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Sultan: I Am Neither for Tinubu Nor Against Him—I Am Father to All Nigerians

● **Debunks viral 2027 endorsement claim, says throne must remain above partisan politics**

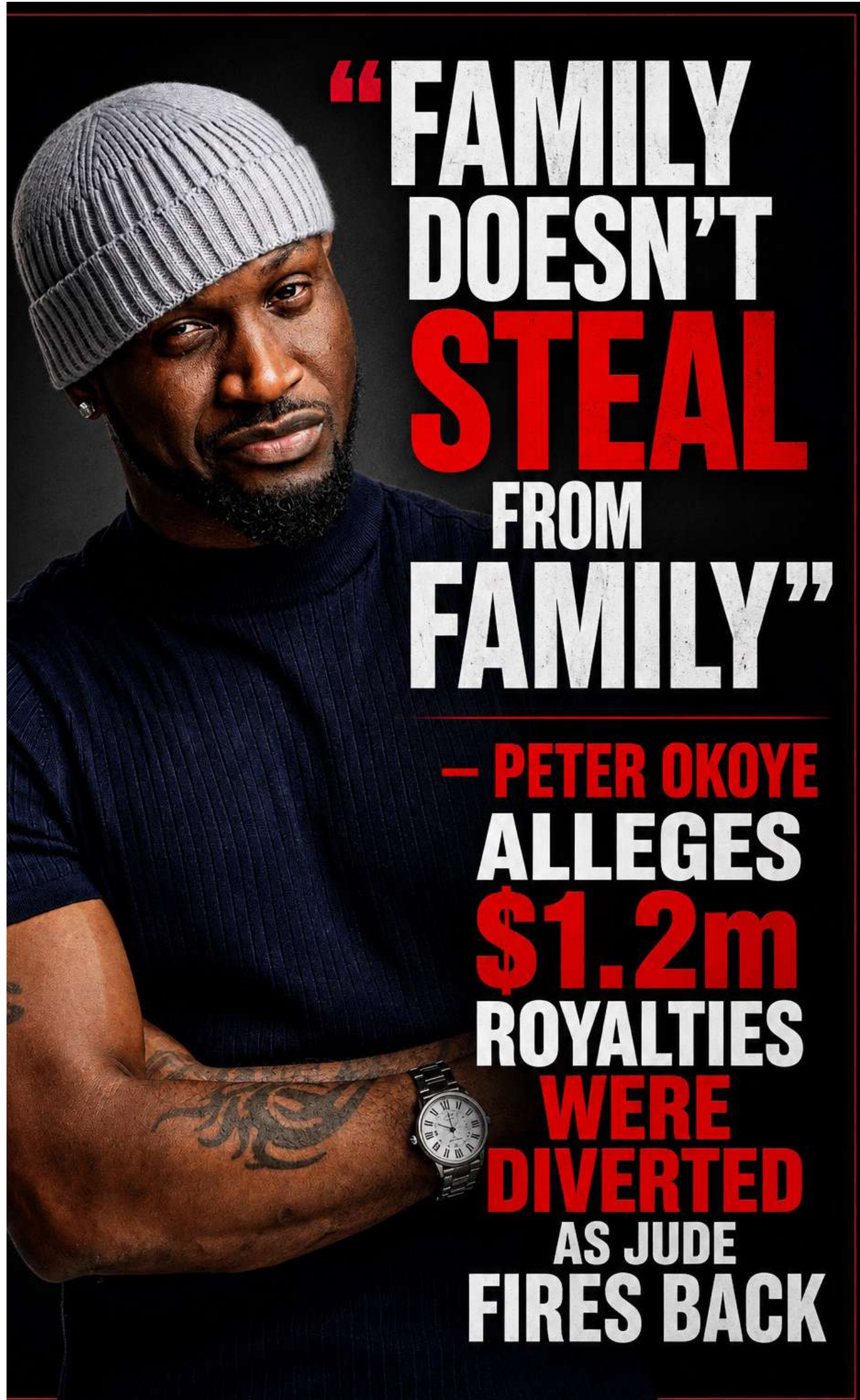
Military Wage Bill Hits Nearly N1 Trillion as Tinubu Approves Up to 80% Pay Rise for Troops

● **Baseline junior soldiers' pay jumps to nearly N190,000 monthly as 250,000 personnel benefit**



Soft Sell

...with Uche Aghulor



**“FAMILY
DOESN'T
STEAL
FROM
FAMILY”**

**— PETER OKOYE
ALLEGES
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The long-running feud within the Okoye family has taken another dramatic turn, with Peter Okoye of P-Square accusing his elder brother, Jude Okoye, of allegedly diverting royalties belonging to the group.

Peter made the allegation while speaking about the ongoing dispute, claiming that music aggregators had been paying royalties into an account belonging to Northside Music, rather than Northside Entertainment, the company he said was originally entitled to receive the funds.

According to Peter, statements covering the period from 2017 to 2023 allegedly showed that aggregators paid Jude nearly \$1.2 million in royalties belonging to the family's business interests.

He questioned how payments meant for Northside Entertainment could have been redirected to another account without the authorisation of all the parties involved.

“How did these aggregators leave our company, Northside Entertainment, and start paying into the Northside Music account?” Peter questioned.

The singer described the situation as the “highest betrayal from family”, insisting that family members should protect rather than financially undermine one another.

Peter also questioned whether his twin brother, Paul Okoye, was aware of or involved in the alleged diversion.

Jude, however, has rejected Peter's narrative.

In a video titled “Debunking the Lies,” Jude presented documents and accused Peter of withholding important information about the dispute. He also claimed that his passport and bank accounts have been frozen for more than two years.

Jude further alleged that Peter had failed to appear in court on three occasions and displayed documents which he claimed showed that Peter remained a signatory to P-Square-related accounts and had received dollar-denominated royalties.

The latest accusations have added another explosive layer to the brothers' long-running legal and financial dispute, with both sides presenting competing accounts of how P-Square's royalties, companies and finances were managed.

As the allegations continue to fly, the central question remains: who controlled P-Square's money, where did the royalties go, and who authorised the transactions?

FLAVOUR

OPENS UP ABOUT HIS SEXUAL STRUGGLE

— AND — UNUSUAL ROAD TO RECOVERY



Nigerian singer Flavour has opened up about a difficult period in his life, revealing that he battled what he described as a masturbation addiction for about two years.

The singer shared the revelation during a TikTok live session with friends, explaining that the habit began after he lost his virginity and later lost contact with the woman involved.

According to Flavour, he turned to masturbation after finding himself without a sexual partner, but what began as an occasional habit

eventually became an addiction after a friend introduced him to Mapouka dance videos from Congo.

He said the situation became so severe that he felt ashamed of himself and struggled to interact normally with friends, even during ordinary activities such as watching football.

Flavour also recalled how far the addiction went, saying that at one point, he resorted to using liquid soap.

Seeking a way out, the singer said he initially approached his mother's pastor, whom he described as a guidance and counselling expert. The pastor

reportedly recommended a 21 day fast and prayer, but Flavour said the problem returned only days after completing the exercise.

He later opened up to a bassist he worked with, who attributed the problem to his youth and lack of regular sexual activity. According to Flavour, the bassist eventually took him to a brothel and paid for him to have sex with a woman.

Flavour said he subsequently began spending part of his earnings from playing musical instruments on weekly visits to brothels, which he believes eventually helped him overcome the addiction.

Soft Sell

Veteran Nollywood actor and musician Harry B Anyanwu has appealed to members of the Nigerian film industry and the public to support actress Maureen Okpoko, who has reportedly been living with sight loss for several years.

In a video filmed in Enugu and widely shared online, Harry B called on his colleagues and well-wishers to come to the actress' aid and help her access the medical treatment she needs.

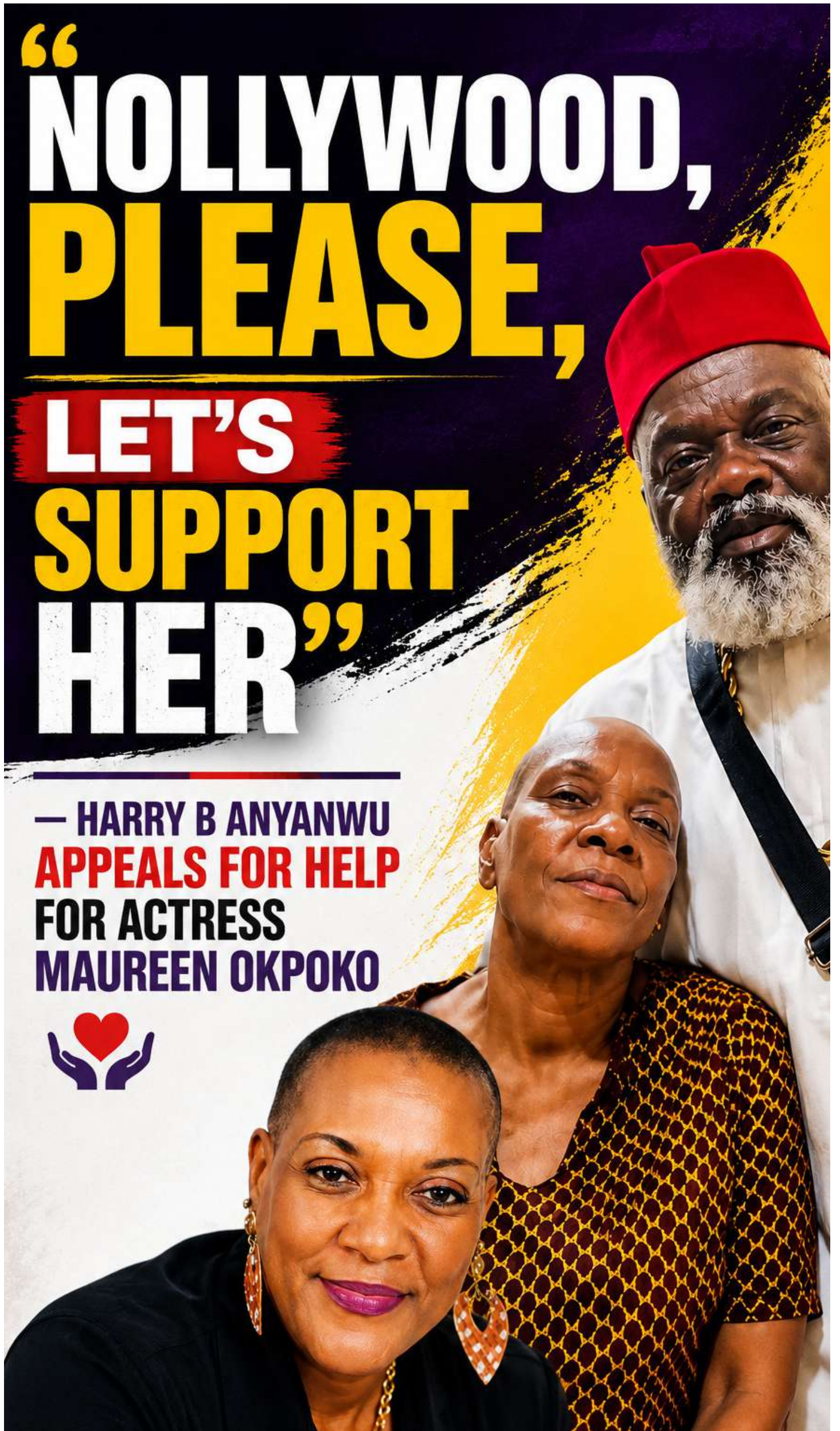
"Nollywood, please, let's reach out and support her. She's blind, but she can restore her sight; all she needs is support," he said.

