothing's getting paid for, and you're barely breaking even. I was there too at one point, so I know how it is."

"I don't want people to get the idea that the ITF tour is Mickey Mouse compared to the WTA Tour, because that's not the case."

"I feel a lot of admiration and respect for the women that continue to grind on the tour, because it's not easy, even on the WTA Tour, it's just not easy."

Vemic, who joined Andreescu's team in September 2025, echoed those thoughts.

"Every player there needs to prove themselves and everyone is hungry and they're not bored of playing many years on tour," he says.

"They're all driven by their dreams and passion because a lot of them are younger athletes."

"So sometimes it's a transitional part or stage of coming from juniors into professional waters and some of them carry a lot of confidence."

While many of tennis' most talented athletes turned their focus to the Australian Open at the start of the year, Andreescu found herself nestled away in Bradenton on Florida's west coast, navigating coastal storms, eager youngsters and a venue change before her final.

She would go on to win that final 6-2 7-5 against 325th-ranked Vivian Wolff after multiple delays because of violent winds and a move to an indoor court.

It was a stark contrast to her epic success on the big stage in New York, when she battled to hold off a fightback from 23-time major singles winner Williams to become Canada's first Grand Slam singles champion.

The move to a lower level has proven effective. After her win in Bradenton, she went on to reach the semifinals of another W35 tournament before winning a W75.

"I'm super grateful for that experience because I was able to really test the

things that I've been working on in practice, in matches," she says.

"I've been able to test how my body handles the pressure and playing match after match, tournament after tournament, and I got my first singles win in six and a half years. I like to say 'hopefully, I broke the curse.'"

Andreescu says she played 14 matches in 16 days - an important move as she tries to get her body ready for the rigours of Grand Slam tennis.

"I don't think I played that many matches ever in a row, and my body held up perfectly fine," she said.

"That's a win. I'm just taking that consistency into the rest of the tour."

"I think it's been going really good. I'm feeling great."

Vemic says Andreescu has been playing "even more aggressive than before" and has been finishing points more at the net.

"She's a bit of an artist on the tennis court. You are always excited to watch her play," says the Serb, who has previously worked with 24-time Grand Slam winner Novak Djokovic.

"My biggest thought when thinking about working with her was that I would really like to help her reinvent herself or come back to the level that she deserves to be at."

Andreescu, now ranked 137th, is back in French Open qualifying this week. She will need to get through three matches if she is to make the main draw at Roland Garros.

Another key part of Andreescu's reinvention has been to continue to focus on interests away from the sport, including charity work, writing a children's book, releasing music and spirituality.

"I've learned, if I'm just tennis, tennis, tennis, I perform worse, and I just go crazy. I need these outlets," she says.

"I like to explore the other side of what life has to offer, which is more the spirituality side, the esoteric side, and neuroscience as well."

"I'm reading a lot of books on that. They all just help me stay grounded, and they also help me get away from the chaos of what the tour offers."

Andreescu, who famously said she had mocked up a US Open winner's cheque as a 16-year-old to help her visualise winning it for real, has moved towards meditation practices that allow her to be more present.

"I would say I'm more into trying to find a balance and not... continuously visualising an outcome of something," she says.

# Sport



Super Eagles

## What Super Eagles Must Do To Qualify For AFCON 2027 – Obuh

AYO BADA

Former Nigeria U-17 and U-20 head coach John Obuh has shared his thoughts on the Super Eagles' chances of qualifying for the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

The 2027 AFCON will take place in the summer of 2027 and will be the first edition to be hosted by three countries, with Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania set to jointly host the competition.

Nigeria were drawn in Group L of the qualifying campaign in the draw held on Tuesday in Cairo, Egypt and will face Madagascar, Guinea-Bissau and co-host Tanzania.

While two countries are expected to qualify from most groups, the presence of the Taifa Stars means only one country can qualify from the remaining three in the Super Eagles' path, leaving very little margin for error.

Nigeria have endured some disappointments in recent years, failing to qualify for back-to-back FIFA World Cup tournaments, including the upcoming 2026 edition in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, after they were beaten by DR Congo in the CAF playoff final in November.

However, the Super Eagles have consistently qualified for

the AFCON, reaching the last four editions. The last time Nigeria missed the AFCON tournaments was in 2017, while their last triumph came at the 2013 edition in South Africa.

