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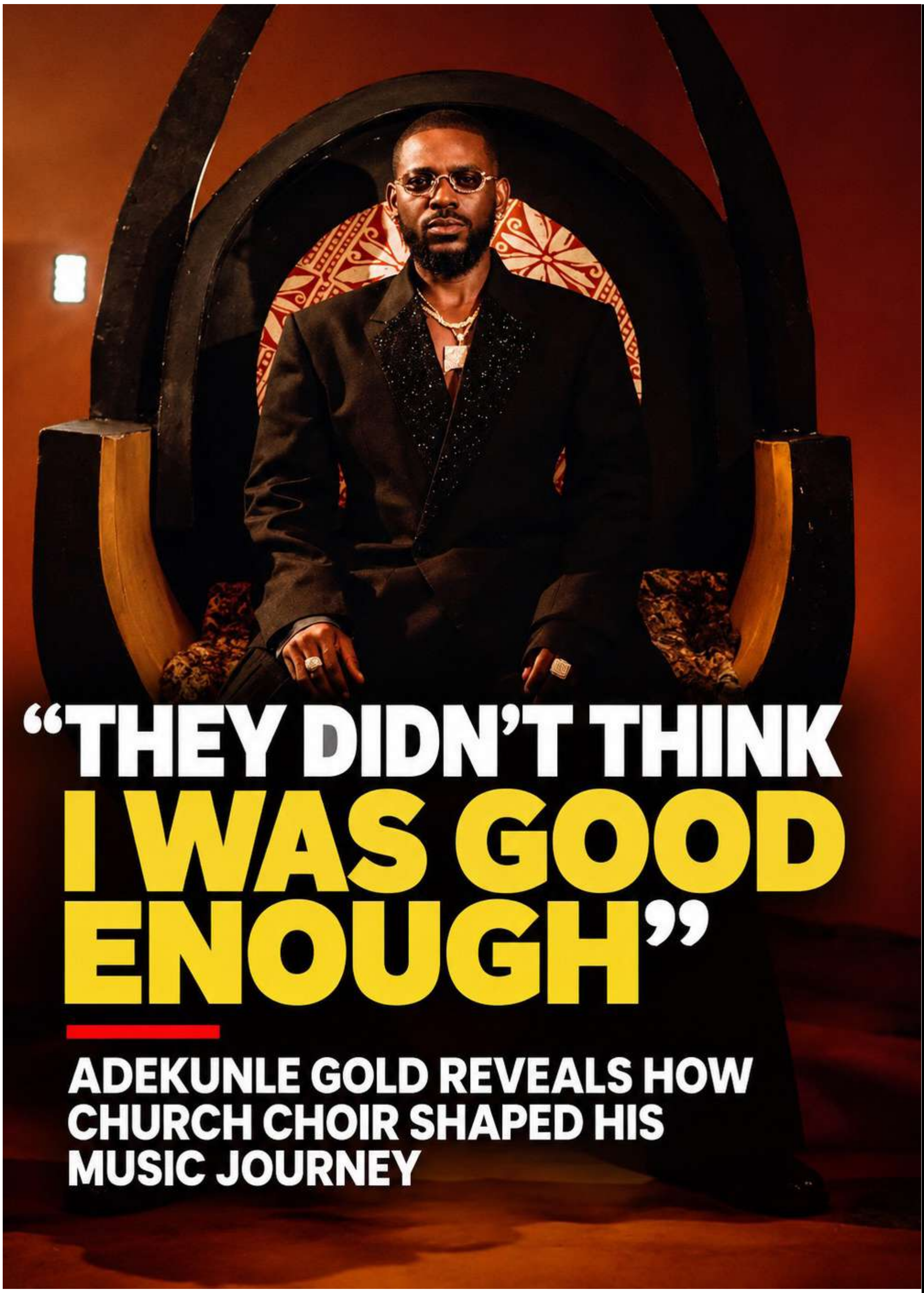


Nigerian singer Adekunle Gold has opened up about his unexpected journey into music, revealing that his passion for singing began in church despite being raised by Muslim parents.

Speaking during a candid interview with One 54 Africa, the singer said his parents were Muslims, but his father allowed him and his siblings to attend church because he was a liberal man who believed religion was a form of education.

"My dad and mom were Muslims, but my dad somehow allowed us to go to church. He was a liberal man," Adekunle Gold said.

He explained that attending church introduced him to music, particularly after he became fascinated by the teens choir and developed a strong desire to lead it.

According to the singer, he spent 11 years in the church choir but was never chosen to lead the group because those in charge did not consider him good enough.

"I was in the church for 11 years, and they didn't think I was good enough to be that guy," he recalled.

Adekunle Gold said he often wondered what the other choir members had that he lacked, particularly their ability to move and control a crowd. His desire to prove himself pushed him to give his best during rehearsals in the hope that his choir mistress would eventually notice him.

He also revealed that his aunt, who was a choir member, played an important role in developing his singing ability by teaching him how to sing different harmonies.

Edo State lawmaker Natasha Osawaru has declared that she intends to become President of Nigeria before the death of her 92-year-old grandfather, businessman Gabriel Igbinedion.

Osawaru made the declaration while celebrating Igbinedion's 92nd birthday, expressing her deep love and admiration for the businessman.

Describing her grandfather as someone who has become "sweeter and better" with age, the lawmaker said being around him sometimes makes her emotional because of how much he means to her.

"I promise you that I will be the president of this country before you die, amen in Jesus' name. And I'll make you very, very proud," she said.

Osawaru also promised to keep improving herself, adding that she would strive to "do better, better, better every day".

The lawmaker prayed for her grandfather to live long enough to celebrate many more birthdays, mentioning his 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th and 100th birthdays, and even praying for him to live to 150.

"I cannot live without you. May God bless you, my grandfather. I love you so much," she added.

Her declaration has since drawn attention online, with Nigerians reacting to the lawmaker's open expression of presidential ambition and her emotional tribute to her grandfather.

Nigerian dancer and entertainer Iweh Odinaka, popularly known as Poco Lee, has spoken publicly about his recent experience in the United Kingdom, insisting that his conscience remained clear throughout the ordeal because he knew he had not committed the offences he was accused of.

Poco Lee made the remarks during a video call with social media activist VeryDarkMan, who shared footage of their conversation on Instagram.

Reflecting on the experience, the dancer said his biggest concern was the people he had left behind, particularly Rahman Jago, who he said was unable to work or use social media during the period.

"My worries were my people outside. Rahman Jago could not work or be on social media. And I didn't want to stress anyone," Poco Lee said.

He added that he repeatedly pleaded with those around him not to worry, while maintaining that he would have accepted the situation differently if he had actually committed the alleged offences.

"If I were inside there and I did what I was accused of, I would have felt I was paying for my sins. But since I knew I didn't do what I was accused of, my mind is pure," he said.

Poco Lee also revealed that singer Burna Boy stood by him alongside Rahman Jago and some of his other associates during the difficult period.

Nobody would have wanted to associate themselves with something like that, but Burna Boy stood by me, Jago and some of my other guys," he said.

VeryDarkMan, who shared the video call, also defended Poco Lee against narratives surrounding the case and praised Burna Boy and Rahman Jago for remaining supportive.

Reports emerged in August that Poco Lee had been held on remand in the UK following sexual offence allegations, with a plea and trial preparation hearing scheduled for September 15 at Snaresbrook Crown Court.

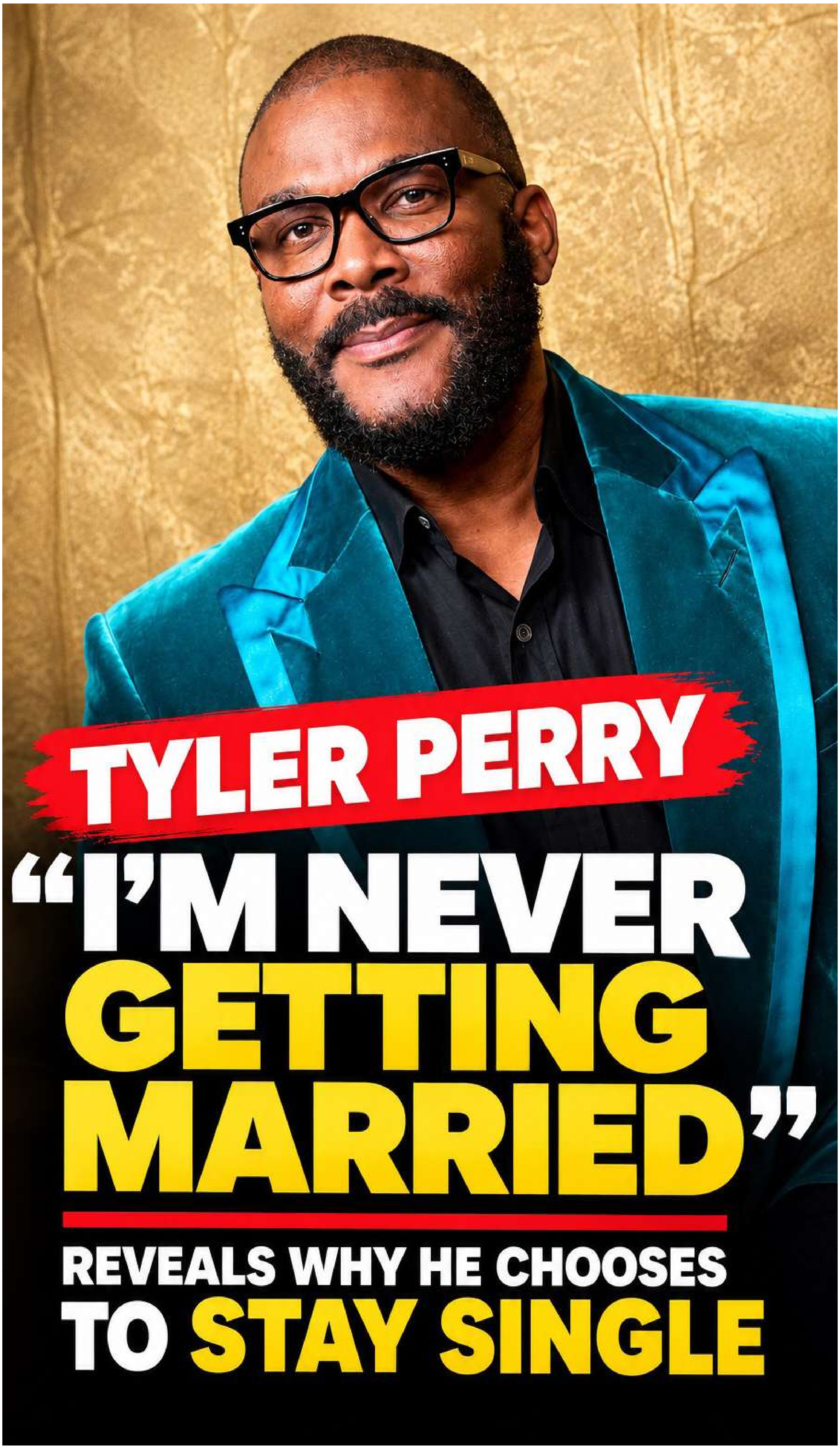
His conversation with VeryDarkMan marks one of his first public appearances addressing the matter directly.

