

Tinubu urges ECOWAS nations to unite against divisive forces

● **reaffirms Nigeria's unwavering commitment to bloc's aspirations**

TRACY FOLORUNSHO

President Bola Tinubu on Thursday called on member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to unite, strengthen ties, and reject forces bent on causing division within

the community.

Tinubu, who is the Chairman of ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, stated this at the inauguration of the Sixth Legislature of the ECOWAS Parliament in Abuja.

A statement by presidential spokesman, Ajuri Nge-

lale, quoted Tinubu as saying that regional solidarity was imperative to strengthen the bloc's resilience and effectiveness at this critical juncture.

He emphasised that member states cannot afford to remain passive spectators while the community faces the threat of

disintegration.

"We stand united against such forces and are committed to ensuring that our unity remains unshaken. We must ensure that cooperation amongst us is strengthened, with a view to building a sense of common destiny and purpose. No one

can do this for us. We must come together," Tinubu said.

"To this extent, reinforcing the legitimacy of the decisions taken by the Authority of Heads of State is key in sending a message that ECOWAS is one indivisible body. It is also very important that the executives,

on the other hand, show similar confidence in the Parliament, which would indeed deepen democracy in our region.

"Meanwhile, in the midst of ongoing challenges, our part-

CONTINUES ON PG 3»

The Nigerian Observer



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...that the people may know

Edo has provided enabling environment for real estate business
—Bliss Legacy CEO

—Pg 16

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Lagos worst hit as NERC reveals areas affected by new tariff hike

● **opinions divided over impact**

EWANSIHA NAOMI,
OYEDUN GOODNESS,
OLUTOLA FAWEHINMI AND
CHIDERA DUMBIRI

The urban areas of Lagos State, Nigeria's commercial capital, are the most affected by the new electricity tariff hike announced by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), according to the latest information from the electricity regulator.

This is even as the recent tariff hike from N68 to N225 per kilowatt-hour for Band A electricity consumers has left many stakeholders pondering about the near-term implications of this move on the Nigerian economy, with manufacturers, Organised Labour and energy experts warning that it could lead to food inflation, industry closures and job losses.

NERC last week announced an over 200 percent hike in electricity tariff for Band A customers, that is, Nigerian households and businesses who get electricity supply for at least 20 hours per day, adding that only

15 per cent of the country's electricity customers will be affected by the new rate increase.

As of December 2023, Nigeria had 12.12 million customers serviced by the 11 distribution companies. Out of this number, 5.61 million customers were metered by 10 distribution companies while 5.83 million customers were under the estimated billing system.

According to Musiliu Oseni, Vice Chairman, Market Competition Rate at NERC, the recent review of the end users' tariff will not impact other customers under the Band B to E service categories. This means that 85 per cent of the customer population will not be affected by the rate increase.

With the newly approved tariffs, it is expected that electricity subsidies for the 2024 fiscal year will decrease by about N1.14 trillion, thus aligning with the Federal Government's efforts to restructure the subsidy regime.

Oseni added that NERC has also implemented a strong monitoring system that utilises technology to

ensure transparency and accountability in the services provided by electricity providers.

"The federal government has indicated a transition in policy direction towards introducing a more targeted subsidy regime aimed at mitigating the impact of changes in macroeconomic parameters, while largely protecting vulnerable customers and fostering investments targeted at providing efficient service delivery in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI)," Oseni said.

On the areas most affected by the tariff hike, consumption statistics provided by NERC shows that Abule-Egba Business Unit in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State, served by the 33-Ota TCN-AMJE line, stands out with a recorded consumption of 998 kilowatt-hours (KW/h) per day. Another segment of Ijaiye, linked to the 33-Ota TCN in the Abeokuta Expressway axis, enjoys a daily consumption of 930 KW/h.

CONTINUES ON PG 3»



Rema: Edo-born musical prodigy of bangers
—Pg 17

Troops kill 2,352 terrorists, rescue 1,241 in 3 months —DHQ
—Pg 3

1999 constitution and quest for true federalism
—Pg 11

Nigerian bridal accessories: A blend of culture and style
—Pgs 22

The Nigerian Observer

Space for Sale



72

Hearty Cheers to the people's comrade

I congratulate Your Excellency, Senator Adams Oshiomhole as you attain the outstanding age of 72 years.

A renowned Labour leader, you rose to the pinnacle of the labour struggle with exemplary courage.

As former Governor of Edo State, your legacy of service is well recorded in history. As serving Senator for Edo North Senatorial District and leader in our State, you have shown profound commitment to development of our dear State.

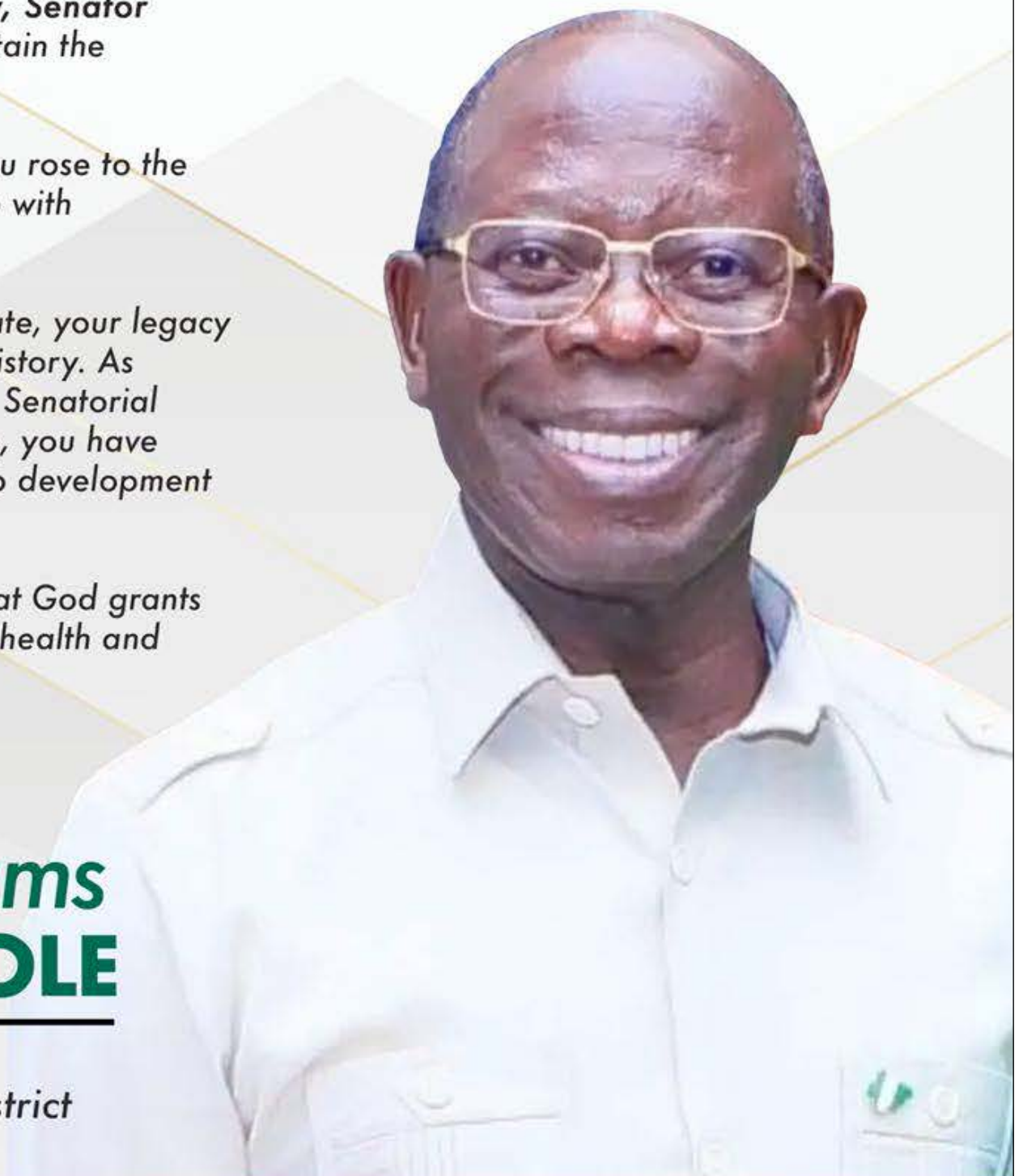
We celebrate you and pray that God grants you many more years in good health and sound mind.

Congratulations!

**Senator Adams
OSHIOMHOLE**

Senator Representing
Edo North Senatorial District

H.E. GODWIN OBASEKI
GOVERNOR, EDO STATE



Troops kill 2,352 terrorists, rescue 1,241 in 3 months —DHQ

TRACY FOLORUNSHO

Nigerian troops have neutralised no fewer than 2,352 terrorists, apprehended 2,308 and rescued 1,241 kidnapped hostages in different operations nationwide between January and March.

The Director of Defence Media Operations at the Defence Headquarters, Maj-Gen. Edward Buba, made this known on Thursday in Abuja while giving update on military operations across the country.

Buba said some of the terrorist commanders killed were Abu Bilal Minuki, aka Abubakar Mainok, the Head of Is-Al Furqan Province of ISGS

and ISWAP, and Haruna Isiya Boderi.

He added that some terrorists' commanders who operated in Birnin Gwari forest, Kaduna State, and along Abuja-Kaduna highway were killed by troops on February 21.

He listed those eliminated to include Kachallah Damina, who was neutralised in March alongside more than 50 combatants; Kachallah Alhaji Dayi, Kachallah Idi (Naimaiddaro), Kachallah Kabiru (Doka), Kachallah Azarailu (Farin-Ruwa), Kachallah Balejo, Kachallah Ubangida, and Alhaji Baldu, among others.

He said the feat was achieved through synchronised strikes between the ground and air

forces on terrorist enclaves.

"For instance, immediately upon acquisition of vital targets, fighter jets are scrambled to carry out major bombarding raids on significant terrorist enclaves," the defence spokesman said.

Buba added that troops equally conducted ambushes, raids, fighting patrols and offensive against terrorists.

He said that the attacks and offensive actions by troops between January and March resulted in the recovery of 2,847 weapons and 58,492 ammunition while oil thieves were denied more than N20 billion returns.

The breakdown of the weapons and ammunition seized

include 1,497 AK-47 rifles, 33,878 rounds of 7.62mm special ammo, 12,698 rounds of 7.62mm NATO, 948 assorted arms and 5,520 assorted ammo.

Others are 21,573,310 liters of stolen crude oil, 2,723,430 liters of illegally refined AGO, 53,300 liters of DPK and 52,730 liters of PMS among other item.

The foregoing demonstrates that ongoing operations are effective and result oriented.

"Accordingly, the military is raising the bar in the prosecution of the war and citizens will continue to witness the incremental effectiveness and efficiency of the armed forces," he said.

Tinubu urges ECOWAS nations to unite against divisive forces

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

nership can be a driving force for stability, growth, and prosperity in our region," the President said.

Tinubu reaffirmed Nigeria's unwavering commitment to the aspirations of the community and, by extension, the fundamental objectives upon which the ECOWAS Parliament was established.

Affirming the important role of the ECOWAS Parliament in the bloc's journey towards a future of peace and prosperity for all, President Tinubu said success cannot be achieved without the loyal contribution and hard work of the community's legislative agency.

"Furthermore, to realise the ECOWAS 'Vision 2050', we require greater involvement of the people in the decision-making processes of the community.

"That can only be achieved through their duly-elected representatives who, being members of their national parliaments, are seconded to the community parliament. We are here, collectively, to serve all the good and great people of West Africa.

"I am aware that the ECOWAS Parliament is seeking enhanced powers, primarily through the election of its members by direct universal suffrage. "This will increase the role parliamentarians must play and the responsibilities that they will assume in advancing our regional development objectives, particularly in harmonizing laws and regulations across the member states.

"Indeed, the practice of directly electing public officials aligns with the democratic principles that Nigeria upholds, as it enhances the legitimacy of our democratic institutions.

"This principle is also in line with the spirit of the ECOWAS

Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. As a one-time legislator myself, I look forward to reviewing a proposal regarding this matter, and we stand ready to support direct elections into the ECOWAS Parliament.

"We believe this would ensure that citizens have a direct say in their representation – in addition to the legitimacy and credibility such a process will confer," the President said.

Tinubu also stated that Nigeria, as the host of the community's institution, will continue to support the parliament to achieve its objectives.

"I am aware of the plan to have all ECOWAS institutions in one complex and of the good progress that has been made. Nigeria is also working to meet its responsibilities in constructing the ECOWAS Parliament's Headquarters in Abuja within the same complex.

"I would like to emphasize that, as you conduct the business of the 6th Legislature, it is my hope that your discussions will provide you the opportunity to address the prime concerns of the region and come up with resolutions that will lead to the attainment of peace and the advancement of all.

"You can stand assured that Nigeria is always ready to support the ECOWAS Parliament, in whatever endeavours you are engaged, to move the ECOWAS mission forward," he stated.



EASTER VISIT:

Edo State Peoples Democratic Party's governorship candidate in the Edo 2024 gubernatorial election, Dr. Asue Ighodalo (left), and immediate past governor of Delta State, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, when Asue paid Okowa Easter visit in Asaba, Delta States.

Lagos worst hit as NERC reveals areas affected by...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

In the Akowonjo Business Unit, the Able-Taylor axis, connected through the 11-Ekoro-INJ-T1-Ekoro line, consumes 920 KW/h per day. The Egbeda area, served by the 11-Alimosho-INJ-T8-Alimosho line, consumes 889 KW/h per day.

Anifowoshe axis, a prominent area within the Akowonjo Business Unit, serviced by the 11-New Alausa-INJ-T4-Siyabola, 11-Adeniyi Jones-INJ-T1-Ajao, and 11-Adeniyi Jones-INJ-T1-Adeniyi Jones lines consume 929 KW/h, 941 KW/h, and 982 KW/h, respectively.

The 11-Ogba-INJ-T3-Oba Akran and 11-Oke Ira-INJ-T2-Kayode lines in Ogba, adjacent to the state capital, consume 888 KW/h and 867 KW/h, respectively. The segment serviced by the 11-Oke Ira-INJ-T2-Mangoro line stands out with a higher consumption rate of 943 KW/h.

Oregun, another key area within the Akowonjo Business Unit, displays varying electricity consumption rates across different line connections. Consump-

tion varies from the 11-Maryland-INJ-T2-Ojota line of 973 KW/h to the 11-New Alausa-INJ-T5-Morrison line with a consumption rate of 950 KW/h.

PTC, a notable segment within the Akowonjo Business Unit, consumes 858 KW/h from the 11-Maryland-INJ-T1-PTC line to 991 KW/h for the 11-PTCI-JN-T2-Awuse line.

In the Ikorodu Business Unit, Lasunwon and Odogunyan demonstrate consumption figures of 890 KW/h and 854 KW/h, respectively.

In the Oshodi Business Unit, Ago and Ajao consume 851 KW/h and 906 KW/h, respectively. Idimu, served by the 33-EjigboTCN-AGODO line, records a consumption figure of 956 KW/h.

The Shomolu Business Unit, including Ikosi, Ilupeju, Mago, Mende, Olateju, and Oworonshoki, all exhibit varying consumption rates, reflecting the intricate electricity demands within this diverse business unit.

Meanwhile, manufacturers have raised alarm bells, highlighting the unfavourable effects

of the tariff hike on their operations. With electricity costs soaring from N68/kWh to N225/kWh for Band A consumers, who receive extended power supply, manufacturers face significant cost burdens that could cripple their businesses.

Analysts say the increase in electricity tariffs would also lead to a surge in production costs, subsequently translating into higher prices for goods and services. This scenario not only threatens the competitiveness of Nigerian products in both local and international markets but also worsens inflationary pressures, making it harder for manufacturers to maintain market shares and profitability.

Reacting to the hike, spokesman of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Mr Benson Upah, said the move was clearly insensitive and cruel and should be immediately junked.

Upah, in a telephone conversation with Daily Sun, argued that the increase would negatively impact businesses, leading to food inflation, company closures, and job losses.

Upah stated that those likely to benefit from the electricity price hike are the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), not the citizens.

"The government's decision is not only insensitive, it is callous. It'll further pauperise consumers, especially workers whose wages are fixed and insufficient," Upah said.

"It similarly makes the operating environment more hostile for manufacturers with potential for an astronomical rise in cost of goods and services or in the worst case scenario, more closures and loss of jobs.

"The only people who stand to gain from this mindless social violence against the people are the World Bank and IMF," he said.

The former Director General of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Dr Muda Yusuf, remarked that electricity is a social service and that the current increase was discriminatory in approach.

Yusuf said the increase still represents what he called cross subsidy by making the elites pay more electricity in order to

subsidize the average and poor Nigerians.

Yusuf, who is the Chief Executive Officer of Center for Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), said the Federal Government must still find ways to continue to fund the power sector, warning that it cannot afford to leave it entirely in the hands of the private sector whose main motive is driven by profit.

But Oseni, Vice Chairman at NERC, said on Arise TV on Thursday that the tariff increase would be cheaper than the accumulated cost of alternative power sources to consumers and would further attract more investment into Nigeria's power sector.

Also speaking on Arise TV, Professor of Energy and Electricity Law, Yemi Oke, said the government needs to restructure the regime in the power sector, otherwise it would kill the Nigerian economy.

"Government shouldn't continue to subsidize production despite the challenges. If there is going to be a direct subsidy, it should be to consumers. You can't subsidize production be-

cause it is going to incentivize wastages and humongous production costs," Oke said.

"The current structure of the power sector is not sustainable and as an energy expert, I feel we have too many subsidies in the energy sector, which include petroleum, gas and power sector. Once we have humongous subsidies in the energy sector generally, would that be sustainable? The answer is No.

"We have always had a mechanism in the law which was never crystalized. I objected to that. The Power Sector Reform Act of 2005 was a funny law that I have always been criticizing since it was put in place. A lot of Nigerians are not aware that we have a Power Consumer Assistance Fund (PCAF), even in the old law.

"PCAF was never operationalized. It was a structured pool of funds meant to subsidize low-income earners who would not be able to afford hikes in electricity tariffs. Government should put in place appropriate structures that would crystallize PCAF. That would reduce the burden on Nigerians," he said.

NEWS

State police not ultimate solution to Nigeria's insecurity, Falana warns

● **urges governments to acquire vital security equipment**

BLESSING IMAGBEINKARO

Renowned human rights lawyer and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Femi Falana, has said that Nigeria should not be deceived into believing that the establishment of state police is the panacea to insecurity in the country.

Falana made the remark on Wednesday at the 3rd Anniver-

sary of the Yinka Odumakin Inter-Faculty Debate and Public Lecture (maiden edition) by Great Ife Students' Union, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife.

Falana, who was represented by the former Head of Department, Dramatic Arts, OAU, Prof. Wumi Raji, explained that state police that's not well equipped and adequately fund-

ed can never confront and contain insecurity.

According to him, the state government that cannot pay the national minimum wage of N30,000 per month should discard the idea of setting up state police.

He, therefore, urged governments to acquire the vital security equipment to track kidnappers, terrorists and so-called unknown gunmen.

"We must avoid a situation whereby members of state police service are owed salaries and allowances for several months," Falana said.

"Therefore, the salaries and allowances of all security offi-

cials should be deducted from source and paid to them directly.

"We must also realise that a well equipped and well funded police service cannot address the crisis of insecurity, if mass unemployment of youths is not addressed," he stated.

He charged the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) to promote and defend the interest of Nigerian students at home and abroad.

The Attorney-General of Osun State, Oluwale Jimi-Bada, said that Late Comrade Yinka Odumakin was dedicated to the struggle for growth and development of humanity

when he was alive.

Jimi-Bada, who was represented by his Senior Legal Adviser, Barr. Debo Oladele, said that Odumakin was a supporter of human rights and advocate par excellence for all that's good for humanity.

He said the late activist committed himself to the eradication of poverty, slavery and injustice in South Africa, and fought against oppression of the poor and high-handedness of the military junta in Africa.

In her remarks, the widow, Dr Joe Odumakin, applauded the organisers of the programme and those that graced the occasion.

Among the dignitaries that attended the event were Edmund Obino of Fresh FM, the OAU Vice-Chancellor, Prof Simeon Bamire, who was represented by Dean Students Affairs, Dr John Odedire, other principal officers and students.

Fourteen faculties participated in the inter-faculty debate. Faculty of Arts scored 81.5 with 3rd position; Faculty of Agric got 85.2 and bagged 2nd position, while Faculty of Law scored 86.75 and bagged 1st position.

Odumakin, a former spokesperson of Afenifere, the apex Yoruba socio-cultural group, died on April 3, 2021 at the age of 55.

Notore records N21.55bn revenue for 2023, to raise N105bn in equity

Africa's leading fertilizer and agro-allied company, Notore Chemical Industries Plc, has recorded group revenue of N21.55 billion for the Year ended 31 December 2023.

This was disclosed in the company's Audited Results for the Year ended 31 December 2023.

In a statement, the company said it recorded the result despite the significant complexities of the economic landscape, adding that it has demonstrated remarkable resilience in navigating through a challenging operating environment.

It said: "The year 2023 proved to be a challenging period for Notore, characterized by the devaluation of the naira, significant forex volatility, and the rising cost of funds driven by changes in the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) rates."

Group Managing Director, Ohis Ohiwerei, commented: "Notore is focused on navigating economic conditions and is optimistic about the future. It will leverage its strengths to drive sustainable growth and value creation for stakeholders."

Building upon this commitment to overcome challenges, the Company announced significant progress in its equity raise trans-

action following approvals from the Board of Directors and shareholders. The subscription offer is expected to result in a substantial capital injection of over N105 billion into the company.

Also, during a recently concluded Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), shareholders provided necessary approvals for the company's financial prosperity. It added that these approvals pave the way for a substantial financial boost for various needs, noting that upon completion of the transaction, the injection of over N105 billion into Notore will bolster operational capabilities.

The company also announced the appointment of Mr. Femi Agbaje as the Chairman of the Board of Directors until the completion of the Company's ongoing equity transaction.

With a career spanning over four decades, Mr. Femi Agbaje brings a wealth of experience to his new role. He previously served as a Non-Executive Director of the Company and held the position of Chief Financial Officer of Notore until September 2018. His extensive experience in finance and banking positions him as an asset to Notore as it navigates its strategic objectives.

Binance, executives' arraignment stalled over non-service of charge

The arraignment of Binance Holdings Limited and two of its executives, Tigran Gambaryan and Nadeem Anjarwalla, on Thursday could not proceed due to inability of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) to effect service of the charge on the defendants.

When the matter was called for the defendants to take their plea before Justice Emeka Nwite of Federal High Court, Abuja, only Gambaryan was represented by a lawyer.

Neither the company nor Anjarwalla, who recently escaped from lawful custody, was represented by counsel.

However, Gambaryan's lawyer, Chukwuka Ikwuazo (SAN), told the court that his client had not been served with

the charge, hence, his arraignment cannot proceed.

FIRS lawyer, Moses Ideho, though acknowledged that the agency had not served Gambaryan's with the charge, he said all efforts to do so proved abortive because the defendant could not be reached at the EFCC's detention.

Ideho then prayed the court to serve Gambaryan in the open court and the judge directed that the charge be served on him in the dock.

The lawyer, therefore, sought a stand-down of the matter or an adjournment to enable Gambaryan consult with his lawyer.

Ikwuazo did not object to an oral application for adjournment and the matter was adjourned until April 19 for him to take his plea.



EGBIN POWER PLANT:

L-R: Head, Capital Projects, Egbin Power Plc, Seyi Sobogun; Project Engineer, Kevin Sadhere; Chief Executive Officer, Mokhtar Bounour, and Project Planner, Olawale Ajayi, at the commissioning of the wind turbines in Egbin Power Plant, Lagos.

