

# Obaseki, Oborevwo, Ibori, Igbinedion, others celebrate Ikimi at 80

The Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki; his Delta State counterpart, Sheriff Oborevwo; former Governor of Delta State, James Ibori; former Governor of Edo State, Lucky Igbinedion, and the Esama of Benin Kingdom, Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, were among dignitaries present at the 80th birthday thanksgiving of the Chieftain of

the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), High Chief Tom Ikimi. The thanksgiving service took place at St. Paul's Catholic Church, Airport Road and attracted guests from all walks of life who turned out en masse to celebrate the octogenarian. Obaseki at the event congratulated Ikimi, hailing his contributions to societal development.

The governor wished him many more years in good health and sound mind. Earlier, Archbishop of Benin, His Grace, Most Rev Dr. Austine Akubeze, was joined by Archbishop Emeritus of Ibadan, His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. Felix Akaba Job; Archbishop Emeritus of Abuja, John Cardinal Onaiyekan; Bishop of Uromi, Most Rev Dr. Donatus

Oguns, among other clergymen to officiate the thanksgiving mass. In his homily titled "What a Life", the Emeritus Archbishop of Ibadan, Most Rev. Dr. Felix Akaba Job, charged the congregation on love, urging them on good neighbourliness, selflessness and sacrifice. According to him, "God created us to serve him in the journey of life. The life given to us is a life of

love for God and neighbors. It's not the number of years spent on earth that matters but the quality and value of how the years were utilized for humanity and mankind." The clergy congratulated Chief Ikimi for joining the league of octogenarians, wishing him many more years in good health and wisdom. Other guests at the event in-

clude former Minister of Women Affairs, Josephine Anenih, PDP Candidate for 2024 Governorship Election, Asue Ighodalo, and his wife, Ifeyinwa; the Edo State Head of Service (HOS), Dr. Anthony Okungbowa; Edo PDP Chairman, Anthony Aziegbemi and former Inspector General of Police (IGP), Solomon Arase, among others.

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...that the people may know

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## Medical doctor suggests mental health checks for public office-seekers

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# Lagos-London Route: FG may query foreign airlines on price cuts

BILL OKONEDO AND HAPPY OSAGIE

## amid allegations of anti-competitive practices

The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development, may soon invite some foreign airlines operating into the country from the United Kingdom for consultations if it finds that claims of anti-competitive practices levelled against them are verifiable. The consultations may be further extended to the UK Civil Aviation Authority for remediation, in line with International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) rules, and then escalated to ICAO itself, if found necessary.

This follows aviation industry price wars kicked off by Air Peace, a private indigenous Nigerian airline, which launched operations into the UK on March 30 this year (2024). By this launch, Air Peace led the way for Nigerian airlines to reciprocate the lopsided Bilateral Air Service Agreement (BASA) between Nigeria and the United Kingdom.

The local airline began direct flight operations from Lagos to Gatwick Airport in London. It is widely believed that foreign airlines operating the Nigeria-UK and some other international routes have been charging much higher than standard market prices, taking advantage of the lack of local competition. The price of an international flight ticket on the Lagos-London route was as high as N3.5m but with Air Peace pegging a return economy class ticket at N1.2m, foreign airlines such as British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, and Qatar Airways were forced to slash their prices to stay competitive.

It is said that some of the airlines then completely knocked the bottom off the pricing bucket, by further slashing prices to levels lower than their cost of operations, a practice considered as unrealistic, unwholesome and anti-competitive. Allen Onyema, Chairman of Air Peace, then raised an alarm that foreign carriers operating the Nigeria-UK route were conspiring to send Air Peace out of international operations by crashing airfares on the route. There is an "unspoken alliance" among foreign airlines to use lower pricing to eject Air Peace from

the Nigeria-London route, alleged a visibly displeased Onyema on Channels Television's Politics Today programme on Tuesday. "If they take out Air Peace prematurely, this country will pay dearly for it ten times over, billions will be lost, there will be another heavy strain on the naira," he said. Onyema further said that foreign airlines operating the route "are fighting back". We are being deliberately frustrated in all ways," he said, citing groundhandling and space allocation difficulties at Gatwick Airport in the last couple of days. "It's a very devilish conspiracy," said a dissatisfied Onyema. "All of a sudden, (foreign) airlines are underpricing, below the cost, it's not up to one month, an airline was advertising \$100, another one \$305, \$350. Fill up the entire aircraft and carry people on the wings, it's not even enough to buy your fuel. So, why are they doing that? Their governments are supporting them because Nigeria has been a cash cow for everybody. "Their governments are supporting them to do this and take Air Peace out. The idea is to take Air Peace out and the moment

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EID-EL-FITR: L-R: Minister of State, Environment and Ecological Management, Ishak Salaco; Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola; President Bola Ahmed Tinubu; Principal Private Secretary (PPS) to the President, Mr. Hakeem Muri-Okunola; Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Dr Obafemi Hamzat, and former Minister of Works and Housing, Mr Babatunde Fashola, during the Eid-El-Fitr Prayers at Dodan Barracks, Lagos, yesterday. Photo by Omoye Aminu

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## Obaseki celebrates Eid-el-Fitr with Muslims in Edo, assures better support

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# Space for sale



## NEWS

# Medical doctor suggests mental health checks for public office-seekers

JENNIFER OSADOH

Co-founder and Medical Director of Healthcore Ltd, Toju Chike-Obi, says that mental health checks should be one of the tests that candidates running for public office positions should undergo before assuming office.