Poco Lee's comments are his account of the events, and the allegations against him have not been established as fact by a court.

American filmmaker, actor, playwright and producer Tyler Perry has revealed that he has no plans to get married, saying his biggest concern is not marriage itself but the financial consequences of divorce.

Speaking on The Jennifer Hudson Show, Perry said he has watched people who were financially successful lose their wealth following divorce, making him more comfortable with remaining single.

"It's not the marriage that bothers me. It's the divorce. Everybody that I know that did well and went broke, it was because of a divorce, so I'm good just being free," he said.



The World's Great Refineries: Lessons for Dangote And Nigeria

By Suleyman A. Ndanusa

In Jamnagar, on India's western coast, Reliance Industries built a refining and petrochemical complex that transformed India's position in the global energy market. Its significance lies not simply in scale, but in how India turned industrial capability into an advantage despite lacking the crude oil resources of major oil-producing countries.

Reliance built its first Jamnagar refinery in the 1990s and later added an export-oriented refinery, taking combined capacity to about 1.4 million barrels per day. The project was financed through a combination of promoter equity, public equity, borrowing, project finance and export credit support. Risk was therefore shared among promoters, investors, lenders and equipment financiers.

Jamnagar's strength also comes from complexity, crude flexibility, export logistics and petrochemical integration. It can process different crude grades, produce higher-value products and sell into markets offering the best economics. Nigeria should therefore think beyond petrol. The real value of refining comes from the industries and exports built around refined products and petrochemicals.

The United States offers a different lesson through Valero Energy. Valero did not depend mainly on one giant greenfield project. It grew by acquiring operating refineries, improving them and integrating them with pipelines and terminals. It now operates 14 refineries with combined throughput capacity of about 2.7 million barrels per day.

Valero demonstrates the difference between financing construction and financing a mature refining business. Once a refinery is operating, investors focus on utilisation, margins, maintenance, operating costs, debt, free cash flow and dividends. Refining is cyclical: strong margins can produce large profits, but downturns can quickly reduce earnings. In 2025, Valero recorded a US$1.1 billion pre-tax impairment relating to its California refining operations.

South Korea's S-Oil provides another model: a listed company with a powerful strategic shareholder. Saudi Aramco became its controlling shareholder, providing capital, technical relationships and greater security of crude supply, while S-Oil remained publicly listed. This combination can work well when governance, disclosure and protection of minority shareholders are credible.

Saudi Arabia's SATORP and YASREF show the strength of strategic joint ventures. Saudi Aramco partnered with TotalEnergies in SATORP and with China's Sinopec in YASREF. Sponsors supplied equity, crude, technology, project management and market access, while lenders financed part of the projects against sponsor strength and expected cash flows.

These ventures are useful comparators for construction, financing, feedstock security and industrial integration, but not necessarily for valuing a publicly traded refinery. Ownership structure matters. A privately held joint venture with guaranteed feedstock does not carry exactly the same risks as a standalone listed company buying crude at market prices.

Brazil's Petrobras provides a mixed public-private model. Government control, private shareholders and international listings coexist with an integrated upstream business. Producing crude as well as refining it can provide a natural hedge that a standalone refiner does not enjoy. Petrobras also shows the danger of political influence over fuel pricing, investment and dividends. Private investors may own shares, but government can still influence the steering wheel.

The less successful experiences of Ghana's Tema Oil Refinery and Nigeria's government-owned refineries provide the opposite lesson. Public ownership does not automatically create public value. Political pricing, weak working capital, debt, maintenance failures and poor accountability can undermine even strategically important assets.

The central lesson from these examples is that there is no magical ownership structure. Private companies can fail, state companies can succeed, listed firms can destroy value and joint ventures can encounter delays. The real divide is between disciplined and undisciplined capital.

Against this background, Dangote Petroleum Refinery deserves careful assessment.

Dangote's original financing was founder-led and predominantly private, combining sponsor capital, related-party financing, bank borrowing, customer advances and strategic investment. The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited acquired a minority stake, giving the state participation without operational control.

Dangote refinery

Public investors are entering at a different stage. They are not financing the original project when it was largely engineering drawings and construction risk.

The refinery has been commissioned and has begun generating substantial operating profits. Their risk is therefore lower than that borne by early promoters and lenders, although it has not disappeared.

Shortly before the public offer, the company completed a private placement of about US$2.5 billion and issued roughly 7.15 billion shares. This implies about US$0.35 per share. The IPO price of N525 is equivalent, using the prospectus exchange rate, to about US$0.385, roughly 10 per cent higher.

That premium may be defensible because the public is entering after much of the original construction risk has passed. But investors should ask why the public offer is priced above a recent private placement and whether earlier investors face meaningful lock-up restrictions.

The IPO is an offer for subscription, meaning the 4.1 billion new shares are issued by the company and the proceeds go to the refinery rather than existing shareholders. This is positive because the transaction is not primarily an opportunity for promoters to cash out. Public investors must therefore judge the offer on future cash generation, not simply on the refinery's size, national importance or the prestige attached to owning a stake in it over the long term.

The bigger question is how the new money will be used. Dangote plans a US$14.3 billion programme to double refining capacity from about 700,000 to 1.4 million barrels per day. The IPO is expected to provide about US$1.55 billion net, or roughly 11 per cent of the expansion cost. The balance will have to come from operating cash flow, debt, trade finance or project financing.

The profitability journey also requires caution. The refinery reported losses of about US$1.51 billion in 2024 and US$476 million in 2025 as operations ramped up and financing costs remained high. In H1 2026, however, revenue rose to about US$13.9 billion, operating profit reached about US$2.37 billion and profit after tax was approximately US$1.82 billion.

The turnaround is impressive, particularly because operating performance, rather than foreign exchange gains, was the main driver. But one strong half-year is not yet a normalised earnings history. Gross margin rose from less than 2 per cent in 2025 to almost 18 per cent in H1 2026. Investors need to distinguish sustainable efficiency from favourable crude costs, product prices, inventory effects or unusually strong refining margins.

Ownership is another major issue. Aliko Dangote beneficially controls about 87 per cent of the company before the offer and will remain overwhelmingly dominant afterward. Such concentration can support long-term strategy, but it makes governance especially important.

The company has transactions with other Dangote Group entities involving financing, procurement, logistics, treasury and shared services. These may be commercially efficient, but minority shareholders need assurance that related-party dealings are conducted at arm's length. The board must have genuine independence and the authority to challenge management and the controlling shareholder.

Nigeria's role is equally important. The country needs transparent and enforceable rules for domestic crude supply, pricing, payment and settlement. Government should regulate the market rather than provide arbitrary protection or subsidies. If consumers require support, subsidies should be transparent and funded through the budget, not imposed through commercially unsustainable refinery prices.

Nigeria should also learn from South Korea and Malaysia by building an industrial ecosystem around the refinery. Roads, rail, ports, power, storage, industrial land, technical training and customs procedures should support a Lekki-Lagos-Ogun refining and petrochemical corridor. Local firms should be encouraged to turn petrochemical feedstocks into packaging, plastics, paints, pharmaceuticals, fertilisers and other products.

The greatest national benefit from Dangote Refinery will therefore not come merely from replacing imported petrol. It will come from creating competitive industries, jobs, exports and wider manufacturing capacity around refining and petrochemicals.

The global experience delivers a balanced conclusion. Jamnagar shows the power of entrepreneurial capital, public equity and industrial integration. Valero demonstrates the importance of operating discipline and capital allocation. S-Oil shows how strategic ownership can coexist with public investors. Saudi joint ventures demonstrate the value of secure feedstock and technical partnerships. Petrobras warns about political interference, while troubled African refineries show that money without accountability can finance repeated rehabilitation without lasting value.

