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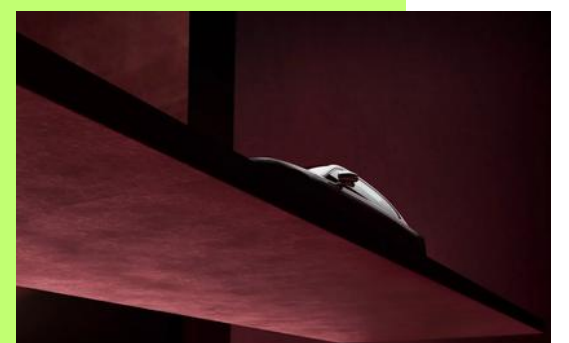
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WCCCS



VOLVO ES90

After more than a decade of dominance by the Tesla Model S, new competitors like the Lucid Air and Mercedes-Benz EQS have entered the full-size electric sedan market. Now, Volvo is joining the race with the 2026 Volvo ES90, aiming to build on its strong EV and hybrid sales.



What We Know So Far

Volvo's teaser images reveal little, except for a notable sensor module above the windshield, likely for advanced driver assistance. The rear light design maintains Volvo's signature vertical elements with light bars extending up the rear glass.

The ES90 will share Volvo's SPA2 platform with the EX90 and Polestar 3, suggesting a 111-kWh battery pack and options for rear- or all-wheel drive. Expect over 500 horsepower and an EPA-estimated 300+ mile range—similar to the EX90.

Size & Production

Rumored dimensions place the ES90 slightly shorter than the S90 but with a longer wheelbase. The sedan will be built in China, potentially facing import tariffs in North America and Europe.

Official Reveal & Release

The Volvo ES90 debuts this March 2025 in Stockholm, Sweden. More details should emerge in the coming weeks.





Future Builders

africa now, tomorrow

editor's note

The Women Shaping Africa's Economic Future

Africa's economic future is being rewritten by women, who make up nearly 50% of the continent's population and contribute over 60% of the agricultural workforce. Despite their vital role in food security, trade, entrepreneurship, and innovation, women remain underrepresented in leadership and receive only about 7% of total investment funding for startups.

This special edition of Future Builders celebrates the trailblazing women redefining Africa's economic landscape. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is shaping global trade policies at the WTO, Fatoumata Ba is investing in Africa's tech-driven startups, and Damilola Ogunbiyi is leading the charge in renewable energy solutions. Meanwhile, women like Mo Abudu and Aya Nakamura are transforming Africa's entertainment and cultural industries, while scientists like Professor Rose Leke and Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim are pushing the frontiers of

medicine, biodiversity, and scientific innovation.

Yet, barriers persist. Women in Africa earn 34% less than their male counterparts and struggle to access leadership positions, holding only 24% of senior management roles. The financing gap remains staggering—women-led businesses receive less than 5% of venture capital funding. If gender parity in economic participation were achieved, Africa's GDP could increase by \$316 billion by 2025.

The question is not whether Africa is ready for women's leadership, but whether the world is ready for the Africa that women are building. Now is the time to recognize, invest in, and support the women shaping Africa's economic future.

Dr. Charles Wirsuiy Snr
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

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Notice on Submitting Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters from our readers and encourage diverse perspectives on the topics we cover. To ensure clarity and relevance, please keep submissions concise (preferably under 300 words) and include your full name, city, and country. Take note that letters may be edited for length, clarity, and style while preserving the original intent. We prioritize letters that engage with recent articles (especially our cover stories) and contribute to meaningful discussions. Not all submissions will be published, and we reserve the right to decline letters at our discretion. Letters must be original, respectful, and free from defamatory or misleading content.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in published letters are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Future Builders Magazine, its editorial team, or its publishers.

To submit a letter, please email : editor@futurebuilders.africa with the subject line "Letter to the Editor."

The Forgotten War in the DRC

Dear Editor,

The ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has led to millions of deaths and one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, yet it receives little global attention. With rival armed groups, political instability, and foreign interests in mineral wealth, peace remains elusive. What role should the African Union, the UN, and regional powers play in bringing stability to the eastern DRC? Should economic sanctions be imposed on foreign actors fueling the conflict? More importantly, why is the world not paying attention to one of the deadliest conflicts of our time?

– Amanda Richards, Toronto, Canada

Cameroon's Economy at Breaking Point?

Dear Editor,

Cameroon's economy is in dire straits, with rising debt, inflation, and unemployment eroding the livelihoods of millions. The once-promising agriculture and oil sectors are struggling, and foreign investment is slowing due to political uncertainty. What policies could realistically stabilize Cameroon's economy, and how can the country diversify beyond oil and raw material exports? More importantly, how can the government restore public trust in its economic policies?

Jean-Baptiste M., Douala, Cameroon

Is Europe Failing Africa on Economic Partnership?

Dear Editor,

European leaders often speak of "equal partnerships" with Africa, yet trade deals and investment policies continue to favor European interests over African development. The EU-Africa trade agreements still limit Africa's ability to develop its industries, forcing many countries to remain exporters of raw materials rather than producers of finished goods. If Europe is serious about a new partnership with Africa, shouldn't it support industrialization, fair trade, and technology transfer, rather than maintaining a neocolonial economic relationship?

Pierre Lefevre, Paris, France

The Challenge of Industrialization in African Economies

Dear Editor,

Africa's economic growth has been impressive over the past two decades, but the lack of large-scale industrialization remains a major barrier to sustainable development. Why do African economies continue to rely on commodity exports rather than building strong manufacturing sectors? Countries like Ethiopia and Rwanda have made strides in industrialization, yet the broader continent struggles with weak infrastructure, limited access to capital, and heavy reliance on imports. Is there a viable roadmap for Africa to shift from being a raw material exporter to a global industrial competitor?

Kwame Boateng, Accra, Ghana



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Kings Towers

- Client: Sky View Nigeria Ltd
- Architects: SAOTA (South Africa) and Consultants Collaborative Partnership (Nigeria)
- Location: Kingsway Road, Ikoyi, Lagos.

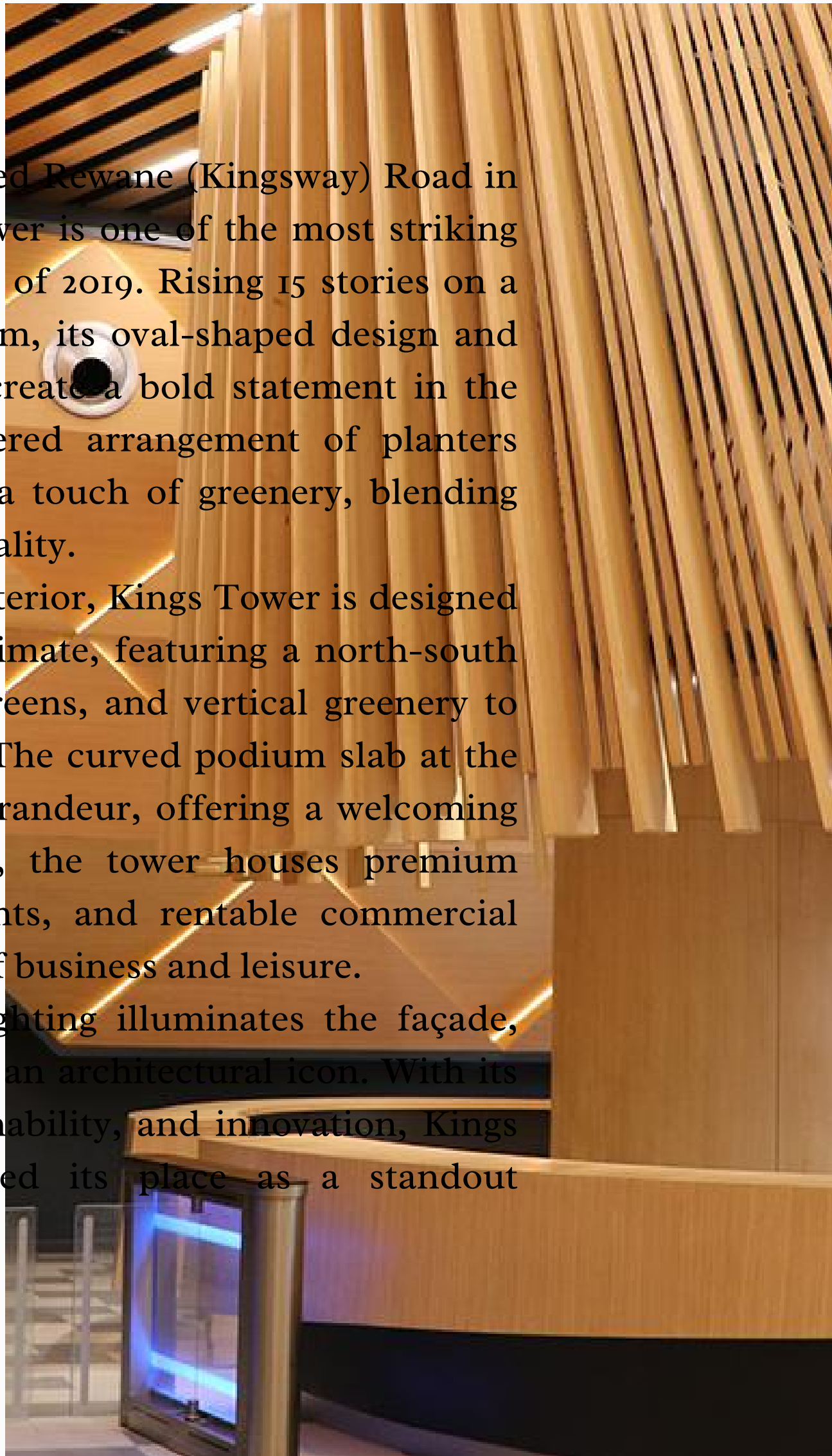
Kings Tower

An Icon of Luxury in Ikoyi

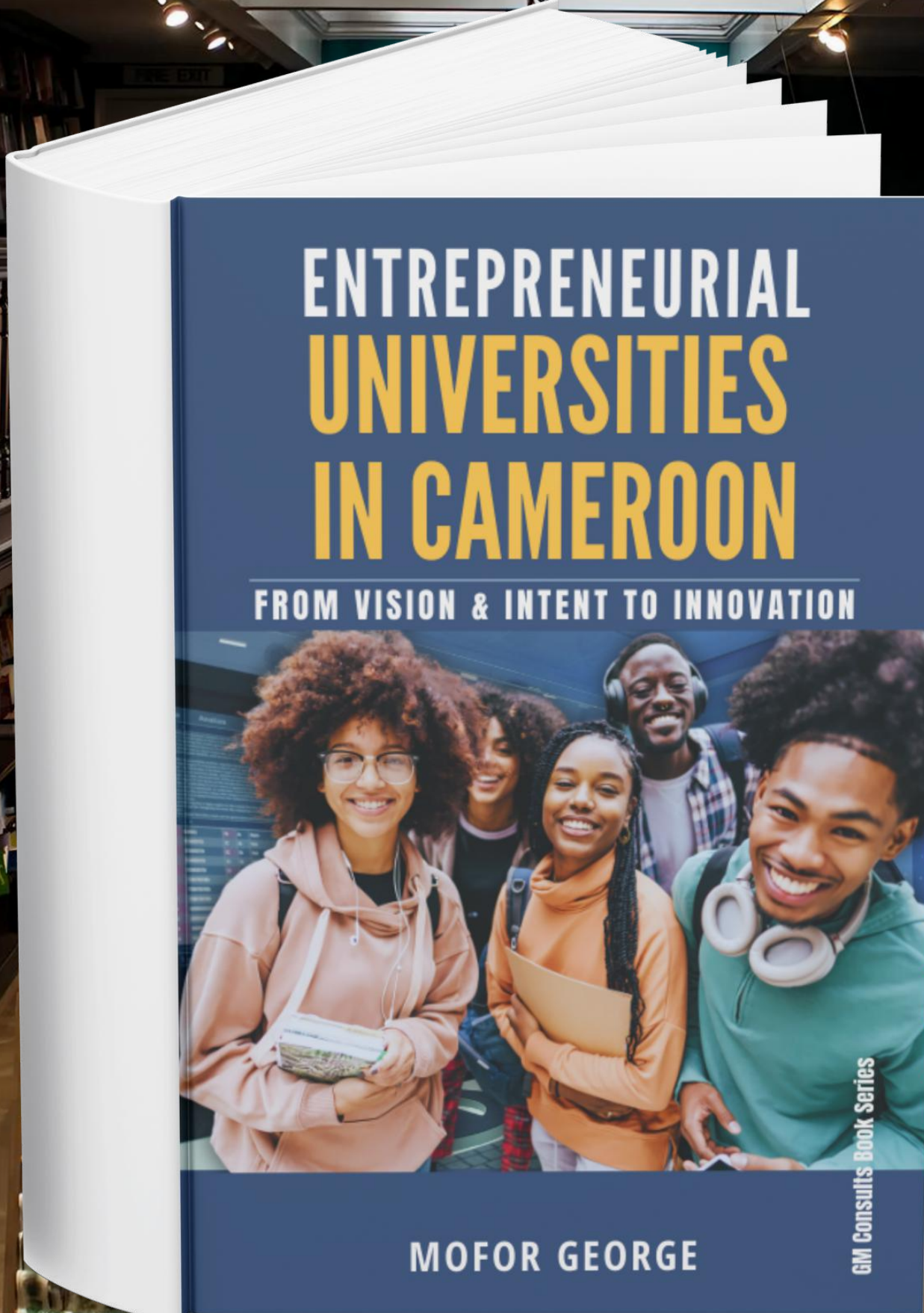
Standing tall along Alfred Rewane (Kingsway) Road in Ikoyi, Lagos, Kings Tower is one of the most striking architectural landmarks of 2019. Rising 15 stories on a sleek rectangular podium, its oval-shaped design and distinctive brise-soleil create a bold statement in the city's skyline. A staggered arrangement of planters along the façade adds a touch of greenery, blending aesthetics with functionality.

Beyond its luxurious exterior, Kings Tower is designed for Nigeria's tropical climate, featuring a north-south orientation, shading screens, and vertical greenery to reduce heat and glare. The curved podium slab at the entrance enhances its grandeur, offering a welcoming feel to visitors. Inside, the tower houses premium office spaces, restaurants, and rentable commercial areas, making it a hub of business and leisure.

