

Messages of hope, love, peace resonate as Christians mark Easter amid hardship

Tinubu, Atiku, Obi, Obaseki, others felicitate Christians

TOBORE JEROME

Christians in Nigeria on Sunday joined their counterparts across the world to celebrate this year's Easter, with many political leaders in the country preaching

messages of hope, love, peace and joy in the midst of daunting economic challenges facing the citizens.

Easter, a memorial of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead after three days in the tomb, marks the end of 40 days

of Lent, a period of fasting and abstinence, prayer, and almsgiving.

For many Nigerians, who have been bent under the weight of the twin policies of petrol subsidy removal and naira float, leading to harsh economy

marked by high cost of goods and services, particularly food items, there was mostly nothing to celebrate.

But President Bola Tinubu, in trying to inspire hope, told Nigerians that just as Christians celebrate the victory of life over

death as exemplified by the resurrection of Christ, the country "will triumph over its challenges as his administration remains firmly committed to this end".

Tinubu, in his Easter message contained in a statement issued by presidential spokesman,

Ajuri Ngelale, emphasised love, sacrifice, and compassion as the patent themes of this solemn season.

"President Tinubu notes that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for

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The Nigerian Observer



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...that the people may know

We have redefined land administration, paved way for businesses to thrive —EdoGIS MD —Pgs 11&12

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UBA, FCMB, Fidelity worst hit as banks search for N3trn fresh capital

Ecobank only unaffected bank

TELIA T SULE

Nigeria's capital market will soon become a beehive of activities as deposit money banks, merchant and non-interest banks will begin to raise

fresh capital in the region of over N3 trillion or explore the various options suggested by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) if they intend to retain their operating licences in the country, The Nigerian Observer's estimates show.

The CBN, through its Director, Financial Policy and Regulation Department, Haruna Mustafa, had last week instructed banks in the country to shore up their capital base, specifically focusing on their paid-up

capital and share premium, within the timeframe of 24 months.

According to our analysis, the most affected deposit money banks in terms of the new capital requirement to meet the CBN mandate are the United Bank

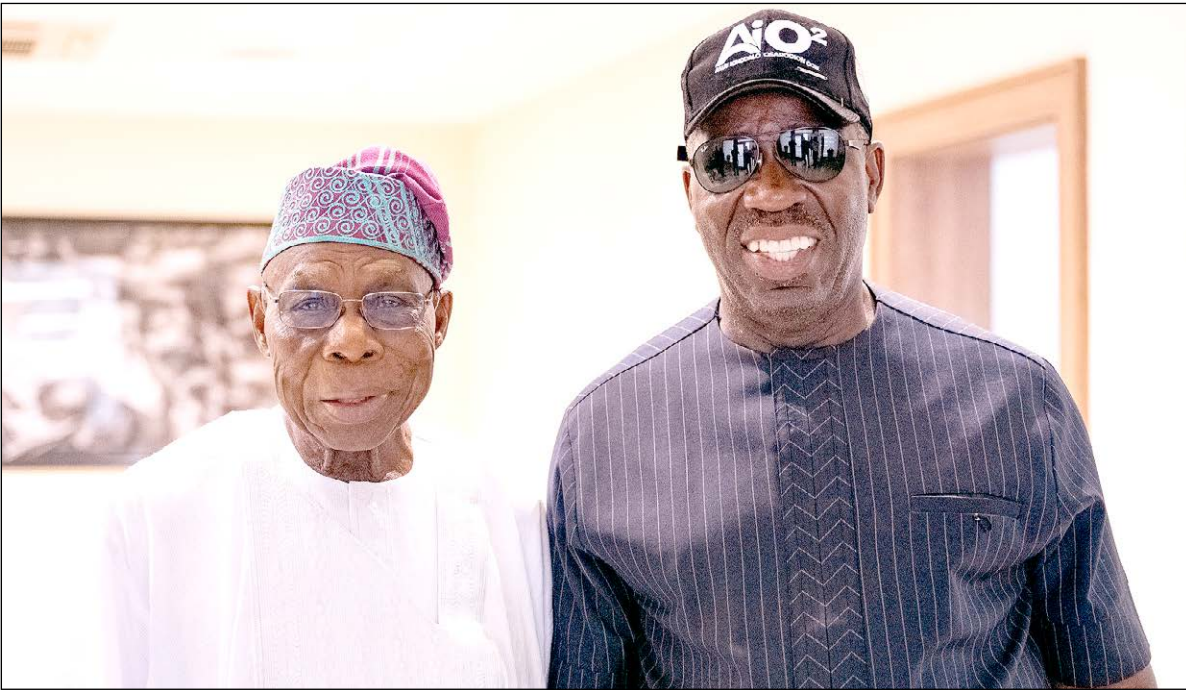
for Africa (UBA), First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Fidelity Bank, Guaranty Trust Holdings, and FBN Holdings.

CONTINUE ON PG 2»

Edo 2024: List of parties and their candidates

Source: INEC

SN	POLITICAL PARTY	CANDIDATE
1	Accord Party	Kennedy Iyere
2	Action Alliance	Uwaifo Osaro
3	African Action Congress	Oberaifo Udoh
4	African Democratic Congress	Paul Obazele Agbone
5	African Democratic Party	Akhime Kingston Afere
6	All Progressives Congress	Monday Okpebholo
7	All Progressives Grand Alliance	Isaiah Osifo
8	All People's Movement	Sylvester Odaro Ugiagbe
9	All People's Party	Areleogbe Amos Osalumese
10	Boot Party	Osirame Edeipo
11	Labour Party	Olumide Akpata
12	National Rescue Movement	Dennis Aikorogie
13	New Nigeria People's Party	Azemhe Azena
14	People's Democratic Party	Asuerinme Ighodalo
15	People's Redemption Party	Patience Ndidi Key
16	Social Democratic Party	Aner Abdullahi Aliu
17	Young Progressives Party	Paul Okungbowa
18	Zenith Labour Party	Akhalamhe Amiemenoghena



OBJ'S COURTESY VISIT:

Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki (right), former President Olusegun Obasanjo, during Obasanjo's courtesy visit at the Government House, Benin City, Saturday, March 30, 2024.

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NACCIMA urges increased PPP to drive economic development —Pg 3

Okomu Oil posts N20bn profit in 2023, recommends N14 as final dividend —Pg 11

No, Ganduje; one-party system will kill our democracy —Pg 15



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- MINING
- INDUSTRY
- TOURISM





# Here are governorship candidates for Edo 2024 poll as INEC displays list

TOBORE JEROME

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has displayed the list of candidates of the 17 political parties participating in the September 21 governorship election in Edo State.

The INEC office in Edo State, led by the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Dr Anugbum Onuoha, displayed the list

on its notice board and in all INEC offices across the 18 local government areas on Saturday.

The list shows that Mr Uwai-fo Osaro is the governorship candidate of Action Alliance (AA); Ugiagbe Odaro Sylvester for All Peoples Movement (APM); Areleogbe Amos Osalumese for All Peoples Party (APP); Akhime Kingson Afere for Action Democratic Party (ADP); Udoh Obersifo

David, African Action Congress (AAC); Akhahamhe Amienoghena, Zenith Labour Party (ZLP); Asuerinme Ighodalo, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP); Osirame Edeipo, Boot Party (BP), and Iyere Kennedy, Accord Party (AP).

Others are All Progressives Congress (APC), Okpebholo Monday; Social Democratic Party (SDP), Aner Abdullahi Aliu; New Nigeria Peoples Party

(NNPP), Azena Azemhe Friday; All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Osifo Isiah; African Democratic Congress (ADC), Obazele Paul Agbone; Labour Party (LP), Olumide Akpata Anthony; Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Key Patience Nnidi, and Young Progressive Party (YPP), Okungbowa Paul Ovbokhan.

Meanwhile, the INEC headquarters said it would publish

the personal particulars of all the governorship candidates and their deputies. This would be done by displaying copies of Form EC9 along with all academic credentials and other documents submitted by each candidate at the State Headquarters and the 18 local government offices across Edo State.

The commission, in a statement by its National Commissioner and Chairman, Infor-

mation and Voter Education Committee, Mr Sam Olumekun, charged Nigerians to scrutinise the documents.

"Any aspirant who participated in his/her party primaries with reasonable grounds to believe that the information provided by the candidate is false can challenge the nomination in a Federal High Court," he said, adding that such legal action was in line with the Electoral Act 2022.



## BOOK PRESENTATION:

From left: Dr Rabiul Olowo, CEO, Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria; Yemi Adefarakan, Executive Vice Chairman, TVC Communications; Gbolahan Olalemi, Senior Management, TVC Communications; Mrs Bola Adesola, Chairperson Ecobank; Mrs Victoria Ajayi, author of the book with her husband Mr Ade Ajayi and Mrs Ibukun Awosika, Former Chairman FirstBank and CEO The Chair Centre Group, during the book presentation titled THE PRECISION-LED WOMAN by Mrs Victoria Ajayi, new Group CEO/MD of TVC Communications was held in Lagos over the weekend.

## UBA, FCMB, Fidelity worst hit as banks search...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Others are Access Holdings, Zenith Bank, Sterling Bank, Stanbic IBTC, Wema Bank, Unity Banks, among others.

At the outset of his administration, CBN governor, Olayemi Cardoso, had hinted at the need for banks to raise their capital base, attributing the suggestion to the floating of the naira which had impacted the capital base of banks in the country.

The Nigerian Observer's analysis shows the exchange rate of the naira to the US dollar, for instance, had depreciated from an average of N460/\$ in May 2023 to an average of N1,300/\$ currently.

Using paid-up capital and share premium of the seven banks with international banking licences, the sum of their paid-up capital and share premium fell from \$2.79 billion to \$988.84 million using the two aforementioned exchange rates of the naira to the US dollar. This limits the ability of Nigerian banks to play at the international arena.

The new CBN mandate requires deposit money banks with international banking licence to have N500 billion; national licence N200 billion, and regional licence, N50 billion. Merchant banks are to have N50 billion each, while non-interest banks with national and regional licences are to have N20 billion and N10 billion, respectively.

On why the CBN singled out these types of capital, a senior

financial analyst said the apex bank took that decision in order to prevent banks from using their FX revaluation gains.

"It is possible the CBN management wanted to dissuade banks from using their FX revaluation gains," Saheed Bashir, CEO Meristem Securities, said.

To meet the minimum requirements, the CBN advised banks to consider any of the following options, namely, to inject fresh equity capital through private placements, rights issue and/or offer for subscription; mergers and acquisitions, as well as upgrade or downgrade their authorisation licences.

"The minimum capital specified above shall comprise paid-up capital and share premium only. For the avoidance of doubt, the new capital requirement shall not be based on shareholders' funds. Additional Tier 1(AT1) capital shall not be eligible for the purpose of meeting the new requirement," the CBN said last week.

Commercial banks in Nigeria have different authorisation licences. There is the international banking licence which allows any Nigerian bank to have branches within and outside Nigeria. Deposit money banks with international banking licences are Access Bank, Fidelity Bank, FCMB, First Bank of Nigeria, Guaranty Trust Holding Company, UBA, and Zenith Bank.

In the new requirement, each of the aforementioned banks is expected to shore up its capital

base to N500 billion. The seven banks collectively have N1.28 trillion as their combined paid-up capital and share premium as against N3.7 trillion in line with the new requirement.

As of the last quarter of 2023, UBA had N115.82 billion as its paid-up capital and share premium. Meeting the new requirement means the bank must, in the next 24 months, put in place programmes that will get it additional N384.19 billion. This shortfall makes it the worst hit among the banks in the country with international banking licences.

FCMB is the second most affected by the new requirement. As of December 2023, the bank had N125.29 billion as its paid-up capital and share premium. Under the new regulation, the bank must raise additional N374.71 billion.

Fidelity Bank has a shortfall of N370.30 billion. As at the end of 2023, its paid-up capital and share premium amounted to N129.71 billion.

As of September 2023, GTB had N138.19 billion as its total paid-up and share premium capital, implying it must raise additional N361.81 billion unfavourably in the next 24 months.

Furthermore, FBN Holdings had N251.34 billion as its paid-up and share premium capital as of December 2023. Its shortfall amounts to N248.66 billion. Access Holdings had N251.34 billion as its total paid-up capital and share premium as of December 2023.

Zenith Bank, with a total of N270.75 billion paid-up capital and share premium as of September 2023, will need an injection of additional N229.75 billion during the timeframe for recapitalization.

Among the banks with national banking licences, Wema Bank is the worst affected. With N15.13 billion as its paid-up and share premium capital currently, the bank will have to inject additional N184.87 billion to retain its current licence. It is followed by Unity Bank which will require additional N183.67 billion during the timeframe. Sterling Bank will have to raise new N142.85 billion, while Stanbic IBTC will need additional N90.74 billion.

Jaiz Bank, with a national licence to operate non-interest Islamic banking operations in the country, will have to raise additional N1.38 billion.

The only bank which is not affected is Ecobank Nigeria. As a national bank requiring N200 billion to operate, the bank as of September 2023 had N353.51 billion as the sum of its paid-up capital and share premium.

FBNQuest Merchant Bank with a national banking licence had N8.2 billion as the sum of its share capital and share premium.

Meanwhile, Access Bank has indicated it will raise \$1.5 billion in fresh capital in line with the new CBN mandate. The bank stated this in the notice sent to the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) last week.

## Messages of hope, love, peace...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

humanity is an emphatic lesson for leaders and all Nigerians to yield to selflessness and compassion, and be steadfast in the pursuit of a united, peaceful, and prosperous nation," the statement said.

The President commended Nigerians for the sacrifices they had made in the past few months for the nation to be steered to the path of recovery and sustainable growth, assuring that the seeds of patience which they had sown were beginning to sprout and would in no time bring forth an abundance of good fruits.

Former Vice President and presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 election, Atiku Abubakar, said it was a time for Nigerians to come together to pray for the peace of the nation.

"Our leaders at all levels should follow the virtues that define this season – sacrifice, love, and charity – and come together to help all Nigerians resolve the differences that divide us," Atiku said in a message posted on his X handle on Sunday.

"We must not allow those who seek to divide us to pretend as if our problems are as a result of another ethnic or religious group," he said.

His Labour Party counterpart and former governor of Anambra State, Peter Obi, called on Christians to use this Easter period to pray for Nigeria for God to "crown our efforts with success".

Obi, in a message posted on his X handle, stressed that need for everyone to "continue to labour, in unity, for the good of our nation, knowing that our labours will not be in vain".

"I, therefore, call on all Christians, in the spirit of Easter, to continue to pray for God's intervention in our dear nation, so that even as we labour, as humans, for the sake of our nation, God will crown our efforts with success, and make the New Nigeria even more possible, beyond our human efforts," he said.

In his Easter message, Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki, urged Christians to reflect on the lessons of Easter celebration, charging them not to lose hope amid the economic headwinds.

"Easter is a time for reflection, love, sacrifice, renewal and hope. I urge that we use this opportunity to ponder on the lessons and purpose of the celebration and renew our resolve towards achieving a more progressive and pros-

perous Nigeria," Obaseki said.

"As a people, we may have been stretched beyond limits occasioned by the high cost of living and other economic headwinds, but we must not lose hope. Working together in unity, we can overcome these challenges and place our country on the path of sustainable growth and development.

"We must remain resilient and use the period of the celebration to seek the face of God, share our joy with neighbours and work towards a peaceful and progressive nation," he said.

Rivers State governor, Siminalayi Fubara, called on the people of the state to, in the spirit of Easter, emulate the virtues of Jesus Christ by living in love and promoting peace and unity.

In a message signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Nelson Chukwudi, the governor noted that the Easter celebration signalled an assurance of a new beginning, not only to Christians but for the entire state.

He emphasised that all the measures that his administration has taken so far were in the best interest of the state and for the general good of the people.

He urged the people to "remember the reason for the season" as they celebrate Easter, saying they should "remember to continue to put our government in your prayers at this time and always, so that collectively, we can achieve the goals we have set for ourselves in efforts to deliver on our mandate".

Cross River State governor, Bassey Otu, called on Cross Riverians to reflect deeply on the selfless life of Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for the redemption of mankind.

In an Easter message issued by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Linus Obogo, Otu maintained that it was only through selflessness and sacrifice that Cross River State and, indeed, Nigeria can attain the desired economic progress.

"Today represents a very significant moment in our lives as Christians. Significant in the sense that it is sobering that someone, whom no fault was found in him, sacrificed his life on the cross that we may live," Otu said.

"His death on the cross and resurrection remind us all about selflessness, the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness, love and compassion over hate. These were the cardinal planks of Christ's teachings before his crucifixion," he said.



## NEWS

# NACCIMA urges increased PPP to drive economic devt

## ● *hails relaunch of National Trade Facilitation Committee*

The National President of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Dele Kelvin Oye Esq., has commended the Federal Government for the relaunch of the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC), urging for increased private-public sector partnership to drive economic growth and development in the country.

Oye, who spoke at the relaunch at the Bank of Industry conference room in Abuja, said it is “through partnership that we can optimise the use of our assets for the greater good of Nigeria”.

“It is both an honour and a privilege to stand before you today as we witness the re-launching of the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment,” Oye said.

“As the President of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NACCIMA), I am here to articulate the collective voice of the Organised Private Sector (OPS) and to affirm our steadfast commitment to the

goals and aspirations that this committee embodies.”

He said the NTFC, as a vital organ within the framework of the national economic architecture, has a profoundly significant role to play.

He said trade facilitation was not just about expediting the movement, release, and clearance of goods, but also about creating a more efficient trade environment that is conducive to economic diversification, industrialisation, and job creation.

“The integration of the Trade Facilitation and Liberalisation Sub-Committee of the Presidential Council on Industrial Revitalisation with the NTFC is a strategic move that signals our government’s resolve to harmonise efforts and streamline operations. Such synergy is critical in the pursuit of the Renewed Hope Agenda, which aims to rekindle the spirit of enterprise, stimulate industrial growth, and engender a more vibrant economy,” Oye said.

“As we stand on the cusp of this revitalisation, let us underscore the importance of trade facilitation in the context of the Nigerian economy.”

He said the committee is tasked with the formidable challenge of implementing reforms that will enhance trade protocols, reduce barriers, and improve the ease of doing business.

“By doing so, we can attract more foreign direct investment, boost our export potential, and create a nexus of opportunities for employment and wealth creation,” he said.

“The Chambers of Commerce across Nigeria are integral to this journey. As conduits of com-

merce and industry, we represent the interests and aspirations of businesses large and small.

“We provide a platform for the articulation of policy recommendations, the sharing of best practices, and the fostering of partnerships that span the globe. In essence, we are the building blocks of the private sector’s contribution to national development,” he said.

On the need for increased partnership, the NACCIMA boss said there was no ambiguity

as to why government and the private sector must collaborate.

“In a world of finite resources and unending challenges, it is through partnership that we can optimise the use of our assets for the greater good of Nigeria,” Oye said.

“The public sector provides the regulatory framework and policy direction, while the private sector brings to the table innovation, efficiency, and execution capability. Together, we form a formidable force that can

transform visions into tangible realities,” he said.

He urged all to embrace the re-launch as more than a ceremonial act, but as a reaffirmation of a collective will to forge a path of progress and prosperity.

“The NTFC, with its renewed vigour and strategic focus, stands ready to play its part in this transformative journey. And the OPS, with active support of NACCIMA, is fully committed to actualising this endeavour every step of the way,” Oye said.

## SIM-NIN linkage extended to July 31 as telcos sensitive about revenue loss

BILL OKONEDO

Nigerian mobile phone subscribers can heave a sigh of relief as disconnection of telephone lines not linked to National Identification Numbers (NIN) has been extended from April 15, 2024, to July 31, 2024.

Telecom industry sources say the decision to extend the deadline was taken by industry regulator, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), following a review of requests

from telecom operators.

It is said that telcos have been notified in writing of the timeline extension.

The extension from 15th April to 31st July is for telephone subscribers with four or more mobile Subscriber Identity Modules (SIMs) to properly match them with their National Identity Number (NIN) data.

Efforts to reach the NCC’s Director of Public Affairs, Mr. Reuben Muoka, on phone proved abortive as calls made were unanswered.

## Police arrest 10-year-old boy for allegedly strangling mate to death

AGENCY REPORT

The Lagos State Police Command confirmed on Sunday it has arrested a 10-year-old boy for allegedly strangling his 10-year-old mate to death during a football match.

The Command’s spokesman, SP Benjamin Hundeyin, who confirmed the arrest to newsmen, said the Ejigbo Police Division received the information on Friday at about 6.20pm, Daily Post reports.

He said the father of the deceased reported the case to the police that his son, Israel Ogunleye, 10, was playing football with some boys at Oluwale Street, Powerline in Ejigbo area, where the mother

of the boy has her shop located.

According to the PPRO, the father reported that his son had an argument with one of the boys, who is also 10 years old.

He said the report alleged that the 10-year-old suspect held the neck of his son and strangled him until he died.

“Based on the report, a team of detectives visited the scene and photographed the place and corpse. The corpse was taken to the General Hospital Isolo, where the doctor on duty confirmed him dead,” Hundeyin said.

“The body was transferred to the mortuary for post-mortem examination, and the suspect is in police custody and investigation is in progress,” he said.



**EASTER CELEBRATIONS MASS:**

Former Governor of Anambra State and Presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in 2023 General Elections, Mr. Peter Obi (left); the Archbishop of Onitsha Catholic Archdiocese, His Grace, Most Rev Valerian Okeke (2nd left), and other Catholic faithful, during the Easter celebration at the Onitsha Correctional Centre where Easter Celebrations mass was held with inmates at the centre.

## Again, SERAP asks govs, FCT Minister to account for N5.9trn, \$4.6bn loans

### *issues fresh ultimatum, threatens legal action*

TOBORE JEROME

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has issued a one-week ultimatum to Nigeria’s 36 state governors and the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, to account for loan agreements and spending details of some N5.9 trillion and \$4.6 billion loans obtained by their states and the FCT.

SERAP’s request also includes details and locations of projects executed with the loans.

SERAP also urged them to “promptly invite the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to investigate the spending of the domestic and external loans obtained by your state and the FCT”.

SERAP’s request is coming on the heels of disclosure last week by Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna State that the immediate past administration of Nasir El-Rufai left \$587m, N85bn debt and 115 contractual liabilities, making it impossible for the state to pay

salaries.

In a Freedom of Information Act requests dated 30 March 2024 and signed by SERAP’s Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare, the organisation said it was in the public interest to publish copies of the loan agreements and details of how the loans obtained were spent.

“Nigerians have the right to know how their states are spending the domestic and external loans obtained by the governors,” SERAP said, adding, “Widely publishing copies of the loan agreements and spending details of the loans obtained would ensure that persons with public responsibilities are answerable to the people for the performance of their duties in the management of public funds.”

In the FoI requests, SERAP said it would be grateful if the recommended measures are taken within seven days of the receipt and/or publication of the letter.

“If we have not heard from you by then, SERAP shall take all appropriate legal actions to compel you and your state to comply with our request in the

public interest.

“SERAP is seriously concerned that many of the country’s 36 states and FCT are allegedly mismanaging public funds which may include domestic and external loans obtained from bilateral and multilateral institutions and agencies.

“Transparency in the spending of the loans obtained by your state is fundamental to increase accountability, prevent corruption, and build trust in democratic institutions with the ultimate aim of strengthening the rule of law,” it said.

The group, quoting Nigeria’s Debt Management Office, said the total public domestic debt portfolio for the country’s 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory is N5.9 trillion, while the total public external debt portfolio is \$4.6 billion.

“Many states and the FCT reportedly owe civil servants’ salaries and pensions. Several states are borrowing to pay salaries. Millions of Nigerians resident in your state and the FCT continue to be denied access to basic public goods and services such as quality education and health-

care,” SERAP said.

“Several states including your state are also reportedly spending public funds which may include the domestic and external loans to fund unnecessary travels, buy exotic and bulletproof cars and generally fund the lavish lifestyles of politicians.”

SERAP said it believes that the constitutional principle of democracy provides a foundation for Nigerians’ right to know the details of loan agreements and how the loans obtained are spent.

“Citizens’ right to know promotes openness, transparency, and accountability that is in turn crucial for the country’s democratic order.

“The effective operation of representative democracy depends on the people being able to scrutinise, discuss and contribute to government decision making, including on the spending of loans obtained by your state and the FCT.

“To do this, they need information to enable them to participate more effectively in the management of public funds by their state government and the FCT,” it said.



