



Pantami: Disruption and themes of Transformation

eTerview

“Remember me as someone who contributed to Nigeria's greatness in the space sector”

– NIGCOMSAT, Abimbola Abimbola Alale

“Without government, technology will erode rather than increase democracy”

– NITDA, Kachifu Inuwa Abdullahi

Nigeria Startup Act will nurture an environment for tech SMEs to thrive

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Nigeria Startup Act will nurture an environment for tech SMEs to thrive

The Nigeria Startup Bill has been passed by the National Assembly. It only awaits the assent of President Muhammadu Buhari to become law and finally institutionalize legal frameworks that will enhance the growth of startups, or aptly put, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to help build up Nigeria's digital economy.

Africa's startup ecosystem is growing not receding despite global economic meltdown and Nigeria, Africa's top destination for global startup financing, can further take advantage of this through a Startup Law. Bloomberg rightly reported that global funding for startups in Africa is surging. "Funding "more than doubled to \$3.14 billion in the first six months of [2022], according to research firm Africa: The Big Deal. That compares with a decline ranging from 3.7% in Europe to 43% in Latin American and the Caribbean."

The Nigeria Startup Act as envisaged will foster an environment for tech-enabled startups to thrive. It is a joint initiative by Nigeria's tech startup ecosystem and the Presidency to harness the potential of the country's digital economy through co-created regulations. Its birth will "ensure that Nigeria's laws and regulations are clear, planned and work for the tech ecosystem" in a way that will "contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for growth, attraction and protection of investment in tech startups."

With an Act of Parliament, Nigeria's startup ecosystem will be better positioned to address the twin challenges of low funding and absence of regulatory support that is currently faced by all SMEs. The law will allow for the creation of a Startup Investment Seed Fund to be managed by the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority. The Startup Investment Seed Fund will help to provide early-stage finance for startups at a single digit interest. The funds will also support technology laboratories, accelerators, incubators, and hubs.

Why does the Nigeria Startup Act matter now? As the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has rightly affirmed: "digital technologies are [now] indispensable for

the functioning of economies, societies and individual lives around the world. As our personal and professional activities have moved online in response to the COVID-19 crisis, we have adapted to the challenges of living, working and learning remotely – and experienced first-hand just how dependent we are on digital infrastructure, services and applications.

"The road to economic and social recovery is a digital one. And in a recent UN series of high-profile online roundtables, governments from Italy to Vietnam, Mauritius, Spain and Trinidad and Tobago highlighted the importance of fostering the growth of SMEs in building back economies post-pandemic."

For the ITU, SMEs are driving digital transformation all over the world; and notably, SMEs make up 90 per cent of all businesses worldwide. This only means that SMEs play a significant role in national economic growth and job creation, as well as offering a path out of poverty for many developing countries including Nigeria.

This is particularly true of tech SMEs – the source of innovative ICT-enabled solutions with the power to change the world, and the engine driving digital transformation.

The Nigerian experience has shown (as is the case elsewhere) tech SMEs are the engine of economic recovery in the present global crisis. So now more than ever, we need to encourage creative SMEs with innovative tech solutions.

More than ever before, tech SMEs, startups and entrepreneurs need support and encouragement from the industry and from the government – it matters now to get the Nigeria Startup Bill assented to by Mr President to begin its catalytic journey of making tech SMEs ecosystem to transform and strengthen Nigeria's economy.

It is time to create and expand opportunities, expose the market to international best practice, provide institutional frameworks to aid better management approaches within tech SMEs, hone new critical skills, bolster productivity, build resilience and encourage more investment in the ecosystem.

The Nigeria Startup Bill as a Law will make all these possible and usher in the desired dawn for millions of aspirations of young Nigerians seeking to rework the world with their solutions.

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– Abimbola Alale

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Without government, technology will erode rather than increase democracy – Kachifu Inuwa Abdullahi

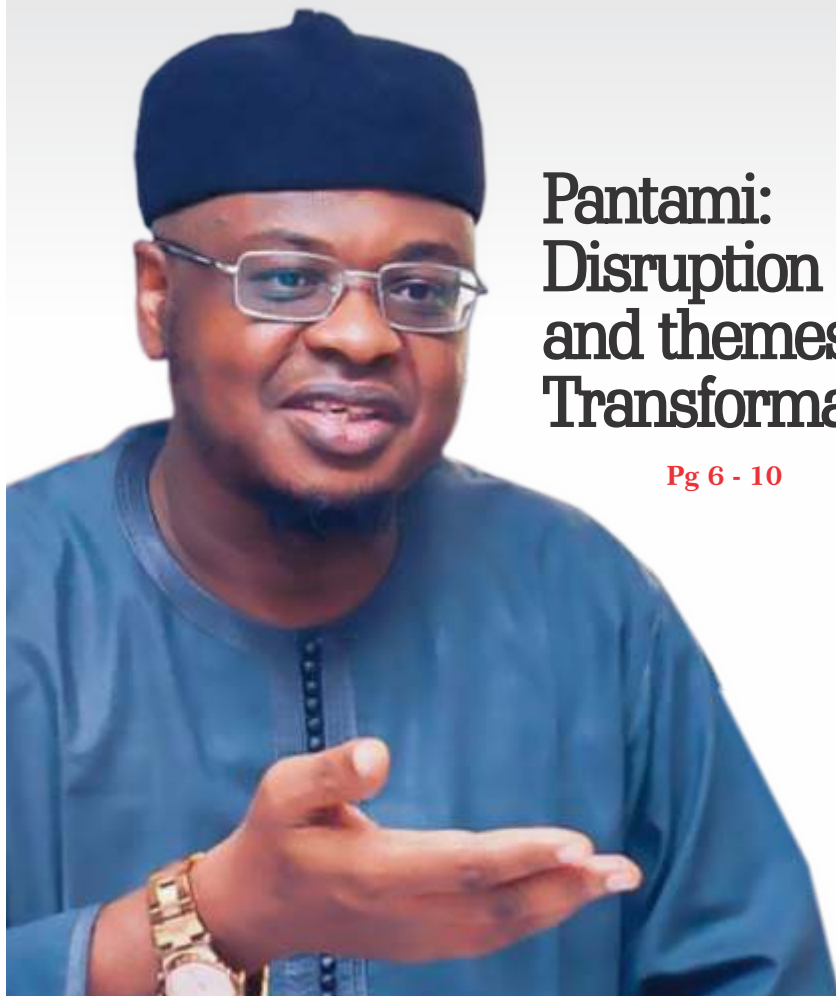
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Pantami: Leadership. Disruption and themes of Transformation

"I would rather [see myself] as disruptive ... reflective of what emerging technologies are doing to the global economy. I am uncomfortable with the status quo and I regularly encourage people to ridicule their previous success. I always strive for excellence and this has been our motivation for disrupting the sector for the overall benefit of the economy."

Nigeria's Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), PhD is deemed by many to be disruptive. The professor of Cybersecurity does not deny this depiction. Not one to be so conventional, the scholar, cleric and technocrat have been able to rework ministerial tasks in a way that has marveled his subordinates, industry stakeholders and critics. And the results have been outstanding. Prior to his appointment as the Minister, he was the Director General/CEO of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), where Pantami set a new direction for an agency once thought to be toothless, unnecessary and ineffective. Since assuming office as the first Minister of Digital Economy, he has clearly set the mark as a non-sedentary team-lead and Chief Digital Officer of the Federation. No one will dispute "the unprecedented success recorded across the agencies under the supervision of the ministry - all of them engineered to focus on the objectives of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) upon which the ministry has anchored its drive for digital economy; and also the work-guide for every agency under the ministry. Whether expanding the footprint of broadband, enhancing citizens' digital identity, building national ICT skill capacities, deepening digital presence in ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), e-enabling NIPOST or advancing the frontiers of data privacy and the likes, Pantami achieved milestones that will ink history's opinion of President Muhammadu Buhari government. Pantami, currently the Chairman of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), was also recently conferred with a Fellowship status by the Chartered Institute of Information Security (CIISec), the first for anyone from Sub-Saharan Africa. A Fellow is the highest level of attainment in the Chartered Institute of Information Security's (CIISec) membership levels.

For many stakeholders, Prof Pantami has reworked the entire spectrum of leadership to make his ministry very impactful, visible and result-oriented. How did you turn a somewhat dormant Ministry of Communications to become an extremely focused Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy?