The actor's appeal has drawn renewed attention to Okpoko's situation, with calls for members of the entertainment industry and compassionate Nigerians to support her treatment and help her regain her sight.

Harry B's plea also highlights the importance of support for entertainers facing serious health challenges, particularly those who may struggle to meet the financial demands of long-term medical care.

"NOLLYWOOD, PLEASE, LET'S SUPPORT HER"

— HARRY B ANYANWU
**APPEALS FOR HELP
FOR ACTRESS
MAUREEN OKPOKO**



Afrobeat star Rema has reportedly expanded his property portfolio with the acquisition of a luxury apartment in Dubai, becoming the latest African celebrity to invest in real estate developed by Binghatti Holdings.

The announcement was made by Binghatti executive Essam Raghab, who shared a photo of himself with the singer at the signing ceremony on Instagram.

Rema's latest acquisition places him among a growing list of prominent Nigerians who have invested in high end properties in Dubai.

Other Nigerians linked to luxury real estate investments in the UAE include billionaire businessman Abdulsamad Rabi'u, business mogul Femi Otedola, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and former Super Eagles striker Odion Ighalo,

who also played for Manchester United.

The acquisition adds to Rema's growing profile beyond music, as the singer continues to build his career and personal brand on the global stage.

For the 25 year old musician, whose international success has seen him perform on some of the world's biggest stages, the Dubai property marks another major addition to his growing list of assets.

Nigeria's Census Crisis: A Nation Counting Everything Except Its People

By Emmah Uhieneh

A nation that does not know its people can neither plan for them nor develop them. It merely guesses, improvises and stumbles from one policy to another, hoping that somehow the future will correct the mistakes of the present. That, unfortunately, has become Nigeria's story.

For a country often described as Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, it is both ironic and troubling that Nigeria does not know, with any credible certainty, how many people it governs. Twenty years after the last national population census in 2006, successive governments continue to formulate budgets, design social programmes, construct infrastructure, borrow trillions of naira, negotiate development partnerships and allocate national resources based largely on projections and estimates rather than verified facts.

A nation cannot accurately plan for people it has not accurately counted.

The history of census in Nigeria is almost as old as the country itself. From the colonial headcounts beginning in Lagos in the nineteenth century to the nationwide census of 1952/53, every attempt to count Nigerians has reflected not only administrative challenges but also the country's political anxieties. Independence did not improve the situation. Rather, census became even more contentious.

The 1962 census was cancelled after widespread allegations of manipulation. The 1963 exercise was officially accepted but fiercely disputed. The 1973 census suffered the same fate and was abandoned altogether. It was not until 1991 that another nationwide count was successfully conducted, followed by the 2006 census, which remains Nigeria's last official population figure despite its own criticisms and controversies.

In six decades of independence, Nigeria has managed only a handful of national censuses, while many countries conduct theirs every ten years as recommended by the United Nations. The implication is profound. For twenty years, Nigeria has effectively been governing an entirely different population from the one officially recorded.

This is not merely a statistical problem. It is a national development crisis.

Census is often misunderstood in Nigeria as simply a political exercise. Many see it only through the prism of state creation, revenue allocation, legislative representation or electoral advantage. Consequently, every census becomes a battle for numerical superiority rather than an honest effort to understand the country's demographic reality.

That perception has done enormous damage.

A modern census is far more than a headcount. It is the foundation upon which intelligent governance is built. It tells government where children are born, where the elderly live, where schools are lacking, where hospitals are overstretched, where unemployment is concentrated, where housing deficits are greatest and where future investments should be directed.

Without reliable population data, governments are essentially planning blind.

How many children should enter primary school next year?
How many teachers will be required over the next decade?
How many doctors should be trained?
How many hospital beds are needed?
Which communities require roads, water projects or electricity most urgently?

How many farmers cultivate particular crops?
Where are the country's skilled professionals concentrated?
How many widows, widowers, persons living with disabilities or vulnerable citizens require social intervention?
How many internally displaced persons require rehabilitation?

These are not questions that should be answered through assumptions. They require facts.

Indeed, every meaningful development index in the modern world is built upon credible population statistics. Gross Domestic Product per capita, poverty rates, maternal mortality, literacy, employment, housing deficits, healthcare coverage, pension planning, insurance, taxation, labour force participation, agricultural productivity, urban planning and environmental management all depend, directly or indirectly, on accurate demographic data.

Even international investors ask a simple question before committing billions of dollars: "Who exactly are the people we are investing in?"

Data has become the new currency of development.

The world's most successful economies understand this principle. They count their people meticulously because they know that every successful policy begins with understanding those it seeks to serve.

Nigeria, unfortunately, continues to rely heavily on estimates produced by international organisations while lacking comprehensive domestic data of its own.

Ironically, the same country that



Dr. Aminu Yusuf, Chairman, NPC

proudly speaks about becoming a one-trillion-dollar economy still cannot confidently state how many citizens live within its borders.

This contradiction should concern every Nigerian.

Conducting a credible census is admittedly not easy. Nigeria presents unique challenges.

Security concerns in many parts of the country make physical enumeration difficult.

Difficult terrain, poor transportation infrastructure and remote settlements complicate logistics.

Funding has remained inconsistent despite huge allocations.

Public mistrust persists, with many citizens believing census figures are manipulated for political purposes.

Religious and ethnic sentiments often interfere with objective data collection.

Rapid urbanisation has created informal settlements that are difficult to enumerate.

Migration, displacement due to conflict and climate-related movements further complicate population tracking.

These challenges are real.

Yet they are not unique to Nigeria.

Countries facing wars, insurgencies, natural disasters and massive migration have still managed to conduct credible censuses through technology, transparency and institutional integrity.

Nigeria itself had planned to deploy Geographic Information Systems (GIS), satellite mapping, digital tablets and electronic data capture for what was expected to be its first fully digital census. That vision remains suspended.

The question therefore becomes unavoidable.

Who is truly afraid of a credible census?

Is it politicians who fear losing numerical advantage?

Is it bureaucracies comfortable with governing through estimates?

Is it institutions that benefit from opaque data?

Or is it simply a manifestation of a deeper national culture that places politics above planning?

One uncomfortable truth deserves attention.

Nigeria has borrowed unprecedented sums over the years in the name of development. Administrations have come and gone, each leaving behind growing debt portfolios justified by promises of infrastructure, economic growth and improved welfare.

Yet one fundamental question remains unanswered.

Development for whom?

Without credible demographic data, how does government accurately determine infrastructure deficits?

How are social intervention programmes properly targeted?

How is borrowing linked to measurable human development outcomes?

How are future demands projected?

Could it be that the absence of reliable census data has made it easier to justify large-scale borrowing without precise accountability regarding beneficiaries?

Perhaps.

A credible census would certainly strengthen fiscal planning. It would expose areas of neglect, reveal demographic realities, improve budget credibility and make public expenditure easier to evaluate. It would not eliminate corruption or poor governance, but it would make arbitrary planning significantly more difficult.

Still, it would be simplistic to conclude that Nigeria's economic challenges exist solely because there has been no recent census.

Countries with excellent demographic data have also suffered poor leadership, corruption and economic crises.

Conversely, credible census data alone does not guarantee development.

What it guarantees is informed decision-making.

Leadership still determines whether those decisions are implemented honestly.

Data cannot replace political will.

But political will without data is often blind.

This is perhaps Nigeria's greatest dilemma.

The issue extends beyond population figures.

Do we possess comprehensive national databases identifying professional skills across the federation?

Do we know precisely where medical specialists are concentrated?

Do we have accurate inventories of agricultural capacity by local government?

Do we maintain reliable records of vulnerable households?

Can we confidently map educational deficits community by community?

Do we possess integrated national databases that connect health, education, agriculture, employment and housing?

If such systems exist, they remain fragmented, incomplete or poorly integrated.

The result is predictable.

Policies become reactive instead of strategic.

Governments respond to crises instead of preventing them.

Resources are spread thinly without measurable impact.

Development becomes uneven.

Public trust erodes.

Perhaps nothing illustrates institutional weakness more painfully than the recurring controversies surrounding voter registers, where allegations of deceased persons remaining on electoral rolls continue to generate public concern.

While population census and voter registration serve different legal purposes and are conducted by different institutions, both depend on the broader culture of maintaining accurate national records.

A country that continuously updates its demographic databases is better positioned to improve the integrity of many public registers.

Census, therefore, should never be reduced to electoral arithmetic.

Its greatest value lies not in determining political winners but in redesigning governance itself.

It should become the foundation for economic transformation, social inclusion, environmental planning, national security, disaster management, healthcare delivery, educational expansion and sustainable development.

Every local government should know its exact population profile.