# InsideEdo

## Council chairmen visit Dr Tony Aziegbemin to felicitate with him

● **as Aziegbemin thanks Governor Obaseki, others**

Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), Edo State chapter, has paid a courtesy call on the state chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Dr Tony Aziegbemin to felicitate with him over his recent safe release from the hands of his abductors.

Speaking on behalf of the association, the Chairman of Orhionwon Local Government Area, Hon. Newman Ugiagbe, who is also the ALGON chairman, Edo State chapter, expressed gratitude to God for the safe return of Hon. (Dr) Tony Aziegbemin.

In his words, "We the chairmen of the 18 Local Government Council Areas under AL-

GON are here to felicitate with you, our leader, the party chairman over your safe return after spending days in the hands of your abductors."

The state ALGON chairman said the news of the abduction of the state party chairman came to them as a huge shock and immediately they started seeking God's intervention for his safety in their hands and safe release, adding that today, the good Lord that answers prayers has hearkened to their prayers and supplications which resulted to his safe return unhurt.

"You are back to us strong and hearty without any trace of injury. Your kind disposition and rare leadership quality towards

everyone brought everyone together on your behalf, and we are happy to identify with you, work under you as a leader, and to join numerous other edolites and residents to felicitate your safe return," he said.

Hon. Ugiagbe said further that the good Lord that granted him victory by releasing him from the captors shall grant PDP victory in the forthcoming governorship election in the state.

Once again, on behalf of members of our great party in our various local government areas, we congratulate you and your households, Ugiagbe said, and used the opportunity to thanked the state governor, Mr Godwin Obaseki, securi-

ty agents including that of the Edo State Security Network, for their tireless efforts during the unfortunate incident and most especially the unwavering support and prayers by Edo people to ensure that the party chairman was released.

Responding, Dr Aziegbemin thanked the council chiefs for their visit and solidarity, and wished them well.

Meanwhile, Dr. Aziegbemin has earlier expressed gratitude to all those who stood by him and his family during the period he was held in captivity by kidnappers, saying the experience made him to appreciate more the bond that binds all Edolites together, irrespective of political, tribal or religious divides.

In a statement issued in his residence in Benin City, and signed by him, Dr Aziegbemin said, "First and foremost, I want to give thanks and glory to God Almighty for bringing me back alive and safe from the kidnappers' den. Throughout my ordeal, my solace was in the knowledge that God was with me. That knowledge kept my hope and confidence alive.

"I want to use this medium to thank His Excellency Governor Godwin Obaseki whom I was made to understand had sleepless nights throughout the 10 days I was in the den. Special thanks go to the security

agencies, political leaders, religious leaders, members of the public and our Royal Fathers for their prayers. "My experience made me to appreciate the cord of love that binds us together as Edolites, irrespective of our political, religious or tribal divides.

"Finally, I will forever as always remain grateful to my lovely wife and family members who stood in the gap with prayers and moral support for each other.

I pray that no one will ever have to go through this horrifying experience. God bless you all."



**CORONATION OF THE ENOJIE OF EWOHIMI:**

Asue Ighodalo (2nd l), PDP governorship aspirant, at the coronation of the Enojie of Ewohimi (m), at the weekend.

## Obaseki hosts Rema, as artiste unveils plans for art, entertainment project

Edo State Governor Godwin Obaseki has assured support for upcoming artists in the state to enable them compete favourably with their peers across the globe.

The governor gave the assurance when he hosted Edo-born musical prodigy, Divine Ikubor, popularly known as Rema, for lunch at the Government House in Benin City, Edo State.

Obaseki said, "He is here for a private lunch. We had an opportunity to chat and catch up with him. He has not been here since I became governor. Rema left Edo just as I was getting

into office as governor. It's nice to have him back after six years.

"We had an opportunity to tell him all we have done and how we are interested in supporting young people in the arts, culture and entertainment sectors. We have commenced the conversation with him on an iconic art project for this City and this part of the country."

On his part, Rema thanked the people of Edo State for being supportive throughout his musical journey, expressing appreciation to the governor for caring for young people in the state.

He noted, "The lunch was great and we spoke about a lot of important things, especially his programme for the young people. It's very beautiful to see a governor that cares for the future. He does not only have a vision for his tenure but beyond the eight-year period.

"We have so much in stock for the young people of the State. I would not be here in the first place if not for the youths in Nigeria. They are the people I am part of, live for, the people I inspire and motivate. They are the next generation."

On his art project, he said, "This is the time to do some-

thing for the youths. I just want to do things. I have been able to make a breakthrough in the music industry. I went out there to perform on the global stage and took Benin City with me. I carried the city on my back and on my shoulders and expressed my culture in the best way I could.

"The government will make moves and it is also time for the youths to make moves, re-educate themselves, ready to accept new rules for the betterment of the Community and for the evolution of the entertainment industry as well."

## Easter: Obaseki felicitates with Christians, urges hope, resilience amid economic headwinds

Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has urged Christians to reflect on the lessons of Easter celebration, charging them not to lose hope amid the economic headwinds.

The governor in his Easter message in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the hallmark of the Easter season, noted: "I heartily felicitate with our Christian faithful as we commemorate the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Easter is a time for reflection, love, sacrifice, renewal and hope. I urge that we use this opportunity to ponder on the lessons and purpose of the celebration and renew our

resolve towards achieving a more progressive and prosperous Nigeria."

He said, "As a people, we may have been stretched beyond limits occasioned by the high cost of living and other economic headwinds, but we must not lose hope. Working together in unity, we can overcome these challenges and place our country on the path of sustainable growth and development.

"We must remain resilient and use the period of the celebration to seek the face of God, share our joy with neighbours and work towards a peaceful and progressive nation. I wish you all a celebration filled with joy, peace and love. Happy Easter celebration," he said.

## 49th year remembrance of Princess Omobude holds April 7

LUCKY EFESI, BENIN CITY

The 49th year remembrance anniversary of the matriarch of Omobude family, Princess Maria Enemwoyomwan Omobude, nee Aghaghowen Osehon, will hold on Sunday, April 7.

According to a statement on behalf of the families of Omobude and royal family of duke of Ogu Village, by His Royal Highness Sylvester Aghaghowen, the Enogie of Ogu dukedom, the remembrance anniversary of his late elder sister, will hold at Omobude's compound.

He said until her death on March 25, 1975, late Princess Omobude was a community leader, who discharged her du-

ties to the development of not only Ogu Village, but the entire Benin Kingdom.

Enogie Aghaghowen maintained that the wise counselling, generosity and philanthropic gestures of his late sister when alive, stood her to be first among equals in terms of a compassionate leadership, as she focused on human capital development to build a crime free society, stressing her death was a devastating blow to the people, especially those who then were privileged to meet her.

Princess Maria Enemwoyomwan Omobude who was the eldest child of the former Enogie of Ogu, HRH Aghaghowen Osehon of blessed memory, had children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters including in-laws.



## Edo receives Obasanjo, as ex-President charges politicians on sacrifice, selflessness

The Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, at the weekend played host to former President Olusegun Obasanjo with the ex-president charging political leaders on sacrifice and selflessness.

Obaseki received Obasanjo who was on a courtesy visit at the Government House in Benin City, the Edo State capital.

Commending the governor for the warm reception, the former President charged Nigerians not to lose faith in the country.

He noted, "The situation in Nigeria is hard, but no bad sit-

uation can't be made good. The question is, when and how? All we should be saying to those who have the opportunity now is to do their best. It is indeed an opportunity for you to run the affairs of your country and look after your people. It is an opportunity.

"It should not be me but we; not mine but ours; not my tomorrow but our tomorrow, and not my generation but all generations including the generation coming. This is what sustainable development is all about. You don't eat today and not remember the generation

coming that they too have to eat, that is all it is."

On the developmental strides of Governor Obaseki in the last seven and half years, Obasanjo said, "The governor used this opportunity to brief me of what is going on in Edo State. Seeing is believing as when you are in a place you learn more by your visit than just hearing and that is what has just happened to me. I have learnt a lot and am better educated now about things in Edo State, recent and immediate future."

On the secret of his good

health and agility, the former President said, "The secret of good health is the grace of God. You must learn to grow and old gracefully with the grace of God. I used the acronym 'DREAMSC' which means, Diet, Rest, Exercise, Medicals, Social Interaction and Contentment.

"Exercise is important no matter how old you are. Your medical is important. You should interact with people and not be alone or dejected and depressed. Be content with what God has done for you and if not, you will run in circles."



### COMMUNICATIONS:

L-R: GCEO-designate, Airtel Africa, Sunil Taldar; Chairman, Airtel, Sunil Bharti Mittal, KBE; Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Dr Bosun Tijani; GCEO, Airtel Africa, Dr Segun Ogunsany, and CEO, Airtel Nigeria, Carl Cruz.

## Asharami Synergy partners NMDPRA on promotion of clean energy policy

Asharami Synergy, a leading Sahara Group Downstream Company, has reiterated its commitment to promoting the adoption of cleaner fuels in the sector, working in collaboration with regulatory authorities and delivering exceptional fuel solutions responsibly.

Speaking at Asharami Synergy 2024 Customer Forum, Managing Director, Foluso Sobanjo said the company remained dedicated to spearheading the quest for environmental sustainability in Nigeria's downstream operations across the sector's value chain.

Sobanjo told the company's customers that Asharami was delighted to serve as their preferred energy solutions provider, adding that Asharami had since commenced the supply of low sulphur fuels in line with the Afri-5 specifications prescribed by African Refiners and Distributors Association (ARDA) and in compliance with the provision of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 which limits the sulphur content in Gasoil/Diesel to 50ppm (parts per million).

"Given our track record of transparency, integrity, and service excellence in the sector, we are using this forum to keep our esteemed customers abreast of new developments in the sector, especially the switch to the AFRI-5 low-sulphur specification which makes diesel appear lighter. This does not reduce the quality or performance of the product as all parameters remain the same as specified by the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON)," he said.

Also speaking at the forum, Engr. Oluwakayode Oyegoke, Head, Distribution System Storage Infrastructure, Lagos SW, Nigeria Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), reassured the public that the new directive would help reduce pollution and promote the well-being of Nigerians.

He stated: "The NMDPRA would like to commend Asharami Synergy for providing this platform to help create more awareness and educate the buying public about the new fuel specifications. The Authority would also like to

assure all stakeholders that the products in circulation meet all requirements for safety, quality, and environmental sustainability. The industry is evolving, and we have to move with the world towards cleaner energy. Economically, the transition to low-Sulphur fuels can attract investment, create jobs, and reduce the country's carbon footprint."

Chief Marketing Officer, Asharami Synergy, Adeoti Onabolu commended the company's customers for their patronage, stating, "serving you is a privilege we hold dear, and your satisfaction is the ultimate success factor and motivation for us to diligently and unceasingly work towards bringing energy to your lives and businesses responsibly."

Onabolu said Asharami leverages Sahara Group's global footprint and strategic investments to deliver exceptional fuel solutions and expand its operations across sub-Saharan Africa.

She said Asharami Synergy's vertically integrated downstream business encompasses the entire value chain from top quality product sourcing

to the final sales to the end consumers. "We build, own, operate, maintain, and manage multiple storage facilities across several locations to the best international standards and manage an efficient, safe, and technology-driven logistics and supply operation via vessels, trucks, pipeline and rail to ensure product integrity and safety. Our International Standards Organisation (ISO) certifications reinforce Asharami's distinctive mark of service excellence, quality, safety, innovation, and environmental sustainability," she said.

Asharami Synergy's ISO certifications include the Quality Management System (QMS) ISO 9001:2015, Environmental Management System (EMS) ISO 14001:2015 and Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSAS) ISO 45001:2018.

The company's Chief Operating Officer, Adekanmi Adesola said Asharami commits to driving product quality and availability, competitive pricing, and service excellence as it continues to work with customers to co-create value responsibly.

## Edo NUJ gets new bus from governor

NAOMI EMOVON

Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, on Thursday, donated a 15-seater Toyota Hiace Bus to the Edo State chapter of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), to help the union effectively carry out its activities and duties.

Presenting the bus to the union at the Oba Oguola Press Center, Governor Obaseki, represented by his Chief of Staff, Dr. Osaigbovo Iyoha, thanked journalists in the State for professionally discharging their duties as members of the fourth estate of the realm and working in partnership with the government to drive growth and development across the state.

Iyoha said: "Today, I am here in keeping with the promise made by His Excellency, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, during a party at this press center. I present to the NUJ, a brand new bus on behalf of the Governor of Edo State."

He said, "I thank you for all that you do. The value of the work that you do can't be over-emphasised and I hope that you keep saying the truth like you

do. We thank you and appreciate you for being a partner in progress for the people of Edo State."

The Chairman of Edo NUJ, Festus Alenkhe, commended Governor Obaseki for fulfilling his promises to the union, assuring the continued collaboration of the journalists for the sustained progress and development of the state.

Alenkhe said: "I thank you on behalf of the leadership of the NUJ, Edo State Council. We like to express our heartfelt appreciation to His Excellency, the Governor of Edo State for the donation of this brand-new bus. We accept it wholeheartedly and want to assure you that this bus shall be judiciously used for the purpose which it is meant for."

He noted: "We shall use it to cover assignments in Edo State and beyond and shall continue to balance every report that comes to us in the Edo State Council of NUJ. Tell the governor that journalists in Edo State are all very happy and you can see our faces right now. This message will be communicated all over the world."

## NIDSUG National President visits Edo Polytechnic Usen, advocates for devt in Niger Delta schools

In a bid to prioritize educational development in the Niger Delta region, the National President of the National Union of Delta State Students Union Government (NIDSUG), Comrade Scott Ogunseri, recently paid a visit to Edo State Polytechnic Usen. During his visit, Comrade Ogunseri made a passionate plea to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs to extend their development initiatives to schools in the Niger Delta.

The visit by Comrade Scott Ogunseri was not only symbolic but also significant in highlighting the need for increased attention and investment in education within the Niger Delta. The national delegates were received by the Rector Edo State Polytechnic; Engr. Omoruyi Sylvester who applauded the national president, congratulating him on his election victory at the last NIDSUG national convention, he also commended the good works of the national president, highlighting that he has been following his administration since inception and must admit that he is achieving a milestone.

Speaking with reporters during his visit, Comrade Ogunseri emphasized the critical role that educational institutions play in the socio-economic development of any region, stressing that neglecting education in the Niger Delta would be detrimental to the overall progress of the region.

"I urge the NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs to prioritize the development of

schools in the Niger Delta. Our students deserve access to quality education, modern facilities, and a conducive learning environment," Comrade Ogunseri said.

He further pointed out that improved infrastructure, adequate funding, and enhanced academic resources would not only benefit students but also contribute to the empowerment and advancement of communities across the Niger Delta.

Comrade Ogunseri's advocacy aligns with the ongoing efforts to address educational challenges in the Niger Delta region. It also underscores the role of student unions in championing the interests and welfare of students, particularly in underserved areas.

In response to Comrade Ogunseri's plea, stakeholders in the education sector have expressed support for initiatives aimed at enhancing educational standards in the Niger Delta. They have called for collaborative efforts between government agencies, educational institutions, and student organizations to achieve meaningful progress in education across the region.

As discussions and deliberations continue on how to bridge the educational gap in the Niger Delta, Comrade Scott Ogunseri's visit serves as a catalyst for renewed commitment and action towards improving educational outcomes and opportunities for students in the region. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks by the institution's Dean of student, Engr. Osagie Edobor Kingsley.



# South-SouthReport

## Akwa Ibom doles out ₦1.5bn interest-free traders' loan

VICTOR AKAN, Uyo

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno, has launched the free food voucher programme for the vulnerable and the neediest at the popular Itam Market, located in Itu Local Government Area.

Flanked by the Deputy Governor, Senator Akon Eyakenyi, the two senators representing Akwa Ibom North East and South, respectively, Senator Aniekan Bassey and Senator Ekong Sampson, the Secretary to the State Government, Prince Enobong Uwah and other top government officials, Governor Eno spoke of his government's bottom-up approach, where the poor and the vulnerable would be assisted to Arise and Shine.

The free food voucher for the vulnerable is a key element of the Bulk Agency Bill that was signed into law a week ago, and the Board, equally inaugurated by the governor, last week.

The key responsibility of the Agency is to provide free staple food items: Garri, rice and beans to the most vulnerable through the Social Register.

At the launch of this programme, the governor was hailed as a leader with compassion, and the joy and happiness on the part of the recipients was palpable. They prayed for the governor and promised to stand by him, support him and continue to pray for the success of his administration.

"This is an incredible people-oriented programme. This Governor is truly a Pastor. Look at the Christ-like humility he has shown here. He is standing right there, supervising the distribution of the food items; he greeted and touched the recipients.

"This is rare to see in people occupying such an exalted office," Honourable Anietie Eka, a political chieftain from Uyo Local Government Area, had observed.

Governor Umo Eno's humanitarian acts are what have defined him. In his inaugural address on May 29, 2023, he had clearly signalled the direction of his government: The need to bring governance closer to the people and have them be invested and take ownership in governance. "To those who may not be able to put food on your table, I will be your advocate and champion."

Today, at Itam Market, he took bold steps to do exactly that, stating, "When leaders are faced with daunting social problems, they usually think outside the box and that's what motivated me to set up the Bulk Purchase Agency and the free food voucher drive initiative.

"We had reviewed all of the options, and this for us, remains the best. We are partnering with the market leaders and I want to thank them for the cooperation we have so far received from them.

"Let me repeat here that this is purely an interventionist act; the solution to our food security remains the need for us to go back

## ● launches free food voucher programme

to the farm. Yesterday, I paid an unannounced visit to a farm run by one of your young men and I was so impressed with what the young man is doing and we pledge to support him. I will continue to pay visits to farms run by both people in government and others," he said.

The highlight of the day's event was the announcement by the

governor of a N1.5-billion interest free-loan to Akwa Ibom traders to be managed by the Ibom Fadama Micro Finance Bank.

"I have heard of how some of you go to some places to get loans with very high interest rates and that has made the cost of food go up, and before you finish paying the loans, you cannot meet up with your market or

trading obligations anymore.

"I have come to tell you not to take such loans anymore. Consequently, we are releasing N500 million interest-free loans to each of the three senatorial districts (N1.5bn in total) to help your business."

The governor also promised to construct a car park, provide solar panel light, and modern

toilet facilities, all of which were the prayers of the leadership of the Itam Market.

The governor directed the Transition Chairmen of the remaining 29 councils (Itu and Uyo Local Government Councils, having been covered by today's launch) to ensure they launch the free voucher food programme by next Tuesday.



**WEDDING RECEPTION:**

Delta Governor, Rt Hon Sheriff Oborevwori (2nd left), his Wife, Deaconess Tobore Oborevwori, presenting a wedding Card to the newly weds, Mr and Mrs Aduomayebe Aghogho (right) during their wedding reception in Effurun, Uvwie Local Government Area on Saturday. Pix Enarusai Bripin

## NDDC responds to presidential directive, tackles erosion scourge in Bayelsa community

PHILIP EKE, YENAGOA

Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Dr Samuel Ogbuku, has described President Bola Ahmed Tinubu as a caring leader who has the interest of his people at heart. This follows a presidential directive ordering a quick intervention in what is considered to be one of the worst ecological disasters in the Niger Delta region occasioned by a

devastating ocean surge, which occurred in Sangana community in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Chief Ogbuku, accompanied by the Executive Director Project at the NDDC, Sir Victor Antai and other Directors of the commission visited the community for an on-the-spot assessment of the level of devastation, donated relief materials for the immediate needs of the people who were displaced by the ocean surge.

According to Chief Ogbuku, the President is happy with the people of the community because of its economic importance and the sustained peace over the years, which created the enabling environment for oil exploration and exploitation activities.

He said, "Before your letter of appeal arrived at our head office in Port Harcourt, the ocean surge in Sangana was already publicized in the media. The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria saw it and directed

that we must come and see what is happening in Sangana and give him feedback."

The Managing Director told the people of the community that he felt elated at the presidential directive, which indicated that the country has a very responsible President who was interested in the welfare of the people, no matter how far they are.

"My presence in your community, apart from being a son of the soil, is in response to Mr. President's directive and having

witnessed first-hand the devastation in your community, we will proceed immediately to see how we can salvage the situation," he said.

While urging the people of Sangana community to continue to maintain the peace so as to attract development, as development can only take place in a peaceful community, he assured them that the NDDC was going to use the best modern technology to tackle the Sangana erosion scourge.

He noted, "We had earlier awarded the contract for shore protection in your community, but we are going to review it. The whole idea in NDDC is that we are also looking at new technology such as the Geotube system. The system is also used in rebuilding and reclaiming the land naturally."

The NDDC boss also used the opportunity to call on the multinational oil company operating in the area to join hands in addressing the persistent ocean surge in the communities around the area as NDDC would not do it alone.

He said further, "Having ascertained the situation on ground, we will go back and put

the papers together and also see how we can partner with the state government and the International Oil Companies (IOCs) to see how we can all come together to ensure that we protect our communities."

The Chairman of the Sangana Council of Traditional Rulers, King Moses Theophilus Kenibara VII, Amadabo of Moko-Ama Sangana, thanked President Bola Ahmed for the love showered on the people of Sangana community, and also used the opportunity to thank Mr. President for appointing their son from Bayelsa State as the Managing Director of NDDC.

He assured that the people of the community would continue to maintain the peace and cooperation with the government for the development of the country.

A former Chairman of Brass Local Government Area and a community leader, Hon. Bello Bina, thanked the NDDC Managing Director for personally finding time to visit the community, commending him for being proactive. He said the people of Sangana were overwhelmed with the presentation of the relief materials, which is worth hundreds of millions of naira.

## High standard of construction must be maintained —Engr. Tarabina

PHILIP EKE, YENAGOA

Chairman of the Bayelsa State directorate for project monitoring and evaluation, Engr. Ebiye Tarabina, has charged contractors handling government projects in the state to be conscious of standards and specifications in the execution of their contract jobs.

Engr. Tarabina gave the charge during a project inspection tour to the ongoing Nembe/Brass road, saying the directorate would continue to insist on standards and specifications, as the projects are very significant

for the present and future development of the state.

Engr. Tarabina said the Nembe/Brass road is one of the three senatorial roads in the state, adding that the road would boost economic activities of the state when completed.

The project monitoring boss noted that the project would open up the Brass Island, which has key natural economic assets such as the ongoing liquefied natural gas, the Brass fertilizer, among others.

He assured the people of Nembe and Brass of the prosperity administration's commitment to the completion of the project despite challenges.

Responding, the project manager, Engr. Julien of Setraco, the company handling the project, said tremendous milestones have been attained on the project in sand filling, sand cement, stone base and culverts construction.

Engr. Julien said piling work would commence on the first bridge two weeks from now and there after designing of the St. Nicholas River Bridge and followed by pavement work.

The project manager assured that the company would deliver on the project to the best of standards and within the time stipulated.

He appreciated the governor of the state, Sen. Douye Diri for finding his company worthy for the construction of major road projects in the state.

He also lauded the chairman of the directorate, Engr. Tarabina and the entire team for their doggedness in the supervision of projects in the state.

The chairman was accompanied by the secretary of the board, Engr. Sampson Igodo, board members engineers, among others.



# C'River governor poised to sanitize state payroll —HoS

PATRICK ABANG, CÀLABAR

Cross River State government has expressed its resolve to sanitize the payroll of the state workforce currently blighted by several infractions.

The state's Head of Service (HoS), Dr Innocent Eteng conveyed the government's position, Monday evening, during a press briefing with journalists in Calabar.

The state's payroll has, in recent weeks, become a subject of public discourse, where the state workforce has skyrocketed from a little above 18,000 (at the end of former Governor Liyel Imoke's administration in 2015)

to a staggering 56,358 as at May 29, 2023, leaving an over-bloated wage bill for the Governor Bassey Otu-led administration to deal with.

A further breakdown of the 56,358 workforce by the HoS, revealed that the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) has 14,328 staff, Primary Health Care Development Agency - 2,812, State Civil Service - 22,526, Pensioners - 19,701, Local Government Service - 4,131, and Traditional Rulers Council - 2,860.

Dr Eteng, who stated that Governor Otu has religiously kept his promise of prompt payment of salaries and done so up-to-date, except for a few

civil servants whose names could not be reconciled on the nominal roll and payroll, however, notified Cross Riverians that there is an ongoing strategic clean-up of the State Payroll, driven by his office and the Accountant General to rid the system of any ambiguities.