Thank you for your kind comments Mr. Oruame. I am someone that dislikes mediocrity with a passion and I consistently state that people should ridicule their past successes in order to be able to inspire themselves to attain greater heights. I had the privilege of serving as the Director General of the National Information Technology

Development Agency (NITDA) prior to being appointed as the Minister of Communications. This enabled me to study the workings of the Ministry at close range and I realized that the Ministry had a great potential to transform the Nigerian economy but that potential was not being properly harnessed. I did some critical thinking



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and realized that there was an urgent need to include a digital economy mandate in order to take advantage of the opportunities. I then sent a proposal to our boss, His Excellency President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, on the need to re-designate the Ministry as the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, in line with global best practice and Mr. President graciously granted the request. After that we carried out research to identify the key factors that are required for the development of a National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) for a Digital Nigeria. The NDEPS was launched by Mr. President on the 28th of November 2019 and we prioritized its implementation with a razor-sharp focus. I made it obvious that I was passionate and committed to its implementation and this commitment was also embraced by the CEOs and management teams of the parastatals under my supervision.

Having been in this office now for close to four years, what are your most challenging moments as Minister of the Federal Republic – Will you say Nigerians are difficult to manage and/or that Nigeria is a tough nut to crack in terms of driving government policies?

Isaac Newton said that a body will continue to stay at rest or constant motion unless compelled to do otherwise by an external force. In other words, inertia is a great impediment to progress and I have experienced this first hand as the Minister in charge of the Communications and Digital Economy sector. Citizens enjoy the status quo and are generally unwilling to change. This has been the case with some of our policies, including the policy on NIN-SIM linkage. Citizens tend to be reluctant to embrace new policies, even when these policies will enhance their lives and the economy. However, we have made it a duty to involve stakeholders as part of our rule making process. Through this and increased advocacy we eventually elicit the support we desire.

You have affirmed so much faith in young people with a lot of programmes targeting skill building and entrepreneurship promotion for young Nigerians – when is the Startup Bill likely to become an Act?

Nigeria is a truly blessed and endowed country. For example, we have a very young population with an average age of 18.4 years and a great number of these are 'digital natives', meaning they are very comfortable with digital technologies. Nigerian startups and young innovators have also made their mark on the African continent; the Start-up Ecosystem in Nigeria has shown amazing growth figures as seen in the over \$1.2 billion dollars raised in venture capital funding in 2021. Furthermore, Nigeria has about 89,000 developers which is about 12% of the total African Developers on the continent. In addition to these, 5 out of the 8 unicorns in Africa have their roots in Nigeria and one of these (Flutterwave) is the most valuable unicorn of the continent. These very

impressive statistics encouraged us to do more to support the innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem and this is one of the things that inspired us to develop the Nigeria Startup Bill. I presented this at the Federal Executive Council and it led to an Executive bill that was sent to the National Assembly. The bill has been passed at the National Assembly and we hope it will be transmitted to Mr President very soon.

One of milestones of your leadership is the creation of the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB) to manage Nigeria's emerging data economy. Is also possible to have Data Protection Bill become an Act considering that this administration has less than 11 months left.

I am a person that has a high level of optimism and I back up that optimism with critical thinking and diligent execution of the plans. I do what I can to motivate the CEOs under my supervision and pass this same mindset

to them. Let me start by saying that the establishment of the NDPB was unprecedented and very fast. Many stakeholders thought that we would wait for the passage of the data protection bill before establishing the Bureau. I am a very proactive person and I felt that the establishment of the Bureau will support and speed up the process of passing the bill. Our boss, President Muhammadu Buhari, graciously approved my proposal and this led to the establishment of the NDPB. I also have confidence in the commitment and capacity of the CEOs that I supervise and I have every reason to believe that everything will be done to ensure that the bill is finalized and passed before the end of the tenure of this government.

You have been a great champion of Economic Diplomacy as underscored by your international engagements and series of global recognitions to you and country. Whether in Dubai, Lisbon, Geneva, Marrakesh or Kigali,



your goals appear the same - do you think your ministry is now better positioned than three years back to promote investments, collaboration on bilateral and multilateral trade agreements for the betterment of Nigeria?

You know I am a teacher and I enjoy mentoring those under my supervision. For example, I recently delivered a series of lectures to the Board and Management of the Nigerian Communications Commission over the period of two days. An aspect of the lecture covered elements of management success, namely Performance, Image and Exposure. This so called P-I-E features play an important role in the success of a manager. Performance, which has a 10% level of importance, refers to the fulfillment of one's major duties and responsibilities. Image, which has a 30% level of importance, refers to how one is perceived by other people. Exposure, which has a 60% level of importance, talks about the quality of

your beneficial and useful network with others, particularly influencers. My global interactions are to create greater exposure for the work we are doing in the digital economy ecosystem with a view to enhancing partnerships and attracting investments into Nigeria.

When you look back in the last three years or so, what are the milestones that gladden you and give you that euphoric sense of achievements – national broadband, digital skill buildup, just what are they?

There are many; I am glad to see great progress in the implementation of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy. A few of these achievements are listed below:

- over 18 policies that have been developed and are being implemented
- a very significant rise in the number of NIN enrolments from 42 million in October 2020 to about 90 million today;
- a rise in broadband penetration

from just over 30% when I assumed office as Minister to close to 45% today;

- enabling over 1 million Nigerians to access digital skills, especially during the COVID-19 triggered lockdown;
- overseeing the sector that played the principal role in lifting Nigeria out of recession, about 1 year earlier than experts predicted;
- overseeing a sector that had an unprecedented contribution to Nigeria's GDP, not once, twice, but three times;
- transforming the sector to such an extent that leading global organisations, such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Economic Forum (WEF), etc now want to be strategic partners of Nigeria; etc

Would you consider yourself an intrusive leader or minister considering that no minister before you has had such impactful and strong presence across the agencies and departments under the ministry?

I would rather use the term disruptive, rather than intrusive. Intrusive has a negative connotation but disruptive is positive and is also reflective of what emerging technologies are doing to the global economy. I am uncomfortable with the status quo and I regularly encourage people to ridicule their previous success. I always strive for excellence and this has been our motivation for disrupting the sector for the overall benefit of the economy. The unprecedented success that we have recorded have also encouraged me to push for more success.

Let me remind you again, Honourable Minister, before your appointment as the Director General of the NITDA, some of your published articles expressed conviction that civil servants are enemies of progress in Nigeria. Having been at the helms of affairs as a technocrat first as a DG and now a minister, do you still share this viewpoint and how have you been able to manage the intricate world of the civil service and civil servants to achieve your set goals?

“Nigeria has about 89,000 developers which is about 12% of the total African Developers on the continent. In addition to these, 5 out of the 8 unicorns in Africa have their roots in Nigeria and one of these (Flutterwave) is the most valuable unicorn of the continent.”



Mr. Oluwaremi, it is important to put some context to my earlier comments. My concern stemmed from the position that civil servants tend to be stuck-in-their-ways and generally unwilling to have a progressive mindset when it comes to adopting technology and embracing change. As the Minister in charge of the sector, I have worked with civil servants and we have been able to achieve a high degree of success in our programmes. My strategy has been to lead by example and to ensure that the civil servants are fully aware of my expectations for success, as well as the fact that I do not take excuses for failure.

By nature, people tend to talk about their successes. But they say great leaders also want their protégés to learn from their low points. Are there certain objectives you have failed to achieve and could you share the lessons learnt?

Mentorship is something that is dear to my heart and I make it a duty to mentor others. At the moment, I am fortunate to be on track with regard to all the objectives that we have and I share the experience and challenges with those within my supervision and sphere of influence.

Under your leadership, the Digital Economy sector has continued to record pulsating growth, what is your ministry's

“Citizens tend to be reluctant to embrace new policies, even when these policies will enhance their lives and the economy. However, we have made it a duty to involve stakeholders as part of our rule making process. Through this and increased advocacy we eventually elicit the support we desire.”

mid to long term plans to sustain this growth and the benefits of digital economy to millions of Nigerians?

After the development of NDEPS, we spent a lot of time to develop a detailed 10-year roadmap for all the pillars of the policies and every initiative. This Roadmap was developed in collaboration with stakeholders in the digital economy sector and this Roadmap has been sent to all the parastatals and stakeholders that have a role to play. We receive regular update reports and this is one of the ways that we sustain the growth.

What is your vision for Digital Infrastructures rollout for MDAs and national rollout of 5G as well as other emerging technologies?

My vision is to have digital infrastructure across all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria, especially the current regions that are considered to be unserved and underserved. With regard to 5G, I look forward a rollout in all major cities, in the first instance and then other parts of the country in the near future.

Will say you have achieved the desired goal with the NIN-SIM linkage; is our use of SIMs better secured now from a security perspective?

The aim is to have all Nigerians enrolled, as such, we have not yet achieved our desired goal, but we are very much on course. The NIN-SIM linkage has enhanced security and I always say that we are yet to receive any complaint from any security institutions on how phones have been used to carry out crime. Recall that the security agencies have the primary responsibility for security, we just support them by providing relevant information from the NIN-SIM database, if they request for such.

Lastly, Honourable Minister, tell us how you struggle to create that work-life balance as a minister, a spiritual leader and a family man. Are there insights you want to share with younger leaders on how to manage these responsibilities efficiently?