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Sultan: I Am Neither for Tinubu Nor Against Him—I Am Father to All Nigerians

■ **Debunks viral 2027 endorsement claim, says throne must remain above partisan politics**

By Our Correspondent

The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, has said he is neither supporting nor opposing President Bola Tinubu's re-election bid, insisting that as a traditional ruler and spiritual leader, he remains a father to all Nigerians irrespective of their political affiliations.

Speaking through his media team, the Sultan dismissed as false reports circulating on social media claiming that he had called on Nigerians to support President Tinubu's re-election in the 2027 presidential election.

"Our simple response to the report is that it is not possible

for the Sultan, as the father of all, to make such a statement, either publicly or in any other forum," the statement said.

The statement signed by Prince Bashir Adefaka described the report as a malicious and unpatriotic attempt to drag the revered monarch into partisan politics for selfish interests.

He stressed that the institution of the Sultanate is founded on neutrality and exists to provide moral, spiritual, and fatherly guidance to all Nigerians, regardless of political persuasion.

"Let it be made clear once again that the institutions of monarchy and religion led by the Sultan are institutions of a father

figure. As such, His Eminence cannot but remain within the purview of that role by offering fatherly, royal, and spiritual blessings, as well as guidance, to Nigerian politicians who seek his counsel and blessings," the statement said.

It added that the palace remains open to every Nigerian without discrimination.

"The Sultan's doors cannot be shut against anyone who comes to him, regardless of political affiliation or persuasion. His Eminence has consistently demonstrated that he is the father of all and will continue to relate with all Nigerians without discrimination."

The statement urged

Nigerians to disregard attempts to portray the Sultan as endorsing the campaign or candidacy of any individual ahead of the 2027 general elections.

It maintained that, as a father figure, the Sultan remains committed to promoting peace, national unity, stability, and harmonious coexistence among Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious communities.

Adefaka also appealed to journalists and social media users to verify information before publishing or circulating reports capable of misleading the public or dragging respected traditional and religious institutions into partisan political controversies.

Military Wage Bill Hits Nearly N1 Trillion as Tinubu Approves Up to 80% Pay Rise for Troops

■ **Baseline junior soldiers' pay jumps to nearly N190,000 monthly as 250,000 personnel benefit**

By Abu Adamu

In what is being described as the biggest salary review for Nigeria's armed forces in years, President Bola Tinubu has approved a sweeping increase in the salaries of military personnel, with junior soldiers receiving up to an 80 per cent pay rise as part of efforts to boost troop welfare and strengthen the country's fight against insecurity.

The new salary structure, which takes effect from September 1, 2026, will benefit about 250,000 personnel across the Nigerian Armed Forces and raise the Federal Government's annual military wage bill from N660 billion to N924 billion.

Under the new package, soldiers from the rank of Private to Staff Sergeant will receive the highest adjustment of 80 per cent, while personnel from Warrant Officer to Colonel will enjoy a 50 per cent increase. Senior officers

from the rank of Brigadier-General to General will receive a 30 per cent salary increase.

The review means that a Nigerian Army Private, who currently earns a baseline monthly salary of about N104,000, will now earn approximately N187,200 from September, representing one of the most significant improvements in the earnings of junior military personnel in recent history.

The Presidency said the decision reflects the administration's commitment to improving the welfare of troops battling terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, and other security threats across the country.

Announcing the approval on Tuesday, President Tinubu said members of the armed forces deserved better remuneration in recognition of the enormous sacrifices they continue to make in defence of the nation.

"The men and women who help to keep us safe in our homes must

be supported and appreciated in the course of their duties to our nation," the President said.

"Our administration will continue to prioritise troop welfare and modernise the armed forces by providing the weapons and technological tools needed to discharge their duties.

"Our administration believes that no nation can achieve greatness without security. We therefore remain resolute in mobilising all military and law enforcement assets to eliminate security threats and protect the lives and property of all Nigerians.

"I urge our servicemen to take our gesture as a sign of our deep appreciation of the services they render to our fatherland. Together, we shall prevail over the enemies intent on destroying the fabric of our nation."

Beyond the salary increase, military personnel will continue to enjoy a range of

welfare benefits, including operational hazard allowances for combat deployments, rent-free accommodation in military barracks, subsidised utilities, and comprehensive healthcare for themselves and their immediate families.

The latest salary review comes amid sustained military operations against insurgents, bandits, and other criminal groups across several parts of the country, where troops have continued to bear the brunt of Nigeria's security challenges.

Analysts say the enhanced remuneration could improve troop morale, aid recruitment and retention, and strengthen operational effectiveness, although they note that improved welfare must also be complemented by better equipment, intelligence, logistics, and continued investment in military capability if Nigeria is to achieve lasting security.

Nigeria's Foreign Reserves Surpass Annual Target, Rise Above \$52.5bn – CBN

Nigeria's foreign reserves have exceeded the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) annual target, rising above \$52.5 billion as of July 17, 2026, the highest level recorded in 17 years. The CBN stated this on Tuesday, emphasising that the growth was driven by renewed investor confidence and sustained capital inflows.

Speaking at a CBN Fair in Gombe, the Acting Director of Corporate Communications and Investor Relations Department of the CBN, Mrs Hakama Sidi Ali, who delivered the opening remarks of the CBN Governor, Mr Olayemi Cardoso, attributed the increase to stronger foreign exchange inflows and renewed investor participation across different asset classes, saying the trend reflects growing confidence in the country's economic management and ongoing reforms.

She said the reforms are restoring stability to Nigeria's financial system. She explained that the reforms introduced under the leadership of the CBN Governor are producing measurable gains, including improved macroeconomic stability, easing inflation and increased confidence in the foreign exchange market.

According to her, headline inflation declined marginally from 15.93 per cent in May to 15.91 per cent in June 2026, while both food and core inflation also moderated during the period, supported by disciplined monetary tightening, exchange rate unification and improved market transparency.

She further stated that the Naira has continued to strengthen, with the gap between the official exchange rate and Bureau de Change rates narrowing to below two per cent, describing the development as a sign of improving stability in the foreign exchange market.

She also highlighted other reforms implemented by the apex bank over the past 34 months, including banking sector recapitalisation, the launch of the Non-Resident Bank Verification Number (NRBVN), the B-Match foreign exchange trading platform, the Nigeria Payments System Vision 2028 and the introduction of the Nigerian Overnight Financing Rate benchmark.

Reaffirming the bank's commitment, Sidi Ali said the CBN would continue to pursue monetary and price stability while implementing policies that encourage investment, strengthen financial markets and support sustainable economic growth.

Earlier, the Branch Controller of the CBN Gombe Branch, Mr Yunusa Buba Mubi, described the CBN Fair as an annual engagement platform aimed at educating the public on the bank's policies while providing stakeholders with the opportunity to ask questions and offer feedback.

He urged participants to take an active part in the sensitisation sessions to deepen public understanding of the CBN's initiatives and their impact on Nigeria's economy.



Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Amb. Shola Enikanolaye (4th R); Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Nigeria, Amb. Yousef Bin Mohammed Al-Balawi (4th L); Nigerian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Amb. Yakubu Gambo (3rd R); Chairman of Hajj Commission, Amb. Ismail Yusuf (3rd L); and other officials of the Ministry and Saudi Arabian Embassy, during a meeting on bilateral relationship between the two countries in Abuja yesterday. PHOTO: NAN

Oando Grows Half Year Revenue to N2.1trn

Oando Plc has recorded a 20 per cent increase in revenue to N2.1 trillion for the half-year ended June 30, driven by higher crude oil production, improved operational efficiency and cost optimisation.

The company disclosed this in its unaudited financial results released on Tuesday in Lagos.

It also reported an eight per cent increase in profit after tax to N68.6 billion, while gross profit surged by 331 per cent to N101 billion during the review period.

The company's average daily production rose by 16 per cent to 42,789 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd), from 36,836 boepd recorded in the corresponding period of 2025.

Production growth comprised a 19 per cent increase in crude oil output to 12,358 barrels per day, a 14 per cent rise in gas production to 28,497 boepd and a 16 per cent increase in natural gas liquids production to 1,935 boepd.

Oando attributed the improved performance to the successful drilling of new wells, restoration of 12 previously shut-in wells and improved facility uptime across Oil Mining Leases (OMLs) 60 to 63.

The company said facility uptime improved to 92 per cent in the first half of 2026 from 85 per cent in the corresponding period of 2025.

It added that production operating costs declined by 18 per cent to 16.83 dollars per barrel of oil equivalent during the review period.

The company's trading business also recorded a 2.1 per cent increase

in trading volumes to 13.15 million barrels, supported by expanded crude oil marketing and offtake programmes, as well as increased sourcing from marginal field producers.

The Group Chief Executive Officer of Oando Plc, Mr Wale Tinubu, said the company's performance reflected the successful integration of its expanded upstream portfolio.

"The first half of 2026 marks an important inflection point in Oando's journey.

"Over the past two years, our priority has been to successfully integrate one of the most significant upstream acquisitions in Africa and unlock the full value of our expanded portfolio.

"The progress achieved during the period demonstrates that we are now delivering the operational and financial outcomes expected from that transformation.

"Operational efficiency underpinned our performance as we strengthened asset integrity, improved facility reliability and reinforced security across our operating areas, resulting in average facility uptime of 92 per cent while reducing production operating costs by 18 per cent to 16.83 dollars per boe.

"Our development programme also gathered significant momentum as we successfully drilled and completed two land development wells, with another land well currently being drilled, while mobilising a second drilling rig to accelerate activity across our operated portfolio.

"In parallel, we continued an extensive

programme of rig-less well interventions designed to restore production, sustain plateau output and mitigate natural field decline.

"Together, these activities increased average production to 42,789 boepd, representing 16 per cent year-on-year growth.

"This translated into stronger financial performance, with revenue rising 20 per cent to N2.1 trillion, while the business generated N179.5 billion in operating cash, improving liquidity.

"Profit after tax also increased by eight per cent to N68.6 billion, reflecting the overall improvement in operating performance during the period."

Tinubu said Oando remained on track to complete its seven-well drilling programme across OMLs 60 to 63 and achieve average production of about 50,000 boepd in 2026.

He said the company had identified 62 development wells and 55 planned well interventions to support its medium-term production target of about 100,000 boepd.