The HoS appealed for support and understanding of all for Governor Otu honest efforts to clean up the payroll so as to give room for new employment. He cited the instance of school teachers, saying, "If you go to schools you will see that we need teachers in schools, but in the payroll, we have more than enough teachers. This is the situation we are addressing."

He pointed out that anyone still owed salary may be as a result of irregularities in their record, and such person must endeavour to do the right thing, and present his or her case before the office of the Head of Service.

The state HoS revealed that there was a standing order from the Governor for Permanent Secretaries and Directors of Administration in all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to submit nominal rolls of all staff to the offices of the HoS and Accountant General, respectively, before salaries could be paid.

He intimated that about nine MDAs only would be paid salaries in March, out of 32 because

they were the only ones that submitted their payroll as demanded.

In clear terms, he advised that MDAs not paid the workers should hold their Permanent Secretaries and Directors of Administration accountable for circumventing government directives.

He explained the tripod arrangement where workers information are forwarded by the office of the Head of Service to the Auditor General's office for scrutiny, then to the Accountant General's office for further necessary action before salaries are paid must be followed religiously to check irregularities, saying, "We have a responsibility

as a people to help the state by ensuring that those who are not in the nominal roll should not be paid salaries."

On the alleged racketeering and double standards permeating promotions of civil servants, Dr Eteng warned that promotions which run foul to civil service rules and other extant statutes would not be entertained.

"Promotions are to be given to deserving civil servants in line with the rules and extant guidelines. No civil servant should pay money for promotion. If caught, both the payer and receiver would face the consequences accordingly," he warned.



## MEDIA INTERACTIVE SESSION:

L-R: Managing Director Commodity Tradenet Limited, Adeyemi Oba, Head Operations, Lagos Commodities and Futures Exchange (LCFE), Dr Allwell Umunnaehila, Senior Associate, Operations and Corporate Affairs, Nkechi Obi, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Akin Ak-eredolu-Ale and Chief Finance Officer, Rotimi Omowale, during Media Interactive Session.

## FG to support Cross River CNG plant at Odukpani

PATRICK ABANG, CÀLABAR

The Federal Government says it will establish a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) plant in Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Vice President Kashim Shettima disclosed this in Calabar during Energy Cross River Expo 2024: Redefining the Energy Architecture of Cross River State Using Sustainable fuel.

CNG is a fuel gas mainly composed of methane and primarily used as a substitute fuel for powering vehicles. It is compressed to less than 1 percent of the volume it occupies at standard atmospheric pressure.

President Bola Tinubu approved the establishment of the Presidential CNG Initiative (Pi-CNG) on August 18, 2023, as part of his palliative intervention aimed at cushioning the difficulties faced by Nigerians due to the removal of fuel subsidy.

The initiative aims to revolutionise transportation by deploying over 11,500 new CNG-enabled vehicles and providing 55,000 conversion kits for exist-

ing PMS-dependent vehicles.

It is also dedicated to reducing reliance on fossil fuel and actively contributing to a cleaner and healthier environment in Nigeria through the use of CNG-powered vehicles.

The Vice President who was represented by the Special Adviser on Economic Affairs, Tope Fasua, said the Federal Government was impressed with the Cross River State government, and pledged the support of the Federal Government toward the actualization of the Cross River State CNG processing plant at Odukpani.

The Cross River State government despite its lean resources wants expansion of the fossil-based energy resources to ensure availability and affordability, especially in our rural areas.

The government maintained that the state, being a sub-national, is also greatly endowed with these natural deposits for energy production besides the enormous gas reserve deposit for fossil energy just as it is endowed with titanium, feldspar, tourmaline, manganese and lithium.

Speaking at the maiden edition of the Cross River State Energy

Conference and Exhibition 2024 held in Calabar with the theme "Redefining the Energy Architecture of Cross River State, using Sustainable Fuels," Governor Bassey Otu said the theme is premised on the national "Renewed Hope Agenda" of Mr. President - Chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Otu said energy is among the first-line enablers of industrialisation, hence a catalyst for national economic growth and development, adding that for renewables, the abundant sunshine could be tapped to provide solar energy, the stretching coastline of the state has potential of producing wind energy by installing wind turbines.

The abundant food and cash crop by-products could be harnessed to produce bio-fuel for clean energy transition, he said.

He said, "Since the world is gradually transitioning from fossil to sustainable energy sources for reasons of environmental friendliness and sustainability, Cross River State is poised to be a major player in the renewable energy drive.

"However, while we are pursuing the fossil-renewable

switch as a gradual transition, we also need to expand the fossil-based energy resources to ensure availability and affordability; especially in our rural areas.

"With these energy potentials at our disposal, when I assumed office as the Governor of the State, I made far-reaching decisions and took concrete steps at harnessing these resources.

"Coupled with the National Assembly's amendment to the energy law; removing it from Exclusive to the Concurrent List, the State is open to potential investors for possible partnership in the provision of clean and affordable energy for the citizenry.

"As a State, we are poised to de-risk to the barest minimum, whatever challenges investors may counter. Among these are legal issues and repatriation of profits.

"To achieve the foregoing, this conference is therefore a veritable platform for us to reiterate our commitment towards the positioning of the state as an energy hub with envisaged centres for Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Processing Plant, Electric Vehicle (EV) parts manufacturing plants etc"

## Fubara promises to protect Rivers interest

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM  
PORT HARCOURT

Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has told the people of the state not to panic and be rest assured of the determination of his administration to protect lives and property of residents while improving the collective aspirations of the people.

Governor Fubara gave the assurance when he addressed members of the Family Support Group, who were on solidarity visit to Government House in Port Harcourt last week to declare their unalloyed support to his administration.

Family Support Group is an assemblage of well-meaning Rivers youths, women and men drawn from the three Senatorial Districts and 23 local government areas, with the core aim of protecting, promoting and defending the interests of Rivers State.

Governor Fubara, who was represented by the Head of Rivers State Civil Service, Dr George Nwaeke, said the government is for the youths, women, men and every well-meaning Nigerian who wishes the state well.

He assured that his administration will not disappoint their expectations, and will deliver good governance and quality services across all sectors.

Governor Fubara said it was gratifying to see such ebullient youths showing undying interest in governance, and were also willing to defend their votes, and therefore, desired the tenure completed without interruption.

The Governor explained that so many development projects have been completed and opened for public use with many others like the Port Harcourt Ring Road still actively ongoing.

He specifically noted the

readiness of the administration to flag off construction of phase two of the real Trans-Kalabari Road from Port Harcourt through Tombia to other communities, and the Elele-Egbeda-Omoku Road.

"The whole land of Rivers State stands in affirmation that we won the election fairly, and deserve to serve out our full tenure. There is not going to be anything that will cut short the popular mandate that you all gave to this administration.

"Just about within weeks of assuming office, His Excellency, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, flagged-off the Port Harcourt Ring Road project that will transverse six local governments. It will be completed within 36 months, but I think it will be completed before the time, because the progress of work we have seen is beyond what we were thinking.

"The Trans-Kalabari Road, very soon, the official main Trans-Kalabari Road will start, and will begin from Port Harcourt. That road, a lot of plans have been done, very soon, you will see contractors on site, and Rivers State will be opened.

"Just yesterday, you heard in the news also that the Governor has commenced the construction of the Elele-Egbeda-Omoku Road. That road was initially done with one lane, but now, he is going to dualise it. The Government has already awarded the contract."

Governor Fubara emphasised that his administration is pro-youth and pro-human beings, and determined to maintain that level of empathy and inclusivity that offers succour to the people.

"I, therefore, want to thank you for the promise you have made, and I want you to remain unshakable. Keep your word of defending him at all times."

## CLASSIFIED

### UGHOTOR

That my name was captured on my Documents/Certificate/BVN as AYO ELOHO, AYO ENO, UGHOTOR AYO ENOH, UGHOTOR AYO ENO and UGHOTOR AYO ENOR which are names of one and same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as UGHOTOR AYO ENOR. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities should take note.

### AMENZE

I, formerly known and addressed as MABEL AMENZE OWIE now wish to be known and addressed as MABEL AMENZE EDEBIRI SOLOMON. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.



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Insecurity: Reclaiming the devil’s workshop

The rising trend of crime and insecurity across the country is cause for concern, just as the extent to which criminals will go can be frightening.

Events of the past few weeks, including the kidnapping of over 100 pupils from a school in the North and the gruesome murder of soldiers and policemen in the Niger Delta, bear testimony to this.

Reports of terrorism, armed insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, murder, communal clashes, oil theft, piracy, drug, and human trafficking, and cybercrimes, among others, have become run of the mill.

The Islamic insurgency perpetrated by the Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) groups in northern-eastern Nigeria over the years has been costly in terms of loss of lives, loss of livelihood, displacement of citizens, cost of military operations, loss of faith in government and governance and loss of face to the Nigerian state, to mention but a few.

Vice President Kassim Shettima has recently attributed the current insecurity in parts of the country to poverty and unemployment and stressed the need to improve governance in the country.

It would appear that the Vice President is quite correct, as it is most unlikely that gainfully employed people with attainable hopes and dreams would hazard engaging in such wanton and dangerous enterprise.

It is mostly the hopeless who take such risks. And then hopelessness mainly stems from lack of the capacity to contend with the challenges of the present and the future, food, housing, healthcare, providing for a family and so forth. And the idle mind, as they say, is the devil’s workshop. So, hordes of uneducated, unskilled youth slide into the cesspit of crime and other antisocial conduct and are at the beck and call of the lords of the underworld, making the lives of the more fortunate and the up and doing a living nightmare.

Along these lines Nigeria’s Minister of Education, Professor Tahir Mamman has been lamenting the alarming statistic of out of school children in the country and the dark implications for the present and future of our nation if the problem is left unchecked.

According Professor Mamman, research now indicates that Nigeria accounts for one of every five out-of-school children in the world and 45 per cent of out-of-school children in West Africa.

He says this ranking was disturbing and unacceptable for a country regarded as Africa’s largest economy.

“One of the implications is that Nigeria will constantly produce miscreants who are ready tools in the hands of criminal gangs,” the minister said.

“Stemming the tide of out-of-school children is a task that this government seeks to accomplish. This is because we are mindful of the spiral effects of having a large number of uneducated populations.”

Latest data from UNESCO in partnership with the Global Education and Monitoring Report put Nigeria’s out-of-school children at 20.2 million, doubling the 10.5 million figures quoted for decades.

UNICEF adds that one in three children in Nigeria is out of school, totalling 10.2 million at the primary level, and 8.1 million at the junior secondary school level. It said one in every five out-of-school children in the world is in Nigeria.

If unchecked, these numbers promise to provide the feedstock for crime and turmoil in the future.

What is required now is a serious and well thought out plan to deal with this ticking time bomb, the outcome of which is already manifesting in the crime and lawlessness chronicled above.

Just a fortnight ago in Abuja, Abiola Arogundade, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Technical Vocation and Entrepreneurship Education, said the Federal Government had mapped out a plan aimed at significantly reducing the number of Nigerians (133 million) living below the poverty line by training them in artisanal skills.

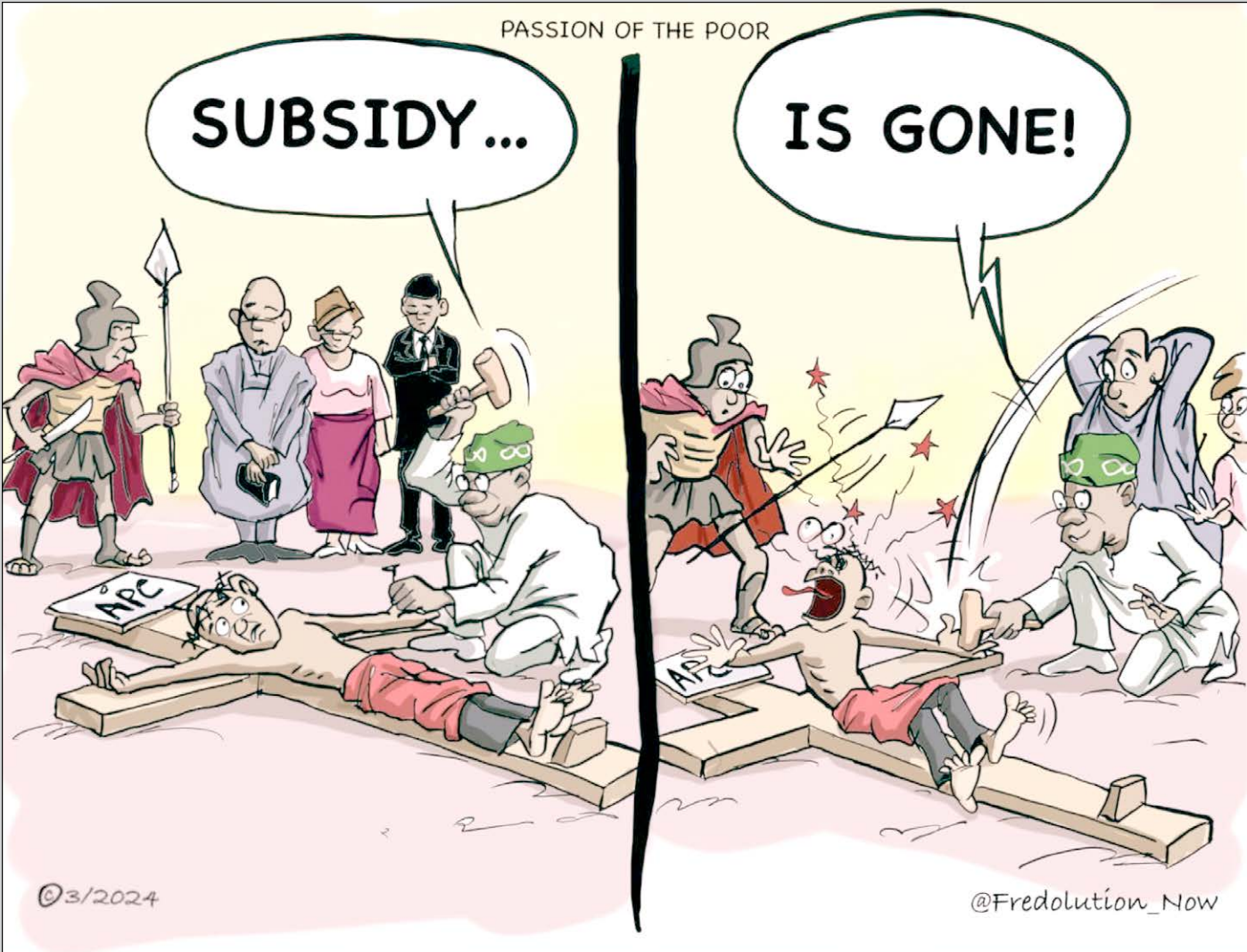
Arogundade said initiative, working in collaboration with various countries, as well as educational and financial institutions around Nigeria, would expose the beneficiaries to artisanal skills that would make them self-reliant and a source of foreign exchange earnings for the country.

We need to fast-track on a serious plan.

The Nigerian Observer

Cartoon Corner

...that the people may know





## Ten ways to boost cognitive health



**HAPPY WORKPLACE**  
by **OLAYINKA OPAEYE**  
A WELL-BEING SPECIALIST AND  
CORPORATE WELLNESS STRATEGIST

There are two ways people differ: personality and intellect. Intellectual health is critical to leading a balanced life and has become one of the eight dimensions of wellness. Therefore, to experience wellness balance, one must have a healthy intellect. So, what is intellectual wellness?

Intellectual wellness is a state of open-mindedness and flexibility that deploys critical thinking, engages in meaningful conversations, explores creativity, and cultivates resilience. This type of well-being improves the brain's physical structure and has determined how successful a person becomes to a certain extent over the years. For example, people who are very smart academically get admitted into Ivy League schools because they pass specific tests like SAT, GMAT, and GRE with very high scores. These high scores rate the IQ level of such individuals and grant them access to certain types of schools, which guarantees a well-paying job upon graduation. Such opportunity gives these individuals a significant career head start, equating intellectual well-being to success.

Moreover, this informative age or era has blown away any form of protection or covering leaders in any capacity enjoyed before now. Every current and aspiring leader has to be intellectually sound to lead effectively. This pressure is often felt when people take our personal wellness status test. They become desperate to improve their intellectual health, having scored poorly in this area. So, here are some exciting ways to improve your cognitive health.

**Lifelong learning:** Be open to new ideas and improve by learning new skills and reading books, articles, documents, and educational posts. Don't just read; critically engage your thoughts on what you understand in the document, then comment or ask questions.

**Embrace change:** Take advantage of technological advancements as they impact your areas of specialty, focus, or interests. An audiobook can be finished within a few hours while multitasking, especially when your schedules are tight. AI helps people read documents, articles, and other materials aloud. Cyberspace is inundated with information on almost any topic or area of interest, and the ad-

vent of AI makes it even easier to find.

**Eat healthy:** Even though the direct impact of eating crunchy foods on brain health is yet to be well-documented. Studies have proven that these types of food highly contribute to overall cognitive health and brain functions. Such foods include nuts like walnuts, seeds like flaxseeds, and vegetables like celery, asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots packed with antioxidants, Omega-3, and fatty acids. These nutrients improve memory, enhance cognitive functions, and prevent decline; everyone should incorporate them into regular diets. Moreover, highly processed foods and beverages with alcohol, refined carbohydrates, trans fat, high sodium, and sugar adversely affect cognitive functions and brain health.

**Get creative:** Everyone has creative abilities to a certain extent, which means creativity is not limited to artistic expression. Our ingenuity manifests in other forms, such as science, business, problem-solving, humanity, and decision-making. Therefore, the ability to excel in unique areas of creativity rests on nurturing such talent through continuous learning, new exposure/experiences, and adaptation to changing circumstances. Engaging with one's environment helps develop skills, knowledge, and perspectives that contribute significantly to creative thinking and innovation.

**Practice mindfulness:** Meditation, taking deep breaths and mindfulness are other ways to enhance intellectual well-being. Studies revealed that meditation increases the density of the brain's grey matter, especially in areas linked to self-awareness and attention. The grey matter density helps people perform better academically than those who don't meditate. Taking deep breaths is another powerful head-clearing mechanism that enhances oxygen flow into the brain for clarity and removing fog-giness and headaches.

**Be resilient:** Resiliency tests one's resolve. It triggers the ability to think critically with great problem-solving tenacity that people may not know they possess until faced with a challenge or a difficult time.

**Engage others:** Engaging people may include playing devil's advocate in friendly debates, playing games like chess or sudoku, contributing meaningfully to posts, asking questions, reviewing books, etc.

**Keep journaling:** As we meditate and reflect on what we read, situations we encounter, events we partake in, actions or inactions we take, work we put in, and other activities, we start to see the need to write. Journaling is one easy way to start writing to improve intellectual capacity.

**Learn language:** Learning a second or third language shows how far one is willing to go in exercising the brain

to allow for developmental growth. Bilingualism increases cognitive reserve, improves focus, enhances multitasking abilities, promotes mental flexibility, and aids the ability to perform executive functions like attention control.

**Healthy habits:** Healthy habits that promote brain health include exercising regularly, practicing sleep hygiene, wholesome scalp, and hair therapy. Observing sleep hygiene involves having at least seven hours of sleep daily, removing brain-stimulating devices from the sleeping area, and avoiding food intake an hour before bedtime. Prolonged head covering or unwashed hair prevents the scalp health. Unhealthy scalp may lead to discomfort that inhibits cognitive functions. Ladies should wash their hair weekly to unclog their pores. Regular scalp massage stimulates blood circulation, which aids toxin and wastes removal. Leaving the head uncovered while sleeping at night may prevent oxygen deprivation.

### CALL TO ACTION

Kindly send your stressful work scenarios for analysis to oopaleye@gmail.com

*Opaeye, a wellbeing specialist and corporate wellness strategist, writes from Lagos*

## Snakes and ladders

TONY OSAKPAMWAN AGBONS

The year 2024 is flying by with the speed of light and the lunar Gregorian calendar is moving at a frenetic pace. Another confirmation of the axiom of 'time waits for no one'. No matter your intentions and convictions that you are reading this is a big privilege and opportunity by divinity because the oxygen of life is still in us, and we don't take it for granted. So many folks saw the start of this year, 2024, but are no more in this aqua at this material point in time. More than money in any currency (Naira, Dollars, Euro, or Pounds Sterling) in the bank, cars in the garage or houses in the estate, the biggest asset of humanity is to be counted among the living and having circulation of oxygenated blood around our body. As they say, health is wealth. Even the Holy book admonishes; 'for a living dog is better than a dead lion' (Ecclesiastes 9 v 4 following).

In this first quarter of the year, there is a palpable feeling of 'de ja vu' pro max across the length and breadth of Nigeria. I do not want to sound like a broken record. I am sure you, my dear reader, know and feel the part as the 'circus-and-drama' that is leadership in our country goes on. In my recent opinion piece, Tales by Moonlight Democratia, my cognate proposal was laid on the table. It elicited varied responses from the ridiculous to surreal depending on the 'web link' of each respondent. As one that places high premium on feedback and feed forwards, I have taken the pains to 'comb' each response, dissect and juxtapose the themes inherent therein. No man or woman is an Island. Many years ago, as a teenager, I attended a symposium at my Alma mater, Edokpolo Grammar School Benin City. One of my all-time intellectual mentors, The Rev. Fr. Theophilus Uwaifo (of blessed memory) propounded; "No one has monopoly of knowledge. It is

only Professor Joel who believes that what he does not know does not count as knowledge" (unquote). Those words resonated with me greatly and have formed part of my moral compass.

Again, referring to my early years, there is a table game we played with friends. Many will remember Monopoly, Ludo, etc, but this is called Snakes and Ladders. The game is a treacherous business. One win gets you up the ladder, and a loss takes you all the way back down. Please note the latter, a loss takes you all the way back! I am sure dear reader you can relate. That game mirrors the terraqueous called Nigeria today. Ours has become a case of one step forward and a million steps backward. It has become a case of perpetual motion without movement. The nation seems stuck in the mud, and it's like watching a movie on rewind. There is no discernible progress in virtually all critical sectors that drives human development. So, the question is, who are the snakes preventing Nigeria from climbing the ladder, growing, and reaching the podium among the comity of nations? Your guess is as good as mine!

In the human terrestrial and spiritual domains, nothing happens by chance. The extant 'Laws of Nature' are set in such a way that pressing the right buttons puts it on auto pilot. Like I posited in my last opinion piece, what differentiates the developed, developing countries from non-developing nations is the application of leadership. It is not religion, ethnicity, population, or location. The best example in our world today is South Korea and North Korea. Both nations are the same people, same location, same ancestry, and DNA. You can even refer to them as two sides of a coin but see what leadership has done to North Korea. According to Statista.com (2022) South Korea's nominal gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to around \$1.48 trillion while that of North Korea was approximately \$26.8

million. South Korea's nominal GDP was around 57 times greater than that of North Korea. There is no gainsaying that leadership is 99% the problem of Nigeria. We get our leadership right; the country will be fine. I can tell you that for free.

The Nigerian political elites, their acolytes and hangers-on are the only happy demographic at the moment. These 'uncommon homosapiens' are loaded to the hilt, living affluent and ostentatious lifestyles. They allocate humongous state resources to themselves while leaving crumbs for the greater majority of the citizens. The political class from the federal, state, and local governments are flexing on the commonwealth of our people. The country is on the cliff edge as poverty ravages the land, insecurity overwhelms the space and a dark cloud hover over the national firmament. The government of the day continues to grapple with a legitimacy problem among the generality of citizens who remain unconvinced with the way and manner of their ascendancy.

There is a seeming air of disconnect especially at the federal and state levels. Nearly one year into the new administration, Bola Tinubu the poster face of the government has not been able to inspire the citizens towards a national reset and rebirth. The President is yet to have an 'undoctored' media engagement with the Nigerian people who in truth are his supposed employers. The usual gung-ho honeymoon period/feeling often associated with a new government in power have not been felt in this dispensation. Loathe him for whatever reasons, even the last administration of Mohamadu Buhari enjoyed that 'new sheriff' in town' and 'body language' fragrance for three months. I stand to be corrected.