At night, cool-toned lighting illuminates the façade, reinforcing its status as an architectural icon. With its blend of luxury, sustainability, and innovation, Kings Tower has truly earned its place as a standout landmark in Ikoyi.



**COMING
SOON**



Rising African Women In Tech & Business

Damilola Olokesusi Co-Founder/CEO Shuttlers

In the chaotic streets of Lagos, where gridlock and inefficiency define the daily commute, Damilola Olokesusi is reshaping the future of urban transportation. As the founder and CEO of Shuttlers, she has introduced a tech-driven bus-sharing solution that optimizes corporate commuting, offering professionals a more efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable alternative to traditional transport options.

At the heart of Shuttlers' innovation is AI-powered route optimization, which reduces congestion, lowers commuting costs, and enhances travel efficiency. By applying smart logistics to Africa's rapidly growing urban centers, Olokesusi is proving that the continent's mobility challenges require scalable solutions, not shortcuts. Her impact is already significant. Shuttlers now serves over 10,000 professionals daily, providing a safe, structured, and reliable alternative to informal transport -



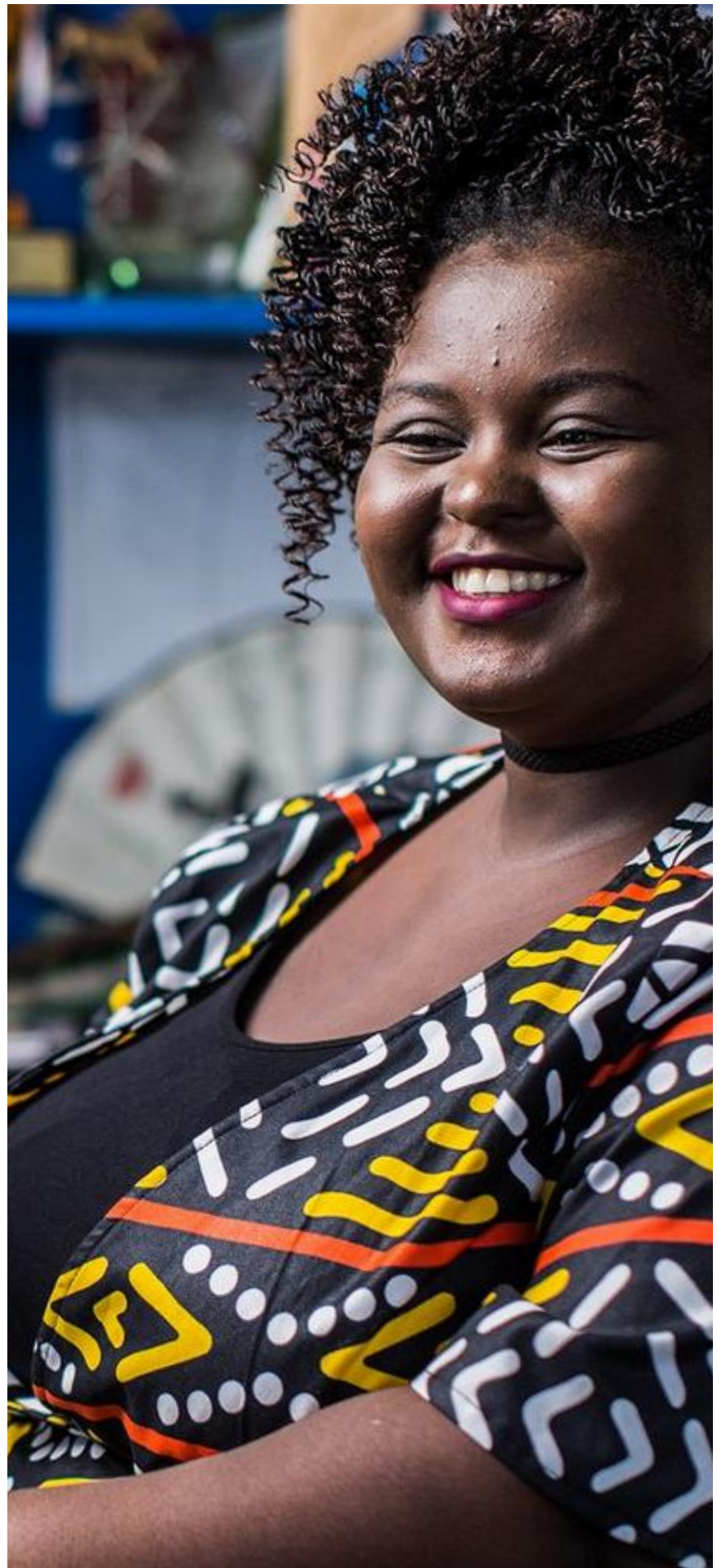
networks in Lagos and Nairobi. The company's success has attracted \$1.6 million in funding, allowing it to expand operations and refine its technology. In recognition of her pioneering work, Olokesusi was named to Forbes Africa's "30 Under 30" in 2023, solidifying her status as a leading force in Africa's mobility revolution.

By reimagining urban transportation through technology, Damilola Olokesusi is not just improving how people move—she is redefining what is possible in African smart mobility and urban development.

Christelle Kwizera Founder-Water Access

In a continent where millions lack access to clean drinking water, Christelle Kwizera is engineering a solution that is both sustainable and scalable. As the founder of Water Access Rwanda, she has pioneered a solar-powered water purification system that delivers affordable, safe drinking water to underserved communities. Her innovation has not only transformed rural water access in Rwanda but has also expanded into Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, directly impacting over 100,000 people.

Kwizera's work has earned her global recognition. She was awarded the Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation, a testament to her sustainable approach to solving water scarcity. In 2022, she was named to Forbes' "30 Under 30" for Social Impact, cementing her reputation as a leader in water accessibility and environmental engineering.



By combining technology, entrepreneurship, and social impact, Kwizera is proving that clean water is not just a necessity but a fundamental driver of health, economic growth, and community resilience.

Ada Nduka Oyom Founder, She Code Africa

In an industry where women remain significantly underrepresented, Ada Nduka Oyom is leading a movement to bridge the gender gap in Africa's tech ecosystem. As the founder of She Code Africa, she has built a platform that equips young African women with software development, data science, and AI skills, ensuring that more women not only enter STEM fields but thrive in them.

Her impact is tangible. She Code Africa has trained and empowered over 20,000 women, providing them with technical education, mentorship, and career opportunities. Through partnerships with Google, Microsoft, and GitHub, she has secured scholarships, coding bootcamps, and hackathons, creating pathways for women to advance in the tech industry.



Beyond skills training, Oyom is a vocal advocate for gender equity, championing policies and initiatives that foster inclusion and diversity in Africa's rapidly growing digital economy. Her work has not only changed individual careers but has also reshaped the broader narrative of women in STEM, proving that when given the right opportunities, African women can lead the future of technology.

GEORGE MOFOR
(BSc. MSc. PMP-PMI-USA)



Working with Women to Sustain the Vision of March 8

Each year, March 8 serves as both a celebration and a call to action—a day to recognize the achievements of women while confronting the persistent inequalities that hinder progress. The date, chosen long before the formation of the United Nations, was rooted in a movement for fair wages, voting rights, and better working conditions. Over a century later, the demands may have evolved, but the fundamental mission remains: ensuring that women everywhere enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and freedoms.

This year, as International Women's Day 2025 unfolds, the global community reflects on the progress made since the historic Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which turns 30 years old. To mark this milestone, UN Women has launched a renewed push for action and investment to accelerate progress towards gender equality. The Beijing+30 Action Agenda identifies six key priorities designed to drive systemic change: integrating gender



equality into national policies, strengthening institutions dedicated to women's rights, ensuring women's economic inclusion, eliminating gender-based violence, implementing political representation quotas, and addressing the unique challenges facing girls and young women.

Despite decades of advocacy, gender inequality remains deeply ingrained. Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions, earn less than their male counterparts, and bear the disproportionate burden of domestic and caregiving responsibilities.

In many parts of the world, they face violence, discrimination, and legal barriers that limit their autonomy. Yet, progress is undeniable. More women hold positions of power in politics and business, more girls are being educated, and more countries are enacting laws to protect women's rights. In fields once closed to them, women are excelling—as scientists, astronauts, engineers, and entrepreneurs.

The history of March 8 is one of resilience and determination. The movement gained momentum in 1908, when 15,000 women marched through New York City, demanding shorter working hours, better wages, and the right to vote. The following years saw the movement spread across Europe, culminating in the first official International Women's Day in 1911. By 1914, women in London were marching for suffrage, and in 1975, the United Nations officially recognized the day, reinforcing its role in the global fight for women's rights. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was a turning point, setting a bold agenda for women's empowerment and equality—one that continues to shape policies today.

As 2025 and beyond unfold, attitudes towards gender equality continue to evolve. While younger generations may take for granted the rights secured through decades of activism, those who fought for these



rights understand the persistence of patriarchy and the long road ahead. Women still do not receive equal pay for equal work, remain underrepresented in politics and business, and continue to experience violence at alarming rates. Yet, progress is steady and unstoppable. Across the world, countries have adopted equal pay laws, implemented quotas for female political representation, and expanded access to education for girls. More workplaces are embracing parental leave policies, flexible work arrangements, and gender equity programs, recognizing that supporting women is not just a moral imperative but an economic and social necessity.

International Women's Day is not just about acknowledgment—it is about action. Corporations, governments, and civil society organizations must commit to real change. The economic case for gender equality is clear: achieving full parity could inject an additional \$12 trillion into the global economy, closing the digital

gender divide could generate over \$500 billion, and addressing education and skills gaps could unlock \$10 trillion more. Yet, no country has fully achieved gender equality. Conflicts, climate-related disasters, and pandemics often exacerbate existing inequalities, pushing back hard-won gains and deepening the struggles faced by women and girls.

Nevertheless, change is here. More people than ever—particularly young people—understand that gender equality is not just a women's issue, but a fundamental driver of human progress. They see its value in their personal lives, their communities, and the world at large. They are demanding rights, representation, and respect, and they are doing so not just on March 8, but every single day.

As International Women's Day 2025 is marked across the globe, from political rallies and business conferences to grassroots community events, the message is clear: progress must not be slowed, and commitments must be honored. Gender equality is not just Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals—it is the foundation for achieving every other global priority, from ending poverty to ensuring quality education and fighting climate change.

There is still work to be done. But there is also reason for hope. The future can be bright, equal, safe, and rewarding for all—if we choose to make it so.

Happy International Women's Day 2025.





global pages to honour WD - and even designates its own annual IWD theme, which back in 2023 was DareToBe.

Year on year, IWD is certainly a powerful moment increasing in status. So make a difference, think globally and act locally.

All choice of IWD activity is valid, that's what makes IWD so inclusive.

There's a space and place for everyone to help fight the good fight. That's the spirit of abundance.

So make everyday International Women's Day.

Do your bit to ensure that the future for girls is bright, equal, safe, and rewarding.

Gender equality is among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. But it is also more than just one part of the 2030 Agenda. It is the best way to achieve progress on every goal, from ending poverty to improving health and climate action. Right now, the world is missing out on a huge potential gender equality dividend.

Achieving equality could inject an additional \$12 trillion into the global economy. Ending the digital gender divide could provide over \$500 billion. Closing gaps in skills could add \$10 trillion more. Yet not a single country has fully achieved gender equality. What's more, when crises such as climate-related disasters, conflicts or pandemics interact with existing inequalities, they make them worse, undermining the world's efforts to react and recover. Despite this, progress is unstoppable. Change is here. Ever more people, especially young people, know the value of gender equality for their lives and their world. They are aware of and demanding their rights.

Based on findings, UN Women developed the Beijing+30 Action Agenda. It outlines six priorities to free women from poverty and improve their voice, choice and safety. Each action would trigger faster changes on a broader scale, and realize both the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. Each would unite people from different backgrounds and parts of the world.