The West African giants have finished second and third respectively in the last two editions and impressed at the 2025 AFCON in Morocco, going unbeaten in normal time before losing on penalties to the hosts in the semifinal.

Speaking in an interview, John Obuh, who led Nigeria's Golden Eaglets to a silver medal at the 2009 FIFA U-17 World Cup, believes that the Super Eagles must approach every match with caution and seriousness to ensure qualification.

The former Flying Eagles coach also praised the team's performance at the 2025 AFCON in Morocco but warned against complacency and underestimating any of their group opponents.

"I will start from their last competition, which was the Nations Cup. We did very well. They brought back hope to us with the way they played, even though we lost out. It was a very good campaign, a very good performance, and there were a lot of positive discoveries", Obuh said, via Footy-Africa.

"Taking that into this current campaign, I want to believe that as long as they do not

underrate those countries—because Madagascar and the rest are no longer small football nations—they will succeed.

"Every country has experienced some level of development as far as football is concerned. Therefore, any country we play, we must face them as if we are playing Brazil, Argentina, Italy, Ghana, or South Africa."

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has faced criticism over recent Super Eagles disappointments, including the failure to qualify for the last two editions of the World Cup.

However, Obuh believes the federation have a very important role to play in ensuring the team does not struggle during its qualification campaign through poor planning or selection.

"Although I have not seen the list of invited players, I know the NFF recognises the importance of this qualifier, and I am sure they will not joke with it."

The Super Eagles are in a period of transition, with many young players expected to be handed opportunities to impress by head coach Eric Chelle.

John Obuh believes this current squad have the potential to help Nigeria end its long wait for another AFCON title, but any other addition must be based on merit and their perfor-

mance for their club side.

"I wouldn't think that their age means they are going to retire at a specific time. There are many of their colleagues playing beyond that age, even in European countries, who are still part of their respective World Cup squads. The most important thing right now is for them to first focus on securing qualification. Let them concentrate on qualifying us before we start talking about representation at the next FIFA World Cup", the ex-Golden Eaglets coach added.

"It is not going to be about my wish; it is about their performance, so my wish will make no difference. It is their performance that will keep them in the team. With the way they are progressing, they are the ones we look forward to seeing replace the older players.

"My wish is for all of them to be part of it because they are young enough to serve us for a longer time. However, they have to perform very well to keep their places, because we need replacements as quickly as possible", Obuh concluded.

Nigeria will begin their qualification in September, with the campaign set to run until March 2027, a few months before the tournament. Before then, the Super Eagles will take part in the Unity Cup later this month and also face Poland and Portugal in international friendlies next month.

## Switzerland-Based Coach Warns Chelle

Switzerland Base Tactician coach Adedeji Adeyemi Anthony (Triple A) has warned Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle to be careful because of those that want him to fail are waiting for him.

Speaking on Crowther 88.5 FM Coach Triple A said: "I am always and will keep supporting Eric Chelle because Nigeria is lucky to have him as the coach of Super Eagles that is why I am advising him to take the friendly matches ahead of him like the Unity Cup to take it seriously and make sure the team defend this trophy in London where Nigeria will be facing Zimbabwe, India or Jamaica.

The Swiss based tactician further give kudos to NFF for arranging Grade A friendlies for Super Eagles where they will be playing against Portugal and Poland after the Unity Cup invitational tournament.

"Super Eagles need to approach all this friendlies to

prove to Nigerians that this team is a winning team like Chelle said few days ago that all he want for this country is to win Gold, so the players and the coach must be fully determined to play very well against Portugal and Poland, "The Super Eagles once play against Portugal under coach Pesiro where they beat us 4-0 so Chelle must make sure they make a statement because some people are waiting for him to fail and this time around he must prove them wrong.

Finally the coach said Nigeria playing against Tanzania, Guinea Bissau, and Madagascar in the 2027 AFCON qualifiers is never an easy ride for the Super Eagles because everybody has setup there games. "The Super Eagles must be ready, we should remember Tanzania made it hard for Super Eagles to defeat them 2-1 at the AFCON in Morocco this year.

## Super Eagles Stars Arrive London Ahead Of Unity Cup Tourney

AYO BADA

Nigeria's preparations for the 2026 Unity Cup gathered momentum on Saturday with 14 players arriving at the Super Eagles camp in London ahead of the team's first training session.