Away from the federal level, state governments in Nigeria should wake up to their responsibilities. Although, we understand in practice that there is nothing Federal about the Federal Re-

public of Nigeria, our federal system is only in semantics and on paper. In reality our current system is nothing but unitary in every sense of the word. This pseudo-federal system as being practiced have made the Governors (with the exception of a few) mere onlookers and underhand benefactors of this very flawed failing system. Many of the state Governors have turned themselves to 'tin-gods' in their domains yet depending on monthly handouts from the centre at Abuja. It was Warren Buffet that posited; "the chains of bad habits are too weak to be felt until they are too difficult to be broken". It is high time state governors and other key actors at that level put on their thinking caps, create, innovate, and deliver for the people they are meant to be serving. They are to serve and not to be served.

If Nigeria is to experience a total turnaround where there will be guaranteed happiness for the majority of citizens and not just a few, the ruling (ruining) class must stop the fast acceleration of the 'Nigeria vehicle' towards the abyss. They must apply the brakes instantly. The optics of Nigerians being reduced to palliatives collectors – bags of rice, indomie – is sickening and heart wrenching. How on earth did we get here? For those who care to listen, the indices are there, our country is on a precipice. Poverty, hunger, insecurity pervades the land. The issue of insecurity must be dealt with holistically. Government should rise up to its cardinal responsibility as enshrined in the constitution to protect lives and property. Dr Richard Montgomery, British High Commissioner to Nigeria put it succinctly at an event in Abuja recently, "There can't be prosperity without security, nor can there be long term security without prosperity".

In conclusion, solving the myriads of challenges besetting Nigeria and the reset of the country is not rocket science and is also not insurmountable. First, the

government at all levels – federal, state, and local government must give the people they are meant to serve a sense of belonging. The country does not belong to politicians, elites, or a few cabals alone who constantly cook only their meals in their own very special kitchen. Secondly, the resources of the country must trickle down to all and sundry. A conducive environment must be created for industry and productivity. The current consume and consumption for self atmosphere must end and move to produce and production milieu for the people. Yes, the people need to make sacrifices (they have always done since Adam), but so too should the rulers. They too must make sacrifices and stop the wastage of the nation's wealth. The cost of governance must be reduced completely by 80-90% in all ramifications and at all levels (federal, state and local government). Ladies and gentlemen, are we still looking for the snakes that dwell amongst us?

A country like Nigeria does not really need a bicameral legislature. Having 3 senators or representatives only (what-ever nomenclature we wish to call it) from the 36 states and FCT is enough. Similarly, a change to a parliamentary system instead of this winner-takes-all 'emperoric' presidential system that is not working may just be the magic wand. We must cut our coat according to our cloth. Thirdly, Nigeria needs to build institutions which will outlive personalities and individuals. The vital organs of nationhood like the judiciary (rule of law), police, electoral body, banking, education, healthcare, power (electricity) has to work seamlessly. In a speech to the British House of Commons in 1948, Winston Churchill stated unequivocally; "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it".

*Dr Agbons is Lead, Institute of Leadership and Good Governance*



# OPINION

The Nigerian  
**Observer**  
...that the people may know

## 'I am still standing': A human account capable of changing humanity

Grand Knight Emeritus, Sir Tonna Okei (Ikuku Oma), an Ekuku-agbor, Agbor, Ika South Local government Area of Delta State-born, but South Carolina, United State of America based Nigerian, is globally recognized as President of South Carolina Organization of African Unity (OAU), a honourable member of the board of trustees of Knight of Columbus and a man that exudes torrents of energy when it comes to promoting Ika and Anioma cultures and tradition.

What many of his admirers and cultural enthusiasts did not, however, know is that from 2021 till date, Knight Sir Tonna has, in the mixed of his social, religious, corporate and community development efforts, relentlessly fought and won hydra headed health and socioeconomic challenges.

This was revealed in a book titled 'I Am Still Standing' published by him and launched in the USA on March 16, 2023.

Essentially, the masterpiece, which was the first from Knight Sir Tonna's stable, amply qualifies as Ika blockbuster celebrated by the world with forwards from world and perhaps the most famous platform ever seen to celebrate Ika/Anioma language and customs, gave a graphic description of how the Ekuku Agbor cultural ambassador was medically diagnosed of ulcerative colitis and primary scholagantis.

'I Am Still Standing,' which was forwarded by very revered traditional rulers and globally recognized professionals such as HRM Dein of Agbor; HRM Nana Apraku 111 Odomase, Ghana; Chief Ozigbo Esere, Osuma of Benin Kingdom; His Excellency, General John Yeri Fss, Psc, Mni, Military Governor of Defunct Bendel State; HE Mrs Eki Igbiniedion, Former First Lady Edo State; Congressman Jim Clyburn, among others, also underlined with vivid imageries and pectoral supports on how he fought and survived colon cancer, liver failure and liver transplant, carried ileostomy bag for six months, multiple surgeries, procedures and drainage pipes fixed on him, through prayers to God Almighty and supplication to the gods of our land.

While it highlighted the series of excruciating pains that he survived,

the book also deeply brought to the fore a tragically unique account of how Tonna was discharged from the hospital on December 24, 2022, and his house collapsed the next day. Despite these afflictions, he is still standing.

Narrating his ordeal to media professionals recently, Tonna said, "Well, in the past three years, I have gone through a lot of medical challenges. From liver transplant to fighting colon cancer, among others - and after all these, when I got home, my house collapsed the following day."

Despite the situation, I was still functioning. At this point, most people started saying that I should write a book to document all these so you can inspire others and so your children and generations yet to come can read about these medical challenges and how you carried it.

I was still on admission when I started writing it. This partially explains why I named the book; I Am Still Standing.

Asked what the book is out to achieve, Tonna responded thus, "It is to give inspiration to people. Now look, when you were interviewing me last year, I am not sure you knew I was passing through a lot. People did not know. I did not tell much. I was still functioning, I was still smiling. And that's the intention. I tell people that when you pass through challenges, you don't have to wear it on your face. You can still be functioning well. Just believe that tomorrow, things will get better."

Tonna, who ruled out spiritual attack as being responsible for the harrowing health challenges that he underwent, further explained that the book is about the story of a man who passed through the very worst or what we call the biblical JOB and lost almost everything but by the grace of God and the goodwill of men and women, survived and decided to write and capture it, using his African ancestral language - Ika.

So, the book relates with Ika proverbs, theories and prayers. It is a mixture of what happened, a lecture on Ika proverbs and to inspire people using biblical verses also. Never in the history of Anioma was a book so well celebrated in the International Circle.

Asked of his next line of action, Tonna responded this way, "You know, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a step. We've launched the book here. It's a bestseller here because African Americans have been waiting to read a book that would capture spirituality and African proverbs. They've seen it. Now, how do we go back home? That is the next issue."

"I am discussing with the very high and mighty in Agbor if they could coordinate it so we can do a book launch and I would give 80% of the profit to Agbor so that they can build a gastroenterology centre because that's my medical diagnosis."

"I don't want Ndi-Ika and Ndi-Anioma to suffer this again. So, I am willing to partner with Ika leaders to open a GI centre in Agbor, so we can begin to help our people that have gastroen-



### UTOMI'S NOTE

**JEROME-MARIO CHIJOKE UTOMI**  
A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE ADVOCATE

terology and abdominal issues, colon cancer. So, I'm talking to them now. Let's see what we can do to set up a GI centre. I've spoken to American Gastroenterologists and they are willing to train those doctors and nurses for two years. So, if Ika leaders fail to take up these projects, I'll rather decide to import the books from America and begin to sell them in Nigeria or look for a good printer in Nigeria that would print it and we'll come and launch it privately."

On how to access the book, Tonna said; officially, it is now on Amazon for 50 dollars. But we know that that price will be too high for our people back home, so that is why we're looking at what we can do; If it's to launch it in Nigeria and bring the price down.

As to the level of support he received during his trying moment, Tonna again hinted that most times, it's only in suffering you know your true friends.

In his words, "I would say I have been blessed with people who I didn't even know before this. They always told us that it may not be your children or family that will help you during your difficult times. I had some family members who I thought would have helped. But they're nowhere to be found. Some have not called, some have not given a dime but those who don't know me, maybe they read my articles in the past, and they've truly helped me. Most family and friends sure supported but unfortunately very few, very few decided to stay away. Some I even empowered have now become scarce."

"I have been blessed by friends, mostly those I do not know. Some of them we've never seen face to face. They just know my name and what I've done. Most family and friends I've helped, Some Ndi-Ika I've helped, and they all just abandoned me at the most trying times."

Away from support to a message of appreciation, Okei emphasized that his message to Ndi-Ika is to thank all those who have supported particularly members of Ika people's Congress.

Also, I want to inform them that through God and their support, I have written a book to document their journey, and the book is laced with Ika language, Ika proverbs. This is a book all Ika's should not only get but should keep. So all those who are not good at celebrating their culture can see that an Ika who was not born in Ika land and has lived abroad for about thirty years now, is celebrating Ika culture. That should inspire Ndi-Ika to be appreciative of their culture, to celebrate their culture. And this book will inspire them that a fellow Ika passed through all this and is still standing."

On the relevance of the book to students of tertiary institutions in the state, the Ekuku Agbor born Administrator cum Cultural Ambassador pointed out that the book is not a full history book but can help deepen our pride in our language. It can help both the medicine students, can help in philosophy, and can help mostly education students.

I believe that this book can serve as a reservoir and fountain of knowledge for those in medicine and education too, to understand medical challenges, to inspire people in philosophy and psychology. And for those studying African languages, this book will help them to say 'look, somebody in America can be so proud of his language and document it in a book celebrated in America. If the State Government should agree with it, they can make it a part of the curriculum for tertiary students. Anything is possible but let them see it first, let them read it. Then, we'll take it up from there, he said.

*Jerome-Mario is the programme coordinator (Media and Public Policy), Social and Economic Justice Advocacy (SEJA)*

**I've spoken to American Gastroenterologists and they are willing to train those doctors and nurses for two years. So, if Ika leaders fail to take up these projects, I'll rather decide to import the books from America and begin to sell them in Nigeria or look for a good printer in Nigeria that would print it and we'll come and launch it privately**

## Ijoba Alagbada: Civilian governance

ABDULMALIK ABDULWAHAB

In the heart of West Africa lies Nigeria, a nation grappling with the complexities of civilian governance amid a backdrop of historical challenges and contemporary dynamics. From the ashes of military rule emerged a fledgling democracy, promising hope and progress for its people. However, the reality of governance in Nigeria today is a tapestry woven with threads of both promise and peril.

At the helm of Nigeria's civilian government is the presidency, a seat of power that commands both reverence and scrutiny. From the majestic Aso Rock Villa in Abuja, while ostensibly elected through democratic processes, the path to power often

winds through a landscape marred by allegations of corruption, electoral malpractice, and ethno-religious divisions.

However, the true essence of governance in Nigeria extends far beyond the corridors of power in Abuja. It spread through the complicated layers of federalism, where states wield considerable autonomy in shaping their destinies. From the bustling streets of Lagos to the serene landscapes of Kano, governors wield significant influence, serving as the custodians of their respective domains.

The below thin sheet of democratic governance lies a complex web of patronage networks, where loyalty to the ruling party often takes precedence over meritocracy. Political appointments are frequently distributed

as rewards for allegiance, leading to a system abundant with nepotism and cronyism. This practice not only undermines the principles of accountability and transparency but also perpetuates a culture of impunity among the ruling elite.

Yet, the path to governance in Nigeria is fraught with challenges. Corruption, a persistent punishment, threatens to erode the very fabric of democracy, as public officials overpower the charm of ill-gotten gains. Despite concerted efforts to combat corruption, graft continues to penetrate every echelon of society, undermining the trust of the Nigerian people in their elected representatives.

Moreover, the specter of insecurity looms large over the nation, casting a shadow of fear and ambiguity. From

the menace of Boko Haram in the northeast and bandits in the northwest to the resurgence of secessionist movements in the southeast, Nigeria grapples with a myriad of security challenges that test the resilience of its democratic institutions.

In the realm of governance technique, Nigeria conflicts with innumerable challenges, ranging from institutional weaknesses to bureaucratic inefficiencies. Where some elites emerge as a beacon of hope, advocating for transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. From grassroots activists to fearless journalists, ordinary Nigerians rise to the occasion, holding their leaders accountable and demanding a government that serves the interests of all.

Ultimately, the story of civilian

governance in Nigeria is one of contradictions and complexities. While progress has been made in fewer areas, significant challenges remain in ensuring the principles of democracy, transparency, and accountability are upheld. As Nigeria navigates its path forward, the fate of its civilian government rests in the hands of its people and their collective commitment to building a more just and equitable society.

*Abdulwahab is a social commentator who writes on national issues*



# Air Peace makes historic inaugural flight from Nigeria to London

TELIAT SULE

Air Peace, one of Nigeria's leading airlines, marked a significant milestone with its inaugural flight from Nigeria touching down at Gatwick Airport, London on Saturday. The historic event signifies a new era of connectivity and opportunities

between Nigeria and the United Kingdom.

Air Peace sharing on its official X handle said, "Our comfy Boeing 777 aircraft live at the Gatwick Airport, London. This means so much to us and reaffirms our trail-blazing status as a leading airline out of Africa".

Its first-ever comfortable Boeing 777 aircraft direct flight

from Nigeria to the UK has safely arrived at Gatwick Airport, London. This landmark achievement is a significant milestone for Nigerians and solidifies Air Peace's position as a pioneering airline in Africa.

CONTINUES ON PG 12»

# TotalEnergies celebrates 100yrs of shaping world's energy landscape

GOODNESS OYEDUN

TotalEnergies, a global multi-energy company with presence in 120 countries, celebrated its 100th anniversary on 28th, March 2024. Established on March 28, 1924, the energy firm has played a vital role in shaping the world's energy landscape, offering a diverse range of en-

ergy solutions, from oil and biofuels to natural gas, renewables, and electricity. With a commitment to affordability, sustainability, and accessibility.

TotalEnergies Marketing Nigeria Plc was incorporated as a private company on June 1, 1956 to market petroleum products in Nigeria. It recently became the first Nigerian petroleum company to end rou-

tine flares.

As it marks its centenary, and with over 100,000 employees across the globe, it stands as a testament to the ever-evolving world of energy. From its beginnings in the 1920s to the present day, the company has continuously adapted to meet

CONTINUES ON PG 12»

The Nigerian Observer

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...that the people may know

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# Okomu Oil posts N20bn profit in 2023, recommends N14 as final dividend

TELIAT SULE

Nigeria's agro-allied giant based on Edo State, Okomu Oil Plc, had a good outing in 2023, as increased production bolstered by favourable prices domestically boosted it top and bottom lines. According to the company's financial statement for the year ended 31 December 2023, revenue from contracts with customers surged by 27 percent to ₦75 billion, up from ₦59.32 billion in 2022.

Profit before taxation increased by 44 percent to ₦33.04 billion in contrast to ₦23.52 billion made in the previous year, just as profit after tax increased by 27 percent to ₦20.65 billion, up from ₦16.23 billion from the previous year.

Prices of palm oil products surged in 2023 in Nigeria caused by higher inflationary trend occasioned by the reforms introduced by the new federal government, especially the removal of petrol subsidy and floating of the Naira. Those policies in some way assisted local farmers in terms of more revenues from sales of agricultural produce.

Okomu produces the following palm products in a sustainable manner and they are Crude Palm Oil (CPO) which is naturally reddish in colour as it contains high amounts of beta-carotene; Palm Kernel (PK) is the seed of the oil palm

fruit; Palm Kernel Oil (PKO) is extracted from the seeds (nuts) of the oil palm, and Palm Kernel Cake (PKC) which is a by-product of palm oil production and are mostly used as a source of energy and fibre in poultry, pig and fish rations.

"Last year, we must say the business environment was very good. Partly, it was due to the fact that we had good yields.

Secondly, we also have good management; my management and staff work very hard to keep cost down to make sure that what we did, we did right and lastly my board were very sensitive to the fact that things were not easy and they also made sure that the environment in which we work was conducive to have been able to get that kind of results," Dr

Graham Hefer, Okomu Oil's CEO said in an exclusive interaction with the Nigerian Observer.

He added that "Obviously, the prices were good. So, it was a perfect storm for us in that regard. So, we are very lucky due to hard work. Going forward, we hope that there is another perfect storm every year obviously prices may not be

moving along with disposable income as we have been seeing, so we may see that the margins may be slightly squeezed this year but we are hoping that in general and of course our people carry on with the good work that they have been doing."

Further analysis of its 2023 financials revealed that Okomu Oil generated its rev-

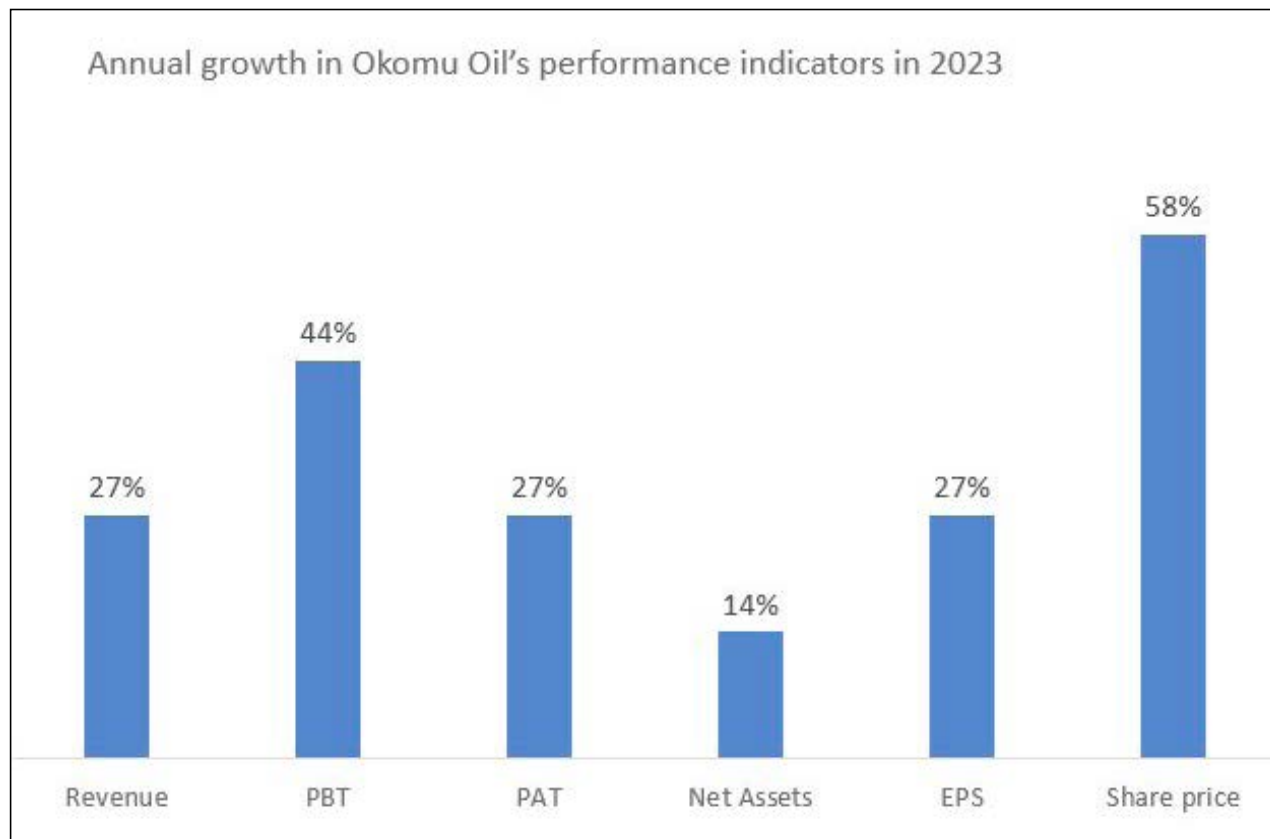
enue from palm oil produce, ₦67.04 billion (₦53.75 bn in 2022), rubber sales, ₦7.95 billion (₦5.50bn in 2022), and pal oil processing, ₦120.37 million (₦78.18m in 2022).

In terms of geographical markets, ₦67.16 billion of its revenue was realised from the domestic market, representing 89.4 percent compared to ₦53.83 billion that was made in 2022 from the same market representing 90.7 percent of the company's revenue.

From the foreign market, Okomu Oil made ₦7.95 billion in 2023 or 10.6 percent of its total revenue, as against ₦5.50 billion in 2022 representing 9.3 percent of its previous year's total revenue.

The board of directors of Okomu Oil Plc has recommended ₦14 per share as the final dividend

"In recognition of our company's outstanding performance and as a testament to our steadfast dedication to rewarding our loyal shareholders for their ongoing trust and support, the Board of Directors will propose for your approval, the payment of a final dividend of ₦14.00 for every ordinary share of 50 kobo each. This final dividend, if approved, in addition to the paid-out interim dividend of ₦4.50 kobo amounts to a total dividend of ₦18.50 kobo for every ordinary share of 50 kobo each," Okomu said.



BANK OF UGANDA RECLASSIFIES GT BANK, 2 OTHERS TO TIER II CREDIT INSTITUTIONS  
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ACCESS HOLDINGS TO RAISE \$1.5BN FRESH CAPITAL AMID CBN DIRECTIVE  
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# Bank of Uganda reclassifies GT Bank, 2 others to Tier II credit institutions

CHIDERA DUMBIRI

In order to align with the recent capital buffer requirements, set by Uganda's finance ministry, the Bank of Uganda (BoU) has reclassified Guaranty Trust Bank (GT-Bank) alongside two other commercial banks, Kenya's ABC Capital Bank, and Opportunity Bank, from Tier I commercial banks to Tier II credit institutions.

The reclassification, announced in a statement by BoU last week, entails a shift in the operational scope for these banks. While they will still be able to accept customer deposits and hold savings accounts, they will no longer be permitted to open current accounts for customers or engage in foreign currency trading.

This decision followed the enactment of regulations in 2023 by Uganda's finance min-

istry, which mandated commercial banks in the country to maintain a minimum capital buffer of \$38.6 million, a significant increase from the previous requirement of \$6.4 million. Concerned about their ability to meet the June 30, 2024 deadline for compliance, the three banks opted to apply for reclassification.

BoU granted a transition period of three months, effective from April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, during which these banks are expected to make necessary adjustments to phase out products and processes that necessitate a Tier I License.

Jubril Adeniji, Managing Director of GTBank Kenya and Head of the East African region, stated, "Continuing operations as a Tier 2 Credit Institution is within the Bank's current capital base and will allow us to play to our core

strengths in Retail and SME Banking. As we make this transition, we will continue to review our positioning within the Ugandan banking sector in line with our objective of maxi-

mizing shareholder value."

Under the new regulations, the minimum capital requirement for a Tier II license stands at \$6.4 million, significantly higher than the previous

requirement of \$275,802. Additionally, microfinance deposit-taking institutions are now mandated to raise \$2.5 million, while foreign exchange bureaus are also impacted by

these directives.

Currently, approximately seven banks are yet to meet the new capital requirements ahead of the impending deadline.

## Air Peace makes historic inaugural...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 11

The successful landing of Air Peace Boeing 777 at Gatwick Airport is a moment of immense pride and joy for Nigeria. The maiden flight, which departed from Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos, was greeted with excitement and anticipation as passengers embarked on this inaugural journey, symbolizing the strengthening ties between Nigeria and the UK.

The arrival at Gatwick Airport was met with a warm reception, underscoring the significance of this milestone not only for Air Peace but also for the aviation industry in Nigeria. Passengers were welcomed with celebrations and ceremonies, highlighting the historic nature of the occasion.

Air Peace's decision to expand its operations to Gatwick Airport is a testament to its commitment to providing reliable and convenient air travel options for passengers traveling between Nigeria and the UK. The new route not only enhances connectivity but also promotes economic and cultural exchange between the two nations.

The airline's inaugural flight represents a pivotal moment in its growth trajectory and reinforces its position as a key player in the African aviation sector. With its modern fleet and commitment to customer satisfaction, Air Peace continues to set new standards for excellence in the industry.

As Nigeria's economy continues to grow and its global presence strengthens, initiatives like Air Peace's inaugural flight to Gatwick Airport play a crucial role in facilitating trade, tourism, and diplomatic relations between Nigeria and the UK.

This milestone paves the way for further collaboration and opportunities between Nigeria and the United Kingdom, benefiting passengers and economies alike.

Timothy Okhipo, Air Peace Benin station manager, has extended heartfelt congratulations to Air Peace on its recent milestone achievements, particularly its inaugural flight to Gatwick Airport, London. As a seasoned expert in the field, Timothy recognises the significance of such developments and applauds Air Peace for its commitment to excellence and innovation.