Speaking on the issue of mental health on an Arise TV interview, Chike-Obi said it is imperative that individuals, especially those in government and those who are licensed to carry firearms like the police, know their mental health status, advocating the need for more mental health education.

"If the people who make up our government do not understand the concept of mental health, there has to be training on mental health; what it is and what it is not. There has to be an understanding in the fabric of the health system that mental health is another

illness just like other illnesses.

"There has to be a lot of education in the health community, in the public and even among elected officials because we know what the issue is with the budgetary allocation for health. It's one of the worst in the world. The WHO says it needs to be about 15%. We are 5% and we have remained there for decades. There has to be focused campaigns.

"I recommend mental health checks for everyone, not just elected officials. For any publicly held position, that should be one of your tests. Also, any force that carries arms, should have psychological testing."

The doctor also raised awareness about the prevalence of mental health issues, particularly among young people, with 50% of lifetime mental health issues manifesting before the age of 25.

She also cited change in sleeping or eating habits as notable symp-

toms of mental health disorders.

"50% of lifetime mental health issues show up before the age of 25. They show up in teens and young adults. They kind of continue to manifest and worsen over time if not cared for. Things to look out for include If you are either sleeping too much or not sleeping at all, you know, your sleep habits change, your appetite changes, you lose appetite or begin to eat voraciously, also if you notice a change in your mood; you are suddenly more angry, touchier, you suddenly have irrational outbursts, you are more easily triggered.

"Sometimes you notice you don't feel like doing things that normally interest you, especially for the younger people. Others could be you starting to have thoughts, persistent thoughts of doom and gloom, paranoid thoughts of someone coming for you or could be thoughts of self-

harm or you harming people.

"The most common mental health issues are anxiety and depression. Everybody is at risk of mental health issues because there are situational mental health disorders. For example, when you lose a loved one unexpectedly or even expectedly, you do get depressed and clinical depression is when you are sad and lose interest in things that you normally love for three weeks or longer. That is when you call it clinical depression.

But those sort of situational mental health disorders are temporal and all of us are at risk for those sorts. But if these are not properly managed, they become more chronic."

Addressing the stigma surrounding mental health, Chike-Obi compared it to other health conditions like asthma or diabetes, highlighting the need to dispel misconceptions and promote understanding and empathy.

## Finally, Olympic gold medalists to receive prize money

EDWARD OSEGHE,  
WITH AGENCY REPORT

World Athletics announced on Wednesday it will become the first international federation to award prize money at an Olympics, beginning at this year's games in Paris.

Gold medal winners in each of the 48 athletics events in Paris will receive \$50,000 (46,000 euros).

While athletes are often paid by sponsors and the Olympic tradition of amateur competition has long since been consigned to history, the decision by track and field's international body to pay prize money represents a major shift for the Games.

World Athletics President Sebastian Coe told reporters the decision reflected the efforts of track and field athletes "which attract billions of eyeballs" to the TV coverage of the Olympics.

"I don't believe this is remotely

at variance with the concept that the International Olympic Committee often talks about, which is recognising the efforts that our competitors make for the overall success of the Games," Coe said.

He said World Athletics had only informed the IOC of the prize money decision on Wednesday, shortly before the announcement, and there had been no discussion beforehand.

Asked if he felt the IOC should have been given more notice, Coe said: "It's a matter for the sport. The one thing the IOC has consistently recognised is the primacy of international federations to fashion their own futures."

The total prize fund of \$2.4 million will come from the IOC's revenue share allocation that World Athletics receives every four years.

Each Olympic champion will receive \$50,000 and relay teams will receive the same amount, to be shared among team members.

Prize money will be extended to the winners of silver and bronze medals from the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

"The introduction of prize money for Olympic gold medalists is a pivotal moment for World Athletics and the sport of athletics as a whole, underscoring our commitment to empowering the athletes and recognising the critical role they play in the success of any Olympic Games," Coe added.

"We are now in a position to also fund gold medal performances for athletes in Paris, with a commitment to reward all three medalists at the LA28 Olympic Games."

The sport of athletics began paying prize money to gold medalists at the 1997 World Championships. Winners at last year's championships in Budapest received \$70,000.



CELEBRATING EID-EL-FITR:

L-R: Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki; Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the Governor on Religious Matters, Rev'd Osagie Eghurmwunse; Chairman, Edo State Muslim Pilgrims' Welfare Board (MPWB), Sheikh Ibrahim Oyarekhua, and Chief Imam of Benin Central Mosque, Alhaji Fatai Enabulele, during the celebration of Eid-el Fitr at the Government House, Benin City, yesterday.

## Obaseki celebrates Eid-el-Fitr with Muslims in Edo, assures better support

The Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, on Wednesday, joined Muslim faithful in the State to celebrate Eid-el Fitr after the successful completion of the Ramadan fast.

