



'New' National Anthem:

# Knocks, cheers for Tinubu over 'Nigeria We Hail Thee...'

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tells organised labour

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## TANTITA SECURITY SERVICES NIGERIA LIMITED

RC 628222

**The Strategist and Performer**  
*Congrats,*  
**Mr. President**  
**On hitting the one-year mark**

The Chairman, Management, and Staff of Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited congratulate and celebrate with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, the Iyelawei of Gbaramatu Kingdom, on your one year in office as the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic Nigeria

We feel honored to be associated with you, in your determination to reposition Nigeria for healthy economic growth and prosperity with your Renewed Hope Agenda.

Mr. President Sir, well-meaning Nigerians and foreign investors appreciate your resolute effort to lay a foundation for a modern

Nigeria.

We confidently stand with you in this vision to make Nigeria prodigious again.

*Once again,  
Congratulations,  
Mr. President.*



HIS EXCELLENCY

ASIWAJU BOLA AHMED TINUBU GCFR  
PRESIDENT, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE  
ARMED FORCES FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA



SIGNED:

High Chief Dr. Government  
Oweizide Ekpmepupolo, alias Tompolo  
The Ibe-Ebidouwei of Ijaw Nation,  
and Chairman, Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited

# Panorama

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## SPOTLIGHT

### Ailing Nigerian PhD student faces deportation from UK over unpaid fees

A Nigerian student at Newcastle University with stage five kidney disease faces deportation from the United Kingdom over failure to pay her accumulated doctorate degree fees.

Sue Agazie, who was diagnosed in September 2023 has been asked to leave the UK by 20 July or make a new application to stay.

### 'Kaduna Refinery not calibrated for Nigeria's crude oil'

MINISTER of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri, has revealed that the Kaduna Refinery was not calibrated to process Nigeria's crude oil.

Lokpobiri made the shocking revelation on Wednesday when he featured in a Channels TV programme to speak on President Bola Tinubu's first year in office.

"What I said was that Nigeria had always imported crude based on the peculiarities of the refineries. And that is why I was giving example of the Kaduna Refinery. We were importing crude oil from Venezuela.

"Nigeria's crude is one of the lightest crude in the world. It is one of the sweetest crude in the world. Some refineries are not calibrated for that.

"That was why the Kaduna Refinery was one that was meant to refine very thick crude oil. So, they were importing from Venezuela. So, it is not happening for the first time," Lokpobiri said.

... DAY 3685

### OUR GIRLS STILL MISSING

Tope Templer Olaiya,  
News Editor

 @TopeTempler



BBC reports.

Agazie, however, said her inability to pay for high quality healthcare in Nigeria means being sent there is like a "death sentence".

The university said "all international students are subject to strict Home Office rules" but it would not discuss individual cases.

Agazie, who is married with one kid, is one of two students who have made an official complaint over alleged promises made to convince the pair to study in the UK.

She said her supervisor promised her funding when she was recruited which did not come to fruition resulting in her being unable to pay. Describing her predicament, she said 2023 has been "the most difficult of my life".

She was diagnosed with stage five kidney disease in



Agazie

September 2023, meaning her kidneys are close to or have completely failed. She is on a waiting list for a kidney transplant.

"I have to check my blood pressure almost every two or three hours," she said.

According to her, being sent back to Nigeria will rather aggravate her ordeal as she does not have the

money to get high quality healthcare for her disease in Nigeria.

She has been told she, along with her six-year-old child and husband who came to the UK as her dependents, must leave the UK by July 20 as she has not paid her PhD fees.

Agazie argues the university did not need to immediately report her to the Home Office as her inability to pay her fee is linked to her complaint.

The university said it must "legally follow sponsor immigration guidance, informing United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) of certain changes".

Agazie is currently using foodbanks as she is being confronted with over £2,000 of debt for her university accommodation.



Representative of UNICEF in Nigerian, Cristian Munduate (left); Oyo State governor, Seyi Makinde; wife of former Oyo State governor, Mutiat Ladoja and IHS Nigeria Director of Data Governance Management and Compliance, Ayobami Adisa, during the commissioning of Solarised PSA Medical Oxygen Plant and Level 2 Newborn Unit at the Jericho Specialist Hospital, Ibadan....yesterday.

### 'Solarised oxygen plant, newborn unit will reduce neonatal mortality rates'

From Rotimi Agbolajaye and Moyosore Salami (Ibadan)

THE Country Director of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in Nigeria, Cristian Munduate, yesterday, joined Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State to inaugurate a state-of-the-art solarised oxygen plant and Level Two Newborn Unit in Ibadan. The commissioning held at the Jericho Hospital, Ibadan, was aimed at bolstering healthcare infrastructure.

Makinde and Munduate said the facility would significantly reduce neonatal mortality rates and improve health outcomes for our youngest and most vulnerable population. Makinde said the solarised oxygen plant represents a ground-breaking leap in his agenda for sustainable healthcare solutions in the state.

According to Makinde, any project that improves the welfare of the people is critical and important to his administration. The governor

noted that the healthcare facility, powered by renewable energy sources, would ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply, critical for life-saving interventions in the state.

Makinde lauded the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders and international partners such as UNICEF, IHS Towers, the Governments of Norway and Canada, and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, underscoring the significance of partnerships in achieving sustainable development.

## CROSS WORD PUZZLE

### • ACROSS

1. Desire something, (6).
2. Part of mouth, (3).
3. Two-legged animal, (5).
4. With low rainfall, (4).
5. Japanese currency unit, (3).
6. Knowledge from teaching, (4).
7. 'Nine' in Hausa language, (4).
8. Undertake legal proceedings, (3).
9. Member of Semitic people, (4).
10. Pulverize something, (5).
11. Master of Science, abbr., (3).
12. Give rise to, (6).
13. Greek alphabet's 12th letter, (2).
14. Strategic business unit abbr., (3).
15. L.G.A. in Edo State, (4).
16. Upper limb, (3).

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### RANDOM FACTS

- Drinking green tea before bed allows ones body to burn calories while asleep. Green tea also increases your metabolism.
- Across cultures and time periods, outcasts and deviants have been buried face-down to prevent their impure souls from coming back up.
- Lesotho is world's largest enclave or country completely surrounded by another country. It's located in South Africa.
- Some engineers have invented a pair of glasses that can change focus depending on what the wearer is looking at.
- If you score high in enthusiasm, industriousness, compassion, or curiosity, you are probabilistically more likely to have high well-being.

### TODAY'S QUOTE



He who will hold another down in the mud must stay there to keep him down.

CHINUA  
ACHEBE

Truth is like oil; no matter how much water you pour on it, it will always float.

IGBO  
PROVERB

When people are incompetent and they don't like you, you wear their dislike as a badge with honour.

SANUSI  
LAMIDO

### • DOWN

1. Move from side to side, (6).
2. Table linens, (6).
3. Small whirl, (4).
4. Piece of soft material, (3).
5. Forbid something, (3).
6. Edition, abbr., (2).
7. Congo D.R. Ex President, (6).
8. Part for holding something, (6).
9. Greek alphabet's 12th letter, (2).
10. Strategic business unit abbr., (3).
11. L.G.A. in Edo State, (4).
12. Upper limb, (3).

### TODAY IN HISTORY

#### • 2017 - Nigeria

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the declaration of independence of the ill-fated Republic of Biafra, all the South-east states were totally shutdown as Igbo people obeyed the sit-at-home order issued by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). 23 banks received N28.7 billion executed in 460,000 transactions through the Mavrodi Mondial Moneybox (MMM) Ponzi scheme within six months, the 2016 annual report of the Nigeria Electronic Fraud Forum (NeFF) revealed. The report disclosed that by the time the scheme crashed on December 13, 2016, over N11.9 billion had been lost by subscribers.

#### • 2016 - Nigeria

President Muhammadu Buhari in glowing terms than he had used before, commended his predecessor, Goodluck Jonathan, who conceded defeat to him. He said but for that singular act Nigeria would have been in turmoil.

30 persons were killed in Onitsha, Anambra State capital, after pro-Biafran protesters, celebrating the 49th anniversary of the declaration of the defunct Biafra republic, engaged soldiers in a clash.

#### • 2014 - S/Korea

South Korean pop star, Psy and his irrepressible "Gangnam Style" became the first YouTube video to surpass two billion views.

#### • 2013 - Nigeria

House of Representatives voted to ban gay marriage, endorsing 14-year prison sentence for any "public show" of affection by a same-sex couple.

#### • 2012 - Liberia

Former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, was sentenced by the Hague to 50 years in prison for atrocities committed during the Sierra Leone Civil War.

#### • 1994 - USA

Mormon Church president Ezra Taft Benson died in Salt Lake City at age 94.

#### • 1967 - Nigeria

Eastern Region declared independence from Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra, sparking a civil war.

#### • 1966 - Congo

The former Congolese Prime Minister, Evariste Kimba, and other politicians were executed in Kinshasa on the orders of President Joseph Mobutu.

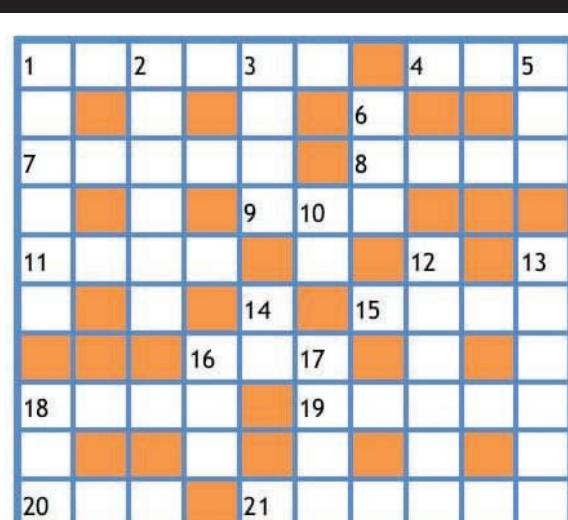
#### • 1964 - Nigeria

Isaac Babalola Akinyele, KBE (born 18 April 1882) died. He was the first educated Olubadan of Ibadan and the second Christian to ascend the throne.

#### • 1889 - USA

Brassiere was invented.

Check page 47 for solution to the puzzle



# News

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## Emirate tussle: CJN summons FHC, Kano CJs

From Amech Ochojila (Abuja) and Murtala Adewale (Kano)

CHIEF Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Olukayode Ariwoola, has summoned the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court (FHC) and that of the Kano State High Court to appear before him over conflicting interim injunctions regarding the Kano Emirate tussle.

Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) has called for punitive actions against lawyers and judges who issue conflicting orders in the Kano Emirate tussle. It said the conduct of counsel and courts in the tussle exposed the entire legal profession in Nigeria to public ridicule and opprobrium.

To enforce the ban on all public gatherings intended for protest within the state, the Kano police command has vowed to deal ruthlessly with anyone found violating the order.

Exercising the authority vested in him as the chief security officer of Kano, Governor Abba Yusuf had imposed stringent restrictions on protests within the state.

The FHC in Kano, presided over by Justice Simon Amobeda, issued an order for the eviction of Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II from the Kofar Kudu Palace, reinforcing the authority of the 15th Emir of Kano, Aminu Ado Bayero.

Also, the Kano High Court presided over by Justice Amina Aliyu issued an injunction to protect Muhammadu Sanusi and other key figures from potential harassment. The order prevents any interference with the Emir's autonomy and the seizure of key symbols of his authority, such as the Twin Spear, the Royal Hat of Dabo, and the ostrich-feathered shoes.

The conflicting orders led to confusion regarding the rightful authority and protection.

- NBA slams courts, lawyers handling proceedings
- Police deploy armed personnel to enforce gov's ban on protests

tion of the emirs in Kano. The state High Court's case is set for further hearing on June 13, while the Federal High Court has adjourned its case till June 4.

NJC, through its X handle, njc-Nig, disclosed the summons yesterday.

NBA, the umbrella body of lawyers in the country, asserted that the actions of lawyers and judges brought utter disgrace to the profession and exposed the entire legal profession in Nigeria to public ridicule and opprobrium.

In a statement by its President, Yakubu Maikyau, yesterday, in Abuja, the NBA vowed to drag any lawyer found culpable in the matter before the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee (LPDC) for appropriate sanctions.

The NBA boss called on the CJs of FHC and his Kano High Court counterpart to identify

the judicial officers involved and drag them before the NJC for disciplinary action.

"I have keenly followed the developments on the recent events concerning the stool of the Emir of Kano. I must say, without any equivocation, that the conduct of counsel and the courts in the proceedings, culminating in the orders issued by the FHC, the Kano High Court and the FHC, in a circus, have brought utter disgrace and shame to the profession," he added.

"The damage would take the legal profession a long time to recover. It is unfortunate and was uncalled for," the NBA president stated.

He called on the respective heads of the judges' courts to take immediate steps to investigate their conduct to find any possible abuse of their judicial offices and file a report with NJC for necessary action. "NBA, on the other hand, will

investigate the conducts of the counsel involved in these cases and shall not hesitate to commence disciplinary action against them before the LPDC, should there be any finding of alleged professional misconduct against them.

"The Chairman of NBA Ethics and Disciplinary Committee has accordingly been directed to invite the counsel for preliminary investigation," he added.

T o contain a possible breakdown of law and order in the state, following the imbroglio, Governor Abba Yusuf imposed stringent restrictions on all public gatherings intended for protest, according to a statement issued by his spokesperson, Sanusi Bature, yesterday.

The governor has the police, the Department of State Services (DSS) and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) to apprehend, detain and prosecute any individual or group partaking in demonstrations on the streets of Kano.



Vice President, Kashim Shettima (left); President Bola Tinubu; Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike; President of the Senate, Goodwill Akpabio and others during the flag-off of commercial operation of Abuja Light Rail Mass Transit...yesterday.

## Minimum wage: Be considerate, minister tells organised labour

By Gloria Nwafor

MINISTER of State for Labour and Employment, Nkeiruka Onyejeocha, has appealed to leaders of organized labour to be considerate and patriotic in their demands in the ongoing negotiation for a new national minimum wage.

Onyejeocha appealed in a statement signed by the ministry's Director of Press and Public Relations, Olajide Osundun, yesterday, in Abuja.

This was as the Trade Union Congress (TUC) said the Federal Government has been nonchalant about deliberations on the new wage.

While arguing that the Federal Government had consistently taken steps to secure a fair and realistic wage for Nigerian workers, the minister urged labour to recognise that the country's economy was still on the path of recovery from Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and economic distress.

"We appeal to organised labour and, indeed, other relevant stakeholders to be con-

siderate and patriotic in their demands, recognising that our economy is still recovering from the devastating effect of the pandemic and other global economic shocks. We are committed to putting the people first and ensuring that our monetary policies benefit all Nigerians, not just a select few."

"The government remains dedicated to the well-being of our citizens and it urges all relevant parties to demonstrate patriotism and understanding. This is particularly during this critical period when President Bola Tinubu is working diligently to revitalise the economy," she said.

The minister, therefore, said the government recognised that the economic challenges faced by Nigerians were complex and multifaceted, and called for a collective effort of all stakeholders to overcome them.

She added that the meeting with organised labour was a significant step in securing a fair and realistic wage for Nigerian workers.

with Channels Television's 'Politics Today', on Tuesday night, disclosed the union's threat to embark on strike if the issue was not resolved.

Osifo said, "The government must be serious in addressing the issue of a new minimum wage."

In the last few months, labour unions and the Federal Government have been locked in negotiations over a new minimum wage with the former giving an ultimatum of May 31 (tomorrow).

Labour had initially demanded N615,000 minimum wage when the government proposed N48,000. It came down to N497 when the government shifted to N54,000. At the time of filing this report, both parties had shifted grounds by N3,000 apiece.

According to Osifo, the new proposal does not tally with the country's economic realities, adding that with an inflation rate of 33.69 per cent in April 2024, labour had to reject the Federal Government's latest offer of 60,000.

## Akpabio, Abbas explain differing statements by Onanuga, Ngelale

Tinubu commences 'new' National Anthem

From John Akubo, Abuja

SPEAKER, House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, may have provided an insight into the confusion between President Bola Tinubu's spokespersons in their conflicting statements over the President's visit to the National Assembly, yesterday, to address the joint session.

Tinubu's Special Adviser on Media, Ajuri Ngelale, had stated that the President was not scheduled to address a joint session of the National Assembly on May 29. Ngelale's statement, on Tuesday, contradicted an earlier one issued by Tinubu's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, which indicated otherwise.

"In view of public commentary concerning the President delivering a speech before a joint sitting of the National Assembly tomorrow, May 29, 2024, it is important to state that this information is false and unauthorised, as the Office of the President was not involved in the planning of the event."

However, while the President passed through the National Assembly, yesterday, to flag off the 'new' National Anthem, 'Nigeria We Hail Thee', the Speaker had asked his colleagues and senators to forgive them for such an error.

'Nigeria We Hail Thee' was first adopted as the country's National Anthem at Independence in 1960. Lillian Jean Williams, a British expatriate, wrote the lyrics, while Frances Berda composed the music.

He said, "By June 12, all that we have to say about our 25 years of unbroken democracy will come to pass."

Noting that the President has other commitments, Abbas added: "After the National Assembly engagement, he is supposed to be at the commissioning of the light railway station somewhere in the town. So, he might not be able to give any speech, and all the speeches coming from us too are not going to take place because June 12 is supposed to be the real Democracy Day, not May 29."

## Court orders forfeiture of \$1.4m linked to Emeifie

By Joseph Onyekwere

A FEDERAL High Court sitting in Lagos has, again, ordered the interim forfeiture of \$1.4 million linked to the former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emeifie.

It also authorised Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank) to temporarily take over the funds and assets of Afex Commodities Exchange, following its N17,808,452,467.107 CBN Anchor Borrowers' Programme loan it has failed to repay.

Justice Ayokunle Faji, yesterday, ordered the forfeiture of the \$1.4 million to the Federal Government.

The judge also ordered the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to publish the interim forfeiture order in a national newspaper for anyone interested in the money sought to be forfeited to appear before the court and show cause within 14 days why the final order of forfeiture should not be made.

The court gave the order while granting an ex parte application by the counsel to EFCC, Bilikisu Buhari-Bala. The money is said to be in Donatone Limited's account domiciled in Titan Bank Limited.

Firm to lose N17.8b assets over ABP loan

Justice Faji adjourned the matter till June 25 for a hearing of the final forfeiture.

JUSTICE Chukwujekwu Aneke granted the interim Global Standing Instruction (GSI) injunctive relief, following the bank's application on May 27, 2024.

The judge made the order after hearing an ex parte motion filed by the bank's counsel led by Ajibola Aribisala (SAN).

The loan comprises N15,766,475,417.06 billion outstanding as of April 17, 2024, on the loan facilities (with the accrued interest) granted by the plaintiff to the defendant, as well as "pre-judgment interest" on the N15,766,475,417.06 at the prevailing rediscount rate of 28 per cent yearly approved by the CBN from April 18, 2024, when the plaintiff's letter of demand dated April 17, 2024, was delivered to the defendant until judgment, is delivered in this suit, and post-judgment interest of N15,766,475,417.06 and cost of recovery and incidental expenses is N2,041,977,050.047.

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# Megacity: How rural-urban drift, demolitions breed homeless population in Lagos

Rural-urban migration has been one of the major factors driving under-bridge dwellings in Lagos State. With its size as the smallest state in the country (by land mass), the pressure of overpopulation, forced evictions, high cost of rent, and ongoing demolitions have jointly exacerbated homelessness in the state.

FELICITAS OFFORJAMAH writes that viable policy options are needed to curb this menace.

DESPITE shelter being one of the necessities of life, homelessness in the country has been receiving a boost of late with the recent demolition of structures in Lagos and Delta states by the respective governments.

As has been the case whenever such exercises are carried out, the hapless victims are accusing both state governments of being insensitive to the plight of the poor, as well as their failure to duly notify them before carrying out the demolitions.

The governments on their part have accused the victims of illegally occupying public spaces, breaching the state's town planning laws, and generally hurting the environment with their unapproved and unplanned development.

But as the accusations and counter-accusations waft across, the nation's housing deficit continues to blossom, while affordable housing remains a luxury.

For Gloria Amejo, a mother of three and one of the victims of the demolition carried out by the Lagos State government under the Dolphin Bridge, nothing could be more grueling than being made homeless just two years after arriving with her husband and children to chase her "Lagos dream."

As she breastfed her last baby amid napping cart pushers, wheelbarrow pushers, cobblers, and sundry characters, she told *The Guardian* that with the demolition, the government has created "unimaginable and unnecessary evil for her."

Driving away flies that encircled her and her baby, Amejo said: "Most people always believe that they will make it in Lagos, and that's why we travelled all the way here. But what we met was not what we expected. My husband's monthly salary is N50,000, and it was difficult to get a house that we could afford in this Ikoyi area."

"So, we paid N20,000 to stay under the bridge pending when we would be able to save enough to get a house, and even a better job."

With their eviction from under the Dolphin Bridge, Amejo and her family now stay at an abandoned shop in Obalende.

With bloodshot eyes staring into an uncertain future, Babatunde, another victim of the demolition exercise, appears bewildered. But amid his bewilderment, he told *The Guardian*: "I work as a driver in one of the companies here at Ikoyi. I must stay nearby so that I can reach the office before 5:00 a.m. to begin work on time, even though I will eventually get home by 9:30 p.m. every day."

"I was saddened when I came back on that fateful day to see my luggage scattered around. I don't know why the government is treating us like criminals. We no get house, na our problem? No be government cause am. And dem no even give us alternatives, dem go just scatter us like that..."

Babatunde, who said that he must secure his job either way, added that his only option at the moment was to appeal to a friend to allow him to stay in his commercial bus after work until he could sort out his accommodation issues.

Narrating his experience living under the bridge, Babatunde said: "I am not aware that



Dislodged tenants under Falomo bridge in Lagos.

people paid up to N250,000 as rent there because I paid N30,000 to stay there. One man whom I suspect is 'the landlord' gave me a bank account number that I paid the money. He said as long as I pay the rent on time, he won't disturb me. And I have been paying since, and there was no problem."

Another resident, Dorcas Eke, who claimed to be a graduate of Education from Kwara State University, started living under Obalende Bridge after her parents died in an auto crash. "We lost everything when our shop caught fire and two weeks later, my parents died. The few relatives that I had didn't want extra responsibilities, so, I had to fend for myself somehow, and that's how I found myself sleeping under the bridge," she said.

Research has shown that about two-thirds of the population of Lagos dwells in informal settlements, including unapproved developments, abandoned buildings, or partially constructed buildings.

According to experts, the situation has been exacerbated due to several issues, including the state's tenancy laws being tilted to favour house owners, the economic situation, forced evictions, and the gale of demolitions.

In the Oworonshoki area of the state, Osiko Daniels told *The Guardian* that the state government didn't give him any notice until he saw his four-bedroom apartment brought down by bulldozers.

He said: "I'm now rendered homeless since the government demolished my house for whatever reason. And if we try to get justice or any compensation, our efforts are frustrated. The agony I'm passing through will lay a curse on the people who demolished the house that I built with my sweat. My family and I are currently staying with a family member," he lamented.

But explaining the Oworonshoki demolitions, the state's Commissioner for Housing, Moruf Akinderu Fatai, said that it was to make room for new housing developments, adding that victims that habited the "shanties" were informed in advance of the demolition.

This position was, however, countered by the locals who said that they were not given adequate compensation if any at all, even as they pointed out that they would not be able to afford the new apartments.

Also, Amnesty International in its report stated that residents were given no prior notice of the demolition of their homes and property.

Last year, data from World Population Review

**Social housing policy can work in Nigeria if we run an efficient and incorrupt system. The government must invest in social housing; we must do it. There's nothing impossible if we put our heart to it. All over the world, social housing has been used to turn around lives**

home is to have privacy, dignity, and protection. So, if any of these characteristics is not there, you are not adequately housed. Unfortunately, it's going to rise because the supply of houses is lower than the demand."

X-raying the payment of rent to some unscrupulous "landlords" by under-the-bridge dwellers Nubi stated: "You can't lease out a public space that belongs to the government. That's illegal and criminal. Those individuals should be brought to book. However, the scenario brings to focus, the fact that these people have money to pay, but not enough to rent a suitable home in Lagos and this is where subsidy comes in.

"Government needs to subsidise highbrow areas in Lagos like the Ikeja axis for average and key workers. It's not rocket science.

Social housing policy can work in Nigeria if we run an efficient and incorrupt system. The government must invest in social housing; we must do it. There's nothing impossible if we put our heart to it. All over the world, social housing has been used to turn around lives."

A housing expert and Director of Sales for Fountain Havens, Ruona Oghuvbu, said that another important policy option would be for the government to provide temporary housing for people who cannot afford to rent a house.

This, he said is in line with international practices where governments guarantee that all citizens, regardless of class, have roofs over their heads.

According to him, citizens also have a role to play in solving housing problems in Lagos State.

"As a player in the real estate sector, we have experienced challenges like multiple owners to a particular property. Imagine the headache one goes through in trying to acquire that property - a property that has no single owner.

"Lagosians are faced with a housing problem that stakeholders need to gather, talk about, and implement. We have a long way to go."

The Co-founder of Rethinking Cities, an advocacy group, Deji Akinpelu, said life under the bridge, or the case of homelessness in Lagos, deserves to be well understood and put in proper context, and that like every urban city in the world, Lagos is bound to experience migration from within and outside the country.

"Coupled with the crisis of insecurity across the nation, this has become inevitable. It is a global trend, as 50 per cent of the world's population now live in urban cities, people tend to migrate to seek major economic opportunities among other factors.

## 'Nigeria enacted anti-torture law to punish errant officers'

**N**IGERIA has enacted the Anti-torture Act to prohibit and punish acts of torture committed by public officers.

Solicitor-General of the Federation, Mrs Beatrice Jedd-Agbia, made this known at a sensitisation and advocacy session for law enforcement agencies, MDAs and relevant stakeholders on the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT), yesterday in Abuja.

"The definition of torture under the relevant legal frameworks pertains to acts committed by public officials, particularly law enforcement, which inflicts pain or suffering, whether mental or physical on individuals in their custody."

"Therefore, the Federal Government prioritises initiatives aimed at preventing torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment," she said.

She said the government and stakeholders have the responsibility to support measures aimed at unequivocally rooting out torture in Nigeria, in line with UNCAT and OPCAT.

## NIDCOM, others move against deportation of students from UK

**A**DELEGATION, to be led by a representative of the Nigerian Embassy in the United Kingdom (UK), Christian Okeke, and leaders of Nigerian Students Union in the UK will visit the management of Teesside University to intervene on allegations of unfair and unjust deportation order served on some Nigerian students at the university.

The plan is contained in a statement by the Director of Media, Public Relations and Protocol, Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), Abdur-Rahman Balogun,

According to the statement, the decision was taken at the end of a virtual meeting held between the Chairman/CEO, NIDCOM, Abike Dabiri-Erewa; Ambassador Christian Okeke; President, Nigerian Students Union, UK, Mr Yemi Soile, and some affected students at a meeting on Sunday.

The affected students narrated their ordeal and were hopeful of positive intervention.

During the meeting, Dabiri-Erewa appealed to the students to remain calm and not to take laws into their hands, while urging the university to treat the students with justice and fairness.

Okeke spoke in the same vein.

## Umahi denies as NUJ reports walkout to Tinubu

From Nnamdi Akpa, Abakaliki

**N**IGERIA Union of Journalists (NUJ), Federal Capital Territory Council, has called on President Bola Tinubu to caution the Minister of Works and Housing, David Umahi, over his walkout on journalists.

The call is contained in a statement jointly signed by the Chairman and Secretary of Council, Osadebamwen Osaretin, and Ochiaka Ugwu, yesterday in Abuja.

According to the union officials, the council is appalled by the outright disregard for members of the fourth estate of the realm by Umahi.

The statement reads: "The description of over 40 journalists present for an assignment, as 'journalists are not present' was very condescending to a news conference he had invited the media through the ministry's Assistant Director Press, Mr Clement Ezeorah.

"For the avoidance of doubt, over 40 media correspon-

dents were present for the news conference for which the ministry's invitation had been scheduled for 2.00 p.m. and for which the minister came at 2.48 p.m.

"The correspondents, who were present include those from *The Punch*, *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Vanguard*, *Leadership*, *Daily Independent*, *People's Daily*, *Armed Forces Radio*, *NTA*, *Arise Television*, *TVC*, among others.

"Describing these and others as 'media not present'

leaves much to be desired. The council urges President Bola Tinubu to call the minister to order as well as direct all his appointees to demonstrate the highest civility and courtesy to journalists and the media in general."

They added that, if not, the media would be persuaded to boycott his activities.

According to them, treating members of the media with such condescension is unbecoming of a minister appointed to serve and not be an emperor.



Alara of Ilara Kingdom, Epe, Oba Olufolarin Ogunsanwo (left); Chief Executive Officer, Caverton Offshore Support Group, Olabode Makajuola; General Manager, Lagos State Waterways Authority, Oluwadamilola Emmanuel; Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu; his Deputy Dr Obafemi Hamzat; Secretary to the State Government, Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin; and Lagos State Head of Service, Bode Agoro, during the inauguration of locally built I5 ferry (OMIBUS) in Lagos...yesterday.

## Fluctuating Customs FX rates crippling clearing processes, stakeholders lament

By Adaku Onyenucheya

**C**USTOMS Foreign Exchange (FX) duty rate volatility is complicating the initial transactions for clearing agents and importers, causing significant disruptions in the clearing process and causing disputes between clearing agents and importers, stakeholders have observed.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had directed a total of 29 rates, ranging from N951.94/\$1 in January 2024 to a peak of N1,662.35/\$1 in February 2024.

While a singular exchange rate was maintained in January, February saw 15 dif-

ferent spot rates, and March had a total of 13 different spot rates applied, ranging from N1,303.84/\$1 to N1,630.16/\$1.

Despite the exchange rate experiencing a steady decline to N1,150.10/\$1 on April 24, it increased to N1,373.64/\$1 on May 1, rose again to N1,441.53/\$1 on May 3, and declined to N1,382.16/\$1 on May 7 before rising to N1,412.57/\$1 on May 8.

The rate was adjusted to N1414.59/\$1 on May 9 and increased to N1,457.01/\$1 on May 11. On May 14, the rate was lowered to N1,407.06/\$1 but escalated to N1,502.136/\$1 on May 15.

The rate was slashed to N1,492.08/\$1 on May 16 and was

increased again to N1,530.367/\$2 on May 17. The Customs duty rate was again adjusted to N1,500.837/\$1 on May 19 and was further reduced to N1,481.875/\$1 on May 21. It was again slashed to N1,446.281/\$1 on May 22.

Industry practitioners highlighted the severe impacts of the unstable Customs FX rate at the point of clearing, which is causing big issues among clearing agents and importers.

The Public Relations Officer for the Association of Nigerian Licensed Customs Agents (ANLCA) Tin Can Island Port Chapter, Onome Monije, emphasised that the fluctuat-

ing FX rates particularly affect the clearing of vehicles and goods not covered by the Pre-Arrival Assessment Report (PAAR) system.

"The goods that have PAAR don't have much problem because some of them are multinational. But for clearing vehicles, we are having challenges," she said.

She explained the complicated process of refunds during an increased FX rate, as she detailed a scenario wherein, if the clearing costs increase due to FX rate changes after a payment has been made, resolving the discrepancies can lead to conflicts and additional charges.

## FG announces plan to boost operations of GenCos

By Walait Musa

**M**INISTER of Power, MAdabayo Adelabu, has said the Federal Government is planning to give electricity Generation Companies (GenCos) access to foreign exchange to boost their maintenance and operations.

He made this known on his X handle, yesterday, May 29, while giving an account of his visit to Egbin Power Plant in Ikorodu, Lagos State.

The minister described GenCos' access to forex as critical to sustaining and improving energy supply nationally.

He said: "Moreover, we

acknowledge the importance of ensuring that power generation companies have access to essential foreign exchange for their maintenance and operations. This access is crucial for sustaining and improving power output on a national scale."

Adelabu added that the government was accelerating access to forex, owing to the critical role it would play in the country's energy infrastructure.

He said: "We are taking decisive steps to facilitate this access, recognising its critical role in the broader context of our energy infrastructure."

Adelabu said the ministry's ongoing discussions with the Ministry of Petroleum Resources and gas suppliers were centred on addressing gas supply constraints and facilitating debt repayment.

He said, through collaborative efforts with all stakeholders, the government was dedicated to finding solutions that would benefit the entire sector and contribute to its long-term sustainability.

He noted that the shortage of gas had posed a significant obstacle to the operation of gas power plants.

The minister said through close collaboration with the Ministry of Petroleum

Resources and gas suppliers, the government was working diligently to tackle this issue and ensure a reliable gas supply for power generation.

Earlier, he said during his recent visit to the Egbin Power Plant, that the ministry had conducted a thorough diagnosis of the challenges currently facing its power sector in Nigeria.

He said the challenges range from infrastructure limitations to supply chain constraints.

Adelabu noted that the government was taking urgent action to address them and enhance power supply across the country.

## CDC, CEPI partner against disease outbreak

By Musa Adekunle

**A**FRICA Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the sidelines of the 77th World Health Assembly to expand their partnership to strengthen epidemic and pandemic prevention, preparedness and response in Africa.

A statement by Africa CDC noted that the organisations would collaborate to boost regional vaccine research, development, and sustainable manufacturing leadership and capabilities in Africa, fostering a faster and more equitable response to emerging infectious diseases.

Africa CDC's Director General, Dr Jean Kaseya, said: "The New Public Health Order calls to action to build resilient health systems capable of managing recurrent, high-impact infectious disease and outbreaks; an action-oriented partnership such as this is at the core.

## Education should boost talent devt, says MultiChoice

**I**N commemoration of the 2024 Africa Day, MultiChoice has emphasised the role of education in cultivating and sustaining talents in the African entertainment industry.

According to the company, the continent is filled with unrealised potential, and it is pertinent that organisations address Africa's education challenge to ensure that skills that students gain are directly relevant to their future development, and that of the continent.

Aligning with the 2024 Africa Day theme, "Educate an African fit for the 21st century," the company said it remained committed to equipping aspiring industry professionals with the "sustainable education" it would take to thrive in the rapidly changing film and television sector, through the MultiChoice Talent Factory (MTF) initiative.

"An MTF survey has found that around 92 per cent of MTF Academy graduates go on to work in the creative sector. Many of these young professionals go on to careers at MultiChoice, which bills itself as 'Africa's most-loved storyteller,'" said MultiChoice West Africa CEO, Mr John Ugbé.

"This level of absorption demonstrates another benefit of education in the African development journey: it unlocks the massive potential of the continent's youthful population."

# Knocks, cheers for Tinubu over 'Nigeria We Hail Thee...'

From Sodiq Omolaoye (Abuja),  
Kehinde Olatunji and Melody  
Duruigbo (Lagos)

A SECTION of the Nigerian public has come down hard on the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for scrapping the country's national anthem, 'Arise, O Compatriots...', in favour of the old, 'Nigeria We Hail Thee...'.

Tinubu, yesterday, signed the National Anthem Bill 2024 into law coinciding with the country's commemoration of 25 years of unbroken democracy. Thereafter, the President, at a joint session of the National Assembly, affirmed the change and sang the 'new'

- Netizens flay leadership for 'misplaced priorities'
- Akpabio, Agbese, others welcome anthem
- Go the whole hog with regional, parliamentary systems of govt, cleric tells President
- National Assembly to get Supplementary Appropriation Bill soon

anthem alongside lawmakers and other top government officials.

"You sang out the latest national anthem, 'Nigeria we hail thee'. You see, this is our diversity, representing all characters and how we blend together to be brothers and sisters," the President said approvingly.

Tinubu's claim was echoed by Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, who said: "We are thanking you for bringing back the old national anthem; taking us

back to our genealogy, the genealogy of our birth, that though we belong to different tribes and tongues, in brotherhood we all stand. Henceforth, we will not refer to ourselves as just mere compatriots but as brothers."

But some Nigerians voiced condemnation of the swap, describing it as a misplaced priority.