The early arrivals are expected to participate in the evening workout scheduled for 6pm at Cray Valley FC, Middle Park Avenue, London, as Head Coach Eric Chelle begins tactical and fitness assessment ahead of the invitational tournament.

Among the players already in camp are forward Terem Moffi, goalkeeper Arthur Okonkwo, winger Philip Otele and England-based attacker Femi Azeez.

Others who have checked into camp include Junior Ayobami, Al Ameen Tijani, Michael Atata, Adeoye Aderemi, Oputa Chibueze, Ighoke Obinna, Ocholi Elias, Oyedokun Tosin, Owen Oseni and Nnadi Tochukwu.

The Unity Cup is expected to provide Chelle with another opportunity to assess emerging players and strengthen the depth of the national team ahead of future international assignments.

Several of the invited players are either new to the senior national team or seeking to establish themselves within the Super Eagles setup following impressive performances at club level during the recently concluded season.

The coach is understood to be keen on building a more competitive squad with a blend of experienced internationals and younger talents capable of fitting into his tactical philosophy.

One of the notable arrivals is Arthur Okonkwo, the Nigerian-eligible goalkeeper who has continued to attract

attention in England following his impressive performances between the sticks.

Forward Femi Azeez is also expected to be closely monitored after enjoying a productive campaign in England, while Owen Oseni's invitation has further highlighted Chelle's interest in expanding Nigeria's attacking options.

The inclusion of several lesser-known players in camp is seen as part of ongoing efforts to widen the Super Eagles talent pool and identify players capable of competing for regular places in the team.

The London camp also reflects the technical crew's increasing attention to domestic talents, with some invited players earning recognition after standout performances in local competitions.

Observers believe the Unity Cup could become an important platform for home-based players to prove their readiness for international football and possibly force their way into future competitive squads.

Saturday's opening training session was expected to focus on recovery exercises, tactical orientation and physical assessment for the early arrivals following the end of their club campaigns.

More invited players and officials are expected to arrive in London in the coming hours as preparations intensify for the competition.

The Unity Cup is anticipated to attract strong support from Nigerian football fans in the United Kingdom, with the tournament also offering the Super Eagles an opportunity to improve cohesion and tactical understanding ahead of upcoming international fixtures.

## Nwaneri To Get Arsenal's EPL Winning Medal

AYO BADA

Nigerian-born winger, Ethan Nwaneri has received an assurance that he will get an English Premier League winning medal with other members of Arsenal's squad, despite his current status in a loan deal outside the club.

Although Nwaneri has found the going tough during his loan deal with Marseille and doubts linger over his chances of getting back into Arsenal's mainframe ahead of next season, the youngster is favoured by regulations guiding distribution of medals.

The rules allow a minimum of five matches by each player to qualify them for a title-winning medal, which Nwaneri is now entitled to because he played six games for The Gunners before they shipped him out to Marseille at the start of this year.

Incidentally, the revelation comes at a point, the Nigerian-born England youth international is reportedly drawing transfer attention from Borussia Dortmund of Germany, who are regarded as one of his 'long-term admirers.'

Despite the link, Nwaneri's next port of call remains un-

certain, as additional information regarding his transfer value indicate that Dortmund might not readily agree to terms on a deal that they consider costly, due to the finances involved.

A report by Tribal Football further revealed, "Ending a 22-year wait without a league title will feel sweet for anyone associated with the club, and even Nwaneri, who has spent the second half of the season on loan at Marseille.

"Nwaneri will receive a Premier League winners' medal, despite only making six appearances in the compe-

tion this term, with the rules stating that a player needs to make a minimum of five.

"The 19-year-old has only played a sporadic role for Marseille since joining the club in January, scoring twice in nine appearances, but Sky Germany has suggested that he may not even play for the Gunners next season.

"Nwaneri's contract at the Emirates Stadium runs until 2030, and with the teenager commanding a high fee, Dortmund could be priced out of a transfer. Nonetheless, it will be interesting to see how this narrative unfolds."

## EBSU VC Lauds Gov. Nwifuru's Education Reforms, Bags Award

SAMSON NWAFOR

The Vice Chancellor of Ebonyi State University (EBSU), Professor Michael Ugota Awoke, has commended the Governor of Ebonyi State, Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru, for his contributions and reforms in the education sector, attributing many of the institution's recent achievements to the support of the state government.

