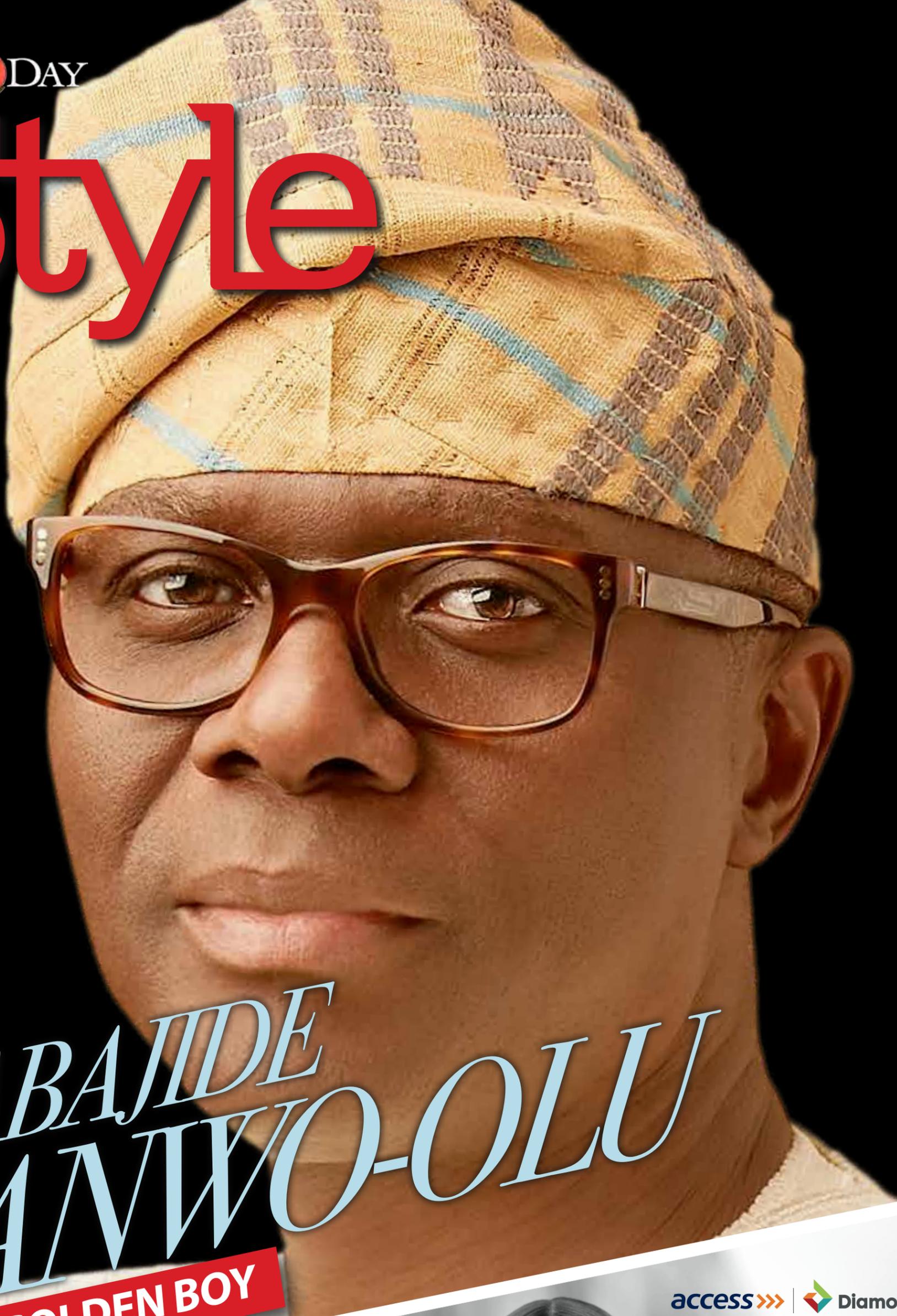


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THIS DAY

Style



BABAJIDE SANWO-OLU

APC'S GOLDEN BOY

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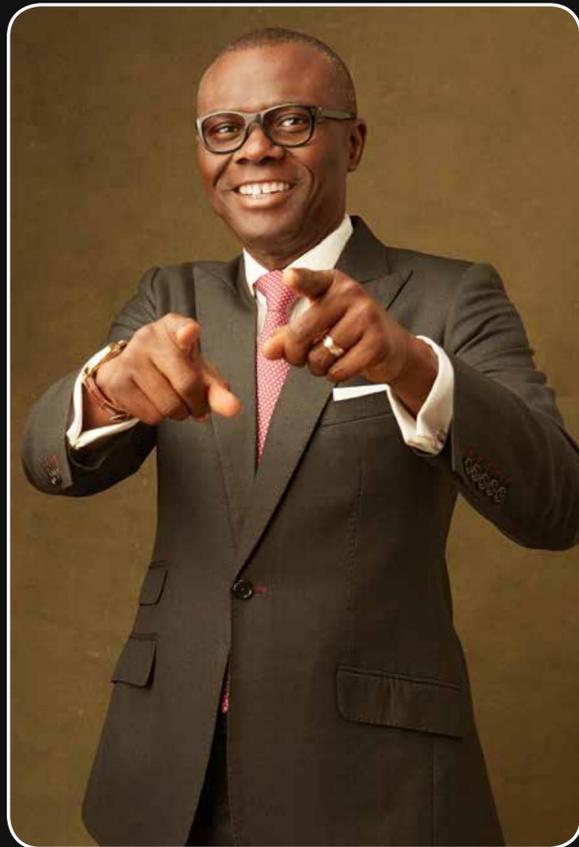
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COVER

Babajide Sanwo-Olu is the gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in the up coming Lagos governorship elections in March. A three-time commissioner and former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the Lagos State Development Property Corporation (LSDPC), Sanwo-Olu isn't new to the politics and governance of Lagos state. But the question is, does he have what it takes to be the next Governor of the state? Sanwo-Olu spoke to **FUNKE BABS-KUFEJI** about his plans for Lagos.