Tinubu also disclosed plans to implement a fundraising and balance sheet restructuring programme to strengthen the company's financial position, improve liquidity and accelerate growth.

He reaffirmed Oando's full-year production guidance of between 40,000 and 50,000 boepd.

Tinubu said the company would continue to advance its Rights Issue, a 1.5-billion-dollar multi-instrument capital-raising programme, alongside the expansion of its clean energy initiatives.

Court Dismisses NDC's Suit Seeking to Void Sections of Electoral Act

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday Dismisses NDC's Suit Seeking to Void Sections of Electoral Act

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday dismissed a suit filed by the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), seeking an order striking down Sections 138 and 77(5) of the new Electoral Act, 2026.

Delivering judgment, Justice Mohammed Umar held that the suit by the NDC lacked merit.

The NDC, in the suit, argued that the two sections, recently passed by the National Assembly and assented to by President Bola Tinubu, are inconsistent with the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

The NDC, which was registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Feb. 5, had filed the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/635/2026.

The party, in the originating summons,

sued the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Clerk of the National Assembly (NASS) as 1st and 2nd defendants.

It also joined the Senate President and Chairman of the National Assembly, Sen. Godswill Akpabio, and INEC.

Vicent Otaokpukpu, who filed the suit on March 27, on the party's behalf, prayed the court to grant their reliefs.

Delivering the judgment, Justice Umar held that the disputed provisions of the Electoral Act complement, rather than conflict with, the 1999 Constitution.

The judge also upheld the preliminary objections challenging the competence of the suit.

He held that the plaintiff was merely inviting the court to interpret constitutional and statutory provisions.

"The plaintiff is invoking the interpretative jurisdiction of this honourable court in respect

of the provisions of the Electoral Act 2026 on the one hand and the 1999 Constitution on the other hand."

He said that the mere attachment of INEC's election timetable to the originating summons did not transform the case into a pre-election matter.

"The fact that the defendant's timetable is attached cannot make the case within the contemplation of Section 285" he said.

The judge added that there was no deposition in the affidavit that raised the questions as to the election timetable.

On the objection raised by the clerk of the National Assembly, Justice Umar held that the plaintiff failed to comply with the statutory requirement of serving a pre-action notice before commencing proceedings.

He ruled that the implication of non-service of a pre-action notice on the 2nd defendant "makes this suit incompetent

against the 2nd defendant."

He subsequently struck out the action against the clerk of the National Assembly.

On the substantive issue, the judge rejected the NDC's argument that Section 138 of the Electoral Act was inconsistent with constitutional provisions governing qualification and disqualification for elective offices.

Justice Umar held that the constitution prescribes the qualifications and disqualifications for elective offices, while the Electoral Act merely provides the procedure and timeline for ventilating disputes arising from party primaries.

"Any aggrieved party who intends to challenge any candidate that emerged at the primary election of a political party on grounds of disqualification must do so at the pre-election level," he said.

He further held that when read together

with other provisions of the Electoral Act, Section 138 was not inconsistent with the Constitution.

"The provision of Section 138 of the Electoral Act 2026 complements the provision of the Constitution, but is not in conflict with it.

"The contention of the plaintiff that Section 138 is inconsistent with the Constitution is of no merit," he ruled.

Justice Umar also declined to invalidate Section 77(5) of the Electoral Act, holding that the issue had already been determined by the Court of Appeal.

According to him, the appellate court has made a pronouncement on the provisions in an earlier decision, stressing that the implication was that "courts, generally, are bound by precedence."

The NDC had sought an order striking down the provisions of Section 138 for being inconsistent with the compulsory provisions of Sections 65 (2) (a), 106 (1) (c), 131 (1) (d), 177 (1) (d) and 66 (1) (i), 107 (1) (i), 137 (1) (j) and 182 (1) (j) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

It sought an order directing the defendants to amend and re-enact a new provision of the Electoral Act, 2026, to restore "qualification" as a ground of challenging the return of any candidate into the seats of the House of Representatives, Senate, House of Assembly, president and governor.

The party said this is in line with the provisions of Sections 65 (2) (a), 106 (1) (c), 131 (1) (d), 177 (1) (d) and 66 (1) (i), 107 (1) (i), 137 (1) (j) and 182 (1) (j) of the constitution.

The party equally sought an order striking down Section 77 (5) of the Electoral Act, 2026, for being inconsistent with the provisions of Sections 40 and 65 (2) (b), 106 (1) (d), 231 (1) (c) and 177 (1) (c) of the 1999 Constitution, among others.

In the affidavit in support of the suit, Ezechi Adaobi, a litigation secretary in the law firm of V-C Otaokpukpu & Associates, said NDC, as a stakeholder in the Nigerian electoral process, will, in future elections, field candidates for elections, including the

Adaobi said from experience, members who are dissatisfied with the conduct of primaries in their respective parties usually seek refuge in other parties to enable them to participate in the general elections."

Adaobi, therefore, urged the court to grant their reliefs in the interest of justice.

But INEC, in its counter-affidavit filed on April 27 by Chief Alex Izinyon, SAN, disagreed with the NDC.

The commission argued that the constitutional and statutory roles of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd defendants are provided by the constitution and the relevant enabling statutes, and not as characterised by the plaintiff.

INEC submitted that the Electoral Act, 2026, was validly passed by the National Assembly on Feb. 18 and duly assented to by President Bola Tinubu.

It said that the National Assembly passed the Electoral Act, 2026, in accordance with the 1999 Constitution.

The commission stated that President Tinubu assented to the Electoral Act, 2026 and that the same is now law within the federation.

It stated that the provisions of Section 77 of the Electoral Act, 2026 does not infringe upon the constitutional right of any person to form, participate in, or belong to any political party.

It stated that the period allotted for the conduct of party primaries, being from April 23 to May 30 (inclusive of resolution of disputes arising therefrom), is a period of 38 clear days in strict compliance with the Electoral Act, 2026 and the constitutional framework.

INEC, therefore, averred that by its timetable, political parties have a window of not less than the period prescribed by the timetable for the conduct of party primaries.

It prayed the court to dismiss the suit in its entirety.



L-R: Deputy Vice Chancellor (Innovation and Research), Delta State University, Prof. Douglass Omotor, Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the Governor of Ekiti State on Student Affairs, Ms Modupe Adetiba, Member, House of Representatives, Hon. Mohammed Bello El-Rufai, and Executive Lead, Gender Mobile Initiative, Omowumi Ogunrotimi, during the national unveiling of the LEAD Fellowship at the National Assembly, yesterday in Abuja. L-R: Deputy Vice Chancellor (Innovation and Research), Delta State University, Prof. Douglass Omotor, Senior

2027 Elections: Anglican Primate Cautions Youths Against Violence

The Primate of All Nigeria (Anglican Communion), Most Rev. Henry Ndukuba, has urged Nigerian youths to resist being used as political thugs by self-serving politicians.

Speaking with newsmen on the sidelines of the 15th Anglican Chancellors, Registrars, and Legal Officers Conference (ACRLOC) on Tuesday in Abuja, Ndukuba said politicians were poverty and hunger for ambition.

He said unscrupulous politicians were using hardship to buy votes and recruit vulnerable youths for violence.

He observed that while many politicians send their own biological children to study abroad, they give drugs and money to underprivileged youths to perpetrate violence during

elections.

"We want to plead with our politicians that this is not a do-or-die affair.

"Let us play politics with a human face and campaign on issues, so that when elected, citizens will know what to hold them responsible for," Ndukuba said.

He said that poverty made people vulnerable to manipulation, but insisted that young citizens should resist being cheap tools in the hands of desperate politicians.

"None of these politicians sends their own children to carry out violence. Their children are in London, Europe and America.

"What they will not send their own children to do, they are sending our young people to do. Our youths

must shun every thuggery and act of violence," the cleric added.

Ndukuba emphasised that politics impacts every stratum of society, including transport workers, commercial tricycle operators, market women, and religious bodies.

He urged all Nigerians, particularly Christians, to register with political parties, participate in internal party democracy, and demand accountability from electoral and security agencies.

The Primate expressed optimism that state policing and active citizen engagement would make the upcoming election cycles pivotal in shaping a better future for Nigeria.

During his keynote, Ndukuba provided updates on the Global Anglican Communion (GAC)

following the historic G26 conference held in Abuja.

He said the Global Anglican Council marks a constitutional evolution shifting orthodox Anglicanism from geographical dependencies toward a confessional, Scripture-centred global covenant.

Earlier, the Registrar of the Church, Mrs Kehinde Ajoni, said the conference was designed to realign church administration with uncompromising moral integrity.

Ajoni charged legal officers across all dioceses to act as the lone voice of moral conscience during internal dispute resolutions.

The conference, themed: "As For Me and My Household, We Will Serve the Lord", runs from Aug. 3 to Aug. 6.



Tinubu Hails Team Nigeria's Seventh-place Finish, 24-medal Haul at Commonwealth Games 2026

President Bola Tinubu has congratulated Team Nigeria on its impressive performance at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland.

The Nigeria delegation won 24 medals - 10 gold, seven silver and seven bronze medals, finishing seventh on the final medals table, and emerging as the highest-ranked African nation at the games.

In a statement issued by the Presidential Spokesperson, Mr Bayo Onanuga, on Tuesday, Tinubu also praised the athletes for demonstrating resilience, determination, discipline and excellence throughout the competition.

The president noted that the

country's haul of 24 medals (10 gold, seven silver and seven bronze) reflected the athletes' hard work and perseverance.

He said the experience gained by the athletes would provide a strong foundation for greater achievements in future international competitions.

He added that their exploits would inspire many young Nigerians to embrace the values of commitment, discipline and national service.

The president also lauded the leadership of the Nigeria Olympic Committee and the National Sports Commission for their commitment to sports development.

He commended the institutions

for providing support that enabled Nigerian athletes to excel.

He said, "Whether on the podium or through courageous performances in the competition, every member of Team Nigeria represented our nation with honour, dignity, and pride.

"On behalf of the Government and the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I express profound appreciation to our athletes, coaches, technical officials, medical personnel, administrators, and all those whose dedication and sacrifice made Nigeria's participation at the games possible."

Tinubu urged the athletes to remain focused and continue striving for excellence in future competitions.