Professor Awoke made the remarks during an award presentation ceremony organised by presidents of student unions across institutions in the South-East and South-South regions, where he was honored for his leadership and achievements as Vice Chancellor.

Speaking at the event, the EBSU vice chancellor said the progress recorded under his administration was largely driven by the support and encouragement received from Governor

Nwifuru, the university's governing council, and other stakeholders.

"He encourages me and continues to support the growth of the university. We cannot take for granted the role he has played in ensuring that Ebonyi State University continues to make remarkable progress," Awoke said about Gov Nwifuru.

Awoke further and acknowledged the contributions of the university's governing council and the Pro-Chancellor, Most Rev. Dr. Abraham Nwali, noting that their guidance and support have been instrumental in restoring peace, unity, and stability within the institution.

He stressed that his administration's achievements should not be viewed as individual efforts, adding that collective support and commitment had contributed significantly to the successes recorded in the university.

## Nigerian Navy Marks 70th Anniversary With Educational Outreach In Rivers

ITODE AKARI  
PORT HARCOURT

The Nigerian Navy has kicked off an educational outreach in Rivers State as part of activities commemorating its 70th anniversary, distributing learning materials to schools across its host communities.

Organised by the Nigerian Navy Ship, NNS Pathfinder, on Friday, the outreach featured the donation of educational supplies including pens, customised exercise books, textbooks, whiteboards, markers, rulers, pencils, erasers, footballs, and other sporting equipment to three schools across the state.

The beneficiary schools were Nigerian Navy Primary School, Borokiri in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area; Nigerian Navy Primary School, Pathfinder; and Community Primary

School, Mgbuodhia in Rumuolumeni, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Speaking during the event, the Commander, NNS Pathfinder, Commodore Mutalib Ibikunle Raji, said the initiative was aimed at promoting education among children, discouraging involvement in criminal activities, and encouraging young people to pursue meaningful and productive futures.

Represented by the First Lieutenant of NNS Pathfinder, Commander Hassan Yahaya, Commodore Raji stated, "We visited three schools within our areas of responsibility; Nigerian Navy Primary School, Pathfinder; Nigerian Navy Primary School, Borokiri, and Community

Primary School, Mgbuodhia, to distribute educational materials as our modest contribution towards supporting the education of the students.

## Nigeria Customs Strengthens Inter-Agency Fight Against Transnational Crimes

ANDREW UTULU  
LAGOS

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has emphasised the importance of stronger collaboration, intelligence sharing, and inter-agency synergy in addressing terrorism financing, money laundering, wildlife trafficking, and other forms of transnational organised crimes.

The Comptroller-General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi, made this known on May 21, 2026 during a study tour by participants of the Operational Level Countering the Financing of Terrorism and Regional Security Course 2 (CFTRSC - OPL2) from the National Defence College, held at the Customs Headquarters in Maitama, Abuja.

He commended the growing capacity development within the Service, as well as the participation of officers drawn from various formations across the country

Adeniyi described Nigeria's removal from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list as a significant milestone that restored investor confidence and strengthened the country's global financial standing.

He explained that, before Nigeria's exit from the grey list, Nigerian-issued bank cards faced restrictions abroad, which affected international transactions and the nation's image.

According to him, the role of Customs has evolved beyond revenue generation and border enforcement, noting that offences such as undervaluation, overvaluation, wildlife trafficking, illicit movement of

African resources, and other trade-based violations now constitute major financial crimes.

He further disclosed ongoing collaboration with the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), and airline operators on automated currency declaration systems.

## 2027: Yobe Stakeholders Rally Support For Atiku Abubakar As ADC Presidential Candidate

MOHAMMED ABUBAKAR  
DAMATURU

In a significant political development, critical stakeholders from Yobe State have officially endorsed Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the former Vice President of Nigeria, as the presidential candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) for the 2027 general elections.

This endorsement came after a series of extensive consultations held statewide, aimed at preparing for the upcoming presidential primary scheduled for May 25 and 26, 2026.

The stakeholders' unanimous decision reflects a comprehensive assessment of various presidential aspirants, taking

into consideration their individual capacities, national acceptability, and their potential to effectively challenge the ruling party's candidate in the forthcoming elections.

The resolution, articulated in an official statement, emphasises three pivotal reasons for the endorsement:

"Atiku Abubakar's long-standing commitment to national development is highlighted, showcasing his extensive experience in both public and private sectors. His history is marked by a clear record of competence and integrity, making him a reliable choice for voters seeking effective leadership.