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THISDAY STYLE

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Some people are still recovering from the high octane emotions of yesterday's elections! And they are yet to snap back to reality because of the heightened expectations that led to the said day. One thing Nigerians have come to accept, is the power of voting. The elections, as you well know, are still ongoing, so it's not yet time to take a back seat until every single political position has been filled with the winning candidates. Naturally, these political appointments will continue to trend until we are well and settled with our new leaders in positions of power. If you have never heard of Babajide Sanwo-Olu, then you must live in Mars because his face is plastered on every nook and corner in Lagos state. This APC gubernatorial candidate for Lagos State, has a few things to say about what he intends to do should he get the coveted seat. Only time will tell if he can live up to his promises if he does win. Like the presidential elections, we will have to wait and see if his bark is as good as his bite.

There was a time when the thrill of a physical shopping spree was second to none! But now, with emergence of online shopping, traditional retailing has been hit really hard and there are those who have used this channel to brand themselves. They are Fashion Bloggers. They not only dictate the rules of fashion through their Instagram handles, they themselves are walking adverts for which trends to follow. Every and anything they adorn can be gotten at the click of a button. It sounds like an easy glamorous job... it is not. Some Fashion Bloggers change as much as thrice daily and every single pose is planned. It's like their life is a permanent photoshoot. As glamorous as it sounds, it is exhausting to keep up such appearances on a daily basis to increase followers. Because this job is so popular amongst the youths of today, many of them have embraced it as it not only suits their lifestyle, it also maintains it. But like with everything in Fashion, the cycle changes very fast with new faces emerging before the tea turns cold. So until another phenomenon comes up, this trendsetters keep dictating the pace of Fashion.

Ruth

FASHION DIRECTOR/EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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ITUAH IGHODALO



KING SUNNY ADE



WALE EDUN



WALE BABALAKIN



H.E. GODWIN OBASEKI
GOVERNOR OF EDO STATE



AIGBOJE AIG-IMOUKHUEDE



ALBERT OKUMAGBA



ALABA & MODELE SHONIBARE



RAYMOND IYEMBE

MARLA IYALEKHUE BELO-OSAGIE LAID TO REST

The body of Mrs. Maria Iyalekhue Belo-Osagie (nee Bazuaye) was laid to rest at Ebony Vaults Ikoyi in Lagos recently. The 90-year old Matriarch is the mother of Nigerian businessman and Chairman Metis Capital Partners, Mr. Hakeem Belo-Osagie, Mrs. Sheri Williams, Rilwan and Hakeem Belo-Osagie. Blessed with successful children, it was expected that she will get a befitting burial which she did as guests from all works of life gathered to pay their last respects. The well attended reception was held at the Harbour Point Victoria Island in her honour for friends and families.

PHOTOS: ABIODUN AJALA & KUNLE OGUNFUYI



MR WILLIAMS



MYRNA BELO-OSAGIE



SHERI WILLIAMS



RILWAN BELO-OSAGIE



ALIKO DANGOTE



TONY ELUMELU



FEMI OTEOLA



ATEDO PETERSIDE



MAIDEN IBRU



Scene and be Seen



CHIEF SAROMI, CHIEF OBETO & KOLA-OWO



STAN ADEYEMI



DR. TAIWO



SINATU OJIKUTU



KENNY SAKA



MR OGUNBAMBI



FOLA OLOWOFOYE



COUNCIL OF CHIEFS



KUNLE MAKINDE



SHADE OGUNSOLO



RANTI ABOROWA



ERNEST NDUKWE



PROF. OGUNTADE



SHAKI YEMBRA

THE SIR OLU OKEOWO PHYSIOTHERAPY CENTRE

BY RUKY SALAKO

Recently, the college of Medicine University of Lagos, Idi Araba, welcomed a new centre, Courtesy of Sir and Lady Okeowo. The physiotherapy centre which was long overdue was donated by Sir Okeowo in his love for education, health care and Humanity. The Sir Olu Okeowo physiotherapy centre is arguably the biggest in any Nigerian University today. In appreciation of the kind gesture, the university's senate honoured him with the Biggest Donor award to the department. The Ijebu-ode, Ogun State-born business and property mogul is known to lean towards any course geared towards the advancement of humanity. Unknown to many who wonder about his commitment to the health sector, the billionaire studied Medicine decades ago at the Dominican Republic.