Sahara Group installs wind turbines at Egbin Power to reduce carbon footprint

Leading energy and infrastructure conglomerate, Sahara Group, has moved to prevent annual estimated emission of 35,793,360g of CO₂ through the installation of wind turbines at the Egbin Power Plc.

The wind turbines will power critical security and essential services architecture at the Power Plant as Sahara Group continues its quest to promote environmental sustainability in its businesses across upstream, midstream, downstream, power, technology, and infrastructure sectors globally.

Director, Governance and Sustainability, Sahara Group, Ejio Gray, said the project aligns with Egbin's sustainability goals geared towards reducing the Plant's carbon footprint and contributing to a cleaner, greener future.

"By harnessing wind energy

instead of relying on conventional power sources, the project promises sustainable reduction in carbon emissions," she stated.

According to the US Department of Energy, wind energy produces approximately 11 grams of CO₂ per kilowatt-hour (g CO₂/kWh) of electricity generated. In contrast, traditional sources like coal emit about 980 g CO₂/kWh, while natural gas emits roughly 465 g CO₂/kWh.

"Using the operational potential of the 15 wind turbines installed at Egbin Power, we would reduce an estimated 35,793,360g of CO₂ annually," Gray noted.

She further noted that the success of this wind turbine project at Egbin Power would serve as a blueprint for implementing similar renewable energy solutions across Saha-

ra Group's other businesses in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. "Replicating this model could ultimately propel Sahara Group's sustainability efforts, reduce operational costs, and strengthen our commitment to environmental stewardship. The lessons learned from this project could inform future renewable energy initiatives within the Sahara Group," she added.

Egbin Power's Chief Executive Officer, Mokhtar Bounour, said the expected reduction in carbon emissions underscores the project's crucial role in mitigating climate change and promoting environmental sustainability. He further noted that: "The installation of the wind turbines exemplifies Egbin's commitment to adopting clean energy solutions and aligning with global efforts to combat greenhouse

gas emissions. The project will ensure uninterrupted powering of our security architecture with clean energy, while ensuring safety, seamless and efficient operations," he said.

Bounour stated that a robust maintenance plan would be implemented to ensure hitch-free functioning of the wind turbines and associated equipment. He said the plan would include regular inspections, lubrication of moving parts, replacement of worn components, and monitoring of performance metrics, all in line with global standards.

Egbin Power, a Sahara Group Power Generation company, is the largest privately-run thermal plant in sub-Saharan Africa, with an installed capacity of 1320MW and ongoing expansion plans to enhance its capacity through a mix of clean energy solutions.

InsideEdo

IUO interrogates role of private sector in enhancing sustainable demand for private universities

EDWARD OSEGHE

Igbinedion University Okada (IUO) has called for solutions to address the private sector's critical but often under-emphasised role in enhancing the long-term viability, resilience and relevance of universities as centres of learning and innovation in an ever-changing higher education landscape.

The Vice-Chancellor, Igbinedion University Okada (IUO), Professor Lawrence Ikechukwu Ezemonye, made this statement in his welcome address at the Institution's sixth Council Retreat on Wednesday, April 3, at Kada Plaza, Benin City, the Edo State capital.

The retreat with the theme: "Managing the Demands of Sustainability in Tertiary Institutions: The Private Sector Intervention", offered the platform for participants to engage in meaningful discussions, explore new ideas, and strategise for future endeavours.

According to Prof. Ezemonye, "On its part, Igbinedion University has over the years sought to forge strategic partnerships with relevant industries for hands-on experience in favour of the students under the auspices of the academia-industry interface.

"The University has also forged alliances with world-renowned universities and other establishments for collaborative research, joint training, faculty and student exchange programmes, curriculum development, etc.

"The ultimate goal is to provide our students with a truly global education that prepares them to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world."

The Vice-Chancellor stated that industry professionals are invited from time to time to participate in the delivery of Master Classes to students in various disciplines as part of the academic curricula.

"Similarly, in order to enhance meaningful research

that speaks to the needs of the industry, one out of the two supervisors for each postgraduate student usually come from the industry," he added.

Prof. Ezemonye noted that the retreat offers a valuable opportunity to interrogate the role of the private sector in enhancing the sustainable demands of private universities, especially in the face of the ever-changing higher education landscape.

Furthermore, the Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the Founder and indefatigable Honourable Chancellor, His Excellency, Sir Chief Dr. Gabriel Osawaru Igbinedion, CFR, Esama of Benin Kingdom, for his visionary and philanthropic roles that have laid the foundation for the institution, noting that through the retreat, his legacy is being honoured by advancing Igbinedion University toward excellence, innovation and societal impact.

In his remarks, the Pro-Chan-

cellor and Chairman of IUO Council, Prof. Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah, OON, stated that IUO is strategically looking inward to proffer solutions to dynamics in the education space without compromising standards.

He added that interdisciplinary approaches can bore actions, luring the boundaries between academic disciplines and fostering innovations.

Prof. Abdullah further expressed that in sustainability, three elements must be recognized. These are the environmental availability factor, the economic factor, and the societal factor, noting that sustainability is the fact that we can maintain, sustain, and predict continuity. He also stressed that in sustainability, there should be the mastery of these elements.

Also, in his opening address, the Hon. Chancellor, His Excellency, Sir Gabriel Osawaru Igbinedion, Esama of Benin Kingdom,

who was represented by the Deputy-Chancellor, His Excellency, Chief Dr. Lucky Nosakhare Igbinedion, said the 6th council retreat of IUO is organised as part of council's strategic goals of enhancing the capacity of its members for optimal performance.

"The council has kept this tradition going for years now, to be precise for the past 6 years, and has contributed to the growth and progress of our university.

"I'm aware that a retreat such as this serves as a vital opportunity for people to disconnect from their daily routines and create space for reflection, collaboration, and skill building while nurturing a sense of unity and purpose among colleagues.

"The theme of the retreat is

particularly pleasing to me to make a deal of its relevance in contemporary times.

"Speaking, as an entrepreneur, I make bold to say that managing the demands of sustainability in tertiary institutions will coerce collaborative efforts from various stakeholders including the private sector by leveraging their resources, expertise and networks.

"The private sector can support academic institutions in addressing sustainability challenges effectively. Through strategic partnership, innovative solutions, and shared commitment, the private sector can play a vital role in advancing sustainability in higher institutions and contribute to a more environmentally sustainable future."

We're empowering, grooming youths for leadership, says Edo govt

LUCKY EFESE

The Edo State government has said it is grooming youths in the State for leadership, empowering them with the skills and tools to thrive and become globally competitive.

The Chief of Staff to the Edo State Governor, Dr. Osaigbovo Iyoha, said this when he received the National President of Niger Delta Students Union Government (NIDSUG), Comrade Scott Ogunseri, and his executives from the nine Niger Delta States, who were on a courtesy visit to his office, at the Government House, in Benin City.

Iyoha, who identified the indispensable role of youths in societal development, urged the union to brace up and make themselves ready to take up leadership through active engagement and participation in the country's political process.

Commending the leadership of the union for their achievements since assumption of office, he pledged the state government's continuous support and partnership.

He stated, "Edo is busy now as the political activities in the State have increased and the State is on top of the political ladder in Nigeria as the next election in Nigeria will take place in Edo State.

"We are doing a lot as we round up this administration to finish well and very strongly as there are lots of projects we have started and want to finish and conclude before leaving office.

"The youths should be ready to participate and not stay aloof in politics. They should not say we are not politicians. Let's look

at the big picture ahead as we have a long way to go. Look at the candidates in the election, look at the one you want to be like, the one you think can do the job, the person you feel will make the Country and State a better place for you."

Iyoha further charged, "This should not be about the party but the person. It should be about our tomorrow as we have to get things right. We are not doing well as a Country and need to take the Country back.

"We should not stay back but rather have our voter's card to vote for the right person and change the Country. We are stakeholders in our own future."

He added, "Your programme, enhancing students in the area of politics is key as it's one of the areas we have failed as a nation. Participating in school politics prepares you for political life outside the campus and helps you to stand on a firm ground."

Commending the association for embarking on the campaign against social vices in society and assuring of the government's continued support, the Chief of Staff said, "It's important we skill up side by side with whatever degree we have as individuals. We should make sure we skill up in some areas to keep up with whatever challenges we face economically. We should look at other areas where we can improve our lives rather than relying on our degree alone."

Earlier, Comrade Scott Ogunseri thanked the Edo State Government for its support and encouragement which has served as motivation for the executives' performance in the last five months in office.



IUO 6TH COUNCIL RETREAT:

L-R: Vice Chancellor, Igbinedion University Okada, Prof Lawrence Ikechukwu Ezemonye, Lady Celerina Ojomoh, Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of IUO Council, Prof. Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah (4th), Deputy-Chancellor, IUO, Chief Lucky Nosakhare Igbinedion (6th) and other members of Igbinedion University Governing Council at the 6th Council Retreat held on Wednesday, April 3, at Kada Plaza in Benin City.

Edo to set up action plan to fight food poisoning —Commissioner

EUBALDUS ENAHORO

Edo State Commissioner for Communication and Orientation, Mr Chris Nehikhare, has said that an action plan with key stakeholders will be set in motion to fight against food poisoning by unscrupulous persons.

The Commissioner, who disclosed this when the Association of LiveStock Managers and Food Product Dealers paid him a courtesy visit in his office,

noted that people's lives can not be left in the hands of unscrupulous people any more.

"The Ministry has been collaborating with the Association in the past through Jingles to sensitize the people on the dangerous and scary trend. We are going to have an action plan to do more by collaborating with other key stakeholders like the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Public Safety and security.

"We as a Ministry, when the action plan is set up, are going to give the publicity because it is very important that this menace is tackled to expose those behind it," the Commissioner said.

he Secretary General, Association of Livestock Managers and Food Product Dealers, Hon. Steven David, disclosed that the rate of food poisoning with the use of substances such as snipper and other dangerous methods to preserve food

is becoming alarming.

According to David, "The Association is embarking on an operation to fight against food poisoning to expose those involved in the act. Today, some people use nails to boil beans and Fufu has become a secret killer because they do not follow the right process in preparing it and there are fake wine dealers.

"We want to collaborate with the Ministry to embark on sensitization and visitation to the markets."

Council chairman meets with revenue staff, threatens to close down hotels, business centres

LAMAI CASSIUS

Etsako Central Local Government Chairman, Hon. Solomon Obomighie, has berated the staff of the revenue department of the local government over poor Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) in the local government.

Expressing his displeasure during a meeting with the revenue staff in his office at the council secretariat, he enjoined them to redouble their effort to ensure they improve on their generations by next month,

saying their monthly collections fell far below expectation.

He said there would be a time when they will no longer depend on the Federal Government allocation for salaries, and this will definitely lead to non-payment of salary if what they are collecting presently is not improved upon.

The council boss, who also frowned at the attitude of some of the revenue staff that confessed to be coming to work once or twice in a week, said IGR is what every government at all levels depends on to de-

liver the dividend of democracy to the people and therefore threatened to redeploy them to the offices.

"Before I called this meeting, I had already done my independent investigation and discovered the lapses, and anybody found a culprit would be disciplined accordingly," he warned.

Hon. Obomighie urged them to think outside the box and find out areas they have not been tapping, like mar-

riages, adding that he is much ready to close down any hotel and business centre operating in the local government that refuses to pay taxes as he can not tolerate it any longer.

He, however, charged them to wake up to their responsibility and show more commitment to justify their salaries.

Responding to a comment by one of the revenue staff, the chairman said, "I don't believe in lamentations because of the disadvantaged position of the

local government. Lamentation doesn't help instead, we should always think outside the box and think big," he stated.

Speaking in the same vein, the treasurer to the local government, Mr Okodugha Samuel M.O., expressed dismay over the attitude of the revenue staff, saying the strength of 42 revenue staff is collecting IGR far below expectations for the local government.

According to Okodugha,

there are a lot of lapses and insubordination among them towards the work and then to ensure that what is on the table is more than what is under the table.

The meeting was also attended by the Head of Local Government Administration (HOLGA), Mr James Okungbowa, Head of Revenue Department (HOD), Mrs Tessa Igide and the local government adviser, Com. Amedu Matthew.

Again, Okumagbe bestows new title on Princess Benedicta Attoh

● **imbibe Christ values, she urges Nigerians**

BENJAMIN ATU

Few months after conferring a High Chief title on Hon. (Princess) Benedicta Attoh for her laudable developmental stride across Etsako East Local Government, again the Okumagbe of Uwanno Kingdom, Dr George Eghabor, last weekend bestowed another highly esteemed title of Senior High Chief O'thegbechiogie of Uwanno Kingdom on the chairman of Etsako East Local Government in a carnival-like well-attended programme at the Okumagbe's palace.

According to the traditional interpretation, the O'thegbechiogie means the one whose body touches a king. It is believed that the one whose body touches the king always finds favour from the king with all-round peace.

While expressing her appreciation to the Okumagbe, the Queen, and the people of Uwanno Kingdom, Hon. Princess Attoh thanked the monarch for recognizing her efforts as chairman, describing the monarch as a dependable father and a world-class educated monarch, very intelligent and the people's person.

When asked why she was given multiple chieftaincy titles in quick succession by the Okumagbe of Uwanno Kingdom, the chairman said she also needed someone to answer the same question for her as she has been focused on her duty in serving her people.

"The applause of the masses is not a call to shrink from duty but a call to remain dedicated and steadfast in bringing meaningful development to the people," she said.

Hon. (Princess) Benedicta Attoh was previously the Vice Chairman and Secretary to the Etsako East Local Government Council; she was also the Senior Special Assistant on NGOs

to the former Governor of Edo State, former member of the Board, Federal Capital Territory Internal Revenue Service (FCT-IRS), Abuja. She spent over a decade in Ireland where she worked mainly in the development sector. In 2009, she launched DreamWorld Leadership Initiative for Girls, an educational, mentoring and support project for girls who are placed at a disadvantage because of poverty.

Meanwhile, as Christians all over the world celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Executive Chairman of Etsako East Local Government Hon. (Princess) Benedicta Attoh urged Nigerians to imbibe the virtues of selfless attributes displayed by Jesus Christ.

She said Easter offers us the opportunity to appreciate the love, sacrifice, and suffering Jesus Christ bore for humanity and as a nation, we can't make headway without making the same sacrifice at our various positions, irrespective of status.

While assuring the people of Etsako East of maximum security arrangement around the Council within the period, the chairman expressed the need for unity of purpose and collective commitment by Etsako East sons and daughters in overcoming the challenges confronting us as a people.

"As we celebrate our liberation today we must not forget that it is not in the interest of our saviour for us to dwell in disunity, mutual suspicion, discrimination, and injustice. We must therefore continue to imbibe the common values that bind us together as believers," she said.

While wishing the people of Etsako East a happy Easter celebration, the local government chairman reiterated her resolve to continue to serve with the fear of God, saying she will continue to allow God's fear to moderate all her actions.



INAUGURATION OF 6TH ECOWAS LEGISLATURE:

Members of the ECOWAS Parliament on Thursday, being led in oath in Abuja, during the inauguration of the 6th ECOWAS Legislature.

Edo Assembly Speaker lauds Governor Obaseki on infrastructural development

Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. (Chief) Blessing Sheriff Agbebaku, has commended the state governor, Mr Godwin Obaseki for the massive ongoing infrastructural development in the state.

Agbebaku made this known during April's edition of the monthly Fellowship of the House of Assembly.

The Speaker, while stressing that the developmental projects by the state Governor

across the state, is a testament that the PDP candidate, Dr Asue Ighodalo would bring continuity, especially in this 21st Century where information technology is the key to development.

He commended the governor for the prudent management of funds accruing from the federation account to give the people the needed development.

The Speaker commended the leadership of the Fellowship for sustainability and called on staff

to attend more often as it is an opportunity to hand over the monthly activities to God for guidance and protection.

He thanked staff for their support and cooperation thus far, emphasizing that the welfare of staff is paramount to the Legislators of the eighth Assembly.

Earlier, in a sermon, Rev. Igbinijesu spoke on the power of the resurrection of Christ, as unachievable by any one living except with the unction of the

Holy Spirit.

The Fellowship, which is held on the first working day of the month, is another notable edition where the cleric called on all to desire to love God, walk with him and reign with him in life to achieve purpose and make heaven.

The Fellowship was an opportunity to pray for the leadership of the House; Speaker and other honourable members, staff, the state executive led by the Governor.

Arewa community PDP in Edo appoints caretaker chairman

TOBORE JEROME

The Arewa Community People's Democratic Party (PDP), Edo State, has appointed Alhaji Usman Sarehasu as Acting Chairman following the removal of Alhaji Sanni Muhammed as Chairman.

At a gathering of the Arewa Community in Edo State, the President General, Arewa Forum, Edo State, and convener of the gathering, Alhaji Sahabi Aliu Umaru, said Sanni has been

in office for upward of 16 years without conducting an election to usher in a new executive.

Besides, he said Sanni had on several occasions received various items on behalf of the Arewa Community without accountability and given the people a sense of belonging.

Alhaji Umaru described Sanni's remaining in office after many years as illegality, saying that the Arewa Community across the three senatorial districts cannot continue to thrive

in and support illegality.

According to him, Sanni is using his position to work for the opposition party, adding that if Sanni remains in office, the Arewa Community members may work for the opposition party in the forthcoming Edo governorship election.

When contacted, Sanni faulted the grounds for his alleged removal as Chairman of Arewa Community PDP in Edo State.

He said he was in the office as Caretaker Chairman after

his four-year tenure ended, following a resolution of the PDP leadership in Edo State, given the forthcoming Edo Governorship election.

Also appointed is another Sanni Muhammed as Youth Leader who expressed the commitment of Arewa Youths to work for the election of Asue Ighodalo in the September 21 governorship election.

Sarehasu, in his acceptance speech, promised to operate an all-inclusive government.

South-SouthReport

Gov. Fubara to make Rivers hub for medical tourism

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM,
PORT HARCOURT

Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has pledged to make the state first choice medical tourism destination in Nigeria, and indeed, Africa.

The Governor said to achieve this, his government was seriously paying greater attention to improving healthcare infrastructure and services available to the people, particularly at the primary level, to bridge observed gaps between the primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services in the state.

Governor Fubara emphasised that the ongoing reconstruction, rehabilitation and upgrade of all primary healthcare facilities across the state, with a view to integrating them with existing secondary and tertiary institutions, was intended to deliver immediate but quality healthcare services to majority of the people.

The Governor made this known while speaking with newsmen in Government House, Port Harcourt, on the modest achievements of his administration in the health sector since assumption of office.

He stated that, besides the construction, renovation and upgrade of primary healthcare centres across the state, the capacity of the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH) has been improved with the training of personnel and establishment of critical units, equipped with modern equipment to deliver sterling expertise services to patients.

Governor Fubara said: "We are proud of our modest achievements in the health sector, particularly in the construction of primary healthcare centres.

"We are also supporting the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital to perform optimally. Do not also forget the

contributory healthcare insurance law that we have started implementing.

"I assure you that we will complete all the ongoing healthcare infrastructure projects that we have around the state."

Governor Fubara also identified some challenges that have frustrated smooth delivery of healthcare services in the state, and promised to tackle them, saying, "With all these on ground, it is evident that the primary challenges in our healthcare system are more with inadequate manpower, corruption, indiscipline and ineffective management.

"We will deal with all identified challenges and ensure that the healthcare system functions optimally to deliver affordable and efficient services to all citizens of the state."

Also speaking, the Rivers State Commissioner for Health, Dr Adaeze Ore, said that under the leadership of Governor Fubara, the state has experienced formidable strides in building a rigorous and robust primary healthcare system.

Dr Ore noted that the current emphasis was on renovating and upgrading already existing primary healthcare facilities in order to enhance their functionality so that Rivers people can have access to affordable and accessible primary healthcare services in the state.

She also said: "Another update to note is His Excellency's approval of the implementation of the Rivers State Contributory Health Protection Programme, which is the state's health insurance scheme.

"His Excellency has approved the implementation, making Rivers State the latest State to come on board on the implementation of Health Insurance Scheme across the country.

"The law was passed in 2021 but unfortunately, we did not have the implementation of this State's Health Insurance Scheme. But His Excellency has graciously approved and with the announcement of the appointment of an Acting Executive Secretary in the person of Dr Vetty Agala, the team has hit the ground running and the office is in place.

"The Federal Government has been notified. The National Health Insurance Authority and the Office of the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare have all been notified so that all the processes needed for the enrol-

ment of citizens and residents of Rivers State in the Health Insurance Scheme, especially our vulnerable populations, can immediately commence," she said.

Dr Ore further highlighted the importance of the ongoing employment of various categories of health workers in the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital and the Rivers State Hospitals Management Board as approved by the governor.

She said the application process was still open with the online application portal inundated with applications from across the state and the Diaspora.

"Citizens from Rivers State who are currently working in the Diaspora are keen to return to contribute their quota to the Rivers State Health Sector," she said.

Oginibo PDP faithfuls pass vote of confidence on Oborevori, Onyeme, Izeze, others

AJUWA VICTOR

Last weekend, the Delta State Commissioner for Works (Highways and Urban Roads), Comrade Reuben Izeze, celebrated with leaders and party faithfuls of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) of Oginibo, Ughelli South Local Government Area of the state, in the spirit of Easter celebration.

The celebration, which took place at the Oginibo residence of Comrade Izeze, was attended by PDP members from other Ughievwen communities; those from Ewu and Olomu kingdoms were also present during the celebration.

Political leaders and party faithfuls from Oginibo thanked Governor Sheriff Oborevori for appointing an illustrious son of the community as Commissioner for Works, Highways and Urban Roads, in the person of Comrade Izeze.

Highlight of the event was the vote of implicit confidence passed on Governor Oborevori, his Deputy, Sir Monday Onyeme, the Speaker of the Delta State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Emomotimi Guwor his Deputy, Rt. Hon. Arthur Akpowowo and Comrade Izeze.

Moving the motion for the vote of confidence on the governor, Chief Andrew Desi, who is Oginibo's top PDP leader, commended the governor for

the way his M.O.R.E Agenda was impacting positively on the lives of Deltans, describing his administration as one with a human face.

Comrade Izeze, in his speech, thanked the people for coming to celebrate with him, stating further that the administration of Governor Oborevori was committed to transforming Delta State in a way never seen before.

He once again thanked Governor Oborevori for the privilege given to him to serve in his administration, stating that he would work tirelessly as Commissioner for Works, Highways and Urban Roads in achieving the purpose of the governor's M.O.R.E Agenda.

The PDP chairman of Ughelli South, Hon. Michael Oshetigbo, commended Comrade Izeze for being a pillar of strength to PDP members in Oginibo and Ughelli South, adding that he and other leaders of the PDP at the local government level were proud of him.

Hon. Oshetigbo went on to commend Governor Oborevori for appointing Comrade Izeze as Commissioner for Works, Highways and Urban Roads, stating further that, he had no doubt in his mind that Izeze he would help in driving the M.O.R.E Agenda of the governor, as Deltans were already feeling the impact of his office.



OYEDE TRADITIONAL RULERS:

Director-General of the Delta State Contributory Health Commission, Dr Isaac Akpoveta (m), when he played host to the Oyede Traditional Rulers Council from Isoko North Local Government Area, in his office in Asaba.

Pray for liberation of state from occultic powers, Gov. Otu tells Olumba Obu

PATRICK ABANG, CALABAR

Governor Bassey Otu of Cross River State has appealed to His Holiness Olumba Olumba Obu, spiritual leader of Brotherhood of the Cross and Star to help pray for the liberation of the state from occultic and other evil forces that may have held it down from progress.

