

Switch

Quarter 1, 2026

A publication of FirstBank Nigeria Group

Your
dream
home
The MREIF Way



The Election
Economy

Nigeria's New
Ambassadors

New Kids
on the Block

FIFA World
Cup 2026



Content

2. From the Editor
4. Navigating the tax season
Some guides to manage your 2026 tax obligations
5. Third party insurance
There's real benefit in the least-priced motor insurance policy
6. Nigeria's new "ambassadors"
Nigerian snacks are representing well at home and abroad.
7. The election economy
Elections mean business. Are you ready?
8. With love from the creeks
Fisherman's soup is now a national delight.
9. Bienvenue à Dakar!
The allure of Dakar.
10. Switch to FirstBank
11. Quick route to your dream home
12. Events Diary
14. The Femi Otedola Way
Lessons from Making it Big
15. Jenifa Rules
Lessons from the Nigerian Queen of Box Office
16. New kids on the block
18. Yahaya Maikori on Esports in Nigeria
19. FIFA World Cup 2026:
A tournament of records.

Cover + page 9 image: houseplannng.com

Switch is published by the Marketing and Corporate Communications Department, First Bank of Nigeria Limited, 35, Marina, Lagos. Please forward all contributions to contentmgt@firstbankgroup.com. **The Team:** Olayinka Ijabiya, Acharu Osime, Chidinma Igbokwe, Temitope Olawunmi, Oluwatola Ibikunle- Aina

Contact us:

0201 448 5500
07080625000
0700FIRSTCONTACT
(0700-34778-2668228)

firstcontact@firstbankgroup.com
complaints@firstbankgroup.com
www.firstbanknigeria.com

[f](#) FirstBankofNigeria [x](#) FirstBankngr [v](#) Firstbankngr [@](#) Firstbanknigeria
[in](#) FirstBankofNigeriaLtd [✉](#) firstcontactcomplaints@firstbankgroup.com

FROM THE EDITOR

Stronger than ever



As Nigeria's banking sector undergoes one of its most significant transformations in decades, we spotlight FirstBank. At FirstBank, we are not merely responding to change, we have been driving it for 132 years. This feature shows how we turned the CBN's recapitalisation mandate into a masterclass in resilience, relevance, and inclusion.

Stronger Than Ever: FirstBank and the New Dawn of Nigerian Banking.

By mid-2025, the Central Bank of Nigeria's recapitalisation directive brought uncertainty across the industry. While others hesitated, FirstBank leaned in, viewing it as a strategic opportunity to deepen capacity, expand reach, and strengthen sustainable growth across Africa.

The numbers speak volumes. FirstBank successfully raised capital through a rights issue and private placement, meeting the CBN's ₦500 billion minimum regulatory capital requirement by early 2026. This was more than compliance — it was bold leadership.

Yet beyond the figures, it's about the people. It's the market woman in rural Kebbi saving daily through a FirstMonie Agent, part of

our vast agent banking network spanning communities across Nigeria. It's the young entrepreneur in Aba who received a loan, business training, mentorship, and digital tools via SMEConnect. It's our over 27 million customers transacting confidently on our digital platforms every day.

Recapitalisation meant expanded access and possibility. From embedding ESG into lending, championing women entrepreneurs through FirstGem, to forging alliances with fintechs, telcos, and development partners — FirstBank was not just getting bigger; it was becoming better, bolder, and more in tune with the Africa we serve.

By Q3 2025, this vision was unfolding in real lives across a nation ready for financial empowerment.

In this edition of Switch Magazine, discover insights on preparing for the 2027 elections, journey with us to Dakar, learn about third-party motor insurance, and enjoy many more engaging stories.

This edition has been carefully curated for your pleasure. Happy reading!

Olayinka

Navigating the 2026 Tax Season

Under the new Nigerian tax laws, the tax season for filing annual personal income tax returns is 1 January - 31 March of each year. The new laws mandate filing, even with zero returns, for all individuals, including those with under ₦800,000 annual income, by the 31 March to avoid penalties. For employers, all emoluments paid to employees must be filed by January 31 of each year.

Failure to file by the deadline can attract penalties, such as ₦50,000 for the first month and ₦25,000 for each subsequent month of default.

2026 Nigerian SME tax season checklist

Here is your essential checklist to navigate the 2026 tax season and avoid the new, stricter penalties.

The identity foundation

Activate your unified Tax ID:

Your National Identification Number (NIN) for individuals or your CAC RC/BN number for businesses is now your official 13-digit Tax ID. Ensure it is linked to your business bank accounts.

Separate your accounts: If you still run business transactions through a personal account, stop. Under the 2026 rules, the NRS may assume all inflows in a personal account are taxable



Violation	2026 penalty
Failure to file returns	N100,000 (1st month) + N50,000 (each subsequent month)
Failure to deduct WHT/PAYE	40% of the amount not deducted
Late tax payment	10% administrative penalty + interest at CBN rate
False/misleading docs	Up to N1,000,000 fine and/or 3 years imprisonment

income unless you can prove otherwise with a dedicated business account.

Monthly obligations (The "Due 21st" Rule)

VAT filing (if turnover > ₦100m): Monthly returns must be filed

on the NRS portal by the 21st of every month.

PAYE remittance: If you have employees, you must remit their Personal Income Tax (PAYE) to the State Internal Revenue Service (SIRS) by the 10th of every month.

WHT management: Ensure you deduct Withholding Tax from suppliers and collect your own WHT certificates immediately. Note: Small companies earning less than ₦2 million from a contract are now largely exempt from WHT deductions if they have a valid Tax ID.

Annual Self-Assessment (Deadline: 30 June 2026)

File even at 0%: If your turnover is ₦100m or less, you are likely exempt from Company Income Tax (CIT), but you must still file an annual return by June 30th (for December year-end companies) to claim this exemption.