SIR OLU & JOKE OKEOWO



CHIEF OLOPAIDE



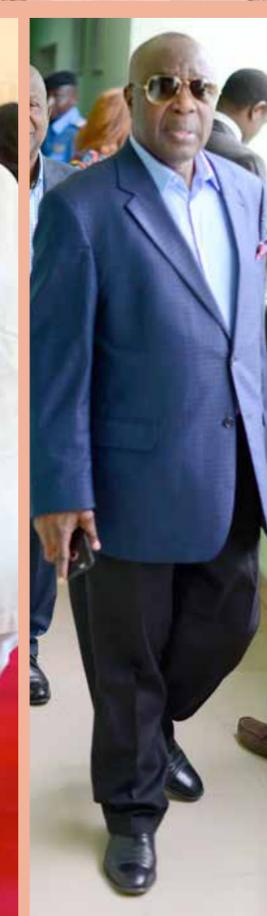
KOFI KARTEY



BOSUN & YINKA OREDOLA



MR OGUNSANYA



LOVETH YEMBRA



SEGUN ABRAHAM



NNENA OKOYE

This week, we're admiring the intelligent and industrious Nnena Okoye's elegant and timeless style. Nnena's style is classy and graceful, with a touch of trendy.

Whether she rocks heels, sneakers, an evening gown or jeans, the beautypreneur prefers sophisticated, classy and cool looks that add to her elegance, beauty and poise.

BY FUNKE BABS-KUFEJI



Look 1



Look 2

Ankara, beads and lace. What more can we say, her classic dress sense keeps us wanting more fashion pointers from her.

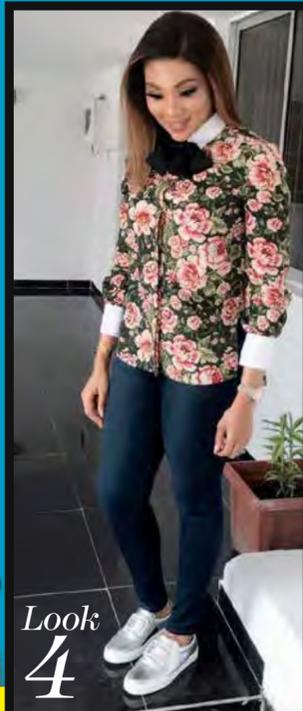


Look 3

Channeling her inner Victoria Beckham, Nnena's translation of the business casual look is simply impeccable.



Look 6



Look 4

Nnena knows how to make every outfit look super cool. She is effortlessly slaying in this floral shirt, jeans and silver sneakers.



Look 5

This look is a perfect mix of sexy and elegant, we need no more proof that this chic fashionista has her fashion game on lockdown.

Ankara, beads and lace. What more can we say, her classic dress sense keeps us wanting more fashion pointers from her.

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BABAJIDE SANWO-OLU

Babajide Sanwo-Olu is the gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in the upcoming Lagos governorship elections in March. A three-time commissioner and former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the Lagos State Development Property Corporation (LSDPC), Sanwo-Olu isn't new to the politics and governance of Lagos state. But the question is, does he have what it takes to be the next Governor of the state? Sanwo-Olu spoke to FUNKE BABS-KUFEJI about his plans for Lagos.

Why should the people of Lagos State elect you as the next Governor, what are you bringing to the table if elected and what edge do you have over other candidates?

The people of Lagos State should elect me as the next Governor because I have come to serve, and I am ready to serve and work for the people of the state.

As a Lagosian, born and raised in Lagos, I share the experiences of other residents, who are my neighbours, friends, acquaintances and family. I have first-hand knowledge of the needs and aspirations of the people, so I will deliver practical solutions that will make Lagos better and more habitable for all.

More importantly, I come prepared and ready, having served as three-time Commissioner in Lagos State, and until recently, the MD/CEO of Lagos State Development and Property Corporation (LSDPC), arguably Nigeria's biggest and oldest real estate development company.

I have a rich mix of public and private sector experience, which can be structured into 17 years of solid private sector experience and 13 years of quality public sector experience.

I have been Special Adviser to a Deputy Governor of the State and later to the Governor. I have served under three Governors of Lagos State. I have run the balance sheet three different banks, where I was Treasurer- Lead Merchant Bank, UBA and First Atlantic Bank (now part of First City Monument Bank). I have also worked as a Seismic Surveyor with United Geophysical Nigeria Ltd (a seismic data acquisition company) in a role, which took me round the whole Niger Delta including the Lake Chad region prospecting crude oil for Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

I think I should let you know that I also ran a start-up company in the 90s, which allowed for extensive nurturing of my entrepreneurial skills. I have done so many great things. This 53-year old man called Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu has a very broad view of life and extensive knowledge of the working of government in Lagos State. I am the most experienced of the gubernatorial candidates.

I come with a lot of experience and that is the edge I have over other candidates. I do not only know Lagos like the palm of my hands, I also know how to take the State forward.

What will you do differently to improve the welfare of the economically challenged to eradicate poverty?

I plan to run an inclusive government, and a social welfare centered government, where every segment of the society will feel the impact of good governance.

Let me say this to you pointedly, our government will serve the people at the bottom of the pyramid, and work seriously towards creating sustainable mechanisms that will deliver prosperity to every Lagosian.

We will roll-out initiatives and improve on social planning. People who are constrained by their socio-

economic situation and often do not have choices in the matter of social welfare and amenities will live differently and experience quality life.

Looking at THEME, the acronym for our policy agenda, which means Transportation and Traffic Management, Health and Environment, Education and Technology, making Lagos a 21st Century Economy, Entertainment and Tourism.

The agenda is conceived not only to make the state better, but also to serve and empower the people including the poor. The Lagos State Employment Trust Fund will be enhanced and strengthened for wider reach. Our agenda is geared towards creating new ecosystems and strengthening the existing ones. We are determined to build a more socio-economically viable state.