A former aide to ex-president Goodluck Jonathan, Reno Omokri, said the development was "a step back-

wards", stressing that 'Arise, O Compatriots...' was written by young Nigerians, including John A. Ilechukwu, Eme Etim Akpan, B. A. Ogunnaike, Sota Omoigui and P.O. Aderibigbe in 1978, but the old anthem, 'Nigeria, We Hail Thee...', was written by an English woman, Lillian Jean Williams.

He fumed: "We ought to have even changed that name(Nigeria) to something indigenous, such as the Republic of Wazobia, as Ghana did in 1957 when she changed from Gold Coast to Ghana at Independence in 1957.

"Instead of undertaking these name changes, we are rather doubling down on another colonial relic by discarding the anthem written by our own citizens for one written by a foreigner. I dare anyone reading this to name another country whose national anthem was written by a foreigner. Even a banana republic would not do that!"

Omokri said: "My heart is very heavy about Nigeria right now because, in my opinion, we just took a giant step backwards in our national journey. Now, do not get me wrong, I support the current economic policies of my country. Fuel subsidy removal and naira flotation are necessary policies that any

lover of Nigeria should adhere to regardless of party affiliation.

"One of the most unnecessary acts of governance in Nigeria in recent times is the law returning the old national anthem. First of all, there was nothing wrong with the existing anthem. Secondly, with all of the multifaceted issues we face, it seems like we have a lack of priorities when we major on such a settled issue as an anthem."

He added: "Does it not sound preposterous that a foreigner should write our national anthem? Are we that shallow and uninspired that we cannot come up with our own indigenous anthem? You can imagine the land of such music icons, like Fela Kuti, Osita Osadebe, Dan Maraya Jos, and contemporary stars, like Sade Adu, Burna Boy, Davido and Wizkid, importing music of national significance from Britain.

"Already, the name Nigeria was given to us by another English lady, Flora Shaw. And she named us in 1897 in much the same way you name a dog. She did it tongue in cheek, for an article she wrote for *The Times of London*."

The Lead Bishop of Worldwide Anglican Church (WAC) in Nigeria, Seun Adeoye, urged the National Assembly to make laws that will return Nigeria to regional and parliamentary systems of government.

Adeoye, in a statement in Os-

ogbo yesterday, said: "If after 46 years of jettisoning the old anthem, we still found it worthy and necessary to restore it into our national life; I think nothing is wrong when we bring back the old systems that had worked for us in the past.

"For me, I think Nigeria's economy as it stands today is not strong enough to successfully fund the current presidential system of government and even bring about the expected developmental projects across Nigeria. Therefore, I suggest that we return to the parliamentary system as inherited from the British at independence in 1960."

Also denouncing the anthem change, a former Minister of Education, Oby Ezekwesili, vowed she would never sing it.

Posting on X, Ezekwesili wrote: "Let it be known to all and sundry that I, Obiageli 'Oby' Ezekwesili, will, whenever asked to sing the Nigerian national anthem, sing: 'Arise, O compatriots...'"

She explained: "This is my own national anthem, and let it be known that no one can suppress my right to dissent an obnoxious 'law' that is repugnant to all that is of good conscience in Nigeria."

Other Nigerians took to social media to vent their anger.

An Instagram user with the handle, @pj.stars, said: "This is disrespect to Sir Benedict Odiase et al, who wrote and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37



Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele (left); President Bola Tinubu; President of the Senate, Goodwill Akpabio; Deputy President of the Senate, Barau Jibrin; Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Benjamin Okezie Kalu; Chairman, Senate Committee, Finance and Appropriation, Solomon Adeola Olamilekan, and others during the Joint Sitting of the Senate and the House of Representatives, as part of activities to mark the first year of the current administration in Abuja... yesterday.

## Nigerians dissatisfied with administration, lament pains of 'reforms'

From Adeyemi Adepetun, Tobi Awodipe (Lagos) and Collins Olayinka (Abuja)

ON May 29, 2023, when President Bola Tinubu took office, the headline inflation was 22.41 per cent.

A year into his four-year tenure, the figure has risen by as much as 11.28 per cent to 33.7 per cent. But the figure stops at official reckoning as Nigerians, who have had to bear the pangs of forced reforms, said prices of essential consumables have increased by over 100 per cent.

As of today, a sardine that was sold for N300 one year ago now sells for N1,200, while a tin of peak milk sold for N250 then now costs N700. Spaghetti was bought for N300 last year May, but it now costs N900, and beans

- Inflation rises by 11.28% in one year
- Nigeria records 45% decline in SMEs in two years
- Falling purchasing power stifling industrial growth, says Adi

(derica measurement) which were sold for N350 now sell for N1,400.

Frozen fish that Nigerians were buying for N700 last year now cost N3,000 and 10 pieces of tomatoes that were sold at N250 now go for N2,500.

However, the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate also shot upward from 2.51 per cent last year to 2.98 per cent, yesterday, when President Tinubu celebrated his first year in office.

The monetary policy rate (MPR), a policy for tackling inflation, went from 18 per cent to 26.25 per cent within a year while public debts also recorded an upward move-

ment, from N97.34 trillion to N87.38 trillion this year.

The foreign reserves also dipped to \$32.74 billion this year as against the \$35.09 billion it was as of this time last year.

A professor of economics at the Lagos Business School, Bongo Adi, said lowering the purchasing power of average Nigerian workers is a disincentive to investment.

He said: "With the removal of subsidy on petrol and liberalisation of the FX market, the earning of workers has remained the same. Which investor will bring money into an economy where the people lack the purchasing power to buy what has been produced?"

Though he argued that the government did not have a choice to liberalise the FX market and remove the petrol subsidy when it came in last year, he stated the government also failed to put in place policies that should address the shocks of the reforms.

He explained: "The petrodollar that was avail-

able to Nigeria enabled her to sustain an FX market that it could defend. But when the source was significantly reduced, the new government had no choice but to float the naira. The government was helpless. But, on the removal of petrol subsidy, what has been happening since last year indicated that policies that were needed to provide alternatives were not on the ground."

Adi also queried why the government has not taken the opportunity gas offered since the war between Russia and Ukraine broke out and the tension in the Middle East.

"There is a new Cold War for gas and Nigeria is awash with gas which nobody is talking about. I have not seen any serious efforts on the part of the government to take advantage of this," he stated.

Adi insisted that the Federal Government is yet to put in place policies that can tackle the challenges confronting Nigeria.

A public analyst, Olufemi

Awoyemi, said the 'bold and daring' policies the President promised during his inaugural speech on May 29, 2023, have turned into a nightmare as Nigerians' purchasing power has plummeted.

He said: "It seems the objectives and goals were simple. Still, after one year in office and given the outcomes, it may seem that a chain of mixed reactions has formed, trailing the government's competence and ability to deliver on the promise of renewed hope."

Another public analyst, Kalu Aja, observed that though the speech of President Tinubu on May 29, 2023, was appealing and reassuring, one year down the road has little to show in terms of achievement.

"Reforms announced were reversed in secret, programmes were implemented poorly, and a real sense that there are no adults in the room has taken over; just look at the clown show of the media team. The President today will struggle to point to one clear, tangible and significant accomplishment of his administration in 12 months after the record budgets and spending," he

said. He charged the President to return to his natural habitat, saying, "The President's instincts as a political juggernaut are not lost; he needs to return to his natural roots and run an open, inclusive government that supports all Nigerians. Mr. President, let your words, actions and team signify you intend to be a President for all, not for those who sign songs about you."

In renewed efforts aimed at stabilising the FX market targeting an exchange rate of N1,200, the Central Bank of Nigeria may have resorted to selling dollars below the market rate.

The source said the apex may have been selling on the back of an anticipated \$1.3 billion Non-Deliverable Forward that matured yesterday, Wednesday.

This may yet affect the unofficial market as the dollar was exchanged for N1,490 while the buying rate was N1,470 for one dollar.

**M**EANWHILE, the Ministries of Power, Finance, Petroleum and Agriculture have ranked low in terms of their performances in the last year of President Bola Tinubu.

### TRUEFACT: IS HAVING DOMINION OVER EARTH POSSIBLE FOR HUMANS?

**Yes, dominion is possible. If you don't have understanding of it, ask the Holy Spirit.**

"No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us". (1 corinthians 2: 11-12 NLT)

**Prayer: Holy Spirit help me.**

Email Address: g.truefact@gmail.com

Oyo State-owned tertiary institutions' workers begin three-day strike

By Moyosore Salami

ACADEMIC and non-academic activities will be grounded at state-owned tertiary institutions in Oyo State starting today, as members of staff under the aegis of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of Trade Unions embark on a three-day warning strike.

The strike, which began yesterday, May 29, 2024, and is ends tomorrow, May 31, 2024, is intended to press home the workers' demands.

The JAC, which includes the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU), Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Polytechnics (SSANIP), Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU), and Senior Staff Union of Colleges of Education in Nigeria (SSUCOEN), represents members of staff from The Polytechnic, Ibadan; The Oke-Ogun Polytechnic, Saki; Adeseun Ogundoyin Polytechnic, Eruwa; Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate, and Oyo State College of Agricultural Technology, Igboora.

In a statement signed by JAC Secretary, Akin Adekanbi, the unions noted that the strike was necessitated by exhaustive discussions and numerous deadlines issued to the Oyo State Government through the Ministry of Education, with no substantive resolutions achieved.

The unions, therefore, urged Governor Seyi Makinde to intervene and ensure immediate resolution of the issues in the interest of the tertiary education sector.

## ODA to honour founding members at grand reception in Lagos

THE Osun Development Association (ODA), a distinguished assembly of non-partisan Osun State elders, thought leaders, technocrats, and professionals, is set to hold a grand reception and honours event in celebration and appreciation of its founding members.

The event, which is scheduled to be held at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Lagos, on Sunday, June 2, 2024, is designed as a mark of tribute in honour of the visionaries who laid the foundation for the association.

The association's Chairman, Dr Segun Aina, noted: "We are privileged to recognise and honour the late Benjamin Adigun, Prof. Olu Aina, Inaojai Aboaba, Tunde Ponnle, the late Duro Oyinlola, and the late Prof. Tunde Odetola. Their legacies continue to inspire us."

He said that the event would also honour the commitment and dedication of Lt.-Gen Alani Akinrinade (rtd) and Joana Maduka, who are current members of the Board of Trustees.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

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## Lagos commits to safe, functional transportation

By Gbenga Salau and Adaku Onyenucheya

LAGOS State Government yesterday reiterated its commitment to safe, functional and seamless transportation to grow the economy and create job opportunities.

The state governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who gave the assurance during the launch of 15 40-seater ferries, said that his administration would continue to deliver dividends of democracy to residents of the state.

He promised that the state government, under his watch, would not relent in delivering good governance for the remaining three years to complete his second term.

Sanwo-Olu said that the

- **Unveils 15 40-seater ferries**
- **Warns boat operators against violating safety rules**
- **20,000 lifejackets distributed to passengers for free**

launch of the new ferries was part of the drive to have a comprehensive integrated urban mass transportation in the state.

The governor said that the ferries were locally produced with only the engines imported.

He disclosed that to ensure safety on Lagos waterways, the Lagos State Waterways Authority has distributed over 20,000 free lifejackets to passengers.

Sanwo-Olu, who implored boat operators to adhere to safety measures, enjoined the regulators to enforce the rules no matter who is

involved, saying that safety on Lagos waterways should not be compromised.

In his goodwill message, Commissioner for Transportation, Seun Osiyemi, said the launch of the new Omi-Bus ferries, is a testament to the collective commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all Lagos residents.

In his welcome address, the General Manager of Lagos State Waterways Authority (LASWA), Oluwadamilola Emmanuel, said that the unveiling of the ferries signifies a significant step in the state's efforts to improve

inland waterways transportation as well as enhance the daily transit experience for residents, making their journeys safer, faster, and more comfortable.

On his part, Chief Executive Officer of Caverton Group, Olabode Makanjuola, whose company built the ferries, emphasised the importance of the project in enhancing mobility and reducing road traffic congestion.

He said the project aligns with the transportation vision of the Sanwo-Olu-led administration, which aims to create an integrated transportation infrastructure to enhance connectivity and mobility across the state with an improved water transport system.



Ekiti State Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Ebenezer Boluwade (left); his Investments, Trade and Industry counterpart, Tayo Adeola; Governor Biodun Oyebanji, Director-General, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Charles Odii, and Commissioner for Information, Taiwo Olatunbosun, during the visit of the SMEDAN team to the governor's office in Ado-Ekiti... yesterday.

## Ondo gubernatorial poll: Court dismisses Jimoh Ibrahim's suit against Aiyedatiwa

From Amech Ochojila, Abuja

THE Federal High Court sitting in Abuja has dismissed the suit filed by Senator Jimoh Ibrahim challenging the candidacy of Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, as the governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) for the November 16 election.

The trial judge, Justice Inyang Ekwo, had on May 14 ordered the APC, Aiyedatiwa and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to file their defence in the suit.

However, at yesterday's pro-

ceedings, Jimoh Ibrahim's lawyer, Mike Uche, informed the court that his client had resolved to withdraw the suit.

He told Justice Ekwo that the withdrawal notice dated May 27 but filed on May 28 had already been served on the defendants.

Lawyers representing various parties in the matter confirmed receipt of the notice of withdrawal by the plaintiff and did not object to the withdrawal notice.

Consequently, Justice Ekwo dismissed the suit in its entirety on the ground that

parties had already joined issues with each other before the withdrawal.

The Attorney-General of Ondo State, Kayode Ajulo (SAN), commended Senator Ibrahim for allowing a sense of reasoning to prevail on the matter.

He urged the senator to team up and work together for the common development of Ondo State, especially in the forthcoming governorship election.

In another development, the APC in Ode-Aye Ward 1, Okitipupa Local Council of

Ondo State, has suspended a female governorship aspirant in the primary election, Folake Omogoroye, for approaching the court to seek the cancellation of the primary election, alleging irregularities.

Others suspended alongside her include four ward executives, Ayesan Tunde (Organising Secretary), Jemiken Seyi (Assistant Public Relations Officer), Adebayo Omobayo (Assistant Welfare Secretary) and Eweje Omotayo (Assistant Treasurer).

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

## LASG, NGO to distribute 20,000 sanitary pads to students

From Rauf Oyewole (Bauchi) and Musa Adekunle (Lagos)

LAGOS State Government, in partnership with a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Vcare for Development Foundation (VCDF), is set to distribute over 20,000 sanitary pads to female students across secondary schools in the state.

Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Dr Kemi Ogunyemi, disclosed this during a media briefing to commemorate 2024 World Menstrual Hygiene Day.

Ogunyemi emphasised that menstrual hygiene is a public health issue that affects the health, well-being, and

CSOs decry female's lack of access to menstrual products, facilities

• Say it's violation of women's rights

dignity of women and girls globally and must be regarded as a fundamental right for women and adolescent girls.

The special adviser explained that the 2024 World Menstrual Hygiene Day celebration, with the theme "Together for a Period Friendly World," is a yearly global day of awareness and action to promote good menstrual health among women and adolescent girls.

She noted that the event, held yearly on May 28, was significant because the "28" represented the average 28-

day menstrual cycle, and the fifth month signified an average of five days of menstrual flow.

She however, urged all stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society organisations, and individuals, to join the state government in advancing menstrual hygiene to ensure every woman and girl can manage her menstruation safely, hygienically, and with pride.

In his remarks, the National Programme Manager, VCDF, James Odey, stated that his organisation would ensure

that adolescent girls remain in schools as statistics show that most out-of-school children are girls with issues around menstruation.

MEANWHILE, a coalition of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) has said that lack of access to menstrual products and facilities is a violation of the rights of women and adolescents to health, education and dignity.

The group includes Women-for-Women International, Attah Sisters Helping Hand Foundation and others.

**Pyrates Confraternity denounces affiliation with AHOY group**

By Waliat Musa

THE National Association of Seadogs (NAS), also known as The Pyrates Confraternity, has denied any affiliation with a group known as the Association of Humble and Obedient Youths (AHOY).

The announcement comes after the AHOY group released a video to associate its origin and existence with the Pyrates Confraternity, especially with their seven founding fathers, Prof. Wole Soyinka and others.

According to members of the Pyrates Confraternity, the video constitutes the most impudent and brazen episode of piracy on the high seas.

They, therefore, said that the attempt to legitimise and link AHOY to their association is pathetic and abject failure.

NAS emphasised that the inaccuracies in AHOY's account confirm that their objectives were disingenuously criminal as many of their statements are serious, untrue and highly inflammatory, noting that some of the statements carry serious and continuing threats to the Pyrates Confraternity reputation and their collective and individual memberships' integrity.

NAS Capoon, Abiola Owoaje, during a media briefing in Lagos, yesterday, said all claims by the authors of the video or the organisation that seek this linkage are denied and rejected as there is no truth whatsoever in the assertions that they have sought to disseminate.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

## Firm promises to prioritise workers' wellbeing, safety

THE Group Managing Director (GMD) of Chemstar Group, Adedayo Paseda, has restated the company's commitment to enhance the safety and welfare of workers, saying the management, as its major priority, considered it worthy to ensure a healthy and valuable workforce.

He disclosed this during the 2024 Chemstar Industries Limited Health & Safety Week, with the theme: "Personal Health and Workplace Safety in a Challenging Economy."

The Health & Safety Week is a yearly event to broaden the knowledge of the group's members of staff on how to live a healthy lifestyle, keep their body fit and keep the environment safe.

Activities for the week-long event, which coincided with the 29th Founder's Day Anniversary of the company, include a health talk by Prof. Osunkalu Oluseye, a professor of Haematology and Blood Transfusion at the College of Medicine University of Lagos (CMUL); medical check; HMO enlightenment; safety & nutrition talk, among others.

# IPOB sit-at-home: Police allay fears in Imo

From Collins Osuji (Owerri) and Lawrence Njoku (Enugu)

IMO State Commissioner of Police, Aboki Danjuma, and the Enugu State government have directed residents to ignore the May 30 sit-at-home order by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in commemoration of the 57th memorial of the Biafra War and its fallen heroes.

The Imo Police Commissioner reassured residents of adequate security, urging them to go about their lawful businesses without any fear of molestation or attack.

The Police boss gave the assurance while leading his personnel and men of other security agencies on a confidence-building patrol and operation show of force across the 27 councils of the state to ensure public safety.

He urged the people to disregard the proposed unlawful three-day sit-at-home order imposed by the outlawed IPOB, and its armed affiliate, Eastern Security Network (ESN), across the five South East states.

Danjuma said: "The Command, in synergy with other security agencies, has put in place adequate security measures to evade any threat of attack by any insurgent group."

Also, the Command's spokesman, ASP Henry Okoye, in a statement made available to newsmen, disclosed that "security operatives, drawn from the police, military, civil defence, road safety, immigration and fire service have been massively deployed to guarantee public safety within the period.

- Enugu govt, COSEYL frown at group's plot to disrupt WAEC exams
- Vows to sanction absentee workers

The Command is, therefore, using this medium to warn anybody intending to destabilise the improved peace and security in the state by attempting to enforce the illegal sit-at-home order to better have a rethink, as anyone caught in the act will be made to face the full wrath of the law."

On its part, the Enugu State government has directed workers to report for duties, warning of dire consequences for failure to do so. IPOB had ordered the closure of schools, markets, businesses, offices, and restriction

of movements, urging residents "to light up candles and pray in their homes during the period." They also promised sanctions against those who may try to defile the order.

To underscore its seriousness, the group had specifically warned the West African Examination Council (WAEC), which scheduled mathematics examination today and the Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK), which had scheduled its convocation ceremony today, to seek new dates to avoid regrets.

In response to the call, the

Enugu State government, yesterday, asked workers to report for duties today. It stated that there is no public holiday or sit-at-home in the state, assuring adequate security of life and property.

Also, the Enugu State government and the Coalition of Southeast Youth Leaders (COSEYL), yesterday, expressed displeasure over what it described as an attempt to scuttle the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination in the state today by promoters of Biafra, saying that doing so is the height of insensitivity.



Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri (left) and Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshall Hassan Abubakar, during a courtesy visit to the Government House in Yenagoa...yesterday.

## 'How tribunal exposed Sylva, police commissioner's fraud'

From Julius Osahon, Yenagoa

GOVERNOR of Bayelsa State, Douye Diri, has explained how the state's governorship election petition tribunal, which sat in Abuja, exposed the electoral fraud perpetrated by the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Timipre Sylva, the party's chairman and a former Commissioner of Police.

The tribunal, on Monday, dismissed the APC and Sylva's petition, challenging Diri's declaration as the winner of the election by the Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC), for lacking in merit.

The governor spoke on Tuesday night at the King of Glory Chapel, in the Government House, Yenagoa, where he stopped for thanksgiving upon his arrival from Abuja.

A crowd of jubilant party members and supporters thronged the state airport and the Government House to welcome the governor.

A statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Daniel Alabrah, quoted the governor as saying that during cross-examination at the tribunal, the APC witnesses shot themselves in the foot with frivo-

lous claims and inconsistent exhibits.

The governor narrated how a former Commissioner of Police in the state, Tolani Alausa, who was procured as a star witness in the case, tainted his image by tendering false evidence before the court and was humiliated for parading fake INEC documents.

He noted that although Alausa was no longer the CP in the state, the senior police officer presented himself at the tribunal to defend the fraud perpetrated by the APC candidate.

Diri also said that the tribunal equally excoriated the APC

Chairman in the state, Dennis Otiotio, for his "unprofessional conduct" being a legal practitioner.

He called on the judiciary to place heavy sanctions on frivolous matters and abuse of court processes by those desperate to subvert the wishes of the people.

He said: "During one of the sittings, I physically went to the tribunal, and I saw what transpired. Our party's Secretary, in the witness box, stated that most of the election materials the APC presented as INEC's documents before the court were manufactured by Otiotio."

elapsed without any substantial progress.

"Congress frowns that after the said committee has been given more than two months to fulfil its mandate of payment of CONLESS, it is yet to come up with a decision. Congress views these delay tactics as a ploy to deprive staff of their entitlements and a sign that they lack the political will to pay."

"Congress also expresses its displeasure that the other issues raised at the meeting of March 28, 2024, bothering on training, funding of the DTHA clinic, regularisation of casual staff, among others, are yet to be addressed or given attention after two months."

## Delta Assembly workers embark on indefinite strike

From Monday Osayande, Asaba

DELTA State House of Assembly workers, under the aegis of Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria (PASN), yesterday, embarked on an indefinite strike action over non-payment of approved salaries, non-funding of clinics, and other sundry issues.

The striking workers shut down activities of the House, locked out the Speaker and other lawmakers, preventing them from gaining access to the Assembly Complex for legislative business.

The workers expressed disappointment that to date, payment for the Consoli-

dated Legislative Salary Structure (CONLESS), about three years after, has not been approved, and casual staff members have not been regularised, as well as training of staff and other entitlements.

After an enlarged meeting on Tuesday, the workers expressed displeasure over what they called "delay tactics and ploy" to deprive them of their entitlements, saying that it was a sign that the leadership of the Assembly and government lack the political will to do the needful.

A communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, they recalled that at a time, the Congress had suspended its earlier

## Kalu seeks legal framework on philanthropy

From Sodiq Omolaoye, Abuja

DEPUTY Speaker of the House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu, has advocated for legislation to back philanthropy and impact investing in Nigeria, saying that it would help to increase capital flow for development, create jobs, and reduce the poverty rate in the country.

Kalu made the submission at the stakeholders' lunch on developing legislation on philanthropy and impact investing in Nigeria, hosted by Impact Investors Foundation (IIF) in collaboration with the Nigeria Office for Philanthropy and the Office of the Deputy Speaker, yesterday, in Abuja.

## AAC will bring desired change in Edo, Sowore assures

From Michael Egbejule, Benin City

RIGHTS activist and National Leader of African Action Congress (AAC), Omoyele Sowore, has solicited support for the party's candidate, Dr Oberiafoh Udoh, in the Edo State September 21 governorship election, saying that he is the best man for the job.

Sowore, who was a former presidential candidate of AAC, said that the Edo people desire change, adding that they will be better for it if Udoh is voted to power.

He stated this in Benin City, while addressing AAC members and supporters during the gubernatorial campaign flag-off of the party in Edo.

## Shell remits \$142m investment to NDDC

By Waliat Musa

HELL Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and Shell Nigeria Exploration and Production Company Limited (SNEPCo) said they remitted about \$142.5 million last year to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

SPDC paid \$112.5 million, while SNEPCo remitted \$30 million compared to \$59.04 million and \$20.73 million by SPDC and SNEPCo, respectively, in 2022.

Shell revealed that the contributions came from the companies and their partners, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL); TotalEnergies, EP Nigeria Limited; NAOC and Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited, as statutory contributions to the interventionist agency.

Director and Country Head,

The lunch had in attendance the Chairperson, Nigeria Philanthropy Office, Thelma Olu-Solanke; the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Impact Investment Foundation, Etemore Glover; Head of Projects, GIZ, Ana Vinambres, India High Commissioner, Shri Balasubramanian and members of the finance committee of the Wholesale Impact Investment Fund (WIIF).

Addressing the delegation, Kalu emphasised that enacting a law will help to mainstream philanthropy and impact investing into the national financial structure of Nigeria, while raising inflows to achieve desired development aspirations and improving the living standard of the people.

## Corporate Relations, SPDC, Igo Weli, said that the support for NDDC is part of their aspirations for the development of the Niger Delta with huge social investments, including health and education.

"With the continuous support of our partners, we will continue to discharge our obligations to communities through statutory payments to agencies and projects executed in partnership with stakeholders," Weli said.

He stressed that Shell companies in Nigeria have supported community development programmes in the country since the 1960s, benefitting many Nigerians, noting that support for education has led to the award of more than 3,450 secondary school grants, 3,772 university grants and 1,062 cradle-to-career scholarship grants since 2016.

## Company slashes cooking gas price by 30% in Enugu

By Mirabel Ezeudogu

AN Enugu-based Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Company, Second Coming Nigeria Limited (Ltd), has offered a 30 per cent reduction in cooking gas prices to over 4,000 residents in the state.

The company, yesterday, mentioned that the price reduction was in honour of Governor Peter Mbah's first anniversary in office, emphasising that the reduction from N960 to N672 represents over N20 million subsidy.

According to the company, the reduction in gas prices, which coincides with May 29 of Mbah's inauguration, at

the company's four gas plant branches within Enugu state, not only celebrates his leadership but also demonstrates the company's commitment to its customers and community at large.

Mbah said that the gesture by the company was a testament to the thriving business environment in Enugu State.

The governor, represented by the Commissioner for Information and Communication, Aka Eze Aka, said that the current administration had de-risked the business environment and improved in all indices of Ease-of-Doing-Business in the state.

## Monarchs seek constitutional roles

By Ngozi Egenuka

**A**MID growing insecurity, ethnic tensions and perceived declining national cohesion, traditional rulers have sought a constitutional advisory role to improve governance and tackle the numerous challenges besetting Nigeria.

Etsu Nupe and Chairman, Coordinating Committee of National Council of Traditional Rulers of Nigeria, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar, who made the call at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs' (NIIA) first Distinguished Lecture Series for 2024, themed Traditional Authority and National Integration in Nigeria, yesterday in Lagos, submitted that there is currently no law at the federal level or constitutional provision recognising

monarchs and the roles they could play.

He urged the National Assembly to assign constitutional roles for traditional rulers to legally intervene in matters affecting religion, culture, security and conflict resolution, along with the debates of restructuring governance, devolution of powers, and the complex interplay between traditional institutions and the federal political system in Nigeria's multi-ethnic democracy.

Abubakar, who is also Chairman, Niger State Council of Traditional Rulers, stressed that the traditional institution is critical to the overall development of the country, highlighting its potential to resolve conflicts owing to its closeness to the people and societal reverence.

## Maiden CNG vehicles unveiled in Kwara

• Tinubu to unveil FCT conversion centre tomorrow

From Nkechi Onyedika-Ugoeze (Abuja), Mansur Aramide (Ilorin) and Eniola Daniel (Lagos)

**T**HE Kwara State government, yesterday, launched the conversion and installation of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles in Ilorin.

The initiative, described by Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq as safer and cheaper to others run on petrol, was acclaimed to be the first of its kind in Nigeria.

Speaking at the official launch of Rolling Energy, the station undertaking the con-

version, AbdulRazaq disclosed that the state government had converted 20 of its petrol-engine vehicles to natural gas automobiles, adding that more would soon be added to the number.

According to him, the breathtaking exercise is an offshoot of excessive reliance on petrol, addressed by President Bola Tinubu when he announced oil subsidy removal last year.

His words: "What we are witnessing today is the beginning of a new future, marking our new lifestyle."

## Bago offers free transportation to Niger children as wife visits orphanage

From Bala Yahaya, Minna

**G**OVERNOR Umaru Bago has provided free transportation to school children across Niger State's 25 council areas.

He announced this while unveiling CNG buses in Minna, yesterday.

While unveiling the vehicles, Bago disclosed that in the next six months, another 1,000 buses would also be inaugurated, adding that all civil servants that would transit in the buses would enjoy discounts.

The governor maintained that his administration's policy direction was in line with

President Bola Tinubu's green economy vision.

Bago hinted that he had approved N25 billion for payment of pensions and gratuity to retirees, who retired over the years and have not been paid their entitlements.

He revealed that approval has also been granted for the promotion of civil servants due for elevation.

**B**ESIDES, his wife, Fatima, visited the state's orphanage along Bosso Estate in Minna to share motherly love with the orphans as part of activities to mark his first year in office.

## Tinubu okays seven-month free train ride for FCT residents

From Terhemba Daka, Abuja

**P**RÉSIDENT Bola Tinubu, yesterday, declared a seven-month free train ride for passengers, as he performed the presidential flag-off of commercial operation of phase 1 of the Abuja light rail service, also known as Abuja Metro Rail till December.

Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, Nyesom Wike, had earlier announced free train rides for two months, to ease the burden of commut-

ing for residents of the FCT.

However, the President appealed for an extension to offer hope to the people of the FCT to enable the residents to celebrate the new administration.

"Our dear landlord and his team, I heard you saying two months' free ride. I appeal to you to make it till the end of the year. Since today, you're not going to charge me, that will give the people hope and reasons to celebrate," Tinubu said.

## Concern as Bauchi PHC gets 400 malnourished babies weekly

From Rauf Oyewole, Bauchi

**I**T was not a 'Happy Children's Day' for kids and mothers battling severe malnutrition and fighting for survival in Bauchi communities.

A cross-section of mothers, who spoke with The Guardian yesterday, lamented that the prevailing hardship in the land had made a balanced diet a luxury to them.

According to the locals, the situation has pushed them into feeding their children with any meal at sight.

A visit to Yelwa Domiciliary Health Care Centre, Bauchi revealed that about 400 malnourished babies are recorded on Wednesday and Thursday, being Nutrition Day. The development has overstretched available material, Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), to tackle malnutrition.

Ongoing economic reforms in the country have pushed more families into poverty.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index survey, 63 per cent of persons living in Nigeria (133 million people) are multi-dimensionally poor. Meanwhile, 65 per cent of the poor (86 million people) live in the North, while 35 per cent (nearly 47 million) live in the South.

Some of the mothers who bared their minds, attributed the problem to economic hardship, as they could not afford varieties of food.

Maimuna Ibrahim, a nursing mother with a six-month-old malnourished kid, who declined exclusive breastfeeding, explained: "I did not do exclusive breastfeeding because I do not have breast milk. I started giving the baby pap and water. I took him to a

traditional home where they told me that he had a skin disease but when I came to the hospital, they told me it was malnutrition.

"In my first baby, I did not do exclusive breastfeeding but there was no case of malnutrition. I have heard about exclusive breastfeeding, but I regret not doing it. Everyone in my area is blaming me for his condition. I'm also blaming myself because I don't think my son deserves this condition. Exclusive breastfeeding doesn't cost anything."

Another, a mother of a two-year-old and three-month-old girl, who also skipped exclusive breastfeeding, narrated that her kid does not take anything aside from water.

"If she eats, she will vomit and if we force her, she will faint. She has been taking only water since I gave birth

to her. She hasn't even taken a pap over the last two years," she relived.

The Nutrition Officer at the PHC, Mukhtar Ahmad, said there has been a sudden upsurge in cases of severely malnourished babies due to poor intake of food with adequate nutrients.

"When we started our nutrition clinic, we were expecting about 10 cases, but we got about 200 cases in one clinic day - on Wednesday and the same thing on Thursday," he added.

Ahmad attributed the challenge to poverty, selection of food choices during pregnancy and economic hardship.

"When they come, we teach them a combination of home-made micronutrient-dense food. Some of the cases we had in the past have recovered and are doing well," the officer noted.



Senior Programme Officer, International Labour Organisation, Chinyere Emeka-Anuna (left); Executive Secretary, National Commission for Persons with Disability, James David Lalu; Director, Sightsavers Nigeria, Joy Shuaibu and Head, Sustainability, Access Corporation/Chairman, Nigeria Business Disability Network (NBDN), Omobolanle Victor-Laniyan, at the Nigeria Diversity and Inclusion Conference 2024, organised by NBDN in Lagos... yesterday.

PHOTO: AYODELE ADENIRAN

## Court discharges Miyetti Allah leader

From Ameh Ochojila, Abuja

**A**FEDERAL High Court, Abuja has discharged President of Miyetti Allah Kautal Kore, Alhaji Bello Bodejo, of the terrorism charges filed against him by the office of the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF).

Justice Inyang Ekwo, in a short ruling, discharged Bodejo after counsel to the

AGF, Aderonke Imana, moved an oral application for withdrawal of the three-count charge.

At the resumed hearing yesterday, Imana informed the court that she had an oral application.

The lawyer said the application was pursuant to Section 108 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015.

She stated that the request was further predicated on the power of the AGF under Section 174 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

"Consequently, the Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation has instructed me to withdraw this charge against the defendant in the interest of justice.

"That is our humble applica-

tion, my lord," Imana prayed. Bodejo's team of lawyers, led by Ahmed Raji (SAN), did not oppose the application.

The senior lawyer lauded the AGF, Lateef Fagbemi (SAN), for his magnanimous gesture.

"We urge your lordship to discharge the accused person under the sections referred to by the prosecutor," Raji said.

## Hajj: Kebbi rescues three missing pilgrims as Lagos loses one

By Shakirah Adunola

**T**HE three missing pilgrims from Kebbi State that are performing this year's pilgrimage have been rescued by government officials in Mecca, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

They are part of the delegation sponsored by the Kebbi state government to perform the spiritual exercise.

Chief Press Secretary the Governor, Mallam Ahmed Idris confirmed the development in a statement issued in Abuja.

Executive Director, Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), Kebbi State branch,

Nasir Idris, was said to have confirmed that they had rescued a woman from the Kamba Local Council of the state.

He said the woman, who missed her way back home, instead, went behind the Al-Masjid Al-Haram (Kaaba), leading to a different area.

"As Kebbi State Government officials, we have to intervene and redirect her back home through a taxi service," he said.

Idris added that the officials, sometimes, assist in translation and stand as intermediaries due to language barriers, adding that they also offer useful suggestions to committees

to ensure a successful hajj. He said the activities of officials were not restricted to Kebbi, as they equally assist other Nigerian pilgrims in need.

"We recently rescued two women from Bauchi State, who missed their way to their hotel, but the quick intervention of Kebbi State officials led them to their hotels without difficulty," Idris stated.

The spokesman added that the humanitarian services being rendered by them would run throughout the pilgrimage, appealing for more support and cooperation from pilgrims for a successful exercise.

A LSO, One of the Lagos State

Idris, lost his life on his return from Tawaf (circumambulation) of the Holy Kaaba in Makkah, on Tuesday.

The announcement, which was made by Secretary of Lagos State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Saheed Onipede, revealed that the 68-year-old from the Shomolu council area, died while taking his dinner.

Onipede emphasised that while the cause of his death was yet to be medically ascertained, the death could not be unconnected with high blood pressure and the stress he passed through during the tawaf.

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## Stray bullets kill two in Ekiti, police commence probe

From Ayodele Afolabi, Ado Ekiti

THERE was pandemonium yesterday in Ado Ekiti, the Ekiti State capital, following the killing of two young men by stray bullets allegedly fired by a yet-to-be identified police officer.