Prepare a statement of account:

While small companies no longer need full audited financials, you must provide a certified Statement of Account and a fixed asset register.

Calculate your deductions:

Ensure you have documented your rent (up to ₦500k deduction), salaries, and utilities to reduce your taxable profit.

Digital compliance and e-invoicing

Adopt e-invoicing: Though the phased rollout for small businesses (turnover < ₦1bn) begins in July 2027, starting now protects you from audits. Ensure your invoicing app supports digital receipts.

Real-time records: The NRS now uses AI-driven tools to match your bank data with your tax declarations. Ensure your app's "Income vs. Expense" report matches your bank statements perfectly.



Third party insurance that works

In the bustling streets of Lagos, Shola weaved through traffic clipping a Toyota Corolla, shoving it onto the concrete pavement.

Metal crunched. Passengers in the Toyota groaned. Chaos is brewing as bystanders shouted. Without insurance, Shola is in trouble: hospital bills, repairs, especially.

But Shola has a third-party vehicle insurance, Nigeria's mandatory minimum cover under the Motor Vehicle (Third Party) Insurance Act. As the chaos settled, he calmly called his insurer. And almost immediately, the policy kicked in, protecting him from liability for damages he caused to others.

How it works: Vehicle owners pay a small annual premium - around ₦15,000 for private cars. Some companies offer a Third-Party Plus policy for roughly ₦30,000, which includes limited coverage for one's own car (up to ₦500,000). When you're at fault, the insurer handles claims from the "third party"- the other driver, passengers, or property owners. It does not cover your own vehicle or injuries.

Payouts include up to ₦3 million

for property damage (repairs or replacement) and coverage for bodily injury or death to third parties (medical bills and compensation to families). Limits vary slightly by insurer but provide essential protection.

Nigeria's motor insurance market forms a key part of the broader insurance sector contributing significantly to non-life premiums. Third-party policies dominate due to affordability and the legal requirement, though only about 28% of vehicles were insured in recent years.

Shola's claim processed smoothly. The Toyota was repaired, victims treated. He drove away wiser, knowing third-party insurance turns potential disaster into manageable resolution for Nigerian drivers.

Connect with an insurance expert today. Our team of dedicated Insurance Brokers are available to provide you with the information and assistance you need. Learn more at <https://www.fbninsurancebrokers.com/>

Nigeria's "New Ambassadors"

Nigerian snacks are representing well, at home and abroad.

Nigerian snacks are making a cultural statement across the world! These culturally-affirming, healthy and convenient traditional snacks are dusting foreign snacks at home and abroad.

They are home-grown, home-loved, home-reminding. Godfrey Orkeh, owner of Greenco Foods, says he has never exported his plantain chips. Yet they are a toast in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States where the love for Nigerian snacks have been on the rise overall.

There's a perfect Nigerian snack for every season, mood, and moment. Here's a walk through:

The Karma, best served hot:

Nothing heals the soul quite like piping-hot Nigerian street snacks. Think Puff-Puff, Akara, Okpa, Egg Roll, Meat Pie, Buns, Moi-Moi, Ekoki, or Masa. If almost-scalding food soothes your worries, this list is for you.

The Revenge, best served

cold: When the sun is blazing, reach for these

chilled lifesavers: Zobo, Kunu-Zaki, Kunu-Aya, or Soya milk. Especially on a dusty afternoon, ice-cold Zobo doesn't just refresh; it restores. Healthy, calming, and quietly telling you to slow down.

The Dentist, recommended:

These ones don't play nice with weak teeth. They test your jaw strength and teach you that "nothing good comes easy." Chin-Chin, Kuli-Kuli, Plantain Chips, Kilishi, Roasted Corn & Pear, Kokoro, and Gurudi - pure chewing satisfaction.

The Mood Changers:

These are natural anti-depressants. A tray of Boli with groundnuts or fish, hot Suya, Dodo Ikire, or Awara can flip your mood instantly. Ever seen anyone eat Suya



with a frown? Exactly.

The Sweet Toothers' Delight:

Head North for this category. Dublan, Donkwa, Halaka Kobo and more - sweet, addictive, and worth the trip.

The Everyday in-between:

Reliable staples that never disappoint: Tapioca with coconut, groundnuts or fish... and the undisputed king - Garri. Cassava flakes, nuts, sweeteners and creamer swimming in chilled water. The greatest snack of all time.

With Nigerians now everywhere in the world, our local snacks are conquering supermarket shelves abroad and winning.

Emediong Essien

The election economy

Elections mean business. Are you ready for it?

Election cycles in Nigeria trigger a powerful surge in economic activity. The 2027 general elections are expected to unleash billions of naira into the economy, creating a short but intense business boom. With INEC proposing a ₦873.78 billion election budget and higher campaign spending caps - up to ₦10 billion for presidential candidates and ₦3 billion for governorship races - significant money will flow into multiple sectors.

For entrepreneurs, freelancers, SMEs and service providers, election season is more than a political event - it is a business season. Demand is high, turnaround is fast and clients often need services urgently. Smart businesses position themselves early in high-demand, quick-cash sectors such as printing and branding, catering, logistics, transport and digital media.

Entrepreneurs who position early, secure contracts and scale their capacity stand to benefit. Access to SME financing, including products such as FirstBank business loans and FirstAdvance, can help businesses expand operations and capture these opportunities.

Top business opportunities

Campaign materials and branding:

Demand surges for



posters, banners, billboards, flyers, T-shirts, caps and branded merchandise. Printing presses, graphic designers, tailors and promotional merchandise suppliers typically see a boom.

Event management and logistics:

Political rallies, town halls and conventions require professional planning. Event managers, equipment rental firms and transport providers move campaign teams, materials and supporters across the country.