"Abubakar is recognised for his ability to unite various regions across Nigeria's six geo-

political zones. His wide-reaching support positions him as a strong candidate capable of bringing together a fragmented electorate at a time when national cohesion is paramount.

"With a wealth of experience in governance and economic management, Abubakar is portrayed as the candidate equipped to confront Nigeria's pressing socio-economic and security challenges. His leadership experience is viewed as essential for navigating the complexities that the nation currently faces."

The Yobe State Chapter of the ADC called upon its members nationwide, emphasising that the upcoming elections present a crucial opportunity to unseat an incumbent government characterised by a lack of tolerance

and allegations of state capture of public institutions.

The chapter firmly believes that Atiku Abubakar represents a credible and capable alternative to ensure a brighter future for Nigeria.

The endorsement was signed by key ADC leaders, including Adamu Maina Waziri, the State Party Leader; Alhaji Umar Kalli, the State Party Chairman; and Kassim Gana Gaidam, the gubernatorial candidate representing all ADC candidates.

As the political landscape heats up in the lead-up to the primaries, the endorsement of Atiku Abubakar signifies a concerted effort among Yobe State stakeholders to galvanise support for a candidate they believe can deliver the change Nigeria desperately needs.



Oba Olubayo Windapo Abidogun, Alara of Ara Kingdom (left); Tunji Olugbodi, Asiwaju of Ara Kingdom and Chairman, Ara Growth and Development Foundation (middle), and Ajibola Tajudeen Abiodun, Principal, Baptist Grammar School, Ara, during the presentation of N2.2m cheque to the principal to cover for the NECO fees of all SS3 students of the school, donated by the American Friends Association, a global NGO, recently in Ara, Osun State.

SEYI TAIWO – OGUNTUASE  
LAGOS

The Rector of the Ed-John Institute of Management and Technology, Rev. Emmanuel Kayode, and a guest lecturer, Professor Isaac Onigbinde, have called for urgent reforms in Nigeria's education and economic systems, stressing that excellence, innovation, entrepreneurship and skills development are critical to national transformation.

They made the call at the maiden convocation ceremony of the Ed-John Institute of Management and Technology, held in Ikorodu, Lagos, where graduates were urged to position themselves as problem solvers, innovators and job creators capable

## Experts Stress Excellence, Entrepreneurship As Key To Nigeria's Transformation

of bridging Nigeria's widening skills gap.

In his convocation address titled, "Excellence, Innovation, and Enterprise: The Triad for National Transformation," Kayode said Nigeria could not achieve sustainable development on a "foundation of mediocrity."

According to him, excellence in polytechnic education goes beyond academic grades and includes technical competence, practical training, integrity and resilience.

"The Nigerian economy cannot develop on a foundation of mediocrity. Every ledger you

balance, every software code you deploy, every business you manage, and every media campaign you design must meet standards that command respect in domestic and international markets," he said.

He urged the graduating students not to wait for white-collar jobs, but to become employers of labour capable of supporting local industries and value chains.

"Do not wait for employment to come to you; create value for others, and employment will follow," he said.

Professor Onigbinde, Director, Research, Innovation and Devel-

opment, McPherson University, Seriki Sotayo, Ogun State, while delivering the convocation lecture titled, "Nigeria's Skill Gap is Real, Structural and Solvable: The Future-Proof Economy Model," described the country's skills deficit as a major threat to economic growth and global competitiveness.

He said recent statistics indicate that about 40 per cent of Nigeria's workforce lacks the skills required by employers, while youth unemployment remains around 33 per cent despite the country's large youth population.

## OPay Partners Charity Group To Boost Access To Education In Osun State

SEYI TAIWO – OGUNTUASE

Do Good Charity Initiative in partnership with OPay Limited has organised a Back-to-School outreach for 1,000 students in Osun State, providing learning materials and other educational support to beneficiaries drawn from six schools across the state.

The outreach, held at Oshogbo Grammar School, Osogbo, brought together students and

teachers from six schools across the state, including students living with disabilities.

Beneficiaries received essential school materials such as school bags, water bottles, sandals, exercise books, socks, and other stationery items to support their learning and school resumption.

The schools that benefited from the outreach include; Oshogbo Grammar School, Salva-

tion Army Grammar School, Special Needs School, Olofa Grammar School, St George Primary School, and Union Baptist School.