Happy International Women's Day 2025

iPhone 17 Air

Apple's thinnest iPhone ever expected in 2025





South Africa's £44bn Infrastructure Gamble

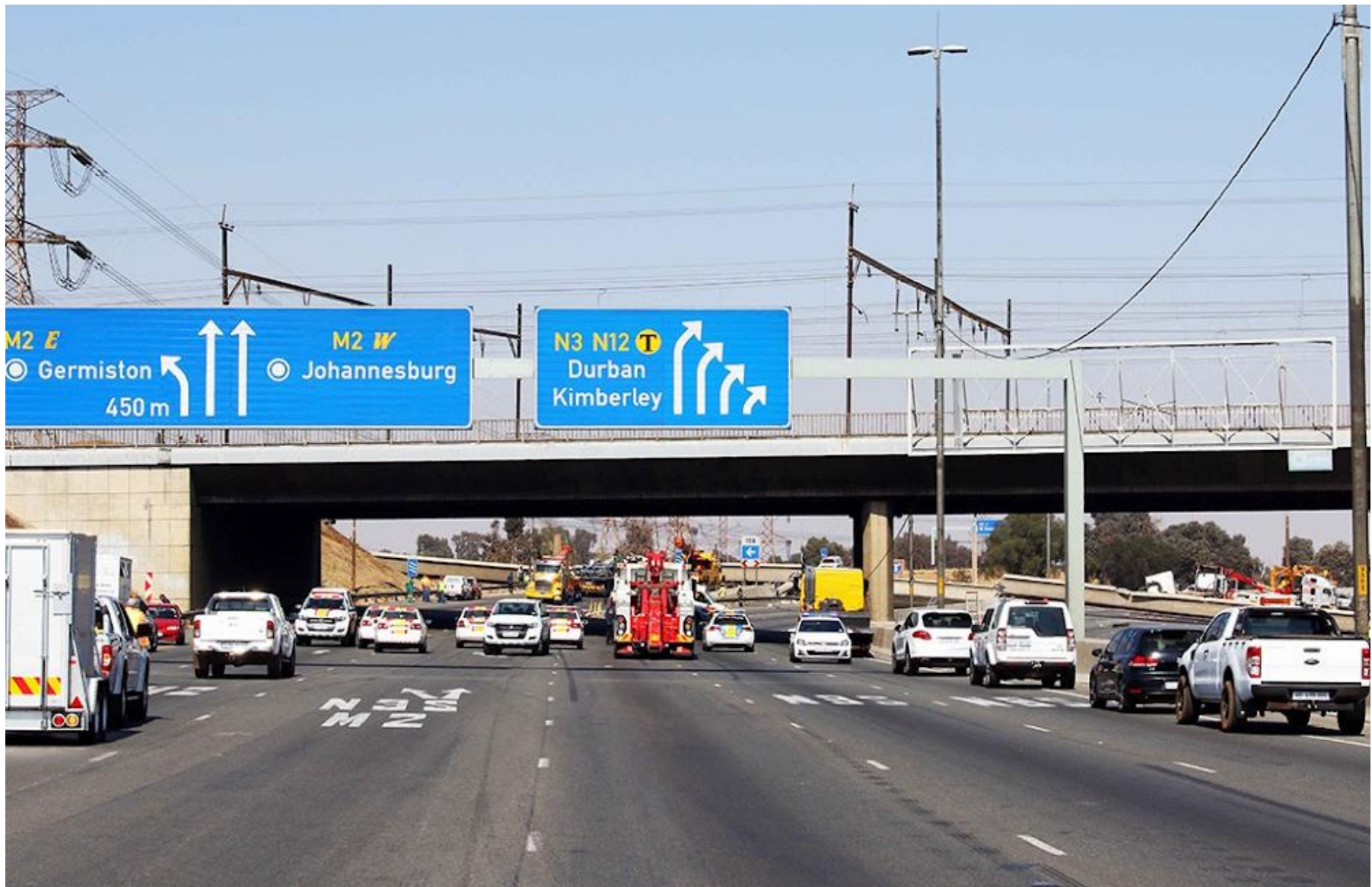
South Africa, the continent's most industrialized economy, has unveiled an ambitious £44 billion (R1.03 trillion) infrastructure investment plan aimed at rescuing a stagnating economy, creating jobs, and modernizing its ailing public services. The proposed spending—one of the most significant infrastructure overhauls in the country's history—targets roads, energy, rail, water, and sanitation, sectors long plagued by underinvestment, inefficiency, and corruption.

Yet, as policymakers champion the plan as a catalyst for economic recovery, skeptics warn of the financial risks, governance concerns, and execution hurdles that have derailed previous infrastructure efforts. With South Africa's fiscal position increasingly precarious, can the government turn this massive spending drive into a genuine growth engine—or will it become yet another expensive misfire?

Infrastructure as the Engine of Growth

At the heart of the plan is a commitment to infrastructure-led growth, a strategy long favored by economies seeking to stimulate employment and attract private-sector investment. The spending blueprint, outlined by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana, allocates £17.3 billion to roads, £9.4 billion to energy, and £6.7 billion to water and sanitation, with additional funding earmarked for railways and disaster reconstruction projects.

Government officials argue that South Africa's economic stagnation is inextricably linked to its decaying infrastructure. Load shedding (rolling blackouts) by the state power utility Eskom, outdated rail networks, and a chronic water crisis have stifled industrial output and deterred investment. In this context, proponents



say the £44 billion package is not just a stimulus plan, but an economic necessity.

"There are major opportunities to reduce the backlog in public infrastructure while creating jobs and bolstering economic activity," a government report stated, echoing the long-held view that poor infrastructure is a key constraint on South Africa's growth potential.

But the grand infrastructure vision comes at a time when South Africa's public finances are stretched thin. The country's debt-to-GDP ratio exceeds 70%, and economic growth remains sluggish, hovering below 1% annually. With tax revenues under strain and rising social welfare costs, the government faces the challenge of funding this massive infrastructure drive without exacerbating its debt burden.

Further complicating matters, the 2025 budget—originally set for February 19—was delayed until March 12 due to disagree-

ments within the Government of National Unity (GNU), reflecting political divisions over spending priorities. The delay has raised concerns about whether the ruling coalition can deliver the policy stability and fiscal discipline required for such an ambitious undertaking.

South Africa has been down this road before. Massive state infrastructure plans have frequently been marred by corruption, inefficiency, and cost overruns. Eskom's power crisis, for example, is not just a failure of investment but of mismanagement, with allegations of fraud and political interference compounding the country's energy woes. Similarly, state-owned rail operator Transnet has struggled with operational failures, hampering the transport of goods and pushing more freight onto already congested roads.

With government coffers running low, there is a growing push for private-sector participation in infrastructure development. The success of independent power producers in renewable energy projects offers a model for how private investment can supplement state funding, particularly in sectors like energy and transport. However, businesses remain wary of regulatory uncertainty, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and policy inconsistencies. Unless the government can restore investor confidence, streamline approval processes, and enforce accountability in public spending, the infrastructure plan could fail to attract the external capital it desperately needs.

For South Africa, the £44 billion infrastructure drive represents a high-risk, high-reward gamble. If implemented effectively, it could revitalize key sectors, improve productivity, and lay the foundation for sustained growth. But if it follows the pattern of previous failed projects—bogged down by corruption, delays, and mismanagement—it risks deepening the country's economic and fiscal woes. Ultimately, the success of this plan will depend on execution, transparency, and political will. Infrastructure can be a powerful engine of growth, but only if the roads, power stations, and railways promised actually get built—and built well.



Happy
international
Women's Day!

René Venter

**Our Pillar of
Leadership,
Integrity & Inspiration.**

(Tribute from the FB & GT Editorial Team)

In a dispensation where leadership is often defined by titles and achievements, there exists a rarer kind of leader—one whose influence is measured not just by results, but by the lives uplifted, the communities strengthened, and the legacies built.

René Venter, our Chief Operating Officer and Director of Publishing, is one such leader.

As we mark International Women's Day 2025, we take a moment to celebrate a woman whose dedication, wisdom, and unwavering commitment to excellence have shaped not only this organization but also the countless lives she has touched.

René's career is a masterclass in visionary leadership and meaningful impact. With expertise spanning IT, corporate training, and business management, she has spent years helping individuals and organizations thrive.



Whether overseeing major training programs, leading her own enterprises, or guiding editorial excellence, she has always operated

with a keen sense of purpose and a deep belief in the potential of those around her.

Yet, René is not just a strategist or an executive; she is a builder—of people, businesses, and communities. Her entrepreneurial ventures, from a successful wedding and conference venue to a wellness center, reflect her ability to turn ideas into reality, creating spaces where people find growth, healing, and inspiration. Her presence in this organization has been far more than operational—she has been a mentor, a guide, and the foundation upon which so many have found direction and encouragement.

At the core of her leadership is a rare combination of strength and kindness. Colleagues describe her as someone who leads with conviction yet with a deep sense of care, pushing those around her to reach beyond their limits while ensuring they always feel supported and valued. Her commitment to developing talent and championing excellence has elevated not just the publications she oversees, but the people behind them.

Beyond her professional achievements, René's spiritual depth, compassion, and generosity define her in ways that words can only begin to capture. She carries herself with grace in challenges, patience in uncertainty, and wisdom in decision-making. Her presence is both a steadying force and a source of encouragement, reminding us all that true leadership is not just about guiding an organization—it is about lifting others and making a lasting difference.

As we celebrate her today, we also extend our warmest wishes to her beloved husband, her son and daughter-in-law, and her entire family, who have been her greatest support and source of strength. Behind every remarkable woman is a family that loves, inspires, and sustains her, and we honor them as part of this tribute.

This dedication comes from all of us at Future Builders Magazine and Glorify Times Magazine, who have had the privilege of working alongside a leader, a mentor, and a true force for good. René, your influence reaches far beyond the walls of this organization—it lives in the people you have empowered, the stories you have shaped, and the future you continue to build.

With deep gratitude, admiration, and respect, we celebrate you today and always.





The Women Shaping Africa's Economic Future

Women have been at the heart of Africa's economic and social fabric for centuries. Long before the rise of modern economic structures, African women were traders, farmers, artisans, and community leaders, driving commerce and wealth distribution within their societies. From the bustling markets of pre-colonial West Africa to the powerful female-led kingdoms of Dahomey and the Ashanti, African women have always played a fundamental role in shaping economies.





In many pre-colonial African societies, women controlled significant sectors of the economy. In Ghana and Nigeria, female traders like the Yoruba Iyalode and Igbo Omu held influential positions in commerce, controlling trade routes and setting market policies. Women in Ethiopia, Mali, and Sudan managed agricultural production, ensuring food security while participating in regional trade.



These matriarchal traditions were also reflected in governance. The Kingdom of Ndongo and Matamba (modern-day Angola) was ruled by Queen Nzinga in the 17th century, who not only resisted Portuguese colonization but also negotiated trade agreements and secured economic autonomy for her people. Similarly, the 19th-century Hausa Queen Amina of Zazzau (now northern Nigeria) expanded trade networks and infrastructure across the Sahel.

The arrival of colonialism in Africa disrupted traditional economic structures, sidelining women's contributions. Colonial powers imposed European economic models, favoring male-dominated labor systems and private land ownership laws that stripped women of access to resources. Women were pushed into informal economic roles, leading to centuries of financial exclusion.

Despite these barriers, women found ways to resist. The 1929 Aba Women's War in Nigeria saw thousands of market women rise against British taxation policies that threatened their businesses. Similar uprisings occurred in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa, where women fought for economic and political inclusion.

Following independence in the mid-20th century, African nations sought economic revival, but

women remained largely underrepresented in formal employment and leadership.

Policies often overlooked their contributions, leaving them concentrated in informal trade and subsistence farming. However, grassroots movements, cooperative societies, and feminist activism led to gradual progress.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a surge in microfinance initiatives, with institutions like Grameen Bank and later Africa-based lenders recognizing women as key drivers of economic growth. Women began taking leadership roles in politics and finance, laying the groundwork for the powerhouse figures we see today.

In the 21st century, African women are breaking barriers in technology, finance, politics, and entrepreneurship.

Governments are enacting gender-inclusive policies, women-led startups are attracting global investment, and corporate leaders are driving digital transformation.

Despite progress, challenges remain—women still face limited access to capital, wage gaps, and



social barriers. Yet, as history has shown, African women are not just participants in economic development; they are its architects. Today's trailblazers are building on centuries of resilience, ensuring that Africa's economic future is defined by inclusivity and innovation.

With this foundation in mind, we now turn to the individual stories of the women currently shaping Africa's economic destiny.

NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA

The Economist Reshaping Global Trade



In the complex and often contentious world of global trade, where economic policies shape the destinies of nations, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has emerged as a defining figure. As the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO)—the first African and first woman to hold the position—she embodies a shift in global economic leadership, proving that Africa's influence on international trade policy is no longer marginal but central. With a career that spans finance, development economics, and governance, Okonjo-Iweala has not only rewritten the rules of engagement for African policymakers on the global stage but has also positioned herself as a key architect of the post-pandemic economic order.

Her rise to prominence was forged through decades of navigating high-stakes negotiations, institutional reforms, and economic crises. Born in Nigeria in 1954, she pursued economics at Harvard University before earning a Ph.D. from MIT, equipping herself with both academic rigor and a global perspective on development finance. Her career at the World Bank, where she rose to become Managing Director of Operations, placed her at the center of international financial decision-making, overseeing multi-billion-dollar projects aimed at poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and economic reform in emerging markets.

Yet, it was in Nigeria's turbulent economic landscape that she made her most enduring impact. As Finance Minister under two administrations, Okonjo-Iweala spearheaded landmark economic reforms that would define Nigeria's fiscal trajectory for decades. In 2005, she led negotiations that resulted in the historic cancellation of \$18 billion in external debt, freeing up resources for national development. She championed transparency initiatives, introducing digital salary payment systems that eliminated ghost workers and reduced corruption in government spending.



Her tenure also saw Nigeria attain its first-ever sovereign credit rating, a critical milestone in positioning the country as a viable investment destination.

But reforming entrenched systems often comes at a cost. Her efforts to reduce fuel subsidies and implement fiscal discipline were met with political resistance and public pushback, a reality that underscores the difficulty of economic transformation in fragile governance environments. Despite these challenges, her commitment to sound economic policies and structural reforms earned her both domestic and international acclaim, solidifying her reputation as one of Africa's most influential economic minds.

When she took the helm of the WTO in 2021, the world was emerging from a pandemic-induced economic crisis, and global trade was under immense strain from supply chain disruptions, vaccine nationalism, and escalating trade tensions between major powers. Her appointment was not just symbolic; it reflected a recognition that multilateralism needed a new kind of leadership—one that understood the economic realities of both developed and developing nations.



At the WTO, she has pushed for trade policies that are more inclusive and beneficial to developing economies, advocating for fairer access to vaccines, a stronger digital trade framework, and the integration of Africa and other emerging markets into global value chains. She has also been instrumental in efforts to reform WTO rules, aiming to make the organization more responsive to

modern economic challenges, including climate change, digital commerce, and geopolitical trade disputes.

Yet, leading a global trade body in an era of protectionism, supply chain nationalism, and rising economic fragmentation is no small task. The WTO's ability to enforce trade rules has weakened, and negotiations on key global trade issues have often stalled due to conflicting national interests. Okonjo-Iweala has sought to revive the organization's credibility, calling for greater cooperation between developed and developing nations while emphasizing that trade can be a driver of economic resilience rather than a source of division.

Beyond her institutional roles, she remains a fierce advocate for gender equality, climate action, and economic justice, serving on boards of global organizations and philanthropic initiatives aimed at strengthening economic opportunities for women and underserved communities. Her leadership reflects a fundamental belief: that trade, when designed inclusively, is not just about markets and tariffs but about people, prosperity, and sustainable development.

In an era where global institutions are under pressure to adapt to new economic realities, Okonjo-Iweala's leadership is a reminder that the future of trade must be fairer, more inclusive, and attuned to the needs of all economies, not just the largest players. Her journey—from shaping

Nigeria's economic policies to steering the WTO through uncertain waters—is not just a personal success story. It is a testament to Africa's growing role in global economic governance and a call for a more balanced and equitable trading system.