It was gathered that the officer allegedly fired the shots to disperse some irate youths.

An eyewitness said the incident occurred at the Omisanjana area of the state capital at about 11:00 p.m.

According to the witness, some men of the Rapid Response Squad (RRS) had been dispersing some youths who accosted a hit and run driver that knocked down a commercial motorcyclist and a passenger.

Another account said the driver put a call to men of the Rapid Response Squad. On ar-



Commissioner of Police, Akinwale Kunle Adeniran

rival at the scene, one of them opened fire and hit two persons in the process.

"The irate youths made an attempt to confront the RRS officers and were mobbing the police. Then one of the officers fired a bullet that fatally injured two boys. The victims were rushed to the Ekiti State Tertiary Hospital. Unfortunately, they died in the hospital. Their bodies have been deposited at the mortuary."

Confirming the incident, spokesperson for Ekiti State Police Command, DSP Sunday Abutu, in a statement, said a discreet investigation has commenced. The command, upon the receipt of the information, deployed the State Traffic Section to the scene to ensure there is no breakdown of law and order and ensure the safety of the victims.

"On getting to the scene, the operatives

met resistance as some irate youths stopped them from performing their lawful duty and insisted on carrying out jungle justice. This necessitated a call for reinforcement to assist the officers on ground.

"In the process, one of the officers accidentally fired a shot that fatally injured two persons. The officer responsible for the shooting has been disarmed, arrested and detained, and shall be made to face disciplinary action immediately."

"The command is already in touch with the two families of the deceased. The state's Commissioner of Police, Akinwale Kunle Adeniran, also condoles with the families and assures them that discreet investigation has commenced and justice shall prevail."

## Lagos court remands businessman for allegedly defiling his two daughters

**A**N Ikeja Chief Magistrate's Court, yesterday, remanded a 40-year-old businessman, Opeyemi Olanrewaju, in the Kirikiri correction centre for allegedly defiling his two daughters.

Olanrewaju, who resides in Ijegun, Lagos, was charged by the police with defilement, but the Chief Magistrate, Mrs Bola Osunsanmi, did not take his plea for want of jurisdiction.

The magistrate adjourned the matter till June 26 for legal advice from the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP). Earlier, the prosecutor, ASP Raji Akeem, told the court that the offence was committed in September 2021.

### • Man detained over alleged kidnapping, armed robbery in Ibadan

He said Olanrewaju's wife caught him molesting their seven-year-old daughter. Akeem said the wife also caught him assaulting their five-year-old daughter. The case, he said, was reported at the police station and the defendant was arrested.

He said the offence contravened the provisions of Section 137 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

SIMILARLY, an Iyaganku Magistrate's Court, Ibadan, has remanded 38-year-old Musa Saidu in a correctional centre for alleged kidnapping and armed robbery.

Saidu, whose address was not provided, is charged with conspiracy, armed robbery and kidnapping.

The magistrate, Mrs M. Olagbenro, did not take his plea for want of jurisdiction. She directed the police to return the case file to the Oyo State Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

The magistrate adjourned till July 30 for mention.

Earlier, the prosecutor, Inspector Elisha Tellang, told the court that the defendant committed the offences on January 2, at about 1:30 p.m., at Iyaganku, Ibadan.

He alleged that the defendant and others now at large, while armed with dangerous weapons, attacked one Mr Oje-bisi Akanni and robbed him of his motorcycle.

Tellang alleged that the defendant also kidnapped one Mr Ramon Shittu with the intent to demand and receive monetary ransom from his relatives.

According to the prosecutor, the offences contravened Sections 6 (b) of the Robbery and Firearms Laws of Oyo State and Section 4(2) of the Kidnapping Prohibition Laws of Oyo State, 2016.

## Man bags six years for stealing N683,000

### • 21-year-old woman nabbed over alleged baby theft

**A**IN Ota Magistrate's Court in Ogun has sentenced 18-year-old Anu Ojo to six years imprisonment for breaking into an office and stealing N683,000 cash.

The convict was charged with stealing, burglary, conspiracy and malicious damage.

The magistrate, Mrs O. O. Fadairo, sentenced the convict to six years imprisonment after he pleaded guilty to the charges preferred against him.

Fadairo, however, gave the convict an option to pay N50,000 as fine and also restitute the N683,000 to the complainant.

## Court grants man bail over alleged assault on Lagos lawyer

**A**NEbute-Metta Chief Magistrate's Court in Lagos, yesterday, granted a 60-year-old man, Ogungbe Emmanuel, bail after he pleaded not guilty to a two-count charge of assault and breach of public peace.

The prosecuting counsel, Inspector Kolade Tedunjaye, told the court that Ogungbe committed the offence on May 15, in the premises of the Chief Magistrate's Court, Ebute Metta West.

Tedunjaye alleged that Ogungbe attacked Alowonle

Yetunde, who represented his wife in a family matter that involved Ogungbe.

He submitted that in the course of rendering her professional services, Ogungbe pounced on the counsel and inflicted serious injury on her.

The offence, Tedunjaye said, violated Sections 168 and 173 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

The magistrate, O.O. Ikobayo, granted Ogungbe bail in the sum of N500,000, with two responsible sureties in like sum.

She ordered Ogungbe to submit his international passport, while one of his sureties must have a landed property.

The court adjourned till June 7, for substantive trial.

## Gas explosion rocks Tejuoso area in Lagos

By Eniola Daniel

**A**GAS explosion, yesterday, rocked the Tejuoso NTA 10 area in Lagos State. The explosion was followed by a blaze that gutted dozens of wooden shanties.

The fire, which broke out at about 1:00 p.m., also affected the nearby Saint Heritage Children's School on Adedapo Street, off Aralile Street in Surulere.

According to sources, the inferno began in a room after a community member left food unattended on a gas cooker.

Emergency responders, in-

cluding the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Lagos Fire Service, Nigeria Police, Lagos Neighbourhood Security Watch and others, were at the scene to combat the fire.

As at the time of filing this report, Permanent Secretary of LASEMA, Dr Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu and Director of Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service, Margaret Adeseye, said the fire was eventually brought under control, but rescue operations were ongoing.

No life was lost and no injury was reported.



Emergency responders at the fire scene



Ebute Metta Magistrate's court.

# Number of Nigerians in Thai prison has dropped to 200, says envoy

By Bertram Nwannekanma

THE government of Thailand has commended the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) for a drastic drop in the number of Nigerians in the Asian country's prisons.

Charge d'affaires/Deputy Head of Mission of the Royal Thai Embassy in Nigeria, Kriwat Pharmorabuta, gave the cheering news during a courtesy visit to the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of NDLEA, Brig Gen Mohamed Buba Marwa (rtd) in Abuja.

He said before, there were about 800 prisoners from Nigeria in Thai prisons, but the number had decreased to about 200.

Pharmorabuta, who was ac-

companied by a Counsellor, Perapol Berananda, praised the NDLEA for mounting a vigorous fight against substance abuse and illicit drug trafficking in Nigeria, a development that has impacted positively on the image of the country in the international community.

The Thai envoy said: "I have good news that I received as we speak. Before, there were around 800 prisoners from Nigeria in Thai prisons. But right now, the number has decreased greatly; it is less than 200. That means it's now very difficult for them to get out with the drugs. So, I congratulate you and the Nigerian people. I feel pleased because I'm a diplomat in Nigeria, and I love not only my country, but also Nigeria

## • NDLEA boss, Marwa, seeks improved partnership



Drug suspects

because Nigeria is my second home. So, when I receive good news like this, I feel very happy."

said his government seeks to strengthen the partnership, since the embassy relies more on NDLEA's visa clearance to issue Thai visa to any Nigerian travelling to Thailand from anywhere in the world.

He said: "I would like to thank Your Excellency and inform you that the government of Thailand gives more importance to the certificate of the NDLEA before issuing visas. There may be some other criteria, some other qualifications that they might need. But I think it's not the priority; the priority document which the government of Thailand needs is the certificate from NDLEA.

"So, it means that if Nigerians have the NDLEA certificate, the correct one in their hands, 90 to 95 per cent as-

surance is guaranteed that they can receive visas to enter into the kingdom of Thailand. I would like to thank you very much and inform you that I'm pleased that our team, my delegation and your delegation can know each other, so that we can coordinate well in subsequent works."

In his response, Marwa expressed delight at the ongoing partnership between NDLEA and the Thai embassy on visa clearance certificates.

He said: "We have a lot to learn from Thailand. In fact, I just created a unit - the Alternative Development Unit, which focuses on encouraging our drug traffickers, especially the cannabis growers, because we have so much going on here, over 10 million consuming it."

## Stakeholders move to tackle tanker explosions

By Wallat Musa

THE Major Energy Marketers Association of Nigeria (MEMAN) has enhanced collaboration among regulators, operators, and enforcement agencies to mitigate increasing number of petroleum tanker explosions on roads and ensure a lasting solution to incessant truck accidents. Executive Secretary, Clement Isong, disclosed this to the media after a stakeholders' meeting in Lagos.

Isong said accidents are caused by deplorable road infrastructure, inexperienced drivers in oversized trucks, and lack of maintenance. He also faulted poor mental alertness and attitudes, adding that some trucks load up to 66,000 litres, exceeding safe limits.

He said the session brought together key stakeholders, including the Executive Secretary of the Depot and Petroleum Products Marketers Association of Nigeria (DAPP-MAN), the President of the Nigerian Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO), and MEMAN's Health, Safety, Security, Environment, and Quality (HSSEQ) committee, representing operators. Other are: the Lagos Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) and the South-West Regional Coordinator of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMD-PRA), representing regulators.

Isong said the primary objective was to foster collaboration among regulators, operators, and enforcement agencies to mitigate the increasing number of truck accidents witnessed in 2024. He said stakeholders agreed to conduct regular sensitisation programmes for drivers.

The MEMAN boss said the industry was committed to continuing these collaborative efforts to ensure safer road transportation of pe-

troleum products.

"Truck accidents and explosions must stop, and through these comprehensive measures, industry operators aim to significantly reduce the incidence of such catastrophic events," he said.

Also, the Assistant Director/Head, Distribution Systems, Storage & Retailing Infrastructure, Southwest Zone, Ibrahim Dimowo, emphasised the need for all trucks to be registered and

assigned specific haulage permits. He said there was a need to state the tank size for petroleum products and ensure compliance.

On his part, Lagos State Sector Commander of FRSC, Patrick Davou, called for strict enforcement of pre and post Safe-to-Load (STL) integrity inspections on trucks, adding that there was a need to verify drivers' qualifications during STL inspections.

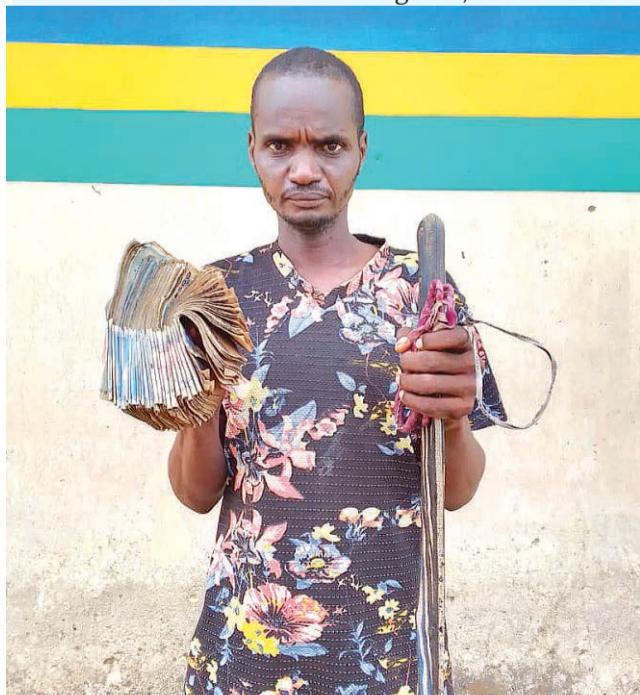
## Police nab bandit leader responsible for Plateau kidnapping

From Saseone Akhaine, Kaduna

THE police in Kaduna have arrested a notorious bandit and leader of a terrorist gang allegedly responsible for kidnapping in Plateau State.

The suspect, Abdulkarim Maude, was arrested with charms, money and a weapon in Upara Warsapiti, Lere Local Council of Kaduna State.

He confessed to involvement in kidnapping for ransom, alongside other members from Binchim village in Bassa Local Council of Plateau State.



Suspected bandit

Confirming the development in a statement, yesterday, the spokesperson for Kaduna State Police Command, ASP Mansir Hassan, said the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Saminaka, acting on credible intelligence, successfully arrested Abdulkarim Usman Maude, 33, from Tudun Wada Mariri on May 22, at about 10:00 a.m.

Hassan explained: "Upon his arrest, the suspect was found in possession of a bag containing N347,000, a machete, and some charms. During interrogation, Maude confessed

## Group empowers 300 students against gender-based violence

By Silver Nwokoro

A NON-governmental organisation, Leadership Initiative For Youth Empowerment (LIFE), has empowered about 300 students from various secondary schools in Lagos State to become change agents against Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The group is also currently providing psycho-social support to survivors of GBV,

including secondary school students.

The schools are: Jaimure College, Divine Infinity College, Divine International School, Heroes Immaculate College, Nubi Private School and others.

Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Esther Oluwatoyi Mokwe, who made the disclosure, said the aim of the programme was to equip students with knowledge and skills needed to recognise, prevent, and address GBV in their schools and communities. She also said it aimed to raise awareness and promote proactive measures within the student community.

She said various forms of GBV prevalent in educational settings include

physical abuse, verbal harassment, sexual assault, and bullying.

"Together, we strive to foster a culture of respect, empathy, and equality, where every individual feels safe and empowered to speak out against violence and discrimination," Mokwe added.

Also, Programme Officer, Ogechi Stephen, said the approach aims to create a safer environment and ensure swift intervention in cases of violence or harassment. She highlighted the importance of the Lagos State Violence Law, stressing the role of the Crisis Response Centre (CRC) in supporting survivors, and urged teachers to report instances of GBV.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### LOSS OF ORIGINAL TITLE DOCUMENT

This is to inform the general public that a Certificate of Occupancy dated 24th December 1990 and registered as no 77/77/1991A in the lands registry office at Lagos is lost and every attempt to locate it has proved abortive.

OLUSEGUN AJE ESQ  
Solicitor

07068588558.

## GENERATORS FOR SALE

IN RUNNING CONDITION AT LADIPO  
"AS IS WHERE IS BASIS"

### 1. Make : Kirloskar 200AKVA

Model : KG200W  
Type. : Open  
Year Installed - December 2018  
Running Hrs : 4,082

### 2. Make : Kirloskar 400KVA

Model: KG400W  
Type. : Open  
Year Installed - December 2014  
Running Hrs : 2,235



Send inquiries to: skk@femina.ng, skk@femina@gmail.com  
Contact : Mr. Kapoor. / Phone # : 08187530714

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Routine allegations of state governors manipulating local council elections in favour of their parties, as evident in the last election in Oyo and Gombe, have rekindled the call for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct local government elections. But besides the required amendment of the constitution, the implication of adding to the burden of INEC, coupled with its credibility doubts, is equally weighty, SEYE OLUMIDE reports.

THE local government elections held simultaneously in Oyo and Gombe states on Saturday, April 27, 2024, have again brought to the front burner, the arguments against the ability of the State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) to conduct a free, fair and credible local council elections.

While agitations that the 1999 Constitution should be amended to empower the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to take over the conduct of council polls with the state supervising it, some believe that such an arrangement runs against the spirit of the federal system of government.

Section 3 Part II of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution empowers SIEC to conduct council polls, while Section 4 of the Constitution defines the powers of the commission to organise, undertake, and supervise all elections to local government councils within the state.

Although the constitution allows SIEC to avail itself of the voter register prepared by INEC for the conduct of local government polls, INEC has no powers to perform any regulatory functions over SIEC.

The *Guardian* checks revealed that the council elections conducted in 1998 by the National Electoral Commission (NEC), in the twilight of the military administration, were the last with a semblance of credibility and fairness in Nigeria. Political parties that participated in the elections won various seats according to their popularity and political strengths in different wards and polling units.

However, since 1999, the outcome of the council polls conducted by SIEC has been reflecting the wishes of the governors, who appointed chairmen and other members of the state electoral body.

With the development that the outcome of the council elections can be predicted, opposition parties and electorates are showing less interest in the administration of the third tier of government, thereby diminishing democracy at the grassroots level.

There is a consensus that the desire of the governors to control allocations accrued to the local councils in their respective states has been identified as a major attraction for their desperation to ensure that only candidates of their parties, who are mostly their cronies, are elected as chairmen of various local governments.

The same desperation of the governors and failure of SIEC to be trusted with council elections allegedly played out in Gombe and Oyo states where the ruling parties won all contestable positions.

While the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Oyo State allegedly manipulated the Oyo State Independent Electoral Commission (OYSIEC) to return results favourable to Governor Seyi Makinde, even though 14 parties participated in the election, the All Progressives Congress (APC) replicated the gesture in Gombe State, with the state electoral body declaring a clean sweep.

Makinde

Yahaya

Yakubu

# Politics

## Between INEC and SIEC: In search of credible umpire for local council polls

for the party.

Why the Oyo State case was particularly curious and questionable by many is that in the 2023 general elections, the opposition APC won in all 33 local governments in the February 25, 2023 presidential and national assembly polls. APC won all three senatorial seats, nine out of the 14 House of Representatives seats, while the PDP won five seats.

However, in the March 18 gubernatorial election, Governor Makinde was re-elected by winning in 31 local governments, while APC won two councils. Out of the 28 seats of the House of Assembly, the ruling PDP won 24 while APC won four.

Comparing the outcome of the 2023 general elections to that of the April 27 local council polls, many have been asking questions on what could have happened between last year and now that could explain why APC did not win just a chairmanship seat.

Similar questions are also trailing the Gombe State Council polls, as to why all the opposition parties including PDP, boycotted the council polls leaving Governor Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya and Gombe State Independent Electoral Commission (GSIEC) to allegedly produce the result that favoured all candidates of the ruling APC.

Despite the obvious voter apathy that characterised both exercises, the results declared by the electoral umpires of both states appeared to be bogus and did not tally with the number of accredited voters.

In Oyo State, for instance, many opposition parties have vowed to challenge the outcome of the council elections in the court, specifically why most of the Electoral Officers (EOs) did not turn up with election materials at the various polling units on time. It was also alleged that where the EOs arrived early, sensitive election materials were either in short supply or were not available.

It was also alleged that the majority of the EOs switched off their telephone sets when voters and election monitoring officers were calling them for failing to turn up at the polling units on time.

Besides, an evaluation of results declared by OYSIEC does not tally with the number of votes cast at some local governments during the election. There were complaints across Oyo North Local Government and other places where they cast less than 100 votes, but over 73,000 votes were later declared by

“

**Though it has become a norm in Nigeria that ruling parties and sitting governors manipulate council polls, that does not warrant distortion of federalism as enshrined in the Constitution. It is like going back to the military era. We cannot be talking of state police, resource control, and restructuring and at the same time asking INEC to handle council polls.**

”

OYSIEC in favour of PDP candidates.

The same scenario played out in Gombe where opposition parties boycotted the polls. Voter apathy was also reported contrary to the fat figures that were later declared in favour of the ruling APC candidates.

Even while declaring the results, the electoral body of both states failed to give an accurate breakdown of how the votes were cast and the number of invalid votes among others.

Another issue that affected the credibility of the two polls, which has also prompted some stakeholders to demand that INEC should take over the conduct of council polls was the refusal of INEC to release the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) as requested by OYSIEC.

OYSIEC Chairman, Isiaka Olagunju (SAN), appealed to INEC for the release of the BVAS for the local council election, INEC however, refused to grant the request on the ground that BVAS contained some sensitive information even when the Supreme Court has dispensed with all electoral disputes.

But besides what happened in Oyo and Gombe states on April 27, it has become a norm in the Nigerian political system that the ruling party in any state must win all the council polls, irrespective of the political dynamics in such states.

Oyo State chairman of the African Democratic



Party (ADP), Ayodeji Ojo, said the last credible local council election held in Nigeria was during the military government.

He said: “After the 1998 council polls, which were conducted by NEC all others supervised by SIEC as stipulated in the 1999 Constitution, have always been in favour of ruling parties.”

The trend has, however, continued since President Bola Tinubu of the ruling APC came to power on May 29, 2023.

This might have prompted the former member of the House of Representatives, Sam Onuigbo, to approach the National Assembly committee on the review of the 1999 Constitution on the need to transfer the conduct of the local council polls to INEC. He argued that if INEC conducts local government elections, it would minimise the manipulation of the process by governors.

According to him, “It is the party at the Government House that wins all elections, so I say we have to take out SIEC and allow INEC to conduct the council polls so we can have some balance and some competitive spirit.”

Corroborating Onuigbo’s position, Ojo said the National Assembly must amend the 1999 Constitution to empower INEC to take charge of council elections.

The former chairman of Inter Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Ojo, who claimed to have been in the saddle of council elections in Nigeria since 1998, said, “there is no way any sitting governor or ruling party will allow the opposition party to dominate local councils. Even when a new governor emerges from the same platform the governor will still prefer to plant his loyalists and stooges at the local councils. That’s the reason democracy is not yielding dividends at the grassroots level in Nigeria.”

His views were, however, countered by the Oyo State chairman of African Action Congress (AAC), Kayode Babayomi, who said, “Even if INEC is empowered to conduct council polls in the country, worse may still happen until Nigerians change their disposition towards council polls and begin to hold governors and ruling party accountable.”

He said Nigeria could not be agitating for restructuring and at the same time making moves to distort the federal system of government by allowing INEC to supervise council polls. “This is contrary to the spirit of federalism.”

The Oyo State Labour Party (LP), Chairman, Tunji Sadiq, also shared same position with Babayomi, saying, that though it has become a norm in Nigeria that ruling parties and sitting governors manipulate council polls, “that does not warrant distortion of federalism as enshrined in the Constitution. It is like going back to the military era. We cannot be talking of state police, resource control, and restructuring and at the same time asking INEC to handle council polls. We just have to find a solution to the ugly trends council elections have taken in Nigeria.”

Meanwhile, the Oyo State Financial Secretary of New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP), Odejide Mojeed, said it has gotten to a level where they either watch and fold arms, allowing the ruling parties and governors to destroy democracy at the local level, or they cede the council elections to INEC.

The Chairman of the Youth Party (YP) in Oyo State, Lanre Haruna, posited that Nigerians must wake up to the task of ensuring that the governors and other elected and appointed politicians do the right thing.

Haruna, who also noted that governors alone cannot be blamed for manipulating council polls, said people are showing a nonchalant disposition towards the grassroots elections.

# World Report

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## Ruto proposes major reforms for stronger African Union

By Wole Oyebade

**KENYAN** President William Ruto, yesterday rolled out major reforms for a stronger African Union (AU) towards its economic transformation agenda.

Ruto, at the official opening of the week-long Annual General Meeting of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group, said the key reforms were strategic actions that must complement Africa's advocacy for a fair global financial system and sustainable growth.

It will be recalled that Ruto recently took over the baton of leading AU's institutional reforms from President Paul Kagame of Rwanda.

After the 37th Ordinary

Session of the African Union Assembly in February, President Kagame presented his final report on AU reforms, and proposed Ruto take over the mantle he had held since 2016. Peers agreed with the suggestion.

Ruto, yesterday, told African leaders that it was no longer enough to ask for fair deals from global multilateral institutions without showing capacity to lead or begin internal reforms.

To that end, Ruto said he would be proposing that the Africa Union Commission Executive be given sufficient power to be able to push for African economic diplomacy to unlock the potential of the continent. He said this would

show the mineral, agriculture, natural and human assets of Africa, turn opportunities into investments, and deliver a better Africa for all.

Also, to make AU a fit-for-purpose organisation that takes charge of the consolidation of the African Market through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

He observed that intra-African trade is only 15 per cent, while that of Asia and Europe are 60 and 70 per cent, in that order.

"We are struggling and looking for markets everywhere, except in our own continent. We must believe in ourselves and sell to the markets we have on our continent. It is the silver bullet that will

increase the contribution of trade from two per cent to the next level," he said.

Ruto said further that the AU must be made to secure the continent, with the AU taking charge of the peace, security and stability-solving the problems of conflicts and wars on the continent.

"We cannot progress as a continent if there is war in Sudan, trouble in Somalia, problem in DRC and Sahel. We must take charge of our security and stability."

Lastly, he beckoned on the AU to close the infrastructure gaps. He said: "The AU was initially a liberation movement. We must repurpose it so that it addresses the challenges of the current moment. We will be proposing to have a much more

accountable AU. Today, the pan-African parliament has no connection with the AU Executive.

"We are proposing the reduction in the size of the pan-African parliament to make it much more cost-effective from 275 members to 100 members. That is, one woman, one man from every country, and make it a full-time organisation."

"And finally, we must bring about the African Court of Justice so that we can sort out our issues. We don't want any African to be dragged to court elsewhere on African issues."

Though some of the proposals have been dubbed controversial, observers reckoned that Ruto's proposal to donate more powers to the

AU Commission could be game-changing as it could mimic the European Union, which traditionally negotiates trade and global security policies jointly.

His predecessor in the reform office, Kagame, said African leaders must walk the talk to make the dream a reality.

Kagame noted that the reforms were not new, as they had discussed and agreed on them many years ago.

He said: "We agreed on many things and most of the Heads of State were represented. But two or three years later, you will find that 50 per cent of things we agreed have changed, and you are asking the leaders what happened."

## Haiti names new PM as country plots return to order

**UNITED** Nations (UN) Development Specialist, Garry Conille, has been named Haiti's new prime minister, nearly a month after a coalition within a fractured transitional council sought to choose someone else for the position.

The long-awaited move comes as gangs continue to terrorise the capital of Port-au-Prince, opening fire in once peaceful neighbourhoods and using heavy machinery to demolish several police stations and prisons.

Council member Louis Gérald Gilles told The Associated Press that six out of seven council members with voting power chose Conille earlier Tuesday.

He said one member, Laurent St. Cyr, was not in Haiti and therefore did not vote.

Conille has been UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean since January 2023 and previously served as Haiti's prime minister from October 2011 to May 2012 under then President Michel Martelly.

## Jury deliberates in Trump's hush money trial

**THE** judge in the criminal trial of Donald Trump has instructed jurors to begin their deliberations in the historic case.

Trump is accused of trying to cover up a \$130,000 (£102,000) hush-money payment to Stormy Daniels, who claims they had sex.

The former president has pleaded not guilty to 34 counts of falsifying business records, and denies any sexual encounter with her.

The defence and prosecution took hours to give their closing statements on

Tuesday, delivering competing arguments on whether Trump is guilty or not.

A prosecutor accused Trump of an "elaborate scheme", while the defence called the other side's star witness Michael Cohen the "MVP of liars".

It is the first time in history that a United States president, former or current, has faced a criminal trial. Only a unanimous verdict from the 12-person jury can convict Trump; he could also be acquitted or there could be a mistrial.

## South Africans vote in crucial election

**SOUTH** Africans began voting yesterday in an election seen as their country's most important in 30 years, and one that could put their young democracy in unknown territory.

At stake is the three-decade dominance of the African National Congress party, which led South Africa out of apartheid's brutal white minority rule in 1994. It is now the target of a new generation of discontent in a country of 62 million people, half of whom are estimated

to be living in poverty.

Africa's most advanced economy has some of the world's deepest socioeconomic problems, including one of the worst unemployment rates at 32 per cent. The lingering inequality, with poverty and joblessness disproportionately affecting the Black majority, threatens to unseat the party that promised to end it by bringing down apartheid under the slogan of a better life for all.

After winning six successive national elections, several

polls have the ANC's support at less than 50% ahead of this one, an unprecedented drop. It might lose its majority in Parliament for the first time, although it's widely expected to hold the most seats.

Support has been fading. The ANC won 57.5 per cent of the vote in the last national election in 2019, its worst result to date.

South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, the leader of the ANC, has promised to "do better." The ANC has asked for more time and patience.

Any change in the ANC's hold

on power could be monumental for South Africa. If it does lose its majority, the ANC will likely face the prospect of having to form a coalition with others to stay in government and keep Ramaphosa as president. An ANC having to co-govern has never happened before.

The election will be held on one day across South Africa's nine provinces, with nearly 28 million people registered to vote at more than 23,000 polling stations. Final results are expected by Sunday.

## Madagascar holds key parliamentary election

**PEOPLE** in Madagascar are voting in parliamentary elections Wednesday in which the ruling party hopes to retain its majority.

The Tanora Malagasy Vonona party of President Andry Rajoelina won 84 out of 151 seats in the last election. Rajoelina himself controversially won re-election last November. The vote was marred by a low voter

turnout and a boycott by the opposition.

12 million people are eligible to cast ballots in Wednesday's exercise, according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI).

The African Union and a grouping of southern African countries SADC sent observers to the island nation.

## Iceland's Blue Lagoon evacuated as volcano erupts

**A**NOTHER volcanic eruption has begun in southwest Iceland, forcing the evacuation of the famous geothermal Blue Lagoon spa and the small fishing town of Grindavik.

The new fissure opened up near Sundhuksgigur on the Reykjanes peninsula, the fifth eruption in the area since December.

The Icelandic Meteorological Office (IMO)

said the fissure is longer than 2.5km (1.5 miles) and is continuing to grow.

Footage from the site shows a wall of molten rock shooting up to a height of 50m, and huge plumes of ash covering most of the sky.

Officials also reported "intense earthquake activity" prior to Wednesday's eruption.

Most of the 4,000 residents of the nearby town of

Grindavik were permanently evacuated in November, prior to the eruptions in December, January, February and March.

Lava flowed into the streets of Grindavik during the January eruption, engulfing three homes.

A few residents had since returned to live in neighbourhoods less at risk from lava flow, but officials said they were evacuated on

Wednesday when the magma intrusion began to flow closer to Grindavik.

The National Police Commissioner said it had put the Civil Defense on an emergency footing. Iceland has 33 active volcano systems and sits over what is known as the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the boundary between two of the largest tectonic plates on the planet.

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Conscience is an open wound; only truth can heal it. Uthman dan Fodio 1754-1816

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# Editorial

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## Good governance achievable with genuine leadership

**N**IGERIA, a country with over 250 ethnic groupings who speak over 500 different languages and have different cultures, may be complex like some other nations. That indeed should not make it difficult to govern with the right leadership in place at every point.

Former president Olusegun Obasanjo recently asserted that Nigeria should not be seen as difficult to govern despite the manifest complexities often accentuated by ethnicity and religion. To a large extent, Obasanjo's allusion has reignited the puzzle as to whether the challenge of governance is largely attributable to a lack of good leadership or the complex nature of the country.

Having served as military head of state and two-term elected president, Obasanjo should be in the position to appraise leadership and governance in Nigeria, more so that he's acknowledged as an eminent global leader. We cannot but agree with him that leadership with sincerity and genuine commitment to public good could change the negative narrative of governance in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, the merit in Obasanjo's comment may be difficult to decipher unless there is an inclination to separate the message from the messenger. The preponderance of opinions, no doubt, would most likely attribute the myriads of challenges in the country to

leadership deficit rather than the diversities that ought to be harnessed as assets. We are persuaded to agree that Nigeria is not only governable but also that good governance is indeed feasible with the right leadership in place.

Unfortunately, Nigeria has, for most of her over 60 years of independence, paraded leaders who lack a genuine commitment to translating the diversities that often manifest as complexities into resources for building a united and prosperous country. Indeed, in the last couple of years, the corporate existence of Nigeria has, more than hitherto, been threatened as a consequence of parochial leadership. A careful appraisal of governance under the present democratic dispensation would reveal the extent to which the quality of leadership has degenerated across the country with the emergence of political actors who appear more interested in power than selfless service to the people.

Interestingly, Nigeria has also paraded individuals who have had the unique opportunities to make a difference in leadership. Obasanjo served as two-term president two decades after he first presided over the country as military head of state. Apart from Obasanjo, the immediate past President Muhammadu Buhari is another individual with the rare privilege to have led Nigeria as military head of state and civilian president. Despite the complexities, it is common knowledge that Nigerians readily submit to their leaders with the usual resolve to persevere whenever a

new leader comes on board. Regrettably, some of these leaders have exploited the acquiescence of the citizenry by failing to live up to expectations.

Under the current democratic dispensation, the hope invested in leadership has been abused by privileged individuals who, upon emerging as elected representatives, not only alienated themselves from their immediate constituencies but became overlords and masters to the people they ought to serve with a sense of purpose and unfeigned humility. The challenge of leadership in the country, therefore, presents a dilemma considering that a good number of Nigerians entrusted with strategic leadership positions at the global stages are performing exceptionally.

While Nigerians are earning recognition as transformational leaders on the global stage, it should be worrisome that failure of leadership at the home front remains a huge disincentive for the emergence of Nigeria as the world's most populous black nation. If the argument is that governance in Nigeria presents unusual challenges due to its complex nature, it still does not explain the gory tragedy of leadership whereby the appetite for public office does not compel obligation to make a difference as leaders.

There should be no pretence about the structural imbalances which partly accentuate the negative trends of

Nigeria's complexities, the failure of leadership is a different matter altogether. Failure of successive leaders to demonstrate unflagging commitment towards addressing the imbalances in the federal system only serves to entrench transactional politics that have lowered the bar of leadership recruitment and undermined good governance. Precisely, because the leadership recruitment process has become patently transactional, the country has, in recent years, witnessed the emergence of leaders that have ended up as dismal failures with unpleasant records of corruption and abuse of power.

It is lamentable that poor governance which is a consequence of leadership deficit appeared to have worsened rather than abate in the last 25 years of civil rule. Leaders who lack the requisite comportment and sense of commitment to nation-building would most likely exploit complexities for personal aggrandizement rather than see opportunities presented by diversities. It is, therefore, imperative for emerging leaders to recognise the obligation of committing themselves to the attributes of good governance which, amongst other imperatives, demand accountability, transparency and a sense of personal responsibility.

### LETTER

#### Worrisome volume of illicit drugs seized by NDLEA

**S**IR: On April 16, 2024, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), in its routine action, destroyed a large volume of illicit drugs at its Lagos Area Office in Iberekoko, along the Badagry Expressway.

The agency, in a press statement, had declared that its operatives across different formations in Lagos and Ogun states, especially at the Lagos seaports, airports, and land border, seized the illicit drugs that were destroyed on that day.

The 304,436 kg and 40,042 litres of illicit drugs, comprising cocaine, heroin, cannabis and tramadol, were seized in 2022. This simply means that the two states of Lagos and Ogun generated that quantity of drugs. That ought to be a wake-up call to the public and the government on the need to act fast, decisively and effectively to curb the menace of drug trafficking in the country.

For discerning minds, the development called for sober reflection. This is even more

worrisome because the quantity of drugs seized in Nigeria by NDLEA in the past three years far outweighs the known seizures in other African countries. Globally, there are rising concerns over the surge in the quantities of illicit drugs seized.

That is why there are even more concerted and coordinated efforts among anti-narcotics bodies across the world. In the case of NDLEA, the agency, in the past three years, seems to have found its mojo, and has been up and doing, as evidenced by its successful interdictions. The growing volume of seizures by NDLEA triggers more concern about public safety and potential effects of illicit drugs on communities, such as addiction rates, increased violence and criminalities.

Chairman and Chief Executive of NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (rtd), at the burning of the drugs along Badagry road, said the quantity spoke volumes about the extent of the nefarious activities of the

drug underworld.

It is commendable that NDLEA is living up to its mandate by destroying all drug exhibits after successful prosecution. This action will prevent recycling of the substances back into the streets.

Those who understand the dynamics of the illicit drug problem will know that the volume seized by NDLEA calls for a societal action to combat trafficking in the substances. NDLEA needs to do more; it needs to be more proactive. The Federal Government needs to support the agency with more funding to squarely tackle this drug problem. The general public needs to collaborate with NDLEA. And the court of law needs to get tough with drug trafficking cases.