The event, organised with the support of the Osun State Education Board, also featured cultural displays and performances by students of the host school.

Speaking at the event, Ito Udo, CSR Project Manager at OPay limited, said the initiative

reflects the company's commitment to creating sustainable opportunities for young Nigerians through investments in education and community development.

According to him, the outreach forms part of OPay's broader social impact efforts focused on education, skills development, and community empowerment.

"At OPay, we believe impact should go beyond temporary assistance. Our goal is to support initiatives that create long-term access and opportunities for children and communities.

# SUNDAY INDEPENDENT

THE MOST READ NEWSPAPER AMONG THE POLITICAL AND BUSINESS ELITE

MAY 24, 2026

Sports



**EPL Final Day: Spurs, West Ham Face Uncertainties As Arsenal Set For Coronation** P.27

## Dele Sobowale On The Other Hand



### How Government Betrays The Military

*“Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori (Latin): Translation: ‘It is sweet and honourable to die for your country.’ Horace, 65-8 B.C.*

*“They wrote in the old days that it is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country. But in the modern day, there is nothing sweet nor fitting in your dying. You will die like a dog for no good reason.” – Ernest Hemmingway, 1891-1961, VANGUARD BOOK OF QUOTATIONS, p. 267.*

Latin was taught to us at Igbobi College until late 1960s. It was also taught in several mission schools, as well as, Kings College and Government Colleges. Sooner or later, we stumbled on the famous quotation by Horace. It was very inspiring then. When the Roman writer, philosopher and satirist wrote those words in 23 B.C, the world was still relatively in its infancy. War was glamorized; and the greatest thing any young man could do was to fight for his country; and possibly, die for her. Fallen heroes were accorded a lot of honors and their orphans and widows were taken care of by the society their head of family defended with his life – at least for those married. By the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially, after the Second World War, armed conflict had become so common that Hemmingway and several others had started to question the validity of Horace’s assertion.

World War I, 1914-1918, took away almost 20 million souls, soldiers and civilians. The carnage was so unprecedented; world leaders, at the time, called it “the war to end all wars”. It was self-delusion at its worst. World War II, 1936-1945, followed eighteen years after; and over fifty million perished; including over two million Japanese, killed by America in less than a week; and six million Jews cremated by Hitler and roughly ten million Russians and East Europeans – not counting Germans, English, French, Italian, Danish and Americans; as well as Africans. One of America’s most decorated Generals left a message carved on stone for all of us. By then dying for your country was no longer fashionable. President Trump dogged the draft which would have sent him to Viet Nam. The bloody coward is now fighting another war – from the safety of the White House.

*“The object of war is not to die for your country, but, to make the other bastard die for his”. US General George S Patton, 1885-1945.*

The truth remains this: a soldier



Bola Tinubu

is employed to kill for his country; not to die for her. He is a failure if he dies; and the higher the rank the higher the cost to the country. It requires millions of naira to train a Brigadier-General. Losing one such high-ranking officer, in a tank which malfunctioned at a critical point in combat, constitutes a national indictment of all of his superior officers. Predictably, they have resorted to crocodile tears.

**CROCODILE TEARS AND HOW WE GET THEM KILLED**

2025: Army gets 7% disbursement for security equipment.

Presidential fleet takes priority over NAF’s aircraft maintenance – Daily Trust, April 20, 2026

“It is the wisdom of the crocodiles that shed tears; when they would devour.” – Francis Bacon, 1561-1626.

Nigerian elected officials are masters at shedding crocodile tears after major disasters to which they might have contributed in one way or another. Nigeria’s crushing insecurity is a classic case study in official complicity in the death of our men in uniform.

I have waited several days; expecting the Presidency, or the Ministry of Defence, or the National Security Adviser to the President, to send a strong rejoinder to the Daily Trust report – which has done nothing short of accusing government of being complicit in

the loss of lives among our men in uniform. None came. Surely, our leaders in Abuja are aware that “silence means consent”. Silence is not golden when a government is being accused of sending its men in uniform into battle as cannon fodder. It is extremely difficult to understand how the government of a nation at war can justify release of less than ten percent of its capital budget to the Army – which bears the brunt of the risks involved in confronting several well-funded and well-armed enemies at once.