Fatoumata Ba

Investing in Africa's Future Through Technology & Entrepreneurship



In a venture capital landscape where funding remains disproportionately concentrated outside of Africa, Fatoumata Ba is rewriting the rules of investment. As the Founder and Executive Chair of Janngo Capital, she is leading a new era of impact-driven entrepreneurship, ensuring that African startups—especially those led by women—have the capital, infrastructure, and strategic support they need to scale.

Born and raised in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, Ba grew up in a family that emphasized education and ambition. She developed an early fascination with technology and its power to drive economic inclusion, a passion that led her to pursue higher education in France at HEC Paris, one of Europe's top business schools. While many of her peers pursued careers in multinational corporations, she had a different vision: leveraging technology to solve Africa's biggest socio-economic challenges.



Her first major breakthrough came at Jumia Group, Africa's first unicorn startup (a company valued at over \$1 billion). Joining at a time when e-commerce was still nascent on the continent, Ba quickly rose through the ranks, eventually becoming CEO of Jumia Côte d'Ivoire. She helped expand logistics, digital payment systems, and online shopping access across West Africa, making e-commerce a reality for millions. But her experience at Jumia also exposed her to a deeper challenge: African entrepreneurs, particularly women, were struggling to access capital.

Determined to address this funding gap, Ba launched Janngo Capital in 2018, a venture capital firm focused on high-growth, impact-driven startups. Unlike traditional investors, Janngo prioritizes businesses that are not only profitable but also create jobs and promote economic inclusion. Since its founding, the firm has raised \$60 million to invest in fintech, healthtech, agritech, and logistics startups that

provide essential services to underserved communities. Janngo has also committed to ensuring that at least 50% of its portfolio companies are founded or co-founded by women—a bold move in a sector where female entrepreneurs receive less than 5% of total startup funding in Africa.

Ba's influence extends beyond investment. Recognized as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum, she has become a leading advocate for bridging the financing gap for women-led businesses. She regularly pushes global investors to increase capital flows into Africa, speaks at international forums like the UN and WEF, and mentors women entrepreneurs, helping them scale their ventures. Her work has earned her a place among Forbes Africa's "Most Powerful Women", a reflection of her transformative impact on Africa's business landscape.

Looking ahead, Ba envisions an Africa where entrepreneurship is not hindered by lack of capital, but fueled by it. She is focused on expanding Janngo's investment fund, driving digital transformation policies, and proving that investing in women-led businesses is not just about equity—it is smart business.

Her legacy is clear: Africa's future will be built by innovators, and those innovators need capital. Through Janngo Capital, Fatoumata Ba is ensuring they get it.

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Professor Rose Leke

Professor Rose Leke

Advancing Global Health and Immunology in Africa

For decades, Africa's health challenges have been framed by external narratives, with solutions often dictated by foreign research institutions and donor agencies. Yet, in the field of infectious disease research and immunology, African scientists are increasingly shaping global health policy, and Professor Rose Leke has been at the forefront of this shift. A Cameroonian immunologist, malaria researcher, and public health advocate, Leke has dedicated her career to combating malaria, strengthening vaccination programs, and mentoring the next generation of African scientists. Her work has influenced global immunization policies, particularly in the fight against malaria, polio, and other infectious diseases that disproportionately affect the continent.

Born and raised in Cameroon, Leke pursued a scientific path at a time when women in STEM fields were a rarity. She earned a Ph.D. in Immunology from the University of Montreal, Canada, before returning to Africa to focus on disease prevention, maternal health, and public health system strengthening. Her decision to work in Cameroon rather than remain in North America reflected a commitment to building local expertise in African medical research, an issue that remains critical as brain drain continues to affect Africa's scientific community.

Leke's most significant contributions have come in malaria research, a disease that remains one of Africa's leading causes of childhood mortality.



Her studies have focused on placental malaria, a condition affecting pregnant women that can lead to low birth weight, stillbirths, and severe maternal complications. By identifying how malaria parasites adapt in pregnant women, her work has informed policy recommendations for malaria treatment and prevention, particularly in rural and underserved areas where access to medical care is limited.

Beyond malaria, Leke has played a pivotal role in Africa's immunization campaigns. As Chair of the WHO African Advisory Committee on Immunization (2016-2020), she oversaw vaccination programs across the continent, helping to eradicate polio in Africa and strengthen routine immunization coverage.

Her expertise has also been instrumental in the rollout of new vaccines, particularly for malaria, meningitis, and cervical cancer, ensuring that Africa's unique epidemiological needs are reflected in global health strategies.

Her contributions extend beyond research and policy into mentorship and advocacy. Leke has been a champion for women in science,



recognizing that despite increased female enrollment in STEM fields, African women remain significantly underrepresented in senior scientific leadership. Through programs such as Higher Women Cameroon, she has mentored hundreds of female scientists, pushing for greater representation of African women in global health research.



Despite these successes, challenges remain. Africa still lags behind in vaccine manufacturing, relying heavily on imports and foreign aid to meet its immunization needs. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed these vulnerabilities, with African countries struggling to secure vaccine supplies in the early months of distribution. Leke has been a vocal advocate for local vaccine production, calling for greater investment in Africa-based biomedical research and pharmaceutical development. She has argued that true health sovereignty requires not just funding but also policy reforms that prioritize research and development within the continent.

Her influence continues to shape how Africa approaches infectious disease control, as she remains an advisor to global health organizations, African governments, and research institutions. At a time when climate change, urbanization, and migration patterns are creating new public health risks, Leke's work remains crucial in anticipating and responding to emerging health threats.

For Professor Rose Leke, science is not just a tool for disease prevention—it is a path to economic development, gender equality, and Africa's self-reliance in global health innovation. Her legacy is one of scientific excellence, institutional reform, and mentorship, ensuring that Africa is not just a recipient of global health solutions but a key player in designing them.





Lillian Barnard

Leading Africa's Digital Transformation at Microsoft
Technology is reshaping economies across Africa, and at the forefront of this transformation is Lillian Barnard, a corporate executive who has spent over 25 years driving digital innovation, business transformation, and tech inclusion. As President of Microsoft Africa, Barnard oversees a continent-wide strategy that aims to integrate artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and digital skills development into Africa's fast-evolving business landscape. Her leadership at one of the world's largest technology firms marks a significant milestone—not only for women in tech leadership but also for the increasing role of African talent in shaping global digital economies.

Barnard's trajectory is one of strategic risk-taking and unconventional career choices. Raised in South Africa, she developed an early fascination with technology and business strategy, pursuing a business and technology management degree at North-West University. While many of her peers followed traditional corporate paths, she opted for a career that merged technological growth with economic development, a vision that would later define her impact on Africa's digital economy.

Her rise in the technology sector began at IBM, where she spent 15 years working across business development, technology sales, and corporate strategy. She became a senior figure in IBM's expansion across Africa and Europe, gaining a reputation for leading large-scale digital transformation projects that positioned African businesses to compete on the global stage. At Vodacom South Africa, where she later became Chief Sales Officer, she took on the challenge of expanding digital connectivity in rural and underserved communities, recognizing that Africa's technological future depended not only on innovation but also on accessibility and inclusivity.

This realization fueled her transition to Microsoft in 2019, where she became the first female Managing Director of Microsoft South Africa. In a region where women hold just 24% of senior management positions in technology firms, her appointment was a milestone for gender representation



in leadership. In 2023, she took on an even larger role as President of Microsoft Africa, overseeing the firm's business strategy, cloud expansion, and AI-driven solutions across the continent. Under her leadership, Microsoft has strengthened partnerships with African startups, offering them access to AI, cloud computing, and cybersecurity training, ensuring that local tech enterprises have the resources to scale globally.

A core pillar of her leadership has been women's inclusion in technology. Through Microsoft's "Women in Tech" mentorship programs, thousands of African women have been equipped with the skills necessary to pursue careers in STEM. She has also worked with universities and government agencies to increase female enrollment in technology-related fields, ensuring that the next generation of African innovators is more diverse and representative.



Barnard's influence extends into youth empowerment and digital skills training, recognizing that Africa's population—where over 60% are under the age of 25—represents both a challenge and an opportunity. Under her leadership, Microsoft Africa has provided millions of young Africans with free access to coding, AI, and cybersecurity education, preparing them for a job market increasingly shaped by automation and digital transformation. Initiatives like the Digital Skills for Africa program have expanded access to job-ready training, creating new pathways for employment in the tech sector.

Beyond workforce development, Barnard has been instrumental in expanding cloud infrastructure in Africa, spearheading the establishment of Microsoft data centers in South Africa and Kenya. These investments are critical to Africa's digital sovereignty, reducing dependence on foreign cloud infrastructure and enhancing data security within the continent. Additionally, she has been a key advocate for ethical AI adoption, ensuring that Microsoft's AI solutions in Africa are designed to address local challenges in healthcare, agriculture, and financial services.



Her efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 2023, she was recognized as one of Africa's top tech leaders, a testament to her role in driving digital inclusion and innovation. She continues to push for greater investment in African startups, ensuring that homegrown solutions receive global support. As a key voice in AI, cybersecurity, and digital transformation, she advocates for policy frameworks that prioritize Africa's unique technological needs.

Looking ahead, Barnard's focus remains on expanding Microsoft's role in AI and cloud adoption, ensuring that African businesses are not just consumers of global technology but creators of innovative solutions. She continues to champion greater participation of women and youth in Africa's tech sector, recognizing that closing the digital divide is essential for sustainable economic growth. As she steers Microsoft's African strategy into the future, one thing is clear: Africa's digital transformation will not happen without African leadership, and Barnard is determined to make sure that leadership is diverse, inclusive, and future-ready.



Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim

Championing Science, Biodiversity, and African Innovation



For much of Africa's modern history, scientific research and innovation have remained underfunded, undervalued, and often dominated by foreign institutions. Yet, as global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and food insecurity intensify, African scientists are increasingly demonstrating why homegrown research is essential to solving the continent's most pressing issues. Among them, Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim has emerged as one of the most influential voices, blending scientific expertise, political leadership, and advocacy for Africa's research independence. A biodiversity scientist, entrepreneur, and former President of Mauritius, she has dedicated her career to proving that science and economic development must go hand in hand.

Born in 1959 in Mauritius, Gurib-Fakim defied societal expectations by pursuing a career in natural sciences, a field that, at the time, was largely dominated by men. She earned a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the University of Exeter, UK, before returning to Mauritius, where she built a career in research and academia. Her work focused on the medicinal properties of African plants, an area of science that had long been overlooked despite Africa's rich biodiversity and centuries-old traditional medicine systems. Over the years, she became one of the leading experts on ethnobotany, cataloging and analyzing the pharmaceutical potential of native plant species, many of which held the key to treating diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and bacterial infections. Gurib-Fakim's contributions in this field were groundbreaking. She published several scientific works, including the first African Herbal Pharmacopoeia, a comprehensive record of medicinal plants from



across the continent. Through her research, she demonstrated that Africa's biodiversity is not just an ecological asset but also an economic opportunity, arguing that if properly harnessed, the continent's natural resources could drive pharmaceutical innovation, job creation, and economic diversification.

In 2015, her influence took a dramatic turn when she became the first female President of Mauritius, an appointment that placed a scientist—rather than a career politician—at the helm of a nation's leadership. Her presidency was marked by efforts to bridge the gap between science and policy, advocating for increased investment in research and development (R&D), STEM education, and environmental sustainability. She sought to position Mauritius as a hub for scientific innovation, particularly in the areas of biotechnology, climate adaptation, and ocean economy research.

However, her time in office was cut short in 2018 due to a controversy related to the use of a corporate credit card linked to an NGO, an incident that led to her resignation. While she has strongly defended her





integrity, the episode underscored the challenges faced by reform-driven leaders in entrenched political systems. Yet, her departure from the presidency did not mark the end of her influence. She has since returned to scientific research, advocacy, and entrepreneurship, focusing on expanding Africa's role in global scientific discussions.

One of her key concerns is Africa's continued dependence on foreign research institutions. The continent contributes only about 1% to global scientific output, despite holding some of the world's most valuable biodiversity and natural resources. Gurib-Fakim has been a strong advocate for localizing scientific innovation, ensuring that African discoveries lead to African-owned patents, startups, and industries rather than being exploited by external entities.

She has also been a vocal supporter of women in STEM, recognizing that systemic barriers continue to limit female participation in scientific fields. Through mentorship initiatives and

educational programs, she is working to increase the number of African women entering careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, arguing that gender inclusion is essential to Africa's long-term scientific and economic competitiveness.

In recent years, Gurib-Fakim has played a critical role in advancing sustainability efforts, particularly in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss. She has worked closely with African governments, universities, and international organizations, calling for stronger policies that protect Africa's ecosystems while unlocking their economic potential. Her vision is one where Africa is not just seen as a source of raw materials but as a leader in sustainable scientific innovation.

Despite the political setback, her legacy remains intact. Through her continued work in research, entrepreneurship, and policy advocacy, she has positioned herself as a key figure in Africa's scientific renaissance. As global attention increasingly turns to climate resilience, bio-economy, and sustainable health solutions, her work serves as a reminder that Africa's future will not be dictated by external actors but by its own scientific leaders.

For Gurib-Fakim, the mission is clear: science must not remain on the fringes of Africa's development strategy—it must be at the center of it.



Professor Tebello Nyokong

Pioneering African-Led Innovation in Cancer Treatment and Water Purification

For much of modern history, Africa has been perceived as a consumer, rather than a producer, of scientific breakthroughs. But a growing number of African scientists are proving that cutting-edge innovation can emerge from within the continent. Among them, Professor Tebello Nyokong has established herself as a global leader in nanotechnology, photomedicine, and environmental chemistry, revolutionizing both cancer treatment and water purification. As one of the most respected scientists in Africa, she has dedicated her career to developing affordable, accessible, and locally designed solutions to some of the continent's most pressing challenges.

Born in Lesotho in 1951, Nyokong's early years were shaped by economic hardship and gender-based educational barriers. In an era when science and engineering were considered male-dominated fields, she defied expectations by pursuing chemistry as her chosen path. Her academic journey took her across continents, earning a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the University of Western Ontario, Canada, before returning to Africa to contribute to its scientific development. Unlike many of her peers who remained in the West, she made a deliberate decision to build her career in Africa, believing that scientific progress should be driven from within the continent rather than imported from outside.