Catering and hospitality:

Campaign teams travel constantly, boosting demand for food vendors, caterers and hotels. Large rallies often require catering for thousands of supporters.

Media, advertising and digital services:

Political campaigns spend heavily on television, radio, print and

₦1.9tn

Cost of election
1999 - 2027

₦873.78bn

INEC's election 2027 budget

digital advertising. Social media strategists, influencers, data analysts and digital campaign managers now play a crucial role in shaping voter perception.

Security services: Private security personnel, crowd control services and safety equipment are essential for rallies, campaign offices and candidate protection.

Other quick-win niches:

Entertainment for rallies, voter-education campaigns, political merchandise, and branded promotional items.

The bottom line

Election seasons create a powerful economic wave. With billions projected to circulate across Nigeria's political landscape, the 2027 election cycle could become a major revenue window for thousands of entrepreneurs.



With love from the creeks

Fisherman's Soup
is now a national
treasure

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking: 45 - 60
minutes.

Fisherman's Soup (aka Rivers Native Soup) is a luxurious, seafood-packed delicacy born in the riverine communities of the Niger Delta. This palm oil-infused broth bursts with fresh catches, bold spices, cocoyam (or ofor/achi) for silky thickening, and uziza leaves/seeds for its signature peppery, aromatic kick - no tomatoes, just fresh habanero heat.

Ingredients (serves 6-8)

- 3 medium fresh fish (catfish, tilapia, croaker, or barracuda; cut in chunks)
- 1 - 2 cups periwinkles (isam; shelled or in shell)
- 1 cup ngolo (whelks/sea snails)
- 4 - 6 crabs (or legs)
- 1- 2 cups shrimps/prawns (jumbo tiger ideal)
- ½ - 1 cup clams or fresh crayfish

- 6 - 8 medium cocoyams (or 2-3 tbsp cocoyam powder/ofor/achi)
- 1 - 2 cups sliced uziza leaves (sub scent leaves if needed)
- 1 tbsp ground uziza seeds (optional)
- 1 - 2 habanero peppers (yellow/red)
- 1 small onion, chopped
- ¼ - ½ cup red palm oil
- 2 - 3 seasoning cubes
- Salt to taste
- Optional: 1- 2 tbsp ground crayfish, uyayak (prekese), ogiri for depth

Instructions

- 1. Thickener:** Peel, rinse, and boil cocoyams until soft (20 - 25 mins). Drain, mash/blend smooth with a little water; set aside. (For powder, make slurry later.)
- 2. Prep seafood:** Clean everything thoroughly. Parboil/steam tougher items (snails, crabs) with salt, onion, and seasoning for 10 -15 mins if desired.
- 3. Base:** Heat palm oil in large pot (lightly - no heavy bleaching). Add blended peppers (habanero + onion), ground crayfish, uyayak/ogiri; fry 3 - 5 mins.
- 4. Broth:** Add tough seafood, season with salt/cubes, add water; simmer 10 mins.
- 5. Fish and prawns:** Gently add fish and prawns. Top with water for consistency, stir in cocoyam gradually to thicken. Simmer 10 - 15 mins until fish is tender (minimal stirring to keep intact).
- 6. Finish:** Add uziza leaves/seeds. Adjust seasoning; simmer 5 mins (keep greens vibrant). Remove from heat.

The result: peppery, slightly oily, uziza-fragrant perfection. You may add calamari, mussels, or lobster tails in final 4 mins for extra medley. Serve hot with pounded yam, semo, or fufu. For lighter, peppersoup vibe, skip cocoyam and use blended okra instead.

Bienvenue à Dakar!



Welcome to Dakar, Senegal's vibrant coastal capital, famous for its stunning beaches, incredible food, warm people, and yes... the original home of Jollof rice. With its prime West African coastline, the city offers countless beautiful beaches.

Whether you want to go surfing, boat cruising, or simply stroll along the shore, you'll find affordable and often free options like Ngor Island Beach, Plage du Virage, and Sagon. End your day by relaxing with a spectacular sunset over the Atlantic while enjoying the rhythmic pulse of mbalax music.

Two signature events will hold in Dakar this year:

- The 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games 31 October – 13 November 2026, the first Olympic event on an African soil.
- The 16th Dak'Art Biennale of Contemporary African Art, 19 November – 19 December 2026 which draws artists and collectors from around the world.

What to see: Gorée Island (Île de Gorée): A 20-minute ferry ride from the mainland, this UNESCO World Heritage site is a place of profound memory. Beyond its pastel-colored colonial architecture and bougainvillea-lined streets, you'll find the Maison des Esclaves (House of Slaves), a reminder of the painful reality of the transatlantic slave trade.

The African Renaissance Monument: Standing taller than the Statue of Liberty at 49 metres, this massive bronze monument sits atop one of the city's few hills (Les Mamelles). It's a controversial yet awe-inspiring symbol of African liberation.

Ngor Island (Île de N'Gor): If Dakar's traffic gets to be too much, take

a tiny wooden pirogue to Ngor Island. It's a surfer's paradise with no cars, tiny art galleries, and beachside restaurants serving grilled lobster.

Village des Arts & Museum of Black Civilisations: See artists at work in their studios, then head to the Museum of Black Civilisations, a world-class facility that celebrates Africa's global contribution to science and culture.

Don't leave the city without tasting the national dish, **thieboudienne** - rice cooked with fish, vegetables and rich tomato sauce.

Sarah Dauda

Switch to FirstBank

Whatever your goals, FirstBank has the right solution to get you there.

My FirstBank journey started in 2015 as a first-year undergraduate, a teenager stepping into university life and newfound independence. When I needed a bank account, I chose FirstBank for what it offered me.

