

Facility management has become like technology where expectations, requirements are changing - Balogun

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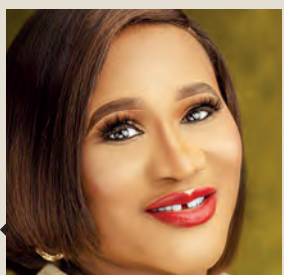
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Abia monarch, Nto Mbah, in double celebration



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Mahmood Yakubu, INEC chairman



Usman Alkali Baba, police IG



Nigeria in the throes of underage voting

Despite INEC's claim of 'cleaning up register'

NOSA IGBINADOR

Nigerian elections tend to be enduringly characterised by unmistakable breaches of civilised rules and regulations.

While election violence tends to be predominantly

a southern phenomenon, underage voting; an undying constant in the country's elections, is largely a northern marvel; a persistent, yet, unchecked abnormality especially in the Sahelian north.

The 2015 general election, widely greeted as free and fair by election monitors and observers, was

itself highly characterised by underage voting.

In February 2016, Godwin Kwanga, the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) of INEC in Plateau state, said that the state was replete with underage voters in possession of Permanent Voters Cards

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This may be my first and last time to vote - Obinna Benedict

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

Young voters who braved their disappointment after the February 25 presidential election to vote in the governorship election say this may be their last time to vote in Nigeria.

The boys saw again in Elemenwo, Obio/Akpor LGA (PH) how counting was disrupted when it became clear

that Labour Party was sweeping the votes.

The young men tried to protect the votes but were overpowered.

In an apparently rehearsed move, some vans moved in and the thugs and election officials jumped in and they moved.

Benedict told BusinessDay in a brief interview that this was his first time to strive to

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Cover

Nigerians watch in disbelief as thugs supervise guber, HoA polls

CHUKA UROKO
and GODSGIFT ONYEDINEFU

Still smarting from the shock of what some citizens described as brazen robbery that defined the February 25 Presidential Election, Nigerians woke up yesterday, March 18, to witness an elevated farce called gubernatorial election that was largely marred by violence, voter intimidation, suppression, and apathy.

Yesterday's election defied all democratic norms and principles as cases abound where voters that were ready and willing to cast their votes for their candidates were told point blank to go in there and vote for a particular candidate of a particular party or stay away. The election was a charade where hoodlums, starry-eyed thugs and street urchins were deployed to carry out what has come to pass as ethnic cleansing and hatred, all happening in the full glare of security officers who pretended to be more helpless than the traumatised 'bloody' civilians.

It is mind-boggling that virtually all relevant institutions in the country are either failing or have failed the people, especially the poor masses. The political elite have so corrupted these institutions that they seem to have forgotten the rules of their engagement. In the circumstance, the police, the electoral umpire and the judiciary have become turncoats that have helped to destroy democratic ethos. That explains why, yesterday in Lagos, the most cosmopolitan city, generally referred to as the ethnic melting pot in Nigeria, violence, orchestrated by the thugs and street urchins also called 'agbero', reigned supreme with attacks on voters and journalists and nobody was arrested. The violence, which happened in many parts of the state took place in the presence of police and other security officers who watched helplessly as voters who came to exercise their franchise were wounded and brutalised as recorded at Polling Unit 018 at Jakande Estate in Isolo area of the state.

In Olodi Apapa, Ajeromi Ifelodun local government area of the state, Ugwu Stella, a resident of the area, told our reporter on phone that as early as 9am, thugs and area boys had taken over most streets, warning residents not to come out to vote unless they were coming to vote for the All Progressives Congress (APC) and its candidates.



"These people who are armed with various lethal weapons are not only intimidating us, but also suppressing our voice to express our choice of leaders through the ballot box which is the hallmark of democracy anywhere in the world," Ugwu said, adding, "we are indoors now watching them from the safety of our rooms."

At Polling Unit 10 by Oja, Second Gate of Jakande Gate, Isolo, a fight broke out when a faceless group insisted that Igbo people and those loyal to the Labour Party (LP) would not vote at that polling unit.

This scenario was all over the state where Igbo people were singled out for both suppression and disenfranchisement. It was such that even some Yorubas who had the misfortune of looking like Igbo people were forced to stay away. This was the fate of Folashade Soremi, a resident of Teju Estate in Ijanikin, Ojo local government area of the state. She however, voted after much introduction.

Another woman tweeted how she and her husband were not allowed to vote in Ajah area of the state simply because they looked like Igbo people. The lady, @Sisi_yemmie, whose polling unit was at Roman Catholic Church, Awoyaya, tweeted: "My husband and I were not allowed to vote. They said we look like Igbo people. I can't believe this."

Also, on his Twitter handle, Ola-

wale Ogunlana, lamented what he called 'harassment' when he was told at his polling unit that he looked like an Igbo person and therefore would not be allowed to vote.

"It is obvious that the ruling party plans to use intimidation, tactical disenfranchisement, violence thuggery and tribal bigotry to hold on to power. This is not an election. This is a crime watch," Ogunlana wrote, adding, "it is easier for Nigerians to participate in electoral process in

the US and UK than in their home country, Nigeria. If you don't see this as a problem, then you need help."

It was a lamentation for a young lady in a viral video who wondered aloud why INEC decided to relocate all the polling units in their Victoria Garden City (VGC) residence which they used for the Presidential election to the Lagos-Epe Expressway. No reasons were given for the decision to move them.

The same scenario played out at Abraham Jakande Estate Ajah where a young man also lamented that INEC, whose officials did not arrive the area until past 10am, decided to relocate their polling units to the expressway. According to the young, who also complained in a viral video, one of the INEC officials told them that they were acting on instruction. If there was voter-apathy which, of course, was widespread, it was because the rape on people's choice and mandate which happened on February 25 is still fresh in voters' minds coupled with the deafening sound of war sent across the state a non-state actor unchallenged by Baba Alkali and his men.

In most of the places visited by our reporters, voters also stayed away in order not to put themselves on harm's way, especially as they were warned to do so by people who have all the powers even to kill and the law of the law will never go after them.

Reports by other observers showed that the same level of violence and electoral fraud in some other states across the country.

Bemoaning increased incidents of vote buying, voter suppression in the gubernatorial election, a pro-democracy think tank, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) described what transpired across the country as an increase in incidents of vote buying and voter suppression in the governorship and state House of Assembly elections compared to the Presidential polls. The think tank, which deployed 1500 observers, also decried violence and intimidation during the polls in states including Kano, Jigawa, Lagos, Enugu, Bayelsa, Rivers and Yobe. This was contained in its preliminary findings on the conduct of the elections signed by chair of the CDD Election Analysis Centre (EAC) Adele Jinadu and Director, Idayat Hassan on Saturday. "There has been an increase in vote buying incidents compared to the February presidential elections. This cuts across political parties, not just traditional parties," Hassan said.

"In places like Ekiti, we saw the Social Democratic Party (SDP) asking people to write their names to be paid later. In Oyo and Ogun, it was the traditional All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)," it said.

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It is obvious that the ruling party plans to use intimidation, tactical disenfranchisement, violence thuggery and tribal bigotry to hold on to power. This is not an election



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Cover

Nigerians watch in disbelief...

Continued from page 2

The preliminary statement similarly revealed that in the north-west, observers in all seven states reported increased reports of vote trading, primarily by political party agents. It said money was used alongside other materials such as food items, wrappers and a 'credit voucher' to buy votes and those items were to be redeemed after the results. Similarly, in the northeast, "political party agents in Taraba infiltrated the queue, pretended to be voters and used the chance to offer cash for votes."

"In the South East, there were reports of APGA and Labour Party (LP) agents using materials, phones and other souvenirs to entice voters in Anambra State. In the south-south, multiple states reported a desire for voters to show proof of their vote before being paid, with party agents reportedly compiling a list of their voters in Esan Central LGA, Edo State."

On how widespread vote buying was in the polls, CDD said its data showed that there were more instances during the governorship election compared to the presidential poll of February 25, with this reality reflected across all six geopolitical zones.

"This might be a reflection of the heightened political environment around governorship polls, the importance of local personalities in state-level politics, and the shortages



of fuel and naira", the statement read.

On voter suppression, "We had more incidences of voter suppression. There were reports in Akwa-ibom where thugs attacked a polling unit just to scare away voters. In Bayelsa, they went to a polling unit, carted away with BVAS machines and the election materials. So it varies and it is appearing in different formats than the traditional formats. In Lagos, non-APC voters were being flogged and chased away," Idayat said.

Consequently, CDD identified voter suppression as a major factor shaping the conduct of elections. Furthermore, CDD said thuggery

was used to disrupt the process. "There were reports in Ukanafun LGA, Akwa Ibom, where thugs attacked a polling unit and scared away voters. Election materials were also hijacked at gunpoint in Emelia LGA and thugs also disrupted the process in Obio/Akpor LGA, both in Rivers State," CDD stated.

Furthermore the Think-tank said it documented incidents of violence, which it noted reinforces the heightened political environment that the polls have been conducted in. These incidents, the CDD noted, have often involved party agents and politically sponsored thugs.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was noted to have, so far, fared better in the area of logistics deployment leading to prompter arrival of poll officials for the commencement of the elections. CDD observer data showed that across the southwest zone INEC officials arrived on time and promptly commenced the process in over 80% of observed polling units.

"In a polling unit in Ekeremor

In the South East, there were reports of APGA and Labour Party (LP) agents using materials, phones and other souvenirs to entice voters in Anambra State



This man was beaten up by thugs at Agric, Ikorodu for coming out to vote

LGA in Bayelsa State, the total number of registered voters was reportedly more than the number of ballot papers provided. Whilst in Yobe state, observers in Fika LGA reported that only 3 of the 10 polling units

had results sheets. In Gwandu LGA of Kebbi state voters had yet to start casting their vote at 1000 because INEC officials did not have the ballot papers allocated for the polling unit," it stated.



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News

2023 elections: 109 persons killed in political violence - CDD

Godsgift Onyedinefu, Abuja

About 109 persons have been killed in political violence recorded from the start of the year to 10 March 2023, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) disclosed on Friday.

According to the Nigeria Election Violence Tracker of the CDD, states that will hold gubernatorial polls with the most incidents of political violence since 1 January 2023 are Lagos, Rivers, Kano, Delta and Anambra – with Kano the state with the most recorded deaths as a consequence at 20.

The Chair of the CDD Election Analysis Centre (EAC), Adele Jinadu and CDD director, Idayat Hassan made this known at a briefing during the opening of the EAC in Abuja.

“Osun, Imo and Ebonyi have also seen a number of incidents in the past three months that could disrupt state house of assembly polls taking place in the state. In total, 109 deaths linked to political violence have been recorded from the start of the year to 10



March 2023 according to the tracker,” they said.

As voters head to the polls to elect governors in 28 states and State House of Assembly members in 36 states, CDD predicted that violence linked to the states elections could

worsen due to the activities of armed groups quasi-security outfits.

“Groups such as Yan Sakai, the Civilian Joint Task Force, Neighbourhood Watch, Amotekun and Ebubeagu have been, and can be, armed and

deployed by state governors and their allies to perpetrate electoral violence or suppress voter turnout, particular in areas of strong opposition support,” Idayat said.

“Apart from these outfits, CDD noted the presence

of the more conventional political thugs, paid to disrupt polls or intimidate political opponents, as a threat to these elections. The insecurity they create itself portends dangers for the ability to conduct credible elections, increases the likelihood of inconclusive results and, ultimately, the need for supplementary elections. Bauchi, Kano, Rivers, and Sokoto all faced this scenario in 2019, with a high risk of repeat in 2023,” she further said.

The pro-democracy think tank, also tasked the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to learn key lessons from its conduct of the presidential poll of February 25 to improve the conduct of the state elections.

CDD stated that given that the polls have been delayed a week, to give INEC time to reconfigure the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) devices, the Commission now has sufficient time conduct better elections, which will be devoid of the earlier noticed flaws.

The think tank stressed

that the functionality of the BVAS machines and improved use of the INEC results viewing platform (IREV) will also be critical for the credibility of the polls.

To ensure the breaches, which occurred during the presidential polls do not happen again, CDD also tasked INEC to reprimand and suspend those found to be colluding with political actors in their state, and support polling unit cancellations in such instances.

CDD urged INEC to avoid elongated periods of silence as this provides fuel for misinformation and disinformation to flourish.

While noting that there will be new governors in 17 states, regardless of the outcome of the polls due to term-limited incumbents who are ineligible to stand, the think-tank however, stressed that such keen contests are likely to be sites for election-violence. The group listed ways violence could manifest to include voter intimidation, ballot box snatching and the destruction of election materials.

Binance, ScholarX partner to drive blockchain adoption across Nigerian markets

IFEOMA OKEKE
-KORIEOCHA

BINANCE, one of the world's leading blockchain ecosystem and cryptocurrency infrastructure provider has collaborated with ScholarX (LearnAM), a social impact startup that helps young Africans access quality skills training, to drive blockchain adoption across rural markets in Nigeria with the use of localized languages namely Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and Pidgin English.

With an aim to increase crypto awareness on the continent at a time when more Africans are turning to digital assets, Binance is running activations at popular Nigerian markets including Alaba market (Largest electronics market in Nigeria), Computer village (Largest ICT accessories market in Nigeria), Balogun market (Largest Textile market in Nigeria), Ikotun market (Food items market) and Coker-Orile market (Building materials market).

Binance has just completed phase one of the activations where blockchain solutions including use cases and academic resources were introduced to market officials at Ikotun and Alaba Intl market. Phase two

will begin on Wednesday 23 March, 2023 at the Computer Village.

“We're excited about this partnership as it is especially important at this crucial time in our country's history, with

the unprecedented push for the execution of digital and cashless policies. We're confident that this partnership with Binance will open new opportunities for people in local markets, with LearnAM providing

them with localized information they need to wield blockchain technology”, Bola Lawal, CEO of ScholarX said.

“We have always believed in equitable access to information and opportunity that improve

the quality of life within these communities. This partnership further reinforces our commitment to this,” he added.

As the world becomes more connected than ever, digital skills are important for people in rural communities to access information, find employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, succeed in education, and build stronger and more connected communities.

“To expedite widespread adoption, we are committed to ensuring that even those in disadvantaged communities have access to the myriad of solutions blockchain offers. We see a more on-the-ground approach as an essential step in demystifying the concepts and providing solutions to real-world problems,” Nadeem Anjarwalla, Binance West & East Africa Director said.

By bringing more in-person experiences, Binance continues to improve crypto literacy and drive adoption across the region, stimulating economic and digital development.



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News

Zipline targets one million deliveries in 2023 with launch of Platform two drones

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

ZIPLINE, a global logistics company, says it plans to complete about one million deliveries by the end of 2023 with the launch of its new platform that provides quiet, fast and precise autonomous delivery directly to homes in cities and suburbs.

According to the company, with the unveiling of the next-generation home delivery platform, by 2025, Zipline expects to operate more flights annually than most airlines.

Keller Rinaudo Clifton, co-founder and CEO of Zipline, while speaking at the unveiling of the New Autonomous System recently, said Zipline has spent the last several years building and fine-tuning its next-generation technology, Platform 2 (P2), to provide an optimal customer experience at scale.

Clifton said that unlike other drone delivery services, Zipline's drones (Zips) fly more than 300 feet above the ground and are nearly inaudible. When the Zip arrives at its destination, it

hovers safely and quietly at that altitude, while its fully autonomous delivery droid maneuvers down a tether, steers to the correct location, and gently drops off its package to areas as small as a patio table or the front steps of a home. This is all made possible through major innovations in aircraft and propeller design

"We have built the closest thing to teleportation ever created - a smooth, ultrafast, convenient, and truly magical autonomous logistics system that serves all people equally, wherever they are," Clifton said. Jonathan Neman, co-founder and CEO of Sweetgreen, one of the restaurants that have already signed on to use Zipline's new home delivery service, said the future of delivery is faster, more sustainable and creates broader access, all of which provides improved value for our customers,

He said Sweetgreen is partnering with Zipline to further its mission of connecting people to real food in the U.S., while moving a step closer to its pledge to be carbon-neutral by 2027.



"By ordering through Zipline's marketplace, Sweetgreen customers can get their orders using 97 percent less energy than traditional automotive methods. "We couldn't be more excited to work with Zipline

to complement our delivery strategy. Zipline's sustainable technology and ability to reach customers quickly, with a great delivery experience, will help us give our customers what they want when they want it," he said. Another healthcare sector that has partnered with Zipline on this project is Michigan Medicine which will use Zipline's new service to more than double the number of prescriptions it fills each year through its in-house pharmacy.

Intermountain Health will use it to deliver prescriptions to patients' homes in the Salt Lake City metro area. MultiCare Health System plans to use the new platform to expedite diagnostics and deliver prescriptions and medical devices throughout MultiCare's network of facilities, including hospitals, laboratories and doctors' offices.

Another Zipline's first customer, the Government of Rwanda, will use the company's new home delivery service to enable urban aerial last-mile delivery to homes, hotels and health facilities in Kigali and elsewhere in the country.

Zipline's end-to-end solution seamlessly integrates with a business's current operations. That includes its dual-use docking and charging hardware, software that easily works with third-party inventory management and ordering systems, an intuitive app that allows order tracking down to the second, and an autonomy system that has already guided the flight paths of 40 million commercial miles. Zipline designed its docking and charging hardware to have a light footprint that can be attached to any building or set up as a freestanding structure.

Each P2 Zip has a 10-mile service radius while carrying a 6-8 pound payload for out-and-back deliveries from a single dock. Alternatively, it can also fly up to 24 miles one way from dock to dock, charging at each dock before picking up its next delivery. Because Zips can move from dock to dock, Zipline can dynamically respond to peak order times - ensuring there's enough delivery capacity for an urgent prescription delivery or a busy Friday pizza night or weekday lunch rush.

Judiciary gains Independence, as Buhari assents to 16 amendments

TONY AILEMEN, Abuja

President Muhammadu Buhari on Friday assented to a total of 16 Constitution Amendment Bills, including the Judiciary Autonomy Bill, guaranteeing long expected financial autonomy to the judiciary and State Houses of Assembly, under the Constitution.

The amendments were announced on Friday, shortly before the President departed for Daura, in Katsina, his home state, to enable him cast his vote during the Saturday March 18 Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections.

Recall that the State Governors had resisted financial autonomy for the two groups, following the existence of State and Local government Joint Account system.

Tolu Ogunlusi, Special Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari on Digital and New Media, stated this on his Twitter handle @toluogunlusi, on Friday Under the new amendments to the Constitution, the Judiciary and State Houses of Assembly will now enjoy financial autonomy as

first line charge on revenue allocated to the state government, at the subnational levels

"The Constitution amendment bill originally passed by NASS included one for FINANCIAL AUTONOMY for LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, replacing the controversial "State Joint Local Government Account" with a new "Local Govt Council Allocation Account"—to be credited directly.

Not enough State Assemblies concurred, sadly

Aside the Judiciary which now enjoys constitutionally-guaranteed financial independence, the new amendments have also moved the Railways from Exclusive Legislative List to the Concurrent List, allowing subnational government to invest in the development of rail services in their states.

Another landmark change: By virtue of the Presidential Assent, Nigerian States can now generate, transmit and distribute electricity in areas covered by the national grid, a situation that was not allowed, before the amendment.

"This is genuine, realistic Restructuring — through the Constitution.

Old Naira notes: Kudos, knocks over Buhari, CBN's directives

EMMANUEL NDUKUBA

Reactions have continued to trail directives by President Muhammadu Buhari and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to commercial banks to disperse and accept the deposit of old Naira notes amid the raging currency crisis.

While some commended the President for finally breaking the prolonged brawl, others described it as belated, saying the delay on the part of government was a mark of irresponsibility.

A veteran journalist, Tony Okafor described the directive as victory for the rule of law, expressing optimism that Nigerians would no longer be subjected to excruciating pains occasioned by new naira notes swap.

He also advised that Nigerian late-hour fire brigade approach to issues should be avoided in the present circumstance.

He said: "The directive is victory for the rule of law. No sane society, more so a demo-

cratic type, can survive without the rule of law and independence of the judicial.

"We commend the president and his CBN implementing agency for giving hope to democracy despite their delay in making that pronouncement. "It's now left to the Central Bank to make adequate arrangements for the gradual and systemic withdrawal of the old notes from circulation on or before 31st December deadline by ensuring the printing and adequate supply of the new notes.

"Nigerians cannot be subjected again to the excruciating pains they passed through during the new naira notes swap that lasted for months.

"It was a whole lot hell that nobody would want to pass through again. Besides, citizens should be fast to comply with the necessary guidelines that may be put in place by the CBN for the discontinuance of the old notes."

It would be recalled that some eleven days ago, the Supreme Court of Nigeria held

that the President, breached the constitution of Nigeria in the way he issued directive to the Central Bank of Nigeria for the redesign of the Naira without consulting with the National Council of States and the Federal Executive Council.

It went further to rule that the unconstitutional use of powers by the President on the Naira redesign has breached the fundamental rights of Nigerian citizens in the various ways.

The state governors have persistently argued that the policy which permitted the CBN to place an embargo on the circulation of old N500 and N1000 notes without providing their replacement in sufficient amounts, had triggered severe cash shortage and chaos in the economy.

It has led to runaway inflation in food and other commodities. Huge crowds and long queues form around bank offices and ATM points across the country as people struggle to get the new cash which have remained extremely scarce. It has triggered riots and other forms of civil unrest.



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News

Why incoming administration should address challenges in power sector - Ezeafulukwe

MERCY ENOCH, Asaba

Christopher Ezeafulukwe, managing director and chief executive officer, Transcorp Power Limited, has said that the next administration in the country should make conscious and disciplined investment efforts in addressing challenges in the power sector.

According to him, the country needs at least 20,000 megawatts of electricity to drive her industrial, economic and social activities round the clock and end epileptic power supply in the country.

He said it was distressing for a country of over 200 million people to be driving its economic and social activities with a meagre 5,000mw of electricity.

He spoke while addressing journalists at the company's plant in Ughelli after a guarded study tour of facilities in the plant by a delegation from the Army War College of Nigeria.

The tour was part of their environmental study tour with the theme 'Protection of Critical National Assets and Infrastructure for National Defence.'

He said that deliberate and significant improvement in generation, transmission and distribution of electricity was invaluable towards finding lasting solution to the headache of inadequate power supply in the country.

He bemoaned the heavy cost implications of servicing turbines as such services are not available within the country vis-a-vis sourcing overseas components of the required items in hard currency.

Ezeafulukwe said, "For instance, to carry out routine inspection of the turbines, you need to fly them out which is a huge foreign expenditure which exposes us to logistic challenges."

He decried the nation's overdependence on technical services from abroad, noting that the situation on ground was bound to increasingly expose gas plants in the country to the vagaries of logistics changes.

