

CBN Moves to Double Foreign Currency Remittances, Grants AIP to 14 New IMTOs

● *Naira appreciates on official FX to N1,459/\$, falls to N1,540/\$ on parallel market*

James Emejo in Abuja and Nume Ekeghe in Lagos

The Central Bank of Nigeria

(CBN) yesterday announced that it has granted 14 new International Money Transfer Operators (IMTOs) Approval-in-Principle (AIP) in a bid

to double foreign currency remittances through formal channels. The initiative also seeks to increase the sustained supply of foreign

exchange (FX) in the official market by promoting greater competition and innovation among IMTOs to lower the cost of remittance transactions

as well as boost financial inclusion. This comes just as the naira yesterday, gained on the official FX window while it continued to

decline on the parallel FX market. At the Nigerian Autonomous

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Atiku: FG's Plan to Use N20 Trillion Pension Fund for Infrastructure Projects Misguided

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Former Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar, has kicked against

federal government's plan to use Nigeria's pension fund to finance infrastructure development in the country.

In a post yesterday on X, Atiku, who described the move as misguided, added that the initiative must be stopped immediately.

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, on Tuesday, May 14, said the government had unveiled

a strategic plan to harness the N20 trillion pension fund and other locally available resources for infrastructure development in Nigeria.

Edun said it was a significant step towards driving economic

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Tinubu Inaugurates 3 Gas Projects, Pledges to Wean Nigeria from Overdependence on Petrol, Diesel

● *Says ending gas flaring top priority for his administration*

● *Gas minister discloses domestic production has increased by 800MMscf/day*

Emmanuel Addeh, Deji Elumoye in Abuja and Peter Uzoho in Lagos

President Bola Tinubu yesterday inaugurated three critical gas projects in Delta and Imo states, pledging to reverse Nigeria's overdependence on petrol and diesel to the more efficient natural gas resources.

The president spoke virtually at the commissioning of the expansion of the Ashtavinayak Hydrocarbon Limited (AHL) Gas Processing Plant in Kwale, Delta, the Assa North-Ohaji (ANO) Gas Processing Plant in Ohaji-Egbema and the 23.3km ANOH to Obiafu-Obrikom-Oben (OB3) Custody Transfer Metering

Station Gas Pipeline Projects. Tinubu stated that the three projects were of utmost importance to him, as it significantly increased Nigeria's aspiration to embrace cleaner and more efficient fuels.

He noted that his recent directive to government agencies to fully embrace vehicles powered by Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) was a step in that direction.

"When we resumed 11 months ago, I asked for this project. I made it my priority and the administration's priority clear on gas for prosperity. They said, this might take a few

Continued on page 9



ELUMELU MEETS SHEIKH MOHAMMED IN ABU DHABI...

L-R: President of United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan; Member of Abu Dhabi Executive Council and Chairman of the Department of Health in Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mansoor Al Mansoori; and Group Chairman, United Bank for Africa (UBA) and Founder, Tony Elumelu Foundation, Mr. Tony Elumelu, during a meeting between Mr. Elumelu and Sheikh Mohammed at the Palace in Abu Dhabi, ... yesterday

Minimum Wage Talks Deadlocked as NLC, TUC Reject N48,000 Proposed By FG... Page 8

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more than banking

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NEWS



INAUGURATION OF THE ANOH GAS PROCESSING PLANT...

R-L: MD, ANOH Gas Processing Company, Effiong Okon; CEO, Seplat Energy Plc, Roger Brown; GCEO, NNPC, Mele Kyari; Deputy Governor of Imo State, Chinyere Ekomaru; Board Chairman, Seplat Energy Plc., Udo Udoma, and others, during the presidential commissioning of the ANOH Gas processing Company in Owerri, Imo State... yesterday

Inflation Soars to 33.69% Amid Higher Food, Energy, Commodity Prices

● Severe in Borno, Bauchi, Oyo, others ● Food index hits 40.53% ● CPPE urges MPC to soften monetary tightening

James Emejo in Abuja and **Dike Onwuamaeze** in Lagos

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) which measures the rate of change in prices of goods and commodity further increased to 33.69 per cent in April compared to 33.20 per cent in the preceding month, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) disclosed yesterday.

Year-on-year, the headline index stood at 33.69 per cent compared to 22.22 per cent recorded in April 2023.

According to the CPI report for the month the food index stood at 40.53 per cent, year-on-year, representing 15.92 per cent increase compared to 24.61 per cent in April last year.

Core inflation, including energy prices rose by 6.87 per cent, year-on-year to 26.84 per cent in the review period compared to 19.96 per cent in April 2023.

On annualised basis, the rise in food inflation was attributed to increases in prices of millet flour, garri, bread, wheat flour prepacked, semovita (which are under bread and cereals class), yam tuber, water yam, cocoyam (under potatoes, yam and other tubers class).

Other contributors to food inflation included coconut oil, palm kernel oil, vegetable oil, among others (under oil and fat), dried fish sardine, catfish dried, mudfish dried (under fish class), beef head, beef feet, liver, frozen chicken (under meat class), mongo, banana, grapefruit (under fruit class), lipton tea, boumviata, milo

(under coffee, tea and cocoa class). However, the NBS stated that month-on-month, food inflation declined by 1.11 per cent to 2.50 per cent in April compared to 3.62 per cent in March.

The statistical agency further explained that fall in the monthly food index was caused by a fall in the rate of increase in the average prices of yam, water yam, irish potatoes (under potatoes, yam and other tubers class), beer, local beer (under tobacco class), milo, boumviata, nescafe (under coffee, tea, and coco class), groundnut oil, palm oil (under oil and fats class), egg, fresh milk, powered milk, and tin milk (under milk, cheese, and eggs class).

Other were soft drinks e.g. malt guinness, coco-cola, spirit (local production), chelsea, seaman schnapps (under spirit class), wine and fruit e.g., water melon, pineapple, banana, pawpaw among others.

On the other hand, the increase in core inflation was blamed on highest increases in prices of actual and imputed rentals for housing, journey by motorcycle, bus journey within a city (under passenger transport by road class), consultation fee of a medical doctor, x-ray photography among others (under medical services class), and accommodation services.

Month-on-month, the core index reduced to 2.20 per cent in April from 2.54 per cent.

Also, urban inflation, year-on-year,

rose to 36 per cent compared to the 23.39 per cent in April 2023 while the index dropped to 2.67 per cent month on month compared to 3.17 per cent in March.

Similarly, rural inflation rose to 31.64 per cent year-on-year compared to the 21.14 per cent in April 2023 while month-on-month, the index dropped to 1.92 per cent compared 2.87 per cent in March.

At states level, the all-items inflation year on year was highest in Kogi (40.84 per cent), Bauchi (39.91 per cent), Oyo (38.37 per cent), while Borno (26.09 per cent), Benue (27.53 per cent) and Taraba (28.69 per cent) recorded the slowest rise. Month-on-month, the index recorded highest increases in Lagos (4.52 per cent), Ondo (3.35 per cent), Edo (3.27 per cent), while Kano (0.30 per cent), Ebonyi (0.97 per cent) and Adamawa (1.25 per cent) recorded the slowest movement.

On annualised basis, food inflation was highest in Kogi (48.62 per cent), Kwara (46.73 per cent), Ondo (45.87 per cent), while Adamawa (33.61 per cent), Bauchi (33.85 per cent) and Nasarawa (34.03 per cent), recorded the slowest rise. Month-on-month, food price was highest in Lagos (4.74 per cent), Edo (4.06 per cent), and Yobe (3.99 per cent), while Kano (0.47 per cent), Adamawa (0.98 per cent) and Zamfara (1.50 per cent) recorded the slowest rate of increase.

Reacting to the CPI report yesterday, the Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for the Protection

of Private Enterprises (CPE), Dr. Muda Yusuf, urged the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to soften its monetary tightening.

Yusuf, however, noted that the persistent inflationary pressure in the Nigerian economy has remained a major cause for concern because of the implications for purchasing power and operating costs for businesses.

He said: "The good news however is the decline in the month on month inflation both for headline inflation and food inflation. Meanwhile the key inflation drivers are yet to significantly moderate."

These key drivers, according to him, were the Naira exchange rate, transportation costs, logistics challenges, insecurity in farming communities and structural bottlenecks to production.

He said these were largely supply side issues which are being addressed by the fiscal authorities.

"Meanwhile the exchange rate benchmark for the computation of import duty continues to be a major concern to businesses as it has become a major inflation driver."

"We again urge the CBN to peg the rate at between N800 -N1000/ dollar to be reviewed quarterly."

This is necessary to reduce the pass through effect of heightening trade cost on inflation.

"The commencement of domestic refining of petroleum products by the Dangote Refinery is a remarkable upside for the economy. It is expected to have a considerable moderating effect on energy costs and inflation in the near term."

Yusuf added: "Businesses are yet to recover from the shocks of the recent bullish rate hikes. The monetary instruments should be put on pause while fiscal policy tools address supply side factors in the inflation dynamics."

Sweden Announces Return of Benin Artefacts to Oba of Benin

Adibe Emenyonu in Benin City

The Swedish government has resolved to return 39 pieces of Benin Artefacts in her Museum to the custody of Omo N' Oba N' Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Ewuare II, CFR, Oba of Benin.

The disclosure followed the Federal Republic of Nigeria Gazette No. 57, Volume 110 at pages A245-247 issued on March 23rd, 2023, which recognised ownership and vesting Custody and Management of repatriated Benin Artefacts in the

Oba of Benin.

The Swedish Ambassador to Nigeria, Annika Hahn-Englund, conveyed the Swedish government decision when she paid a courtesy visit to Oba of Benin Palace in Benin City, Edo State.

Hahn-Englund informed the Royal father that Sweden and Nigeria, which is the second largest market in Sub-Sahara Africa, are partners in the areas of infrastructure, telecommunication, energy and other businesses that supported the economies significantly.

The Swedish envoy said, "also, I would like to mention that with cooperation, we have in Culture, Education with Nigeria; I would like to mention the decision of why the Swedish government has to return 39 Artefacts to Benin Kingdom."

"So, your Majesty, I am very honoured to be here tonight," Ambassador Hahn-Englund said while paying respect to Oba Ewuare II.

Responding, Oba Ewuare II on behalf of Edo people also welcomed the decision and expressed his deepest gratitude to the Swedish government for the intervention.

The Benin monarch recalled how he made a request through the Swedish monarch in 1998, to return Benin Bronzes in Sweden during his courtesy visit to him as Nigeria Ambassador to Scandinavian countries.

The traditional ruler disclosed that

the federal government-backed Benin Royal Museum project was still on course and commended partners for their support and devotion towards the project.

The Oba also commended the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), which is an agency of the federal government of Nigeria, responsible for the preservation, promotion, and development of Nigeria's cultural heritage.

The traditional ruler who prayed for members of the Diplomatic Mission, shared a captivating tale of his Diplomatic exploits as Ambassador in the Scandinavian Countries, noting that the remarkable reign and enduring affection of the Swedish monarch, His Royal Majesty, Carl Gustaf Folke Hubertus remain indelible.

According to Oba Ewuare II, the demand for the return of looted Benin Artefacts has been on since the reign of Oba Akenzua II, "and you are here today telling that it has been approved. This has been my request long time ago. God's time is always the best."

To underscore the significance of the historic visit to the Palace, the Ambassador in the company of her husband and a member of the Diplomatic Mission, presented a souvenir to Oba Ewuare II, who in turn gave a copy of the Federal Government Gazette on all Benin Artefacts to the envoy in appreciation.

Nigerian Citigroup Executive in Charge of Job Cuts Resigns

Nume Ekeghe

A prominent Nigerian executive at Citigroup, Titi Cole responsible for overseeing the implementation of the bank's extensive restructuring plan, has resigned to pursue a position at a non-profit organisation.

Cole's departure marked the loss of one of the most senior Black women in finance within the banking giant.

After four years with Citigroup, Cole's exit comes shortly after the bank announced the completion of a significant phase of its reorganisation, as unveiled by Chief Executive Officer, Jane Fraser in September.

A statement announcing her departure, stated that alongside Cole, Mike Whitaker, who led the

operations and technology teams, was also departing from the bank. Simultaneously, Citigroup is bringing in Tim Ryan, the outgoing US head of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), to lead its technology and legacy franchises teams.

Ryan's appointment comes after he withdrew from consideration for the global chair position at PwC due to opposition late last year. He had previously announced plans to retire by the end of June, prompting PwC to expedite its US leadership transition, with Paul Griggs taking on the role of US senior partner immediately.

Despite ongoing restructuring efforts, Citigroup is still working towards its goal of eliminating

20,000 jobs, equivalent to roughly 10 per cent of its workforce, by the end of next year. Last month, the bank informed 7,000 employees of job cuts, with additional reductions expected to come from automation in the future.

The extensive layoffs created unrest among employees, despite better-than-expected first-quarter earnings, particularly in investment banking fees, although profits were still down approximately 25 per cent compared to the same period last year.

Fraser, has emphasised the efficiency improvements resulting from the restructuring, including the elimination of upper management layers. However, the creation of Citi's client division has absorbed

thousands of employees.

Cole's departure also reduces gender diversity within Citigroup's senior leadership ranks, with CEO Fraser being one of the few senior women remaining. Cole, who joined Citigroup from Wells Fargo four years ago, played a significant role in managing the bank's exit from consumer banking in numerous countries, although some aspects of this transition remain unfinished.

While Cole's departure was said to be unrelated to the restructuring, with sources indicating her plans to join a non-profit were in motion before the recent revamp, her exit represents a notable transition within Citigroup's leadership team amid ongoing organisational changes.

NEWS



DURING THE 26TH ANNUAL TAX CONFERENCE IN ABUJA...

L-R: Former Governor of Ogun State, Senator. Ibikunle Amosun; His Royal Highness Emir of Dutse, Muhammad Hameemnuhu Sanusi; President/Chairman, the Council of Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria (CITN), Mr. Samuel Agbeluyi; Governor of Sokoto State, Ahmad Aliyu Sokoto; Special Adviser to the Governor of Lagos State on Taxation and Revenue, Mr. Ogungbo Abdul Kabir Opeyemi; Vice President of CITN, Mr. Innocent Ohagwa, during the 26th Annual Tax Conference in Abuja...recently

PHOTO: KINGSLEY ADEBOYE

Adedeji: FIRS Generated N3.94tn in Taxes Out of N4.8tn Target in Q1

- *Oseni: Effective risks management culture will enhance non-oil revenue collection*
- *Mulls bill to make risk practices compulsory for government agencies*

James Emejo in Abuja

Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Dr. Zacch Adedeji, yesterday disclosed that the service generated a total of N3.94 trillion in tax revenue in the first

quarter of the year (Q1 2024).

The performance however, fell short of its quarterly revenue target of N4.8 trillion.

Adedeji gave the figures while receiving the leadership of the Chartered Risk Management Institute

of Nigeria (CRMI) of Nigeria, led by its President/Chairman, Governing Council, Dr. Ezekiel Oseni, on a courtesy visit to the FIRS Headquarters in Abuja.

He said the performance in Q1 represented 56.7 per cent increase

over the figure recorded in the corresponding quarter of 2023.

Represented at the meeting by his Chief of Staff, Mr. Tayo Koleosho, Adedeji said the service under his watch, remained committed to intensifying efforts in the remaining

part of the year towards meeting its ambitious N19.4 trillion target for 2024.

He said, "Over the years through the various administrations, the service has maintained its mandate of generating revenue and meeting government's targets.

"We will continue to make giants stride and we take pride in meeting and surpassing our revenue collection targets for the federation with constant collaboration with stakeholders like the CRMI.

"We have resolved to create an environment of growth by removing every obstacle in the way of corporate entities and ensure a tax administration that is friendly, customer-centric and ready to help businesses to bear more fruits."

However, speaking to THISDAY after the engagement, Oseni said the institute is currently sponsoring a bill at the National Assembly to institute risk management practice in every ministry, department, and agency of government (MDAs).

He said, "Risk management is something that is not restricted to any particular sector. It is something that has relevance in every sector of the economy, including the government. The bill is about to go, and we are doing a draft on that.

He added that when passed into law, Act would be made compulsory, adding that "what we're trying to do

is to say that when you are taking any decision, you need to assess the risk of that decision. When you want to do a road construction, there are a lot of things you need to look at - weather, soil texture, finance.

"You don't undertake a project and at the end of the day you don't have funding to finish it."

Oseni said part of the reasons for the visit was to invite the FIRS to become its Council member, "just like we have the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and other reputable institutions like the Federal Ministry of Education". [JE1]

He said imbibing risk practices would help the service in its mandate of tax administration, as well as impact positively on businesses and economy in general.

Oseni said, "So, with risk management, it would be easier for them to identify the loopholes and also be able to mitigate the risk that could emanate for those loopholes.

"Being a risk management practitioner, it's necessary for them to embrace risk management in respect of their profession. Even in tax collection, you need to be risk conscious."

He added that adherence to risk practices will improve revenue by plugging the loopholes that people could take undue advantage of, to either evade tax or avoid tax altogether.

Report: Nigeria's Glut of Unsold Oil Starts to Shrink as Prices Weaken

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Nigeria's crude oil for loading this month is finally showing signs of starting to clear out after a weak pull from Europe forced some sellers to lower prices, a Bloomberg report said yesterday.

About 10 cargoes of the country's crude for May loading were still available for purchase, according to the median estimate of three traders specialising in the trade.

While that's still around a fifth of

the West African producer's exports for this month, more deals were expected to be completed this week after offer prices eased, the people said.

West African barrels are typically put on the market about six weeks before their loading month, underlining the sluggish pace of sales for Nigeria's May supplies.

That's another sign of a wider bearish crude market in the Atlantic Basin, with a burst of US oil exports depressing prices of refinery feedstock from Europe and West Africa, even as

European refineries begin returning from routine seasonal maintenance.

Prices have also weakened for rival suppliers to Europe's plants, such as Azeri Light and West Texas Intermediate, the report added.

"We've got much weaker margins so crude demand is taking a hit," said James Davis, director of short-term oil market research at FGE.

Nigeria's lag was also driven by sellers seeking premiums over the Dated Brent benchmark that proved too high for refiners in Europe, according to Energy Aspects Ltd.

"May cargoes were at a premium that didn't work that well into Europe, but lower offers have seen volumes move," said Christopher Haines, EA global crude analyst. "Stronger forward diesel pricing is also helping," he added.

Some Nigerian grades were being priced more competitively, including Qua Iboe to Asia and Bonny Light to the Mediterranean or East, with the overhang slowly reducing, Sparta Commodities said in a note earlier this week.

Still, a further 30 shipments of Nigerian oil for loading next month remain on sale, and July's supplies are due to hit the market later this month, the traders said. Typically each of the cargoes holds about 1 million barrels of crude.

By contrast, Angola's sales to China have held up well, with less than 10 shipments for June loading looking for buyers out of 37 scheduled. Much of Angola's crude is of a medium-to-heavy sweet variety that can suit China's refiners better than Nigeria's lighter output.

Tinubu Seeks Senate Nod for SEC Nominees' Confirmation

Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu yesterday asked the Senate to screen for confirmation, four persons recently appointed as members of the Board of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The President's request was contained in a letter read by the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio at plenary.

The nominees were: Emomotimi Agama, Frana Chukwuogor, Bola Ajomale and Samiya Hassan-Usman.

Agama, was nominated as Director-General while Chukwuogor would serve as Executive Commissioner (Legal and Enforcement), SEC.

Ajomale, on the other hand, nominated as Executive Commissioner (Operations) while Hassan-Usman was appointed as Executive Commissioner (Corporate Services).

Tinubu, had on April this year, approved the appointment of seven persons as members of the SEC pending their confirmations by the Senate.

Only four names were however, transmitted to the Senate for confir-

mation and the President did not give reasons for not including names of the other three professionals.

In the letter, the President explained that the appointment was in compliance with the provisions of section 3 and 5 (1) of the Investment and Security Act of 2007.

Part of the letter titled, "Confirmation of appointment of the Director-General and Commissioners of the Securities and Exchange Commission," read: "In accordance with the provision of sections 3 and 5 (1) of the investment and security Act of 2007. I am pleased to present for confirmation by the Senate, the under-listed four nominees as Director-General and Commissioners of SEC."

The president urged the lawmakers to expedite the screening and confirmation process.

The Senate President thereafter referred the request to the Senate Committee on Capital Markets and directed the committee members to refer their resolution to the senate within two weeks.

The nominees would be screened by members of the Senate Committee on Capital Markets.

NSE Confers Fellowship on 64 Engineers, Urges Them to Adapt to Fresh Challenges

- *Threatens to withdraw awards from persons who breach engineering ethics*

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE) yesterday conferred its fellowship on 64 of its members, urging them to adapt to the ever changing engineering environment in the country.

Speaking at the Special Dinner for the new conferees in Abuja, National President of the group, Margaret Oguntala, said the unique occasion equally served as a platform to celebrate excellence, dedication, and the spirit of innovation.

She stated that Nigerian engineers had been at the forefront of driving progress and development across various sectors, whether in infrastructure, energy, healthcare, or

information technology.

She stated that they had continually risen to the occasion by overcoming challenges and pioneering solutions that make a tangible difference in the lives of the people.

Oguntala paid tribute to their unwavering commitment to excellence, their tireless pursuit of knowledge, and their dedication to the advancement of the profession, explaining that each conferee represented the epitome of engineering excellence and served as an inspiration to all.

"However, as we celebrate our achievements, we must also acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead. The world is evolving at an unprecedented pace, driven by technological advancements and

societal changes. As engineers, it is our responsibility to adapt to these changes, to embrace innovation, and to continue pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

"I would like to remind you all that we must remain steadfast in our commitment to promoting diversity and inclusivity within our profession. Engineering is a collaborative endeavour that thrives on the contributions of individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

"By fostering an environment that values and respects diversity, we not only enrich our profession but also ensure that our solutions are equitable and sustainable.

"Undoubtedly, the expectations

of NSE and the larger society from our conferees are high, with regards to the strict adherence to professional codes and ethics. The NSE therefore, reserves the right to revoke and withdraw the fellowship certificate of any member enmeshed in breaches brought to the notice of the society," Oguntala stressed.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the Board of Fellows/College of Fellows of the the NSE, Maliki Kamila, said a total of 64 engineers who had distinguished themselves in the practice and promotion of engineering were conferred with the Fellowship of the Nigerian Society of Engineers (FNSE), which is the highest level any practicing engineer in Nigeria can attain.

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NEWS

**MARWA VISITS TINUBU...**

Chairman/ Chief Executive Officer of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Retd) presenting a copy of the Agency's official magazine, NDLEA Today, to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR during his meeting with the President at the Presidential Villa in Abuja yesterday

Minimum Wage Talks Deadlocked as NLC, TUC Reject N48,000 Proposed By FG

Return to negotiation table, NECA urges labour

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja and Dike Onwuamaeze in Lagos

Negotiations for a new minimum wage appeared to have hit the rocks with organised labour yesterday, saying they were pulling out of the engagement with the federal government following the offer of N48,000 minimum wage proposed by the government.

However, reacting to the walk-out by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) during the meeting of the National Minimum Wage Committee, the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) urged the representatives of the organised labour to return to the negotiating table.

Earlier, addressing a press conference yesterday, President of the NLC, Joe Ajaero and the Deputy President of the TUC, Etim Okon, said Nigerian workers would not accept N48,000 as new minimum wage being proposed by the federal government.

Government's offer of N48,000 contrasted sharply to the N615,000 which organised labour had proposed as a living minimum wage for Nigerian workers.

Both labour leaders said the position of government does not reflect the economic reality and hardship the workers are currently facing in the country.

"The NLC and TUC express

profound disappointment as negotiations at the Tripartite National Minimum Wage resumed today but reached an unfortunate impasse as result of the apparent unseriousness of the government to engage in reasonable negotiation with Nigerian workers.

"Despite earnest efforts to reach an equitable agreement, the less than reasonable action of the government and the organised private sector (OPS) has led to a breakdown in negotiations.

"The government's proposal of a paltry N48,000 as the minimum wage does not only insult the sensibilities of Nigerian workers but also falls significantly short of meeting our needs and aspirations."

Ajaero, said in contrast, the OPS proposed an initial offer of N54,000.

He however, noted that even the least paid workers in the private sector receives N78,000 as stated by the OPS.

According to Ajaero, the proposal by the private sector team highlighted the stark disparity between the proposed minimum wage and prevailing standards, further demonstrating the unwillingness of Employers and Government to faithfully negotiate a fair National Minimum Wage for Workers in Nigeria

He stressed that NECA revealed that although no one in the sector receives less than N78,000, but proposing a new minimum wage

of N54,000 was apt considering prevailing factors.

NLC and TUC leadership further expressed disappointment over the government's failure to provide any substantiated data to support their offer exacerbates the situation.

When asked their next line of action, both labour centres said the May 31 deadline they had issued on the May Day celebration stands, adding that they would summon their organs to a decision at the expiration of the deadline.

The labour leaders said there was an absolute lack of transparency and good faith by the government side, adding that the action was capable

of undermining the credibility of the negotiation process and eroding trust between the parties involved.

"As representatives of Nigerian workers, we cannot in good conscience accept a wage proposal that would result in a reduction in income for federal-level workers who are already receiving N30,000 as mandated by law, augmented by Buhari's 40 per cent, Peculiar allowance (N12,000) and the N35,000 wage award, totaling N77,000 only.

Such a regressive step would undermine the economic well-being of workers and their families and is unacceptable in a National Minimum Wage Fixing process.

"In light of these developments, and in order to prevent the negotiation of a wage deduction, the NLC and TUC have taken the decision to walk out of the negotiation process.

"We remain committed to advocating for the rights and interests of Nigerian workers and will continue to engage in reasonable dialogue with the government if they show serious commitment to find a fair and sustainable resolution to this impasse.

"We call upon the government to reconsider its position and come to the negotiation table with clear hands that reflects the true value of the contributions made by Nigerian

workers to the nation's development and the objective socioeconomic realities that confronts not just Nigerian workers but Nigerians today as a result of the policies of the federal government.

"Together, in a reasonable dialogue, we can work to give Nigerian workers a N615,000 national minimum wage as proposed by us on the basis of evidence and data.

"This will be in keeping with the pledge of President Bola Tinubu's pledge to ensure a living wage for Nigerian workers," the labour centres said.

Continues online

Adelabu: Only 1.7% of Nigeria's 3.6GW Hydropower Dams Currently Utilised

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adelabu, yesterday disclosed that just 1.7 per cent or just 0.06 per cent of the current available 3.6GW of hydropower was deployed at the moment.

Speaking at the Africa High-level Roundtable on Sustainable Hydropower in the African Renewable Energy Mix of the 21st Century in Abuja, the minister stressed that while the country has a hydropower

potential estimated at 14GW, only about 15 per cent has been explored, signifying huge untapped potential in hydropower across Nigeria.

At the event organised by the African Development Bank (AfDB), Adelabu stated that Africa is a continent blessed with immense resources, among which are vast untapped water systems which hold the key to unlocking a clean, reliable, and abundant source of energy.

Quoting the International Energy Agency (IEA), Adelabu stated that

over 600 million Africans (or 43 per cent of the total population) currently lack access to electricity with Nigeria having the bulk of the population estimated to be over 85 million by the World Bank.

Stressing that this not only hinders economic growth but also impacts basic human capital development on the continent, he argued that Africa's hydropower potential is estimated to be around 340 GW, of which only 11 per cent (less than 40MW) is exploited.

According to him, this is when compared to 53 per cent in Europe, 39 per cent in North America, 26 per cent in South America and 20 per cent in Asia.

This gap, he said, presents a tremendous opportunity for responsible and sustainable hydropower development to improve energy access on the continent while increasing the renewable energy penetration in the energy mix.

"In Nigeria, hydropower has been a substantial contributor to the energy supply mix for some decades, accounting for about 20 per cent of total grid supply today. Currently Nigeria has completed key hydropower projects such as 760MW Kainji hydropower, 578MW Jebba hydropower, 600MW Shiroro hydropower, 40MW Mabon hydropower project and the recently commissioned 700MW Zungeru hydropower and 40MW Kashimbila hydropower.

"Nigeria is rich with an abundance of water resources along the different

basins of the country. Whilst the country has a hydropower potential estimated at 14GW, only about 15 per cent has been explored. This signifies huge untapped potential in hydropower across Nigeria.

"The country has over 340 dams spread across different geo-political zones, under the management of the three government tiers and many are not optimally utilised or at risk of damage.

"For the small hydropower, a multitude of river systems, providing about 70 micro dams, 126 mini dam and 86 small sites, supply a technically exploitable capacity of 3.5GW, but only 1.7 per cent (0.06GW) of these resources is currently being tapped," he added.

In line with the Nigeria Energy Transition Plan, the minister stated that the federal government aims and is committed to achieving sustainable energy access target for all by 2030 by ensuring 30GW of electricity is available by 2030; 30 per cent of which is generated from renewable energy sources.

He stated that this is important to ensure Nigeria achieves its updated Nationally Determined Contribution from 2021 to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by cutting emissions by 20 per cent in the year 2030 unconditionally (and 45 percent with international support) from business-as-usual levels.

Continues online

NECA, ILO, UNICEF, Others Task Graduate Job Seekers on Green Economy Skills

Dike Onwuamaeze

The Nigeria Employers Consultative Association (NECA), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the UNICEF has advised job seekers, especially young graduates, to acquire green economy skills that will enhance their employability in the emerging green and sustainable economy.

They gave this advice yesterday during the NECA's "Job and Employability Fair 2024" that was held at NECA's secretariat in Ikeja, Lagos State, with the theme "The Green Economy: The New Frontiers for Job Creation and Employability."

The Gender and Development

Manager, UNICEF, Ms. Takudzwa Kanyangarara, said that there is a big demand for green jobs globally whereas green skills are actually in short supply.

Kanyangarara said: "Demand is growing for those with green jobs' skills twice as workers with the skills and those with green kills are more likely to be hired.

"But 66 per cent of the green talent pools are made up of men, meaning that women are underrepresented.

"We are very much committed to working with the government and the private sector to really support young people on their pathway from learning to earning."

The President of NECA, Mr. Taiwo Adeniyi, said that this year's fair was organized to explore the boundless opportunities presented by the emerging green economy and its transformative potential in shaping the future of employment in Nigeria.

Adeniyi said: "The green economy has the power to not only create millions of new jobs but also to foster social inclusion, reduce inequality and promote environmental stewardship.

"It is a pathway toward a more resilient, equitable and prosperous future for all Nigerians."

He told members of NYSC and other job seekers that they have the opportunity to connect with wide

range of employers representing various industries and sectors.

"I encourage you take advantage of this unique platform to showcase your skills, experience and unique talents as you engage with job recruiters," he said.

The Director of the ILO Country Office for Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and ECOWAS Secretariat, Dr. Vanessa Phala, who was represented at the job fair by the National Project Coordinator, ILO, Mr. Stephen Agugua, said that the move toward green and sustainable economy is propelled by the negative effects of climate change, which is one of the biggest challenges humankind is facing today.

Senate Approves Tinubu's \$500 Million World Bank Loan for Electricity Meters

Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The Senate yesterday approved a \$500 million World Bank loan request by President Bola Tinubu to provide electricity meters for the citizens.

The fund was approved for the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) after considering the report of the Committee on local and foreign debts.

The report was presented by the

Vice Chairman of the Committee, Senator Haruna Manu.

The \$500 million loan was part of the \$7.94 billion World Bank loan which Tinubu sought the Senate's approval for on November 1, 2023.

It was under the 2022-2024 external borrowing plan. The president also sought the approval for €100 million then.

However, the Senate gave the approval to borrow \$7.4 billion approved during its special plenary

on December 30 after considering the report of the Committee on local and foreign debt.

Manu, while presenting the report, said the \$500m for the BPE could not be approved because the agency did not appear before the committee to defend the proposal.

He noted that the terms and conditions under which the loan was brought will not in any manner compromise the sustainability of Nigeria's economic growth or hinder

the integrity and independence of Nigeria as a sovereign nation.

He said: "The Committee recommends that the Senate do approve the ongoing negotiations of the external borrowing in the sum of \$500m for BPE; that the terms of the loan from the funding agency be forwarded to the National Assembly before execution."

The Senate had earlier put on hold the approval of the N\$500 million because the BPE was

unavailable to defend it when it was scheduled to appear before its committees.

However, following the defence of the borrowing, the Senate gave its approval for the loan in unanimous decision presided over by its Deputy President, Senator Barau Jibrin.

"The programme development objective of this project is to improve financial and technical performance of electricity distribution companies," the Senate report said.



President Bola Tinubu

After considering the report, Jibrin, who presided over the meeting, ruled in favour of the loan request approval after a voice vote.

TINUBU INAUGURATES 3 GAS PROJECTS, PLEDGES TO WEAN NIGERIA FROM OVERDEPENDENCE ON PETROL, DIESEL

years, these three projects. Upon later review, they didn't make further promises. What they said, was they will surprise Nigeria.

"Today is a great day for your achievement, demonstrating teamwork, commitment, and dedication. These projects demonstrate the commitment of the administration to develop gas infrastructure to boost the industrial base and create employment opportunities for our people.

"It's also in line with the decade of gas initiative while eliminating gas flaring and celebrating industrialisation," he stated, adding that it represented over 25 per cent incremental growth in the gas sector.

According to the president, from the outset of the current administration, it had been very clear in its intention to leverage "on virtually Nigeria's unlimited capacity of gas to drive economic growth.

"Beyond the Presidential CNG initiative, which is aimed at moving the good people of Nigeria away from petrol and diesel, as well as commercial fuel products that are also being made, we are incentivising gas development through presidential executive orders.

"I wish to assure the Nigerian people that this project represents only the beginning. The federal government is stepping up its co-ordination of other landmark projects and initiatives that will ensure the earliest possible realisation of gas to prosperity in our country.

"Equally, I wish to assure investors in energy space that this is an investment enabling government, and we will not relent in our effort to facilitate the ease of doing business in Nigeria.