I am very averse to procrastination and this helps a lot. I also designate time for all my activities and this includes family and religious activities. I do my best to stick to this plan and this has helped me a lot in my quest for work-life balance.

NCC extends Mafab's 5G rollout by 5 months as industry sees 2,000 new jobs

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has approved a five-month extension for roll out of 5G network by Mafab Communications.

The extension is coming amidst industry optimism that no less than 2,000 new jobs will be created through rollout of 5G network.

Mafab and MTN Nigeria were the two winners of the 5G spectrum licences last December. Under the terms of the 5G licence, the two companies are expected to rollout 5G services beginning August 24, 2022.

But the telecoms regulator has issued Mafab a five-month extension following the delays in receiving its unified operational licence, (USAL) and Numbering Plan – made available only at the end of July.

“We are fully committed to bringing the benefits of 5G services to Nigerians and deploying a network that will drive economic development with increased broadband capabilities nationwide,” said Chairman, Mafab Communications Limited, Dr. Mushabu Bashir in an official statement.

“I have no doubt that the service will help deliver improvements in the fields of education, business, smart cities and entertainment. The goal remains to launch before the five-month extension period and we

will be sharing more information in the near future” he added.

5G will spur new jobs

With about 204,214,647 active GSM subscribers as at May 2022 in Nigeria largely on 3G/4G networks, Nigeria’s 5G run looks very promising.

The industry is optimistic 5G operation will add about 2,000 jobs by Q1, 2023 with MTN Nigeria leading the charge.

According to Executive Vice Chairman of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Prof. Umar Danbatta, 5G will spur expansive growth across sectors. The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) including fintech and e-commerce platforms, will benefit tremendously from 5G rollout.

The industry agrees with the regulator and sees new job opportunities requiring suitable skilling of manpower in new technologies and in subsectors that include Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Blockchain, Internet of Things, among others.

Mafab was incorporated on the 8th of July, 2020 and licensed by the Nigerian Telecommunications commission to provide and operate Local Interconnect and International carrier services.

FirstMonie agents' transactions cross N1b, reinforces leading role in promoting financial inclusion

First Bank of Nigeria Limited, Nigeria's premier and leading financial services provider has announced that its agent banking network – Firstmonie Agents – spread across the nook and cranny of the country has collectively processed transaction volume in excess of 1 billion, amounting to over 22 trillion naira. The Bank currently has over 180,000 Firstmonie Agents, spread across the country's 772 Local Government Areas.

Firstmonie Agents have been integral to bringing financial services closer to the underbanked and unbanked



segment of the society, providing convenient banking services that are easily accessible, thereby saving time and travel costs for individuals in the suburbs and remote environments with no access to financial services.

Popularly referred to as the 'Human ATM', Firstmonie Agents are empowered to

reduce the reliance on over-the-counter transactions while providing convenient personalized services. Amongst the services carried out by the Agents include; Account Opening, Cash Deposit, Airtime Purchase, Bills Payment, Withdrawals and Money Transfer.

Through various empowerment and reward schemes implemented to put its Firstmonie Agents at an advantage to economically impact their immediate communities whilst importantly having their business sustained, the Bank's Agent Banking scheme has remained a toast to Nigerians, irrespective of where they are in the country.

Amongst these schemes is the Agent Credit – launched in 2020 – which has had the Bank provide credit facilities to the tune of 238 billion naira to its

teeming Firstmonie Agents.

Expressing his appreciation to the Firstmonie Agents, Dr. Adesola Adeduntan, CEO, FirstBank said “since the relaunch of our Agent Banking scheme in 2018, our Firstmonie Agents have played a vital role in bridging the financial inclusion gap in the country, as many more people have been able to undertake various financial and business transactions in cost-effective ways, thereby saving a lot of time and money in travelling over long distances for basic banking services.”

“We are delighted by the giant strides of our Firstmonie Agents in promoting financial inclusion and commend them for their efforts in taking banking to the doorsteps of Nigerians – irrespective of where they are – in a very effective way”, he concluded.

"Remember me as someone who contributed to Nigeria's greatness in the space sector" – Abimbola Alale



Dr. Abimbola Alale was running the last weeks of her tenure as Managing Director/CEO of the Nigerian Communications Satellite Limited (NIGCOMSAT) when this 'eTerview' held. In spite of her busy sign-off schedules, she found time to respond to our questions. After eight years of managing one of government's most complex enterprises, The Nigerian satellite technologist would be leaving behind an entity in search of a new future beyond its early days of dreams and national aspiration to be part of the global of communication satellite industry. NIGCOMSAT is entering its next phase of evolution to be managed outside of sole government's proprietorship, and become fully commercialized or privatized as a government White Paper has already recommended. Alale was part of NIGCOMSAT's beginning and has helped to nurture part of those early dreams to reality working closely with China as a major partner. In spite of all the inherent challenges, she is confident that "NIGCOMSAT Ltd is a viable government asset and with the right legislation or friendly policies in place, the company will function very well and will be amongst the foremost government revenue earners." She is leaving NIGCOMSAT with over two decades of experience in the space sector beginning with the Nigerian National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) where she was the Assistant Project Manager/Secretary of the Team that championed NigComSat-1 and 1R missions, including the formation of NIGCOMSAT Limited. "I would love to be noted as someone who has contributed to the greatness of Nigeria through my work in the space sector," she told IT Edge News even as she expressed confidence in the future of NIGCOMSAT Limited and its subsidiary companies. Alale is a PhD degree holder of Security & Strategic Studies from Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria. She also holds a Master degree in Space Studies (MSc) and an MBA degree from the International Space University, Strasbourg-France. Other Certificates were obtained at the Massachuttes Institute of Technology, USA and the Management School, London. Dr. Alale is a Fellow of African Scientific Institute (FASI), Certified Forensic Investigation Professional (CFIP), Member International Academy of Forensics (MIAF), Fellow of Chartered Public Diplomacy and Management (FCPDM). She was a Council Member 2021 of the World Economic Forum for Global Future Council on Space. In 2021, Reset Global People called her one of Africa's 100 Women CEOs. She is a mother of 10 children, 9 of them are adopted.



“If the capital flight on satellite services in the country is directed to NIGCOMSAT Ltd, the company would have done better in the revenue generation drive.”

Officer of NIGCOMSAT Ltd. I started from the National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA). It was at NASRDA that the idea of NIGCOMSAT was birthed. I served as the Secretary of NigComSat-1 satellite project. That first satellite lasted for eighteen months until it was eventually deorbited.

You were in Beijing with us when we signed the replacement satellite in 2009 and in less than three years, we launched NigComSat-1R. NigComSat-1R replaced the deorbited satellite. I came into office in February 2014 with the end of tenure of the first Managing Director, Engr. Timasaniyu Ahmed-Rufai. By December of the same year, I was confirmed as the substantive Managing Director, thereby given the opportunity to preside over the affairs of the satellite company.

In my years as the CEO, I was opportuned to work with a team that helped place NIGCOMSAT Ltd at par with its peers in the satellite communications industry globally. We ensured that we conform to the international best practice in all our business dealings and industry best practice.

So to respond to your enquiry, it was a wonderful experience. A worthwhile experience! I thank the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President

Muhammadu Buhari, (GCFR) for giving me the opportunity to serve. I also wish to thank the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami); a very passionate, innovative and hard-working member of the Federal Executive Council, for the passion, hard-work, innovation and above all, leadership he has brought to the Ministry. By his efforts, he has changed the entire outlook of ICT in Nigeria, making the digital sector the most relevant to economic sustainability of the nation. It has been a great privilege to work with him as my boss and Honourable Minister.

I want to use this opportunity to also thank the Board, Management and Staff of NIGCOMSAT Ltd, for the support and the challenges we faced together. It has been great working with them. The lesson learnt here is, with the right team to work with, you will surely achieve greatness.

As one who should know, what will your response be to some opinions that the Nigerian communications satellite journey is stuttering and has not yielded the expected goals?

I know we have challenges but the situation is not as you present it. Technically, the NigComSat-1R satellite is performing optimally, all that we need is the implementation of “right of first refusal” policy and the enshrinement of local content policy to satellite business, by government. If the capital flight on satellite services in the country is directed to NIGCOMSAT Ltd, the company would have done better in the revenue generation drive. We provide the same service any other communications satellite company worldwide can provide, but for the issues of backup satellite and policy implementation.

The media has also done very little to create awareness amongst Nigerians, of the existence of the communications satellite and the knowledge that it can

How will you sum up your eight years in the public service and specially, your eight years as CEO of NIGCOMSAT - What lesson has it taught you?

My response to this would be that of mixed feelings. As you know, there is no phenomenon without its ups and downs. However, in everything I give thanks to God Almighty. When I reflect on all that has been achieved, starting from a small project office, metamorphosing into an entity that is the cynosure of everyone, I will say I am utmost grateful. If I leave NIGCOMSAT today, I would love to be noted as someone who has contributed to the greatness of Nigeria through my work in the space sector.