For instance, by frontally addressing the issues of transportation and traffic management, commuting within the state will become easier and intra-state travel time will be significantly reduced. This will boost economic activities and facilitate exchanges that will make life more meaningful to the people. We are committed to delivering a multimodal transportation system.

Education is one of the ways of lifting people out of poverty because knowledge is power. The rich amongst us have choices, and can take their children to private schools or private hospitals. They can pay for what they need. It is the poor who do not have a choice that the government must make giving their children the opportunities they need in life, a priority. We must bring opportunities to the poor.

More importantly, we will make health affordable and accessible. Some of the issues around accessibility, affordability and effective healthcare delivery system will be addressed. We have the facilities, but we need to bring a lot of reforms into the health sector that will make healthcare affordable to Lagosians, and qualitative too.

We will look at the State Health Insurance Scheme (SHIS) for citizens and how all these tie into a working healthcare system. We will integrate the reports of the survey into our policy agenda on healthcare. No segment of the state will find access to quality healthcare challenging, neither will affordability be an issue for any category of Lagosian.

In your own view, what are the most pressing problems facing the state? How do these problems compare to those of other mega cities in the world and how do you intend to solve them?

Our THEME agenda is a direct response to the socio-economic challenges of the State.

So, on the scale of needs, Lagosians have listed traffic management as a very serious issue, but this is a low-hanging fruit our government will easily pluck. Preparative to addressing the problem, we commissioned a study on traffic hot-spots in Lagos, and the feedback revealed that there are over 60 points, where traffic gridlock is always very bad. Now, we

identified the locations, and efforts at creatively identifying the causes of gridlock those locations are intensified.

Already, we have seen that in some places, the location of fuel stations is one of the causes of the problem. In other areas, offices and commercial buildings without parking spaces are contributors to the jams. Quick Service Restaurants, where vehicles are reversing-out of car parks also contribute to road blocks. But bad roads have come out as the major contributor to gridlocks in Lagos State.

With these insights, we are looking at the locations case-by-case and designing workable solutions that will bring relief to road users. Some of the traffic management experts we are working with have methodically looked into the issues and came-up with smart solutions, including the need to reduce the big roundabouts in some areas.

Part of the solution could also be, for example, in the morning, during rush hours, you see places where traffic is moving on one side and not moving on the other side. A smart solution is to look at how we can extend some of the free lanes in the morning and in the evening reverse same into another lane. This means that in the morning, we turn a 4-lane road into a 6-lane, and reverse the order in the evening because the pressure point has changed. People are going back home from work and other places they drive to in the morning.

See, simple solutions like directing traffic to the free lanes to decongest our roads as quickly as possible, especially in the evening, during rush hours, could reduce travel time and enhance our productivity. Even, there are health benefits to effective traffic management, so it's a major point of consideration for our government.

We also have people issues to deal with. I mean behavioural issues that we need to address. Many of our people do not understand that they are not the only road users. People must drive responsibly, and need to respect the right of other road users. We need to take some of these messages back home to educate ourselves. People must know that the same right they have to our roads is the same right others have. We must respect ourselves on the roads. Appropriate road use conducts can contribute significantly to removing congestions from our roads.

Similarly, traffic signs and traffic lights must be obeyed. It is only when we do the little things we need to do as citizens that we can solve some of our problems, including the gridlocks on our roads. People should not drive against traffic when there is no need to do so, or when not directed to do so by traffic management officers.

I need to also say clearly that we will bring increased efficiency to traffic management in the state. LASTMA officers will be retrained, and where there is need for recruitment of more officers, we will do that. We will do a lot of enlightenment campaign around the issues, while working on implementable solutions. Every



“
I have a rich mix of public and private sector experience, which can be structured into 17 years of solid private sector experience and 13 years of quality public sector experience.
”

challenge will get a bespoke solution.

Our focus is beyond just road travels within the state. We are thinking about a multimodal transportation system befitting a megacity state like Lagos. A third of Lagos is water. That suggests that we have a huge water transportation opportunity and alternative. The waterways need to be properly mapped to help navigation.

Where we have water body that needs to be dredged to allow boats to move well, we will do. I am aware that one of the problems with water transportation in Lagos is lack of investment, and operators are not willing to invest because of poor returns. The operators complain of poor patronage. When they take people from Ikorodu to Island in the morning, they return the boat empty without passengers because less people go towards the area in the morning. We will have to look at how we can help them solve that problem, such that the venture becomes profitable and water transport more efficient.

We also have the rail projects that we need to complete, especially the Blueline from Okokomaiko to CMS. We need to complete the track and bring the rolling stock to get it operational. It is about funding. We will find a way to complete that rail project. Lagos needs a transportation system outside the roads that can move thousands of people daily.

As we continue to engage on expansion of our BRT corridors, develop water transportation and deal with the road issues, I believe we will be able to address the problem of traffic gridlock in Lagos. It is worth emphasizing too, that there is no mega city like Lagos, where traffic challenges are eliminated completely. In cities like New York, Chicago, Cairo etc., where they have better public transportation system, they still have traffic issues.

Waste Management in Lagos has been at its worst in recent times, what will be your immediate plan to address this in the short term, and sustain it in the long term?

Waste Management is an extension of the 'H' in our THEME agenda. Health & Environment. Waste Management is a component of our plan for the Environment. Well, for some reasons our waste management system seems to have broken down, but I know that environmental cleanliness and waste management shouldn't not be a challenge.