"We will continue to review ourselves and listen to our partners. It is my sincere hope that the theme of this commissioning: "From Gas to Prosperity and Renewed Hope", shall be adopted by all gas sector participants, and would-be investors

to ramp up efforts to accelerate investment and development of projects in the gas sector on a win-win basis," he stressed.

He reiterated the federal government's resolve to continue to provide support to domestic gas utilisation, increase national power generation capacity, revitalise industries as well as create new and exciting new opportunities for economic growth.

Tinubu added: "It is pleasing that approximately, 500MMscf of gas in aggregate would be supplied to the domestic market from these two gas processing plants, which represents over 25 per cent incremental growth in gas supply. In practical terms, this translates into more gas to the power sector, gas-based industries, and other critical segments of the economy."

He charged the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) to sustain its relentless efforts and record more successes in the energy sector for the benefit of all Nigerians.

Also speaking, the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas) Rt. Hon. Ekperikpe Ekpo highlighted the efforts of his ministry to continue to champion the utilisation of gas as a transition fuel as Nigeria moves towards achieving clean energy efficiency and security by 2060.

He said: "Mr. President, the decision to eliminate fuel subsidies at the start of your administration has compelled increased spending in upstream and midstream gas development, and the use of gas as an appropriate, more cost-effective, and cleaner alternative to diesel and gasoline.

"Furthermore, in keeping with the Paris Climate Change agreement, this measure solidifies the use of gas as our transition fuel as we move the Nation towards achieving green energy sufficiency by 2060."

Describing the projects as important facets of the Decade of Gas initiative, Ekperikpe noted that the federal government's intervention

policy in the gas sector had seen domestic production increase by 800MMscf/day.

On the AHL Gas Processing Plant 2 (GPP-2), the minister said it was a Joint Venture (JV) between NNPC Limited and Sterling Exploration and Production Company Ltd. (SEPECO), for the development of the AHL Gas Processing Plant, which will process 200MMscf/d of natural gas.

"In addition to producing over 160,000 metric tonnes of propane and 100,000 metric tonnes of butane annually, this plant promotes rapid industrialisation and reduces reliance on Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) import," he said.

In his remarks, the Group Chief Executive Officer, NNPC, Mr. Mele Kyari described the commissioning as a demonstration of the president's

commitment and support to grow the domestic utilisation of natural gas for power generation, as feedstock for gas-based industries and overall rapid industrialisation of Nigeria on the back of the enormous gas resources in the country.

Kyari assured that as part of its mandate, NNPC remains committed to maintaining energy security by executing more strategic gas projects for the benefit of Nigeria.

"This is to enhance economic growth, elevating prosperity and national rebirth, anchored in delivery, challenging me and my colleagues in NNPC and partners to deliver beyond the ordinary. The amount of work that is done in the last 11 months is beyond precedence. And we thank you (president) for that pressure and that support that you gave us.

"I want to emphasise that the progressive policy direction of this administration to reposition the Nigerian economy and transform the nation from gas to petroleum is making its point and making its mark.

"This is in line with Nigeria's Decade of Gas Agenda and particularly consistent with the administration's efforts to boost gas supply to the domestic market.

"We are pleased to inform you that the three projects will enable additional gas processing capacity and also increase supply of petroleum gas, thereby reducing dependency on importation and also on petrol.

"Also, we are in line with the government's plans to derive value from nation's gas assets while eliminating gas flaring and moving towards environmentally friendly and

cleaner energy sources," he stated.

He added that the NNPC was executing a compressed natural gas project aimed at providing a cleaner fuel to power vehicles as a cheap alternative to petrol.

"We are also pleased to mention that in line with the just announced directive on the purchase of CNG powered vehicles by institutions of government, and in accordance with the overall objective of broadening CNG as an alternative fuel, NNPC deployed CNG delivery installation in all our installations across the country," he said.

Chairman of Seplat, Senator Udo Udoma, in his comments, stated that Nigeria has over 200 million trillion cubic feet of gas, but yet its economy and fast-growing population are hampered by poor and expensive access to energy.

Abe: I Have Fought This Long Because Amaechi Said We'd Go Hungry in 6 Months If We Left Him

● Alleges ex-minister gave him condition to drop guber ambition ● Says why he can't be uncharitable to Fubara ● Five Wike's loyal commissioners resign from Rivers govt

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

Governorship candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the 2023 general election in Rivers State, Senator Magnus Abe, yesterday, said the reason he had fought this long was because his former ally and Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi boasted that he and his supporters would go hungry in six months if he did not drop his governorship bid.

He however, said being with the Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, was not enough to be uncharitable to Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State.

Recalling his experience with Amaechi, Abe explained that the former Minister of Transportation, Chibuike Amaechi, challenged him and his supporters that they would go hungry in six months and return to beg him, unless he dropped his governorship ambition.

He alleged that former governor Amaechi came to his house and warned him never to contest for the governorship position else, he would

scatter the party.

Amaechi announced that the rebellion will not last for six months and that after six months all of us will go hungry and return to him.

"This is six years and more, look at us, we have shaken the country, we have deflated them, they have ran away and left the party and that is why we must go back to the party and we must go back now," he said.

Abe, who at a meeting with his supporters and party faithful at his Freedom House office, in Port Harcourt, therefore, begged his supporters to join the APC in the state, to support the government of President Tinubu, and the FCT Minister, whom he said was working with the APC government.

Reacting to the ongoing crisis in the state, the former SDP governorship candidate, who has just returned to APC, said he had respect for the governor, stressing that his concern was for the 27 lawmakers who had become members of his party.

Abe argued that the embattled assembly members could not vacate their seats because they defected from

the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the APC, explaining that he and many others took same step as federal lawmakers and didn't vacate their seats until they left office.

"I have nothing but the greatest respect for the governor of Rivers state. He is the governor and we are not members of their party and we are not therefore part of their problem.

"We are members of the APC, the 27 House of Assembly members are members of the APC and so they are our own. We must defend them, we cannot say because they decamped from PDP, they are different APC from our own, that is not how party politics works.

"I decamped to APC from PDP on national television, 11 of us and we didn't lose our seat. So, we cannot come here today and begin to support people that they should lose their seats because they decamped to our party, we will not do that.

"I have called for peace, negotiation and working together. And as a statesman in Rivers state, I will continue to call for that. I am not going to be

uncharitable towards the governor because I am working with the FCT Minister. But I will defend our party and whatever position the party takes I will defend that position," he added.

He described Wike as a formidable force, saying without him President Bola Ahmed Tinubu wouldn't have won election in the state.

Meanwhile, five commissioners loyal to Wike have resigned from Fubara's cabinet.

They are Jacobson Nbina, (Transport), Inime Aguma (Social Welfare and Rehabilitation), Gift Worlu (Housing), Prof Chinedu Mmom (Education) and Austen Ben-Chioma (Environment).

In a resignation letter addressed to Fubara and copied to the Secretary to the State Government, Dr Tammy Danagogo, dated May 15, 2024, Prof Mmom, said he could not continue to work in a toxic environment.

Aguma said her resignation was in pursuant to the current inconducive working environment.

Ben-Chioma equally said the reason for his resignation was as a result of the ongoing political crisis in the state.

ATIKU: FG'S PLAN TO USE N20 TRILLION PENSION FUND FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS MISGUIDED

progress and addressing critical infrastructure needs.

But Atiku however warned that the decision could have devastating effects on the lives of Nigerians, who had worked hard, saved money, and now relied on their pensions after retiring from service.

"My attention is drawn to a disturbing disclosure by the Finance Minister and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, as he addressed state house correspondents after the federal executive council (FEC) meeting at the presidential villa on Tuesday, 14 May.

"There is, according to the minister, a move by the federal government to rev up economic growth by unlocking N20 trillion from the nation's pension funds and other funds to finance critical infrastructure projects across the country.

"The minister has indicated that although 'the initiative is expected to attract foreign investment interest over time', domestic savings are his 'immediate focus' for now.

"He provided no useful details, such as the percentage of the funds to be mopped up from the pension funds, for example. Even at that, this move must be halted immediately!

"It is a misguided initiative that could lead to disastrous consequences on the lives of Nigeria's hardworking men and women, who toiled and

saved and who now survive on their pensions having retired from service. It is another attempt to perpetrate illegality by the federal government," he said.

Atiku explained that the government must be cautioned to act strictly within the provisions of the Pension Reform Act of 2014 (PRA 2014), along with the revised Regulation on Investment of Pension Funds Assets issued by the National Pension Commission (PenCom).

"In particular, the federal government must not act contrary to the provisions of the extant regulation on investment limits to which Pension Funds can invest no more than 5% of total pension funds' assets in infrastructure investments.

"I note that as of December 2023, total pension funds assets were approximately N18 trillion, of which 75% of these are investments in FGN Securities.

"There is no free Pension Funds that is more than 5% of the total value of the nation's pension fund for Mr. Edun to fiddle with."

He said there were no easy ways to address the challenges of funding infrastructure development in Nigeria, but added that Edun needed to implement the necessary reforms to regain investor confidence in the Nigerian economy and leverage private resources, skills, and technology.

CBN MOVES TO DOUBLE FOREIGN CURRENCY REMITTANCES, GRANTS AIP TO 14 NEW IMTOS

Foreign Exchange (NAFEM) window, the naira closed at N1,459.02/\$1, which was a N61.38 gain compared to the N1,520.40/\$1 which it closed on Tuesday.

By the end of trading yesterday, the parallel market rate closed at N1,540/\$1, which was a loss of N5 compared to N1,535/\$1, which it exchanged on Tuesday.

The daily turnover recorded an increase in transactions of 124 per cent, to \$289.14 million yesterday, compared to the \$128.76 million recorded on Monday.

The highest spot rate observed yesterday stood at N1,593, with the lowest spot rate recorded at N1,401.

CBN's acting Director, Corporate Communications, Mrs. Hakama Sidi Ali, disclosed the granting of the AIP to 14 IMTOs in a statement.

She said formal remittance flows—a major source of FX inflows—accounted for over six per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and remained key to reducing the historical volatility in the country's

exchange regime largely induced by external factors such as fluctuations in foreign investment and oil export proceeds.

Sidi-Ali stressed that the entrance of more IMTOs would spur liquidity at the Nigerian Autonomous Foreign Exchange Market (NAFEX), and augment price discovery to enable a market-driven, fair value for the Naira.

CBN Governor, Mr. Olayemi Cardoso, recently declared, "We've set ourselves a target to double remittance flows into Nigeria within a year, a goal I firmly believe is within reach.

"We are wasting no time driving progress to remove any bottlenecks hindering flows through formal channels permanently. We have a determined pathway and a sequenced approach to tackling all challenges ahead, working hand in hand with key stakeholders in the remittance industry."

However, the acting CBN director pointed out that the increase in the number of IMTOs remained one

of the primary actions initiated by the apex bank remittance task force currently overseen by Cardoso.

The unit remains a collaborative unit pulling together specialists to work closely with the private sector and market operators to facilitate the ease of doing business in the remittance ecosystem in the country.

She said the task force was established as a direct result of an executive learning session with IMTOs during the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings held in Washington DC in April.

She added, "This will spur liquidity in NAFEX, augmenting price discovery to enable a market-driven fair value for the naira.

"The CBN viewed increasing formal remittance flows—one of the major sources of foreign exchange, accounting for over six per cent of GDP—as a means of reducing the historical volatility in Nigeria's exchange rate caused by external factors, such as fluctuations in foreign investment and oil export proceeds."

In August 2023, the central bank unveiled draft operational rules and regulations for in-country clearing and settlement of foreign currency (FCY) fund transfers among Nigerian banks.

The move aimed to enable faster, cheaper, and more transparent FCY transfers and to create an efficient and safe operation of FCY transfers amongst Nigerian banks, and improve the efficiency of the in-country FCY transfers, leading to greater confidence in the payment system.

The central bank said the settlement of clearing balances shall be accorded the highest priority for settlement under the new regime.

The CBN said the regulation provides measures that would address some of the challenges facing the current system for switching FCY transfers among Nigerian banks including high cost associated with correspondent banking services, delay and inefficiencies with processing foreign remittances for third party including IMTOs.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Procurement of Commodities for The Challenge Initiative Nigeria

The Johns Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programs (JHUCCP), Baltimore, USA, the implementer of The Challenge Initiative NextGen Project (TCI) Nigeria Hub under the auspices of the Johns Hopkins Public Health in Nigeria Initiative (JHPHINI) based in Abuja has received funding to implement Family Planning/Reproductive Health interventions in Nigeria from 2021 to 2025. This project works with the Federal and State Ministries of Health in 22 states and spans each of the major geographical zones in the country.

The Challenge Initiative supports the Government of Nigeria in strengthening its family planning (FP) program. This includes ensuring consistent availability of a wide range of FP commodities (method mix) to meet the population's diverse needs.

Purpose & Specifications

This Request for Proposals (RFP) aims to secure a qualified supplier to procure and deliver a comprehensive range of high-quality family planning (FP) commodities to Lagos State, Nigeria. This initiative will support the Project's efforts to strengthen the Lagos State family planning program by ensuring access to a diverse method mix of commodities for the population as a stop-gap measure.

The awarded supplier must provide a complete selection of FP commodities as outlined in the attached Annex A. This list aligns with the Lagos State FP guidelines to guarantee a method mix catering to various needs and preferences.

All supplied FP commodities must be:

- Registered with Nigeria's regulatory body (NAFDAC)
- Of the highest quality and meets international manufacturing standards
- Within valid expiry dates and accompanied by proper batch number documentation.

The supplier:

- Must ensure timely and efficient delivery of the commodities to Lagos State according to a pre-agreed schedule.
- Provide a detailed logistics plan outlining the transportation process, which must be included in the proposal.
- Demonstrate the capacity to maintain proper storage facilities that comply with all relevant Nigerian regulations for FP commodities.
- Is responsible for providing clear and comprehensive documentation for all deliveries, including:
 - o An itemized list of delivered commodities.
 - o Corresponding expiry dates and batch numbers
 - o Delivery receipts
- The ability to provide post-procurement FP training support to the State is a plus.

A complete proposal must:

- Detail quality assurance procedures for handling commodities to ensure their efficacy and prevent damage.
- Demonstrate experience providing similar procurement and delivery of commodities for organizations in Nigeria: three references, including the company name, address, contact, email, and phone number.

Eligibility of Bidders

All bidders must show their eligibility to participate in this procurement by providing copies of the following documents.

- Legal Certificate of Incorporation in Nigeria, Tax Identification Certification, Company Profile with verifiable business address, valid email with telephone numbers, and point of contact for the organization.

Criteria for Selection

1. Capability: evaluation of the vendor's technical proposal showing the vendor's ability to supply and deliver the commodities.
2. Demonstrated experience providing similar services to reputable organizations in Nigeria. Consideration will be given to experience with international organizations in the development sector.
3. Evaluation of financial proposal

Cost Evaluation Criteria

The cost will be evaluated for realism, reasonableness, allowability, allocability, and cost-effectiveness. Bids that have reasonable expenses will be more favourably considered. The completeness of the bids will also be considered.

Submission Process

- Issuance Date: May 16, 2024.
- Closing Date and Time for Bids Submission: **Wednesday, May 22, 2024, 4 00 pm West African Central Time**

The Proposal should be addressed to:

Project Director, TCI Nigeria
RE: Procurement of Commodities for TCI Nigeria
Abuja, Nigeria.

Contact: Send proposals to: ngtci-procurement@jh.edu

Required Application Format: To facilitate the competitive review of the proposals, all documents should be sent as a single PDF file. Submissions must not exceed 20 pages long and should capture all requirements. Any bids received without following the submission instructions will be disqualified. Only shortlisted vendors will be contacted for further discussions.

Payment Terms

Please state your payment terms while quoting. However, TCI's preferred term is full payment after receipt of goods/services, when all invoices have been received and goods/services are satisfactorily certified.

TCI is VAT-exempt, so please do not include VAT when quoting. **Also, note that TCI will deduct withholding tax at the applicable rate to be remitted to FIRS.**

Note

TCI reserves the right to consider any quotations received before the end of the deadline. Any deviation from the specifications contained in the RFQ will lead to the vendor's **DISQUALIFICATION**.

An award will be given to the responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) best meets the requirements of this RFP and the selection criteria contained herein. Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment by JHUCCP or its funding agency. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for further discussions.

Applications are submitted at the applicant's risk, and all preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense. Applicants must provide all required information in their application or may be deemed non-responsive.

JHU reserves the right (but is not under obligation) to enter discussions with one or more applicants to obtain clarifications, additional details, or refinements in the application. Oral discussions may be conducted.

JHU reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted and to award either the entire scope of work to one applicant or partial scope of work to more than one applicant by, for example, focal state or other relevant criteria.

LAGOS STATE FP COMMODITY REQUIREMENT JUNE-DEC 2024

S/N	FP Commodities	UOM	Quantity Required May-Nov 2024
1	Condom Female	pcs	71,629
2	Depo-Provera 150mg Inj + syringe	amp	196,482
3	Microgynon	cycles	32,267
4	Noristerat 200mg inj + syringe	amp	1,512
5	Implanon NXT	pkt	140,742
6	Jadelle	pkt	54,160
7	CycleBeads	pcs	438
8	Sayana Press	amp	664,090
9	Levonplant Implant	pkt	2,344
10	H-IUD	pcs	920
11	N&Syringes	pcs	265,047



Congratulations

Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, President, France Nigeria Business Council

I want to congratulate Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, Chairman of the Board of Access Holdings, on his recent appointment as President of the France-Nigeria Business Council by President Emmanuel Macron of France in Paris. It is a significant moment as he assumes the role previously held by the late Herbert Wigwe, whom we fondly remember for his dedicated service until his passing in February.

Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede's extensive experience in the Nigerian banking industry and the African financial landscape makes him well-suited for this vital role. As the pioneer President of the Council, I had the privilege of setting the groundwork for the expansion of strong business ties between Nigeria and France in collaboration with the Secretariat led by Jean Haas, fostering valuable business partnerships between both countries.

The council has full confidence in Aigboje's ability to continue the mission of the France Nigeria Business Council and will continue to support the attainment of the council's goals.

Abdul Samad Rabiou, CFR, CON
Chairman, BUA Group



Exit of an Icon

SIR.
AMBASSADOR
Uche Onyekwe
OKEKE OFR
1944 - 2024

DIRECTOR GENERAL, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
1999 - 2007

FIRST CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE OF INTELLIGENCE
AND SECURITY SERVICES OF AFRICA. (CISSA) 2004 - 2005



FUNERAL ARRANGEMENT

Service of Songs

Date: 16th May 2024

Time: 4:00pm (16:00hrs)

Venue: All Saints Anglican Church, Wuse Zone 5,
Abuja

Night of Tributes

Date: 17th May, 2024

Time: 6:00pm (18:00hrs)

Venue: Abuja

Funeral Service

Date: 23rd May, 2024

Time: 10:30pm (10:30hrs)

Venue: St. Peters Anglican Church, Abagana,
Anambra State.

From: Family, Colleagues and Friends




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NEWS



COURTESY VISIT TO THE SGF...

L-R: Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Tunji Alausa; Secretary to the Government of the Federation, George Akume and Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Mariano Grossi, during their meeting at the SGF office in Abuja...yesterday

PHOTO: GODWIN OMOIGUI

Obaseki Moves to Broker Peace Between Palace, Enigie

● To meet Oba of Benin, Iyase, others ● Warns desperate politicians not to frustrate peace talks

Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has initiated a peace-building process to resolve the issue between His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolopkolo, Oba Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin,

and some suspended Enigie. According to a statement, speaking after a meeting with some Enigie in Edo South Senatorial District, held at the residence of Prof. Gregory Akenzua in Benin

City, Obaseki said the meeting was aimed at understanding the issues at stake with a view to brokering peace and ensuring reconciliation of the aggrieved parties. He noted that the move was

intended to facilitate the withdrawal of the existing court case so as to promote peace in Edo South.

The governor condemned the action of politicians who were attempting to hijack and distort

the matter at stake, urging them to be careful as the Benin Royalty is a unique inheritance which Edo people must preserve.

He said, "You will recall that a few days ago, there was an incident in Court in Benin City, where there was almost a breakdown of law and order because some people tried to stop a court hearing relating to a case between some Enigie in Benin Kingdom and the palace."

"Government issued a statement that we are going to look into the matter and seek for amicable reconciliation over the issues in court. I came back from a trip about two days ago and decided to commence that process by meeting with the aggrieved Enigie who went to Court. The intention is to see what the issues are and amicably ensure that they are resolved."

Obaseki continued: "Every Enigie in Edo South has a blood relationship with the Palace; they are an extension of the Benin Royal family. We are here to meet a cross-section of them to understand what the issues are. We want to know what it takes to broker peace and reconcile them with the hope that the case is withdrawn from the Court."

"They have assured me that they are anxious to promote peace and acknowledge the Oba of Benin as their Royal father but have concerns that bother them and would like them to be resolved. The process has started. We will also visit the Iyase of Benin Kingdom and after that, we will visit our Royal father and see how these issues will be resolved."

Noting that the sacred heritage of the Benin Royalty must be preserved, he said, "We all should be careful as our Royalty is a unique inheritance. We must try to preserve it and never allow the corrosive

influence of politicians to afflict our heritage.

"You can see from the display in Benin City last week that politicians are attempting to hijack and distort the issue at stake."

"There are real and fundamental issues which will be resolved by all means. But we use this medium to appeal to politicians from different sides of the divide to desist from playing politics with the royal family and the Palace."

The Enigie of Evbo-Obanosa, Akenzua, commended Obaseki for attempting to wade into the matter and broker peace.

He exonerated the governor of the allegations that he had asked the Enigie to take the Oba of Benin to Court, noting that, "We have not only taken His Majesty to Court but also taken Edo State Government to Court as well."

"I have listened to the governor who is making appeals to us to resolve the issues we have amicably. We welcome the idea but the fact must be stated that contrary to what I am reading in the press that the governor is the one who asked us to go to Court, the truth is that we have issues with His Majesty who is the head of the traditional institutions."

"Those issues have to be resolved if that settlement has to be made and we welcome any intervention from any source."

"As a point of correction, we have not only taken His Majesty to Court but also taken the Edo State Government to Court as well. The issue of people saying that it is the governor that is using us to fight the traditional institution is completely incorrect."

"We will address a full press conference on the issues; we have many issues to be resolved before we agree to settle out of court."

Tinubu Directs Media Organisations to Enjoy Financing at Single-digit Interest Rates

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has directed the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, through the Bank of Industry (BOI), to extend its single-digit interest rate financing to media organisations in the country. Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, disclosed this yesterday in Abuja when he received members of the Independent Broadcasting Association of Nigeria (IBAN) on a courtesy visit to his office.

Idris said the gesture was in keeping with the administration's resolve to create an enabling business environment for the media to operate in Nigeria.

He stated, "Let me say that the

Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation under my leadership, as part of our five pillars, will support all media platforms in this country, whether they are public or private.

"I can tell you that the president has directed the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment to extend financing to media organisations at single-digit interest rates. I think you need to take advantage of that."

Idris urged IBAN members to develop bankable proposals to access the financing facility being offered by the federal government.

He decried willful violation of advertising industry payment standards and habit by some practitioners who failed to remit

advertising payments to media organisations within the approved 90 days.

The minister threatened that going forward, the Advertising Regulatory Commission of Nigeria (ARCON) would be mandated to ensure that all advertising revenues due to media organisations were released to them promptly.

The minister advised the private broadcasters to key into the Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) initiative of the federal government to bring down the cost of their operations through cheaper access to energy.

Idris said with the commissioning of three gas projects by the president and other initiatives of his administration, Nigeria aimed to attain sufficiency in gas processing

for local consumption and export.

In response to a request from IBAN regarding the resumption of Digital Switch Over (DSO) rollout, Idris, who expressed deep concerns over the historically slow progress of the DSO initiative, stressed the need for a renewed and vigorous approach to ensure timely completion.

He said the president had instructed the ministry to expedite the DSO project by adopting successful models from other countries that had effectively transitioned from analog to digital broadcasting.

Earlier, in his remarks, Chairman of IBAN, Alhaji Ahmed Ramalan, complained about multifaceted challenges confronting the broadcasting industry in Nigeria, and called for urgent steps to revitalise the sector to stimulate innovation and empower indigenous media owners.

Ramalan said, "The Nigerian broadcast industry, a cornerstone of the nation's information and entertainment landscape, faces significant challenges hindering its ability to reach its full potential. There is the urgent need to take the initiative with a design to revitalise the industry, stimulate innovation, unlock the potential media economy and empower indigenous media entities."

FG to Include Digital Literacy in Education Curriculum

Oghenevwe Ohwovoriele in Abuja

In Nigeria's quest to achieve 70 per cent digital literacy by 2027 and 95 per cent by 2030, the federal government is planning to include digital literacy in the nation's education curriculum.

The Director General, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Kashifu Abdullahi dropped the hint at a media briefing on Wednesday, in Abuja.

Kashifu, while highlighting NITDA's Strategic Roadmap and Action Plan (2024-2027) said that one of the initiatives of the agency was for the Federal Ministry of Education to include digital literacy in the nation's education curriculum.

He said: "We are working with the Ministry of Education to review the curriculum across the formal education, from nursery to university so that we can infuse digital literacy in our formal education and by doing that, we can empower Nigerians to have digital skills before graduating."

"We are also conceptualising other initiatives like Digital Literacy for All Initiative which will enlighten Nigerians outside formal education,

and enable them have access to quality digital content, so that they have the knowledge to navigate around digital technology and digital economy."

He also noted that women, children and people with special needs will not be left out in the digital literacy drive, adding: "We have other initiatives targeting women, children and people with special needs, so we can carry everyone to achieve that 95 per cent digital literacy."

According to him, Nigeria will train over two million youths in twelve most highly sought after technical skills so that Nigeria can become a major outsourcing country to the world.

"Apart from digital literacy, we are going beyond that to digital sovereignty, so that we can develop all our digital innovation in-country."

"Therefore, we conducted skills gap assessment to identify skills in high demand locally and globally, and based on that, we have identified 12 tech skills in high demand and we used that to design three million tech talent initiative which is to train three million Nigerians on those 12 identified tech talents in high demand."

"The idea is that when we train

them, some will be able to serve local market and some leave Nigeria to get jobs elsewhere for brain export, not brain drain," he said.

He also noted that just like India currently dominates the tech world, Nigeria can also do the same.

"India started brain export about 20 years ago and today, almost 25 per cent of sea level executives in big techs are Indians and they have dominated the global technology ecosystem."

"So, in Nigeria, we believe we can do the same and we have even more competitive advantage than India, we have a younger population, a fast-growing population, better accent than India, better time zone, so if we position ourselves, we can beat India in technology," he added.

To validate this, he disclosed that PriceWaterHouse Coopers (PWC) also carried out a research called, "Nigerian Brain Export: The Optimum Path to Developing Nigerian Economy."

"So, it is not brain drain, if you train people and they leave the country, they will go and get more network, experience and come back or connect back and transfer knowledge that can help the local ecosystem to grow."

Oil Magnate, Sholaye Jeremi, Loses Mother

Businessman, Sholaye Jeremi has lost his mother, Madam Lilian Jeremi at the age of 74

Mrs Jeremi died on Tuesday after a brief illness.

A statement by the Media Consultant to the Oil Magnate, Obafemi Ajayi, confirmed the death of Mr Jeremi's mother.

The statement reads, "The Jeremi family of Delta State, has announced the passing on of their Matriarch, Mrs Lilian Jeremi, who slept in the Lord on Tuesday, May 14th, 2024 at the age of 74 after a brief illness."

"While we mourn her passing, we are grateful for the life she lived and the legacy of hard work, courage, faith, discipline, along with her commitment to God, to Church, to family and community"

"Mrs Lilian Jeremi, a devout Christian, is survived by her children, grandchildren and other family member. Please do keep us in your prayers, and we ask God to grant her eternal rest"

The statement by Jeremi said further announcements will be made by the family in due course.



Late Mrs. Jeremi



CHEVRON NIGERIA LIMITED

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TENDER OPPORTUNITY

PROVISION OF UNMANNED AERIAL SURVEILLANCE (UAS) TECHNOLOGY FOR PIPELINE RIGHT OF WAY (ROW) SURVEILLANCE

NipeX Tender: CNL.0000285

1. INTRODUCTION:

Chevron Nigeria Limited invites interested and prequalified companies for this tender opportunity for the provision of Unmanned Aerial Surveillance ("UAS") technology for pipeline Right of Way ("ROW") surveillance. The service will be carried out across all Chevron Nigeria Limited Onshore and Offshore locations.

The Primary duration for this contract is Three Years firm plus One Year option to renew.

2. SCOPE OF WORK:

The successful contractors will provide Unmanned Aerial Surveillance ("UAS") technology for pipeline Right of Way ("ROW") surveillance for CNL. The scope of work for the services shall primarily include but is not limited to the following:

- Conduct aerial surveillance using Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) at Escravos (Onshore and offshore) areas to enhance surveillance and detection of security breaches on CNL pipelines, assets and right of ways.
- Deliver beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) flight operation, including both day and night flight operations and provide real time video and still images to a central location other than the ground control station.
- The UAS shall be capable of operating up to six hours per sortie, at a range of up to 80 kilometers from the ground control station, while maintaining continuous control and communication links with the ground control station. UAS employed shall be capable of operating in light to medium rain conditions for extended periods of time.
- The UAS shall be powered by a fuel burning engine capable of operating from sea level to 10,000 feet altitude.
- Preferred launch and recovery configuration shall be vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) but other modes will be considered based on total UAS capability and maximum takeoff weight (MTOW).
- The UAS should be fitted with sensors capable of providing high-quality thermal images at night and high-definition electro-optical day and night still images and videos. Images must be capable of being relayed to a ground station, in real time, over the entire patrol area.
- The UAS should be mandatorily fitted with a Mode S (In/Out) Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) for airborne identification and collision avoidance.
- The system shall be capable of data analytics and image analysis to identify points of interest within the patrol area by recognizing medium to significant changes to vegetation patterns or other physical attributes of the areas of patrol. Also expected is for the system to be capable of performing image analytics using artificial intelligence (AI).

Deliverables:

The UAS shall have the following deliverables as system outputs, each aimed to serve a specific application:

1. Thermal Imagery/Electro Optical imaging (still and video footages) of onshore Right of Way (ROW) and areas up to 500 meters on both sides of the pipeline (ROW).
2. Thermal Imagery/Electro Optical imaging (still and video footages) of the offshore fields and assets.
3. Perform weekly dedicated overfly of onshore areas and assets for monitoring purposes.
4. Relay encrypted real time video and image feed from payload up to 80 km to the ground control station and the secondary monitoring stations. Videos and images shall be in readable format.
5. Perform analytics of the videos and images captured during flights using artificial intelligence (AI).
6. Maintain large storage capacity for video and still image footages.
7. A separate sensor capable of sensing ground disturbances up to 10 feet below the ground surface is desirable.
8. Mode S In/Out ADS-B for collision avoidance.
9. Perform moderate weather flight operations within the airplane safety margin.
10. Provide a stand-alone weather station (Vantage Pro2 Plus or higher grade) to support UAV flight operations.
11. Provide handheld Very High Frequency ("VHF") radios for air traffic monitoring and coordination.

These services must be provided in strict accordance with Company's established Standard Operating Procedures with a strong emphasis on safety and protection of people and the environment.

3. MANDATORY TENDER REQUIREMENTS:

- A. To be eligible for this tender exercise, interested bidders are required to be **prequalified and "live"** in the **3.18.05 (Security Services) or 1.16.01 (Security Equipment and Accessories)** categories of the NipeX Joint Qualification System (NJQS) database. All successfully **pre-qualified and "live"** bidders in these categories by the bid close date will receive invitation to submit Technical and Commercial Tender (ITT).

- B. To confirm if you are pre-qualified and view the product/service category you are listed for: Open www.vendors.nipex-ng.com and **access NJQS with your log in details. Click on Products/Services tab to view your status and product codes.**

- C. If you are not listed in the product service category and you are registered with NUPRC to do business in this category, please contact NipeX office at 27b Oyinkan Abayomi Drive, Ikoyi Lagos with your NUPRC certificate (formerly called DPR Certificate) as evidence for verification and necessary update.

- D. To initiate and complete the JQS prequalification process, access www.nipex-ng.com click on services tab followed by NJQS registration.

- E. To be eligible, all tenders must comply with Nigerian Content requirements in the NipeX system.

4. NIGERIAN CONTENT REQUIREMENTS:

Chevron Nigeria Limited is committed to the development of the Nigerian Oil and Gas business in observance with the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act 2010 (NOGICD Act) enacted by the Federal Government of Nigeria in April 2010.

Pursuant to enactment of the NOGICD Act, the minimum Nigerian Content in any project, service or product specification to be executed in the Nigerian Oil and Gas industry shall be consistent with the level set in the schedule of the Act and any other target as may be directed by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

Contractors shall comply with the provisions of the NOGICD Act and all applicable regulations. Bidders that do not meet the Nigerian Content criterion will not be allowed to participate in next Tender Stage.

The following are the Nigerian Content requirements bidders are expected to comply with in their technical bid submission.

1. Tenderer shall demonstrate evidence of being a Nigerian indigenous company having greater than 51% Nigerian shareholding. Provide evidence of company Ownership Structure forms CO2 and CO7, registration on NOGIC JQS and NUPRC certificate.
2. Provide evidence of what percentage of your key management positions is held by Nigerians and what percentage of the total workforce are Nigerians.
3. Detailed description of the location of in-country committed facilities & infrastructure (Administrative/Technical offices, Laboratory, Workshop) in Nigeria to support this contract.
4. Tenderer shall comply with the latest approved version of NCDMB Human Capacity Development (HCD) guideline by committing (via a letter of undertaking) to providing Project-Specific training, man-hour, budget, skill development and understudy plan for Nigerian personnel utilizing Oil & Gas Trainers Association of Nigeria (OGTAN) registered trainer(s) or other approved NCDMB training institution(s).
5. Provide evidence of at least 50% Nigerian ownership of equipment as stated in the scope of work and evidence of Category 1,2,3, 4 or 5 Services and Support (SS) Group Nigerian Content Equipment Certificate Registration (NCEC) demonstrating at least 50% Nigerian Ownership of equipment to be deployed in the execution of the work scope.