Madugu to Replace Echegini with Payne in Super Falcons' Final WAFCON Group Match Against Egypt

Super Falcons coach, Justin Madugu, has suggested that Toni Payne could replace suspended midfielder Jennifer Echegini for Nigeria's Women's Africa Cup of Nations, WAFCON, final Group C clash against Egypt on Wednesday.

Nigeria will be without Echegini, who has accumulated two yellow cards, and defender Oluwatosin Demehin, who received a red card against Zambia.

Speaking to reporters at his pre-match press conference, Madugu said of the possibility of Payne replacing Echegini,

"All the players in the team are good enough; they all have different qualities and have their strengths and weaknesses.

"She [Toni Payne] is good to go, she has an opportunity, and hopefully she will also be part of the team, considering the fact that we have players that would

not be on the team tomorrow."

A win for Nigeria against Egypt will boost their chances of progressing to the quarter-final stage.

"He promised to hand over the Lagos National Stadium to Ambode for renovation, but what happened?" Gara asked.

He further alleged that Dalung claimed a forged letter from the Presidency prevented the project from proceeding, challenging the former minister to produce the document and identify its author.

"He should bring out the letter and find out who wrote it," Gara said.

Gara admonished government agencies to properly scrutinise allegations involving public officials.

"I blame the government of the day. I blame the ICPC. I blame the EFCC. I blame the Nigerian Police and even the DSS," he said.



School Cricket, Grassroots Programmes Producing Next Generation of Talents – Akpata



The President, Nigeria Cricket Federation (NCF), Uyi Akpata, says school competitions and grassroots development programmes are playing a major role in producing the next generation of cricket talents in the country.

Akpata disclosed this in an interview on Tuesday in Lagos.

According to him, the federation has made schools the foundation of its development plan because they provide the best platform to discover young players.

He said introducing cricket to children at an early age had helped to increase participation and improve the quality of players coming through the system.

The NCF president further noted that the federation had continued to work with schools nationwide, through various competitions and development programmes, to ensure more children had access to the sport.

"Our focus has always been on the grassroots because that is where the future of Nigerian cricket lies.

"When children are introduced to cricket in schools, they learn the game early and develop their skills over time.

"The school system also allows us to identify talented players and guide them through the right pathway," he said.

Akpata said school competitions had become an important avenue for discovering gifted players who later progressed to state

and national teams.

He noted that many players currently representing Nigeria first played cricket in school competitions organised or supported by the federation.

According to him, the federation has continued to partner with state associations, schools, teachers and other stakeholders to expand the reach of the game.

Akpata added that training teachers and coaches was also important because they helped young players develop the right skills and understanding of the game.

"We cannot build cricket without qualified coaches and teachers.

"They are the ones who work with these children every day and help them improve.

"That is why we continue to organise coaching and training programmes across the country," he said.

The NCF president noted that the federation was also committed to providing playing equipment and creating more opportunities for young cricketers to compete regularly.

He added that regular competitions helped players gain confidence, improve their performance and prepare for higher levels of the game.

Akpata said support from parents, schools, government and the private sector remained important for the continued growth of cricket in the country.

WAMUFAT/NSSF Annual Sports Fiesta Begins in Ogun

The second edition of the WAMUFAT/Nigeria School Sport Federation (NSSF) Annual Sports Fiesta began on Tuesday at the Agrotterra Sports Complex in Jega Orile, Ogun.

The five-day camp, which will end on Aug. 8, has attracted more than 300 students aged between six and 16 from the South-West.

It is organised by WAMUFAT Youth Sports Development in partnership with the NSSF, with support from the management of the Agrotterra Sports Complex.

Declaring the camp open, the traditional ruler of Owu Kingdom, His Royal Highness, Saka Matemilola, urged the participants to make the best use of the opportunity to develop their talents and improve their sporting skills.

He also called on governments at all levels to give greater attention to school sports, describing it as the foundation of every successful sporting nation.

Founder of WAMUFAT, Fatimo Mohamed, said the decision to sustain the initiative after its successful maiden edition in 2025 was driven by her passion for giving back to society and creating opportunities for young people.

"I am excited to return and give back to the community that shaped me. This camp has shown that we can produce educated champions, and we believe it is an initiative that will continue for many years.

"I sincerely appreciate everyone involved because this is not a one-person effort. Many people have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this vision a reality," she said.

The President of the NSSF, Olabisi Joseph, described the partnership with

WAMUFAT as a major boost for school sports in Nigeria.

She urged more well-meaning individuals and organisations to support grassroots sports development through similar initiatives.

"I am delighted that this camp has returned for its second edition. I commend Fatimo Mohamed and her team for their commitment to sustaining this initiative.

"I am confident this year's edition will build on the success of the maiden event. We believe the students will benefit greatly from the combination of sports and education, which is essential to developing the total child.

"At NSSF, we will continue to partner with organisations and individuals committed to advancing school sports," Joseph said.

Chairman of Agrotterra Resort,

Abdulrasheed Afonja, reaffirmed the facility's commitment to supporting programmes that promote sports and education.

"I look forward to hosting more editions of this camp because supporting initiatives like this was one of the key objectives behind establishing this facility.

"I hope it continues to grow and remain sustainable so that we can discover and nurture talents for Ogun and Nigeria as a whole," he said.

The organisers said the camp would expose participants to quality coaching while combining sports activities with educational and character-building programmes.

The participants will receive free coaching in athletics, football, chess, netball, golf, ayo and tennis, as well as mentorship and leadership development sessions.



Arsenal in Talks to Sign Newcastle's Guimaraes

Arsenal are in direct talks with Newcastle United to sign captain Bruno Guimaraes.

The clubs are understood to be in formal discussions regarding the midfielder, with previous discussions being done through intermediaries.

Guimaraes, 28, wants to join the Premier League champions.

Whether a deal will be agreed remains to be seen, but those involved feel the transfer is moving towards a resolution.

It was previously reported that Arsenal would need to increase a £70m bid they made through intermediaries last month.

One source at Newcastle has since said the club have rejected an offer from Arsenal.

Although Arsenal have failed with an unspecified offer - neither side has disclosed the amount - it is expected they will return with an improved bid.

Guimaraes has travelled to Spain for Newcastle's pre-season training camp in La Manga, as planned, following his post-World Cup break.

The Brazil midfielder has been a priority target for Arsenal as the club look to further strengthen after winning the Premier League last season.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta would not be drawn directly on Guimaraes over the weekend, but said the club were "very active" and "very ambitious in what we want to do".

"We need to increase the competition internally," he added.



Wenger



Guimaraes

Itauma vs Hrgovic Fight Upgraded to IBF World-title Bout

British heavyweight Moses Itauma's fight against Filip Hrgovic on 29 August will be for the vacant IBF title.

Itauma, 21, has been widely tipped as the next star of heavyweight boxing, with 12 knockouts in 14 professional victories.

Promoter Frank Warren told BBC Sport the IBF belt, vacated by Oleksandr Usyk in June, will be on the line at London's O2 Arena.

"A lot of people have high expectations of him as I have, by the way," Queensberry Promotions' Warren said.

"We signed him when he was 16. He was an amateur. We sponsored him and he turned professional with us. And he's been amazing and sort of taken the world by storm.

"This is a big moment for him. But I'm confident he can do it."

Itauma would become the youngest heavyweight champion since Mike Tyson if he beats Hrgovic.

He had initially been ordered to enter negotiations with Cuban Frank Sanchez for the vacant title and was given a deadline of 29 July.

However, Sanchez has agreed to step aside and will instead face the winner of the bout.

"We paid [Sanchez] some money. We said whoever wins the fight, you're not losing out and you'll get the opportunity to fight for the title against the winner," Warren added.

Itauma impressed in a fifth-round stoppage of American Jermaine Franklin in Manchester in March and stopped Briton Dillian Whyte in one round in August 2025.

Hrgovic, a 2016 Olympic bronze medallist, has won 20 professional fights. The 34-year-old stopped Briton Dave Allen in the third round in May.

"We know Hrgovic is going to come and give 100%, and 100% of him is hard work for anyone," Warren said.



Itauma

Hrgovic

FIFA Private Money Plan Had to Be Scrapped - Wenger

FIFA's Chief of Global Football Development, Arsene Wenger, has said that scrapping the plan to have private investment in FIFA competitions was "absolutely necessary and beyond question".

FIFA president Gianni Infantino planned to create a commercial subsidiary to run its main events, including its World Cups, with external investors able to buy stakes.

Infantino had offered FIFA's 211 member associations \$40m (£30m) each if they backed the proposal.

But after days of criticism - including UEFA's 55 nations threatening to boycott all FIFA tournaments - Infantino was forced to withdraw the plan.

Wenger has been in a role which encompasses data

analysis of the game, FIFA's online training and youth competitions since 2019.

The former Arsenal boss previously supported Infantino's proposal to play the men's World Cup every two years.

A week after Infantino's investment plan was first released, the Frenchman issued a statement through FIFA in which he demanded "transparency and integrity" from world football's governing body.

"The recent events at FIFA deserve some clarity from my side," Wenger's statement read.

"I was not involved in this strategic plan and first became aware of the project through media reports.

"The decision to withdraw the project was absolutely

necessary and beyond question, because I firmly believe in an independent FIFA that serves our game with commitment, transparency, and integrity."

Wenger is one of 18 FIFA officials named in a document preservation letter UEFA sent to FIFA, threatening legal action.

Carlos Cordeiro, Infantino's senior adviser on global strategy and governance, is the only FIFA official to resign over the scandal, saying the proposal was "a bad deal for football's future".

FIFA secretary general Mattias Grafstrom joined the criticism of the plan, writing in an internal memo to staff that the last week had been "difficult to comprehend and accept".

Williams Sisters Get Wildcard to Play Cincinnati Open Doubles

Serena and Venus Williams have been given a wildcard entry for the women's doubles at the Cincinnati Open.

The sisters were scheduled to play together at Wimbledon in July until Serena, 44, picked up a knee injury in her singles comeback loss to Australia's Maya Joint.

The WTA 1000 event, which runs from 11-23 August in Ohio, will be the first time the siblings have played doubles together since the 2022 US Open.

It could also pave the way for Serena to return to play in the US Open this year.