In a statement released to the Nigerian Observer's Aviation Correspondent, Timothy praised Air Peace for its dedication to expanding its reach and enhancing connectivity between Nigeria and international destinations. He emphasized the importance of initiatives like the inaugural flight to Gatwick Airport in fostering economic growth, promoting tourism, and strengthening bilateral relations.

Timothy commended Air Peace for its role in elevating Nigeria's aviation sector and positioning the country as a key player on the global stage. He noted that the airline's modern fleet, top-notch service, and unwavering focus on customer satisfaction have set a new standard for excellence in the industry.

Furthermore, Timothy highlighted the positive impact of Air Peace's initiatives on job creation, infrastructure development, and overall economic prosperity. He emphasized the need for continued collaboration and investment in the aviation sector to unleash its full potential as a driver of growth and development.



**NATIONAL FOOD INTERVENTION:**

L-R: Group Executive Director, Commercial Operations, Dangote Industries Limited, Fatima Aliko Dangote; Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Chairman, Aliko Dangote Foundation, Aliko Dangote; and MD/CEO, Aliko Dangote Foundation, Zouera Youssoufou; during the Lagos flag-off of Aliko Dangote Foundation National Food Intervention Programme in Lagos on Wednesday, March 27, 2024.

## Access Holdings to raise \$1.5bn fresh capital amid CBN directive

CHIDERA DUMBIRI

Access Holdings Plc has announced a strategic move to raise additional \$1.5 billion in capital to bolster its financial reserves. This development comes less than a few days after the directive from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), instructing banks to fortify their capital bases in the next twenty-four months.

"That the Issued Share Capital of the Company be and is hereby increased from N17,772,612,811.00 (Seventeen Billion, Seven Hundred and Seventy-Two Million, Six Hundred and Twelve Thousand, Eight Hundred and Eleven) divided into 35,545,225,622 (Thirty-Five Billion, Five Hundred and Forty-Five Million, Two Hundred and Twenty-Five Thousand,

Six Hundred and Twenty-Two) ordinary shares of N0.50 Kobo each) to N26,658,919,216.50 (Twenty-Six Billion, Six Hundred and Fifty Eight Million, Nine Hundred and Nineteen Thousand, Two Hundred and Sixteen Naira, Fifty Kobo Only) by the creation of 17,772,612,811.00 (Seventeen Billion, Seven Hundred and Seventy-Two Million, Six Hundred and Twelve Thousand, Eight Hundred and Eleven) ordinary shares of N0.50 Kobo each ranking pari-passu with the existing ordinary shares of the company," Access Holdings announced.

Under the CBN's directive, banks operating with international banking licenses are required to increase their capital base from N50 billion to N500 billion. Similarly, banks with national operations must raise their capital from N25 billion

to N200 billion, while regional banks are mandated to increase their capital from N10 billion to N50 billion.

Access Bank, positioned among lenders with international operations, has articulated that its capital-raising initiative aims to bolster the group's financial robustness through the issuance of diverse financial instruments like ordinary shares, preference shares, Alternative Tier 1 capital, convertible and/or non-convertible debt, bonds, or other funding instruments.

"The programme may be executed through various methods including public offerings, private placements, rights issues, book building processes, or a combination thereof. The specifics regarding tranches, series, proportions, dates, pricing, tenor, and other associated terms and conditions will be

determined by the Board of Directors, contingent upon securing the necessary regulatory approvals," Access Holdings stated.

Through the capital raising programme, Access Holdings anticipates raising up to N365,000,000,000.00 (Three Hundred and Sixty-Five Billion Naira) specifically through a Rights Issue of ordinary shares. The funds generated from this proposed Rights Issue are earmarked to bolster ongoing working capital needs, including funding for organic growth in its banking and non-banking subsidiaries.

Details of this capital-raising endeavor were unveiled in the Group's Notice of the 2nd Annual General Meeting scheduled for April 19, 2024, published on the Nigerian Exchange portal on March 27, 2024.

## TotalEnergies celebrates 100yrs of shaping...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 11

the changing needs and demands of society.

TotalEnergies' commitment to international expansion and technical prowess has been instrumental in its growth and success over the years. By venturing into different corners of the globe, the company

has been able to secure energy resources and meet the ever-growing demands of modern society. Through strategic partnerships and acquisitions with companies like Petrofina, Elf-Aquitaine, Maersk Oil, Saft, and Direct Energie, TotalEnergies has expanded its expertise and strengthened its position in the energy sector.

These collaborations have

not only enhanced the company's technical capabilities but also allowed TotalEnergies to diversify its energy solutions. From oil and biofuels to natural gas, renewables, and electricity, the company offers a wide range of energy options to cater to the evolving needs of customers. This adaptability and customer-centric approach have been key in staying ahead of

the curve and driving positive change in the energy industry.

Furthermore, TotalEnergies' journey has been intertwined with the progress and development of modern society. As technological advancements and geopolitical shifts shaped the world, the company continuously adapted and grew, while embracing innovation and exploring new frontiers.



# NGX Group celebrates 13-year achievements of Oscar Onyema

STORIES BY:

OLUTOLA FAWEHINMI

A farewell ceremony was held at the NGX office in Lagos on Tuesday in celebration of the remarkable tenure of Oscar Onyema, former Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX).

Onyema, who served as the inaugural CEO of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) for a decade and later held the position of Group Chief Executive Officer at Nigerian Exchange Group Plc (NGX Group) for three years, concluded his tenure in 2023. His departure was commemorated by the NGX Group, the

Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers (CIS), the Association of Securities Dealing Houses of Nigeria (ASHON), Central Securities Clearing System Plc (CSCS), NG Clearing, and various other entities.

Esteemed figures such as Oba Otudeko, a former President of the Nigeria Stock Exchange, joined other stakeholders in showering praise on Onyema for his transformative leadership during his 13-year tenure at the exchange. Organized by the Association of Securities Dealing Houses of Nigeria, the Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers, NGX Group, CSCS, and NG Clearing Limited, the event marked the conclusion of

Onyema's impactful tenure.

Reflecting on Onyema's leadership, Oba Otudeko, founder of the Honeywell Group, spoke on the importance of noble character in leading an institution of such magnitude. He remarked on Onyema's professionalism, confidence, and noble background, asserting that these qualities were instrumental in steering the exchange towards its goals.

"I call him 'big man'. I was the president of the stock exchange when Onyema was being spoken to and invited to come and be the CEO of the exchange. Our council was willing to scout the world and get the best at that time. We worked very hard and

we interacted with him. The truth is that Onyema is a prince and one lesson that one would learn is that the personality of someone who can take an institution of this size to its destination must be that of a noble background," Otudeko said.

Umaru Kwairanga, chairman of the NGX Group, hailed Onyema's achievements during his tenure. Kwairanga talked about Onyema's role in modernizing the exchange's technological infrastructure, implementing a robust business continuity plan during the COVID-19 pandemic, and establishing a world-class regulatory regime.

"His achievements during the NSE era were nothing short

of monumental. Onyema overhauled the technological backbone by developing and transforming our trading platform, bringing it into the modern era, working with management and staff to design a robust business continuity plan that saw the exchange seamlessly maintain remote trading for over two years in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"He implemented a world-class regulatory regime focused on fairness, stability, collaborative rule-making and robust corporate standards. This steadfast commitment to regulation and transparency restored our investors' confidence and positioned the exchange as a credible and trusted platform," Kwairanga said.

Through his steadfast commitment to regulation and transparency, Onyema restored investor confidence and solidified the exchange's reputation as a credible and trusted platform.

Oluwale Adeosun, President of the Chartered Institute of

Stockbrokers, lauded Onyema's contributions in revitalising the Nigerian stock market. Drawing attention to Onyema's capital market experience in the United States, Adeosun commended his strategic approach to restructuring and repositioning the exchange. He noted the remarkable turnaround of the market under Onyema's leadership, contrasting its current vibrant state with the gloominess it experienced in previous years.

"Between 2011 and March 2024 is 13 years and incredibly today, very few people remember or can ever remember that this same market was in that gloomy state as most of the global capital markets were back then. The symbolism is further accentuated by the fact that the great market boom experienced between 2006 and 2007 was recently replicated in 2022 and 2023, even stretching into the first quarter of 2024," Oluwale stated.

Appointed as CEO in 2011, under his leadership, the Nigeri-



LAGOS-LONDON-LAGOS DIRECT FLIGHT:

Air Peace CEO, Allen Onyema (middle) with guests, during the firm's inaugural Lagos-London-Lagos direct flight March 30, 2023.

## Sterling Bank, EAS to aid SMEs in export endeavours

Sterling Bank Limited has joined forces with Export and Sell Nigeria Limited (EAS) to propel small and medium-scale enterprise (SME) operators into the realm of scalable exports.

This partnership unfolded through a four-day capacity-building boot camp, drawing an impressive turnout of over 130 export business participants.

The export conference organized by Sterling Bank, and Export and Sell Nigeria Limited serves as a platform for knowledge exchange, networking, and collaboration. By bringing together stakeholders from across the export value chain, the conference creates opportunities for SMEs to access new markets, forge partnerships, and scale their businesses.

Olushola Obikanye, the group head of agric and solid minerals finance at Sterling Bank, stressed the necessity of capacity building, highlighting three factors

crucial for the flourishing of Nigeria's agricultural sector.

"Access to information, markets, and finance are fundamental," he emphasised, adding that "without addressing the first two, financial intermediation remains futile."

Obikanye said it was imperative to ensure that domestically produced goods secure access to well-structured markets primed for their uptake. He affirmed the bank's commitment to collaborative endeavours aimed at co-creating products and devising innovative solutions to bolster the private sector's vitality within the agricultural domain.

"Given agriculture's significant GDP contribution, SMEs represent the most viable intervention avenue in the sector, transcending traditional industry players," he remarked.

Similarly, Akporee Idenedo, head of the commercial banking division at Sterling Bank, elucidated the bank's broader vision,

highlighting its aspiration to foster wealth creation and enrich livelihoods through proactive initiatives.

"We strive to empower entrepreneurs beyond mere financial transactions," he articulated, noting that "by nurturing activities geared towards enhancing exports, we catalyze entrepreneurial empowerment," Idenedo further elaborated.

"Our conviction lies in the belief that nurturing entrepreneurship leads to wealth generation, and our export conference serves as a pivotal avenue to realise this vision. Given agriculture's intrinsic link to exports, this platform underscores our commitment to empowering lives, generating wealth, and contributing to Nigeria's socio-economic advancement."

Through the intensive four-day capacity-building boot camp, participants gained invaluable insights and skills essential for navigating the complexities

of international trade.

Olushola Obikanye's emphasis on access to information, markets, and finance resonates deeply within Nigeria's agricultural sector, where SMEs often face challenges in accessing these key resources. By addressing these fundamental factors, Sterling Bank aims to create an enabling environment for SMEs to thrive and contribute significantly to Nigeria's economic development.

Akporee Idenedo's vision of empowering entrepreneurs goes beyond traditional banking services. By focusing on initiatives that enhance export opportunities, the partnership between Sterling Bank and Export and Sell Nigeria Limited aims to support SMEs in unlocking their export potential. Through capacity building, access to markets, and financial support, Sterling Bank is empowering entrepreneurs to seize opportunities in the global market and contribute to Nigeria's economic prosperity.

## Kennedy Uzoka appointed Independent Director at Africa Prudential Plc

Africa Prudential Plc has appointed Kennedy Uzoka as an Independent Non-Executive Director, effective March 26, 2024.

In an official statement released last week, the company expressed gratitude for the contributions of Emmanuel Nnorom, who will be retiring as a Non-Executive Director following the completion of the Annual General Meeting scheduled for March 28, 2024.

"The Board acknowledges the retirement of Mr. Emmanuel Nnorom as a Non-Executive Director of the Company with effect from completion of the Annual General Meeting slated for March 28, 2024," the statement read.

Throughout his time with the company, Nnorom spearheaded numerous pioneering accomplishments, earning recognition from the Board for his invaluable contributions to Africa Prudential Plc's expansion and triumph.

Following his resignation, Kennedy Uzoka was appointed by Africa Prudential Plc as an Independent Non-Executive Director, effective March 26, 2024. This appointment is pending approval from the Securities and Exchange Commission.

"To promote independent voice and bring a high degree of objectivity to the Board for sustaining stakeholder trust and confidence, the Board has appointed Mr. Kennedy Uzoka as an Independent Non-Executive Director, with effect from March 26, 2024, subject to the approval of the Securities and

Exchange Commission," Africa Prudential announced.

Kennedy Uzoka brings with him a wealth of experience accumulated over three decades as a distinguished business leader. His expertise spans various domains including governance, commercial banking, corporate and retail product marketing, information technology, human resources management, strategic business advisory services, and non-human resources management. Uzoka retired as the Group Managing Director/CEO of United Bank for Africa Plc.

"Mr Uzoka brings to Africa Prudential Plc, a wealth of over three decades experience as a distinguished business leader, with expertise in governance, commercial banking, corporate & retail product marketing, Information Technology, human resources management, strategic business advisory services and non-human resources management. He retired as the Group Managing Director/CEO for United Bank for Africa Plc," Joseph Jibunoh the company's Secretary explained.

The Board expressed confidence in Kennedy Uzoka's appointment, stating its belief that his vast experience and strategic insights will further strengthen Africa Prudential Plc's commitment to excellence and sustained growth.

"The Board is confident that Mr. Kennedy Uzoka's appointment will further strengthen Africa Prudential Plc's commitment to excellence and sustained growth," the statement read further.



# Addressing features, philosophy of productivity in business management development

BANJE SURU

Productivity is the management of input resources to produce output resources at less cost for the betterment of humanity and improved standard of living with the conservation of environment.

Business management development is a strategic plan put in place to describe where, what, whom, who, when, why and how of operating and growing a new or existing venture. This could be achieved through productivity.

However, productivity practices as sources of authority operate in the characteristics of rules and regulations which culminate in productivity features and philosophy. The rules and regulations serve as basic productivity guidelines.

In the promotion of conducive businesses, investment and economic environment the rules and regulation when complied

with strives to achieve purpose, direction, aim and objectives.

The practices of productivity touch all spheres of human endeavours and activities especially the economy that is under the control of people, people are business and business is people in all sectors private or public. It is with these facts that productivity does not rely on assumptions or rumours rather it deals with facts and figures that can be measured.

Anything that cannot be measured is not productivity and as such, productivity deals with reality on ground, visual and verbal in most cases under the purview of man-human resources.

Productivity as a rule must work with people, human and material resources-internal or external which must be evaluated and monitored for progress, commerce and in pursuit for efficiency to enhance productivity profile.

In the conduct or practice of productivity, it is required that patience plays a vital role in perfectionism and professionalism.

It is also a rule that there must be a strong relationship with output and input in a strongly structured and cultured institution to be able to control or eliminate corruption. Corruption breeds its ugly head in a society where there is no productivity, low productivity, poor productivity, and diminishing productivity. This paves the ways for poverty, greed, poor investment, poor leadership, poor economy and poor business corporations.

Productivity practices or operations as a regulation or rules must be seen to have value added, wealth creation, and a long value chain in order to control inflation. It is believed that productivity breeds faith, trust, confidence, diligence, integrity and commitment so that its con-

cepts, tools and techniques are achievable on a sustainable basis.

Productivity hinges on projects (policies, programme, job, duty, task), process, procedure or principles, projection, prediction, progress, preventive etc. as such cannot be operated in a vacuum. It must be designed deliberately to address all forms of waste such as unethical work attitudes, poor quality leadership etc. while materials can be seen to be recycled, recovered and reused under productivity practices.

In productivity operations, one of the characteristics is that change must be accepted as constant as an improvement to attain quality where key performance indicators or productivity indicators (KPIs) are qualitatively quantified or measure validity to justify objectives for prosperity.

Productivity must be able to

differentiate right from wrong but must respect human rights of client organizations. A design in productivity must be precise and prioritize so as not to allow activities to accumulate but to embrace effective service of product delivery.

For the success of productivity, there is a need to avoid criticism, aggressiveness, mental and verbal confrontation when faced in unpleasant circumstances; rather, it is good to seek interpersonal relationships to promote industrial harmony.

As rules, regulation or control, philosophy and features of productivity on which productivity profile should strive there must be a way to reframe/restrain from religious sentimentalism, ethnicity, favouritism, nepotism and the mentality of political patronage.

Above all, productivity needs to embrace digitalisation, ICTs,

Artificial Intelligence (AI), etc. for it to achieve its purpose, direction especially to boost investment, economic stability and business/entrepreneurship development.

In conclusion, raising productivity consciousness especially in developing economies as well as the growth level requires urgent attention and an all-involving commitment. The commitment can only be achieved by proper articulation, obeying rules and regulations of productivity improvement programmes.

In the Renewed Hope Agenda, Nigeria needs to reaffirm the importance of productivity, without productivity no individual, company, organization or developing countries can make sustainable economic growth and progress. Therefore, the legislators must legislate to enhance the essence of productivity in the country.

## FG boosts ginger farming with N1.6bn

NAOMI EWANSIHA

The Nigerian government in a bid to rejuvenate the ginger farming sector has unveiled a support package worth N1.6 billion. This announcement was made during the launch of the Ginger Blight Epidemic Control Taskforce Support Initiative in Kaduna.

The Executive Secretary of the National Agricultural Development Fund (NADF), Mohammed Ibrahim, revealed that the support, part of the GRATE package (Ginger Recovery Advancement and Transformation for Economic Empowerment), targets 15,000 affected ginger farmers across Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa states, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

"At the first instance, the Federal Government through the NADF is providing support valued at N1.6 billion, starting with 1 ha input packs aptly named the GRATE package, which is the Ginger Recovery Advancement and Transformation for Economic Empowerment.

"The recent ginger blight epidemic affected an estimated 15,000 farmers across Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa states, and the FCT, occurring at a time when our country had started to experience significant growth in ginger exports," he said.

The recent epidemic struck at a crucial juncture when Nigeria was experiencing significant growth in ginger exports. Statistics from the National Bureau for Statistics (NBS) highlighted a remarkable 17% increase in revenue from ginger exports, soaring to N10 billion in the second quarter of 2023 compared to N4.6 billion in the same period in 2022.

Under the support package,

ginger farmers will receive essential inputs including high-yield seed varieties, fertilizers, fungicides, insecticides, and herbicides. This comprehensive aid aims to revitalize ginger production and empower farmers to reclaim their livelihoods.

Marian Moon, the Technical Assistant on Agriculture from the Office of the Vice President, emphasized the global demand for Nigerian ginger, urging farmers to seize this opportunity by scaling up production.

The commendable initiative garnered praise from Kaduna State Governor, Uba Sani, represented by his Deputy, Hadiza Balarabe, who hailed the federal government's commitment to supporting affected farmers. Governor Sani further extolled the quality of Kaduna's ginger, branding it as among the finest globally, and encouraged farmers to persevere in their agricultural endeavours.

The unveiling of the N1.6 billion support package for ginger farmers by the Nigerian government signals a significant commitment to revitalizing the agricultural sector, particularly in regions affected by the recent blight epidemic. This initiative holds profound implications for both the local economy and the livelihoods of thousands of farmers.

By providing essential inputs and resources, the government aims to not only mitigate the immediate impact of the epidemic but also to foster long-term sustainability and growth in ginger production. The increase in revenue from ginger exports, coupled with the global demand for Nigerian ginger, highlights the potential for economic empowerment and expansion within the industry.



**NNPC FREE MEDICAL OUTREACH:**

Patient under examination during NNPC Foundation's free medical outreach, Garki Village, Abuja.

## Abia revamps agricultural sector with farming season launch

NAOMI EWANSIHA

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State has reaffirmed the government's commitment to modernising agriculture in a bid to bolster food production, employment opportunities, and revenue generation in the state. He reiterated this commitment during the launch of the Abia North senatorial zone farming season in Bende Local Government Area which marked a significant step towards achieving this goal.

Governor Otti, represented by Commissioner for Agriculture, Prof. Monica Ironkwe, emphasized the shift towards mechanised farming practices to enhance productivity. The theme of the 2024 farming season, "Boosting Food

Production; Let's Get Back to the Farm," resonates with the pressing need to address food scarcity and hunger.

Highlighting the state's agricultural potential, including fertile land, abundant water resources, and diverse crops like oil palm, rubber, rice, cocoa, cassava, fisheries, and livestock, Otti urged citizens to embrace agriculture as a cornerstone of the economy.

The Mayor of Bende Local Government Area, Hon. Chijioke Nwankwo, praised Otti's dedication to agriculture, citing initiatives such as soil sampling and farmer training sessions to boost mechanised farming in the region.

Abia North Senatorial zone farming season flag-off is a significant event, indicating Gover-

nor Otti is running a responsible government, and he is responsive to the yearnings of his people.

"We are also working with the governor and replicating what he is doing in Bende Local Government. Recently, we distributed over 150 rice seedlings to selected rice farmers to enable them to go into their farms in this farming season," Hon. Nwankwo said.

The reaffirmed commitment of Governor Alex Otti's administration to modernise agriculture in Abia State carries significant implications for the state's socioeconomic landscape. By prioritising agricultural development, the government aims to address pressing issues such as food insecurity, unemployment, and revenue generation. The launch of the farming sea-

son in the Abia North Senatorial zone signifies a pivotal step towards realising these objectives, signalling a shift towards mechanised farming practices to enhance productivity.

The collaborative efforts between the government, local authorities, and agricultural stakeholders reflect a coordinated approach towards agricultural revitalisation in Abia State. Initiatives such as soil sampling, farmer training sessions, and the distribution of improved farm inputs demonstrate a proactive commitment to supporting farmers and enhancing agricultural productivity. Moreover, the recognition of outstanding farm produce exhibitions serves to incentivize innovation and excellence within the agricultural sector.



# ThePolity

• Policy • Legislation • Enforcement

## No, Ganduje; one-party system will kill our democracy

RUTH ISIGBE

Democracy as a system of government derives its strength from citizens' participation and the rule of law. That is to say that one of the vital ingredients that sweetens democracy is a multi-party system that gives citizens opportunity to choose from several parties and candidates during periodic elections.

Also, multi-party democracy enhances checks and balances by giving the opposition an avenue to constructively criticise the ruling party and government in power so as to keep them on their toes.

So, when recently the National Chairman of All Progressives Congress (APC), Abdullahi Ganduje, said that for the South-East region of the country to exercise political power and stop complaining of marginalization, the region would need to connect to the ruling party, those words left a sour taste in the mouth.

Ganduje spoke during the Anambra APC 2024 colloquium and empowerment rally at the Ifeanyi Ubah International Stadium, Nnewi. The colloquium was hosted by the Senator representing Anambra South, Ifeanyi Ubah, with the theme "Demarginalisation of South-East Zone and Integration into National Politics".

The APC National Chairman said Anambra State was not making the kind of progress it was expected to make because it was not connected to the central government and pointed out the need for the state to join APC. Anambra State has been ruled by the All Progressives Grand Alliance (AGPA) since about 2006 when Peter Obi became the governor.

"As we stand here today, one curious fact is bare for all to see: Anambra is not making the progress that a state of its means, in terms of resources in men and material, is expected to make. The diagnosis is not far-fetched. Anambra has not connected to the central government since the beginning of the government of Governor Peter Obi," Ganduje said.

"This is the missing link. And this has limited its benefits from the Federal Government who is the chief custodian of our commonwealth. From Peter Obi, to Obiano and now Soludo,



GANDUJE

they have all been on the APGA platform. That has been a total of 25 years of dislocation from the centre.

"Most states surrounding Anambra have not just left their original political party, they have now joined the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) at the centre in efforts to improve the lot of their people and they are happy and better for it. Their governors are now using their connection to the centre to attract development to their states.

"Why should Anambra continue to live in isolation? What is the justification for this? If there had been a superlative performance and outcomes on their isolated platform, one would have said that it is a worthy isolation, but nay!" he said.

He cited the case of Imo State, which used to be PDP but, according to him, "has now tightly embraced APC"; Cross River, which he said "has also moved to join the APC", and Ebonyi State, which "was highly PDP but it has abandoned that 'umbrella' and received the broom to sweep clean its house".

Ganduje further said Anambra's refusal to connect with the centre has

greatly deprived its people of enormous dividends in terms of infrastructure and other benefits".