5 CLOSE DATE:

Only bidders who are registered with NJQS Product/Category **3.18.05 (Security Services) or 1.16.01 (Security Equipment and Accessories)** by **16:00 Hours, 29 MAY 2024** being the advert close date shall be invited to submit technical bid.

Additional Information:

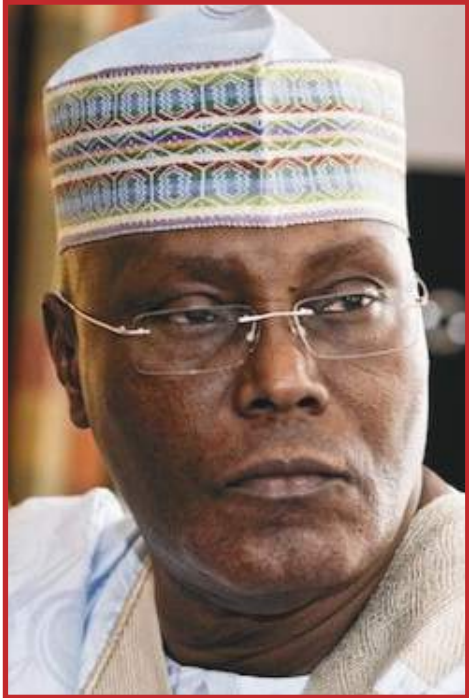
1. Suppliers eligible for this tender opportunity are expected to be prequalified in NJQS under this product/service category.
2. The Invitation to Tender (ITT) and any further progression of this tender shall be via NipeX.
3. All costs incurred in preparing and processing NJQS prequalification shall be borne by the contractor.
4. This advertisement shall neither be construed as any form of commitment on the part of Chevron Nigeria Limited/ Affiliates and Partners to award any contract to any company and or associated companies, sub-contractors or agents, nor shall it entitle prequalified companies to make any claims whatsoever, and/or seek any indemnity from Chevron Nigeria Limited, its Affiliates and Partners and or any of its partners by virtue of such companies having been prequalified in NJQS.
5. The tendering process shall be the NNPC contracting process requiring pre-qualified companies to submit technical tenders first. Following a technical review, only technically and financially qualified contractors will be requested to submit commercial tenders.
6. Chevron Nigeria Limited will communicate only with authorized officers of the pre-qualifying companies and NOT through individuals or Agents.

ES/NCDMB/CNL/ADV/UPD/230224/PROVISION OF UNMANNED AERIAL SURVEILLANCE (UAS)

Please visit NipeX portal at www.nipex-ng.com for this advert and other information.

PDP: Fading Glory of A Much Touted Largest Party

Tony Icheke reports that the fading glory of the Peoples Democratic Party which once held sway as the largest ruling party could be traced to its utter disregard for the rule of law.



Atiku



Wike



Ihedioha



Anyanwu

From 1999 to 2003, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) held sway across the five South-East States as the ruling party. Gradually like shooting stars, its lights would blossom brightly and eventually darken in the political firmament.

Several factors were responsible for PDP losing out in the powerplay, foremost of which include dumping honoured party ethos, values, tenets and traditions which constituted the bedrock of its strength, positive public perception and distinctiveness. Succinctly, today's PDP refused to play by its own rules. Its utter disregard for Rule of Law became its Achilles heel.

Such utter disregard for law and order precipitated the exodus of its members in Imo State, with spill over effects in Abia State.

The Imo PDP debacle began in the run up to November 2023 governorship election in the state. Before the PDP governorship primaries, Hon Emeka Ihedioha, counted his losses and withdrew from the governorship race, paving way for Senator Samuel Anyanwu to emerge unopposed as PDP governorship flagbearer.

From that point began the bitter tussle for the soul of Imo PDP between the two party stalwarts. Contrary to the party's constitution, Anyanwu in addition to the party's governorship ticket, also held on to his position as the National Secretary.

As a matter of fact, he combined the two positions from April 2023 when he emerged as the governorship candidate to November 2023 when he eventually lost the election and returned to the National Secretariat to continue from where he left the office in limbo.

His return to PDP National Secretary's position after losing in the election instigated various court cases until Justice Inyang Ekwo of the Federal High Court, Abuja ruling in January, 2024 declared him as the valid National Secretary of the PDP. The judge also restrained the national leadership of the PDP from appointing any person as its acting national secretary until the expiration of Anyanwu's four-year tenure on December 9, 2025, as enshrined in the party's constitution.

The implication of that court judgement is that Ihedioha from his leadership position would become an ordinary member in his Imo PDP with no say in the affairs of the party. As the party prepares for congresses, Ihedioha would have no say even in his ward. For a founding member of the party who rose to become Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, it was a bitter pill to swallow, thus his exit.

Ihedioha in his resignation letter expressed concerns over the party's inability to enact internal reforms, uphold its regulations, and effectively oppose the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Regrettably, in recent times, the party has taken on a path that is at variance with my personal beliefs. Despite my attempt to offer counsel, the party is, sadly, no longer able to carry out internal reforms, enforce its own rules or offer credible

opposition to the ruling All Progressives Congress.

"It is in the light of the foregoing, that I am compelled to offer my resignation from the People's Democratic Party effective immediately.

"While the decision was difficult to take, I, however, believe that it is the right one. Despite this resignation, I will always be available to offer my services towards the deepening of democracy and good governance in Nigeria", the letter read.

What may be shocking to the vested interests that obstructed adherence to rule of law in PDP is the deluge of people who jointly migrated with Ihedioha either in a show of solidarity or in expression of personal anger. Indeed, it was not simply an Ihedioha versus Anyanwu tussle.

The Ihedioha resignation has decapitated the Imo PDP, only it's tail is wrinkling in death throes. The defectors include Chief Chris Okewulonu, a Board of Trustees member; four zonal officers including Mr Stanley Ekezie, ex-officio Zonal Officer; Chief Austin Okeke, Zonal Publicity Secretary; Chief Emeka Nwokeke, Zonal Organizing Secretary and Mrs Ruth Nkwocha, Zonal Women Leader.

In addition, the State Chairman, Chief Charles Ugwu, three State officers and a Local Government chairman have resigned including Mr Kissinger Ikokwu, State Legal Adviser; Mazi Emenike Nmergini, State Publicity Secretary; Chief David Abanihi, State Assistant Treasurer and Hon Sambazz Iheaturueme, Obowo LGA Chairman.

Other top ranking officers of the party who have exited include Hon Obinna Onwubuariri, former member of the

House of Representatives; Mr Chibuzor Agulana, former Aboh/Ngor Okpala Federal Constituency candidate for House of Representatives; Prof Obioma Iheduru, Hon Mrs Amarachi Owuamanam and a host of others. Indeed, if the party recovers before 2027, it would be a miracle of the century

Udeh-Okoye as SE PDP Caucus' choice for National Secretary

The South-East PDP caucus rising from its February, 2024 Zonal Executive Committee meeting urged the party's NEC to ratify Sunday Udeh-Okoye as the party's National Secretary, in line with the zone's decision and a valid court order.

The South-East PDP in its communiqué issued at the end of the meeting in Enugu maintained that Udeh-Okoye is the Zone's choice for the position and accused the party's national leadership of mistreating the zone by neglecting their earlier nomination.

They insisted that they would no longer tolerate the delay in ratification of Udeh-Okoye as the party's National Secretary at the meeting chaired by Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State alongside PDP National Vice Chairperson (South-East), Ali Odefa.

Chairperson of PDP's Board of Trustees, Senator Adolphus Wabara, in his remarks at the meeting said he was pained that the national leadership of the party had treated the South-East zone of the party with levity.

PDP National Vice Chairperson (South-East), Mr Odefa, who read out the communiqué at the end of the meeting said "The meeting reiterated and reconfirmed its decisions in its earlier meeting held on 20th October 2023, which asked Senator Samuel Anyanwu to stop parading himself as the National Secretary of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), as he has relinquished the office by virtue of the constitution of the PDP, which has

been upheld by a court of competent jurisdiction.

"The meeting affirmed the nomination of S.K.E. Udeh-Okoye as his replacement for the National Secretary of the party, to serve out the remainder of his term, in accordance with the party's constitution."

The PDP leaders, citing Section 47 of the party's constitution, argued that Anyanwu had automatically resigned his position as the National Secretary by picking the party's ticket to contest for the Imo State Governorship election held in November, 2023.

"Even though his resignation was automatic, based on the constitution and guidelines of PDP and the operation of law, Anyanwu promised the leaders of the South-East Zone of the Party and the PDP Governors' Forum that he would formally resign before the Imo State elections," the party leaders said.

They further maintained that the Federal High Court, Abuja which later ruled Mr Anyanwu should remain the National Secretary "was obtained per curiam and in abuse of court process," given that the High Court ruling in Enugu came first, and both courts are of coordinate jurisdiction. This is in reference to the decision of another court of competent jurisdiction which directed that Anyanwu should stop parading himself as the National Secretary of the party which was never appealed against. Instead, NWC promptly chose to implement a contrary decision of Ekwo's ruling.

The SE Caucus also urged the NWC of the party PDP Governors' Forum, PDP Board of Trustees, PDP National Assembly Caucus and all organs and stakeholders of the party, to recognise S.K.E Udeh-Okoye as the authentic National Secretary of the PDP.

"This is in line with the constitution of the party and the practice of the party, which was recently accorded to the South-south (National Women Leader) and South-west (National Vice-Chairman, South-west) zones of the party on the matter of the replacement of the party leadership following a vacancy," the party leaders in the South-East maintained.

Wike vs Atiku

When the PDP leadership finally met at its recent National Executive Council meeting, it failed to take judicious notice of the infractions to its rules. Former Senate President, Senator Adolphus Wabara in his remarks at the NEC meeting said:

"Furthermore, the contentious issue surrounding the office of the National Secretary has regrettably sown seeds of discord within our party. The ambiguity surrounding this position has led to confusion and internal strife, hindering our collective efforts to pursue our noble objectives." It was casual warning that was ignored.

NOTE: Interested readers should continue in the online edition on www.thisdaylive.com

The National Working Committee led by Ambassador Umar Damagum shut its ears to the South East leaders petition on the position of National Secretary, as entertaining the petition and doing the right thing would mean losing a Wike loyalist being in control of the National Secretariat. Rather than being loyal to the party, the PDP NWC is now serving individual interests, thus its refusal to invoke internal mechanisms of the party to look into the cases of the party leaders who embarked on anti-party activities that ruined the party's electoral chances during the last general elections. Not a few party loyalists are worried that such leaders are still in control of the party's machinery, soul and spirit; jostling and maneuvering to tie the party's existence to the fate of such individuals.

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- Chuma Okwodu
- Amina Isa
- Deborah Nzegwu
- Zaq Isa
- Ebuka Nzegwu

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FEATURES

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How NOWA NAVTRAC Chapter is Fostering Collaboration, Strengthening Ties

For the Naval Officers Wives Association, NOWA, Naval Training Command, NAVTRAC Chapter, its overarching objective is to foster collaboration and strengthen ties not just between the command but also for military families and its immediate host communities. Recently, the members paid a courtesy visit to the command to unveil their plans, **Chiemelie Ezeobi** reports



NOWA NAVTRAC Chapter Coordinator, Mrs. Joy Albara presenting a souvenir to FOC NAVTRAC, Rear Admiral Istifanus Mu'azu Albara



The FOC (middle) flanked by Mrs. Albara to his immediate left and NAVTRAC Chief Staff Officer, Rear Admiral Adedotun Ayo-Vaughan (second left) with other NOWA Members and senior officers of the command

The Naval Officers Wives Association (NOWA), Naval Training Command (NAVTRAC) Chapter last week paid a courtesy visit to the command. The reason was simple- they wanted to acquaint themselves with the command and also outline the plans they intend to carry out to foster collaboration and strengthen ties between the command, the military families and their host communities.

The visit, which took place at NAVTRAC's temporary headquarters in Lagos, provided an opportunity for NAVTRAC officials and NOWA representatives to engage in discussions on mutual interests and initiatives.

The team led by Mrs. Joy Albara, a magistrate, who also coordinates the NAVTRAC Chapter of NOWA, were received by the Flag Officer Commanding (FOC), NAVTRAC, Rear Admiral Istifanus Mu'azu Albara and his team, including the Chief Staff Officer, Rear Admiral Adedotun Ayo-Vaughan.

While highlighting NOWA's key objectives and initiatives, including its focus on supporting naval families, promoting civil-military relations, and contributing to community development, Mrs. Albara expressed their

readiness to collaborate with NAVTRAC in various areas, including community outreach programs, cooperative societies, and educational scholarships.

She said: "NOWA is a non-governmental organisation established on November 30, 1965. What began as a small tea group to promote love and harmony amongst wives of naval officers has grown to become an Internationally recognised philanthropic organisation

"Presently, NOWA contributes to the social-economic life and well-being of Nigerians by providing quality education, vocational training, charitable activities, and economic empowerment programme for women, orphans as well as youths amongst others. These activities have helped improve civil-military relations in our host communities.

"Firstly, I would like to commend the FOC and the entire Principal Staff Officers for the successful commissioning of the New Headquarters of the Naval Training Command and the tireless effort in producing highly skilled and dedicated Naval Manpower for the Nigerian Navy. Your work at the Headquarters is a success of our nation's

naval endeavours and we appreciate your service

"As women and naval officer's wives, we understand the sacrifices that come with serving in the navy. We have witnessed firsthand, long deployments, and time spent away from family. That is why NOWA is committed to supporting our members and the wider Naval Community at large.

"It is in this regard, that I would like to state that NOWA NAVTRAC Command is solidly behind the FOC NAVTRAC, to support him in improving civil military relations."

Reiterating NOWA's plans to relocate alongside the command to Ebubu-Elleme, Rivers State, she said the strategic alignment aims to facilitate closer cooperation between NOWA and NAVTRAC in implementing community-based initiatives and outreach activities in the Port Harcourt region.

"We have mapped out activities to assist our host communities by launching community-based outreaches, Cooperative Society and Shop, Scholarship for

exceptional children of ratings, as well as improving civil military relations.

"We are also looking forward to exploring potential areas of collaboration and partnership with NAVTRAC and the wives of Commandants of professional schools under NAVTRAC. This we intend to do by sending feedback forms to members who would choose, contribute and own these activities."

In his response, the FOC emphasised the critical role of NOWA as a support group for naval officers and their families, just as he commended them for their longstanding commitment to promoting love, harmony, and social-economic development within the naval community and beyond.

Given the outlisted plans by NOWA to touch lives of communities around all its units, the FOC pledged to support where they can, adding that it was imperative that civil military relations be upheld, adding that it underscores their shared commitment to service, compassion, and community engagement. He also assured NOWA of continued dialogue and collaboration while expressing optimism about the positive impact of their partnership on community development and civil-military relations.

Women's Growing Presence in Sports Betting, Empowerment and Opportunity

In recent years, the landscape of sports betting has witnessed a significant evolution, particularly with the increasing involvement of women, **Precious Ugwuzor** writes that for BetKing, it is committed to fostering a safe and empowering environment for their female customers through tailored initiatives aimed at promoting betting culture among the female folks

Traditionally perceived as a male-dominated domain, women are now actively engaging in sports betting, leveraging strategic wagers to heighten their enjoyment of favorite sports while potentially reaping financial rewards.

Evolving Landscape: Women's Rising Role in Sports Betting

Since 2014, there have been an upsurge of women participation in sports betting, what with the increased legalization of sports betting globally. Sports betting companies on the other hand have also deliberately targeted women with their inclusive ads and messaging. Also, the proliferation of sports betting Apps, increased visibility of women's sports and social acceptance have in no small measure contributed to the growth of women participation in sports betting.

Growth Trends: Increasing Female Participation in Sports Betting

While there are more men bettors in gaming, including sports betting, with an average ratio of 2:5 between women and men, the growth rate of women is almost double the that of men. This stems from the increasing number of women signing up as sports fan. We see more women following football, basketball, tennis, golf and even polo games and research shows that sports fans are more than twice likely to bet on sports. Against this background, we are most likely going to see more women bettors in sports betting in the coming years.

Financial Opportunities: Women's Potential in Sports Betting

The improved number of female bettors can also be hinged on the propensity of betting as a



L-R: Uche Okafor, Head of Division-Agency, BetKing Nigeria; Bonike Ayanbadejo, Head of HR Operations, BetKing Nigeria; Gossy Ukanwoke, Managing Director, BetKing Nigeria and Oludare Kafar, Head BTL Marketing, BetKing Nigeria, participating in a novelty match between staff and agents as part of the 6th-anniversary activities in Lagos

form of leisure and entertainment, providing an outlet for relaxation. Whether it's visiting a physical store, participating in online betting platforms, or engaging in friendly wagering with friends, sports betting offers an escape from the stresses of everyday life and an opportunity to unwind and have fun.

Of course, beyond mere entertainment, sport betting can also present financial benefits for women. With strategic decision-making and prudent risk management, women can potentially generate additional income through successful betting endeavours. Whether it's winning a jackpot, placing bets in favour of

their favourite team, betting on virtual sports, sports betting offers the possibility of financial gains for women who approach it with caution and skill.

Moreover, betting can foster a sense of empowerment and confidence among women. By participating in betting activities, women can develop strategic thinking, analytical skills, and decision-making abilities, which can translate into various aspects of their personal and professional lives. The challenge and excitement of betting can instill a sense of self-assurance and resilience,

empowering women to tackle challenges and pursue their goals with determination.

BetKing's Commitment: Empowering Women in Betting

Recognising the shift and subsequent growth in the number of women participations, BetKing is aware of the tendency for the esteemed women bettors becoming vulnerable to the risk of gambling addiction. In this light, BetKing is committed to fostering a safe and empowering environment that empowers their female customers to overcome such risks.

Now, in the realm of betting, the focus on responsible gambling is paramount, especially when it comes to ensuring the well-being and financial stability of all customers. Amidst this commitment, BetKing is dedicated to empowering women in betting through tailored initiatives aimed at promoting betting culture among female customers.

They recognise the importance of providing educational resources that cater specifically to the needs of female bettors. Through comprehensive guides, informative articles, and interactive platforms, we aim to equip women with the knowledge and tools necessary to make informed decisions while engaging in betting activities.

Their dedication to enhancing the overall betting experience for women extends beyond just providing entertainment; it encompasses a commitment to fostering a safe and responsible gaming environment.

They also believe that by embracing responsible gambling practices and leveraging the opportunities it offers, women can enhance their well-being, financial stability, and overall quality of life.

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FLOODING IN LAGOS

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Terrorists deserve only the dock and the noose, reckons **IKE WILLIE-NWOBU**



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EDITORIAL

THE ABUSE OF INNOCENT CHILDREN



The tussle in Rivers State is not making sense anymore, writes
JOSHUA OCHEJA

RIVERS: THE ARROGANCE OF IGNORANCE

The drama in Rivers State has resumed despite the earlier presidential intervention. The warring factions have refused to sheathe their swords. This time, they went for bigger swords, because it was a fight to finish. And no one is willing to take the back seat. The cheerleaders have increased their tempo, and the actors are dancing hard, arrogantly, and ignorantly.

Too often, arrogance and ignorance go hand in hand. Arrogance can lead a person to ignore something important, and ignorance of others' abilities can also make a person arrogant. This is the story of the love gone sour between Nyesom Wike and Siminalayi Fubara, Rivers State's former and current governors.

There have been commentaries on the raging political tussle. Only recently, the governor, Siminalayi Fubara, indicated his intentions to probe the previous administration in the state. This is a salvo that would send shivers down the spine of the other camp. But my question is thus: is this necessary? Can it bring the desired peace to the state?

Many will argue that the goat doesn't bite. But a proverb says if you chase a goat to a wall, it will turn back and knock you down. Could this be what is playing out in the state? Has Siminalayi Fubara been chased to the wall by Nyesom Wike that the only option left is to knock him down? If that is the case, the fall will be horrible and loud! But again, with the benefit of the doubt, can Sim Fubara knock Nyesom Wike down?

The arrogance of ignorance is at play in the whole debacle. Both parties need to be more strategic. They have been speaking in parables. Maybe the details are messy. They have allowed the public to form their opinion. They have refused to come open about the issues and seek ways to resolve them. They are arrogant in the sense that they want to get headline news; and ignorant because they have turned themselves into jesters.

If I were Nyesom Wike, I would hold a press conference and state the issues and areas of disagreement. If I were Sim Fubara, I would also hold a press conference and state the problems and areas of dispute. But no, both parties have been acting like kids on the playground and making a comedy out of the whole issue while the governance of the state continues to suffer.

Nyesom Wike is also distracted in Abuja. His mind is constantly in Port Harcourt, thinking about Sim Fubara's next line of action. If he is hypertensive, he needs to rethink. Sim Fubara is also distracted. He is unsure of Nyesom Wike's next line of action or where the bullet will come from.



That ultimately puts him in overdrive, which might lead to a fatal crash.

The recent plan to probe the previous administration is one such example. It is an overkill. Remember that he was part and parcel of the administration as the State's Accountant General. Yes, he holds the ace as he is privy to all that transpired during the previous administration. It is like adding salt to a sore. He should expect stiff resistance. Remember that if that happens, heads will roll. That may be the only card he has left to play, and it might give him a breather. But would Nyesom Wike bulge? Is he a saint? Politicians always have things in their cupboards. Things they don't want the public to see or know about. Now that Sim Fubara has threatened to make some of these things public, what should we expect? It is also the arrogance of ignorance because he might end up shooting himself in the foot, too. Desperate measures beget desperate countermeasures.

The fact remains that both parties are wasting our time with the unending drama. We want to see the victor and the vanquished. This fight has dragged on for

Politicians always have things in their cupboards. Things they don't want the public to see or know about. Now that Sim Fubara has threatened to make some of these things public, what should we expect?

too long. Rivers is not the only state in Nigeria where a former governor has fallen out with his successor. None has been this dramatic that the President had to wade in.

Let me be blunt. Both parties have disrespected the President. Despite the presidential intervention, the war is still raging. This is also the arrogance of ignorance. Albert Einstein said, "The only thing more dangerous than ignorance is stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits". Please fill in the blank spaces. I don't want to be quoted. These were the words of Albert Einstein.

What is Sim Fubara looking for about the past administration that he doesn't know about? What does he want to probe? Who will chair the judicial panel of inquiry? He has the facts and figures on his table. If I were him, I would bring them out and not sound cryptic. He is the state governor and has the power to do and undo things. Talk is cheap. He should act like the governor of a state. Nigerians are tired of all the side talk.

What does Nyesom Wike want? The state is not his birthright. If he feels betrayed, he should lick his wounds and move on. The world won't come to an end. Such is life. Nigerians are also tired of his unending jabs at the governor.

Peace has to return to Rivers State. Both parties must respect the sensibilities of Nigerians. What is the fight all about? Money or control of political structure? The tussle in Rivers State is not making sense anymore. I rest my case. ■

Ocheja, a military historian and doctoral researcher, can be reached via jaocheja@gmail.com

MOSUNMOLA OGI-OLU urges the state government to recommend Omole Estate's sanitation model to others

FLOODING IN LAGOS

During a visit to Omole Estate, an incident occurred that sparked curiosity about the community's cleanliness standards. Alighting from a tricycle, someone dropped her snack, picked it up, dusted it off, and ate it, a surprising sight given Lagos' reputation for being unclean.

However, upon closer inspection, it was clear that Omole was exceptionally clean, especially its drainage systems, which were devoid of the typical plastic waste seen in other parts of Lagos. Curious, a passerby attributed the cleanliness to the residents' zero-tolerance policy for dirt.

This encounter would have led anyone to contemplate whether such cleanliness standards could be replicated in other parts of Lagos and the possibility of the government engaging Omole residents as environmental champions to share their success stories and strategies for maintaining a clean environment.

Lagos, being a coastal city, struggles with the recurring challenge of flooding. In recent years, the city has experienced varying degrees of flooding, resulting in drowned vehicles, flooded homes, property damage from fallen trees, and disrupted businesses.



A significant concern raised by many residents of the state is the inadequate management of drainage systems, hindering the free flow of water through gutters and drains across the state. Numerous drains in Lagos are clogged, with stagnant water often displaying discolored shades.

In a chat with the environment officer of Omole Phase 2 estate, Adebowale Michael Owookade, it seems the management has devised a means of ensuring that the drainages are clean and unclogged within the community. One of such strategies employed is that the estate takes sole responsibility for drainage maintenance, organizing annual evacuations at its own expense, without reliance on government assistance.

Owookade shared that the estate has an environmental committee whose responsibility is to ensure that the drains are always kept clean; he highlighted the importance of residents' cooperation to achieve their aim. Additionally, he noted that regular inspections are conducted monthly to identify areas that need attention, during these inspection responsibilities are shared between resident and estate management.

In places like Agege, there appears to be widespread neglect in maintaining the drainage networks, despite yearly budget allocations to the Ministry of Environment, particularly the Office of Drainage, Lagos State. This raises doubts about the effectiveness of oversight over Lagos' drainage infrastructure.

Moreover, there is a pattern to how drainage clearing is carried out, typically in response to flooding incidents. While gutters are cleaned and debris removed, the waste is often piled beside the drains. Consequently, during subsequent rainfall, the accumulated debris is washed back into the drains, increasing the problem.

A tire repairman operating near the Abattoir along Abule Egba road highlighted the challenges faced during the rainy season, noting that the

road becomes submerged with water, obstructing passage and causing traffic congestion as vehicles must slow down to navigate through the flooded area.

He commended the efforts of the Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) in maintaining cleanliness on the street, noting that they diligently clear debris from drainage systems. In contrast, he pointed out issues at Agege market where cleaned drains result in debris being left on the road. Consequently, during subsequent rainfall, the runoff washes the debris back into the drains.

During a conversation with Mr. Zubair, a resident of Agege, he explained how recurring floods during rainfall have inflicted substantial and devastating damage to properties in the area, sometimes resulting in loss of life and destruction of buildings along waterways and canals. Zubair highlighted that the flood originates not only from rainwater in Agege but also from flooding in Oke-Aro area, Ogun State, which feeds into the Olaniyi canal in Oke-Oba area, passing through the State Abattoir en route to the Aboru canal, amplifying the devastation during rainfall.

Zubair identified human activities as significant

contributors to the problem, citing instances where people obstruct the free flow of water by living along waterways and canals or constructing dwellings in these areas. He particularly emphasized the illegal dumping of refuse by cart pushers into the canal, exacerbating flooding during heavy downpours and causing extensive damage, including loss of life.

In addressing the issue, Zubair outlined solutions proposed by researchers and environmentalists. These include clearing debris and refuse during the dry season under strict supervision, removal of illegal shanties along the canal, and regulation of cart pushers' activities.

Furthermore, Zubair suggested that the government needs to widen the canal from the Oke-Aro axis to Aboru and construct concrete walls along the edges to prevent erosion and weathering.

Representing the Baale of Oke Oba in Ilobu Street, Agege, Balogun Akinpelu painted a vivid picture of the challenges faced by residents whenever it rains. He expressed deep concern over the prevalent flooding that afflicts the area, emphasizing the urgent need for effective drainage solutions.

During recent rainfall, Akinpelu revealed that residents resorted to using buckets to cope with the influx of water inside their homes. Despite expectations for larger gutters to facilitate proper water flow to the canal, Akinpelu said the contractor stated that the size he's working on is what he has been instructed to work on.

Akinpelu further highlighted the impact of the ongoing drainage project on Oke Oba Road, which has diverted debris onto Ilobu Street. This influx of dirt and debris worsens the flooding situation, leaving residents grappling with the aftermath of each rainfall.

Ogi-Olu
writes from Lagos

Terrorists deserve only the dock and the noose, reckons IKE WILLIE-NWOBU

A DEADLY SUBTERFUGE

Justice must precede peace if peace is to have immediate power or hold lasting promise. Peace is the usual goal of conflict resolution, whether it is arbitration, mediation or conciliation. Because of its acrimonious nature, litigation is not always considered the pathway to peace, even if it's more forceful ways of seeking justice guarantees peace eventually.

As a country, Nigeria has grappled with many solutions to terrorism since 2009 when Boko Haram's campaign became bolder and bloodier. One of the solutions was to rehabilitate and reintegrate into the society terrorists willing to 'repent' and lay down their arms. This proved immediately divisive along two polemical planks. On one side were the communities reduced to rubble who felt that reintegrating their attackers will be salt to their wounds. On the other side were those who argued that this solution experimented in other terror-marred places had yielded undeniable fruits. There was also a case to be made closer home: the amnesty granted the Niger Delta militants, which largely quelled the restiveness in the area when oil pipelines and expatriate workers



became bargaining chips in socio-political war.

If the argument that justice isn't justice until it extends some allowance, no matter how limited to the accused favored the repentant terrorists, it seemed to abandon those railing against any soft landing for terrorists, especially as there were allegations politics was put before people.

Despite protestations, the Nigerian Army went along with its De-radicalisation, Rehabilitation and Re-integration plans. Indeed, when the laughter of the supposedly repentant terrorists sailing over the fence of the de-radicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration camp at the Kwami Local Government Area of Gombe State as they played football reverberated in the news some years ago, images of laughing hyenas rose unbidden in many minds.

For those who believe that the repentance of the terrorists was a ruse all along despite its minimal gains, painful vindication came by fire on 1st May 2024 when 'repentant' Boko Haram members burnt down checkpoints belonging to the Nigeria Customs Service and National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Kasuwan Fara, Borno State.

In a country sorely lacking in justice, a beaker of brutal jokes is always threatening to overflow. It was always a smokescreen, wasn't it? The swell of the entire scheme was always to dispense slaps on wrists and stitch together a soft landing for those who showed ruthless hardness as they rampaged through communities raping women, ripping limbs apart in an orgy of bloody violence. The signs were there from the beginning that the leopard would struggle to change its spots yet the federal government and the security forces perhaps exhausted by their exertions against a formidable force chose the cheaper but far costlier option of cajoling and befriending terrorists. In January, the Chief of Defence Staff had gleefully announced that about 3,478 terrorists had

been successfully reintegrated into different communities in seven years. The success implied by the CDS is best interpreted as relative, and it is not in the place of the Nigerian Army to refine the contours of this relativity.

Can pathological killers suddenly become pacifists? Even the Divine would struggle to fashion peace into those whose inherent nature is violence. In animals, gustatory geography gives that once blood is tasted, it becomes impossible to delete blood from mouths, especially from memory, and those who trample communities to dust are worse than animals for even animals sometimes show restraint.

The smoke billowing from the burnt checkpoints is a sign of a scuttled strategy. When the government should have built cages to hold men who had become more rabid and ravenous than rabies-infected animals, it compelled the taxpayer to build cozy camps for them. When a lash of scorpions would have been a generous guerdon, laughter and footballs were given them so they could troll countless children whose childhood they had stolen while razing their schools and turning their playgrounds in a graveyard of memories.

The problem with Nigeria is that there is no justice. Colonialism was a grave injustice. The mirage of justice offered by independence in 1960 was swiftly lost to the way the country has been (mis) managed since then, occasionally by the military, which provided the scaffolding for the presently unfolding chaos.

At every occasion, the country shows itself incapable of doing justice. As well as the macabre corruption endemic to the judiciary, there are many who are complicit in shielding criminals from justice.

Building a country where dignity endures demands that a human face is worn even while treating the worst offenders. But just as true is the fact that destruction is perhaps the most delicate task in creation. Presently, Nigeria is showing little promise in navigating this nuance. While it commits billions to fighting terrorism, terrorists, wearing fake masks of remorse, slip behind its guard to unrepentantly incinerate the pyres of a broken country.

Trauma often assumes a life of its own and outlives generations. Many things never recover from being broken, no matter how much effort is fed into finding repair or forcing reparation. To assume to rehabilitate terrorists when commensurate efforts have not been made to help broken communities pick up the pieces of their broken lives presents the narrative as needled with pathetic flaws. Those behind it are either insensitive at best or just desperately callous.

It is always a mistake to detain what can only be defeated by destruction. To wear a human face when the set is for a ghost story and the costumiers are ghost-like is to court grave folly.

To catch killers, Nigeria must return to the trail of the past to discover the path to the future. It must read the past and the present and attempt to decipher the invisible to discover and destroy the seedbed of weeds threatening to suffocate the country.

Those who have called themselves to be confessors to terrorists must remember that cold-blooded killers don't change, that the past here pulses with blood, and that victims of terrorism deserve dignity which can only come from justice visited on their attackers.

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EDITORIAL

THE ABUSE OF INNOCENT CHILDREN

The Child Rights Act should be enforced

That the incidence of domestic violence across the country has extended to children is frightening, just as the statistics of the prevalence are worrisome. While we urge the relevant authorities to pay attention to this malaise that threatens the future of our children, it is also important for parents to be more alive to their responsibilities. Last Friday, the Nigeria Police Force arrested a man in Edo State who posted obscene photos and videos of his four-year-old daughter on his Instagram page in what is becoming a fad among some irresponsible parents who crave clout on social media. In a similar viral video three years ago, a man was seen kissing his three-year-old stepsister and when arrested, he claimed he had "no bad intentions."

In a survey once reported by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), six out of every 10 Nigerian children suffer some forms of physical, emotional or sexual violence before attaining the age of 18. The survey, carried out by the National Population Commission (NPC) with support from UNICEF and the United States' Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, revealed that violence against children had become so widespread that one in two Nigerian children experience physical violence; one in four girls and one in 10 boys experience sexual violence; and one in six girls and one in five boys experience emotional violence. Unfortunately, the majority of these children don't speak to anyone about the violence they suffer and fewer than five per cent receive the help they need to recover from their trauma.

Last December, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) rescued three babies who were rented out for N3,000 by their mothers to traffickers to beg for alms. "The suspected trafficking syndicate specialise in collecting babies with the connivance



Child marriage, child trafficking, child labour and rape of underage boys and girls are on the increase in many parts of the country

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LETTERS

WIKE, AMAECHI AND THE TRANSIENCE OF POWER

Among the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) group of five (G-5) governors who publicly worked against their party in the last presidential election, immediate past governor of Rivers State, Chief Nyesom Wike, is the only former governor who's still relevant today in politics as a result of his current position as the minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde, is currently on his second term. The trio of Okezie Ikpeazu, Samuel Ortom and Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Abia, Benue and Enugu States respectively lost their senatorial ambitions.