"This is because we queue to wait for some clearance before being allowed to do our jobs, which to a large extent affected our turnaround. That is, if you have a turbine that would have come back in six months, it then takes some eight to 10 months.

"This also denied us running the turbine from

generating power that you would have put on the national grid to support the nation's economy."

The Transcorp Power CEO however, urged the Federal Government to work on incentives for investors in the power sector by identifying gas fields for accelerated development.

The MD rated the company high on provision of various corporate social responsibility programmes spanning quality education, vocational training and empowerment as well as provision of health and other social facilities particularly for several host communities in Ughelli North and Ughelli South local government areas.

Brigadier-General U.M. Alkali, the deputy commandant/director of Studies at the War College, had in his address disclosed that study tour was of strategic importance towards identifying and understanding various critical infrastructure in the country, stressing the importance to national economic growth.

He assured that the outcome of the detailed study tour would help in fashioning policies and programmes that would translate into ensuring seamless operational activities of critical assets like Transcorp Energy.



R-L: Lagos State Governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu; son of the deceased and the Senior Pastor of House on The Rock church, Pastor Paul Adefarasin; the Vice President, Prof Yemi Osinbajo; his wife, Dolapo and the Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt Hon Femi Gbajabamila during the funeral service of Mrs Hilda Adefarasin at the Guiding Light Assembly church, Ikoyi, Lagos, on Friday, 17 March 2023.



L-R: Lagos State Governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu exchanging greetings with son of the deceased and the General Overseer of Guiding Light Assembly church, Pastor Wale Adefarasin during the funeral service of Mrs Hilda Adefarasin at the Guiding Light Assembly church, Ikoyi, Lagos, on Friday, 17 March 2023.

MultiChoice rolls out new content to deepen indigenous storytelling

...As Africa Magic marks 20th anniversary

SEYI JOHN SALAU

MultiChoice has unveiled a bumper chain of local content to deepen indigenous storytelling for customers across DStv and GOtv channels for the new calendar year on Africa Magic.

The catalogue of content includes news, music, sports, reality TV shows, documentaries, drama series, movies, and children's programmes.

"This year, we intend to break more boundaries and find new frontiers in local storytelling. We look forward to ensuring Africa Magic remains at the forefront of Nigeria storytelling. We are adding 28 more series titles and 20 original Africa Magic movies for our customers, starting from April 2023. This year, we are also investing more in our indigenous productions across our language channels: Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo," Busola Tejumola, executive head of content and West

Africa Channels, MultiChoice Nigeria, said.

Speaking during the recent content discovery event held in Lagos, Tejumola said that customers should expect a new and diverse set of captivating and relatable indigenous stories across Africa Magic channels.

"It's been 20 years of Africa Magic and Nollywood growing together, building global careers and talents. In 2003, we began the journey of telling authentic Nigerian stories on Africa Magic to build a platform where everyday Nigerians see themselves in relatable stories reflecting our culture. In 2023, we've found ourselves celebrating 20 years of creating and telling Nigerian stories," Tejumola.

Speaking on the investment made by MultiChoice in growing content on its platform, Tejumola disclosed that Africa Magic launched with a single channel in Nigeria and has since expanded to a cluster of seven channels

"From April 2022 to March 2023, we had over 2,500 hours of production and licensed 10,000 hours of

authentic Nigerian stories. We have stories in English, and indigenous languages Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, broadcast to over 42 African countries," she said.

Victor Aghahowa, head of production West Africa, MultiChoice Nigeria, said the new roll call of content includes, The Residence, Ripples, Igbo drama series, Ugwu and Iwe, Yoruba series, Apo (The Bag), among others.

He disclosed that Africa Magic will now premiere new 130 episode series every six months as opposed to 260 episode series every year. The list of new programmes also includes brand new unscripted game show, 'Mind and Body', and new drama series, 'Simbirella'.

According to him, customers will also continue to enjoy local and international sport entertainment contents across SuperSport channels, including EPL, FA Cup, CAF Champions League, Europa League and UEFA Champions League matches and WWE specials.

MTN, Amazon partner to offer Prime Video to subscribers

SEYI JOHN SALAU

MTN Nigeria has teamed up with Amazon's global streaming platform, Prime Video, to offer Prime Video mobile edition - a single-device, mobile-only subscription.

MTN customers, who subscribe will have access to Prime Video's full catalogue of 9,000+ movies and 1,500+ TV shows, in standard definition with an affordable and dedicated data package for streaming and downloading.

Subscribers will enjoy a 30-day free trial with 2.5GB of video data, exclusively for the Prime Video app. After the free trial, they can then enjoy Prime Video mobile edition

for N800 per month only, with their airtime.

"We are excited to offer Prime Video subscriptions to millions of Nigerians providing them with access to entertainment on their own terms - where and when they want it. Video-on-demand has become a major part of our lives and this launch offer is important to make every customer's journey to their desired content more accessible and affordable," A'isha Umar Mumuni, the chief digital officer, MTN Nigeria, stated.

According to her, the plans will be available from March 13, 2023, while customers can sign up for the offers by visiting: play.mtn.ng/primevideo. "The Prime Video platform boasts

thousands of titles with over 150 Nollywood titles already and with several Nigerian Originals currently in the pipeline. We are confident this relationship will bring value to both our customers and the Nigerian movie industry," Mumuni stated.

Select MTN customers are eligible to sign up to Prime Video and enjoy the first three months, courtesy of MTN Nigeria. Thereafter, for only N2, 300 per month, customers can conveniently subscribe with their airtime.

A Prime Video subscription gives access to the vast catalogue across TV, mobile and tablet devices, enabling subscribers to stream and download in high definition, on up to 3 devices simultaneously.

Ojaja University to bridge Nigeria's education gap - Ooni

SEYI JOHN SALAU

The Ooni of Ife, Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, in reiterating his unending passion for education and entrepreneurship has disclosed that Ojaja University will bridge Nigeria's education gap by developing a 360 learning model that leverages technology and entrepreneurial studies.

Ogunwusi stated this while unveiling plans for the official commissioning of his citadel of learning, the Ojaja University, Eyenkorin Ilorin, Kwara State formerly Crown-Hill University.

The Ooni shared the news via a post on his verified social media handles after securing full accreditation for the take-off courses of the institution from the National Universities Commission (NUC) aided by its substantial vice chancellor, Professor Jeleel Ojuade.

After a thorough



Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, the Ooni of Ife and founder, Ojaja University being presented with the certificate of accreditation by the National University Commission (NUC) by Professor Jeleel Ojuade, the acting vice chancellor of the University.

accreditation exercise recently conducted by the nation's University regulatory body, the Ooni disclosed that it has always been his dream to own

a citadel of learning where scholars can be developed in learning and character, and entrepreneur mindset for a global market. "Nigerian

Universities just churn out millions of graduates yearly but don't arm them with the necessary skills and support they need.

"In China and the United States of America, students build most of the applications we use today. Facebook, Instagram, and the likes were built by students but today they are making billions of dollars from them. Our education curriculum should teach how to analyze situations and bring pragmatic solutions via proper research," the Ooni stated.

He further disclosed that the University will provide students with business grants to support students willing to delve into entrepreneurship. "The grants are made readily available to help establish what they have learnt in school. We can't keep churning out graduates without providing how they should be utilized," Ogunwusi stated.

Speaking further on the motive behind the business grant, Ogunwusi stated that it will help to bridge the current brain drain in the country, and limit the number of Nigerians seeking greener pastures outside the shores of the country.

According to him, Ojaja

University will be structured in a way whereby students will be given a free hand to explore and settle for what they wish to become with our solid support. "They will be trained to be problem solvers and critical thinkers with a burning entrepreneurial mindset. Ojaja University is driven strictly by innovation and ideas. We will celebrate more innovative minds than academic excellence," Ogunwusi stated.

The Ooni also disclosed that admission into various degree programs would soon commence with an easy payment plan for students. "What we are bringing on board in terms of academic reform is different from what is out there. Our graduates and products will not be half-baked.

"They will be well-trained to meet the teeming demands of a modern technological-driven society like Nigeria. They will be the change-makers who are ready to proffer solutions to all issues they might encounter in and outside their workspace," Ogunwusi stated.

Wase hails Buhari over state judiciary, legislature independence, power generation bills assent

JAMES KWEN

Ahmed Idris Wase, the deputy speaker of the House of Representatives, has lauded President Muhammadu Buhari for assenting to some momentous legislations that altered some Provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.

Wase, who is also the chairman, House Special Ad-Hoc Committee on the Review of 1999 Constitution particularly expressed delight over Buhari's assent to bill seeking to provide for the financial independence of State Houses of Assembly and State Judiciary.

According to the lawmaker, it is also commendable that the bills seeking to allow states generate, transmit and distribute electricity in areas covered by the national grid; and for related matters has gotten the executive seal.

The other Constitution alteration bills which the deputy speaker is fascinated by the presidential assent to them include:

"The Bill to alter the Constitution of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to move the item 'railways' from the Exclusive Legislative List to the Concurrent Legislative List.

"The Bill to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to delete the item 'prisons' in the Exclusive Legislative List and redesignate it as 'Correctional Services' in the Concurrent Legislative List.

"The Bills to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to change the names of Afikpo North and Afikpo South Local Government Areas; change the name of Kunchi Local Government Area; the names of Egbado North and Egbado South Local Government Areas.

"The Bills to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to correct the name of Atigbo Local Government Area; to correct the name of Obia/Akpor Local Government Area.

"The Bills to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to regulate the first session and inauguration of members-elect of the National and State Houses of Assembly; delete

the reference to the provisions of the Criminal Code, Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Act, Criminal Procedure Code or Evidence Act.

"The Bills to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to exclude the period of intervening events in the computation of time for determining pre-election petitions, election petitions and appeals; provide for the post call qualification of the Secretary of the National Judicial Council.

"The Bill to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to require the President and Governors to submit the names of persons nominated as Ministers or Commissioners within sixty days of taking the oath of office for confirmation by the Senate or State House of Assembly.

"The Bills to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to correct the error in the definition of the boundary of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja; require the Government to direct its policy towards ensuring right to food and food security in Nigeria and for related matters."

Awarding contracts to APC candidates exposes INEC's partisanship, incompetence - Atiku

TONY AILEMEN

The Presidential candidate of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, has knocked the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for awarding contracts to companies owned by candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

INEC had in a statement by its National Commissioner, Festus Okoye, admitted to awarding a sensitive contract to the Binani Printing Press Limited, a firm which has now been revealed to be owned by APC governorship candidate in Adamawa State, Senator Aishatu Ahmed Binani.

Okoye had claimed that the company was awarded the contract as a way of stimulating the economy and encouraging Nigerian enterprise and that a preliminary search at the Corporate Affairs Commission did not immediately show that Senator Binani was a director.

Responding in a statement, however, Atiku's Special Assistant on Public Communication, Phrank Shaibu said INEC's excuse was watery and unconvincing.

Shaibu said it was unfortunate that despite being given an allocation of over N300bn as well as financial assistance from foreign governments including

the European Union, the United States and the United Kingdom, the leadership of INEC had continued to run the Commission without scruples.

He said, "INEC's latest statement cannot even fool a primary school student. An ordinary search on CAC's portal by youths on Twitter has already revealed that Senator Binani owns Binani Printing Press Limited, a firm that was given a contract to print sensitive INEC material. The company with RC 310024, which was registered on March 13, 1997 has Senator Aishatu Ahmed listed as number one. "It is obvious that Prof. Mahmood Yakubu has no plan of leaving a legacy of free and fair elections. With barely a year left on his tenure, his performance as INEC chairman will become a by-word for failure. This is a man who has received the highest financial allocation ever and yet cannot still run the agency effectively and deliver a credible election.

"It is funny that INEC claims it awarded the contract to Binani's company in order to stimulate the local economy. One wonders whether it is the duty of INEC to stimulate the economy or conduct credible elections."

Shaibu noted that this would not be the first time that INEC would be awarding sensitive contracts to APC chieftains.

He recalled that ahead of the 2019 poll, INEC under the leadership of Yakubu also

awarded a contract for the printing of Permanent Voters' Cards to Mohammed Sani Musa who in the same year was contesting for the Niger East senatorial election.

Shaibu added, "Recall that in the run-up to the 2019 Presidential election, INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu admitted that the commission indeed awarded a contract to Act Technologies Limited to print Permanent Voters' Cards.

"Act Technologies, whose Managing Director, Mohammed Sani Musa, was APC candidate for Niger East senatorial district at the time, went on to win that election." Shaibu noted that Senator Musa was arrested by the Department of State Services briefly before the 2015 elections following allegations by the spokesman for the Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Organisation.

"Despite all these complaints, INEC still insisted on awarding him a contract," Shaibu said.

Atiku's aide also noted that despite complaints from several political parties, INEC under the leadership of Prof. Yakubu also insisted on using the transport services of Musiliu Akinsanya, aka MC Oluomo, to transport ballot papers across Lagos State on the day of election.

He said, "Elections are not just supposed to be free and fair. They are expected to be free and fair."

News

IWD: Sterling Bank, Healthtracka move to fight cervical cancer

IFEOMA OKEKE
-KORIEOCHA

Sterling Bank has entered into partnership with Healthtracka, a digital health company, to eradicate cervical cancer by gifting their female employees HPV self-sampling kits.

This is part of the companies' efforts to celebrate International Women's Day.

The initiative aims to raise awareness about cervical cancer, consequences of its late diagnosis, and the importance of screening eligible women in underserved communities like Nigeria.

Cervical cancer is a preventable disease that is caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is transmitted through sexual contact.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women worldwide, with approximately 570,000 new cases and 311,000 deaths annually. Nigeria has the



Ifeoluwa Dare-Johnson, founder of Healthtracka and Stephanie Metieh - Medical Doctor

highest burden of cervical cancer in Africa, with an estimated 14,943 new cases and 10,403 deaths each year.

One of the major challenges in the fight against cervical cancer in Nigeria is the late diagnosis of the disease. In

many cases, the disease is only detected in advanced stages when treatment options are limited, and the survival

rate is low. To address this challenge, Sterling Bank and Healthtracka have come together to promote early detection through screening, awareness, and education.

As part of the initiative, Sterling Bank is gifting a number of their female employees HPV self-sampling kits, which enables women to collect their own cervical samples in the privacy of their homes. The samples can then be sent to a laboratory for testing, and results can be accessed through a secure online portal. This approach is more convenient and less invasive than traditional screening methods, such as Pap tests, which require a visit to a healthcare facility.

Commenting on the partnership, Temi Dalley, the Chief Human Resources Officer of Sterling Bank, said: "As a socially responsible organization, we are committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of our employees and the wider community. Cervical cancer is a preventable disease, and we believe that early detection through screening is key to eradicating it. We

are proud to partner with Healthtracka to provide a number of our female employees with the tools they need to take control of their health."

Ifeoluwa Dare-Johnson, founder of Healthtracka, added: "We are delighted to partner with Sterling Bank to raise awareness about cervical cancer and promote early detection.

"Our HPV self-sampling kit is an innovative and convenient way for women to access screening, particularly in underserved communities where access to healthcare may be limited. We hope that this initiative will encourage more women to prioritize their health and take action to prevent cervical cancer."

The partnership between Sterling Bank and Healthtracka is a step towards eradicating cervical cancer in Nigeria and improving the health outcomes of several women across the nation.

By promoting early detection through screening and education, the initiative is empowering women to take control of their health and well-being

Nigeria loses future Goalkeeper hopeful to England U20

SEYI JOHN SALAU

Nigeria's Super Eagles hope to solve its goalkeeping challenge with the promising 19-year-old England-based kid sensation, Owen Olamidayo Goodman, is now on the brink as he has been invited to the England U20 team ahead of the U20 World Cup.

The goalkeeper, who is born in United Kingdom to a Nigerian Mother and British Father, is one of the two goalkeepers invited in the 22-member team by John McDermott, Technical Director.

The kid sensation, who recently penned a new deal with his U21 Crystal Palace club, is expected to report to the team camp on Sunday along with other players.

The team is expected to play three friendly matches before the departure for the 23rd edition of the U20 World Cup in Indonesia scheduled between May 20 and June 11, 2023.

Preparation for the summer tournament will see England play France, USA and Germany.

The English fans will have the opportunity to see some of the most exciting young players in the country when the U20 take on Germany at the Manchester City Academy

Stadium on Wednesday 22 March (7.30pm GMT kick-off). The squad will then head to the Marbella Football Centre in Spain to take on the USA (Saturday 25 March) and France (Tuesday 28 March) as preparation for this summer's tournament ramps up.

Goodman has been the first-choice keeper for Paddy McCarthy's Under-21s this season, keeping three clean sheets in 12 games.

Goodman can represent

Canada, Nigeria and England for his international career.

A young goalkeeper with a clear head and directions recently opened up on how he will arrive at a decision.

"Whoever calls me first, I will honour the invite," he said.

When pushed further on the possibility of Nigeria, Owen gave an emphatic answer. "I will be glad to play for my country (Nigeria) if I get the opportunity I will grab it."



Terra unveils shrimp seasoning cube

TGI Group has launched Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube to excite the market with value-adding varieties of Terra Seasoning Cubes.

Made from locally sourced ingredients, Terra Shrimp Cube is a flavour-filled blend of real shrimp, chili and garlic among others to enhance various meal types. Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube is guaranteed to deliver a strong aroma, flavour and an irresistible taste to your meal.

Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube offers an option for consumers who like to savour and experience the original seafood taste and aroma that comes from real shrimp in their meals. It also imparts a mild smokey taste to meals which is reminiscent of party cooking with firewood.

Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube will surely delight chefs, caterers and homemakers who desire to achieve a distinctive seafood flavour and irresistible taste to their variety of meals.

Mrs. Nadia Ekong, a chef with Emmanuel Catering Ajah, describes her cooking experience with the new Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube as perfect, especially for her favourite seafood okra.

"Getting the right seasoning to deliver that unique seafood flavour and aroma for my favourite soup; seafood okra and other seafood delicacies

had been a challenge until I recently discovered the Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube through my mother.

"Ever since we started using Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube, we have noticed a higher demand than usual for our Seafood dishes, especially the seafood Okra. We believe that this trend will continue, and we will have more returning customers. Thanks to Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube" she says.

Deepanjan Roy, Group Executive Director - TGI says Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube was generally designed to meet the taste needs of consumers who enjoy the flavour and aroma of shrimp for great-tasting meals anytime.

"With its key ingredients of real shrimp, garlic and chili, Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube has provided us with an opportunity to, once again, offer a unique product to our consumers who are ever on the lookout for an exciting variety" he says.

Probal Bhattacharya, Chief Marketing Officer, TGI Group stated that the new Terra Shrimp Cube is designed to meet the needs of consumers looking for that unique seafood taste and aroma that comes from real shrimp in their meals.

"We are confident that the new Terra Shrimp Seasoning Cube will be endorsed by chefs, caterers and homemakers

across Nigeria for its authentic Shrimp flavour suitable for both local and international dishes" he added.

Terra Seasoning Cubes are made up of wholesome, carefully sourced essential ingredients specially designed to meet the discerning Nigerian consumers' needs in every meal, offering great taste, flavour and aroma for that unique cuisine experience. Every meal cooked with Terra guarantees an enjoyable meal and a rich signature homemade taste experience. Available in Beef, Chicken, Shrimp and Jollof flavours, in various consumer-friendly pack sizes, nationwide.

Tropical General Investments (TGI) Group is an international investment and holding company with diversified interests and investments across Africa, The Middle East, Asia and other emerging markets. TGI's investments focus on driving inclusivity and value addition using locally sourced raw materials, state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities and a highly skilled workforce to produce world-class products that are consumed both locally and exported to global markets. Across markets, TGI Group owns over a hundred leading brands in Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Agricultural Inputs, Industrial Chemicals, Homecare Products and Pharmaceuticals.

Angry electorate shun polling units

...In protest against INEC 'incompetence'

OBINNA EMELIKE

With the unprecedented low turnout of voters in the gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections across the country on Saturday, it is obvious that angry Nigerians have abandoned polling units for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Of course, the action is an expression of their lack of confidence in the INEC to conduct free and fair elections again.

While the February 25th presidential election witnessed huge improvement in voters' turnout, the March 18, 2023 election recorded a low turnout across the country; a sad development that seems to return voter apathy, which declined during the presidential election.

The situation was worrisome as empty streets witnessed the return of youths playing football on election day instead of casting their votes, while their parents and many young adults, who voted in the presidential election, found safety and comfort at home than exercising their civic duty.

At Ijesha in Surulere, Lagos, several youths who were playing ball in major streets told BusinessDay that their votes at the February 25th presidential election did not count and that

is why they were back to their past time passion of football.

But the youths at Bishop Hopewell Street, Eric Moore, Lagos, took the protest to another level by blocking roads and even denying passage to security personnel.

"Why will we waste our time to vote when INEC has decided the winner before election. They asked us to vote and that our votes will count this time. But it did not count, football is counting for us because there is no tribe or INEC here," a youth, who called himself Timi T, lamented.

According to BusinessDay's investigations across the country, the turnout was unprecedented.

At Osogbo, the turnout was so low that electoral officers were waiting for voters, a reverse of the presidential election where voters waited long for the electoral officer.

An INEC ad-hoc staff at Ward 4 unit 39, Ataoja D Osogbo, who pleaded for anonymity, lamented that they were set for voting by 8:30 am, but only started seeing voters from 11am, and in fewer numbers than the presidential election.

The low turnout gave Ademola Adeleke, governor of Osun State, huge concern and made him to call out residents of the state to come out and vote. "You are still at home? Come out now and use your PVC as a democrat. It is safe



outside. Exercise your right to vote and be voted for.

"Don't be scared to abandon your right to vote. Security agencies are in top form to ensure that your vote and my vote count. I have issued directives to service commanders to secure lives and properties as we all vote today.

"I need you, good people of Osun State, to vote massively. If you love democracy and good governance, stand up now and face your polling units," the governor said after voting at his unit in his Ede country home.

But the call by the Osun State governor seemed to have fallen on deaf ears as Osun voters still stayed back.

There was also low turnout of voters in most of the polling units visited by BusinessDay in Akure, the Ondo State capital.

In Rivers State, voters aban-

doned polling units for INEC as low turnout in Port Harcourt was also witnessed across the state.

But the late arrival of INEC officials also aided voter apathy as many went back unlike in the presidential election where people came very early waited for INEC and voted till night.

Reacting to the low turnout in his state, David Oleyelogun, speaker, Ondo State House of Assembly, lamented that the low voters turnout was unprecedented.

The Speaker, who went on to call on the people to come out and vote, noted that it is their rights to do so.

"The turnout is very poor, it is not encouraging. But we still have the hope that people will still come out to vote.

"In order for us not to have more problems, there is need

for more awareness on the reason why they need to vote for the legislature. Some people are tired of coming out to vote because they don't even know their rights and we need to let them know," the Ondo speaker said.