Dangote has already achieved what many considered impossible. Its next challenge is different: operate reliably, finance expansion prudently, protect minority shareholders and generate sustainable returns across the refining cycle.

Nigeria must move beyond applause. It should neither worship the refinery nor frustrate it. It must provide stable rules, competitive markets, infrastructure and industrial linkages.

A great refinery is not defined only by its barrels, pipes or construction cost. It is defined by the quality of capital that built it, the discipline with which that capital is employed, the ability to generate sustainable cash flow and the fairness with which value is shared.

Steel and ambition can build an enormous refinery. Only profitable operations, prudent finance, sound governance and strong institutions can build a great refining company.

That is the real lesson from the world's great refineries for Dangote, investors and Nigeria.

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Dangote Shuns Atiku's Plan, Backs Tinubu on Subsidy Removal—Says Deregulation Way Forward

- As Atiku pushes cheaper crude for refineries, Africa's biggest refiner says market reforms are the right path
- Opens N2.15tn refinery IPO, targets 1.4m barrels per day, potentially world's largest refining complex

By Emmanuel Olugua

Africa's leading industrialist and refinery owner, Aliko Dangote, has thrown his weight behind President Bola Tinubu's removal of petrol subsidy and foreign exchange reforms, providing a striking counterpoint to opposition proposals for a return to government-supported pricing in Nigeria's downstream petroleum industry.

Dangote's position is particularly significant because it comes from the owner of the 650,000-barrel-per-day Dangote Petroleum Refinery, Africa's largest refinery, which is targeting an expansion to 1.4 million barrels per day—a scale that could place the Lekki complex among the biggest refining facilities in the world.

Speaking on Monday at the Nigerian Exchange Limited in Lagos during the formal opening of the refinery's N2.15 trillion Initial Public Offering (IPO), Dangote described the Tinubu administration's removal of petrol subsidy and reform of the foreign exchange market as bold decisions necessary to reposition the Nigerian economy.

"I want to thank him for taking a lot of bold steps by removing the subsidy and democratising the exchange rate," Dangote said.

The endorsement comes against a continuing political debate over the future of fuel pricing, with former Vice President Atiku Abubakar advocating a different model that would involve supporting domestic refineries with crude oil supplied on preferential terms to bring down production costs and ultimately reduce prices at the pump.

The contrast is striking: while Atiku has argued for targeted intervention at the production end of the petroleum value chain, Dangote—the man whose company operates the country's biggest refinery and would ostensibly be among the largest potential beneficiaries of cheaper crude—has instead publicly backed the deregulation reforms undertaken by the Tinubu administration.

Dangote said his group would continue to partner with the Federal Government in its efforts to strengthen the economy.

"So, we thank you very much for your leadership and we will continue to partner with the government to ensure that we make this country great and we make Africa great," he said.

His comments could further intensify the emerging policy argument ahead of the 2027 presidential election over whether Nigeria should consolidate deregulation or reintroduce some form of subsidy through government intervention in refinery input costs.

The Tinubu administration abolished the decades-old petrol subsidy regime in 2023, arguing that it had become fiscally unsustainable, distorted the downstream market, and consumed resources that could otherwise be deployed to infrastructure and social services.

Atiku and his African Democratic Congress have, however, proposed a different approach. Rather than returning wholesale to the old petrol import subsidy arrangement, the opposition has canvassed a targeted production subsidy under which domestic refiners could receive crude at below-market prices, subject to controls intended to ensure that the benefit is transmitted to consumers.

Dangote's intervention therefore puts one of Africa's biggest industrial voices firmly on the side of market-oriented reform at a time when the appropriate role of government in determining fuel prices is becoming a major political dividing line.

The billionaire businessman spoke as Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals formally opened its IPO on the NGX, offering 4.1 billion new ordinary shares at N525 each to raise approximately N2.15 trillion.

The minimum subscription is 10 shares, worth N5,250, while the offer is scheduled to close on October 13, subject to the provisions of the prospectus.

Dangote said the IPO was designed primarily to democratise ownership of the refinery rather than merely raise capital, giving ordinary Nigerians and investors around the world an opportunity to participate in the wealth generated by the massive industrial complex.

"What initially belongs to a country, begins in a deeper sense, now belongs to the people. Today is such a moment; today is a historic day," he said.

"An asset of this magnitude should not create value for only a very few people. It should create value for millions of people, not only Nigerians, but all over the world."

Dangote disclosed that the group had initially planned to raise $2.5 billion, comprising $1 billion through private placement and $1.5 billion from the public offer.

Demand for the private placement, however, reached about $2.5 billion against the $1 billion being sought, forcing the company to return about $1.2 billion to investors after allocations.

"We already met all our demands with the private placement. Coming back now to the IPO is actually about making sure that the public can get part of these benefits," he said.

Dangote said he would increasingly prefer to be judged by the number of people for whom his businesses create wealth and opportunities rather than by his ranking as Africa's richest man.

He urged Nigerians to see the IPO as an opportunity to become part-owners of an industrial business with substantial growth prospects.

"You are buying a future. It is a company that is not only about revenue, but profitability," he said.

The refinery currently has a nameplate capacity of 650,000 barrels per day and supplies petroleum products to Nigeria as well as international markets.

Its planned expansion to about 1.4 million barrels per day would more than double existing capacity and could transform the Lekki facility into the world's largest refining complex by capacity, if completed as proposed.

Dangote said the refinery was already making significant inroads into export markets, including Europe, where it supplies aviation fuel. According to him, its jet fuel production for August and September had already been sold out.

The company is also expanding its petrochemical operations, with plans to produce polypropylene, polyethylene, and polystyrene, creating additional industrial value chains around the refinery.

Dangote said the group was considering further expansion outside Nigeria, including a proposed refinery in Lamu, Kenya, as part of a wider strategy to demonstrate Africa's capacity to build businesses capable of attracting global capital.

"Africa is like a scratch card. Unless you scratch it, you don't see the use of it. The opportunities are immense," he said.

"What we are trying to do is to open up the market and make sure that when we open up the market, Africans and non-Africans will join us to have what you call the new Africa rising."

Chairman of NGX Group, Dr Umar Kwairanga, described the refinery IPO as a demonstration of the capacity of Nigeria's capital market to support businesses operating at global scale.

"Transactions of this scale strengthen our proposition and demonstrate what our markets can achieve when capital, enterprise, and ambition come together," he said.

Access Holdings Chairman, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, also pointed to strong early demand for the shares, saying billions of naira had been subscribed by thousands of investors shortly after the offer opened.

For the Tinubu administration, however, perhaps the most politically significant message from Monday's ceremony was not the size of the IPO but the policy endorsement from the businessman sitting at the centre of Nigeria's refining revolution.

At a time when the opposition is proposing cheaper crude and targeted subsidies for domestic refiners, the owner of the country's dominant refinery—and potentially the world's largest if its 1.4 million-barrel expansion materialises—is making a different argument: Nigeria should stay the course on deregulation and allow market reforms to drive the next phase of its petroleum industry.

Furious Obi Pushes Back on Wife's Alleged N250m Hermès Handbag: 'She Has Her Own Money–What's My Business?'

By Uche Aghulor

Peter Obi has pushed back strongly against the controversy over an expensive designer handbag reportedly carried by his wife, Margaret, insisting that her personal spending has nothing to do with either his famed frugality or his record in public office.

The former Anambra State governor and 2027 presidential hopeful was responding to questions generated by claims circulating online that his wife had been spotted carrying a Hermès handbag reportedly valued at about N250 million.

Obi said Margaret is independently engaged in business, earns her own money, and is entitled to decide how she spends it.

"My wife has her own business and her own money, so what is my business if she buys expensive items with her money?" Obi said.

"The bags and shoes my wife wears, I don't even know how much they cost."

The controversy has attracted particular attention because Obi has for years cultivated a political identity built around personal modesty, fiscal discipline, and prudent management of public resources.

Critics have consequently sought to contrast that image with the reported price of his wife's handbag, while his supporters argue that expenditure from her private income has no bearing on her husband's advocacy for responsible management of taxpayers' money.

Obi firmly embraced the latter distinction, arguing that his obligation as a public official was to safeguard public funds—not dictate how his wife spent legitimately earned private income.

He said Margaret had, in fact, been considerably more fashion-conscious before he became governor of Anambra State.

"In fact, she is actually a bit less sophisticated now. She used to be far more sophisticated before I became governor," he said.

According to Obi, what mattered to him during his years in government was ensuring that members of his family neither interfered with government business nor benefited improperly from public resources.

"I'm managing public money, and as long as she lives her own life without interfering with my management of public funds, good luck to her," he said.

He pointed to his decision not to operate an Office of the First Lady while serving as governor as evidence of the separation he maintained between his family and the machinery of government.

"I didn't even have an Office of the First Lady while I was governor," he said.

Obi also used the discussion to reiterate his personal preference for an austere lifestyle, saying he does not celebrate his own birthday, although he has no objection to other people celebrating it.

"I don't celebrate my own birthday, but I don't stop people from celebrating. As long as you don't ask me to pay the birthday bills, I will even attend if you invite me," he said.

The handbag controversy has continued to generate debate online, with critics questioning whether the reported luxury purchase sits comfortably alongside the austere political image associated with Obi, while his supporters insist that Margaret Obi's private finances should not be conflated with her husband's management of public money.