Had Wike won the presidential ticket of the PDP, I dare say that he would have come a distant third in the election behind Peter Obi of the Labour Party. With Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Peter Obi of the Labour Party and Nyesom Wike of the PDP, the last presidential election would have been an all Southerners presidential candidates' affairs. With that kind of scenario, which states would Wike have won in the southern region let alone the northern region? What Wike doesn't know is that many power brokers in the country don't get fascinated with his kind of political exuberance. He may have performed relatively well as a governor, but apparently he lacks the comportment and qualities needed as a president or vice president of Nigeria. Hav-

ing come second in the PDP presidential primary election, why didn't Atiku Abubakar choose him as running mate?

Wike should thank his stars when juxtaposed with his current and powerful position today. If Atiku had picked him as running mate, of course both of them would have still failed in the presidential election with the political hurricane Peter Obi brought into the election. If Wike was Atiku's running mate, he wouldn't have been appointed as a minister which he is today. The governor of Rivers State, Siminalayi Fubara, wouldn't be going through the political headache he's currently experiencing. Wike would have become powerless to trouble the governor. Ifeanyi Okowa, Atiku's running mate, doesn't disturb his successor which he literally imposed on Delta State just as Wike did with Fubara in Rivers State.

Today, Wike seems to be the most powerful minister in the current federal government. He goes about with a outrider and convoy even more powerful and sophisticated when compared with those of some Nigerian governors. I had seen the convoy of past ministers of the FCT, none of them came near what Wike is currently using. I do hope that Wike doesn't set a dangerous precedent in the FCT as regards how he has been elevated just to keep him on equal level with state governors. I also read reports that the FCT has been removed from the Treasury Single Account

of other members of the gang, hire out these innocent children and position them at the roadsides at busy intersections and bus stops, where they use them for alms begging," said NAPTIP. "These infants are exposed to harsh weather conditions on a daily basis in a dusty and dirty environment even in the face of vehicular movement and other forms of abuse without proper feeding."

We therefore urge the government, at all levels, to begin to respond to this crushing incidence of child exploitation in Nigeria. To start with, highlighting the true magnitude of the challenge is crucial to drumming up public support and breeding steady action towards its eradication. The strategies for addressing this problem should

also include provision for counselling services and creating public awareness by involving all critical stakeholders in the campaign. This is because a major concern from the UNICEF study was the lack of counselling unit and professional

counsellors to manage such cases. We believe that the consequences are enormous if the appropriate authorities refuse or fail to act urgently on this growing, fear-provoking, and crying incidence as we may unwittingly be breeding an angry, psychological traumatised, wayward and rebellious generation.

The social disharmony in many Nigerian homes has become a veritable threat to the survival of the family institution. More worrisome is that the situation will likely worsen because of the prevailing economic crisis in the country. Child marriage, child trafficking, child labour and rape of underage boys and girls are on the increase in many parts of the country.

The challenge of enforcing the Child Rights' Act in many of the states is at the heart of what is necessary to tackle the menace. But the society must also rise to the challenge of all forms of abuse and violence against children in Nigeria.

*Ifeanyi Maduako,
Owerri*

CRIME & PUNISHMENT



Five-Minute Pleasure: Fastest Way to Life Imprisonment

Funke Olaode

Looking polished and unruffled in his dark green 'Atiku' dress as he was being led to the court that sunny afternoon, the presiding Bishop of I Reign Christian Ministry, Oluwafeyitope Daniels, was the latest culprit in the case of sexual assault involving two women in his church.

Evidence from the prosecution team led by Mr Babajide Boye that the convict raped his assistant pastor in his home in Ikota Villa Estate sometime in June 2020.

He also said the convict sexually assaulted one of his church members by forcefully sucking and touching her breast without her consent, sometimes in April 2021 at the church office in Ikeja. The offences contravened Section 260 (2) and

263 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

In the end, the axe of law fell on the embattled cleric as Justice Rahman Oshodi read out the judgment of life imprisonment. Looking remorseful, the die was cast. He was led in handcuffs and whisked away to begin his journey of life in eternal confinement.

This is just one of the sexual assaults involving clergies, with justice being served without reservations. Daily, women, children and vulnerable girls are being molested. The menace of defilement and rape increases every day despite attendant heavy penalties. What measures can be put in place to curb this animalistic act? And now that more and more religious leaders are caught in the act, what should

Christian bodies do?

In an exclusive chat with THISDAY, legal practitioner and women and child rights advocate Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo said handing immediate judgment like Bishop Daniel is another win for sexual and rape survivors. Taiwo-Ojo said, "It is a judgment that will restore faith primarily in the church and not only the church and the society. We have seen men of God committing this crime over and over again. And we have seen the very institutions which are supposed to expose these crimes covering it up."

"With such judgment, even though it may tarry, justice will eventually prevail. With this judgement, morality and the truth, which form the basis of society, are protected by the judiciary. I have also seen the

promiscuous and pervasive attitude of some clerics to take advantage and influence their position over the vulnerable; this judgment has actually mitigated and exposed this pervasive influence. It has also saved the vulnerable, the survivors who have been brutalised, who have been victimised and traumatised by men of the church that they have a voice and when they talk, society will listen."

Anthonia Ojenagbon, Executive Director of Tonia Bruised But Not Broken Rape Survivors Foundation, said when victims get justice, it is a stern warning to those who believe they can manipulate vulnerable girls and women in the name of God, that survivors will get justice and that they will find themselves in a place where they won't be able to

escape one day.

How can this menace be tamed?

"People need to pay for bad behaviours. The menace has refused to fade away or reduce in society because the culprits believe they can just rape or molest their victims and go scot-free," said Ojenagbon.

The rights advocate commended the Lagos government for its effort in institutionalising criminal law that stands against any form of gender-based violence.

"If we have more states like Lagos state, I think it will be curbed. It is an offence that in Lagos, 'that five minutes pleasure' will send you to jail. Sexual violence, sexual abuse, sexual assault, and incest are all big deals. They are not family matters," Ojenagbon explained. "They are not issues that can be settled. They are criminal matters; they are offences punishable under the law. We need more enlightenment in our religious organizations, the churches, the mosques. We need to sensitise our religious leaders;

they need to understand that it is actually a crime against humanity because it affects the soul."

Ojenagbon added, "Our religious organisations actually have a strong hold on the people, and we have to involve them more in this act of dehumanisation against women and girl-child. They need to start to speak from their pulpits that it is a 'sin' to molest women or girl-child without their consent forcefully. You know, sometimes, when it happens because of shame, they try to cover it up because of stigma. If they continue to cover it up, the perpetrators will continue because they know that they are 'covered', especially by their wives."

"If you live in a state like Lagos state under the Criminal Law of 2015 section 260, for you to rape or defile anybody is a criminal offence, and the penalty is life imprisonment. So, if more people are prosecuted, it will serve as a detriment to other people."

Legal Battle on Ojukwu's Property Resumes, As Bianca's Sons Seek to Join Suit

Wale Igbintade

The legal battle over the control of landed property belonging to Ojukwu Transport Limited OTL, founded by Sir Louis Odumegwu Ojukwu, has resumed as family members are back in court.

This is in spite of two separate judgements delivered by Justice Adeayo Oyebanji (Mrs.), and Justice A.M Lawal both of the Lagos High Court on the disputed property.

Based on Justice Oyebanji's judgment in suit number LD/794/2011, delivered on June 1, 2018, Ojukwu Transport Limited executed a warrant of possession on all its properties in Lagos with Form O, Certificate of completion of execution obtained in July 2022.

Defendants in the suit are Ojukwu Transport Limited, Professor Joseph O. Ojukwu, Engineer Emmanuel N. Ojukwu, Lotanna Ojukwu, and Massey Udegbe (T/A Massey Udegbe & Co.)

Meanwhile, Afamefuna and Nwachukwu, sons of Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, wife of late Biafra leader, Chief Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu have applied to be joined as parties in the 2011 suit filed by Ogonna Ojukwu and others against the Ojukwu Transport Limited, OTL, and others in which judgment had been delivered in 2018.

They based their application on the ground that another Lagos High Court had in a judgment in 2022 on a 2012 case marked LD/1539/2012

which they filed against OTL and others, granted them possession of 29 Oyinkan Abayomi Drive, Ikoyi and four other properties.

Justice A. M. Lawal, in the 2022 judgment, granted a restraining order against interference with Afamefuna and Nwachukwu's possession of the properties pending the harmonisation of Ojukwu properties by OTL.

Claiming to be unaware of the matter before Justice Oyebanji, Afamefuna and Nwachukwu, last year served a 'Notice of Disobedience of Court order' on OTL, the Ojukwu and other tenants of the property.

In their application to be joined, Bianca's sons argued that it would amount to a miscarriage of justice

for the matter to be conclusively decided without their input as the issues in the case affect their interests.

Having listed properties under dispute, they stated that it would be in the interest of justice to grant the application and join the Applicants to enable them to bring the necessary application before the court.

At the resumed hearing for the fresh application for the joinder on April 22, 2024, OTL Director, Dr. P Ike Ojukwu, their agent, Mr. Massey Udegbe and lawyer, Chief Ifeanyi Okumah were in court while Bianca, her sons and their lawyers were absent. The case was adjourned till May 20, 2024 for hearing.

Ikorodu Kingship Tussle: Appeal Court Fixes Sept 19 for hearing

Wale Igbintade

The Court of Appeal, Lagos Division, has fixed Thursday, September 19, for hearing the appeal challenging the installation of Kabiru Adewale Shotobi as the Oba Ayangburen of Ikorodu, Lagos.

The appellate court presided over by Justice Muhammed Mustapha fixed the appeal for hearing after granting two applications moved by counsel to the appellants, Mr. Eytayo Jegede SAN to enable proper hearing of the appeal.

Other members of the three-member panel are Justice Abdullahi Mahmud Bayero and Justice Paul Bassi.

When the matter came up on Monday, Jegede moved the application dated March 25, 2024, and urged the court to strike out the names of the sixth appellant and the 1st respondent, respectively.

The lawyer to the Respondents, Mr. Olusegun Fabunmi SAN, did not oppose the application.

Consequently, Justice Muhammed Mustapha struck out the names and adjourned the appeal for hearing.

Justice M. A. Savage of the High Court of Lagos State had ratified Kabiru Adewale Shotobi as the Oba Ayangburen of Ikorodu, Lagos, in his judgment.

Dissatisfied, the appellants (Lambo branch of Lasunwon ruling house) are challenging the installation of Mr. Kabiru Adewale Shotobi as the Oba Ayangburen of Ikorodu, Lagos, and prayed the court to set

aside the lower court's judgement.

The appellants/applicants are Mr. Matthew Shodipo, Omobo Sokelu, Shakiru Shodipo, Mr. Nurudeen Fakomaya and Mr. Albert Ania.

The family is praying that the court will allow the appeal and set aside the lower court's judgment.

In their Notice of Appeal, the appellants stated that the trial judge erred in law in holding that the third to sixth respondents were not parties to Suit No (KD/57/2007) and, therefore, not bound by the decision.

They urged the court to hold that the 3rd-6th respondents are kingmakers of Ikorodu and privies to Mr. Z.O Aro in Exhibit A who was sued on behalf of the kingmakers.

Besides, appellants stated that the trial judge erred in law in holding that clause 2 of the consent judgment in suit No IKD 57/2007 did not preclude the Adegorushe branch from presenting a candidate nor preclude the second respondent from being nominated as candidate for the vacant Ayangbure title of Ikorodu.

The appellants argued that the trial judge misdirected himself in law and reached the wrong conclusion that the obas and chief laws are paramount and that all the reliefs sought in the originating motion must fail, noting that "the interpretation by the honourable court took away cause of action and as brought by the applicants and extended it beyond the reliefs sought by the applicants into the response sought by the respondents."

No Remand Warrant of Convict, Dada Aigbe, Correctional Officer Tells Court

Funke Olaode

The representative of the Controller of Correctional Centre, Lagos command, Mr. Rotimi Oladokun, told Justice Akintunde Salvage of the Ikeja Division of the Lagos High Court yesterday that the command did not receive the committal warrant of the Chairman of Confidence Cargo Freight Forwarder, Dada Aigbe.

Oladokun, a prison official from the Legal Unit serving at the State Command Headquarters of Nigeria Correctional Services (NCoS) Alagbon, Ikoyi, told the court that the five Correctional Centers in Lagos, including Kirikiri Maximum or Medium, have no record or remand warrant of a convict, Aigbe, in their files. He said he was in court sequel

to the subpoena testicandum served on the controller of the correctional centre, Lagos command, on the court's order.

It would be recalled that Justice Salvage had, on March 11, ordered that Aigbe be committed to prison for one month until he purges himself of contempt.

The judge ordered was sequel to disobedience of Aigbe to appear in court after form 48 and 49 contempt proceeding was filed against him in a suit filed by the Mr. Maruf Jimoh-Akogun, counsel to judgment creditor.

Jimoh-Akogun had in a suit marked in ID/3831LMW/2016 instituted by the HRM Oba Shakirudeen Adeshina Kutu for themselves and on behalf of the Ajamogun/Onikotun family of Ewu kingdom against the Osolo of Osolo, HRM, Oba Agbabiaka Kabir Orisedeko Elemo and the

Baale Mafoluku Ajao Estate, Chief Hussam Raheem Shekoni Elemo as the first and second defendants respectively.

However, Oladokun in his testimony told the court that he joined the Correctional Center in 2012 and was serving at the state command.

"As a directive of the command, I was brief about the matter. From our record, the command did not receive a committal or remand warrant. We have verified from our internal communication, there was no record of Dada Aigbe."

Meanwhile, judgment debtors defendants/respondents counsel, Mr K. U Okoro had filed an application dated April 29, in pursuant to Section 60b (36) and Section 94 of the Sheriff Law.

The motion seeks relief as follows: an order setting aside the entire committal proceedings

on the ground that an unknown sheriff served it and such further order. The ground of the same notice is that it was not served on the applicant.

The judge held that he had read the objection and counter, and if he was not convinced that it was served, he wouldn't issue the conviction.

Okoro argued that "We are also saying that the court did not have jurisdiction to give the order. We urged the court to set aside the order and to rule in our favour and grant our relief."

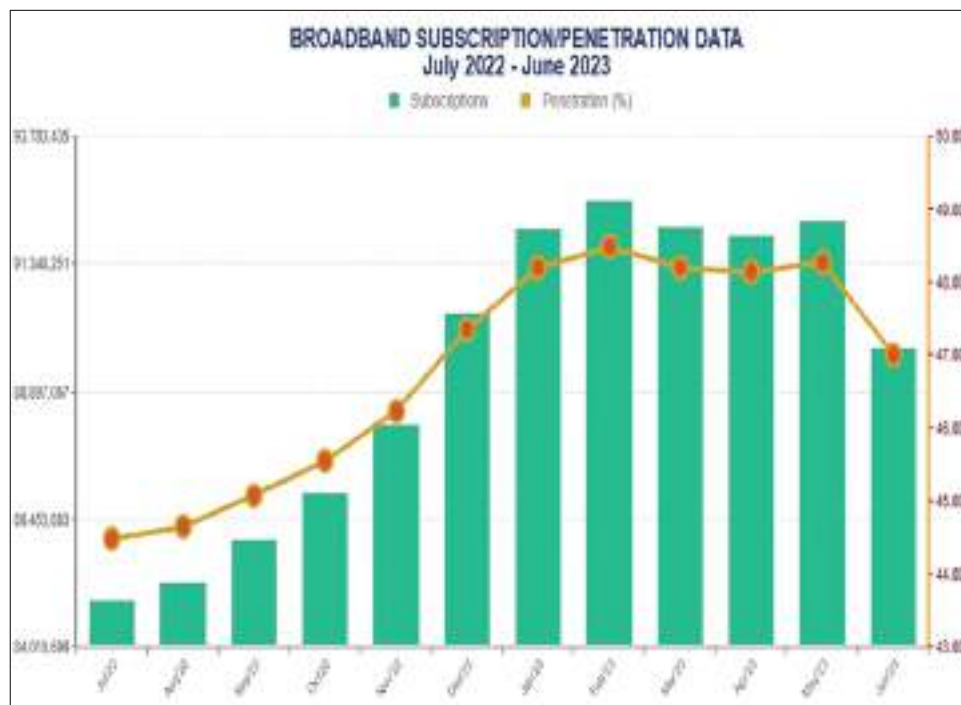
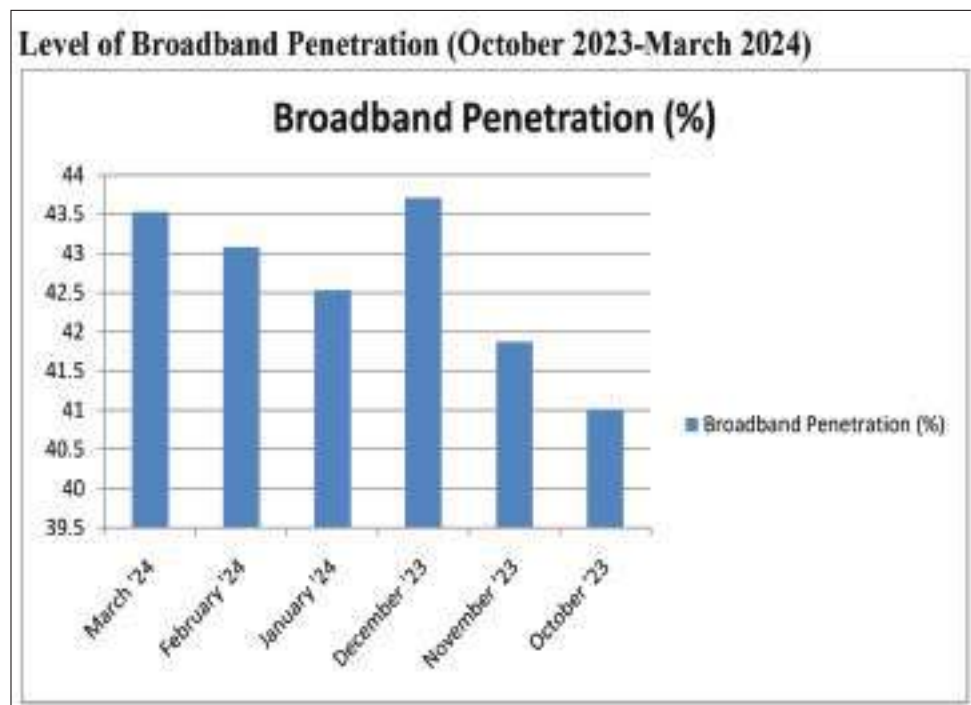
Jimoh-Akogun in his response opposed the preliminary objection, said they have filed a counter affidavit to their objections.

He told court that the reason for Aigbe's committal to prison is the complaint that he involved himself in a land matter that he is not a party to.

RATES AS AT MAY 15, 2024

MONEY MARKET		REPO		S & P INDEX		S & P INDEX		EXCHANGE RATE
OPR	25.34%	CALL	23.25%	INDEX LEVEL	595.26	1/4 TO DATE	0.24%	N1,262.85/1 US DOLLAR*
OVERNIGHT	25.18%	1-MONTH	21.37%	1-DAY	0.10%	YEAR TO DATE	-10.99%	*AS AT WED., APRIL 17, 2024
		3-MONTH	22.41%	MONTH-TO-DATE	0.24%			

With 43.53% Spread, Nigeria Still Far From Attaining 70% Broadband Penetration By 2025



Emma Okonji

The promise by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), that Nigeria would attain 50 per cent broadband penetration threshold by the end of 2023 has not materialized as the country has only achieved 43.53 per cent penetration, THISDAY investigation has revealed.

The NCC had early last year reassured Nigerians that the country would attain 50 per cent broadband penetration threshold by the end of 2023 and possibly surpassed the 70 per cent broadband penetration target by 2025, as contained in the Nigeria National Broadband Plan (NNBP) 2020-2025.

NCC's reassurance was

based on the contribution of telecommunications' sector to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which increased significantly to 16 per cent in the second quarter of 2023, coupled with the various regulatory efforts put in place by the telecoms regulator.

But such assurances appear too far from reality, giving the current state of broadband penetration is put at 43.53 per cent as at March 2024.

Contrary to NCC's assurance that broadband penetration would reach 50 per cent by the end of 2023, Nigeria struggled to attain 43.71 per cent penetration by December 2023.

Latest statistics on telecoms industry as released by the NCC,

which THISDAY obtained from its official website, showed that Nigeria attained 43.53 per cent broadband penetration as at March 2024, which is far from the 70 per cent broadband penetration target by 2025.

According to the statistics, Nigeria attained 47.01 per cent broadband penetration in June 2023, and maintained same penetration level in July 2023, before sliding to 45.57 per cent penetration level by August 2023, with a further slide to 40.85 per cent in September 2023. In October 2023, broadband penetration however picked up a little to reach 41.01 per cent, with a further increase to 41.87 per cent and 43.71 per cent penetration level in November and December 2023 respectively.

In January 2024, broadband penetration dropped again to 42.53 per cent before it increased again to 43.08 per cent in February 2024, with a further increase to 43.53 per cent penetration level in March 2024.

Although there was a slight increase in broadband penetration from 43.08 per cent in February to 43.53 per cent in March 2024, industry stakeholders have raised some concerns about the current 43.53 per cent broadband penetration level, insisting that it will be a herculean task for Nigeria to attain 70 per cent broadband penetration by December 2025.

Responding to the concerns of industry stakeholders over the slow growth rate of broadband penetration, the Chairman,

Association of Licensed Telecoms Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), Gbenga Adebayo, told THISDAY in a telephone interview, that if Nigeria does not improve on her investments in the telecoms sector, it would be difficult to attain 70 per cent broadband penetration by 2025.

According to Adebayo, "The target year 2025 is few months from now, and if we do not have real investors in the telecoms sector who will invest for a minimum turnaround of the sector, it will affect the growth of the telecoms industry, which will also affect the vision of achieving 70 per cent broadband penetration by 2025."

"To achieve rapid growth in broadband penetration, we need ubiquitous broadband

connectivity, and more fibre optic cable connections from the shores of the sea in Nigeria to the hinterlands where there is high demand for broadband connectivity. We also need more upgrades of cell sites that are formerly on microwave and we need more fibre-to-the-home connectivity. But all of these are not happening now, and the effect is already creating negative impact on the turnaround time."

"If government did not address the current challenges faced by industry operators, it will be a herculean task achieving 70 per cent broadband penetration by 2025, as targeted by the Nigeria National Broadband Plan initiative of the federal government, Adebayo further said.

Despite Challenges, ICT Contribution to GDP Surged to Reach 13.5% in Q4 2023

Emma Okonji

The latest report released by Groupe Spécial Mobile Association (GSMA), a global organisation unifying the mobile ecosystem worldwide, has highlighted the huge contribution of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which surged to 13.5 per cent in fourth quarter of 2023.

The report, which was presented at its recent forum in Abuja, cast a spotlight on the significant contributions of Nigeria's telecoms sector to the nation's GDP, highlighting its crucial role in driving economic growth and development.

Key findings of the report indicate that in 2023 alone, the telecoms sector directly contributed eight per cent to Nigeria's total GDP. The report however said when factoring in the wider ICT industries' value-added contributions, the figure surged to an impressive 13.5 per cent.

According to the report, considering the direct and indirect contribution of the mobile ecosystem, as well as the productivity impact throughout the economy, the telecoms sector's contribution to Nigeria's overall economic activity is much greater, estimated at N33 trillion in 2023, with N2.4 trillion in tax revenue contributions.

The report titled: "The role of mobile technology in driving the digital economy in Nigeria," addresses the challenges hindering the growth and development of the telecommunications industry and the crucial role of the mobile sector in Nigeria's economic development.

"Connectivity to mobile services, including Mobile Money is the foundation on which digitalisation is built. The Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) are committed to investing to support the realisation of the digitalisation ambitions that will unlock economic growth and development in the country," the report said.

The GSMA's report emphasised that while 29 per cent of Nigerians

are regularly using mobile internet, there remains untapped potential, as 71 per cent are not accessing these services on a regular basis, adding that an improved policy environment has the potential to help the industry boost coverage and adoption, that can result in 15 million additional internet users by 2028.

The report also identified some challenges to infrastructure deployment to include:

Complex and costly process of securing Rights of Way (RoW), which significantly increased the time and costs associated with rolling out infrastructure; The complex tax environment in Nigeria and overlapping tax

structure within the country; Rapid increases in the price of fuel; Increased government fees and levies; Increased demand for forex in an import-dependent environment, among others.

The report called for an enabling policy and regulatory framework that will be critical to realising the full potential of Nigeria's digital transformation, as recognised in Nigeria's Strategic Plan 2023-2027 as well as the Federal Ministry's National Broadband Alliance for Nigeria (NBAN), adding that without universal access to digital connectivity, a broader digital transformation of the Nigerian economy is not possible.

To this end, the report

recommended initiatives to support policymakers in creating an economic and regulatory environment that supports growth, investment, and competition. They include implementing a legal framework for Critical National Infrastructure to address challenges in building network infrastructure; Simplifying and improving the process for issuing RoW and standardising it across the country; Reducing the industry's tax burden to help cut operating costs; and Creating a regulatory environment that supports sustainable investment.

The story continues online on www.thisdaylive.com

MARKET DATA AS AT WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2024

BONDS					BILLS					CPS					OTC FX FUTURES			
DESCRIPTION	Price	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time	MATURITY	Discount	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time	MATURITY	Discount	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time	CONTRACT TENOR (MONTH)	Contract	Current Rate (\$/N)	Updated Time
^13.53 23-MAR-2025	95.66	19.18	0.01	May 15, 2024 ▲	NTB 6-Jun-24	23.87	24.22	-0.01	May 15, 2024 ▼	UNCP CP VI 20-JUN-24	27.12	27.86	-0.01	May 15, 2024 ▼	13M	NGUS MAR 26 2025	-	May 15, 2024
^12.50 22-JAN-2026	92.23	18.00	0.01	May 15, 2024 ▲	NTB 11-Jul-24	23.50	24.40	-0.01	May 15, 2024 ▼	DUFIL CP III 25-JUL-24	23.47	24.59	0.05	May 15, 2024 ▲	14M	NGUS APR 30 2025	-	May 15, 2024
^16.2884 17-MAR-2027	104.31	18.09	-0.01	May 15, 2024 ▼	NTB 8-Aug-24	18.15	18.95	-0.01	May 15, 2024 ▼	FDHC CP VI 2-AUG-24	20.65	21.62	0.07	May 15, 2024 ▲	15M	NGUS MAY 28 2025	-	May 15, 2024
^16.2884 17-MAR-2027	95.28	18.46	0.00	May 15, 2024 ▬	NTB 5-Sep-24	18.62	19.75	0.28	May 15, 2024 ▲	GZIL CP II 13-AUG-24	21.86	23.11	0.09	May 15, 2024 ▲	16M	NGUS JUN 25 2025	-	May 15, 2024
^19.94 20-MAR-2027	100.95	19.44	0.00	May 15, 2024 ▬	NTB 24-Oct-24	19.02	20.78	0.33	May 15, 2024 ▲	DANC CP XII 27-AUG-24	21.86	23.30	-0.01	May 15, 2024 ▼	17M	NGUS JUL 30 2025	-	May 15, 2024

Rumpus over Distell Acquisition

The announcement by Nigerian Breweries of the acquisition of Distell Wine and Spirits is generating conversations in the industry, given the competition in the market and the state of the economy, writes **Raheem Akingbolu**

With a projection of a market share growth of 16.79 per cent by 2024-2028, resulting in a market volume of \$12.3 billion in 2028, Nigeria's beer market has been rated one of the 10 fastest growing markets in the world.

As in the game of football, where players make frantic efforts to score goals, things are happening fast in the country's beer market as each of the players daily look for an opportunity to have competitive advantage.

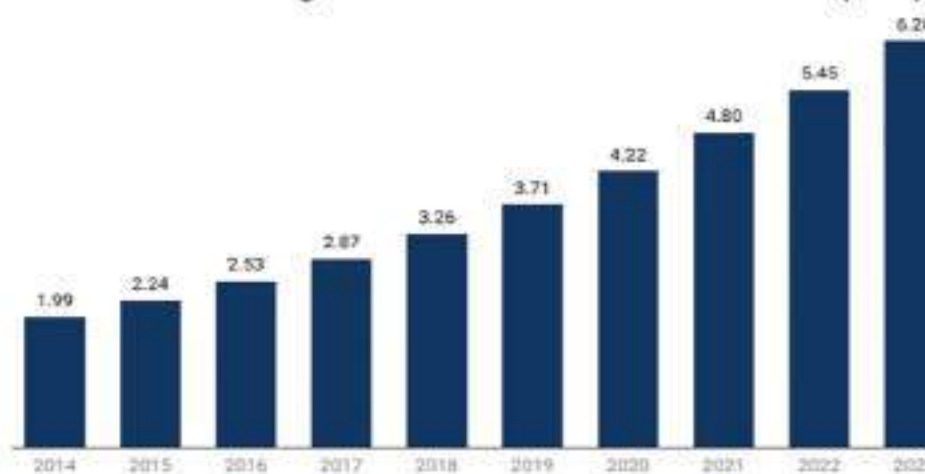
Until 2011, the duel was well pronounced between Nigerian Breweries Plc and Guinness Nigeria. But since AB Inbev, one of the world's top brewers, acquired majority share in the International Breweries Ilesa, manufacturers of Trophy Lager and also took control of the ownership of Hero, a popular brand in the Eastern market, the game has changed. Today, almost all the players have extended their frontiers through acquisition and brand extension into spirit and wine portfolios.

For Nigerian Breweries, having battled the headwinds of the foreign exchange instability in the 2023 financial year that occasioned an unprecedented loss of N106 billion, tongues wagged about what plans the company has for recovery, and it did not waste time to unveil a road map to refloat the business and return it to profitability.

Besides the approval obtained from its shareholders to raise N600 billion through rights issue, the company also announced a nearly concluded plan to diversify its portfolio with the acquisition of Distell Wine and Spirits, a South Africa-based company whose global footprints in the wine and spirits business is well known.

The move for the acquisition began in November 2021 with the acquisition of the South African giant by Heineken BV, the majority shareholder of Nigerian Breweries for \$2.56 billion.

Market value of Nigeria's Non-Alcoholic Beer market (\$'bn)



DISTELL'S RECORD

Those who wondered why Heineken paid such a hefty amount for a distillery may not have any knowledge of the track record of the company. An X-ray of its 2022 annual report shows a company that is not just a global player but a big earner. Its full year ended for June 2022 showed a sales volume of 823.9 million litres of its products, indicating that it stands quite strongly against global giants like Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, Diageo, Altria, Wuliangye Yibin, Pernod Ricard, and Brown-Forman.

Distell distilled an impressive N34.133 billion (N2.365 trillion) in revenue in the same year. In a year during which the biggest player in the sector posted revenue of N79.2 billion, Distell's performance presents a decent report card that will enable analysts to project the impact that a company with

the global network of Heineken would make in further penetrating the brand in Nigeria and other parts of the world.

Its sales volume, profits, and earnings per share all grew in double digits between 2022 and 2023, according to information on its annual report, and with the takeover of its business by Heineken the opportunity to grow its global presence, which accounted for only 8.8 per cent of its revenue in 2022 has received the needed impetus.

The wine and spirits market in Nigeria is huge. With locally-produced brands holding their own against imported ones, experts have projected the market to record a cumulative average growth rate of approximately 11 per cent between 2023 and 2027.

According to the founder and Director of Drinks Revolution Limited, Dr. Ikem Ugo, the market will continue to experience remarkable growth that will accommodate

new players, even as it will also increase the competition in the various segments that exist in the market.

Ugo, who is also the author of the book, Nigeria Wine and Spirits Market: Structure and Regulations, the growth will be driven by lifestyle changes that has drawn a swathe of the population to develop tastes for wines and spirits.

"There will continue to be significant growth in consumption, with substantial on-trade and off-trade developments that will impact the volume of trade. Whereas wine consumption has remained comparatively high in the key states in the southern region, there is a significant expectation of growth in other regions hitherto impeded by social, cultural, and other concerns," he stated.

WHISKEY MARKET GROWTH

Data on the wine and whiskey sector in Nigeria appear to be many and varied, but according to Statista, the market in Nigeria is valued at over \$34.38 billion (N40.8 trillion). Disputable as this might sound, it presents a window through which analysts can view the opportunities available for the players, including new entrants like Nigerian Breweries.

In fairness, many of the brands produced by Distell Wine and Spirit have been available in the country before now. Brands such as Amarula Cream Liqueur, Crus Red Wine, and Bain's whiskey are all available in the country. Drinks such as Savanna were at one time, quite popular in the Nigerian market, but had its growth impeded by distribution challenges. What the acquisition will do, therefore, is to add fillip to the marketing and distribution of these and other brands that have not become household names in the Nigerian market.

The story continues online on www.thisdaylive.com

Gains of IsDB Membership

As the Islamic Development Bank marks its 50th anniversary, **Ugo Aliogo**, who attended the annual general meetings in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, looks at the opportunities for Nigeria as a member

This year, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) is commemorating its 50 years of continuous development interventions aimed at promoting human dignity and advancing Islamic cooperation and solidarity.

IsDB's 50-year journey is marked by significant growth and substantial financial commitments to meet the aspirations of its member countries. The bank's efforts reflect its dedication to promoting human dignity, sustainable development, and resilience in the face of evolving global challenges.

From its humble beginnings in 1974, the bank has grown from a single entity to a group of five development entities, with a network of 10 regional hubs. The membership has increased from 22 to 57 member countries. The capital and annual financing approvals have also expanded greatly. The accumulated approvals from inception to the end of 2023 reached \$182.1 billion.