Obaseki, who hosted the Muslims at the Government House in Benin City, assured them of better collaboration and support.

Obaseki was accompanied by the Edo State Head of Service (HOS), Dr. Anthony Okungbowa and Commissioner for Communication and Orientation, Chris Nehikhere and other top government functionaries.

The governor said, "As a government, we must continue to work with religious leaders be-

cause citizens in distress can easily meet religious leaders as they know and can deal with issues swiftly. So, we must cooperate with religious bodies.

"We know things are difficult for citizens but we will continue to pray to God to see us through this trying period and will overcome like we did during COVID-19. There is hunger in the land and we will continue to support palliatives and others.

"I thank the Chief Imam of Benin and Muslim faithful in Edo as in the last seven and half years, you have been a pillar and have helped us consolidate and renew our beliefs as Edo people. I thank you for the peace you

have continued to help us maintain in our State."

According to him, "Listening to the Chief Imam made me realize that all of you are close observers of what we have done in the State. One government can't finish all the work and what we have been doing in the last seven and half years was re-directing the path Edo must go.

"What we met was not what it ought to be but we have tried to change the narrative and now instead of our young people travelling out for greener pastures, people are coming to Edo for livelihood."

Assuring on efforts to ensure sustainability of the government's projects and achievements in the

seven and half years, Obaseki noted, "When the time is right, by the grace of God, I will bring my successor to you, so that you will understand how we have come along in this last seven years so that we can build on what we have achieved and not go back to the situation we met."

Commending Obaseki for his inclusive style of governance, the Chief Imam of Benin Central Mosque, Alhaji Fatai Enabulele hailed the Governor's developmental strides across various sectors of the State's economy.

He assured that the Muslim community in the State will continue to support the governor to finish well and strong.

## Waldrum warns Nigeria over Olympic preparations

● **as Nigeria, Zambia women's teams qualify**

Nigeria boss Randy Waldrum has warned his side must prepare professionally to be able to challenge for a medal at the 2024 Olympic Games women's football tournament.

The Super Falcons and Zambia booked their places in Paris as African qualifying culminated on Tuesday.

Nigeria, ranked 36th in the world, will return to the Olympics for the first time since 2008.

"Now my plea and challenge is to the Minister of Sport and to the federation - to help us prepare properly," Waldrum said.

The West Africans qualified after securing a goalless draw away against South Africa in Pretoria, progressing 1-0 on aggregate thanks to Rasheedat Ajibade's winner in the first leg.

The Super Falcons will face World Cup holders Spain, former world champions Japan and Brazil in Group C in Paris, the BBC reports.

"We need a camp in Europe to prepare for the group that we have - we need proper training, we need proper transportation," Waldrum, 67, added.

"We need to do things right because these women deserve this opportunity to represent our country of Nigeria in the best

possible way."

Eleven-time continental champions Nigeria will be making their fourth appearance at the Olympics, with their best previous result a quarter-final exit in Athens in 2004.

The Super Falcons reached the last 16 at the Women's World Cup last year, losing to eventual runners-up England on penalties.

"With this field being small in the Olympics, every team is a top team," American Waldrum added. "And if you look at our group, again - like the World Cup - it's the group of death, so to speak.

"Sixteen years without qualifying is a long time and I am extremely proud of the girls. There is work to be done when it comes to our attack, and we will improve before heading to France."

Meanwhile, Zambia overturned a first-leg deficit in Morocco to secure back-to-back qualifications for the Olympics. Trailing 2-1 on aggregate, captain Barbra Banda levelled the tie in the 38th minute to send the match at the Moulay Hassan Stadium in Rabat to extra time.

And the Orlando Pride striker netted the winner from the penalty spot in the 105th minute to give the Copper Queens a 3-2 win overall.

## FG may query foreign airlines on price cuts...

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they succeed in taking Air Peace out, Nigerians will pay 20 times over again."

The International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) which regulates global aviation business, states in a document that as, "Part of its policies and guidance on competition, ICAO has examined the issue of anti-competitive practices in international air transport. As reflected in the Conclusions of the Worldwide Air Transport

Conference (ATConf/5), Montreal, 24-28 March 2003, while general competition laws may be an effective tool in many cases, given the differences in competition regimes, the differing stages of liberalisation among States and the distinct regulatory framework for international air transport, there may be a need for aviation-specific safeguards to prevent and eliminate unfair competition in international air transport"

ICAO adds that: "This may be done by means of an agreed

set of anti-competitive practices which can be used, and if necessary modified or added to, by States as indications to trigger necessary regulatory action."

The Conference further agreed that States should give consideration to the following model clause as an option for use at their discretion in air services agreements:

"Safeguards against anti-competitive practices

1. The Parties agree that the following airline practices may be regarded as possible unfair

competitive practices which may merit closer examination:

a) charging fares and rates on routes at levels which are, in the aggregate, insufficient to cover the costs of providing the services to which they relate;

b) the addition of excessive capacity or frequency of service;

c) the practices in question are sustained rather than temporary;

d) the practices in question have a serious negative economic effect on, or cause significant damage to, another airline;