Nigeria, India Seek $15bn Trade Revival, Renewed Crude Sales

Nigeria and India, on Monday, agreed to deepen their strategic economic relationship, with India seeking renewed purchases of Nigerian crude oil.

The commitment followed a bilateral meeting between Vice President Kashim Shettima and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the recently concluded BRICS Leaders' Summit.

The two countries are seeking to rebuild bilateral trade towards its previous peak of nearly $15 billion.

The bilateral trade reached $14.95 billion in the 2021–2022 financial year before declining sharply following reduced Indian purchases of Nigerian crude.

The trade value fell to $7.13 billion in 2024–2025 but recovered to about $9 billion in 2025–2026.

The Indian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Abhishek Singh, disclosed the latest trade figures.

Modi made a case for renewed Indian purchases of Nigerian crude, saying stronger energy ties could restore bilateral commercial exchanges.

He also expressed appreciation for Nigeria's hospitality towards the sizeable Indian community living and doing business in the country.

Shettima said Nigeria would consider India's request within broader efforts by President Bola Tinubu's administration to attract investment.

He said the administration was pursuing strategic partnerships capable of expanding Nigeria's productive capacity and strengthening domestic industries.

Shettima identified pharmaceuticals, defence, digital technology and creative industries as priority areas for expanded Nigerian-Indian cooperation.

He stressed the need for partnerships that create jobs, transfer skills and unlock opportunities for Nigeria's large youth population.

"The Tinubu administration is particularly interested in moving Nigeria's relationship with India beyond the traditional exchange of commodities," Shettima said.

He said the focus was on investments supporting domestic production and value addition across strategic sectors of the economy.

Shettima said the President wanted international partnerships to deliver investment, technology transfer, industrial growth and tangible economic opportunities for Nigerians.

The vice president said stronger economic ties should therefore translate into greater productive capacity rather than remain centred on commodity exchanges.

The two leaders also discussed expanded cooperation in renewable and clean energy, power, healthcare, capacity building and financial technology.

They further explored opportunities in other emerging sectors, reflecting the broadening scope of Nigeria-India economic relations.

Both leaders agreed that stronger private-sector engagement would be central to the next phase of bilateral relations.

They identified industries where Indian companies have considerable expertise and Nigerian demand remains strong as areas for deeper collaboration.

L-R: Vice President Kashim Shettima with the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, during the ongoing 28th Edition of the BRICS Leaders' Summit in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

J.P. Morgan Puts Nigeria Back on Global Investors' Radar With 7.4% Bond Index Weight

By John Paul

Nigeria has returned to a J.P. Morgan emerging-market bond benchmark more than a decade after its 2015 exit, securing a significant 7.4 per cent weighting in the bank's newly introduced Government Bond Index–Emerging Markets Edge (GBI-EM Edge).

A J.P. Morgan Global Index Research report dated September 14, 2026, showed that Nigeria has $17.47 billion in eligible Federal Government bonds spread across 16 instruments in the index.

The 7.4 per cent allocation is close to J.P. Morgan's maximum country weighting of 8 per cent and makes Nigeria one of the largest exposures in the benchmark.

Nigeria's bonds also offer an average yield to maturity of 17.1 per cent, considerably above the index average of 10.39 per cent, potentially increasing their attraction to international fixed-income investors.

Vietnam, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Kazakhstan each have the maximum 8 per cent weighting, while Sri Lanka has 7.5 per cent. Kenya follows Nigeria with 6.91 per cent.

he GBI-EM Edge tracks about $328 billion in local-currency government debt across 425 instruments, 26 markets, and 24 currencies, with African frontier markets accounting for 44.5 per cent of the index.

Nigeria was admitted to J.P. Morgan's Government Bond Index in 2012 but was removed in September 2015 following concerns about foreign-exchange liquidity, capital repatriation, exchange-rate transparency, and the absence of a functional two-way FX market.

The latest inclusion does not amount to reinstatement in J.P. Morgan's flagship GBI-EM Global Diversified Index. The GBI-EM Edge is a separate benchmark covering frontier and emerging economies generally excluded from the flagship index.

Nigeria reopened discussions with J.P. Morgan in 2025 following reforms aimed at improving transparency and liquidity in the foreign-exchange market.

J.P. Morgan's data showed that after a sharp depreciation in 2023 and 2024, the naira recorded positive FX returns of 6.7 per cent in 2025 and 8.1 per cent in the period covered in 2026.

The new 7.4 per cent weighting could significantly raise the international visibility of naira-denominated FGN bonds, putting Nigerian government securities firmly back on the radar of global investors tracking J.P. Morgan benchmarks.

Court Adjourns Suit Challenging Mark, Aregbesola-led ADC Leadership

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Monday adjourned a suit filed by Mr Nafiu-Bala Gombe, seeking to stop the David Mark-led leadership of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) from parading themselves as leaders of the party until Sept. 28.

The case, which was fixed for the hearing of all pending applications, could not proceed because the presiding judge, Justice Peter Lifu, did not sit.

The case was subsequently fixed for Sept. 28.

Justice Lifu had, on June 16, fixed the case for the hearing of all the pending applications after he dismissed the application seeking his recusal from the case.

The judge, who held that the two motions filed by ADC and Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola (1st and 3rd defendants) lacked merit, awarded a fine of N1 million each against ADC and Aregbesola, the embattled National Secretary of the party, in favour of Gombe.

ADC and Aregbesola had, in separate motions, asked Justice Lifu to withdraw from the suit filed by Gombe, an aggrieved party member, citing alleged bias.

Gombe, in the suit, is seeking an order restraining Mark, Aregbesola and members of their interim National Working Committee (NWC) from parading themselves as the party's leaders.

He had argued that the emergence of Mark, Aregbesola and other interim NWC members as the party's leaders breached the provisions of the party's constitution and the Electoral Act.

Gombe had sued ADC, Mark, Aregbesola, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and Ralph Nwosu as 1st to 5th defendants respectively in the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1819/2025.

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris Malagi; Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Amb. Sola Enikanolaiye, and former Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ahmed Wase, during the North Central Stakeholders Development Summit in Abuja on Monday.

Wike's Rainbow Coalition Will Deliver Tinubu in 2027 – Nwuche

A former Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Chibudom Nwuche, has said the Rainbow Coalition established by the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Nyesom Wike, will deliver President Bola Tinubu in the 2027 presidential election.

Nwuche, Chairman of the South-South Development Commission, stated this in Abuja on Monday while commending Wike for what he described as his outstanding performance, courage and political sagacity.

He said the coalition had widened Tinubu's support base across party lines and created an avenue for members of opposition parties to support the President's re-election without leaving their respective parties.

Nwuche described the Rainbow Coalition as a "political masterstroke" that had created a new political opening ahead of the 2027 elections.

"The Rainbow Coalition is a political masterstroke. It has created leeway and an important political opening that allows individuals and groups who may belong to opposition parties to support the President's re-election without necessarily having to abandon their political parties," he said.

He dismissed claims that the coalition could hurt Tinubu's electoral chances, describing such views as a poor understanding of how political coalitions work.

"Every additional constituency, political stakeholder, or community that identifies with the President's interest strengthens, rather than weakens, his electoral prospects," he said.

On reports of confusion in Rivers State over the coalition, Nwuche said there was no uncertainty regarding its political direction.

"There is no confusion or uncertainty whatsoever over the choice of the coalition's consensus governorship candidate in Rivers State," he said.

Nwuche added that the coalition would work to mobilise support for Tinubu, its governorship candidate and candidates contesting National and State Assembly seats.

"We will be working assiduously to ensure that the good people of Rivers State vote massively for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the coalition's governorship candidate, as well as the National and State Assembly candidates," he said.

He said similar mobilisation would be carried out in other states, describing the coalition as a major advantage for Tinubu ahead of the 2027 elections.

Nwuche also urged members of the All Progressives Congress, APC, who were uncomfortable with the coalition, to stop attacking Wike and instead concentrate on securing their polling units, wards and local government areas for the President.

He called on Nigerians to support Tinubu beyond political, ethnic and religious considerations, arguing that such support was necessary to sustain the administration's ongoing reforms.

The former federal lawmaker described Tinubu as the best choice for Nigeria's future prosperity, acknowledging that the reforms had caused hardship but expressing optimism that their benefits would become more tangible.

"President Bola Ahmed Tinubu remains the best choice for the future prosperity of Nigeria. The reforms may have brought pain, but the country will soon begin to experience more tangible benefits," he said.

Nwuche also cautioned Nigerians against what he described as "bogus promises and economic hallucinations" from some presidential aspirants, saying the country could not afford to abandon difficult but necessary reforms.

"What Nigeria needs now is not a return to the past, but the courage to complete the journey towards a stronger, more productive and prosperous nation," he said.

FIFA U20 Women's World Cup: Falconets to Battle England for Quarterfinal Spot

The Falconets of Nigeria, the only African team to have advanced to the last 16 of the 2026 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup in Poland, will on Thursday take on their English counterparts for a place in the quarter-finals of the tournament.

Nigeria finished runners-up in Group F with four points and a superior goal difference over China.

England, on the other hand, also finished second in their own first-round group that had Brazil and Canada.

They recorded four points from three matches after they walloped Tanzania 5-1, drew 1-1 with Canada before they fell 2-1 to group winners Brazil.