But let me be quick to correct you, I have spent over twenty-one years in public service and eight years as the Managing Director/Chief Executive

serve the country just as other satellites would. Imagine if most government services are being delivered on the NigComSat-1R satellite, or that all VSAT and broadband services to rural areas, public and private spaces are delivered on the NigComSat-1R satellite, where do you presume NIGCOMSAT would have been? The NigComSat-1R satellite is viable and has the capacity to cater to the abovementioned needs. Presently, the company is on the verge of concluding arrangements for the procurement of a second satellite, a high throughput satellite. This will replace NigComSat-1R as its end-of-life is fast approaching. NIGCOMSAT's goals and aspiration is therefore, hinged on good patronage. Nigerians must own this project; it is theirs to use. If NIGCOMSAT Ltd is patronised with the expected revenue coming in, it will have no business going to government cap-in-hand for money.

After NIGCOMSAT Ltd, what next for Nigeria's first female CEO of a government-owned satellite communications company?

Private sector venture or NGO?

What were your best moments in those eight years?

I can tell you that there are no immediate plans. I shall decide on what next, subsequently. Presently, I am praying to God to give me good health and grace to face the future. I need to sit still and reflect on all that have transpired in my life in the last twenty-one years or so, then forge ahead. As for my best in the last eight years, you have been with us all through so this is an opportunity for you to be the judge. Where did we get it right, where did we do wrong, how well did we handle challenges? Above all, I would say that we have tried our best to place NIGCOMSAT Ltd where it is supposed to be placed.

Is there a future for NIGCOMSAT Ltd as a publicly own entity or should it be privatised or commercialised as many have advised?

NIGCOMSAT Ltd is a government entity. Government has the prerogative to decide the fate of the company. But frankly speaking, for now, full commercialization with government patronage will make it function well. As I had mentioned earlier, NIGCOMSAT Ltd is a viable government asset and with the right legislation or friendly policies in place, the company will function very well and will be amongst the foremost government revenue earners. Diversification of government revenue earnings require putting all the necessary tools to work. I am not saying NIGCOMSAT is not a revenue earner presently, but to gain more revenue for government, more has to be done.

Alale with Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami



NIPOST partners e-payment companies to bring financial inclusion to 38m Nigerians



The Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST) is partnering operators of eGate and Visa to facilitate digital financial services and issuing of payment

cards across Nigeria.

The new deal will bring financial inclusion to more than 38 million Nigerians, according to the Postmaster General/CEO, NIPOST, Dr. Ismail Adebayo Adewusi.

He said partnership is part of NIPOST's strategic plan to provide financial inclusion services to millions of Nigerians outside of the ongoing Nigeria's digital transformation by the government across sectors.

The deal allows NIPOST to provide digital financial services using Visa credit and prepaid cards to unbanked customers in a way that supports financial inclusion, government e-services and cashless society.

His words: "Today we take this plan forward by signing with eGate, one of the leaders on digital transformation and our consultant who leads our digital transformation plan and Visa, the world leader in digital payments."

Months back, NIPOST inked a fresh Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) over technology-based delivery and self-service systems to improve its overall services. The MoU with e-Gate covers last mile delivery services while that of Access Solutions will facilitate self-service kiosks for daily need transactions. The deal with Lleida.net to leverage its Registered Communication System will allow the postal agency play more efficiently in Nigeria's burgeoning digital economy.

Amidst surge in global funding for African startups, NITDA assures Nigeria Startup Bill will become law



The Director-General, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, has expressed confidence that the Nigeria Startup Bill will become an Act of Parliament before year end. The Senate has already passed the Nigerian Startup Bill, 2022 and awaits assent of the president. Abdullahi assured the startup community and other stakeholders that included Microsoft, MasterCard, and Norebase in Lagos recently of a speedy implementation of the bill to address the bottlenecks in the ecosystem.

He spoke as just as Bloomberg reports that global funding for startups in Africa is surging. According to the report, funding "more than doubled to \$3.14 billion in the first six months of the year, according to research firm Africa: The Big Deal. That compares with a decline ranging from 3.7% in Europe to 43% in Latin American and the Caribbean." Bill will

enable environment for tech-enabled startups. The Nigeria Startup Bill project is a joint initiative by Nigeria's tech startup ecosystem and the Presidency to harness the potential of our digital economy through co-created regulations. "The Bill will ensure that Nigeria's laws and regulations are clear, planned and work for the tech ecosystem. This, we believe, will contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for growth, attraction and protection of investment in tech startups."

The bill will provide for the creation and development of an enabling environment for technology-enabled startups in Nigeria. The Nigeria Startup Bill is expected to address the twin challenges of low funding and absence of regulatory support. Once it becomes law, there will be a Startup Investment Seed Fund to be managed by the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority. The Startup Investment Seed Fund is designed to provide early-stage finance for startups, as well as support technology laboratories, accelerators, incubators, and hubs.

Without government, technology will erode rather than increase democracy – Kachifu Inuwa Abdullahi



When Kachifu Inuwa Abdullahi came to the scene three years ago to manage the affairs of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) as the new Director General/CEO, he had huge misgivings and expectations to contend with. His appointment was as disruptive as the industry he was hired to come manage. Three years on, Abdullahi appears to have manifested his headship on themes of disruptions, transformational leadership and stakeholders engagement. There has been a consolidation of the years of NITDA under Prof Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami); and an exploration of new frontiers in terms of IT development and regulation. Abdullahi shares his experience with IT Edge News, Olusegun Oruame in this eTerview that focuses on leadership and managing an agency for a sector that is perpetually in transition.

How will you sum up your three years as CEO/DG of NITDA considering that your appointment was unprecedented – what are the remarkable lessons in those 36 months that could be takeaways for young people in leadership positions?

I think it is the confidence that we have delivered beyond even expectations because we have achieved a lot in terms of transformation within NITDA. When I

was appointed there were lots of expectations from the person that recommended me, the Honorable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, the president that appointed a young person and the youths in the country as well as the elderly people. Everybody had their own expectation. Being the youngest at the time in the government among the CEOs and also how dynamic the sector is, there were a lot of expectations. So, at that time, if

people congratulated me, I normally say "pray for me, don't congratulate me, because there are a lot of expectations, wait until I deliver the expectations then you can congratulate me." so, with the support of my staff, the guidance and the support of the minister and also the president's support for the sector in general, all have helped us to achieve a lot.

The same year in 2019, the presidents named and expanded the mandate of our



ministry to cover digital economy and we have to recalibrate at the agency, because if you remember, the agency was established to implement National IT Policy. So now we have a new policy, the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS), meaning we had to recalibrate, we had to reassess ourselves and we had to set target for ourselves. That's when we crafted the Strategic Roadmap and Action Plan (SRAP). We did the assessment to establish 'where we were', and we then crafted our 'where we want to be.' Then based on that we identified the kind of capabilities we needed to have in place that will help to take us from where we are to where we want to be. Part of it needed a lot of transformation in house, within the agency, in terms of building the mindset, shaping the mindset and building the skillset in terms of orienting the people, because our people are our great resources, if the agency has a mandate to deliver something, it's not the agency as a building that would do this but the

“We encourage collective leadership with individual accountability; and collective ambition of where we want to take the agency to. All these help to unleash that energy.”

staff within the agency. So, the staff needed to understand the mandate, and they needed to have the capacity to deliver. So, I develop a Playbook that I use mostly to navigate my ways. In my Playbook firstly, I create clarity in

everything. We as staff must be clear about the mandate, what we want to achieve, the government's expectation and stakeholders' expectation. We linked what the government wants us to do with our corporate strategy. Then we created departmental strategy and job role for staff, and we mapped everything together. That has helped greatly. I make sure that before I give anybody any assignment, I make that assignment clear, letting him understand my expectation because it is easier for anybody to deliver any work when he has clarity of what is expected from him. Then, secondly, I find a way to unleash energy within the team because it is not about the DG, it is about the team. The team does the work because it is about talent; it is about the capacity of the staff. You can only unleash that energy if the staff takes the ownership of the work. So, we use different strategy to achieve that desired result. We encourage collective leadership with individual accountability; and collective

ambition of where we want to take the agency to. All these help to unleash that energy in addition to the packaged remuneration, reviewing our own remuneration to encourage the staff. Also, we created that kind of autonomy within the agency, the ability to allow people to work in their self-directed way. If I give you an assignment, I think you should go and think on the best way to deliver it not micromanaging you and telling you do this or don't do that. Give that autonomy for people you'll get the best out of them. And also, we give them the mastery and ability to build skills. Everybody wants to develop a skill; everybody wants to be the best and also have that sense of being part of something meaningful. Because whatever we achieve it is not about the DG, it is NITDA. NITDA achieves this, NITDA achieves that. And that is how you can institutionalize things. Then the third component of the Playbook is about building trust because trust revolves around everything we do. Without trust, I won't sit down with you to grant this interview. Without trust my staff will not tell me what is happening in the agency. And if you don't have trust, you have malicious disobedience. People doing things because they were asked to do, and they know that thing is not right, but they will do it because this is what my boss says I should do. Then fourthly, it's about winning today. Everybody wants to be associated to success to celebrate your wins. So, we always try to do that. If people are part of that something meaningful happening around and about them and also, if they are praised for what they do, they will certainly want to do more. So, that's what helped the agency to even come to the limelight to be among the top agencies of government when you talk about government in Nigeria. Also, that's what has helped to build the trust with the ecosystem because we exist to serve the ecosystem. The last thing we do is sharpen our tomorrow. Don't think because today you're winning, tomorrow you would win. No! You need to think of what you need to do to win tomorrow, because what helps us win today might not help us succeed tomorrow. We have to shape our tomorrow, and we don't want just to let things happen like serendipity. We want to engineer the serendipity; we want to