Lagos State also witnessed low turnout at many polling units across the state, especially in Surulere's Ijesha and Bode Thomas, where in some of the polling units about 10 people or less had voted at about 11:10am.

"I don't know why people are not coming out to vote, you can see the polling units are empty. Few people have come out, but the process is going on smoothly as you can see," Joy Akeem a polling agent said.

In Anambra State, voter apathy forced INEC officials to sleep off at polling unit 034

Garuba Square situated inside the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

In Nasarawa State, BusinessDay gathered the turnout was not very impressive, as compared to the last election that witnessed large turnout of voters.

In most of the local government areas of the state witnessed voter apathy, in spite of the early delivery of election materials.

Akuabmeh Galle Polling Unit-021, Kofar Yakubu Adah Polling Unit- 010 and the polling units in Eggon Palace had had low turnout of voters.

Franca Odeh, the presiding officer of RCM primary school polling unit 027, Nasarawa-Eggon, said so far, the election is peaceful and orderly.

The low turnout also worried Samuel John Magaji, an observer from the Polling Units Ambassador of Nigeria, who decried that despite the fact that election materials arrived in good time, there were fewer voters at the polling units.

It was also pathetic that till noon, less than 100 voters, out of 378 registered voters at PU: Patient Market 2, ATBU Teaching Hospital voted, despite recording almost 90 per cent voter participation in the presidential election.

Also in Adamawa State, INEC ad-hoc staff waited for

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Oshiomhole condemns electoral violence in Edo

IDRIS MOMOH, Benin

Adams Oshiomhole, former governor of Edo and senator-elect of Edo North senatorial district, has condemned alleged violence that marred the House of Assembly election across the state.

Oshiomhole, spoke in reaction to a short video when thugs allegedly disrupted election in Sobe community in Owan East Local Government Area.

The former National Chairman of APC, described the incident as unfortunate and alleged that security agencies watched thugs helplessly without doing anything to curb the situation.

"Our election can't be better because what is happening in many places is terrible. In Sobe, Owan West local government area, the security people were supervising the destruction of polling unit materials;

while security were present some thugs came and had a free hand destroying election materials.

"I called the Commissioner of Police and he said they are not to look beyond certain areas, how can you monitor a place if you are not to prevent criminality?"

"They are using vigilante groups to shoot, which is not right. Nigerians are peaceful but you have politicians who are desperate and because they lost their units in the last election, this time they are



Oshiomhole

determined that wherever they are not winning, they will destroy them and disrupt the election.

"In Sobe, out of 17 units, they destroyed 10 units and that is the units where we have huge votes in our favour.

"They are going round intimidating people in Jattu because he is not winning there, they say if you are not going to vote for the PDP, they take you out, there are instances where people voted for the APC, the presiding officer allegedly thumb printed double to void the vote and police were watching while this was going on.

"At the IDP camp in Benin City, I was told that this morning at 9 am, they were voting and about seven people have already voted but because they know that those people will vote for us, they went there with the presence of security and destroyed the ballot papers and took away the BVAS machines," he added.

Jandor defeats Sanwo-Olu-Olu, Rhodes Vivour in own polling unit

INIOMBONG IWOK

Abdul-Azeez Adediran (aka Jandor) the Lagos State Peoples Democratic Party

(PDP) governorship candidate, has defeated his closest rivals, Babajide Sanwo-Olu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour of the Labour Party (LP), at his polling unit in Osolu Junior

High School, unit 001 ward G in Irewe, Ojo local government area.

Adediran polled 79 votes while Sanwo-Olu secured 66 votes. Rhodes-Vivour got just one vote.

This may be my first and last...

Continued from Page 1

obtain a permanent voter's card but that his experience in both moments were bitter.

"I will only bother to vote again if electronic voting is introduced," he said.

For now, he hissed, voting is useless because thugs are sent to mess everything.

Benedict is not alone in the decision, some other youths who spoke with BusinessDay on condition of anonymity, on why they were not voting, said they did not see any sense in doing so.

The youths who aired their views in various parts of the country pointed to the "disappointment they had" during the February 25 Presidential



election.

"Why must I waste my time again in an election in Nigeria. I have never seen it this way before. What pains me most is that these are the same people

that will be reeling out laws and calling themselves government. It is a shame. Nigeria is gone," a young man who, simply identified himself as Douglas, said.

News

Killings, counting disruption, ballot snatching mar voting in Rivers

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

Killings have been reported in parts of Rivers State in the voting that took place today, Saturday, March 18, 2023. This, plus widespread disruption of counting and ballot box snatching, has marred voting in the oil-rich but volatile state which had been under intense tension days and hours to voting day.

Shooting was heard in Emohua local council where ballot box snatching was widespread.

The police however denied reports of six deaths in Emohua, saying the video clip was not from Rivers State.

Thugs were reported to have shot sporadically in Abual/Odual Ward 7 and one election official with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was said to have been hit. He died on the way to hospital. The police public relations officer (PPRO) in the state, Grace Iringe-Koko, has confirmed that one.

The Rivers State publicity secretary of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Darlington Nwauju, has also reported that tragedy struck his colleague in Enelga, but he did not give details.



Snatching of ballot boxes and disrupting sorting/counting seemed planned and massively executed especially in targeted local council areas.

The style for the day was to allow peaceful voting and pounce during counting. Thugs dressed in police uniforms storm some polling units and cart all materials into vans and zoom off.

INEC officials were refusing to upload results at the

polling units as stipulated by law. In some places, it caused uproar as voters and agents blocked the way and held the officials hostage.

The APC had warned two days before the voting day that they had credible information that 30 hilux vehicles had been procured with armed thugs dressed in military uniforms by the state government to storm centres on election day. This was dis-

missed by the state commissioner of information, Chris Finebone, as madness of little boys. But on voting day, that seems to be exactly what happened in most places.

An eye-witness at Woji in the state capital captured his experience in an account he submitted to the Community Initiative for Peace and Development (CIEPD) thus: "Cry my beloved countrymen and women! Criminality, ineffi-

ciency, incompetence, mediocrity, corruption and absurdity. Today's governorship and state assembly election was a demonstration of this.

"I came out to vote at Woji Town Hall by 9.00am and unlike February 25th Presidential election the Hall was virtually empty. There was widespread disenchantment over the manipulation of the last Presidential election by the state government. In the last election

on February 25, the Woji hall was filled to its capacity with almost 7000 people but only about 2000 voted. The rest were disenfranchised by the INEC.

"Vote counting happened around 8.00pm and LP scored over 1600 of the votes but once this was recorded, the INEC officials disappeared with the result without uploading it to the Bvas machine.

"Today, people tickled out to vote and everything went well until vote sorting and counting started by 2.30pm. Two units, 003 and 004 were sorted and counted for governorship and LP led comfortably, scoring more than twice the other parties. Sorting had just been concluded in P002 and suddenly a group of people said to have come from the state government ordered that the materials be packed into a waiting bus. Voters kicked. We beckoned the police to do their work. The police remained silent. Some voters rushed out and saw a fully armed patrol team and beckoned on them. They arrived. We heaved a sigh of relief.

Suddenly, one of the thugs went to the team leader and the police became armless. The entire materials were bundled into the bus and they drove out in a second."

He went on: "In despondency, we left.

Guber poll: Abiodun condemns violence, vows to deal with perpetrators

RAZAQ AYINLA

The Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, has condemned pockets of violence in some parts of the state during the conduct of the governorship and House of Assembly elections on Saturday.

The governor in a statement signed by his Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Kunle Somorin, blamed opposition elements, saying rather than subjecting

the exercise to the people's choice, these undemocratic characters turned a seamless electoral process to a do or die affair. Abiodun said the reports of the violence came as a surprise, as the election started on a peaceful note across the state.

He seriously frowned at the situation, which, according to him, will not be condoned.

He said though normalcy had returned to the affected areas as security agencies swiftly responded, the state government would not hes-

itate to deal with anyone or groups behind the poll disruption, attacks on voters and snatching of ballot boxes. While the statement urged the people and residents in the state to remain calm and law-abiding, it further warned the state government would not treat anyone responsible for the violence with kids' gloves.

"The law will take care of those caught to serve as a deterrent to their paymasters and their wards for violating the peaceful atmosphere that Ogun is noted for," the statement submitted.

Makinde in early lead, as supporters jubilate In Ibadan

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan.

Governor Seyi Makinde of the Peoples Democratic Party Candidate is in early lead at the Saturday's Governorship election in Oyo state.

There were jubilation in all Units, wards and Local governments as Makinde is maintaining the lead in all the zones in Oyo state ahead of Teslim Folarin of APC and Bayo Adelabu of Accord

Results announced so far by the Independent National

Electoral Commission in units and some wards coalition center, shows the governor is leading

According to a video, PDP members and agents in the wards were seen jubilating around the state shouting "4+4" and Omikutun 2.0.

Water conservation, access to take centre stage at CWAY's forum

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEO-

Challenges and opportunities related to water conservation, sustainability, and access would be discussed by experts, stakeholders, and industry leaders at a thought leadership forum hosted by CWAY Group, one of the leading manufacturer and distributor of drinking water and other consumer goods.

Scheduled for the 22nd of March, 2023, the forum will feature Associate Professor Roland Efe Uwadiae, an environmentalist and Marine Scientist from the University of Lagos, as keynote speaker.

He will be speaking on the theme of this year's WWD – 'Accelerating Change.'

This is part of CWAY's commitments to promoting and accelerating sustainable clean water preservation and to celebrate the United Nations World Water Day (WWD) 2023.

CWAY will hold series of events and activities that promote the importance of clean and safe water for all.

According to the United Nations, "World Water Day

celebrates and raises awareness of billions of people living without access to safe water. It is about taking action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030."

Commenting on the event, Tony Ojumoola, the senior director, external affairs CWAY Nigeria Drinking Water Science & Technology Co. Ltd, says, "At CWAY, we recognize the importance of safe and clean drinking water, and we are committed to ensuring that everyone has access to it.

"Since we began operations in Nigeria over two decades ago, we have made significant contributions towards providing clean drinking water to millions of Nigerians. Our commitment to this cause has not wavered, and we will continue to do more.

"We have invested heavily in modern technology and equipment that allows us to produce high-quality water that meets international standards. Our factories are equipped with state-of-the-art facilities that enable us to produce large volumes of water, while

maintaining the highest level of hygiene and safety."

Speaking also, Sobhan Mukherjeer, the deputy managing director, added; "We are committed to promoting awareness on the importance of clean water and the need to conserve water resources.

"Through our various corporate social responsibility initiatives, we have provided access to safe water to communities that lack access to it. We have also organized several water conservation campaigns aimed at educating the public on the need to use water responsibly."

"We are delighted to have Professor Uwadiae join us as our keynote speaker for World Water Day 2023," said Rohit Prakash Gupta, marketing director at CWAY Group.

Gupta said his insights and expertise will inspire people to think critically and creatively about how people can all work together to ensure that everyone has access to safe and clean water.

In addition to the thought leadership forum, CWAY Group will also carry out several initiatives to promote the importance of water conservation and sustainability.

Nigeria Decides 2023



Minister of Power, Abubakar Aliyu voting at his PU032, Garin Maina, Potiskum Yobe State





Nigeria Decides 2023



Bola Ahmed Tinubu, president-elect and wife, Oluremi, voting



Governor Hope Uzodima of Imo State on the queue to vote.



Peter Obi, LP presidential candidate, addressing journalists.



Governor Udom Emmanuel of Akwa Ibom state casting his vote at a polling unit in Awa, Onna LGA during the governorship and state assembly election.



IoD to celebrate 40 years of impactful leadership in Nigeria

SEYI JOHN SALAU

The Institute of Directors Nigeria (IoD) has announced a year-long programme of events and activities to mark its 40th year anniversary and impactful leadership in Nigeria's business ecosystem.

Ije Jidenma, president and chairman of governing council, IoD, stated that the Institute is rolling out the drums to celebrate four decades of providing ample opportunity for the growth and development of the practice of directorship in Nigeria.

According to her, IoD Nigeria has continuously met its founding mandate and objectives by improving the capacities of directors through various knowledge-building and capacity development programmes, which the Institute runs locally and internationally to expose directors to global best practices.

She stated that IoD Nigeria, which was established on 17th May 1983 as Branch of IoD UK and later in 1999 became a full affiliate of the United Kingdom body, would host a year-long series of activities to mark the milestone anniversary.

The IoD President further

disclosed that the programmes lined up for the anniversary have been structured to add value to all players in the Nigerian corporate governance space as it will serve to increase stakeholders' awareness of the imperatives of good corporate

governance and best practices, while amplifying in the public domain the contributions of IoD Nigeria in this regard over the last 40 years.

"Also, the lectures and discussions during the events will generate new thoughts and

practicable ideas on corporate governance, leadership, ethics, economy, and business, especially with peculiar references to the Nigerian business environment," Jidenma stated.

She said the events would provide forums to enlighten

stakeholders on the Institute's diverse advocacy, capacity development and membership engagement tools and platforms and also amplify the Institute's Young Directors Forum programmes as young directors, who are members of

the IoD, will have opportunities to share their challenges and aspirations.

Jidenma concluded that the celebrations, which will set the tone for IoD's enhanced leadership role as an advocate of corporate governance in the coming years, will crystallize a deeper understanding of good governance, which will have positive effects on all sectors, including public institutions and regulatory agencies across various professional and business sectors.

Samuel Yemi Akeju, past president and chairman, IoD 40th anniversary planning committee, disclosed that the Institute will use the opportunity of the anniversary to hold the foundation laying ceremony of its national headquarters building, the 'IoD Towers' in Lagos.

According to him, the IoD will host a special anniversary gala on 17 May 2023 in Lagos, which would be the climax of the anniversary celebration. He added that other events to mark the anniversary include a health and fitness programme, 'Walk for Life', that would be held in Lagos and the Institute's branches in Abuja, Port Harcourt and Abeokuta and a special Golf tourney in Lagos.



Photo caption L-R:

President Muhammadu Buhari (middle); Adeniyi Adebayo, minister of trade and investment (3rd from left); Zainab Ahmed, minister of finance (4th from left); Ibrahim Gambari, chief of staff to President Buhari (5th from left); Ije Jidenma, president and chairman of governing council, IoD (6th from right); Tijjani Borodo, 1st vice president, IoD; Adetunji Oyebanji, 2nd vice president, IoD, flanked by other past president of the IoD during a recent courtesy visit to the state house to inform the president about the Institute's 40th Anniversary.

CIPM leads conversation on AfCFTA policy implementation

SEYI JOHN SALAU

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM) is leading conversations on the policy implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) two years after its commencement with a charge that leadership, diversity and inclusion is crucial for the agreement to flourish across Africa.

This was the outcome of the hybrid CIPM 2nd International Academic Conference themed, 'The Commencement of AfCFTA: Opportunities for the Work Environment' held at the International Conference Centre, Lead City University, Ibadan.

The AfCFTA trade implementation was initially scheduled to commence on 1 January 2021, however, no trade has taken place under the AfCFTA regime. As at February 2023, 46 of the 54 signa-

tories, about 85.2 percent have deposited their instruments of AfCFTA ratification.

Tiekie Barnard, founder and CEO, Shared Value Initiative and Shift Impact, South Africa, stated that to make a success of AfCFTA, leadership coupled with diversity and inclusion (D & I) is essential. According to her, Africans are responsible for the Africa they want.

She stated further that to achieve the set goals under AfCFTA, Africa needs leadership that uses knowledge, experience and wisdom is necessary to lift millions out of poverty. "As leaders, we reap what we sow, and now is the opportunity to sow into the future possibilities that AfCFTA can bring to the people of Africa".

She noted that diversity and inclusion, which includes gender equality, is critical to AfCFTA implementation. Barnard also charged CEOs and business owners to invest in recruiting and promoting



women to improve profitability. "Women are responsible for 60 percent of the work done globally yet earn 10 percent of the income and 1

percent of the prosperity. The narrative needs to change in Africa".

Panelists at the conference shared their views on criti-

cal policy implementation for AfCFTA, and called for collective responsibility to push the agreement through. Quresha Abdullahi, executive director, Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM), Kenya, said that the opportunities under AfCFTA belong to those who can take the challenge.

According to her, every African country should pay attention to the legal frameworks and how they function should be able to favour African countries regardless of what they have. The legal framework is key to effective implementation. Abdullahi said further that the successful implementation of AfCFTA will help to create more opportunities for both public and private organisations. "It is going to boost our job creation; it is going to give us increased investment".

Wincate Muthini, senior program manager, Pan-Afri-

can Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ethiopia, said AfCFTA provides a clear strategic direction for Africa as a continent. According to her, there is a collective responsibility from all stakeholders on how to address and bridge the gap identified in AfCFTA implementation. "It's that spirit of collaboration and understanding".

On his part, Fareed Arthur, national coordinator, AfCFTA, Accra, Ghana, said trade across the world is the driver of development. Hence, the opportunities provided in AfCFTA will help in adding value to everything produced on the continent. According to him, AfCFTA also provides an opportunity for innovation, employment on the back of the huge supply chain. "There is a lot of work to be done across the continent in regard to implementations in order to succeed," Arthur said.

BUSINESS DAY
ABUJA ROUNDTABLE

PRINVEST

PROPERTY INVESTMENT SHOW

Theme: **EMERGING CITIES IN ABUJA**



ABOUT

The Property Investment (PRINVEST) 2023 Roundtable will address topical and salient issues in the real estate sector. It would also provide expert insights into the key opportunities, and challenges, as well as the role that government can play in creating an enabling environment that supports investment.

WHY ATTEND

Participants are expected to among other benefits:

- Gain access to innovative ideas and actionable industry data that would help drive their businesses and support investment decisions.
- Participate in robust discussions with Pension Operators (PenOPs) on Pencom Mortgage offer to RSA holders
- Discover best-in-class residential and commercial real estate solutions for families, investment, and businesses
- Engage with the Mortgage Banking Association of Nigeria (MBAN) to better understand its new role in the Pencom Mortgage offer to RSA holders
- Explore World-class products and services for builders and developers.
- Tap into financing solutions
- Network with consultants, designers, and vendors serving the contemporary real estate market in Nigeria.

ENTRY AND PARTICIPATION ENQUIRES

John ☎: 08023165436 Bashir ☎: 08027588990
Prisca ☎: 08039471113 Oge ☎: 07039384138

SPECIAL GUEST OF HONOUR



Hon. Umar El-Yakub
Hon. Minister of State
Works and Housing

SPEAKERS



Alhaji Aliyu Wamakko
President, Real Estate Developers
Association of Nigeria (REDAN)



Bldr. Lawal Magaji
Managing Director/CEO
Abuja Property Development
Company



Mrs. Saadiya Aliyu-Aminu
Managing Director
Urban Shelter Ltd.

SPEAKER / PANELIST



Mr Olayinka Braimoh
Chief Executive Officer,
Hall 7



Prof. Uchenna Joseph Uwaleke
Department of Banking & Finance,
Nasarawa State University,
Keffi, Nasarawa State.



THURSDAY
30 | **MARCH**
2023

Chelsea Hotel,
Central Area, Abuja.

The Worshipper

‘The Church has the right to make known its expectations and demand for good governance’

Adesunmbo Adeoye, the convener of the ‘Inspiring Change’ conference, in this interview spoke on 10th edition of the Inspiring Change conference scheduled for Saturday, March 25, 2023. She also spoke about the evolving woman and her experience in the past 10 years; the place of the Church in politics and what active participation entails for the Church in Nigeria. Excerpts by SEYI JOHN SALAU:

Tell us about the theme for this year’s conference?

This year’s theme is tagged ‘Evolve’. It is a reflection of what God intended for all creation. The bible says in proverbs 4:18(AMP) but the path of the just (Righteous) is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until it reaches its full strength and glory on the perfect day. God desires that we shine brighter in the midst of thick darkness and through the rough, irregular path that leads to our advancement. He urges us via the word to persevere despite what we face, and learn to overcome obstacles, trials and tribulations till we experience victory.

So this year’s conference has been packed with lined-up sessions with myself, Rev Funke Felix Adejumo, David Adeoye, Tara Durotoye, and other female speakers who have persevered against all odds and have weathered the storm, recorded groundbreaking results and evolved greatly, to come and share with our audience how they loose and how they choose. The steps they have had to take in the midst of the storm and what has helped them on the journey of life to record the several feats. This we believe will help attendees draw strength and inspiration and develop the guts to face and fulfill their God-given purposes.

How did you arrive at the theme?

Apart from the first edition, the theme aligns with the Global International Women’s Day, the other editions have been inspired by divine leading to tackle the present-day needs of our vast growing global audience. We have had themes like “Make it Happen”, “Yes I can”, “Run Forward”, and “There is More”, to name a few and one of the most common feedback we have received from participants is the “Can do” effect it has on them to desire to be more, and in turn, propels them to live purposefully as Christ intended.

What are the indicators of a woman who has evolved or is currently evolving?

Obvious transformation and disruption of old behavioral patterns and ideologies, socioeconomic development and active participation in both public and private sectors are some of the key indicators that point to a woman who has evolved in today’s world. A woman who is evolving is however not scared of change; she’s constantly learning new habits and unlearning old ideologies, she prioritizes self-care, believes in



Adesunmbo Adeoye

herself and feels very comfortable in her own skill, she seeks no approval from external influence, but sees failure as a learning point and takes pride in her God-given abilities to move the world forward.

What challenges or barriers could there be in evolving?

When you stop growing, you start dying. One of the many barriers that can hinder one from evolving is the feeling of complacency and the inability to learn or dare new things. Proverbs 19:27 warns us of this... “If you quit listening, dear child, and strike off on your own, you’ll soon be out of your depth.”

10 years down the line; how has the journey been?

The journey has been glorious but not without its challenges. Every time I get the opportunity to share the humbling privilege of hosting an event of this magnitude consistently for the past nine years, I am astonished at the faithfulness of God and the courage to dare to try. I am glad for the many lives that have been transformed and several women have gained clarity from our many outreaches.

From supporting entrepreneurial ideas through mentorship, advisory services

and training to mentoring young female secondary school graduand through our Inspiring Change deliberately movement, the initiative has actively impacted lives through our mentor meets mentee and free skill acquisition programs for young school leavers, the entrepreneurial advancement training of market women and the ongoing inspiring change school tour, it’s such a significant milestone. I am particularly excited about the 10th edition of the inspiring change conference happening on Saturday march 25,2023 because the experience will be mind-blowing as we celebrate our 10 years of Inspiring change deliberately with a focus on Nation building.

Can you tell us more about the conference, ‘Inspiring Change’ and what you set out to achieve at the end?

Having completed my entrepreneurial management training in 2011 as a Goldman Sachs scholar, I had this ceaseless desire to pay it forward by supporting entrepreneurial ideas through mentorship, advisory services and training. So, when the call came from the Enterprise Development Center instructing me to host a #IWD meeting where I could inspire women in commemoration of International

Women’s Day, I took a bold step while trusting God and hosted it with all the strength and courage I had in me. The aim at inception was to inspire change, and encourage women to dare to take up leadership positions competently in their various industries despite the obvious limiting factors and gender biases. And the conference has surpassed that vision by recording several ground-breaking results of women achieving and blazing the trails in their various industries dominated by men.