Nigeria's Davis Cup Team Jets Out to Morocco

Nigeria's Lawn Tennis team departed in the early hours of Monday for Rabat, Morocco, ahead of the 2026 Davis Cup World Group II crunchy clash slated for September 19-20 at the Union Sportive des Cheminots de Tennis du Maroc.

The tie promises fireworks as Team Nigeria seeks to break a jinx that has seen them lose all four previous meetings against Morocco. Flying aboard Royal Air Maroc, the players are determined to fly the green-white-green colour high in what promises to be a mouthwatering championship encounter.

The squad has spent the last three weeks in an intensive training camp, sharpening their game and building team chemistry ahead of the crucial duel. The mission is clear: secure a historic win and advance to the Davis Cup World Group I.

The players making the trip are Daniel Adeleye, Canice Abua, Michael Emmanuel, and Yusuf Abubakar. They will be led by Head Coach Benson Ishicheli.

Adding firepower to the team, rising star Oluwaseun Ogunsakin is expected to link up with the squad in Morocco. Ogunsakin, who recently featured in Grand Slam tournaments at Roland Garros and the US Open, will complete the five-man lineup flying Nigeria's colours.

Nigeria earned this spot for the first time in 30-years after a gritty victory over Uzbekistan in February, setting up this fierce encounter against North African rivals Morocco.

Pride, history and promotion are all on the line. Team Nigeria will be aiming to turn the tables and write a new chapter in the Davis Cup rivalry. The winner of the Morocco vs Nigeria tie will book a place in the Davis Cup World Group I.

NFF Hammers Assistant Referee Bana Over Error in Doma United vs Enyimba Match

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has suspended assistant referee Aliyu Yakubu Bana indefinitely following a controversial offside decision in a matchday three encounter involving Doma United and Enyimba FC.

The decision was reached in a letter signed by Mohammed Ameenu, Secretary of the NFF Referee Development Committee, on Sunday, September 13th.

According to the letter, Bana failed to properly apply offside guidelines while serving as assistant referee 1 in Doma United's 2-0 victory over Enyimba on Saturday.

The NFF said Bana did not follow the "wait-and-see protocol," which led to the cancellation of a valid goal scored by Enyimba.

The federation stated that the mistake affected the result of the game.

As a result, Bana has been delisted from the league roster of referees and assistant referees for the 2026/2027 Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) season.

Buter Hails Players After Sporting Lagos' Win Over Rivals Inter

Sporting Lagos technical adviser, Jeffery Buter, has commended his players for their performance in the local derby win over Inter Lagos.

The modest club thrashed Inter Lagos 3-0 in a matchday three fixture at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Onikan, on Sunday.

Sodiq Ayoade, Aliyu Baba and Valentine Joseph were on target for Sporting Lagos.

Buter believed that it was a good response following the defeat in their opening game of the campaign against Doma United.

"I feel ecstatic; credit to the players; they put in a lot of work coming into the game," Buter reacted to the club's media.

"We knew we hadn't beaten them since inception; it wasn't another game for us after losing in the first game of the season, we have to bounce back.

"What a way to respond, and kudos to the team."

Sporting Lagos will do battle with Abia Warriors in the next league game.

Arsenal to Contact Pro Ref Over Konsa Penalty

Arsenal will contact refereeing body Pro Ref over the incident in which Ezri Konsa conceded a penalty in Saturday's win over Sunderland.

Konsa and Black Cats defender Dan Ballard were involved in a physical exchange inside the penalty area in which the Arsenal defender was adjudged to have fouled the Sunderland player for excessive holding.

After the game, Gunners manager Mikel Arteta criticised the decision, and it is understood the Premier League champions will hold talks with the professional referee's body for an explanation as to why the penalty was awarded.

It is understood Arsenal are keen to avoid major refereeing decisions impacting on results and want clarity over how referee John Brooks came to his decision.

Brooks initially awarded Sunderland the spot-kick on the field, and the decision was backed up by the video assistant referee (VAR).

"The referee's call of penalty to Sunderland for a holding offence by Konsa on Ballard was checked and confirmed by VAR," read a statement published by the Premier League Match Centre.

But after the game, Arteta said: "This is not acceptable at this level.

"I watched it 20 times and I cannot find a way to understand how they think to give a penalty in that situation, or the way the VAR has to intervene.

"So I don't know what to think. I'm sad that we have to discuss this after such a beautiful game, that at this level has the gravity of that. Because that changes the course of the season and it can cost you the championship.

"At this level, with all the work we put in, this cannot happen."

Mourinho

Mourinho Praises 'Incredible' Guler Amid Battle for Minutes

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho hailed playmaker Arda Guler on Monday ahead of the team's visit to face Elche in LaLiga.

The Turkish midfielder came on as a substitute in Madrid's 4-1 win over Rayo Vallecano on Saturday and helped steady the team when they were wobbling under pressure.

Guler is not assured of a starting place at Madrid, with Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius Junior and Jude Bellingham all part of Mourinho's regular side.

The 21-year-old is competing with record signing Yan Diomande and Brahim Diaz among others for minutes, ahead of the central midfield duo.

"There are people more qualified than me to talk about his development, people who have been here since he arrived, about how he's transformed physically," Mourinho told reporters.

"But for me, his quality of play is incredible – his vision, his decision-making, his playmaking, the stability he brings to the team, his creativity...

"For me, he's a player with fantastic potential who already has some very impressive stats."

Guler has shown he has a strong link with Mbappe on the pitch, regularly combining well with the French forward, including for Madrid's fourth goal against Rayo.

Mourinho said he would not go completely overboard with praise for Guler, who arrived from Fenerbahce in 2023.

"Maybe I don't want to go so far as to say 'top, top, top' three times, but I can definitely say 'top, top'," joked the Portuguese coach.

One player still looking for his best form at Madrid is Vinicius.

The Brazilian winger has scored one goal this season and Mourinho reiterated his view that Vinicius is still not at his best.

"The best version of him is scoring goals. Obviously, assisting is important, working for the team is very important. Commitment, solidarity, and teamwork are very important," said Mourinho.

"But there's another Vinicius, the Vinicius who arrived in Lisbon last season (in the Champions League) and in close matches, in the knockout rounds, gets one chance, scores a goal and that's it.

"He's lacking that top-level performance lately, but I am happy with him."

Second-placed Madrid trail LaLiga leaders Barcelona, who boast a 100 per cent record, by three points.

Australia Names Uncapped McLaughlin-Phillips in Squad for South Africa Test

Uncapped flyhalf Harry McLaughlin-Phillips earned a Wallabies call-up Monday for this month's home test against South Africa while Jordan Petaia returns.

Outside back Petaia is included in the Australia squad for the first time since 2023, following an unsuccessful stint trying to break into the NFL.

Coach Les Kiss picked Western Force's 22-year-old playmaker McLaughlin-Phillips to replace Carter Gordon, who fractured his leg against Argentina earlier this month.

Australia will play world champions South Africa on 27 September in Perth, followed by two tests against New Zealand.

It is a crucial build-up as Australia host the Rugby World Cup in October-November next year.

"We've learned a bit more about ourselves as a group over the last four tests and we know we still have a lot to work on to get to where we want to be," said Kiss.

"South Africa have been the benchmark team in world rugby for a long time and we're motivated by the challenge of meeting them in our own backyard in two weeks' time."

The Wallabies last month beat Argentina 27-21 before a thrilling 28-28 draw in the away test series.

McLaughlin-Phillips

Benn Unsure on Future After Defeat by Garcia

Conor Benn said he does not know what is next in his career after a crushing world title defeat by Ryan Garcia.

The Briton was stopped in the second round on Saturday - only the second loss of his 10-year professional career - as American Garcia retained his WBC welterweight crown in Las Vegas.

Benn, 29, was fighting at welterweight for the first time in more than four years and had said the fight would be his last in the division.

"Everybody keeps asking, 'What's next for Conor Benn? The truth is, I don't have the answer," he wrote on Instagram.

"I've always wanted to be a servant of the public and give everything I have when it matters.

"But giving everything comes at a cost. And the people who have paid that cost more than anyone are my family and my kids.

"They've sacrificed time with their dad so I could chase this dream. They've had to share me with this sport their entire lives.

"So when people ask me what's next for Conor Benn, right now the answer is simple. Time with my kids."

Benn

Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa (M); Minister of State for Education, Prof. Suwaiba Ahmad (3rd L); Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwole (2nd R); and others during the official launch of the Digital Training Academy, DTA, by the Minister of Education in Abuja yesterday. Photo: NAN

Obasanjo: South Africa Wouldn't Have Got Rid of Apartheid Without Nigeria

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has said that apartheid would not have ended in South Africa without Nigeria's support for the struggle against white minority rule.

South Africa held its first democratic, non-racial elections in 1994, marking the end of apartheid rule.

Obasanjo disclosed this during an interview on C-Suite Cafe, hosted by Ikem Okuhu, and published on Monday.

The former president, who served as Nigeria's military head of state between 1976 and 1979 and later as civilian president from 1999 to 2007, said Nigeria's involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle was driven by the belief that no black person should be treated as inferior because of their skin colour.

"We were not doing what we did in South Africa or in Southern Africa or decolonisation anywhere for our personal gain or for our country. We did it for our race. I believe that no black man anywhere or black person anywhere should be regarded as an inferior human being because of his colour," Obasanjo said.

Obasanjo said Nigeria's role in the abolition of apartheid in South Africa could be described as "enlightened self-interest", adding that the West African country did not support the struggle with the expectation of receiving anything in return.