"Today Imo and Ebonyi sons and daughters are appointed as ambassadors, and given other lofty portfolio and positions because of their connection to the centre. But Anambra's failure to transit regional political sentiments has made it stuck and trapped in the mud of self-inflicted limitations and inevitable exclusion.

"This is a natural occurrence in line with the reality that you have to be at the table to negotiate what comes to you. If you are not at the table, nobody will speak for you when the chips are down," he claimed.

Ganduje's argument may sound convincing to a lay mind. However, anyone who has followed Nigerian politics since 1999 knows that the APC Chairman was just blowing hot air. Being in the party at the centre has never guaranteed better treatment for any state in the South-East.

But that aside, what is more worrisome is the eagerness with which the ruling party appears to be pushing to transform Nigeria into a one-party

state. Must one party occupy most of the states and zones in the country? It is understood that a party in power would be concerned with always having the majority on its side, but the APC needs to understand that multi-party system is the beauty of democracy.

Nigeria is a democratic country, so it allows a multi-party system of government and decentralization, which proves that the states of Nigeria can be ruled by any given party. So, every state and region need not be in the same party with the president before they can enjoy political power or even the benefits of good governance. It is an aberration to say a state or region is not getting what is statutorily due to it because of party differences.

In any case, the South-East was predominantly PDP (People's Democratic Party) for the 16 years that the party was in power, how much political influence did the region wield at the time? And what amount of develop-

ment happened in the region within that time frame? Even the Second Niger Bridge, not much progress was made on it throughout the PDP years; it took the APC government of President Muhammadu Buhari to complete the project and open it for public use.

Marginalisation of the South-East does not appear to have anything to do with political party. Despite much of the South-East being in the same party with the president at the centre, marginalisation of the region led to agitations like the one by the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) beginning from 1999. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has since continued from where MASSOB stopped.

So, it is puerile for the APC Chairman Ganduje to suggest that unless some parts of the country join a ruling party, they would not see tangible progress.

Today, Abia State is making tremendous progress under an APGA government led by Alex Otti, the kind of progress that may not have been made in Imo State that has enjoyed communion with the centre in the last over four years.

Rather than asking Anambra and other South-East states to join APC, Ganduje and his party should ensure even spread of developmental projects across the states and regions in the interest of equity and fairness. A state does not need to come under the control of a ruling party before it can get what is its due. The South-East has been crying out over its perceived marginalization; it is time to really look at it and see where the problem lies with a view to proffering solutions. Political party affiliation shouldn't be a criterion for federal presence in a state or region.

Meanwhile, Nigeria is currently grappling with too much power at the centre. The discussion right now should be about how this power can be devolved and decentralised to give the states and regions wings to fly instead of foisting a one-party system on the country. A one-party system will be the death of democracy in Nigeria.

## 19 political parties to participate in Ondo 2024 election, says INEC

TOBORE JEROME

Nineteen political parties will be participating in the race for the number one seat in Ondo State in the November 16 governorship election in the state, according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Ondo State Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Mrs Oluwatoyin Babalola, who announced this during a meeting with the representatives of political parties in Akure on Friday, stated that the parties have indicated their interest in fielding candi-

dates in the election and have notified the Commission about the conduct of their primaries for the governorship election.

The political parties include the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP), Accord Party, Action Alliance, African Action Congress, African Democratic Congress (ADC), African Democratic Party (ADP) and All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA).

Others are Allied Peoples Movement (APM), Action Peoples Party (APP), Boot Party, Labour Party (LP),

New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), National Rescue Movement (NRM), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), Youth Party, Young Progressives Party (YPP), and Zenith Labour Party (ZLP).

The INEC REC appealed to all parties to adhere strictly to the guidelines, rules, and regulations in their constitutions in the conduct of their primaries.

She equally advised them to ensure that their primary elections are conducted in a peaceful, orderly, and transparent manner to ensure the credibility of the outcomes.

## PDP BoT, NEC meetings hold April 16

TRACY FOLORUNSHO

The National Working Committee (NWC) of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has announced the schedule for its Board of Trustees (BoT) meeting and the 98th National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting.

The meetings are slated to take place on Thursday, April 18, 2024.

According to a statement signed by the party's National Publicity Secretary, Hon. Debo Ologunagba, on Friday in Abuja, the BoT meeting will commence at 10:00 am at the NEC Hall of the PDP National Secretariat in Abuja. This will be followed by the NEC meeting at 2:00 pm at the same

venue.

Additionally, the meeting of the National Caucus of the party has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

"The BoT meeting will hold at the NEC Hall of the PDP National Secretariat at 10:00 am, after which the NEC meeting commences at 2:00 pm at the same venue," Ologunagba stated.

"Consequently, the meeting of the National Caucus of our Party has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

"The NWC urges all members of NEC, BoT and the National Caucus to please take note of the scheduled dates accordingly," he said.



# Understanding the chemistry of $\text{AiO}_2$ : Deconstructing Edo 2024 guber election outlook

AUSTIN ISIKHUEMENE

To understand the chemistry of the Edo-based rare raw material with the chemical formula  $\text{AiO}_2$ , I need to first elucidate characteristics of its analogous material called  $\text{SiO}_2$  or silicon dioxide. This material is made up of two elements, silicon and oxygen, which in this combined form is called silica. It is the material that makes up sand. A grain of sand is as hard as glass and, indeed, glass is made of silica heated to extremely high temperatures. Can you imagine our roads and building infrastructure without sand?

What are the characteristics of silica? Its colour varies from transparent to grey. It has extremely high melting temperatures of 1713 oC and can only boil at the almost impossible temperature of 2950 oC. These temperatures can only be attained in a furnace or molten magma! Compare to water with a boiling point of a mere 100 oC. Silica is insoluble in both acid and water, meaning it cannot be dissolved by them!

Silica is stable in water and at elevated temperatures and it is an excellent insulator. It forms a near perfect electrical interface with its substrate. Silica materials are hard and strong and fail to brittle fracture under an imposed stress! It is the material of which glass, electronic chips and abrasives like sand paper are made. It is clear that without chips there would be no technology as we know it today.

Now to  $\text{AiO}_2$ . That is the joint ticket of Asue Ighodalo (Ai) and Osarodion Ogie (O2) who are flying the PDP flag in the September off-cycle governorship election in Edo State. That ticket has an uncanny resemblance to its anal-



IGHODALO

ogous chemical counterpart called silica! The characteristics of this joint ticket have interesting parallels with those of silica described above. Like silica made up of hard silicon and gaseous oxygen, this PDP ticket is made up of two gentlemen – successful technocrat Barrister Asue Ighodalo and administrative expert Osarodion Ogie.

Asue, super technocrat, comes with excellent and unbeatable curriculum vitae and a record of achievements as long as the Second Niger Bridge! Urbane, streetwise homey who understands and has a clear path and

feasible road map to Edo's prosperous tomorrow. He has successfully created wealth in corporations and has guided governments at state and federal levels in waste reduction and revenue growth to meet development needs.

He looks at the rearview mirror and critically analyzes the present while designing workable strategies for the future. Could Ighodalo, his name meaning "I look to the future", have been more prophetic? The government that hands over in November 2024 gave him the role of leader of Alaghodaro summits which tink-tank has been crafting



OGIE

impressive practical strategies that are moving Edo forward silently but visibly. Path. Path. He has seen a path and has created paths before. In Nigerian Breweries, Sterling Bank, Sovereign Wealth Fund, Dangote Flour Mills and several businesses. Law is his tool for business and governance.

Ogie is a lawyer too. Like oxygen, he exudes the aura of a silent achiever and loyalist extraordinaire! Works behind the scenes providing effective covering fire to keep his boss safe and dotting i's and crossing t's. Ogie is a continuity thread that weaves together the past and

present in Edo Government in order to deploy resources that will deliver a future assured of economic growth and political stability. He will ensure, post November swearing-in, that Edo's current growth trajectory is on course working in synchrony with Ai that he has known and worked with over the years. His remarkable 'seen-not-heard' noiseless solid loyalty, like silica, gives the ticket an impregnable interface with Edo South and the establishment and people.

This ticket, like silica that withstands high intolerable temperatures and pressure, will remain unshaken even in turbulent winds and will not take – in fact is incapable of taking – irrational decisions to satisfy primordial needs and whimsical considerations that put Edo's future in shackles. The Asue-Ogie combination, like silica that is insoluble in both water and acids, will withstand any intrigues and stratagems designed by those who put their personal interest above those of the Edo collective. Their strategic focus will be as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar and Somorika's Oriakpe!

What of other contemporary chemicals that can be found in Edo State? How do they perform when stacked against  $\text{AiO}_2$ ? They are ubiquitous but amorphous and mostly malleable. It can be difficult to classify if they are solid, liquid or gaseous! What is agreed by many renowned chemical researchers including 'Nobel Prize winners' is that those materials abrade and sometimes degrade when in close proximity with  $\text{AiO}_2$ . And like the silica of various colours, you only need to look at the complexions of the two gentlemen.

*Isikhuenen can be reached via auxtynisi@yahoo.com.*

## Edo 2024: How Obidients' withdrawal of support from LP may impact party's chances

MICHAEL IMAGBENIKARO

The sky does not seem bright for the Labour Party as its prospects going into the September 21 governorship election in Edo State suffered a major blow recently following the Edo Obident Movement's withdrawal of its support for the party and its candidate, Olumide Akpata.

The Obident Movement, a formidable force in Edo State politics, while announcing the withdrawal of its support, reiterated that its involvement with LP during the 2023 general elections was largely based on its support for the party's presidential candidate, Peter Obi.

The Obident Movement emerged as one of the many support groups for Obi during the 2023 general elections owing to Obi's credentials and antecedents in public office. But today, the group is singing a different tune.

Addressing journalists at the NUJ Secretariat in Benin City, the Edo State capital, the group's spokesperson, Ikhuenbor Figo, insisted that LP has failed to impress as the alternative to the two main political parties in Nigeria.

It passed a vote of no confidence on the Edo LP primary election process, alleging that the leaders, both at the national and state working committees, the local government areas, and ward executives are guilty in what it described as disgraceful and unpatriotic activities before, during and after the primary.

"We completely disassociate ourselves from the Labour Party and its candidate for the Edo 2024 governorship campaign, street rallies, and fitness walk," he said.

The Obident Movement also called on Obi to sanitize the leadership of the LP ahead of the 2027 presidential elections.

"While assuring His Excellency, Minister Peter Obi, of our continuous support for him, we advise that he provide leadership in the Labour Party and do a thorough review of the party leadership and purge themselves of all contaminating symptoms ahead of the 2027 general election," Figo said.

The group said it would unveil the political party and candidate it would be backing for the Edo governorship election in the coming weeks.

This decision, articulated by the movement's leader in Edo State, possibly carries substantial implications for both Akpata's candidacy and the overall prospects of the Labour Party in the state.

The rejection of Akpata by the Edo Obidients signifies a seismic shift in the political landscape of Edo State. This movement, which unarguably played a pivotal role in propelling the Labour Party to unprecedented success in the 2023 presidential election in the state, has now completely distanced itself from the party's gubernatorial candidate in the state. This move has raised concerns about the viability of Akpata's

future campaign strategy and the potential loss of a crucial support base.

### UNDERSTANDING THE OBIDENT MOVEMENT

The Obident Movement can be described as a social and political mass movement that evolved to ensure the electoral victory of Mr. Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of Labour Party in the 2023 election. The movement cuts across every strata of Nigerian society and exists in all the geopolitical zones of the country. Members of the group also exist abroad among the Nigerians in the Diaspora.

A thorough understanding of the group shows the group's unrestrained and special preference for Obi, who is almost seen as its 'political messiah' in the Nigerian political landscape.

### OBIDENT MOVEMENT AND THE 2023 ELECTION

The final results released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from the 36 states and the federal capital Abuja during the 2023 presidential election showed that President Bola Tinubu of the APC garnered about 36.6 per cent or 8.79 million of valid votes counted, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the PDP trailed behind with 29.1 per cent or 6.98 million of valid votes, while LP's Obi received 25.4 per cent, or about 6.1 million votes.

In Edo State, the Labour Party sur-

passed all other parties in the state, showing the Edo Obident Movement's huge support for Obi. The Labour Party, buoyed by the support of the Obidients, emerged victorious in 12 out of 18 local government areas in Edo State, far ahead of the APC and the PDP. LP won the presidential election in Igueben, Esan Central, Esan North-East, Egor, Esan South-East, Esan West, Ughunmwonde, Orhionmwon, Ovia South-West, Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha and Ovia North-East, while APC won in six LGAs of Owan West, Owan East, Akoko-Edo, Etsako Central, Etsako West and Etsako East.

According to statistics from the result sheet uploaded by INEC in Edo State, APC polled 144,471, PDP polled 89,585, while the Labour Party garnered a total of 331,163 votes.

The Obident Movement not only influenced the presidential election but also the National Assembly election. The scenario led to the making of history in Nigeria as ordinary politicians who had no fame were elected into office just by grace of being in the same party with Obi.

This electoral success, coupled with the movement's influence in securing legislative seats, solidified its status as a potent political force. The Labour Party through the Obident Movement climbed up the stairs to become the third force in the Nigerian political landscape.

### WHAT LIES AHEAD

Now that the movement has disassociated itself from the Labour Party and its candidate for the Edo State 2024 governorship election, it does not inspire much hope for the party going into the election. The hope of possible victory for the Labour Party riding on the back of a repeat of the 'Peter Obi effect' in the forthcoming Edo 2024 election may have been extinguished. The absence of the 'Peter Obi effect', which propelled the Labour Party to prominence in last year's election, poses a significant challenge to the party's electoral fortunes in the upcoming governorship race.

Political analysts say the Obident Movement's withdrawal of support is not just a symbolic gesture; it reflects a tangible loss of electoral strength for the Labour Party in Edo State. With the movement's widespread influence among voters across various demographics, including youth and non-voting populations, its withdrawal of support could significantly impact the Labour Party's prospect at the polls. It perhaps signals a broader sentiment of disillusionment with the Labour Party's leadership and strategic direction in Edo State.

However, most of this is still in the realm of conjecture. The ramifications of the Obident Movement's decision will only unfold on September 21 when the chickens come home to roost.



28<sup>th</sup> March, 2024

His Excellency,  
 Right Hon. Phillip Shaibu,  
 Deputy Governor of Edo State.  
 Edo State Government House,  
 G.R.A  
 Benin City.

Your Excellency,

**PANEL TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGATION OF MISCONDUCT OF HIS  
 EXCELLENCY, THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF EDO STATE.**

Take notice that consequent upon the inauguration of the above panel by His Lordship the Hon. Chief Judge of Edo State, Hon. Justice D.I. Okungbowa in line with section 188 subsection (5) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, the said Panel shall commence sitting at Judges Conference room, New High Court Complex, Benin City on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> day of April, 2024 at 10:00Am prompt.

Parties and /or their counsel are expected to be present on that day while the complainant is expected to be ready to present it's case on that day.

  
 G.O. Odidi, Esq.

Administrative Secretary.


28<sup>th</sup> March, 2024

The Hon. Speaker,  
 Edo State House of Assembly,  
 Ring Road,  
 Benin City.

**PANEL TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGATION OF MISCONDUCT OF HIS  
 EXCELLENCY, THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF EDO STATE.**

Take notice that consequent upon the inauguration of the above panel by His Lordship the Hon. Chief Judge of Edo State, Hon. Justice D.I. Okungbowa in line with section 188 subsection 5 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, the said Panel shall commence sitting at Judges Conference room, High Court New Complex, Benin City on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> day of April, 2024 at 10:00Am prompt.

Parties and /or their counsel are expected to be present on that day while the complainant is expected to be ready to present it's case on that day.

  
 G.O. Odidi, Esq.

Administrative Secretary.


28<sup>th</sup> March, 2024

**PRESS RELEASE**

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 G.O. Odidi, Esq.

Administrative Secretary.





FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA

BENIN-OWENA RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

KM 24, BENIN/SAPELE ROAD, OBAYANTOR, BENIN CITY



INVITATION TO TENDER FOR WORKS AND SERVICES

FOR FY2024 CAPITAL PROJECTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority (BORBDA), hereinafter referred to as "the Authority", a Parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation, is desirous of executing her FY2024 Capital Projects. In compliance with the Public Procurement Act, 2007, the Authority hereby invites interested, experienced and competent Contractors to submit bids for the implementation of the following projects:

2.0 SCOPE OF WORKS/GOODS/SERVICES

The Scope of Works/Services are categorised and packaged into LOTs as shown in the table below:

2.1 CATEGORY A: INVITATION FOR PREQUALIFICATION

LOT NOS.	PROJECT NAME
LOT A1	Rehabilitation and Construction of Stadium Road in Uzanu South-Uneme Community, Edo State
LOT A2	Erosion Control and Concrete Works in Lere Federal Constituency, Kaduna State
LOT A3	Construction of Box Culverts and Erosion Control Works in Lere Federal Constituency, Kaduna State

2.2 CATEGORY B: INVITATION TO TENDER FOR WORKS & GOODS

LOT NOS.	PROJECT NAME
LOT B1	Rehabilitation of Access Road in Obayantor Community, Edo State
LOT B2	Construction of Ungwa Abakwa Bridge, Culverts, and Road Rehabilitation Wamba-raga Nasarawa North Senatorial District
LOT B3	Rehabilitation and Surface Dressing of Nitel Road, Utsogun Etsako West Local Government
LOT B4	Construction of Access Roads Kpeere Road, Bera Gokana, Rivers State
LOT B5(a)	Rehabilitation of Water Reticulation in Afuze Community, Owan Federal Constituency, Edo State
LOT B5(b)	Rehabilitation of Water Reticulation in Sabongida-Ora Community, Owan Federal Constituency, Edo State
LOT B5(c)	Rehabilitation of Water Reticulation in Uzebba Community, Owan Federal Constituency, Edo State
LOT B5(d)	Rehabilitation of Water Reticulation in Oke New Community, Owan Federal Constituency, Edo State
LOT B6	Construction of Wash (Water Sanitation And Hygiene) Facility in Federal Constituencies Under The Benin-Owena RBDA Catchment Area
LOT B7	Edo State Area Office Building (Completion of Pure Water Factory)
LOT B8	Ukhun-Erha Irrigation Project (250ha)
LOT B9(a)	Provision of Water Boreholes to Communities in Owan East LGA, Owan Federal Constituency, Edo State
LOT B9(b)	Provision of Water Boreholes to Communities in Owan West LGA, Owan Federal Constituency, Edo State
LOT B10	Iju/Itaogbolu Irrigation Project
LOT B11	Owena Multi Purpose Dam Irrigation Project
LOT B12	Illah-Ebu Irrigation Project
LOT B13	Construction Of Solar Powered Boreholes in Benin/Owena River Basin Edo State
LOT B14	Expansion of Integrated Farm and Irrigation Infrastructure At Unuobu - Ukpiko, Edo State
LOT B15	Construction Of Auchi Earth Dam, Auchi, Edo State
LOT B16	Provision of Water Supply Schemes in Federal Constituencies under the Benin-Owena RBDA Catchment Area
LOT B17	Provision of Boreholes in Selected Communities and Expansion of Water Works at Auchi
LOT B18	Erosion Control Works In Idinli Lake, Auchi, Edo State
LOT B19	Iyemero Farmland Development
LOT B20	Auchi Integrated Farm
LOT B21	Maintenance of Dams: Owena Earth Dam, Ogwashi Dam, Ukhun Erah Dam
LOT B22	Construction of B Classroom Blocks with Wash Facility, Gombi/Hong Federal Constituency, Adamawa State
LOT B23	Construction of a Solar Powered Borehole at Elele Community in Edo North Senatorial District, Edo State
LOT B24	Construction, Rehabilitation and Reticulation of Pipes, Oni River Dam, Efon Alaaye, Ekiti State
LOT B25	Provision of Solar Powered and 4 Motorised Boreholes In Selected Towns And Rural Areas Of Ekiti South Senatorial District
LOT B26	Provision of Solar Street Lights in Ute Okpu & Ika North East LGAs, Delta State
LOT B27	Construction of Ita Meerin/Paara Bridge, Ibadan Oyo State
LOT B28	Provision of Solar Powered Borehole in Selected Communities In Delta North Senatorial District
LOT B29	Construction of 2KM Feeder Road and Provision of Solar Street Lights at Iyekogba Community, Edo State
LOT B30	Fencing, Renovation and Furnishing of Idumuje Ugboko Police Station, Aniocha in Delta North Senatorial District
LOT B31	Construction And Installation Of Irrigation Facilities
LOT B32	Provision/Installation of Solar Street Light for Selected Communities in Ovia South West Federal Constituency, Edo State
LOT C1	Procurement of Equipment for Farmland Clearing and Preparation-D7 Bulldozer and G12 Grader (Supply of Roller)

2.3 CATEGORY D: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (Eoi)

LOT NOS.	PROJECT NAME
LOT D1	Design, Rehabilitation and Construction of Stadium Road In Uzanu South-Uneme Community, Edo State
LOT D2	Construction of Access Roads Kpeere Road, Bera Gokana, Rivers State
LOT D3	Erosion Control and Concrete works in Lere Federal Constituency, Kaduna State.
LOT D4	Construction of Box Culverts and Erosion Control Works in Lere Federal Constituency, Kaduna State
LOT D5	Design of Irrigation Facilities at Ukhun-Erha
LOT D6	Construction of Idumuje-Ugboko Dam: Pre-Feasibility
LOT D7	Study, Design and Construction of Damn at Iyemero, Ekiti State
LOT D8	Design of Ungwa Abakwa Bridge, Culverts, and Road Rehabilitation Wamba-raga Nasarawa North Senatorial District
LOT D9	Design Review and Supervision for Jattu Dam
LOT D10	Otuo Earth Dam Supervision

3.0 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

a. Evidence of Certificate of Incorporation issued by Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) including Form CAC1.1 or CAC2 and CAC7. Business Name with Form BN1 is also acceptable for Consultancy Services;

b. Evidence of Company's Income Tax Clearance Certificate (or Personal Income Tax Clearance Certificates of all Partners in case of Business Name) for the last three (3) years (2021, 2022 & 2023) valid till 31st December, 2024;

c. Evidence of Pension Clearance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024 (this requirement is only applicable to bidders whose number of staff is 15 and above);

d. Evidence of Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Compliance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024 (this requirement is only applicable to bidders whose number of staff is 5 and above or the bidder's annual turnover is N50m and above);

e. Evidence of Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) Clearance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024;

f. Evidence of Registration on the National Database of Federal Contractors, Consultants and Service Providers by submission of Interim Registration Report (IRR) expiring on 31st December, 2024 or valid Certificate issued by BPP;

g. Sworn Affidavit:

- disclosing whether or not any officer of the relevant committees of the Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority or the Bureau of Public Procurement is a former or present Director, shareholder or has any pecuniary interest in the bidder and to confirm that all information presented in its bid are true and correct in all particulars;

- that no Director has been convicted in any Country for any criminal offence relating to fraud or financial impropriety or criminal misrepresentation or falsification of facts relating to any matter;

- that the Company is not in receivership, the subject of any form of insolvency or bankruptcy proceedings or the subject of any form of winding up petition or proceedings;

- That the company does not have existing loan or financial liability with a bank, other financial institution or third party that is classified as doubtful, non-performance, bad or whose repayment portion has been outstanding for the last four (4) months;

h. Company's Audited Accounts for the last three (3) years - 2021, 2022 & 2023;

i. Reference Letter from a reputable Commercial Bank in Nigeria, indicating willingness to provide credit facility for the execution of the project when needed;

j. Company's Profile with the Curriculum Vitae of Key Staff to be deployed for the project, including copies of their Academic/Professional qualifications such as COREN, QSRBN, ARCON, CORBON etc.;

k. Verifiable documentary evidence of at least three (3) similar jobs executed in the last five (5) years including Letters of Awards, Valuation Certificates, Job Completion Certificates and Photographs of the projects;

l. Consultancy Services: Evidence of Firm's current registration with the relevant regulatory professional body(ies) such as COREN, QSRBN, ARCON, CORBON etc.;

m. Works: List of Plants/Equipment with proof of Ownership/Lease Agreement;

n. Electricity Jobs: Evidence of current Licence issued by Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA);

o. For Joint Venture/Partnership, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) indicating Lead Partner should be provided (CAC, Tax Clearance Certificate, Pension Clearance Certificate, ITF Compliance Certificate, NSITF Clearance Certificate, IRR & Sworn Affidavit are compulsory for each JV partner);

**Note:** All documents for submission must be transmitted with a Covering/Forwarding letter under the Company/Firm's Letter Head Paper bearing amongst others, the Registration Number (RC) as issued by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), Contact Address, Telephone Number (preferably GSM No.), and e-mail address. The Letterhead Paper must bear the Names and Nationalities of the Directors of the Company at the bottom of the page, duly signed by the authorised officer of the firm.