“Then the third component of the Playbook is about building trust because trust revolves around everything we do.... Without trust my staff will not tell me what is happening in the agency. And if you don't have trust, you have malicious disobedience.”

engineer our success. We don't want things to happen by coincidence, by mere chance. We want to design it; to be outcome of efforts, consequence of planned actions. So, this is what is helping us, building the trust about the ecosystem, delivering our expectations and that's what always makes me happy when I see what we've achieved so far within these three years.

You represent a new level of leadership in the country and goes back to part of the decision of the Honourable Minister's to be both futuristic and disruptive. What is leadership to you in the context of managing people in one of the most complex government institutions in the last three years?

I think personally there is nothing like a born leader or born anything. Anything you made, you made it in this world, whether it is leadership, money, or anything you can think of. I don't believe there is someone that was born to be a leader but the environment, the people you relate with, the mentorship and so on that's what shapes leadership and whatever you think of. For me I would say that my background and upbringing have a lot of influence on who I am. I was born and raised in a small community in

Jigawa state, in my community there are two key values. In that community, everybody wants to stand out and get noticed because it is a community of enthusiastic artisans, people with hands-on skills to get the best carpenters, tailors, plumbers and electricians in my area. Also, my family core-values, my daddy brought me up to believe that in everything I do and wherever I find myself, I should try and be different and try to create value, so my family core values coupled with the community core values shaped and created who I am. So, I use these four things wherever I find myself, I try to stand out, get noticed, be different and lastly create value. Then in my career, the people I met have helped a lot in shaping who I am today. In terms of mentorship, my teachers, notably my mentor, the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy since my university days, he's been part of the people that if I have a problem, I can go to them for guidance and mentorship. The minister has been a great mentor and that has helped a lot because with mentorship, there is someone that will tell you one word that will change your perspective. I will never forget the first time I met the minister in the university; I was keeping bad company and he called me, and he said, “you look decent why are you moving around with this people.” At that time, I was young and I was thinking this is freedom for me because I finished from a boarding school where I didn't have freedom to do whatever I wanted and I had my parents right at my back and now in the university, I had freedom to do what I wanted. But he told me one thing: anything that you are going to do, first of all ask yourself is that the reason why God created you? Secondly, ask yourself is it the reason you are where you are? If the answer is no then don't do it as it is a waste of time. Those words changed my perspective then and till now, I use them to judge before I make decisions. If the context does not meet the criteria, I find it difficult to make the decision.

As an IT regulator and in the light of emerging technologies what is the future of NITDA?

The future is co-creating regulation for several digital spaces and enabling environment. About 20 years ago when we started this journey into the digital world, people were saying it is an ungoverned space without government.

But now, it is beyond that. Technology is something that changes the way we live and the way we relate with each other and even our environment. Anything with this kind of monumental impact neither should not be left at the hands of few people to control it. The future is about regulating the digital space so that it will help us increase competition. If we look at the digital world, it is about dominance: the big companies dominate everything. If they see you, they either acquire you or crush and smash you, how can we enhance accountability? We are asking them to be transparent and accountable for what they do. The kind of data big tech companies have, there is no sovereign nation in this world that has that kind of data, and you know with that kind of information you can easily manipulate and control people. You can decide what they see, what they read, what you want them to believe. The third one is how can we use technology to reform governance, we are talking about digitalizing government services, we are talking about paperless government, so we need to have the regulatory instrument in place that will help us to achieve that. The fourth one is safeguarding privacy, how can we use technology to safe guard our privacy? How do we share data? What do you do with the information you collect from individuals and so on? The last one is about protecting democracy, because today the CEO of these big techs are more powerful than sovereign nations and democracy, if you look at the republican ideology (not the US Republican Party) but republican idea traced back to the Greek, it means opposing a situation where a group of people can control and exercise unaccountable power over others. Today, we have this big tech controlling and exercising unaccountable power over everyone and we think the technology is helping us increase democracy but actually it is eroding democracy. Looking at what happened in 2016 before the US election and other things, society is concerned about what kind of laws we need to have in place to make sure technology is not abused or used to dominate others. That is the focus of NITDA as an agency.

Amazon records subscription surge for Prime Video in Nigeria



Amazon is recording a subscription surge with thousands of new subscribers few weeks after it launched its global streaming service Prime Video in Nigeria.

Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt feature as major subscription points as the streaming giant hots up against existing competition that includes Netflix and ShowMax.

The company in early August said Nigerians, for the first time, will be able to subscribe to Prime Video using naira, the local currency and tweeted in its official account, Prime Video Naija, that customers in Nigeria can stream more than 20,000 original TV shows and movies within its ecosystem, such as "The Boys," "All or Nothing," "Reacher," "All the Old Knives," "The Terminal List," and the upcoming, highly anticipated "The Lord of the Rings."

Prime Video membership attracts ₦2,300 per month, far lower than Netflix premium at ₦4,400 per month. With the lower price carrot from Prime Video Nigeria, subscribers are getting to enjoy a vast selection of entertainment that includes global Amazon TV series, Hollywood titles, exclusive Nollywood movies, and Local Nigerian Originals:

Prime Video is bolstering its local presence with two Local Amazon Originals for Nigerian customers, Gangs of Lagos and LOL: Last One Laughing Naija.

"We're delighted to be increasing our investment in Prime Video for customers in Nigeria, making it a truly localised experience. From local payment and a full-scale local marketing campaign, to more local content specifically for Nigerian customers, our investment in Nigeria is a significant step towards our broader expansion plans in Africa and our ambition to be the most local of global streaming services," said Director of International Expansion, Prime Video, Josh Mclvor, at the formal entry of the company into Nigeria earlier this month.

"We know our customers want to see locally relevant faces, places, and stories alongside our global content on Prime Video, so we're excited to be bringing Nigerian customers these brand-new Local Amazon Originals, Gangs of Lagos and LOL: Last One Laughing Naija, which will complement our growing selection of Nollywood and African series and movies," said Head of Nigerian Originals, Prime Video, Wangi Mba-Uzoukwu.

Salute to a Leader & an Achiever at

50 PROFESSOR
**ISA ALI IBRAHIM
(PANTAMI)**

FCIS, FBCS, FNCS



- **NEW NATIONAL AGGRESSIVE FOCUS ON:**
Developmental Regulation; Digital Literacy & Skills; Digital Innovation & Entrepreneurship; Digital Transformation; Emerging Technologies; Cybersecurity; Promotion of Indigenous Content.
- **DEVELOPMENTAL REGULATION**
Issued 1 NDPR Implementation Framework; Issued 2 Guidelines; Issued 2 Standards
- **IT PROJECT CLEARANCE**
267 Federal Public Institutions Cleared (FPIs); Over 575 Projects cleared; 1.4 Trillion Worth of IT projects; Cleared: N45.6 billion saved from IT Project clearance
- **DIGITAL ECONOMY INTERVENTIONS**
Established 240 Digital Economy Centres; Established 8 IT Hubs & Incubation Centres; Established 11 IT Community & Digital Skill Acquisition Centres.
- **DIGITAL LITERACY & SKILLS**
Over 508,211 beneficiaries under the Digital Literacy & Skills Initiative.
- **DIGITAL INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**
Over 78 startup supported with funding & global exposure
- **NIGERIA STARTUP LAW**
Promotion of the startup bill to law to offer funding, tax relief & incentives for startups
- **NIGERIAN DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (NDPR)**
Value of the industry - N1.8billion; No of jobs - 7,680; No of licensed DPCOs – 103; No of people trained - 5,746; Cumulative earning for the sector - N4.08billion (3years).



All of us at the National Information
Technology Development Agency(NITDA)

Celebrate a Great Icon at 50

Signed

Kachifu Inuwa Abdullahi

Director General / CEO, NITDA



Pantami: Milestones and a **Redefinition of Leadership**

Pantami: A Techvolutionary Icon

By Uwa Suleiman



Pantami with Governor of Edo State, Godwin Obaseki; and Chairman of MTN Nigeria, Ernest Ndukwe at a recent function to stakeholders accelerate broadband penetration.