Who are you looking at for the awards?

The listed categories for this year’s Esob hero award in celebration of our 10th year of Inspiring change and transforming the lives of women who are striving to take the lead in their various industries dominated by men, go to female trail blazers who have evolved greatly, outstanding beneficiaries of the initiative and of course a lifetime award to partners, brands and sponsors whose visions align with the Inspiring Change Initiative. Top on the list of awardees is the Post Humorous Award that we will be presenting to an outstanding

election; do you consider this good for the image of the Church?

The Church forms a large part of society and so we can’t be quiet about the obvious realities of our day-to-day living. So, making known our expectations and demanding good governance is a welcomed development.

What would you advise the incoming administration to do differently for a new Nigeria?

An Inclusive government that keeps people (both men and women, young and old) informed, involved and inspired.

Finally, who is Adesunmbo Adeoye?

Adesunmbo Adeoye is an alumna of Lagos business school and a certificate holding member of Harvard class of 2020. I am the host of the weekly virtual talk show tagged, #RiskToRewardSeries where we seek to impact and enhance the knowledge of business people deliberately. I am an advisory board member of several companies with global vision and partners with global brands to help foster the growth of women and mothers in business, ministry and career. As a youth ambassador and premium activator of the Transforming Nigerian Youth initiative, I recently partnered with MasterCard foundation in collaboration with Enterprise Development Centre to empower 40,000 Nigerian youth within the age of 18-35years to start, launch and grow their businesses. As a mentor to many, and a recipient of numerous awards for dedication and contribution towards progressive initiatives and humanity, in Nigeria. I was recently recognized as one of the 100 most inspiring and trailblazing women in Nigeria, by Leading Ladies Africa for #LLA100WOMEN2020. I am currently the CEO of Esobevents and founder of Esob heroes. A Cherie Blair foundation brand ambassador and a Goldmansachs scholar.

I am happily married to David Adeoye, an icon of greatness and the senior Pastor at Royalty Christian Centre where I serve as the first lady and together we are blessed with great and intelligent children. Adesunmbo Adeoye has authored several books and annually brings women who have been able to bridge gender gap in their respective professions together with the women who aspire to be like them and this life transforming meetings have produced outstanding women with amazing results in business, ministry and career.

The journey has been glorious but not without its challenges. Every time I get the opportunity to share the humbling privilege of hosting an event of this magnitude consistently for the past nine years, I am astonished at the faithfulness of God and the courage to dare to try

mentor and leader per excellence, the Late Pastor Nomthi Odukoya of blessed memory. Her impact towards the inspiring change initiative and the sustainable development of women can never be forgotten.

The Church has been directly/indirectly involved in the general

‘BSN donated N16.7m worth of Bibles in 2022’

SEYI JOHN SALAU

The Bible Society of Nigeria (BSN) has disclosed that Bibles worth N16.7 million were donated in 2022 as part of its free Bible distribution objective.

“The value of the Bibles donated to the sighted was N9.8 million,

while 137 complete sets of Braille Bible given to people with visual disabilities cost N6.9 million. This gesture is in line with The Society’s mission to make the Holy Bible available to Nigerians in their preferred languages and formats and help them engage with the word of God through programmes to transform their lives,” the BSN stated in a press release signed by Benjamin

Mordi, manager, Media & PR.

According to the Society, beneficiaries of the free Bible distribution included prison inmates, churches, Christian fellowships and organisations, schools for the blind and individual members of the public, among others.

“A complete set of the Braille Bible, which comes in 37 volumes, costs N50,000. The organisation carried out

the free distribution programme with funds donated by members of the Bible-A-Month Club, Special Members, corporate organisations, churches, and individual donors for the Braille Bible project, You Can Be Their Eyes (YCBTE).”

The Society stated further that through the free Bible distribution and other programmes, the BSN has continued to break every known

barrier that makes the Word of God inaccessible to people.

The BSN is a not-for-profit inter-denominational Christian organisation that translates the Bible into local languages, distributes, publishes, and raises funds for the Bible work. So far, the organisation has translated the full Bible into 27 Nigerian languages, while Bible translation/revision is ongoing in 10 Nigerian languages.

Focus

Ibukun Adebayo, real estate hotshot, unveils plans for new Diaspora City project

SEYI JOHN SALAU

NIGERIA continues to achieve widespread global fame, making it a top destination for many reasons and a hub for various billion-dollar companies.

Its economic benefits have attracted lots of investors and entrepreneurs from all over the world.

Nigeria's widespread success and growth are attributed to several sectors — entertainment, retail, technology, and real estate are among the most prominent ones.

The country has built a competitive and sustainable economy by relying on several major sectors, and the real estate sector has emerged as one of Nigeria's most important lifelines.

As a result, the government continues to enhance its real estate plans, including all measures and initiatives to advance the mortgage sector and the real industry as a whole, allowing Nigeria to be at the forefront regionally and globally.

When asked what pull factors laid a medical professional under the necessity to keep the stethoscope aside for a foray into Nigeria's effusive real estate market, Ibukun Adebayo said: "It was a journey; a long one indeed!"

Ask Ibukun, a qualified medical doctor, and she would tell you what it means to journey from the certainty of wanting to be a medical doctor to the uncertainty of responding to the innate desire to venture into other business sectors despite not being sure of what lies ahead.

To keep it short and simple, that's the narrative of how Ibukun moved from the medical profession to the real estate industry from which she is not only finding great commercial nourishment but has found fulfillment in leading major market innovations in her new field of play, middle-income real estate.

To be sure, her foray into the orbit of entrepreneurship started with Rock Realty Limited, a real estate advisory and Development Company she founded in 2016, which she has nurtured from scratch to etch its niche offerings in Nigeria's effusive market.

This has been made possible by the uniqueness of the underlying philosophy of her real estate initiatives, which informs the scope of houses and structures offered by the company's housing estates.

It's a blissful narrative that gives an insight into the pull factors underpinning what looks like a decision midstream to hang the stethoscope for the slew of cash-minting and profit-gushing opportunities in the bubbly real estate and hospitality markets.

Ibukun said: "It was a journey. It was a journey that first started with me practising as a doctor, but I did not find fulfillment in the practice of medicine, so I knew I needed to



explore something else. The question was, what was I going to venture into? I initially tried to do a few other things while I was still practising. One of those was interior decoration. I did some courses on this. I knew I loved it, but I wanted to do more. This meant that the

search continued in response to the longing to unlock and unleash the inbred entrepreneurial instincts in me. Then a friend of mine suggested that I consider a career in finance. Though I had not done numbers for a long time, I gave the idea a shot."

She added: "He invited me to intern at his organisation, an Investment Management and Training Firm. He said to me, when you are not working as a doctor, come around and see if you would like it here. I had barely started when I suddenly realised that I ticked with doing numbers, and I started spending more days working in that office as an investment analyst. I found that the world of investment management and finance was beautiful. Gradually, I started doing only night jobs as a doctor and working in the investment training firm during the day, as an analyst. I started learning on the job, but the good thing was that the organisation was strategic for a novice like me at that time. It was an investment training firm, so when the organisation had training sessions for client companies, I went as part of the administrative team and I had the opportunity to listen in on the training sessions. So, it was a blend of working and training for me and that was how I got into the investment management industry."

The real deal and dream for the real estate business started loading as she continued in the investment management space in other companies, the last of which was in Chapel Hill Denham Management where she worked in the private wealth management department. Most High Net worth Individuals, she said, had real estate as a big part of their portfolio. That meant that a big part of the portfolio that she managed was real estate. This, of course, meant that she needed to learn about real estate as an investment/asset class.

She further said: "While I was at



“It was a journey that first started with me practising as a doctor, but I did not find fulfillment in the practice of medicine, so I knew I needed to explore something else”

Chapel Hill, I was invited by The Infrastructure Bank to head the real estate department of the bank; I took the offer and became the head of the real estate department, a role I held for six years. So, my stint in real estate started fully, and after six years at The Infrastructure Bank, I founded Rock Realty Limited as a middle-income-focused real estate advisory and development firm. So, that's my journey from medicine into real estate."

How would you paint a portrait of Rock Realty to an inquisitive client?

"I won't be able to paint that if I don't tell you about the motivation for Rock Realty. The motivation for Rock Realty came from a pain point for middle-income earners who in other climes, would be able to get homes easily because once they have good jobs, they can access mortgages.

"In Nigeria, many of these middle-income earners earn well, eat well, holiday well, and have decent regular monthly inflows, but they are not able to buy homes because mortgages are not a very common phenomenon in Nigeria.

"The popular home-purchase models in the country require them to pay tens of millions within a 12 to 18-month period which their earnings pattern does not support. So, they get locked in the rental cycle endlessly. I experienced that. I had good jobs but I really could not get home until I became an entre-

Focus

Ibukun Adebayo, real estate hotshot, unveils plans...

preneur and had access to income in larger bulk patterns.

“So, the pen portrait for Rock Realty is a company that focuses on working with middle-income earners to own their homes using a blend of easier payment plans and mortgages that simulate their earnings pattern. Our projects are structured to enable middle-income earners to purchase homes using a blend of the National Housing Fund Mortgages (from the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria) and mortgages from other Primary Mortgage Banks.

“Our advocacy to middle-income earners about mortgages being the low-hanging fruits that allow them to get on the home-ownership ladder and working with them through the process of obtaining mortgages has been our stand-out factors. This is because mortgages are still largely untapped in the Nigerian real estate industry and most real estate developers do not currently structure their business models around mortgage buyers.

“We usually target companies and provide our projects as solutions to their staff en bloc, even though we also sell to cash-buyers and individual off-takers. We look forward to having many more investors, local and international who will realise the mammoth potential in Nigeria’s middle-income housing and mortgage space. Rock Realty’s focus over the next decade is to attract long-term financing into the Nigerian middle-income real estate space and mortgage industry so that the potentials that exist in this space can be unlocked

significantly, both for the buyers and the investing community.”

The other handle of Rock Realty is that the company is currently working with the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) to set up Diaspora Cities in different locations in the country. The first two Diaspora Cities, Abuja, and Lagos are programmed for commencement in the second and third quarters of this year. Besides from cash sales, Nigerians in Diaspora would also be able to access single-digit-rate mortgages.

The Diaspora Cities concept can itself be amplified if long-term United States Dollar (USD) financing is available to be funneled into providing USD-denominated mortgages for Nigerians in Diaspora to buy homes back in Nigeria. This would imply that investments in USD are used to create USD assets (USD Mortgages) and repayments are also in USD, thereby removing the FOREX risk from Dollar investments in the Diaspora Mortgages.

One of the biggest challenges in the Nigerian real estate market in the country is the lack of long-term capital both for construction and more importantly, for buyers in terms of mortgages. Rock Realty is navigating the waters and working with partners to still create access to mortgages with terms that are friendlier than they would otherwise be able to access.

“It is the same challenge with Nigerians in Diaspora who want to buy homes back in Nigeria. If we can unlock significant financing into the mortgage sector, particularly if we can do foreign financing against USD-denominated diaspora mortgages, we would open up the middle-income market significantly, and that is a massive market in Nigeria,” she said.

The company currently has striking projects in construction, two in Lagos, and one in Ibadan. The current total project pipeline is 300 residential units. The ones in Lagos are called the Bold Living Apartments series. The Concept of the Bold Living Apartment is that middle-income earners need to get bold and get on the home-ownership ladder. Bold Living One comprises beautifully designed apartments on four floors located on Alpha Beach Road, Lekki.

They also come with modern architecture and a serene ambience. Bold Living Two, a serviced estate currently in construction, simulates the typical condominiums style for exquisite living in upwardly mobile communities. The project is also located in Lekki, Lagos. It is delivered with Gym, Mini mart, Co-work space, Bar/lounge area, and play area.

What could make her business model work better and give her an edge in the market? She is starting relationships with some credible international finance organisations that can provide financing such that home buyers can access cheaper, longer-term mortgages. The effect of this initiative will leave the market in a bubblier mode and would be loud in the industry.



L-R: Aladesanmi Moji, Publicity Secretary, Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria (ACPN); with Lawrence Ekhat, Chairman, ACPN, Lagos Chapter; Biola Aransiola, Rite Foods’ Traditional Marketing Lead; and Charles Oyeniyi, General Secretary, ACPN; at the 2-day annual conference of ACPN held from Tuesday 14th to Wednesday 15th March 2023, in Lagos, proudly sponsored by Bigi Premium Water from the stable of Rite Foods Limited.

Bigi Premium Water commits to promoting quality healthcare for Nigerians

NGOZI OKPALAKUNNE

BIGI Premium Water brand of Rite Foods has continued in its strong commitment in promoting quality healthcare for Nigerians with the support of the Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria (ACPN) two-day Annual Summit aimed at tackling the challenges faced by pharmacists in the delivery of their services.

The ACPN Continuing Education Conference [CEC] 2023 themed ‘Overcoming Brain Drain Challenges in Community Pharmacy’ held in Lagos from Tuesday, 14 March to Wednesday 15, 2023 dwelt on several issues that would enhance the effectiveness of pharmaceutical services, strong collaboration among members of the association and enlightenment campaign on how common diseases can be addressed.

It was also in the furtherance of the association’s move to curtail and discouraging the brain drain syndrome in the sector, where over 5,000 pharmacists have left the country in recent years for greener pastures in overseas countries.

Commenting on the ACPN’s annual event, the Chairman of the Lagos Chapter, Mr. Lawrence Ekhat, stated that the conference was targeted at updating pharmacists on

recent trends in pharmaceutical practice. He said the summit which spans over 10 years, is also to empower the pharmacists and to protect the citizenry by giving them the right tools for pharmaceutical care throughout the communities they serve.

Eulogising Rite Foods’ Bigi for the sponsorship, Ekhat thanked the company for the great assistance in making the event successful, with its premium water produced with the best purification process, stating that it was a step in the right direction. “Our members are in all parts of Lagos and I hope the sponsorship is a veritable tool in making the brand available to the people through sustainable partnership with the association,” he affirmed.

Earlier on, the Managing Director of Rite Foods, Selem Adegunwa, avowed that powering the conference was one of the ways the company, through the Bigi Premium Water, has demonstrated that it cares about the well-being of Nigerians by reaching out to them for adequate healthcare initiative.

He added that the consumers are on topmost priority to the company and would continue in its giant stride in sponsoring

projects that keep them healthy and always refreshed with the various Bigi variants.

In her presentation at the conference, Assistant Brand Manager Bigi; Biola Aransiola, explained that the award-winning Bigi brand with its unique flavours is there for every moment, catering to its teeming consumers by revitalising them at all times. She avowed that the Bigi Premium Water is also well produced for a rejuvenating experience for healthiness, to keep Nigerians satisfied when tasty.

Aransiola pointed out that the Bigi products, likewise other Rite Foods products are produced with consumers in mind, in a Truly World-class factory with modern technology and up-to-the-minute infrastructure in line with global best practices.

In a similar health scheme, Rite Foods in 2021, aided the free breast and cervical cancer screening and treatment programme of Optimal Cancer Care Foundation for women in Lagos. The exercise saw medical experts from the Foundation offering free advice about the disease, its symptoms, causes, and prevention, together with free screening and treatment.

Kogi Poly promotes eight lecturers, dismiss 4 for misconduct, insubordination

VICTORIA NNAKAIKE, Lokoja

Kogi State Polytechnic’s Governing Council has approved the dismissal of four (4) Principal Lecturers for acts of Gross Misconduct bordering on sexual harassment and victimisation of female students, abscondment from duties, insubordination, falsification of record, disobedience to lawful order, diversion of TEFUND training grant, among others.

Also, the Governing Council has approved the promotion of eight (8) Principal Lecturers to the prestigious rank of Chief Lecturers.

According to a press statement from the management of the institution disclosed that the promotion and termination of appointment of the lecturers was taken at then 68th Regular Meeting of the Governing held on Wednesday, 8th March, 2023 at the Institution’s council Chamber, Lokoja.

“Those promoted to Chief Lecturers are: Dr. Ayodele Shade Oluwakemi, Department of Computer Sciences, Adalumo Adebola, Department of Fine Arts and Lawal Fatai Kolade,

Department of Statistics.

“Others are: Akande Stephen Department of Mechanical Engineering, Attah Yusuf Emmanuel, Department of Business Administration, . Joel Tope Ebenezer, Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, James Oricha, Department of Arts and Social Sciences and Aleshegba Ebenezer Department of Industrial Design”.

“The dismissed staff are: Abutu Thompson Okolo, Department of Language and Communication, Mr. Ipinmoroti Samuel Adejoro, Adegoke Kehinde Vivian (Both of the Department of Architectural Technology) and Sylvester Ojone Blessing of Registry Department”.

“Thompson, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Language and Communication, was dismissed on account of sexual harassment and victimization of a female student in the Department of Computer Science”.

“Mr. Ipinmoroti Samuel Adejoro and Mrs. Adegoke Kehinde Vivian, were dismissed for disobedience of the lawful order, falsification of document to obtain training grant and diversion of the said training grant to

the tune of 22,676,500.00 and 21,204,000.00 respectively”.

“The Council further directed the Management to use available legal means to recover from Mr. Ipinmoroti and Mrs. Adegoke the total sum of N22,676,500 and N21,204,000 respectively, being the fund they

fraudulently collected as training grant without undergoing the training at the approved University in Malaysia.”

“Mrs. Sylvester Ojone Blessing who was dismissed for absconding from duty from 5th January, 2020 to 31st July, 2022 was also penciled to refund the N1,356,653.79, being the unearned salaries drawn from the Government within the period of abscondment”.

In the same vein, the Polytechnic also terminated the appointment of Mr. Aremu Olorunfemi Samuel of the Department of Social Science and Humanities, School of General and Communication Studies, on account of gross misconduct bordering on extortion of students in the name of Continuous Assessment (CA).

“If we can unlock significant financing into the mortgage sector, particularly if we can do foreign financing against USD-denominated diaspora mortgages, we would open up the middle-income market significantly, and that is a massive market in Nigeria



Focus

Coca-Cola: Creating a better shared future through women economic empowerment

NGOZI OKPALAKUNNE

Equality is not just the right thing to do, it is smart economics. No society can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contribution of half its citizens," Alfred Olajide, vice president and general manager, Nigeria, The Coca-Cola Company, said.

According to Olajide, "At Coca-Cola, we know that women are not only essential to building thriving communities – we truly believe they represent one of the biggest accelerators of economic growth globally, which is why Coca-Cola is creating shared opportunities for our communities.

"We believe that a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace makes us stronger as a company, enables us to create a better shared future for employees and communities, empowers access to equal opportunity and gives a strong sense of belonging in our workplaces and society."

According to the Global Gender Gap Report for 2022, gender parity has not been achieved, and its hindrances continue to intensify. Despite this, the share of women hired into leadership roles in industries continues to increase, from 33.3% in 2016 to 36.9% in 2022. This represents a slight improvement compared to previous years. However, it does not compensate for the generational loss that occurred between 2020 and 2021.

At the current rate, progress will take another 132 years to close the global gender gap. Only select industries have levels near gender parity in leadership, such as Non-

Governmental and Membership Organisations (47%), Education (46%) and Personal Services and Wellbeing (45%). At the other end of the range are Energy (20%), Manufacturing (19%) and Infrastructure (16%).

An organisation's ability to evolve is increased by inclusivity in a variety of ways. Real sustainability improvements in 2023 are being committed to by change-oriented leaders, those who are prepared to challenge the status quo, take bold actions and move with agility and flexibility. This is a crucial step in managing this unpredictable period.

To effectively manage a changing business environment, diversity, equity

and inclusion have been viewed as key strategies for an organisation's dynamic performance. These strategies also aid in the development and retention of top employees.

A study by Forbes shows that employees in organisations without a DEI strategy that mainstreams their business for organisational and employee growth are up to six times more likely to actively seek new positions than those in demographically similar organisations that do.

The company also stated that "For us at the Coca-Cola System, we believe that a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace makes us stronger as a company. It enables us to create

a better-shared future for employees and communities, empowers access to equal opportunities and builds bonding in our workplaces and in society. In 2021, we refreshed our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) strategy to expand the global reach and impact of our programmes and policies while driving accountability. The updated strategy also deepens our focus on equity that took the center stage in 2020 amid a climate of widespread of civil unrest and global conversations about systemic racism and inequality.

"Our global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) goal of having women hold 50% of leadership roles within The Coca-Cola Company by 2030 continues to guide our commitments. In our Africa Operating Unit, we already achieved this target as women form 55% of our Extended Leadership Network, while they represent 54% of our total workforce in Nigeria. We have an integrated workforce strategy that will continue to guide our commitment in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 10 that speak to gender equality and reduced inequality.

"Our aspiration is not only to mirror the diversity of the communities where we operate, but also to lead and advocate a better-shared future. We believe that the inclusion of females into the leadership of any company brings a fresh outlook and a unique perspective to the table," he said.

In creating these opportunities for our communities, The Coca-Cola System and our philanthropic arm, The Coca-Cola Foundation, have provided over \$5Million in grants to various NGO partners to implement women-focused economic empowerment initiatives aimed at driving financial

inclusion and poverty reduction across communities under our Africa Sustainability platform, JAMII.

These signature projects contribute to our commitment to promoting women's economic empowerment, as a key to bridging the poverty gap and gender inequality across the African continent.

He further said: "In partnership with these NGOs, we have created award-winning and impactful projects that continue to create shared opportunities for these women. Some of these projects include our 5 by 20 Programme that saw the economic empowerment of over 450,000 women across various communities in Nigeria, through initiatives such as Catalyst for Change 1.0 and 2.0 by Karis and Eleos Hand of Hope Foundation, E.Q.U.I.P. 60,000 & S.H.A.P.E. by Whitefield Foundation, the Recycling Scheme for Women and Youth Empowerment (RESWAYE) by Mental and Environmental Development Initiative for Children (MEDIC), AWAMBI by African Fashion Development and Empowerment Centre (AFDEC), and Digital Academy for Female Entrepreneurs (D.A.F.E.) by The Wivesroundtable Foundation, among others.

"With our partners, we will continue to build on our own best practices, learn from others, encourage innovation, replicate and scale up our ambitions and programmes to empower more women.

"We are proud of the successes and achievements recorded so far and look forward to building on these by advocating and supporting the economic and social advancement of women, both in the workplace and communities across the country."



Alfred Olajide

Celebrating International Women's Day at BAT in West, Central Africa

SEYI JOHN SALAU

This year's International Women's Day (IWD) themed 'Embrace Equity' marks a call to action for accelerating women's opportunities and promoting equity to forge harmony, unity, and help drive success for all. British American Tobacco in West and Central Africa recognises that our employees are all unique and have different needs, experiences, and opportunities, and through equity everyone has access to the same opportunities.