4.0 COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS (INVITATION TO TENDER)

Interested companies are to collect the Standard Bidding Document (SBD) from the office of Head of Procurement Unit, Room 067, Ground Floor, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor on presentation of evidence of payment of a NON-REFUNDABLE tender fee of N10,000.00 per Lot, paid into the Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority's Remita account in any reputable Commercial Bank in Nigeria. Bidders are to generate Remita Retrieval Reference (RRR) and pay into the BORBDA Remita e-collection IGR Account Number 025203800100 in any Commercial Bank in Nigeria.



# Technology

## Experts move to shield Nigerians from electronic fraud

NAOMI EMOVON

Players in the electronic payment industry have been urged to protect their customers against a growing wave of electronic fraud and other attacks by providing them with tips on how to recognise phishing and secure online payments.

The call was made by Mr. Festus Amede, chairman of the Committee of Chief Information Security Officers of Nigerian Financial Institutions (CCISONFI) in his keynote presentation at the maiden edition of Payments Forum Nigeria in Lagos recently.

Amede was represented by Olusola Odediran, an executive member of CCISONFI, who is also the Chief Information Security Officer of the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System.

He identified data minimisation principles, user consent, and control as important elements in protecting privacy in payments adding that it was important to keep software updated.

He stated that the payment systems were exposed to such threats and vulnerabilities as cyberattacks and data breach-

es, phishing and social engineering, and malware and ransomware.

His presentation, themed 'Payments: Trust, Security, and Privacy in the AI Era,' explored the critical aspects of trust, security, and privacy in payments, and provided insights into the challenges, solutions, and future trends in safeguarding transactions in the digital landscape.

According to the CCISONFI chairman, the compliance requirements for businesses in the industry have balanced security and convenience, relying on user experience in payment security, seamless authentication methods, and biometric and tokenised payments.

He listed some of the best practices for businesses, including regular security audits and penetration testing, employee training on security protocols, and ensuring collaboration with payment security experts.

Speaking further on the need to build trust in payment systems, Amede, who is also the CISO of Zenith Bank Plc, emphasised the importance of trust for consumer adoption, transparency in transactions, and commitment to securing the payment infrastructure.

He stated that the payment systems were exposed to such threats and vulnerabilities as cyberattacks and data breaches, phishing and social engineering, and malware and ransomware.

The Chief Compliance Officer, Ikenna Ndugbu, represented by the Regional Sales Manager of Moniepoint, Isoken Aigbomian, highlighted the evolution of Moniepoint into a leading payment processor.

He said, "We started with a virtual account service where we automated payments or transfers, allowing customers and businesses to make and receive payments seamlessly through transfers. This was what catapulted and was modified into the limelight and household name that seems to be."

Ndugbu emphasised the company's focus on providing flexible payment options to businesses across various sectors, stating, "Today, Moniepoint offers a wide variety of payment options to businesses."

"There is an online payment platform, in-person payments option, and then there are the cash payments via our ATM network, which is almost, I think, one of the largest, as well."

## 5G adoption rises to 1.11% in January –NCC

UYIOSA ISAAC

Data from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) reveals that 5G adoption in Nigeria has moved to 1.11 per cent of all connections in January 2024.

Information posted on the NCC website indicates 5G recorded a marginal increase from the 1.04 per cent recorded in December 2023.

Despite the slight uptick, the overall pace of 5G growth in the country remains sluggish, underscoring the complexities associated with transitioning to next-generation networks.

However, the data showed that 2G subscriptions continued to dominate, representing 57.78 per cent of connections in January 2024.

4G subscriptions rose from 31.33 per cent in December 2023 to 31.75 per cent in January 2024.

In 2022, the telecom regulator issued 5G licences to successful bidders on the 3.5GHz spectrum. Since then, a few 5G-licensed telcos have rolled out their networks in the country.

MTN Nigeria led the commercial launch of 5G activities

in September 2022, followed by Mafab Communications and Airtel Nigeria in January and June 2023, respectively.

5G has been deployed in several major cities, including Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Ibadan, Kano, Owerri, and Maiduguri.

According to experts, the adoption of 5G in Nigeria remained low due to challenges such as the high cost of equipment, routers, and devices, as well as inadequate infrastructure.

Tony Izuagbe, President of the Association of Telecommunication Companies of Nigeria (TCN), says 5G technology rollout needs more infrastructure and more connectivity between the infrastructure.

"There is enthusiasm about 5G. The awareness is there, and operators are getting a lot of requests."

"However, the infrastructure available will determine if more people will push for 5G. You know it is a factor of demand and supply," he said.

In response to those challenges, the Nigerian government introduced a national 5G policy aimed at ensuring the effective deployment of 5G

to cover major urban areas by 2025.

During the launch of the policy, former President Muhammadu Buhari said, "The national policy includes a deployment plan to ensure that major cities across the country benefit from 5G technologies."

"It also seeks to make 5G a major driver of our economy, a catalyst for smart cities in the country and a platform for the creation of jobs that support our digital economy."

The International Telecommunications Union, a specialised agency of the United Nations, recently revealed that Africa maintained the lowest 5G coverage rate globally, standing at only 6 per cent as of December 2023.

It attributed the low 5G coverage rate on the continent to the ongoing significance of older mobile technologies, particularly 2G and 3G networks.

The ITU report highlighted the persistent reliance on 2G and 3G networks in many African countries, including Nigeria, where those technologies offer a cost-effective means of delivering essential mobile services, especially in regions lacking access to 4G and 5G networks.



**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA**  
**BENIN-OWENA RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT**  
**AUTHORITY**  
KM 24, BENIN/SAPELE ROAD, OBAYANTOR, BENIN CITY



## INVITATION TO TENDER FOR WORKS AND SERVICES FOR FY2024 CAPITAL PROJECTS

The GIFMIS code for the Tender fees is 1000020623.

**NOTE:** Firms / Contractors for Invitation for Prequalification (LOT A1-A3) and Expression of Interest (LOTs D1 – D10) are not required to pay any tender fee at this stage.

### 5.0 SUBMISSION OF BIDS, PRE-QUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS AND EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

5.1 For Expression of Interest (Eoi) interested firms should submit two (2) bound copies Expression of Interest (Eoi) documents duly signed, paginated, separated by dividers and arranged in the order outlined in 3.0 above. The reverse side of each sealed envelope should bear the name and address of the bidder and dropped in the designated Tender Box not later than 12:00 noon Monday, 15th April, 2024.

5.2 Prospective bidders for Invitation for Pre-qualification are to submit Pre-Qualification Documents for each of the Lot desired; two (2) hard copies each of the technical bids packaged in sealed envelopes and clearly marked as "Technical Bid"; with the name of the project and the Lot number. Furthermore, the reverse side of each sealed envelope should bear the name and address of the bidder and dropped in the designated Tender Box not later than 12:00 noon Monday, 22nd April, 2024.

5.3 Prospective bidders for Invitation to Tender (B & C) are to submit two (2) hard copies each for technical and financial bids with softcopy of the financial bid only in MS-Excel format; packaged separately in sealed envelopes and marked as "Technical Bid" or "Financial Bid". Thereafter, put the two sealed envelopes together in a bigger envelope and clearly marked with the name of the project and the Lot number at the top right corner. Furthermore, the reverse side of each sealed envelope should bear the name and address of the bidder and dropped in the designated Tender Box not later than 12:00 noon Monday, 29th April, 2024.

5.4 Each sealed envelope of bidders should be addressed to:

THE MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
BENIN-OWENA RIVER BASIN  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY,  
KM. 24, BENIN/SAPELE ROAD, OBAYANTOR,  
P. M. B. 1381, BENIN CITY.

This should be delivered and receipted for at the Procurement Unit and dropped in the designated Tender Box in the New Conference Room, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor.

5.5 Inclusion of a bid security of 2% of the bid price for Works of Three Hundred Million Naira (N300m) and above; and for Goods and Services of One Hundred Million Naira (N100m) and above.

### 6.0 OPENING OF EOIs AND TECHNICAL BIDS

6.1 The Expression of Interest (Eoi), Pre-Qualification documents and Technical bids will be opened immediately after the deadlines for submission in the New Conference Room, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor as follows:

S/N	DESCRIPTION	DATE AND TIME OF OPENING
1.	Expression of Interest	12:00 noon Monday, 15th April, 2024.
2.	Invitation for Pre-Qualification: Pre-qualification Documents	12:00 noon Monday, 22nd April, 2024.
3.	Invitation to Tender for Works and Goods Technical bids	12:00 noon Monday, 29th April, 2024

while the Financial bids will be kept unopened.

6.2 Bidders should please ensure that they sign the EOI/Bid Submission Register in the office of the Head, Procurement Unit, Ground Floor, Room 067, BORBDA Headquarters Complex, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor, as the Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority will not be held liable for misplaced or wrongly submitted bids. For further enquiries, please contact the "Head Procurement Unit" on e-mail aochukwuyem@beninowena.gov.ng, info@beninowena.gov.ng or call any of these mobile telephone numbers: 07039591337, 08059625635.

### 7.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

- Bids must be in English Language and signed by an official authorised by the bidder;
- The authorised official shall be introduced to the Authority by a Letter of Authority duly signed by the Director or Secretary of the Company;
- Bids submitted after the deadline for submission would be returned unopened;
- Bidders should not bid for more than two (2) Lots, violators shall be disqualified from all the Lots;
- All costs will be borne by the bidders;
- Invitation for Pre-Qualification: Only pre-qualified bidders at technical evaluation will be invited on a later date for collection of tender documents;
- Expression of Interest: Only shortlisted Consultants will be invited at a later date for collection of Request for Proposals;
- Invitation to Tender: Only pre-qualified bidders at technical evaluation will be invited at a later date for financial bids opening, while the financial bids of unsuccessful bidders will be returned unopened.
- The EOIs/Technical Bids will be opened in the presence of Bidders or their representatives, CSOs in the areas of Anti-Corruption and Transparency and Private Professional bodies; and will be covered by video recording; invitation link will be sent to bidder who chooses to join the EOI/bid opening online;
- Bid documents can also be collected in soft copies and Bidders can submit through post (Courier Services). Bids submitted through post must be received before the deadline for submission of bids, otherwise the bid will be returned unopened;
- The Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority is not bound to pre-qualify/shortlist any applicant and reserves the right to annul the Procurement process at any time without incurring any liabilities in accordance with Section 28 of the Public Procurement Act, 2007.

Signed:

**MANAGING DIRECTOR,**

Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority.



# CampusGist

## Faith Dibie emerges MACSA UNIBEN first female president

GOODNESS OKOH AND  
PRAISE EMUHOWO

Faith Dibie from the 300 level Constituency has emerged the first female president of the Mass Communication Students' Association (MACSA), University of Benin.

She was elected alongside other executives in the recent MACSA election for the 2024 administration.

Dibie polled 283 votes to defeat her rival, Success Iyobor,

who got 51 votes.

Similarly, Omosede Daisy Aigbe-Edebor, who ran for office of the Director of Welfare, amassed 180 votes to triumph over her opponent, Princess Ofure, who had 153 votes.

Some other executive positions were unopposed, while aspirants to some positions were not cleared during the screening.

In a brief chat with MACSA Ekehuan Watch reporters, the newly-elected president applauded all students of the asso-

ciation for their support during the exercise and pledged to put their interest first.

"I sincerely thank all MACSAs for their unwavering support and for coming out en masse to vote for me. By God's grace, and with the support of my fellow executives-elect, we will ensure that all our manifestos are manifested," Dibie said.

The immediate past Editor-in-Chief of MACSA Ekehuan Watch, Chief Nwabor Goodluck, described the exer-

cise as one of the best elections that MACSAs have ever conducted, despite series of challenges that the Electoral Committee passed through before arriving at the end.

He urged MACSAs "to uphold politics of ideas and development, and shun politics of rancour and acrimony, because the Nigerian society is heading to a state of kakistocracy and we need the youths with right vision and mission to restore things to normalcy".

"The journey to such restoration starts at this grassroots level of politicking. If we don't get it right here, we won't get it right there," he said.

While congratulating her former colleague who emerged the winner in the recent exercise, Success Iyobor promised to be supportive to the association and department. She equally eulogized her disciples who supported her till the end of the race.

Other members of the newly elected MACSA UNIBEN ex-

ecutives include Success Osejele Inegbedion (Secretary General), Lexy Oyeima Idemudia (Vice President), Osifo Nehikhare James (Director of Socials), Omorodion Iyen Esther (Financial Secretary), Iwuoha Chidimma Justina (Treasurer), and Aikharialea Joy Omoseme Adesuwa (PRO 2).

As at the time of filing this report, the offices of the Public Relations Officer 1 and Director of Sports remained vacant pending when bye-elections will be conducted.

## MACSA Ekehuan Watch inaugurates new Editorial Board

FAVOUR NWEKE

MACSA Ekehuan Watch of the University of Benin (MEW UNIBEN) on Saturday, 30th March 2024, inaugurated the new Editorial Board for 2024 administration of the media platform.

The occasion was graced by reporters, outgoing Editorial

Board and the founding father of the campus journalism platform, Mr Sunday Ekerikevwe, who is also a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin.

Speaking at the inauguration, Mr Ekerikevwe, who is widely known as 'Sunnylove', charged the student journalists to uphold the principles and

practice of the pen profession.

The newly inaugurated editors are Naomi Ewansiha (Editor-in-Chief), Chidimma Kalu (Sub-Editor), ThankGod Ebhoman (Press Secretary), Ruth Irinmore (News Editor), Goodness Okoh (Production Manager), Emmanuella Oko (Health Editor), Silvia Amere (Features Editor), Omoseyi Oluwatumise

(Graphics Designer), Success Inegbedion (Graphics Designer 2), Emmanuella Olufeko (Advert Manager), Favour Nweke (Treasurer), and Praise Emuhowo (Publicity Director).

"Journalism is the oldest son of Mass Communication and it started from heaven," Ekerikevwe said.

Quoting from the book of

Revelation 20:11 to substantiate his position, he said, "I saw a great white throne and the One seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne. And books were open and one of them was the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, as recorded in the books."

He equally enjoined the newly inaugurated Editors to develop more nose for news writing and reporting, which will enable them to cover and report important happenings within and outside the institution.

"MACSA EKEHUAN WATCH has come a long way. This is the 6th Editorial Board of this media platform. I am glad to stand before you as the founding father of this noble media platform. The outgoing administration led by Chief Goodluck Nwabor remains the most active and radical we've encountered since the inception of this platform, because he understands the intricacies of this profession and has worked round the clock to uphold the principles and practice of journalism," Ekerikevwe said.

"This campus journalism platform (MACSA EKEHUAN

WATCH) is as a result of the 'journalistic intercourse' I had with Mass Communication students in 2019, and after the journalistic touch, they felt the need to start practicing the profession on campus. Glory be to God, it is waxing stronger today. I urge the new Editorial Board to perform better than the outgoing administration so as to push MACSA EKEHUAN WATCH to an enviable height in the society, where NUJ will recognize and commend us," he said.

In a farewell speech on behalf of the outgoing Editorial Board, Nwabor lauded the reporters and newly inaugurated Editorial Board for their support in bringing MEW to the level it is today. He reaffirmed his commitment to supporting the new editors and promised them of full backings from the Advisory Council (made up of past Editors and Patrons, Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Ekehuan Campus, Dean of Students, Dean Faculty of Arts, and the Department of Mass Communication in general).

He implored them to work together with the new Executives of Mass Communication Students' Association, MACSA UNIBEN, in a bid to promote and project the association to the limelight.



### CAMPUS JOURNALISM:

Founding father of MACSA Ekehuan Watch and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin, Mr Sunday Ekerikevwe (middle), with the immediate past and newly inaugurated Editors of the campus journalism platform, after the inauguration.

## UNIBEN Health Centre: Between myths and reality

CHUKWUMDIMMA ESINULO

It is one thing for an academic community to lack the presence of a good health care facility; it is another for community members to refuse to utilize the health care facility provided for them. Right from day one of our undergraduate journey in UNIBEN, we have heard many myths and rumours about the University of Benin Health Centre, especially in Ekehuan Campus. Has anyone ever tried to ask the appropriate sources for the right information? Our quest for the truth took us right into the health centre where we were granted an interview by the Deputy Director of Nursing Services, Mrs Dabor. Here are some myths and what the health centre specialists had to say about them:

### Myth 1: The Healthcare staff have no sense of commitment to their duty

Not true. The staff of the health centre view their work as responsibilities meant to be carried out and many of them carry these responsibilities out with a zeal inspired by their deep-seated interests in saving lives and caring for the suffering.

### Myth 2: The health centre doesn't enjoy much patronage

Although one cannot compare the health centre's daily patient volume to that of UBTH and other full-fledged hospitals, the health centre is a beehive of activities on a normal day. This is because the health centre has to care for the students, staff and staff's families in Ekehuan Campus (that's a lot of people if you think about it). In fact, they have got a bit busier due

to the influx of external patronage lately. The university's management has, as a way of impacting society, allowed people from the school's environs (non-NHIS) to use the health centre after paying a little token as consultation fee, then they buy their drugs from pharmacies outside.

### Myth 3: The staff don't need to fear burnout since they don't do much work

Since the health centre has quite a large patient volume, its workers naturally have the need to prevent burnout from overwork. The health centre's staff recognize this need and hence they practice self-care by taking things a step at a time and resting whenever they can.

### Myth 4: The health centre is not up to date

Definitely not true. Just like

every other health practitioner, the staff keep up with latest medical advancements by reading journals, attending seminars and watching out for new cases, illnesses and methods.

"When it comes to healthcare, information is not constant. We see new cases every day, new strains of pathogens, new and more efficient treatment methods, etc. If we don't update our knowledge, we'll get left behind and may be unable to help our patients more efficiently," Mrs Dabor said.

### Myth 5: The health centre lacks equipment and professionals

This myth is one of the oldest and has been passed down among students over the years. Here's one fact that will leave you shocked: The health centre boasts of the necessary facilities needed by a healthcare facility including

a standard laboratory where different tests are run (blood sugar and blood pressure checks, blood group determination, malaria, hepatitis B, HIV and even pregnancy tests). They also have a good supply of various drugs as well as conducive patient rooms.

"We have drugs and we administer them to patients. It is true that occasionally, some drugs get used up but they are quickly replaced," Mrs Dabor stated, adding that all of the health centre's staff were professionals with many years of experience.

### Myth 6: The staff lack coordination

When it comes to healthcare, teamwork is important. In UNIBEN Health Centre, Ekehuan Campus, each team leader works with other team leaders and the members of their own

teams. They are able to achieve this teamwork through a combination of Communication, Tolerance and Incentives.

### Myth 7: Students don't trust the institution

While it may be true that some students do not trust the institution, it is also true that over 50 per cent of the students trust the health centre with many of them rushing to see the doctor at the slightest headache. The other 50 per cent do not visit the health centre chiefly because most of them have not done their medical clearance.

### Myth 8: The health centre isn't bothered if you come or not

Our last myth is not true at all. The interview we conducted showed that the health workers are concerned about the students who don't come to be medically cleared.



# Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Gulf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

## Peseiro replacement: Two-time AFCON-winning coach Hervé Renard a perfect fit for Super Eagles?

ADOLOR OKOEGUALE

France women's national team head coach Hervé Renard has announced his intention to resign from the position following the conclusion of the Paris Olympic Games later this year.

Renard will look to guide Les Bleues to their first gold medal finish at the Summer Olympics, after which he wants to work on taking a men's national team to the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The ex-Cannes defender disclosed that he has informed the Football Federation of his decision to depart, to secure his third coaching stint at the World Cup.

"It's a difficult job," Renard said,

"If I had to be brief, I have in the back of my mind the 2026 World Cup in men's football; I hope that it will be my third World Cup at the head of a men's team. These are my personal motivations."

Will NFF seek the services of Renard as Super Eagles head coach?

As reported by L'Equipe, Nigeria is among the contenders considering the appointment of Hervé Renard as the head coach of the Super Eagles.

Earlier this month, Jose Peseiro departed from his role after guiding Nigeria to an impressive second-place finish at the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations in Cote d'Ivoire.

Former Super Eagles international Finidi George, who served as Peseiro's assistant, handled the team as an interim manager for the country's two friendly games against the Black Stars of Ghana and Mali last week in Morocco.

Finidi, along with Emmanuel Amunike, Michael Nsien, and Ndubuisi Egbo, is among the top contenders to succeed Peseiro as the next head coach.

However, the NFF remains open to appointing a foreign coach to manage the national team, leaving the door open

for Renard to secure the Super Eagles job.

Securing Renard may prove challenging for Nigeria, as the 55-year-old Frenchman is reportedly sought after by Poland, South Korea, Cameroon, and even Morocco, among others.

Renard coaching career began in his native country

France, he handled a few lower-league French clubs before landing in Africa in 2007 after he was asked to serve as assistant to Claude Le Roy for the Ghana national team.

In the subsequent year, Renard assumed the role of manager for the Zambia national team, guiding the Chipolopolo

to the quarterfinals of the 2010 AFCON, marking the nation's best performance in 14 years.

He departed briefly before returning to lead Zambia to their historic first-ever AFCON title in 2012.

Ahead of the 2015 AFCON, he was appointed as the manager of the Cote d'Ivoire national team, Renard won the competition with Ivory Coast to become the first coach to win two Africa Cup of Nations with different countries.

Renard helped Morocco qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup to make his first appearance at the Mundial.

Renard was Saudi Arabia's coach in 2019 and led the team to make it to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, where they defeated Copa America Champions and eventual winners of the Worldcup Argentina in their first match.

He was CAF Coach of the Year thrice in 2012, 2015, and 2018.



RENARD

## Nnadozie sets sights on Olympics glory with Falcons

ADOLOR OKOEGUALE

Super Falcons goalkeeper Ser Chiamaka Nnadozie is determined to secure qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games as Nigeria prepares for their crucial final qualifiers match against long-time rivals, South Africa.

Both teams have developed a fierce rivalry over time and are regarded as the pride of Africa due to their accomplishments on the continent. However, in recent encounters, it has been the South African side that has emerged victorious.

Banyana defeated Nigeria in their last two meetings, at the 2022 Women's Afcon in Morocco and the 2021 Aisha Buhari Cup in their backyard, the same tournament that Banyana went on to win.

For Nnadozie, qualifying for the Olympic Games in France is of very particular importance and very paramount.

"I read so many things about the Olympics. We didn't manage to qualify in 2020, I felt bad at

first, then I said to myself 'Come on, you have time ahead of you' and that's it, another great opportunity to qualify," she said.

"I want to know what it feels like to participate in the Olympic Games."

Since 2020, the Nigerian goalkeeper has resided in the City of Lights for four years, representing top-flight club Paris FC. Developing a fondness for the city, Nnadozie aims to compete in the Olympic Games, which will be hosted in her adopted hometown.

Apart from being the home of her club side, France holds significant importance for Nnadozie as it was where the goalkeeper made her international breakthrough on June 17, 2019. This milestone occurred when the Super Falcons journeyed to Rennes, located in western France, and she debuted under the guidance of coach Thomas Dennerby.

Years later, the Nigerian goalkeeper was honored as the Best Women's Goalkeeper in Africa at the 2023 CAF Awards.



NNADOZIE

## Fury vs Usyk 'Ring of Fire' undercard to include return of 'Britain's Mike Tyson' Itama

EDWARD OSEGHE

The undisputed Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk's showdown takes place on May 18 at the Kingdom Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and will be preceded by a decent eight-fight bill.

Cruiserweight king Jai Opetiaia rematches Mairis Briedis for the IBF and Ring Magazine 200lb belts in the co-feature attraction.

The last time they squared off back in July 2022, Opetiaia upset the odds by toppling Briedis from his throne via unanimous decision in Australia.

Briedis hasn't fought since,

while Opetiaia has recorded two comfortable stoppage wins over British boxers Jordan Thompson and Ellis Zorro in his last couple of outings.

The other world title fight on the undercard is an IBF super-featherweight bout between reigning champion Joe Cordina and surging contender Anthony Cacace.