Her third-round loss at New York's Flushing Meadows four years ago had been her last appearance at a Grand Slam until she featured at the All England Club this summer.



She is currently one short of the all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles, jointly held by Margaret Court and Novak Djokovic.

Together, Venus and Serena

have won 14 major titles and three Olympic gold medals in doubles.

Venus, 46, has also received a wildcard into the singles draw of the tournament in Cincinnati.



From left: Former Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Mrs Sarah Sosan; Lagos State APC Deputy Governorship candidate for the 2027 election, Princess Damilola Sonayon-James; Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State; Lagos State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Mrs Bolaji Dada; one of the beneficiaries, Mr Gbadamosi Yusuf, and Chairman, House Committee on Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Lagos State House of Assembly, Mrs Omolara Oyekan-Olunmegbon, during the 2026 Micro Enterprise Support Initiative (MESI) programme organised by the Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation in Lagos on Tuesday. Photo: NAN

Oborevworì Celebrates Ibori at 68, Praises His Leadership Qualities, Vision, Commitment to Service

Delta State Governor Sheriff Oborevworì has congratulated former governor of the state, Chief James Ibori, on his 68th birthday, describing him as a dynamic leader whose contributions remain significant. In a congratulatory message issued

Tuesday in Asaba by his Chief Press Secretary, Festus Ahon, the governor praised Ibori's leadership between 1999 and 2007, noting his vision, resilience and commitment to service. Oborevworì described the former governor as a great motivator and

inspirational leader who laid the foundations for the state's development, adding that his impact had continued to be appreciated across the state. "On behalf of the government and people of Delta, I congratulate our dynamic and inspirational leader, Chief

James Ibori, the former Governor of Delta, on his 68th birth anniversary," he said. He prayed for God's continued blessings, good health and long life as the former governor celebrates his birthday on Tuesday, Aug. 4.

The governor extended warm wishes to Ibori as he marked the milestone celebration with family and associates. "May your special day be filled with joy and pleasant memories. Congratulations," Oborevworì said.

Wike Backs Tinubu, Says Only Bold Leaders Can Rescue Nigeria

Dismisses Onaiyekan's Criticism as Catholic Laity Rallies Behind Cardinal

By Our Correspondent

Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, Nyesom Wike, on Tuesday mounted a robust defence of President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms, declaring that the President is the only Nigerian leader with the political courage to confront the country's deep-rooted economic challenges, even as he dismissed Cardinal John Onaiyekan's recent criticism of the administration as politically motivated. But the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria (CLCN) swiftly pushed back, insisting that the former Catholic Archbishop of Abuja spoke not out of partisanship but from a moral obligation to hold leaders accountable and speak for suffering Nigerians. Addressing journalists during his monthly media briefing in Abuja, Wike praised Tinubu for taking difficult decisions that previous administrations had avoided, particularly the removal of fuel subsidy, which he said has significantly improved the finances of state governments. "Asiwaju is the only person we have now. He may not have solved every problem, but he has shown the courage to take decisions others avoided. He deserves credit for that," Wike said. According to him, Nigerians should not expect decades of economic decline to be reversed overnight. "You cannot expect problems that accumulated

over 15 years to be resolved in one year. Recovery is gradual, but it will happen," he stated. The former Rivers State governor argued that although subsidy removal initially imposed hardship on Nigerians, it has strengthened public finances by increasing federal allocations to states. "The subsidy consumed over N3 trillion. Today, states receive more money, pensioners are being paid, and governors no longer have to queue before banks just to pay salaries," he said. Wike maintained that genuine leadership is measured by the willingness to make unpopular but necessary decisions. "Everyone agreed the subsidy was a scam, but no previous president had the political will to remove it. President Tinubu took that responsibility. No decision is perfect, but leadership is about making tough choices," he added. The minister also weighed in on the controversy surrounding Cardinal John Onaiyekan's remarks during last week's meeting between President Tinubu and members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) at the Presidential Villa. The respected cleric had reportedly warned that the Tinubu administration appeared determined to secure victory in the 2027 general election "by all means." Reacting, Wike accused the Cardinal of approaching national issues from a partisan standpoint, arguing that repeated criticism from individuals perceived to have taken political

positions diminishes the credibility of their interventions. "While I do not oppose comments from religious leaders and elder statesmen who criticise the government, when a particular section consistently voices such criticisms, the government must proceed with caution," Wike said. "If you are a religious leader and it is perceived that you are taking a side—as is very clear in the case of Cardinal John Onaiyekan—it becomes difficult for people to regard those comments as constructive. I am aware of Cardinal Onaiyekan's position; it is not hidden." He added that criticism alone should not define anyone's contribution to national development. "You cannot make only criticism of an administration the centrepiece of your contribution to governance," he said. However, the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria rejected Wike's characterisation of the Cardinal's intervention, insisting that Onaiyekan spoke purely out of patriotism and pastoral concern. In a statement jointly signed by its National President, Ambrose Obioha, and Secretary-General, Francis Olayinka Ojo, the council described the Cardinal as "a man of peace, dialogue, and integrity" whose comments were intended to awaken the nation's conscience rather than embarrass the government. "We know Cardinal Onaiyekan to be a man of peace, dialogue, and integrity. His intervention was not to embarrass the government, but to call the

nation to conscience," the council said. According to the Catholic body, disagreement between the Church and government over national issues should not be interpreted as hostility. "A disagreement over facts, as the Presidency rightly noted, should not be read as arrogance. Neither should a pastoral reflection be read as a breach of trust." The council stressed that the Catholic Church has both a moral and constitutional responsibility to speak out on issues affecting the welfare of Nigerians. "The Church has a duty, rooted in the Gospel and Catholic social teaching, to speak truth to power, defend the vulnerable, and hold leaders accountable," it stated. It further argued that discussions on matters relating to the economy, insecurity and justice cannot remain permanently behind closed doors because Nigerians have a right to know the direction of national leadership. "Cardinal Onaiyekan did not reveal secrets. He shared the moral concerns of the Church and the response of government, which is in the public interest." The Laity Council urged both the Presidency and the Catholic Church to sustain constructive engagement in the interest of national unity, while expressing solidarity with Cardinal Onaiyekan and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. "Nigeria needs moral voices now more than ever," the council added.

Alausa Orders Dismissal of Students Found Guilty of Kidnapping, Related Crimes

The Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, has directed vice chancellors, rectors and provosts to dismiss any student found culpable, after due investigation, of kidnapping or related crimes.

Alausa gave the order in Abuja during a meeting with the Governing Council and Management of the Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State.

He said the directive was part of renewed efforts to strengthen security across tertiary institutions in the country.

He also instructed heads of tertiary institutions to strengthen internal intelligence mechanisms and deepen collaboration with the Department of State Services (DSS) and other security agencies to prevent criminal activities on campuses.

Alausa said that although Nigerian universities, polytechnics and colleges of education remained largely safe, recent isolated incidents involving students outside campuses demanded stronger preventive measures and improved intelligence gathering.

According to him, every institution has a responsibility to ensure students remain safe within and outside campuses through effective security partnerships, vigilance and prompt responses to emerging threats.

He warned institutions against condoning criminality, saying, "If you tolerate bad behaviour for too long, it becomes a culture."

Alausa stressed that discipline remained essential to preserving the integrity of tertiary education.

"Any student found culpable, after due investigation, of planning or participating in the kidnapping of fellow students has no place in our tertiary institutions. Such individuals must be dismissed," he declared.

Alausa disclosed that he recently held strategic discussions with the Minister of Defence, Gen. Christopher Musa (Rtd.), to strengthen nationwide implementation of the Safe Schools Initiative, noting the government remained committed to learner

protection.

"We have a collective responsibility to protect every Nigerian child, from primary school to tertiary education.

"While our campuses remain safe, we must continue to strengthen intelligence gathering and work closely with our security agencies to ensure that students are protected both within and outside our institutions," he said.

He said the collaboration was designed to improve protection for learners, enhance intelligence sharing and reinforce security architecture across educational institutions throughout the country.

The minister commended President Bola Tinubu for providing political support, strategic leadership and resources toward improving national security while implementing reforms across the education sector.

He reaffirmed the Federal Government's position that no public institution should negotiate with kidnappers or pay ransom, saying such actions only embolden criminality and undermine security efforts.

Alausa urged governing councils and institutional managements to establish effective intelligence structures capable of detecting threats early while maintaining constant engagement with security agencies in their respective states.

He announced that TETFund's 2027 intervention would support perimeter fencing and other security infrastructure, urging eligible institutions to submit proposals promptly for consideration.

Alausa also reaffirmed the government's commitment to expanding the Energising Education

Programme in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Power to improve electricity supply in tertiary institutions.

He explained that institutions requiring additional electricity capacity could benefit from expanded solar generation systems and improved battery storage under the ongoing programme.

Alausa advised the university to submit formal requests under relevant intervention programmes, assuring the institution that deserving projects would receive due consideration.

He reiterated the federal government's commitment to investing in safer schools, stronger institutions and modern infrastructure capable of supporting globally competitive teaching, research and innovation.

He assured Nigerians

that the ministry would continue to collaborate with security agencies and stakeholders to safeguard campuses nationwide.

Earlier, the Pro-Chancellor of the Federal University of Lafia, Dr Adebimpe Adebajo, appreciated the federal government for sustained support toward the institution's growth and development.

Adebajo identified student accommodation shortages, electricity challenges at the university's second campus and insecurity as major issues requiring urgent government intervention.

She disclosed that some students were suspected of involvement in off-campus kidnapping activities, adding that available information from recent incidents pointed towards such disturbing developments.



From left: Chairman, Anambra State House Committee on Power/representative of the Speaker, Anambra State House of Assembly, Hon. Golden Iloh; Founder/Chief Executive Officer of Juhel Nigeria Limited, Dr Ifeanyi Okoye; President, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Otunba Francis Meshioye; Okebo II of Umueri, His Royal Majesty (HRM) Igwe Benneth Izuchukwu-Emeka; Managing Director, Manufacturing Power Development Ltd., Mba Oweh; Chairman, MAN Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi Zone, Lady Ada Chukwudozie, and Commissioner for Information, Anambra State, Dr Law Mefor, during the inauguration of MAN South East Industrial Energy Solutions and Investment Symposium in Awka, Anambra State, on Tuesday. Photo: NAN

Sokoto Under Fire as Bandits Wage Six-Hour War on Northwest Community—18 Fleeing Villagers Drown; 37 Abducted, Homes Razed

At least 25 residents drowned while attempting to escape a deadly six-hour bandit assault on communities in Sabon Birni Local Government Area of Sokoto State, as heavily armed attackers killed villagers, abducted dozens—mostly women and children—and forced thousands to flee their homes in one of the worst attacks to hit the area in recent months.