He spoke last Sunday at the UJ Esuene Stadium Calabar in his goodwill message to the spiritual organisation when they marked the Easter celebration with a programme called Divine Assurance of Christhood.

Represented by the commis-

sioner for local government affairs, Chief Victor Felix Idem, Otu said, "We are particularly saddened that His Holiness Olumba Olumba is a revered and respected spiritual leader that has drawn global traffic of worshippers to the state. The state government is very happy with your contributions and the religious tourism.

"We appeal to you to pray for the liberation of the state from any forces, occultic or satanic that may be impacting the state."

Also speaking, two paramount rulers of Efut Nation in Calabar South Local Government Area as well as that of Yakurr Local Government Area

and Obol Lapon of Ugep, Professor Itam Hogan, and Ubana Ofem Eteng, respectively, also called on the spiritual leader for serious prayers for the country and state.

They commended the spiritual leader for being the highest private employer of labour in the state.

The senator who represented Bayelsa East Senatorial District and former deputy governor-elect in the Bayelsa State, B.W. Degi, said the organisation has used its unique teachings to impact thousands of her adherents, Nigerians and other nationals.

Degi, who is Secretary Gen-

eral of the organisation, said the celebration of the Divine Assurance will bring about positive developments in the country.

Addressing the faithfuls and guests, the spiritual leader said God has intervened in the course of human history, adding that peace and progress are the lots of the country.

He charged all nations to abide by the precepts of peace and forgiveness, saying the aim of the celebration was to elevate all that practise the ideals of the Christ into Christhood.

He emphasised on need for love, saying it is the hallmark of all governments for their citizens as leaders shall be accountable.

Gov. Diri says palliatives not solution to hardship

PHILIP EKE, YENAGOA

Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, has said offering palliatives was not the lasting solution to the economic hardship in Nigeria.

Senator Diri made the remark when he spoke during the Easter Sunday service at the St. Peter's Anglican Church in his commu-

nity, Sampou, Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area of the state.

According to a press statement by Daniel Alabrah, Chief Press Secretary to the Bayelsa State Governor, the governor said even though he was not against palliatives, he was more concerned with putting in place the right structures and systems to address the economic challenges.

He said his administration was initiating policies and programmes that would bring about long-term empowerment to people of the state rather than short-term palliatives.

According to him, the government was tackling manpower shortage and the skills challenge by establishing technical colleges in the eight local government areas, embarking on skills acquisi-

tion programmes, building roads to connect the hinterlands as well as other infrastructure that would bring socio-economic empowerment to the people.

Governor Diri also stressed that the government alone cannot provide for everyone and called on the people to get involved in businesses and other meaningful ventures toward adding value to their lives and the state.

He said: "There is nowhere in the world that the government does everything for you. Let us get involved in businesses. Take advantage of our skills acquisition programmes and that way you will add value to yourselves and Bayelsa State. That way the youths will become productive."

On the significance of the Easter celebration, Diri urged the people to learn from the lessons of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot and that of the doubting Thomas Didymus in the scripture.

He advised that Christians should imbibe the virtues of

trust, honesty and faithfulness in order to have a better society.

In a sermon, the Bishop of Northern Izon Diocese, Anglican Communion, Rt Rev. Funkuro Amgbare, said the power in the resurrection of Jesus Christ brought about salvation for Christians.

Bishop Amgbare, who urged the clergy to always uphold the truth and propagate the gospel, decried the moral decadence in the church and stressed the need to reverse the trend.

Governor Diri read the first and only lesson at the service taken from the book of John 20:1-18.



TINUBU HOSTS APC PCC, OTHERS:

President Bola Tinubu (middle); his vice, Senator Kashim Shettima, and other of his cabinet chiefs, when he hosted the All Progressive Congress (APC) Presidential Campaign Council and the Independent Campaign Council to Iftar at the State House, Abuja.

31 principals to face suspension for wrong WAEC exam list

PATRICK ABANG, CALABAR

Cross River State Commissioner for Education, Stephen Odey, has debunked claims in some quarters that the list of Cross River State indigenes submitted by school principals was not padded.

According to Odey, the Cross River State Governor has volunteered to pay for all

indigenous students of Senior Secondary School writing West African Examination Council (WAEC) for 2024.

In line with the directives from the Governor some principals submitted list of both indigenes and non-indigenes while some duplicated names leading to the commissioner setting up a Disciplinary Committee.

The Committee found out that 31 principals were culpa-

ble and should be suspended, and six were exonerated from the offence.

The commissioner stated this on Monday during a press conference in his office in Calabar.

Odey also promised to clampdown on all illegal schools operated by people who don't have the capacity to run schools in the state, saying, "We will go after them, we will closed them down be-

cause they don't have the capacity to run schools."

He said due to the lean resources available to the state government and because of the shortage of teachers, he has sought approval of the governor for the employment of 6,000 teachers across the state.

He said his mission in the Ministry of Education is to identify the problem and proffer solution to it.

I am not weak, says Fubara

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM, PORT HARCOURT

Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has warned that he will surprise those who consider his honest decision to implement the presidential peace pact as a sign of weakness.

Governor Fubara said he had been inundated with several comments in the media about the implementation of the peace initiative, and had chosen to be silent out of maturity and wisdom.

But, he said, it was important to put the records straight for clarity, and explained that when President Bola Tinubu intervened in the political crisis that engulfed the state on October 30, 2023, the agreement that was accepted was a political solution.

Governor Fubara said, he had since then commenced im-

plementation of the agreement, solely because of his respect for President Tinubu, but cautioned that it appears that other political actors have taken his humility and compliance as a sign of weakness.

The Governor said: "Let me say it here for record purposes. What is happening here in our dear state is somebody who has respect for an elder."

"Mr. President invited all the parties to Abuja, and came out with a resolution that we should go and implement. That resolution, I am implementing it. It is not a constitutional implementation. It is a political solution to a problem."

"And I am doing it because of the respect I have for Mr. President. But, let me say it here, if that action that I have accepted to take would be seen as a weakness, I will surprise them. I want this message to go to them."

Governor Fubara, who had received members of the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) from the 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State on a solidarity rally at Government House Gate, in Port Harcourt on Wednesday, said their large number further goes to prove the nature of the organic support his administration has continued to enjoy from the people of the state.

"Some days ago, somebody said we are busy renting crowd for thanksgiving. But what I have seen here today, it's not different from what is happening at those thanksgiving rallies. People are just appreciating God and good governance."

The Governor stated that he was mindful of the legacy he would bequeath after his tenure, adding, "It should also be about the lives that have been touched genuinely; about the policies im-

plemented without any inducement to better the lives of the people and the society."

He urged the people to continue to support his administration, show understanding over actions taken, and obey the rules in a peaceful manner.

"When you are doing what is right, I will stand by you. Nobody, whether full or half, is going to intimidate you. Brace up, I say brace up, because the next step, it will be fire for fire in Rivers State. Everything will be implemented."

Governor Fubara said already, local government workers have started receiving N30,000.00 minimum wage with promotion to be implemented beginning from April's salary payment.

He also promised to set in motion plans to finalise modalities for the implementation of the Consolidated Salary Scale

for Grade Level 17, and regular payment of benefits to the local government service retirees.

"For our people, the great and wonderful people of Rivers State, we will continue to lead you with the fear of God."

"Maturity is not about age, maturity is in the person. It is what defines the character of a person. I choose not to respond to people that I assumed are matured, but are obviously immature in attitude."

"I will continue to be mature, not minding my age, but I will not, for any reason, allow myself or anybody who is working with me in this Administration to be messed with, maltreated or abused in the cause of administering this governance."

In his speech, the Rivers State chairman of the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Apostle Clifford Paul, told the Governor that

they were on a Thank-You Rally to show appreciation for his love for the workers.

Apostle Paul stated that Governor Fubara has changed their fortunes and restored hope in them when he directed the payment of N30,000.00 minimum wage to the workers, and lifted the right-year ban on promotion, which has now placed them at par with their counterparts across the country.

On his part, the Deputy General Secretary of NULGE, Comrade Ajewole Ayedele, who represented his National President, said they were delighted with the pro-people policies of Governor Fubara, particularly for ending the stagnancy and frustration workers suffered.

Comrade Ayedele assured the Governor of the continued support of the union both at the State and national level to his Administration.

Port Harcourt youths get digital training from Keystone Bank

Keystone Bank, a financial institution, recently empowered about 30 youths in Port Harcourt with digital skills, specifically on web development and digital marketing.

The intensive training, which spanned several weeks, ended with a graduation ceremony on March 5, 2024.

According to the bank, the programme aimed to bridge the digital skills gap in the region, equipping young individuals with the necessary tools and knowledge to thrive in the evolving landscape of technology and business.

At the training, the participants, carefully selected from diverse backgrounds, engaged in hands-on projects that provided practical insights into the world of web development and digital marketing.

During the graduation ceremony, the Regional Head for South-South, Dr. Eucharia Ken-Agbirogu, highlighted the increasing demand for individuals with expertise in web development and digital marketing, citing the transformative impact these skills can have on personal and professional growth.

Dr. Eucharia commended the graduates for their dedica-

tion and hard work throughout the intensive training program. She encouraged them to leverage their newfound skills to unlock opportunities, drive innovation, and contribute to the digital transformation of the local economy.

On her part, Izore Bamawo, the Group Head, Marketing and Corporate Communications of Keystone Bank said the programme reflects the bank's commitment to foster youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, and socio-economic development in the communities it serves.

"By investing in the next generation of digital talents, Keystone Bank continues to play a pivotal role in shaping a digitally inclusive future."

"At Keystone Bank, we are committed to ensuring that Nigeria economy grows. One of the ways to do this is to invest in education of what can take Nigeria from where it is to where it ought to be in the comity of nations."

"We say Nigeria is the giant of Africa. For us to sustainably be the giant of Africa, we have to invest in key sectors that can ensure that we are not just giant of Africa today, but tomorrow."

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Aviation Business: A call to duty for government

In the thick of the ongoing economic downturn, the Nigerian Government and patriotic agents and citizens are looking to navigate the country onto higher ground.

Part of the strategy is to cut wastage, reduce avoidable financial outflows, create an enabling environment for business to thrive, find creative ways to generate goods, services, jobs and foreign earnings and grab every opportunity along these lines with both hands.

One such opportunity is staring Nigeria in the face and presents as a low hanging fruit. Not surprisingly, some foreign governments and agents are said to be setting up all manner of roadblocks to thwart the opportunity.

Surprisingly though, some agents of the Nigerian Government are said to be resisting, even rebuffing the opportunity too and making the country appear to be at odds with its avowed development drive.

This is how it manifests. Air Peace, a leading private Nigerian airline, which has been priming itself for a bigger share of the Nigeria/UK passenger market by building up its fleet of aircraft, enhancing operational

efficiencies and undercutting foreign airlines by 66 percent on airfares, says it is contending with strong internal and external conspiracies and resistance in its expansion drive.

Air Peace, has pegged its economy class ticket at N1.2 million on the Lagos-London route, while findings show that foreign airlines charge an average of N3.5 million for economy class tickets from Lagos to London.

The airline is likewise pushing for a foothold and the US market.

In an interview with Arise TV on Monday, Chief Executive Officer of Air Peace, Allen Onyema, said Air Peace is faced with struggles and sabotage in its expansion plan. His words “You suffer what I call both internal and external conspiracies. It took us seven years. We got the designation I think about six and a half years ago to go into London. Since then, it has been Cat-and-Mouse game.

“Whether you like it or not, there is what is called international aero politics which is very dirty. We applied for the TCO. TCO means Technical Country Operators permit, you must get that one before you

start going into any European country, UK inclusive. And the TCO organisation from Europe wrote our Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority- Do you know Air Peace? Do you know about their designation? And we were denied. My own country denied us, so they threw it back.

“We went back to the NCAA, they said, oh, we didn’t tell them. Who designated us? It was the Federal Ministry of Aviation, whose duty it was and still is to do that. We said okay, we’re ready. They refused, they said until they allow us to apply. So, we got designation from the Federal Government, and the NCAA, under the same Federal Government was telling us that we should not make any application towards going into the UK.”

Such conduct, if true, contradicts the goal and essence of national development. The Federal Government should check the conduct of its agents and ensure they pursue the stated goal of creating an enabling environment for business, including indigenous airlines to thrive, so as to grow the economy.

Government, its agencies or agents cannot be seen acting

contrary to the national interest.

There are other benefits derivable from the growth and expansion of indigenous airlines. One of these is that the Federal Government would be under less foreign exchange obligation to foreign airlines if indigenous airlines acquired more share of the international market.

Other benefits include foreign exchange earnings, taxes and spin-off businesses that an expanded aviation industry will generate, as well as the creation of employment and wealth in the local economy. International relations and diplomacy facilitation, as well as socio-political and economic development are also counted among the gains of a thriving indigenous aviation sector.

Furthermore, Air Peace has proven to be a responsible corporate entity, regularly supporting Nigeria in times of emergency and need, by evacuating citizens from trouble spots and rendering other such commendable national service.

The agents of government must stand true to their calling and work to uplift the nation and where they fail to do this, sanctions must be duly and swiftly applied.

The Nigerian
Observer

Cartoon Corner

...that the people may know

NEWS: DR. ADESINA CALLS ON FG TO CHANGE
NAME OF NIG TO ‘UNITED STATES OF NIGERIA’

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OPINION

The Nigerian Observer
...that the people may know

Character as cradle of credibility for Nigerian leader

ISSUES MISCELLANEOUS

With

KALU OKORONKWO
Leadership & Good Governance Advocate



The most valuable component of leadership is not power, position, influence, fame, talent, giftings, dynamic oratory, intellectual superiority or even management skills. Character is the cradle of credibility for the leader.

Leadership is a solemn responsibility that carries the weight of a nation's hopes and aspirations. For a diverse and dynamic country like Nigeria, leadership is not just a position; it is a stewardship of a nation's future. Leaders are expected to be exemplars of integrity, vision, and ethical conduct, but the history of the Nigerian leadership journey has witnessed instances of leaders who have fallen short of these expectations, leaving a trail of disappointment in their wake.

Nigeria has repeatedly had leaders lacking character, who erode trust, perpetuate unethical behaviour, and fail to uphold the principles of responsibility, accountability, and empathy. This does not only hamper their ability to lead effectively but also burdens the people with disillusionment and unfulfilled promises.

A nation so blessed with immense human and material resources, a diverse, resilient population, should be occupying the top echelon of comity of nations. Nigeria remains a nation in search of true leadership – a leadership that can harness this potential and steer the country toward a brighter future.

In every turn, the Nigerian leader is defective on character when it comes to the discharge of his leadership responsibility and this is almost traceable to every leader occupying prominent position in the country and cutting across; politicians, captains of industry, clergy-

men celebrities, and what have you.

For instance, the Nigerian political landscape has, over the years, witnessed its fair share of controversies and scandals, but few have been as persistent and intriguing as the “certificate saga” surrounding the educational qualifications of many of the nation's leaders.

The certificate saga in Nigerian politics is as old as the nation's democratic history. It dates back to the early post-independence period when the qualifications of political leaders were questioned. The first major certificate scandal emerged in 1964 when Obafemi Awolowo, a prominent political figure, was accused of presenting fraudulent academic qualifications. Although Awolowo was later cleared of the charges, this incident marked the beginning of a long history of certificate controversies in Nigerian politics.

The certificate saga has, over the years, embroiled a myriad of political figures, including presidential candidates, governors, and legislators. The controversies often revolve around claims of forged certificates, discrepancies in educational records, or allegations of incomplete qualifications. Prominent leaders such as Muhammadu Buhari, Goodluck Jonathan, Rochas Okorocha and now Bola Ahmed Tinubu, among many other notable figures, have faced certificate-related scrutiny.

The certificate saga has profound implications for leadership in Nigeria. On one hand, it raises questions about the integrity and honesty of leaders. When leaders are perceived as lacking transparency or credibility in their educational qualifications, it erodes the trust of the people, a critical component of

effective leadership. On the other hand, it can also divert attention from more pressing issues, obscuring the focus on governance and policy-making.

When this happens, diverse views will emerge. While some argue that educational qualifications are essential for leadership, others believe that leadership should be judged based on performance and the ability to deliver on promises. This diversity of opinion reflects the complexity of the issue.

Certificate saga is not just a matter of personal integrity; it is a reflection of broader challenges facing Nigeria. The nation's educational system, accountability mechanisms, and political processes all come under scrutiny.

Greater transparency in educational records and a more stringent vetting process for candidates have to grow louder to avoid the perennial distraction that follows its occurrence while accountability and ethical conduct in public life are also seen as important facets of addressing the issue.

Nigerians are not exclusive in their yearning for effective leadership. Around the world, citizens seek leaders who are principled, transparent, and devoted to the welfare of the people. People yearn for leaders who rise above the lure of self-interest and are committed to the common good. This hunger for legitimacy is universal, but in Nigeria, it is a hunger that has yet to be fully satiated.

As a country characterized by a complex interplay of diverse ethnic groups, interests, and socio-economic disparities, this complexity has often led to a struggle for power that overshadows the core tenets of leadership, service, accountability, and progress.

Another grave challenge to effective leadership in Nigeria is the pervasive issue of corruption. Corruption has seeped into various aspects of the nation's governance and institutions, eroding trust, stifling development, and thwarting the aspirations of millions. Effective leadership stands as the

antidote to this plague, promising accountability, transparency, and an unwavering commitment to eradicating corruption at its roots.

Nigerian leadership requires a compelling vision for the nation, one that transcends the divisions that have too often held its destiny back. This vision must unite Nigerians under a common purpose, instilling hope and faith in a shared future. The challenges are many – from ethno-religious tensions to economic disparities, but a true leader is called to confront these challenges with a commitment to unite the nation.

As Nigeria continues its search for true leadership, it is essential to remember that leadership is not the sole responsibility of those in power; it is a collective endeavor. Citizens, civil society, and the international community all play vital roles in nurturing and holding leaders accountable.

It is time for Nigeria to break free from the cycle of unfulfilled potential and missed opportunities. It is time for leaders to rise, not for personal gain, but for the greater good. Nigeria's journey toward effective leadership may be long and arduous, but it is a journey worth undertaking, for the destiny of a nation and the aspirations of a people hang in the balance.

Nigeria's potential is undeniable. It is the most populous country in Africa, a hub of economic activity, and home to a burgeoning youth population. With natural resources, a burgeoning tech industry, and a dynamic creative sector, the nation has all the ingredients for success. But potential alone cannot shape destiny.

Nigeria's diversity is both a strength and a challenge. For a nation comprised of over 250 ethnic groups and multiple religions, unity is often elusive. Yet, unity is the foundation of a brighter destiny. An inclusive vision that brings all Nigerians together, regardless of their background, can foster a sense of shared purpose.

Economic disparities must be addressed. Nigeria's wealth should be shared equitably, and policies that promote sustainable development must take center stage. An inclusive economic framework can uplift millions and serve as the basis for a prosperous future.

Security remains a significant concern. Addressing issues such as terrorism, insurgency, and communal violence is crucial for stability and progress. A secure environment is a prerequisite for any nation's destiny to flourish.

Leadership is the fulcrum upon which a nation's destiny pivots. Effective leadership, characterized by integrity, transparency, and a dedication to the welfare of the citizens, is the need of the hour. It is leadership that places the interests of the nation above personal gain and works tirelessly to overcome the obstacles that threaten to stifle progress.

Nigeria's destiny is not etched in stone; it is an evolving narrative written by its leaders and citizens. The nation stands at a crossroads, where the choices made today will reverberate through generations. Nigeria's destiny is not predetermined; it is waiting to be woven with the threads of unity, progress, and resilience.

As the world watches, as Africa watches, Nigeria is in pursuit of a leadership destiny that will define its place in history. It is a journey marked by challenges, but also by the unyielding spirit of its people. The destiny of Nigeria is in the hands of those who believe in the nation's potential, who are committed to forging a united, inclusive, and prosperous future. The nation is in search of true committed leadership. The story is still being written, chapter by chapter. It is a story of hope, resilience, and the unwavering belief that Nigeria's best days are yet to come.

Okoronkwo, a leadership and good governance advocate, writes from Lagos

Remembering Buhari, Emeziele with nostalgia

OKWUDILI OJUKWU-ENENDU

In the wee days of the Buhari regime, the man was quoted as saying that Nigerians would remember his government with nostalgia. When I read it, I sneered. Nigerians would rather have him stoned for stalling the nation's development, I mused.

I never knew that Buhari had joined the prophets, and that his deity was of the sharp-sharp variety. To me, it was simply unimaginable that the lacklustre regime characterised by incompetence, nepotism and spectacular corruption could be outdone for anyone to long for it.

But what has Nigeria had since May last year when he handed over to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the same All Progressives Congress (APC)? The macroeconomic indices have gone haywire.

With his careless verbal dismissal of fuel subsidy right on inauguration grounds, he set the tone for the level of inflation the nation hasn't seen in a very long time.

Adding fuel to fire, he altered the extant foreign exchange regime with 'immediate effect' like the military governments of the past.

The result was that the price of petrol spiked from about N200 per litre to N600 per litre in a matter of minutes

(hovering around N700 now). Being that road transportation is the primary source of movement in the country, the effect was predictable.

Tinkering with the forex market the way he did, hit the economy in precise manner. An import-dependent economy cannot take such a shock without a very significant market impact. Prices rose astronomically. Today, food inflation is heading to 40 percent year-on-year, while core inflation stood at 29.9 percent in January – a 27-year high.

For the citizens, the times are bitter. Many people are skipping meals and suffering great deprivation. Some have protested in Niger, Kano and a few other states. But hunger will yet get acute in the months ahead. Corn, which is the base for both human and animal feed sells for about N70,000 per bag wholesale, up 100 percent from N35,000 at this time in 2023. By the time the first rains come, the price would spike and it would be a surprise if it doesn't hit N100,000 per bag by the end of the planting season. How many farmers can buy and plant at such a cost? And if food inflation is heading to 40 percent within the first quarter, what would the picture be by June/July, which are the toughest months before the main harvest starts?

It's not that a government cannot

make bold policy decisions and alter the direction of governance. The issue, however, is that governments think through whatever policy decisions they want to make and the impacts such policies are likely to make. It is doubtful that such rigours went into these twin policies that have left Nigeria prostrate. Tinubu had three months between being declared winner of the presidential election and being sworn in. That was sufficient time for his economic team to have thought through his key policies. But he apparently opted for the 'kick-and-follow' football tactics – slam the policy and manage whatever comes up.

In the kick-and-follow tradition, the petrol subsidy decision was announced, and the fallout thundered home without any shield – economic or social. It was several days later that Tinubu made a promise of some palliative. And some palliative it was. He promised some N8,000 grant per month to the poorest families to ameliorate their pains. It took public outcry against the mean sum for it to be adjusted. Nine months down the line, I'm yet to hear of whoever has been given the grant.

For inflation, Tinubu apparently left it to run its course initially. Of course, Aso Rock is on another planet and can hardly hear cries from Nigeria. By the time Tinubu realized that Nigerians

were roaring, and shook up his CBN governor, it was eight months down the line. Olayemi Cardoso told the House of Representatives committee the other day about the CBN's inflation-targeting framework, which he said was anchored on communication and collaboration with the fiscal authorities to achieve the desired results. He didn't state how long the framework had been in place, but within the same week, it was reported that the cost of clearing goods at the ports had risen four times within 10 days. A fortnight earlier, customs duty had gone up some 100 percent. So much for the vaunted collaboration between the monetary and fiscal authorities.