Nigeria and its people will benefit immensely if all concerned continue to do their best towards tackling trafficking in illicit substances.

Tosin Damola wrote from Lokoja, Kogi State.



# Opinion

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## Where are secular lawyers?

By Leo Igwe

THIS question has agitated me over the years, and it persists. At a recent event in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, a participant introduced herself as a member of the Christian Lawyers Association of Nigeria (CLAN). I wondered, Why Christian lawyers? Why should lawyers associate based on faith? Do we have a traditional religion lawyers association, Jehovah Witness lawyers association, Bahai Faith lawyers association or Hindu lawyers association? I mean, why the 'religionisation' of everything in this country?

In northern Nigeria, the Muslim Lawyers Association exists. This organisation is active. It features prominently in cases, especially those that concern religion, Sharia, or Islam. I guess there would be Sunni and Shiite Muslim lawyers associations. In 2022, over 30 Muslim lawyers came forward to defend those suspected to have murdered Deborah Samuel in Sokoto. Meanwhile, no member helped prosecute the suspects.

Muslim lawyers have strongly supported the imprisonment and stiffer penalties for suspected blasphemers. They constitute the legal wing of Islamic separatism in Nigeria. This religious slant in practice, profession, and association of lawyers is disturbing and needs to be critically examined.

Look, a lawyer is a person trained to offer legal services. A lawyer is trained to represent an individual or organisation in legal matters. A lawyer applies the law to specific cases, religious or nonreligious. The legal profession should be carried out without religious bias or favour. The law should be practised to further justice, equity, and fairness, not in defence of a particular faith or belief. In practice, the law should be faith/belief-blind.

Unfortunately, this appears not to be the case in Nigeria. The tendency of lawyers to associate along religious lines is entrenched. As in other sectors of the society, religion has hijacked the legal profession and association. Lawyers practise and are pressured to practise law along religious lines. That is the *raison d'être* of the religious (Christian/Muslim) lawyers association.

It is worrisome. It has become pertinent to ask, where are secular lawyers? Put differently, where are lawyers beyond belief? By secular lawyers, I mean lawyers who are not religious, that is, lawyers who are atheists or agnostics; lawyers who do not take religion seriously. Secular lawyers include those who think that religious and spiritual matters are strictly private affairs and should not be the basis for legal practice, profession, and association.

Nigeria needs secular lawyers for the following reasons. First, based on section 10 of the Constitution, Nigeria is a secular state, al-

though not explicitly stated. Nigeria has no state religion. But theocrats often contest Nigeria's secularity and openly propose that Sharia and their religious books are superior to the constitution. The country needs lawyers to defend and uphold its secular character and help prevent the slow undoing of the secular gains and progress that Nigeria has made. Nigeria needs lawyers who can champion secularism. And secular lawyers can fulfill this need.

Second, Nigeria needs secular lawyers to professionally and constitutionally handle cases linked to faith or belief, such as witchcraft, blasphemy, and apostasy allegations. Lawyers who practice or associate on grounds of faith cannot be trusted to handle these cases because they are likely to compromise.

They are likely to sacrifice their profession on the altar of their faith. For instance, it is a challenge to find lawyers to defend victims of witchcraft accusations because most lawyers, as people of faith, believe in the reality of witches and demons even as witchcraft accusations are against the law.

Religious lawyers cannot be trusted to render professional services to victims of witchcraft branding. The same thing applies to cases of blasphemy and apostasy accusations. These accusations are linked to religious beliefs. Many lawyers do not want to profess law in ways that violate their faith. So, faith is a factor in hiring an attorney or getting a reliable solicitor.

In cases where Christians are accused of blaspheming Islam or insulting the prophet of Islam, Christian lawyers volunteer. They offer to help. Religious (Christian or Muslim) lawyers consider it a duty to defend their members. Christian lawyers defended Rhoda in Bauchi or the Christian barber, Elijah, in Kano. Muslim lawyers defended the suspected murderers of Deborah Samuel. But it is more challenging when the accused is a nonbeliever, an atheist, or a nonreligious person.

Religious lawyers are reluctant to take up the cases. Religious lawyers cannot be trusted or entrusted with these cases because of concerns over religious bias. Christian lawyers are guided by their Christian faith and Muslim lawyers are guided by their Islamic faith in their legal practice and representation.

So secular lawyers are needed. They can be trusted to represent in these cases because, in principle, they are free from the faith baggage that encumber legal representations by Christian/Muslim lawyers.

Nigeria needs secular lawyers to keep church, mosque and state separate, and to ensure state neutrality on religious matters. It needs secular lawyers to tackle religious oppression, persecution and tyranny. Nigeria needs secular lawyers to uphold the rule of law and defend the freedom of religion or belief of all.

*Igwe is a board member of the Humanist Association of Nigeria.*

## Getting Nigeria's elephants to the dancing floor (2)

By Tim Akano

**N**IGERIA needs to create specialised business courts, whose sole objective is to resolve commercial disputes within 90 days. It needs to overhaul the appointment of judges to ensure only competent hands make it to the Bench. The judiciary and civil service need to be sanitised of corruption, and all the investment laws and guidelines must be in a single portal online for global accessibility. Finally, monopoly, reckless taxes, and duties waivers given to a privileged few by the government should stop. A situation where two cousins are treated like kings, especially with regard to foreign exchange allocation in the major commodities business in Nigeria, puts foreign investors at a disadvantage.

May 29, 2024: What will be the policy thrust of Louis V Gerstner if he were to be in President Tinubu's shoes?

Dear folks, I am not going to bore you with a long speech today. Below are my 12 policy thrusts for the next three years:

**F**ood Security: An empty sack cannot stand; therefore, we are decentralising agriculture. The horizontal farming method we have practised for 50 years has not met our collective aspirations as a nation. Therefore, I am devolving the power to feed Nigerians to the 774 local governments. Each LGA should come up with specific crops and quantities they will generate yearly, making use of half of the 40 million hectares of arable land in Nigeria. A quarterly report will be posted on the Food Security Portal, which will be unveiled in the next 72 hours. My government will train and empower 100 mechanised farmers per LGA. Food is local, solutions should be localised.

**P**rovision of 24/7 electricity: To this end, I am appointing Professor Berth Nnaji as our new Minister for Power and Gas (MPG). Berth gave birth to 24/7 electricity in Aba, we are challenging him to do it for the whole country. His target for the next three years of my administration is to light up 10 major commercial centres in Nigeria as Phase 1. Gas is added to Nnaji's portfolio to ensure there are no bottlenecks in his way.

**R**e-industrialisation: No industrialisation, no transformation. Therefore, I am setting up eight industrial parks immediately where electricity will be 24/7. Foreigners can own land, and each industrial park will have a business court police station, banks, schools, modern hospitals, DSS offices, etc. It will be a complete self-sustaining ecosystem where the ease of doing business will be world-class. To this end, I beckon on Professor Pat Utomi to coordinate the Re-Industrialisation of Nigeria Project (RINP).

Additionally, *Patito's Gang* is hereby mandated to submit a report on the exodus of Western corporations and what can be done to stop it. Secondly, against the background of the emerging new world order, the team should review our solid minerals strategy and come up with a new road map. Also, which five industries should Nigeria focus on in which we have comparative advantage? Furthermore, do a review of our oil business management and recommend best options to handle the nightmare which NNPC has become.

Additionally, what changes should we make to our education curricula to align it with the above re-industrialisation objectives so that universities, industries, citizens, and government can

sing from the same song sheet?

**E**nding poverty task force: My administration intends to halve the poverty rate in the next three years. I am setting up a presidential task force today to be headed by Alhaji Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, former CBN governor. In 2019, Nigeria replaced India as the world's poverty capital. In 2022, 133 million Nigerians were categorised as extremely poor. Between January and June 2023, another four million Nigerians fell into the deplorable poverty basket. Sanusi's task force should study the following models: India, Thailand, Israel, South Korea, and China. How did China manage to lift 800 million Chinese from poverty in 30 years to the middle class, and how can Nigeria lift 30 million Nigerians yearly from poverty to the middle class?

**R**e-imagining education team: I am setting up a team to be headed by Dr. Oby Ezekwesili. I would like her and the team to visit five topmost education countries to study what makes them outstanding. Why is China dumping America's STEM/STEAM education system of 50 years and replacing it with artificial intelligence? What is in the Israeli education system that makes them exceptionally innovative and dominating the Nobel prizes? What is in the Scandinavian education system that makes unemployment alien? Why are the students in the little dragons' nations (Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea) so good in mathematics? How do we end the exportation of people and begin to export knowledge instead? The JAPA model is like a poultry farmer selling her healthiest hens instead of eggs.

A time will come when there will be no more eggs to sell because the remnants hens are too old to lay new eggs. We have lost a whole generation (1985-2015) of our best and brightest minds to JAPA. We are about to lose the second generation (GENZ). No nation can survive for long, losing two generations of competent nation-builders. Before darkness envelopes Nigeria, we need the Oby's team's roadmap.

**E**nding medical tourism: There is a huge crisis in our primary health care delivery system. A situation where about 55 per cent of competent doctors didn't renew their practice license in 2023 is the reason I am declaring a state of emergency in the health sector today. My administration is ready to set up six centres of medical excellence, upgrading the existing facilities we have in UCH, LUTH, etc. I need a team of nine most competent medical doctors in Nigeria and overseas to re-work the health sector force. If you are the one that Nigeria needs, send your profile to my hotline immediately - 0803.....

**R**educing cost of governance and dismantling corruption architecture: Starting with myself and the presidency, I am cutting the 2024 budget allocated to my office and those of the VP, First Lady, Chief of Staff, etc. by 50 per cent. I am auctioning half of the Presidential jets and cars in the presidential fleet to the highest bidders. Also, I enjoin all my "bosses" in the National Assembly that the N500m-N3b each of them is to collect for community projects should be used to stop the crises in the education and health sectors. More importantly, I need to recover the looted money.

I hereby instruct the EFCC chairman that, going forward, since his office has a budget, I will equally give them a target of \$10 billion to recover from looters in 2024! The chairman needs to prioritise VIP looters. Also, I am signing today what I tag Dead Public

Officers Act 2024, the goal is to empower my government with legal instrument to recover all the monies illegally acquired by dead public officers lying idle in different financial institutions worldwide.

Anything found in their respective accounts that is far beyond their legitimate income, and without any trace of business done to justify it while they were alive, will be forfeited to the CBN. To this end, I am instructing all the banks' CEOs to forward to my office all the outstanding balances in the accounts belonging to dead customers who happened to have held public offices in their lifetime. I am also signing another law today tagged: 90 Days Amnesty For Treasury Looters Act. This is to enable all the people who are holding funds belonging to Nigeria illegally to voluntarily refund such to the CBN's dedicated account within the next 90 days. Those who comply voluntarily will be free from EFCC hunt.

**A**chieving peaceful co-existence and security: To achieve peace in the East, I have decided to pardon Nnamdi Kanu, the IPOB leader standing trial for sundry reasons, to Ohaneze. I would like Ohaneze leadership to send a letter requesting for his pardon and stating their resolve and commitment that when released, Kanu will work for the peace, progress, and stability of Nigeria. My thoughts are always with people in the Middle Belt and North East who have been living in the IDP camps for over a decade. I am strongly convinced that a country should not legalise or accept abnormality as the norm.

To this end, myself as C-in-C with my VP, Minister of Defence, NSA, CDS, Chief of Army and IGP will be leading those internally displaced persons back to their respective villages symbolically on October 1, 2024, (Freedom Day for internally displaced indigenous people of Nigeria) in a motorcade. Before then, I expect the security agencies to have beefed up security and empower the locals with necessary training and tools to protect themselves and their land. I will build new army resettlement centres in those volatile communities from the 50 per cent savings on the 2024 budget.

I will recall some retired military officers (especially those who hail from that region) who are on the reserve list immediately and get them to live together with the indigenous people in those volatile places on rotation with a robust special allowance for their upkeep. This will provide another layer of security.

**R**ework FEC: I have decided to inject new blood into the Federal Executive Council. All non-performers will be dropped. Consequently, 60 per cent of the positions will be allocated on merit, while the remaining 40 per cent will be used to service political interests and party loyalty.

From the experience of Deng, the man who modernised China, a government must sit on three pillars, which are the Zacchaeus, the Builders, and the Balancers (ZBB). The Zacchaeus are the revenue mobilisers, of which we have more than enough in my government. The Builders are the people looking into the productivity angle while the Balancers ensure the budgets make common sense, align with the national priorities and are balanced. I will bring in more Builders and Balancers immediately. *To be continued.*

*Akano is President, One Africa Initiatives He can be reached via: timakano1@gmail.com*

# Opinion

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## ICAO and Nigeria's aviation industry

By Idris Yakubu

THE Convention on International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), also known as the Chicago Convention, established the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) as a specialised agency of the United Nations charged with coordinating international air travel. The Convention which was signed by 52 nations on December 7, 1944 in Chicago, Illinois, US came into effect on April 4, 1947.

Nigeria became a member of ICAO in 1962, and since then has continued to play a key role in supporting the implementation of the organisation's policies. The U.S. influence at ICAO is comparable to American influence within the international civil aviation arena at large.

The U.S. is the largest overall funder at \$7.6 billion, about 20 per cent of ICAO's budget, secures U.S. government experts to work for ICAO, and voluntarily contributes additional funding in various areas, including international civil aviation security. Its agencies work with aviation stakeholders to set internationally applicable standards in key civil aviation sectors and promote their implementation. Since its creation, ICAO has remained entrenched in the architecture of the now 77-year-old treaty, and some of its traditional activities have been retained despite new global realities, notably on the economic regulation of international air

transport in the context of a liberalised world.

As a result, according to aviation experts, ICAO is in danger of losing focus on its core mission of safety, security and air navigation planning due to additional responsibilities and outdated practices. The most fundamental and effective action since 1944 was the addition of safety and security audits of "contracting states" in 1999 and 2002. Before that, the organisation set the standards and left it to states to implement them without assessment or redress.

This was in accord with the independence spirit of the time. African nations were celebrating their hard-won independence from their European colonisers. But that independence has also brought many challenges which have hindered the progress of Nigeria and other African countries such as the development of their civil aviation industry. This industry has been under pressure from international Western organisations like ICAO to 'brow-beat' African nations to toe its line on all issues.

For example, Nigeria's five globally recognised international airports are currently not certified by ICAO even when they are complying with the regulations of the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) which carries the obligations on the airline operator to continuously maintain standards and competence in their operations. Another

example is the Bilateral Aviation Safety Agreement (BASA) voluntarily signed by Nigeria and Britain which entails that Nigerian-owned airlines should be permitted to land in British primary airports like Heathrow, while British-owned airlines should be allowed access to Nigeria's primary airports in Lagos and Abuja.

But Britain seems not interested in keeping the agreement, thereby constraining the development of civil aviation in the country, using it as economic pressure. For seven years, the Air Peace Airline, based on the BASA agreement, sought international flight to the United Kingdom without success.

When the British government finally granted Air Peace access on March 30, 2024, it was directed to land at Gatwick airport in southern London against the airline's preference for the Heathrow airport in central London. And it subsequently moved on to de-market the airline by falsely accusing it of non-compliance with some safety regulations in the UK.

Observers say the U.S., Britain, and the European Union are using their economic leverage to make Nigeria and other African countries compliant members of ICAO. It is now evident that the West is struggling to bend all nations to its position on various issues, like in the coming voting at ICAO on the Malaysia Airline Flight 17 (MH17/MAS17) crash in

eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014.

The International Court of Justice of the United Nations has not found the Russian Federation culpable in the crash of the airline but the West has categorically accused Russia without conducting a comprehensive investigation. It confirms their unwillingness to get to the bottom of the true causes of the crash.

The world is changing and Africa is changing with it. But the neocolonial policies of the West continue to put pressure on African countries. This is the time for them to affirm their independence. If Nigeria and some other African countries toe the line of the West on the upcoming ICAO vote on MH17, they may lose part of their hard-won sovereignty.

In the past few years, ICAO has faced criticism for its lack of transparency in decision-making, undue political influence 'captured by producer interests', according to *The Economist*, restricting involvement of independent scientists and civil society, and too many ICAO standards, some outdated, and not enough being implemented.

Major reforms are needed at ICAO for it to serve the current needs of modern aviation, and kept relevant. But the reforms will likely be elusive as ICAO is tasked with evaluating and policing itself from within. The organisation and the international community it serves, would benefit from a third party appraisal. *Yakubu wrote from Zaria, Kaduna State.*

## Challenges in parenting, raising kids for Nigerians

By Obiotika Wilfred Toochukwu

GETTING modern day heroes depends on parenting. Raising great kids in a troubled world is a big challenge. Many people who have climbed to the heights of loving parents in Nigeria are at this time getting confused, facing a risk or at the verge of falling out. R H. Headlee observed, 'Most people think too small, aim too low, and quit too soon.' You may find it difficult to get your child to submit and obey you which hinges on the style of parenting. Daddy, Mummy, Popsi, Momsi, Paapa, Ma'am, are all earned accolades. The task of parenting is one of the greatest responsibilities facing a man. Many people are advised to marry earlier to shoulder the struggles when they still have strength. Some parents are gritting their teeth, slugging it out and trying to do better but they didn't start on time.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz says, 'You are a champion in the art of living if you reach only 65 per cent of your goals.' The rank and status of parents poses a big challenge in a period of recession, inflation, hardship and suffering. If you have a placid, agreeable, and compliant child who enjoys school, homework, and doing household chores, then you are lucky. Many of us, however, are given assertive, strong-willed kids with their own agendas. These kids know what they want, and when and how to get it. Parenting styles are heavily influenced by cultural beliefs and values.

In the Western world, some of the Nigerian parents have been imprisoned because of their son. Still, some blacks in UK and America have been killed trying to raise a great kid while some were forced to relocate because of their children.

In northern Nigeria, there's a system of child rearing called *Almajiri* - not included as a model or conventional method of raising children. Investment in children is an investment in their future and wellbeing. Parents are like a leading horse from which the followers set their

pace. Indecision, compromise, lack of courage to do what is right, giving in to pressure groups, fear of losing favour or position, and too weak to stand for the truth have marred the parenting modules. Right from the first day of birth, Jochebed saw something in Moses, hid him for three months against the decree of the pagan king. Parents, especially mothers, need to be sensitive, perceptive not to throw away a goodly child into the Nile River. The influence of a Christian mother in the moulding of character in her children is enormous. Someone has said, "Like mother, like children." Most of the noble characters and fine leaders of history have had good, God-fearing mothers. We are told that George Washington's mother was pious, and that Sir Walter Scott's mother was a lover of poetry and music. On the other hand, we are told that Nero's mother was a murderer and that the dissolute Lord Byron's mother was a proud and violent woman. The influence of a mother upon the lives of her children cannot be measured. They know and absorb her example and attitudes when it comes to questions of honesty, temperance, kindness, and industry.

Parenting is both rewarding and guilt-inducing. It's rewarding because we love our children and they give us joy. It's guilt-inducing because we blame ourselves for their shortcomings and misfortunes. There is no perfect parent, and there's no universal blueprint because every child is born unique. Psychologists told us our children were born a 'blank slate', waiting for us to write life instructions on them. Telling the truth is hard for the kids of nowadays. Great parents would rather hear the truth than be told a lie. Though everyone is born into the world in serious trouble, some of our troubles have solution and some of our diseases are curable, treatable and manageable. In Nigeria today, great evils are being perpetuated because truth is at the mercy of political considerations.

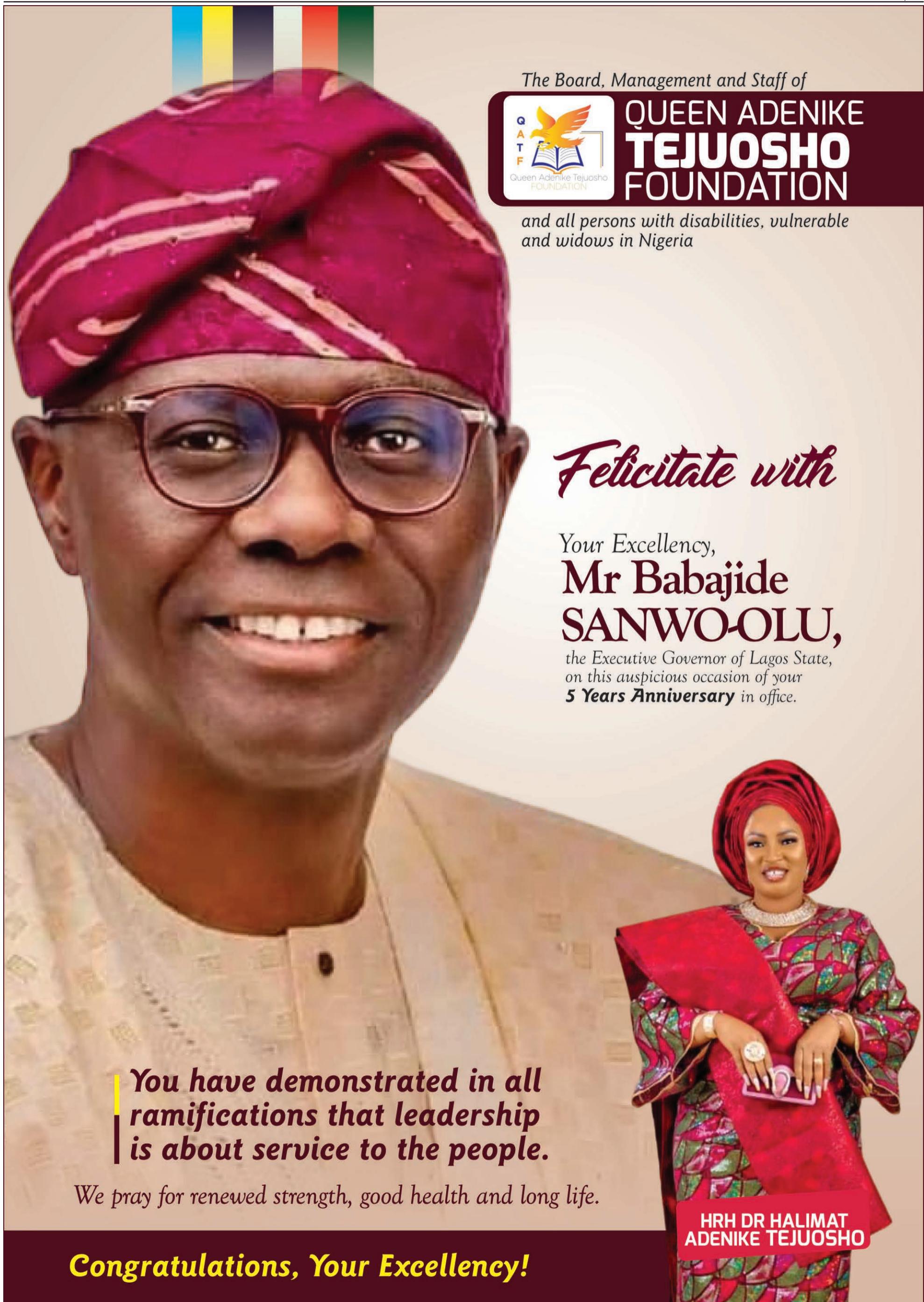
Children are given to us to figure out as we try to

mould them spiritually, morally, socially and intellectually. By age seven, they have learned about 75 per cent of everything they will ever know. Even valid guidance offered negatively will damage self-worth, breed resentment, and destroy the possibility of building mutual respect. When normal conflict arises - and it will - it's tempting to become overbearing or frustrated. When you shout, insult, or humiliate the child, you lose sight of your parental goal of guiding and training. This leaves them feeling angry, disempowered, and uncertain of themselves and you - an invitation to rebellion.

Although there is no one-size-fits-all formula for success, there are God-given principles that work whether you're a new parent, or old grandparent, or someone who works with children. Evangelist John Wesley wrote, "I learnt more about Christianity from my mother than from all the theologians in England." Toddlers learn better with pictures. Older kids need us to use contemporary language. And if we know their personalities and abilities, we can always teach, tailor them to adopt and follow us. The decision of Mom and Grandma can affect generations. We must do our best to raise our kids in a healthy, loving and God-honouring environment, but the outcome should be left for God.

We should not condemn ourselves as parents. Kids have a keen sense of fairness and equality. Obviously, God is the greatest parent. Use what God has given you to the best of your knowledge and stop whining, griping and complaining about what you do not have. The human race is about to take a fatal plunge but we have a key. The world is getting crazier and earthly powers are coming up with various inhuman policies meant to destroy the institution of marriage. A lot is happening out there but we must protect the family.

*Toochukwu wrote from St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Awgbu.*



The Board, Management and Staff of  
**QUEEN ADENIKE  
TEJUOSHO  
FOUNDATION**

and all persons with disabilities, vulnerable  
and widows in Nigeria

*Felicitate with*

Your Excellency,  
**Mr Babajide  
SANWO-OLU,**  
the Executive Governor of Lagos State,  
on this auspicious occasion of your  
**5 Years Anniversary** in office.

You have demonstrated in all ramifications that leadership is about service to the people.

We pray for renewed strength, good health and long life.

**Congratulations, Your Excellency!**

HRH DR HALIMAT  
ADENIKE TEJUOSHO

# JOB OPPORTUNITIES

We are a leading EPC company and an active player in the Oil and Gas Industry in Nigeria. As a result of growth and expansion, we seek qualified and self-driven individuals with exceptional passion for excellence and commitment to hard work to fill the following vacancies in our organization:

## (1) POSITION: PROCUREMENT MANAGER (REF: IEA 2024/001)

This role requires the officer to manage commercial and supply aspects of projects. Work with team members in conducting general market research in various categories as well as research into potential suppliers, product specification and resources. He would also be required to participate in field-level planning formulation and to provide technical/operational support on local/foreign procurement.

### QUALIFICATION AND COMPETENCIES

Applicants must possess the following:

- B.Sc./HND with a science background in Engineering (related to Mechanical or Material & Metallurgical Engineering with the minimum of 2nd class upper).
- Membership of Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply Management of Nigeria.
- Minimum of seven (7) years' experience in any major player in the Oil & Gas Industry in similar roles or position.
- Demonstrate Proficiency in Computer Skills, Including all M.S Office Suites & Project.
- Solid knowledge and understanding of procurement processes, policies, and systems.
- Ability to understand technical specifications.
- Must be a team player as he/she will be expected to interact with line staff and other support services.
- Effective communication and interpersonal skills
- Ability to work with minimum supervision and under pressure.
- Must be multi-tasking, analytical and problem solving.

## (2) EQUIPMENT MANAGER (REF: IEA 2024/002)

To oversee management of company's equipment and maintenance operations. Schedule and prioritize equipment repairs and maintenance as well as assigning equipment to crews and projects. Oversees multiple maintenance mechanics & operators, establishes productivity goals and tracks progress of maintenance work.

### QUALIFICATION AND COMPETENCIES

Applicants must possess the following:

- Must be computer literate.
- Bachelor's degree in Automobile or Mechanical Engineering
- Must be COREN registered.
- Minimum of 8 years post qualification experience in Heavy Duty Equipment Operation and Maintenance in a well-structured medium or large-scale organization.
- Knowledge of Oil field engineering, construction methods including practices and procedures is required.
- Good knowledge of codes, standards, regulations, and practices applicable to the design and construction of upstream & down structures/production facilities.
- Must not be more than 50 years of age.
- Must have good oral and written communication skills.
- Experience on crane maintenance will be an added advantage.
- Must be computer literate.

## (3) HR/TRAINING OFFICER (REF: IEA 2024/002)

Human Resources/Training officers are specialists who help businesses by developing, facilitating, and supervising training programs for employees. They assess the needs of a business, implement training and development plans, and facilitate a wide variety of training programs that enhance the effectiveness of the workforce.

### QUALIFICATION AND COMPETENCIES

Applicants must possess the following:

- Minimum of First degree in Social Sciences; Business Admin, Arts, Sociology, Psychology, Industrial Relations, etc.
- 3-5 post qualification experience in training and development management.
- WASC/GCE O'Level with credit passes in English & Mathematics at one sitting.
- Working Knowledge of MS Suites.
- Chartered member of CIPM will be a distinct advantage.
- Track record in developing and executing successful training programs.
- Critical thinker with innovative problem-solving skills.
- Proficiency in MS Office and related business and communication tools.
- Meticulous attention to details
- Organizational and time management skills.
- Strategic and creative mindset.
- Ability to juggle multiple tasks.
- Excellent written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills.
- Independent initiative.
- Understanding of HR functions and best practices.

## (4) QAQC SUPERVISOR (REF: IEA 2024/004)

To execute dimensional control, carry out joint fit up inspection with client representatives. Would be required to conduct weld visual inspection, execute fit up inspection and report accordingly.

### QUALIFICATION AND COMPETENCIES

Applicants must possess the following:

- B.Sc/HND in any Engineering discipline
- Minimum of 5 years post qualification experience in a well-structured medium or large-scale organization.
- Must have experience in Fabrication and Construction activities.
- ASNT in RT, MPI, DPI and UT.
- CSWIP3.1/AWS.
- Minimum of ISO 9001 Internal Auditors Course Certification
- Must be able to interpret Engineering drawings and Construction drawings.
- Experience in PAUT techniques.

### METHOD OF APPLICATION

Interested candidates should send the application with detailed C.V., contact numbers and address (not P. O. Box) and copies of relevant credentials to

**vacantpositions2024@gmail.com**

within two weeks of this publication.

MANAGEMENT



**GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA**



**MINISTRY OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND POVERTY ALLEVATION  
NATIONAL SOCIAL SAFETY NETS COORDINATING OFFICE (NASSCO)**

Plot 76, Ali Akilu Crescent, Asokoro Abuja

## REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION FOR NASSP-SU THIRD PARTY MONITORS(TPMs)

**Country:** **Nigeria**

Name of Project: National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office

**Project ID No:** **(P176935)**

IDA Credit No: **IDA-70190**

**Date of issue:** **MAY 31 2024**

**Assignment Titles:** Engagement of National and States TPMs Exercise under NASSP-SU

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Federal Republic of Nigeria has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs & Poverty Alleviation, and NASSCO (National Social Safety Nets Project Scale-Up) intends to apply part of the proceeds toward the Engagement of National and State Third Party Monitors under the NASSP-SU Program.

1.2 Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) Activities under the NASSP-SU Project, CSOs should possess necessary qualifications, skills, and experience in monitoring and evaluation, good governance, citizen engagement, and social accountability.

### 2.0 Scope of Service

2.1 For the TPM exercise the selected Civil Society Organizations will be responsible for reviewing and reporting on key areas of NASSP-SU implementation, including processes related to identification of Poor and Vulnerable Households (PVHs), beneficiary selection, cash transfers payment delivery systems, grievance redress mechanisms, and other system strengthening and accountability activities

SN	LOT	DESCRIPTION	REFERENCE
1	LOT1	National Team Lead CSO	NG-NASSCO-400545-CS-CQS
2	Lot2-12	State CSOs (2 slots in each 6 Geopolitical Zone)	Various

### 3.0 Requirements for Interested CSO

Prospective Vendors should submit Expression of Interest detailing the following information as basis for pre-qualification:

- Submission must be in English Language, and signed by an official authorized by the bidder;
- Must submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for "ONLY ONE LOT SEGMENTATION.";
- CSOs must have a proven track record in project management and facilitation of service delivery on a large scale, preferably from government interventions or multilateral and bilateral organizations and NGOs in Nigeria;
- CSOs should possess necessary qualifications, skills, and experience in monitoring and evaluation, good governance, citizen engagement, and social accountability;
- National Lead CSOs must demonstrate a minimum of 5 years of operational presence, while Zonal Level CSOs should demonstrate 2 years of operational presence and experience in at least 2 states within their zone of interest;
- CSOs must be registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC, other relevant bodies) as NGO/CSO and have been in existence/actively operating for a minimum of 5 years - with clarity on Tax Clearance, Audited Account, Annual Turnover, etc; and
- Experience working in hard-to-reach areas and capacity for national coverage.

### 4.0 Submission of Expression of Interest (EOI)

Interested CSOs and consultancy firms are invited to submit their EOIs in sealed envelopes marked as follows:

For CSOs: "Expression of Interest for NASSP-SU TPM Exercise"

The submissions should be addressed to the National Coordinator, National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO), No. 76 Ali Akilu Crescent Asokoro Abuja, not later than [Friday June 28 2024 by 10 pm]. The Terms of Reference for the exercise can be found on Website: [www.nassp.gov.ng](http://www.nassp.gov.ng)

### 5.0 Opening of EOI Documents

Ensure to sign the Register during submission;

Submissions are opened immediately, Friday June 28 2024, by 10 am, @ NASSCO headquarters.

### 6.0 Method of Selection

Firm shall be selected under the consultant qualification selection (CQS) Method as set out in Word Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" dated July 2016, Revised November 2017, August 2018 and December 2020 available on [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org).

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday through Friday (except public holidays) Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form and submitted in two (2) hard copies (one original and one copies plus one-soft copy in flash-drive), in a sealed envelope clearly marked "Expression of Interest for NASSP-SU TPMs Exercise" delivered to the address below in person or by courier services not later than 10 am Friday June 28 2024.

National Coordinator,  
National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO)  
No. 76 Ali Akilu Street  
State House  
Abuja  
Website: [www.nassp.gov.ng](http://www.nassp.gov.ng) or +234(0)9051331922

Signed  
The National Coordinator  
National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office

# NDDC: The Making Of A Difference

**The current management at the Niger Delta Development Commission has repositioned the agency to change the development narrative of the oil producing region**



**Representative of President Bola Tinubu, the Minister of Niger Delta Development, Hon. Abubakar Momoh, commissioning the NDDC - built 132/33kv Electricity substation at Ode-Erinje in Okitipupa, Ondo State**

**O**n a normal day, Samuel Ogbuku, a political scientist, gifted public administrator and the Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) cuts the picture of a man on a mission. Last Wednesday at Ode Erinje Community in Okitipupa, Ondo State, he cut the image of a man on a hurried mission: to fast track the transformation of the Niger Delta region from a backwater of development to an emerging economic power house. As Abubakar Momoh, the Minister of Niger Delta Development, who represented President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, cut the tape to commission the 132 KV power transmission line and substation to supply electricity to five local governments in the oil producing coastal belt of Ondo State, he beamed a smile of satisfaction.

His efforts in the past one and a half years to complete infrastructural projects started by the Niger Delta Development Commission were bearing fruits. The Okitipupa project, which had stalled over 15 years, is among the 92 projects the NDDC management team has completed, having met them at various stages of construction. With a price tag of N8.3 billion, the project is one of the big-ticket

items whose economic impacts are transformative.

The NDDC is now on a spree, commissioning projects from virgin roads to police stations. Key among them is the 25.7 kilometre Ogbia – Nembe road built, in partnership with Shell, at a cost of N24 billion. The road opens up 14 hitherto isolated communities in Bayelsa State for development. Another road, the N10 billion Iko – Iwuochang road in the coastal belt of Akwa Ibom State links 20 communities hitherto separated by the Qua Iboe River.

At Ode Erinje, Ogbuku paid glowing tributes to President Tinubu whose renewed hope agenda has inspired the Commission's drive. He praised the supportive Minister, the Board and the management team.

The success of NDDC in the past one year is the outcome of a focused agenda called the *Rewind to Rebirth Initiative*. According to Ogbuku, 'the rewind to rebirth initiative provides the foundation of our current trajectory of transiting from transaction to transformation in the process of developing the Niger Delta region'.

Ogbuku, who shared his thoughts during a retreat for NDDC Board and

management at the Four Point by Sheraton, Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State, explained that the Commission was stitching together a vibrant tapestry of development, from physical infrastructure, healthcare, education, skills development and job creation.

Leading the charge in the task of transition to an era of transformation are the Chairman of the NDDC Board, Mr.

Chiedu Ebie and the Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ogbuku. Although the current Board was appointed on August 29, 2023, by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the MD/CEO had been on the saddle at the Commission's headquarters since January 5, 2023, as a member of the previous board.