Today, as a staff member, I operate a FirstBank salary account. But for the past 11 years, my student account (now upgraded) has seen me through both good and challenging times. That same reliability is what Nigeria's #1 banking brand delivers to millions of people worldwide through its flagship Savings Account products.

Goal-Driven Savings Products

Opening a FirstBank Savings Account is straightforward. You'll need a passport photograph, valid ID, proof of address, BVN, and a resident permit if you're a non-Nigerian. FirstBank offers a range of tailored savings products designed to meet different needs:

Generic Savings Account: A standard account with unlimited deposits and withdrawals, offering attractive interest rates.

First Savings Plus: A hybrid account that combines savings with current account features for greater convenience.

First Target Savings: Ideal for building a disciplined savings habit or saving towards a specific goal.

Kids First (0-12 years): Designed for parents and guardians who want to start investing in their children's future early.

MeFirst (13-17 years): A premium version of the Kids account that helps teach teenagers financial responsibility.

Xplore First (18-29 years): The flagship youth savings product for students and young people pursuing formal or informal education, whether at home or in the diaspora.



First Instant & First Instant Plus:

Created for the unbanked and underbanked to promote financial inclusion. (First Instant Plus requires a second-level KYC).

FirstGem Generic and FirstGem Savings: Specially crafted for women - from low-income earners, traders and artisans (FirstGem Savings) to female professionals, entrepreneurs, HNIs and SMEs (FirstGem Generic).

The thought and care invested in each of these variants clearly show how intentional FirstBank is about helping every customer, regardless of age, income level, profession or location, achieve their financial goals.

Salome Ogbolu

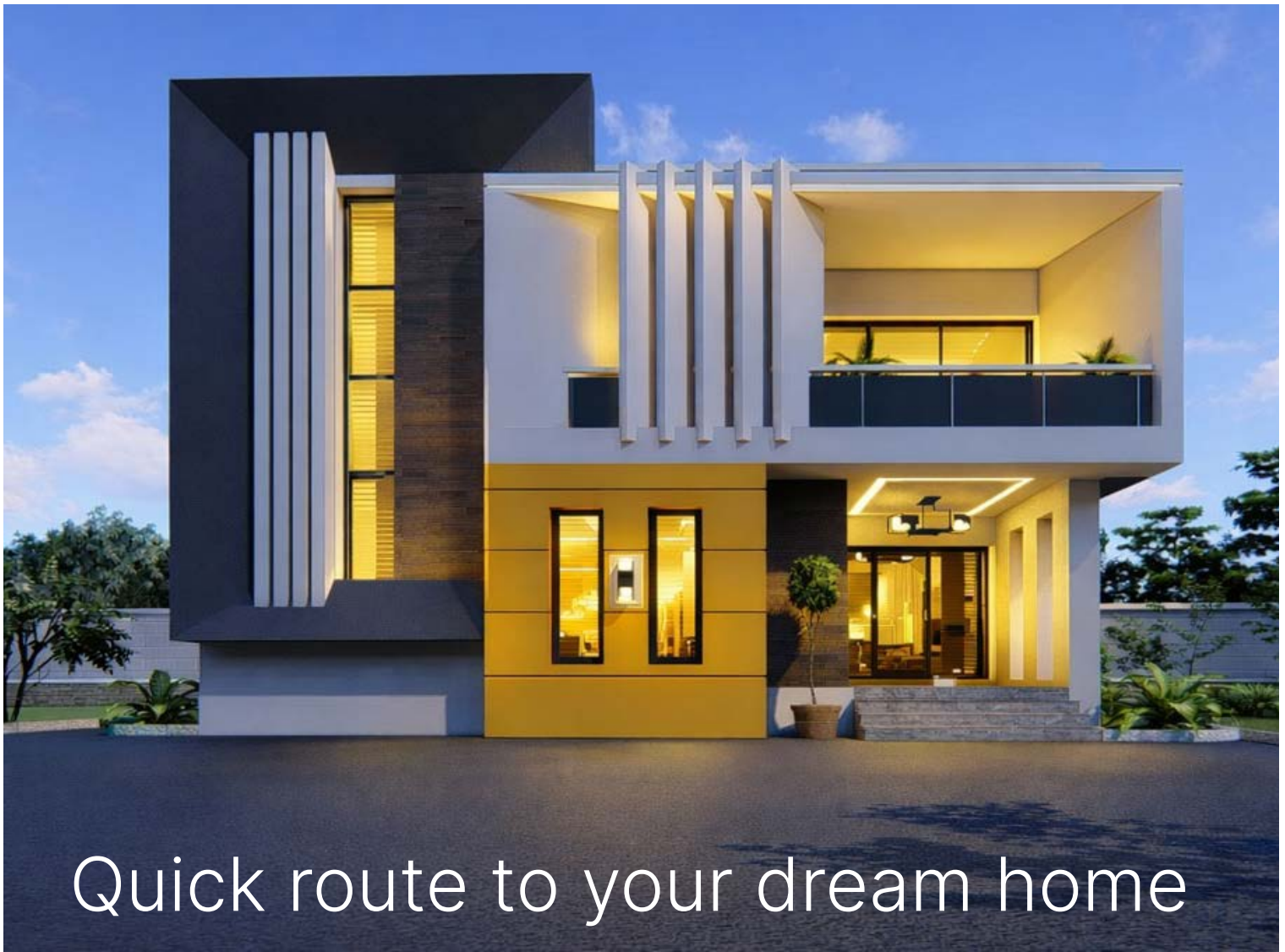


The Best Private Bank in Nigeria

We kicked off 2026 on a strong note as FirstBank was named **Best Private Bank** in Nigeria by Global Finance Magazine for the third consecutive year.