The President of IsDB, Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser, stated that the global economy would reach \$15 trillion to finance long-term solutions, sustainable infrastructure projects, adding that the world needs long-term solutions, and sustainable infrastructure projects, and financing these projects requires a paradigm shift.

He averred that the bank's asset-based and risk-sharing principles perfectly align with the needs of least-developed countries for long-term infrastructure projects.

Al Jasser further explained that the Islamic finance, with its emphasis on environmental responsibility, is perfectly positioned to support these endeavours.

According to him, "Asset-based and risk-sharing financial products for infrastructure financing remain a niche area within the overall financial system. Multilateral development banks can play a vital role in developing the necessary financial infrastructure to attract private capital flows toward developing countries. A collective effort by MDBs can significantly boost investor confidence."

As part of activities marking the IsDB 50 years anniversary, the bank organised the 2024 IsDB Group Annual Meetings and the Golden Jubilee marking the 50th anniversary of the Bank in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia with the theme: "Cherishing our Past, Charting our Future: Originality, Solidarity, and

Prosperity," that brought together member countries, investment partners, and players in the financial markets. One of the member countries is Nigeria.

Nigeria is one of the member countries of IsDB. Nigeria joined the IsDB on 15 June 2005 with a capital subscription in the bank at 0.3 per cent, which later rose to 7.69 per cent becoming one of the nine major shareholders. The country is a key beneficiary of the IsDB financing in Africa with a total portfolio of approved operations amounting to \$1.8 billion. IsDB Group's financial support for Nigeria is diverse, covering broad sectors of the economy. Agriculture infrastructure projects account for 29 per cent of IsDB's financing for Nigeria, followed by health (18 per cent), transportation (17 per cent), and water (15 per cent), among others.

FG'S POSITION

The Coordinating Minister of the Economy and Minister for Finance, Mr. Wale Edun, represented Nigeria at the annual meetings.

Speaking, Edun stated that President Bola Tinubu is focused on increased domestic revenue generation by mandating national revenue generating agencies to remit 50 per cent of their revenue proceeds to the federal government, deviating from the norm of remitting earnings after deducting operational costs.

He also stated that the surplus funds from these efforts are utilised for crucial infrastructure development, social welfare programme and job creation.

He revealed that with oil serving as a key revenue source, steps were taken to bolster pipeline security and increase crude production, resulting in a current output of 1.6 million barrels per day through collaborative tax force efforts. He appealed to the bank to expand its portfolio of projects with more concessional loans facilities to support government ongoing efforts to develop the economy.

Edun remarked that in view of the fragility of the country relating to insecurity and climate issues, the federal government is seeking for more grants and technical assistance from the

bank for Nigeria.

He requested the assistance of the IsDB to mobilise resources from the Arab Coordination league for infrastructural development.

"We wish to request for the visibility and presence of IsDB affiliates (ICD, ITFC, ICIEC) in the regional hub of Abuja to intensify their support to the private sector who are important growth drivers and to support the renewed hope initiative of Mr. President," he stated.

The minister commended the bank for their continued support to the economic development of Nigeria; especially for approving the I-dice project aimed at creating the next unicorn in the Nigeria technology space and the Special Agro Processing Zone Project (SAZP) to support the country's import substitution drive.

According to him, "President Tinubu's renewed hope encapsulates a comprehensive vision for Nigeria's future, built on the pillars of economic prosperity, social development, and political stability. Crafted to address the pressing challenges facing the nation while leveraging its vast potential, this agenda aims to instil optimism and confidence among Nigerians and international stakeholders alike.

"President Tinubu recognises the need to reduce Nigeria's dependence on oil revenue and promote diversification across multiple sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. By harnessing the nation's abundant natural resources and human capital, the administration aims to unlock for growth and prosperity."

SAPZ PROJECT

In 2022, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the government of Nigeria signed a \$150 million financing agreement for a flagship project that provides extensive support to the country's food security.

The agreement signed on August 8, 2022 is part of a mega co-financing effort for the launching of the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zone (SAZP) Project in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

IsDB President, Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser, had stated: "The Project can play a key role in pushing Nigeria's economic recovery in the post-pandemic period. Given that Nigeria has a high agricultural potential, SAPZ will help in boosting the country's agricultural supply chain. With this in mind, tapping prospects in a special agro-industrial processing zone and pushing for its advancement is one way to achieve inclusive growth and sustainable development in Nigeria."

Signatories to the agreement were IsDB President and Group Chairman, H.E. Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser, and Dr. Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed, Federal Minister of Finance of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The project aims to support the poverty alleviation strategy of the Government of Nigeria, stimulate sustainable activities for low-income households, and enhance the competitiveness of the agriculture sector through the promotion of select value chains in the country. In addition to the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), SAPZ Program will cover seven other states namely Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Imo, Cross River, Ogun, and Oyo. IsDB Project will cover FCT, Kano, and Kwara.

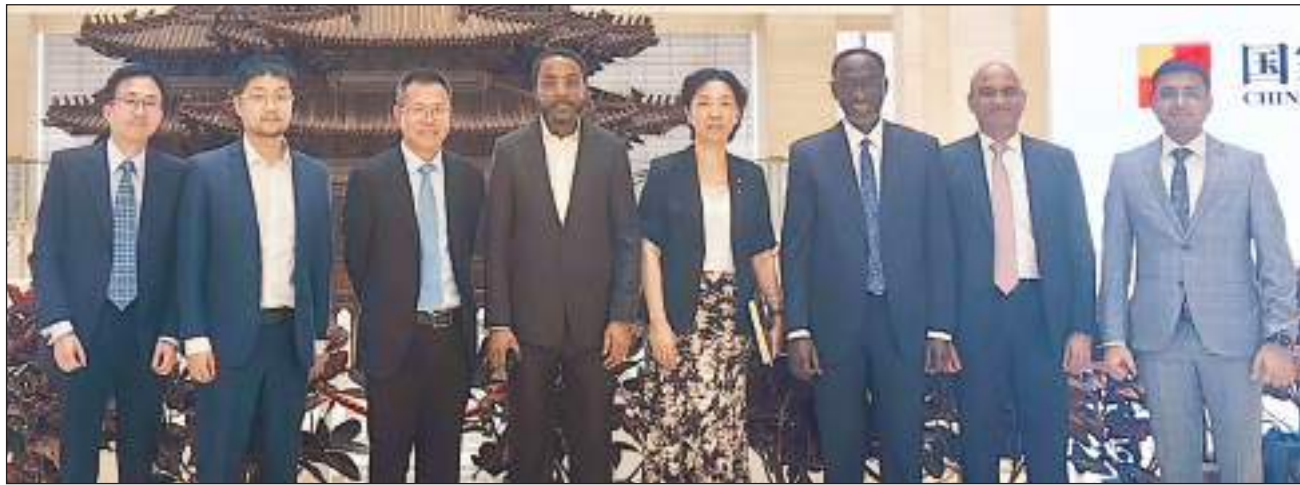
The SAZP Programme bears an estimated cost of \$575 million financed by other international partners including the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Once operational, the project will support inclusive and sustainable agro-industrial development and enhance the competitiveness of the agriculture sector through the promotion of select value chains.

AFDB VIEWPOINTS

Also speaking at the event, President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Dr. Akinwunmi Adesina, stated that the IsDB has partnered the bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to launch a \$538 million programme to develop special agro industrial processing zones in Nigeria.

The story continues online on www.thisdaylive.com



Representative of the federal government on the Board of Lekki Deep Seaport and Managing Director Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Mohammed Bello (4th from Left); Lekki Board Chairman, Mr. Abiodun Dabiri (3rd from Right), China Development Bank's Deputy Director-General Global Cooperation, Mr. Wu Guohua; Director International Cooperation, Mr. Zhao Nan; Deputy Director CDB, Mr. Li Beirui; Deputy Director China Development Bank, Dalian Region Zhan Xiao, and a representative of the Tolaram Group on the Board of Lekki Port during a visit to the China Development Bank Headquarters in Beijing for high level talks on finance related matters and overall success of the Port one year into commencement of operations... recently

Advertisers Canvass for Public-private Collaboration, Regulation

Advertisers and other stakeholders in the marketing industry have urged the federal government and its agencies involved in advertising regulations to always engage the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) and other sectoral groups in the ecosystem including that of the state governments, before coming up with new policies or regulations as some of the present regulations are threatening the survival of their businesses.

Speaking at the ADVAN Industry Dialogue with the theme: "Public-Private Collaboration In The Marketing Industry, The Path To Economic Viability," held in Lagos, the stakeholders unanimously concluded that constant engagement between government agencies and advertisers are necessary to grow the industry.

In his welcome address at the dialogue, ADVAN President said the association has continued to lead the charge in shaping the marketing landscape in the country, adding that the event served as a platform for collaboration and innovation as it continues to advocate for better industry practices and regulation.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, represented by the Director-General of the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), Dr. Lekan Fadolapo, applauded ADVAN for its advocacy role and contributions to the growth of the advertising and marketing industry.

Delivering the keynote address

Experts Task Marketers on Sustainable Marketing, Consumer Behaviour

Stories by Raheem Akingbolu

Experts have said that becoming a sustainable marketer is no longer optional as sustainability has become a necessity for the future.

The experts disclosed this at the recently concluded Industry Summit with the theme: "Sustainable Marketing for Growth," held in Lagos.

While delivering his keynote paper, Marketing Director, Nigerian Breweries Plc, Emmanuel Oriakhi, who was represented by Portfolio Manager, Nigerian Breweries Plc,

Samson Oloche, said: "as consumers are becoming more conscious of their environmental imprint, sustainable marketing is becoming more important."

According to him, "The economic challenge affects every player in the economy. It is only when we come together that we can tackle the challenges and forge a way going forward, noting that there are different consumers with varying expectations there is therefore the need to create products that meet them at their various needs."

Also, in her presentation, one

of the guest speakers, who is the Head of Sustainability, Access Holdings, Omobolanle Victor-Laniyan, who was represented by Head of Communication, Access Holdings, Moji Coker, said: "Innovative marketing requires that a company innovates by producing new products and services while improving and updating existing ones. This strategy often ensures that companies continuously identify better ways to develop and market products and services."

According to her, "companies

adopt innovative methods through new product development, product packaging, positioning strategies, specifications, market segmentation, customer value, delivery of goods and customer satisfaction. Enlightened marketers and sustainable businesses understand how to market new products or enter new markets successfully. They also know that the perfect way to grow and achieve success is always to offer consumers what they want."

Brand, Strategy & Communications Manager, Stanbic IBTC, Rita Akao said: "Build your ideal target audience biography (clients, employees shareholders, regulators, activists, stakeholders, or the public) Know how and where to communicate with your audience. Listen to what your audience says

MainOne Completes Repairs of Submarine Cable Two-months After

MainOne, an Equinix Company, has announced the conclusion of repairs to its submarine cable following an outage caused by major cuts on the cable, which occurred on Thursday, March 14, 2024.

Working closely with regional partners, maintenance providers, vessel owners, and permitting authorities, MainOne completed the necessary repairs to its submarine cable system, thanks to the diligent efforts of all stakeholders and has resumed regular operations with the utmost integrity of its submarine cable.

During the period, MainOne provided restoration capacity

and rerouted traffic on its network to minimise the impact on its customers.

Managing Director of MainOne, Funke Opeke, in a statement, expressed gratitude to all stakeholders for their support through the incidence. "We are immensely grateful for the support and collaboration of our partners, the patience of our valued customers, and the unwavering commitment of our team during this outage. MainOne's resilience in the face of the recent outage demonstrates the company's commitment to its customers and the region's digital transformation," Opeke said.

Expert Identifies Ways SMBs Can Leverage Business Apps

Agnes Ekebuike

Given the importance of Small and Medium Businesses (SMBs) in developing the Nigerian economy, the Country Head, Zoho Corporation in Nigeria, Kehinde Ogundare has identified five ways SMBs can leverage business apps for product development.

According to him, to reach their full potential, SMBs must leverage effective business-enabling technology, including solutions for CX, finance, HR and employee productivity.

He however said it would be important to remember that not every business app is equal, adding that it is essential for businesses to carefully select

the apps they utilise, "whether opting for a mix of best-of-breed solutions from various vendors or choosing to deploy a unified suite from a single vendor who offers end-to-end business solutions for all needs."

Ogundare identified new areas that businesses could consider when choosing apps that are best suited to their business needs to include: Apps with single source of truth; Scalability; Security; Ease of use; Customer Support and Integration.

In the area of single source of truth, Ogundare said data accruing from a variety of sources can be incredibly valuable, helping the business make decisions about where it's performing best and which areas it needs to work on.

He however said that could only happen if the app (or suite of apps) provides a single source of truth (SSOT).

For security, he advised that all apps must comply with local data protection guidelines or regulations and should protect the data of the customers who has trusted you with their information, since Nigerian SMEs are among the biggest targets of cybercrime.

For ease of use, he said, it would be vital to ensure that any business app or suite of apps that is selected is user-friendly, especially for non-technical staff. "Opting for easy-to-use apps has long-term benefits. As your business expands, seamless on-boarding becomes crucial," Ogundare said.

CrediCorp Partners FintechNGR to Drive Consumer Credit Initiative

Stories by Emma Okonji

Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation (CrediCorp), has partnered Fintech Association of Nigeria (FinTechNGR) to drive consumer credit scheme initiative through a robust payment platform that would be provided by members of FinTechNGR.

Speaking at a Social Meet in Lagos, organised by FinTechNGR, with the theme: "Augmenting the Future, AI, Credit and Transformation of Nigerian Finance," the Chairman, CrediCorp Board of Directors, Aderemi Abdul-Bojela, said members of FinTechNGR would have specific roles to play in the partnership, in the areas of providing robust platform for money transfer, technology evaluation, among others.

"Today, CrediCorp is engaging with members of FinTechNGR in a social interactive gathering to discuss collaboration and support for the growth of Consumer

Credit Corporation in Nigeria. We want to interact to understand how technology will drive the crediCorp initiative in Nigeria and also to understand the role that members of FinTechNGR will play in all of these initiatives around CrediCorp," Abdul-Bojela said.

Describing the partnership as a welcome development that will enhance savings culture among Nigerians, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of FinTechNGR, Dr. Babatunde Oribimah, said: "FinTechNGR is an enabler of technology advancement in Nigeria. We bring the players together to drive technology innovation. Our role in the FinTechNGR-CrediCorp partnership is to ensure that our members support the growth of consumer credit in Nigeria, by providing the relevant payment platforms for all financial transactions among the banks who are the lenders, the customers who are the borrowers and the CrediCorp who is the guarantor."

Speaking about the benefits for Nigerians, Oribimah said the Consumer Credit Corporation in Nigeria would enhance the country's credit culture and enable Nigerians to save and plan well with their savings. "The initiative will address inflation, help in liquidity flow, build trust in customers' borrowing, boost credit culture and enhance the culture of savings among Nigerians," Oribimah said.

Addressing the issue of interest rate, Abdul-Bojela said the interest rate would be below a single digit.

Addressing the issue of risk and consumer trust, Abdul-Bojela said the CrediCorp has put measures in place to ensure that the banks that would be involved in lending, would be protected and guaranteed of the repayment of the loans within the CrediCorp ecosystem.

He said there would be an independent management that would ensure that the right technology is put in place to recover all monies.



FEDERAL AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF NIGERIA

ADDENDUM

TO THE ADVERTS PUBLICATION ON MONDAY 13TH MAY, 2024 IN BUSINESS DAY, THE GUARDIAN AND FEDERAL TENDERS JOURNAL.

WE MAKE THIS ADDENDUM ON THE ADVERTS AS FOLLOWS:

- 1) INVITATION TO TENDER AND EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR PROCUREMENT UNDER FAAN 2024 IGR BUDGET (WORKS).
- 2) PREQUALIFICATION FOR CONCESSION OF TOWING OF VEHICLES AT MURATALA MUHAMMED INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, LAGOS.
- 3) INVITATION TO TENDER AND EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR PROCUREMENT UNDER FAAN 2024 IGR BUDGET (SUPPLIES).
- 4) INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR THE ACQUISITION OF DATA FOR SURVEY DOCUMENTS ON CERTIFICATE OF TITLES FOR AIRPORT LAYOUT PLANS UPDATE AND BOUNDARY RE-ESTABLISHMENT AT THE AIRPORTS.
- 5) EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR VALUATION OF ASSETS (LANDS, BUILDINGS, PLANT AND MACHINERY, VEHICLES, FURNITURE AND FITTINGS), UNDER FAAN 2024 IGR BUDGET.
- 6) INVITATION TO TENDER AND PREQUALIFICATION FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF MEDICAL DRUGS, REAGENTS AND EQUIPEMNT UNDER FAAN 2024 IGR BUDGET.

THAT THE ADVERT (LINE ITEMS 1, 3 AND 6) ABOVE IS FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION ONLY,

WHILE (LINE ITEMS 2, 4 AND 5) IS FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) ONLY AND NO PAYMENT THEREFORE, IS REQUIRED AT THIS STAGE.

CONSEQUENTLY, THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT DOES NOT INCLUDE THE SUBMISSION OF FINANCIAL BIDS AS QUALIFIED COMPANIES SHALL SUBSEQUENTLY BE NOTIFIED FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS UPON PAYMENT OF A NON-REFUNDABLE FEE OF N10,000.00 AT A LATER DATE.

- SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) AND PRE-QUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS SHALL CLOSE BY 11:30 AM ON MONDAY 27TH MAY, 2024.
- OPENING OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) AND PRE-QUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS SHALL BE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION AT 11:30AM MONDAY 27TH MAY, 2024 AT PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT MAINTENANCE YARD FAAN HQ, IKEJA LAGOS.
- THE CONTACT NUMBERS ARE 08033199481 OR 07059381200
- THESE CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS SUPERCEDE THE MENTIONED EARLIER ADVERTS OF 13TH OF MAY, 2024.

SIGNED

MANAGEMENT

Advocacy for Salt Reduction through Policy Intervention in Nigeria

Following a one-day 'Journalism Training on Salt Reduction' recently organised by the Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), **Sunday Ehigiator** writes on the dangers of excessive salt consumption, while also calling on the government to put in place, necessary policy intervention to help in curbing excessive salt intake by Nigerians



Attendees at the one-day 'Journalism Training on Salt Reduction' recently organised by the Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), in partnership with Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI), and the Network for Health Equity and Development (NHED)

As said in popular parlance, "If you can taste the salt, it's already salty". Eating too much salt raises blood pressure and the risk of cardiovascular disease, heart attack, stroke, and kidney disease.

The Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance (NCDs) also revealed that diseases such as cardiovascular diseases are the primary cause of death and disability worldwide.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), globally, excess sodium (salt) consumption (more than 5 grams a day, or about a teaspoon of table salt) leads to almost 2 million deaths each year.

Nigeria currently grapples with a huge burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as seen in recent data. By observation of social media data, you will also confirm the increase in crowdfunding for some lifelong diseases related to NCDs.

Nigeria currently records an estimated daily salt consumption reaching up to 5.8 grams per day, which exceeds the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended limit of 2 grams of sodium per day or less than 5 grams of salt per day, equivalent to just one teaspoon of salt daily.

Hypertension; mainly caused by an increased intake of salt or sodium, accounts for 12 per cent of deaths in Nigeria, hence the urgent need for more advocacy on salt reduction among Nigerians

The training

The media training, tagged, 'Journalism Training on Salt Reduction' organised by the Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA) in Lagos State, brought together journalists from different media organisations, and health experts, including Non-governmental organisations, as they sought to forge a pact on improving media advocacy on salt reduction, industry monitoring, and need for policy interventions.

It was held in partnership with Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI), and the Network for Health Equity and Development (NHED).

Mandatory salt target

In his remark, the Executive Director of CAPPA, Akinbode Olufemi, said Nigerians must make healthy dietary choices to live longer, and the government must also help the public in making these choices by setting up a mandatory salt target, as some of these lifestyle choices include the reduction of salt even in processed foods.

"Nigeria currently consumes up to 5.8

grams of salt per day which exceeds the World Health Organization (WHO) limit of 2 grams of sodium per day or less than 5 grams of sodium per day.

"Our role as a health-focused civil society organization is to help the public understand the dangers of their choices, especially when consumption is driven by a gap in knowledge when it comes to food. We also constantly engage with the government to put in place the relevant legislation to protect Nigerians.

"However, as journalists, you have key roles to play in this campaign to achieve the necessary salt reduction target for a healthy nation. You also must help Nigerians understand the gimmicks of the food production industry that promote unhealthy foods as the norm."

He said the training will further advance the quest that Nigerians are well-educated on the need for salt reduction and the need for the government to set mandatory salt targets in Nigeria.

NCDs as the primary cause of death and disability

On her part, a Food and Nutrition Scientist at CAPPA, Bukola Odele, noted that the WHO has confirmed non-communicable diseases (NCDs) to be the primary cause of death and disability globally. According to her, "The World Health Organisation (WHO) has confirmed Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) as the primary causes of death and disability globally, and it accounts for an estimated 29 per cent of all deaths in Nigeria.

"Approximately, 2 million deaths each year are linked to a high salt diet. Salt reduction is a crucial step in lowering NCD deaths and improving cardiovascular health.

"Nigeria records an average daily salt consumption ranging between 2.8g to 10g per day. The main source of sodium in our diet is salt, although it can come from monosodium glutamate (MSG). High sodium consumption (>2g/day, equivalent to 5g of salt per day) contributes to high blood pressure and increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.

"Reducing sodium intake significantly reduces blood pressure in adults. Salt reduction is a cost-effective public health intervention that adopts a multi-sectoral approach to tackle the NCD burden."

Global Action On Salt Reduction

Relating the 'SHAKE (Surveillance, Harness Industry, Adopt standards for

labelling and marketing, Knowledge, and Environment) Technical Package for Salt Reduction' as recommended by the WHO, Odele said, "The WHO recommends the formulation of sodium-related policies and practical actions that should be implemented to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease.

"These include, lowering sodium content in processed and packaged food, conducting mass media campaigns to alter consumer behaviour around sodium, implementing front-of-pack labelling to help consumers select food products with lower sodium content, implementing public food procurement and service policies to reduce sodium content in the food served or sold."

Need For Policy Intervention

Speaking on the need for policy intervention, NHED's Technical Advisor, Dr Jerome Mafeni, said that reducing sodium intake significantly reduces blood pressure in adults (<2g/day sodium (<5g /day salt).

According to him, "Key salt reduction measures will generate an extra year of healthy life for a cost that falls below the average annual income or gross domestic product per person.

"Reducing salt intake to less than 5 grams per day (about 1 teaspoon) will save around 2.5 million lives every year."

He proposed the implementation of policies such as, "Setting Salt Targets by developing mandatory salt reduction targets for food manufacturers and food service industries.

"Education and awareness campaign by utilising the mass media, and social media to educate the general population about the risk of excessive salt.

"Food labelling regulations in a way that mandatory clear and standard labelling on the sodium content on packaged foods; and lastly, regulation advocacy, in which we Advocate for mandatory salt reduction regulation to facilitate salt reduction efforts."

He concluded that, by implementing mandatory salt reduction targets, we not only address the immediate health risks associated with high sodium consumption but also pave the way for long-term benefits in reducing the burden of cardiovascular and other diseases.

Dangers of Unhealthy Processed Foods

Presenting a research work titled, 'Nigeria Sodium/Salt Consumption Patterns and Nigerian Perspective on Salt', a Cardiovascular Researcher from the University of Abuja (UNIABUJA) Cardiovascular Research Unit, Vanessa Alfa, noted that increased consumption of unhealthy processed foods, particularly those high in sodium, is a major risk factor for Cardiovascular Diseases (CVD).

According to her, "Sodium derived from packaged foods and beverages is a key driver of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), particularly hypertension and CVDs, in many parts of the world.

"Reducing sodium intake is a highly cost-effective strategy to control high blood pressure and prevent CVD: Sodium reduction strategy is a WHO 'Best Buy' strategy in addressing unhealthy diets in the population, and this can be achieved through, nutritional labelling reformulation and implementation of front-of-pack labelling."

Generating Editor-friendly salt-reduction stories

Speaking to attendees on how to get editor-friendly salt-reduction stories, Head of Media at CAPPA, Robert Egbe noted that, "As a journalist, writing stories that capture your editor's attention can sometimes be challenging. This is often because your story is not the only one fighting for his/her attention.

"There is always competition from other stories by your colleagues. If your editor does not find your story to be newsworthy or "strong" enough, it will most likely not stand a chance of publication on its merits.

"Sometimes, even newsworthy stories don't cut it. I'm sure all of us have that experience of filing a report, a good one, which seemed like a sure bet to get published but was not."

He said the reason such reports may not be published could be attributed to either, "Excessive adverts inflow, lack of space, or publisher's interest."

He, therefore, recommended through research, good use of statistics, use of infographics, humanising the story, using expert opinions, community efforts, hard-to-get or hidden sources, tying the story to events, seasonal angles, and using a very catchy, yet unsensational headlines as some ways to generate an editor-friendly salt-reduction stories

Marcelle Ruth Cancer Centre Partners Leadway Health HMO to Revolutionise Healthcare in Nigeria

Mary Nnah

Marcelle Ruth Cancer Centre has entered into a partnership with Leadway Health HMO to provide comprehensive medical insurance for patients, to revolutionise healthcare in Nigeria.

The facility, located in Victoria Island, Lagos, is Nigeria's premier healthcare institution specialising in cancer treatment, with cutting-edge technology and a dedicated team of experts committed to compassionate and comprehensive healthcare solutions.

At a press conference held at the facility, yesterday, the Chairman of Marcelle Ruth, Mr. Bolaji Odunsi, emphasised that the partnership with Leadway Health HMO was to make healthcare accessible to many Nigerians who desire global standard healthcare. The

guided tour of the facility showcased the institution's commitment to cutting-edge healthcare solutions and modern facilities, positioning it as a leader in healthcare solutions in Africa.

The radiology and cancer treatment facility features specialized rooms tailored to specific diagnostic and therapeutic needs, including a mammogram room, a CT scan room, an X-ray room, an Ultrasound room, and a modern laboratory room that competes with any such anywhere in the world. Additionally, Marcelle Ruth features two operating theatres, an eight-bed chemotherapy suite, and a radiotherapy centre equipped with a linear accelerator and brachytherapy capabilities.

Mr. Odunsi expressed his pride in the facility's achievements, stating that the institution's mission is to redefine cancer care in Nigeria by providing acces-

sible, world-class treatment options. He emphasized the accessibility and affordability which Marcelle Ruth provides, stating that there is no need to travel

abroad for any type of treatment, especially when the protocols followed abroad are the same as those being implemented at Marcelle Ruth.

Furthermore, Mr. Odunsi announced that Marcelle Ruth is poised to embark on a groundbreaking initiative that will further expand its capabilities and

redefine cancer treatment in Nigeria. The institution plans to introduce stem cell transplantation services, aimed at providing advanced treatment options for individuals battling bone marrow and blood cancers. Stem cell transplantation involves the transplantation of healthy stem cells to replace damaged or diseased cells in the bone marrow, thereby restoring the body's ability to produce healthy blood cells and effectively combat cancer.

Marcelle Ruth's dedication to pushing the boundaries of cancer care ensures that patients have access to the most advanced and effective treatment options available.

The transformative impact of the institution's partnership with Leadway Health HMO will alleviate the financial burden often associated with cancer treatment, ensuring that patients can access comprehensive health insurance coverage.



Co-Founder and CEO, Marcelle Ruth Cancer Centre and Specialist Hospital, Dr. Modupe Elebute-Odunsi

Emir Promises Support for Kano Bio-medical Research Centre

Precious Ugwuzor

The 15th Emir of Kano, Aminu Ado Bayero, has promised to support the Kano Independent Research Center Trust (KIRCT) to achieve its mandate.

He spoke when the donors and trustees paid him a courtesy call in his palace.

KIRCT was established by the Kano government and Pfizer in Dawakin Kudu, Kano.

The centre conducts biomedical (and healthcare) research with a focus on communicable and non-communicable diseases of public health importance in Nigeria and the African continent.

It also executes programmes for workforce development in public health.

The KIRCT donors and trustees met in Kano, during which they briefed the Secretary to the State Government Dr Abdullahi Baffa Bichi, who represented Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf.

The donors-trustees meeting was on the ongoing development and long-term sustainability of the research centre led by the Kano International Independent Research Trust.

Emir Bayero said he was conversant with the centre's establishment and was keen to sustain the role played

by those before him.

"I give thanks to Allah that the centre is being further developed for the benefit of the people.

"We will give full and continued support so the Trust will make progress. Be assured of my support and the cooperation of the Emirate," he said.

A joint statement issued after the meeting at the SSG's office reads: "Pfizer Inc. and Kano State Government are coming together once again to highlight the work of the Trust and its efforts in establishing a preeminent research centre.

"Since the establishment of the Trust and implementation of a strategic plan four years ago, the Trust has made great strides — including appointing a Director-General/Chief Executive Officer, attracting some grants, installing governance mechanisms that have improved its independence, transparency, and accountability and, most importantly, in the volume and quality of research being conducted at the centre. "Pfizer Inc. and Kano State government also want to express their appreciation to those whose hard work has resulted in a preeminent international research centre focusing on a wide array of serious diseases in Kano.

"The donors pay tribute

to the deceased trustee Prof Kamil Alausa who passed on November 10, 2023, for his significant contributions to the work of KIRCT and wish the Director-General, Prof Hamisu Salihu and the Executive Secretary, David Odiwo a successful tenure.

"With their selfless service, the research centre continues to be operational and managed sustainably to deliver immense value to the people of Kano State, Nigeria, and Africa as a

whole."

Among the delegation were Pfizer counsel Chief Anthony Idigbe (SAN), Pfizer Country Manager, Nigeria/Cluster Lead, West Africa Mr Olayinka Subair, and Cluster Lead, Sub-Sahara Africa, Mr Rhulani Nhlani.

The statement adds: "At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives.

"We strive to set the

standard for quality, safety, and value in the discovery, development, and manufacture of healthcare products, including innovative medicines and vaccines.

"Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments, and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time.

"Consistent with our responsibility as one of the

world's premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with health care providers, governments, and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world.

"For more than 175 years, we have worked to make a difference for all who rely on us.

"We routinely post information that may be important to investors on our website at www.pfizer.com."



From left: Pfizer Country Manager, Nigeria/Cluster Lead, West Africa, Mr Olayinka Subair; Cluster Lead, Sub-Sahara Africa, Mr Rhulani Nhlani; Emir of Kano, Aminu Ado Bayero and Pfizer counsel, Chief Anthony Idigbe (SAN) during a visit to the Emir by KIRCT funders and trustees, last Tuesday

Dettol Unveils International Football Star, Taiwo Awoniyi as Brand Ambassador for Dettol Cool

Nigeria's leading hygiene brand, Dettol, manufactured by Reckitt has unveiled Nigerian international football star, Taiwo Awoniyi, as the new brand ambassador for one of its category products, Dettol Cool. This announcement was made at the official signing event held at Reckitt Sub-Saharan headquarters in Lagos recently.

Awoniyi, who currently plays for English football side Nottingham Forest and the Nigerian football team, has built a reputation as one of the most impressive players in his

position.

His partnership with Dettol establishes him as the new face of the upgraded Dettol 5c Cool soap which provides the triple benefits of maximum freshness with a 5° cooling sensation, protection against 99.9% of disease-causing germs, and protection against body odour. As Dettol endeavors to keep Nigerians cool and refreshed all day long, Awoniyi has been hand-picked as the perfect embodiment of the brand's sentiments.

"I'm happy to be partnering with a global

brand like Dettol Cool," said Taiwo Awoniyi. "As

a footballer, maintaining good hygiene is essential



L-R: Category Manager, Reckitt Sub-Saharan Africa, Zara Adoki; Marketing Director, Reckitt Sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzim Rezwan; International Footballer and Brand Ambassador Dettol 5c Cool, Taiwo Awoniyi and General Manager, Reckitt Sub-Saharan Africa, Akbar Ali Shah at the signing event of International Football Star, Taiwo Awoniyi as Brand Ambassador of Dettol 5c Cool held recently in Lagos

for my performance and overall health. Dettol Cool's commitment to hygiene aligns perfectly with my values, and I'm excited to work with the brand to inspire young Nigerians to stay cool, clean, confident, and reach for their goals."

Speaking at the signing event, Tanzim Rezwan, Marketing Director, Sub-Saharan Africa at Reckitt said "We are thrilled to welcome Taiwo Awoniyi to the Dettol family, Taiwo's talent, dedication, and vibrant personality make him a perfect fit for Dettol Cool. We are confident that

together, we can inspire Nigerians, especially youths, to embrace good hygiene practices and live healthier lives. We look forward to what we will accomplish together." he said.

Taiwo Awoniyi's unveiling as the brand ambassador for Dettol Cool marks the beginning of a promising partnership between the football star and Dettol Nigeria. Together, they will promote good hygiene practices and inspire Nigerians to prioritize healthy living. This move further reinforces Dettol's commitment to building a good health and hygiene culture.

GAMINGWEEK

Edited by **NSEOBONG OKON-EKONG** | gamingweek1117@gmail.com | Tel: 08114495324



Drizzy Dollars: Drake's Million-dollar Bets and the Curse that Won't Quit



Aubrey 'Drake' Graham, the chart-topping rapper and pop culture icon, is known for more than just his music. **Davidson Abraham** writes that in recent years, Drake has become a fixture in the world of sports betting, placing high-stakes wagers on everything from UFC fights to the Super Bowl. These bets, often documented on social media with hefty sums of money on display, have become a source of both entertainment and controversy.