Pantami: Honoured abroad with Leadership and Commitment Award at the GITEX GLOBAL, Dubai, UAE

When in September of 2016, the then Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami) heeded the clarion call, packed his bags and bade a very lucrative academic career in one of the most illustrious institutions good bye, not a few wondered in disbelief. His first appointment in public service as Director General of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), plunged him right into the middle of a complex, disorganised, monolithic and corrupt sector, grappling with the lacuna of professionalism and leadership. Again, not many gave him a chance. Unprofessionalism and a total deviation from lawful standards had become so common place, nobody expected the much-needed remedy would come in the form of an unassuming, humble and “new” young man. But he took the Agency, sector and the nation by surprise and within months, repositioned the Agency in every ramification and set it on a steady course of exemplary success. NITDA has continued to thrive on the solid foundations laid by Professor Pantami.

His unprecedented success at NITDA earned him a call to higher duty and two years eleven months later, President Muhammadu Buhari (GCFR) entrusted him

with the task of fixing the entire sector and he took the oath of office as the Honourable Minister of Communications on 21st August 2019. As usual, he hit the ground running and by 17th October, less than two months later, he had secured Presidential approval re-designating the Ministry to the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, thereby, making history as Nigeria's first ever Digital Economy Minister, thus, resetting and reversing the hitherto, dire fortunes of the technology sector. The rest, as they say is history. A history of unprecedented and unparalleled successes at personal, national, continental and global levels. The impact of his leadership resonates in every sector of the economy and beyond the shores of Nigeria. Under his leadership and guidance, the sector has maintained a steady lead since 2020 in contributing to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with the latest figure at a staggering and unprecedented 18.44%. Two of the most strategic developmental documents in Nigeria's modern history –the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) and the Nigerian National Broadband Plan are to his credit, nineteen national policies developed and in full effect, he established



Pushing the frontier for international engagements: Prof Pantami and senior aides with the South Korea Ambassador to Nigeria, Kim Young-Chae Amb Chae and the Deputy Country Director, KOICA, Park Hye Song.

and developed the first- of- its- kind in Africa National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR), sustained digital capacity building programmes for citizens, numerous International partnerships and collaborations, nationwide interventions in institutions of learning to promote research and innovation in IT. Led the vanguard for the enactment and implementation of the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation and the subsequent establishment of the Bureau, established over a thousand IT Centers across the country, laid the foundation for a solid national data base through the national identity project, supervised the successful trial, auction and launch of 5G and has commissioned citizen-impactful projects and initiatives more than any public servant in present day Nigeria. Through the discharge of his duties, Professor Pantami has directly fulfilled, or provided the platform, for the fulfillment of the President's focal agenda of Anti corruption, Security and Economic recovery. As the adage goes, "a gold fish has no hiding place". Professor Pantami's consistency, professionalism, discipline, integrity, loyalty, dedication to duty, patriotism and leadership, has drawn global acclaim to his enigmatic personality. In the six short years he has been in the public eye, the Professor of Cyber security has earned some of the most coveted spots in the global digital economy sector. He is the first and only African currently holding the status of the Fellowship of the Chartered Institute of Information Security (CIISec),

a Fellow of the British Chartered Institute for IT (British Computer Society), a Chartered IT Expert, Chartered Cyber security professional, Chartered Computer Scientist, Fellow of the Nigeria Computer Society, Fellow Computer Registration Council of Nigeria, Fellow Institute of Information Management, Fellow African School of International Relations and Diplomacy, current chairman of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2022, recipient of professional, leadership and excellence awards too numerous to count including the prestigious Award for Digital Innovation which he recently clinched at the Nigeria Excellence in Public Service Awards.

In a special message on the eve of Professor Pantami's ascension to the golden fifth floor, Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari (GCFR) , wrote "Professor Pantami is one of the most resourceful, innovative and effective public officials that I have in this administration. His depth of knowledge of complex issues is amazing and remarkable and his loyalty and dedication are worthy of emulation. The appointment of Pantami is one of the best choices I have made because he has added tremendous value to good governance".

As a man, he embodies a life of total surrender to God, as a boss firm, disciplined and principled, as a father kind and protective, as a leader just and law abiding, as a mentor inspiring and practical. You have etched your name in the annals of history and will always be celebrated for your historic milestones.

Milestones

"I commend the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), for the landmark achievements of the digital economy sector and his commitment in carrying out his responsibility of developing the sector, including championing the growth of the indigenous telecom sector and NIN-SIM registration process. I also commend the industry stakeholders for their support for the sector" - President Muhammadu Buhari

- Steady rise in contribution of ICT to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), now over 17.83% according to NBS
 - Launch of the National Policy for the Promotion of Indigenous Content in the Nigerians Telecommunication Sector (policy underscore government's commitment to ensure Nigerians become active participants in the different sectors of the economy, including the telecommunications sector)
 - Launch of the Revised National Digital Identity Policy for SIM Card Registration (policy enhances security and promote digital economy)
 - Institutionalisation of online meetings by the Federal Government through the approval of the National Policy on Virtual Engagements in Federal Public Institutions (Virtual Federal Executive Council, Virtual Council of State and Virtual National Economic Council meetings now a norm)
 - Extensive progress and complete resolving of major challenges including NIN, RoW, NNBP, and digitisation of the economy beginning with MDAs
 - Set up of National Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre in Abuja."
 - Aggressive promotion of ICT innovation Hubs, Digital Skills for Entrepreneurs and Innovators, Community IT Training Centres, Tertiary Institution knowledge centres, school knowledge centres, etc.
 - Policies to define government's engagements of emerging technologies
 - Enforcement of Executive Orders Executive

Order 3, 5 in more actively impactful ways across MDAs and sectors

- Unveiling of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) by President Muhammadu Buhari to provide the blueprint for Digital Nigeria
- Creation of the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB) to promote Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR), create an enforcement structure and sustain Nigeria's leadership of Africa data privacy regulation
- Nigeria's emergence as the chairman, West African Telecommunications Regulators Assembly (WATRA)
- More aggressive application of technology to sectors including Smart agriculture, smart education
- Expansive growth in broadband penetration to unprecedented 45.07%
- Commissioning of over 80 digital economy projects across all 36 states of Nigeria including National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, Abuja, ICT Innovation and Incubation Centre, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Emergency Communication Centre, Owerri, Imo State, ATBU ICT Innovation Hub, Bauchi, Bauchi State, and the Digital Economy Centre, Ekiti State
- Mandatory requirement for all Parastatals under the ministry to be ISO Certified to enable meet the International Standards Organisation's Quality Management System there by helping them focused on service delivery
- International engagements and partnership with global brands such as GITEX , LEAP to promote exposure and strategic collaborations for indigenous startups.
- Deepening of Nigeria's value propositions with international bodies that include the ITU, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO), Universal Postal Union, etc
- Establishment of the country's first Emergency Communication Centre in Katsina State

Congratulations @ Golden Age!

The Board, Management and staff of the Nigerian Communications Commission, NCC, felicitate with our hardworking Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, as he attains the Golden Age!

Hon. Minister, at 50, your contributions to nation building, and ICT development of our country is remarkable. At 50, you have offered exemplary leadership that has taken the telecom and ICT industry, miles ahead.

You can be rest assured of our unalloyed support in your quest to transform Nigeria into a full digital economy in line with the mandate of His Excellency, the Commander in Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, President Mohammed Buhari, GCFR.

Your performance shall be written in Gold.

God bless your new age as we wish you many returns.

Congratulations!

PROF. ISA ALI IBRAHIM (PANTAMI) *FNCS, FBCS, FIIM*
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL ECONOMY

Signed:

Professor Umar Garba Danbatta *FNSE, FRAES, FAEng, FNIEEE*
Executive Vice Chairman/CEO



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FIFTY GARLANDS TO AN UNCOMMON ACHIEVER, PROFESSOR ISA ALI IBRAHIM (PANTAMI)

The National Identity Management Commission, NIMC, has witnessed unprecedented human and capital management development since its move to the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy under the dynamic and effervescent leadership of the visionary **Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami)**.

In 2020, and before the transfer of the supervision of the NIMC to Prof Pantami, the number of unique National Identification Numbers in the National Identity Database was **Forty-Two Million records (42M)**. This number within a space of two years grew astronomically to **Ninety Million Records (90 M)** and still counting! This remarkable feat was a result of the resilience, uncommon support, and dynamism of Professor Pantami.

The NIMC Human Management Capital also witnessed the transformational input of the Honourable Minister. The Commission's pursuit of improved staff welfare and condition of service which transcends ten years was given accelerated attention which culminated in the signing of a new state of service and improved staff emolument- a first of its kind in the annals of the history of the NIMC!