This latest recognition reinforces FirstBank's long-standing leadership in Private Banking and Wealth Management, building on its consistent track record of excellence in private banking and sustainability-focused investing.

It further cements the Bank's dominance and forward momentum in Nigeria's financial services landscape.



Quick route to your dream home

Owning a home has always been a mark of responsibility and success.

But in today's economy, building or buying a home the traditional way is incredibly tough. By the time you save enough, inflation has pushed prices beyond reach. It's a frustrating reality.

So why wait years - or until retirement - when you can own your dream home today? With the FirstBank MREIF Home Loan, you don't have to.

MREIF is the Ministry of Finance Incorporated Real Estate Investment Fund, a partnership between FirstBank and the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI),

to offers affordable, long-term mortgages. It provides up to ₦100 million in financing, a repayment period of up to 20 years, and a low fixed interest rate of about 9.75% per annum, with just 10% equity contribution.

Whether you want a basic apartment or a luxury home, this programme makes it possible without the usual sweat and stress. To make your dream home a reality today visit: <https://www.firstbanknigeria.com/personal/loans/mreif-home-loan/>

Friday Okwori

20

Years of repayment

10%

Equity contribution

9.75%

Interest rate

Events Diaries



L-R: Osahon Ogieva, Deputy Managing Director, FirstBank Ghana; Olusegun Zaccheaus, Chief Economist, PWC; Ini Ebong, Deputy Managing Director, FirstBank Group; Laura Fisayo Kolawole, Head of Equities and Alternative Solutions, First Asset Management; Olusegun Alebiosu, Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, FirstBank Group; Niyi Yusuf, Managing Partner, Verraki; Kenneth Erikume, Partner, Tax Reporting and Strategy, PWC; Bongo Adi, Professor of Economics and Data Analytics, Lagos Business School; and Chike Uzoma, Head, Strategy and Corporate Development, FirstBank, during the FirstBank Nigeria Economic Outlook 2026 held in Lagos in Quarter 1, 2026.

Olusegun Alebiosu, CEO FirstBank Group, speaking at the FirstBank Nigeria Economic Summit, 2026 held in Lagos in Quarter 1, 2026



Ini Ebong, Deputy Managing Director during the FirstBank Nigeria Economic Summit, 2026 held in Quarter 1, 2026.



L-R: Richard Scholtz, Managing Director, Global Finance; Seun Denton, Deputy Head of Mortgages, FirstBank UK; Kemi Akinyemi, Business Development Manager, FirstBank UK; Idowu Thompson, Group Executive, Private Banking and Wealth Management Division, FirstBank; Olayinka Ijabiya, Acting Group Head, Marketing and Corporate Communications, FirstBank; and Ononuju Irukwu, Head, Private Banking, FirstBank UK, at the Global Finance's Best Private Banks Awards Dinner at Claridge's, London, 10 February 2026, where FirstBank was awarded the Best Private Bank in Nigeria.

L-R: Ini Ebong, Deputy Managing Director, FirstBank; Remi Odunlami, Non- Executive Director, FirstBank; Tope Omage, Non- Executive Director, FirstBank; Kemi Andu-Alausa, Non- Executive Director, First Securities; Mojisola Agbaje, Wife of the Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on Rural Development; Roseline Alebiosu, Wife of the Managing Director/ CEO, FirstBank; and Olaitan Martins, Group Executive, Corporate Banking, FirstBank, during the FirstBank Women Network 2026 International Women’s Day celebration held in Lagos in Quarter 1, 2026.



FirstBank Women Network led by Group Executive, Aishatu Bubaram at Nigerian Correctional Services Suleja as part of the Bank's commemoration of the International Women's Day

The Femi Otedola Way

The 10 commandments of success and other lessons from his book, **Making it Big**

Femi Otedola's *Making It Big* is the story of success built on strategy, discipline, and resilience - with no shortcuts. From childhood hustles to creating Nigeria's largest diesel distribution network, Otedola expanded into shipping, oil and gas, power, and finance, becoming a billionaire. His empire later collapsed under heavy debt and market shocks, resulting in a staggering \$1.2 billion loss. Yet he rebuilt his fortune through strategic divestments and renewed focus - one of the most remarkable comebacks in Nigerian business history.

Early in his career, Otedola admits he ran on raw instinct without proper structure - a mistake that nearly destroyed everything. The rebuild taught him the power of governance, due diligence, delegation, and strong teams. Great instincts, he learned, must be backed by great systems.

His story also reveals the deep intersection of business and politics in Nigeria, and the necessity of understanding and navigating government policies and influence.

At the heart of the book are Otedola's 10 **Principles for Making It Big:**

1. **Dream big.** Extraordinary achievements start with bold visions that ignore limitations.
2. **Discipline and delayed gratification:** Success demands sacrificing short-term pleasures for long-term rewards.
3. **Hard work:** There are no shortcuts to lasting wealth; only sustained effort and perseverance deliver it.
4. **Financial intelligence:** Understand how money is earned, multiplied, protected, and invested.



5. **Integrity:** The true currency of trust. Reputation keeps doors open long after money does.
6. **Patience:** Not every opportunity should be seized immediately. Strategic waiting creates better outcomes.
7. **Courage:** Growth requires bold, calculated risks that lead to transformative breakthroughs.
8. **Generosity:** Giving back builds goodwill and strengthens communities. True wealth lifts others.
9. **Adaptability:** Markets change. The ability to pivot ensures survival and continued relevance.
10. **Faith:** The ultimate anchor that fuels you through setbacks when everything else says quit.

A powerful, no-nonsense blueprint from one of Nigeria's most resilient entrepreneurs.