Her most groundbreaking research has focused on photodynamic therapy (PDT)—an innovative approach to cancer treatment that offers a less toxic alternative to chemotherapy. Unlike traditional treatments, which often damage healthy cells along with cancerous ones,



PDT relies on light-activated nanomedicine to target cancer cells with precision, reducing harmful side effects. The implications of her work are profound: in a continent where cancer rates are rising but access to advanced treatments remains limited, locally developed, cost-effective alternatives could save millions of lives.

Beyond healthcare, Nyokong has also been a pioneer in water purification technology, developing nanomaterial-based filtration systems capable of removing industrial pollutants, heavy metals, and microbial contaminants. Given that over 400 million Africans lack access to safe drinking water, her research offers a sustainable and scalable solution to water scarcity and contamination. By integrating solar-powered purification techniques, she has also ensured that her technology remains affordable and accessible to off-grid communities.

Her contributions have earned her global recognition, with accolades including the L'Oréal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science and being named one of Africa's most influential scientists. Yet, despite her success, she has frequently spoken about the systemic challenges facing African researchers, particularly the lack of funding, limited infrastructure, and the continued reliance on Western institutions for scientific validation. She has been a vocal advocate for greater investment in Africa-led research and development (R&D), arguing that scientific sovereignty is essential to the continent's long-term growth.

A strong believer in mentorship and education, Nyokong has played a crucial role in training and inspiring the next generation of African scientists, particularly women. As a professor at Rhodes University in South Africa, she has mentored hundreds of young researchers, many of whom have gone on to pursue advanced scientific careers in Africa. She has also worked with African governments and universities to push for more STEM funding, recognizing that without robust local research ecosystems, Africa will remain dependent on external scientific advancements.

Yet, despite these challenges, Nyokong remains optimistic about Africa's scientific future. She sees a continent that is beginning to take ownership of its own discoveries, where young scientists are no longer looking to the West for solutions but creating them at home.

Her work is more than just laboratory research—it is a statement about Africa's potential to lead in high-tech innovation. Whether in cancer treatment or water purification, her message is clear: Africa is not just a participant in the global scientific community—it is a leader in its own right.





Damilola Ogunbiyi

Powering Africa's Green Economy

Energy access remains one of Africa's defining economic challenges, shaping everything from industrial growth to healthcare delivery and education. More than 600 million people across the continent still lack access to electricity, while millions more rely on expensive, polluting energy sources such as diesel generators and firewood.

At the heart of efforts to change this reality is Damilola Ogunbiyi, a global leader in sustainable energy and climate resilience. As the CEO of Sustainable

Energy for All (SEforALL) and the UN Special Representative for Sustainable Energy, she is driving policies and investments that aim to close Africa's energy gap, accelerate the transition to renewable energy, and strengthen climate adaptation strategies.



Ogunbiyi's career has been defined by a results-driven approach to energy reform, combining policy expertise, private-sector collaboration, and infrastructure investment to drive real change. Born in Nigeria, she pursued a degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Surrey in the UK, equipping herself with the technical knowledge necessary to tackle one of Africa's most complex infrastructural challenges. Unlike many of her peers who sought careers in oil and gas, she turned her focus to sustainable energy solutions, recognizing that Africa's long-term economic future depends not just on electricity access, but on the right kind of energy sources.

Her impact became most visible when she was appointed Managing Director of Nigeria's Rural Electrification Agency (REA), making her the first woman to hold this position. Under her leadership, Nigeria saw an unprecedented expansion of off-grid solar projects, with Ogunbiyi

spearheading initiatives that brought electricity to millions of rural households, small businesses, and healthcare facilities. Among her most notable achievements was the Energizing Education Programme, which installed solar mini-grids in Nigerian universities and teaching hospitals, ensuring that critical institutions had access to reliable, sustainable power. Additionally, her focus on mini-grid solutions and decentralized energy systems helped position Nigeria as one of the fastest-growing markets for off-grid solar investments in Africa.

Her success in Nigeria did not go unnoticed. In 2019, she was appointed as CEO of SEforALL, a global platform dedicated to achieving universal energy access by 2030—a core target of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As part of this role, she also became the Co-Chair of UN-Energy, making her one of the most influential voices in global energy policy.

At SEforALL, Ogunbiyi has focused on three key priorities: expanding renewable energy solutions, bridging the energy access gap, and strengthening climate resilience efforts. She has been a vocal proponent of solar, wind, and hydro energy investments, pushing for African countries to leapfrog fossil-fuel dependency and adopt cleaner, more sustainable alternatives. Her work has also included securing financing for large-scale clean energy projects, recognizing that while Africa holds 60% of the world's best solar resources, it attracts only 2% of global investment in renewable energy.



Her influence extends beyond financing and policy. Ogunbiyi has also worked to ensure that women and marginalized communities are included in Africa's energy transition, advocating for gender-responsive energy policies that recognize that women bear the greatest burden of energy poverty. Under her leadership, SEforALL has launched initiatives aimed at training and supporting female entrepreneurs in the renewable energy sector, ensuring that Africa's energy transformation is both inclusive and equitable.

In 2023, she was recognized as one of the world's leading climate and energy advocates, continuing to push for reforms in global energy financing that ensure that African nations receive the investment and support needed to develop resilient, sustainable energy infrastructure. Her role as an advisor to global institutions, including the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the UN, has further positioned her as a strategic architect of Africa's green energy transition.

Despite the progress made, the road ahead remains challenging. Africa still needs at least \$25 billion annually to meet its energy access goals, and many governments remain slow to implement policies that prioritize renewables over fossil fuels. Moreover, rising climate vulnerabilities mean that energy strategies must now incorporate resilience planning, ensuring that infrastructure is built to withstand extreme weather conditions.

Ogunbiyi remains undeterred. Her vision extends beyond electricity access—she sees sustainable energy as the foundation for economic transformation, from agriculture and industry to education and healthcare. As she continues to advocate for clean energy investments, policy reforms, and inclusive growth, one thing is clear: Africa's future will be powered not just by energy, but by the right kind of energy—one that is sustainable, equitable, and designed for long-term prosperity.



Nunu Ntshingila Shaping Africa's Digital Economy

Few executives have had as profound an impact on Africa's digital transformation as Nunu Ntshingila. A pioneer in advertising, marketing, and technology, she has spent over two decades redefining how businesses engage with African consumers. As the first Head of Meta Africa, she was instrumental in expanding digital adoption, driving e-commerce growth, and positioning social media as a key business tool across the continent. Though she has since stepped down from this role, her legacy is firmly embedded in Africa's tech-driven economic evolution.



Ntshingila's career began in the world of advertising and brand strategy, long before Africa's digital revolution took hold. Born in South Africa, she was raised in a society where racial and gender barriers often dictated career trajectories. Yet, she pursued a path in marketing and business strategy, earning degrees from the University of Swaziland and Morgan State University in the United States. This academic foundation, combined with a sharp understanding of consumer behavior and brand positioning, led her to the advertising industry at a time when Africa's corporate sector was undergoing a profound shift.

Her most significant contributions came during her tenure at Ogilvy & Mather, one of the world's largest advertising firms. As CEO of Ogilvy South Africa, she was responsible for some of the most iconic brand campaigns in the region, working with multinational clients such as Coca-Cola, KFC, and Unilever. More

importantly, she played a critical role in localizing global marketing strategies, ensuring that Africa's diverse cultures and economies were reflected in major advertising campaigns. Her leadership helped expand Ogilvy's footprint across Africa, solidifying its dominance in the region's fast-growing advertising sector.

It was her ability to anticipate the shift from traditional to digital marketing that set her apart. While many corporate leaders were still focused on television and print advertising, she recognized that mobile technology and social media would define Africa's next wave of economic growth. In 2015, she made a decisive move into the tech industry, becoming the first Head of Meta Africa (then Facebook Africa). Her appointment came at a crucial time—Africa's mobile penetration was skyrocketing, and businesses were beginning to explore digital platforms as a way to reach new customers.

At Meta, Ntshingila led business strategy, policy engagement, and market expansion efforts across the continent. Her priorities included helping African businesses scale through digital marketing, driving internet connectivity initiatives, and expanding Meta's influence in African e-commerce. She spearheaded efforts to get small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) online, recognizing that digital adoption could be a catalyst for economic growth in sectors ranging from retail and hospitality to agriculture and finance.

Her work was particularly significant in an environment where traditional advertising models were failing to reach Africa's rapidly evolving consumer base. Under her leadership, Meta partnered with African entrepreneurs, content creators, and digital advertisers, helping them leverage platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp for business growth. She also played a key role in internet connectivity projects, including Facebook's Express Wi-Fi initiative, which aimed to provide affordable internet access in underserved communities.

Despite the successes, challenges remained. Africa's digital divide—exacerbated by infrastructure gaps, inconsistent regulatory policies, and affordability barriers—meant that many of the businesses Meta sought to support lacked the resources to fully embrace digital transformation. Additionally, concerns around data privacy, misinformation, and platform regulation placed increasing pressure on tech firms operating in the region.

In 2022, Ntshingila stepped down from her role at Meta Africa, marking the end of an era. While she has not taken on a new public executive role, she remains a key influencer in Africa's digital economy, serving as an advisor, board member, and mentor for African entrepreneurs. Her insights continue to shape discussions on digital marketing, e-commerce, and the role of technology in economic development.

Her departure from Meta does not diminish her legacy. Africa's social media-driven business ecosystem,

now a multi-billion-dollar industry, owes much to her leadership. The widespread adoption of e-commerce, digital advertising, and online content creation across the continent is a direct outcome of the strategies she championed.



Looking ahead, Ntshingila's influence is likely to persist as Africa's digital transformation accelerates. As the continent navigates the complexities of artificial intelligence, fintech growth, and mobile-driven commerce, her expertise will remain invaluable. Whether through advisory roles, mentorship programs, or strategic investments, she is expected to continue shaping Africa's place in the global digital economy.

Her career exemplifies the intersection of technology, business, and cultural transformation, proving that Africa is not just a market for global tech companies, but a key player in shaping the future of digital commerce and marketing.



Asisat Oshoala

Redefining African Women's Football on the Global Stage

Football in Africa has long been dominated by male narratives, with women's participation receiving limited funding, media attention, and institutional support. Yet, in the last decade, few athletes have done more to redefine the visibility, professionalism, and success of African women's football than Asisat Oshoala. From the streets of Lagos to the grand stages of European club football, she has shattered records, defied expectations, and cemented her legacy as the most decorated African female footballer of all time.



Born in Ikorodu, Lagos, Nigeria, in 1994, Oshoala's rise was far from conventional. Like many Nigerian girls, she encountered deep-rooted societal norms discouraging women from pursuing professional sports. Her parents initially opposed her football aspirations, believing that academic success should take precedence. But against all odds, she found her way into FC Robo, a local club where her raw talent and relentless work ethic quickly set her apart. Her breakthrough came in 2014, when she led Nigeria to the final of the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup, winning both the Golden Boot and Golden Ball as the tournament's top scorer and best player. It was a performance that not only announced her as a future superstar but also highlighted the untapped potential of African women's football. Soon after, she made history by becoming the first African woman to sign for an English club, joining Liverpool in 2015.

Oshoala's club career has since taken her across multiple continents, from Arsenal in England to Dalian Quanjian in China, before she found her true home at FC Barcelona Femeni in 2019. At Barcelona, she became the first African woman to win the UEFA Women's Champions League, playing a key role in the club's dominance in European women's football. Her time in Spain saw her win multiple league and cup titles, earning recognition as one of the best forwards in the world. In 2022, she became the first African woman to be nominated for the Ballon d'Or, a testament to her growing influence on the global stage.

Despite her club success, Oshoala's most enduring legacy lies with the Nigerian national team, the Super Falcons. She has won three Women's Africa Cup of Nations

(WAFCON) titles and represented Nigeria in multiple FIFA Women's World Cups, helping elevate the team's standing in global competitions. Her leadership was pivotal in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, where Nigeria advanced to the knockout stages, eliminating co-hosts Australia and proving that African teams could compete at the highest level.



Yet, Oshoala's impact extends beyond the pitch. Through the Asisat Oshoala Foundation, she has invested in the next generation of African female footballers, providing scholarships, training programs, and grassroots development initiatives. She has also been a vocal advocate for gender

equality in sports, calling for increased investment in women's football infrastructure, pay equity, and sponsorship opportunities. Her influence has pressured football federations and corporate sponsors to take African women's football more seriously, contributing to better contracts, improved facilities, and increased media coverage.

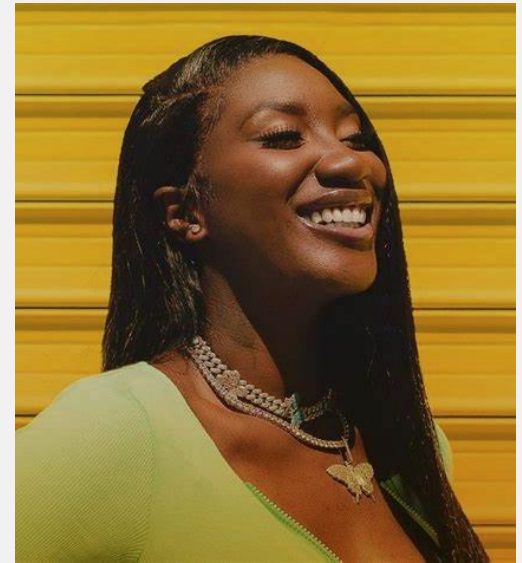
In January 2024, she made another landmark move by joining Bay FC in the United States, taking her talents to the growing National Women's Soccer League (NWSL). The move signals not just a new challenge in her career, but also an opportunity to continue pushing African football onto the global stage.

For many young African girls, Oshoala is more than just a footballer—she is a symbol of what is possible when talent, determination, and opportunity intersect. She has redefined what it means to be an African female athlete, proving that success is not limited by geography, gender, or circumstance. In the broader conversation about sports, representation, and economic opportunities for women, her name stands as a powerful argument for investment in African talent.

Her story is still being written, but one thing is certain: Asisat Oshoala is not just changing football—she is changing the future of African women in sports.