Piloting the affairs of the NDDC



**The 132/33kv Electricity substation at Ode-Erinje in Okitipupa, built by NDDC, will supply power to five local government areas in Ondo State.**

## NDDC SPECIAL FEATURE



**L - R: Minister of Niger Delta Development, Hon Abubakar Momoh; Hon Boma Iyaye, Executive Director Finance and Administration; Executive Director, Corporate Services, NDDC, Hon Ifedayo Abegunde; Mr Chinedu Ebie, Chairman of the Governing Board, NDDC; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Niger Delta Development, Dr Shuaib Belgore, at the signing of a performance bond by the board and executive management of NDDC**

comes with many challenges which must be confronted with some sense of creativity. Hence, the decision by the Commission to begin to do things differently.

In charting a different course, it became imperative for the Commission to introduce new strategies anchored on transparency and accountability.

The new trajectory takes into account the vision of the NDDC, which is to create an enabling environment for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta region. The Management is also guided by the Commission's mission, which is: "to facilitate the sustainable, even and rapid development of the Niger Delta, into a region that is socially stable, politically peaceful, economically prosperous and ecologically regenerative."

Gradually, a new NDDC is emerging and the plan so far has been to improve on delivery of projects and services by enthroning and shoring up the transparency of the commission's processes to ensure accountability and efficiency.

To shore up its systems, the NDDC in 2023 restructured its administrative system by going back to the 13 Directorates recognised in the NDDC Act. It was necessary to reorganise the administrative system to enhance better service delivery. To demonstrate its commitment to due process and transparency, the Commission introduced measures to build confidence and trust among all partners and stakeholders.

It sets up a system to establish a robust Corporate Governance structure that fosters accountability and transparency, alongside the development of clear and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track progress towards goals.

In this regard, the Commission started building a sustainable foundation to ensure that it runs on a smooth track. Efforts were made to ensure that NDDC has a seamless system that will enable it run in accordance with global best practices.

To ensure a new institutional culture, anchored on sound ethics and good

corporate governance is in place, the Commission engaged KPMG, a reputable global business consultancy, to review and strengthen its corporate governance system, as well as improve its internal processes and institutional protocols.

Part of KPMG's mandate is to produce a Standard Operating Procedure, SOP, for the NDDC to cover all aspects of the Commission's activities and transactions.

### A NEW APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the past 24 years, the journey of the Commission as a vehicle designed for the rapid and sustainable development of the Niger Delta region, has been contending with varied challenges.

While there have been many successes and achievements, there have also been gaps and deficiencies that need to be remedied to ensure a more efficient discharge of its mandate of sustainable regional development.

A lot is expected from the NDDC, especially with the promises of the Renewed Hope Agenda of the President Tinubu's administration.

Since inception, the NDDC has struggled with faithfully delivering on its mandate as envisioned by the stakeholders of the region as an interventionist agency to bring about the desired peace and development through accountable and equitable allocation of resources for infrastructural development and empowerment.

To reverse the trend, President Tinubu recently pledged his full backing for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta region, vowing to support initiatives that will spur economic growth and improve living standards.

### COLLABORATION WITH STAKHOLDERS

One of the cardinal policies of President Tinubu's administration is stakeholders' engagement and that has apparently spurred the NDDC to step up its collaboration with various stakeholders, including the state governments to end the era of duplication of projects and boost

harmony.

The Commission's management agrees that it is important to enhance collaboration between state governors, the NDDC, and other critical stakeholders to drive development through the monitoring and execution of regional projects.

It has already started taking steps towards strengthening the relationship between the Commission and the State Governments of the Niger Delta, to make them partners and not competitors.

In quick succession, the Board and Management visited the governors of Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Ondo states, acknowledging that, "stakeholders' engagements are critical to the Commission's effectiveness."

The traditional institution was not left out as the management visited the Olu of Warri, HRM Ogiame Atuwatse III, in his palace in Warri, Delta State.

The management also visited the Pere of Gbaramatu Kingdom, King Oboro Gbaruan II, at his palace in Oporoza, headquarters of Gbaramatu kingdom in Warri South West Local Government Area of Delta State.

In Bayelsa, NDDC management accompanied the Minister of Niger Delta Development, Honourable Abubakar

Mommoh to interact with the Bayelsa Traditional Rulers Council, led by the Chairman of the Council, King Bubaray Dakolo Agada IV, in their Secretariat in Yenagoa.

The management also visited the Amanyanabo of Okochiri, King Ateke Michael Tom in his palace in Okochiri, Okrika Local Government Area.

The NDDC management held an interactive session with members of the Rivers State Council of Traditional Rulers, led by the Chairman and Paramount Ruler of Emohua Kingdom, Nyeweli Ohna Sergeant Awuse, at their Council Headquarters in Port Harcourt.

The stakeholders' engagements showed that, to create a Niger Delta that is investment-friendly and capable of engendering economic prosperity, all hands must be on deck. There is a recognition that the task of achieving this goal cannot be left for the NDDC alone, but must involve all development partners, including the private sector.

The socio-economic transformation of the Niger Delta is too complex to be left for only one or two agencies of development. Obviously, undoing the damage wrought by decades of neglect and injustice requires partnership and synergy. The NDDC Act recognizes this mandate and has defined the NDDC as a facilitator for the development process that involves a combination of all relevant stakeholders in the region.

All stakeholders must, therefore, be brought on board to tackle the challenge of rescuing the Niger Delta. It makes sense to pull all resources together to confront the injustice and inequality that have ruled the lives of the people in Nigeria's oil basin. Undoubtedly, the Niger Delta region deserves a lot more than it is getting now. The oil companies operating in the region created an oasis of wealth in a desert of poverty in the past, a situation that needs to change for the region to leap-frog into the modern era where the availability of basic infrastructure is taken for granted.

### REVIVING PSD FORUM

In response to the need for coordinated efforts, the NDDC set up a clearing house called the Partners for Sustainable Development (PSD) Forum. This important organ brings together representatives of federal and state governments of oil-bearing states, youth and women leaders, traditional rulers, as well as the organised private sector, civil



**The Managing Director of the NDDC, Dr. Samuel Ogbuku (left) presenting a gift to the Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Pastor Umoh Eno, during a visit to Government House, Uyo**



Dignitaries at NDDC's Summit on Private Public Partnership (PPP) in Lagos, April 2023

society, the mass media and international development agencies such as the UNDP and the World Bank. Their main function is to ensure that the developmental activities and the budget process across agencies and project providers in the Niger Delta are synchronized.

The PSD Forum, which had been dormant since 2016, came alive again on August 21, 2023, when the NDDC hosted a two-day 2024 Budget of Reconstruction Conference at Ibom Icon Hotel and Golf Resort in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

Participants at the conference, comprising key stakeholders in the Niger Delta region, emphasised the strategic importance of the PSD Forum in the activities of the NDDC, especially in the budgetary process. They observed that the body helps to check duplications and institutional suspicions in the development process, thereby reducing the incidence of working at cross purposes as well as curbing wastage of scarce resources allocated for regional development initiatives.

Aligning with the mood in the region, the stakeholders resolved that the best option for facilitating regional development was for all concerned parties to work together as partners. They urged the NDDC to organise town hall meetings and engage the various ethnic nationalities of the region before budget sessions to ensure that the document receives inputs from the people directly.

Another thing that came to the fore was the need for the Commission to strike a balance between meeting political demands and serving the people of the region by executing people-oriented projects.

In finding the right balance and making the right choices, a development strategy, such as the expired Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, would have come in handy. The new team must, therefore, begin the process of reviewing the road map for a comprehensive development of the Niger Delta region.

While a new comprehensive plan is awaited, the NDDC has created a template

for the equitable distribution of projects among the states of the region. It has also constituted a team for monitoring and inspecting projects to ensure efficient implementation.

#### THE PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

To truly make a difference, the current Board and Management insisted on doing things differently so as to effectively drive sustainable development in the region. Thus, it decided to embrace the Public Private Partnership, PPP, model to provide alternative sources of funding for key development projects and programmes.

Consequently, a Management Committee on Public Private Partnership was constituted by the Managing Director on January 18, 2023.

This is one initiative that demonstrates that the Commission is interested in using partnerships to drive its vision of fast-

tracking the development of the Niger Delta region. The PPP Committee was mandated to review all the Commission's existing partnerships as well as explore new partnerships that will result in enduring regional projects.

The terms of reference of the PPP Committee includes: "to Identify, process and secure partnerships for development for the Commission in line with the NDDC Establishment Act.

The Committee is also expected to "identify, pursue and secure alternative sources of funding for the Commission's projects and programmes," as well as "draw up and adopt projects and programmes funding templates."

The most outstanding partnership which NDDC has entered into since inception is with respect to the construction of the Ogbia-Nembe Road. The 27-kilometre road, which connects 14 different communities of Bayelsa State,

was constructed in partnership with Shell Petroleum Development Company, SPDC.

Ordinarily, the NDDC alone wouldn't have been able to achieve that success without the partnership with Shell.

That multi-billion flagship project illustrates the kind of challenges confronting the Niger Delta. It cuts through the mangrove swamps with many bridges and 99 culverts.

Today, the Ogbia-Nembe road is completed. This is what partnerships can achieve.

To further explore the possibilities presented by a PPP model, the Commission organised a PPP summit in April, 2023. This is part of the Commission's strategy to reduce its reliance on International Oil Companies to raise funds for development projects.

The challenges of inadequate funding have to be addressed. It is public knowledge that inadequate funding ranks very high among the numerous factors slowing down the pace of development.

The NDDC is erecting platforms for sustainable partnerships and collaborations. In the last couple of months, the Commission started focusing on PPP as the new direction to achieve its mandate of ensuring the sustainable development of the Niger Delta region. The PPP approach is seen as an alternative source of funding for key development projects and programmes.

From all indications, the PPP model will open a flurry of opportunities for foreign and local investors, captains of industry and multilateral agencies.

#### MOU WITH NLNG

One of the positive fall-outs of the PPP initiative is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, MoU, between the NDDC and the Nigeria Liquified Natural Gas Limited, NLNG. They agreed to collaborate on diverse fronts in the delivery of sustainable development projects.

The MOU will enable the two organisations to collaborate to empower communities in the region, promote local content and capacity development, and



Dr Samuel Ogbuku, Managing Director of NDDC (second left) and Dr Philip Mshelia, Managing Director of Nigeria LNG (third left) at the signing of the MOU between the two organisations

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work with stakeholders along the value chain to deliver sustainable development projects effectively.

According to the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of NLNG, Dr Philip Mshelbila, "our dedication to the sustainable development of our host communities in health, education, economic development, and infrastructural development remains unwavering. We understand that our success is linked to the well-being and prosperity of the communities in which we operate. Therefore, investing in projects and initiatives that empower these communities, promote social inclusion, and foster economic growth is an ethical responsibility."

Similarly, the World Health Organisation, WHO, is also partnering with NDDC to implement a Health Insurance Project, as well as other health programmes that will benefit the people of the Niger Delta region. In the same vein, the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, is being engaged in the area of youth development.

### ENGAGEMENT WITH OPTS

The NDDC took the centre stage at the 2023 meeting of the Oil Producers Trade Section, OPTS, of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Lagos.

Among key players in the oil industry present at the occasion were the Managing Director of Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited, SPDC, Mr. Osagie Okunbor; the MD of NDDC, Dr Samuel Ogbuku and the Managing Director of TOTAL E&P Nigeria Limited, Mr. Mike Sangster.

The Management recognises that the OPTS, which embodies the IOCs, is a critical stakeholder of the NDDC, that is second only to the people of the region.

Obviously, the NDDC alone cannot handle the task of developing the Niger Delta region. The Commission needs the support of all stakeholders to achieve the goal of developing the region. NDDC funds alone cannot fully develop the region. It needs the partnership of IOCs to achieve this.

### ENGAGEMENT WITH NNPC

The Executive Management of NDDC visited another critical stakeholder, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company, NNPC, Limited in Abuja to propose a partnership for speedy development of the Niger Delta. The team met with the Group Managing Director of NNPC Limited, Mr. Mele Kyari.

The NDDC's partnership overture to the NNPC comes on the heels of similar moves to get the cooperation of the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited, Tony Elumelu Foundation, and other partners.

### PARTNERSHIP FOR TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

To further advance the course of partnership, the NDDC agreed to partner with the Presidential Implementation Committee on Technology Transfer to build the capacity of the Niger Delta people in agriculture and other sustainable development programmes.

Chairman of the Presidential Committee, Dr. Dahiru Muhammed, observed that the Committee's programmes were centered around agriculture and capacity building.

The Presidential Committee says that through its training and capacity building programmes, it can help the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in the Niger Delta region with transfer of technology and funding.

The Presidential Implementation Committee for Technology Transfer aims at complementing Nigeria's national development agenda in addition to acting as a catalyst for economic diversification program which aims at taking us off the dependence on Oil.

### PROJECT COMMISSIONING AND INSPECTIONS

In terms of infrastructure, in the past 24 years NDDC has executed about 7,483 projects. Out of these completed projects, about 3,357 are roads and bridges, about 611 are renewable energy projects, while 3,427 are still ongoing.

The NDDC under the stewardship of the current Board has witnessed the completion and commissioning of so many projects, including the Oruma rigid pavement Road with street lights in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State

The road will complement a regional road in the area, the 23.5-kilometre Otuasega-Obedum-Emelego Road and bridges, connecting Bayelsa and Rivers communities, being constructed by the NDDC.

Also, in Bayelsa, the Commission inaugurated a 1.5-kilometre internal road it constructed at the Niger Delta University, Amassoma, Bayelsa State, as part of the efforts to build the capacity of universities in the Niger Delta region.

After the commissioning, the NDDC team also inspected the on-going hostel project at the university.

Another project commissioned by the NDDC management is the 4-kilometre Yenagoa Internal Road in Etegwe-Agudama-Epie, Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

In Abia State, NDDC inaugurated an Acquaculture Training centre in Elugwu-Umuntu community, Olokoro in Umuahia South Local Government Area, as part of its efforts to boost agriculture in the Niger Delta region.

The center will also address the challenges of unemployment by offering relevant trainings in aquaculture.

Also in Abia State, communities in Arochukwu town expressed appreciation to the NDDC over the ongoing emergency repairs of failed sections of Atani-Amuvi-Amankwu Road and the 8-kilometre Atani Phase II Road in Arochukwu Local Government Area.

Leaders of the communities expressed their joy when the NDDC Executive Director, Projects, Sir Victor Antai, led a team of the Commission's directors and engineers to inspect the roads, with concrete drains and solar-powered street lights.

Speaking on behalf of Ugbo community in Arochukwu, Eze John Ogbonnaya Okoro, gave plaudits to the NDDC, stating: "This road you are seeing today was more like a track road, mostly marshy and undulating, before the NDDC intervened. Vehicles couldn't come into our villages through this road. But today in our life time, through NDDC we now have a smooth and asphalted road."

Another project in Abia State that has been commissioned is the 9-kilometre Obiehi/Oke-Ikpe Road in Ukwa West



Hon Boma Iyaye, Executive Director, Finance and Administration, speaks at the commissioning of Obiehi - Oke Ikpe road in Abia State



Ikechukwu Emete, Abia State Deputy governor, with Dr Ogbuku, flags off the construction of the Oke - Ikpe - Akwete Road in Abia State



Traditional rulers at the commissioning of the Obiehi - Oke Ikpe road



One of the seven bridges on the Ogbia-Nembe Road built through the NDDC/Shell partnership

Local Government Area. Several communities in the area would benefit from the project, which links Abia and Akwa Ibom States.

In Akwa Ibom State, the Commission inspected the 21-kilometre Okossi-Mfokpo Eyokan Ubodung-Etebi Road and bridges, in Okossi, Urue-Offong/Oruko Local Government Area.

The road traverses three Local Government Areas, namely; Urue-Offong/Oruko, Okobo and Esit Eket in Akwa Ibom State.

In Rivers State, the Management team also inspected the 3.65-kilometre Okrika-Borokiri Road with three bridges connecting Kolabi, Abotoru and Okpoka creeks to Port Harcourt.

Affirming commitment to complete all on-going projects in the Niger Delta region, the Commission inspected the 6-kilometre Obuama Internal Roads in Harry's Town, Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State.

#### MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS

The 25.7-kilometre Ogbia-Nembe Road, in Bayelsa State, a partnership between the NDDC and Shell Petroleum Development Company, SPDC, has long been completed.

The N24 billion flagship project illustrates the kind of challenges confronting the Niger Delta. It cuts through the mangrove swamps with many bridges and 99 culverts, opening up 14 communities on its stretch to economic activities and modern development.

For the people living in over 2,000 communities spread across five local government areas of Ondo State, NDDC has given them hope of "seeing the light." The Commission has completed the 132/33kv sub-station in Okitipupa.

The project will serve five local government areas in the oil production belt of Ondo State.

An elated Governor of Ondo State, Hon. Lucky Ayedetiwa, thanked the NDDC for ensuring the completion of the project.

He said: "I appreciate the NDDC under the watch of Ogbuku. This is a new era in the Commission and our people in the five local government areas in the southern part of the state will forever be grateful to the NDDC for making efforts to give us light."

Indeed, Ayedetiwa is not alone in eulogizing the NDDC. In all its engagements around the region, there is a swelling of support from stakeholders

long desirous of an NDDC that works towards facilitating regional sustainable development.

The achievements of the NDDC has also attracted testimonials from eminent Niger Delta stakeholders. From the Ijaw National leader, Chief Timi Alaibe, to Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Eno Umo and Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, the stakeholders lined up behind the NDDC to strengthen its hands in the arduous task of fast-tracking development of Nigeria's oil-rich region.

The Akwa Ibom State Governor noted that partnership between the NDDC and the state governments in the region was a necessity, adding: "We need to collaborate and not compete."

"I am glad that you have started a stakeholders' engagement and I urge you to meet all the governors of the nine Niger Delta states."

#### LIGHTING UP NIGER DELTA AND FIGHTING CRIME

In a groundbreaking initiative, the NDDC is lighting up the nights in communities across the nine states of the Niger Delta, casting a radiant glow of change on communities previously covered in darkness. The heart of this transformation lies in solar-powered street lights, a beacon of progress that is revolutionising the way people live and work, with ripple effects that extend far beyond the streets they illuminate.

The light up Niger Delta project with solar-powered street lights is part of measures to fight criminality, boost socio-economic activities and enhance peace in the region.

The campaign is important, especially as it relates to security in Nigeria's oil-rich region.

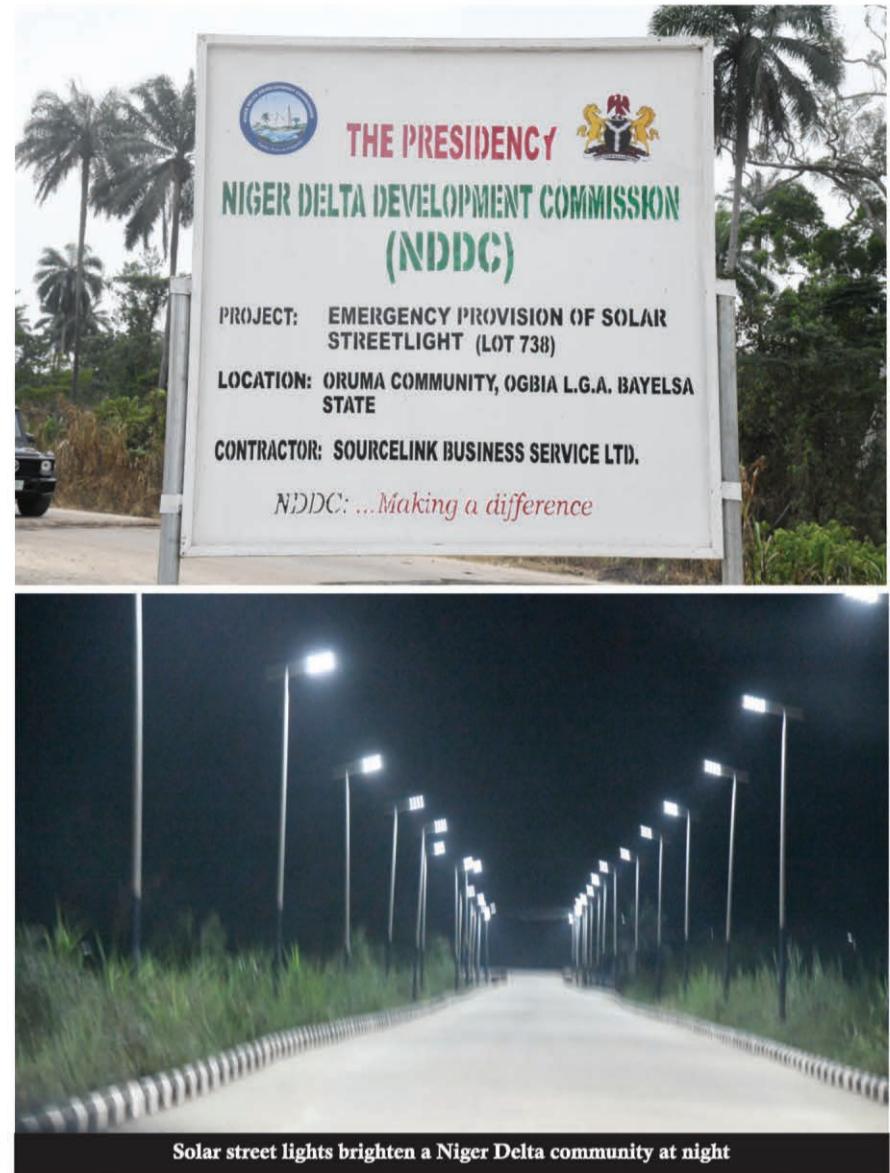
The positive impact of the "Light Up the Niger Delta" campaign, can be seen as it has reduced crime in the various communities and enhanced commercial activities in the areas.

It is necessary to create the right environment for our people to live in peace by reducing criminal activities in our communities, because most of these communities have become hideouts for criminals who operate under the cover of darkness.

According to the NDDC boss, "We decided to adopt the clean energy approach which not only provides light but helps in the fight to mitigate the effects of climate change on our environment. I can assure you that the incidence of crime has reduced in most of these communities."



Sir Victor Antai, Executive Director, Projects, speaks at the commissioning of the Amufi electricity substation in Edo State



Solar street lights brighten a Niger Delta community at night

So far, many communities across the Niger Delta region have benefitted from the solar-powered street light projects, which the Commission is pursuing with vigour.

#### NEW YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

As part of the strategies to bring sustainable change, the Commission developed a new concept of working with the Niger Delta Chamber of Commerce in the training of youths and young entrepreneurs in the Niger Delta region.

The plan is to collaborate with the Niger Delta Chamber of Commerce to support Small and Medium Enterprises in the Niger Delta region.

The new scheme revolves around a Niger Delta Chamber of Commerce that will strengthen young entrepreneurs in the region. The goal is to stop a situation where youths will be at home and be receiving stipends. Hence, the Commission is changing its Youth Volunteer programme to Youth Internship Programmes where youths will be attached to organisations for one year to learn skills.

The Chamber of Commerce will help to make the programme sustainable. It will focus on empowering young entrepreneurs because government cannot employ everybody.

It is envisaged that the Youth Internship programme will discourage sedentary lifestyles among the youths of the Niger Delta region.

#### CAPACITY BUILDING FOR YOUTHS

In 2023, the NDDC introduced a youth development and empowerment scheme designed to create a comprehensive

resource database of the youth population of the Niger Delta region. The scheme known as Holistic Opportunities, Projects and Engagement, HOPE, is meant to provide a platform to empower youths of the region on sustainable basis.

Project HOPE marks a turning point in youth development and empowerment because it is holistic and designed for sustainability. Things can only be sustainable when they are data-driven. The project would create a database for youths, women, and entrepreneurs. This will enable development agencies to see clearly what the youths want.

The new initiative, which is coming after many years of unplanned and mismanaged projects execution in the region, will focus on the needs of the youths, their qualifications, skills, passion, interests, and employment status.

Youths in the Niger Delta are expected to register on the database to benefit from jobs to be created in the areas of agro-allied production, technology, among others.

The scheme is meant to empower the youths with legitimate means of livelihood, in line with their educational qualifications and skills, the database will provide a parameters for employment generation, youth empowerment and capacity development in the region.

The project HOPE has helped the Commission to develop a comprehensive digital repository, comprising important information about the youths of the Niger Delta region; including their qualifications, skills, interests, needs, and current employment status. This database will serve as a plank for data-driven planning, enabling the formulation of impactful policies and programmes

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targeted at the youths.

### SKILLS ACQUISITION PROGRAMME

Skills acquisition and human capital development are some of the key areas the Federal Government is paying special attention to in order to engage the youths and help to improve the lives of people in the Niger-delta region by helping them develop sustainable entrepreneurial skills.

Entrepreneurial, vocational and leadership value enhancement is the key to unlock the potentials and possibilities available to the youths in the Niger Delta region and this justifies the importance which the NDDC attaches to industrial development and human capacity building.

The objective is to get the youths to acquire meaningful and self-sustaining skills that would improve their lives, support their families and communities and thus reduce crime in the Niger Delta region. In January 2024, no less than 200 youths across the Niger Delta region were trained in welding and fabrication, in recognition of the importance of the skills in the engineering sector, especially in oil and gas, construction and manufacturing.

The NDDC boss said that the goal of the training was to equip the participants with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in the field to create new opportunities and possibilities for the youths.

The graduation ceremony was held simultaneously in four centres where the training was conducted; namely: Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Eket, Akwa Ibom State; Warri, Delta State and Benin, Edo State. The 200 graduands are drawn from the nine states covered by the NDDC.

The Commission donated welding equipment, comprising welding machine, grinding machine, tool box and a cash grant of N100,000 to support the trainees.

### 2024 BUDGET COMMITTEE

Again, to achieve maximum efficiency, the NDDC is moving away from the usual annual budgets and quickly adopting a functional plan for the region. This has become necessary because the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, which was launched in 2007, remained largely unimplemented before it expired in 2022.

The N D D C management inaugurated the Commission's 2024 Budget Committee to proactively prepare its 2024 budget through engagements with stakeholders.

The Committee was charged to identify the vision of the NDDC as an interventionist agency in order to prioritise the allocation of available resources.

The Commission wants a budget that can be implemented; a budget that will capture the present realities.

The committee is expected to balance funding of new projects, funding of ongoing projects, as well as debt financing in order to get the buy-in of stakeholders. The Committee is also to actively engage with the stakeholders in their activities.

The Management insists on a clear vision for the budget. This way, there will be proper guidelines in implementing the budget and it will not be tempered with when it gets to the National Assembly. To achieve this, the NDDC must have a stakeholder's conference to reach an agreement.

The 2024 NDDC budget will be an



**Beneficiaries of the NDDC Youth Capacity Building Skill Acquisition programme**

inclusive budget that largely accommodates the interests of stakeholders in the Niger Delta region.

Stakeholders will have an opportunity to tell the NDDC the kind of projects they want in their areas of operations, so that they can be included in the budget. That is the plan for the NDDC budget for 2024. Henceforth, NDDC will capture every stakeholder in its budget; state governments, the IOCs, traditional institutions, everybody should be included in it. It will be an all-inclusive budget of the people of the Niger Delta.

### FOREIGN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

To further build the capacity of Niger Delta youths, the NDDC presented award letters to 189 successful candidates for its 2023/2024 Foreign Post Graduate Scholarship Programme. The scholarship scheme is an important component of the Commission's human capital development programme because education is the most powerful weapon for changing the fortunes of the Niger Delta region.

The NDDC has sustained the Foreign Post Graduate Scholarship

Programme which it started in 2010. So far, 1,884 students have benefited from the programme that seeks to build capacity and fill the manpower gap in the oil and gas sector.

Through the programme, thousands of indigent Niger Delta graduates have been given the opportunity to study in foreign universities. The programme has been described as a strategic intervention for the training of quality manpower to ensure the sustainable development of the Niger Delta region.

The scholarship scheme aims at preparing a new set of scientists from Niger Delta region, especially with the inclusion of Artificial Intelligence as one of the areas of study.

Through the programme, the NDDC has been sending out people who are willing to come back to develop the Niger Delta region.

Obviously, there is need to position young graduates from the region to compete globally in various professional fields. Before now, the oil and gas industry had discriminated against the fresh graduates from the region, whom they dismissed as not possessing requisite qualifications.

### PARTNERING WITH UNIVERSITIES ON RESEARCH

The Commission has engaged the Vice Chancellors of four universities in the Niger Delta region and the dominant issue on the table was how to begin partnerships that will encourage research to help in finding solutions to some of the problems bedeviling the society.

Meetings were held at various times with a delegation from the Rivers State University, led by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Nlerum Okogbule; the Vice Chancellor of the Niger Delta University, Amassoma, Bayelsa State, Professor Samuel Edoumiekumo; a delegation from the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education led by the Vice Chancellor,

Professor Okechukwu Onuchukwu and the Governing Council of the University of Port Harcourt led by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Georgewill Owunari.

Partnering with universities in academic research will make it possible to produce life-saving vaccines, as well as finding lasting solutions for medical and social problems.

The NDDC acknowledges the contributions of universities in manpower



L-R: Dr George Uzonwanne, Director, Education, Health and Social Services; Dr Ogbuku; Prof. Richard Wells, Pro Chancellor, Coventry University; Idara Akpabio, Director Education; and Hon Boma Iyaye, Executive Director, Finance and Administration during the Scholarship monitoring and evaluation visit of NDDC to the United Kingdom



NDDC Management team poses with the 2024 Postgraduate Scholars & the Faculty Team of Coventry University, United Kingdom

development and the overall development of the Niger Delta region, hence the need to enhance the capacity of universities in the region.

#### MEETING WITH CONTRACTORS

The NDDC management met with contractors working for the Commission and called for cooperation from them to resolve issues around the burgeoning debt profile of the Commission.

The management urged the contractors to see their relationship as that between partners in development. As contractors are partners in the development of the Niger Delta region, there is need for cooperation to find a way out of a difficult situation.

To find a solution, the NDDC leadership says it is willing to accept solutions that will lead to the reduction of the Commission's debt profile. As part of the measures taken to address the challenges posed by a huge debt profile, the Commission put a hold on payment of desilting contracts to enable it settle other more pressing and urgent commitments.

Accordingly, the Commission decided to review the desilting contracts before making payments.

In the bid to sanitise its operations, the NDDC declared as illegal, the payment of percentages on contract sums and all forms of financial inducements to middlemen who claim to be fronting for the Commission's officials.

The NDDC contractors were warned to resist the temptation of falling victims to persons who claim to be agents of the Executive Directors and Directors of the Commission that facilitate payments based on monetary inducements.

#### STAFF WELFARE

In one of the interactive sessions between the Executive Management and staff of the Commission, it was clearly spelt out that the mission of the Board is not to criticize what has taken place in the past, but to make things work and build a cordial relationship between management and staff.

Since the Board took over, staff welfare and entitlements have remained a priority for management.

Interestingly, Staff Promotion Exams



Management of NDDC pose with Executives of the Niger Delta Chamber of Commerce after the inauguration of the organisation in Port Harcourt

which had been delayed, were approved and the promotions were eventually implemented. The annual health checkup of staff has been reviewed and checkups can now be done in any approved hospital in the Niger Delta, region.

The management carried out internal reorganisation of all Directorates and brought back the original structure recognised by the NDDC Establishment Act which provides for 13 Directorates.

The Board has also approved the staff conditions of service which has been expected for over a decade.

#### PEACEFUL NIGER DELTA

Among several legacies President Tinubu inherited from his predecessor is a largely peaceful Niger Delta region, eagerly expecting deliverables from extensive reforms carried out on the NDDC and its supervising Ministry, the Ministry of Niger Delta Development.

Just as the preceding administration took decisive steps to implement reforms in the NDDC and appointed competent technocrats to bring about what is today celebrated as a new dawn for the growth and progress of the region, President Tinubu re-enforced that by appointing some of the best hands in the region.

He stated from the onset of his administration that he will always favour competence over religious or political considerations, insisting that if Nigeria must move forward then it needs a government of national competence run by seasoned professionals.

The members of the NDDC Board appointed by President Tinubu fits the bill and their performance, has among other things, sustained the peace in the Niger Delta region.

The security agencies operating in the region, have expressed satisfaction with the assistance and cooperation they are getting from NDDC.

Both the General Officer Commanding, 6 Division of the Nigerian Army, Major General Jamal Abdulsalam and the Commander of Nigerian Navy Ship, NNS, Pathfinder, Commodore Desmond Okechukwu Igbo, gave kudos to NDDC when they visited the Commission's headquarters at different times.

The NDDC boss stressed the need for collaboration to ensure that the Niger Delta region remained peaceful, noting that development could only take place in an atmosphere of peace and security.

He declared: "Development and security are intertwined because without security there will be no development and where there is security and development there will be prosperity. For the Niger Delta to be peaceful, we need both development and security. Incidentally, the foundation for development is security, hence there is need for collaboration between the NDDC and security agencies."

#### BETTER DAYS AHEAD

The NDDC team is ramping up efforts to commission and put to use many more projects. Also, as the various programmes in education, health and youth development are executed, the development narrative of the Niger Delta region will change for the better.

## NDDC SPECIAL FEATURE

**Photo Extra**

L-R: Managing Director NDDC, Dr Samuel Ogbuku; Minister of Niger Delta Development, Hon. Abubakar Momoh; Governor of Ondo State Hon. Lucky Aiyedatiwa; and Executive Director Projects, NDDC, Sir Victor Antai, during the commissioning of the 132/33kv Electricity substation at Ode-Erinje in Okitipupa LGA, Ondo State



Operation Light up the Niger Delta; solar powered street lights installed by NDDC in the nine Niger Delta States to improve security and standard of living



Chairman Governing Board NDDC, Mr Chiedu Ebie, presenting NDDC's 2023 Foreign Post graduate Scholarship award letter to a recipient



2023 foreign postgraduate scholars at their pre departure briefing



Dr Ogbuku (centre) launches the Niger Delta Youth Capacity Building Scheme (Project H.O.P.E.)



Community Road at Yiba-Ama community in Ogbia Local Government Area, Bayelsa State constructed by NDDC



L-R: Alabo Boma Iyaye, Executive Director, Finance and Administration; Dr Samuel Ogbuku, Managing Director; Sir Victor Antai, Executive Director, Projects, and Hon Ifedayo Abegunde, Executive Director, Corporate Services, during an interactive session with staff of the Commission



Cross section of NDDC staff during an interactive session with the Management

**CRUDE OIL PRICE UPDATE** Brent crude: \$83.56 | WTI crude: \$79.27

**FOREX MARKET UPDATE**
**I&E window:** #1329.65

## African leaders push for continental credit rating agency, fair financing model

**By Wole Oyebade**

**A**FRICAN leaders, yesterday, called for a fair global financing architecture, especially an indigenous credit rating agency, to truly assess the risk and strength of African economies.

The leaders, at the opening ceremony of the Annual General Meeting of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group, in Nairobi, Kenya, said the vast potential of the continent and its transformation drive remain encumbered without a new multilateral

economic order that offers good development financing and on fair terms.

Among the leaders that took charge were the presidents of Rwanda, Kenya, Congo DR, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Burundi, Namibia, Niger, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Libya.

Conspicuously absent, however, was the Nigerian President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who was neither represented.

President of the AfDB, Dr Akinwumi Adesina, in setting the tone for the presidential

dialogue on transformation of the global financial architecture noted that the system has a great role to play in mobilising resources for development.

However, the current architecture is not delivering enough for Africa in multiple areas, including climate financing that avails only \$30 billion out of the \$277 billion needed yearly to cushion the devastating effects of drought and flooding in several countries.

Also, the global financial system is not delivering the financial scale of \$1.3 trillion needed

for accelerated development to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, having failed to provide a buffer in the face of the last pandemic.

"No wonder there are economic divergences between Africa, developed and even emerging market economies. The global continent financing facilities have not been fair and equitable. Take the case of the Special Drawing Rights (SDR), out of the \$650 billion of the SDR allocation, Africa got \$33 billion, which is roughly 4.5 per

cent. In other words, those that need it the most got the least," he said.

Adesina added that the global financial system is also failing to deal with the debt burdens of African countries, "yet a more timely, comprehensive debt treatment, restructuring and resolution are urgently needed".