Embracing equity provides an excellent opportunity to celebrate British American Tobacco's (BAT)'s diverse and inclusive culture which shows the company's commitment to gender diversity. The company is proud of its diversity & inclusion agenda, remarkably, we were globally awarded the Brandon Hall excellence award for best diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy, recognized in the



2023 Bloomberg Gender Equality Index inclusion for demonstrating commitment to addressing gender diversity and transparent reporting.

The BAT of tomorrow will be a high growth, consumer goods

company, with sustainability and diversity at our core. To further help accelerate the pace of progress, we have set bold ambitions: Increase the proportion of women in senior leadership teams to 40percent;

increase the proportion of women in management roles to 45percent, and achieve at least a spread of 50 percent nationalities within all key leadership teams

This accelerated focus on diversity is crucial in creating a dynamic and inspiring workplace that will propel BAT into the future and create A Better Tomorrow™ for all our stakeholders. In building A Better Tomorrow™ we understand and are committed to fostering a gender equal-equity workforce which is evident in the independent accreditation from Fair Pay Workplace (FPW) for equitable pay practices.

Identifying the unique skills set and capabilities, perspectives, ideas, and background of our employees, empowers them and creates an inclusive culture that unites us as ONE and makes BAT a Great place to work. "Equity is everyone's responsibility" remarked Odiri-Erewa-Meggison, the External Affairs Director, West and Central Africa "and at BAT we create an inclusive

workplace that acknowledges the unique contributions of women to the organisation."

Sergio Berlanga, the Human Resource director, also remarked "As we aim to transform our business, we need to challenge the status quo and drive innovation. This means becoming better at attracting and retaining an increasingly diverse set of capabilities, welcoming a more inclusive working environment, and striving for even greater gender balance."

This year, employees of BAT in West and Central Africa marked the day with the theme #Embrace Equity and a call to action for accelerating women's equality in the workplace and society at large. Hosting a series of activities and open forum conversations, calling for change, and leading the way in bringing about change for an equitable environment where every can thrive. Equality is the goal, equity is the means to get there, through the process of equity, we can reach equality.

Nigeria Decides 2023



Who wins Rivers' guber diadem?

..Wike-backed Sim Fubara, Amaechi's Tonye Cole, Magnus Abe in battle of wits

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

The hour is here and only one candidate will win the Rivers State governorship election, no matter the noise, thunder and thunderstorms.

Political pundits in the oil-rich state think the odds favour Opo-born Sim Fubara, simply because those rooting to stop the sitting governor, Nyesom Wike, from planting a successor have failed to do what keen opposition groups do – form an alliance.

The next may be APC's Tonye Cole who has the full backing of former governor, Chibuike Amaechi, and Magnus Abe of SDP, who was Amaechi's strong ally when Wike fell off and fell in with Goodluck Jonathan. Thus, the experts say: Sim, Cole, Abe.

Those who think it's Sim say much as the anger of the Wike haters is palpable, their strategy seems to fall flat. They are divided into very strong camps and parties that may never move mountain.

Basically, analysts think the election in Rivers State is still in the political kitchen of Peter Odili who produced Chibuike Amaechi that gave birth to Wike. Now, Wike is determined to install Fubara, and the rest of the former cabinet is saying a vehement no.

Instead, the opposition has broken into APC (Tonye Cole) and SDP (Magnus Abe). These are seen as different fingers of the APC, including Dawari George of Action Alliance (AD).

Counting from the Kalabari groups that are believed to be the next to occupy the Government House, many other candidates are slicing away the votes.

Others still of the former APC block that are making waves in the race include Dawari George who is loved by many especially genuine Christians. Dumo Lulu-Briggs of Accord is believed to have a large following but he may only succeed in helping Fubara to win by chopping off a huge chunk of the Kalabari votes.

A dark horse in the race is said to be Labour Party's Beatrice Itubo who ought to ride on the massive votes of the Obedients. Just as the Kalabari and Wike-haters votes would be shared into pieces, so would the Obident votes be shared in Rivers State, thus failing to garner the 175,000 votes that Peter Obi got.

Many voters have insisted on EluUP all the way, but the state does not seem ripe for a female governor. Besides, the Wike haters do not seem to be in the mood to replace him with a woman, despite her clear programmes and impeccable plans for the civil service.

If character, mien, and trust were to be the only credentials, the voters would not have problems



choosing George. His father alone touched many lives as a school principal when integrity had meaning. The man was also chairman of the scholarship board who served as a private counsellor to many young scholars who are all important men today. George the son was known to broker peace in the APC until he was urged to get into the ring so that any day consensus was needed, he would simply be picked. George is no one's enemy.

It is clear that what is at war in the state on Saturday are the forces of Wike (Sim) and those of Amaechi (Cole). Much, too, is at stake.

War without end

Beyond voting, each camp rep-

resents political death to the other, and much more. Wike and Amaechi may be kinsmen but the hate between them and the bile they pour on each other would never allow for reconciliation, peace, or sharing of booty. One must 'die' for the other to stand. It is that bad, said an insider of both.

Wike's single dream seems to be for Amaechi to be disgraced into silence, or worse. Amaechi can align with the devil if that is what would make him crush Wike.

Besides, there are goodies. Whoever wins decides over 1000 appointments of his supporters into positions. He will control almost N500Bn annual budget for

eight years (N4 trillion), and would control 23 local councils in the state including the richest LGA in Nigeria, Obio/Akpor, where Wike was chairman for two terms.

The winner may also recommend appointment of federal officers including ministers, and would not be arrested and prosecuted for financial sleaze. Wike wants to jail Amaechi for \$50m state funds from sale of assets, Amaechi wants the EFCC to clamp in Wike for withdrawal of N117Bn. These are just the tip of the iceberg for each kingpin.

That could explain why none is ready to give up the fight. Defeat may be jail or worse. Amaechi

may have tried to use federal might to deal with Wike when he was 'Buhari Pikin' but President Muhammadu is said not to play ball. Bola Ahmed Tinubu who is seen as Wike's strong pillar may not be that kind of president like Buhari. With Wike, they may fling Amaechi to Siberia or to a far worse destination.

Some of Amaechi's allies that fled to Wike side hint at such prospects as reason for moving over.

Many say Sim is likely to win because he is backed by a man who has hardly lost an election: Wike won twice as LGA boss, backed Amaechi twice to win as governor, won his own twice as governor, backed Tinubu to win, and only lost when he backed Jonathan's second term. Many say he knows how to win elections.

Tony Okocha, who was chief of staff to Amaechi and now close to Wike, said the sitting governor had always defeated the Amaechi forces and that if they jam 20 more times, that Wike would crush Amaechi. Though he is in APC, he is rooting for Wike's Sim.

Wike is showing the signs of someone that will not hear about defeat. He seems to have rolled out the entire armoury for election; 200,000 polling unit assistants, unlimited financial war chest, men ready for anything, order upon order, and many more. This is more so in a state where gun speaks louder than votes.

The others are playing neat and safe, but Wike seems to be consummate. He openly boasts of how he has driven others underground and that if it is paining them, it is sweet to him.

Many may dislike Wike but translating it to votes may be difficult. The votes of the Wike haters may go to many candidates and thus may not form a force to dethrone the governor's choice and form a force under one Cole or Lulu-Briggs or Itubo or Dawari.

Abe is a consummate politician with deep knowledge of the system but he seems to have picked many bullets along the battle line. He carries the Ogoni dream for a governor, but that alone may not be enough. His votes may only help Sim to win by subtracting from Cole's. All the camps seem to know this too well but the craftsmanship of alliance and strategic integration seems to a scarce community within them.

Each seems prepared to fight to the lost end and maybe sneak back to Sim to seek subordination than seek a unified ticket that can win the seat. That, in itself, seems to suit Sim perfectly well.

Yet, elections are very unpredictable: Anybody can win, and many last minute factors can crop up and create a new king.



Nigeria Decides 2023

Conduct of 2023 presidential poll downgraded Nigeria's rating globally - Peter Obi

Peter Obi was the presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in the February 25 election and former governor of Anambra State. In this interview, he assesses the conduct of the presidential poll, his next step, among other issues. Iniobong Iwok brings the excerpts:

How are you handling the result of the election which perhaps, went against what you had anticipated?

For me when you go into a competition, especially in a transactional country like Nigeria, you expect all sorts and whatever the outcome, the most important thing is to stay on course.

I'm on course on this, because we've seen probably what I consider the worst election in our history, because of the Electoral Law of 2022, which gave so much hope and the huge expenditure we put into technology.

You know what it means to spend over a billion dollars.

So, there was so much that was promised and then we went back to where we used to be, that is very devastating, that a country as big as Nigeria, the giant of Africa and supposedly a nation that should be celebrated 63 years after Independence cannot conduct a simple election, that's how I feel. But for me the struggle is on, we must revise this situation.

Are you hurt, saddened; do you have hope?

I'm not hurt personally, I'm not sad personally, but I am for my country and the future it portends for the young ones and the future generation, because we can't go on this way, it must be the better place; we must give them a better place. It is about the future of the society we have. My generation will say we've lost it, but we must build a better place for them, and building a better place is why I'm saddened because it's important to conduct the election.

I can assure anybody that if today, I'm in service Nigeria will not spend near what was spent and we have a first class election that will be celebrated globally. Look at the editorials globally, starting from the financial Times to the economist, to Chatham House, institutions that don't make comments, not making comments bringing us so low among committees of nations. Even one of the rating agencies downgraded our rating, it is already a junk rating, why bring us down again.

This is not your first time participating in elections; you have been a governor and presidential running mate. Is this the worst in the country's recent history?

Yes, it is the worst, remember like I said, the law, the 2022 law that gives



so much hope when it was passed because all those loopholes and difficulties we used to have was taken care of and then again we invested in technology which was supposed to make it seamless and there was so much noise, of results transmission from pulling boots to server and everybody would see it globally we advertised it.

Go and look at the speech of the APC presidential candidate speech at Chatham House, go and look at my own speech, go and look at the speech of the INEC chairman, everybody paid so much emphasis on the law and the technology.

The APC presidential candidate said; that the winner of this election requires the overwhelming mandate of the people to have the courage to be able to do the right things for the country. I said the same thing and the chairman of INEC said, I would be there for the world to watch, that they can watch it from there. I mean what else do you expect, when you promised so much confidence and you didn't even meet the minimum.

The chairman of your party has expressed lack of confidence in the INEC chairman, are you satisfied now that your lawyers have been granted access to inspect information in BVAS machines used for the presidential election?

Well it's not the chairman of our party that passed a vote of no confidence, everybody did, including you.

I'm sure you don't have confidence in them, you might not say it.

You could see it whenever there's an election announced globally, what it does is that it uplift the rating, the status of that society, but every newspaper editorial, read The Punch newspaper editorial on Sunday.

It has never happened before where we have bad editorial globally and internally, where people are saddened to go to the airport, if you're not sure, but when you finish this program go out on the streets and ask people how do you feel? They'll tell you.

Nigerians have passed a vote of no confidence and not the chairman of the labour party.

We have legally approached INEC to inspect the materials which they conducted the election and I believe they are cooperative, even when they said they will configure, they've said they are going to book it at the backend server so that they would be able to conduct the election. For me, we don't want to disrupt the electoral process that is ongoing, we want to do things in an organised manner, because at the end of the day it is our country.

It was a shocker that you won Lagos, I've had two members of your party say the votes that went to the LP from Lagos during the presidential election actually was about 900, 000. How possible is it that you secured such votes in

turned around as quickly as possible and become something everybody will celebrate.

Your lawyers met with INEC some days ago and the INEC chairman made the statement that; there's nothing to hide, has that changed your position, you have said time and again you don't trust INEC?

That was the initial beginning, when we wanted to start it, if somebody had pronounced this, there's no way the trust would not have evaporated, but they are now dealing with the lawyers, I don't go to INEC anymore. I'm not part of it.

So has your trust been restored in INEC?

I believe the lawyers so far are satisfied and if they are, the case is now in court. So it's no longer me trusting or not trusting, there's now something between the two of us which is our lawyers and if they trust them I am fine.

You have a history with the tribunal and court, I think it was your case that first changed the calendar of the election cycle in Nigeria, that's in Anambra years ago. Are you confident in the Judiciary as you were then?

I am confident in the judiciary. I am because I have stayed in court for three years, when people said it was impossible for you to become a governor through the court and I became the first to reclaim a stolen mandate. Remember I was impeached and again the court brought me back. And I went for interpretation where I said, my tenure is not complete, People said it's impossible because somebody else had been elected but I changed it.

So, having gone through courts, several of them, I have not had any cause to doubt the court. I believe Nigeria has one of the best judiciary globally, but it is we, the politicians, because of our transactional nature, that are trying to ensure that everywhere is corrupted. That I wish can start reversing, even with this case. They are seeing globally what is happening; Africans are surprised that the giant of Africa can no longer deliver. Even Ghana will soon have elections and they will do all without the BVAS and it will go smoothly.

I don't go anywhere referring to how others were treated. Irrespective of their judgements recently, I have confidence that they know the country is collapsing, they know they have to help to build a better place for their children.

Lagos, what would have gone to the presidential candidate of the APC?

I can assure you that the position announced by INEC is false, it's wrong, I don't know exactly what it is, but I would say, our votes is far more than that.

I don't intend to say more than that because the matter is in court. What did we do? Because we campaigned and told the people right things, remember my watch world is going to verify whatever I'm telling you, you're going to draw from the past. We campaigned and told the people the truth, nothing but the truth, anyone from our past, what we are promising we're going to do.

We wanted to build a new Nigeria, we're this Lagos will be a place and the financial center not just for Africa, probably the Middle East.

We really think a place that we used to drive the change of Africa in terms of finance and I'm part of that world and the same thing is all what we would have done all over Nigeria because we have the North would have been something where you have engine pulling people out of poverty due to massive agricultural production that will lead to Industry that would lead to export.

This should have been a place where you could see all sorts of industries emerging; lots of products again through Port Harcourt, Akwaibom. This country can be

Fashion Talk

How to make your own body lotion

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA

In almost every home, you find a body moisturiser. Slathering yourself in moisturizer as soon as you step out of the shower isn't just a luxurious experience: It's a much-needed one. Most times, the between scaly skin and a glowing complexion all over is the moisturiser. Most times, you find yourself using bottles after bottles weekly, depending on your skin type. The more the bottles, the more the money you spend on moisturisers. Who says you can't make your own moisturiser to save some costs and use as much moisturiser as you would like?

Whipping up your own concoction is pretty straightforward, whether you're in dire need of a butter-thick confection or a non-greasy veil of moisture.

Here are easy recipes to have; from a light slip to butter-thick.

Ingredients for basic lotion recipe

½ cup jojoba oil (or other carrier oil of choice)

½ cup aloe, ½ cup rosewater, or ½ cup distilled water (you can use whatever you have on-hand)

1 Tbsp. beeswax or wax of choice (candelilla wax is a great vegan alternative)

Optional: 1 Tbsp. shea butter (to make it extra nourishing), 1 tsp. vitamin E or rosemary extract, and 10 to 15 drops of essential oil of your choice

Step to step guide for basic lotion

• Place the wax, carrier oil, and shea butter (if using) in a heatproof glass measuring cup or Mason jar.

• Make a double boiler by heating several inches of water inside a small pot. When the water boils, lower it to simmer and put the glass bowl or cup inside the water.

• Stir the ingredients with a spoon until fully melted, then remove the cup from heat.

• Pour ingredients into a small glass or metal bowl and wait until it cools to room temperature.

• Slowly add your liquid (either aloe, water, or hydrosol), and other optional ingredients



while mixing with an immersion blender. (If you don't have an immersion blender, just pour the ingredients into your standing blender instead of a bowl and slowly add the ingredients while blending on low.)

- Blend the mixture until you reach a creamy consistency.

- Scoop into a glass jar with a lid, and keep in the fridge for up to one month.

Thick, whipped lotion

“To make a whip-thick version, you can omit the liquid and use a carrier oil, butter, and wax,” says Blankenship. Here's a recipe that piles on the butter:

- Ingredients:
- ¼ cup shea butter
 - ¼ cup cocoa butter
 - ½ cup coconut oil
- Optional: 1 tsp. vitamin E or rosemary extract

Directions:

- Place the wax, carrier oil, and shea butter (if using) in a heatproof glass measuring cup or Mason jar.

- Make a double boiler by heating several inches of water inside a small pot. When the water boils, lower it to simmer and put the glass bowl or cup inside the water.

- Stir the ingredients with a spoon until fully melted, then remove the cup from heat.

- Stir in your optional ingredients, if using. Pour the mixture into a Mason jar with a lid.

- Wait until the mixture cools to room temperature, and place the jar in the fridge. Leave it until it solidifies (which usually takes about one to two hours).

- Scoop out the mixture into a mixing bowl, and blend with a standing mixer or immersion blender (or pour it into a

standing blender and blend on medium speed).

- Blend for about 5 to 10 minutes until it reaches a fluffy, whipped consistency. (Note: “If the cream sticks to the sides of the bowl, push it down with a spatula to reintegrate,” says Blankenship.)

- Transfer the lotion to the jar and keep in the fridge, away from direct sunlight. Because there's no liquid, the lotion should keep for up to one year (just remember to scoop it out with clean, dry fingers or a clean spoon).

Creating your own lotion is as simple as combining oil-based ingredients and water-based ingredients (that's what all moisturizers are, anyway!). Whether you keep it basic or add in some fun extras, each cream coats your skin with healthy ingredients and keeps water locked in.

Perspective



BANJI OJEWALE

Jose Mourinho is the unpredictable, irritable yet unforgettable Portuguese soccer coach renowned for a host of feats confounding forecasters. He took clubs to great heights in his in-form days. Few tenderers of his era have matched his history: he has won a domestic title record in four different countries; he is one of only three managers to have lifted the UEFA Champions League twice with two different clubs; he is the first manager to clinch a European hat-trick, after winning the inaugural 2022 Europa Conference League with Roma, having previously secured the Champions League and the Europa version.

What's the magic, if there's any, that earns you prized international accolades in such a gritty sport? Once, in the newsroom of a popular TV station in Lagos, I listened as an analyst previewing a Mourinho match, attempted an answer; he sought a "demystification" of the ways of the 60-year-old who calls himself the "Special One." He said all you needed to second-guess the Portuguese in a game was to look closely at his starting selection; it would lead you straight into his secret.

On this occasion, Mourinho's Chelsea was facing a heavy-scoring side in the English Premiership League. The coach fielded Nigeria's Mikel Obi and two or three others in irregular positions to begin the game. Upon

Frank Mba in Ogun: A take from Jose Mourinho

noticing this tactical formation, our analyst concluded that "Chelsea would play a defensive game to deny little access at goal for even the deadliest strikers in the world."

He predicted finally: "With this Mourinho approach, the favoured visitors won't get any chance at goal; nor would Chelsea attempt deep forays beyond their defensive wall into the opponents' 18."

I think the forecast came to pass: although not a drab show in the long run, the match ended goalless.

I have lately been reminded of these winning ways of a famous football figure following the appointment of Frank Emeka Mba as the commissioner of Police, CP, of Ogun State in Nigeria's southwest. As in the field of soccer, where a discerning coach aligns his team in recognition of the perceived or experiential threat of the opposite side, the Police authorities have brought into the Ogun scene not only an officer to prevent crime, but also to fight it if and when it erupts. So, as soon as Mba was named as the new CP in the Gateway State, observers came to the conclusion that, given his background of a string of successful exploits where he has operated, he's here to upset the old order and still the storm of criminality in Ogun.

Clearly, the Police undertook an avid reading of the security portfolio in the state and the outcome is that a figure would be needed now to change the game from a normal run to an asymmetrical style. The authorities would appear to have taken the Mourinho course in giving the citizens Mba to police the state. A Mourinho wouldn't battle you with the conventional rules in the books. He'd be guided largely by a determination to contain you as you throw in your best. One moment of a Mourinho-contrived tactical slip by the ambushed, mortally harassed, pressed and stressed enemy during the skirmishes would be the invitation for the killer move.

That's been Mba's style. Newsmen who covered his days as Assistant Commissioner of Police at State Criminal Investigation Department, Panti, Lagos State, say he established a policing standard whose hallmark was countering violent extremism while identifying with his community. Crime beat journalists have also spoken of Mba's habitation in Ajah, a mixed-multitude haven of the hoi polloi and patricians. There as Area Commander, Mba reportedly took the battle to the doorsteps of the criminals; in some instances he neutralized them before their operation. Where they went ahead of him, Mba nonetheless didn't give up. He put up a chase, leading to significant arrests and subsequently, a fall in crime stats in the area under his watch. These are the primary functions of scientific policing: preventing crime and defeating it if it shows its vile and venomous visage.

But in Ogun, a state speeding to overthrow the crime leaders, Mba the troubleshooter would need to go outside the box and rifle through his own ideas bag for innovative strategies. I believe the Police Command saw in him a man who could read a festering situation and respond in real-time to tame it. Ogun borders a bursting Lagos which is emptying its flotsam and jetsam into Ota, the state's economic hub. It is just a neat example of where the best of policing should take place. It has a long stretch of road that opens Nigeria to the whole of the West Coast of Africa and, indeed the world. It boasts an assembly of manufacturing plants second only to Lagos in all of the southwest. It is home to more universities than most of the country's urban centres. These vibrant features combine with other economic, cultural and social facets of the state to make it an alluring investment destination.

Yet if insecurity is allowed a free ride in Ogun,

this massive potential would remain latent and void growth and development not only in the state, but also in Nigeria, because within the state are revenue-bringing holdings benefiting the country.

The CP will realize that Ogun is troubled by an army of kidnappers, armed robbers, rival cultic groups etc. who have terrorized the community and put progress on hold, despite the laudable efforts of government and security bodies. Mba must complement what has been done with other initiatives he successfully applied elsewhere.

Mba would also be expected to work with the government to free Ogun from the vicious grip of land grabbers (omoonile) whose activities have retarded the development of Ota. There's a law barring them from their exploitative business. But it seems this piece of utilitarian legislation has gone into a retreat.

The new CP, as an experienced public relations person (three times he was appointed Police PRO, one of which saw him as Force PRO in Abuja), would need to work closely with the community and the media in the state. These platforms are veritable structures required in building trust between the Police and the people. Lack of mutual trust is responsible for lack of vital information-sharing in our society. The Police under Mba can thaw the icy situation by letting his men and officers establish more friendly presence in the society, notably in the inner communities. The Police must be our friend, in deed, not on the ubiquitous posters in the Police station.

When the analyst at the opening of this article saw the selection of the football coach at the commencement of a game, he correctly predicted the tempo of the match. Can we also here in Ogun hope that Frank Mba's coming as the CP would reenact his fame as a redoubtable crimefighter?

Ojewale is a journalist and writer in Ota, Ogun State.