But if there's one thing the Tinubu government has done with gusto, it has been the hounding of Godwin Emeziele, the erstwhile CBN Governor. This government broke the records on disobeying court orders for this man's freedom while he answers charges regarding his tenor at the CBN.

And when the government allowed him to go home, it then picked on his wife. I guess his children are getting ready for their turns. Of course, Emeziele and wife, just like any other person, should answer to whatever they are suspected to have done. But the choreographed manner in which

they are being handled attracts attention. It appears they are the problem of Nigeria. And if they are, it has taken Tinubu eight months and running to begin sorting out. Apparently, the knot that Emeziele tied would take Tinubu's entire tenure to untie before actual governance starts.

Emezele has been portrayed as a busybody while atop the apex bank, intervening here and there. But between Emeziele and this jaded-looking Cardoso, I'd rather have Emeziele. Imperfect as Emeziele was, at least, he had enthusiasm and worked where he worked. Cardoso is in his own world, apparently unmindful of the rest of us and doing what is not rubbing us on the right side.

It is said that those who fail to plan, plan to fail. Tinubu perfected his capture of the presidency with Buhari as the experimental pawn. He had eight years waiting and flexing his muscles to take it. If this was all he could dream up for Nigerians, then, it is such an anticlimax. And it is unconscionable that Nigerians should be subjected to this.

Ojukwu-Enendu, a former Editor of BusinessDay newspaper, writes from Lagos

ThePolity

• Policy • Legislation • Enforcement

1999 constitution and quest for true federalism

TOBORE JEROME AND
VICTORY OKONJO

Almost two years ago, the Nigerian Senate and House of Representatives voted on 68 bills to amend the constitution. In fact, ever since power was transferred to civilians in 1999 after decades of military dominance, there have been countless calls for constitutional reforms.

Nigeria's current constitution, officially enacted in the year 1999, establishes the country as a federal republic and outlines its fundamental principles, with special focus on concepts like freedom, equality and justice. In spite of this, there has been intensive pressure for lawmakers to re-examine the constitution to properly reflect the prevailing political and socio-economic contexts of the present reality.

The 1999 Constitution is widely regarded as the written supreme law of Nigeria, enacted on May 29, 1999 to inaugurate the Fourth Republic. After the annulment of the 1993 presidential election, General Sani Abacha initiated a constitutional amendment process. Later, General Abdulsalam Abubakar established a constitution drafting committee, resulting in the emergence of the current 1999 constitution, which over the years has continued to remain a crucial framework for governance in the country.

It would be silly to casually dismiss the immense importance that a thorough revision of the constitution holds for Nigeria's democratic processes and overall governance. Apart from the enhancement of local government autonomy, other pressing issues that could be potentially addressed through these amendments include the strengthening of state legislative assemblies, as well as checkmating executive discretion.

Political pundits will recall the 2014 National Conference, which was designed as a platform to hear the opinions of the average Nigerian. It led to the House of Representatives stepping a motion seven years later to obtain the report of the Conference with the aim of incorporating it in the constitutional amendment process of the national assembly at the time.

The Deputy Minority Leader of the House who moved the motion then, Hon. Toby Okechukwu, had stated thus, "The House is aware that the Federal Government of Nigeria instituted the National Conference on March 17, 2014 where about 492 delegates drawn from various segments, interest and professional groups of the Nigerian society brainstormed on how to build Nigeria into a more cohesive, viable, prosperous union."

Hon. Okechukwu said the House was also "aware that the Conference made over 600 recommendations cutting across public service; devolution of powers and political restructuring; national security; trade and investment; energy; public finance and revenue generation; social welfare; politics and governance; electoral reforms, among others".

It should be noted, however, that members of the House stepped down the motion at the time, appreciating Hon. Okechukwu's position, but fault-



SENATOR GODSWILL AKPABIO
PRESIDENT OF NIGERIA SENATE



TINUBU



RT. HON. TAJUDEEN ABBAS
SPEAKER, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ing his process of engagement. According to the Leader of the House, Ado Doguwa, there was no opposition to the motion by Okechukwu but it was procedurally wrong to ask the House to specifically call for the documents.

"We have taken it as a very good observation and we will definitely get it used in the process of the constitutional review. But it need not be presented by way of motion or seeking the resolution of the House before any other person is asked to do what is naturally expected to do," he said.

Very recently, some prominent politicians, lawmakers and elder statesmen converged on Lagos to deliberate on the urgent need for constitutional reforms. They cited the socio-economic crisis, as well as the alarming insecurity in the country, emphasizing the need to redirect Nigeria on the path of growth and development.

During the meeting, former Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, asserted that Nigeria as a pluralist state would only thrive on a true federal system. Former governor of Akwa Ibom State, Obong Victor Attah, noted that one of the fundamental and cardinal flaws of the 1999 constitution is the concentration of powers in the centre.

"We might not achieve true federalism because the basis has proven to be misguided. The unity we set to achieve was not achieved, what we achieved was more disunity. From this, it becomes critically clear that the underpinning principles that guided the drafting of our constitution have turned out to be misguided," Attah said.

The current federal structure, inherited from colonial times, concentrates excessive power at the federal level, leaving other levels of government as appendages. This imbalance has led to challenges such as ethnic rivalry, unequal wealth distribution, and ineffective leadership.

Artificial identities were created by foreign powers during the colonial era, leading to the splitting and joining of societies along ethnic lines. The British

colonial administration imposed physical borders, disrupting social arrangements and creating conflicts over power distribution and resource control.

Previous attempts at constitutional amendments have faced numerous challenges, including presidential vetoes. Calls for restructuring aim to address the lack of public representation in constitutional processes. Specifically, the Niger Delta region, rich in oil and gas resources, demand a fairer share of national wealth.

Also worthy of consideration are the interests of political elites across the states who benefit from the existing system. This might be another formidable minefield for the restructuring argument since restructuring literally implies an alteration of the status quo, potentially redistributing power and resources. Thus, it stands to reason that there could be resistance to these changes due to the corruption embedded in the system.

Equitable distribution of resources among regions in the country could be a strong facilitator of sustainable development across all states of the federation. By prioritizing equitable allocation, governments and organizations can promote inclusive growth while significantly reducing inequalities.

Re-engineering the constitution and realigning the federal arrangement may be the first step to take in actualizing this reality for greater autonomy among federating units and a fairer distribution of power, fostering stability and proper nation-building.

PRESIDENTS, GOVERNORS AS EMPERORS

Meanwhile, former governor of Bayelsa State and Senator representing Bayelsa West in the National Assembly, Seriake Dickson, has said that insufficient mechanisms for accountability by leaders must be addressed in the 1999 Constitution.

The lawmaker, who has been in the red chamber since 2020, stated this while appearing as a guest in a Channels Television programme.

According to Dickson, the 1999 Constitution created emperors

as president and governors because the drafters of the document omitted accountability in terms of the use of power by public office holders.

Asked why some governors have been obstructing financial autonomy for local governments, the ex-Bayelsa governor said, "If you look at the framework of our constitution, the biggest emperor that the Nigerian Constitution has created is the President, that's the biggest emperor but there are also 36 and now 37 (a Minister of the FCT).

"There are 37 emperors because of the insufficient mechanism for accountability built into the constitution which is what we must address. Accountability in terms of the use of power."

Dickson, who was Bayelsa State governor from February 2012 to February 2020, stated that he never tampered with local government (LG) funds as governor for eight years.

"For eight years as governor, I never tampered with one naira of the local government fund. I was rather giving them a percentage of IGR (Internally Generated Revenue) to support them but I am told that there are state governors who literally commandeer all their (LG) allocations and even given them pieces of paper to sign," Dickson said.

"I now introduced a transparency law by which as governor I gave myself legal obligation to announce what was coming to the state and how it was spent every month. That same law directed the local government chairmen to do the same in their local governments. And I said the punishment for not doing that consecutively amounts to gross misconduct," he said.

In February, the House of Representatives set up a constitution review committee to address contentious issues and revamp the document handed over to the civilian government by the military in 1999.

Dickson, who is a member of a similar committee in the Senate, expressed his desire for the country to have "a comprehensive review of the constitution".

"The underbelly of the constitutional inadequacies has come to the fore that those who are even opposing state police for example are now some of those who are now on their own advocating for it, which is very good," Dickson stated.

"The National Assembly (I am also a member of the Constitutional Review Committee), we have not been far-reaching enough; it's always been piecemeal because of the difficulty of building consensus over the years about building consensus. But in the last Assembly, the 9th Assembly, I think we achieved some of it – railways, airports, electricity, prisons, they can now go to the concurrent list because what we are calling restructuring which people claim they don't understand. They know what we mean; what we are saying is: address the constitutional foundation of the country. Let's go back to the earliest constitutions," he said.

The lawmaker opined that President Bola Tinubu should convoke a national dialogue to address major existential issues in the country.

"I think we should have a robust national dialogue. It would be nice if the President convokes it but it is more than mounting a convocation of another jamboree, it's about selecting a team and consulting on areas of broad national consensus like state police or even the judiciary," he stated.

PRESIDENTIAL OR PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM?

The former Bayelsa State governor also threw his weight behind the growing call for Nigeria to return to parliamentary system government from the presidential system currently in practice.

"I believe that a nation that is as plural as we are, as diverse as we are, and culturally, religiously, and socially diverse as we are, the system of government that best suits our purpose should have been the Westminster Parliamentary System," he asserted.

The lawmaker said Nigeria as presently structured does not reflect the goals and aspirations of the founding fathers of the country at independence over six decades ago, hence the need to return to the original ideals of the past heroes.

He lamented that the Nigerian elite, unknown to themselves, are collectively committing mass political suicide as their service to the country has not been based on shared values and ideals for Nigeria's development but selfish interests.

He said the lack of quality investment in education over the years affected and produced the kind of current crop of leaders in Nigeria.

"A nation that has not invested heavily in education will be dreaming too high to get quality leadership," he said.

FINAL WORD

Pundits reckon that for Nigeria to break out from its current political and socio-economic state, the country must take a clue from the 1963 Republican Constitution where true federalism was practiced as the Northern, Western, Eastern and Midwest regions enjoyed devolution of powers. That arrangement encouraged every region to

Bandits and Sheikh Gumi, the *Advocatus Diaboli*

JIBUNMA ANTHONY-SPINKS

When a good man dies, the rainbow appears in the sky but when a bad man dies, the clouds turn gloomy and fearful. This may sound superstitious but it is on record that when Queen Elizabeth II passed on, a rainbow appeared in the sky above the roof of Buckingham Palace. I recall that when the death of a certain notorious former Head of State of Nigeria was announced, it rained cats and dogs in most parts of the country, causing heavy flooding that rendered thousands homeless.

Certain persons are associated with good or evil and it's not without a reason. Whenever Sheikh Gumi's name is mentioned, the response, rightly or wrongly, is often one of contempt and suspicion. Each time he talks of negotiating with bandits, the question on every lip is, "Why has this man not been arrested?" Everyone knows that Federal Government's policy on the matter is that negotiating with bandits and kidnappers for ransom is illegal.

Because of his self-appointed role as mediator and facilitator for payment of ransom and amnesty for bandits, Sheikh Gumi readily comes across as the *Advocatus Diaboli*, the Latin expression for the Devil's Advocate. Is this the role he has taken upon himself? The role of a mediator for insurgents, cattle rustlers, terrorists and Islamic fundamentalists? Why has he taken up this



GUMI

unenviable role for which he has continued to suffer public condemnation?

Born in Kano in 1960, Gumi's background as an Islamic scholar, Grand Khadi of the Shariah Court of Appeal, and a retired captain of the Nigerian Army Medical Corps, may explain his

activism in matters affecting the Moslem faith and militants of northern extraction. With such a pedigree, no one should be in doubt as to his level of individual achievement and status as a cleric and as a bona fide citizen of Nigeria whose right to his religion is

inalienable. On a number of occasions, Sheikh Gumi has met several bandit leaders to dissuade them from kidnapping and militancy and has repeatedly advocated that the Federal Government of Nigeria should treat the case of bandits in the same manner the militants in the Niger Delta were treated, comparing both as "cattle militants" and "oil militants", respectively. He is of the view that repentant bandits should be granted amnesty and rehabilitated into civil society as was done for militants in the Niger Delta. This position has been rejected by the Federal Government, although some states in the north, at one time or the other, appeared to have bought into the idea.

It was widely reported particularly by BBC and other local media that he once donated Islamic books to bandits. In March 2021, he was involved in the release of 27 students abducted from a forestry college in Kaduna State. He said that he had helped to stop some kidnappers from killing their hostages when they threatened to kill them if no ransom was paid at the expiration of the deadline given by the kidnappers.

His argument is that negotiating with bandits and rehabilitating them will minimize their militancy and criminal behaviour. Specifically, he said, "Kidnapping children from school is a lesser evil because in the end, you can negotiate and now bandits are very careful about human lives. Before, the mission of bandits was to go into town, ransack

it and kill people." This mediatory role has caused him great headache in the hands of the federal authorities. Recently, he was invited for questioning by security agents, but it appears he is determined to continue with his mediation for the criminals.

From a humanitarian point of view, and perhaps for peace to reign, as they say, troublemakers could be forgiven and reintegrated into the society if they show remorse. However, Gumi's argument that negotiation and amnesty will minimize banditry has since collapsed like a pack of cards. Despite payment of ransom albeit through the backdoor, cases of banditry and kidnapping have quadrupled in recent times. Children and students are abducted almost on a daily basis. Villages and communities are sacked even in broad daylight. The kidnappers have become more daring and the amount of money they now demand as ransom is sometimes bigger than the annual budget of an entire state. The more ransom you pay, the higher the demand. This is the reality on ground. Kidnapping is like a vulture stalking and circling a dying man; it will not go away until the man dies. The bottom line is that banditry and kidnapping are twin-evils, and the only thing you do to evil is to fight it; nothing more, nothing less.

Anthony-Spinks writes from Asaba, Delta State.

Budget Padding: Akpabio replies Falana, denies responsibility for Ningi's suspension

RUTH ISIGBE WITH AGENCY REPORT

Senate President Godswill Akpabio has declared that he was not responsible for the suspension of Bauchi Central Senator, Abdul Ningi, over allegations of budget padding, DAILY POST reports.

This was in response to the demand by Ningi for the immediate lifting of his suspension and reinstatement.

Ningi had, through his lawyer, Femi Falana, warned that if his suspension was not lifted within seven days, he would take legal action against the Senate President, contending that the process leading to his suspension was flawed.

Ningi was on March 12 suspended by the Senate for three months after he alleged that the 2024 budget was padded with about N3.7 trillion.

However, Akpabio's counsel, Umeh Kalu, SAN, in a letter to Falana, titled 'Re: Request to Lift the Suspension of Sen. Abdul Ningi', stressed that the Senate President was not responsible for Ningi's suspension.

"We are solicitors to Sen. Godswill Akpabio and write you in respect of the above subject matter at his instance," the letter read.

"Your letter of March 27, with the above caption has been referred to us with instructions to react thereto.

"We have carefully read through your analysis of the facts and circumstances leading to your client's suspension from the Senate.

"We are unable to find reason in your verdict of our client's sole culpability in the said suspension. We therefore plead non est facti for our client.

"In addition to the above and contrary to the contents of your letter under reference, our client was at no time your client's accuser, prosecutor and judge.

"Our client's role at the session of the Senate that led to your client's suspension was and remains the statutory role of a Legislative House Presiding Officer.

"Which role equally includes pronouncing the majority decision of the Legislative House at the end of debate and voting.

"Permit us to mention your attempt at drawing our client's attention to legal authorities and pronouncements of our Courts of record on the unconstitution-

ality of suspending members of Legislative Houses.

"Which attempt we dare say was unhelpful, due to your failure or refusal to make available, the relevant particulars of the said Court decisions in your letter.

"You may wish to provide these legal authorities which you have alluded to, bearing in mind that every decision of a court emanates from its peculiar facts, circumstances and extant laws.

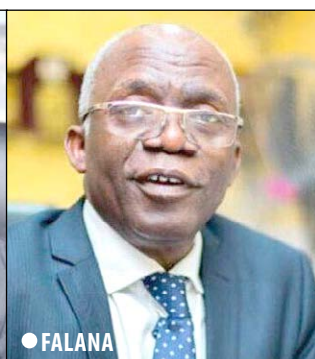
"In as much as it may not be necessary to canvass herein all the remedies available to our client, in response to your threats of a court action and petition to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee (LPDC).

"It is important we mention that legislative proceedings are guided by rules.

"We urge you to give due consideration to the legal issues raised in this letter and be guided accordingly in your further and future action in respect of this matter," it stated.



● AKPABIO



● FALANA

Rivers Crisis: APC accuses Fubara of plotting against assembly

RUTH ISIGBE

The caretaker Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Rivers State, Tony Okocha, has alleged that the state governor, Siminalayi Fubara, is seeking court injunctions to obstruct the State House of Assembly from performing its functions.

Okocha, who made the allegation on Thursday during a press briefing at his office in Port Harcourt, also claimed that Governor Fubara intends to utilize the court orders to appoint Caretaker Committees in the 23 local government areas, contravening President Bola Tinubu's directive outlined in the peace pact signed by the governor, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, and others in December 2023.

Mr Okocha expressed his distaste over the governor's failure to fully comply with the peace accord brokered by President Tinubu.

"I want to use this opportunity to inform Rivers people and Nigerians of the move by the Governor of Rivers State, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, to procure interim orders from Judges that I may not name here, but I will put in my petition today to the National Judicial Council," Okocha said.

"He wants to procure an interim order stopping the implementation of the laws which he was vetoed over.

"He wants to procure an order to announce as illegal the Rivers State House of Assembly as constituted and as led by Rt. Hon. Martin Chike Amaehwile.

"The Governor is in the business as we speak and I speak with all authority because the walls have ears.

"These are the plans that are on and he is doing that so that he will now leverage on that order to go ahead to appoint caretaker committees in local government against the warning of the man he says he respects, the President.

"But let me put it clearly here that we will stoutly, vehemently oppose such negative subterranean moves by a man who ought to protect the dignity and integrity of a state called Rivers.

"Rivers State cannot be turned into a pariah because of the cluelessness of one person.

"Rivers State is a state to be reckoned with in the comity of nations, highly respected and regarded.

"But see how dangerously we have fallen because we have a Governor who does not understand his left from his right.

"So we put out this clearly to Nigerians and to Rivers people that we will stoutly disobey that," he added.

Reacting to the allegation, the Rivers State Commissioner for Information, Joe Johnson, said Okocha's claims were false.

"There is nothing like that.

We are not given to backyard business. My governor does not do anything that is illegal and he is not interested in any illegality," Johnson said.

"Whatever will come from the courts will not come from the back door. We are not like them and the governor has said that he will surprise them so he will surprise them," he said.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, Governor Fubara, while receiving members of the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) from the 23 local government areas of Rivers State on a solidarity rally at Government House Gate, Port Harcourt, warned that his adversaries should not misinterpret his composed attitude and willingness to accept the peace accord.

"Let me say it here for record purposes; what is happening here in our dear State is somebody who has respect for an elder," Fubara said.

"Mr. President invited all the parties to Abuja, and came out with a resolution that we should go and implement. That resolution, I am implementing it. It is not a constitutional implementation. It is a political solution to a problem.

"And I am doing it because of the respect I have for Mr President. But, let me say it here, if that action that I have accepted to take would be seen as a weakness, I will surprise them. I want this message to go to them," he said.

Health & Environment

• Community Health • Primary Health • Medicine • Climate

Mycetoma, a destructive NTD

TRACY OHOVWORE

One of the devastating Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) claiming the lives of many in Africa and Nigeria is the mycetoma also known as the “Madura foot” which leaves a debilitating effect on the feet of its affected patients.

NTDs are caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi, and toxins from snake bites. They affect 1.7 billion people globally.

Mycetoma is a deadly disease caused by bacteria or fungi that lead to skin discoloration and skin lumps, ulceration, and pus discharge that emits a horrible smell.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the bacteria and fungi that cause mycetoma live in soil and water. These germs can enter the body through wounds or other small skin injuries, like a thorn prick, often on a person's foot.

This chronic infection occurs 80% mostly on feet that leave firm, painless but weakened masses under the skin. Although they usually appear on a person's foot and can form anywhere on the body.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mycetoma is a chronic, progressively destructive infectious disease of the subcutaneous tissues that spreads to the skin, deep tissues, and bones.

The global health body also informed that this destructive disease occurs in tropical and sub-tropical environments characterized by short rainy seasons and prolonged dry seasons that favour the growth of many thorny bushes that serve as a breeding spot for this bacteria.

According to the University of Khartoum, Mycetoma prevails in the mycetoma belt, which includes Sudan, Somalia, Senegal, India, Yemen, Mexico, Venezuela, Colum-

bia, Argentina and others. In Africa, mycetoma is most frequently seen in Sudan, Senegal, Mauritania, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Chad, Cameroon, Djibouti and Somalia.

It commonly affects young adults, mostly males aged between 15 and 30 years, in developing countries like Nigeria.

Also, people of low socio-economic status and manual workers such as agriculturalists, laborers, and herdsmen are most commonly affected.

Mycetoma has numerous adverse medical, health, and socio-economic consequences for patients, communities, and health services in affected areas.

However, to prevent being affected by this debilitating disease, travelers and people in endemic places are advised not to walk barefoot. Proper clothing and footwear should be worn to protect against puncture wounds and from bacteria getting into the foot. Clearing down bushes around homes and safety precautions can also protect individuals from mycetoma.

Healthcare providers believe that wearing shoes might prevent injuries that can lead to mycetoma.

Also, early detection and treatment in patients are important to enable a drastic reduction and improve treatment outcomes.

Treatment includes the usage of antibiotics or anti-fungal drugs depending on whether it is caused by bacteria or fungi. Surgery is sometimes needed to cut away the infected tissue. Although treatment might be lengthy it contributes greatly because if left untreated, it can result in deformity, destruction, and loss of function.

Sadly, these treatments may have side effects. It is also very expensive may not be available in endemic areas and most importantly, often unsatisfactory. Many cases result in amputation.

The former National Co-

ordinator of the NTD programme, Dr. Akpan Nse, mentioned that NTDs create a high burden in society with effects that can be lifelong, and quite devastating and expressed the need to prioritize the elimination of the disease.

“Those that are disabled cannot contribute to the economy. We need to reduce the burden of NTDs among the active population. We are focusing on creating more awareness such that more people are informed of the long-term impact of the disease.

“If you are not affected you can be infected, sometimes people attribute the sickness to village people, especially at the onset of the disease. India is rated first in terms of NTDs followed by Nigeria. All hands must be on deck to eliminate

NTDs,” he said.

He further urged all members of the public, stakeholders, and healthcare practitioners to collaborate to ameliorate the high rate of mycetoma and other Neglected Tropical Diseases in Nigeria.



Why your body needs high fibre meals

ENAJIYERIN OKIEMUTE

In Nigeria, where traditional cuisines are rich in flavours, representing the diverse heritage, incorporating high-fibre meals into your diet can be a game-changer for a healthy lifestyle.

It is essential to explore high-fibre meals that are beneficial, along with affordable options that resonate with the tastes and budgets of the common.

Fibre, also known as roughage or bulk, is a type of carbohydrate found in plant-based foods. Unlike other carbs, fibre isn't digest-

ed by the body but rather passes through the digestive system relatively intact. It comes in two forms: soluble and insoluble.

Soluble fibre dissolves in water, forming a gel-like substance. It's found in foods like oats, beans, and fruits.

Insoluble fibre doesn't dissolve in water and adds bulk to your stool, aiding in regular bowel movements. Whole grains, vegetables, and nuts are rich sources of insoluble fibre.