The coordinated attack, which began around p.m. and lasted until about 2 a.m., saw the gunmen move from house to house, setting homes ablaze, looting property and livestock, and hunting down residents who had taken refuge in nearby farms and bushes.

According to a Daily Trust report, residents said the attackers disclosed during telephone conversations with relatives that they had abducted 37 people, many of them women and children.

A resident who fled the

community said the bandits answered the mobile phones of kidnapped victims and openly admitted carrying out the mass abduction.

"When we called our relatives, the bandits answered the phones and told us they were the ones who abducted them. They said they had taken 37 people," he said.

He explained that many villagers had stopped sleeping in their homes because of repeated attacks and instead spent nights in surrounding farms, but the gunmen combed through the farmlands, rounded them up, and took them away.

"Most of those abducted were women and children. I personally saw three infants placed on the ground by the bandits while they led their mothers away," he said.

Residents also accused security agencies of failing to respond despite receiving early warnings of the invasion.

"We informed them in good time, but nobody came to rescue us before the bandits completed their operation," another resident lamented.

A local vigilante member said the attackers initially forced villagers to identify wealthy households and locations where livestock were kept before unleashing hours of terror.

He said efforts to mobilise security personnel proved unsuccessful because the operatives lacked adequate equipment to confront the attackers.

"When the gunfire intensified, we had no option but to hide," he said, adding that security forces urgently require Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) to effectively combat bandits operating across the difficult terrain.

The assault also left homes in ruins after the bandits set fire to houses belonging to Lawwali Ta'u Mai Chaji and Hassan Hasken

Halara, a vigilante member whose family members could not immediately be accounted for.

Residents said only a handful of people now remain in the community, with more than 100 vehicles transporting displaced families to safer locations since the attack.

"From yesterday until today, nobody has eaten because of the trauma and panic caused by the attack," one resident said.

Those confirmed killed include Kabiru Mallam Tanimu, Ayuba Mallam Hashim and Yakubu Mu'azu, while several others remain missing.

The violence also emptied more than a dozen neighbouring communities, including Borai, Tsululu, Garin Tudu, Bukka Hamsin, Turkawa, Rumbukawa, Dutsin Na Umma, Zangon Mu'azu, Arawa, Kuru, Zangon Mallam, Mai Hurde, Zugun, Gidan Na Birni, Mashaya and Marina, as frightened residents

fled in search of safety.

The displaced villagers appealed to the Federal Government and the Sokoto State Government to deploy more troops and armoured vehicles to enable security forces to reclaim the area from bandits.

Chairman of Sabon Birni Local Government Area, Ayuba Hashimu, confirmed the attack but said he was still verifying the casualty figures.

The Sokoto State Police Command also confirmed the assault, with its spokesman, DSP Ahmad Rufai, saying additional security personnel had been deployed to restore order and prevent further attacks.

The latest violence comes barely days after bandits attacked the Tsamaye community in the same local government area, killing eight residents, including three worshippers inside a mosque, underscoring the worsening security crisis across Sokoto's eastern corridor.



Kaduna State Governor, Senator Uba Sani, with trained Armed Forest Guards during their passing-out parade at the DSS Development Centre, Afaka, Kaduna. PHOTO: GOVERNMENT HOUSE, KADUNA

Kaduna Police Nab 16 Suspected Kidnappers, Recover 10 Firearms, 410 Cattles

The Police Command in Kaduna State says it arrested 16 suspected kidnappers and recovered 10 firearms of different calibres in operations conducted in the state.

The Commissioner of Police, Rabiu Muhammad, disclosed this on Tuesday at a press briefing in Kaduna, saying the achievements were recorded within the two weeks.

Muhammad said the command also arrested three suspected gunrunners and six other suspects in possession of 170 counterfeit U.S. dollar notes, while 190 solar inverters worth about N69 million were recovered.

According to him, other items recovered include one stolen vehicle, 83 parcels of hard drugs, 32 stolen mobile phones, two plasma television sets, 410 cattle and other exhibits.

He said on July 21, police arrested Aisha Barau, 20, of Ramin Kura Village, after she was allegedly found attempting to exchange suspected counterfeit U.S. dollar notes for naira.

The CP said preliminary investigation led

to the arrest of Abdullahi Muhammad, 55, and Danbala Jibrin, 57, both of Ramin Kura Village, who were allegedly linked to the counterfeit currency syndicate.

He added that further investigation led to the arrest of other members of the syndicate, who would be prosecuted in accordance with the law.

Muhammad said that on July 25, operatives of the Anti-Kidnapping Unit arrested three suspected gunrunners in Jos, Plateau State, following credible intelligence on the activities of an arms-trafficking syndicate.

He identified the suspects as Luka Samuel, 38; John Paul, 37; and Musa Elisha, 28, adding that two locally fabricated pistols were recovered from them.

According to him, the suspects allegedly confessed to supplying arms and ammunition to bandits and were assisting the police with information to identify other members of the syndicate.

The CP also said that on July 24, a combined team of operatives from Anchau Division and Yan Sa Kai arrested Abdullahi

Mohammed, alias "Aala", 34, over alleged involvement in several kidnapping incidents.

He said one AK-47 rifle and five rounds of live ammunition were recovered from the suspect, who allegedly confessed to masterminding kidnappings in Kuzuntu Village, Ikara Local Government Area, and other parts of Kano State.

Muhammad said the command also recovered a Toyota Sienna allegedly stolen from a Juma'at Mosque in Ungwan Rimi, Kaduna, and arrested two suspects linked to the theft and fabrication of duplicate vehicle keys.

He said 80 cattle and 10 sheep allegedly rustled from Damanko Village, Zaria Local Government Area, were also recovered after police operatives engaged the fleeing attackers in a gun duel.

The CP said two owners of the livestock sustained gunshot injuries during the attack and were receiving treatment at a medical facility.

He further disclosed that police recovered 190 solar inverters valued at about N69

million and 10 lithium batteries worth approximately N9 million from a store in Zaria.

According to him, preliminary investigation indicated that the items were suspected to have been stolen from a container while in transit to Zaria.

Muhammad said the command also arrested two suspected suppliers of hard drugs to bandits operating around Kasuwar Magani Town and recovered a large quantity of suspected illicit drugs.

The commissioner commended the operatives for their gallantry and professionalism, assuring residents of the command's commitment to dismantling criminal networks and ensuring the safety of the state.

He urged members of the public to continue providing timely and credible information to the police, stressing that security agencies were working jointly with the military, Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), vigilante groups and other stakeholders to make Kaduna safer.

Gunmen Ambush Joint Security Patrol in Plateau, Kill Two Operatives

Gunmen have reportedly ambushed a joint security patrol along the Ganawuri -Sabon Gida road in Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau State, killing two security operatives and carting away their service rifles.

Security sources said that the incident occurred in the early hours of Tuesday when four operatives drawn from two

security locations mounted a roadblock along the route.

The sources said the team was returning to their respective duty posts after the operation when two of the personnel failed to return, prompting an immediate search by their colleagues.

According to the sources, the bodies of the two operatives were later recovered at

the scene of the attack, while their service rifles were found to be missing. The motorcycle used by the operatives was, however, recovered.

Following the incident, security personnel launched cordon-and-search operations in surrounding communities as part of efforts to track down the attackers and recover the stolen weapons.

As of the time of filing this report, the identities of the slain operatives had not been officially confirmed.

Efforts to obtain official confirmation from the spokesman of the Plateau State Police Command, SP Alfred Alabo, and the Media Information Officer of Operation Enduring Peace, Captain Chinonso Polycarp Oteh, were unsuccessful.

Ukraine Drones Kill Six, Damage Warehouses in Russia, Authorities Say

Ukraine's overnight attacks on Russia killed six people and injured nine, as they damaged warehouses near the cities of Moscow and St Petersburg, governors said, while Russian strikes killed and injured people in Ukraine.

Five were killed and six injured after Ukrainian drones attacked the Moscow region, governor Andrei Vorobyov said

on messaging app Telegram on Tuesday. A warehouse caught fire, which was later doused, he said, without giving details.

Drones near St Petersburg, Russia's second biggest city, hit a warehouse facility, regional governor Alexander Drozdenko said on Telegram without identifying it, while one person was injured.

Russia's top online retailer, Wildberries,

which became a frequent target of Ukraine's recent attacks, said its warehouse near St Petersburg caught fire, but there were no casualties.

Neighbouring Finland, a member of the European Union and NATO, lifted a temporary aviation restriction area briefly set up in the eastern Gulf of Finland, its defence forces said on X.

In the Belgorod region close to Ukraine, a woman was killed, and two were wounded after a drone hit a car overnight, regional authorities said.

Two children and an elderly woman were killed in Russian guided bomb strikes on Ukraine's northern city of Sumy, while four sought medical aid, regional governor Oleh Hryhorov said on Telegram.



Smoke rises as firefighters work to extinguish a fire at a Wildberries logistics hub following a Ukrainian drone attack in Russia's Ryazan region.

People Return to Gutted Homes as Wildfires Ease in Greece

Wildfires were easing in Greece on Tuesday, though hundreds of firefighters were on alert for persistent flare-ups northwest of Athens, where rugged hills and canyons hampered efforts to fully contain a blaze that gutted homes and scorched forests, farmland and olive groves.

Local crews supported by water-bombing aircraft and reinforcements from Romania and

France were operating on three fronts west of Athens in the Gulf of Corinth, dousing flames raging since Friday.

Strong dry winds blowing from the Aegean Sea, known as the meltemi, had complicated their efforts, with water bombers unable to operate at times, officials said.

"We are talking about a fire where we didn't have an aircraft at our disposal for 30 continuous hours, which caused us a lot of

difficulties," deputy fire brigade spokesperson Ioannis Artopoios told public broadcaster ERT.