Aya Nakamura

Redefining Global Pop with a Francophone African Voice



In an industry long dominated by Anglophone artists and Western cultural hegemony, Aya Nakamura has managed to do what few Francophone African musicians have achieved—break into the global mainstream while staying true to her linguistic and cultural roots. With her signature blend of Afrobeats, R&B, and contemporary pop, she has become the most streamed Francophone female artist in the world, a feat that places her in a league of her own. At a time when African artists are commanding global recognition, Nakamura's rise represents a shift in cultural power dynamics, proving that African and diasporic voices can shape the future of popular music—on their own terms.

Born Aya Danioko in 1995 in Bamako, Mali, Nakamura moved to France as a child, growing up in a working-class suburb of Paris, where she was immersed in French hip-hop, West African sounds, and Caribbean zouk rhythms. Like many in the African diaspora, she navigated multiple cultural identities, blending influences from her Malian heritage, French upbringing, and global pop music. This fusion would later define her distinct sound, which defies traditional genre classifications.



Her breakthrough came in 2018 with the viral success of "Djadja," a song that became a global sensation without a single word of English—a rare feat in an industry where non-English songs often struggle to penetrate mainstream markets. The track topped charts in over 10 countries, amassing over a billion streams and earning her a place among the most influential contemporary artists. It was a defining moment, not only for Nakamura but also for Francophone African artists, proving that success did not require linguistic assimilation.

Following "Djadja," she solidified her position with hit albums like "Nakamura" (2018), "Aya" (2020), and "DNK" (2023), all of which showcased her ability to blend sharp lyricism, urban slang, and rhythmic diversity. Unlike many artists pressured to switch to English for wider appeal, she remained committed to her unique expression, incorporating Bambara (a Malian language) and Parisian street dialects into her music. This linguistic authenticity has made her a symbol of cultural pride, particularly for second-generation African immigrants in Europe, who see in her a reflection of their own diasporic experiences.

Yet, Nakamura's impact extends beyond music. She has played a key role in challenging industry norms, particularly regarding gender dynamics in French music. Often compared to male counterparts in French rap and Afropop, she has consistently pushed back against

misogynistic narratives, asserting her independence, artistic control, and commercial power in an industry that often relegates female artists to secondary roles.

Her influence can be seen in the elevation of Francophone Afrobeats and urban music to new global heights. While Nigerian Afrobeats has largely driven Africa's music industry boom, Nakamura has ensured that Francophone sounds remain equally relevant, inspiring a new generation of African and diaspora artists to embrace their linguistic and cultural identities on a global stage.

Despite her success, she has faced the familiar resistance that comes with being a Black woman in the music industry. From undervaluation by French media to controversies surrounding race and representation, her career has been marked by a constant push for recognition in spaces that have historically been reluctant to embrace African and diasporic artists. Yet, she remains unapologetic in her success, leveraging her platform to redefine what mainstream music looks and sounds like.

Her story is not just one of artistic success; it is a cultural movement, proving that the future of global music is not limited to a single language, geography, or industry model. With each album, she is not just making hits—she is rewriting the rules of global pop music.



MO ABUDU

Redefining African Storytelling on the Global Stage



For decades, African stories were either underrepresented, misrepresented, or entirely excluded from mainstream global media. When they did appear, they were often filtered through Western narratives that emphasized war, poverty, and corruption over the continent's dynamism and cultural richness. Mo Abudu has spent the last two decades dismantling these narratives, ensuring that African voices take control of their own stories. As the founder and CEO of EbonyLife Media, she has built one of Africa's most influential entertainment companies, securing groundbreaking partnerships with Netflix, Sony, and Amazon, and elevating Nollywood and African storytelling to the global stage.

Born in London in 1964 to Nigerian parents, Abudu spent her early years navigating multiple cultural identities. She later returned to Nigeria, where she built a corporate career in human resources, rising to become the Head of HR at ExxonMobil Nigeria. Despite her success, she was driven by a larger vision—to change the way the world saw Africa. In 2006, she took a leap into media, launching "Moments with Mo," Africa's first syndicated daily talk show, where she interviewed global figures such as Hillary Clinton and Christine Lagarde, blending African and international perspectives on culture, politics, and business.

Her most transformative move came in 2013, when she founded EbonyLife TV, a media powerhouse dedicated to telling African stories with authenticity and commercial appeal. Unlike previous Nollywood productions, which were often low-budget and

locally distributed, Abudu pushed for high-production-value films and series that could compete with global content. Under her leadership, EbonyLife produced some of Nigeria's most commercially successful films, including "The Wedding Party" (2016), which became the highest-grossing Nigerian film at the time, and "Oloture" (2019), a hard-hitting film on human trafficking that gained international acclaim.

Abudu's business acumen extends beyond filmmaking. Recognizing the global demand for diverse content, she forged unprecedented partnerships with Netflix, Sony Pictures, and Amazon Studios, making EbonyLife the first African production company to sign multi-title deals with major Hollywood studios. These deals not only secured wider distribution for African films but also opened doors for African creatives—screenwriters, directors, and actors—to work on a global stage.





Beyond entertainment, she has championed capacity building in the African creative industry, launching the EbonyLife Creative Academy, which trains young Africans in filmmaking, scriptwriting, and production. Through these initiatives, she is ensuring that Africa's storytelling future is not just about representation but also industry ownership and skill development.

Despite her success, challenges remain. Africa's film industry still struggles with funding gaps, piracy, and inconsistent government support. While Nollywood is the second-largest film industry in the world by volume, it remains largely informal and underfunded compared to Hollywood or Bollywood. Abudu has consistently called for more structured investments in Africa's

creative economy, emphasizing that content is one of the continent's most valuable exports.

Abudu's vision is clear: African stories must be told by Africans, for Africans, and on the world stage. As streaming platforms expand their reach into African markets, her work is shaping how the continent is perceived and consumed globally. At a time when diversity in media is more scrutinized than ever, she has ensured that Africa is not just included but leading the conversation.

For Mo Abudu, storytelling is not just entertainment—it is economic empowerment, cultural diplomacy, and legacy-building. She is not just producing films; she is rewriting Africa's place in global media history.



**Big
Mac**







Tesslo

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CADILLAC'S ESCALADE IQL

Stretching the Limits of Luxury EVs



For decades, Cadillac's Escalade has been synonymous with American luxury, excess, and power. Now, as the automotive industry pivots toward electrification, General Motors is ensuring that its flagship SUV doesn't lose its commanding presence. Enter the 2026 Cadillac Escalade IQL—a longer, roomier, and even more imposing version of the all-electric Escalade IQ.

Unlike traditional long-wheelbase variants, which typically extend the space between the front and rear axles to benefit second-row passengers, the Escalade IQL adds 4.2 inches entirely at the rear. The result is a larger cargo area and increased comfort for third-row occupants, giving it an edge in a market where electric SUVs must balance performance, practicality, and premium features.



At 228.5 inches in length, the IQL is the largest electric SUV Cadillac has produced, yet its wheelbase remains unchanged at 136.2 inches. The added length translates to four extra inches of legroom in the third row, bringing it to 36.7 inches, with an additional inch of headroom. Cargo capacity has also increased modestly, rising from 23.6 to 24.2 cubic feet with all seats in place and from 69.1 to 75.4 cubic feet with the third row folded. The front trunk—Cadillac's eTrunk—remains unchanged at 12.2 cubic feet.

Beyond space, the IQL remains identical to its standard-length counterpart. It retains the dual-motor powertrain, delivering up to 750 horsepower and 785 lb-ft of torque in Velocity Mode, enabling a 0-60 mph time of 4.7 seconds. The 205-kWh battery pack offers a Cadillac-estimated range of 460 miles, a figure that matches the standard Escalade IQ despite the added weight. Fast-charging capability remains competitive, adding 116 miles in 10 minutes, though the brand has yet to confirm its peak DC charging rate.

Cadillac's strategy for the Escalade IQL is clear: luxury first, technology second, and capability third. The interior is a showcase of opulence and digital sophistication, featuring a 55-inch curved pillar-to-pillar display, a 21-speaker AKG sound system, and Super Cruise driver assistance technology as standard. The SUV accommodates seven passengers across three rows, but those seeking a more exclusive experience can opt for the Executive Second Row package. This option replaces the second-row bench with heated, ventilated, and massaging captain's chairs, complemented by stowable tray tables, dual 12.6-inch rear displays, and a command center with wireless charging pads.

Despite its focus on comfort, the IQL remains a highly capable tow vehicle, boasting a 7,500-pound towing capacity. The inclusion of air suspension and MagneRide adaptive dampers ensures a ride that is both smooth and composed, crucial for a vehicle that weighs well over three tons.

WORLD BANK URGES SOUTH AFRICA TO TRIM REGULATION

South Africa's economy has been in a low-growth trap for over a decade, with stagnant GDP, high unemployment, and persistent inequality undermining its development prospects. Now, the World Bank has issued a blunt assessment. Unless the country reduces its excessive regulatory burden and rethinks its Black economic empowerment (BEE) policies, it risks deepening its economic malaise.

In a recently released report, the Washington-based lender warned that overregulation, complex industrial policies, and burdensome racial equity laws have created bottlenecks that are choking business activity, discouraging investment, and opening avenues for corruption. The result, it argues, is an economy on the wrong growth trajectory, where real output per capita in 2023 was lower than in 2007.

South Africa has long been an outlier in global economic governance, with a dense web of bureaucratic hurdles that businesses must navigate. Regulations covering labour laws, taxation, and corporate ownership structures have become increasingly complex, not only for private companies but also for government agencies tasked with enforcing them. "The burden of institutions has become excessive — not only for businesses and citizens but also for public administration," the World



Bank stated. It pointed to direct-support programs, tax incentives, and skills development initiatives that, while well-intentioned, have become too cumbersome to administer effectively, particularly at the local government level. This administrative paralysis has created space for mismanagement and corruption, further undermining investor confidence and economic productivity.

Over the past decade, Africa's most industrialized economy has expanded by an average of less than 1% annually, weighed down by political instability, an unreliable power grid, and failing state-owned enterprises. A series of costly

government bailouts for struggling public institutions, coupled with widespread graft, have only further eroded public finances and business confidence.

At the heart of the debate is South Africa's Black-ownership policy, a post-apartheid initiative that compels companies to allocate at least 30% of shareholding to historically disadvantaged groups. While the policy was introduced to correct racial economic imbalances, the World Bank now argues that its implementation has become rigid and counterproductive, deterring investment and limiting economic dynamism.

"The burden of several industrial and labour policies can be reduced by adjusting them to the reality of the market," the report suggests, advocating for a shift towards equity-equivalence investment programs—a model that would allow companies to meet empowerment requirements through alternative forms of investment rather



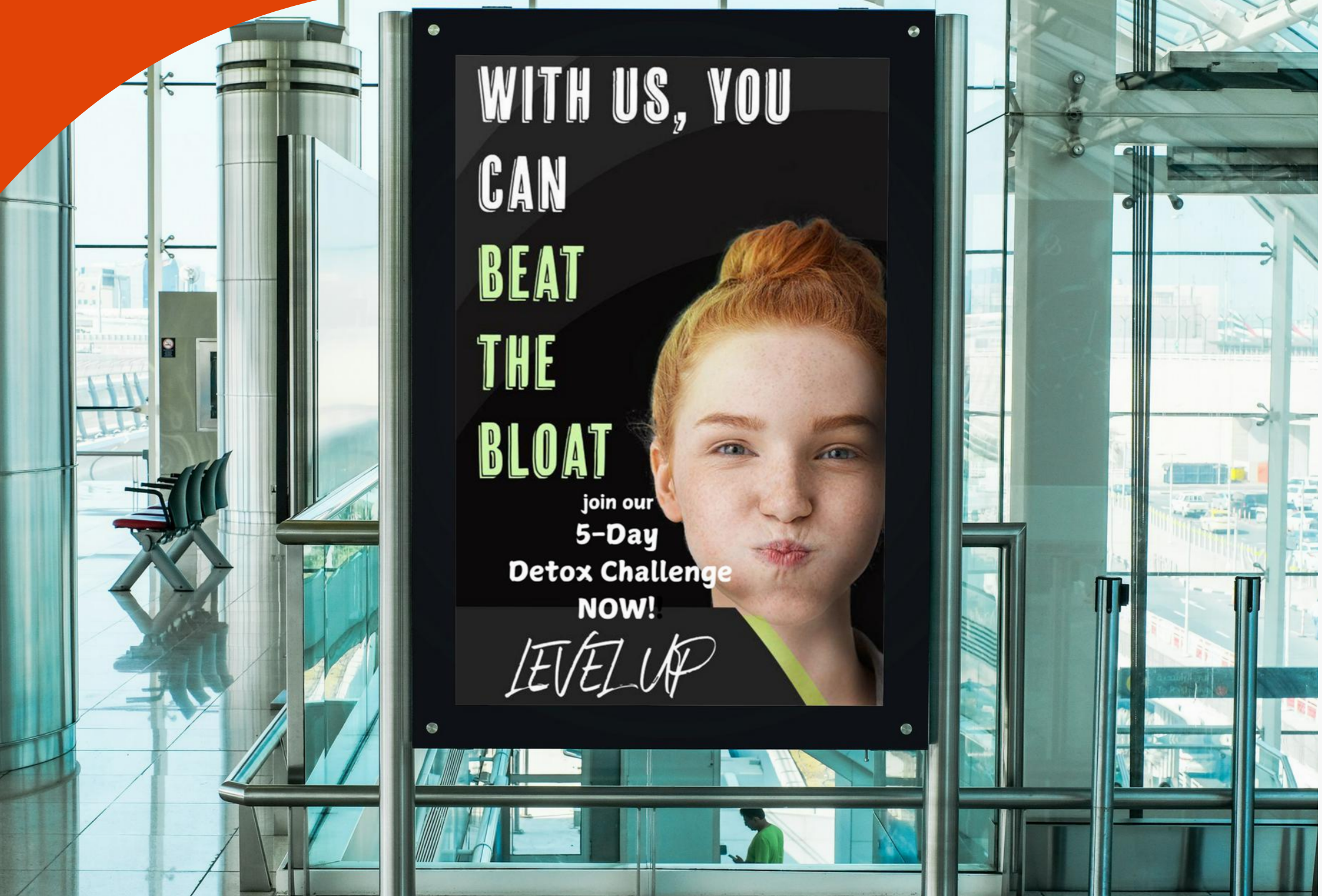
than direct ownership transfers.