The so-called 'Drake Curse' is the most intriguing aspect of Drake's betting habits. Fans and analysts have observed a curious trend: athletes or teams that Drake publicly supports tend to lose. This unofficial jinx has fueled endless online debates

and added a layer of drama to Drake's wagers. This perceived curse has only been amplified by the ongoing feud between Drake and fellow rapper Kendrick Lamar. Their lyrical sparring has fascinated hip-hop fans for years, and some see Drake's losing bets as a potential manifestation of

Kendrick's lyrical diss tracks. While there's no factual basis for such a connection, it adds another layer of intrigue to the narrative. Beyond the theatrics, Drake's betting raises questions about the influence of celebrities on sports. His massive social media following means his support

for a particular team or athlete can generate significant buzz. This, in turn, could potentially affect betting lines or even the outcome of a game, with some fans placing bets based on Drake's pick rather than their own analysis. However, it's important to remember that Drake is not

always on the losing end. In February 2024, his \$1.15 million bet on the Kansas City Chiefs to win the Super Bowl paid off handsomely, netting him a cool \$2.34 million. This victory, dubbed by fans the 'End of the Drake Curse', showed that even a perceived jinx can be broken.

One thing's for sure: Drake's high-stakes bets will continue to generate headlines and fuel online discussions. Whether backing the underdog or the favourite, his wagers add a layer of entertainment to the world of sports. And who knows, maybe one day he'll even collaborate with Kendrick Lamar on a diss track about the "curse" phenomenon. That would be a million-dollar headline.

NATIONAL LOTTERY TRUST FUND

Key Performance Indicators (Renewed - Hope Impact)

Hon. Zaphaniah Bitrus Jisalo, MFR
Minister for Special Duties & Inter-Governmental Affairs

Chart Showing Revenue Performance 22 Billion in 17 Years

REVENUE

Dr. Bello Maigari, OON
Executive Secretary, National Lottery Trust Fund

GOOD CAUSES PROJECTS

SPORTS

Percentage Distribution of Sports Projects Across the 6 Geopolitical Zones:

Zone	Percentage
North West	17%
North East	17%
South West	17%
South East	17%
North Central	17%
South Central	17%

3,000+ Primary schools benefitted in sport distribution across the Federation.

13 Federal universities benefitted from soccer kits and equipment across the 6 geopolitical zones and FCT.

- Provision of kits and sponsorship of Para-Powerlifting world cup 2022 chaired by First Lady Federal Republic of Nigeria.

HEALTH

Percentage of Health Projects Across 6 Geopolitical Zones and FCT:

Zone	Percentage
North West	17%
North East	17%
South West	17%
South East	17%
North Central	17%
South Central	17%

347 Public secondary schools benefitted in First Aid Intervention Programmes.

48 Primary healthcare centers benefitted from upgrade, supply of vital medical equipment and ambulances.

13 Hospitals benefitted from Covid 19 Test kits and PPE's and ambulance.

1 Intensive Care Unit launched to cater for covid 19 patients.

WATER & SANITATION

15 Communities in Benue state were provided with solar-powered boreholes to improve access to portable and clean water.

14 Solar-powered boreholes are currently under construction in Port-harcourt, River State and Tarka Iga in Benue State.

EDUCATION

- Strengthening access to learning in public schools in Surulere, Lagos State through counterpart funding with Jump Start Initiative Phase I & II.
- Strengthening entrepreneurship and vocational training through construction and equipping of a block of skills acquisition Centre at Federal Polytechnic Daura, Katsina State.

With Impending Conference, Enugu Positions for Nigeria's Gaming Tourism Destination

Enugu State is poised to establish itself as Nigeria's leading destination for gambling tourism. The highly anticipated Enugu State Gaming Conference, organised by the Enugu State Gaming and Lotto Commission (ESGC), will take place at the Amadeo Event Centre on June 27, 2024. This inaugural conference will bring together industry stakeholders to explore new opportunities and collaborations within the gaming sector.

Enugu State Gaming and Lotto Commission, established under CAP 86 laws of Enugu State, is the legal regulator for all gaming/gambling/lotto activities within Enugu State, that is dedicated to promoting responsible gaming practices and ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for all participants.

"This conference marks a pivotal moment for the gaming industry in Enugu State," said Prince Arinze Arum, Executive Secretary and CEO of ESGC. "It's an opportunity for us to showcase how far we've come in regulating and managing the gaming landscape in our state."

This groundbreaking event's theme is 'Exploring the Future of Gaming: Innovations and Collaborations', reflecting a commitment to fostering growth and development within the industry. Governor Peter Mbah, the special guest of honour, will attend to show support for initiatives aimed at positioning Enugu as a hub for gambling tourism.

"We believe that through

Prince Arum

strategic partnerships between casino operators and hospitality providers, we can unlock new avenues for growth and prosperity within our state," stated Arum. "This conference is about more than just discussing ideas - it's about taking concrete steps towards making Enugu a premier destination for gaming enthusiasts."

The event will provide attendees with valuable insights into regulatory practices, market trends, and potential investment opportunities within the gaming sector. Participants will also have the unique opportunity to engage directly with Mbah on his vision for promoting sustainable growth within the industry.

With its focus on collaboration and innovation, the Enugu State Gaming Conference represents a significant milestone in advancing the state's position as a key player in Nigeria's growing gambling tourism market. By leveraging its regulatory prowess and creating fertile ground for partnership opportunities, ESGC is paving the way for a bright future.

GAMINGWEEK



How NLTF Revitalised 40 Healthcare Facilities in Two Years

Muhammad Auwal

With the growing need to strengthen public health systems at the local government level to ensure effective community medical practice and access to quality healthcare service delivery across Nigeria, the National Lottery Trust Fund (NLTF) has been delivering on its mandate as the Federal Government agency saddled with the responsibility of utilising a certain percentage of the proceeds to the execution of good causes projects across the country for the benefit and well-being of Nigerians.

Indeed, NLTF has been working round the clock to promote all-inclusive healthcare coverage through procurement and donating world-class health equipment to primary and tertiary health facilities, funded through proceeds from the agency since 2018.

This pragmatic move by NLTF, with Dr Bello Maigari, the Executive Secretary/CEO, at the helm of affairs, is a significant milestone in the history of the lottery in Nigeria. It especially comes when public health experts seek strengthened health systems to help citizens attain their maximum health potential.

The policy thrust of the Fund's all-inclusive healthcare coverage is to carry out intervention programmes in health institutions across the country to help promote proper and effective diagnosis of critical diseases and ailments.

It seeks to support the current administration's core objectives to improve security, achieve economic diversification, fight corruption, and build a buoyant economy that supports inclusive growth and creates broad-based prosperity for every Nigerian. There has been a reduction in the number of referrals and travels by patients seeking proper diagnosis and treatments.

To ameliorate the suffering of the locals resulting from the wrong diagnosis through faulty or malfunctioning equipment and prevent mortality resulting from wrong prescriptions and wrong diagnosis, as well as address the problem of inadequacy and poor organisation of health services at the local government level.

The agency focuses on promoting access to proper and accurate diagnosis of ailments to facilitate correct and appropriate treatment. Hence, the following medical equipment was procured and donated to health institutions from 2018 to date to help promote all-inclusive



Maigari

healthcare coverage across Nigeria.

The medical equipment and health supplies include well-equipped ambulances, digital ultrasound machines, digital X-ray machines, anaesthetics machines, hydraulic operation tables, wheelchairs, screens, suction machines, BP apparatus, and stools with castors. Others are blood bank, hematocrit centrifuge and sponge, holding forceps, standard first aid boxes and accessories, patient blankets, bed sheets, MVA kits, dental examination head heights, dental aprons, portable bone drilling machines, soft surgical wire, tongue and check detractor, hospital beds and mattresses, blood bank refrigerators, oxygen concentrators and G/C liquid and powder.

The agency provided an ultrasound and digital X-ray machine to Aisha Muhammadu Buhari General Hospital, Jega, Kebbi State, and standard first aid boxes and accessories to select public secondary schools throughout the country, including the Federal Capital Territory.

The General Hospital Toro in Bauchi received anaesthetic machines, a hydraulic operation table, wheelchairs, a screen, a suction machine, a BP apparatus, a stool with a castor, a blood bank, a haematocrit centrifuge, and sponge-holding forceps.

While ultrasound, X-ray machines and autoclave equipment in General Hospital,

Umezeoke, Ezza North LGA, Ebonyi, and another set of ultrasounds, X-ray machines, and vital medical equipment were presented to the Comprehensive Primary Health Centre, Okundi-Boki, in Cross River. Through its intervention, the agency provided ultrasound, X-ray machines and an autoclave to the General Hospital Daura, Katsina.

The NLTF also funded the procurement of medical equipment for seven healthcare facilities in 2019. The facilities are General Hospital Hong, Adamawa, Federal Medical Centre, Yola, Federal Teaching Hospital, Gombe Primary Healthcare Centre Jjeru Oba-Ogbomoso, Oyo Primary Healthcare Centre, Iresapa Ogbomoso, Specialist Hospital, Gombe Primary Healthcare Clinic, and New-Karu Nasarawa.

Equally, the NLTF funded the building, furnishing, and equipping of an ultramodern mortuary complex at the General Hospital, Hong, in Adamawa State in 2019 and the Katsina State COVID-19 ICU Treatment Centre at the General Hospital Daura-Katsina State in 2020.

NLTF intervened in the purchase and donation of Emergency Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and COVID-19 Test kits across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria in 2020 and the purchase of vital medical equipment to Gbaja Randle Hospital Mother & Child Care, General Hospital, Gbaja Street, Surulere, Lagos State in 2022.

The NLTF is committed to sustaining its ongoing interventions in the health sector by promoting all-inclusive healthcare coverage across the 36 states of the federation and the FCT and leveraging the enabling environment for Lottery business revenue growth created by the current administration, in fulfilment of President Bola Tinubu's government's agenda.

In line with development, the National Lottery Trust Fund has revitalised more than 40 healthcare facilities across Nigeria's six geo-political zones in the last two years.

Former Minister of Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Affairs and current Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Senator George Akume, disclosed this during the recent official inauguration and handover of vital medical equipment to the General Hospital, Igboora, Oyo.

Akume expressed satisfaction with the remarkable progress made by the NLTF and said that the agency had done very well in implementing intervention programmes in health and other key infrastructural sectors.

"The federal government is impressed with the agency's resolve to deliver life-changing outcomes to the people through its interventions, despite the dwindling global economy and the agency's meagre income. The government is aware of your revitalisation of over 40 healthcare facilities across the six geo-political zones within the last two years, putting

smiles on the faces of ordinary Nigerians in remote villages and communities," he said.

Akume, therefore, charged the agency to extend the laudable interventions to other primary healthcare centres across the country.

In her remarks, Mrs Patricia Ibiene, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Special Duties, said that the agency's gigantic interventions were timely considering the state of the country's healthcare facilities. Ibiene noted that the projects were a clear testament to the good leadership of the NLTF and commended the executive secretary and his management team for these very important interventions in equipping the health sector and other developmental sectors across Nigeria.

Ibiene cited the Jump Start School Project initiated and designed to provide learning and teaching aids to more than 45 public schools and the Gbaja Randle Maternity Hospital, both in Surulere, Lagos State, is one such project undertaken by the NLTF.

The permanent secretary further listed the Moniya General Hospital, Kugba Maternity and Onikan Healthcare Centre in Oyo, Ogun, and Lagos states.

She, therefore, called on individuals and organisations licensed and engaged in the lottery business to meet their statutory obligations of due remittance to the government to avoid legal issues.

Speaking at the event, the Executive Secretary of the NLTF, Dr Bello Maigari, said that the interventions had reaffirmed President Bola Tinubu-led administration's commitment towards promoting quality healthcare and the well-being of the country through funding from national lottery proceeds.

"This intervention is a clear demonstration of our desire to promote social inclusion of the most vulnerable sectors of our society. We reaffirm our enduring and sincere commitment to utilising lottery proceeds judiciously for the good and general well-being of the nation," Maigari said.

Therefore, he urged the Igboora community and the Oyo government to ensure the proper use and security of the equipment.

WORDS ON MARBLE

"The gaming sector holds the key to economic growth and is a potent tool for addressing the pressing issues of unemployment and low per capita income. Nigeria has so much untapped potentials; and its most precious resource is its population. The gaming industry had become more dynamic, with technology, a development that has created a digital era and fundamentally reshaped how people engaged and perceived the gaming industry. The Commission would partner with operators in the gaming industry to build a world-class online lottery university."

- Lanre Gbajabiamila, Director General, National Lottery Regulatory Commission



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BUSINESS/MONEYGUIDE

Enugu, Diamond Stripes Sign Deal to Revive Moribund Oil Palm Produce Firm

Ndubuisi Francis in Abuja

The Enugu State Government and Diamond Stripes Limited have entered into an agreement paving the way for the latter to revive the moribund state-owned United Palm Produce Limited (UPPL) through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), Pragmatic Palm Limited.

This followed the signing of a deal with the Enugu State Government for Diamond Stripes to acquire a controlling stake in UPPL.

United Palm Products Limited was set up by the state government to plant palm trees and engage in the production of palm products such as palm oil and kernel, among others.

The firm is an offshoot of the now defunct Agricultural Development Corporation established by the then Eastern Region government led by the then Premier Michael Okpara.

However, UPPL has remained moribund as efforts by successive administrations in the state to revive it were unsuccessful.

Diamond Stripes, established in 2007, is a dynamic investment firm focusing on sustainable infrastructure and early-stage projects.

With a track record of successful collaborations in various sectors including hydropower generation, ports, solar power, and agro-processing, the company provides a platform for international and domestic capital resources, delivering exceptional returns for investors.

Its helmsman, Prof. George Nwangwu is renowned for his expertise in project finance, law and infrastructure finance.

A statement made available to THISDAY, Monday quoted the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of

Diamond Stripes Limited, Prof. George Nwangwu as saying that palm products were in high demand.

Nwangwu, who spoke at the agreement-signing ceremony in Enugu, stated that with the deal with Diamond Stripes Limited, an acclaimed agricultural processing firm, the moribund firm is expected to come to life once again, adding that it was capable of kick-starting the economic transformation of Enugu State.

He said: "We have to realise that agriculture is a business. We are going to bring in a lot of equipment and we are going to process the palm. Not just the palm, the palm kernel is an export commodity. If you go back and look at the biggest import over the years, palm is actually number five on the list. So, it is a significant product, and we tend to make sure we optimise its potential here," he said.



L-R: Independent Non-Executive Director, Berger Paints Nigeria Plc, Erejuwa Gbadebo; Non-Executive Director, Kunle Olowokande; Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Alaba Fagun; Chairman, Abi Ayida; Company Secretary and Legal Adviser, Omolara Bello; Independent Non-Executive Director, Aisha Umar, Non-Executive Director, Raj Mangtani and Non-Executive Director, Dr Oghechi Iheanacho, during the 64th Annual General Meeting of Berger Paints in Lagos...recently

Shareholders Laud Berger Paints for Posting Good Returns

Shareholders of Berger Paints Nigeria Plc have commended the management for its resourcefulness in improving the company's fortunes in the last financial year and for paying competitive dividends and assuring them of higher shareholder value.

Commenting on the Company's performance at its 64th Annual General Meeting in Lagos yesterday, the National Co-ordinator, Pragmatic Shareholders Association, Mrs Adebisi Bakare, stated that the 2023 performance was a significant improvement on the previous year against the background of headwinds such as high energy cost, soaring

inflation rate and exchange rate, in addition to low purchasing power of consumers.

Other shareholders, including the Chairman Emeritus, Independent Shareholders' Solidarity Association of Nigeria (ISSAN), Sunny Nwosu, expressed satisfaction with the company's impressive performance and commended its board and management for the balanced gender representation in their compositions.

The Chairman, Mr. Abi Ayida, explained that adherence to many sustainability initiatives enhanced the company's performance in the review period. Ayida also attributed the stellar performance to five

key pillars: product innovation, market expansion, operational efficiency, customer experience and strategic partnerships.

"In the face of market uncertainties, Berger Paints Plc., maintained its position as a leading player in the paints and coating industry. Our relentless commitment to innovation, product quality, and customer satisfaction has not only fortified our market presence but also empowered us to seize new opportunities for growth. Currently, Berger Paints operates within the premium and super premium segments of the market," explained Ayida.

Interswitch Set to Empower Nigerian Talent for the Workplace

Interswitch, one of Africa's leading digital payments and commerce companies, has announced plans to host the third edition of its annual Career Fair, aimed at unlocking the immense potential among Nigerian youths and providing them with the required support to thrive in their careers.

The event, which is scheduled to hold in Lagos, will feature top speakers like the Founder and Group Managing Director of Interswitch Group, Mitchell

Elegbe; Founder, IMMERSE Coaching Company, Debola Deji-Kurunmi; and Chief Human Resource Officer, Interswitch Nigeria, Franklin Ali. Other speakers include Vice President, Sales and Account Management, at Interswitch, Robinta Aluyi, and Head Employee Experience, Sahara Group, Ivie Temitayo-Ibitoye, among others.

This year's edition, themed: "Reimagining Work-People, Culture, Technology," highlights the need to view the future of

work from a different lens by leveraging innovative technologies to enhance productivity in the modern workplace.

The Interswitch Career Fair 3.0, which is free for all attendees, has been designed to provide attendees with the fundamental and advanced tools and skills to thrive in the new world of work. Furthermore, attendees will have the opportunity to connect, network, and extensively explore new career opportunities.

Moniepoint Ranked Africa's Fastest Growing Financial Institution

Moniepoint Inc, parent company of Nigeria's leading financial institutions, Moniepoint MFB and TeamApt Limited has been ranked by the Financial Times, one of the world's leading business news organizations, recognized internationally for its authority, integrity, and accuracy as Africa's fastest-growing financial institution.

The world's leading financial publication confirmed Moniepoint Inc's accolade in its annual "Africa's Fastest Growing Companies" survey, released today. It is the second consecutive year Moniepoint has achieved both the fastest-growing fintech milestone, and, ranked in Africa's top four fastest-growing companies overall.

Group CEO of Moniepoint Inc, Tosin Eniolorunda, said: "We are

thrilled to be recognised by the Financial Times as Africa's fastest growing fintech for the second consecutive year. Achieving rapid growth and scale is a fantastic achievement; maintaining that year-on-year is even better. The ranking is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the entire Moniepoint team, and the trust of millions of customers across Africa in the Company.

"2023 was a pivotal year for Moniepoint. Moniepoint has moved from being an agency-dominated institution to becoming merchant-dominated as we have seen a lot more people embrace more digital payment solutions. It is humbling to see that we have become a household name that people have come to know and trust, the bellwether for reliable transactions every time."

According to FT Africa Editor, David Pilling, "The third year of our now expanded ranking of Africa's Fastest Growing Companies comes against a background in which many economies are struggling to recover from the Covid pandemic. The FT-Statista list reveals the type of companies that, even in hard times, have managed to grow, often by disrupting markets...This year, our ranking has a wider geographical spread of companies than before. The big newcomer is Morocco, with 12 companies in the top 125 against just three last time. Mauritanian-domiciled companies also did well with nine winners, against four in 2022. South Africa had 42 companies in the list, followed by Nigeria's 25, while Kenya tied third at 12."

MARKET INDICATORS

MONEY AND CREDIT STATISTICS (MILLION NAIRA)

	FEBRUARY
Money Supply (M3)	95,557,263.40
-- CBN Bills Held by Money Holding Sectors	1,588,771.44
Money Supply (M2)	93,968,491.96
-- Quasi Money	63,691,242.70
-- Narrow Money (M1)	30,277,249.26
--- Currency Outside Banks	3,411,735.44
--- Demand Deposits	26,865,513.82
Net Foreign Assets (NFA)	7,408,009.72
Net Domestic Assets (NDA)	88,149,253.67
-- Net Domestic Credit (NDC)	114,788,867.95
--- Credit to Government (Net)	33,925,848.79
--- Memo: Credit to Govt. (Net) less FMA	0.00
--- Memo: Fed. and Mirror Accounts (FMA)	0.00
--- Credit to Private Sector (CPS)	80,863,019.16
-- Other Assets Net	13,319,068.99
Reserve Money (Base Money)	21,230,656.70
-- Currency in Circulation	3,693,573.23
-- Banks Reserves	17,537,083.47
-- Special Intervention Reserves	433,229.15

• Source - CBN

Money Market Indicators (in Percentage)

Month	February
Inter-Bank Call Rate	19.25
Minimum Rediscount Rate (MRR)	
Monetary Policy Rate (MPR)	22.75
Treasury Bill Rate	17.03
Savings Deposit Rate	5.86
1 Month Deposit Rate	8.69
3 Months Deposit Rate	9.89
6 Months Deposit Rate	9.61
12 Months Deposit Rate	10.75
Prime Lending rate	15.06
Maximum Lending Rate	26.55

• Monetary Policy Rate - 13%

OPEC DAILY BASKET PRICE AS AT 4TH APRIL, 2024

The price of OPEC basket of twelve crudes stood at \$87.33 a barrel on Monday, compared with \$86.00 the previous Thursday, according to OPEC Secretariat calculations. The OPEC Reference Basket of Crudes (ORB) is made up of the following: Saharan Blend (Algeria), Djeno (Congo), Zafiro (Equatorial Guinea), Rabi Light (Gabon), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basrah Medium (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Meroy (Venezuela)

MARKET NEWS

Stock Market Drops by N503.32bn on Uncertainty over MPC Outcome

Kayode Tokede

The Nigerian stock market has declined by N503.32 billion in the first three days of this week as investors' profit-taking persisted in high-mid capitalised companies listed on the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX).

Analysts attributed the downward trend to uncertainty amid the scheduled next week's Monetary Policy Committee

(MPC) of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

At the last MPC meeting, members voted to hike the benchmark interest rate by 200 basis points to 24.75 per cent from 22.75 per cent amid rising inflation rate (33.69 per cent as of April 2024).

The CBN governor, Dr. Olayemi Cardoso has announced the retention of the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) of deposit money banks at 45

per cent. However, the MPC adjusted the CRR of merchant banks from 10 per cent to 14 per cent.

Cardoso had stated that it here was "every indication" that the MPC would "do whatever is necessary" to contain the soaring inflation.

Meanwhile, opening the new week, the domestic stock market recorded a loss of N297 billion following profit-taking activities in Seplat Energy

Plc and 23 others, and on the following day, market capitalisation declined by N133 billion on selloffs in Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc and 19 others.

As of the close of the stock market yesterday, the stock market closed on a negative note as selloffs on Nigerian Exchange Group Plc and 29 others dragged the capitalisation lower by N74 billion.

Consequently, the NGX ASI

dropped by 0.91 per cent to close yesterday at 97,343.42 basis points from 98,233.76 basis points the stock market opened for trading this week.

For yesterday trading activities, the downturn was impacted by losses recorded in medium and large capitalised stocks, amongst which are; Nigerian Exchange Group, PZ Cussons Nigeria, UAC of Nigeria (UACN), Zenith Bank and United Bank for

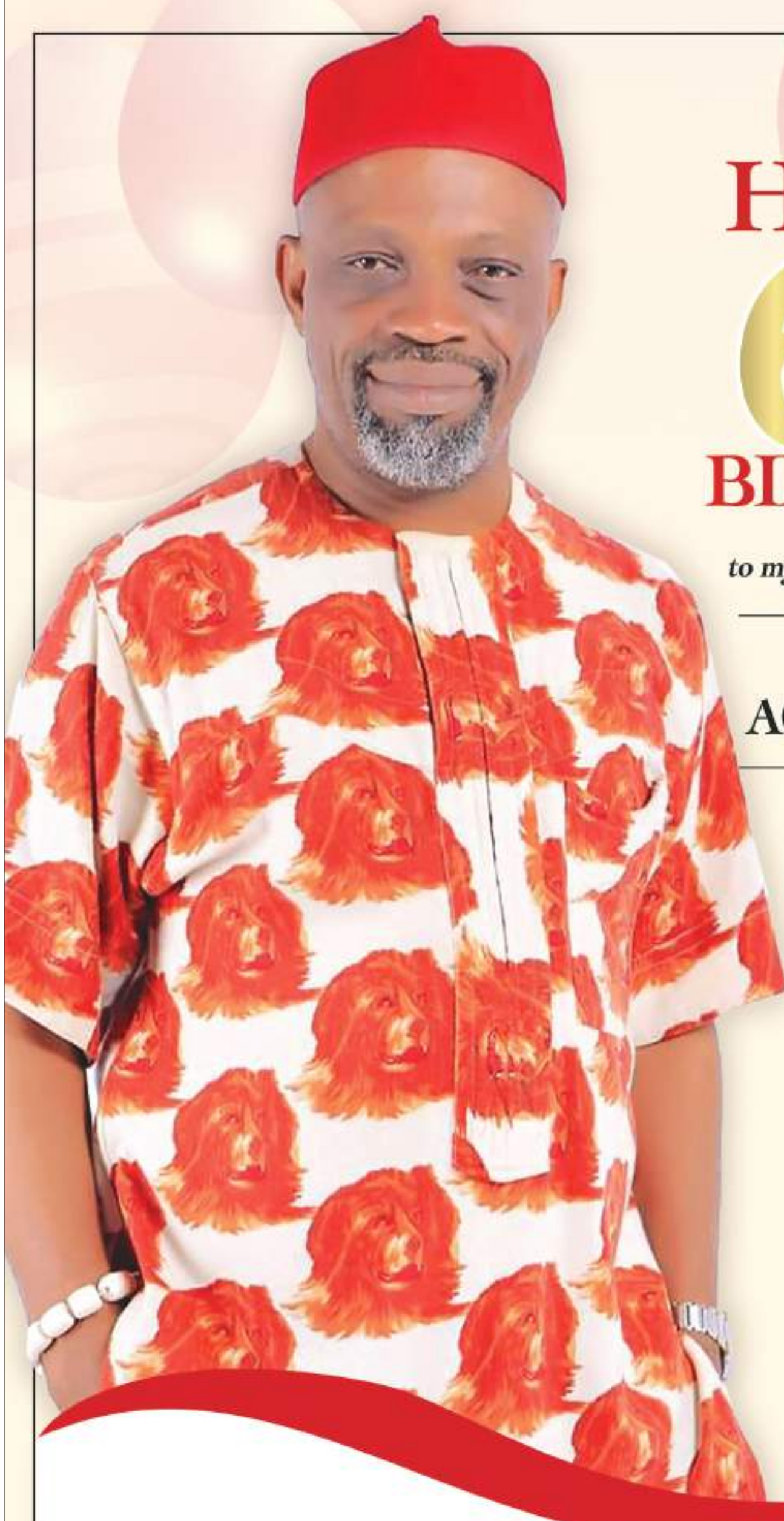
Africa (UBA).

As measured by market breadth, market sentiment was negative, as 30 stocks lost relative to 13 gainers. Custodian Investment recorded the highest price gain of 9.63 per cent to close at N10.25, per share. International Energy Insurance followed with a gain of 9.29 per cent to close at N1.53, while Sovereign Trust Insurance rose by 7.89 per cent to close at 41 kobo, per share.

PRICES FOR SECURITIES TRADED AS OF MAY 15 / 24

MAIN BOARD	DEALS	MARKET PRICE	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE TRADED (N)
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N FINANCIAL SERVICES				
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
1 UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC	23.50	-2.34 ↓	517	22,517,992
2 ZENITH BANK PLC	34.40	-0.85 ↓	507	15,586,140
BANKING				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
3 ACCESS HOLDINGS PLC	17.30	-0.29 ↓	746	33,234,562
4 FBN HOLDINGS PLC	24.50	-2.09 ↓	208	2,135,930
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS				
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
5 MTN NIGERIA COMMUNICATIONS PLC	220.00	-	265	1,368,826
ICT				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
6 DANGOTE CEMENT PLC	656.70	-	37	9,092
7 LAFARGE AFRICA PLC	539,611.15	0.30 ↑	78	501,210
BUILDING MATERIALS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
8 SEPLAT ENERGY PLC	1,743,149.32	2,962.30	90	162,270
EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
9 ELLAH LAKES PLC	8,674.43	3.15	32	6,787,621
10 FTN COCOA PROCESSORS PLC	6,240.00	-0.62 ↓	47	856,022
11 OKOMU OIL PALM PLC	243,914.79	255.70	15	25,902
12 PRESKO PLC	291,500.00	291.50	31	885,838
CROP PRODUCTION				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
13 LIVESTOCK FEEDS PLC	5,250.00	1.75	35	482,583
LIVESTOCK/ANIMAL SPECIALTIES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
14 CUSTODIAN INVESTMENT PLC	54,955.43	9.35	30	130,150
15 JOHN HOLT PLC	770.52	1.98	4	11,127
16 S C O A NIG. PLC	1,397.13	2.15	0	0
17 TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATION PLC	491,840.68	12.10	331	9,711,276
18 U A C N PLC	43,453.06	14.85	40	222,564
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
19 ARBICO PLC	152.96	1.03	0	0
BUILDING CONSTRUCTION				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
20 AVA INFRASTRUCTURE FUND	4,075.00	-	0	0
21 CHAPEL HILL DENHAM NIG. INFRAS DEBT FUND	109,445.10	114.00	48	298,117
22 JULIUS BERGER NIG. PLC	115,840.00	72.40	36	43,732
INFRASTRUCTURE/HEAVY CONSTRUCTION				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
23 UPDC PLC	25,983.96	1.40	20	238,075
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
24 DN TYRE & RUBBER PLC	954.53	0.20	0	0
AUTOMOBILES/AUTO PARTS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
25 CHAMPION BREW. PLC	27,828.27	3.11	17	281,733
CONSUMER GOODS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
26 GOLDEN GUINEA BREW. PLC	3,227.70	3.15	0	0
27 GUINNESS NIG PLC	116,090.29	53.00	61	81,824
28 INTERNATIONAL BREWERIES PLC	107,448.27	4.00	33	519,854
29 NIGERIAN BREW. PLC	236,351.04	23.00	163	27,463,146
BEVERAGES-BREWERS/DISTILLERS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
30 BUA FOODS PLC	6,838,200.00	379.50	31	5,064
31 DANGOTE SUGAR REFINERY PLC	491,948.57	40.50	175	824,882
32 FLOUR MILLS NIG. PLC	155,814.42	38.00	63	599,490
33 HONEYWELL FLOUR MILL PLC	26,248.95	3.31	41	250,869
34 MULTI-TREX INTEGRATED FOODS PLC	1,340.10	0.36	0	0
35 N NIG. FLOUR MILLS PLC	8,607.06	48.30	0	0
36 NASCON ALLIED INDUSTRIES PLC	99,989.80	37.00	73	942,706
37 UNION DICOM SALT PLC	2,214.04	8.10	0	0
FOOD PRODUCTS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
38 CADBURY NIGERIA PLC	30,520.78	16.25	59	511,472
39 NESTLE NIGERIA PLC	649,978.13	820.00	69	14,005
FOOD PRODUCTS-DIVERSIFIED				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
40 NIGERIAN ENAMELWARE PLC	1,467.42	19.30	0	0
41 VITAFAM NIG PLC	21,264.35	17.00	50	94,194
HOUSEHOLD DURABLES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
42 P Z CUSSONS NIGERIA PLC	89,335.73	22.50	63	955,916
43 UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC	87,324.08	15.20	44	91,440
PERSONAL/HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
44 ECOBANK TRANSNATIONAL INCORPORATED	441,306.71	24.05	22	41,618
45 FIDELITY BANK PLC	281,707.46	8.80	202	5,419,782
46 GUARANTY TRUST HOLDING COMPANY PLC	1,243,467.32	42.25	828	32,253,229
47 JAIZ BANK PLC	79,444.70	2.30	150	8,440,881
48 STERLING FINANCIAL HOLDINGS COMPANY PLC	128,117.36	4.45	91	2,879,359
49 UNITY BANK PLC	19,871.87	1.70	29	882,331
50 WEMA BANK PLC	89,364.18	6.95	109	1,353,488
BANKING				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
51 AFRICAN ALLIANCE INSURANCE PLC	4,117.00	0.20	0	0
52 AICO INSURANCE PLC	37,337.38	1.02	111	10,644,756
53 AXAMANSARD INSURANCE PLC	46,800.00	5.20	73	2,805,559
54 CONSOLIDATED HALLMARK HOLDINGS PLC	14,959.20	1.38	7	505,500
55 CORNERSTONE INSURANCE PLC	36,332.79	2.00	23	1,328,813
56 CORONATION INSURANCE PLC	16,074.43	0.67	28	249,290
57 GOLDLINK INSURANCE PLC	909.99	0.20	0	0
58 GUINEA INSURANCE PLC	2,382.84	0.30	64	14,101,471
59 INTERNATIONAL ENERGY INSURANCE PLC	1,797.72	1.40	8	10,960
60 LASACO ASSURANCE PLC	3,740.52	2.04	28	749,180
61 LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	11,620.00	0.83	12	525,700
62 MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC	11,635.74	0.58	9	296,203
63 NEM INSURANCE PLC	46,904.07	9.35	36	1,409,105
64 NIGER INSURANCE PLC	1,547.90	0.20	0	0
65 PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC	7,421.43	0.56	20	8,571,735
66 REGENCY ASSURANCE PLC	2,334.06	0.35	28	3,099,775
67 SOVEREIGN TRUST INSURANCE PLC	5,406.69	0.38	10	565,000
68 STACO INSURANCE PLC	4,483.72	0.48	0	0
69 STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE PLC	2,582.21	0.20	0	0
70 SUNU ASSURANCES NIGERIA PLC	7,263.50	1.25	4	11,000
71 UNIVERSAL INSURANCE PLC	5,920.00	0.37	26	12,072,435
72 VERITAS CAPITAL ASSURANCE PLC	8,042.67	0.58	28	3,430,178
INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
73 NPF MICROFINANCE BANK PLC	10,967.07	1.83	16	547,695
MICRO-FINANCE BANKS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
74 ABBEY MORTGAGE BANK PLC	24,978.46	2.46	14	7,889
75 ASO SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC	7,370.87	0.50	0	0
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
76 INFINITY TRUST MORTGAGE BANK PLC	29,360.01	7.04	0	0
77 RESORT SAVINGS & LOANS PLC	2,265.95	0.20	0	0
78 UNION HOMES SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC	2,949.22	3.02	0	0
MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
79 AFRICA PRUDENTIAL PLC	12,800.00	6.40	47	383,777
80 DEAP CAPITAL MANAGEMENT & TRUST PLC	885.00	0.59	8	54,169
81 FCMB GROUP PLC	160,401.96	8.10	180	13,567,029
82 NIGERIAN EXCHANGE GROUP	46,611.87	24.75	30	283,319
83 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLC	4,712.02	0.57	57	9,984,983
84 STANBIC IBTC HOLDINGS PLC	673,763.85	52.00	56	5,214,275
85 UNITED CAPITAL PLC	107,700.00	17.95	150	3,590,511
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS				
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
86 EKOCORP PLC	2,886.90	5.79	0	0
HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
87 MORISON INDUSTRIES PLC	4,006.11	4.05	2	28,961
MEDICAL SUPPLIES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
88 FIDSON HEALTHCARE PLC	36,146.19	15.75	19	64,363
89 MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC	12,076.64	7.00	45	873,925
HEALTHCARE				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
90 PHARMA-DEKO PLC	396.78	1.83	0	0
PHARMACEUTICALS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
91 OMATEK VENTURES PLC	2,235.76	0.76	20	1,139,441
COMPUTERS AND PERIPHERALS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
92 CWG PLC	15,148.98	6.00	24	389,118
93 NCR (NIGERIA) PLC	466.56	4.32	2	1,005
IT SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
94 CHAMS HOLDING COMPANY PLC	8,218.11	1.75	52	1,312,940
95 E-TRANZACT INTERNATIONAL PLC	57,040.00	6.20	10	62,200
PROCESSING SYSTEMS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
96 AIRTEL AFRICA PLC	7,441,139.98	1,980.00	75	63,850
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
97 BERGER PAINTS PLC	3,579.32	12.35	31	42,600
98 BUA CEMENT PLC	4,849,375.50	143.20	46	46,085
99 CAP PLC	25,257.17	31.00	20	53,343
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
100 MEYER PLC	2,974.93	5.60	19	281,361
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
101 PREMIER PAINTS PLC	1,230.00	10.00	0	0
BUILDING MATERIALS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
102 AUSTIN LAZ & COMPANY PLC	2,192.12	2.03	2	10,000
103 CUTIX PLC	9,158.87	2.60	13	291,000
ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
104 BETA GLASS PLC	35,638.00	59.40	8	13,472
105 GREIF NIGERIA PLC	232.39	5.45	0	0
106 TRIPPLE GEE AND COMPANY PLC	2,044.16	4.13	4	5,550
PACKAGING/CONTAINERS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
107 NOTORE CHEMICAL IND PLC	100,754.14	62.50	0	0
AGRO-ALLIED & CHEMICALS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
108 INDUSTRIAL & MEDICAL GASES NIGERIA PLC	6,868.04	13.75	3	1,511
CHEMICALS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
109 ALUMINIUM EXTRUSION IND. PLC	1,572.69	7.15	2	500
METALS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
110 MIB TURFIRE MINING AND EXPLORATION PLC	6,520.77	15.30	9	3,135
NATURAL RESOURCES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
111 THOMAS WYATT NIG. PLC	863.26	2.18	3	91,992
PAPER/FOREST PRODUCTS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
112 JAPAIL GOLD & VENTURES PLC	13,276.93	2.12	109	6,432,043
ENERGY EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
113 OANDO PLC	144,204.38	11.60	123	3,381,520
INTEGRATED OIL AND GAS SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
114 CONOIL PLC	63,080.25	90.90	27	390,589
115 ETERNA PLC	21,583.59	16.55	55	505,138
116 MRS OIL NIGERIA PLC	45,289.44	135.00	9	100,207
117 TOTALENERGIES MARKETING NIGERIA PLC	117,844.32	346.50	59	25,393
PETROLEUM AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS DISTRIBUTORS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
118 AFROMEDIA PLC	1,065.37	0.24	0	0
ADVERTISING				

MAIN BOARD	DEALS	MARKET PRICE	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE TRADED (N)
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N MICRO-FINANCE BANKS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
73 NPF MICROFINANCE BANK PLC	10,967.07	1.83	16	547,695
MICRO-FINANCE BANKS				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
74 ABBEY MORTGAGE BANK PLC	24,978.46	2.46	14	7,889
75 ASO SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC	7,370.87	0.50	0	0
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
MARKET CAP(Nm)				
76 INFINITY TRUST MORTGAGE BANK PLC	29,360.01	7.04	0	0



HAPPY
60TH
BIRTHDAY

to my dear brother and friend,

—◆—
PROF. ACB
AGBAZUERE, Esq.
—◆—

SIGNED:

Chief James Ume
Ike Abam

POLITY

Leveraging Emerging Technologies to Improve SME Productivity in Nigeria

Lynda Saint-Nwafor

Nigeria's economic challenges have seen it suffer two significant recessions in recent years; still, Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have provided much-needed succor to millions of Nigerians struggling to secure gainful employment.