Oluwatola Ibikunle-Aina

Jenifa Rules

Six business lessons from Nigeria's box office queen, Funke Akindele

Funke Akindele first won Nigerian hearts as Bisi, the sharp, curious teen in the United Nations Population Fund, (UNFPA) - sponsored series I Need to Know (1998–2002) on the Nigerian Television Authority network. Dressed in her iconic green-and-white school uniform, she brought intelligence and vulnerability to stories about adolescent health, relationships, and social issues.

From there, she created one of Africa's most powerful entertainment brands. Today, she's the continent's highest-grossing filmmaker, with record-breakers like **A Tribe Called Judah** (over ₦1.4 billion), **Everybody Loves Jenifa** (₦1.88 billion), and **Behind the Scenes** (over ₦2 billion, the first Nollywood film to cross that mark). Here are six key business lessons from her journey:

1. Turn visibility into an empire: **I Need to Know** gave her early exposure, but **Jenifa** (2008) was the breakthrough. She didn't stop there. She expanded it into **The Return of Jenifa**, the long-running **Jenifa's Diary** series, and spin-offs.

Lesson: Spot what resonates with your audience and build a full ecosystem around it.

2. Master reinvention: As audiences moved from television to streaming and big-screen blockbusters, Akindele leveled up production scale and quality, delivering hits like **Omo Ghetto: The Saga**, **Battle on Buka Street**, **A Tribe Called Judah**, and **Behind the Scenes**.

Lesson: Markets evolve. Adapt or fade.

3. Evolve from talent to enterprise: Akindele didn't stay just an actress. She became producer, director, studio head, and savvy marketer, building professional teams and systems for consistent output and growth. **Lesson:** Talent attracts attention; structure delivers lasting success.

4. Root in local authenticity for global reach: Her stories pulse with Nigerian language, humor, culture, and everyday realities, yet they connect worldwide, topping charts in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, and the United States.

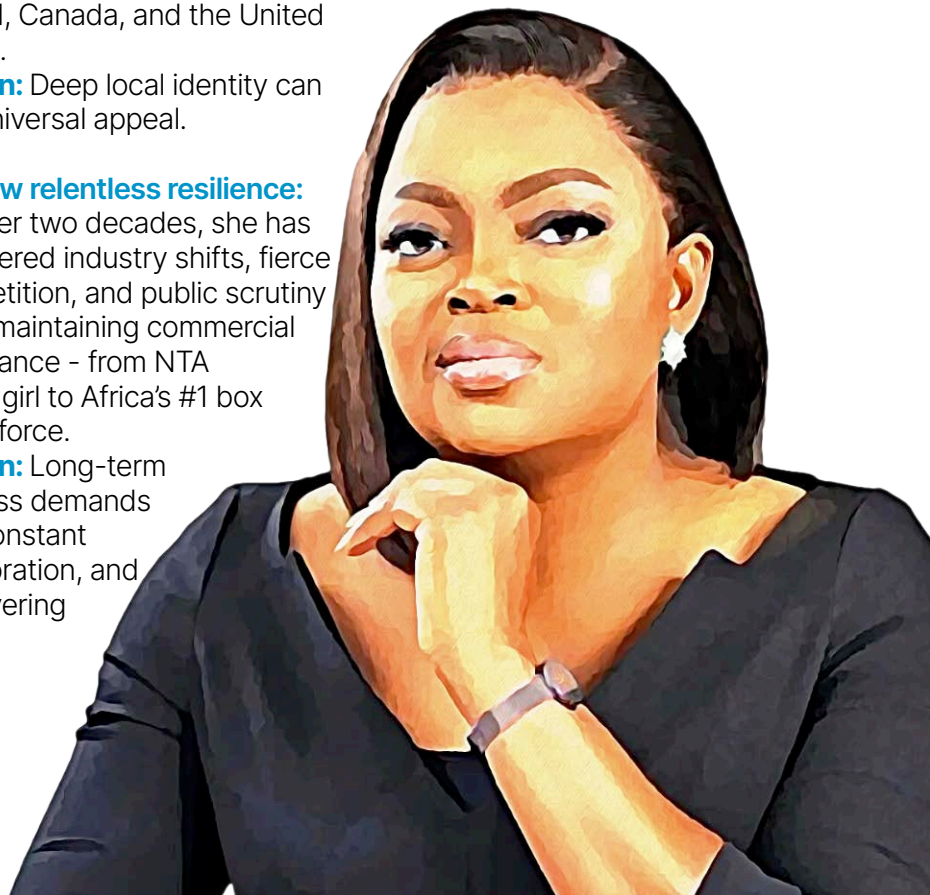
Lesson: Deep local identity can fuel universal appeal.

5. Show relentless resilience: For over two decades, she has weathered industry shifts, fierce competition, and public scrutiny while maintaining commercial dominance - from NTA schoolgirl to Africa's #1 box office force.

Lesson: Long-term success demands grit, constant recalibration, and unwavering focus.

6. Embrace bold leaps beyond comfort zones: In 2023, she ran as PDP deputy gubernatorial candidate in Lagos State. The move drew backlash but proved transformative, sharpening her perspective and influencing later works like **A Tribe Called Judah** and **Behind the Scenes**.

Lesson: Entrepreneurship is an adventure. Step out, learn fast, and keep an eraser handy.



Fresh heat alert:

New kids on the block

5 new school artistes set to take over 2026

Nigeria's music scene is buzzing with a new wave of talent bringing fresh energy, bold sounds, and undeniable vibes. From charting records to cult favourites, these artistes are shaping what 2026 could sound like. These artistes aren't just trending; they're building sounds that people genuinely connect with. If you're looking for what's next in Nigerian music, this is your starter pack.

Fola

Fola is on his own lane right now, and his Catharsis project proves it. Standout records like "Lost" (featuring Kizz Daniel) and "Caricature" have really connected with listeners, blending vulnerability with smooth Afrobeats. Tracks like "You" and "Eko" also show his range, from love to hustle stories. He's not just making music—you can feel the emotion in every track.