"And for me—and I believe for Nigeria at that time and even now—we should be proud of what we did because without Nigeria, South Africa would not have got rid of apartheid when it got rid of it. That is true," Obasanjo said.

The former president said Nigeria worked with several African and international leaders in the campaign against apartheid, including Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Samora Machel of Mozambique, former US President Jimmy Carter, former British Prime Minister James Callaghan and Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme.

Obasanjo criticised xenophobic attacks against African migrants in South Africa, saying the country's leaders had not done enough to address the problem.

He acknowledged that some migrants may be in the country illegally or may have committed crimes, but said such violations could not justify mob attacks on their homes and businesses.

"I do not believe that you use illegality to treat illegality, asking and encouraging area boys and area girls to break into their houses and break into their shops," he said.

Obasanjo rejected arguments that migrants were taking jobs from South Africans, noting that some migrants contribute to the economy by creating jobs.

Last week, the national assembly suspended all legislative engagements with South Africa due to the persistent xenophobic attacks against Nigerians in the former apartheid country.

About 100 Nigerians have been reportedly killed in mob and hate-related attacks in South Africa since 2022.

Tinubu Orders Release of Funds to Regional Development Commissions

President Bola Tinubu on Monday directed the timely release of funds to the Regional Development Commissions, warning their boards and managements against corruption, waste and the execution of projects that do not directly benefit the people.

Tinubu gave the directive while declaring open the first North Central Stakeholders Development Summit organised by the North Central Development Commission in Abuja on Monday.

The President, who was represented at the event by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Sen. George Akume, said the Federal Government would continue to provide political and financial backing to the commissions to enable them execute projects capable of unlocking the economic and industrial potential of the country.

He, however, urged the commissions not to depend solely on government funding, advising them to explore alternative sources of financing, including public-private partnerships, donor funding and development financing.

"Government will continue to give the NCDC and other Regional Development Commissions the political and financial backing to embark on key projects that will unlock the economic and industrial potentials of the nation.

"I therefore direct the Secretary to the Government of the Federation to ensure that all funds accruable to the Commissions are released as and when due," he said.

Tinubu said the creation of the Regional Development Commissions was part of his administration's Renewed Hope Agenda to accelerate development across the country and address longstanding development gaps.

He stressed that the commissions were not established to replace, duplicate or usurp the functions of any tier of government.

"Rather, it is our way of looking at why development gaps still exist and trying to close them up for the benefit of our people," he said.

According to him, the commissions are expected to focus on development priorities capable of unlocking the potential of their respective regions while providing interconnectivity for the country.

He listed roads, rail, air transportation, industrialisation, security, investment, human capital development, education and health among the sectors requiring attention.

The President urged the commissions to develop clear, concise, attainable and fundable programmes, warning against the execution of white elephant projects.

"The era of white elephant projects is over and there is no excuse for the Commissions to become another conduit for wasting public funds," he said.

Tinubu also charged the Ministry of Regional Development to ensure that the commissions operated within the Regional Development Policy Document, while the legislature provides the necessary oversight.

He warned the boards and managements against corruption, marginalisation, politicisation and ethnicisation of government operations.

"Such actions will not be tolerated and government will not hesitate to sanction anyone found culpable," the President said.

Speaking on the North Central region, Tinubu said the area had enormous potential in agriculture, food production and agro-processing, solid minerals development and processing, industrial development, peace and security.

He said the region had operated below its potential for too long, urging stakeholders to use the summit to chart a new development trajectory.

The President also acknowledged the security challenges confronting the North Central, saying the Federal Government had intensified surveillance and intelligence gathering, established more formations, deployed additional personnel, increased the prosecution of criminals and supported dialogue and reconciliation.

He urged the NCDC to complement the government's efforts to stabilise the region, stressing that development could only take place in an atmosphere of peace and security.

Tinubu said the theme of the summit, "The Great Leap Forward: A 20-Year Economic, Infrastructural and Social Development Plan for the North Central Region," was appropriate, noting that it provided an opportunity for stakeholders to develop a consensus-driven plan for the region.

He urged participants to scrutinise the proposed development plan and ensure that it reflected the aspirations of the people and aligned with the Renewed Hope Agenda.

The President warned against allowing the summit to become another platform where ideas were discussed and reports produced without implementation.

"This Summit should not end up as one of those platforms where ideas are ventilated and reports generated only to be left dusting on the shelves. The NCDC should show a better example by following through to implementation," he said.

APC Eyes 2027 Landslide as 12.8m Membership Widens Gap Over Opposition

By Orkula Shaagee

The All Progressives Congress (APC) says its rapidly expanding membership and the performance of the President Bola Tinubu administration have put the ruling party in a strong position to secure a sweeping victory in the January 16, 2027 presidential election and other general elections.

A spokesman of the APC 2027 Presidential Campaign Council, Ima Niboro, expressed confidence during an interview on Arise TV in Abuja on Monday night that the party's 12.8 million registered members give it a formidable electoral base ahead of the polls.

Niboro, a former presidential media adviser, said the APC's membership strength far outstrips that of its major rivals, citing figures of 2.4 million registered members for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), 1.6 million for the African Democratic Congress (ADC), 1.3 million for the Labour Party and 700,000 for the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC).

He argued that the figures provide an important indication of the ruling party's organisational strength and nationwide reach going into the elections.

"Look at the party registration. The APC has 12.8 million registered members, while the opposition parties are far behind. However, if tomorrow the APC wins, they will say we rigged the election," Niboro said.

Beyond the party's numerical strength, Niboro said President Tinubu deserves re-election on the strength of his administration's record over the past three years, particularly its efforts to stabilise an economy he said was in serious difficulty when the government took office.

"The achievements of the president in the last three years are quite outstanding, such that sometimes you don't even know where to start from," he said.

"But the most important achievement of the APC is the stabilisation of the economy, because the economy that this government inherited was in tatters.

"This government has been able to solve or sort out most of the problems it inherited, and there is growth across sectors."

Niboro also defended the removal of petrol subsidy, describing the policy as difficult but inevitable because the previous arrangement had become fiscally unsustainable. He explained that the former model subsidised neighbouring countries more than Nigerians because the fuel was simply smuggled out, leaving Nigerians paying humongous prices at black market rates.

He noted that the leading presidential candidates in the 2023 election had all acknowledged the need to end the subsidy regime, arguing that the fundamental disagreement was therefore not over whether subsidy should go, but how its consequences should be managed.

"Talking about fuel subsidy, the policy was inevitable because it was no longer sustainable. Let me tell you, all three presidential major candidates in the 2023 election agreed that fuel subsidy removal was inevitable," he said.

Niboro said the government's longer-term response should be to reduce Nigerians' dependence on petrol by expanding cheaper transportation alternatives.

According to him, the real objective should not simply be cheap petrol but affordable mobility for ordinary Nigerians.

"What Nigerians need is cheap transportation, not necessarily cheap petrol," he said, adding that creating viable alternatives to petrol would ultimately provide a more sustainable answer to high transportation costs.

Speaker, Delta State House of Assembly, and representative of Governor Oborevwori, Rt. Hon. Emomotimi Guwor (middle); Member representing Warri Federal Constituency, Hon. Thomas Ereyitomi (2nd left); State Chairman, All Progressives Congress (APC), Chief Solomon Arenyeka (left); Commissioner for Riverine Infrastructure Development, Chief Ebikeme Clark (3rd right); Commissioner for Water Resources, Dr. Isaac Wilikie (2nd right); Executive Director, Social Services, DESOPADEC, Chief Favour Izuokumor (right), and Chairman, Warri North Local Government Council, Hon. Festus Ashima (3rd left), during the presentation of boats to fishermen in Koko on Monday.

Oborevwori Distributes 50 Fishing Boats, Engines to Fishermen in 3 Warri LGAs

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, has distributed 50 fishing boats equipped with 15-horsepower Yamaha outboard engines and fishing nets to fishermen across Warri North, Warri South and Warri South-West Local Government Areas of the state.

The intervention, according to the governor, is aimed at boosting fishing activities, improving the income of riverine dwellers and strengthening food security in the affected communities.

The boats and other fishing equipment were commissioned and handed over to beneficiaries at Koko, headquarters of Warri North Local Government Area, on Monday.

Represented at the ceremony by the Speaker of the Delta State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Emomotimi Dennis Guwor, Oborevwori said the initiative was part of his administration's commitment to empowering people in riverine communities with productive assets.

He said fishing remained central to the economic and social life of riverine communities, noting that many fishermen still operated with inadequate equipment despite the difficult conditions under which they carried out their activities.

"For generations, fishing has been an important part of the life and economy of our riverine communities. It is more than a means of livelihood; it is a tradition that has been passed from one generation to another.

"This intervention is therefore about giving you the tools you need to fish more efficiently, increase your income and provide better opportunities for your families," the governor said.

Oborevwori said the programme represented a practical demonstration of his administration's M.O.R.E Agenda, particularly its commitment to creating opportunities for citizens and ensuring that no community was left behind in the development process.

He disclosed that the distribution was only the first phase of the programme, directing the Ministry of Riverine Infrastructure Development to extend the intervention to other riverine local government areas across the state.

The governor urged the beneficiaries to protect and maintain the boats, engines and nets, stressing that the equipment was provided to enhance their livelihoods and improve economic activities in the communities.

He also assured riverine communities of continued government investment in infrastructure, including access roads, landing jetties and facilities aimed at reducing post-harvest losses and facilitating the transportation of fish and other agricultural produce to markets.