As enshrined in the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy, NDEPS (2020-2030), NIMC staff have continued to be trained to handle modern identity management. Amongst many of the training organized for staff of the NIMC is the e-Governance human capacity building which has provided human management capacity to over two hundred staff and is still ongoing! Professor Pantami's golden hands also touched the NIMC in the area of its system and equipment upgrade. Before his supervision of NIMC, the Commission's system and database equipment needed to be upgraded to meet the exigencies of modern data collection and management, but the coming of Professor Pantami saw a great turn- around. He ensured within a short period of supervision that NIMC got the needed approval to upgrade the National Identity Database to one of the best in the world.

The NIMC is indeed blessed to be supervised by the indefatigable, visionary, trailblazer, energetic, focused, great achiever, and transformational leader- **PROFESSOR ISA ALI IBRAHIM, FCIIS, FBCS, FNCS.**



THE INDEFATIGABLE MINISTER THE MAN WHOSE IMMENSITY HAS EXCEEDED THE SHORES OF AFRICA

The Board, Management and Staff of the National Identity Management Commission, felicitate with the indefatigable Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Professor. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami) FCIIS, FBCS, FNCS. On the occasion of his Golden Jubilee.

May Almighty Allah (SWA) Continue to guide you in your pursuit of greatness and service to the nation

Happy Birthday

Signed:

Engr. Aliyu A. Aziz
Director General/CEO NIMC



IBRAHIM (PANTAMI) @ 50: A Celebration of Vision & Milestones



The Galaxy Backbone (GBB) Limited is the Information technology and shared services provider set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria and working under the supervision of the Honourable Minister of Communications & Digital Economy, Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami. In over a decade of its existence, it has enhanced the transformation of Nigeria's digital space, however in the last three years under Professor Pantami, GBB has remarkably grown in terms of its Infrastructure and the quality of service it has provided to both the public and private sector organisations it currently serves. With Pantami, leading the vision towards enhancing Nigeria's Digital Economy and creating a Digital Nigeria, his visionary support and encouragement to GBB over this period has been unparalleled. It is this support that has led to improved service delivery, expansion and enhancement of government's ICT infrastructure across ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) across the country. GBB's service patronage has recorded the highest growth through the support of the Minister.

Through his Inspiring leadership, he has led the development and ongoing execution of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) developed via Presidential directives and pursued with passion and commitment by Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim. Our nation is on a path to becoming one of the leading Digital Economies in Africa and by extension, the world. GBB, under the dynamic leadership and guidance of Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), has recorded tremendous milestones in infrastructure and human capacity development. The GBB portfolio of services around Datacentre, Cloud, Virtual Communication, Cybersecurity and other digital services have been better structured and improved upon to serve both clients and stakeholders.

Also, through his support, the rollout of the National Information Communications Technology Infrastructure Backbone (NICTIB) II project to ensure a hyper connected and data secure digital Economy for a Digital Nigeria has yielded a lot of achievement due to Professor Pantami's intervention with the State Governors which has led to a huge reduction in the cost of right of way for the fibre roll out implementation. Due to this, in the last three years, Galaxy Backbone has aggressively expanded its roll out from 13 states to 22 states, with a commitment to expand to the other remaining parts of the country before the end of May 2023. This roll out is deepening broadband penetration and expanding the delivery of national infrastructure backbone that will support Nigeria's digital transformation across sectors and its growing digital economy. Galaxy Backbone's role as the Digital Infrastructure organization received the greatest level of awareness within the public sector and on the global stage as the Honourable Minister has at all times, spoken about the strength of the GBB Infrastructure and its capacity to deliver digital services at world class standards. That was why during the COVID-19 lockdown, it was the Honourable Minister's belief in the Capacity of GBB's Infrastructure and personnel, that led to GBB providing the Virtual Communications platform that supported and continues to support the Federal Executive Council and Council of States virtual meetings. This act has continued to ensure that the businesses of government and governance is never interrupted.

It is also the strong belief of Professor Pantami that human capacity development which is a critical aspect of NDEPS be fully executed. It is in this light that GBB has continued to deliver trainings on Digital services to Directors of MDAs to ensure they are abreast with modern changes across the digital space. This has aided the support of the usage of GBB's digital services in government.

In Galaxy Backbone today, we have the only fully operational Tier IV Datacentre within the nation's public sector, in addition to the Tier III Datacentre that has been in operations. With this additional world class Datacentre, GBB can more effectively, provide disaster recovery and business continuity services to its stakeholders and customers. The completion of this infrastructure in record time, would not have been possible without the support of the Honourable Minister.

Through the Professor Isa Ali Pantami's intervention, Galaxy Backbone received the approval from the Federal Executive Council to upgrade the Local Area Network (LAN) of MDAs across Abuja. This approval of this project has been a remarkable achievement for GBB because it has struggled with it for many years until Professor Pantami took over. This project is now being implemented and has greatly improved the network services of these MDAs.

With Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim, FCIIS, FBCS, FNCS, the vision has remained strong, the commitment unshaking and underscored by the numerous milestones, his indentures across all agencies under his ministry, especially Galaxy Backbone. The organization is better positioned now to handle and deliver on the mandate from the government and provide excellent digital infrastructure services to organisations across Nigeria.

These feats and many more are the results of the robust vision and commitment of the transformational leadership in PROFESSOR ISA ALI IBRAHIM, FCIIS, FBCS, FNCS.



Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy,
Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), FNCS FBCS FIIM

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We celebrate a remarkable and excellent Leader who has led the transformation of Nigeria's Digital Economy with resounding results. We celebrate and congratulate an icon and wish you many more outstanding achievements in the years ahead from all of us at Galaxy Backbone Limited

Signed

Prof. Muhammed Bello Abubakar,
Managing Director/Chief Executive of
Galaxy Backbone Limited

Aging Gracefully with Achievements



We join family, friends and well-wishers all over the world to celebrate the Trailblazer and Pathfinder of Nigeria's Digital Economy: Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), FCIIS, FBCS, FNCS.

Age may be a signal of man's mortality but what you have achieved in each passing age are the building blocks of immortality.

Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB) and the data governance ecosystem in Nigeria have good reasons to be included in the column of your achievements as we celebrate your new Age.

Year by year, may your seed time be yielding a richer store.

Happy Birthday, Sir.

Signed

Vincent O. Olatunji, PhD

National Commissioner/Chief Executive Officer

The Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB)



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND
DIGITAL ECONOMY
Leveraging ICT for National Development



NDPB
NIGERIA DATA PROTECTION BUREAU

NDPB JOINS FAMILY, FRIENDS AND WELL-WISHERS
ALL OVER THE WORLD TO CELEBRATE
THE TRAILBLAZER AND PATHFINDER OF
NIGERIA'S DIGITAL ECONOMY



Golden Jubilee

Prof Isah Ali Ibrahim Pantami, FBCS, FNCS, FIIM

Pioneer Honourable Minister,
Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy





Pantami: Milestones and a Redefinition of Leadership

By IT Edge News

This year, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) appointed Nigeria's Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, as the Chairman of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2022 to underscore his globally recognised commitment to information and knowledge societies.

For a minister who had already gained reputation as the most visionary to manage Nigeria's national portfolio for technology, communication and innovation now collapsed into the single ministry of Communication and

Digital Economy, Pantami's emergence as the WSIS 2022 chairman did not come as a surprise. He would be the first from sub-Saharan Africa to be so appointed after extensive consultation by the ITU with various international stakeholders.

Soon to follow would be his

emergence as the first African Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Information Security (CIISec).

Since he first appeared on the national scene as a holder of public office over four years ago, Pantami has deepened that sense of leadership's obligation to service delivery and redefinition of commitment to people and nation.

It has been no easy walk for Pantami within the pathway of global policy and administration of ICT where he has been able to successfully promote a Nigerian and African presence. Only two years ago, he was honoured with the prestigious award: "Digital Leader Of The Year 2020" at the 4th edition of the Nigeria Tech Innovation and Telecoms Awards (NTITA) in affirmation of his visionary leadership since mounting the saddle to lead Nigeria's digital agenda. Everything the award was premised on in 2020 has since expanded positively in value and impact.

That award recognised his sterling leadership as first, an IT regulator and Director General at the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA); and then his resounding strides as a minister of the federal republic and a public officer with a mission in a country where commitment to goals are often lost in the frenzy of the office.

The awards that have followed have further spotlighted Pantami's robust profile as a leading light in technology policy drive and a pathfinder for Nigeria's steady push in digital economy. Since making his mark as an IT regulator at the NITDA, Pantami would leave the agency as a Director General that strengthened all the frontiers of IT regulation for which the NITDA is statutorily empowered including the pursuit of IT procurement across all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) of the federal government. No NITDA's director general had dared to proclaim or even enforce that mandate. Pantami did! When he would leave the NITDA for a higher national assignment as a federal minister, he had turned a once docile agency around to become a regulatory bulldog, whose IT watchdog role was no longer in doubt. It has been three years since Pantami took up the baton to lead the ministry now re-named Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy. It has been no mere paper name-change. In three years, Pantami has made the ministry to experience fundamental array of

activities engineered at strengthening its oversight role over regulatory institutions under it; and building an enabling synergy to get everyone on board to achieve the core objectives of the ministry including 'Digital Nigeria.'