Morravey

Morravey stepped into the spotlight strong and hasn't slowed down. Her feature on "In the Garden" with Davido introduced her to a massive audience, while "Magician" further showed her confidence and star power. Her sound is smooth, expressive, and quietly powerful; she's definitely one of the standout female voices right now.

Ayomaff

Ayomaff is one of those artistes building a loyal fanbase without too much noise. Songs like "Dealer" and "Stay With Me" have resonated with listeners for their relatable themes and easy-going vibe. He brings a calm, real-life storytelling approach that makes his music feel personal and replay-worthy.

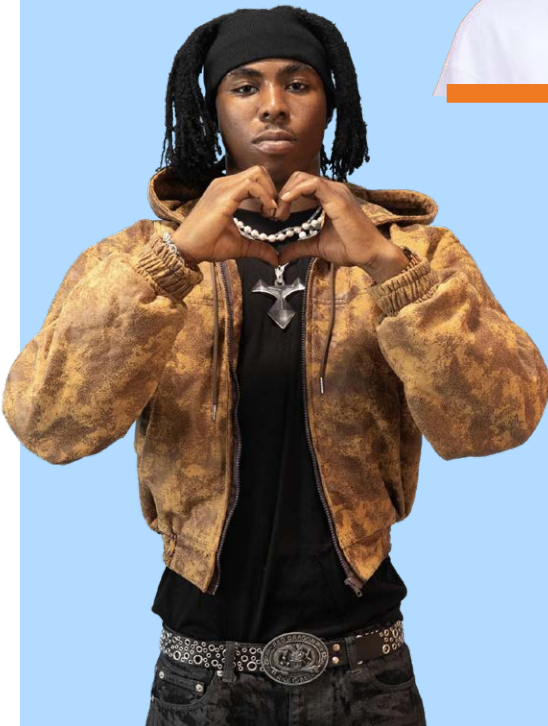


Shoday

Shoday's breakout moment came with "Hey Jago" alongside Poco Lee, a track that instantly became a street and social media favourite thanks to its catchy, high-energy vibe. He's also kept the momentum going with collaborations like "Paparazzi" with Fola, proving he knows how to make music that sticks.

Sky Jaga

Sky Jaga is bringing something different to the table. With "Jagajantis" from his Jagajantisii project, he's pushing a raw, experimental sound that blends underground energy with mainstream appeal. It's bold, it's unconventional, and that's exactly why people are paying attention.



Top free to watch

No.	Title	Genre	Release Date	Producer / Director	Platform
1	Wheels of the Heart	Drama	Mar 2026	Omoni Oboli TV	YouTube - Free (5.5M+ views)
2	Monica	Drama	Mar 2026	Uche Montana TV	YouTube - Free (4.9M+ views)
3	Throne and Thorns	Drama	Mar 2026	Uchenna Mibunabo TV	YouTube - Free (4M+ views)
4	A Hand to Hold	Romance Drama	Mar 2026	Mercy Johnson Okojie TV	YouTube - Free (1.8M+ views)
5	Ori (Rebirth)	Spiritual Drama	Mar 6, 2026	Muyiwa Ademola (Prod. & Dir.)	YouTube - Free
6	The Universe	Drama	Mar 2026	Nolly MovieRoom	YouTube - Free (1.1M+ views)
7	Heaven Must Wait	Drama	Mar 2026	Blessing Obasi TV	YouTube - Free
8	When Love Spins	Romance	2026	Great Valentine Edochie (Dir.) / Chioma Chukwuka TV	YouTube - Free



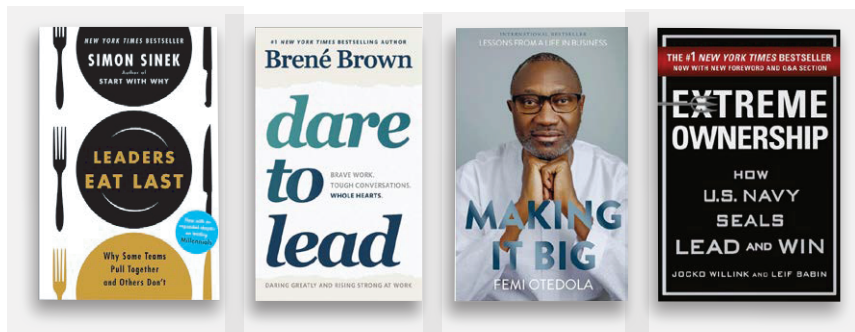
These films are available and completely free on YouTube - no subscription, no paywall. If you want quality Nigerian storytelling without spend, this is your list.

Podcasts to listen to in transit

No.	Podcast	Host(s)	Genre	Platform
1	The Honest Bunch New Editions	Nedu, Husband Material, Toun & Ezinne	Lifestyle	YouTube Spotify - Free
2	MENTality with Ebuka	Ebuka Obi-Uchendu & Banky Wellington	Society	Spotify, Apple Podcasts - Free
3	So Nigerian	Dami Aros & Isaac	Culture	Spotify, Apple Podcasts - Free
4	Nigerian American	eLDee	Diaspora	Spotify, Apple Podcasts - Free
5	Lagos Meets London	Alice, Oj, Hakka & Naay	Lifestyle	YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts - Free
6	Diary of a Naija Girl	Ife Agoro	Lifestyle	YouTube - Free



Must-read books for Q2



Leaders Eat Last by Simon Sinek focuses on building trust and strong teams. Brené Brown's **Dare to Lead** highlights courage and vulnerability in leadership while billionaire Femi Otedola shares 10 tested principles for making it big in life and business in **Making it Big**. In **Extreme Ownership**, Jocko Willink and Leif Babin share leadership principles from SEAL teams.