News

Airport: Abiodun hosts aviation investors, projects Ogun agro processing hub in West Africa

RAZAQ AYINLA

The Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, on Thursday, hosted investors in the aviation industry and declared his administration's plans to make Gateway Agro-cargo Airport an agro processing hub in the West African sub-region.

Abiodun, while addressing the investors at the airport located in Iperu-Remo, said that the agro cargo airport is to expand the industrial base of the state and further open it up, said that when completed, the project would be of international standard and would handle both agro and passengers services.

The airport, the governor noted started with collection of approval from relevant agencies in 2006, stating that "it is situated at the centre of the state and will leverage on its closeness to Lagos, the economic capital of the country."

He explained that the construction of the airport is in fulfilment of the vision his administration has for the state, informing the investors that it would host a Special Agro-Processing Zone, where conglomerates in the agricultural sector, would process agricultural products for export. While promising that the airport would be one of the best in the country, Abiodun said many investors had indicated interest to invest in the airport, while the Nigerian Air force and the Nigeria Customs are to set up their bases and training schools at the airport.

"This airport has been built within one and half years because it fits into our transport master plan, it allows us to have a multi modal approach that connects the road transport to the sea or ocean



L-R: Chief Executive Officer, Executive Jets, Siza Madiba; Chairman, Quit Aviation and Executive Jets Services Ltd., Sam Iwuajoku; Governor Dapo Abiodun; Chairman, Access Corporation, Herbert Wigwe; Deputy Governor, Ogun State at the presentation of letter of intent to establish Maintenance, Repair and Operations facilities at the Gateway Agro Cargo International Airport, Ilishan - Iperu Road in Ikenne Local Government Area of Ogun State on Thursday

transport, to the rail transport and of course to the air transport.

"This airport is an agro cargo airport, but it is also an international airport, it is not an agro international, it is a cargo airport, agro and international airport, so we will have activities for both agro and non-agro and then we have passenger traffic as well.

"We have one of the biggest cargo aprons in the country, our apron is like four times the size of the cargo apron in Muritala Muhammad International Airport, about 82,000 square meters. We are also constructing a second apron, so one apron will be

dedicated for cargo, the other will be dedicated for passenger, we have runway that is about 4km in length and about 60 meters in width

"By the time we finish our terminal building, you will see that there is flow in our designs, our terminal building also looks exactly like the control tower admin building and the reason for that is very simple, this is because we envisaged that this airport will be expanding quite rapidly, so we wanted to make for a design that allows us to expand the airport in due course," he told the investors.

Abiodun, however, disclosed that his administration

would commence the construction of warehouses, submitting that "because if this is going to be a cargo airport, there is need for us to have warehouses."

In his remarks, the Chairman, Access Corporation, Herbert Wigwe, said his company was the first to key into the vision of the governor's desire to build a world-class airport in the state.

"I think this airport will certainly be one of the very best we have in the country and perhaps in the continent, and I think when it is completed, it will serve several other purposes in terms of an export processing zone.

"I happened to be at the bankers committee at a particular point in time where we were thinking of how to resolve some of the challenges we are facing in Nigeria as far as export is concerned and apart from the seaport, this airport was designated as one of those airports that will be used to help to solve the problem of export in Nigeria.

"As a banker, I feel extremely fulfilled to be part of this project, a project by a responsible entity, one in which the leadership is fully aware of the implication to the wider economy. I am talking in terms of employment, development of the facilities and areas around the airport.

The Chief Executive Officer, Executive Jet, Siza Madiba, said his company is interested in developing an aircraft maintenance organisation to support commercial aircraft that are in need of support, saying there is capital flight as most of the airlines carry out their maintenance outside the country hence spending billions of dollars out of the country.

"The money could be spent in Nigeria where we have a facility, where employment is created, training is created and expertise is done, one of the expertise areas has to do with the supply chain in aircraft parts.

SundayBusiness

Food & Beverages With Ayo Oyoze Baje



Introduction

Obesity is simply defined as a health challenge when someone becomes overweight due to excess body fat. It also means that one's weight is higher than what it should be by height.

Though one can be overweight with muscles as with some athletes who are body builders and weight lifters, obesity is considered as a global health issue which accounted for more than 10% of health expenditures according to World Health reports. That was back in 2005. But the situation is worse as at this day.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO 2016) some 2 billion adults were considered as overweight with 650 million of them suffering from obesity.

A systemic review on obesity

Obesity: Of fats, facts and fiction

as it affected Nigerians, between January 2001 and September 2012 as published by MEDLINE revealed that overweight affected between 20.3% to 35.7% of the citizens while obesity had between 8.1% and 22.2% victims.

With regards to children, WHO stated that the world wide population of those affected rose from 200 million in 1995 to 300 million by the end of 2003. That was back some 18 years ago when Nigerian children affected was put at between 5% to 10%.

The root causes

Apart from the consumption of trans fat and animal fat, refined carbohydrates including white flour, sugar with products such as pasteries, rolls and confectioneries are some of the causes

Not left out are alcoholic beverages, such as beer that contains much calories transformed into fat. Baked foods such as cookies and crackers are also responsible. Consumption of red meat, fried fatty food items, and high-fat dairy products such as ice cream, and cheese are traceable to obesity.

Since salt retains water, excess of it could lead to obesity.

As for other causes, sedentary lifestyle with children spending too long time watching television, on computer, playing video games could lead to it.

Incidentally, Michael Lemonick warned about this dangerous trend with an article published in the International Time Magazine titled: 'How We Grew So Big' when it became a serious health matter in the U.S. back in 2005.

DANGERS of FATTY FOODS

When the regular consumption of fatty foods eventually lead to obesity it could lead to respiratory problems, chronic fatigue, depression, mood



swings and anxiety disorders, sexual dysfunction, infertility and skin diseases. Arthritis is worsened by obesity because the joints are stressed having to bear extra weight.

Another health issue aggravated by it is type -2 diabetes. About 90% of people living with diabetes are type- 2 and they are either overweight or obese.

In men obesity is associated with the incidence of colorectal and prostate cancers. Other symptoms include vaginal or rectal bleeding and emacpsia during pregnancy in women.

In addition, cardiovascular diseases such as HBP, hypertension, high cholesterol, congestive heart failure and stroke are associated with both obesity and overweight.

Similarly, psychological problems could worsen stress, depression, societal rejection and complex withdrawal syndrome.

The way forward

As well stated by Dr. R. C. Anyanwu with her article titled 'Obesity and Future Health' published by F and B Magazine, prevention is not only better than cure but made more practical based on applied knowledge.

With the increasing demand on health care delivery by the critical issues of overweight and obesity these steps should be taken, and with all the seriousness they deserve.

1. Children's activities should be monitored. Parents should ensure that they do not consume much of sweet, sugary drinks, ice creams and fried, fatty food items.

They should be discouraged from spending too long time watching television, playing video games and working on computers.

2. Both children and adults should be encouraged to get involved in physical activities such as swimming, biking, and sports.

3. The entire family should set some health targets for each member

that should be adhered to.

Did you know that:

1. Drinking milk could assist you to lose weight because the calcium and protein from low-fat milk could help to reduce calories.

2. The American Dietetic Society (ADA) recommends 60 grams of fat a day. For every pound of fat you have, you burn about two calories.

3. According to Jeffrey Horowitz, a professor of kinesiology at the University of Michigan it takes a week of overeating to consume 3,500 excess calories.

4. Though scientists have discovered a gene called GAD2 which can cause obesity, meaning that it can be inherited your wise choice of both the right food items to eat and healthy lifestyle can assist you to overcome obesity.

By Ayo Oyoze Baje is Nigeria's first food technologist to practice as a journalist. ayobaje@yahoo.co.uk; 07068638066

Mouka marks World Sleep Day, advocates healthy sleep as essential to wellbeing

DAVID IJASEUN

Mouka, a player in Nigeria's Sleep industry, has joined the World Sleep Society and thousands of sleep health professionals and advocates raising awareness of the importance of good sleep for healthy living.

Celebrated annually on March 17, this year's World Sleep Day with the theme "Sleep is Essential for Health", is dedicated to spreading awareness about all aspects of sleep. According to the World Sleep Society, just like eating well and exercising, sleep is a behaviour that is foundational to one's physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

Speaking on the theme, Mouka's Managing Director, Femi Fapohunda, said that healthy sleep on quality products is very crucial for sound health. According to the MD, "sleeping on quality mattresses and pillows keeps the body properly aligned for a great night's sleep and

general wellbeing."

Remi Durojaiye of the Nigeria Society Of Physiotherapy (NSP), Lagos Chapter, also shared her thoughts on the 2023 World Sleep Day Theme. She said, "good sleep is

required for optimal health. During sleep, your body works to support healthy brain function and maintain physical health."

Mouka rolled out grassroot education centred around the

theme to celebrate this year's World Sleep Day. In partnership with the Nigeria Society Of Physiotherapy, Mouka is conducting physical sensitisation sessions in selected companies in Lagos. Mouka has

also deployed radio communication and educational content in print and social media platforms for a wider reach.

Shedding more light on the World Sleep Day plans at Mouka, Damilola Taiwo, Media Manager, said, "Mouka is committed to investing behind the propagation of the importance of quality sleep in the physical and mental health of every Nigerian. We use all media platforms to reach our consumers to sensitise them. The Mouka brand truly cares and intends to add comfort to life through its high-quality brands and health education in partnership with medical professional bodies."

Mouka is a member of the Dolidol International Group, the market leader in Africa with head office in Morocco. The company has a wide range of sleep products crafted to meet the needs of different segments of society. With the popular slogan, "there's a Mouka for you", Mouka products are manufactured with the unique age, lifestyle, budget and bodybuild in mind.



Interview

Facility management has become like technology where expectations, requirements are changing - Balogun

MKO BALOGUN, a mechanical engineer and consummate academic with diverse interests, is the MD/CEO of Global Property, Facilities and Infrastructure (GPMI) company—a frontline facility management company in Nigeria. In this interview with CHUKA UROKO, Property Editor, he shares the journey of the company's merger, challenges, and footprints the company has left on the sands of time 11 years on. He also speaks on the road ahead for Africa's facility management (FM) industry and the role of GPMI in it. Excerpts:

Congratulations on the 11th anniversary of your Group's merger into what is now GPMI—a leading FM firm in Africa with presence in over 10 African countries and serving many blue-chip clients. 11 years on, tell us about GPMI; where is it coming from and where is it today?

Yeah, it's been quite a journey. Reflecting on how we started, where we started, and the journey so far, we can only give glory to God. I was telling my children three days ago that it has been a wonderful experience. It has also been a milestone. One of my directors said three months ago that starting a company 15 years and transforming into this level is not a joke.

Talking about me as a person, my orientation and interests as a young man has always been in engineering. I'd always want to do things that I can use my head and hands together. That led to engineering. My idea for engineering initially was working on aviation. Focusing on airplane development and management. However, at that time, Nigeria was not ripe for knowledge in that area.

Also, at the time I finished my degree, Nigeria had been removed from many multilateral agencies because of the Sani Abacha's government. So, I had to choose mechanical engineering because it was very broad. They call mechanical the mother of all engineering. I had the opportunity of working in the automobile industry which I saw as a sister field to automotive engineering.

I started my journey into facility management at Mr Biggs where I did two jobs—one as a project and the other as a facility manager. At the same time, I was doing my MBA at the Lagos Business School. This was when Tony Elumelu of United Bank of Africa (UBA) visited to give a lecture as the bank's MD.

In the process of our engagement after the lecture, we exchanged numbers and he invited me over one day asking me to come and join the bank. Eventually I did. At that time, they were transforming the head office of UBA to a world class building for a monster bank, a pan-African bank with the head office in Lagos.

His intention was that our head office should represent what we are



as a bank. It was very exciting in all the journeys and transformation, with challenges and opportunities to learn new things. However, all the while the idea of entrepreneurship remained keen in me because of my MBA. Before then I've set up two other companies. One was in automobile repairs. The other was in procurement and logistics. I also worked at the Muritala Mohammed Airport terminal as a facility manager.

At what point did the idea of setting up your own company start and when did it eventually evolve?

During our final MBA project, part of the requirement was to set up a new company or re-activate an existing one. The company will have to be run. We were lucky to have Dr Doyin Salami. Our first meeting took place at Mr Biggs where four of us who were interested in the concept met to discuss how we can see this through.

That was 2006 when we finished our MBA. And then we registered the company in 2007 as Domme Facility Management. After the company was set up for a year, I had to leave paid employment to focus fully on the business – bringing the experience and expertise from working over the years. The vision from Day one was to become a global company.

expectations and what the industry looked like in order to position ourselves for future opportunities.

What led to the merger of the company? What were some of the key moments that have defined the success of your company since the merger?

We started effectively in 2008 and had a couple of projects. In 2011, I was approached by WSP to become the MD of the company. I told the board then that I couldn't leave Domme to take a job. So there was a proposition to merge and that was how Domme became part of WSP.

Agreements were signed in 2012 and both companies become one. At that time, the company had two different models to their business. We had to bring an integrated model into the business. At the same time, the industry was changing and there were consolidations. Africa had only two strong FM companies at that time, both in South Africa.

The idea for us then was to position ourselves to become a major player in Africa. We wanted to become a leading player on the continent for anyone coming from outside Africa. We started developing processes, we went for ISO process, and were developing people, because those were the things that we believed would help us and also ensuring that we're connecting with our clients because when you connect with clients, you get better because clients can give you feedback, can give you objective reviews to say these are the areas to improve on. So that's how the journey started.

Mergers & Acquisitions are infamous for performing below expectations and relatively rare in sub-Saharan Africa. What were the challenges and how did you overcome them?

I think basically the only challenge, which I won't really want to call a challenge, was integrating the two company cultures. One company was more people-driven, the other was more contract-driven. So it was just bringing the two together and making them work and one of the things we did was to first study the culture of the two organisations.

We know where we are coming from, I was coming as the MD from Domme, so I was transiting my team into who we are at a time and we had two people who had to resign because of where we are coming, they felt they would not fit into the new structure and it was a

conversation, not misunderstanding.

After some time, everybody started getting back into that new orientation. We also had the opportunity of having very good board in the new company who understands and who are experienced, and who had also handled similar projects. So, they give us an opportunity to manage the business and supported the process.

Clients from both sides didn't feel any different about the evolution of the new company. There were no issues. I remember, even post-merger, when we were to do change of name, we did a scenario planning, to detail the worst case scenario presented which was done to the board. It was thought that clients will go away for not knowing the company but they didn't.

We are a learning organisation, a focused organisation. But you're going to always have people, your ability to manage them matters. One of the key things that was also very important for us was that at that time, there was a balance of remuneration between the two organisations.

The junior staff in Domme were earning more than the junior staff in WSP. The senior staff in WSP were earning more than the senior staff in Domme. We needed to bring everybody to the same level. There were a lot of grumbling, which is normal, but after several conversations, we were able to let everybody realise that, as one organisation, we could not operate disparity. Remuneration for everybody has to be at the same level. And eventually, we were able to overcome that.

How is technology transforming the facility management industry and how is GPMI leveraging it?

Technology has always been in FM. It's only becoming more in demand. We have had computer-aided facility management as far back as 2003. Even in Nigeria as far back as 2006. I started talking about computer-aided facility management when I was in UBA. It's been existing all the way back but it has advanced.

And as everything is changing in the market, it is also affecting the expectation, affecting the demand as it changes every day. FM has become like technology. Expectations are changing, requirements are changing. With COVID, space utilisation changed and everything about FM also changed.

Chika Unigwe; mirroring life in diaspora with her book

OBINNA EMELIKE

Not many novelists would wander around the seedy red-light district of Antwerp in a mini-skirt and thigh-high boots to carry out research. But this is what Chika Unigwe, Nigerian writer, did for her novel 'On Black Sisters' Street', which is about the lives of African sex workers in the Belgian city. She also spent time persuading these women to share their stories.

Her diligence has paid off. On Black Sister Street is a probing and unsettling exploration of the many factors that lead African women into prostitution in Europe, and it pulls no punches about the sordid nature of the job. The novel unveils the lives of four naive young women, Sisi, Joyce, Ama and Efe, who fall under the money-making spell of pimp-daddy "Senghor Dele" in Lagos.

Rich, vulgar, ruthless, he specialises in exporting girls to work in Belgium for a modest fee of 30,000 euros. They must pay back the fees in monthly installments over many years of turning tricks ten hours a day. They do not all know that this is what lies in store but, fake passports withheld; the consequences for those who try to escape are dire.

Sisi, around whom most of the novel's suspense revolves, is an ambitious graduate unable to find suitable work. Efe is a teenage mother struggling to raise her son with no support from his father. Ama has escaped an abusive childhood only to find her dream of escaping Nigeria crushed by a dead-end job. Joyce, without family, home or money, is abandoned by her boyfriend. The women's dreams come in different sizes, from financial support for struggling relatives back home to



Chika Unigwe

the allure of big houses, fancy cars, gold jewellery and expensive plait extensions.

Unigwe's vigorous prose is at its best when describing the utter humiliation Sisi feels when forced to dress like a hooker in "a gold-

coloured nylon skirt" that rode up her legs when she walked and "showed her butt cheeks when she bent". So too with the degradation of her first encounter with a client in a toilet: "She baptised herself into it with tears, hot and livid, down her



cheeks, salty in her mouth, feeling intense pain wherever he touched, like he was searing her with a razor blade that had just come off a fire".

Men in this novel are generally drunks, murderers, rapists, weak, cold-hearted, pathetic - although Unigwe avoids the fallacy of women as passive victims. Hers make choices, for which there are consequences. But their choices are restricted by circumstance and the Lagos they leave behind is a harsh place to survive, where "on any given day one was likely to find a corpse abandoned by the roadside".

She shows what the women

become, too. Sisi, who felt she was living the dream on her first day in Belgium because she was eating jam, can "no longer bear to look at herself", while Efe's plan is to run her own brothel one day when she has paid off her debt. What Unigwe does brilliantly is to delve into the psychology of each woman, eliciting different levels of empathy.

This is an important and accomplished novel that leaves a strong aftertaste. Unigwe gives voice to those who are voiceless, fleshes out the stories of those who offer themselves as meat for sale, and bestows dignity on those who are stripped of it.

'What We Don't See' still on display at Soto Gallery

OBINNA EMELIKE

Since March 4, 2023, art lovers, collectors and discerning guests have been enthralled by a must-see exhibition.

Titled 'What We Don't See', the solo exhibition, which holds at Soto Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos, features the works of Ludovic Fadairo, a Beninese art master, is storming the Nigerian art scene with his first ever show in the country.

The exhibition; a first major survey of Fadairo's work in Nigeria and English-speaking West Africa, takes a close and comprehensive look at the illustrious career of the Beninese master, who is equally,

a well-known and respected figure within artistic and intellectual circles in Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

Speaking on the title of the exhibition, 'What We Don't See', he explained that he is a great believer in spirituality and African heritage; hence his works are spiritually inclined.

"We hardly see God because of our different ways of perceiving Him. So, I try to bring what I see that others don't see in my images.

"You can get 1,000 meanings in an image and that is what I do with my paintings," he said.

A boost to his spirituality is his rich African heritage background,

which also influences his works.

"I grew up in a family that has a revered spiritual background. We have Oro, Egungu, among other traditional heritages."

Speaking on Fadairo's upcoming exhibition during a virtual media parley heralding the show, Tola Akerere, director, Soto Gallery, expressed her excitement, saying that the master painter is one of the pioneers of African art and that Soto Gallery is honoured to exhibit his works in its space.

"We are incredibly honored to present Ludovic Fadairo's work for the first time in Nigeria. With this exhibition, we hope to help begin the process of reevaluating Fadairo's

place in the canon of African art," she said.

According to Akerere, Fadairo is a pioneer whose contributions, given due assessment, should remain relevant for at least another few generations.

"His paintings have been shown in the great art capitals of the world so we consider this exhibition evidence of Lagos' rising esteem as well as a significant achievement for Soto," the gallery director added.

Explaining the rationale for the exhibition in Nigeria at the virtual media parley, Fadairo said he was excited to bring his show to Nigeria, having had great shows within and outside Africa in recent past, except Nigeria, which is neighboring to Benin Republic.

Born on August 21, 1947, at Zinvie, Fadairo is a Beninese master respected in the contemporary African art scene and indeed the world. He had a traditional education at the Art School in Amsterdam, returned soon after, and developed a unique language in trans materiality and texture. Fadairo's oeuvre encompasses painting, installation, sculpture, and works in mixed media. He seeks to understand the media he employs, which range from the traditional to the highly unorthodox including chalks and natural pigments. What We Don't See runs from March 4 - April 2, 2023 at Soto Gallery, at #10 Omo Osagie Street, South West, Ikoyi, Lagos.

Travel

'Our desire is to grow into a fully-fledged convention bureau, MICE destination'

Winnie Muchayakya is the CEO of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority. In this interview, which was held at Meetings Africa 2023 at Sandton Convention Centre, South Africa, she speaks on the importance of her country's participation, strategies to grow MICE and others.

OBINNA EMELIKE

Why are you here at Meetings Africa?

I think this is the best platform for us on the side of the continent to be talking about Destination Zimbabwe from a MICE perspective. I think we have spaces where we can participate as Destination Zimbabwe. I think the Victoria Falls is iconic and we have seen an increase in the demand for conferencing and convention requests coming through to Victoria Falls for us.

But then I think we also need to talk about Harare as a meeting place and also other smaller places like Kariba, and even the Eastern Highlands where we can hold smaller meetings. All these spaces within Destination Zimbabwe are what we are showcasing at Meetings Africa this year.

We have some operators with us at the stand to talk about the properties that they represent. And we are hoping that we can pick up some businesses that can be channeled towards Zimbabwe from a meeting perspective.

From the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, you now have



a convention bureau. Does it suggest that you have a new mandate to push for MICE and business events?

I think the National Convention Bureau has been a department within the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority and remains so. But I think our desire is to grow it into a fully-fledged convention bureau. That probably runs independently in the area of engaging for MICE business to come to Zimbabwe.

I think we have learned post Covid that this is where the mainstay of our tourism business would be and the need for them to attract more businesses

coming to Zimbabwe. In the long term, from the tourism authority perspective, even from the government perspective, the aim is to make sure that we have infrastructure that boost this drive that we are looking at.

Currently we are limited to the size of conventions, and the size of conferences that we can have because the infrastructure we have in place will only take from 500 and maybe maximum 1,000 delegates that would attend any convention or conference. So, we need more building infrastructure for bigger spaces, presence and bigger audiences coming through for this type

of business.

What should African destinations and tourism authorities on the continent do to grow MICE business?

One thing that I have learned in the last day or two that I have been engaging here at Meetings Africa is that we need to be cognizant of the fact that the desires or the wishes of the traveler have changed post pandemic.

But I think we need to go back and interrogate what our traditional market is and whether they still want the same sort of platforms, the same sort of facilities or services around MICE that we had before the

pandemic. Also to look at what other opportunities are there and that we have not reached out for and interrogated in the past and begin to bring those on board. We have constant business throughout the year for our facilities.