"We recognise the important role our fishing communities play in our economy and food security, and we will continue to support them," he added.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Riverine Infrastructure Development, Chief Ebikeme Clark, described the intervention as the fulfilment of a key commitment of the Oborevwori administration to the riverine people.

Clark said the boats were specially constructed to withstand tidal conditions and were designed to support both fishing expeditions and the transportation of agricultural produce from riverine communities.

"Today, we are not just handing over fishing boats; we are handing over tools of livelihood, instruments of peace, and engines of economic growth to the very people of the riverine communities of Warri Federal Constituency whose major means of livelihood is fishing," he said.

According to him, the new boats, engines and nets would enable fishermen to travel farther, spend more productive hours on fishing expeditions and increase their catches.

He added that improved transportation would enable fishermen to move their produce to markets faster, thereby reducing spoilage and increasing profitability.

The commissioner reiterated that the distribution was the first batch of the intervention, assuring that other riverine local government areas would benefit from the programme in due course.

He commended Governor Oborevwori for what he described as his commitment to improving the socio-economic wellbeing of riverine communities, while urging beneficiaries and the affected local government councils to ensure that the equipment was properly maintained and used for the purpose for which it was provided.

Stanley Agbosa, who spoke on behalf of the beneficiaries, thanked Governor Oborevwori for the gesture and assured the state government that the recipients would put the boats and equipment to judicious use to increase their yields and contribute to food security in the state.

The ceremony was attended by State Chairman of the All Progressives Congress APC Chief Solomon Arenyeka, lawmakers, members of the Delta State Executive Council, chairmen of Warri North, Warri South and Warri South-West local government councils, traditional rulers, community leaders, and representatives of fishermen and farmers associations.

Troops Rescue Eight Victims, Apprehend Six ISWAP Members in Borno, Adamawa

Troops have rescued eight abductees and arrested six suspected terrorists and collaborators in separate operations across Borno and Adamawa.

An operational report made available to newsmen on Monday said the operations were conducted between Sept. 11 and 13.

The report said the operations also led to the arrest of suspected terrorist logistics suppliers and collaborators, the disruption of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and the arrest of illegal miners.

It said the troops of the 82 Division Task Force Battalion rescued eight abductees at the fringes of Armuda and Gava villages in Gwoza Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno.

The report said preliminary investigation indicated that the victims escaped from the enclave of Chikede terrorists.

According to the report, the rescued locals were subsequently handed over to local authorities for further action.

In Adamawa, it said the troops of 23 Brigade arrested three suspected terrorists at Gaya village, Hong LGA.

"The suspects were arrested following information obtained from a previously arrested terrorist and remained in military custody.

"Also in Adamawa, troops arrested six suspected kidnappers at Soktu Hill, Song Local Government Area, during a raid conducted with hunters.

"The suspects reportedly confessed to kidnapping more than seven victims, collecting ransom for some and killing those who failed to pay.

"In Borno, troops and members of the Civilian Joint Task Force arrested three suspected terrorist logistics suppliers at Koppa village, Konduga.

"The suspects were allegedly supplying food and household items from Maiduguri to terrorists operating around Alajiri village, Mafa.

"The troops recovered three mobile phones, two bicycles, N53,200 and other sundry items from the suspects," it said.

The report also said the troops conducted a dawn cordon-and-search operation at Kukawa following intelligence about plans by terrorists to attack their location.

According to the report, one suspected terrorist fighter was arrested during the operation after allegedly leaving Kukawa about a year ago to join terrorist groups operating in Dumbullum and Kareto camps.

It added that troops and the Civilian JTF arrested two suspected terrorist collaborators and recovered six loaves of bread and N3.65 million.

In Kwara, the report said the troops of Operation SAVANNAH SHIELD arrested a suspected terrorist collaborator at Oro Ago, Ifelodun LGA.

It said the troops also disrupted an IED threat along the Woro-Nuku Road in Kaiama, where an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team located four IED cylinders.

It added that the EOD team successfully disposed of two cylinders and disabled the remaining two.

"In Plateau, troops of Operation ENDURING PEACE arrested six suspected illegal miners at Rakwok mining site, Barkin Ladi LGA.

"The troops recovered a cutlass, seven torchlights, a mobile phone and other items from the suspects.

"In Benue, troops of Operation WHIRL STROKE arrested four suspected vandals with vandalised pipelines at Gou, Logo Local Government Area.

"A generator and other items were recovered from the suspects.

"Meanwhile, troops and police intervened in a communal clash at Kowa Yarda village, Karshi, Abuja, after a herder allegedly macheted two farmers.

"Troops subsequently engaged the families, youth leaders and vigilantes and appealed for calm and restraint.

"The troops also rescued a Fulani vigilante detained by youths at Ara Sabo and handed him over to the vigilante headquarters in the area," it said.

Director-General of the Nigerian Technical Aid Corps, NTAC, Hon. Yusuf Yakubu (M); management staff of NTAC, and 10 other volunteers scheduled for deployment to Rwanda, during their orientation/briefing exercise in Abuja on Monday.

Police Arrest 14 Over Suspected Alcohol Poisoning in Ondo, Recover Methanol

The Police Command in Ondo State has arrested 14 suspects in connection with the sale and consumption of alcoholic drinks linked to the deaths of 29 persons in Odigbo Local Government Area of the state.

The spokesperson for the command, DSP Abayomi Jimoh, disclosed this in a statement on Sunday in Akure.

Jimoh said the arrests followed the state government's ban on the sale and distribution of unverified alcoholic drinks, and an enforcement operation by the police in the affected communities.

The state Commissioner for Health, Dr Banji Ajaka, had confirmed the deaths of 29 people and 60 cases from the suspected alcoholic poisoning in the local government.

Ajaka said the cases were recorded mainly in Araromi-Obu, Orita Odigbo, Newtown, Odole, Okele and Oniparaga communities.

Some residents of the affected communities reportedly fell ill after consuming substances suspected to be herbal alcoholic drinks.

Speaking further on the incident, the spokesperson for the command said the arrest and recovery followed sustained security, medical and investigative interventions by relevant authorities.

Jimoh said during the operation, 14 suspects, comprising alleged sellers and consumers of the deadly drinks and concoctions, were arrested, noting that they have been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) for further investigation.

"The enforcement followed directives of the Commissioner of Police, Felix Ohagwu, on targeted dangerous and potentially life-threatening alcoholic drinks and concoctions," he said.

Jimoh said the command was investigating every relevant lead, including the source, production, composition, distribution and consumption of the suspected drinks.

"The substances suspected to be methanol have been recovered and subjected to further investigation and necessary forensic examination.

"This is to establish their exact composition and determine any possible link to the reported deaths," he said.

Jimoh said the bodies of the deceased were undergoing post-mortem examinations, while health officials had intensified medical intervention.

The command's spokesperson said several youths from the affected communities were taken to the Odigbo Local Government medical facility for assessment, testing and treatment.

He said the suspects would remain in police custody and would be charged to court after investigation.

Jimoh urged residents to exercise extreme caution and avoid locally brewed, unlabelled or suspicious alcoholic drinks and herbal concoctions.

"The Command remains committed to working with health authorities and other stakeholders to establish the full circumstances surrounding the incident and bring anyone found culpable to justice," he said.

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul with Hungarian Foreign Minister Anita Orban in Budapest, Hungary, September 14, 2026. REUTERS/Bernadett Szabo Purchase Licensing Rights

Germany Eyes Fresh Start with Hungary as Foreign Minister Makes First Visit Since Orban Ouster

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul described his trip to Budapest on Monday - the first by a German foreign minister in nearly seven years - as a chance to rapidly restore relations in the wake of the ouster of former prime minister Viktor Orban.

There is much ground to make up, he said, but "the political change in Hungary offers an opportunity to rapidly restore our relations to a foundation of mutual trust and reliability."

Germany has hailed a new start in relations under Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar, who took office this year following Orban's 16-year rule.

Zelenskiy Asks Lawmakers for Swift Removal of Ukraine's Prosecutor General

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called on Ukrainian lawmakers on Monday to swiftly support the removal of Ukraine's prosecutor general as tensions escalated over a series of high-profile anti-corruption investigations.

Prosecutor General Ruslan Kravchenko resigned his post last week after a corruption investigation reached his office. He was not charged with a crime or named a suspect in any investigation, but anti-corruption authorities had accused a subordinate of helping run a fraud ring.

Relations between Ukraine's anti-corruption watchdogs and other law-enforcement agencies have faced continuous strain over the past year, and Kravchenko said on Monday that he had signed a "suspicion notice" against the head of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU), one of the bodies investigating his office.

He alleged that NABU head Semen Kryvonos has forged official documents to obtain "an unlawful benefit on an exceptionally large scale" and accused him of a fictional adoption to "evade legal liability in court".

NABU and SAPO, the other anti-graft agency involved in the probe that led to the prosecutor general's resignation, said that Kravchenko's statement was another step in a "systematic attack on independent anti-corruption bodies." They denied the allegations in Kravchenko's statement and said that Kryvonos had not been formally charged.

Under Ukrainian law, Zelenskiy needs to submit a formal request for parliament to accept Kravchenko's resignation. Parliament was expected to hold a vote on Tuesday, several lawmakers said.

"There is only one path for this Prosecutor General: removal from office. That is what I told him," Zelenskiy said on the Telegram app.

Kravchenko had been criticised by opponents for allegedly participating in an attempt to roll back the independence of NABU and SAPO last year – accusations he has denied.