"The rules of global taxation need to be modified to ensure that they are serving developing countries. Cooperation across jurisdiction tax rules is needed to avoid Africa losing taxes to multilateral corporations that do illicit capital flows. Therefore, we must make sure that the whole issue of profits, tax avoidance and profit base shifting are addressed. In my view, if you do business in Africa, you should pay taxes in Africa,"

Adesina said.

Apparently in agreement with Adesina, the host and President of Kenya, William Ruto, affirmed that Africa has what it takes to succeed, but the countries are faced with a stringent financing mechanism that levies up to eight or 10 per cent higher interest rate on Africa than in other parts of the world.

Ruto said an Africa that has a huge resource could not at the same time have a low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared with others without resources.

"I therefore believe that we need to change the narrative because we have been rated wrongly for so long. AfDB can support us to have an African credit rating agency that will factually rate African countries and our risks too."

## Stakeholders call for customs law review

**By Benjamin Alade**

**T**HE Customs Consultative Committee (CCC) has urged the federal government to review the Nigeria Customs Services Act (2023) to cushion the effect of foreign exchange (FX) rate volatility.

At a stakeholders' meeting held in Lagos, yesterday, the body said the review has become imperative to protect local businesses that engage in import and export.

According to the body made up of top customs officers, members of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) and business owners, the new law has the potential to increase Africa's volume of trade, which currently stands at two per cent.

CCC also resolved to partner with the government through institutional support aimed at ensuring the workability of the policies enunciated in the new act.

Good as the new law was, the committee said, government needs to ensure pursues its implementation with the necessary political will it deserves.

According to the body, the government needs to identify

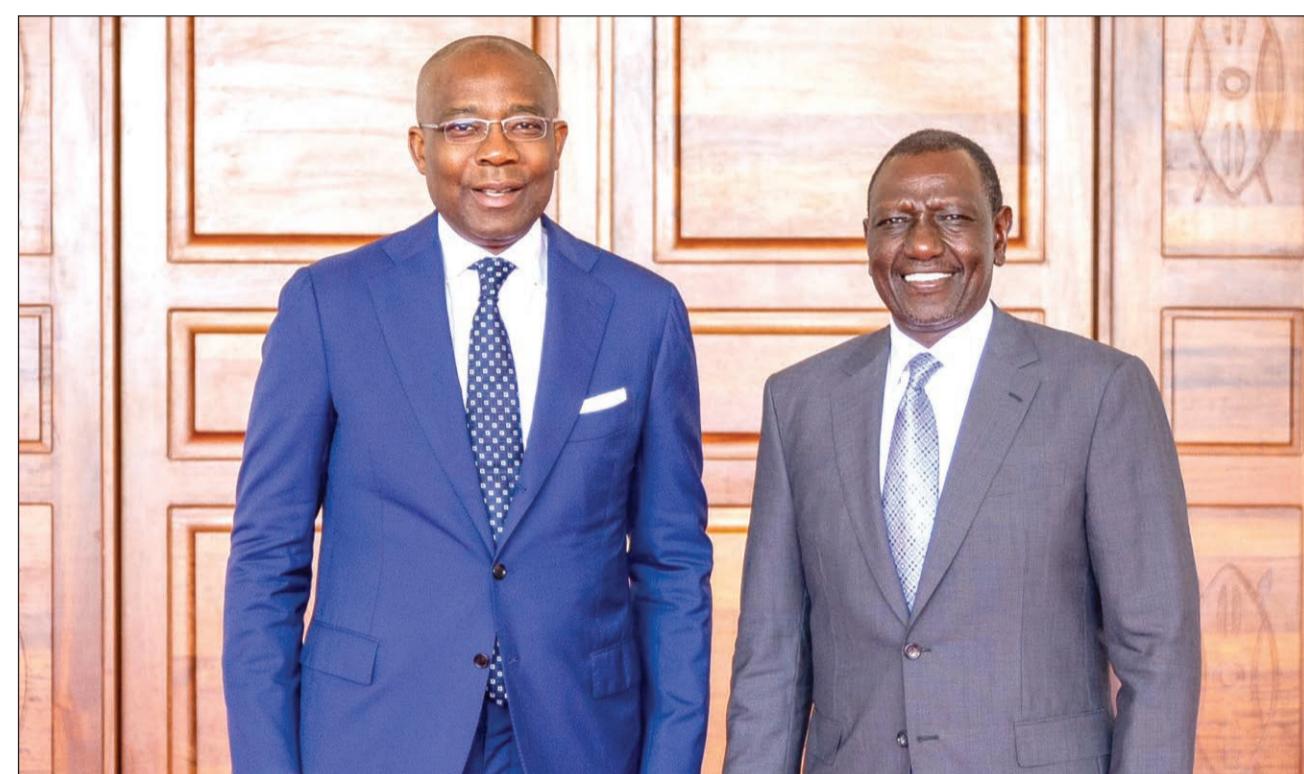
good corporate governance and absolute compliance with the laws governing the maritime sector, while not sparing infractions.

"It marks duplicity to encourage violators of laws in the maritime sector by not punishing infractions, while those who are out of compliance with government policies continue to suffer huge losses," the body said.

The committee said efforts must be geared towards making Nigeria Ports more efficient and profitable in line with global practices.

"Ports, anywhere in the world do not sleep. They work 24 hours. This is the only way to go. Ports do not close businesses at all. However, it is not the same as a Nigerian port that works like the Ministry in Nigeria. This must be addressed," it said.

While advocating improved trade facilitation among critical stakeholders, the committee said digitalization of the ports would reduce downtime as well as encourage improved trade relations targeted as raising the accruable revenue to the government.



Chairman, Access Holdings Plc, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede (left); with President William Ruto, during Aig-Imoukhuede's visit to the state house in Nairobi following the receipt of the African Banker Lifetime Achievement Award, recently.

## Skills shortage ranked as biggest risk to cybersecurity service providers

**By Adeyemi Adepetun**

**A**CYBERSECURITY solutions provider, Sophos, said the biggest challenge facing managed service providers (MSP) is keeping up with the latest cybersecurity solutions and technologies.

This was cited by 39 per cent of the MSPs surveyed.

Alongside this, MSPs indicated that hiring new cybersecurity analysts to keep up with customer growth and keep pace with the latest cyber threats are also top challenges.

The survey also revealed that MSPs perceive the shortage of in-house cybersecurity skills to be the single biggest cybersecurity risk to both their own business and their clients' organisations.

MSPs also perceive stolen access data and credentials and unpatched vulnerabilities to be amongst the biggest security risks to their customers.

The latest State of Ransomware 2024 report found that nearly a third (29 per cent) of ransomware attacks started with compro-

mised credentials, showing the prevalence of this entry vector.

Vice President of MSP at Sophos, Scott Barlow, said: "The speed of innovation across the cybersecurity battleground means it's harder than ever for MSPs to keep up with threats and the cyber controls designed to stop them. When you couple this with a global skills shortage, which has made it infinitely more difficult for many MSPs to attract and retain cybersecurity analyst resources, it is unsurprising

that MSPs feel unable to keep pace with the changing threat landscape.

"This is all compounded by the need for 24by7 coverage as indicated in our 2023 Active Adversary report for Tech Leaders, which finds that 91 per cent of ransomware attacks now happen out of business hours."

In response to this complex threat landscape, Sophos said there is growing demand for managed detection and response (MDR) services to provide always-on coverage.

## Consumer protection commission probes cause of high food prices

**By Adaku Onyenucheya**

**T**HE Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) has commenced a comprehensive nationwide investigation into the persistent surge in food prices.

The FCCPC, during the kick-off of the fact-finding mission in markets in Lagos yesterday, engaged directly with traders' associations, marketers and consumers to collect information and identify the underlying causes of the

### • Accuses market traders of price gouging, hoarding

continuous hike in food prices.

During interactions in Mile 12 and Ile Epo market, the Acting Executive Vice Chairman Dr Adamu Abdullahi, who was represented by the Head of the FCCPC Lagos Office, Suzie Onwuka, said preliminary findings from the FCCPC indicate that some participants in the food supply chain, including wholesalers and retailers, may be

involved in the conspiracy, price gouging, hoarding and other unfair practices.

According to him, the tactics, which restrict competition, limit food supply and artificially inflate prices, are illegal under the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act (FCCPA).

He said the aim is to open up the markets and address key consumer protection and competition issues affecting food prices.

Abdullahi said upon completion of the inquiry, the FCCPC will compile a detailed report with recommendations for government action by Section 17(b) of the FCCPA.

He said the FCCPC plans to propose broad-based policies to review and regulate economic activities, aiming to eliminate anti-competitive, anti-consumer protection, and restrictive practices.

Abdullahi said the FCCPC's proactive approach under-

scores its commitment to protecting consumers and promoting a fair market environment amidst rising concerns over food affordability and accessibility in the country.

The Chairman of the Mile 12 International Market, Shehu Usman Jibril, refuted allegations of price inflation by retailers and attributed the high costs to the substantial expenses involved in procuring goods.

"Nobody is inflating prices. When a basket of tomatoes

costs up to N100,000, sellers must cover their costs to avoid losses. Retailers face numerous expenses, including rent, school fees, and transportation, making it a challenging business environment," he stated.

Jibril also highlighted broader issues impacting food production, such as security concerns, noting that farmers are struggling due to banditry, which hinders their ability to produce food.



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## Bank, UK partner to transform Kano transport system

**I**N a move to transform transportation and enhance the security of women, Kano state has witnessed the launch of a first-of-its-kind electric tricycle programme.

The Alternative Bank, in collaboration with the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Qoray Mobility, unveiled the innovative social impact initiative, providing women with fully electric tricycles and comprehensive training.

The project flips the script on traditional transportation in Kano and marks a new chapter for the expertly trained women ready to navigate the city's streets.

With 120 women from the Mata Zalla and Yar Baiwa cooperatives having undergone comprehensive training, they are now proficient tricycle drivers and mechanics. The electric tricycles enable women to generate income by providing local transportation services and operating small delivery businesses.

"This initiative is a double win," said Executive Director of The Alternative Bank, Garba Mohammed. "Our electric tricycles are designed to address significant concerns regarding the safety of female passengers and children while at the same time safeguarding the environment," he added.

## LG commits to growth of cleaning industry

**L**G Electronics has declared its commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility through the development of solutions that make a positive impact on the planet and support the development of the cleaning industry.

General Manager, Home Appliances, LG Electronics, Brian Kang, made the remarks at the two-day inaugural Clean Africa Show conference and exhibition, at the Landmark Centre.

Kang noted that the cleaning industry plays a vital role in maintaining public health, productivity and overall well-being.

"We recognise the importance of this sector and are dedicated to supporting its growth and development. Through our sponsorship of Clean Show Africa, we aim to showcase our cutting-edge

cleaning solutions, designed to enhance efficiency, reduce energy consumption and promote eco-friendliness.

"Our products and technologies are tailored to meet the unique needs of African markets, supporting the region's economic growth and development. Let us come together to shape the future of cleaning technologies and create a more sustainable tomorrow," he said.

At the show, LG showcased its new innovative one-body form of laundry washing machine. It presented its state-of-the-art residential air conditioners and living appliance lineups.

Its modern design and advanced technology of the company's latest appliances were exhibited while highlighting the personalised convenience they provide through the addition of ThinQ and smart pairing.

By Helen Oji

**T**HE Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) extended gains for the third consecutive session yesterday, as buying interest in Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc and 30 others lifted overall capitalisation further by N246 billion.

The All-Share Index (ASI) gained 435.00 points, representing a gain of 0.44 per cent to close at 98,818.04 points. Also, market capitali-

sation rose by N246 billion to close at N55.900 trillion.

The positive performance was driven by price appreciation in large and medium capitalised stocks amongst which are; Dangote Sugar Refinery, NASCON Allied Industries, Nigerian Exchange Group, Zenith Bank and FBN Holdings (FBNH).

Market breadth closed positive as 31 stocks gained relative to 15 losers. Abbey Mortgage

Bank emerged the highest price gainer of 9.76 per cent to close at N2.70 kobo. NASCON Allied Industries followed with a gain of 9.66 per cent to close at N40.85 kobo, while FCMB Group rose by 9.63 per cent to close at N7.40 kobo.

International Breweries increased by 9.59 per cent to close at N4, while Dangote Sugar Refinery added 9.56 per cent to close at N47. Caverton appreciated by 8.73 per cent to

close at N1.37 kobo. Oando rose by 7.54 per cent to close at N10.70 kobo. NGX Group increased by 7.01 per cent to close at N23.65 kobo.

Livestock added 6.92 per cent to close at N1.70 kobo. Universal Insurance garnered 6.06 per cent to close at 35 kobo. Ella Lakes improved by 5.67 per cent to close at N3.17 kobo. Prestige Assurance also gained 5.36 per cent to close at 59 kobo.



Managing Director, Henkel Nigeria, Rajat Kapur (left); Minister of Industry, Trade, and Investment (MITI) Dr. Doris Nkiruka Uzoka-Anite, and Managing Director, Precise Platforms Limited, Bolaji Okusaga, during a courtesy visit by the Henkel Nigeria management team to the Minister in Abuja.

## Civil society faults CBN Act amendment, cites instability

By Bankole Orimisan

**T**HE Conference of Civil Societies has condemned the proposed amendment to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Act, saying the timing is inappropriate considering the current unstable economic condition.

The group called on the National Assembly to shun the temptation to deliberately weaken the CBN, saying watering

down the bank's autonomy under any guise would be tantamount to throwing spanners into the effective management of the economy.

Speaking on the economy and monetary policy, at an event organised by the society in Abuja, the Chairperson, Adams Otakwu, expressed concern about the impact of the review on ordinary Nigerians.

He underscored the critical need to maintain an independent central bank amidst Nigeria's current economic challenges.

He added that Nigerians are desirous of having a vibrant economy supported by an independent central bank.

He urged the government to focus on fixing the economy and not creating confusion by amending the CBN Act and weaken-

ing the important institution.

Otakwu said: "Nigerians in the past year have had great expectations concerning a major turnaround in the economy. Particularly of interest is the rate of inflation, which has continued to rise. Only last week, the CBN increased the monetary policy rate (MPR) to 26.25 per cent to check inflation, which now stands at 33.7 per cent."

## DisCos fall below ATC&C targets, Kaduna records 73% loss

By Waliat Musa

**E**LECTRICITY Distribution Companies (DisCos) have failed to meet the aggregate technical, commercial and collection (ATC&C) loss reduction targets, with Kaduna DisCo recording 73 per cent loss.

The failure comes at a time when the sector has increased the electricity tariffs for Band A customers.

The high ATC&C losses indicate substantial technical inefficiencies, energy theft and billing issues, which have collectively hindered the DisCos' ability to deliver reliable electricity to consumers.

According to Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) fourth quarter (Q4) 2023 statutory reports highlight, none of the DisCos achieved the target with Abuja DisCo recording

43 per cent from a target of 19 per cent.

Benin DisCo recorded 44 per cent from a target of 17 per cent target; Eko DisCo recorded 24 per cent from a target 14 per cent while Enugu DisCo recorded 43 per cent from a target of 11 per cent.

Ibadan DisCo recorded 45 per cent loss from an actual target of 15 per cent; Ikeja Electric recorded 18 per cent from a target of 11 per cent

just as Jos DisCo recorded 63 per cent from an actual target of 27 per cent.

Kaduna DisCo recorded 73 per cent from a set target of seven per cent; Kano DisCo recorded 58 per cent from a target of 16 per cent; Port Harcourt recorded 43 per cent loss from a 21 per cent target while Yola DisCo recorded 64 per cent from an actual target of 61 per cent.

The failure to meet the target means they are unable

to meet revenue requirements, thereby compromising their long-term financial position.

These losses can be attributed to technical issues such as power theft, meter tampering, equipment failures and commercial challenges such as billing inaccuracies and revenue, leakages, collection losses arising from difficulties in retrieving payments from consumers.

NERC mentioned that any DisCo that can outperform its allowed ATC&C by recording a lower actual ATC&C than the target used to compute its cost-reflective tariff will earn more returns on its set tariffs while any DisCo that fails to meet its allowed ATC&C, having higher actual ATC&C than the target would be unable to earn the expected returns on its set tariffs and could risk long-term financial challenges.

# Labour & Appointments

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## Retooling workforce to meet green economy's demand

*As Nigeria embarks on the journey towards a greener economy, mindful of the challenges that lie ahead and the immense opportunities it brings forth, the need for reskilling and upskilling the workforce to meet the demands of emerging green industries is paramount, writes GLORIA NWAFOR.*

EMPLOYERS, critical stakeholders in the labour sector and job seekers, who gathered at this year's job and employability fair recently, underscored the need to tap into the potential inherent in the green economy, conserve the environment and unlock the opportunities for business growth and job creation.

From renewable energy to sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism to green infrastructure, indeed, the possibilities are limitless.

By embracing green practices and fostering a culture of innovation, they argued that Nigeria could unlock new avenues for employment, entrepreneurship, and economic prosperity and aid the preservation of the environment.

While they called for concerted effort, investment and policy support, they said achieving success will require strong leadership, collaboration at all levels and policy development.

They added that reskilling and upskilling of the workforce to meet the growing demands is necessary through innovation and creativity

in developing sustainable solutions to complex environmental issues.

Speaking on the theme 'The Green Economy: The New Frontier for Job Creation and Employability', President and Chairman of Council, Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA), Taiwo Adeniyi, whose association organised the event, said the immense opportunities in the green economy has the power to, not only create millions of jobs but also to foster social inclusion, reduce inequality and promote environmental stewardship.

According to him, it is a pathway towards a more resilient, equitable and prosperous future for all Nigerians.

Considering the high rate of employment and its attendant implication for businesses, like increasing insecurity, high poverty rate and low purchasing power among others, Director-General, NECA, Adewale-Smatt Oyerinde, said the job fair, began in 2020 as part of efforts to promote employability and job creation in Nigeria.

Country Director, International Labour Organisation (ILO) office for Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Venessa Phala, represented by National Project Coordinator for Just Transition and Green Jobs, ILO, Stephen Agugua, said with about 60 million jobs expected in the green economy by 2050, the global organisation was driving actions on green jobs and green skills through the just transition. In Nigeria, he said the ILO is providing the needed support to the government in areas of technical knowledge by implementing physical programmes to develop guidelines for Nigeria to transmit from



Chairman, 2024 Fellowship Award ceremony, Nigerian Institute of Training and Development, (NITAD), Oluwaseyi Kuton (left); Guest Speaker, Olumide Ajomale; Honourary Fellow, Temidayo Oluwafunsho; President, NITAD, Ayoade Igbeji; Representative of Director-General, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Abdulhamid Dembos and Zonal Director, NTA 2 Lagos Network Centre, Nick Onyishi; 1st Vice President, NITAD, James Bulus and Registrar/Chief Executive, NITAD, Kayode Adejumo at the 2024 NITAD Fellowship Award ceremony held in Lagos.

high emitting to low emitting economy and to make sure the country approaches the just transition that is justifiable and equitable for all.

At the job fair, employers had on-the-spot job interviews with thousands of job seekers and members of the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC), who were almost rounding off their one-year mandatory programme.

While the youths lamented the high rate of unemployment in the country, the employers said the jobs are there but most youths and job seekers lack the requisite skills and potential to up their game.

They charged them that while in school and during their internships, they should upskill themselves through certification and trainee programmes, get the experiences and grow their talents to

become an employer's delight. Lead, Talent and Acquisition and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), Flour Mills Nigeria (FMN), Christianah Olukanmi, commended NECA on the initiative despite the huge number of graduates churned out yearly. Sharing her experience with *The Guardian*, she said recently, her organisation did a trainee programme with large applications covering around 6,000 first-class graduates and 8,600 second-class upper

graduates. With such an amazing quality of graduates, she queried what was missing, even as she struggled to fill the 82 available vacancies for her organisation.

"Using experience as a yardstick, I ask that experience can be from their internship placements and also when they are undergradu-

ates, they should know to go get experience, that counts for something.

"What we do here is to counsel people. We respond to their queries on opportunities that will match their level of experience. We are not looking at overly experienced folks but there is something for everyone at FMN, whether internship or NYSC for their career path.

"When we are shortlisting, we have 45,000 applications, and about half already have Master's degrees. We are looking for people with additional talent, not particularly experience but there is a misconstrued message out there that people think it is the experience we are after we are looking for people with potential and certain skills, something we can leverage on. We must start with them and satisfy their curiosity," she said.

## Repositioning labour movement amid economic decline

*With the many struggles workers face daily to make ends meet, to address the quagmire, the call that the country's labour movement must be united to work together as one indivisible entity to defend and protect the rights of Nigerian workers has been made, writes GLORIA NWAFOR.*

THERE is no doubt that Nigerian workers today are burdened with the challenges of low wages, poor working conditions and the outrageous cost of living due to high inflation owing to the removal of fuel subsidy.

From socio-economic and political crises down to the happenings in the field of industrial relations environment in the country, workers' challenges are worsened daily. These have pushed many workers, including labour leaders to leave the country for greener pastures overseas, thus causing a decline within the labour movement.

To make the labour move-

ment stand tall amid socio-

economic decline, the labour movement has been urged to unite and work together as one indivisible entity, by collaborating and partnering as a team to defend and protect the rights of Nigerian workers.

Speaking at the just-concluded Labour Summit, organised by the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) South West states on 'Repositioning the Labour Movement amid Economic Decline in Nigeria', at the International Conference Centre, University of Ibadan, Oyo

State, Director-General/Chief Executive Officer, Michael Imoudu National Institute for Labour Studies, Issa Aremu, said labour leaders and trade unions needed to be available to play the role of becoming a voice of the voiceless and masses as well as regain their confidence. Represented by Raji Ayo, a staff of the Institute, Aremu, said globally, while capitalists are uniting, Nigeria's trade unions also must unite strongly to work against declining the labour movement, and be a formi-

dable force to confront everything that will divide our rank. "We must build our leadership capabilities, develop and equip our collective bargaining skills and embrace knowledge continuously. We must work together to build a Nigeria where every worker is empowered, valued and treated with the respect that they deserve," he said.

Also, in a paper titled, 'Economic Hardship Under President Bola Tinubu Regime: Any Hope for the Masses?', a

labour lawyer and activist, Femi Aborisade, presented eight tabular indices on fuel price, evaluation/exchange rate, inflation, minimum wage globally, minimum wage/purchasing power, basic food costs, crude oil prices and FAAC allocation, said findings from the tables confirmed governance by state-imposed economic terrorism.

According to him, amid plenty, many Nigerians are chronically poor, through the series of economic policies of the President Bola Tinubu regime.

He lamented that the policies of the Tinubu-led regime have enabled the rich to get richer while the poor are dying in poverty.

He said the root cause of the unprecedented pains of the masses is the unjustifiable hike in fuel price under the guise of removal of subsidy, stating that he should reverse the fuel price hike by reducing fuel price to the last regulated rate. Noting that there are alter-

the masses, Aborisade stressed that it all depends on the policy options adopted.

He added that it would be heartwarming if the TUC South West joint workshop could resolve to initiate the building of a solidarity movement as a form of social movement, which other people interested in changing society may join, to fight for the interests of workers and the poor on a nationwide basis and a daily basis.

The President of TUC, Festus Osifo, lamented the poor standard of living of Nigerians, especially workers due to unchecked hyperinflation, adding that the economic challenge in the country has drastically eroded money for commodity value.

Osifo emphasized Nigeria's abundant yet underutilised mineral resources even as he criticised the frivolous expenditure of revenue generated from the resources.



Special Adviser to the Governor of Oyo State on Media and Communications, Dayo Ogunbowale (left); Chairman, Trade Union Congress (TUC), Ogun State, Akeem Lasisi; TUC Chairman, Lagos State, Gbenga Ekundayo; Labour and Human Right lawyer, Barr Femi Aborisade; Workers' Advocate Award recipient, Amb Sola Iji represented by Barr Femi Abimbola; TUC Chairman, Oyo State, Bosun Olabiyi; TUC Chairman, Ondo State, Clement Fatuwase and TUC Secretary, Lagos State, Comrade Abiodun Aladetan at 2024 Southwest Labour Summit.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

## Firm to empower youths with equipment manufacturing skills

By Silver Nwokoro

**L**G has announced plans to empower Nigerian youths with requisite skills vital for installation, repairs, general maintenance and after-sales services.

The Head of Marketing, West Africa Operations, LG, Hari Elluru, stated that presently, the company has a training Academy at the University of Lagos where students are trained on new technologies, adding that plans are ongoing to open one more training centre for the public in June. He stated this on the sidelines of a three-day exhibition organised by Elan Expo in Lagos.

"We have already identified the space and by next month it will be open. We would be inviting students from the colleges to get trained and once they complete their courses, they can pick up jobs while also having experience with LG," he said.

## Aponmade emerges USGEAA president, seeks support

By Yetunde Ayobami Ojo

**T**HE newly elected president of the associations of the United States Government Exchange Alumni Association, Lagos Branch, Akeem Aponmade has solicited continued members' support and commitment.

He promised that the new leadership would undertake projects that would enhance the association's profile and ensure members' satisfaction.

Aponmade disclosed this in his speech after he was declared winner of the 2024 election participated by 29 delegates and member associations to elect new leaders for a two-year term.

The election which was overseen by a three-man electoral committee, led by

## Firm appoints country manager for Nigeria

By Eniola Daniel

**H**AYAT Kimya Nigeria Limited, a subsidiary of the global fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) company Hayat, has announced the appointment of Motayo Latunji as the new Country Manager for Nigeria.

Latunji becomes the first indigenous Nigerian to assume this leadership role within the global company structure.

In his new position, Latunji will be responsible for Hayat country business in Nigeria and oversee the day-to-day operations of the business.

He will also be responsible for driving the company's growth and expansion objectives, as well as strengthening its market position.

His appointment comes after a successful tenure as the Sales Director for Hayat Nigeria and subsequently West

He added that LG is a leading brand with a strong presence in Nigeria, pointing out that the expo is a platform to showcase its innovative products which can cater to this market. He said Nigeria remains the best place to invest because of its huge population with people preferring to buy new products and technologies.

Elluru said the company is getting the required support from the government and expects the same support in the coming years.

He stated that despite the harsh operating environment, LG is performing well, as the business is growing year on year. "We are also trying to introduce a new technology for the Nigerian market before the year runs out. LG is worth over a \$100 billion company and we spend a percentage of this revenue on research and development to improve the quality of our products," he said.

# Labour & Appointments

## Group urges FG to prioritise citizens' welfare

By Gloria Nwafor

**M**EMBERS of the Nigerians for Better Nigeria (NBN) have urged the federal government to halt the construction of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal superhighway project and devote more of its energy to pressing priorities that could better the lives of the citizens.

In a statement by the group, its National Secretary, Abdulkumain Sanusi, contended that though the coastal superhighway was important, however, the immediate priority of the government was to address the

starvation, hardship and pains Nigerians are currently going through.

According to him, in the rush to begin the construction of the coastal highway from the Lagos axis, many hapless citizens have been rendered jobless as their means of livelihood have been destroyed by the government.

Assessing the project, Sanusi said that outside the controversy over its approval or not by the National Assembly, or whether it followed due process among others or not, the number one priority of most Nigerians

today was how to feed and the government should give it the top-most priority.

He queried the construction of a superhighway where in a country, many government hospitals have collapsed and essential drugs are unavailable, and when available, are they unaffordable.

He queried where sub-standard drugs now dominate the markets across the country, and citizens are dying in droves, stating that it is certainly not a priority.

"In a country where workers are demanding a

new minimum wage, improved welfare and better working conditions and the government is unwilling to accede to their demands, construction of a superhighway cannot be a priority.

"Construction of a coastal highway cannot be a priority in a country where the power supply has collapsed and the citizens live in total darkness, cannot be a priority.

"Construction of a coastal highway obviously should not be a priority in a country where fuel prices have risen beyond the reach of the ordinary citizens."



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A hospitality company based in Ajao Estate is Seeking the Services of well motivated and skilled individuals to fill the positions below:

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All applicants should be graduates or have Higher National Diploma (HND) in their relevant field with a minimum of three [3] year working experience

#### How to Apply

Interested and qualified persons to send their CV to:

[info@sscfg.Com](mailto:info@sscfg.Com)

Using the job title as the subject of the email

**TOPAZ**  
ENERGY AND MARINE

**WRITTEN RESOLUTION OF THE  
SHAREHOLDERS  
OF TOPAZ MARINE NIGERIA LIMITED  
PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 620- 623, 626-627  
AND 259 OF THE COMPANIES AND ALLIED  
MATTERS ACT, 2020**

We the Shareholders of Topaz Marine Nigeria Limited hereby unanimously adopt the following as special resolutions of the Company:

- A Special Resolution to the effect that: "The affairs of Topaz Marine Nigeria Limited be voluntarily wound up voluntarily, pursuant to the above provisions of the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020, effective 14th day of May 2024.
- A Special Resolution to the effect that: "The books of account of Topaz Marine Nigeria Limited shall not be audited and an Auditor's report shall not be required for liquidating the Company pursuant to Section 633(6)(ii) of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2020".
- An Ordinary Resolution to the effect that: "Ijeoma Uche of KPMG Advisory Services, KPMG Tower, Bishop Aboyade Cole Street, Victoria Island, Lagos be and is hereby appointed Liquidator to wind up the affairs of the Company.

Dated this 27th day of May 2024

*[Signatures]*

Topaz Marine Limited  
(represented by Narayana Prasad Naranchi Venkata Lakshmi)

Topaz Energy and Marine Limited  
(represented by Martin Helweg)

Team Offshore Nigeria Limited  
(represented by Afolabi Caxton-Martins)

TOPAZ MARINE NIG LTD

Registered Office 4th floor Atlantic House 121 Louis Solomon Close off Ahmadu Bello Way, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria Tel +234 80 9692 9550|[pomaritime.com](http://pomaritime.com)

## IJEOMA UCHE

KPMG Tower, Bishop Aboyade Cole Street,  
Victoria Island, Lagos

**COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT, 2020  
MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP  
NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT OF LIQUIDATOR  
OF  
TOPAZ MARINE NIGERIA LIMITED (RC:988237)**

**[Pursuant to section 654(1) of the Companies and  
Allied Matters Act, 2020]**

The Registrar-General  
Corporate Affairs Commission  
Plot 420, Tigris Crescent  
Off Aguiyi Ironsi Street  
Maitama  
Abuja

I, Ijeoma Uche of KPMG Advisory Services, KPMG Tower, Bishop Aboyade Cole Street, Victoria Island, Lagos hereby give notice that I have been appointed Liquidator of Topaz Marine Nigeria Limited by virtue of an Ordinary Resolution of the Company passed on the **27th day of May 2024**.

Dated this 28th day of May 2024

*[Signature]*  
Ijeoma Uche  
Liquidator

# ASHA MICROFINANCE BANK LIMITED

RC 851282



## ASHA MICROFINANCE BANK LIMITED ABRIDGED/SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The directors present the summary financial information of Asha Microfinance Bank Limited, for the year ended 31 December 2023. These summary financial information is derived from the full financial statement of the Bank and cannot be expected to provide as full an understanding of the full financial statements of Asha Microfinance Bank Limited. The audited annual report, from which these summary financial information were derived, will be delivered to the Corporate Affairs Commission. The Bank's Auditors issued an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 from which these summary financial information were derived.<sup>1</sup>

### STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION As at 31 December, 2023

	31-Dec 2023 N'000	31-Dec 2022 N'000
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	5,324,273	5,314,966
Loans and advances	14,758,485	17,702,121
Debt instruments at amortised cost	130,421	330,944
Property and equipment	42,377	37,427
Right of use asset	177,860	144,513
Deferred tax assets	525,618	294,281
Other assets	181,271	193,576
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>21,140,305</b>	<b>24,017,828</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Deposits from customers	5,927,848	6,730,216
Current income tax payable	852,529	2,388,611
Other liabilities	1,812,589	1,026,609
Defined benefit obligations	920,975	817,621
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>9,513,941</b>	<b>10,063,057</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Share capital	5,000,000	5,000,000
Retained earnings/(accumulated loss)	2,631,561	4,082,049
Statutory reserve	3,575,239	3,575,239
Regulatory risk reserve	419,564	397,483
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>11,626,364</b>	<b>13,054,771</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b>21,140,305</b>	<b>24,017,828</b>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 27 March 2024, and signed on their behalf by:

*[Signature]*  
Mr. Andrew Amedu  
Acting-Managing Director  
FRC/2024/PRO/DIR/003/685152

*[Signature]*  
Mrs. Adetutu Oluwatobi Ogunnaike  
Independent Non-Executive Director  
FRC/2024/PRO/DIR/003/572376

*[Signature]*  
Mr. Olorhenuan Omoh Demu  
Acting-Chief Financial Officer  
FRC/2024/PRO/ICAN/001/128184

### STATEMENTS OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023 N'000	2022 N'000
Interest income	7,457,433	9,547,379
Interest expense	(63,695)	(73,726)
<b>Net interest income</b>	<b>7,393,748</b>	<b>9,473,643</b>
Fees and commission income	626,636	703,764
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>8,020,284</b>	<b>10,177,407</b>
Other operating income	22,884	17,262
Impairment charge on financial instruments	(2,086,799)	(512,342)
Personnel expenses	(3,426,943)	(3,219,678)
Depreciation	(191,199)	(190,762)
Other operating expenses	(2,721,973)	(1,731,258)
(Loss)/Profit before income tax	(383,746)	4,540,429
Income tax	(59,039)	(1,779,947)
<b>Profit for the year</b>	<b>(442,785)</b>	<b>2,760,482</b>
Other comprehensive income that will not be reclassified to profit or loss in subsequent periods (net of tax)		
Actuarial gain	14,378	118,143
Total Comprehensive (Loss)/profit for the year, net of tax	(428,407)	2,878,626
(Loss)/profit attributable to shareholders of the bank	(442,785)	2,760,482
Total comprehensive (Loss)/income attributable to shareholders of the Bank	(428,407)	2,878,626
Earnings per share - Basic/ Diluted (kobo)	(0)*	55

### INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Shareholders of Asha Microfinance Bank Limited

#### Report on the Summary Financial Information

##### Opinion

The summary financial information, which comprise:

- the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2023;
- the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income;

are derived from the audited financial statements of Asha Microfinance Bank Limited for the year ended December 31 2023.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial information are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial statements, in accordance with the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020 and the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act, 2020.

#### Summary Financial Information

The summary financial information do not contain all the disclosures required by the IFRS Accounting Standards as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board, the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020 and the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (Amendment) Act, 2023 and the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act, 2020 and other relevant Central Bank of Nigeria guidelines and circulars. Reading the summary financial information and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial statements and the auditor's report thereon.

#### The Audited Financial Statements and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial statements in our report dated 2 May 2024.

#### Directors' Responsibility for the Summary Financial Information

The Directors are responsible for the preparation of the summary financial information in accordance with the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020, and the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act, 2020.

#### Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial information are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial statements based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 810 (Revised), Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements.

#### Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

Compliance with the requirements of Schedule 5 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020

- i. We have obtained all the information and explanations which to the best of our knowledge and belief, were necessary for the purpose of our audit.
- ii. In our opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the Bank, so far as appears from our examination of those books and proper returns adequate for the purposes of our audit have been received from branches not visited by us.
- iii. The Bank's statement of financial position and statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income are in agreement with the books of account and returns.

#### Compliance with Section 26 (3) of the Banks and the other Financial Institutions Act, 2020 and Central Bank of Nigeria circular BSD/1/2004

- i. The Bank paid penalties in respect of contravention of the requirements of the CBN AML/CFT Schedule of Administrative Sanction Regulation during the year ended 31 December 2023. Details of penalties paid are disclosed in note 29 to the audited financial statements.
- ii. Related party transactions and balances are disclosed in note 27 to the audited financial statements in compliance with the Central Bank of Nigeria circular BSD/1/2004.

*Nneka Eluma*

Nneka Eluma, FCA  
FRC/2013/ICAN/00000000785  
For: KPMG Professional Services  
Chartered Accountants

2 May 2024

Lagos, Nigeria.