The revelation that the “presidential fleet takes priority over NAF’s aircraft maintenance” has reinforced Hemmingway’s pronouncement that “there is nothing good or fitting in dying... You die like a dog; you die for nothing” – while top officials of government and the military shed crocodile tears over a death they might have caused, deliberately or inadvertently. Interestingly, the former Minister of Finance, Wale Edun, was reportedly sacked, not because he under-funded the armed forces and endangered our collective security, but, because he failed to disburse funds for two questionable roads awarded to cronies of those in power. Roads that have not yet been completed take precedent over the lives of living men in arms!!!

*“B/HARAM, ISWAP TERRORISTS: How Nigeria lost four generals, four col-*

*onels in five years” – VANGUARD, April 19, 2026.*

Nothing demonstrates the penchant for official crocodile tears better than the dishonest, self-deceptive and self-consoling statement – “your sacrifices will never be forgotten”. The Sunday paper article by Matilda Ikediobi, listed ten senior army officers who lost their lives in the last five years. Even, as an avid reader of Nigerian newspapers, I must confess to remembering only the last two. How many Nigerians remember them? For that matter, can the Commander-In-Chief, C-I-C, remember their names? The truth be told: they are quickly forgotten – even in Aso Rock.

Braimah’s death however, points to how the nation’s leaders contribute to their deaths. He jumped into the tank with full expectations that it was in good condition. Tanks are two-edged swords; they are devastating when they work; they become deadly traps if anything goes wrong. It would have taken Braimah less than the time it has taken you to read this sentence to realize that he has made the last mistake on earth. Why did the tank fail to respond and perhaps save, not only his life, but the situation? In any other well-governed nation, a major enquiry would have been underway to answer the question.

What followed a few days after is even more revealing of the insincerity of the tears.

**744 BANDITS GLAMORISED – A DIRTY SLAP IN THE FACE**

*“Doesn’t anybody on this team know how to play this game” – US Baseball Coach after his team lost the seventeenth game in a row.*

So many blunders have been committed by the FG, Army Chiefs and the National Security Advisers to Presidents to warrant that question. There must be a method to the discernible madness which only those making important decisions know about. I might not have gone far in school, but, confusion is the mildest word to express the bewildering measures governments have been taking since B/Haram first emerged; followed by herdsmen as nationwide terrorists.

A few days after shedding their crocodile tears over Braimah and others, the same FG and top military brass was shaking hands with 744 bandits, called repentant, and celebrating their return to their communities with uniforms and cash in their pockets.

Nigerians should have expected that open slap in the faces of the men in uniform. Earlier, the Chief of Defence Staff had called

the bandits “prodigal sons” and the National Security Adviser regarded them as “our brothers”. With such warped mindsets at the top, coupled with Matawele’s admission that N900 million was paid to terrorists, when he was Governor of Zamfara State, is there any wonder that those unfortunate boys are being betrayed by those they should trust? The real prodigal son wasted his own money; bandits waste other peoples’ lives. And, no real brother kills members of his family.

**RAMS OR SCHOOL FEES: GREATEST DILEMMA OF 2026**

*“An ethical choice is seldom a selection between right and wrong, but, a choice in the grey area of right.” Daniel H Sweet, 1975, VBQ p. 50.*

Last week in my article, “Nigerian Festivals turned to Funerals since 2015”, the point was made that as the four annual festivals – two Islamic and two Christian – we no longer worry about feasting. Instead everybody is concerned about terrorists striking on the day of merriment. I deliberately held back another reason why there is no more joy in those festivals – especially since 2015.

Increasing poverty nationwide has made it impossible for most young families, with kids still in school, from participating fully in celebrations. Among the groups I spend time with are young men in that category. Most are self-employed; while the rest are civil servants. Something unprecedented has happened this year. The ram killing festival is expected around the second week of May Ram prices are over the roof. At about the same time, school fees, for the third term are due. Fees have skyrocketed. Usually, by now at least half of the members would have bought rams. That was bad enough. Virtually all of them are faced with the same dilemma – buy ram or pay school fees?

It is a heart-wrenching decision for those who have, hitherto, measured their social worth in terms of doing both. One young man, at a watering hole, where few now buy drinks, voiced their collective pains. “How do I tell my children that there will be no ram this year or their school fees will not be paid?”

Certainly, our lives have fundamentally changed for the worse in many respects since 2015, and there is little hope for relief any time soon.

“Be careful what you ask for; you might get it and not like it.” That was a sage’s advice.

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