Some meals rich in high fibre include oats, Beans and Legumes, Whole grains, Start your day with a high-fi-

bre breakfast, such as oatmeal topped with fruits and nuts.

Be sure to include plenty of fruits and vegetables in your meals daily.

Choose whole grains over refined grains; opt for whole wheat bread, brown rice, and whole grain pasta.

Snack on fibre-rich foods like almonds, and popcorn (without excessive butter or salt).

Incorporate legumes such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas into soups, salads, and main dishes. Vegetable stews and soups, fruit smoothies (strawberry, raspberries, and chia seed), roasted plantains and sweet potatoes are other sources to try out.

Eating a diet rich in fibre has numerous health benefits. Fibre can help with digestion, weight management, and overall health. By incorporating high-fibre meals into your diet, you can reap these benefits and feel better, both physically and mentally, some of which are:

Digestive Health - High-fibre meals help keep the digestive system in good working order by keeping food moving through the system. This can help prevent constipation, hemorrhoids, and other digestive problems. High fibre diets can also help reduce the risk of colon cancer; as they im-

prove bowel movements which in turn reduces the incidence release of free radicals (cancer-causing agents) due to the long transit time of faeces in the colon and rectum.

Weight Management - Fibre can help people feel full faster and stay full longer. When people feel full, they are less likely to overeat or snack on unhealthy foods. This can lead to weight loss and better overall health. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, a high-fibre diet can help people maintain a healthy weight.

Blood Sugar Control - With the rising prevalence of diabetes, consuming high-fibre meals can help regulate and stabilize blood sugar levels. Health experts and nutritionists believe that high-fibre foods slow down the absorption of sugar in the body, preventing sudden spikes in blood sugar levels and supporting better glucose control.

Heart Health - Heart disease is a significant concern globally, including in Nigeria. Soluble fibre from foods like beans and oats helps lower cholesterol levels, reducing the risk of heart disease and related complications. According to the American Heart Association, soluble fibre can help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels.

EDSG trains 200 community-based first responders

ADESUWA EDOKPAYI

Edo State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Samuel Alli has charged the Community-Based First Responders (CBFR) trained at the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA) to put their best foot forward as they embark on this noble journey of service to humanity.

Dr. Alli who gave this charge in his speech during the training exercise organized by the Edo State Government to ensure there are Commu-

nity-Based First Responders to attend to emergencies in the Health System, stated that dedication and commitment will be the cornerstone of Edo Emergency Medical Services, adding that the goal of the training was to equip them with the skills and knowledge to recognise and respond to basic emergencies within their communities, providing essential care in pre-hospital settings from both medical emergencies and trauma.

Dr. Alli advised the people of Edo State to utilize the Edo Emergency Medical Services

in times of medical emergencies by dialing the emergency holiness 112 or 739 which he described as a timely and life-saving assistance that could make all the difference.

He thanked Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki for making the initiative possible, through the provision of necessary funding, directions, and all other kinds of support.

Speaking, the Director General, Edo State Health Insurance Commission, Dr. Rock Amergor thanked Edo State Government for the initiative, admonishing the trained Com-

munity-Based First Responders to do their best in offering effective services that will go a long way in saving lives, noting that they are about to embark on a journey to greatness which would make Edo State a landscape for emergency care.

Responding, Osa-Agbonlahor Charity, a trained Community Based First Responder thanked the State Governor for the novel initiative in the Health Sector and for the privilege granted them as the pioneers of Community Based First Responder Services (CBFRS).

Stakeholders decry 300% electricity tariff hike

● DisCos to raise electricity prices to ₦225 per kilowatt-hr

EDWARD OSEGHE

Following the recent 300 percent increase in electricity tariffs approved by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), stakeholders have expressed their dissatisfaction noting that such an increase would further burden electricity consumers across the nation.

Mr. Musiliu Oseni, the Vice

Chairman of NERC, disclosed the electricity tariff hike on Monday, in Abuja.

According to Oseni, the 300 percent increase would specifically impact Band A consumers, constituting only 15 percent of the total electricity customers nationwide.

As a result, power distribution companies (DisCos) will be permitted to raise electricity prices to N225 (\$0.15) per kilo-

watt-hour, up from the previous rate of N68 for urban consumers, effective April 1, EnviroNigeria reports.

Reacting to the development, Mr. Adeola Ilori, the National Coordinator of All Electricity Consumers Protection Forum, condemned the sudden tariff hike, asserting that it was implemented without due process.

Ilori emphasised that the increase should have followed the

prescribed procedures outlined in NERC's regulatory directives, as mandated by law.

He said that the magnitude of the increase, purportedly a minor review, was like a major review, necessitating thorough scrutiny and consultation with all stakeholders.

Ilori hinted at potential legal action by the group to challenge the tariff hike, citing violations of the Electricity Act 2023 and con-

sumer protection regulations.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lanre Elatuyi, an electricity market analyst, acknowledged the inevitability of the tariff increase, attributing it to fluctuations in the dollar and gas prices.

Elatuyi explained that, with the government unable to subsidise electricity for all consumers, the burden falls on those capable of bearing the actual cost of electricity, particularly Band A cus-

tomers.

He stressed the importance of ensuring that Band A customers receive the promised hours of supply, urging strict adherence to service standards.

However, Mr. Chinedu Amah, Founder of Spark Nigeria Ltd., raised concerns about the clarity and monitoring of Band A classification, warning of potential exploitation if not properly defined and regulated.

Man receives first pig kidney implant

TRACY OHOVWORE

The first man to successfully receive a genetically modified kidney transplant from a pig has been discharged from the hospital.

Reports from BBC News revealed that the 62-year-old was sent home on Wednesday, March 3, after undergoing two weeks of surgery at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH).

However, it appeared to be the first successful organ transplant from genetically modified pigs. In the past, transplants from pigs have failed, and the accomplishment of this procedure has set a historic milestone in the field of transplantation.

Following the press release that was shared on Wednesday, March 3 by MGH, Harvard Medical School's teaching hospital in the US city of Boston, disclosed that the patient, Richard "Rick" Slayman of Weymouth, Massachusetts has been battling with kidney

disease and requires an organ transplant to save his life.

With the urgency to save his life, doctors successfully transplanted a genetically modified pig's kidney into his body after a lengthy four-hour-long surgery that took place on the 16th of March 2024.

Reports show that Mr Slayman's kidney is functioning perfectly and is no longer on dialysis.

Speaking, Mr Slayman revealed that being able to leave the hospital to his home after the success of the surgery, is one of the happiest moments of his life.

According to him; "I'm excited to resume spending time with my family, friends, and loved ones free from the burden of dialysis that has affected my quality of life for many years.

Mr Slayman also spoke on his experience of a human kidney transplant from a deceased donor in 2018, which however began to fail last year not until the doctors brought up the idea of a pig kidney transplant.

Return environment to status quo, restore people's livelihood before divesting –Group tells IOCs in N'Delta

The Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/ FoEN) has said that the International Oil Companies (IOCs) operating in Nigeria have lost the right to simply divest in Nigeria, as they cannot be allowed to leave the communities they have subjected to environmental and human right abuses, without addressing the issues.

ERA/FoEN Executive Director, Chima Williams, stated this at a webinar discussion themed: "Time for a legislative Pathway on IOC Divestment in the Niger Delta", which was attended by civil society groups and media practitioners across the country.

Speaking on the topic, Williams stated that the divesting IOCs are not leaving Nigeria as they want the public to believe but are only moving their operations offshore where their operations cannot be monitored, and their environmental crimes can remain hidden.

According to him, ERA/ FoEN is leading the campaigns against IOC divestments in the Niger Delta in its current form, due to the impacts of oil exploration on the local people in host communities, even as he added that ancestral lands have been taken away from the people, waters polluted, farmlands destroyed and livelihoods eroded in these communities, subjecting them to untold poverty.

"Oil companies are at liberty to dispose of their assets as permitted by the law, but, as they have caused damage to the people and their environment, there are requirements that must be met. The environment must be returned to the status quo, and the livelihood of the people restored before divesting.

"They must settle the crisis they have caused with the divide-and-rule style they introduced to the communities, as one of the antics they used to overshadow the voice of the people. Rather

than being a blessing to Nigeria, oil has become a curse to the people of Nigeria, unlike other oil-producing countries in the world."

While reacting to questions of the benefit of divestment to the country as the assets are being sold to domestic oil companies, Williams opined that the oil multinationals could not manage the environmental issues caused by their operations, despite their financial war chest and technological muscle, stressing that this questions the ability of these indigenous companies to handle the environmental crisis with their limited financial power and technological strength.

He called on the National Assembly to start a legislative process that will hold IOCs accountable for the environmental damages they have caused. He also called for the establishment of an environmental restoration fund, to tackle the issues of environmental pollution before divestment pro-

posals are concluded.

Also speaking at the meeting, the Executive Director of the Socio-Economic Research and Development Centre (SERDC), Tijani Abdulkareem, drew attention to the euphoria about the discovery of oil in Bauchi and Gombe states, revealing that tensions are already building up in the local communities, as they bicker over where the oil is located.

Abdulkareem stated that a recent town hall meeting organised by ERA/FoEN which was held in Bauchi state exposed to the people the social impacts of oil exploration, even before the environmental impacts began.

The discovery of oil is already creating tension between Bauchi and Gombe states because the oil wells are within the boundaries of both states. Because of that, there is already a conflict going on among the border communities on who owns the oil wells.

CLASSIFIED

EATEATUKUDO

That my name was wrongly spelt and arranged on my BVN as SOLOMON ESTHER EATAUKUDO instead of ESTHER SOLOMON EATEATUKUDO. ESTHER is my first name, SOLOMON is my middle name and EATEATUKUDO is my surname. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OKORO

That I wish to remove EKEMERIOR from my names OKORO EKEMERIOR CATHERINE. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as OKORO CATHERINE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

USIAHON

I, formerly known and addressed as USIAHON EHGIE LEOMARY now wish to be known and addressed as PETER LEO. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OLUWATOBI

I, formerly known and addressed as FALUYI OLUWATOBI now wish to be known and addressed as OLUWASEGUN OLUWATOBI IYANUOLUWA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

AGHIMIEN

That I wish to add OKEMA to my names KELVIN AGHIMIEN. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as OKEMA KELVIN AGHIMIEN, OKEMA (surname), KELVIN (first name), AGHIMIEN (middle name). All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OGHOMWEN

I, formerly known and addressed as OMOROSE OGHOMWEN JULIET now wish to be known and addressed as OSAYOMON OGHOMWEN JULIET. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

IKECHUKWU

That IKECHUKWU MICHAEL and INEKHOMON MICHAEL is one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as IKECHUKWU MICHAEL. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OMORUYI

That I wish to add JOHN to my names OMORUYI OSAZEE. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as OMORUYI OSAZEE JOHN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

ONOMIGHO

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS ONOMIGHO ONOME now wish to be known and addressed as MRS ONOMIGHO ONOME OSULA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OYINDAMOLA

I, formerly known and addressed as ADELEGAN OYINDAMOLA MARY now wish to be known and addressed as ONYENISE OYINDAMOLA MARY. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

AYODELE

That I wish to add EMOKPAE to my names OGBEBOR MARIANA AYODELE. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as EMOKPAE-OGBEBOR MARIANA AYODELE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

IVIE

I, formerly known and addressed as IVIE ANNABEL OKORO now wish to be known and addressed as IVIE OSHORIAH OMIGIE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OSAYEMESE

That EMMANUEL OSAS, EWEKA OSAYEMWENSE and EWEKA OSAYEMESE is one and same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known and addressed as EWEKA OSAYEMESE. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

ONORIODE

That I wish to add AKPENWENMOGHENE to my names ONORIODE COMFORT. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as ONORIODE COMFORT AKPENWENMOGHENE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

IYOKA

That I wish to add OMORUYI to my names PATIENCE IYOKA. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as OMORUYI PATIENCE IYOKA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

CHIOMA

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS EJIUGU JANET CHIOMA now wish to be known and addressed as MRS WISDOM JANET CHIOMA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OGBENIN

I, formerly known and addressed as OGBENIN ESTHER OSATOHAMHEN now wish to be known and addressed as OGBENIN ESTHER ANITA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

EHINOMEN

I, formerly known and addressed as EHNOMEN OKPERE now wish to be known and addressed as EHNOMEN BLESSING SUMAILA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

NAPOLOEN

That my name was wrongly captured on my BVN as NAPOLEON ANGELLA instead of NAPOLOEN ANGELA. My full and correct name is NAPOLOEN ANGELA. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

SANDRA

The general public should take note that my name was wrongly written as MAGOHOL SANDRA PETER in my BVN instead of TERUNGWA SANDRA as captured in my NIN. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as TERUNGWA SANDRA.

ESOSA

I, formerly known and addressed as SUCCESS ESOSA IDAHOSA now wish to be known and addressed as SUCCESS ESOSA ALIDU. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OREYE

That my name was wrongly captured on my BVN/ACCOUNT as OREYE MICHAEL OSIFO instead of OREYE MICHAEL OSIFO. My full and correct name is OREYE MICHAEL OSIFO. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OGORCHUKWU

I, formerly known and addressed as NWADOZIE EUGENE OGORCHUKWU now wish to be known and addressed as IDUH EUGENE OGORCHUKWU. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

EROMOSELE

That my name was wrongly captured on my BVN as UDO-THOMAS EMMANUEL instead of ODU-THOMAS EMMANUEL EROMOSELE. My complete and correct name is ODU-THOMAS EMMANUEL EROMOSELE. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OMOWUNMI

I, formerly known and addressed as ESTHER OMOWUNMI BABALOLA now wish to be known and addressed as ESTHER OMOWUNMI AMADIN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

ARIKHAN

I, formerly known and addressed as EMMANUEL EHINON ARIKHAN now wish to be known and addressed as EMMANUEL EHINON PEREZ ARIKHAN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

GIFT

I, formerly known and addressed as ANENE GIFT NCHEKWUBE now wish to be known and addressed as NNAEKEZIE GIFT OLUEBUBE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

UWAILA

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS STEPHANIE UWAILA OMOKARO now wish to be known and addressed as MRS STEPHANIE UWAILA ONOCHIE-ADIGWE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OSARUMWENSE

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS PATIENCE OSARUMWENSE ASEMOTA now wish to be known and addressed as MRS PATIENCE OSARUMWENSE IDEHEN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

SPACE
FOR SALE

WomenAffairs

What to know about cryptic pregnancy

OSAGIODUWA UHNMWANGHO

A cryptic pregnancy, also known as a hidden pregnancy or stealth pregnancy, is a pregnancy that is not detectable through standard testing methods, like a pregnancy test or ultrasound. This type of pregnancy is rare, but it can happen if a woman has irregular periods or has been using hormonal birth control that has affected her cycle. A woman with a cryptic pregnancy may not realize she is pregnant until she starts showing symptoms, like nausea or abdominal pain.

There are a few different causes of cryptic pregnancy. One is delayed implantation, where the fertilized egg takes longer than normal to attach to the uterus. Another cause is an ectopic pregnancy, where the fertilized egg implants outside of the uterus, such as in the fallopian tube. This type of pregnancy is dangerous and requires medical attention. Finally, the hormones of a cryptic pregnancy may not be high enough to trigger a positive result on a pregnancy test. This can be due to the use of hormonal birth control or other medications.

CAUSES OF CRYPTIC PREGNANCY

There are several factors that can cause cryptic pregnancy. They are discussed below:

1. Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS): Women with PCOS might have irregular periods, making it harder to detect a missed cycle.
2. Low levels of pregnancy hormone: Some women produce lower levels of the hormone hCG, leading to negative pregnancy tests.
3. Teenage pregnancy: Having been pregnant as a teenager can lead to misconceptions about a new pregnancy.
4. Perimenopause: Women nearing menopause might mistake pregnancy symptoms for menopause signs.

SYMPTOMS OF CRYPTIC PREGNANCY

Some of the common symptoms of a cryptic pregnancy include missed or irregular periods, nausea or vomiting, abdominal pain, fatigue, breast tenderness, and weight gain.

These symptoms can be similar to other conditions, like the flu or PMS, so they may not always be recognized as signs of a cryptic pregnancy. If you're experiencing these symptoms



and haven't had a positive pregnancy test, it's important to talk to your doctor. They can do a blood test or ultrasound to confirm whether you're pregnant.

DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT

Diagnosing a cryptic pregnancy can be challenging due to the absence of typical symptoms. However, ultrasounds and blood tests can help confirm the condition. Once diagnosed, the management of cryptic pregnancy is similar to that of a regular pregnancy, with prenatal care and regular check-ups being crucial.

CONDITIONS THAT CAN INCREASE THE RISK OF CRYPTIC PREGNANCY

There are a few conditions that can increase the risk of cryptic pregnancy. One is polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), which is a hormone disorder that can cause irregular periods and make it harder to get pregnant. Another condition is endometriosis, which can cause scarring and adhesions in the reproductive organs. Finally, thyroid disorders can affect hormone levels and make it harder to detect a pregnancy. If you have any of these conditions, it's important to



talk to your doctor about your risk of cryptic pregnancy.

LENGTH OF CRYPTIC PREGNANCY

The length of a cryptic pregnancy can vary. While most pregnancies last about 40 weeks, cryptic pregnancies can sometimes extend beyond this

timeframe. The extended length can be attributed to slower foetal development or inaccuracies in detecting the actual conception date.

COPING WITH CRYPTIC PREGNANCY

One of the most important things to do when coping with a cryptic

pregnancy is to focus on self-care. This means taking care of your physical and mental health. Some specific strategies include getting plenty of rest, eating a healthy, balanced diet, exercising regularly, avoiding excessive stress, and practicing relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or mindfulness meditation.

After a cryptic pregnancy, many women find it helpful to seek counselling or support from a therapist. This can be especially helpful if you experienced a loss during your cryptic pregnancy. It's also important to focus on your physical health and make sure to eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep. In addition, try to spend time doing things you enjoy and spending time with people you love.

In conclusion, cryptic pregnancy, while rare, is a reality for some women. Understanding the signs, causes, and management strategies can help in early detection and ensuring the well-being of both the mother and the baby. Whether you're trying to understand what is cryptic pregnancy or are curious about the cryptic pregnancy belly, it's essential to consult with a health care professional for accurate information and guidance.

Managing diabetes: Tips for women

GIFT OSAIBUEKUN

Diabetes is a condition that affects how your body uses glucose, which is a type of sugar that serves as a vital source of energy. When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't produce enough insulin (a hormone that helps glucose enter cells for energy) or doesn't use insulin effectively. This leads to high levels of glucose in the blood, which can cause various health issues if not properly managed. There are different types of diabetes, including Type 1, Type 2, and gestational diabetes, each with its own

causes and management strategies.

WOMEN AND DIABETES

Diabetes can indeed affect women differently than men. Women with diabetes have a higher risk of heart disease compared to men with diabetes. Additionally, diabetes can lead to complications during pregnancy, affecting both the mother and the baby. It's essential for women to manage their diabetes carefully to reduce these risks.

Diabetes can impact hormone levels in women by affecting insulin production and utilization. When insulin levels are disrupted due to

diabetes, it can lead to imbalances in other hormones such as estrogen and progesterone. These hormonal imbalances can contribute to irregular menstrual cycles, fertility issues, and an increased risk of conditions like polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). Proper management of diabetes is essential to help maintain hormone balance and overall health in women.

In order to manage hormone imbalances in diabetes, women can focus on lifestyle changes such as maintaining a healthy weight, staying physically active, eating a balanced diet, managing stress levels, and get-

ting regular exercise. These lifestyle adjustments can help improve insulin sensitivity, regulate hormone levels, and promote overall well-being in women with diabetes.

HOW CAN WOMEN MANAGE DIABETES EFFECTIVELY?

To manage diabetes effectively, women can focus on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This includes eating a balanced diet, staying physically active, monitoring blood sugar levels regularly, taking prescribed medications as directed, and attending regular check-ups with healthcare

providers. It's also crucial for women with diabetes to manage stress levels, as stress can affect blood sugar levels.

By incorporating these strategies into daily life, women can better control their diabetes and reduce the risk of complications.

In addition to managing diabetes, it's crucial for women with diabetes to prioritise their overall health. This includes maintaining a healthy weight, staying physically active, eating a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, and getting regular check-ups with healthcare providers.

INTERVIEW

Edo has provided enabling environment for real estate business —Bliss Legacy CEO

Dr. Salvation Onomroba is the Chief Executive Officer of Bliss Legacy Limited, an indigenous real estate development company based in Benin City. In this interview with a team of The Nigerian Observer journalists comprising the Acting Managing Director, OSA VICTOR OBAYAGBONA, Marketing Manager, IYAYI OWEGIE, and Correspondent, JENNIFER OSADOH, Dr. Onomroba shares insights into the company's business, milestones, real estate market in Edo State, the challenges with land administration, among others. Excerpts:

PHOTOS BY SAVIOUR MATTHIAS

How long have you been in business?

Real estate business, that's about two years. I started as a cab business that was called Auto Bliss International, but I sold it off after four years.

What attracted you into real estate business in Edo State?

I saw the level of development in places like Lagos. I could look at Benin City and till tomorrow you can still count the number of estates we have here. Cities are known for estates, secured environment where you can stay and be safe, where you trust your security. How many known developed estates do you know in Benin City? If you go to Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Abuja, you see different estates, you hear of Banana Island, Mayors Estate. So I saw a need and an opportunity to help reduce unemployment. When I was in Auto Bliss when I started business, I employed over 200 drivers. It has always been my desire to create employment, so I saw an opportunity to use real estate business as a source to solve unemployment.

What challenges have you encountered in these two years and how have you been able to overcome them, especially with existing competition?

When we started two years ago, nobody wanted to listen to us. I started with so little capital, nobody knew us and the competitors whom we were looking at were already very big. So first, it was that lack of recognition and everybody was afraid of land business, people needed to trust you to buy from you. We overcame that by going back to think and then we came up with a unique product. We looked at the market that others were not reaching. We analyzed the market in Benin; the existing real estates that we saw, which market were they reaching? For example, when I came, I realized that nobody was reaching the market women with real estate, that everybody was selling land for N1,000,000.

I knew the average market woman out there cannot buy and I knew that the people in that category are even more than those in the rich category. So that was what we broke down and that was what brought about the N1,000 for land and we were able to really penetrate the market very fast with that. The good thing was that it was when we penetrated the market that we got access again to the top people that were there. So it's always constant innovation, the market is always demanding.

Real estate marketing is about being on your feet; you always think, you can't be monotonous, you can't do the same thing, you have to be creative. So it has been creativity and innovation.

Today, we are the most innovative. We have our app, now you can pay through our app wherever you may be, just download our app through Play Store, Google or Apple Store. You can also get documents, choose a land and do anything you choose on the app. Someone abroad can download our app and pay.

The challenges have forced us to be the innovative, because when you look at the challenges, the best way is to be innovative.

Another thing was the banks; they don't give real estates loans. Banks, financial institutions are not friendly to real estates. I can boldly tell you that as big as this company is, we are not under any loan because when the bank closed their doors to us, we had to think. So the challenges always come, the Nigerian factor, the dangling economy, the instability of naira. I always tell my workers: challenges will always force you to think and when you think, you get answers.

What has the Edo State government done to help alleviate these challenges with regard to policies, especially for new entrants into the real estate market?