This issue has become increasingly contentious, particularly after Elon Musk, the South African-born billionaire, publicly criticized the country's Black-ownership laws, calling them "openly racist".



Talks between South Africa and SpaceX to roll out Starlink internet services stalled after Musk objected to BEE requirements, a stance amplified by his political ally, former US President Donald Trump. The standoff has reignited debate over whether BEE policies—once seen as essential for economic redress—now serve as a barrier to innovation and foreign investment.

Beyond BEE, the World Bank has urged South Africa to rethink its broader economic framework. The country could stimulate private sector growth by simplifying its regulatory environment, reducing market entry barriers for new businesses, and scaling back protections for underperforming state-owned enterprises. Small firms, in particular, bear the brunt of the current system, struggling to navigate bureaucratic hurdles while competing against state-backed incumbents. Low-skilled workers, meanwhile, remain trapped in a high-tax, low-opportunity labour market.



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Botswana & De Beers Sign Long-Delayed Diamond Sales Agreement

Botswana's government has formally signed a long-awaited 10-year diamond sales agreement with De Beers, a subsidiary of Anglo American (AAL.L), incorporating a potential five-year extension.

Under the finalised agreement, the share of diamonds allocated to Botswana's state-owned Okavango Diamond Company (ODC) from Debswana—the 50-50 joint venture between the Botswana government and De Beers—will reach 40% by the end of the initial term. This marks a revision from the 50% allocation outlined in the provisional agreement. However, ODC's share could increase to 50% should the five-year extension period be



Bogolo Kennewendo



Al Cook

"We have secured a strong agreement, one that we trust will sustain us into the future. To the people of Botswana, this deal is about you—about the jobs it will create and the opportunities it will bring."

Duma Boko (President of Botswana)

activated, according to a joint statement issued by the Botswana government and De Beers.

During the first five years of the agreement, ODC will be entitled to sell 30% of Debswana's diamond output, an increase from the previous 25%. The earlier provisional agreement, reached under Botswana's former government, had envisioned ODC's share reaching 50% at the end of the 10-year period.

Negotiations for the new deal began in 2018, and although an agreement was announced in 2023, it was never formally ratified.



President Duma Boko, who assumed office last October, prioritised the finalisation of the deal, recognising its significance to Botswana's economy, which remains heavily reliant on diamond exports.

Speaking at the signing ceremony in Gaborone, President Boko stated:

"We have secured a strong agreement, one that we trust will sustain us into the future. To the people of Botswana, this deal is about you—about the jobs it will create and the opportunities it will bring."

As part of the agreement, Debswana's mining licences, which were due to expire in 2029, will be extended until 2054.

Botswana's government has attributed last year's economic contraction to a prolonged downturn in the global diamond market. Declining demand, oversupply, the growing popularity of lab-grown diamonds, and shifting consumer preferences—particularly among younger generations—have exerted downward pressure on rough diamond prices.

However, officials remain optimistic about a recovery in 2025, citing expectations of improved global market conditions and stronger performance in other economic sectors.



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Microsoft Unveils Quantum Computing Chip for Future Data Centres



Microsoft Corporation has announced the development of its first quantum computing chip, a significant milestone in the company's ongoing efforts to build machines capable of solving problems beyond the reach of conventional computers.

Named Majorana 1, the chip integrates eight qubits—the fundamental units of quantum computing—on a compact, sticky-note-sized piece of hardware. Microsoft envisions that, in the future, the chip could scale up to host as many as one million qubits. At present, the device is primarily capable of performing mathematical operations that demonstrate its controllability. However, Microsoft engineers assert that it lays the groundwork for more advanced quantum machines.

The announcement underscores a breakthrough in the practical deployment of topological quantum computing, a method designed to

significantly reduce the error rates that have long hindered the technology's viability. Some of Microsoft's findings on this approach—centred around what the company calls a topoconductor—are set to be published in the journal *Nature* on Wednesday.

"Scientists first theorised this concept in 1937," said Jason Zander, Microsoft's Executive Vice President overseeing quantum research and emerging technologies. "It has taken nearly a hundred years to prove it. Now, we can harness it." He added that quantum computing will begin delivering practical applications in "years, not decades."

The field of quantum computing, long considered a technology of the future, has seen a surge in recent developments. This progress suggests that quantum machines may soon transition from theoretical constructs to real-world utility.

Quantum computing represents a fundamental departure from traditional computing architecture. Unlike conventional computers—which encode information in binary bits (either a 1 or a 0)—quantum bits, or qubits, can exist in a superposition of both states simultaneously. This characteristic allows quantum systems to process multiple possibilities at once, enabling

them to solve problems that classical computers struggle to address.

The potential advantages are profound. In December 2024, Alphabet's Google reported that its latest quantum chip solved a complex computational problem in five minutes—an equation that, by some estimates, would take classical computers longer to solve than the age of the universe itself.

Despite these advancements, the field faces a major hurdle: error rates. Quantum particles require highly controlled environments, as even the slightest exposure to heat, vibrations, or electromagnetic interference can introduce computational errors. In many experiments, these particles exist for only fractions of a second before they collapse, making both stabilisation and error correction significant challenges.

Unlike most competitors—who have focused on error-prone superconducting qubits—Microsoft has pursued a different approach. Since initiating its quantum computing research in 2004, the company has concentrated on Majorana qubits, named after the Italian physicist Ettore Majorana, who first theorised their existence in the 1930s.

Microsoft believes that Majorana qubits will be inherently more stable, reducing the likelihood of unintended state flips between ones and zeroes. To achieve this, the company's engineers constructed an intricate structure by assembling indium-arsenide strips atom by atom and connecting aluminium



nanowires into an H-shaped configuration. When cooled to near absolute zero and finely tuned with a magnetic field, Majorana quasiparticles emerge at each of the H-shape's four ends, forming a single qubit. This structure can then be replicated across a chip, creating a scalable quantum computing platform.

Microsoft's research has not been without setbacks. In 2018, its scientists believed they had successfully identified Majorana quasiparticles, but a subsequent review led to the retraction of their published findings. However, in the years that followed, the company managed to create and measure these elusive particles, paving the way for the Majorana 1 chip.

With this latest breakthrough, Microsoft aims to position itself at the forefront of quantum computing, a field that promises transformative applications in chemistry, healthcare, materials science, and beyond. If successful, quantum machines based on this technology could eventually power next-generation data centres, accelerating advancements across numerous industries.



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Future Builders Tech & Business Roundup - March 2025

Africa: VC Funding Rebounds as Startups Focus on Profitability

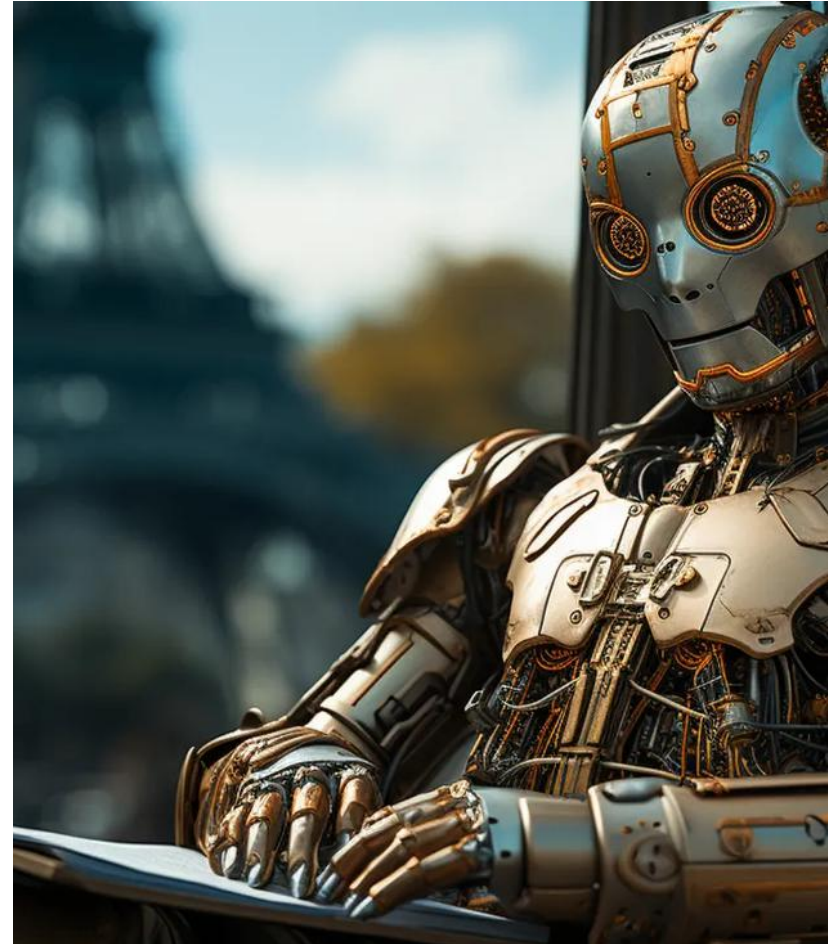


Africa's startup ecosystem is showing signs of recovery, despite a global funding slowdown. New VC deals signal investor confidence in AI, fintech, and clean energy:

- ◆ TeamApt (Nigeria) rebranded as Moniepoint and secured \$50M in new funding to expand SME banking solutions.
- ◆ Wasoko (Kenya), an e-commerce B2B platform, is in talks for a \$100M growth round, focusing on West African expansion.
- ◆ Solarise Africa, a clean energy financing company, raised \$33.4M to support solar projects in commercial sectors.

📉 However, total VC funding in Africa for Q1 2025 is still 30% lower than in 2024, according to Partech Africa's latest report. Investors are prioritizing profitability and unit economics over hypergrowth.

Europe: UK & EU Strengthen AI Regulation as Startups Push Back



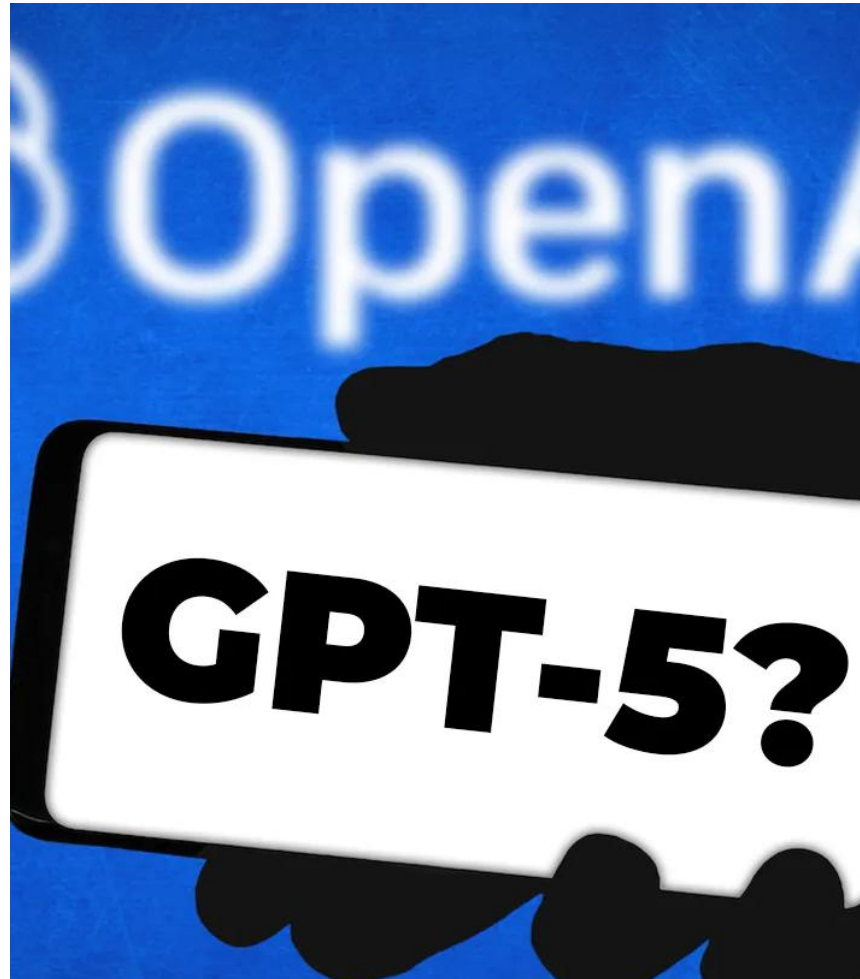
The EU AI Act, set to roll out in Q2 2025, is causing a stir among startups:

- ◆ Mistral AI (France), a rising competitor to OpenAI, called for "fairer" regulations that don't favor big tech.
- ◆ UK regulators proposed a more flexible "pro-innovation" AI policy, contrasting with the EU's strict rules.
- ◆ DeepMind (UK) continues to push AI research, with a new "Gemini" update expected to rival OpenAI's GPT-5.

Why it matters:

- 📌 Europe is becoming a global leader in AI ethics but faces challenges in balancing regulation with innovation.

North America: AI and Semiconductor Boom Drives Tech Stocks Up



📈 The Nasdaq surged after a wave of AI investments and semiconductor breakthroughs:

- ◆ NVIDIA hit a \$2 trillion valuation, fueled by record GPU sales for AI applications.
- ◆ Microsoft and OpenAI are launching “GPT-5”, with multimodal capabilities and real-time reasoning.
- ◆ Apple’s AI-focused “iPhone 17” leak suggests on-device AI processing, enhancing privacy.

VCs are betting big on AI hardware, with investments in quantum computing and next-gen semiconductors reaching \$10B+ this quarter.

Africa & Europe Deepen Tech Collaboration



European investors are ramping up funding for African startups:

- ◆ France’s Bpifrance launched a €100M fund for African fintech and agritech companies.
- ◆ Germany’s Rocket Internet is backing early-stage African SaaS startups.
- ◆ The EU-Africa Tech Summit (April 2025) will focus on AI, clean energy, and mobile banking.

📢 What’s next? Expect more EU-African startup partnerships, especially in fintech, logistics, and AI.