Mozambique announces visa exemption for 28 countries.

The exemption applies to visitors holding ordinary passports and allows for a 30-day stay, renewable to an additional 60 days. The model adopted by the Mozambican government is similar to the US visa waiver program in the sense that it requires travelers to register on a platform for pre-screening at least 48 hours before traveling and to pay a processing fee of MZN650 (+/- £8,50).

The list approved today includes the following countries: Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and Russia.

Others are; Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States of America.

The visa exemption announcement follows the launch

of a platform last December that allowed prospective visitors to apply for an electronic pre-authorization to travel into the country. Mozambique announces visa exemption for 28 countries after the introduction of the Mozambican e-Visa which reportedly has seen an increase of over 30% in the volume of travelers entering the country compared to the same period in the previous year. The eVisa platform commits the country to respond to applications within 5 days, but general feedback places an average response at 24 hours and the few issues reported are usually created by users not uploading the required documentation.

As Mozambique announces visa exemption for 28 countries, it advances measure 13 (which proposes changes for the Visa regime) of the Economic Acceleration Measures Package (PAE) announced by President Nyusi on August 2022 containing 20 reform measures aimed to deliver a path for a more competitive and more accessible country to visitors and investors alike. The stimulus package implementation is coordinated by a delivery unit created for the effect under the country's Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Report calls for gender diversity in cruise companies, travel companies

New research has revealed that the cruise industry is struggling to recruit women across the entire workforce, translating to only 3 percent of C-Suite spots being held by women. The study, which was carried out by private advisory firm Aptamind Partners drew on publicly available data from the world's largest cruise companies and online travel agents (OTAs) and travel companies.

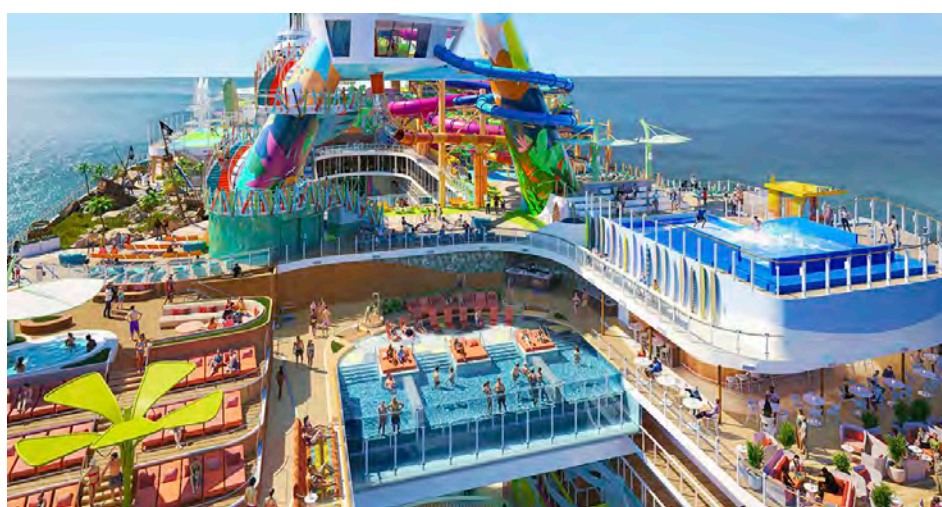
In the OTA sector, the news was more heartening; the majority of the workforce (56 percent) is women, with 36 percent at senior management level and 16 percent in the C-Suite.

In both sectors, however, there is a sharp drop in female representation once you hit the highest echelons of lead-

ership. There is one female CEO amongst the top ten publicly listed OTAs and no female board chairs. Meanwhile, in the cruise industry, where the overall workforce is 35 percent female, there are zero female CEOs or chairs within the major conglomerates.

This bleak picture, however, isn't the full one. As the cruise sector is highly consolidated, with a handful of large corporations owning multiple well-known cruise brands, it is important to look at the businesses within the businesses. Amongst the smaller cruise lines, there are six female presidents or CEOs. The percentage of women on boards across the industry has also increased 10 percent since 2007 from 12 percent to 22 percent.

Aradhana Khowala, CEO,



Aptamind Partners and author of the report, says, "There is plenty of positive news that can be taken from this research. The progress we have seen in recent years has been made

possible thanks to high-level support from regulators and industry bodies, which are focused on promoting the cruise industry as an attractive career choice for women. They

are now focusing on bringing more young women into the sector, which is the only way to sustainably build a pipeline of candidates for higher levels of management."

The report offers six steps the leisure sector can take to get more women into leadership positions across the travel and tourism sector, including better disclosure and regular reporting, independent regulation and verification, and incentivizing and holding leadership accountable for progress on gender diversity.

It particularly stresses the importance of insightful and robust gender diversity data, which, at present, is lacking across the entire travel and tourism industry. Public and private cruise and OTA companies are invited to share their data, to measure and benchmark DEI data in travel, tourism and hospitality, to help the industry develop an accurate picture of where things currently lie so meaningful progress can be made, together.

Personality

Abia monarch, Nto Mbah, in double celebration

UDOKA AGWU, Umuahia

...Marks 70th birthday, 23rd year on the throne ...Empowers 1000 subjects

“Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, some have greatness thrust upon them” (William Shakespeare, in his book, Twelfth Night or What you Will.

For Eze Linus Nto Mbah, the Traditional Ruler of Ata Igboekwu Autonomous Community, Umuzomgbo Ihechiowa, Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State, a philanthropist, industrialist, farmer and estate manager, and developer, rose from obscurity to fame by dint of hard-work, sincerity, meekness, perseverance and of course, God’s grace upon his life.

The Abia Royal father said during his growing up years, that he, after dropping out from Secondary Education, went into various apprenticeship as the parents could not afford the fees to enable him continue his studies.

After the Biafra-Nigeria civil war, the young Nto, not satisfied with his plight in the village embarked on journey to Republic of Cameroon in search of greener pastures in a wooden canoe alongside other youths.

According to him, on their way to Cameroon through sea, the wooden canoe which they boarded, encountered problems as ocean waves started tossing the canoe up and down.

“In the ensuing encounter, I started praying to God that if He spared my life in the ocean, whatever I become in future will be used to serve Him and humanity” he reminisced.

This, he said, was the beginning of his covenant with God. God showed him mercy and other travellers as they safely got to the shores of Cameroon.

According to him, while in the foreign land, life was not a bed of roses for him. He undertook trading apprenticeship with one of his uncles, Agwu Nweke Agwu in Cameroon, who discovered his dexterity in the trade and commended his efforts in business.

“But the cordial relationship which existed between me and my uncle did not last long. When he found out that I got some contacts abroad for them to send me samples of their products, he asked me to for leave Nigeria. But in no distant time, I found favour in the sight of God who linked me to many manufacturers in China, Hongkong, USA, Taiwan, among others who started sending to me samples of their various products for me to market. That was the beginning of my breakthrough in the business world. I was sincere to them and all of them trusted me,” he said.

After he had been selected by people of his Autonomous Community, the monarch was presented with his staff of office by former governor of Abia State, Orji Uzor Kalu, 23 years ago.

But recently, he rolled out the drums to celebrate his 70th birthday (Platinum) anniversary and 23 years on the throne as the Royal father of Ata Igboekwu Autonomous Community, Ihechiowa, Arochukwu Local Government Area, Abia State.

To spice up the double celebration, at his home, various Gospel Artists drawn from within and outside Abia State were on hand to thrill guests with their fine tunes while comedians equally entertained them with rib-breaking jokes.

“I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore, that I



Eze Linus Nto Mbah

can do, or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again” (Stephen Grellet—1773—1855).

The above quote by Grellet synchronises with what the Abia Royal father did on the occasion.

To mark the anniversary proper, as it has been his usual practice, he used the forum to empower over 1000 persons, including the indigent and less-privileged persons in society with mini-buses, Tricycles (Keke Napep), motorcycles, block moulding machines, sewing machines, wrappers, food stuffs (yams, Rice, salt), condiments, stock-fish, cash, among others.

The Eze Udo of Ata Igboekwu recalled that during his turbulent days in life, he made a covenant with God that if He made him rich, he would use the resources to assist in the building and propagation of his Kingdom as well as impact on humanity.

Many people from Ihechiowa, his country home, neighbouring communities and beyond have been benefiting from the milk of Eze Mbah’s benevolence for more than a decade.

During the COVID-19 pandemic which kept the entire world on its toes, the traditional ruler was on hand to share palliatives to over 50,000 persons as well as giving them cash.

This time around, among the beneficiaries of the largesse to mark his 70th birthday and 23 years on the throne included selected persons from all the 17 villages in Ihechiowa, four other clans that make up Arochukwu Local Government Area which include Arochukwu, Ututu, Abam and Isu.

Others include neighbouring

communities of Cross River and Akwa-Ibom states.

In further keeping with his covenant with God to always impact on humanity and assist in the propagation of the Gospel of the Kingdom, Eze Mbah has equally built and donated an ultra-modern Town Hall Complex to his Ata Igboekwu Development Union, Ihechiowa, Aba branch; engages in community services every year, grading of roads within the community, provision of potable water and electricity.

Also built are Mater Misericordiae Catholic Church in Umuzomgbo, the Presbytery and Grotto of Our Lady of Perpetual Hall also in Umuzomgbo.

Others are: complete renovation of the Apostolic Church, roofing of the Presbyterian Church, Umuzomgbo Paris, ICT centre, Ihechiowa Police Station and building of St Mark’s Catholic Church, Uburu Ihechiowa, among others.

Over 200 persons are equally enjoying scholarships in tertiary institutions, courtesy of the Abia Royal father.

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia State congratulated Eze Mbah on his double celebration. He described the Royal father as a businessman of repute, a philanthropist, farmer and community leader who has always gone out of his way to make life easier for the next person.

Ude Oko Chukwu, his deputy, in his own goodwill message joined members of the Eze Udo family to thank and glorify God for His love, mercy and goodness unto his Royal Highness for these 70 years of life of selfless service, sound leadership and genuine commitment to the course of not only Ata-Igboekwu

Autonomous community but also Ihechiowa, Arochukwu LGA and Abia State in general.

He prayed God to grant the Royal father strong and good health and many more years of exemplary leadership and statesmanship for common good of all and sundry.

Orji Uzor Kalu, former Governor of Abia State and the Senator representing Abia North at the Red Chamber of the National Assembly in his message said “Your Diamond age and 23years on the throne is a double celebration to acknowledge the goodness of God in your life. I pray that the Almighty God will continue to grant you good health even as he guides and prospers you with many more years of fulfilling reign on the throne ahead,” he said.

On his own part, Theodore A. Orji, Senator representing Abia Central at NASS said it was certainly the Lord’s doing, noting that as captured in hymnal, “count your blessings, name them one by one, it would definitely surprise you what the Lord has done.”

He urged the Abia Royal father to keep reigning with truth, the fear of God, fair-play, and avoid any scorn and regrets as has been his mantra.

Eze Mba used the forum to launch his autobiography entitled ‘Quintessential Monarch—Autobiography of a Living Legend.’

The 167-page compendium chronicles his travails from grass to grace and the Monarch of his Autonomous Community.

His stories, which stem from humble beginning to fame are captured in the autobiography which he noted would be honourable if people would draw inspiration from his life and change the land-scape of their lives, noting that all things are possible to him that believes.

In the Forward of his autobiography, Eze Mbah gave two reasons for his book.

One, to debunk the erroneous belief or superstition that no one can succeed in this life without bowing down to the devil through engaging in blood rituals or belonging to a secret cult.

“This makes many ascribe the Praise that is due to the Almighty God to Satan and devil,” he said.

That his life experience and testimony have proven that hard work, courage, integrity and trust in God give him better success and that he wants to leave a legacy and shining testimony for posterity to know that anyone can surmount daunting challenges in life and thrive, noting that there is no obstacle too great and no mountain too high that a man of faith and courage cannot conquer.

Mba chronicled his story from birth in 1952 which he disclosed that his parents and indeed the entire family so much celebrated his arrival with jubilation and feasting and was named Okechukwu Nto Mbah (God’s gift).

He disclosed in his book that his arrival was a divine consolation to his parents who lost their first issue.

He reminisced his experience as a brilliant child but finance was the major constraint as he later engaged in truck pushing which only fetched paltry amount while staying in Aba.

The Royal father narrated how he went back to his village at the outbreak

the Nigeria-Biafra civil war and how he engaged in menial jobs ranging from going into the bush to fetch snails to going to the village stream to catch fishes.

He disclosed that the Biafra Army conscripted him and other young boys during the Nigeria-Biafra civil war and were taken to the barracks at Otulu Ohafia that is presently housing the 14 Brigade of Nigeria Army.

“At the end of the war, I travelled to Cameroon through Calabar to Lobe in Western Cameroon through the Atlantic Ocean for seven days,” he revealed.

In the autobiography, Eze Mbah told of his pathetic story how his uncle, Nweke Agwu Nweke, who he kept records of his sales sacked him despite his glaring faithfulness in the handling of the company, on discovering that he had made contacts from Europe and America for their products and samples.

He disclosed that his breakthrough in business came in 1974 when he received samples from Taiwan and took them to one of his friends, Innocent Odo from Anambra who was apprentice trader for one Iloduba who showed the samples to his master and amazingly he liked the samples and subsequently started buying them.

“That was how eventually I entered into business deal in which I will supply jewelries to Mr. Iloduba each time I received my order from overseas,” enthused Mbah.

“By the Grace of God, I can boldly say that I did not borrow money from anybody to establish my business and neither was I sponsored in my growth in business. I always maintain good relationship with everyone involved in corporate business with me. I like transparency, accountability and integrity so that people usually rush to bring deals for either importation or exportation,” he noted

The Abia Royal father, who is also a papal knight and Knight of St Mulumba, Catholic Church, disclosed in his book that when his company became enlarged in stakes of business, he started importing 404 and 505 saloon and station wagon Peugeot cars.

“As my business grew, I became more devout in my faith, I joined the Catholic Church in Duala and served God with utmost sincerity.

“In fact, growth in my business did not in any way diminish my devotion, instead my love for God grew deeper.

“In 1975, God blessed me with the establishment my own Company, Pin Lin Intercontinental Agencies in Duala.

“The circle of poverty had been broken and I now have great pleasure to serve God and humanity,” the Royal father said.

In keeping with the philosophy of John Bunyan (1628-1688) Pilgrims Progress which says, “He who bestows his good upon the poor shall have much gain and ten times more,” Eze Mbah decided in 2017 to take one of his numerous businesses, Linto Farms Limited to his country home, Ihechiowa in Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State covering over 100 hectares of land.

He hinted that he embarked on such project in order to create employment for his people in the rural community.

The Royal father disclosed that in 1979, he bought lands in Aba and built houses bearing in mind to relocate his business to Nigeria because foreign land is always foreign, adding that the government of Cameroon did not appreciate all his exploits there.

In his word “I opened a branch of my company called Linto Nigeria Limited which later made me realise that my relocation to Aba gave me more impetus and breakthrough in my business,” he said.

Feature

Nigerian wonder girl, Mabel Madueme, who flies planes in the US, sends tips back home

...The former student of Showers Int'l School in PH wants girls to banish fear of mathematics, sciences

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

A Nigerian Lady, Mabel Madueme, born and brought up in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, is now flying aero planes in the US skies. The 24-year-old female pilot who was in the mathematics and sciences at Showers International Schools in Port Harcourt now wants other girls to banish the fear of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. She has surged into a world of success and breakthroughs.

At Showers, the sciences are given high premium and the school's success story is more in the STEM up to British Council recognition and Cambridge awards.

The school founded and run by Ekama Emilia Akpan and her husband, Anthony, an oil engineer, is famed in Nigeria and beyond for zero-tolerance to exam malpractice and a strict insistence that students must forget everything their parents owned and do things themselves with their hands.

Mabel whose only brother was close to being a genius in the sciences (graduating with many alphas and making waves abroad with first class in engineering) fought her way through in STEM, too.

Today, by dint of hard work, discipline and dedication to whatever she set her mind on, she is a certified pilot and also presently lectures in an aviation school in the USA.

The Showers alumna is a Coventry University engineering graduate. She proceeded thereafter to a Flying School in the US.

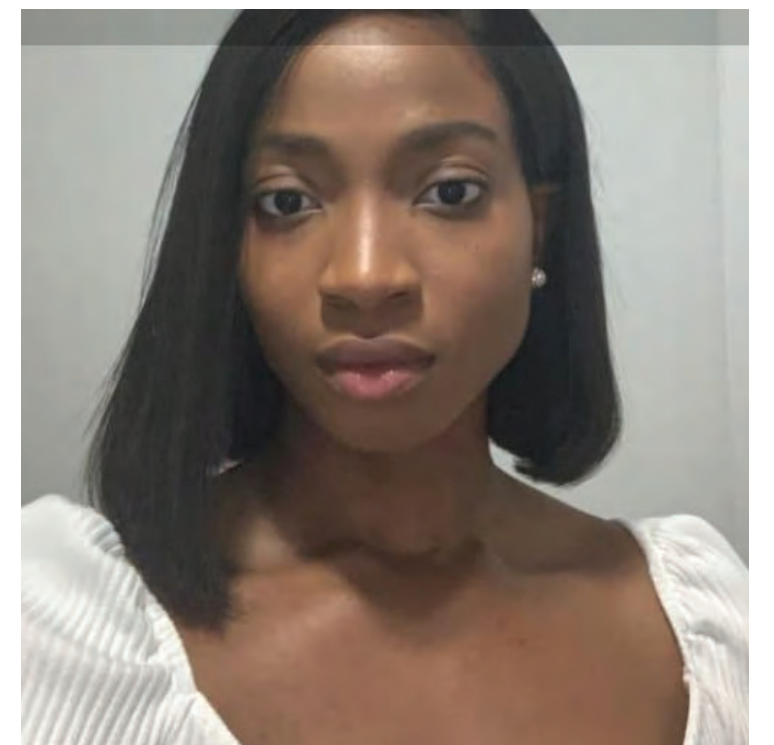
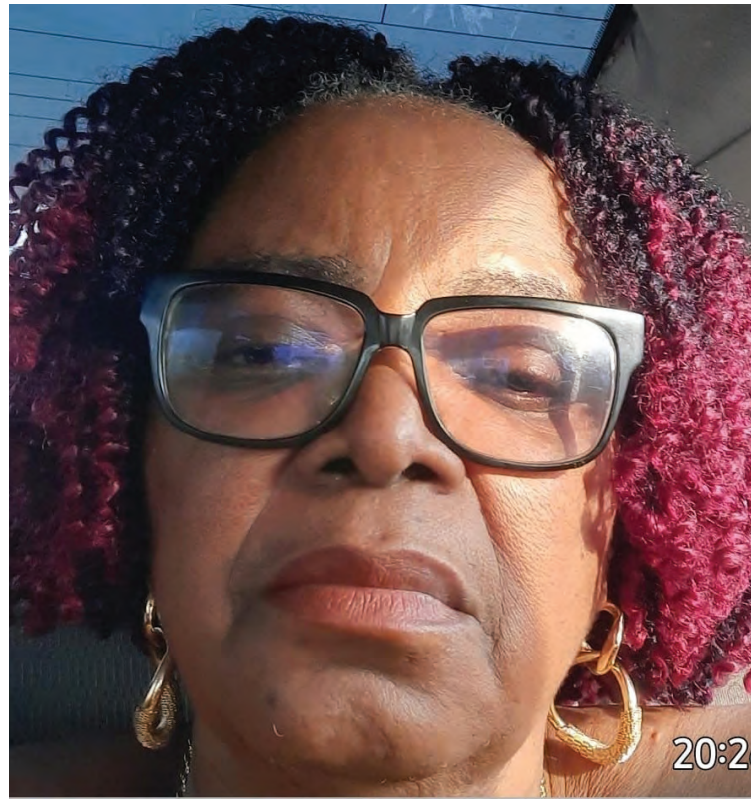
Today, just 24, she is seen as a pride of the Nigerian youth and shows raw strength in areas of her passion.

Many believe that homes also help to shape the way children grow up and end up. BD Sunday gathered that Mabel comes from the strict Madueme family of Isio-kpo in Ikwerre local council area of Rivers State where home discipline takes precedence. Her mother, Winifred, is a public with one of the federal agencies in Port Harcourt. Mabel's only brother, Michael, is also said to be propelled by hard work and academic excellence.

With a First Class at Southampton University, he worked briefly in Accenture, but now works offshore for companies, and owns three firms in Dubai, USA, and in Canada.

From the US in even in the skies, Mabel sends sound counsel to upcoming girls in Nigeria.

In an age when many girls seem distracted to fruitless pastimes, the Nigerian model tells Nigerian youth that want to go into STEM to stay disciplined in their studies. She reveals: "STEM fields require



a lot of hard work and dedication, and you need to stay disciplined in your studies to succeed. Create a study schedule and stick to it, avoid procrastination, and prioritize your academic work."

The Showers product seems to know more than the sciences. "Remember your why: When things get tough, it can be easy to lose sight of why you wanted to pursue a career in STEM in the first place. Take some time to reflect on your motivations and remind yourself of the exciting opportunities and challenges that await you in this field.

"Make the right friends. Your friends really can make or break

you. Surround yourself with people who share your passion for STEM and can support and motivate you in your academic journey. Seek out mentorship from older students who have achieved what you hope to someday or professionals in your field who can offer guidance and advice."

The bold model urged Nigerian youth not to be afraid of their lecturers. "Ask professors questions: Don't be afraid to ask them for help or clarification when you're struggling with a concept. They are there to support you and can provide valuable insights and feedback that can help you improve your skills and understanding.

"Have a positive mindset for when things get tough: Pursuing a career in STEM can be challenging, but maintaining a positive mindset can help you overcome obstacles and stay motivated.

"Remember anything worth having will come with its challenges so focus on your strengths, celebrate your successes, even the little ones and don't be afraid to fail, embrace it as an opportunity to learn and grow and ultimately succeed."

BD Sunday gathered that Mabel is currently doing her MBA in Aviation Management from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, USA.

The Showers alumna loves health and fitness and is very con-

sistent with working out in the gym. She serves in the worship team at her church. She is part of the African Caribbean Society (ACS) and the Business Aviation Student Association (BASA) at her university.

Akpan, Showers founder who seems to know each former student by the last detail like a direct parent confirms that Mabel was the hard working and focused type, never given to mischief and strife.

The lady thus fits into what the school proprietress tells students to aim at; to be able to do things on their own in any part of the world and to compete with the best in any university in the world.

Nigeria Decides 2023



Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu casting his vote.



Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun casting his vote at Ward 3, Polling Unit 2, Ita Osanyin, Iperu-Remo in Ikenne Local Government Area of the State on Saturday



Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, LP governorship candidate



Abdul-Azeez Olajide Adediran, PDP governorship candidate votes.