0294440

# NEWCROSS

NEWCROSS EXPLORATION & PRODUCTION LIMITED

## NewcrossEP Announces Release of Crude Oil Barging Vessels

Newcross Exploration and Production Limited (NewcrossEP), the operator of OML 24, has announced the clearance and release of the vessels involved in its crude oil barge operations.

Following this, members of the NewcrossEP management team members met with critical regulatory and security offices.

"We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the collaboration, timely intervention, and support from the relevant authorities regarding the challenges experienced in our barge operations," said Engr: Victor Sodje, Managing Director of NewcrossEP.

"The diligent work of the security officers, the industry regulator, and other stakeholders ensured that due process was followed, leading to this prompt resolution. This outcome is also a testament to the transparency and integrity of NewcrossEP's Operations".

The continued assurance from the Navy to ensure a safe and secure maritime environment provides NewcrossEP's greater commitment to supporting industry activities aligns with the national aspiration to increase production.

Newcross Exploration and Production Limited (NewcrossEP), in a joint venture with NNPC Limited, is the operator of the OML 24 oil block located in the Eastern Niger Delta in Rivers State. NewcrossEP acquired the 45% participating equity from the hitherto Shell Petroleum Development Corporation Joint Venture.

Since inception, the Newcross/NNPC Joint Venture has delivered more than 18 million barrels of crude oil to Bonny Terminal. This has been a key enabler to restarting upstream operations along the NCTL corridor. Owing to the success of the project, the concept has been leveraged by other upstream operators constrained by the same evacuation challenge.



Rear Admiral, Olusegun Ferreira (4th person left), Managing Director, NewcrossEP, Victor Sodje (2nd right); Donna Spectra, Adesoye Olatunji, other Naval chiefs and staff of NewcrossEP during a courtesy visit to the Chief of Naval Staff in Abuja on Tuesday.



(L-R) Rear Admiral, Olusegun Ferreira; Managing Director NewcrossEP, Victor Sodje and Chief Technical Officer, NewcrossEP, Abiodun Ogunjobi, during the presentation of an award to the Chief of Naval Staff in Abuja on Tuesday.



JAMES HOPE  
UNIVERSITY

## Faculty Vacancies

**J**ames Hope University's mission is to educate and inspire men and women to excel in every aspect of life and to exert lasting positive impacts on the world. Its Business School is seeking **world-class professors and researchers** across disciplines at all levels, including:

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- Employment and Industrial Relations and Human Resources Management
- Financial Data Privacy and Security
- Fintech, Business and Managerial Data Analytics
- Innovation, Intrapreneurship and Entrepreneurship
- Institutional Economics, Urban and Regional Economics, Political Economy of Development, Globalization and International Economics
- Labour Economics, Education Economics, Forensic Economics and Social Entrepreneurship
- Mathematical Economics, Quantitative Techniques and Financial Econometrics
- Microeconomics, Economics of Health and Health Care, and/or Environmental Economics and Sustainable Development
- Operations Research, Design and Scheduling
- Risk Management, Banking Regulations and Compliance

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- **Inspiring Students:** Shape the next generation of business leaders and innovators, empowering them to drive positive change in the global economy.
- **Collaborative Culture:** Thrive in a collaborative and inclusive environment that values diversity, creativity, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

### Location

James Hope University is in Lekki, a few minutes away from Victoria Island, and offers a dynamic setting with access to a thriving business ecosystem and cultural amenities in the greater Lagos metropolitan area.

For more information, visit [www.jhu.edu/careers/](http://www.jhu.edu/careers/).



# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of Sterling Financial Holdings Company Plc (the "Company") will be held virtually via [sterlingholdco.ng/agm](http://sterlingholdco.ng/agm); on **Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 10:00 am** to transact the following businesses.

## ORDINARY BUSINESS

1. To receive the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, the reports of the Directors and the Statutory Audit Committee thereon.
2. To elect/re-elect Directors
  - (a) To re-elect the following Directors:
    - (i) Mr. Adeyemi Adeola
    - (ii) Mr. Abubakar Suleiman
    - (iii) Ms. Aisha Bashir
    - (iv) Ms. Enye Ambakederemo
    - (v) Mr. Shola Adekoya
3. To appoint Deloitte & Touche as External Auditors of the Company
4. To authorize the Directors to fix the remuneration of the Auditors
5. To disclose the remuneration of Managers of the Company under Sections 238 and 257 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020
6. To elect the Shareholders representatives of the Statutory Audit Committee

## SPECIAL BUSINESS

### To consider and if thought fit, pass the following resolution as an ordinary resolution:

7. That the Annual Directors' Fees for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 be fixed at N157,178,000 (One Hundred and Fifty-Seven Million, One Hundred and Seventy-Eight Thousand Naira) until reviewed by the members at an Annual General Meeting.

### 8. To consider and if thought fit, pass the following sub-joined resolutions as ordinary resolutions:

- i. That the Company be and is hereby authorized to raise additional capital of up to **N200,000,000,000 (Two Hundred Billion Naira)** through the issuance of shares in the Nigerian capital market by way of rights issues, private placements, public offerings, private and/or other transaction modes, at a price(s), coupon or interest rates determined through book building or any other acceptable valuation method or combination of methods, in such tranches, series or proportions, within such maturity periods and at such dates and upon such terms and conditions as may be determined by the Board of Directors of the Company, subject to obtaining the requisite approvals of the relevant regulatory authorities;
- ii. In furtherance of the above, the Directors be and are hereby unconditionally authorized pursuant to sections 127(1) and 149(1)(a) of the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 as amended by the Business Facilitation Act 2022 to increase the share capital of the Company by the allotment of up to **40,000,000,000 (Forty Billion)** shares of 50 Kobo each ranking pari-passu with the existing ordinary shares of the Company at any time or times during the period of 2 (two) years from the date hereof;
- iii. That in the event of a Rights Issue, any shares not taken up by existing shareholders within the period stipulated under the Rights issue may be offered for sale to other interested existing shareholders and where following such offer, any portion of the shares, remain unsubscribed, the Directors are hereby authorized to offer such shares to interested investors on similar terms to the Right Issue or offer for subscription.
- iv. That the Directors be and are hereby authorized to appoint such professional parties and advisers and perform all other acts as may be necessary to give effect to the above resolutions, including obtaining relevant regulatory approvals and without limitation complying with the directives of any relevant regulatory authority.
- v. That the Company Secretary be and is hereby authorized to register any increase(s) in shares capital with the Corporate Affairs Commission in such incremental proportions or tranches as the Board of Directors in its absolute discretion may deem necessary or desirable; and the Board of Directors is hereby authorised to issue on behalf of shareholders; such resolutions as may be required by the Corporate Affairs Commission.

### To consider and if thought fit, pass the following resolution as a special resolution:

9. That the Memorandum and Articles of Association (Memart) of the Company be amended to reflect the Company's new share capital after the capital raising exercise in the resolutions above; and
10. That the Board of Directors be and is hereby authorized to file the amended Memart at the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

## NOTES

- 1. PROXY:** A member of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the Annual General Meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in their stead. A proxy need not be a member of the Company. To be valid, a completed proxy form must be deposited at the office of the Registrar, Pace Registrars Limited, Akuro House (8th floor), 24 Campbell Street, Lagos not less than 48 hours before the time of the meeting. A blank proxy form is attached to this Notice.
- 2. STAMPING OF PROXY:** The cost of stamping the instruments of proxy would be borne by the Company.
- 3. E-ANNUAL REPORT:** The electronic version of the Annual Report is available at [www.sterling.ng](http://www.sterling.ng). Shareholders who have provided their email details to the Registrar will receive the electronic version of the Annual Report via email.
- 4. QUESTIONS FROM SHAREHOLDERS:** Shareholders reserve the right to ask questions not only at the meeting but also in writing before the meeting on any item contained in the Annual Report and Financial Statements. Please send questions, comments, or observations to [investor.relations@sterling.ng](mailto:investor.relations@sterling.ng) no later than Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024.
- 5. UNCLAIMED DIVIDEND AND E-DIVIDEND MANDATE:** Shareholders are requested to update their records and advise Pace Registrars Limited of their relevant bank accounts for the payment of their dividends. Detachable forms in respect of mandate for e-dividend payment, unclaimed dividend payment, and shareholder data updates are attached to the Annual Report for convenience. The forms can also be downloaded from Pace Registrars Limited's website at [www.paceregistrars.com](http://www.paceregistrars.com). The duly completed forms should be returned to Pace Registrars Limited, Akuro House (6<sup>th</sup> Floor), 24, Campbell Street, Lagos, or to the nearest Sterling Bank/Alternative Bank Branch.
- 6. STATUTORY AUDIT COMMITTEE:** The Statutory Audit Committee consists of (3) three shareholders and 2 (two) Non-Executive Directors in accordance with Section 404 (6) of the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020. Any member may nominate a shareholder as a member of the Statutory Audit Committee by giving notice in writing of such nomination by the Company Secretary at least 21 (twenty- one) days before the Annual General Meeting. The Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 and the Securities & Exchange Commission's Corporate Governance Guidelines provide that members of the Statutory Audit Committee should be financially literate and should be able to read financial statements. We therefore request that nominations should be accompanied by a copy of the nominee's curriculum vitae.
- 7. RE-ELECTION OF DIRECTORS:** By the provisions of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020 the following Directors of the Company are to retire from office at the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting, Mr. Adeyemi Adeola, Mr. Abubakar Suleiman, Ms. Aisha Bashir, Ms. Enye Ambakederemo and Mr. Shola Adekoya. The retiring Directors, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election. The profiles of the Directors are available in the Annual Report and on the Company's website at [www.sterling.ng](http://www.sterling.ng).
- 8. VIRTUAL MEETING LINK:** Further to the provisions of the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act which allows public companies to hold meetings electronically, this AGM would be held virtually. The virtual meeting link will be sent to shareholders electronically and will also be made available on the company's website at [www.sterling.ng](http://www.sterling.ng) and on the Registrar's website at [www.paceregistrars.com](http://www.paceregistrars.com).

Dated this 30<sup>th</sup> day of May 2024  
BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

TEMITAYO ADEGOKE  
Company Secretary  
20 Marina, Lagos





**LAGOS STATE GOVERNMENT**  
**MINISTRY OF PHYSICAL PLANNING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**  
**OFFICE OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT**  
**LAGOS STATE BUILDING CONTROL AGENCY**

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) AS CONSULTANTS IN THE  
LAGOS STATE "CERTIFIED ACCREDITORS PROGRAMME" (CAP).**

**PREAMBLE**

The Lagos State Building Control Agency, on behalf of the Lagos State Government, is facilitating a Public- Private synergy referred to as "Certified Accreditors Programme" in order to further accelerate LASBCA's effectiveness towards optimum service delivery with the view to actualize its operational mandates of ensuring all new and existing buildings in Lagos State are constructed fit for human habitation and avert incidence of building collapse. The State is set to engage Consultants who will act as Certified Accreditors to complement the activities of Government Officials in Screening of Drawings, Stage Inspection and monitoring activities for compliance with the Lagos State Building Control Regulations. This is also in line with the policy of Government of making Lagos sustainable, resilient and attractive to businesses through Physical Planning and Urban Development. The State thereby invites interested consultants in the built environment, registered with relevant professional bodies to indicate interest in the program.

**SCOPE OF WORK.**

The Certified Accreditors, among other responsibilities are expected to carry out the following;

**A. SCREENING OF DRAWINGS:**

Certified Accreditors shall offer premium screening services for:

- i. All Structures in the various categories as applied.
- ii. Specialized projects (Stadia, Factories etc.)
- iii. Evaluating plans and specifications for projects to ensure conformance with regulations

**B. STAGE INSPECTION PROCEDURES:**

Certified Accreditors shall carry out stage inspection services for:

- i. All Structures in the various categories as applied.
- ii. Specialized projects (Stadia Factories etc.)
- iii. *Attending pre construction and technical meetings*
- iv. Conducting field inspections to inspect standards of building structures
- v. Referring deviations to LASBCA
- vi. Attending close-out meetings of construction projects
- vii. Conducting final inspection with LASBCA for processing of Certificate of Completion and Fitness for Habitation

**C. MONITORING ACTIVITIES:**

- i. Identification and reporting of illegal and non-conforming structures to LASBCA
- ii. Identification and reporting of Distressed and

abandoned structures to LASBCA

- iii. Assisting LASBCA with inquiries.

**CATEGORIES OF CERTIFIED ACCREDITORS**

Consultants shall be deemed to mean:

1. *Consortium*: Shall consist of a minimum of two CAC registered companies, practicing in the built environment.
2. *Group of Professionals*: A team of not less than 5 or more registered and practicing professionals for the purpose of stage Inspections.

N:B. Consortium/Group of professionals to include minimum of 5 professionals with minimum of 10 years post qualification experience and current year practice license; Architect, Civil/ Structural Engineer, Mechanical Engineer, Electrical Engineer, Builder, and Town planner, Geo-technical Engineer.

**WORK CATEGORIES**

**CATEGORYI**

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**PRE-QUALIFICATION CONDITIONS:**

The State Government would consider Consultants duly registered to practise in Nigeria and with proven capabilities on such assignment. To apply, the Consultant must show evidence of considerable experience and track records of good performance and must be registered members of their respective professional bodies. In addition, Interested Consultants shall submit the following documents:

- i. A covering letter summarizing content of the pre-qualification documents
- ii. The Consultant/Company Profile indicating qualifications and experience of key personnel
- iii. Company Certificate of Incorporation in Nigeria where applicable
- iv. Certificate of Professional Practice
- v. Current year Professional Practicing License
- vi. Attestation of the respective professional Registration bodies
- vii. Evidence of last 3 years Tax Clearance by Directors/Individuals

- viii. Evidence of last three (3) years Developmental Levy for two (2) Directors
- ix. Evidence of LASRRA Registration
- x. Evidence of professional and technical staff / experience of key personnel of the firm xi. Evidence of registration / renewal with Lagos State Public Procurement Agency (PPA)
- xii. Evidence of specific experience in similar assignment in the last 3 years
- xiii. Sworn affidavit confirming that all documents submitted are authentic.

#### MODE OF OBTAINING APPLICATION FORM

- a. Interested members of the public with the requisite qualifications/requirements are hereby invited to obtain an Expression of Interest Form upon payment of the non-refundable application fee from the General Manager's Office at the Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA) Headquarters, Room 101-First Floor, Muiz Banire Way, Old Secretariat, Ikeja GRA, Lagos, between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday from 3<sup>rd</sup> June till 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- b. A non-refundable sum of Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand (N250,000.00), payable to **Lagos State Government Revenue Code: 4020277, Agency Code: 7740000.**

#### SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM

- a. Completed applications should be submitted with 1 (one) original and 3 (three) copies of their Expression of Interest (EOI) in a sealed envelope addressed to the General Manager, Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA), Headquarters, Room 101-First Floor, Muiz Banire Way, Old Secretariat, Ikeja GRA, Lagos, between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday, from 3<sup>rd</sup> June till 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024.
- b. Please attach evidence of payment (Revenue Receipt) of the non-refundable fee of Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Naira (N250,000.00) along with other relevant documents.

**Closing Date:** All applications must be submitted to the above Office, not later than 12:00 noon, 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2024.

- It should be noted that this Expression of Interest does not constitute a commitment on the part of the State and/or the Lagos State Building Control Agency to award the project to any consultant(s) expressing interest.

Furthermore, submission of documents shall not entitle any of the interested parties to any claims against the State and/or Lagos State Building Control Agency by virtue of such party having responded to the EOI.

All costs incurred by respondents as a result of the Expression of Interest and any subsequent requests for information shall be borne by the respondent.

Signed

**Arc Gbolahan Owodunni Oki FNIA**  
General Manager  
Lagos State Building Control Agency

## Netizens flay leadership for 'misplaced priorities'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

composed the existing national anthem. If not that we've all been toughened by hardship, this anthem should be sung with tears whenever it is recited. Every lyric is a message, every rhyme is a reminder of what we stand for and what our heroes have fought for. It is sad to see that this present government has no regard for history."

Another, @\_ewatomilola\_, said: "We are hungry! Do something and stop this unnecessary thing! This is not our concern right now, please."

Also, @darlex.obi said: "Things are expensive, unemployment is high. The national anthem is an issue that concerns the masses. Sometimes, I wonder if those in government hear the cry of the people."

BUT deputy spokesman of the House of Representatives, Philip Agbese, described the return to the old anthem as a pathway to Nigeria's golden era.

Addressing newsmen yesterday, after the joint session of the National Assembly, Agbese said: "I'm particularly thrilled with the return to our old national anthem as a major step towards the country's return to glory days. This was an era of prosperity

when the economy worked, infrastructure was in top shape, agriculture was still the in-thing, and our educational system was among the best.

"This anthem, with its familiar lyrics and stirring melody, evokes a sense of nostalgia and patriotism in the hearts of many Nigerians. It reminds us of our history, our struggles, and our triumphs. Its return is a welcome move that resonates with citizens from all walks of life."

Agbese, who noted that the old anthem is more than just a song, said: "It's a symbol of our shared values and aspirations. Its lyrics speak to our collective desire for unity, peace, and progress. It reminds us of the sacrifices made by our founding fathers and the struggles of our national heroes."

He added: "In a country as diverse as ours, the anthem is one of the few things that bind us together. It's a common thread that runs through our collective fabric, reminding us of our shared identity and purpose."

"I applaud the decision to return to our old national anthem, and urge all Nigerians to embrace this move with open arms. Let us sing our national anthem with pride and passion, and let its lyrics inspire us to work to-

wards a brighter future for ourselves and for generations to come."

BEFORE the President's arrival, during a plenary presided over by Deputy Speaker, Benjamin Kalu, an uproar had ensued when a lawmaker, Prof. Lilian Obiageli Orogba, said Nigerians have nothing to celebrate as the nation marks 25 years of unbroken democracy.

Orogba, representing Awka North/Awka South Federal Constituency of Anambra State, lamented that Nigerians were not enjoying dividends of democracy compared to what is obtained in other parts of the world.

Kalu had asked the lawmakers to make brief speeches on the celebration.

Orogba said 25 years after the country returned to civilian rule, her constituency, including the majority of Nigerians, has not enjoyed the dividends of democracy.

"I have mixed feelings about today. Democracy should be a government of the people by the people and for the people. How has this 25 years we are celebrating impacted my people? How has it transformed to unbroken food security? How has it transformed to improved security," she queried.

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R S V P

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## THE GUARDIAN'S SPECIAL FOCUS ON NIGERIA'S TEN (10) MOST VIBRANT, DILIGENT DISTINGUISHED STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SPEAKERS WITH UNCOMMON LEADERSHIP ACUMEN

### Abubakar Y. Suleiman: Advancing Legislature for The Development Of Bauchi State

**R**T. Hon. Abubakar Y. Suleiman (*Dangaladima Ningi*) is the speaker, Bauchi State House of Assembly, representing the good people of Ningi Central, Ningi Local Government of Bauchi State. The 54-year-old lawmaker studied Political Science and Administration from the prestigious University of Maiduguri and bagged his Master's degree from Bayero University Kano where he studied Public Policy and Administration, he is currently in his PhD studies and conducting research on Gender Based Violence at the Sa'adu Zungur University (formerly Bauchi State University) Gadau.

Before going into politics, Suleiman was an Assistant Chief Administrative Officer with Bauchi State Government. He was elected into the Honourable House in 2019. As a first-time lawmaker, Suleiman was elected Speaker to lead the House by his colleagues who believed in his integrity, competency and good leadership qualities. Having sworn-in on 20th June 2019, Suleiman took charge of the legislative arm with an all-inclusive, open and responsive leadership.

In November 2019, four months after his emergence, Suleiman was elected Chairman, the Conference of Speakers of the State Legislature of North East. He became the star of the legislative arm of the government in the region. His openness, respect for the rule of law, understanding of the separation of power, patriotism and honesty gave him an edge. Suleiman's outstanding performance was glaring to all. His humility and sense of justice attracted his colleagues nationally.

Exactly one after, November 20th, 2020, Suleiman was elected Chairman, Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures in Nigeria. He took over from the speaker of Lagos State House of Assembly, Hon. Mudashiru Obasa who has served out his tenures. Suleiman never saw this coming, it was the Northern turn to produce Chairman, his northern colleagues had unanimously agreed to elect him in Abuja.

His leadership at the Conference achieved the much-agitated autonomy for the state houses of assembly. Suleiman's Chairmanship advocated for the creation of state police. He led the Conference to several international communities and local podiums where quality legislative business matters.

#### Leads a rancor free Assembly

In his first term, Suleiman was elected under the platform of the

APC where the party controlled the House under the People's Democratic Party (PDP) government. Since his emergence as the speaker, there has never been a crisis between the legislature and the executive. Suleiman runs an Assembly that understands its constitutional roles. He believes that when Legislature and Executive tissue defines governance, the state suffers.

#### Achievements in Bauchi State House of Assembly

Right Honourable Abubakar Suleiman's achievement in the Bauchi Assembly is second to none. He broke the jinx when he became the first speaker ever to be elected twice and sworn in three different times. Having been reelected speaker unopposed in June 2023, the court of appeal declared his election inconclusive and ordered fresh polls in 10 polling units. He never lost a sleep. He defeated his challenger in the All Progressives Congress (APC). He was sworn in as a new member on February 14, 2024.

Some of the legislation under his leadership in his first four years include; 105 bills in four years, including 55 executive and 50 private/member bills, 131 motions. 93 matters of urgent public importance.

He was seen as a he-for-she advocate by ensuring that state Houses of Assembly assented to Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law. He has always been protecting the interests of women.

In November 2020, he bagged the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs' 2020 'HE-FOR-SHE' award of excellence. Suleiman received the award at the 20th Anniversary of the UNCR-1325 on Women, Peace and Security organised by the Ministry in partnership with the Defence Headquarters and UN Women held NAF Conference Hall Abuja.

Suleiman was conferred with a PhD (Honoris Causa) in Social Justice and Peace Advocacy by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution United Nations-Polac in affiliation with University College of Christian Mission, in 2021.

#### Speaker Resigned for Suleiman

The voluntary resignation of Hon. Babayo Akuyam and his decision to allow Suleiman continue as Speaker is a testimony to his acceptability by his Honourable colleagues.

In his Ningi Central constituency, Suleiman is impacting the lives of youths, women and aged people. He has spent millions of naira to pay for, scholarships, WAEC, NECO, JAMB and other examinations to students. His contribution to assuaging the suffering of the constituents during COVID-19, fuel subsidy removal and other emergencies has earned him acceptability for his reelection.



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1 - 10,000	9	49,500	49,500	0.3%	49,500
10,001 - 100,000	13	726,141	726,141	4.4%	775,641
100,001 - 500,000	15	5,870,359	5,870,359	35.8%	6,646,000
500,001 - 1,000,000	9	6,954,000	6,954,000	42.4%	13,600,000
1,000,001 - 5,000,000	2	2,800,000	2,800,000	17.1%	16,400,000
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# Stakeholders differ on health sector's performance under Tinubu

From Nkechi Onyedika-Ugoeze, Abuja

ONE year after, stakeholders are divided in opinion on the effect of President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda on the health sector, citing that healthcare investment in Nigeria has been low by global standards, with high individual out-of-pocket costs restricting access to healthcare.

Tinubu had in July 2023, two months after his inauguration, promised to raise the health budget from five/six per cent to 10 per cent and put the sector on the front burner of Nigeria's national development priorities while unveiling of Nigeria's Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative, and signing of the Health Renewal Compact by Federal, state governments, and development partners in Abuja.

According to him, the administration will be prioritising and improving Nigeria's health sector through massive investments, and improved allocation of funds in the proposed 2024 budget. However, the N1.228 trillion allocated to the health sector under the 2024 Appropriation Act fell short of the 10 per cent promised as it represents five per cent of the total proposed budget expenditure.

Besides, over the past 12 months, the nation's health sector has been inundated with various challenges ranging from the mass exodus of skilled health workforce, and the exodus of pharmaceutical companies to skyrocketing prices of essential medicines and the high cost of health care.

However, the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof Muhammad Ali Pate, said the last 12 months have seen significant accomplishments with the vigorous implementation of the four-point agenda - governance of the health sector, improving population health outcomes, unlocking the healthcare value chain and health security, which is yielding tangible and intangible results.

While some stakeholders have agreed with him and lauded the government's policy direction for the health sector in the last one-

## • It will improve health sector, says NARDs president • 'Agenda yet to become evident in medical lab services'

year, others are yet to see its visible impact on the lives of Nigerians.

Assessing the government's performance, President, Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARDs) Dr Dele Abdullahi, said that the current plan by the Tinubu-led administration shows a more focused direction in improving the health sector.

Abdullahi noted that though the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare put in place plans to rejuvenate the health sector, the association is hoping that there will be proper implementation.

"It is difficult to have a holistic and critical judgment of the health sector in the first one year of the president. For an average Nigerian, for an average health care worker, your judgment will be based on what you have on ground, what you can see. So, for the health sector, we have both negatives and positives. The current plan shows a more focused direction in improving the health sector.

"We are hoping that the promises of better remuneration for health workers will be achieved. He should look into the issue of manpower gap in the health sector. No matter the equipment and facilities you have, without the necessary manpower, it is of no use. The government needs to find ways to keep within the country, the manpower we have and produce more to meet WHO standard for Universal Health Coverage (UHC)."

For the Executive Director, Civil Society Legislative and Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) Auwal Rafsanjani, Nigeria's biting economy presents significant challenges to health accessibility for its citizens, adding that the basic medical services and medications are increasingly becoming expensive, pushing them out of reach for many Nigerians.

Rafsanjani who called for government intervention to regulate the price of medica-

tions and make them more accessible, advocated targeted subsidies for low-income earners and those with chronic illnesses could ease the financial burden.

He lamented that due to financial constraints, people now delay seeking medical attention or forgo treatment altogether, leading to worsening health outcomes and because of the high cost of prescribed drugs, many Nigerians resort to self-medication with potentially harmful consequences.

He said: "High medical bills can push families into debt, creating a vicious cycle of financial hardship. The current economic situation in Nigeria makes healthcare affordability a major challenge for many citizens. Basic medical services and medications are expensive, putting a strain on household budgets. This is further exacerbated by the stagnant wages, especially for low-income earners; which makes it difficult for people to keep up with rising healthcare costs."

Rafsanjani noted that the Federal Government allocated 1.228 trillion to the health sector in the 2024 Appropriation Act, which translates to roughly 4.47 per cent of the total proposed budget expenditure falls short of the Abuja Declaration commitment of 15 per cent of the national budget for health. This translates to approximately

6,831 per person in Nigeria, which may not be sufficient considering the population of over 220 million.

He said: "Despite this poor allocation to the health sector in general, further analysis shows that there's a recognised imbalance in how health sector funds are distributed in Nigeria, with a bias towards secondary and tertiary healthcare over primary healthcare. This creates challenges in the system."

He urged the administration to ensure that more funding is allocated to the sector in the coming years, especially primary healthcare.

"Health insurance coverage remains low, leaving people to pay out-of-pocket for medical bills and this further exacerbates the already crushing financial hardship, especially for those with chronic illnesses or emergencies. There is a need to expand Health Insurance to achieve Universal health coverage and provide broader financial protection for Nigerians."

"Targeted subsidies for low-income earners and those with chronic illnesses could ease the financial burden. Partnering with private healthcare providers can address funding limitations and expand service reach. This can improve efficiency and offer more options to Nigerians. Nigeria needs more healthcare workers, along with better training and incentives. This includes doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and community health workers. Shifting focus from just funding inputs to measuring health outcomes can ensure resources are used effectively," he added.

The National President, Association of Medical Laboratory Scientists of Nigeria (MLSCN) Dr Casmir Ifeanyi told *The Guardian* that the government has been able to set an agenda for the health sector clearly, but they are yet to become evident in the medical laboratory services.

Ifeanyi observed that President Tinubu has been able to translate a few of his ideas into policy documents. For instance, he has been able to speak to the issue of UHC through the launch of the UHC policy which was launched some months ago.

He, however, argued that the UHC policy document was deficient in medical laboratory services. "The president has improved funding for health, you will recall that the Coordinating Minister of Health came up with a four-point agenda for the health sector but of all the coordinating efforts of the minister, we are yet to see his coordination of the medical laboratory services in Nigeria.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](#)

# Nurses demand cancellation of verification exercise, better remuneration

By Ijeoma Nwanosike

THE Nursing Group Administrators (NGA) has demanded the rescission of the nursing verification policy by the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN), insisting that the new rules demonstrate a blatant disregard for the well-being of nursing professionals.

The group said the regulation, which was issued by the NMCN Registrar in February 2024 had raised concerns among practicing nurses in the country as the policy neither enhances nursing practice standards nor protects patient interests but instead, creates unwarranted obstacles that impede the dedication and effectiveness of the nursing workforce in delivering essential healthcare services.

NGA called on the government and relevant stakeholders to intervene and make actionable policy recommendations, stating that an in-depth analysis of the policy has revealed impracticality and adverse implications on healthcare standards in Nigeria.

The group's Representative, Edike Osemeke, who spoke during a press briefing in Lagos, emphasised that the requirements for the verification are excessively rigid with prolonged waiting periods, imposing an unreasonable burden on practicing nurses.

They equally noted that the policy overlooks the genuine challenges faced by nursing professionals in Nigeria where many nurses operate in resource-constrained environments, grappling with bureaucratic red tape and financial constraints to obtain necessary permissions and reference letters.

Osemeke advocated a revised policy that should prioritise practicality, accessibility, and advancement of healthcare standards in Nigeria, warning that failure to rectify the policy flaws could jeopardise the already dwin-



Representatives of Nursing Group Administrators, Edike Osemeke (left) and Onyekosor Cletus during the press conference held in Lagos state, recently.

dling healthcare system. "Failure to address these grievances and rectify the flaws in the current policy will exacerbate the crisis facing the Nigerian healthcare system, jeopardise the health and safety of millions of citizens. Urgent action is imperative to rectify this untenable situation and restore trust in the regulatory framework governing nursing practice in Nigeria."

"Furthermore, we implore the NMCN to engage in meaningful dialogue with the public, nursing associations, advocacy groups, and relevant stakeholders to develop a more equitable, inclusive, and efficient verification process that upholds the integrity of nursing practice while safeguarding the well-being of

nurses and the communities they serve," he said.

She pointed out that the lack of transparency and consultation in formulating the rules underscores a profound disregard for the voices of the nursing community. "The NMCN has failed to engage in meaningful dialogue with stakeholders, disregarding the concerns and insights of those directly impacted by these draconian measures. We demand immediate action from the NMCN to revoke these unjust rules and engage in genuine consultation with nursing professionals and relevant stakeholders," he said.

They further called for the implementation of competitive remuneration and compensa-

tion packages for nurses, including an increase in retention allowances, hazard allowances, and hardship allowances to account for the increased workload, working hours, and cost of living in Nigeria.

"These adjustments should be fully integrated into the proposed new salary structure by the National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives, with swift implementation at the federal, state, and local council levels."

The group demanded placement adjustment of Graduate Nurses to Grade level 10 and Intern Nurses to Grade level 09, ensuring appropriate recognition and compensation and adopting policies that empower nurses to practice to the full extent of their competency, expertise, skills, education, and training in a supportive and safe service delivery environment, fostering job satisfaction amongst others.

"Addressing the concerns raised by younger nurses regarding workload distribution, the reluctance of hospital management to hire additional staff, and toxic work culture is paramount. Policy decisions should be enacted to prevent mistreatment, ensure fair workload distribution, and foster a supportive work environment to retain young nurses and mitigate migration to alternative work settings."

A specialist occupational health nurse in the United Kingdom, Tobi Omolere, said Nigeria's current brain drain could be transformed into a brain gain if proactive measures are taken.

He also highlighted his journey from a nurse in Nigeria to a specialist occupational health nurse in the United Kingdom as the transformative impact of investments in professional development.

## How inadequate facilities hamper menstrual hygiene for women

*This year's Menstrual Hygiene Day highlights the importance of proper menstrual hygiene for women and girls, as many female genders in Nigeria still face challenges in maintaining their menstruation health due to inadequate facilities, particularly in public settings like schools, workplaces and health clinics, FELICITAS OFFORJAMAH writes.*

NENNNA'S yellow uniform was already soaked in blood; she couldn't hide it any longer. Struggling to hold herself together in the assembly, she tried to sneak into the almost collapsing structure of a toilet available in her school. The hope of running water was dashed when she opened the tap - just a throaty sound and then a gush of air. The tears that welled and flowed from Nnenna's eyes were enough to wash her school uniform and get her clean.

Nnenna was not alone, somewhere on the playground at a school in Iyana-Ipaja, Lagos; Sukurat had worn her white sportswear. Being the white house commandant and oblivious of the fact that her period would commence; while leading the march past, she had stood in front with all confidence and excitement giving orders to the students. "Ahan, see blood!", a boy had shouted from behind with a mockery tone. When Sukurat discovered they were referring to her, she quickly looked for a girl to give her a sweater to tie below her waist.

"I was only able to get a sweater to cover the stain, but I wasn't able to get someone to give me a sanitary pad. I thought of going to the school clinic to get a pad and I was shocked at the response I got. I was scolded for not knowing when my period would come and I wasn't given any pad at the end of the day. I cried, I had to sit in a corner all day and went home later to meet my mum."

Sharon had told *The Guardian* that she doesn't go to work when she's on her period. "I usually have a heavy flow during my period and water only comes by the grace of God in the office, so I can't risk it. Besides, the toilet is kind of exposed, someone outside

can easily see me, changing my pad." Laila's story is a bit different. She just can't afford sanitary pads; it is a luxury item for her household. "I use small bits of cloth and tie them to my pants. When it gets very full, I wash and reuse them. I'm 16 years and that's how I have been doing it since when I was nine."

These scenes and several others reflect why every year on May 28, Menstrual Hygiene Day is observed to raise awareness about the critical role that proper management of menstrual hygiene (MHM) plays in empowering women and girls to realise their full potential. Adolescent girls and women face various challenges in managing their menstruation healthily and decently.

According to UNICEF, Menstrual Hygiene Management "is described as the process where "women and adolescent girls use a clean menstrual hygiene management (MHM) material to absorb or collect blood that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period, using soap and water for washing their bodies as required and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management material."

Inadequate facilities for managing menstruation hygiene affect at least 500 million women and girls worldwide (MHM). For women and girls, inadequate WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) facilities can be a severe barrier, especially in public settings like workplaces, schools, or health clinics.

Women and girls struggle to maintain their menstrual hygiene in a private, secure, and respectable way because there aren't enough separate restrooms with doors that can be securely closed, or there aren't enough resources to dispose of used sanitary

pads or water to wash hands. An increasing amount of research demonstrates that girls' incapacity to maintain proper menstrual hygiene in schools, workplaces and public spaces has detrimental effects on both the nation and the girls' individual lives.

Only 37 per cent of Nigerian women between the ages of 15 and 59 have access to all the necessities for proper menstrual hygiene management, including pain relievers, clean materials to prevent leaks and stains, WASH facilities, and places to dispose of used products. These statistics are derived from a smartphone survey called Performance Monitoring and Accountability 2020.

From the findings made by *The Guardian*, a substantial number of schools lacked basic water and sanitation facilities. A report further showed that 60 percent of public schools did not have toilets, unlike private schools.

According to the International Journal of Science and Research Archive, both students and instructors should feel at ease at school, particularly when it comes to making accessible, private, and operational facilities for getting rid of human and other waste. Everyone needs access to clean water, hygienic conditions, and activities that promote hygiene in their surroundings.

Children wherever they may find themselves require to be given adequate attention in terms of providing potable water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. Children leave their homes every morning for school and return to their places in the afternoon and in most cases in the evening thereby spending most of their daily time in schools. These schools are expected to have adequate potable water, sanitation and hygiene facilities to enable the children to relieve themselves easily."

The National Institute of Health stated that: "The use of sanitary pads

and washing the genital area are essential practices for good menstrual hygiene. Poor menstrual hygiene may lead to itching or rashes in the perineal region, bad odor, and sometimes, major complications such as pelvic inflammatory disease and toxic shock syndrome."