Lagos State had conquered this challenge years back. So, the current situation will be methodically looked into, and the issues immediately resolved. For instance, if there are issues with the current waste management arrangement, we will certainly address them. If it is about the implementation, we will see what the problem is.

And for increased efficiency of the waste management system, the Private Sector Participants (PSPs) will be looked into. The structure will become more integrated to ensure that Lagos is clean. The refuse needs to go.

More importantly, we now need to go back to ourselves as individuals and embrace a better culture of refuse disposal, which begins with waste sorting. It is when we start sorting our waste that waste management becomes more effective, and transformable to wealth.

We need a total mindset change. Advocacy must come into this. Public enlightenment will play a pivotal role in this attitudinal change. It is not going to be a one-size fits all solution. What I can assure our people is that we will solve the problems associated with waste management in Lagos. Lagos will be cleaner and more livable for all. We will create and sustain the ecosystem that will ensure environmental cleanliness in the state.



On education, there has been very little impact over the years. Public schools are not well equipped and most parents, particularly from the upper middle class still prefer to place their children in private schools. If you are elected how do you intend to change the narrative?

First, we need to know that government has a primary responsibility to provide basic education for the people. As we speak, there are not less than

673 junior and senior secondary schools, about 1,017 primary schools and almost 30,000 teachers catering to more than 1,000,000 students in Lagos State. Lagos State is occupying an unenviable 6th position nationally in the 2018 WAEC exams. This is not acceptable, we used to be in the first three positions back in the day.

So, our approach to restoring the lost glory in education shall be to introduce measures to address three broad issues: students, teachers and school infrastructure. We will invest heavily in developing a strong pool of talented and well-trained young people to drive economic development by increasing budgetary allocation for education from 12.07% to 18% during the tenure of the administration.

We will also collaborate with industry, federal government and the academia to update the education curriculum to reflect current and future industry needs. Because we pride ourselves as government of continuity in Lagos State, we will expand the Support-Our-School Programme in partnership with the private sector by targeting 100 schools across all 57 LCDAs, and provide tax incentives and waivers for private sector organisations partnering with our technical and tertiary institutions. We will scale-up school rehabilitation programme to renovate dilapidated schools, and provide adequate furniture and tools for every child in public schools in Lagos.

What ideas do you have around making Lagos a tech-collaborative state or at the very least make doing business easier for the tech industry towards job creation, innovation, and economic growth and development?

I must be honest with you that I didn't realize the amount of energy, interest and passion Nigerian youth, particularly Lagos youth have invested in technology, until I began this journey, taking trips to places of interest such as the Vibranium and other tech hubs in the State.

However, I had always known that technology is the major driver for sustainable wealth in today's world. Think about it, few years ago the names that dominated the top 10 countries in the world are the energy giants, but today, it is the other way round. Technology companies have taken over, and they are occupying the first five positions. Once elected as governor, we will facilitate creation of ICT hubs by creating office spaces across all the LGAs/LCDAs in the State within two years of our administration, to promote innovation and empowerment for teeming youths.

We are going to be heavy on technology, so we intend to collaborate with local and foreign experts and institutions to establish world class training institutions for relevant skills and expertise, required in the technology industry. We will upgrade infrastructure and curriculum of the ICT related courses at Lagos State University (LASU), provide tax incentives to Internet Service Providers to implement a Broadband Rollout Plan and drive affordable internet access for businesses and homes across Lagos within two years.

As we speak, we are the only one who in practical term, have done something in the area of technology, even while on campaign trail. We have what is called Sanwo Free Wi-Fi in the higher institutions as well as big shopping malls in the State. And we intend to do more when we form government such as creation of an IPP dedicated to the technology hubs around Lagos, establishment of an exchange program to match undergraduates in universities within Lagos State with technology start-ups to develop the skills required by the industry before they graduate, stimulate demand by ensuring that the state

government patronises viable technology solutions developed by local entrepreneurs and create a State Council on Advancement of Technology in Lagos made up of key persons in the technology industry, the private sector and government. This council would be responsible for advising the government on policies and initiatives that can advance the growth of technology in Lagos State. With all these in place, we believe that Lagos will be on her way to becoming IT hub in Africa.

Lagos is over populated. Constructing and repairing roads is key. How much attention will you put into the repairs and construction of inner roads as opposed to the focus on major roads by successive administrations?

It is a fact that Lagos has a rapidly growing population, with daily influx of people, majority of who do not return to where they came from. Lagos has a gravitational pull as the commercial hub of Nigeria and this puts pressure on existing infrastructure like roads, housing, hospitals, housing etc.

To the specific issue of your question, both inner city roads and major roads are important and we will focus on both. Lagosians need the inner roads to access the major roads. So, I get it when people complain about inner city roads. We will intervene heavily on inner roads even though many of them are local roads for Local Governments to do. We will reform and restructure our local governments and council development areas to do more on roads within their jurisdiction, while we support them where necessary. The major roads are the trunk A roads we all need to commute from one part of the state to another.

For example, the Airport Road, Festac-Badagry-Seme Border road or Lekki-Epe Road and the Coastal road, which is in the pipeline. The Badagry-Seme Border road is a major international gateway to the West Coast. A major economic route though a Federal Road. We will ensure quick completion of the road and many others. We need to open up the state by expanding existing roads and constructing new ones. Our administration under our agenda for Making Lagos a 21st Century Economy have a comprehensive policy options for massive infrastructural development.