I have to appreciate the Edo State governor; he has encouraged us. He even called us on one occasion, he wanted to give us lands to develop somewhere around Upper Sakponba. One of the best things I appreciate about the Edo State government is that they provided a conducive environment to do business for the real estate sector. I do business in other states; we have branches in Lagos and Ogun. In Edo, the government did not come for tax so quick; we were the ones that even went to them, because we have our tax certificate. The government gave us an opportunity to do business because it's the best they can do. At least if you can't give me light, road or anything, don't suffocate us. So I must say that the governor has allowed real estate to thrive. Also, half of my staff came through EdoJobs. We partner with EdoJobs most times when we need staff and they recruit for us.

In terms of land acquisition, what has it been like, especially re-



garding disturbances from communities?

We have been very careful when it comes to land acquisition. It is an issue that will always come up, but with time you overcome it. We always do our research. Thank God for the Edo State government which has put EdoGIS there to always confirm the land, so we also do that. And before we buy land, we make sure all the elders of the community are seated. One thing I'm grateful for is that I have never had any direct fight with any community. We have always used the negotiation tactics with them instead of getting down dirty with them. So far, we have been managing them. It's not perfect but it's coming out well.

How have the Federal Government's policies of petrol subsidy removal and floating of naira affected real estate business?

The floating of naira and the removal of fuel subsidy have the capacity to kill many real estate companies. If you are building for people and someone is paying for a three-year plan, let's say cement was N4,000 as at when the person started the plan and the contract has been signed, and along the line cement goes up to N12,000; not just that, every other building material goes up as well. What that means is that the cost of the contract as at when you signed it has tripled or doubled; you are already in losses and you signed a contract, so the law is the law. It is very frustrating. I told someone I was going to build a house for him for N10 million based on my calculation of the price of things. Would anybody have envisaged that within few

months prices would skyrocket? For us as a company, we have studied the economy and we stopped all building plans and just sell lands for now. The few we did we had to sell in dollars to match the naira, so for now we are not building, until we are able to study the economy again. To sign any deal now will be suicidal.

You made mention of EdoGIS; how has the agency been helpful?

EdoGIS confirms the authenticity of land, to see if there is government acquisition, if it's a free holding, or other encumbrances. EdoGIS has made it very easy to process your C of O, survey and many more. The government has made it easier to get a document or to know a fake document than before. So we use the agency a lot.

What would you say has set you apart from other real estate firms in Benin?

It's our ability to reach every group of persons; even the poorest of the poor. Because of us, some boys who are hawking on the streets are buying lands, because we brought land down to N1,000 daily. So it's that uniqueness: we sell to the richest and we also sell to the poorest. There are people who never dreamed of having land but because of Bliss Legacy they are paying. We were committed to everyone getting a land; we made so much losses but that commitment was there already. Most of the lands that these women paid N1,000 for, which was N500,000, before they even finished paying the land had appreciated to over N2 million. We have been able to give them land because that is what some people were scared of when they saw lots of persons coming to give us N1,000 daily. Some people were watching us from afar wondering if we were going to run away, but we have not disappointed the people of Edo State.

Many people who are not based in the state have lands and buildings here, but whenever they return, they prefer to stay in a hotel rather than their homes? How does Bliss Legacy hope to reverse this trend?

The estates we are building are to a great percentage secured because they are fenced, you enter with a code, and there is 24-hour security with police station inside. We are very particular about security and the serenity of the environment, because insecurity is one of the reasons they prefer to stay in the hotel than in their homes. But when you have all these features in the estate, they will like to go to their homes. As it is an estate, there is going to be order even in terms of building because if someone builds a mud house beside a mansion, it would somehow deface it, so we ensure order and serenity of the environment.

Where are your estates located in Benin and what is the state of access roads?

We have about 16 estates - three around Ugbowo axis, two around Siluko axis, three around Aduwawa axis, one at Upper Airport-Ureghin, one at Upper Ekenwan Road, two around Agbor Road and other parts of Benin except Sapele Road. The reason is because any place we try to acquire big plots around that axis, we see the hand of government and we prefer to rather not have there than have and our clients keep having issues.

Are you open to partnership and how do you go about it?

For now we don't accept partnership. You can partner with us with your land; joint venture in different ways but for financial investment, we are very careful, reason being that you have to be ready for that. We have rejected money from many persons. You need a plan for every money invested or it becomes a waste. You need to have a perfect plan for that money because the person is coming back in one or two years' time and what will you say? So we decided to build to a particular level before we open it for partnership.

The economy is harsh and many people prioritize feeding over capital projects like investing in real estate? What would you advise?

What I always tell people is that whether you like it or not, real estate is still the answer in this harsh economy. The thing is this, if the naira is losing value, where will you bank that naira? Real estate is on one of those few places. For example, those women that bought land from us at N500,000 paying N1,000 daily, even as naira has fallen, the value of that money has appreciated because that land is about N2 million and this is just within one year, let alone when it's up to two-three years. So I'll advise Nigerians, food is a necessity, but if you have any spare, then real estate is the place to bank the money.

Entertainment

Rema: Edo-born musical prodigy of bangers

NOSAZEME AIMIUWU

The first time I heard Rema's song was in Agbor, Delta State, where I ran a successful locksmith enterprise. I was going to work and decided to have my breakfast. That was how I heard "Corny". I asked the young man playing the song, "Who the hell is this guy?" He asked, "Don't you know Rema?" I already knew this unique sound was packed with all the deliciousness of good music. However, I was too cautious to go check out other songs. Some artists are just one-hit wonders. Not Rema. When he coughs on the microphone, trust me, it is a hit.

You hear a random hit track and it's exciting and intoxicating. You go check out the rest of the album and you want to plug your ears forever with cotton wool.

I checked out "Dumebi". But I began to explore his previous discography. I discovered my all-time favourite song, "Trap Out the Submarine". With the likes of Juice Wrld, Xxxtentacion, Trap Music was the rave at the moment and Rema did so well. It was quite impressive as he flowed on the beat like a professional rapper from California.

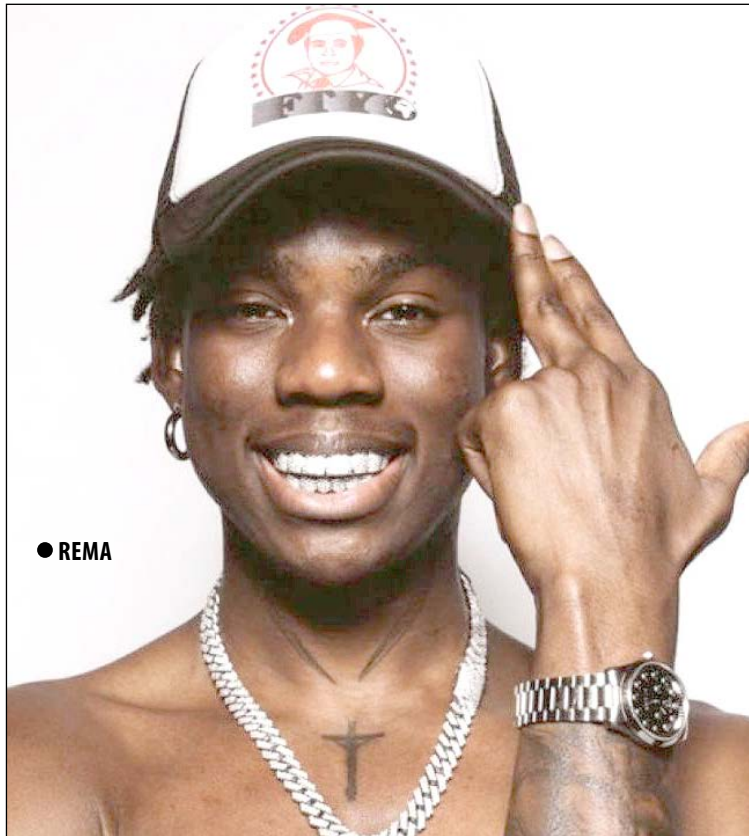
Then later we had "Calm Down" and from that moment onwards, the world has never calmed down again. If you think I am lying, ask Selena Gomez.

At my junction in Ugbowo area, I saw a billboard advertising his latest album. Debut album actually. "Raves and Roses". The artwork was spellbinding and we naturally began to look for hidden clues.

Artwork aside, the album itself which featured Chris Brown was incredible. No bad songs. I had it on replay for months. I played it every day. I usually have a playlist on whenever I am writing. And during that period of my life, I was starting a new career. I was writing "Village Square" and "Chop and Clean Mouth" and I needed a playlist to help me focus.

It was when I began to research Divine Ikunbor's profile I learnt that he comes from Benin City. I was surprised but not too surprised.

I always keep saying that the Edo people are low key ambitious. They make silent underground moves. Strategic moves. Calculated moves in their



● REMA

quest for success without being ostentatious about it. And before you know it, them don blow.

Anyway, before this article gets boring, let me analyse my favourite slice of slices from Rema's eclectic discography. I'll begin with:

Calm Down: What's there not to love about this international hit? The percussion? The rhythm? The power of the music? The paradoxical intention of Rema telling us to calm down made the whole world find exactly no reason to do just that. How do you calm down when one of the most exciting songs in the world is blaring through your speakers?

Trap Out the Submarine: Listening to this record makes you feel like you are in "the abroad" a.k.a Ebo-Ebo. Rema delivers fire on this unique sound and voice and lyrical artistry. Especially lyrical artistry. The existential angst inherently laden in a musical track like this showcases Rema's ageless wisdom. This is not surprising. When you lose your loved

ones and have to cope with tremendous grief at an early age, you have to grow up pretty fast. My favourite lyrics from this song are: "How can I be wrong for this?" and "I told them, I was born for this."

Spaceship Jocelyn: This masterfully written song - Rema writes his songs by himself anyway - tells a short story about a relationship between the author and a girl he had to break up with in order to stay focused in his ascension to the top of his career. Hence the expression, "Spaceship in my eyes", a metaphor for "I want to be massively successful and don't want anyone or anything to hold me back". Of course, anyone who has ever struggled for long without any breakthrough is going to be intolerant of any hindrances to their rise and life purpose. However, Rema tries to get us to elicit sympathy for his cause, to help us understand that the true cost of fame and success might be the painful severance of a prospective relationship.

Why?: Have you ever been heart-

broken or rejected before? Don't worry, Rema is here to help you express how you feel. The question we always ask when we feel this way is "Why?" This is essential if we want to find out how to improve ourselves so as to not be rejected again. This applies to relationships as well as career opportunities.

Peace of Mind: What is every human being looking for? Peace of mind. It is the ultimate goal of any sane human being. After running all over the world in the quest for fame and money and success, Rema, like Citizen Kane from the 1941 Hollywood movie and other adults like us who have been forced to grow up pretty fast, is looking for his "Rosebud". That point, that moment, that golden age in our life where everything was peaceful and blissful. When we actually felt at peace with ourselves and the whole world. That point in time when we were just ourselves and had no need to pay bills or impress anyone. It's painful to grow up fast.

Dumebi: The "Dumebi" song did not make such sense to me until I paid more repetitive attention to the words "Dumebi don go carry belle". Rema himself says it was just a freestyle. But I believe songs are not only for the artists. Everyone brings their experience to any work of art. I am inspired for a new story with this "Dumebi" of a song. Now, imagine you love someone called Dumebi very deeply and they got pregnant for someone else. Let me stop there.

Corny: This was the first song of Rema I heard. I knew, yes, this guy has it. I didn't get much from the lyrics here, but the vocals and rhythmic appeal were sensational. Especially with that Indian-like sounding vocals he invented for himself to make himself stand out. "Baby nor go do, do, do, do corny my baby oh. Do, do, do, do, corny my baby oh. Do, do, do, do corny ah. Oh oh oh."

8. Iron Man: "Come make I be your iron man." The rhythm of this song is heavenly. That's why I am encouraging you to go listen to this hit song right about now.

Ginger Me: Oh, I love a good love song. "Baby na your love wey dey ginger me, you dey give me love and the

energy only you wey dey high me like Hennessy". Love is intoxicating and so is the melody of this song. What can I say? If you are not in love yet, there are many men and women out there. Why not go out there and grab one for yourself?

Charm: This song has a mystical charming effect on the listener. Rema even invented a dance style for this song. It is charming. I love the guitar sound by the way. I love guitars.

Troublemaker: This song spoke to me through the spirit. Check out these lyrics: "How many dues wey the boy don pay? How many insult I go take-uh?" Wow. Fantastic intro to one hell of a song. And the chorus: "Them say I be troublemaker, I dey disturb everybody. Leave me, leave me, leave me make I do my thing, nor judge me. Make you sef reason ... I go still pass them even though them use extra sheet." Here he talks about his struggles in the tough and unforgiving terrain of the music industry and his clapbacks against his contentious doubters and antagonistic contemporaries. He promises to keep living up to his reputation as a troublemaker, disturb everybody with his back-to-back hit.

Holiday: Rema broaches his ghet-to story in this emotional song where he goes down memory lane. And celebrates his success as every day seems like a holiday for him.

Bonus: Are You There?: In this sociopolitical song, Rema addresses the economic situation of Nigeria. The music video for this song is colourful, comical, and then thoughtful and leaves a lot to be desired.

In conclusion, I feel extremely pained that I could only talk about a slice of Rema's voluminous discography. His songs are quite inspirational and have personally helped me get through difficult times.

I celebrate his success. I celebrate the musical prodigy of bangers that is Divine Ikunbor. Whenever I hear, "Another Banger", I just know, yes, something good is coming into my eardrums. When he performed at the O2 Arena and at the FIFA Balon d'Or event, I was like, "Wow! One of the world best musicians is entertaining the world best footballers."

Thank you, Rema, for taking Edo To The World.

What is Nollywood (4): Film and audience

KABAT ESOSA EGBON

It is said that with the coming of Nollywood, it opened the viewing space and created a new viewing public who were 'eager' and 'hungry' for this product called Nollywood films. This audience easily lapped on it despite its simplistic stories, treatment and poor technical expression. The demand and need grew.

In return, the output of making movies also increased and several people entered into the most lucrative end of the chain, 'marketing/distribution', which had its structure and nuances, as well as the art of churning out these movies in their numbers. And with this commercial instinct at the back of

the minds of these marketers or executive producers, coupled with the sales they were making, it was rather not important to look at those elements that transform or help in making a good film. They were not bothered about professionalism. This has been one major criticism of our movies - quality - back in the days. But a lot has changed since the early beginnings of Nollywood. Our films have transcended poor quality to world class quality, as we see it these days.

But why and how did Nollywood capture the imagination of many. Like I said, a new 'viewing public' emerged with the coming of Nollywood. Let us critically look at that audience and see how they played (and still do play) an

important role in the 'dynamics of economics' of the distribution network.

From my personal research all these years and as a participant in the industry, I have come to realize that we have two kinds of audiences:

THE CRITICAL (INTELLECTUAL) AUDIENCE

This is what I call the 'You' and 'I' audience. These people are like you and I, who are learned (or seemingly learned), quite intellectual with a passion for the arts or good entertainment, including good movies. They are those who have seen a lot of foreign movies from Hollywood to Bollywood and understand the ethics of making great films. These are people who get 'insulted' by the simplistic nature and

crudeness of our films. The lack of details infuriates them and are they are so ashamed to recognize anything good in Nollywood movies. Some of them try to understand the pressure and difficulties these filmmakers go through to make their films and are ready to forgive these exigencies and lack of professionalism, but it still doesn't change their attitude and opinion of subdued resentment of these films.

But you would notice that most people in this category of critical audience, back in the days, would not buy a film with their money, no matter how cheap it is, or like it is these days, not go to the cinemas often. Even if they do, their minds are usually made up on what they expect to

see and they are quick to judge us by 'Hollywood standards', undermining the fact of budget and other factors we face as filmmakers in this climate.

They would only watch these films by bumping into it on Cable TV or on terrestrial television and, lately, some manage to subscribe to streaming platforms and a lot more of them patronize pirate sites where our films have become a target of platforms like Telegram.

They are good with the criticism and nothing pleases them. They do not help to put money in the pockets of the filmmakers to at least encourage them. These are the ones I call 'critical audience'.

...to be continued

How new media, creativity are helping actualize dreams in show business —Mc Joe

Prolific Edo-born comedian and show business entrepreneur, Mc Joe's profile keeps shooting skywards. In this interview with NAOMI EWANSIHA and OLUWATOLA FAWEHINMI, Mc Joe speaks on his coming show, the business and the impact of new media on the entertainment realm, and gives industry tips to the budding youth looking to build careers in the entertainment space.

Could you tell us about yourself?

My name is Aiwekhoe Joseph Agbonmanwen, popularly known as Mc Joe. I am a comedian, a content creator and at the same time I am a compere, that means MC of events and all that. I am also into show promotion, showbiz generally, so generally I am an entertainer.

I had my primary education here in Edo State, a bit of my secondary school here and I rounded it off in Ondo State. I have an ND from an ICT school, Computer Engineering, and I also had my ND and HND in Mass Communication from Auchi Polytechnic.

As for my achievements, I have two awards to my name as a comedian.

We are aware that you are planning a show. We would love to know what the show is about and the direction it will take?

Basically I am having a show on the 14th of April here in Benin City, at Rickrex Event City. The title of the show is 'Mc Joe Unveiled'. So, I now have my first of this kind of show, this is now my show title, 'Mc Joe Comedy Synergy'. I had the first one in Auchi. So, I am having the mainstream which is the major one in Benin City at Rickrex, with the theme 'Family Tales'.

What kind of people should one expect to meet there?

Let me just say it is a blend of all forms of entertainment all in one. The entertainment show encompasses different segments in one but majorly, it is going to be headlined by comedians. It is a comedy show with other entertainment. So, we will be having the likes of Mc Casino, Candy B, Porcupine, King James, Mc Wise all the way from Lagos. I will be having Mc JP from Port Harcourt, Moscow White from Delta State and I will be having one of the fastest rising rappers we have now in Nigeria from Lagos.

It is going to be incredible and we did not leave the indigenous entertainment part of it. So, we will be having the son of the legend, J Tunes, he is an artist. He will also be performing on that day. It is a blend of both the so-called hip hop and also blend of Benin in the show that day.

It is just going to be full embodiment of a show on that night, 14th of April. I promise you it is going to be an event that will give value for money.

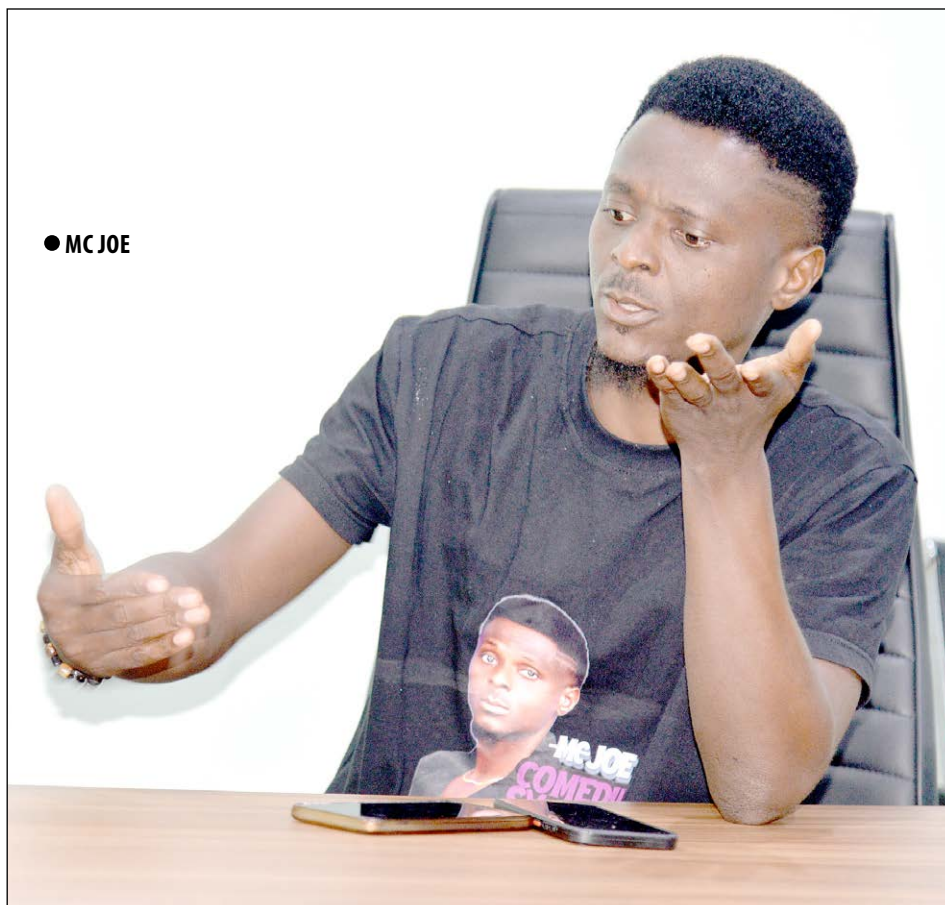
Is it a restricted show, or what kind of audience are you anticipating?

So firstly, my show is for everybody. The young, old, what have you. Let me just say it is a family show, so everybody has a space in my show. My show is not free, it is not a free show.

There is a gate fee for it, we have the regular ticket for N5,000, we have the VIP for N20,000 then we have the table for ten which is N300,000. There are incentives attached to the N300,000 and it is just 10 persons that will be admitted for that N300,000.

Then we have another segment which is for the business owners. It is called the sponsorship table. Those set of persons will have the opportunity to promote their business and do some other things. That category is N500,000. So those are the prices for my show because a lot of money is being put into this and money needs to be made back. By God's grace, we also make profit, that is why it is called showbiz, it is a business.

● MC JOE



What is the nature of show business in Edo, particularly with the recent growth of entertainment in the state?

Firstly, I must say that showbiz has actually got to another level in Edo State. It is not business as usual. I want to be very specific right now. For the past six to seven years, showbiz in Edo State has been taken to another level and not just the showbiz per se.

Many of the topnotch entertainers we have in Nigeria right now, in Africa, even in the world at large, many of the creatives are from Edo State. We have the likes of Johnny Drill from here, we have the likes of Shallipopi, Rema from Edo State.

Now take it back to the comedy industry, we have some of our pathfinders, the Malekes, I Go Save, and so on. We now have those that are actually trending right now and doing well for themselves, like Edo Pikin, Mc Casino, Da Sense, King James and what have you, and it is not business as usual. As for entertainers or comedians in Nigeria, maybe before you mention five, at least you will mention one or two in Edo State. I want to also thank the Edo State people for accepting us and giving us the required support.

What influence have new media and social media had on the entertainment industry, particularly in Edo State?

I will say that new media has become a huge booster, a catalyst to promote Edo State entertainment. Now, let me use Instagram as an example, most of the comedians I have mentioned now, most of them came to be recognised and known in Nigeria, Africa and the world at large in the Instagram era of skit making.

That is when people got to know that there



were such talents here in Edo State. You will now discover that most of the persons are actually good. Bring them to skit making they are there, when it comes to compere that is MC, they are top notch, when it comes to the stand-up comedy like the show I am doing now, they are good to go.

So social media has really helped us dramatically. It has brought a lot of progress, it has helped us to publicise our work out there and our content. So, it has been a major advantage to us and it has helped us to promote the growth for us in Edo State. I will say the use of Facebook,

Instagram, YouTube and it has even helped us to break what we call the middle man.

With a smartphone in your hand, you just need to go to Instagram, Facebook or YouTube and you will have access to them. At the same time, for some that are monetized, like the YouTube, the Facebook, it helps a lot as well.

So, what are the challenges of being a show promoter in Edo State, for example, the venues and how you get your sponsors?

Getting sponsors in Edo State has been a major issue, unlike Lagos and other places where you have sponsors, multinational companies that are ready to sponsor your event, buy into your ideas, sponsor your brands and you have to also do publicity for them. Here in Edo State, you bring in the capital from your pocket. In Lagos, I can see they are getting more sponsorships over there but here in Edo State, it's a major issue. I believe that with time we will come over that and we will be in the forefront.