The latest escalation in the power struggle comes at a time when Ukraine is struggling to meet its obligations on some of the anti-corruption reforms that are required to unlock vital funding from its international partners.

Russia Hits Ukrainian Train Shortly After Boris Johnson, Top European Officials Leave Station

A Russian drone has hit a train near the Ukraine-Poland border shortly after former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and top European security officials had passed through.

No casualties were reported after the strike at Yahodyn, which hit the train's engine. All the passengers had been evacuated, Ukrainian authorities said.

Johnson and other European national security advisers, including the UK's Jonathan Powell, had passed along the same line on a different train on their way back from a conference in Kyiv.

Russia said it had struck "railway infrastructure" in western Ukraine, but Ukraine's state railway company Ukrzaliznytsia said that "quite possibly, the target of this drone could have been the diplomatic train".

Former CIA chief David Petraeus, who had been on board another train at Yahodyn station at the time of the strike, said the incident was "terrifying".

In an interview with the New York Times, Petraeus said: "This is the act of a truly barbaric leader trying to terrorize Ukrainian civilians."

In a statement, Ukrzaliznytsia said the diplomatic train "had left the station earlier than expected because of the timetable change... due to constant threats of Russian strikes".

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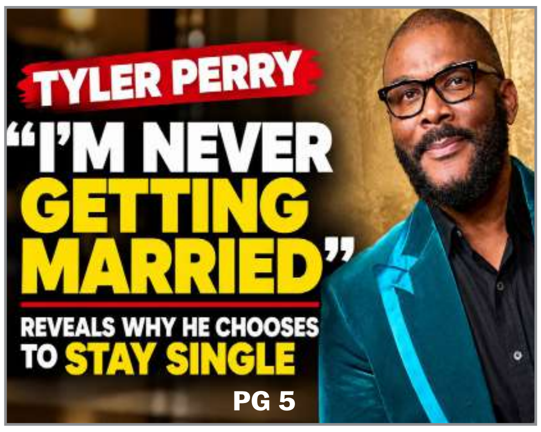

Steve Osuji's 2027 Prophetic Fantasy

OPINION

BY

SUNDAY DARE

There is a distinct, exhausting genre of Nigerian commentary that mistakes cynicism for sophistication, bitter partisanship for objective analysis, and venom for editorial depth.

Steve Osuji's intervention on the 2027 presidential landscape fits squarely into this well-worn mould. Dripping with unwarranted condescension, frantic hyperbole, and a palpable disdain for institutional reality, Osuji attempts to paint a picture of an imperiled incumbent and an infallible, messianic opposition.

But when stripped of its purple prose, partisan hero-worship, and unfounded insinuations, his thesis collapses into a hollow, intellectually dishonest exercise in wishful thinking.

Osuji's commentary is not an analysis; it is a symptom of a political subculture that refuses to reconcile itself with the hard, structural choices required to save Nigeria from decades of managed decay. To dismantle his web of selective amnesia and manufactured outrage, one must drag his assertions back into the harsh, uncompromising light of reality.

The Myth of the "Messianic" Third Force and Electoral Arithmetic

Osuji's primary preoccupation is the elevation of Mr. Peter Obi to a mythological status, describing him as a political phenomenon who supposedly "won" the 2023 election before it was "glitched" away. This is a comforting fairy tale for the opposition, but it collapses upon even elementary statistical scrutiny and objective electoral history.

The assertion that Obi won the 2023 election "by miles" ignores the brutal, mathematical reality of electoral geography in Nigeria. In 2023, a candidate who failed to cross the constitutional threshold of broad national spread—failing catastrophically to garner meaningful, statutory votes in critical states across the northern and central regions of the federation—cannot lay claim to a national mandate.

Winning pockets of hyper-mobilized angst in isolated urban enclaves does not translate to a pan-Nigerian victory.

To suggest that a politician who bounces haphazardly from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the Labour Party, and now supposedly to a fledgling outfit like the National Democratic Congress (NDC), represents "organic consistency" is an insult to the lexicon of political integrity.

Osuji gushes over Obi's aversion to traditional campaign structures, framing it as a badge of populist honor. In truth, it is a convenient evasion of institutional accountability. A candidate who fears structured party organs, open programmatic debates, and transparent nationwide organization is not a revolutionary; he is a digital-age populist riding the transient waves of economic anxiety and social media echo chambers.

When Osuji attempts to dismiss all other contenders—labeling veterans like Donald Duke, Omoyele Sowore, and Adewole Adebayo with derogatory tags of "spoilers" and "clowns"—he betrays a deep intolerance for pluralism. Anyone who refuses to bow at the altar of his preferred candidates is summarily excommunicated. This is not journalism; it is partisan gatekeeping disguised as high-minded critique.

The Reality of the Tinubu Administration: Courage Over Populist Cowardice

Osuji paints President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration as an "abysmal failure," weeping over imaginary dunghills of poverty while conveniently ignoring the monumental, foundational rot the current administration inherited on May 29, 2023.

For decades, successive Nigerian leaders lacked the political will to confront the twin cancers that were bleeding the nation to death: the criminal, unsustainable fuel subsidy regime and the distorted, multiple foreign exchange markets that served as a massive pipeline for rent-seekers and corrupt arbitrageurs.

Previous administrations kicked the can down the road, preferring popular, debt-financed ruin to necessary, painful surgery. President Tinubu took the bull by the horns on day one, halting the hemorrhage.

To evaluate this administration without acknowledging the structural courage of those reforms is intellectual dishonesty of the highest order. Let's consider the measurable, verifiable milestones achieved under President Tinubu's watch across key sectors.

First, is the "Economic Stabilization and Fiscal Re-engineering". The abolition of the opaque fuel subsidy stopped the bleeding of trillions of naira into private pockets. The unification of the foreign exchange market dismantled a corrupt parallel-market cartel. Consequently, revenue flows to federal, state, and local governments have expanded exponentially, granting sub-nationals unprecedented financial autonomy to execute developmental projects.

Second, is the "Macroeconomic Growth and Investor Confidence". Defying doomsday prophecies, Nigeria's real GDP expanded by 4.43% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2026, accelerating from previous quarters. International rating agencies such as Fitch, Moody's, and S&P Global Ratings have recognized these stabilizing fundamentals, with landmark credit upgrades reflecting growing international confidence in Nigeria's structural reforms.

External reserves have surged past $54.08 billion—achieving their highest level in nearly 18 years—while the debt service-to-revenue ratio has experienced a dramatic downward rebalancing away from the unsustainable precipice of the past.

Third, is the "Massive Infrastructure Drive". Unlike past eras where public funds vanished into phantom projects, the administration has prioritized high-impact infrastructure through aggressive Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and the Renewed Hope Infrastructure Development Fund.

From the ongoing, ambitious construction of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway and the Sokoto-Badagry Highway to crucial rail modernizations and regional power interventions, the administration is laying the physical tracks for long-term industrialization.

Fourth, is the "Social Interventions and Human Capital". Recognizing the temporary pains associated with macroeconomic adjustments, the administration instituted targeted cushioning mechanisms. The Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) has liberated hundreds of thousands of indigent students from financial exclusion, enabling access to higher education. Initiatives like Credicorp, MSME intervention funds, and the implementation of the new national minimum wage are systemic cushions designed to protect the vulnerable.

Fifth, is the "Security and Institutional Integrity". While security challenges inherited over decades cannot vanish overnight, the armed forces have sustained aggressive, coordinated offensives against insurgency, banditry, and kidnapping networks, steadily restoring civil authority to liberated communities.

Concurrently, institutions like the EFCC have been empowered to sanitize the financial architecture, striking down illicit financial flows, while Nigeria's standing in international financial governance continues to reap profound dividends.

Debunking the Hollow Insinuations of Flight and Fear

Osuji's snide remarks regarding President Tinubu's working vacation—peddling the stale, gutter narrative that the President is "on the run" or "incommunicado"—reveal a profound misunderstanding of modern governance and basic executive scheduling.

A national leader is not tethered to a physical chair in Abuja to prove competence. In an interconnected global economy, statecraft requires strategic international engagements, economic diplomacy, and moments of tactical reflection away from the suffocating pressure-cooker of domestic political sycophancy.

The desperate attempt to weaponize a temporary vacation into a sign of weakness is a classic hallmark of opposition panic. While opposition figures run from pillar to post launching ad hominem missiles and recycling hollow populist slogans, the Tinubu administration continues to execute its mandate, commission landmark infrastructure, and consolidate macroeconomic gains.

Conclusion — Substance Will Trump Demagoguery in 2027

Steve Osuji and his ilk can continue to spin elegies for failed political projections, manufacturing outrage to appease partisan paymasters. They can dress up electoral lightweights as messiahs and minimize the historic, painful, but ultimately essential foundational surgery performed by President Tinubu.

However, the Nigerian electorate is increasingly discerning. Governance is not a shouting match won by moral posturing and economic illiteracy; it is about taking difficult, consequential decisions that secure the future of a nation.

President Tinubu's administration has faced the structural demons of Nigeria head-on. As the fruits of these bold reforms continue to ripen manifest across macro-fiscal stability, infrastructure delivery, and institutional renewal, the hollow assumptions of partisan polemicists like Steve Osuji will be swept away by the unyielding verdict of progress. Forget your Expresso. Smell the coffee.

• *Dr. Sunday Dare is Special Adviser to the President on Media and Public communications*

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