Today, SMEs account for 46% per cent of the country's GDP. This is no surprise as SMEs represent almost 97% of businesses in Nigeria and contribute to 88% of employment in the private sector. Interestingly, most of the over 40 million MSMEs are owned by sole proprietors with little or no funding and are, therefore, more susceptible to suffering the impact of any economic downturn.

Data shows that this has been the case over the last few years. Limited access to funding, rising inflation, and the wrecking ball of the pandemic mean most critical metrics in the sector are trending downwards. Over two million MSMEs were lost between 2017 and 2021, and despite an increase in employment in the industry within the same period, there was a significant decrease in GDP contribution. The situation has become worse in recent years. More than half of existing SMEs have faulted the rising cost of doing business as a significant drawback in their quest to achieve growth, with the annual inflation rate currently at over 22%—the highest in Nigeria since 2005.

Incidentally, beyond the pangs of underinvestment and rising inflation, an unprecedented upswing in technological innovation and adoption globally has made the sector and doing business even more dynamic. We are now witnessing more SMEs leveraging new technological solutions to satisfy existing customers and reach new ones. Likewise, there has been an encouraging proliferation of Nigerian startups offering MSMEs tailored digital services, including quick credit, payment wallets, and bookkeeping services.

It thus raises the question: how can SMEs in Nigeria take maximum advantage of this technological shift to weather the storm of peculiar economic challenges in their business operations? What will the future of SMEs look like with new technology concerning access to finance, markets, infrastructure, knowledge, and more?

I have intently engaged owners of small businesses in conversations about their convictions and reservations about the impact of new technology on their businesses. In many instances, a lack of awareness about the opportunities technology provides remains a significant barrier to accessing the required support. For many, a lack of know-how



Lynda Saint-Nwafor

to translate the myriad opportunities technology promises to seamless operations management, market access, and improved productivity contributes mainly to their skepticism and stalling. Therefore, the first crucial step in driving Nigerian SMEs to leverage technology to navigate unfavorable economic tides and achieve sustainable growth

would require deliberate knowledge sharing and training.

MSMEs must recognize the linkage between emerging technologies and business productivity in today's global business landscape. They must understand that crucial technologies such as Big Data and Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Cloud Computing, Virtual and Augmented reality (VR & AR), Cybersecurity, and many more have the potential to influence strategic levers in the areas of scale, cost optimisation, and operational effectiveness. More importantly, they must know the practical application of these new technologies.

Analyzing big data can significantly help SMEs identify new growth opportunities, forecast future trends, and optimize marketing efforts. AI can automate tasks and workloads, including customer services, data, or inventory management, while VR and AR can provide customers with immersive experiences that build brand loyalty and increase sales. Cloud computing will offer SMEs scalable and cost-effective solutions for managing technology infrastructure. The Internet of Things is also exciting. The technology can provide businesses with valuable data for specific operations and improve efficiency.

However, it is essential to note that conversations around the upliftment of SMEs in Nigeria must transcend lip service if we are to leverage these numerous technologies for the desired productivity and growth in the sector. Our actions can come in the form of deliberate partnerships and investments.

In 2018, MTN Nigeria demonstrated this by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Microsoft to create sustainable and scalable initiatives to ensure the growth of SMEs in the country. The partnership aimed to leverage Microsoft's technologies and MTN's expertise to develop strong value propositions for small businesses. At the time, the recommendations spoke to the needs of SMEs around capability development, access to markets, and business networks across Africa; and addressed some of their challenges by creating innovative solutions.

Our resolute commitment to providing SMEs with a foundation to survive deep business waters has similarly led to establishing SME-friendly programmes that can accelerate growth and drive digital inclusion. The REVV Programme, for instance, was launched by MTN Nigeria three years ago to address major macro-level issues facing SMEs at the height of the pandemic. The programme embraced a comprehensive strategy comprising four key components: masterclasses, market access, productivity tool support, and advisory initiatives to assist over 10,000 SMEs

in accelerating the growth of their businesses in an emerging digital economy.

As an extension of our efforts for SMEs to survive in a post-COVID economy, MTN Nigeria was inspired to launch new Customer Relations Management (CRM) applications. The initiative had one primary goal: to empower MSMEs with digital tools and solutions to enhance their customer management capabilities and provide a one-stop platform for their ICT needs.

It is, however, critical that any tactical approach we employ in providing avenues for SMEs to leverage technology for productivity must be geared towards inclusiveness. The estimation by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) that about 41% of businesses in Nigeria are owned by women is compelling and provides us with a solid base to build upon. In this regard, MTN Nigeria recently organized a webinar to encourage and empower female-led SMEs to utilize advanced technologies to enhance their business processes for scalable growth. With the ICT company fully embracing its role as a digital enabler for SMEs, it was necessary to dedicate the event to specifically focus on female SMEs to recognise their contribution to entrepreneurship in Africa's largest economy.

With MTN Nigeria's continued understanding of the importance of new technology to achieve productivity in the MSME sector, especially regarding connectivity, data analysis, and process automation, it is an exciting time for small business owners. Our investments in technological solutions to support SMEs mean small business owners in the country can now have easy access to comprehensive digital solutions, including IoT, Mobility, Cloud and ICT, and Productivity and Collaboration. When fully harnessed, these solutions present SMEs with unmatched opportunities to improve organizational effectiveness and productivity in their businesses.

As the world continues to experience rapid technological advancements and digital transformation, embracing these technologies becomes a key driver for Nigerian SMEs to remain competitive and thrive in the marketplace. This will ultimately empower them to navigate challenges, adapt to evolving customer preferences, and stay ahead of the curve in a rapidly changing business landscape.

Crucially, embracing emerging technologies will benefit individual SMEs and significantly contribute to Nigeria's overall economic development by fostering entrepreneurship, job creation, and sustainable growth. MTN Nigeria, I am enthused, will remain utterly committed to the cause.

•Saint-Nwafor is Chief Business Enterprise Officer, MTN Nigeria

Agbarha-Otor As Spiritual, Artistic Centre of Global Significance

Oluwatoyin Adepaju

Having completed my third visit to Agbarha-Otor in Delta State, Nigeria's Niger Delta, I believe I have enough information to demonstrate why Agbarha-Otor is a site of global spiritual and artistic significance, a potential UNESCO World Heritage Site, and what can be done to advance this value of Agbarha-Otor.

At the core of Agbarha-Otor artistic and spiritual culture as achievements of global stature are two institutions - the Onobrak Art Centre of Bruce Onobrakpeya and its Harmattan Workshop and the Ekene Society, its natural and human made shrines, its architecture, dance, dress, verbal and instrumental music and its theology unifying nature, humanity and family.

A climatic point of Ekene Society spirituality and arts is the Ekene Festival, held every fifteen years, in which the various Ekene arts are unified, at the core of which is the Ekene mobile architectural and dance structure, many feet high, constructed through a process unknown beyond the artists and described as unreplicated in skill anywhere in the world.

Complementary to Ekene are the spiritual and associated arts of various spiritual practitioners and artists, who dramatize, in their unique ways, various possibilities of the total complex constituting Urhobo spiritualities and related arts, Urhobo being the ethnicity to which Agbarha-Otor belongs.

The Onobrak Art Centre galleries contain representative examples of Bruce Onobrakpeya's greatest art, projecting a secular spirituality, a spirituality not active in relation to any particular religious practice, but distilling the inspirational essence of Urhobo spiritualities, in relation to other



The Shrine by Bruce Onobrakpeya at the Onobrak Art Centre galleries in Agbarha-Otor.

Niger Delta and Edo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani and Christian spiritualities and related arts, at times also reflecting other classical African arts and their spiritual resonances, from Onobrakpeya's use of Akan Adinkra, to examples from classical African artists of a wealth of creative forms from Yoruba edan ogboni, to Chi Wara of the Bambara.

Complementing Onobrakpeya's work in these

galleries is that of other artists who have participated in the two annual Harmattan Workshops, which, for decades, have brought people from different parts of the world to Agbarha-Otor to learn, practise and discuss art.

What needs to be done to advance the global visibility of these achievements? The Ekene Society is against visual and certainly against photographic

depiction of its arts. This orientation has to be balanced against the prospects of the historical longevity of Ekene and its sustenance in human memory.

What are the chances that Ekene will survive in Agbarha-Otor, a town described as largely Christian, in which most Ekene members might be largely elderly or middle aged? What are the chances that Ekene artistic achievements can be sustained and its memory maintained without documentation, particularly visual?

What are the chances that the Ekene sacred groves can survive, given increasing population pressure that has led to building on their spaces, leading to their becoming a fraction of what they once were? What are the chances for the survival of Ekene and the Ekene Festival, in spite of their great artistic achievements, if those negative practices described as associated with the festival are sustained?

What are the chances for the survival of Ekene if some of its members remain opposed to non-Agbarha people even showing interest in the spirituality and its arts, a resistance I have observed, though only from a minority of those I have met?

How likely is Ekene to survive if it remains localized to Agbarha communities in terms of practice and location of shrines? Why can't it be practiced as a universally valid spirituality open to all? What are the chances of Ekene surviving if its practices and beliefs are not codified, systematized and presented in written form rather than limiting the knowledge and practice of these structures and practices to the oral tradition?

These are pertinent questions for all to ponder as the dream of seeing Agbarha-Otor become a UNESCO World Heritage Site grows.

This piece is part of Adepaju's research on Sacred Sites of Classical African Spiritualities in the Niger Delta.

NEWS



OGONI TRADITIONAL RULERS VISIT TINUBU...

L-R: The Paramount Ruler of Ogale Clan, Eleme, Rivers State, HRH, King Godwin Maduabuchi; Paramount Ruler of Gbenemene Tai Kingdom, HRM, Sir King Samuel L.A, Nnee Rivers State; President Bola Ahmed Tinubu; Chief of Staff to the President, Honourable Femi Gbajabamila; Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike and the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Honourable Abubakar Momoh, at the visit of the members of the Supreme Council of Traditional Rulers of Ogoniland to the Presidential Villa, Abuja...yesterday

PHOTO: GODWIN OMOIGUI

Kukah Visits Tinubu, Says Nigerians Going Through Various Levels of Pain

● Advises Nigerians not to worry about Rivers crisis

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Reverend Father Mathew Kukah, on Wednesday, held a closed-door meeting with President Bola Tinubu at State House, Abuja.

Kukah told newsmen after the meeting that close to one year into his administration, Nigerians were writhing in serious pain.

Answering reporters' questions about his assessment of Tinubu government's one year in office, Kukah said even though it was too early to judge the administration, citizens had found themselves in a precarious situation.

Describing the pains as unintended, the Catholic priest blamed them on government policies, which he hoped would be amended for the sake of the welfare of the people.

According to him, reviewing such policies is necessary because the essence of government is to guarantee the welfare and security of the people.

He highlighted the need for national rebirth, as he stressed that government should continue to build on the things it believed it was doing well, while urging citizens to commit themselves to nation building.

Kukah stated, "I'm sure many

people will tell you that one year is not enough to make a judgment. However, from where all stand, we know that we are all in a very difficult situation.

"Nigerians are in various levels of pain and they are pains that are unintended. But they are the results of certain policy decisions that, hopefully, with time, can be amended in order to serve the welfare of the people.

"Because I believe that the essence of government is to guarantee the welfare and security of ordinary citizens. I believe that the times that we are in now are very difficult times and nobody should be under any illusion. But they are also times for renewal.

"We just need to commit ourselves to the fact that building a good society takes a lot of time. It's not something that is done in one lifetime. And for me, the most important thing is to continue on the building blocks of the things that we think are being done well.

"My argument has always been that the government needs to very quickly improve the quality of communication so that Nigerians can at least get a sense of how long it is going to be before food is ready."

Commenting on the political crisis in Rivers State, the cleric admonished Nigerians not to worry themselves

about the rivalry among politicians, saying they know how to resolve their problems.

He expressed hope that the issues would be resolved sooner than later, as he noted that the state was very dear to his heart.

Prodded further to comment on the crisis, the Catholic Bishop said, "Well, I don't live in Rivers State.

Look, this is politics and very often we, ordinary people, cry more than the bereaved. The important thing is politicians will fix their problems.

"Rivers State is a place that is very dear to me because I have been associated with them for a very long period of time.

"But, look, when politicians fight, don't get carried away because they

have the capacity to fix their quarrel. And I hope and pray that Rivers State will sooner rather than later reposition, because it is not an insignificant part of Nigeria."

On the purpose of his visit to the president's office, he said it was in connection with the planned conference on national cohesion being organised by the Kukah Centre.

According to him, "I came to see the president with the director of the Kukah Centre. We came to discuss with the president an invitation we had earlier extended, which we renewed, to have a conference in which we would like him to be in attendance, addressing the theme of national cohesion. So, that's really what we came to discuss."

Lawmakers Disagree Over Cybercrimes Tax

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

Members of the House of Representatives were sharply divided yesterday, over the implementation of the suspended cybercrimes tax.

While some lawmakers believed that the executive arm should go ahead with the implementation of the controversial tax policy, others believed that the introduction of the tax would be indirectly passed on to Nigerians who are currently groaning over the removal of fuel subsidy.

The Minority leader, Hon. Kingsley Chinda, laid the ground for the debate while moving a motion on matter of urgent national

importance on the urgent need to correct the wrong perception of the House on implementation of the Cybercrimes Act spored by him and seven others.

Presenting the motion, Chinda recalled that on 9th May, 2024, the House considered a joint motion on the implementation of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition and Prevention) Act, 2015 as amended in 2024 and resolved to direct the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to withdraw the ambiguous circular of 6th May, 2024 and in its place issue an unambiguous and unequivocal circular in line with the letters and spirit of the law.

He decried that the media space was awash with the wrong impression that the House was against a law passed by her, which he said painted the House in bad light.

Chinda noted that cybercrime was more devastating and could cripple a nation easier than conventional crime in the physical space.

He said humongous costs expended on security and the very likely limitations of funding cyber space security by the government.

The lawmaker stressed that the Cybercrimes Act imposes a levy of 0.05 per cent on some establishments enumerated in the second schedule to the Act, that occupy the cyberspace; do business therein and make profit therefrom.

He said the levy does not apply to ordinary Nigerians but only to the establishments listed in the second schedule to the Act, viz: GSM Service providers and all telecommunication companies; internet service providers; banks and other financial institutions; insurance companies and Nigerian Exchange Group.

The House urged, "The CBN and Office of National Security Adviser to cause further enlightenment on the Cyber Crimes Act and implementation of the 0.5% (0.005) levy.

"In line with Order 20 Rule 93 (2) (b), mandate the House Committee on National Security and Intelligence and Digital and Information Technology to be part of the Committees to superintend over the implementation of the House resolution of 9th May 2024 on the Cybersecurity Levy, with the committee on National Security and Intelligence as the lead committee."

However, in his submission, Hon. Sada Soli, said the confusion started from the office of the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), adding that the law reform

commission should sign up and do their job.

On his part, Hon. Ali Jesse, while acknowledging Section 44 of the Cybersecurity Act, said in most cases, when government introduces tax to banks and other organisations, they simply transferred the burden to Nigerians.

He urged the committee while carrying out the investigation to do it with a human face, saying they should ensure that if at all government will go ahead with the tax on Cybersecurity, Nigerians should not be overburdened.

In his intervention, the Deputy Speaker, Hon. Ben Kalu, said while laws were made by the legislative arm, the implementation falls under the executive arm.

He said as legislators, they cannot be probating and reprobating at the same time, adding that they cannot make law and still come by way of motion to stop the implementation of the law.

His words: "All we are saying is for the executive not to tax Nigerians directly or indirectly. All we are doing today is to enlighten Nigerians that this law does not affect Nigerians that only companies making money from cyberspace are to pay the tax.

"In the course of implementation, we find out that implementers, that is the executive power is abusing it, we will come back to amend it. But we cannot at this stage amend by way of motion.

"All we are saying is to caution the executive arm. This is the content of the law we made, in the process of implementation, do not tax Nigerians directly or indirectly," he added.

In his contribution, Hon. Ademurin Kuye was of the opinion that the whole confusion came from the office of the governor of CBN through its directives to the banks.

JAMB Releases Additional 36,540 UTME Results

Kuni Tyessi in Abuja

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has released additional 36,540 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) results, which were earlier withheld for further investigation.

This was in addition to the 531 results released the previous week now bringing the total results released to 1,879,437.

The board disclosed this in a statement it released through its spokesman, Dr. Fabian Benjamin.

JAMB, in the statement, denied reports circulation on the social media purporting to emanate from it that the outstanding 2024 UTME results, currently being subjected to intense scrutiny by its team of experts, had been compromised on account of a cybersecurity breach and that it was considering rescheduling the examination.

It asked the public to disregard the report, saying it was created by

fraudsters who were out to dupe unsuspecting members of the public.

"In another development, the attention of the Board was drawn to a fictitious letter concocted by a fraudster and circulated on social media purporting to emanate from the Board stating that the outstanding 2024 UTME results, currently being subjected to intense scrutiny by its team of experts, had been compromised on account of a cybersecurity breach and that it is considering rescheduling the examination.

"This is far from the truth as the said letter did not emanate from the Board. In fact, a closer look at the letter, which was not signed by any person, lacked every ingredient of a letter from the JAMB. The letter is, therefore, from those who wish to destroy the integrity of the Board, by compromising its unassailable operational processes to mislead hapless candidates with the sole aim of extorting them.

"The Board reiterated, for the

umpteenth time, that the results of its 2024 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and other previous years are intact, not in any cloud storage and can, therefore, not be hacked by anybody.

"It is to be recalled that at the release of the 2024 UTME, the Board had announced that some results had been withheld as they were being subjected to further investigation. Out of these, 531 results were released recently. Others found to be involved in any examination misconduct are still undergoing investigation as the Board would want to review all the footage of all CCTV cameras placed in all its accredited centres to ascertain the candidate's culpability or otherwise.

"At the conclusion of this exercise, the Board would publish its findings. Therefore, the public is urged to be wary of misleading information emanating from sources not linked to the Board be it religious or other sources.

"Equally disturbing is the misleading comments of some functionaries of some private institutions, who are linking the Board with 'the prevailing low 'cut-off marks' when in practice, it was their institutions that had submitted lower minimum admissible scores marks, even lower than what other institutions had presented.

"For the purpose of clarity, minimum admissible scores are first presented by individual institutions before such are debated to arrive at a benchmark agreed upon by all Heads of Institutions across the country at its annual Policy Meeting on Admissions and which no institution would be allowed to compromise.

"Also, the Board would also like to urge religious organisations to stick to their primary roles and not dabble into areas outside their calling as there are reports of some religious organisations making false representation to government at various levels for selfish ends," it read.



DONATION OF 10,000 PENS TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION...

L-R: Trade Marketing Manager, BIC Nigeria, Patrick Bello; Commissioner, Basic and Secondary Education, Lagos State Ministry of Education, Honorable Jamiu Alli Balogun; Business Development Manager, BIC Nigeria, Adeyemi Ojo and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Lagos State Ministry of Education, Abayomi Abolaji during the donation of 10,000 pens to the Ministry of Education, Lagos State at the state's secretariat, Alausa, Ikeja...yesterday.

PHOTO: ABIODUN AJALA

FG Flags Off Hajj Airlift, Charges Pilgrims on Diplomacy, Positive Nigerian Values

● *Senate seeks collective role in selecting airlines, feeding* ● *Lagos kicks off airlift, Oyo prepares pilgrims* ● *Saudi launches 15 guidelines in 16 languages, including Hausa*

Deji Elumoye, Sunday Aborisade in Abuja, **Segun James** in Lagos, **Kemi Olaitan** in Ibadan and **Ahmad Sorondinki** in Kano

The federal government, yesterday, flagged off the inaugural airlift of Nigerian pilgrims for the 2024 annual Hajj, with a charge to the intending pilgrims to maintain national policies aimed at promoting unity, sustainable development and strategic diplomacy

throughout the sacred exercise. Also, yesterday, the Senate passed for second reading, an amendment bill on the establishment Act of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON). This was as the Lagos State government has said it would commence the airlift of 1,862 for the 2024 Hajj, noting that the welfare and safety of citizens was sacrosanct. At the same time, the Oyo State

Governor, Seyi Makinde, yesterday, charged the 1,007 intending pilgrims from the state to be good ambassadors by exhibiting good behaviours, following laid down rules and avoiding any act capable of tarnishing the image of the state and the country. Meanwhile, the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has launched 15 comprehensive guides aimed at assisting pilgrims from around the world, providing easy-to-follow

information covering all stages of the Hajj rituals. Addressing intending pilgrims at the Sir Ahmadu Bello International Airport, Bimin Kebbi, the Kebbi State capital, Vice President Kashim Shettima, said the Hajj pilgrimage was an opportunity for Nigerian Muslims to uphold the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and project Nigeria's positive national values on the global stage.

In a release by his Media Assistant, Stanley Nkwocha, he said, "Our Nigerian pilgrims, as you prepare to depart for the Holy Land, I urge you to embody the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by exhibiting humility, perseverance, and kindness during this journey." The vice-president noted that the pilgrimage's essence aligned with government policies geared towards fostering peaceful coexistence and social harmony among Nigeria's diverse populace.

development" in Nigeria. The Kebbi State Governor, Nasiru Idris, while speaking earlier, said the state was the first among equals to remit its pilgrims fare for the annual exercise to the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria. The Governor further disclosed that the state government spent over N953 million on the upgrade of facilities at the Sir Ahmadu Bello International Airport and the Hajj Camp in Kebbi to enable the airlift of pilgrims directly from Kebbi to Saudi Arabia. On his part, Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence, Sa'ad Abubakar III, commended the Nigerian government under the leadership of President Tinubu for its efforts toward the success of this year's Hajj. "I want to thank the federal government, under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for all efforts put in place to ensure that this hajj takes place. When all hopes were lost, light showed at the end of the tunnel and today we are having this inaugural flight," he said. The Sultan, who said the airlift of pilgrims from Kebbi was historic, urged the pilgrims to conduct themselves in a good manner while in the holy land.

TI: Weak Border Security Surveillance at Heart of Terrorism Financing in Nigeria

● *Seeks effective law enforcement collaboration*

Kasim Sumaina in Abuja

Transparency International, Nigeria (TI-Nigeria) and the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), yesterday, in Abuja, fingered weak security and surveillance at nation's borders as major a contributor to terrorism financing in Nigeria. The bodies hinted that the lack of control and monitoring allowed terrorists, as well as small arms and light weapons, to infiltrate the country quickly.

To this end, they sought adequate and effective collaborations on the part of law enforcement and regulatory agencies to tame the problem of terrorist financing in Nigeria. In his welcome remark at a multi-stakeholder national dialogue on preventing terrorism financing and violent extremism in the North Eastern part of Nigeria, the Executive Director, CISLAC/TI-Nigeria, Auwal Ibrahim Musa Rafsanjani, stressed the imperative of strengthening security measures at borders by Nigerian authorities to prevent the inflow of funds and resources for terrorist activities. He noted that effective information sharing was crucial in combating terrorism financing, yet there seemed to be a lack of coordination among various agencies and institutions. This, he said, hindered the ability to track and intercept suspicious transactions and apprehend those

responsible for financing terrorism. Rafsanjani explained that the lingering inter-agency rivalry among response agencies constituted an impediment to intelligence gathering and information sharing for coordinated response to potential violent signals. "Unhealthy inter-agencies rivalry and struggles for superiority among response agencies competing for resources have been identified as major barriers to coordinated response to conflict warning signals at all levels. "We are indeed excited to bring under one roof, state and non-state actors as part of the effort to drive a collective resolution and citizen-oriented approach towards the prevention of terrorism, terrorism financing and violent extremism with specific focus on North-East Nigeria. This Dialogue remains critical to galvanise all-inclusive conversation on the thematic focus, giving the recurring threats to lives and property of many Nigerians, occasioned by terrorism and violent extremism that have hitherto bedeviled the country. "You would all agree with me that terrorism constitutes a global threat, and Nigeria, unfortunately, is one of the countries that faces a high level of terrorism. "While attempts to combat terrorism and violent extremism in the country continue, policy attention has

been shifted towards many sources of terrorism financing, which have continued to fuel terrorism and other violent conflicts in Nigeria. "Without doubt, terrorism finance is the backbone of terrorist groups as funds go into buying weapons, recruiting militants, and operating terrorist organisations. Just as the United Nations Office on Drugs

and Crime (UNODC) puts it, 'terrorist groups need money to sustain themselves and carry out terrorist acts.' Rafsanjani, further stated that, poor awareness at community levels hampered collective monitoring and timely response to warning signals of potential terrorist activities and violent extremism.

FG Endorses Clean Cookstoves Project in Nigeria

● *GreenPlinth Africa, partners to deploy 80 million free cookstoves nationwide*

In a move towards sustainable development and environmental conservation, the federal government through the National Council on Climate Change has officially endorsed an initiative aimed at addressing global climate crisis, environmental challenges and improving livelihoods across the nation. According to a statement yesterday, under the auspices of GreenPlinth Africa Limited, in collaboration with strategic partners, an ambitious Article 6.4 project was launched to distribute 80 million clean cookstoves free of charge to households throughout Nigeria. The initiative, the largest single clean cooking systems project in the world, marked a significant

step forward in combatting the adverse health and environmental impacts associated with traditional cooking methods, such as indoor air pollution and deforestation. The provision of clean cookstoves was set to transform the lives of millions of Nigerians, particularly women and children, who are disproportionately affected by the harmful effects of traditional cooking practices. "The adoption of clean and efficient cookstoves by households will lead to improved indoor air quality, reduce respiratory illnesses, and largely contribute to mitigating climate change through lower carbon emissions," it added. President and CEO of Greenplinth Africa Limited, Dr. Olawale

Akinwumi; Director General of the National Council on Climate Change, Dr. Salisu Dahiru, were quoted in the statement to have recently issued a formal Letter of Endorsement (LoE) for the Improved and Efficient Cooking Energy Solution For Nigeria – a Programmatic Article 6.4 Project. Dahiru, who is also the Designated National Authority (DNA) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Focal Point in Nigeria averted that the project would result in greenhouse gas emission reduction and more importantly lead to sustainable forest development and job creation in Nigeria. According to him, besides reduction in domestic emissions,

the project would decrease upper respiratory infections, thereby leading to improved health conditions; and equally enhance the nation in achieving sustainable development and the goals of Nigeria's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Speaking on the importance of the project, Dr. Victor Fodeke, Vice President and GMD of Greenplinth Africa Limited stated that the initiative would particularly benefit vulnerable communities, women, and children, who bear the brunt of health issues linked to traditional cooking practices. "Nigerians will experience tangible benefits while collectively contributing to global efforts in combating climate change," he added.

Continues online

NEWS



REMEMBERING ALHAJI AND ALHAJA GBADAMOSI...

L-R: Children and Grand-children of Late Alhaji Jimoh Adisa Gbadamosi and Alhaja Azeezat Adebisi Gbadamosi, Mrs. Bimbola Adedun; Chairman Caverton Offshore Group Plc, Mr. Aderemi Makanjuola; Mr. Biodun Gbadamosi; Mr. Kunle Gbadamosi; Mrs. Yoyinsola Makanjuola and Mr. Rotimi Makanjuola, during memorial prayer and lecture in commemoration of one year and 10 year anniversaries of Alhaji Gbadamosi and Alhaja Gbadamosi respectively in Surulere, Lagos...yesterday

Abure to Ajaero: Let's Walk Together, Nnewi Convention in Line with LP Practice

● Commends TUC for collaborating with party

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Embattled National Chairman of the Labour party, Julius Abure, has appealed to the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) led by Joe Ajaero to join the party to enable the leadership

right the wrongs in the nation.

He also said the March national convention of the party was conducted in line with the constitution of the party irrespective of earlier agreement reached between the party and other stakeholders.

He, however, announced the setting up of a committee to reconcile all aggrieved members of the party.

Addressing a press conference at the party secretariat, Abure said, "I want to appeal, first to my own

brother, friend and comrade, Joe Ajaero, President of the NLC whom we have worked together in the trenches over the years in the struggle for the workers, to put aside whatever may be his grievances and let's work in the interest of our people.

"Fighting the Labour Party at this time is uncalled for and unwarranted especially at this time when the working people of Nigeria are suffering. As we speak today, minimum wage is still N30,000.

"There are unfair workers practices by employers across the country. The inflation in Nigeria is unprecedented. Unemployment and underemployment are unimaginable

and unacceptable.

"The welfare of workers are swept under the carpet and nobody talks about workers welfare. So, for us, we need to team up together in other to be able to fight for better working conditions for our people.

"We need not waste or dissipate our collective energies in fighting ourselves over nothing. Secondly, this is the first time the Labour Party will be having a very successful outing in the political space.

"In the history of the party, we have a governor in our kitty, 35 House of Representatives members, 7 Senators and several other members in the various Houses of Assemblies across the country.

"I think we could consolidate on this and use what we have to get what we want. I had thought that we can use our representation in the National Assembly currently to begin to fight the cause of workers, fight the cause of Nigerians and see if we can get a better life for our people.

"It is on the basis of the foregoing that the current energy the NLC is dissipating in attempting to take over the leadership of the party is unnecessary and will therefore lead us to nowhere," he said.

He commended the leadership of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) for supporting the National Working Committee (NWC) of the party.

APC Suspends Jimoh Ibrahim for Alleged Anti-party Activities

● Zamfara chapter suspends state party chair

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja and Fidelis David in Akure

The Executive members of the All Progressives Congress in Igbotako Ward 11, Okitipupa Local Government Area of Ondo State, have suspended the senator representing Ondo Southern Senatorial District in the National Assembly, Dr Jimoh Ibrahim, for alleged anti-party activities.