Was there any time you had someone you could look up to as a role model or comedian skit maker for your journey?

I have a lot of comedians I look up to but there is this particular one I will not fail to mention, Bovi. That's my role model. For me Bovi is a complete epitome of talent, I am short of words to explain how I see Bovi. We have the likes of Basketmouth, Alibaba and the rest but for me, it's Bovi. I also have a mentor that I work with here in Benin City, MC Casino. He is my mentor here in Benin City. So I have a lot of persons I look up to that have done so well for themselves.

What are your words for youths who would like to go into the entertainment industry but do not know how to begin?

Firstly, do you have what it takes? Do you want to do this? What about when you come into entertainment and three years later you have not made money, do you quit? That is where the place of tenacity, courage, doggedness, determination comes in.

For me now, how did I come into entertainment? Firstly, there was what we called yab then in school. Just sit down and be talking to ourselves, you give me and I give you. "If he pain you, you go house go cry". From there, I started acting drama in school as a teenager and they would say apart from drama, I should just come and talk, make them laugh before they call in drama groups.

Then in 2012, I was to perform in a comedy show. I was just a comedian they called to perform. They had this big comedian coming from another place that would come and perform but the guy did not come. To cut a long story short, the guy did not come and I hosted the show all through the day. That was how I was like, I can do this thing on the big stage oh.

I still remember that the first official job I did, I was given N2,000 and it was a very big money. I thought I had made it then.

If you have the passion, then why not? Start from your environment around you there. If it is skit making you want to do, get a smartphone. If you don't have, borrow a smartphone from someone around you, shoot, edit. If you cannot edit, talk to someone that can do it for you and post your stories online.

PidginService

Tuke-Tuke Gossip with **Sam Imagbe**



Olokpa again

Today, man pikin wan beg everybody wey read dis atiko make dem explanate to me de tin wey dem dey call KRIME and de persin wey dey do de KRIME. Wetin persin go do wey dem fit hold dem say dem don do krime wey dem kach dem put? Dis question dey very good to ansa sake of say de way our olokpa take dey do when dem see pepos wey get dada for head too much.

We don talk am bifor say dis pikins wey we get nowadays no dey hear word at all, but dat no mean say olokpa pepos go just dey open ATM mashin for dia head. Haba! For dis obodo kingdom wey king na tru tru king if even na grand grand papa city, if you like call am ashient town, na you sabi, olokpa pepos go comot eye for de tins wey dem say make dem dey do, go dey porshu de ones wey gofment no send dem.

One oga talk say krime na something wey bad wey gofment say make persin no do and if you do am, olokpa go gbab you. De persin fit go ayoko city becos of dat.

For ezampo, if persin tif, do kidnap, amu robry, take anoda man wife by kunni-kunni plus including putin fire for anoda persin property, na him dem dey call krime and de persin wey do am na him dey dey call KRIMENA. Gbam. Since time Imo River, man never hear say de kind klot abi moto wey persin buy na krime.

Today, as man pikin dey talk una dis tory so, boku olokpa dey do patro for town. No be say dem dey look for tif pepos, de rezin wey make dem dey do dis patrol na to find pepos wey get dada for head.

Plenty plenty times, dis olokpa wey dey do dis kind show nor dey wear olokpa klot. Dem no dey kari olokpa moto. Na kabu-kabu motos dem dey use. Dem fit kach bus driver say make him kari dem waka, especially when de driver don do one rong tin. No be say dem go even pay de driver afta dem don finis de waka wey dem use am take do. Anyhow, na diferent tory for anoda day.

Dis tory of de wahala wey dem dey give pepo wey get dada wan three much. De trouble go born turkey if de persin wey dem kach get moto wey dem dey call Camuri or Lezus. For dis ashient city, olokpa pepos no dey take eye see dis kind moto at all make dem throway face.

De mumet dem site dem, de first thing wey dem dey do na to say make dem park for one side. Afta dat one, everybody wey dey inside de moto musto come out. Olokpa wey no even know how moto papers be go dey shout make dem bring de patikulas of de moto. De next wahala na to kolet de telefones wey dem hold, up to the laputup. Before you know de tin wey dey hapun, dem don stat to

dey negotiate de money wey dem go kolet. Even if de dada pepo gree say make dem kari dem go for olokpa office, dem go take kunni-kunni put fear for de dada pepo bodi.

De olokpa pepo no dey take small money oooh. Na tousan tousan dem dey kolet. If de dada pepo no get kash for hand, olokpa go say make dem do transfer or kari dem go withdraw from POS wey dey arand de area. Even sef, plenty olokpa dey kari POS mashin follow bodi when dem dey go hunt for dis kind pepos. De rezin wey make dem dey do so be say, akordin to one olokpa wey we sabi, na dis kind pepos be de Yahoo Yahoo boys. Dem belive say dem get plenty money, so therefore, dem too must take dem share for de money wey dem take from oyibo pepos.

Who come be tif abi Yahoo Yahoo boys, or de olokpa wey also kari gun dey take operate for koro koro aftunu? Wetin koncine olokpa with telefon and laputup? Bicos de telefon wey dis boys kari dear well well, some olokpa go even ceez de fone from dem plus inkludin laputup. After later, dem go dey look for who go follow dem buy dem as kago.

Not too tay ago, na dis kin tin bring wahala for olokpa dem when one of de branch of olokpa wey dem dey call SARS come do pass demsefs sotay dis same pepo dem dey call Yahoo boys come organ-ize show dem pepe. Yet dem never still learn any lesson.

As de country be so wey all de pepos dey vex sake of say hungry dey mama persin, who dey die dey die sake of say no money to take buy mericin, worker dey fear to come house afta him don klose from work make ogalanlord no see am, farmer no fit go farm make aboki no go take am do suya, driver no fit pay skool fix bikos petro too cost to take work, nahin some pepos bikos dem put de klot wey we gada sow for dem for bodi go still come dey take wayo and force dey obtain pepo pikins?

We hear bifor say de oga kpata-kpata for olokpa pepos don anounce say make olokpa no dey kolet fone and laputup from pepo again. Dem no wan hear.

Yanga dey slip, turobo dey take idea find am. De day wey boys go gada again say dem don taya for all dis wayo OBT, everybody go hear am.

You see, NTA pepo dey talk something wey dey make us dey try informate oga of olokpa wey dey dis kingdom about de tins wey him men dey do. NTA dem say, "If you see something, say something." We don dey see, so therefore we don dey also dey say something. Make pepos wey get ear dey hear.

Ofone! Ka chineke mezie okwu'. Oba ghatu Okpere, Ise!!!



● IGP KAYODE EGBETOKUN

TATAFO



How film take concern gofment?

DAVIDSON IZEGAEGBE

My pipo, another wik don land and na to first tank baba God say all of us see dis wik and nobodi carri waka, delete or kpai. If you think say wetin I de yan so, na easy sometin, go any mortuary and ask dem how many pipo kpai for only dis wik wey jus pass so, and you go shock to no say many pipo don drop and don join dia ancestors by force. For me and you to de yan laik dis so, show say awa moon neva off and baba God no go let awa moon off before awa time oooo!!!

E get sometin wey de worri my belle for some time now, and I no say de mata fit also de wind ya belle too as time nor day again for us on plenti mata laik dis. I take ma time to take find out why America and Europe dem film de laik say na from heaven baba God arrange am cum for dem. From wetin I use ma kro kro eyes see for dia buk wey I read, show say dem gofment use all dem bodi take helep dem start de film bizness from de scratch cum reach wia dem de so. Dem film and dia gofment be laik Owo and oghede, and una no say na wen dis hand wash de oda hand naim e go clean.

Wat about awa own film bizness? Na how e take start? Na wetin even make us tink of de film bizness self? We even no why we de do de film bizness? All dis question be as e get since to answer dem go mean say, de journey go long laik Mungo Park own. I want make we first no say Oyinbo dem siddon reason wetin dem fit use film take achieve wey go work wella for dem. The first tin dem do na to use film take change awa brain so dat we not go de reason well or even laik awa selves and wetin we as Africans de do. Na de beginnings of awa wahala as Africans be dat but de beginning of achieving awa soul by de Oyinbo pipo as dis arrangement work wella for dem.

I nor no weda de person wey discover de film and camera reason how pipo fit use am take change pipo minds, but if e de among wetin dem reason, naim be say over try de worri dem. Wen Oyinbo dem don see de magic wey film fit do to pipo, dem nor waste time at all. Dem jus land Africa and begin de show us films wey de show say Oyinbo people get brain pass us, strong pass us and beta for war with dem soja pass us. Afta dat, dem begin us film to kolet and achieve awa land, thrones and eve awa soul. I no mean say, film na evil tin oooo!! If una luk de mata wella una go reason am say, dem succeed bcos dem gofment see de film as dia weapon to capture awa minds.

Dia gofment support dem reach say, na dia gofment de sponsor dia film, and also de run film festival. Till today, dia gofment still de dash dia film pipo money to take de do film every time dem wan do film. All dis show say gofment hand nor fit comot for film mata for any kontri wey ready to move forward. Now wen you luk as how Oyinbo dem take start dia films cum reach wia dem de now, you go see say na wetin dem don plan since. Na how

awa own take start? If una reason am, una go see say na by mistake. So if we say awa film na "born by mistake", na true. If you no belif me na ya toro.

Una rememba wetin happen wen de Oyinbo pipo wan comot and how dem cum use hurry take liv dia film unit wey dem de call Colonia Film Unit for us? If yan rememba, wetin happen? NOTHING. Naija only jus change de name to "Nigeria Film Unit", and if una use adult eye luk am, na dat tin wey Oyinbo take twist awa brain cum end up as Nigeria Television Authority, NTA. I hope una still de follow my tori? Jus imagine wetin Oyinbo use take change awa brain, reach say we begin call awa tradition juju, cum troway awa native cloth plus native food for Oyinbo cloth, food and kpakpa carri dia language join, naim don turn to ordinary television house.

Why awa gofment nor fit use de film unit take also achieve tins from de Oyinbo pipo? Dis one show to us say, if e not be panadol e can't fit to be panadol. Wetin you nor undastand, if e reach ya hand, e go be laik pikin wey hold herbalist leave for hand cum de call am vegetable. Nor be de pikin fault. Na wia him brain no reach be dat. Today, we go see America film de konvince us say de kontri gallant die. So tay, dem fit kpai for dem kontri. If you luk all Oyinbo dem film, na to de make us belif say e go even hard Angel Michael to defeat dem for war. But me and you not say, all dat one na packaging. Wetin we don fit achieve with awa film apart from to show say we as Naija pipo wiked die? If we no use person do ritual, we go show say awa girls na ashawo, awa boys na yahoo yahoo. Na bad bad tins we de show to de outside world about awa sef.

Dis tin I de yan so, show say we nor siddon as gofment and film pipo to find ansa to de question I first ask before about wetin make us start film. No be say e don late sha, as time still de gidigba. Gofment need to cross mind give film pipo plenti Kuza to take shoot film wey go show de beauty of awa culture, awa food, awa good hearts and awa good environment and make dis films free to de dominate awa cinema, also make laik Netflix platforms for dat Kain films wey go de liv Naija. Many tins de wey gofment fit use film take achieve, if dem ready to re-package Naija and Nigerians. Na dat kain free money Oyinbo de call grants plus many ways to take make film pipo de put Naija first for any film dem de do. Make I yan una de truth: if gofment nor put hand for dis film mata laik America and Europe do, na films wey go de make us hate each oda we go de do Everi time and las las na we go de lose both for local and international. If una laik waka pass wetin I de yan so laik the tori of dat man wey jump and pass dat man wey dem kponse for Bible before dat bros from Samaria cum save am, na hia I go still de and kontinu to de write until my ink finish. Anyways we go align next wik. Make una no do bad tin oooo!!!

WeekendColumn

Thriving Family Life with Peace



Encouraging your spouse for a thriving marriage

It is often said that behind every successful man is a great woman. The wife of one of the most famous names in literature, Nathaniel Hawthorne, was probably one of such women.

Sophia Hawthorne secretly set aside in few dollars each week savings that eventually grew large enough to support them both for a year. You see, Sophia believed that her husband would one day be a great writer. When Hawthorne came home and announced in disgrace that he had been fired from his job in a custom house, Sophia presented him with the money, saying, 'Now you can write your book.' Her confidence and encouragement led to the birth of one of America's celebrated classic novels, *The Scarlet Thread*.

This story is a story of encouragement from a spouse to help a spouse to fulfil God's purpose. Your spouse is not what happened to them, they are what they choose to become and by encouragement, you can help them fulfil God's purpose.

As a spouse, I want you to know that sometimes things happen; your spouse can make mistakes, make bad choices and decisions. As a spouse, should you abandon them or disregard them? Or leave them alone to perish or get stuck in their mess? Even in situations where your

spouse doesn't really treat you right, my honest answer is, please encourage your spouse. The opposite of love in marriage is not hate, it is indifference. Indifference in a marriage is a state where you don't care about what happens and what concerns your spouse. Have you ever felt or got stuck in that feeling of indifference or are you currently on that street of indifference, maybe because of your spouse's bad attitude? My dear, you are not alone. Most marriages have been stuck like that before but to have a thriving intimate marriage, you have to let go of the offences. Marriage is made for couples to complement and encourage each other.

It is very important to appreciate your spouse as an individual with unique motivation and experiences. Encourage and build bridges across the different experiences and foster more understanding by encouraging your spouse to greatness. Your spouse may be stuck with procrastination, fear of failure, lack of control of impulse. I need you to know that behind those behaviours may be trauma. Trauma can disrupt your spouse's sense of safety, self-worth and control, making it challenging to engage in tasks that trigger discomfort or fear. Procrastination, therefore, can become a coping mechanism, providing tem-

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It is very important to appreciate your spouse as an individual with unique motivation and experiences. Encourage and build bridges across the different experiences and foster more understanding by encouraging your spouse to greatness

porary relief from the distress associated with confronting a challenging situation.

Before you beat your spouse down with negative word to complete task or do anything you are currently complaining about, please I beg you, offer your spouse grace, compassion and encouragement. Such things in your spouse go deeper than what you see. Traumatic events and other difficult experiences can have lasting effects on your spouse. In spite of that, you can bring out the best of your spouse just by telling them those daily words of encouragement.

Some seasons of life or events that you should stand to encourage your spouse include: in seasons when your spouse is betrayed by the the people they helped; in seasons when they are abandoned by family, friends and business partners; in seasons when people dishonour your spouse because others spoke lies about them or misinterpreted their actions or made up a story to rubish their integrity; in seasons where you noticed your spouse is stuck in a rut but you are sensitive to encourage them to discover that gift or potential of theirs that can turn into a profitable enterprise worth admiring.

Encourage your spouse to develop their capacity and scale their operations as business owners with tech-

nology.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE YOUR SPOUSE FOR A THRIVING INTIMATE MARRIAGE

Your spouse doesn't have to be perfectly perfect to be worthy of your love, care, respect and commitment; just encourage them by loving and accepting them unconditionally.

Your spouse doesn't have to stop making excuses for making mistakes; just encourage them to learn from their mistake and face their reality.

In difficult times, encourage your spouse by being understanding, kind, compassionate. Treat your spouse with kindness, encourage them to bounce back from setback; encourage them with positive affirmation; help them to overcome their negative self-talk, self-doubt and limited belief system.

It is very important to celebrate your spouse's success and compliment them no matter how big or small. Being kind and considerate to you spouse will help them find meaning and lessons in every stage and phase of your marriage.

When you encourage you spouse, they will be more open to self-reflection and growth. A thriving intimate marriage is a reality with your hand-work and heart-work.

Personal Finance with Queen



Start by defining your financial goal

What is it that you want to achieve in the next six months, one year, two years, five years? Is it to acquire a plot of land in a choice location? Are you planning on setting up your own business? Do you want to start a building project? Or you want to start a family?

Whatever it is, you need to clearly define that financial goal.

Defining your financial goal also entails that you try to put a cost to it. Depending on the goal, putting a cost to it may not necessarily be the entire capital layout. Of course, if you want to start a building project, for instance, it is almost impracticable to set aside all the money that you will need from foundation to finish, so

you may have to do this in phases. It is only when you have an idea of how much you may need to actualize your financial goal that you are able to plan on how to set aside that money.

As you already know, it is easier to spend money than to save. That's why many people purchase items because they feel it's cool and it enhances their appearance without factoring the expenses into their financial plans.

Here is what I have to say: You work really hard to earn money, so you should also make conscious effort to ensure the money is properly planned for. Where you place your value, that's where you spend your money. If you place your value on your set goals, that is also where you

would channel your finances with proper planning. But If your value is placed on expensive outfits or impressive gadgets, you would find yourself spending your money there without making budgets for it.

Financial decisions are made with the end point in mind. A goal without a plan is just a wish, so goes an adage. For instance, a man who has set a goal to mop up funds for his building project goes to work to accomplish his goal. He must see to it that he cultivates a regular saving habit suitable for him. This can be done on a monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or yearly basis. Having put a figure to the amount he may be needing, he will then have a particular amount in

mind. This he must do in such a way that it doesn't affect the other areas of his life that need finance. In doing so, he must be highly disciplined with his finance which entails giving up on unnecessary spending.

In the course of my job as a financial advisor, I have had the privilege of offering financial advice to people who have remained grateful that they achieved their goals as a result of the advice.

All successful people are goal-oriented. They believe in cause and effect. They are clear about what they want and are focused on achieving it. (They always define the effect they want to see and trace it back to the cause. By so doing, they achieve

the effect they want by duplicating the cause.)

Brian Tracy, a motivational public speaker and self-developed author, in his book *GOALS*, says, "Without goals, you drift and flow on the current of life, and with goals, you fly like an arrow straight and right at your target."

He who fails to plan to achieve financial success plans to fail. Individuals must clearly define objectives they intend to achieve. They must develop a comprehensive plan that outlines income, expenses and savings. By engaging in effective financial planning, individuals gain clarity on their financial position, stay focused and allocate their resources effectively.

Lifestyle

Beware! These habits contribute to health risk

EMMANUELLA OKO AND
GODSBLESSING OKHUELEIGBE

Each individual possesses or has possessed habits that are less than desirable. Some individuals make earnest efforts to change these habits, while others have successfully embraced a wholesome lifestyle void of such habits. There also exist individuals who have not yet contemplated giving up their unhealthy habits and continue to live without considering the impact on their overall well-being.

Bad habits can have far-reaching and often unseen repercussions that can significantly impact our overall health. While we may initially perceive these habits as causing only occasional feelings of guilt or embarrassment, the long-term consequences can be much more profound. It's crucial to recognise that these habits can have a detrimental effect on our well-being and take steps to address them. By engaging in unhealthy habits, we may unknowingly compromise our physical and mental health.

Bad habits can indeed have detrimental effects on both our physical well-being and our ability to fully realise our potential throughout our lives. Particularly concerning are the habits that are ingrained during our formative years, as they can be exceedingly challenging to overcome. It is crucial to recognise the gravity of these habits and the difficulty associated with breaking free from them.

Many individuals often overlook certain habits that they perceive as normal, failing to recognise the potential risks they pose to their overall health. Some of these habits include:

LACK OF EXERCISE

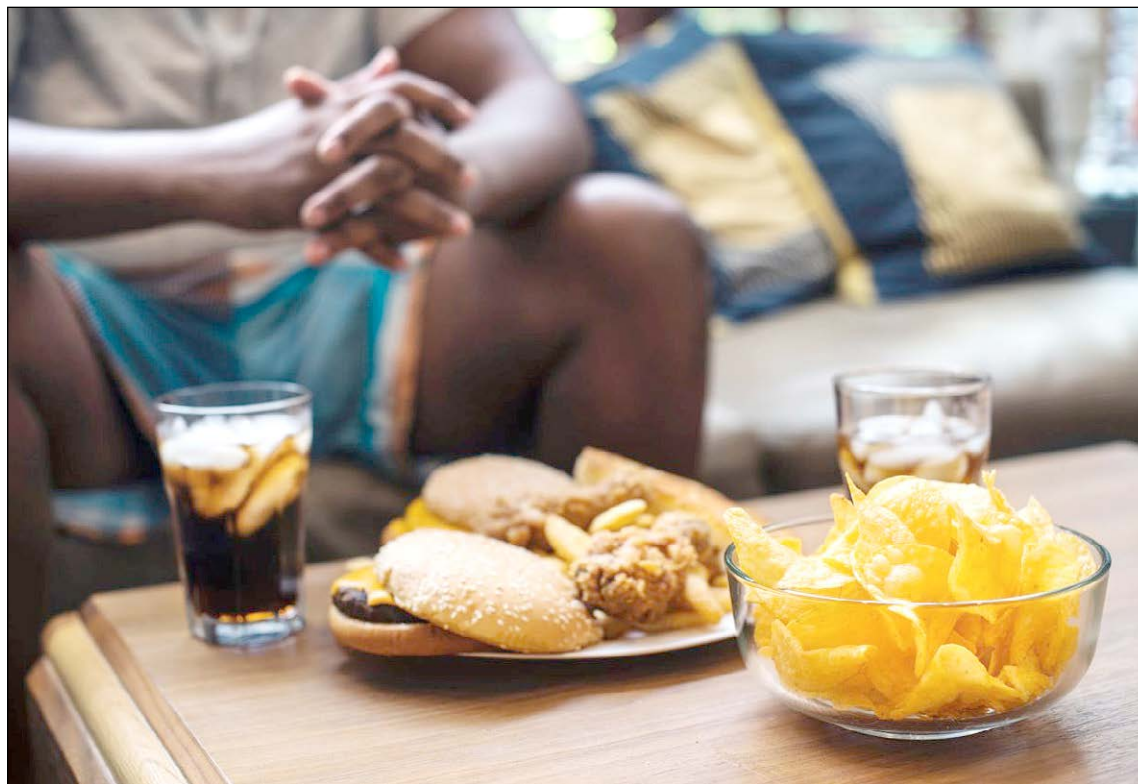
When we fail to engage in regular physical activity, our bodies miss out on the numerous benefits that exercise provides. Without regular exercise, we burn fewer calories, making it easier for excess weight to accumulate. This can increase the risk of developing various health conditions, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Physical activity helps strengthen the heart and improve blood circulation. Without regular exercise, the heart may become weaker, leading to an increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and other cardiovascular problems.

NOT DRINKING ENOUGH WATER

When we neglect proper hydration, our bodies can suffer in various ways. Dehydration can lead to decreased physical performance. When we don't consume enough water, our muscles and joints may not function optimally, leading to fatigue, cramps, and reduced endurance. This can hinder our ability to engage in physical activities and exercise effectively. Dehydration can impair concentration, memory, and overall mental clarity. It may also lead to headaches and dizziness, making it challenging to focus and perform mentally demanding tasks. It can also affect our mood and emotional well-being. Studies have shown that even mild dehydration can lead to increased feelings of anxiety, irritability, and fatigue.

LACK OF VEGETABLES IN DIET

When we don't consume an adequate



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High sodium intake is associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure, which in turn can lead to heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular problems. It's important to note that many processed foods, including canned soups, snacks, and fast food, contain high levels of sodium, so it's essential to be mindful of our overall salt intake

amount of vegetables, we miss out on essential nutrients and fibre that are crucial for our overall well-being. Vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that support our immune system, promote healthy digestion, and help protect against chronic diseases like heart disease and certain types of cancer. They also provide dietary fibre, which aids in digestion, helps maintain a healthy weight, and keeps us feeling full and satisfied. When we consistently lack vegetables in our diet, we may experience deficiencies in key nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium, and folate. These deficiencies can compromise our immune system, impair our energy levels, and negatively impact our overall health.