Cordina reclaimed his belt from Shavkatdzhon Rakhimov last year after being stripped due to injury and defended it against Edward Vazquez in his most recent outing five months ago.

His next opponent, Cacace is a former British super-feath-

erweight champion who bested Poland's Damian Wrzeskiński in his last outing.

Next up on the card is a decent WBC final eliminator bout between undefeated heavyweights Agit Kabayel and Frank Sanchez.

The winner of the fight will put themselves in a strong position to campaign for a contest against whoever gets their hand raised in the main event.

Meanwhile, British teenage sensation Itama is back in action against experienced 27-fight veteran (24-3) Ilja Mezencev in what looks to be, at least on paper, a solid step up in opposition.

Itama, who has been compared to boxing legend Tyson by the national press, is hoping to break 'Iron Mike's' record as the youngest world heavyweight champion of all time.

But he will have to beat Mezencev convincingly if he hopes to continue stepping up the levels.

Elsewhere on the bill, British lightweight Mark Chamberlain takes on Nigeria's Joshua Oluwaseun Wahab while David Nyika vs Michael Seitz and Isaac Lowe vs Hasibullah Ahmadi kick off proceedings.

Former unified light-heavyweight champion Sergey Kovalev also features on the night against Robin Sirwan Safar in his second outing at cruiserweight.

### FULL CARD

Oleksandr Usyk vs Tyson Fury (WBA, WBC, IBF and WBO heavyweight titles)

Jai Opetiaia vs Mairis Briedis 2 (IBF cruiserweight title)

Joe Cordina vs Anthony Cacace (IBF super-featherweight title)

Agit Kabayel vs Frank Sanchez (heavyweight)

Mark Chamberlain vs Joshua Oluwaseun Wahab (lightweight)

Sergey Kovalev vs Robin Sirwan Safar (cruiserweight)

Moses Itama vs Ilja Mezencev (heavyweight)





# THE MondayInterview

## We have redefined land administration, paved way for businesses to thrive —EdoGIS MD

*Since she assumed office as Managing Director of Edo State Geographic Information Service (EdoGIS) in August 2022, Mrs. Osaro Grace Aihie has steered the agency in the right direction towards achieving its mandate, and the agency under her watch has earned plaudits from businesses operating in the state who attest to its contribution to ease of doing business. Mrs Aihie, a lawyer, estate surveyor and valuer, and a fellow of the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers, sat with a team of editors and reporters from THE NIGERIAN OBSERVER in her office at Sapele Road, Benin City, where she elaborated on the work that the six-year-old institution is doing, the challenges faced, and the plans ahead. Excerpts:*

**We will start by asking you, what is the mandate of EDOGIS?**

Our mandate at EdoGIS is to administer the land resources in Edo State; to title documents, that is, issue Certificate of Occupancy (C of O), to do cadastral surveys, to do land acquisition and compensation on behalf of the government and also to take care of the land-based taxes, Land Use Charge which comprises the property tax, tenement rate and ground rent. Basically, we take care of anything that has to do with land.

**We have interviewed a number of businesses operating in Edo, like Okomu, Presco, Bragav and others, and they all have positive things to say about EDOGIS. What exactly have you done (or are you doing) to earn this reputation?**

To start with, I will say that this is the first time that Okomu has paid Land Use Charge. I am not talking about ground rent and others, they have been paying all that. But what we did was we sat down, we talked, we brought out the law, we enforced it and for the first time they paid their Land Use Charge last year. So what do we do to enhance ease of doing business? Ease of doing business comprises that the investors should have a fair playing ground and the people should be carried along to understand what the investors have come to do. So, as I said, we come together, we sit down and we discuss. Where there are problems, we look at the problems and look for a solution and everybody agrees, then we go on. That is the ease of business we are talking about. They don't have bottlenecks that are stopping them from doing their business. And the people, if they cooperate with the investors, they are likely going to get employment. These are the things we do. We don't fight; problems are to be solved, so we sit down, look at the problem and solve it. A little to the right, a little to the left, and everybody is happy. And when it comes to title, if you say you have a land somewhere, we will look at our records and tell you that from the records, this or that person is the true owner and problems are solved.

And since the beginning of this new technology that His Excellency has brought, many things have changed. Land grabbing has reduced drastically; no more loss of investment or capital. Before now some people would just go and buy land without conducting a search and when they come to EdoGIS, they see that the property is either mortgaged or does not belong to the person who sold it to them. There is loss of investment there. But what I keep saying is that you should conduct a search. If you are going to buy a land for N100 million, you just need N25,000 to find out if that land is free from all encumbrances. If you do that, and we tell you, 'Yes, it is John that owns the land', then you are good to go. Then, if there is already a C of O and you come for the same land, there is an overlap and we cannot continue. We stop there and call those involved, communities even come. Sometimes they agree that they even gave the same land to two people, then we say no, you have to relocate one person to another land. For those we cannot solve their problem, we refer them to the court and the law court decides who the owner is. When they send in the judgement, we accept and implement it. Because of all this, the issue of double dealing has drastically reduced.

We also visit communities. We went to one community recently and told them about the need to register their layout. If they do that too, there will be no double dealing, there will be no land grabbing, no strife. They have been able to key in because they see it is good for them. If you have a community where they don't fight, where they don't double deal, many people will like to come there and the value of your land will increase. When investors come and you accept them in a community, they are happy. That is what we are talking about, ease of doing business, and it is helping us.

**You are trying to help businesses solve their problems, but I know EdoGIS has its own challenges. Could you talk about these challenges, and how are you going about solving them?**

When I came here, there were a lot of problems but we have solved most of them. The most prominent one was representatives, people who represent people, clients. I met them here and they were over 150; they were more than my staff. I saw that the problem the gover-



● GRACE AIHIE

**Ease of doing business comprises that the investors should have a fair playing ground and the people should be carried along to understand what the investors have come to do. So, as I said, we come together, we sit down and we discuss. Where there are problems, we look at the problems and look for a solution and everybody agrees, then we go on. That is the ease of business we are talking about. They don't have bottlenecks that are stopping them from doing their business**

nor tried to solve was coming back. We take just N50,000 to process C of O, but they were taking over N200,000 from the owners. I said no, it can't be so. We invited all of them, interviewed them, screened them, took the ones we wanted and gave them rules and regulations to guide them. They have keyed in and things have changed.

There was also another problem. Before GIS you could pay for C of O and for two to three years you would not get it. People would tell you they paid as much as N1.5 million, but since we started EdoGIS, Governor Obaseki reduced the cost to N50,000. So if you pay N50,000 and your documents are correct, no objection, you will get your C of O in 30 working days. You will just pay a little more than that N50,000 if there are some documents you still need to do. We are not just saying it, we have started doing it. We have government-community relationship also introduced by this government. The governor said he wanted us to be meeting with the communities. We are doing those things for them, we should not do it on their behalf, they should understand what we are doing so they can key in. So we visit the communities; we go to them and meet with them so we understand each other.

We also had to change the work flow. When I came in something happened - and this is not to put my officers in bad light, it is about solving problems and making things flow. We saw about 2,000 files locked up in one place, and people had been complaining. So we changed the work flow, we changed the people, we changed everything, and things have started working. We are doing very well now compared to then. But daily problems will come and we will solve them daily as they come.

**Let's say I am an investor who has just come into Edo State, could you talk us through the process from the point where I see a plot of land that I am interested in to the point where I get my C of O?**



THE **MondayInterview**

First of all, if you are an investor and you want to get a land, whatever land shown to you, conduct a search. So, first, you have to conduct a search to be sure that the land you are buying belongs to that person who is selling it to you; be sure it is not encroached. Some people may sell mortgaged land to you and you won't know, but when you conduct a search, we are able to say, 'This land belongs to John, but he has mortgaged it to XYZ Bank'. That means: don't buy, don't pay, it is not free. But if the land is free and you buy and then you want to come for your C of O, you will bring all we require: the survey plan of that land, the documents with which you bought, your tax clearance certificate, your passport photograph. If you are going to use a representative, you also bring a passport of that person since you won't be on ground. These are the main things you will bring along. There are other things like utility bill, just to tie the address to where we will be relating to you. Once you get those things, the property will have to pay Land Use Charge, which is the tax on the land. Remember, don't pay it to anybody. We are cashless here, we don't take cash. Once you collect the C of O form, you will see the account to pay it to and you will get your receipt. If all your papers are in order, in 30 working days you should get your C of O. But someone can object to the issuance of C of O. To object, you pay N25,000. So, if we are processing and somebody objects, we will stop and let you know that someone is objecting and we cannot continue. We then look at the issues involved with a view to finding solution. We can even invite both parties involved.

**When you go to some communities, your land already has C of O, but they tell you that it is long and you will have to pay again. So, does C of O have expiry date?**

C of O has no expiration. It is a lease hold document. I won't call it expiration. The Land Use Act of 1978 gave birth to C of O. It is for 99 years, that is what it should be if it is fresh. But if somebody is giving you C of O and it is not fresh, if it has stayed for 20 years, your own will be minus 20 years. Sometimes when I tell people it's for 99 years, they start complaining, but nobody is even going to take it from you after 99 years; they are just going to renew it. Your children will continue with it.

However, when you are buying, see the date and see what you are buying. If somebody also has C of O, what you do is consent, which is like change of name. For that consent, you still have to have records with His Excellency because he is the only one that can do that. By law, it is the person selling to you that should come and obtain the consent, but they just sell to you and leave you to do it, otherwise you don't have something to hold on to.

**You mentioned encumbrances that may be revealed through search. Apart from selling the same land to two different people, what other encumbrances are likely to arise?**

One is mortgage. You have mortgaged the property and you didn't tell anyone, then you went ahead and sold it. That's an encumbrance. When you get here to conduct a search, that encumbrance will be revealed. The land is for John but the interest is with XYZ Bank, they will not let you sell. If you buy, you have bought nothing.

The other encumbrance we are solving now with search is that before now, people would just buy land and there is nothing to check if there is anything there, but now if you just do survey, we will check it and if there is an overlap, then that's an encumbrance and we cannot continue. That land is not free for you to use.

Then there is acquisition and revocation. If government allocates a land and it is revoked, it will be an encumbrance when you buy a revoked property. So when you get here and conduct a search, we will say, 'fallen on government property'. We can also say it is fallen on the forest reserve, and we will not give you; it is an encumbrance. Some communities are selling forest reserves. When the buyers now come here to search, they will see forest reserve like Okomu, Ogbu, and so on. We have many forest reserves, so if you go there and buy land within the forest reserve, we cannot process the C of O.

**we are able to process C of O online and some people are taking advantage of that, so you don't have to come. People abroad, people that cannot come, just submit your information online and we will process your C of O. So when we open a GIS office in Auchi, no need for people to come...**



**“Once you collect the C of O form, you will see the account to pay it to and you will get your receipt. If all your papers are in order, in 30 working days you should get your C of O. But someone can object to the issuance of C of O. To object, you pay N25,000. So, if we are processing and somebody objects, we will stop and let you know that someone is objecting and we cannot continue. We then look at the issues involved with a view to finding solution. We can even invite both parties involved.”**



**Edo GIS was awarded the best GIS in the South South in April 2023. Could you tell us more about the award?**

If you have been following all the things we have been saying in the media, I have said that this place is a state-of-the-art office, one of its kind in the whole country. The technology we have here, you cannot see it in other places. In fact, other states are coming here to learn what we are doing. Enugu came, Abia came, Anambra is coming, Akwa Ibom is coming, and Delta as well. I am here most of the times working because the office is conducive. There is 24-hour power supply from Ossiomo.

Apart from that, we have technology, we have drones, we have mobile mapper. We have a lot of technology here that is helping us. The core station helps surveyors to do very precise survey. They come in every day because they need that core station, it was put there to help surveyors do better at surveys.

**How did you get the workforce to do all the job you are doing at EdoGIS?**

EdoGIS came out from the defunct Ministry of Land and Survey, so many of the staff here are staff of Ministry of Land and Survey. When His Excellency decided to change the face of land administration in the state and the technology came about, the staff of Ministry of Land and Survey were brought here for those who wanted to key in. For those who said they could not key in to the technology, they were sent to different MDAs. That time e-gov had not started; right now e-gov has caught up with everybody, so there is no hiding place. But then, few places had technology like this; some went to other MDAs, some retired, and some came in. At a point there was a recruitment exercise and some set of new people were brought in.

Right now we have three sets of people here. We have the civil and public servants, and we have the GIS staff. For the GIS, some white people helped us, and they are still around. We have some staff that were trained by them and they are already working with us, so when the white people are going they will leave the trained staff for us.

Then we have ad-hoc staff. When His Excellency brought me here, he said he wasn't happy that he had technology but he didn't have people using them. I went to UNIBEN, got a professor who knows about GIS, and told him I needed some GIS experts. We have about 14 of them now, they are on ad-hoc basis but the government will absorb them when they are done. So we have the best of them from UNIBEN, as they graduate they bring them here. We are also up-to-date in terms of training, both internal and external. Apart from JOOPSA, we have a training hall right here. The training is continuous because it is part of the GIS. If we have money we will have a GIS school in the long term.

**Given that your office is in Benin City, is EdoGIS also thinking of decentralization to make things easier for those outside the state capital?**

Yes, we are already thinking of that. In fact, the Chairman of Etsako West has already promised me officers because I want to put a GIS office in Auchi and I want to put one in Ekpoma so that people there will not have to come this way. Also, we are able to process C of O online and some people are taking advantage of that, so you don't have to come. People abroad, people that cannot come, just submit your information online and we will process your C of O. So when we open a GIS office in Auchi, no need for people to come, our staff there will bring their information, then we process; when they are ready, they will come and collect. We want to do that so that it will also help with ease of business and save people the stress of long travel.

**In all of this, sustainability is key. What are the plans to ensure that all these lofty achievements continue even you have left office?**

That is the idea. If it doesn't continue, that means we are gone and it will be very sad. Governor Obaseki has laid a good foundation that we should not go back to Egypt. If we go back, we will not come out again. Pharaoh will hold us down.

I remember when His Excellency brought me here, I told him, 'Your Excellency, I may have many things upstairs, but computer?' He said go, and I have keyed in. The only thing they say is constant is change. It is technology that makes you see all the money we are generating. It is very important, we must key in, we will sustain it.

The governor does not want us to build personalities but institutions. What that means is that if I drop dead today, another person will sit here and this thing will move on. The governor has laid the foundation, so we have to key in and move on. That is the only way we can sustain it. So I am not afraid at all. If I am still here, be sure no going back. If any other governor comes, it is a good thing. We pray for sustainability.

**What would you want to be remembered for when you leave office?**

People who know me know me for integrity, hard work and, above all, fear of God. If you don't do what is right, in a way you are accountable to God. I fear God, and it is because I fear God that I learnt how to do things properly because if you are not there, God is there. Many people know me, many people can speak for me because I am very firm. Maybe I am too firm but that is who I am. So, I want to be remembered as someone who fears God and someone who wants to do what is right always by God's grace.





# As 2024 marches into April

Growing up, a day hardly passed without my father throwing an idiom at us. He travelled on the famous Elder Dempster Shipping Line to England, a poor boy without hope after he woke up to the reality that he must go to school. An Igbo educationist had come to our sleepy valley of Ozenyen in Ohordua, Esan land to spread the gospel of education. My father, an 11-year-old boy at the time, believed. Excitedly, he told his stepfather about it. As the story went, he got the beating of his life for daring to dream. What his stepfather did not reckon with was the spirit of 'can do' that resided in the heart of the 11-year-old who had been sold a dream of a world of possibilities far, far away. But, there was one problem. He was yet to be circumcised. He approached the expert native 'doctor' in the village. "I wish to be circumcised," he said, "but I have no money to pay you." The native doctor, a kind old man, said to him, "You can get me ten bunches of palm nuts as payment." My father went into the bush, and the next day, he appeared with ten bunches. He got circumcised biting on a stick in his mouth as the doctor did his job. Tell me, how do you stop a man like that?

David Omozokpia Oviemhada left the village one fine evening and just began to walk away into the wilderness. For him, nothing out there could be worse than a cruel stepfather. Long story short, many years later he was London-educated, and he appeared in the village with a Triumph motorcycle. He would regale us with tales of

growing up. He taught me how to read with a cane in his hand. He sparked my interest in reading when he bought me a big fat book titled Arabian Nights Tales. He employed Idiomatic expressions to teach us valuable lessons, like: Time and tide wait for no one; As you make your bed, so you will lie on it; Early to bed, early to rise; A bird in hand is worth two in the bush—and one of his all-time favourites—You cannot carry coal to Newcastle.

These sayings have moulded me into the man that I am today. I am grateful that David O. Oviemhada was my father. I carry his name proudly.

I write this to say that my heart bleeds for my country, Nigeria. She is analogous to my father's stepfather who whipped him silly for daring to dream. We can change our story. If we can't change Nigeria's story, at the very least, let us change the story of Edo State. It is an election year. Let us choose wisely. Let us get a kind, thoughtful, empathetic, wise, and listening man who will encourage us to dream and give us the tools to fulfill those dreams. May September 2024 change our lives forever in the same way that my father's decision to leave the village changed his life.

Elsewhere around Nigeria, we hear that Governor Otti of Abia State is making accelerated strides. He says his competition is Dubai, and not even Lagos. Kudos to him. Abians are just now not only celebrating 48 hours of continuous availability of electricity, but one full month. As stories in Nige-

ria go, this could only have happened because of the right leadership. In Edo State, between two power plants already stationed here, we have 800MW of idle power waiting for a buyer. We need someone who can make a deal to enter into a Power Purchase Agreement with the Niger Delta Power Holding Company (NDPHC) and Azura Power to give us a better quality of life. If Abia, a tiny state, can do it, so can we, and even better still.

A few days ago, we were heralded with the heart-warming news that over 300 Kaduna students, and the Edo State PDP Chairman, Dr. Tony Aziegbemi, who were kidnapped have regained their freedom. We are glad to have them back in the safety of their families. The big question for the average Nigerian is: for how much longer shall we endure this terror?

In a sad story, terrorists of the Islamic State (ISIS) persuasion have unleashed pure terror, carnage, and destruction upon a gathering in Russia. Over 140 people are said to have died thus far as the toll is still mounting. The good news coming out of that tragedy is that the perpetrators have been caught. No godfathers can call for them to be released. There's only one godfather in Russia. His name is Vladimir Putin.

In Baltimore, Maryland, United States, the Francis Scott Key bridge built only in 1977 collapsed upon impact by a container ship over a week ago. It was an accident waiting to happen. This would not be the first time. We mourn the deaths of the people

who were on that bridge that unfortunate day. Just like the 18 people who were crushed to death when the Tower of Siloam (Gospel of Luke 13:4) collapsed, these dead were in the wrong place at the wrong time. May our steps be ordered, and may their memories be a blessing to their grieving families.

Here we go again. We are beginning to hear people in the West advocating for the institution of pedophilia as a sexual preference. In a matter of a few years, courts in the West will rule that it is a human right, being a human preference. We will be waiting for them in Africa with our own documents for them to sign allowing for polygamy as a human right also, being a human preference. Since international relations are based on the principle of reciprocity, it will only be fair that they sign our documents as we sign theirs.

The situation in Gaza has gone beyond dire as famine may have set in.

Ukraine and Russia are at a stalemate. Neither one of the countries is blinking.

Last week, a little known guy from a village with dusty streets where donkeys pulling carts are still used as a mode of transport won a nationwide election in Senegal. His name is Bassirou Diomaye Faye. He's just 44 years old. His election is sparking a revival of hope across West Africa, especially in light of the Nigerian election of 2023 which lit up our country momentarily, but then, left us gasping for air. May his humility and ability to listen steer him to greatness. Africa is in dire need of heroes. Only

time will tell if he too will not become drunk with power, and begin to throw members of the opposition in jail as he was jailed by the outgoing president.

Oh, how could I forget about that dreadful disease, cancer! It has no respect for anyone, not the King of England, not the Princess of Wales or the wife of an old friend or an old classmate who was scheduled for prostate surgery this past weekend. God be with you all. One day, the frontier of cancer, just like Mount Everest, will be conquered—and the people said.

Coming back to our inflation-ravaged country, my dear country, Nigeria, it appears some relief may be coming the way of the citizenry soon as the dollar tumbles and prices go lower on food items across the board. It looks like our current Central Bank under Yemi Cardoso has its thinking caps on. May he seek wisdom to do a great job for our country. He should gather great minds across the country and outside. He should take a deep dive into the history of economic revival that's happened in other countries and borrow a page here and a page there. Good news is good for the soul. God bless Edo State in this election year, and may God bless Nigeria. Happy holidays, everyone.

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## What does Bassirou Diomaye Faye's fairytale victory mean for Senegal?

OLUWATOSIN OGUNJUYIGBE

On Sunday, March 24th, Senegal held its presidential elections. Bassirou Diomaye Faye, 44, is set to be declared winner. But his rise to the presidency is the biggest plot twist in this build-up. Just ten days before the polls, Faye was still a prisoner in the Cap Manuel prison on the southern outskirts of Dakar. A few months ago, he was a relatively unknown figure outside his opposition party, PASTEF. Authorities had dissolved PASTEF in 2023, three months after Faye's arrest. But now he will reside in the Senegalese presidential palace for the next five years as the country's youngest-ever head of state.

According to official results from the National Vote Counting Commission on Wednesday, March 27th, Faye won with 54.28% of total votes. His main opponent, Amadou Ba, had 35.79%. The rest trailed much further behind.

Faye's opponents have already conceded. "In view of the trends in the results of the presidential election and pending the official proclamation, I congratulate President Bassirou Diomaye Diakhar Faye on his victory in the first round," Amadou

Ba said. Shortly afterwards, President Macky Sall sent his congratulations on Twitter (X).

Years of political turmoil have left the West African state's democracy teetering on the brink of collapse, with deadly uprisings and the jailing of opposition figures commonplace. In February, Sall made the nation jittery by suddenly postponing the elections. It took protests and the intervention of the Constitutional Court to reverse that decision. But Faye's victory has left the population, particularly its youth, energised by his promise of radical change.

Everything changed for Faye when his party's charismatic leader, Ousmane Sonko, who was also detained, was charged with insurrection in July and barred from running in elections to succeed President Macky Sall. He was a "plan B" designed to compensate for Sonko's announced absence. And he wasn't the only one to play the role of alternate candidate, as Sonko had also sent Cheikh Tidiane Dièye and Habib Sy to file their candidacies to ensure his ideas would be represented.

However, Faye became the popular choice for being the closest substitute to Sonko. This birthed the slogan: "Diomaye moy Sonko, Sonko moy Dio-



FAYE

maye" ("Diomaye is Sonko, Sonko is Diomaye," in Wolof) chanted among the party members. The slogan was their way of making Faye popular among the nation. And it worked. On the evening of his release alongside Sonko (thanks to a last-minute amnesty law), the

crowd chanted the slogan in unison. It was the start of 10 short days of electoral campaigning for a candidate who had never before been elected.

Faye pitched himself as a pan-Africanist intent on steering Senegal toward economic sovereignty and away from French colonial relics such as the West African CFA franc, a currency pegged to the euro. He has also pledged to overhaul the government, weed out corruption and increase transparency. At 44, Senegal's youth regard him as a relatable figure whose values have been informed by a traditional village upbringing and a devotion to Islam.

Not everyone agrees with his left-wing populist ideologies. Pastef's critics condemn the party for promoting what they say are reckless policies that could sink Senegal's economy, most notably its budding oil and gas industry, and inciting "insurrectional movements". But the incumbent party hasn't won confidence either.

Sall has also been criticised for prioritising foreign interests and businesses over local entities, and opponents blame him for high youth unemployment rates and a related migration crisis, which has reached record highs in recent years. More than 60% of Senegal's population is

under 25 years.

More so, Sall's popularity among Senegalese youth sunk to new lows during his second term when he began jailing opposition members. His ambiguous stance about whether he would step down at the end of his mandate fuelled violent clashes between protesters and gendarmes. More than 60 people have died in protests since 2021, according to rights groups.

In his first speech as president-elect, Faye sought to reassure international partners, since his ideologies concern them. "I would like to say to the international community, to our bilateral and multilateral partners, that Senegal will always hold its own and will remain the friendly country and the reliable ally of any partner who engages with us in virtuous, respectful and mutually productive cooperation," he said.

The country wants to exploit oil and gas soon. So, it needs these investors and donors on its side. Most of them will be cautiously observing the new government.

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