Pantami not a sedentary minister



As was the case in NITDA, it was clear Pantami will not be a sedentary minister. In his first 12 months as a minister, he has mobilised ministerial willpower to get all agencies under him targeting specific goals; and has made the ministry active to its mandate, particularly the agenda for digital economy across all spectrums of national life. The minister and his team have remained committed to the pursuit of massive digital skill building, steady digitisation of government processes, embracing of new technologies and innovations from AI, Big Data to Robotics; and deeper broadband penetration among others.

Today, national broadband penetration has hit an unprecedented 47 % and over 120,000 Nigerians have already been empowered with digital skills in line with the paradigm shift championed by Pantami who has emphasised skills over mere certificates.

With nearly 60 projects launched under his first 12 months to accelerate Nigeria's transition into the digital economy, the additional 24 months have been strong testimonial to of what 36 months of visionary leadership and hard work could mean.

One case of this visionary leadership is the minister's forceful drive at resolving the Right of Way (RoW) dilemma and the positive outcome across the states. For nearly two decades, the RoW has worked against operators' ability to rollout network into the states and has undermined ICT infrastructure development. RoW issue will be one of the first thorny battles Pantami will fight through dialogues with state players. After series of engagement with state governors, the result was positively unprecedented. States agreed to crash RoW fees, in some cases, in excess of 1500%.



Testimonials and rising credential

You could tag Pantami as the 'Star Boy' in President Muhammadu Buhari's cabinet and he has received numerous commendations from Mr. President for building robust synergy in the digital sector worthy of emulation.

Hear the President in 2021: "I commend the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, for the landmark achievements of the digital economy sector and his commitment in carrying out his responsibility of developing the sector, including championing the growth of the indigenous telecom sector and NIN-SIM registration process. I also commend the industry stakeholders for their support for the sector."

The ITU's appointment and CII Sec Fellowship no doubt further strengthen his rising credentials as one of most outstanding ministers and he already enjoys several endorsements to that effect from state governors including Governor Hope Uzodinma of Imo State, Governor Babagana Umara Zulum of Borno State and Governor Nasir el-Rufai of Kaduna State.

Hear Uzodinma: "On Wednesday 21st August 2019, when he was sworn in as the minister to oversee the Ministry of Communications, some of us who followed his activities as the Director General, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) were convinced that he was going to lift the ministry from where it was to the next level. Knowing him as a thinker, an individual full of innovative ideas, and a man under whose leadership NITDA came up prominently to the fore,"

This is Zulum's attestation: "Honestly speaking not because the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy is here with us, the activities of the Ministry of Communications was not well known to many Nigerians before his arrival as the minister of Communications. We have applauded his competency in handling the affairs of the ministry, he gingered the performance in his ministry that makes it

possible for him to achieve a lot during his short stay in office." For el-Rufai, Pantami offers sterling leadership at a very critical time. His words: "If you will list 2 or 3 performing Ministers in this administration, the Minister, Dr Pantami is at the top. He took a Ministry that was sleeping and upgraded it to a 21st century Ministry."

Pantami and the theme of value-based leadership to foster change

Pantami has persistently helped to reinforce the theme of Change: one of the cardinal themes of the President Buhari's administration in the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy. The ministry has become more proactive in engaging and making statutory pronouncements on some of the thorny issues as they concern consumers, operators and regulators.

In the last three years, the minister's office has consistently asserted government's position on several issues across the sub-sectors that fall within the purview of its ministerial oversight including clearing the controversies around 5G to set Nigeria on course for an optimum 5G journey.

It has truly been a long time since the ministry had a minister who came to office with a sense of leadership that is inherently value-based and is concerned with fostering change.

But you must have a good grasp of Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, Buhari's Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, to appreciate why change could happen to that ministry. He is the Sheriff that fears no one to drive goals and mandates.

Not many Nigerians were conversant with the roles of that ministry but since Pantami assumed office, you now have a growing multitude of enthusiastic voices able to connect their stake in the telecom or postal sector and the responsibilities of the ministry to them as stakeholders.

Pantami is leaving no one in doubt, his vision at the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy is steadily coming to form and gaining local and international recognitions. Like Abraham Lincoln whose driving philosophy was 'powerful persistence,' the Sheriff at the ministry has a knack to evolve strategies to hit the bull's eye. Today, ICT contribution to the country's GDP has exceeded 17% and has continued to rise since 2019.

It hinges on Pantami persistent vision to rework the ministries and agencies under it with an eye on evolving strategies to explore the thematic value propositions in Nigeria's growing digital economy that could tap from the \$11.5 trillion global digital economy fund. With the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS), Pantami has said his vision is to help reposition Nigeria to become the leading digital economy in Africa, time is not what he has but that obstinate persistence to make his vision for Nigeria come true.

PANTAMI: HERE, THERE, NOW & THEN



PANTAMI: HERE,THERE, NOW & THEN



PANTAMI: HERE, THERE, NOW & THEN





NIGERIAN POSTAL SERVICE (NIPOST)

Achievements:

- Some of the achievements recorded by the Nigerian Postal Service under leadership of the Honorable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami) in President Buhari-led administration include:
- Established and commission a Computer Based Center (CBT) in Gombe State located at the GPO Headquarters to boost easy access for students sitting for Joint Matriculation Examination in the state.
- Successful launching of NIPOST Revenue Stamp to Strengthened the administration of the Stamp authentication Compliance , in order to enhance the authenticity of NIPOST stamps.
- Successfully constituted and inaugurated the boards of the newly established NIPOST Logistics and Transport Company LTD, NIPOST Property and Development Company LTD , which is sequel to the Plan Initiative/ reforms to unbundled NIPOST to viable commercial enterprises.
- Successfully convened a Stakeholders Meeting with Courier Operators, which produced a roadmap that has been adopted by the Stakeholders in view of the incidence of the review of licensing fees that was reject by operators.
- Made NIPOST establish stakeholders rules of engagement processes to facilitate a seamless interaction with Stakeholders .
- Partnered with other relevant government agencies ie NDLEA, FRSC, EFCC in order to utilize NIPOST facilities for e- government services Infrastructure Projects, with the overall objective of improving quality, safety, integrity and ensure the marketability of Nigerian goods and services, as well as removing technical barriers to be in conformity with international best practices.
- Successful unveiling and launching of 28 new 10, 20 and 30 tonnage NIPOST/ Speedaf delivery trucks in order to enhance the performance of qualitative services.
- Successfully allotted capital vote for NIPOST in the Ministry's annual budget after 27 years of zero capital budget.
- Another major milestone/achievements of the Hon. Minister was the assenting of Finance Act, 2020 in to law by President Muhammadu Buhari to give NIPOST the statutory sole producer of stamps, and it's role in the administration of stamp authentication Compliance.
- Successfully promoted an e- government training program , which over 200 Management and junior Staff from NIPOST benefited from to enhance capacity building, skills and productivity.
- Successfully achieved implementation of a new operation tariffs /license for Courier Operators in Nigeria which was last review 25 years ago.
- Successfully facilitated a special Independence anniversary commemorative Postage stamp.
- NIPOST Successfully delivered COVID- 19 relief materials on-behalf of the Federal Government in some states of the Federation during the COVID- 19 pandemic lockdown.
- Successful collaboration with the National Population Commission on the harmonization of NIPOST AVS for national development.
- Successfully launch of a commemorative Postage stamp for the African Development Bank special Agro Industry Processing Zone Programme.

Signed

Hon. Sunday Adeyemi Adepaju

Postmaster General of the Federation/ CEO, NIPOST



Nigerian
Postal
Service

*Congratulations!
@50!*

*Hearty
Congratulations!*



Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami)
**Hon. Minister of Communications
and Digital Economy**

Happy birthday and congratulations on attaining the golden milestone of 50. Today, your giant strides and track records as the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy cannot be wished away, particularly, in the Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST), one of the parastatals under your supervision. We are proud of you!

As our Minister, your life represents a proof of symbolic dynamism and outstanding accomplishments. Your resilience has given NIPOST a direction for massive transformation, and It is on record that your exemplary leadership qualities as well as your numerous contributions have continued to steer the postal industry's development

and growth in the Digital Economy, enabling it to regain its statutory role.

It is our fervent prayer that Almighty Allah will continue to grant you divine wisdom, sound health and strength

as you continue to serve our dear country.



Hon. Sunday Adeyemi Adepoju
**Postmaster General of the
Federation /CEO, NIPOST**

ONE AFRICA.
LIMITLESS OPPORTUNITIES



AFRICA

Morocco

31 MAY -
2 JUNE 2023
MARRAKECH

RISE OF THE NEXT
DIGITAL ECONOMY



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