EATING LATE

Eating late at night can disrupt our natural digestive process. Our bodies are designed to digest food more efficiently during the day when our metabolism is higher. Consuming a heavy meal or snacks right before bed can lead to indigestion, acid reflux, and discomfort. Additionally, eating late can interfere with our sleep. When we lie down to rest, our bod-

ies should be focused on repairing and rejuvenating, not digesting food. Consuming a large meal or foods high in fat and sugar before bed can make it harder to fall asleep and may result in poor sleep quality. It can also contribute to weight gain. When we eat closer to bedtime, our bodies may not have enough time to properly metabolize and burn off the calories consumed. This can lead to weight gain and an increased risk of obesity over time.

EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL INTAKE

Alcohol is a substance that, when consumed in moderation, can be enjoyed responsibly. However, excessive intake of alcohol can lead to a variety of health problems. It can damage vital organs like the liver, heart, and brain. Long-term excessive alcohol consumption can increase the risk of liver disease, heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer. Alcohol also affects our mental health. It can impair cognitive function, leading to poor decision-making, memory problems, and difficulty concentrating. Excessive drinking is also linked to an increased risk of developing mental health conditions such as de-

pression and anxiety. Also, excessive alcohol intake can lead to accidents, injuries, and risky behaviours. It impairs coordination and judgement, increasing the likelihood of accidents and making it unsafe to drive.

EXCESSIVE INTAKE OF SODA AND SALT

Excessive intake of soda, especially those high in sugar, can lead to various health issues. Regularly consuming sugary sodas can contribute to weight gain, increase the risk of obesity, and potentially lead to conditions like type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Additionally, the high sugar content in soda can be harmful to dental health, causing tooth decay and cavities. As for salt, consuming too much can have negative effects on our health as well. High sodium intake is associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure, which in turn can lead to heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular problems. It's important to note that many processed foods, including canned soups, snacks, and fast food, contain high levels of sodium, so it's essential to be mindful of our overall salt intake.

EATING TOO MUCH JUNKS

Junk food is typically high in unhealthy fats, added sugars, and sodium. Consuming these types of foods on a regular basis can lead to weight gain, obesity, and an increased risk of developing chronic conditions like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure. The excessive intake of junk food can also have a negative impact on our energy levels and overall well-being. These foods are often low in essential nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and fibre, which are important for our body's proper functioning. Instead, they are packed with empty calories that provide little nutritional value.

SMOKING

Smoking is a major cause of lung cancer. The harmful substances in tobacco smoke can damage the cells

in the lungs, leading to the development of cancerous tumors. Smoking is also linked to other types of cancer, including throat, mouth, esophageal, and bladder cancer. Smoking increases the risk of developing various respiratory conditions. It can cause chronic bronchitis, where the airways become inflamed and narrowed, leading to persistent coughing and difficulty breathing. Smoking can also contribute to the development of emphysema, a condition in which the air sacs in the lungs are damaged, making it harder to breathe. Furthermore, smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. The chemicals in tobacco smoke can damage blood vessels, leading to the buildup of plaque and narrowing of the arteries. This can increase the risk of heart attacks, heart failure, and stroke.

SLEEPING PILLS

One of the main concerns with sleeping pills is the potential for dependency and addiction. These medications can be habit-forming, meaning that over time, the body may become reliant on them to fall asleep. This can make it difficult to sleep without the pills, leading to a cycle of dependence. Another risk associated with sleeping pills is the possibility of side effects. Common side effects include drowsiness, dizziness, and impaired coordination, which can increase the risk of accidents and falls, especially if taken before bedtime and not allowing enough time for a full night's sleep. Sleeping pills can also disrupt the natural sleep cycle. They may suppress the REM (rapid eye movement) sleep stage, which is important for memory consolidation and overall sleep quality. This can result in feeling groggy or unfocused during the day. Moreover, long-term use of sleeping pills has been associated with a higher risk of developing certain health conditions. These can include cognitive impairment, daytime drowsiness, and even an increased risk of accidents or falls.

SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the main concerns is the impact social media can have on mental health. Spending too much time on social media can lead to feelings of comparison, inadequacy, and low self-esteem. Constantly seeing curated highlight reels of others' lives can create unrealistic expectations and a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out). The constant scrolling, liking, and commenting can become addictive, leading to a compulsive need to check social media platforms. This can negatively impact productivity, relationships, and overall well-being. Excessive social media use can also disrupt sleep patterns. The blue light emitted by screens can interfere with the body's natural sleep-wake cycle, making it harder to fall asleep and get quality rest. This can contribute to fatigue, mood swings, and decreased cognitive function and can lead to a sedentary lifestyle. Sitting for long periods while scrolling through feeds can contribute to a lack of physical activity, which is essential for maintaining good health.

Fashion&Style

Nigerian bridal accessories: A blend of culture and style

GODSBLESSING OKHUELEIGBE
AND EMMANUELLA OKO

A wedding is a special and happy event where love, joy, and celebration are in the air. The wedding attire is way more than just a regular outfit. It's like a reflection of the bride's personality, style, and the traditions she holds dear. The wedding dress is like a statement of who she is and the amazing love story she's about to start. For the bride-to-be, finding the perfect wedding dress is like finding a hidden treasure. It's a journey of discovering herself and expressing who she really is. The dress she chooses becomes a symbol of her dreams, hopes, and the love she shares with her partner. Every little detail, from the fabric to the style, is carefully picked to create a look that is uniquely hers, and when she walks down that aisle in her dress, she shines with confidence and beauty.

When it comes to wedding dresses, accessories play a vital role in creating the perfect bridal look. Fashion designers understand the importance of accessories in adding those extra touches of elegance, charm, and personalisation to the bride's attire. By carefully selecting the right accessories, designers can enhance the overall style and theme of the wedding dress. Accessories can also help to highlight certain features of the dress, such as a beautiful neckline or a stunning back detail, allowing the bride to express her own unique style and personality.

There are endless options to choose from. Some brides opt for traditional accessories, like a classic veil or a delicate tiara, to create a timeless and elegant look. Others may go for more modern and unique pieces, such as a flower crown, a statement headpiece, or even a colourful pair of shoes, to add a touch of personality and individuality to their ensemble.

Bridal accessories can also be influenced by the overall theme or style of the wedding. For example, a bohemian-themed wedding may call for accessories with a natural and organic feel, like a floral crown or a beaded hair vine. On the other hand, a vintage-inspired wedding may inspire the use of antique jewellery, a birdcage veil, or a retro-style headpiece.

Nigerian weddings are known for their vibrant and glamorous celebrations, and the bridal accessories are no exception. In Nigeria, brides often adorn themselves with a variety of accessories that reflect their cultural heritage and personal style. Here are some of them:

GELE

This is a traditional headwrap that adds a touch of elegance and cultural significance to the bride's attire. Gele is typically made from a vibrant and



colourful fabric, often with intricate patterns or designs. It is skillfully wrapped around the bride's head, creating a beautifully sculpted and stylish look. The art of tying a gele is truly

remarkable and requires expertise to achieve the desired shape and structure. Nigerian brides often choose gele that complements their wedding attire, whether it's a traditional outfit



like the Aso Oke or a modern gown. The gele serves as a statement piece, enhancing the bride's beauty and showcasing her cultural heritage. Not only does gele add a stunning visual element to the bridal ensemble, it also holds cultural significance. It symbolises the bride's status, elegance, and respect for her cultural traditions. It's a way for the bride to honour her roots and showcase her pride in Nigerian culture. So, picture a Nigerian bride adorned in a gorgeous gele, confidently walking down the aisle. The gele adds a regal touch to her overall look, making her shine even brighter on her special day.

PARASOL

This accessory adds a touch of grace and elegance to the bride's ensemble. A parasol is a beautiful and functional accessory that provides shade and protection from the sun during outdoor wedding ceremonies, sometimes likened to an umbrella. In Nigeria, parasols are often adorned with intricate designs, vibrant colours, and embellishments that reflect the bride's cultural heritage and personal style. They can be made from various materials such as lace, silk, or even handwoven fabric like Aso Oke. The parasols are typically held by the bride or carried by her bridesmaids, creating a visually captivating procession. Not only do parasols serve a practical purpose by shielding the bride from

the sun's rays, they also make a fashion statement. They add a unique and traditional touch to the overall bridal look, making it even more memorable and special.

JEWELLERY

Nigerian brides often wear a variety of jewellery pieces that reflect their cultural heritage and personal style. One popular type of jewellery is the traditional coral beads. Coral beads hold great cultural and symbolic value in Nigerian weddings. They are often worn as necklaces, bracelets, or waist beads. Coral beads are believed to bring good luck, fertility, and protection to the bride. They are intricately designed with beautiful patterns and colours, creating a stunning and eye-catching adornment. In addition to coral beads, Nigerian brides also wear gold and silver jewellery. These can include hair pieces, necklaces, earrings, bangles, and rings. The jewellery is often intricately crafted with detailed designs, incorporating elements of Nigerian motifs and symbolism. These pieces not only enhance the bride's beauty but also serve as a representation of her family's wealth and status. Nigerian brides may also wear other types of jewellery, such as pearls, diamonds, or gemstones, depending on personal preference and style. These pieces are often chosen to complement the bride's attire and add a touch of glamour and sophistication to her overall look.

TRADITIONAL FANS

In Nigeria, traditional fans come in a variety of styles, materials, and designs, each representing different ethnic group and tradition. One popular type of traditional fan is the Aso Oke fan. Aso Oke is a traditional Nigerian fabric, often handwoven with intricate patterns and vibrant colours. The Aso Oke fan is made from this fabric and is usually adorned with embellishments like beads, sequins, or embroidery. It is commonly carried by Yoruba brides and adds a regal and majestic touch to their overall look. Another type of traditional fan is the Akwa Ocha fan. Akwa Ocha, meaning "white cloth" in Igbo, is a fabric traditionally worn by Igbo brides. The Akwa Ocha fan is typically made from this fabric and is beautifully decorated with delicate embroidery and lace trimmings. It is a symbol of purity and grace and complements the bride's attire perfectly. Additionally, there are fans made from other materials like feathers, beads, or even carved wood. These fans often showcase the craftsmanship and artistic skills of various Nigerian cultures. They are not only practical for keeping cool during the wedding festivities but also serve as a stunning accessory that completes the bride's traditional look.

Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Gulf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

FIFA Ranking: Super Eagles soar, surpassing Ghana and Haaland's Norway

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

In the most recent FIFA ranking, Nigeria's Super Eagles fell two spots, yet the three-time African champions maintain a considerable lead over their West African counterparts, Ghana.

The Super Eagles were ranked 28th in the world in the February ranking but dropped to 30th in the ranking released on Thursday, April 4, following the team's mixed results in last month's international break.

Following their 2-1 victory in last month's international friendly against the Black Stars,

the Super Eagles now hold a lead of 33 spots over their West African counterparts in the latest FIFA ranking.

In Finidi George's debut game as interim manager, Nigeria secured a 2-1 victory against Ghana before suffering a 2-0 defeat to the Eagles of Mali just a few days later.

The Super Eagles also surpass Erling Haaland's Norway (47th), Mohamed Salah's Egypt (37th), and Canada (49th), the co-host of the upcoming World Cup.

Furthermore, despite the two-spot drop, Nigeria maintains its third position on the

African continent, trailing behind Morocco (13th) and Senegal (17th).

On the African continent, Egypt (37th), Cote d'Ivoire (38th), and Tunisia (41st) complete the top five rankings.

Meanwhile, Argentina retains its position as the top-ranked nation globally, with France, Belgium, England, and Brazil following closely behind.

Completing the global top ten rankings are Portugal, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Croatia. The next FIFA ranking update is scheduled for release after the international break in June.



South African football star, Fleurs killed in car hijacking

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Luke Fleurs, a 24-year-old defender from Johannesburg's renowned Kaizer Chiefs team, was fatally shot on Wednesday night while refueling his car at a gas station in a northwestern suburb of the city, according to police.

Kaizer Chiefs, the defender's current club, confirmed the heart-breaking news on social media. They honored the memory of the 24-year-old and extended their condolences to his loved ones.

The club statement read: "It is with a great deal of sadness that we announce that Kaizer Chiefs player, Luke Fleurs tragically lost his life last night during a hijacking incident in Johannesburg.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends at this difficult time. The SAPS are handling the matter and further details will be commu-



nicated in due course. May his dear soul rest in peace."

The shooting occurred at a petrol station in a Florida suburb. Fleurs was waiting for service when he was confronted by armed individuals demanding his vehicle.

The gunmen then shot him before fleeing the scene. Gauteng police spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Mavela Masondo said: "The suspects pointed [at] him with a firearm and took

him out of his vehicle, then shot him once on the upper body."

The defender was taken to the nearest medical care centre but he was tragically certified dead on arrival. Police have opened an investigation, with Gauteng Provincial Commissioner Lieutenant General Tommy Mthombeni appointing a team of seasoned detectives from the provincial office. No arrests have been made at this stage.

Osimhen rejects Premier League transfer, opts for new club

PRINCESS NZEREM

Napoli's Victor Osimhen has declined a transfer to the Premier League and might opt to return to Ligue 1, with Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) as his intended destination in the upcoming summer transfer window.

The 25-year-old Nigerian forward appears set to depart from Napoli in the summer, despite having inked a fresh contract in December which incorporates a €130 million release clause, providing him an exit route after the season.

Despite facing injuries throughout the season, the Nigerian international has excelled in Serie A, scoring 11 goals and contributing three assists in 18 league matches. With the summer transfer window approaching, the 25-year-

old is anticipated to be a prime target for several clubs.

In a chat with Radio Kiss Kiss Napoli, Agent Dario Canovi has revealed that Victor Osimhen will join PSG this summer as a replacement for Kylian Mbappe.

"Osimhen's future? In my opinion he is likely to play in PSG.

"It would be the most successful signing after the farewell of Mbappe who has already been at Real Madrid for months, I see a farce that has been going on for some time so as not to say it.

"Mbappe sent the coach to hell and also insulted him. The only team that has Mbappe in its hands is Real Madrid."



NPFL: Insurance suffers first home loss after 17 yrs as Tornadoes break records

EDWARD OSEGHE

Bendel Insurance Football Club of Benin on Wednesday suffered a huge loss as Niger Tornadoes secured a 3-1 victory in the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) Matchday 28 tie, at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City.

The Benin Arsenal had to endure the pains of their seventeen-year-old strong record of no defeat at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium being destroyed by the strong wind from Niger State in the rescheduled midweek en-

agement after FA Cup success.

Recall that Bendel Insurance FC emerged champions of the Edo Football Association (Edo FA) Cup on Sunday, March 31, after a comfortable 3-1 victory over Ine Stars but not without a big sacrifice as their defense strongman, Sunday Anyanwu sustained an injury that kept him out of Tornadoes clash.

Niger Tornadoes stunned Bendel Insurance in the 13th minute of play as Ernest Chidiebere latched on a rebound ball which he brilliantly put in the right corner beyond the reach of Amas Obasogie to open scoring for the visitors.

Clinton Jephta became a thorn in the flesh of Insurance's defence which missed the services of their leader Sunday Anyanwu as his clever pass met Akintunde Azeez who smartly smashed it into double the lead for the visitors in the 44th minute following poor communication between Insurance goalie and his defenders.

As time drifted away for the referee to signal for halftime, the unbelievable happened as Clinton Jephta got a through pass from Akintunde Azeez and shot from a close range to make it 3-0 before the halftime whistle.

Trabzonspor get six-match fan ban following pitch invasion in Turkey

ADOLOR OKOEGUALE

The Turkish football club Trabzonspor has been mandated to host six home matches without spectators following incidents of violence during a league match against rivals Fenerbahce last

month, announced the country's football federation (TFF) on Wednesday.

The TFF's disciplinary board fined and imposed one-match bans on two Fenerbahce players, Dutch defender Jayden Oosterwolde and goalkeeper Irfan Can Egribayat. Oosterwolde's sanction

stemmed from kicking a Trabzonspor fan who had invaded the pitch with his face concealed.

A group of Trabzonspor fans invaded the pitch after the final whistle of the 3-2 home defeat on March 17.

The assaults occurred during celebrations by Fenerbahce players and coaching staff following their victory, with goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic being punched in the face.

The Black Sea team must also pay two fines totaling 3.1 million Turkish Lira (\$97,000).

Nigerian international Bright Osayi-Samuel who was also involved in the brawl escaped punishment, he punched a fan on the pitch.



SPORTS

The Nigerian Observer
...that the people may know

Boxing: Tyson Fury vs Oleksandr Usyk

● the undisputed fight is back on after previously being postponed

EDWARD OSEGHE

Tyson Fury takes on Oleksandr Usyk in a massive undisputed heavyweight title fight next month.

Fury suffered a nasty gash above his right eye in sparring earlier this month and saw his clash with Usyk on February 17 go up in smoke as a result.

Usyk revealed he missed the birth of his daughter at the beginning of the year to focus on training camp for Fury, but now he has to refocus on a new date.

Fury holds the WBC title in boxing's glamour division, while Usyk has the WBA, WBO, IBF, and Ring Magazine straps.

The pair have been on a collision course to fight for 18 months, following Usyk's rematch win over Anthony Joshua



in August 2022.

Fury only just overcame boxing debutant and former UFC heavyweight champion Francis Ngannou last October, as he was knocked down stunningly before going on to win the bout on points.

And Fury's latest scuffle in sparring with heavyweight Agron Smakici, which saw an 11-stitch cut open up below his eyebrow, will be another confidence booster for Usyk.

The Ukrainian is looking to become the first man in history

to win undisputed titles at both cruiserweight and heavyweight - and he's just one win away.

A victory for Fury, on the other hand, would set up an all-British mega-bout with Anthony Joshua, who takes on Ngannou himself on March 8.

WHEN IS FURY VS USYK?

· Fury vs Usyk will now take place on Saturday, May 18 after the original date of February 17 was postponed.

· The Gypsy King has three months to recover from his injury, and if there are any more pull-outs this time around, a £7.9million fee will be paid to the opposing fighter.

· The fight will take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

· Expect main event ringwalks to get going from around 11 pm BST, with the main card likely to start from 6 pm BST.

Anthony Joshua's next opponent exposed

PRINCESS NZEREM

Anthony Joshua's good friend Derek Chisora has stated that Joshua will not be facing Tyson Fury or Oleksandr Usyk in his next fight.

Following his emphatic knockout victory against Francis Ngannou last month, former two-time world champion Joshua was assured a chance at the undisputed world titles.

However, with Fury and Usyk set to contest for all four heavyweight belts next month, their bout includes a two-way rematch clause, indicating that they will probably face each other again later this year, irrespective of the outcome.

According to Chisora, Queensbury Promotions will host an event at Wembley Stadium later this year, with Joshua set to headline the card.

"He will fight the winner of

Daniel Dubois and Filip Hrgovic in Wembley. I've got a big mouth. That's the plan. It's gonna be a sick, a little adventure for Turki Alalshikh to bring it back to London," Chisora told iFL TV.

A bout between Dubois and Hrgovic is expected to occur as part of the undercard for Artur Beterbiev and Dmitry Bivol's undisputed fight in Saudi Arabia on June 1. If the IBF mandates Fury or Usyk to face their mandatory challenger Hrgovic, this fight could be for the IBF world title.

Another significant heavyweight fight between Deontay Wilder and Zhilei Zhang, both of whom lost to Joseph Parker in their most recent fights, is also rumored to be on the same card.

Eddie Hearn, Joshua's promoter, believes that if Fury triumphs over Usyk next month, a bout between Fury and Joshua will be arranged instead of a rematch with Usyk.



Tyson could be replaced by ex-world champion if not cleared to fight Paul on Netflix



EDWARD OSEGHE

The boxing legend 'Iron Mike' is set to throw down with the YouTuber-turned-boxer in a controversial crossover clash in July, and his participation in the crossover clash is subject to stringent medical tests.

Mike Tyson is at risk of being pulled from the Texas tussle on medical grounds and could be pulled from his upcoming clash with Jake Paul should he fail additional pre-fight medicals.

Notwithstanding, a former 168lbs WBC super-middleweight king Sakio Bika is willing to step in and replace 'The Baddest Man on the Planet' should he be deemed unfit to

compete, The Sun reports.

He told World Boxing News: "At the moment, I am staying in shape and ready if the right offer comes my way.

"I have reached the top of the sport, becoming a multiple-time world champion and winning the prestigious Contender series.

"I have nothing more to prove to anyone, but I would like to have one more big fight.

"If someone like Jake Paul or his brother would really like to test himself against a recent world champion, I am always ready to fight.

"Mike Tyson is an all-time great boxer; he was a hero of mine growing up, and even though he looks in great shape, he is almost 60 years of age!

"If Jake Paul is serious about fighting a former champion, look for someone a lot younger or active within the last decade."

Meanwhile, Mike Tyson, 57, has admitted he is "scared to death" ahead of his fight with Jake Paul.

The heavyweight boxing icon takes on YouTuber-turned-boxer Paul in a controversial clash on July 20 in Texas.

Tyson officially retired in 2005 but did return in 2020 to draw over eight exhibition rounds with fellow great Roy Jones Jr.

The Baddest Man on The Planet was full of nerves back then four years ago - and nothing has changed now.

He told FoxNews: "I have a weird personality - I don't think it's weird though.

"Whatever I'm afraid to do, I do it. That's how it is. I was afraid of the Roy fight.

"I was 100lbs overweight, I was however old, 54, 53, and I said, 'Let's do it'.

"Anything I'm afraid of, I confront it. That's my personality. Right now, I'm scared to death.

"I always believed that adversity and nervousness pretty much catapulted me into success."

2024 Tour Championship: Ronnie O'Sullivan cruises into semi-finals

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Ronnie O'Sullivan advanced to the semi-finals of the 2024 Tour Championship with a commanding 10-2 win over Ali Carter on

Wednesday, April 3rd.

The Englishmen have been involved in intense clashes and have exchanged strong words with each other previously.

However, the match did not

meet expectations, as O'Sullivan capitalized on Carter's subpar performance to easily progress in the competition.

The Rocket crafted breaks of 92, 87, 81, 77, 54, and 51 to establish a dominant 7-0 lead,

capitalizing on his opponent's numerous errors.

In the final frame of the first session, Carter halted the streak by producing a superb total clearance of 141, the highest break of the week thus far.

Phil Foden equals Cristiano Ronaldo's record following Aston Villa's demolition

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Phil Foden continues to inspire Manchester City and write his name in the Premier League record books.

During Manchester City's victory over Aston Villa on Wednesday night, Phil Foden achieved a record previously held by Cristiano Ronaldo and two other Premier League legends.

City defeated Aston Villa 4 - to level on points with Liverpool, as they delivered a commanding performance against Unai Emery's side at the Etihad Stadium. City went ahead thanks to

Rodri in the 11th minute before Jhon Duran equalised nine minutes later.

Foden made it 2-1 just shy of half-time before adding two further goals in the second half to complete his hat-trick and seal a 4-1 victory for his side.

On the back of his latest hat trick, Foden has now equaled a feat managed by Ronaldo, Frank Lampard, and Didier Drogba, (3 Premier League hat tricks)

So far in the 23/24 season, Foden has managed 21 goals and 10 assists in 44 appearances across all competitions for City.

"I'm loving my football; playing with a smile on my face, I'm just trying to help the team because I know I'm capable of scoring goals. Today I showed that. I set myself better than last season. Trying to get more goal contributions. I'm up this year. Doing well." Foden said after the game.