About the In one Freedom Of Information Act (FOI), in one of your interviews, you said you will look into the act. What do mean by look into, does this mean you are not keen on having the Act domesticated?

I know that the Freedom of Information Act is passed to ensure openness and accountability in government. And because it is meant to facilitate social progress, I will certainly look at it if elected.

The general perception is that Asiwaju Bola Tinubu controls the affairs of Lagos State and sitting governors defy him at their own risk. What is your relationship with Tinubu and how do you intend to serve the people without reinforcing this perception?

Let me be upfront with you. Asiwaju Tinubu is my leader and mentor. I have tremendous respect and admiration for him, just like many people do. He is a leader who has invested time and resources in creating a large pool of aspiring leaders across the country, not just in Lagos State.

I have a very good and fantastic relationship with him. I also want to correct a very wrong impression people carry around, especially people in the media. Asiwaju does not have any negative influence on any sitting governor in Lagos. He has very positive one. His focus is on development. He has worked for Lagos, and still working for Nigeria. He was the pacesetter for all the good things happening in Lagos. He brought innovation and revolutionary ideas to public service, which his successors have built on.

He has never told any governor after him to stop working for the people. If there is anything he has done and will continue to do, is to see Lagos move higher and higher in all indices of human development.

As Governor of Lagos I will continue to seek his wise counsel in the administration of the state. He had

eight solid years as Governor and was a very successful governor by all standard. For any Governor or leader that wants to succeed, the best is to seek counsel from predecessors.

You are a banker, a public servant and politician. Who is Babajide Sanwo-Olu when he is not wearing any of the caps above?

I am a husband, father, brother, friend, a family man and benefactor. I have been married for about 30 years to a beautiful and strong woman, who is a Medical Doctor. If you asked my wife about me, I am sure she will say I am not a bad husband and my children will also say I have probably not done badly as a father. My family members and friends think I have not done badly too. People around me will be in a better position to give more candid testimonial than whatever I can say about myself.



As a result-oriented person, I know passion is a critical component in driving any vision from conception to reality. And in sincerity, I am aware that great goals can be achieved when actions are conducted with all sense of sincerity. So, in anyone, or whichever environment I find the two lacking, is an instant turn-off for me.



When you are not working or campaigning for re-election, what do you enjoy doing or how do you relax?

I have lived a very busy life since I started my first work after NYSC. As a banker and public servant, I have had to work late nights and run very tight schedules. Running for election now is another basket entirely. The campaign schedule and activities have been grueling to say the least. The little time I have outside campaign, I try to spend with my family, read some books; because I love reading a lot and watch football.

I am an unrepentant Arsenal fan. On a lighter note, I am a supporter of every club now because I need everybody's vote. I don't want Chelsea, Man U supporters and others to be angry with me. So, I support all the clubs in Premiership and Champions leagues.

How are you effectively able to juggle your work and being a father and a husband?

I must say that I am lucky that my children have attained the age, which does not require any round-the-clock parental monitoring. They are aware and independent to take on many aspects of life, and following the right paths in their various endeavours.

So, as a father that is savvy with modern technology, what I do with them now are regular chats through different means of modern communication; and occasional visits.

In fact, for some of them who are out of the country, the proximity brought about by technology makes it feel like we are not geographically far away from each other.

Therefore, I am able to effectively conduct and combine my personal engagements with my parental roles, without lagging behind on any front.

Also as a husband, I am fortunate to

have married a woman, who, by all standards, is a perfect definition of a supportive wife and committed friend. The bond and understanding we share are tremendous and unrivalled. And I must state that this sustains our love, despite the demands of our respective professional endeavours. That's why management, planning and cooperation are also essential components of successful parenting and matrimony.

Do you have any pet peeves?

I would say lack of passion and sincerity.:

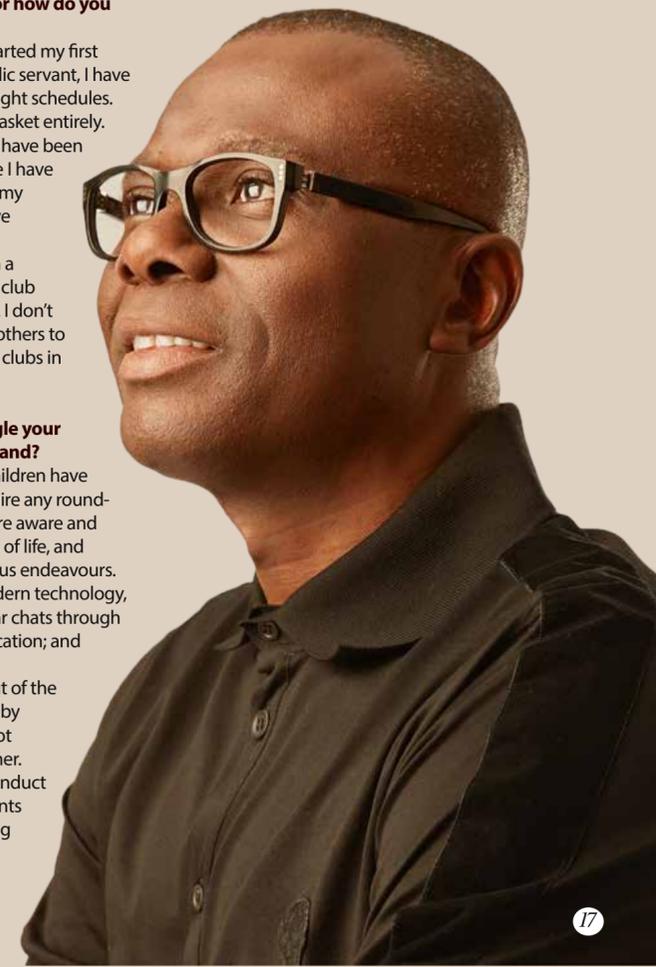
As a result-oriented person, I know passion is a critical component in driving any vision from conception to reality. And in sincerity, I am aware that great goals can be achieved when actions are conducted with all sense of sincerity. So, in anyone, or whichever environment I find the two lacking, is an instant turn-off for me.