FIFA 2026 World Cup:

A tournament of records

Months before the 11 June 2026 kickoff, the FIFA World Cup 2026 co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico has already broken multiple records as the largest edition ever: 48 teams (up from 32 in 2022), 104 matches (a 63% increase from 64), 16 host cities (11 in the US, 3 in Mexico, 2 in Canada), a 39-day span (longer than the 32 days of 2014/2018), and the first men's tournament hosted by three nations.

It is projected to generate a record \$10.9 billion in revenue (up 56% from 2022's \$7 billion). Ticket demand shattered expectations, with over 500 million requests during the Random Selection Draw phase (averaging 15 million per day, from all 211 FIFA member associations).

Other pre-tournament records include:

- Most host cities: 16 across three countries.
- First three-nation host.
- Mexico's unique feat: First

World Cup 2026 by the Numbers

A snapshot of the scale of the
2026 FIFA World Cup.

48

Teams competing in the
expanded tournament

104

Total matches to be played

3

Host nations: United States,
Canada and Mexico

16

Host cities across North
America

39

Days of competition

82,500

Capacity of MetLife Stadium in
New Jersey, venue for the final

\$10.9 bn

Projected tournament revenue

1.5 m+

Ticket requests recorded
within the first 24 hours of the
initial sales phase



nation to host three
men's World Cups (1970,
1986, 2026).

- Highest expected
attendance: Poised to
exceed all prior totals.

Estadio Azteca in Mexico
City, Mexico, venue of the
opening match on between
host nation Mexico and
South Africa on 11 June,
makes history as the only
stadium to host three World
Cup opening matches (1970,
1986 and 2026).

42 teams have qualified
so far. The final six spots
will come from the March
2026 FIFA Play-Offs. Cape
Verde, Curaçao, Jordan, and
Uzbekistan set for World
Cup debuts.

Historically, Brazil remains
the only nation to appear in
all 22 tournaments (5 wins),
while Germany holds the
most final appearances (8).

More records - like total

goals (surpassing Qatar
2022's 172) and individual
feats - are expected when
the final unfolds at MetLife
Stadium (New Jersey) on
19 July. The expanded
format promises the most
expansive, inclusive, and
lucrative World Cup yet.

Historic World Cup Records

Most titles: Brazil, 5 wins
(1958, 1962, 1970, 1994, 2002)

Most final appearance:
Germany, 8 finals

Most goals: Miroslav Klose
(Germany), 16 goals

**Most goals in a single
tournament:** Just Fontaine
(France), 13 goals in 1958

Most matches played: Lothar
Matthäus (Germany), 25
matches

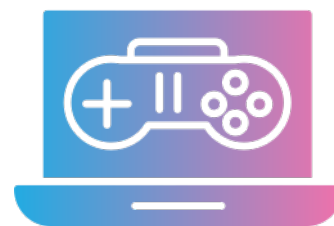
Biggest win: Hungary 10 – 1, El
Salvador (1982)

**Youngest goal scorer in a
final:** Pelé, 17 years old, Brazil
vs Sweden, 1958

Highest appearance: Brazil,
all 22 tournaments since 1930

Esports is now bigger than music and film together

Yahaya Maikori, president, Esports Federation of Nigeria



Tell us about the journey of esports in Nigeria. Who is it for and why should we care?

Esports stands for electronic sports but it's more commonly called video game played competitively. They can be played with a console, a laptop or even on our mobile phones but generally esports is for everyone regardless of age or gender

How large is the esports market in Nigeria, Africa and the world?

I can only hazard a guess. In Nigeria it is estimated that we have close to 100,000,000 players who play via their mobile phone. In Africa it could easily be close to 500,000,000 when we look at both the demography and the pervasive use of the phone device for our digital activities

Who are the top players and teams and streaming platforms?

So esports is unique in the sense that it's has several game titles and more are being developed on a daily basis. From those replicating traditional games to different other types of games. However, e-FIFA, League of Legends, DOTA 2 are some of the most popular games amongst Nigerian players.

Do we have a national flagship tournament?

We are in the process of setting up our league; it will launch soon but before then we have worked with other national events organisers like 10 N 8 for their Pubg, Kontender and Gamer X.

Globally, esports is a multi-billion industry. How can Nigeria benefit from it? What are the opportunities and who can mine them?

Esports or video games industry is now reputed to be bigger than both music and film together. It lies at the intersection of music, film, technology and popular culture. Nigeria is actually one of the few countries which has triple government recognition: Under the National Sports Commission as a competitive sport; under the Ministry of Creative Economy and under the Ministry of Communications as a technical skill that needs to be developed locally for export. The Ministry (of Communications) currently runs the 3MTT of which game development features prominently

Are there challenges to its growth in Nigeria? How is the Federation addressing this?

Like every other industry there are lots of challenges in terms of infrastructure and more particularly available facilities. Cost of broadband and expensive devices are a key hindrance.

Tell us about the esports ecosystem.

It's still in its infancy and has need for players, tournament organisers, referees, shout casters, game developers ,etc. The sectors needs market drivers to take up the various commercial opportunities in order to build a robust ecosystem.

Are we developing games with local slants to take to the global stage rather than just consume foreign games?

There are a few companies driving game development. There are hubs and studios but these all need impactful funding to develop, test and scale. We also need large marketing budgets for these games.

How can I get started if I want to play esports?

It's pretty simple. Get a device and download a game of your choice from the App Store.

Finally, who is Yahaya Maikori?

An entertainment lawyer, entrepreneur, film producer, amongst others things.





of putting **You First**

For **132 years**, we've led with **purpose**,
pioneering progress, **earning trust**, and
growing with generations.

-You First-