The World Bank had also posited that "Poor menstrual hygiene could pose serious health risks, like reproductive and urinary tract infections which could result in future infertility and birth complications." According to the global partnership, girls and women reduce their risk of infection when they have access to inexpensive, safe sanitary products; facilities to control their menstruation and Hepatitis B and Thrush could spread when females change their menstrual products and forget to wash their hands.

Sweetman and Medland did research in 2017, discovering that women and girls may face discomfort, psychological stress, embarrassment, and occasionally sadness if they lack the means to manage their period hygienically.

Child Rights Activist and Social Crusader, Kikelomo Oduyebo said "Quality attention should be given to the girl child as they need a lot of support in their growth stage. Millions of women worldwide lack access to inexpensive and sustainable menstruation products, which is a critical component in promoting menstrual health and cleanliness. To achieve optimal menstrual health hygiene and improve development outcomes for women and adolescent girls, a holistic strategy is most effective. This approach integrates education with infrastructure, goods, and initiatives to address the issue."

Given the various obstacles that women and adolescent girls encounter, encouraging menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is crucial for preserving women's and girls' physical integrity, dignity, and possibilities in life as a whole.

## Firm fights malaria, offers free healthcare in Cross River communities

By Musa Adekunle

AFARGE Africa Plc has launched its yearly medical outreach programme to fight malaria and improve the health of residents in its host communities in Nigeria.

In a statement, the medical outreach programme focused on health education, where attendees learnt about malaria prevention techniques, such as the use of insecticide-treated nets and environmental management. "In addition, participants will access to medical tests, consultations and free medications to address various health concerns throughout May," it noted.

Speaking during the flag-off ceremony at Akwa Ibom Effanga Community, Cross River State Commissioner for Health, Dr Egbe Ayuk, commended Lafarge Africa for being a proactive partner with the state with its consistency in health interventions and service delivery.

In alignment with the theme for this year's World Malaria Day, "Health Equity, Gender and Human Rights", the Director General of the State's Primary Healthcare Development Agency, Dr Vivien Otu, lauded Lafarge Africa for its continual support towards eradicating malaria in the state and called for increased support, particularly for pregnant women and children. "Our goal is to address the disparities associated with malaria, and by doing so, create healthier communities that are free from malaria in Cross River state."

In his remarks, the Plant Manager, Lafarge Africa Plc, Sitirios Valsamakis, who was represented by the Human Resources Business Partner, Mfamasing Plant, Barong Ita, highlighted the company's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and community well-being. "Every year, we continue to impact members of our host communities with our health intervention. This year, we are glad to be expanding our scope to reach the most vulnerable persons with free and quality medical health services tailored to their needs in our respective communities."

"To drive engagement and improve the quality of life, we have reward programmes that incentivise good health-seeking behaviour. Beneficiaries can earn rewards for maintaining proper health practices."

Umeh said: "We promote health education through videos, articles, and social media interactions."

## Experts raise concern over rising chronic diseases in Africa

By Musa Adekunle

HEALTHCARE experts have raised concern over rising cases of chronic diseases in Africa due to the lack of health insurance to address affordability, education and adherence challenges.

The Programme Director and Chief Medical Officer of Zuri Health, Dr Uzodinma Umeh, who spoke during the launch event themed: "The Burden of Chronic Disease in Nigeria: Launch of MyZuriCare in Addressing the Challenges through Innovation," pointed out that many Nigerians are unaware they are living with chronic diseases and called for the use of a digital health platform like myZuriCare to arrest the situation.

Umeh while speaking on the burden of chronic illness in the country, highlighted three core issues, high cost of care, lack of health education and non-compliance to medications.

"With rising inflation, people as more preserved disposable to provide for food and self-preservation. Many people with chronic diseases cannot afford the exorbitant cost of hospital visits and medication and would rather self-medicate."

Umeh noted that one of the reasons for poor quality health is that many do not have access to good medical information promptly and people rely on several myths about chronic illness that lead to poor management.

He also pointed out that the rising



Co-Founder Zuri Health, Titilola Olaolu-Hassan (left); Chief, Strategic Alliance and Growth, AHA, Mayowa Adeagbo; Vice President, Market Access of AHA, Yewande Adekoya and Programme Director and Chief Medical Officer of Zuri Health, Dr. Uzodinma Umeh during the launch of myZuriCare in Lagos.

cost of drugs is being exacerbated by the exit of large pharmaceutical companies, which led to treatment failure and worsening health outcomes, causing many patients to discontinue their treatment.

"This departure has led to a significant shortage of essential medications, increased drug prices and reduced availability of newer, more effective treatments. The local pharmaceutical while growing, has struggled to fill the gap left by these multinationals, resulting in delays and disruptions in the supply chain. "Consequently, patients are forced to

pay higher prices for medications, seek alternative treatments that may be less effective or forgo treatment altogether, leading to poorer health outcomes. A significant yet often overlooked challenge in managing chronic disease is the lack of community support. Many patients with chronic conditions feel isolated and lack the necessary social support networks to help them manage their health effectively. This isolation can lead to mental health, decreased motivation to adhere to treatment plans and an overall decline in well-being," he said.

MEANWHILE, the experts from Zuri Health, in conjunction with myMedicine, an arm of Advantage Health Africa (AHA), aims to improve the lives of Nigerians and by extension, Africans struggling with chronic illnesses. Zuri Health specialises in digital healthcare solutions, while myMedicine operates as a healthcare distribution network.

Umeh said myZuriCare offers affordable medications, AI-powered monitoring, telehealth consultations, and robust community support, stating: "The platform encourages and rewards good health behaviour, leading to cost savings, reduced healthcare expenses, improved telemedicine and AI solutions, enhanced quality of life, and increased productivity."

"With myZuriCare, patients will have access to stable-priced medications, conveniently delivered to their doorsteps or offices, along with the necessary support. Every patient can consult with a doctor or a nutritionist about primary care issues and manage chronic conditions regularly through our telemedicine services."

"To drive engagement and improve the quality of life, we have reward programmes that incentivise good health-seeking behaviour. Beneficiaries can earn rewards for maintaining proper health practices."

Umeh said: "We promote health education through videos, articles, and social media interactions."



WE WELCOME MR PRESIDENT TO  
THE COMMISSIONING OF  
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In line with our commitment to building infrastructure that targets the economic expansion agenda of the government, the Iseyin-Fapote-Ogbomoso Road, a 76.67 kilometres road project started in 2022 and named after former Governor Adebayo Alao-Akala, comes on stream today.

I, on behalf of the Government and good People of Oyo State, welcome the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, to the commissioning of what can be adjudged as the longest road project by any government in Oyo State in modern history.

This project connects the agriculture hub of Oyo State to the ready markets in city centers across Nigeria. It is another stride in reengineering a modern Oyo State.

**Signed**  
**'Seyi Makinde, FNSE, D.Sc., GSSRS**  
Governor of Oyo State



# Why Nigeria needs more universities, by NUC boss

By Iyabo Lawal

THE acting Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Chris Maiyaki, has responded to those criticising the Federal Government for approving more universities, saying that the current 272 public and private institutions are not enough to accommodate the growing demand for university education by the teeming Nigerian youths.

While comparing the population bracket of Nigeria to those of India, Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, the United States and Russia, Maiyaki noted that enrollment of just two million Nigerians in universities represented barely one per cent, saying it was not good enough. Members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have been at loggerheads with the government over proliferation of universities, wondering why the Federal Government has continued to approve new universities when existing ones are not properly funded.

ASUU president, Prof. Emmanuel Osodeke, insisted that the Act establishing the NUC should be amended to

make it more potent in arresting excessive establishment of universities in Nigeria.

Osodeke lamented that the trend has put much stress on intervention funds of the Tertiary Education Fund (TETFund), which are diverted to the new universities, contrary to the Act establishing it.

"What we need are universities that are adequately empowered to address the challenges confronting Nigeria and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their peers elsewhere in the world, not mushroom-glorified high schools," Osodeke said.

However, the NUC boss in his reaction, justified the need for the establishment of more universities in Nigeria to cater for the growing demands of applicants.

He said: "In an enrollment of two million Nigerians, barely one per cent are in the university, while in some of these countries, they have over 25 per cent of their population in the university."

Maiyaki said the government would continue to approve new universities until the teeming Nigerian youths desirous of acquiring a university edu-

cation are comfortable.

He added that as part of NUC's efforts to improve the quality of education in Nigeria, it had finalised guidelines on Transnational Education (TNE), thereby opening doors for foreign educational institutions to participate in Nigeria's university education landscape.

He added that the new standards being laid out by the commission were intended to serve as a guiding light towards a future where the quality of teaching, learning, and research in Nigerian universities would stand out unrivalled.

Maiyaki said the NUC has identified strategic priorities that encompass curriculum development, quality assurance, research and innovation, infrastructure development, deeper information technology penetration, and internationalisation, among others, to ensure better outcomes from the Nigerian university system for national development.

He said NUC remains steadfast in its commitment to reposition the Nigerian university system for excellence and global competitiveness.

## 'Why TETFund is undergoing reforms'

By Opeyemi Babalola

THE Executive Secretary of Tertiary Education Fund (TETFund), Sunny Echono, has clarified that the reforms being carried out by the agency were part of moves to place the organisation in a better stead to deliver on its mandate.

He, however, warned that despite its critical role in bridging the funding gap and providing critical infrastructure in the nation's tertiary institutions, the agency must not be allowed to become a victim of corruption or mismanagement.

He stated this while receiving an award of Outstanding Public Servant of the Year by Champion Newspapers Limited.

Echono said: "Since we came on board, we have embarked on a number of reforms to further make the agency work better and deliver on its mandate to the good people of Nigeria. We are aware of the role TETFund plays in

the provision of infrastructure and critical facilities in our higher institutions, as well as the training of academic and non-academic staff."

Despite criticisms and complaints from some persons opposed to his reforms, Echono said his administration remains committed to uplifting the nation's tertiary institutions.

"We are glad that testimonies from beneficiaries - schools and individuals, are positive and encouraging. However, because it is an agency that is known to be achieving a lot, we attract the attention of people. The nature of reforms will, no doubt, affect some people adversely; but as a public servant, one must develop thick skin and move on to do the best he can," Echono stated.

He added that the award would propel him and his team to work harder and move the agency to greater heights.

## Foundation educates youths on dangers of corruption, others

By Adelowo Adebunmi

skills to combat vices," Fadeyi said.

THE Akin Fadeyi Foundation recently empowered students with the requisite skills to combat corruption, cyber-bullying, gender-based violence, and other issues of social injustice.

The programme, themed: 'Empowered to create safe spaces online and beyond,' was organised by a non-governmental organisation, 'Be safe initiative,' with support from MacArthur Foundation.

It featured interactive training sessions, discussions, role-plays, advocacy drama messages and activities that reinforced the concepts.

Participants were also empowered to conduct step-down training sessions for their peers.

Founder and Executive Director of the foundation, Akin Fadeyi, restated the organisation's commitment to gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) initiatives. "It is a journey we have embarked upon to empower students and staff, equipping them with requisite

At the end of the workshop, participants shared their thoughts on the conference.

While some said they the programme has emboldened them to speak out against vices, others stressed the need to be mindful of the information shared on social media.

A teacher from one of the schools, Hauwa Audu, appealed to organisations and non-governmental bodies to extend the programme to more schools, saying it would enlighten the students on the dangers inherent in these vices.



Rector, Yaba College of Technology, Dr Ibraheem Abdul (left); Former Chief Judge, Lagos State, Justice Ishola Olorunnimbe and Chairman, DSE Foundation, Tunde Fanimokun, at the unveiling of the college's 2023-2028 strategic plan document to commemorate the rector's one year in office.

advancements in technology and obtain skill certifications before graduation.

He added that the institution has received donations worth N26 billion for legacy projects.

These include a 150-acre landed property at Snake Island for a Green Campus

initiative by philanthropist, Chief Rasheed Fanimokun, as well as a hostel building at Epe campus donated by Doja Otedola.

A former rector of the college, George Okufi, commended Ibraheem for embracing the challenges of leadership with humility.

In her lecture on "Leadership and service: The need for creativity, innovation and excellence," Mofunanya noted that in today's rapidly evolving world, effective leadership and dedicated service require a blend of creativity, innovation, and excellence.

## NAPPS partners UK firm to tackle examination malpractices

By Iyabo Lawal

THE National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS) is collaborating with Afrikindness, a United Kingdom-based charitable organisation for children and young adults, and other stakeholders, to stamp out examination malpractices from Nigeria's educational system or reduce it to the barest minimum. The menace, which has remained a big challenge in the country and globally, was the focal point of discourse at a virtual teachers' training workshop organised recently by NAPPS in Nigeria.

The forum, held in conjunction with Afrikindness, was themed: 'Promoting integrity: Strategies for mitigating examination malpractice in schools.'

Speaking at the event, NAPPS National President, Yomi Otubela, explained that the training was for educators to be enlightened on why they need to take proactive measures against exam malpractice in schools.

Otubela said it is important for educators, learners, and other stakeholders to always uphold the principles of honesty, transparency, accountability and integrity on

exams and certificates coming out of an educational system.

While condemning examination malpractice in all its forms, Otubela, who is also the chairman of Lagooz Group of Schools, said the growing concern about the menace in recent times has threatened the credibility and integrity of educational institutions.

He noted that the workshop was designed to provide participants, who are school owners, administrators, and teachers, with opportunities to share ideas, strategies, and best practices, to effectively tackle examination malpractice.

He pointed out that the adverse consequences of exam malpractice are not limited to cheaters and those who aided it, but extended to the education sector, economy, and society in general.

Otubela said that is why fighting the menace and achieving success requires the collective efforts of stakeholders.

According to him, educators must be able to promote a culture of academic honesty and ethical behaviour among students.

He said a situation where teachers and even parents encourage their students and wards to engage in

exam malpractice is not only unheard of but condemnable.

He, therefore, called on participants to work together to instil a sense of integrity and ethical values in the country's educational system by grooming a generation of young leaders, who will uphold the highest standards of moral conduct in school and after graduation.

In their separate contributions, the Chief Executive Officer of Afrikindness, Bunmi Owolabi and two other speakers, Lovette Monyei and Alice Crawford, said educators are expected to prepare learners at all levels for future challenges.



BAUCHI STATE GOVERNMENT

## Governor Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed's giant stride in health sector

Governor Bala Mohammed has made significant strides in the health sector in Bauchi State, focusing on improving healthcare infrastructure and services to ensure that quality healthcare is accessible to all residents. One of the key accomplishments in the health sector under his leadership is the rehabilitation and re-equipping of a minimum of one General Hospital in each of the 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the state. This initiative aims to extend quality healthcare services to the doorsteps of the people, making it easier for residents to access essential medical care.

As part of the Kaura's 2021/2022 Health Project, nine dilapidated general hospitals in Alkaleri, Kirfi, Toro, Kafin-Madaki, Dass, Misau, Gamawa, Zaki, and Itas were renovated and equipped. Additionally, four new cottage hospitals were constructed in Dambam, Warji, Azare, and Yelwan Duguri, further expanding healthcare facilities in the state. These efforts have helped to improve the infrastructure and capacity of healthcare facilities, ensuring that residents have access to quality medical services.

Governor Bala Mohammed has also focused on strengthening primary healthcare services in the state. Steady progress has been made towards equipping each of the 323 electoral wards with at least one functional primary health care center. Through collaboration with development partners such as the EU-UNICEF Project, 107 PHC facilities were renovated, and 43 new PHC facilities were constructed across the state. Additionally, 12 main PHCs were renovated under the BORN Project, further enhancing primary healthcare services in Bauchi State.

Furthermore, under the AF-NSHIP initiative with the World Bank, a total of 204 PHCs in 10 out of the 20 local government areas have been upgraded and stocked with medical consumables. This initiative has helped to improve the quality of care provided at the primary healthcare level, ensuring that residents have access to essential medical services closer to their communities.

Governor Bala Mohammed has also prioritized maternal and child health in Bauchi State. The launch of the Maternal Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) Drug Revolving Fund (DRF) worth N480 million in collaboration with USAID has helped to ensure the availability of essential drugs and supplies for maternal and child health services. Additionally, the Bauchi State Health Contributory Management Agency (BASHCMA) has enrolled over 50 thousand beneficiaries in its Vulnerable Program, with more than N500 million disbursed for primary and secondary health facilities.

Recently, the state government of Bauchi procured a multi-million Naira dialysis and radiography machine at the Specialist Hospital in Bauchi. This significant investment in healthcare infrastructure is a testament to the government's commitment to improving the quality of healthcare services in the state.





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# Education

## Again, ASUU demands implementation of Briggs report

From Rotimi Agboluaje, Ibadan

**T**HE Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Ibadan Zone, has called on President Bola Tinubu to implement the late Nimi Briggs-led committee report on the renegotiated 2009 agreement to avert further crisis in the nation's universities.

The Ibadan zonal coordinator of ASUU, Prof. Oyebamiji Oyegoke, who made the call at the University of

Ibadan (UI), said there has not been any serious effort to address the issues, which led to previous strike actions, especially that of February to October 2022.

Oyegoke highlighted the issues to include non-completion of the renegotiated 2009 FGN/ASUU agreement; inadequate funding of public universities; non-release of arrears of earned academic allowances (EAA); the albatross of Integrated

Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS); proliferation of universities, and arbitrary dissolution of governing councils of public universities.

According to him, the 2009 FGN/ASUU agreement contained a road map for addressing the crisis in public universities in Nigeria. Thus, it provided a template for funding public universities for their revitalisation.

Oyegoke said: "It is no longer a secret that our negotiated salary has not changed since 2009. The government, instead of committing itself to negotiated welfare packages, has irreverently maintained lines of frustration, blackmail, and use of hunger as a weapon to weaken our struggles."

He noted that since 2017, various committees have been put in place by the government to renegotiate

the agreement with ASUU, but expressed regrets that none of the reports have so far been implemented.

"Unfortunately, the Muhammadu Buhari-led administration, instead of implementing the Briggs agreement announced 25 and 35 per cents wage award, which was never implemented till his exit on May 29, 2023. This has led to the pauperisation of academics in Nigeria," Oyegoke said.

### Foundation empowers Edo primary school teachers

From Michael Egbejule, Benin City

**O**VER 300 teachers in Edo State public schools were recently trained by a non-governmental organisation, the Josemaria Escriva Foundation (JOSEF), to improve their teaching, technical, and personal skills.

The training, which is under the teachers' skills enhancement project (TSEP), is funded by TY Danjuma Foundation.

In his remarks at the closing session of the programme, the Chief Responsibility Officer (CRO), Dr Jude Obasanmi, said areas covered include how to improve subject content, time, and stress management; issues around gender-based violence, innovative curriculum design, as well as technology-enhanced learning and delivery (blending technology and learning using teachers' computers, among others).

Obasanmi said: "We started this project courtesy of TY

Danjuma Foundation in 2023. So far, a total of 120 teachers have benefited from the initiative, while 60 teachers will subsequently be captured yearly before the end of the project in 2027.

He explained that the training enabled teachers and learners to benefit maximally from the teaching process.

He pointed out that before now, individuals, organisations and governments were only interested in building schools, providing tables, chairs, and books, without looking at the delivery process.

But during the training, Obasanmi said the teachers were taught classroom, time and stress management, which in most cases, can negatively affect teaching delivery if not properly managed.

While thanking Edo State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) for approving the project, and the TY Danjuma Foundation for

making funds available for the training, Obasanmi commended the teachers for their enthusiasm and the facilitators for their effectiveness in the delivery of the different modules.

Representative of TY Danjuma Foundation, Ms Oluwatomi Ajayi, urged beneficiaries to take the training seriously, to meet the challenges of teaching 21st century learners.

"It is our hope that the teachers would effectively deploy what they have learnt, and the knowledge gained for quality delivery to students. Also, it is believed that these individuals would, in turn, train other teachers who were not captured in the training programme," she said.

In her presentation, Mrs Clementina Omosimua, a learning and development officer, emphasised the need for teachers to build their competence, saying this is the only way to remain relevant.



Oluwo of Iwo land, Oba Abdulrasheed Akanbi (left); Wife of the Chancellor, Mrs. Folashade Afolabi; Chancellor, Gerar University of Medical Science, Imepe-Ijebu, Dr. Taiwo Afolabi; Vice Chancellor, Prof. Niyi Adetoro and his Wife, Mrs. Abiola Adetoro at the investiture of Afolabi and Adetoro as Chancellor and Vice Chancellor respectively at Imepe-Ijebu, Ogun State.

### 600 postgraduate students compete for PTDF scholarship in Rivers

From Obinna Nwaoku, Port Harcourt

**A**BOUT 600 shortlisted Masters and Doctorate

candidates were recently interviewed for the 2024/2025 overseas scholarship scheme by the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital.

Addressing journalists on the scheme, General Manager, PTDF, Mrs Ifeoma Nwokike, said the initiative was aimed at providing Nigerian students with the intellectual foundation and skills set needed to participate actively in the country's oil and gas industry.

She said: "By mastering your crafts, whether in fashion design, catering, leather works, photography, or cosmetology, you have equipped yourselves with invaluable skills. These skills are not just trades, but pathways to creating better lives for yourselves and your communities."

Nwokike said the students are expected to return to

the country after they train to bridge identified gaps in the oil and gas industry with their expertise.

She said, "Our mandate is to build capacity in the oil and gas industry, and we have been mandated to train Nigerians in different skills to fill some of the identified gaps."

Nwokike disclosed that the selection interview would hold simultaneously across the six geo-political zones.

The team lead for the overseas scholarship interview, Port Harcourt Centre, Mr Ere Iyalla, said the 600 students for the zone were shortlisted based on their results at the ordinary and undergraduate levels, as well as research proposal and statement of purpose that fit into the needs of the oil and gas industry.

### Students acquire vocational skills to tackle unemployment

By Kehinde Olatunji

**O**VER 200 youths have been awarded certificates of completion in various vocational skills at Grace Springs Business and Vocational School (GSBVS) to bridge the unemployment gap in the country.

Sponsored by Fountain of Life Church, Ilupeju, Lagos, the vocational skills include baking and confectionery, bag making, fashion designing, makeup, hair making, shoe making and photography, among others.

Speaking at the ceremony, Operations Manager, GSBVS, Olumide Oyetunde,

stressed the need to address the rising unemployment in the country by equipping youths with skills.

He said this would provide gainful employment and opportunities for wealth creation, thereby minimising social vices in society.

"Our mission is to impart knowledge that empowers individuals to create opportunities for self-development. Vocational training is gradually being given the attention it deserves as a veritable tool for national development.

"Government should play the role of a regulator and

not a player in the field. The harmonisation of skill acquisition and training centres should be prioritised. Also, the certification of training and opportunity of continuing learning through tertiary institutions should be encouraged," he added.

On her part, the keynote speaker, Mrs Hauwa Haruna-Sheidi, urged the graduating students to be focused and committed to their goals.

According to her, vocational skills are often more valuable than traditional white-collar jobs.

She maintained that as

skilled professionals, the graduands have the potential to become entrepreneurs, creating jobs not just for themselves, but for others, saying the independence and ability to shape their own destiny is both empowering and rewarding.

She said: "By mastering your crafts, whether in fashion design, catering, leather works, photography, or cosmetology, you have equipped yourselves with invaluable skills. These skills are not just trades, but pathways to creating better lives for yourselves and your communities."

### Experts counsel students on career choices

By Opeyemi Babalola

**A**s opportunities arise from the evolving world of information technology, students have been advised to follow their interests when making career choices. Speaking at the maiden edition of Lagos Students Career Expo (LSCE) for learners in the state higher institutions, held at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Muminah Salaam, one of the organisers and a 400-level

Electronics and Computer Engineering student, emphasised the importance of mentorship to growing a career as a student.

Salaam, a student of Lagos State University (LASU), noted that learners must have access to relevant information to make better career choices.

She said: "The reason we brought students together is to give them access to career resources such as intern-

ships and entry-level positions that are hard to get unless one has the right connections. The event provided an opportunity for students to interact with different company representatives on how they can secure internships for them to grow."

In his remarks, the Commissioner for Tertiary Education in the state, Tolani Akibu, who was represented by the Director of

Infrastructural Planning and Development, Kikelomo Oduwole, said for students to become potential employees or entrepreneurs, they must continually develop themselves and work towards their dreams.

Speaking on the theme: 'A 21st Century economy: The future we are building in Lagos State,' Akibu called for collaboration from all concerned, noting that the initiative would help improve

the quality of graduates in the state.

He urged experts and captains of industries to identify areas of support for the students, saying the state government, on its part, is committed to improving the quality of graduates through various initiatives.

While emphasising the importance of mentorship, Akibu enjoined the students to seek career help as the only pathway to reach their goals.

Chisom Nwokwu, a software engineer, who spoke on 'Building a tech career in Africa ecosystem,' urged students to explore and build careers around the technology space.

"As a student, you don't have to wait till you graduate before you have an active LinkedIn profile, where you share your learning progress. This would give you as many opportunities as possible," she added.

# TheGuardianSports

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## At New Maracana Stadium, Ndidi preaches grassroots devt

By Christian Okpara

SUPER Eagles midfielder, Wilfred Ndidi, has joined the campaign for grassroots football development, saying investing in children is the easiest way to build a virile sports culture.

Speaking at the New Maracana Stadium, Ajegunle, where he unveiled a new hostel for the facility, Ndidi said Nigeria has abundant talents waiting to be discovered, adding that providing facilities and the enabling environment will make it easier for the budding talents to become great athletes.

He described the New Maracana Stadium as an amazing facility, which was not available to children of his generation.

"When we were younger, we didn't have facilities like this. So, when Mr Yemi Idowu told me about the facility, I was very happy, and I tried to con-

tribute by donating a hostel to it.

"This facility will go a long way in motivating the kids to train harder knowing that they have something to look up to. If other kids have this type of facility, it will help their development."

"We underrate grassroots football development, but it is the way to go. You can imagine what these children will turn out to be after training in this facility. Not many children have the same opportunity."

Also speaking on the facility, Yemi Idowu, whose foundation rebuilt the stadium, said the idea was to provide an outlet for the budding talents to hone their skills.

He commended Ndidi for his contribution to the facility, saying that the Super Eagles star has provided a big boost for the development of future generations of players.

He said: "Many of the stars

look for outlets that they can participate and give back to the society. When Ndidi sees the impact of his contribution to this facility, it makes him happy."

"It was also a phenomenal impact on the kids seeing a Premiership player coming to take photographs with them, sit with them, and play with them. It is a dream builder, which not many children can experience."

Idowu said he was motivated to build the New Maracana Stadium because of the knowledge he has acquired from visiting such facilities overseas.

He said the hostels are used by the children when they have programmes that would last for two to three days, adding, "We feed them from beginning to end. Apart from playing football, they also play educational games, watch films, and do several other things when they are in the hostel."

### After blowing away Rozanski, Okolie eyes Wilder blockbuster, unification bout

A potential blockbuster showdown with hard-punching heavyweight Deontay Wilder could be on the horizon for Lawrence Okolie after he claimed the WBC bridge weight world title, says Sky Sports expert George Groves. The British fighter, making his return to the ring nearly one year on from his majority-decision loss to Chris Billam-Smith for the WBO cruiserweight crown, knocked down Lukasz Rozanski three times en route to a first-round stoppage win in Poland to take the belt on Friday.

A potential unification clash with WBA bridgerweight champion, Evgeny Tishchenko, could be on the cards, but former super-middleweight champion, Groves, believes former heavyweight king Wilder may be tempted to take on Okolie for his belt if the American's

options at heavyweight are limited.

"I think, now, this is his time to capitalise on being a world champion," Groves told Sky Sports.

"There are going to be a lot of heavyweights out there with big names, who are not huge, who are going to be thinking 'Am I ever going to win the heavyweight world championship soon? Maybe not, but I can be a world champion if I take on Lawrence Okolie'.

"I think, maybe, Wilder is the sort of character who goes 'I'm such a big name, I'm a former heavyweight world champion, I can't see

me just getting a shot at a heavyweight world title any time soon, but why not become a two-weight world champion by fighting at bridge weight?"

The bridgerweight division was introduced by the WBC in 2020 to sit between cruiserweight and heavyweight, with the WBA following in recognising it three years later, with the weight limit between 14st 4lb and 16st.

The WBC and WBA's limits cover the traditional lower end of the heavyweight division and Okolie weighed in at close to the upper bridgerweight limit for his clash with Rozanski.

### SOLUTION

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Okolie



Yemi Idowu (left), Wilfred Ndidi (middle) and Chairman, Ajeromi-Ifeodun Local Council, Fatai Adekunle Ayoola (right), inside one of the rooms of the hostel donated by the Super Eagles star to new Maracana Stadium...yesterday.

## Govt plans reception for triumphant Edo Queens

THE Edo State government has revealed plans to host the state's female football team, Edo Queens, to a heroic reception after their excellent outing at the NWFL Super Six Playoffs, where they emerged champions of the league and secured a ticket to represent the country at CAF Women Champions League for the first time.

The team will arrive in Benin City today to a rousing wel-

come amid pump and pageantry, in celebration of their remarkable achievement.

In a statement, the Edo State Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Chris Nehikhare, said a victory road show has been planned for the triumphant team.

He said: "In celebration of their remarkable achievement, a grand reception and

victory road show has been planned for our triumphant team by the State Government.

"The victory roadshow is scheduled to commence at 10 am with the rallying point being Western Boys Secondary School, Benin City. They will proceed on the motorcade through Ring Road and terminate at the Government House, Benin City."

## UNILAG, Daysprings, others win top prizes in chess championship

By Gowon Akpodonor

THE University of Lagos (UNILAG), Dayspring School, Lagos, and Marvelvine Montessori School, also in Lagos, have emerged winners in the tertiary, secondary, and primary schools' categories of the 2024 Ecobank National Schools Team Chess competition held at the Pan African Centre, Lagos.

The Chess competition, described as the largest gathering of chess players in Africa, attracted over 1,200 players from over 250 schools across 18 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Vice President, Nigeria Chess Federation (NCF), Adeyinka Adewole, expressed excitement that the championship, which was introduced last year when the

International Chess Federation (ICF) started the World Schools Team Chess Championship, has grown in leaps and bounds.

He noted that the 2024 edition attracted over 1,200 participants, describing NCF's partnership with Ecobank as a shining example of the public-private partnership needed for the advancement of sports in Nigeria.

school category, followed by the University of Benin and Chess in Slums Africa (CISA), while DaySpring School, Platforms School, Ireti Senior Grammar School came first, second and third respectively in the secondary school category.

## REMEMBRANCE


 Late **Pa Wilfred Mikie OKPOTSE**

It was 46 years ago since you transited to great beyond. Your children, grandchildren and relations still remember you as if your departure was yesterday. Our prayer is that you continue to rest in perfect peace with our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!

Signed:  
**Aboyewa Okpotse**  
 For the Family.



Ahead 2026 World Cup

## Preparing for S/Africa exciting, says Ndidi

By Christian Okpara

**SUPER** Eagles stand-in captain, Wilfred Ndidi, has described as exciting the pressure on the team going into the 2026 World Cup qualifier against South Africa. Nigeria will host South Africa in Uyo on June 7 and travel to Cote d'Ivoire to meet Benin Republic three days later.

Although South Africa have proved to be a big challenge to Nigeria in recent times, Ndidi said the Super Eagles are looking forward to the game, which will position the winner for a possible qualification for the World Cup to be hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Ndidi, who missed the last Africa Cup of Nations hosted by Cote d'Ivoire due to injury, said he was proud of the team when they beat the Bafana Bafana in the semifinal. He added that Nigeria would have won the AFCON if it had a complete set of players in the final.

"I was proud of the team even though we lost the final game. The difference between the teams was that the Ivoirians had different players in the final, while we had the same set of players throughout the competition.

"We had a tough time against the South Africans, but we will be meeting in a different setting at the World Cup qualifier."

"The Nations Cup and the World Cup qualifiers are two different things. The teams may not have the same set of players and the conditions are not the same, but the pressure that comes with this game is exciting."

Ndidi said that the Super Eagles are bothered whatever they hear about South Africa, adding, "We are just going to stay focused and play our game."

"To be honest, South Africa is a good team. They gave us a tough time in the AFCON semifinal, which we won by penalties. But no two games are the same. It doesn't matter what we played against them in the past, this will be different, and we will approach it as a fresh challenge."

On his changing roles in midfield, Ndidi said he would play in any position the coaches assigned to him so long as it brings good results to his team.

"In Leicester City, I played as an attacking midfielder, but I don't know where Coach Finidi George will put me in

the Eagles. I will function wherever he puts me because he knows the team and will decide how he wants to approach the match."

On the absence of Super Eagles top striker, Victor Osimhen, who has been ruled out of the games by injury, Ndidi

said the team would miss the aggression the Napoli star brings to games. "Osimhen is a big hustler; he never relaxes, and I think we will miss him. But we have some other strikers with different approaches to football."

"However, this is not the time to start thinking of absent players. I think it is the time to come together and play to win the games."

## Athletes chase Olympics tickets to Region II Championship in Ghana

By Gowon Akpodonor

**NIGERIAN** athletes, especially home-based stars, seeking to compete at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, will hit Accra, Ghana, on June 1 to compete in the CAA Region II Athletics Championship.

The event runs from June 3 to 6 at the University of Ghana Sports Stadium, Accra.

The CAA Region II Athletics Championship in Accra is one of the three competitions in Africa recognised by World Athletics (WA) for athletes globally to pick qualification tickets to the Paris 2024 Olympics.

The other two are the Athletics Sonelgaz International Meeting slated for Stade Souk, Ethnine, Bejaia, Algeria, on June 1, and the Sixth Challenge Meeting holding on June 6 at the Olympic Centre for Training National Team in Cairo, Egypt.

An earlier report by an online platform had stated that the CAA Region II Athletics Championship in Accra is not recognised by World Athletics, and that Nigerian athletes seeking tickets to Paris Olympics may shun it for the fourth Making of Champions (MoC) Grand Prix, slated to hold in Lagos between May 31 and June 1.

According to the report, "If Nigeria will be sending a delegation to Ghana, most of the athletes are likely to opt out as the competition will not serve any qualification purpose because it is not registered with World Athletics."

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Hansi Flick promises to win trophies for Barcelona

PUTTING an end to days of speculation, Barcelona have finally sealed the appointment of Hansi Flick, writes *barcauniversal.com*.

The German tactician has signed a two-year contract with the Catalan outfit and will replace Xavi Hernandez at the end of the season.

In a short video message released by the club, Flick expressed his eagerness to get down to business: "I really want to start working for this incredible club. Since I arrived, I have seen that everyone loves this club and does everything possible for its success."

It was reported in the past that Flick was deeply eager to take the Barcelona job. He was close to missing out when Barça reinstated their confidence in Xavi.

But an unprecedented turn of events saw the Barcelona bosses eventually lose trust in Xavi, ultimately leading to Flick's arrival at Camp Nou. However, one can be forgiven for wondering how Barcelona will cope with the culture change that Flick will bring to the table.

Flick, though, reiterated that his version of Barcelona will continue to play possession football. "My style of play? I like to have possession of the ball and prefer an offensive way of playing. These are the aspects that I like and we are going to work for it," he said.

Flick has a proven track record of playing attractive, attacking football with emphasis on efficiency in front of goal. The presence of star striker Robert Lewandowski, to that end, could prove to be a pivotal factor.

However, the German is particularly looking forward to working with Barcelona's youth players.

"Barça have one of the best youth teams in the world. In the first team there is a good mix between experienced players and talented young players," he said.

Talking about improving the squad, the German stressed the importance of working closely with President Joan Laporta and Sporting Director Deco.

"I think we have to work to be able to improve. This is our work together with Deco and President Laporta. It is important to work as a team. We have to work together on this aspect. We have to focus on this task and I'm happy to do it with these people," he said.

Nevertheless, Flick concluded his message with a stirring call to arms for the fans: "I really want to start this journey with you. Your support is very important and together we can achieve many things with this incredible team. Visca Barça!"

"I won some titles with Bayern Munich, and I would like to follow this path in Barcelona. We can achieve many things together, this is the most important thing," he added.

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