Web3 & Crypto: Bitcoin Breaks \$80K, Africa Leads in Adoption

🚀 Crypto is making a comeback, with Bitcoin surpassing \$80,000:

- ◆ Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya are now among the top 10 global crypto adopters.
- ◆ Ethereum's Layer-3 scaling is driving more Web3 startups in Africa.
- ◆ London-based Web3 fund NeoChain Capital announced a \$500M fund for blockchain startups.



Startup Spotlight: Canada's Quantum Nexus Raises \$400M

🧬 Quantum computing breakthrough: Canada-based Quantum Nexus raised \$400M to develop room-temperature quantum processors. If successful, this could revolutionize AI, cybersecurity, and drug discovery.



The Rise of the Trifold Smartphone



For years, smartphone innovation has been trapped in what industry analysts call a "sea of sameness"—a market saturated with bar-shaped devices that look and function almost identically. Now, a new wave of innovation is emerging, and it comes in threes. Trifold smartphones—devices with three folding screens—are making their way onto the global stage, promising a radical shift in mobile design. At this year's Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona, several tech giants showcased their latest display technology, hinting at a future where smartphones are more flexible, versatile, and—potentially—more expensive. Leading the charge is Huawei, which recently launched the

Mate XT, a trifold smartphone retailing at €3,499 (\$3,679). The Chinese manufacturer may have been the first to introduce a trifold model to international markets, but competitors Samsung and Tecno quickly followed suit, unveiling their own prototypes.

Samsung, the dominant force in the foldable phone market, introduced two trifold concept devices at MWC: the Flex G and Flex S. The Flex G folds in both inward and outward directions, mimicking the way a book opens and closes. Meanwhile, the Flex S unfolds in a zigzag pattern, forming an "S" shape when fully extended. Both

Both devices hint at new possibilities for multitasking, allowing users to seamlessly transition between smartphone, tablet, and even laptop-like configurations.

However, Samsung has made it clear—these are just prototypes. Unlike Huawei's Mate XT, the Flex G and Flex S aren't hitting the market anytime soon. Instead, their unveiling serves as a statement of intent, reinforcing the idea that foldable technology isn't just a fad—it's the future of mobile design.

Despite the buzz surrounding foldables, these devices remain a niche segment of the smartphone industry. According to IDC, foldable phones accounted for only 1.6% of global smartphone shipments in 2024, even as the category grew by 6.4% year-over-year to 19.3 million units. The biggest barrier? Price. The average foldable phone costs nearly three times as much as a standard smartphone—\$1,218 vs. \$421, respectively.

Beyond affordability, practicality remains an issue. While flexible displays have improved, many consumers still find foldables too bulky, fragile, and battery-draining. With trifolds adding even more screens, hinges, and weight, widespread adoption remains uncertain.

Samsung currently leads the global foldable market, holding a 32.9% share in 2024, followed closely by Huawei at 23.1%. Meanwhile, Motorola, with its revived Razr lineup, has captured 17%, solidifying its position as a serious player in the space.



Yet, new entrants are challenging the status quo. Chinese startup Tecno showcased the Phantom Ultimate 2, another trifold concept that mirrors Samsung's Flex S design, while Oppo introduced the Find N5, a thinner, more compact alternative to traditional foldables. Even British startup Nothing is trying to shake up the industry, launching the Phone (3a), a device with a quirky LED-light system designed to provide a more personalized smartphone experience.

Despite their high price tags, foldable and trifold phones aren't just gimmicks—they're positioning themselves as premium experiences, blending smartphone convenience with tablet-like functionality.

The trifold smartphone movement marks a significant leap in display technology and user experience, but whether it transforms the industry or remains a high-end curiosity depends on consumer demand. Will users embrace larger, more adaptable screens, or will they stick to the tried-and-tested bar phone?

As foldable technology improves and production costs drop, smartphone makers are betting that consumers will eventually see these devices as more than just novelties. For now, however, the future of mobile remains folded in uncertainty.





Alibaba's AI Ambitions Fuel Stock Surge as It Challenges DeepSeek

Alibaba's AI ambitions took center stage this week after the Chinese tech giant unveiled QwQ-32B, its latest AI reasoning model, which it claims can compete with DeepSeek's groundbreaking R1. The announcement sent Alibaba's Hong Kong-listed shares soaring 8.39% to a new 52-week high, reflecting renewed investor optimism around the company's position in the rapidly evolving AI landscape.

The race for AI supremacy has intensified globally, with both established tech giants and emerging players scrambling to develop more efficient, high-performance models. The unexpected launch of DeepSeek-R1 earlier this year disrupted the industry, raising questions about whether incumbents like OpenAI, Microsoft, and Google would maintain their dominance. Now, Alibaba is making a bold move to challenge the competition head-on.

Unlike DeepSeek-R1, which operates with 671 billion parameters, Alibaba's QwQ-32B runs on a significantly smaller 32 billion parameters, with 37 billion actively engaged during inference—the process of running live data through a trained AI model. While parameter count is often associated with model complexity, lower volumes can indicate greater efficiency, a key advantage as companies seek to reduce computational costs and energy consumption.



Alibaba highlighted that QwQ-32B delivers “impressive results” and that the company intends to continuously improve its performance in math and coding, two areas that are critical for AI reasoning capabilities.

The launch of QwQ-32B aligns with Alibaba’s broader AI investment strategy, particularly within its Cloud Intelligence Group, which has become a major revenue driver. CEO Eddie Wu recently emphasized that AI-driven cloud services will accelerate the company’s growth trajectory, following a sharp profit increase in the December quarter. Bernstein analysts echoed this sentiment, predicting that continued advancements in AI could significantly boost Alibaba’s stock value and earnings trajectory. Year-to-date, Alibaba shares in Hong Kong have climbed nearly 71%, signaling strong investor confidence in the company’s AI roadmap.

Industry experts see the rapid pace of AI development leading to greater accessibility and cost reductions. According to Futurum Group CEO Dan Newman, large language models (LLMs) are increasingly becoming commoditized, as developers focus on optimizing efficiency and reducing costs.

“The training era, which fueled Nvidia’s AI boom, was just the beginning,” Newman told CNBC’s Squawk Box Europe. “The future lies in inference—the real-world application and consumption of AI—which will exponentially increase its adoption.”

With AI reshaping global technology landscapes, Alibaba’s latest move signals that China’s tech giants are determined to remain at the forefront of the industry. Whether QwQ-32B can truly rival DeepSeek-R1 remains to be seen, but one thing is clear: the AI arms race is far from over.

TESSY OLISEH-AMAIZE

Redefining African Fashion on the Global Stage

For years, African fashion has been celebrated for its vibrancy, but often confined to a niche, perceived as traditional rather than high fashion. Tessa Oliseh-Amaize is dismantling those perceptions, proving that African textiles, geometry, and craftsmanship belong in the global luxury market.





As the founder and creative director of Tesslo, she has built a brand that fuses mathematical precision with cultural storytelling, creating designs that are bold, structured, and undeniably sophisticated.

Oliseh-Amaize's signature lies in her "four-dimensional" approach to fashion, inspired by her background in science and mathematics. "My designs are all mathematics," she explains. "You need to think of shapes and even calculate shapes that do not exist." This influence is visible in pieces like "Pyramids", a knee-length dress with prism-like formations inspired by the pyramids of Giza, and "Mpi", a geometric take on the varsity jacket, incorporating three-dimensional horn-like structures, a nod to Igbo cultural artifacts.

Born in Nigeria and trained in Fashion Product Management at Middlesex University in London, Oliseh-Amaize's

breakthrough came when she won Nigeria's Best Designer award at the 2006 Nigerian Fashion Show. Her early career saw her designing for TV shows and Nigerian celebrities, but her ambitions stretched far beyond West Africa. Seeking a larger stage, she relocated to the United States, where she quickly realized that breaking into the American market required more than just creativity—it demanded reinvention.

Today, based in Washington, D.C., Oliseh-Amaize's designs have been showcased at Philly Fashion Week, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Ankara Festival Los Angeles, where she was invited to close the show. Her philosophy is clear: African fashion is not just about tradition—it is about innovation and global relevance.

"Outside Africa, when people hear 'African prints,' they expect something



primitive or poorly made. I'm rebelling against that," she says. "African fashion is rich, diverse, and deserves to be seen as sophisticated and high-quality."

This ethos has won her celebrity clientele, including Folake Olowofoyeku, star of CBS's "Bob Hearts Abishola", and attracted commissions from celebrity stylist J. Bolin. But beyond personal success, Oliseh-Amaize is committed to mentoring the next generation of African designers through her "Fashion Professor" project, a series of online masterclasses covering fabric selection, pricing strategies, and industry navigation.

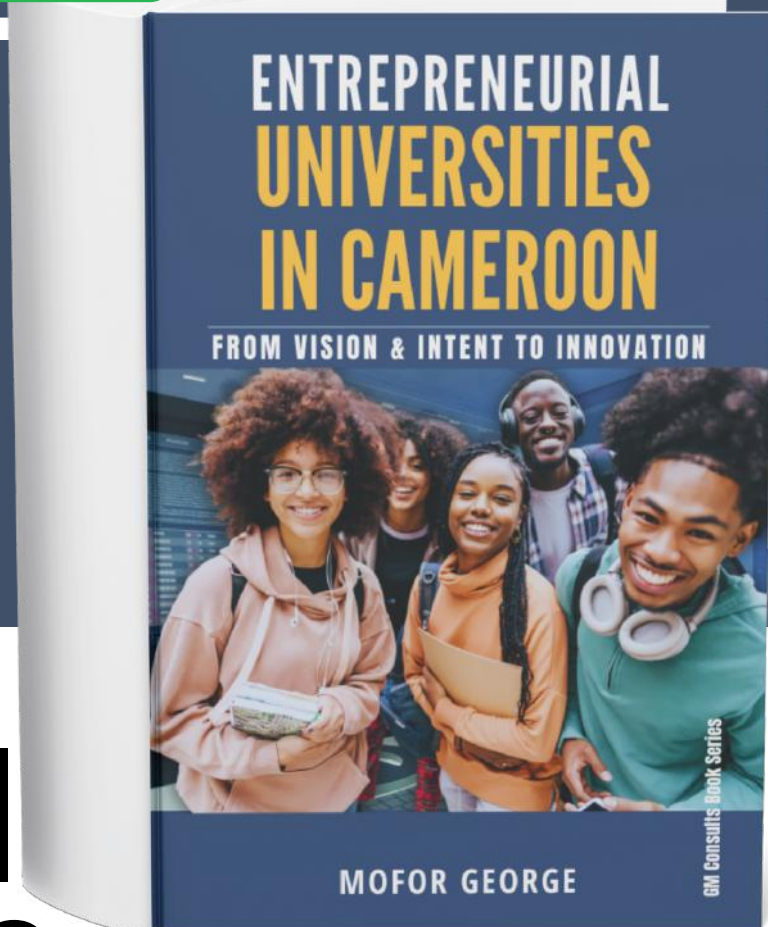
Despite her deep ties to African heritage, she resists being categorized solely as an African designer. "I don't want to be put in a box," she asserts. "I want to be identified as a global brand designing for the global market."

As Western designers increasingly draw inspiration from African fabrics, Oliseh-Amaize is determined to ensure that African creatives are not sidelined in the industry they helped shape. With her meticulous craftsmanship, bold aesthetic, and unwavering vision, she is not just making waves—she is reshaping the narrative of African fashion worldwide.

Book Review

Entrepreneurial Universities in Cameroon

Rethinking Education for a Job-Creating Future



Entrepreneurship is often hailed as the key to economic self-sufficiency and empowerment, yet not everyone who starts a business is truly an entrepreneur.

In *Entrepreneurial Universities in Cameroon*, the authors dissect the shifting dynamics of entrepreneurship, distinguishing between opportunity-driven innovators and necessity-driven business owners.

The book provides a structured framework for transforming higher education institutions into incubators of innovation, equipping students with practical skills, resilience, and strategic vision for sustainable success.

At the core of this work is a critical analysis of Africa's economic trajectory, particularly in light of structural adjustment programs and rising youth unemployment.

As many young professionals face limited job prospects, entrepreneurship has become less of a deliberate career choice and more of a forced alternative. The book examines how Cameroon's 2023 law on

entrepreneurial universities seeks to address this, positioning higher education as a launchpad for job creation rather than just a pipeline to employment.

Beyond business fundamentals, the book explores the social and psychological aspects of entrepreneurship, highlighting how success attracts both allies and adversaries. The author advocates for a mentorship-driven model, integrating project management principles and community impact strategies to foster a generation of job and wealth creators.

More than just a theoretical discussion, *Entrepreneurial Universities in Cameroon* offers actionable insights for students, educators, and policymakers seeking to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem that is both sustainable and scalable. It is an essential read for anyone looking to redefine the role of education in Africa's economic future.

The book is due to be released this in March, 2025.



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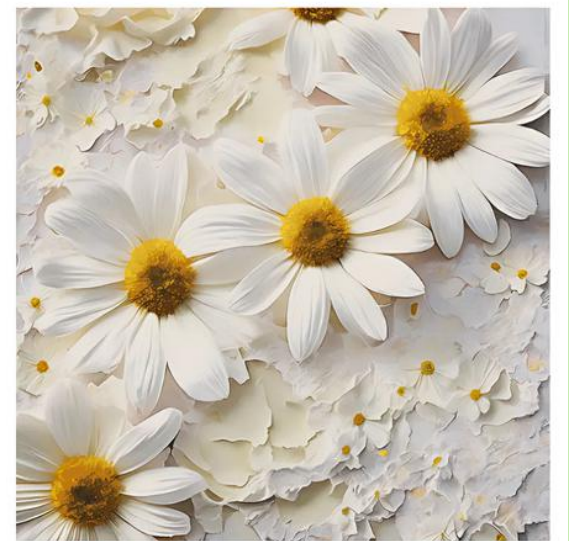


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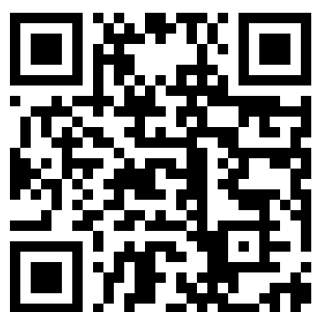
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