Any last word for the electorate on why it is important for them to go out to vote in the coming election?

I think there should be continuous education in the country on the importance of voting by citizens in an election. There should be growing understanding amongst the populace that their vote is the power they have to bring about improved living standards, secure society, quality education, sustainable infrastructure and better health system they have been clamouring for. And that this can only be achieved by their participation in an election, and by voting a candidate that is competent and can deliver on those essential needs for the people.

People should also know that by voting a wrong candidate in an election, the solutions to many of the social problems will be long delayed.

And that's why we, at the APC, have a lot of programmes to educate our members and other members of the society on the importance of voting. So, the people must know the power they carry with their vote and must use the power wisely by voting the right candidates at elections.





BY FUNKE BABS-KUFEJI

MY EXPERIENCE

Virgin

30,000 feet in the air with a glass of champagne in my hand, on a seat that reclines into a flat bed I couldn't help but think Virgin Atlantic's Upper Class is a slice of heaven in the sky.

It was the experience of a lifetime, so of course, it only seems fair to let you in on all the details about my virgin Atlantic experience.

the flight there was a vast menu of food and variety of drinks...which, if you wanted, you could retire to the bar with friends. I couldn't help but think, I was over 30,000 feet in the air and I could eat, sleep 'comfortably', chat on WhatsApp, catch up on Instagram, watch a movie, listen to music and more. Isn't that something?

LAGOS - LONDON

You see I have had my fair share of first class travel but as I approached the Virgin Atlantic upper class check-in counter that morning and the ground staff greeted me warmly with a smile I knew this trip was going to be different from any I had ever taken. My luggage and passport were swiftly taken from me and it took all of 10 to 15 minutes to check in and clear immigration. As I sat at the lounge waiting for others in the team to arrive, a waiter approached and offered me selection of continental breakfast with a twist of Nigerian cuisines - the food was hot and fresh, just what I needed after waking up so early to beat the Lagos traffic in order to make the airport on time. As everyone arrived and grabbed

something to eat, we familiarized ourselves as travel partners before our flight was announced.

Typically, when I travel upper class it's always work related and I never take time to enjoy all the services available; but on this day I was in for the long haul. I stowed my bag and sat in my assigned seat and was immediately handed a hot towel to wipe off all the grime of walking through the airport and a glass of champagne to cool down before the aircraft takes off for the 6-hour trip. I took in my environment in-between sips from my champagne glass.

The upper class cabin was lit with ambient purple light to relax you; it had big oversized seats and ottomans, which recline to become a full bed. My personal little pod came complete with a fluffy pillow, a plump duvet and a slim but luxurious padded mattress that transformed my seat into the perfect place for a snooze.

The flight to London was smooth, on board I had an entrée of spicy suya served with warm bread rolls, a main of salmon and creamy mash, and finished with a sweet dessert of raspberry cake. Dead tired and stuffed, I passed on the trillion of movies and TV series on my personal entertainment system but I was trilled to hook up to Wi-Fi which should have cost me about £2.99 but because I was flying courtesy of the airline, it was free. This gave me a chance to catch up on Instagram and chat and share fabulous real time pictures with friends and loved ones on my 'chop life' flight to London. All, through

LONDON

Touched down in London clearing passport control was quite breezy - just one of the many perks of flying Upper Class; you get to use the fast track lane to get through and we were met by a limousine service, courtesy of Virgin Atlantic. This service is available to all upper class travellers and before I forget to mention the limousine came with free Wi-Fi. As we drove through London traffic I relaxed into the soft leather seats and fell asleep. I woke up just as we approached our hotel in Covent Garden, Radisson Blu Edwardian Hotel. It looked modest from the outside but inside the lobby was modern and cozy with a reception, concierge desk and a waiting area with contemporary furniture. We were greeted by two receptionists with a bright white smile and handed the keys to our rooms.

STANDARD ROOM AT THE RADISSON BREAKFAST

My room was warm and inviting, just what my body needed for the cold winter evening; the bed was perfectly laid with snow-white sheet and a thick soft duvet; the bathroom had a shower and bath to soak in and the best part of it all, breakfast was on the house. Lets just say this was home away from home and I was beginning to like the look of things.

As a typical Nigerian, being touristic has never been a thing for me in London but Virgin had this trip planned, and I was not about to miss out on any of the fun. First up was a trip to Cake Boy, a luxurious but relaxed cake boutique set on the river



in South West London. There we learnt to make the Virgin Atlantic bespoke High Tea with Eric Lanlard. Hot chocolates and Marshmallow, savoury scones, financier, scones and champagne were the order of the day. Being a baker myself I was in my elements mixing, kneading, piping till high tea was set to be devoured.