In the coastal community of Porto Germeno, some 60 km (40 miles) northwest of Athens, Vivi Gialia, 45, surveyed the remains of her parents' home and the fire-ravaged landscape of her childhood summers.

"It's as if my heart has been torn out," she told Reuters.

Europe has been ravaged by wildfires this summer after a period of record-breaking heatwaves and little rain — conditions that many scientists say have been exacerbated by human-driven climate change.

France and Spain have been particularly hard hit, although huge blazes there died down over the weekend, providing some respite. Greece, a known fire hotspot, had until now experienced a relatively mild summer.

French Coastguards Rescue 157 from Burning Migrant Boat in English Channel

French coastguards rescued 157 people from a boat carrying migrants that caught fire in the English Channel early on

Tuesday morning near the port of Boulogne-sur-Mer, the local administration said in a statement.

The people on board the boat were rescued by three coastguard ships, which will take them back to the port, added the statement.

Five other people had been rescued from the same boat a few hours earlier by the coastguards.

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NIGERIA'S CENSUS CRISIS:
A NATION COUNTING EVERYTHING EXCEPT ITS PEOPLE

PG 6

Tinubu: From Emilokan to Bulldog Brower

OPINION

BY

LASISI OLAGUNJU

A grandson of Uganda's former military ruler, Idi Amin Dada, is Aziz Abdul, better known as "Ringo." Like his grandfather, the young Ugandan is a super-heavyweight boxer who competed at the Commonwealth Games, which ended yesterday, August 2. He left the ring at the weekend convinced that he had been denied victory by a biased referee.

Reflecting on the defeat in an interview with the BBC, Ringo recalled the boxing philosophy his grandfather often preached: "Don't try to win on points—you will be cheated. Knock out your opponent, so the referee has no choice." Repeating the old man's advice, Ringo told the BBC: "He said if you want to win, you have to knock out your opponent. There are only two decisions: win or lose. There is no draw here."

President Bola Tinubu appears to share something of that Idi Amin boxing creed. Addressing members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) last week, he declared that "all is fair in politics" and warned that anyone seeking to take power from him must be prepared to fight (dirty) for it. "I asked for this job. Those who want to take it from me will have to fight for it. Politics is about competition, and we will wrestle to the finish," he said.

My president's wrestling metaphor for politics is intriguing. Having lived in the United States for years, he must have had American professional wrestling with all its theatrics, rivalries and violence in mind. His generation and mine will remember the legendary professional wrestler, Bulldog Brower, a bruising character who fought by every rule and beyond every rule. He fought fair when it suited him, fought dirty when it didn't. He usually found a way to leave with his hand raised.

I found much to ponder in Nicholas Sammond's 'Steel Chair to the Head: The Pleasure and Pain of Professional Wrestling'. In that collection, Henry Jenkins, in his 'Never Trust a Snake', argues that professional wrestling is less about fair competition than about the clash between the "perfect bastard" and the suffering hero. In bouts, spectators are not looking for justice; they crave spectacle: heroes and villains, betrayal and revenge; drama and a decisive ending.

French literary critic and semiotician, Roland Gérard Barthes (1915–1980) made the same point decades earlier. Wrestling, he wrote, is not merely a sport but a "morality play." People do not troop into arenas to watch an equitable contest. They come to witness good triumph over evil—or evil triumph over good—in a satisfying performance. Politics, especially in our clime, often follows the same script. Crowds cheer as combatants exchange blows, and when the curtain falls, someone is carried out of the arena or wobbles out. Sometimes it is only a political career that dies. Sometimes, as our history sadly shows, the casualties are flesh and blood.

In one of his memorable quotes, Idi Amin said "politics is like boxing—you try to knock out your opponents." My president spoke of wrestling, not boxing. But wrestling has always borrowed something from boxing.

That is why I bring into this story a boxing tragedy that occurred in Lagos in June 1953.

Michael Gennaro, in his 2019 study, 'Ban This Cruel Sport Boxing', recounts one of the darkest episodes in Nigeria's sporting history. At a promotion in Lagos, lightweight boxer Dapo "Homicide" Ilori was knocked out by Eddie Phillips. Assisted from the ring after complaining of exhaustion, Ilori died hours later at the General Hospital. Lagos newspapers splashed the tragedy across their front pages. The Nigerian Daily Times of July 1, 1953 carried the haunting headline, "The Last Punch." The West African Pilot, also on July 1, chose an even more chilling epitaph: "He Walked from the Ring to the Graveyard."

As if one tragedy was not enough, another boxer on the same fight card, same day, Billy Armstrong, was knocked unconscious and remained in a coma for five days. Deadly sport. Yet, as Gennaro notes, newspapers still described the evening as a thrilling spectacle for "the cheering crowd," full of "fast and furious punching" and some of the finest boxing Lagos had witnessed.

That, perhaps, is the enduring lesson for politics. Look back at Nigeria's previous electoral contests. Look, too, at what is unfolding in Osun State as it heads to the governorship poll on August 15. The spectators cheer; the contestants revel in combat; bullets and blows; arrests and protests. When the political war is over, victory will intoxicate the winners while the wounded are left sprawled in the ring—or carried to the hospital. In politics, the casualties are both physical and otherwise. People die. Careers are broken. Reputations are shattered. Friendships are killed and buried. Properties are lost. Popcorn in hand and mouth, the crowd moves on to the next theatre.

But, in talking tough before the Catholic bishops, Tinubu was merely stating the obvious. In 2023, he fought for that office and defeated a formidable coalition of friends and foes. Power was not gifted to him; he wrestled for it. And when he declared last week that "all is fair in politics," he was repeating a political creed to everyone who cared to listen: to him, victory matters more than the finesse of legalese.

As the president huffed and puffed before the bishops, I told myself that the brass bracelet of power is already fastened to the wrist of this warrior-king. School or

no school; certificate or no certificate; a ti t'òjé bọ olódù à lówó, ó kú baba ẹni tí ó bọ. The mantle he wears from Borgu is woven with the threads of war. The one from Lagos bears the scent of the goddess of the sea. In Yorubaland, he would be called both ẹni ogun—the man of war—and ẹni oògùn—the man of medicine, mystery and magical power. In his shrine in pairs, steel and sorcery; money and the mint breathe life into each other. With one hand he wields the sword; with the other, he summons the charm.

And for those crying, "Ebi ní pa mí" (I am hungry), the president had something to chew on. He said: "There had been hunger in Nigeria before I was born."

If you had working eyes, you would see in that statement a wide window into the president's mind. It revealed a leader who sees hunger not as an emergency to be defeated but as an old national companion to be endured. The man elected to confront the country's deepest afflictions reminded the hungry that their forebears also lived with empty stomachs. The message was stark: hunger predates me; endure it, as your ancestors did.

And he said so in the very presence of men commanded by their Lord to feed the hungry as a core duty of faith. Faith, in Islam and Christianity, demands that a leader actively advocate for the welfare of the poor. The president professes not Christianity but his wife is a Christian; some of his children are also. Could they read to him Matthew 25:35-40. When you give food to the hungry, you are doing it directly to God. There are other verses that bring light into the dark life of the hungry: Isaiah 58:10; even James 2:15-16.

The president is a Muslim. The Qur'an leaves little room for indifference to hunger. Alhaji Tinubu should ask his malam to take him through the Qur'an's teachings on hunger and compassion. Surah Al-Insan (76:8-9) praises those who feed the needy purely for the sake of Allah. Surah Al-Balad (90:14-16) counts feeding the hungry among the steep paths of righteousness. Surah Al-Haqqah (69:33-34) condemns those who neither believed nor encouraged the feeding of the poor. And Surah Al-Ma'un (107:1-3) asks a haunting question: "Have you seen the one who denies the Judgment?" It answers: "It is he who repulses the orphan and does not encourage the feeding of the

poor."

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reinforced the same ethic when he warned that a person is not a true believer if he goes to bed with a full stomach while knowing that his neighbour is hungry.

But the Villa is a long way from the streets bustling with hunger and beggars.

Those bishops, what was their reason for their invasion of the Villa? Someone said the bishops thought they could frighten the Commander-in-Chief into rethinking a second-term bid. Why should anyone expect the man who proclaimed Emilokan (It is my turn) three years ago and, against all odds, got it, to now quietly accept that his turn should end after only four years?

Since the beginning of man, not a few leaders have taken power for skin rather than the garment which Shakespeare knew it to be. In Measure for Measure, the playwright spoke of "man, proud man, dressed in a little brief authority." But in Aso Rock, authority is rarely "brief" in the hard mind of those who possess it. Every occupant dreams of making the borrowed robe take on permanent skin. The truth is, for man, offices are much easier to enter than to leave. The Nigerian presidency, with all its seductive allure, has consistently proven to be the hardest office of all to relinquish.

So, even if the heavens were to decree, "Enough. One term is enough," Tinubu would probably insist on another round. Power is honey; those who have tasted its comb seldom surrender it willingly.

The "I-will-spend-one-term" politician is rather like the man who whispers to a woman in bed: "I won't go too far... Just the tip!" Liar. Experience teaches that such promises seldom survive contact with power. Appetite grows by what it feeds on. This husband will not be content with the usual ration. As it has been with his governorship in Lagos, Tinubu's presidency gives every indication that it will not end after even the next term. He has shown every sign that he is not a man who embraces premature exits. Nigerians should prepare for a long haul.

Emilokan was the battle cry of entitlement in 2023. Three years later, it remains a governing creed. The President has made it abundantly clear that he has no intention of surrendering his mandate after one term. Not even a distinguished delegation of Catholic bishops heard from him the language of restraint or retreat.

Archbishop John Onaiyekan, who was part of the delegation, came away with one unmistakable impression: the President is determined to seek and win re-election at all costs. Tinubu himself had already unveiled his battle plan. Politics, he said, is wrestling. Wrestlers do not enter the arena expecting to lose.

Tinubu is already on his way to the battlefield. He has not pretended otherwise. He has sounded the bugle himself. Politics, after all, has often been described as war by other means. Nigerians should therefore prepare for a bruising contest this year and the next. There is nothing unusual about that. Every incumbent wants to remain incumbent.