News

Guber poll: Okowa raises alarm over plans to destroy electoral materials

MERCY ENOCH, Asaba

Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta State, on Saturday, raised the alarm that some people were planning to destroy electoral materials in some parts of the state during the governorship and state Houses of Assembly elections.

Okowa raised the alarm in an interview with journalists shortly after casting his vote at ward 11, unit 17 in the premises of Eghoma Primary School, Owa-Alero, Ika North-East Local Government Area of the state.

He called on security agencies in the state to be on red alert with a view to apprehending those plotting to distort the electoral process.

According to him, there was an information that some people were, also, trying to impersonate the military and the police by putting on their uniforms, adding that the security agencies were

on the look out for such persons.

“There were lots of intelligence gathered across the state on people planning to destroy electoral materials and the security agencies have to be on red alert.

“I hope that our people across the state would try to understand. But we have also asked that where people have their voters cards and they are moving, they could try to ease that restriction,” he said.

He also said that the security agencies should ensure that vehicles are searched because the restriction was actually for vehicular movement.

“We also got information that some people are trying to impersonate the military and the police by putting on their uniforms and I think that the security agencies are on the look out for such persons,” he said.

While saying that he had just cast his vote, the governor disclosed that everything about the election in his polling unit was working per-

fectly, adding that the capture was quickly done in a seamless process.

“I just cast my vote. Everything is working perfectly here in my unit. The capture was quickly done and the process was seamless.

“But to go beyond this, I have been talking to security agencies across and there are a few issues concerning persons not being able to get to their polling units because of the restrictions.

“We hope that it will lighten up very soon. It is unfortunate and I hope that our people will bear with the security agencies.

“But beyond that, from the reports we are getting thus far, everywhere is very peaceful and we thank our security agencies for this.

“I am sure people know that there is still a lot of time. It is just about 10am. I believe that a lot of people are still going to come out. So, we still have about four to five hours for people to cast their votes,” Okowa said.

Angry electorate shun polling ...

Continued from page 13

the voters past 11:00 am before a few started trickling in.

Ajiya Ward Yola North had very few voters despite being Atiku Abubakar's base. Speaking on the reason for the low turnout, Emmanuel Ejeghi, an Abuloma indigene, who voted at Rumuodani Elelenwo Ward 3B Unit 9, blamed it on several factors including late arrivals of the officials.

“I was at my polling unit by 8am and many were there too. But half left when INEC officials did not come until 11.20am. Some of those people did not come back and also asked others to stay back,” Ejeghi said.

He also noted that the general violence and ballot snatching experienced during the presidential election scared voters from coming out in this gubernatorial election.

“We know that Nyesom Wike will not allow mistakes again and that means violence and we voters know that,” he said. For Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, governorship candidate of Labour Party (LP), the low turnout in some parts of Lagos State, is due to the voter intimidation by thugs.

“We've been getting reports on voter intimidation, suppression from places like Kosofe. At VGC, INEC officials

are refusing to go to the polling units in the estates and are instead telling voters residing in that area to come out to the express road, which is not the legal position to vote,” Gbadebo told news men. “You have voter suppression all over Ikate, Ojo and several places. But we are dealing with it in our situation room and our security team to resist all sorts of intimidation,” the LP gubernatorial candidate continued.

The voter intimidation also kept people in safety of their homes in some parts of Nasarawa State.

The ordeal of Edwin Philip, News Editor of Breeze FM, a privately owned radio station in Nasarawa State, whose head was smashed by thugs in the face of personnel of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps while covering the governorship and State House of Assembly election in the state, served a warning and scared many from voting at polling unit 061 in Ciroma ward in Lafia.

Following the beating of the journalist by thugs and NSCDC on the directive of a politician from the locality for asking why other voters were being intimidated by local thugs, many voters who witnessed the beating, and who were asked to come back by 2pm by INEC ad-hoc officers did not return and hence disenfranchised.



Nigeria Decides 2023

Nigeria in the throes of underage voting

Continued from Page 1

(PVCs).

“Our experience in Quan’Pan showed that a lot of underage voters were having the PVCs and this led to a lot of cancellations. One of the underage voters, who had PVC bearing his image and the age of 36 years, confessed to INEC officials that he was only 16 years old. We looked the other way even when in the same elections, our tags were photocopied and massively reproduced by agents of political parties,” he had said.

In February 2018, Observers, including the Centre for Information Technology And Development, CITAD, and Action Aid International Nigeria, said they witnessed voting by underage citizens during the local government elections in Kano state.

A 2021 news report by a national daily noted that during the January 6, 2021 Local Government elections, “Children between the ages of 9 and 15 were seen voting in some of the voting centres in Kano. Pictures and in some cases video clips were circulated on the social media and this got people expressing outrage...Kano has become notorious for child voting, arguably more than other Nigerian states. This is rampant especially where the election is conducted by the state, like the recent local government election in Kano”.

Nigeria implements the Universal adult suffrage system of voting. This means that, before a person can vote or exercise his franchise, he or she must have first attained “full age”.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended recognizes the full age status of every Nigerian. Section 29(4)(a) defines “full age” to mean, the age of eighteen (18) years and above.

Nigeria’s election manager, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, in November 2022, vowed that citizens who had yet to attain the legal voting age of 18 will not be allowed to participate in the 2023 elections.

INEC assured that the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) would help identify these underaged voters on election day.

“I assure you that the register will be cleaned up completely and no underage voter will vote in 2023. After we finish with the claims and objections on Friday, we will be taking in again for further claims based on the complaints of the people,” INEC’s Director of Voter Education and Publicity, Victor Aluko assured Nigerians.

“That is why it is important that persons who noticed any issue at all with the register should complain through the right channels where they can be documented,” he added.

In January, INEC further boasted that it was cleaning underage voters’ details in the registered voters’ record. Festus Okoye, the Commissioner for Information and Voter Education of the commission, asserted, “On the issue of the underage voters, this commission published



the entire registered voters in Nigeria in various local government areas and all the registration areas. People have made their objections, complaints and claims. The commission is presently cleaning up the voter register. The cleaning up is an ongoing exercise and we are going to try our best to make sure that we go into the 2023 general election with a voter register Nigerians will be proud of.

“In terms of non-Nigerians voting, only validly registered voters will be in the position to vote in the 2023 general election. Any time Immigration Service sees any non-Nigerian with a voter’s card and claims to be a Nigerian, they should arrest him and make the card available to INEC and we cancel those registrations.

“Therefore, Nigerians should be on the lookout. If any non-Nigerian approaches any of the polling unit, they should alert security agencies”.

INEC failed as usual to deliver on

its bluster of underage free voting during the February presidential elections.

Underage voters not only littered the voters register, there were widespread reports of underage voting in Northern Nigeria during the elections.

The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) stated in its election monitoring report that its observers confirmed cases of underage girls being made to vote in Saturday’s general elections in Kaduna and Kwara states.

In a preliminary report signed by Mrs Amina Agbaje, the FIDA National President, the cases of female underage voting were confirmed in “polling unit 003, Ward 1, Zaria LGA” and “polling unit 006, Ijabo ward, Oyun LGA, Kwara State.

“In polling unit 003, Ward 1, Zaria LGA, young girls were observed clearly below the stipulated age voting. In polling unit 006, Ijabo ward,

Oyun LGA, Kwara State, a similar occurrence occurred,” the report observed.

The nature of Nigeria’s transactional politics ensures that politicians and political parties who would otherwise not have won elections use juvenile voters to gain illicit victories in return for monetary considerations.

To do this, state authorities and politicians transact with INEC staff to warrant the registration of callow voters who are then placed on the voters roll.

In November 2022, Mike Igini, a former Akwa Ibom State Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for INEC, accused some staff of the electoral body of registering underage voters.

“Those who have done this are staff of INEC, I can tell you. If you register as a registration officer, you register with your personal ID (identity card), all of them can be

traced...Anyone who undermines the confidence of public institutions must be brought to book”.

“Unfortunately,” noted Twitter use, @DanUbangiji, “those that are to prosecute cases like this will claim that the genetic make-up of those in Northern Nigeria makes it difficult to decipher their age.”

During the February 25, 2023 presidential elections in Kano, the state’s police commissioner, Muhammed Yakubu, defended underage voting in the state when he insisted that most of the alleged underage voters seen in viral videos during the election in Kano State might be suffering from stunted growth.

“It is very difficult to determine by appearance who is a minor or not, most of the ones you are seeing their growth rate might be impaired,” Yakubu theorised.

Our of the most impactful outcomes of underage voting in Nigeria, notes content writer Nonyelum Ossai, is the election of bad, incompetent leaders.

“Since the purpose of using underage voters is to rig elections and inflate numbers to give the impression of a “massive turnout” of voters, the result is unsuitable people will be voted into prominent positions to oppress the people. For instance, northern Nigeria has arguably recorded the highest numbers of underage voters and the region is the least developed in Nigeria. This is because of the massive rigging of elections using underage voters, who then elect incompetent leaders to the helms of affairs.”

In January this year, the INEC said that it was cleaning underage voters’ details in the registered voters’ record.

The Commissioner for Information and Voter Education of the commission, Festus Okoye, stated this during an interview on Channels TV.

Okoye, who was asked what the Commission was doing with regard to underage voters and non-Nigerians, said, “On the issue of the underage voters, this Commission published the entire registered voters in Nigeria in various local government areas and all the registration areas.

“People have made their objections, complaints and claims. The commission is presently cleaning up the voter register. The cleaning up is an ongoing exercise and we are going to try our best to make sure that we go into the 2023 general election with a voter register Nigerians will be proud of.

“In terms of non-Nigerians voting, only validly registered voters will be in the position to vote in the 2023 general election. Any time Immigration Service sees any non-Nigerian with a voter’s card and claims to be a Nigerian, they should arrest him and make the card available to INEC and we cancel those registrations.

“Therefore, Nigerians should be on the lookout. If any non-Nigerian approaches any of the polling unit, they should alert security agencies.”



Visitation

Day traders, artisans, others abandoned wares for 'hurricane' Obi in Edo

CHURCHILL OKORO, Benin

They jubilated, beamed at him with admiration, raised their hands in unison as they danced, marched alongside his convoy and uttered his name, Obi! Inspired by his strength of character and efforts to make a new Nigeria possible, the relentless Nigerians left their respective businesses of the day and followed the man of the hour.

Undaunted with the outcome of the presidential election, the people gave him a rousing welcome with endless chants of Obi, our president! And all he did was to wave back at the cheering crowd and flashed a winning smile indicating, "we won the election and we will prove it."

The Labour Party's presidential candidate visit to Edo State wasn't entirely a campaign to woo voters ahead the March 18 house of assembly election but a "thank you" visit he embarked on barely two weeks after the February 25 poll.

From the streets of Mission road, New Benin Market among other roads in Benin metropolis, it was profound love. Edo residents, including passers-by, hawkers, shop owners, commercial bus drivers as well as private vehicles owners stood in awe and gazed in amazement to their newfound love.

On Saturday, March 11, 2023, many inhabitants were eager to hold on to their regarded Nigerian messiah while others who couldn't



come close stood in front of their shops just to get a glimpse of the 61-year-old man that unsettled the nation's political turf. It was all reminiscent of the biblical woman who had a continuous flow of blood and had faith that when she touches the hem of Jesus Christ's garment she will be healed.

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garment she will be healed. On Saturday, March 11, 2023, many inhabitants were eager to hold on to their regarded Nigerian messiah while others who couldn't come close stood in front of their shops just to get a glimpse of the 61-year-old man that unsettled the nation's political turf.

"The Obidient movement is one that has come to stay and has reawaken the consciousness of Nigerians. It has shown that gone are those days when those feeding on our wealth will no longer have the force to decide elections. Peter Obi may not have been declared winner of the election, but his name will remain indelible in the annals of Nigeria's democratic journey," Gabriel Efosa, a young male Benin resident, who is keen on retrieving Nigeria, said.

During his visit to Edo State, the former Anambra State governor said a new movement has begun which no one can stop, and promised that the party would organise a retreat for the winners of the national assembly elections and those who will emerge victorious in the forthcoming elections so that they can do things differently and change the political narratives of the country.

"Nigeria must not be allowed to remain the way it is, there must be a paradigm shift for a better and a prosperous Nigeria. We have begun the journey of a new Nigeria and nobody will stop it, we will not allow Nigeria to remain the way it is.

"I am here to thank you for the feat recorded in the February 25 election. We will vote for labour party come March 18", Obi said.

Matthew Edagheshe, a legal practitioner, described the last Saturday's visit by the LP's presidential standard-bearer and the accompanying crowd that roused many residents as the true meaning of legitimacy and endorsement by the electorate.

According to him, "the truth is that the people know whom they elected and they know the kind of leader they want. The body language and the expression of the people were very audible to the deaf that they wanted a departure from the old way and Obi represented the vision of a new Nigerian leadership.

is paradoxical that the people are not celebrating INEC's pronouncement, instead they are celebrating the one INEC pronounced against. That shows they know who they voted and they are not in agreement with who INEC has pronounced as the winner.

"What that means is that the people are supposed to chose their leaders and leadership should not be imposed by dubious means and questionable processes. We all witnessed what happened on Saturday, February 25, when Nigerians massively came out with so much enthusiasm and high expectations to elect their leader. They were expecting nothing short from a free, fair and credible election but it turned out not to be," Edagheshe said.

He further added: "INEC promised to abide by the electoral act and their own regulations in conducting the election only for them to turn around and abandon all the processes. They reverted to the negative, manual compilation and computation of results as against the uploading of the polling units result in their INEC portal. All these made room for subversion of the will of the people as expressed through the ballot.

"At the polling unit, everybody knows who lost and who won. They know the number of votes scored by each candidate; it is not just the



"Do not forget before the election that the pre-election polls conducted pointed to the direction that Peter Obi will win with a wide margin. Though the opposition said it was fabricated but it turned out to be exactly the situation. Despite the manipulation and suppression of votes and outright disruption of ballot votes for Obi, he still won. You see how he triumphed in Lagos among other states and that shows the depth of love Nigerians have for him across the states of federation and across religious divides.

"Obi's votes did not come from one political party. People voted for him across party lines and that is why people are saying that the pronouncement by INEC is an irony. It

party agent, I am talking about the entire people who witnessed the voting processes in every polling units. What we saw in Benin City, when Obi visited, was a reflection of the true mood of the people and their preferences.

"They see Obi as the president-elect and what I will call the people's president as opposed to the one that INEC is trying to manipulate. The results are in the hands of all Nigerians as opposed to what INEC eventually pronounced in some states. All these were orchestrated to superimposed a candidate on the people of Nigeria as against what emanated from a free and fair process. Nigerians know who they elected and they are conscious of that reality," he noted.

Avoidable cash crisis: Any lessons

On February 3, 2023 the media was awash with the report of an unidentified man who slumped and died after spending hours at a new generation bank in Agbor, Delta state in what turned out a fruitless effort to withdraw some money.

Similarly, some three days later on February 6, 2023 a pregnant woman in Kasuwan Magani in Kajuru LGA of the southern part of Kaduna state died when her husband was unable to withdraw the needed cash to attend to her critical health challenges.

And unfortunately, another helpless Nigerian, a popular presenter on Fresh FM radio, called Baba Bintin died while trekking on his way to work on a fateful Saturday.

These listed three voiceless victims were but a few of the citizens who have gone through harrowing experiences, all due to the federal government's recent cashless policy and the Naira redesign issue that have brought many to their begging knees. But do the brains behind the policy really care about us? One is talking of course, about the Central Bank Governor, Godwin Emefiele and the Attorney General and Minister of Justice of the federation, Abubakar Malami, who Mister President has passed the buck to as having deliberately disobeyed the Supreme Court judgement. That is, the one directing that the old notes be accepted as the legal tender till December 31, 2023.

As aptly captured by the report titled: 'Redesign gone wrong? Costly cashless by Agosto and Co on March 3, 2023 the hardest hit were the most vulnerable members of the society including the poor, the unbanked and the rural dwellers.

Perhaps, the President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration should have taken into



Most important, the Central Bank must keep public opinion on its side, because the public is the ultimate source of its power and independence

-International Monetary Fund (IMF) report titled: "Rethinking Monetary Policy in a Changing World."



cognisance that the country is still a largely cash-dependent economy. That the informal economic activity accounts for an approximately 65% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) dominated of course, by the Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises.

In fact, as broken down by the report: "These MSMEs account for 96% of businesses and 86.3% of the national workforce.

"These are mostly cash-based businesses - particularly the micro enterprises which account for 99.8% of Nigeria's 37.1 million MSMEs". The import of this is enormous. And the impact has been economically debilitating, socially destabilizing and concomitantly castrating on a people battling with daily survival!

Indeed, it is the height of cruelty for a government to embark on a cashless policy without first and foremost fully involving the economic think-tank!

Worse still, coming at an election period and under an inclement situation with frequent network failures underscores the cluelessness of the policy makers.

With some pro- Ahmed Tinubu governors

alleging that the cashless policy, along with the redesign of the Naira notes were premeditated and targeted at the current president -elect and the public anger triggered by the scarcity of notes leading to the burning down of some banks, some hard lessons should be learnt.

This is significantly so such that whoever takes over from Emefiele will not repeat the mistakes of the past.

One of such is that both elected representatives of the people and their appointees should stop personalizing political power. Instead, they should be driven by the national interest and function within the ambit of the statutory regulations guiding their functions always.

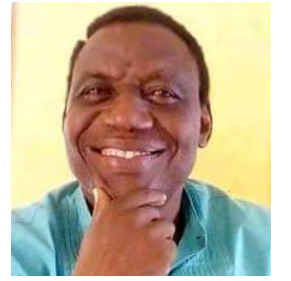
Ordinarily, the CBN should keep to its mandate to ensure monetary and price stability, promote sound financial system, issue legal tender currency as well as provide economic and financial advice to the federal government.

For instance, though the mobile phone ownership in Nigeria is estimated at 81% by Enhancing Financial Innovation and Access, internet penetration remains at a dismal 44.3%.

In a similar vein, though the banks embarked on Unstructured Supplementary Service Data launched by them and TelCos with the aim to enable deeper mobile penetration in communities, especially those lacking data there have however, been network hiccups.

Besides these technical hitches, the Central Bank of Nigeria ought to have effectively communicated the rationale behind its cashless policy to the public. With that, the average Nigerian would understand why the policy was coming into effect in the first place and the role he has to play for it to succeed.

Unfortunately, the CBN under Emefiele has al-



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legedly pandered to the wishes of some influential people up there in the corridors of political power!

Rather, it should have stuck to its constitutional mandate and ensure its freedom at all times.

As well stated by Funmi Odude, writing for Financial Nigeria " research has shown that central banks that are more independent achieve lower inflation than those with closer ties to their governments".

In her words of caution: "reckless pandering to the financing request of the government, the CBN is fostering financial instability- the very opposite of its core mandate". This has become a serious paradigm shift that has seen millions of Nigerians holding the short end of the country's economic stick.

As in other climes, the CBN governor should be at the background acting as catalyst for economic policies and be strictly apolitical.

Issues of showing active interest in politics, on the platform of the ruling political party or going to court to avoid getting arrested for one infraction or the other are seen as an aberration. So should it be here in Nigeria.

Above all, economic policies should be in line with the interests and needs of the people and not otherwise.



IKEDDY ISIGUZO

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Seplat - When boardroom brawl goes overboard

ment age in UK private sector is 65.

Board squabbles tend to reflect the interests of board members. Sometimes external influences that want to get into or get at a company can put some of its members up to internal fights. These all seem available in the Seplat brawl has drawn the attention of the Ministry of Interior which acted decisively.

Brown is accused of being a racist who bullies Nigerians to resignation. The allegation that must have irked the Ministry of Interior the most is that his work permit is fake, expired or illegally obtained.

When the Immigration Service decided on the matter, Brown was absent on the two occasions the meetings. Sources familiar with the case said that though the letters were delivered to Seplat, those bent on seeing Brown out of position ensured the letter never got to him. Those who know Brown said he would not have disrespected Ministry of Interior as the situation portrays him.

Seplat Awesome Women's Network, SWAN, a body of Seplat women employees, and predominantly made up of Nigerian employees, in its statement posted on Seplat platform said certain petitions to the Ministry of Interior and the courts against Brown, were false allegations and blatant lies.

"Curiously, we are unable to identify any of the individuals alleging these falsehoods as our fellow employees - past or present. It is therefore concerning that persons outside of our employee population can purport to speak so purposefully and publicly on our welfare. The unfortunate (but perhaps intended) consequence of these efforts is to disparage the sterling record of our corporate champion and steadfast cheerleader while diverting the much-needed time and resources of our Ministry of Interior and

Courts away from legitimate concerns requiring their attention," SWAN said.

Brown was the Chief Finance Officer of Seplat before the CEO role.

Will to he authorities listen? Will those taking the decisions ponder for awhile why it has taken 10 years of Mr. Brown's services as CFO and CEO for these allegations to be made?

Had he always be a racist or it is a new behaviour?

Will the CEO of an international company listed in Lagos and London Stock Exchanges act consistently without board approvals?

Did Brown assume the powers of the boards over the 10 years of his service? The questions are pertinent because of the issues have been parlayed to stretch across the tenure of another board.

Seplat, once prided as the best-governed and biggest Nigerian-grown company has 515 employees - regular and direct contract. Only 24 of these are non-Nigerians from other nationalities.

Among other beneficiaries of Seplat's oil and gas operations are host communities and hosts of companies that are service providers. These fights affect them and Seplat in different ways.

They also great new grounds for new investors in Nigeria to weigh their options. Would their investments be safe? How would Nigerian companies treat foreigners nationals who are their staff? Would the companies abide with their agreed conflict resolution agreements?

Brown could be a victim of the new governance regime that Seplat implemented. Some influential former board members who are affected feel affronted. They are fighting back.

Global business news agency, Bloomberg, in September 2022 reported that Seplat awarded contract worth over \$450 million, over 12 years to companies linked to its former board members. Seplat banned party related transactions in 2021. Could this be one of the issues in this boardroom war?

The authorities have to look deeper to resolve the issues without destroying a thriving Nigerian company over the greed of a few.

Finally...

ELECTIONS have come and gone or have they? One matter that would stick around much longer is the hate speeches generated around the elections. Some were sublime. Others were outrageously provocative. Maybe the knowledge that the security agencies would not arrest anyone for incitements caused the incidents where a woman was stabbed at a polling. No arrests were made and none is about to be made. It was in the same Lagos that people were told they would not be allowed to vote, except for a particular political party. The threats, execution of the threats and violence needed to be addressed. Security agents on duty just looked away. Their refusal to act emboldened criminals that should have been put away. At least, in Abia State, they arrested someone threatening voters. The standards for preventing crimes or going after suspects should be the same. If that is the only thing the security agencies decide to take away from the elections, they would have learnt a lot for a better society.

.Isiguzo is a major commentator on minor issues