Later that same evening we visited the Lyrics Theatre where we watched 'Thriller', a show devoted to the music of Michael Jackson. Let's just say I have added more of the pop legend music to my iTunes playlist. The show starts with songs from the Jackson 5 era and gradually moves through MJ's career, his biggest hits and more.

The next two days were just as eventful, a trip to the British museum to see the 'I am Ashurbanipal' exhibition, the King of Assyria who ruled the Assyrian Empire from 669BC until his death

somewhere around 631BC. It was amazing to see the display of ancient history in a modern way in this exhibition offering insight about an empire. Perfume profiling at Miller Harris, a walking tour of Covent Garden to see the magnificent Christmas street lights and exclusive stores draped in grand decorations and window displays donned in their festive finest. We even got the chance to tour central London on the hop off, hop on, Big Bus. In these three days I toured London far more than I had ever done in my many years of visiting the city and I had



THRILLER LIVE AT LYRICS THEATRE



KAYLAH ONIWO, LOLA KUFILE, CHIDERA MOUKA, GLORY EDOZIEN, FUNKE BABS-KUFEJI & AZEEZ QUADRI AT LYRICS THEATRE

great fun. The day flew by so fast I almost didn't want it to end.

LONDON TO LAGOS

Our return home was just as good, chauffeur-driven through the Virgin Atlantic upper class private check-in lounge, a quick stop at duty free for some retail therapy and straight to the Virgin Atlantic Club House where we ate and relaxed before our flight. It's worth mentioning that the Virgin Atlantic Club House at Heathrow

is one of the best in the world. The lounge is a carefully thought of haven for travelers to relax. The food menu is extensive yet exquisite, with comfortable chair and recliners to relax in. It's an endless buffet of food and drinks, spa services and more but there is never enough time when you are having fun. Our flight was called and we all headed to board the plane back home but all hope wasn't lost as the thought of my full flat bed, Wi-Fi, the endless array of champagne, food, drinks and an endless sucking up free Wi-Fi.



STANDARD ROOM AT THE RADISSON



AT CAKE BOY



SALMON SERVED WITH CREAMY MASH



TABLE SET FOR HIGH TEA



SUYA SERVED WITH WARM BREAD ROLLS



KAYLAH ONIWO, FUNKE BABS-KUFEJI, AZEEZ QUADRI, ERIC LANLARD, LOLA KUFILE, GLORY EDOZIEN & CHIDERA MOUKA



Fashion blogs have been around since the early 2000s, but today, blogging is a whole new ball game. While fashion blogs are at an all-time high, we can't argue against the fact that social media platforms like Instagram remain the single largest forum to redirect traffic towards fashion blogs. But we are not complaining, because this has made our lives twice as easy. It's a hash tag game out there, and that's why we are neck deep into people's profiles – engrossed, enamored, and even losing a few days while browsing one hashtag after another. Sometimes it can be overwhelming too, to see every second influencer with thousands of followers (and sometimes millions) and the stuff they have to offer. But some fashion bloggers manage to stand out despite it all. And we are going to talk about five of the ones currently on our radar. And hey, if fashion and being updated is your thing, you need to follow them too. DIGITAL EDITOR, Style, KONYE NWANBOGOR reports...



THISDAY Style
bruary 17, 2019

SAMYJO VALENTINE

@samyjovalentine

Everything about Samyjo Valentine is fascinating. Her personality, aura, wit and humor, not to mention a strong fashion sense and everything else. This seems to be what caught the attention of the high street brands she adorns regularly and she has over 170,000 followers.

Hers is an exciting balance of feminine and fashionable pieces put together, redefining style.



THISDAY Style
No. 8697 Sunday, February 17, 2019

TREND SETTERS

FASHION BLOGGERS CURRENTLY ON OUR RADAR



IDU EMEZIEM

@fashionably_idu

You won't find too many people like her, but you know the world needs more of that. With stand out styles and fancy labels, this fashion lover is living it all up and raising bars, or actually, more like breaking barriers for all the right reasons. With prints, flaming hot oversized sunglasses, and a contagious fashion sense, Idu Emeziem believes and shows us time and again that 'age is just a variable.'



SADE AKINOSHO

@s4de_u

Sade Akinosho has an interesting approach that focuses on style, fashion, and just that. You'd realize that her posts are often full angle shots, or close angle pictures that focus on her accessories, because she believes everything else takes a back seat when it comes to her love of fashion. From her angular shots, it is clear she wants her followers to focus on her outfits, which brings an excellent perspective to the table. With over 40,000 followers that get a dose of her everyday outfits, she is an unstoppable force.



OLA ADEWALE

@olarslim

Popularly known as "Olarslim", Ola Adewale seems to blog not only out of an inborn love for fashion but also to increase sales for her online fashion store. Her brand is unique, and her feed is colourful. Definitely something to look for on a daily basis. Follow her for all of it, and more.



YUKI AKINOSHO

@yukiakinosho

Relatively new to the scene, Yuki Akinosho's approach is breathtaking, off-beat, and fulfilling, which is a terrific combination and precisely what fashion influencers need to be. From breaking stereotypes, challenging fashion trends, and merging high street fashion with luxury fashion, Yuki is steadily becoming an influencer in the most real sense.



Together, we conquer



The fight becomes easier with a reliable partner in your corner.

Glo, I hail o.



- Anthony Oluwafemi Olaseni Joshua, OBE.
World Heavy Weight Champion