Similarly, the crisis rocking the Zamfara State chapter of the APC, reached a boiling point yesterday following the suspension of the state party chairman, Hon. Tukur Danfulani.

However, in Ondo, the notice of suspension was signed by ward executive members including Bakere Usuf, Tore Obwoselu, Oloyinmi Idowu, Borewaye Louyomi, Oladipupo Bose, Alkimbobola Seyi, Lawal-Babatunde, Anitawe-Ademole, Akinkuaju Olarewaju and Fabioye Ajoke.

The lawmaker had approached a Federal High Court in Abuja, to seek the nullification of the primary election that produced Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa, as the APC governorship candidate for the forthcoming election in Ondo State.

Ibrahim, in a suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/588/2024, told the court that the April 20 primary election that produced Aiyedatiwa was marred with a lot of irregularities, claiming that Sections 221, and 228 of the 1999 Constitution and 84 of the Electoral Act 2022 were grossly violated in the conduct of the primary election.

Specifically, he prayed the court to bar the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from accepting Aiyedatiwa as the APC governorship candidate, and sought an order of perpetual injunction prohibiting Aiyedatiwa from holding himself out or parading himself as

the APC governorship candidate.

However, when contacted for reaction over the alleged suspension, media aide to the senator, Yemi Akintomide, said the alleged suspension was a joke taken too far.

"It was a joke taken too far. Even before now, the executive members of Igbotako ward II passed a vote of confidence on senator Jimoh Ibrahim and they urged him to go ahead with his court process. So, they're strongly behind him.

"The executive members held an emergency meeting on May 9, 2024 and declared their support for the senator who dragged the party to court over the shoddy manner the governorship primary of the party was conducted on April 20 in the state.

"At the meeting, executives and members of the party rewed the party's governorship primary election which they described as fraudulent, saying no election took

place in the ward and in Okitipupa Local Government Area of the state on April 20, 2024.

"Few days after, how can they now come again to say they're suspending him from the party over alleged offense they which earlier told him to go ahead with? It's impossible! Senator Jimoh Ibrahim is not perturbed and the purported suspension can't hold water," he said.

In Zamfara, the suspension of Danfulani was announced at a press conference in Abuja by the executive of Galadima Ward, Gusau Local Government of the State.

The Youth Leader of the Ward, Abahuraira Ilyasu, who spoke on behalf of the executive after submitting a suspension letter dated May 11, 2024 and addressed to the National Chairman of APC, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, said Danfulani was suspended for causing disunity in the party.

Nigeria's Judiciary Witnessing Undeniable Decline, Says Peter Obi

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in the 2023 general election, Peter Obi, has bemoaned the state of Nigeria's Judiciary, saying it was "witnessing an undeniable decline."

Obi stated that although there still existed a few good Judges and Justices in the country, however, generally speaking, he said the situation was worrisome and a threat to the future of the nation.

Delivering a keynote speech titled: "The Role of the Judiciary in Shaping Nigeria's Future" at the 5th Memorial of Justice Anthony

Nnaemeka Aniagolu at the Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, he said there was a lot to learn from the integrity of the late Justice of the Supreme Court and his class of Justices.

Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, is a private institution owned and managed by the Catholic Church.

According to Obi, "It was truly an honour to pay tribute to one of Nigeria's most esteemed jurists, the late Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Anthony Nnaemeka Aniagolu.

"His illustrious career, particularly as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria from 1978 to 1987, brought

immense honour to our judiciary through his unwavering integrity and steadfast commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring justice in our nation.

"As we commemorate the legacy of Justice Aniagolu and other revered Nigerian judges, we must draw inspiration from their exemplary service. We must strive to emulate their dedication to integrity, fairness, respect for the rule of law, transparency, humility, and the dispensation of justice.

"While the judiciary today still boasts of a few outstanding judges, there is an undeniable decline in our judicial system. This decline poses a significant threat to the future of Nigeria. Justice is increasingly commodified, and delivered in favor of the highest bidder.

"When the rule of law is compromised, the most vulnerable members of society are disproportionately affected, and the fabric of our society begins to fray. The integrity of our institutions, the protection of human rights, and the stability of our nation are all jeopardised.

"The rule of law is the highest intangible and most valuable asset of any society, and we must work tirelessly to protect and preserve it. We must prioritise the pursuit of justice above all else.

"Only then can we ensure that the rule of law remains a beacon of hope and a safeguard against tyranny, oppression, and injustice. The future of our nation depends on it," the former Anambra State governor said.

Tinubu: Nigeria is Truly Proud of Nasarawa State for the Strides Taken in Mining Sector

Igbawase Ukumba in Lafia

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, yesterday, said the country was 'truly proud' of Nasarawa State, particularly for the strides it has taken within the mining sector.

He stated this on the occasion of Nasarawa Investment Summit held in Lafia, the state capital.

He said Nasarawa had shown great vision that their vast lithium deposit was processed in the country by ensuring that raw materials were not exported out of the country without any value addition in line with the renewed hope agenda of

his administration.

Represented by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Doris Uzoka-Anite, Tinubu said, "Lithium is the future and the future is very electrifying. Manufacturers continued to produce cars, trucks that use lithium batteries rather than fossil fuels.

"Therefore, we as a country must prepare for this by ensuring to take full advantage of this for the global demand of lithium, by developing more processing plants in Nasarawa and even across other states that are rich in lithium and Nigeria as a whole."

The president added that the federal government would continue to actively put measures in place to continue to support the mining sector to catalyse local and foreign investors.

"It is in recognition of the critical role of the industrial sector in the growth and development of the national economy that the government, through the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, has continued to implement laudable programmes and projects aimed at supporting small and medium scale enterprises.

"This initiative includes access

to finance and capacity building," Tinubu said.

Welcoming guests at the summit, Governor Abdulkahi Sule, pointed out that, as a state, Nasarawa had been deliberate in stimulating the economy, building human capacities, creating wealth and generating employment to its people.

"It is for this reason that we have adopted our policy document christened 'Nasarawa Economic Development Strategy (NEDS)' as a driving force towards the initiation and implementation of various programmes and policies which we have achieved so far.



IBAN VISITS IDRIS...

L-R: Chairman of Multimesh Communications, Sir Godfrey Oluwabunwa; Chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (IBAN), Alhaji Mohammed Tijjani Ramalan; Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris; CEO of RadioNow, Lagos, Ms. Kadaria Ahmed; Director General of the National Broadcasting Commission, Mr. Charles Ebuebu and Chairman of SMK Group, Alhaji Shittu Mohammed Kabir, when some members of IBAN paid a courtesy visit to the Minister in Abuja... yesterday

Tinubu: Our Govt'll Unlock Human and Natural Resource Potential of Ogoniland

● *Ogoni people ready for production of oil and gas with potential unbundling of OML 11, says monarch*

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu on Wednesday assured that his administration was committed to unlocking the human and natural resource potential of Ogoniland, while ensuring the environmental and economic security of the people and Nigerian communities, generally.

Tinubu gave the assurance at State House, Abuja, during a meeting with members of the Supreme Council of Traditional Rulers of Ogoni, Rivers State, led by King, Samuel Nnee, Gbenemene Tai Kingdom, and Paramount Ruler of Kpite Tai.

The president was responding to requests presented by the Ogoni leaders at the meeting, which was also attended by former governor of Rivers State and incumbent Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr. Nyesom Wike;

Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Engr. Abubakar Momoh; Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Mr. Heineken Lokpobiri, and Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris.

Among the requests to the president were the resuscitation of oil and gas production in Ogoniland, which comprises Eleme, Khana, Gokana, and Tai local government areas of Rivers State.

The president said, "We must heal the wounds of the past. We must live and prepare for the future of our children, and we must be committed to uplifting the livelihoods of our people in a free Nigeria."

"This is all part of the healing process for the Ogoni people."

"There is equally the Ogoni clean-up programme that I inherited. That will be pursued diligently and honourably. The number of people

that we will empower will increase as time goes on.

"I am glad that this meeting has emphasised peace and stability through the resuscitation of businesses in Ogoniland. Without these businesses, the recovery of this country will be adversely affected.

"Safety precautions, environmental and other challenges must be looked into, and we will certainly do that.

"My unwavering dedication to freedom for all people and the value of democratic governance has not diminished because I have been elected by the people, and I have to make the people the central focus of our governance of Nigeria."

Having appointed his official spokesperson and, most recently, Director-General of the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) from the area, the

president said he was committed to deepening collaboration with Ogoni leaders to create mutually-beneficial economic opportunities for Ogoniland and Nigeria at large.

"I am ready to work with the Ogoni people and engage with the government of Rivers State and the people of Nigeria to ensure that we give all of you a bright future in this country," he stressed.

Tinubu commended Wike for his dedication to alleviating the plight of the Ogoni people.

He stated, "I share the same view about Ogoniland with the Minister of the FCT. He is very much concerned about the progress, peace, and stability of Ogoni people, and he has discussed this with me on a number of occasions, and I thank him for that."

Earlier, in his remarks, King Nnee commended Tinubu for his numerous

achievements within one year in office. The traditional ruler highlighted the ongoing construction work on the Orne-Junction/Elemo-Junction axis of the East-West Road.

He said regarding Tinubu's feats,

"Your unspeakable dedication to service and empathy are the propelling forces behind your prompt response to our people's yearnings, which the past administrations have persistently promised and failed to meet."

Nigeria Ranks Lowest in Education Budget in West Africa, Says ASUU

Kuni Tyessi in Abuja

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) yesterday decried the neglect of the education sector, saying Nigeria ranks lowest in education budgets across the West African sub-region.

ASUU President, Prof. Emmanuel Osodeke, said this at a one-day workshop on "Emerging Areas of Students Needs in Beneficiary Institutions", organised by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) in Abuja.

He also reiterated the union's call for an upward review of education tax to 10 per cent, saying it would increase TETFund funding from the current N600 billion annually to N3 trillion.

"We have done a survey of West African countries. The least budgetary allocation to education by any country in West Africa is 15 per cent. The highest is 32 per cent.

"We are in a country where we give 4.5 to 7 per cent out of which less than 70 per cent is released. But the Obafemi Awolowo government was allocating over 30 per cent to education," he said.

He singled out Enugu, Abia and Oyo states for earmarking more than 20 per cent of their budgets to the sector.

Osodeke berated many universities vice chancellors for their failure to carry necessary stakeholders along in the utilisation of TETFund allocation to their schools.

"The TETFund inviting us as stakeholders to this meeting is an example of how it should be. But, you remember that when you were allocating money to universities VCs, we agreed that they would call stakeholders meeting before that money is utilised.

"We had our National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting some days ago, less than 10 per cent have called for that stakeholders meeting.

"I want to plead that any university that does not take the stakeholders along, should not be allowed to have access to the fund. The funds belong to the Nigerian people," he said.

Earlier, the Executive Secretary, TETFund, Sonny Echono, said funding educational activities required careful consideration of different needs and expectations.

Red Cross Seeks \$69.3 Million for Humanitarian, Crisis Response in Nigeria

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The Nigerian Red Cross yesterday disclosed that it was facing one of the most severe humanitarian crises in West Africa, with Nigeria being on the brink of extreme hunger, violent conflicts, and devastating health outbreaks, which is currently threatening the lives of millions.

The Nigerian Red Cross therefore said it was urgently seeking \$69.3 million to save lives and alleviate the suffering of millions of Nigerians facing unprecedented humanitarian challenges.

In a statement in Abuja, the organisation stated that 31.2 million people are projected to experience food insecurity from June to August 2024, including 1 million in an emergency phase, according to the March 2024 Cadre Harmonisé analysis.

Vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with disabilities, it said, are particularly affected.

"This is the highest number of people in a hunger crisis in West Africa. Increased violence, banditry, and economic challenges have displaced millions, leading to acute hunger and malnutrition.

"Health crises like malaria, and outbreaks of diphtheria, meningitis, Lassa fever, and cholera overwhelm health services and endanger populations. Additionally, significant flooding is predicted in 2024.

"The Nigerian Red Cross Society

(NRCs) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), with partners, launched the Nigerian Red Cross 2024 Plan on May 14, 2024 to respond to these needs.

"The plan details the strategy to address urgent needs such as the hunger crisis, diphtheria outbreak and other health emergencies, displacement, and flooding. It targets 11.5 million people," the body added.

It said the focus of the plan was not just on the Northeast but also on the Northwest, North Central, and Southern parts of the country.

It added that it also aims to tackle long-term issues, including but not limited to food and livelihood security, health, climate adaptation, humanitarian access, disaster risk reduction, capacity development, disaster management, and youth engagement.

"With ongoing crises affecting the most vulnerable and projected floods, now is the time to act and save lives. The Nigerian Red Cross supports hard-to-reach communities and vulnerable populations alongside the government's efforts. Every contribution counts in our fight to save lives and stop the suffering of millions of Nigerians," the statement quoted Abubakar Kende, Secretary General of the NRCs, to have stated at the launch.

Speaking on the capacity to respond, Benson Agbro, the NRCs Director of Disaster Management said: "The Nigerian Red Cross can address

these increased humanitarian needs and support communities to build resilience and end these cycles of crisis. We reach the most vulnerable communities who need help the most to survive."

Bhupinder Tomar, Head of Delegation for IFRC Abuja Delegation, expressed deep concern about the escalating food security and nutrition crisis and displacement in the northeast and northwest states.

"The rising needs are not matched

with available resources. By coming together and pooling resources, we can save lives and provide relief to families worst hit by these crises," he said.

The NRCs is a key first responder in emergencies. In 2023, it addressed food insecurity and displacement while continuing its response to the massive 2022 floods and a new operation for the diphtheria outbreak. Reaching over 27 million Nigerians with vital aid.

NMA Backs FG's Measures to Stem Brain Drain in Health Sector

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) has expressed support for the federal government's directive to university medical colleges in the country to double their students' intake as part as strategies to reduce the impact of brain drain.

The association said as one of the key stakeholders in the healthcare sector, it was ready to partner with government to resolve the challenges affecting healthcare delivery system in the country.

Newly elected President of NMA, Prof. Bala Mohammed Audu, who addressed journalists in Abuja, yesterday, said the associa-

tion was happy with the federal government's move to enhance the raise the students' intake of most Colleges of Medicine in Nigeria.

He added: "The policy move by the federal government to double the intake medical students by colleges of Medicine in the country is a step in the right direction.

"We believe that this measure will help to address the impact of the exodus of doctors by filling the gaps in healthcare professionals.

"We are going to work closely with government and encourage them to put all the necessary infrastructure for manpower training as well as equipment that critical for the training of these medical students.

"So, we are to further work with government to open up more spaces for employment of qualified medical Lecturers and resident doctors as well as open up additional training opportunities for resident doctors in the country," he said.

However, Audu said the issue of brain drain cannot be addressed only by training more young medical students but it also important to train more post graduate doctors who will take up the teaching positions to train these students.

While reading the communique issued at the NMA 64th Annual General/Scientific Conference and Delegates meeting held on Monday in Calabar, Cross River State, Audu

said the association urged government at all levels to, as a matter of urgency, prioritise and show more commitment to healthcare funding.

He explained that the increase in funding would enable payment of better and competitive wages, improving working conditions and creating enabling environment for medical practice.

"These are critical interventions necessary to reverse the on-going brain drain. The meeting resolved that the introduction of Euthanasia in the medical practice in Nigeria requires careful considerations because of ethical, legal, religious, social and cultural diversities," he added.

NEWS

**RISK MANAGERS VISIT FEDERAL INLAND REVENUE SERVICE...**

L-R: Governing Council Member, Chartered Risk Management Institute (CRMI), Dr. Chidiebere Nwagboso; President and Chairman of Council, CRMI, Dr. Ezekiel Oseni; Chief of staff to the Executive Chairman Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Mr. Tayo Koleosho; Treasurer, CRMI, Dr. Laurine Ubanozie, and Coordinating Director, Small Taxpayers Group, FIRS, Mr Kabir Abba, during a courtesy visit by CRMI council to FIRS in Abuja... yesterday

NSCDC Parades 14 Suspected Fraudsters in Ekiti**● Nabs serial motorcycle snatcher in Osun**

Gbenga Sodeinde in Ado Ekiti and **Yinka Kolawole** in Osogbo

The Ekiti State Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC, has paraded 14 suspected fraudsters for allegedly defrauding members of the public with fake job offers.

Niger Arrests 30 for Illegal Mining

Laleye Dipo in Minna

Officials of the Ministry of Mineral Resources yesterday carried out a raid of illegal mining sites in the Maitumbi area of Minna the Niger State Capital during which 30 people were arrested.

Among those arrested were 12 men among whom eight were under aged and 18 women seven of whom were also under aged.

Several equipment used for illegal mining were also seized from those arrested. The leader of the team and Director of Mining in the Ministry, Alhaji Adamu Garba, said the surprise raid on the illegal mining site followed the refusal of the miners to vacate the site.

Dokubo-Asari Congratulates Fubara on First Anniversary

An advocate for resource control and good governance in the Niger Delta, Muhajid Alhaji Abubakar Dokubo-Asari has extended congratulations to the Governor of Rivers State, Siminalayi Fubara, on his first anniversary celebration as governor of the state.

In a statement, Dokubo-Asari said that Fubara's leadership has been characterised by patience, wisdom and a commitment to peace, key components in resolving conflicts and promoting unity in Rivers State.

"With Governor Fubara leading

Sanwo-Olu Mourns Death of Deputy Chief of Staff, Soyannwo

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has announced the passing of his Deputy Chief of Staff, Gboyega Soyannwo, yesterday. He died at aged 55.

Sanwo-Olu, who sympathised with the Soyannwo's family in a statement posted on his personal X (Twitter) handle I, said the death of his top aide was sudden and devastating.

He described the deceased as a brother, an armour-bearer, a confidante and a faithful believer in the collective dream

Similarly, NSCDC Osun State Command has apprehended a suspected serial motorcycle snatcher, 27 years old Wahab Saburi of Obada Compound Ede, Osun State.

Parading the suspects in Ado-Ekiti, the State Commandant of NSCDC, Agboola Sunday said

Alhaji Garba emphasised the determination of the ministry to combat illegal mining throughout the state because the activities of illegal miners pose a serious threat to the environment apart from the hazards those involved are exposed to.

"This arrest send a strong message to those involved in exploiting Nigeria's natural resources unlawfully, particularly concerning the use of underage labour," he said adding that "The Ministry of Mineral Resources has emphasised its commitment to clamp down on illegal mining operations and protect the welfare of Niger State citizens, especially children, involved in such illicit activities.

the way, there is hope for a future of growth and development, free from division and discord. Rivers State boasts abundant natural resources that, when properly utilised, can elevate the region into an economic powerhouse, creating opportunities and prosperity for its people. By following in the footsteps of the visionary founding fathers of Rivers State, like Chief Harold Dappa-Biriye and Chief Godfrey Kio Jaja Amachree, who championed unity and inclusivity, it is possible to build a united and prosperous future for all," he said.

of a Greater Lagos.

According to the statement, "It is with deep sorrow that I announce the passing of my Deputy Chief of Staff, Gboyega Soyannwo. I am devastated by Gboyega's sudden departure and I'm deeply affected by this news.

"Soyannwo was not only my Deputy Chief of Staff by title; he was a brother to me, an armour-bearer, a confidante and a faithful believer in our collective dream of a Greater Lagos.

operatives of the Counter Terrorists Unit of the command arrested the syndicates who specialise in duping people with fake job

opportunities. According to him, the victims are caged somewhere in the state to extort money from them in the

guise of providing employment adding that the case will be thoroughly investigated.

He called on members of the public to go through the right channel is seeking for jobs to avoid falling prey to the criminals in the guise of providing employment.

Tinubu Okays N24bn Loan Reimbursement for Kebbi, Nasarawa

Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has asked the Senate to approve the reimbursement of over N15 billion used by the state for the construction of Sir Ahmadu Bello International Airport in Birnin Kebbi to the state government.

Niger Delta Youth Group Rallies Support for Tinubu, Hails Appointment of Ijaw Sons

Olusegun Samuel in Yenagoa

Niger Delta youths under the auspices of the Coalition of Niger Delta Youths Stakeholders (CNDYS) yesterday trooped out in large numbers in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State capital, for a solidarity rally in support of President Bola Ahmed

272 Varsities Not Sufficient for Nigeria's Growing Demand, Says NUC

Kuni Tyessi in Abuja

The acting Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Chris Maiyaki yesterday said that the current number of 272 public and private universities are not enough to cater

Indigenes Abandon Homes over Pollution from Rice Mill in Anambra

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Some residents of Ndam village in Nnobi community, Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State have abandoned their homes over pollution of their environment by a recently established Seaman Rice Mill.

Customs Sensitises AMDON on Regularisation of Vehicle Duties

Onuminya Innocent in Sokoto

The Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) Sokoto/Zamfara Area Command has sensitised Association of Motor Dealers of Nigeria (AMDON) on a 90-day window for regularising import duties on specific categories of vehicles

In a statement signed by its

Adeleke Inaugurates Osun Country Club, Urges Members to Contribute to Societal Devt

Yinka Kolawole in Osogbo

The Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, yesterday inaugurated the Osun Country Club (OCC), where members would forge lasting friendship, indulge in leisure activities and

contribute to societal development.

The governor, who was accompanied by his cousin, David Adeleke popularly known as Davido, the Commissioner for Youth, Moshood Olalekan, among other states executives, members of the club and monarchs, also

unveiled OCC's logo.

Speaking at the event held in Osogbo, Osun State, the governor urged members to work hand in hand not only for merriment but also for the betterment of the immediate community and the state at large.

The statement said that while declaring the workshop open, Comptroller Kamal Mohammad elucidated the momentous role the association play in the importation and sales of vehicles in the country, stating the choice of AMDON members as participants in the work is in consideration of the critical role they play in the vehicle business.

He said: "As we begin this journey, let's remember that what we do now will figure the future for those who come after us. Let's work together to make this club not only enjoyable for us, but also something that helps our community in a good way."

Ndidi in Abuja After Blissful Season with Leicester, Visits Sports Minister

Duro Ikhazuagbe

Nigeria and Leicester City midfielder enforcer, Wilfred Ndidi, paid a visit to the Minister of Sports Development, Senator John Owan Enoh, in his office in Abuja yesterday. Accompanied by his manager, Yahaya Atom, and Chairman of

Nathaniel Boys FC, Mr. Yemi Idowu, Ndidi met with the Sports Minister to discuss various matters. During the visit, Ndidi expressed his gratitude to Senator Enoh, praising the Sports Minister for ensuring the well-being of his teammates during AFCON he could not be part of because of injury.

Ndidi who will be returning to the English Premier League with Leicester after a blissful Championship season, commended the sports minister for the excellent support and care provided to Super Eagles. Senator Enoh congratulated Ndidi on Leicester City's promotion to the English Premier League.

He also took the opportunity to remind Ndidi about Super Eagles upcoming 2026 World Cup qualifying matches against South Africa and Benin Republic scheduled for early next month. The minister encouraged Ndidi to be prepared and to contribute significantly to the Super Eagles' efforts to secure their spot in the World Cup to hold in USA, Mexico and Canada in 2026.

Nigeria missed qualification for the 2022 edition of the Mundial hosted by Qatar.



Minister of Sports Development, Senator John Owan Enoh (left) receiving an endorsed Leicester City shirt from Wilfred Ndidi during his visit to the minister in his office in Abuja...yesterday



Victor Boniface...voted Rookie of the year in German Bundesliga

Victor Boniface is Bundesliga Rookie of the Year!

Victor Boniface has been voted the German Bundesliga Rookie of the season. He won the monthly award a record four times in a row – from August to December 2023. He beat Xavi Simons, Ian Maatsen and Maximilian Beier to the top prize.

The Super Eagles striker, 23, has posted a stellar first season with Bayer 04 Leverkusen in the German Bundesliga, netting 13 times and creating nine goals to shoot the 'Die Werkself' to their first-ever Bundesliga title and dethrone 10-time consecutive champions Bayern Munich.

Tinubu Congratulates Aruna Quadri for Winning ITTF Africa Cup Title

Deji Elumoyein Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has congratulated Nigeria's table tennis pacesetter, Mr. Aruna Quadri, on winning the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Africa Cup title. Quadri achieved a resounding victory in the final match of the 2024 ITTF Africa Cup in Rwanda, reclaiming his title and sealing his place as Africa's table tennis champion. The President, in a release issued on Wednesday by his Media Adviser, Ajuri Ngelale, commended the table tennis star for his dogged pursuit of excellence even in the face of gnawing obstacles, declaring that the zeal for distinction, the hardiness to succeed, and the inventiveness to solve complex problems are the exceptional qualities that define Nigerians. President Tinubu also noted the recent progress in the nation's sports

sector, with remarkable performances in the African Games, the Africa Cup of Nations, and the World Relay Championships, and emphasizes that his administration will continue to foster the growth and development of sports in the country. The President reassured Nigerians that his administration remains dedicated to expanding the space of opportunities across diverse fields for Nigeria's creative youths.

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ANOCA Appoints Ngerem as Olympafrica Ambassador

Former President of Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Dan Ngerem, has been made an Ambassador of the Olympafrica International Foundation. Olympafrica International Foundation was founded in 1989 by former International Olympics Committee President, Juan Antonio Samaranch, in conjunction with the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA). Part of the mission statement of Olympafrica is to promote the social values of the Olympics in Africa, most especially in the area of youth sports development, youth centres, education, health, training,

and social economical initiatives. It is expected that it will impact in the lives of athletes when their sports careers are over. ANOCA President, Moustapha Berraf, in a letter of appointment to Mr. Ngerem, said the body was banking on expertise, dedication and passion of the former AFN Chief for sports to bring a positive change to African youths. Speaking on joining the ambassador's club for the organisation with headquarters in Dakar, Senegal who are ready to host the Youth Olympics in 2026, Mr. Ngerem noted that his interest is to see that youths are empowered

through sports and when it is all over they would have something to fall back on and have a decent living. "By 2030 Africa will constitute over 42 percentage of global youths according to World Economic Forum and I am pleased that the Olympafrica is at the epicenter of reinventing youth engagement, youth empowerment, nurturing our youths through sports," said Mr. Ngerem. "I've partnered Olympafrica in some projects and so I am particularly pleased to act as an ambassador to Olympafrica to foster this excellent engagement.

Ebenyo Laments Injury Has Stopped Him from Defending Okpekpe Road Race Title

Kenyan athlete Daniel Ebenyo has expressed sadness over how injury has stopped him from becoming the first man to successfully defend an Okpekpe 10km International Road Race title. The Kenyan top runner is also lamenting his inability to be the first man to break 28 minutes at the race after setting a 28:28 course record in 2023. The 28-year-old won the men's title last year and had promise to return

to Nigeria this year but an injury he sustained in training means he will not be in Okpekpe to defend his title. "I had a dream to be the first man to defend my title and and run another course record but definitely I can't again," wrote the Kenyan in a message to the Okpekpe race media. Ebenyo, like the good sportsman that he is, is wishing the athletes who will compete for honours this year all the best. "I am hereby wishing all the

runners all the best and may the best athlete win," said the defending champion. Ebenyo also has nice words for the organisers of the world-class, gold label 10km road race. "Okpekpe is always a bridge and a mother to all races in Africa. God bless Okpekpe and God bless the organiser of the race. See you next year," wrote Ebenyo who made the podium at both the World Athletics Championships in Budapest and

World Athletics Road Running championships in Riga after emerging Okpekpe race champion last year. This year's race is the 10th in the series and organisers have assured of another world-class event come May 25 in Okpekpe in Edo State of Nigeria. The race is the first road race in Nigeria to have its course measured by a World Athletics' certified measurer and the first in West Africa to be granted label status to depicts its world-class status.

FIFA Women's Club World Cup to Debut January 2026

World football body, FIFA, has set plans in motion for the introduction of a Women's Club World Cup to take effect from January 2026. This is one of the key decisions of the 37-member FIFA Council which held during the week as part of the 74th FIFA Congress to hold in Bangkok, Thailand on Friday, May 17, 2024. According to FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, the "Women's International Match Calendar and the subsequent amendments to our regulations represent an important milestone in our pledge to take the women's game to the next level by enhancing competitiveness across the world, particularly in those regions where women's football is less developed and protecting the well-being of the players," observed the FIFA chief. The new FIFA Secretary General Mattias Grafström of Sweden/Netherlands origin, was appointed

following his nomination on an ad interim basis in October 2023. "I am humbled and deeply honoured to have been appointed FIFA Secretary General and I would like to thank the FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, the Confederation Presidents, the Vice-Presidents and the members of FIFA Council for having trusted me to serve football in such an important position," said Secretary General Mattias Grafström. "Football is my passion since I was born. I started playing it as a child and worked in football all my life at all different levels. There are therefore no words to express my feelings as I accept with pride and with a great sense of responsibility, the biggest challenge of my professional life. Together with the FIFA team, I will of course dedicate myself more than ever to the service of our beautiful game of football, FIFA and its 211 Member Associations," pledged the new scribe of FIFA.

NPFL Live Match Subscriptions Now Available Via Paystack Checkout

Propel Sports Africa (PSA) has unveiled an additional subscription payment method for NPFL Live Users looking to subscribe and watch their favourite NPFL club games on their mobile devices and laptops. Basil Kabbani, Chairman of PSA, the rights holders of NPFL broadcast streaming of matches, announced on Monday that payment via Paystack, an online payment gateway service provider had been fully integrated for ease of payment with debit and credit cards including cards denominated Naira. This channel in addition to subscription by airtime for MTN subscribers, and card payments via Stripe which already exist for the platform. "We realised that some of our subscribers had experienced challenges accessing our streaming platforms when attempting to make payment using their Naira Cards, and worked to deliver this additional option for them. Nigerians are already

familiar with using Paystack in making online purchases, and it is this same very simple process that is now available as an additional subscription payment option", a very excited Kabbani disclosed over a WhatsApp call from his base in England. Propel Sports will in the days ahead embark on a public orientation blitz on all media channels to educate fans on how to use this additional subscription method. "A single game subscription starts at as low as N400, while a month's subscription pass costs N2560. A week's subscription pass to the platform can also be purchased for N980. The weekly and monthly subscriptions give you access to ALL content on the platform, including previously shown games, for the period of your subscription", explained Victor Okobi, the Country Director for Propel Sports Africa

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A.B. Mahmoud to Judiciary

"Much of the investment is driven by procurement rather than informed decisions based on needs assessment or suitable technology selection. Technological solutions often lack harmonisation across different courts, hindering the exchange of information or data. In many cases, vendors merely supply devices to courts, some of which are underutilised and serve as mere decorations in offices"—Former Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) President, expressing concerns on the absence of a coherent policy framework for the application of technology in Nigerian courts.

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The Betrothal of Magari Orphans

A religious dimension was yesterday added to the attempts by the Minister of Women Affairs, Mrs Uju Kennedy-Ohanenye to stop the Niger State House of Assembly Speaker, Mr Abdulmalik Sarkindaji, from marrying off 100 orphaned girls as part of his 'constituency project'. Although Sarkindaji initially backed out of the idea following social media backlash, the Niger State Imam Forum has vowed to go ahead with the marriage on grounds that it did not contravene any sections of the Nigerian constitution and teachings of Islam. The Director General, Niger State Religious Affairs, Dr Umar Farouk, who read their resolutions in Minna, the state capital, gave the Minister a seven-day ultimatum to withdraw her court case against the Speaker or face legal action. They also called on President Bola Tinubu to sack the Minister for an alleged attempt to cause religious disharmony in Nigeria.

This whole controversy started when Sarkindaji announced that he would marry off the orphaned girls in Mariga local government area of the state, in what he said was "aimed at alleviating the suffering of the impoverished." He had pledged to pay the dowries for their bridegrooms and procure materials for the mass marriage. But on Tuesday, Kennedy-Ohanenye described the plan as "unacceptable" because it flouts the Child's Rights Act. "These children must be considered, their future must be considered, the future of the children to come out of their marriage must be considered," the Minister



Uju Kennedy-Ohanenye

said. "I have filed for an injunction to stop him from whatever he is planning to do on the 24th until a thorough investigation is carried out on those girls,

find out whether they gave their consent, their ages, find out the people marrying them."

It is instructive that while announcing the programme, Sarkindaji had stated that Governor Mohammed Umar Bago, and the Emir of Kontagora, Alhaji Mohammed Barau, would serve as guardians to the female orphans during the mass marriage ceremony. He also added that the Kano State Commander General of the Hisbah Board, Sheikh Aminu Daurawa, would be a special guest of honour. The invitation extended to the Governor, the Emir and the Kano Sheikh was deliberate: To introduce official, traditional, and religious endorsement for this strange 'constituency project.' And with the position of the Imam Forum yesterday, it stands to reason that the Minister has lost the battle.

For almost two decades, a marriage scheme has been part of the social programmes in Kano State, upon which billions of Naira have been expended. When in 2019 the current APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Ganduje conducted a similar wedding for 1,500 couples, he explained that the state government had provided complete sets of beds, side mirrors, wardrobes, and mattresses to the couples as gifts. Last October, the state government conducted another mass wedding of 1,800 couples comprising widows, divorcees, and spinsters selected from across all the 44 local government areas. Aside Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf, the ANPP presidential candidate in the 2023 general election, Dr Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso was among the prominent people who attended the

wedding at the Emir's palace. "The event reflects the deep-rooted values and unity of the people in Kano State and highlights the state government's dedication to preserving traditions while ensuring a bright future for its residents," Yusuf said before the festivities were concluded with a 'Walima' (traditional feast) at the Government House. The Kano brides were, however, adults, so the issue of consent was not a concern for that event.

Interestingly, this programme has also been gamed by some smart people. In 2012, for instance, Lawan Sadi and his wife Amina, who had been married for years, registered by deceiving officials into 'joining' them, just to benefit from the largesse. According to Abba Sa'idu Sufi, then Director-General of the board, "the fraud couldn't have been possible without the help of an insider and that was why we suspended the Hisbah commander in the area so that we can investigate the matter properly." The said Hisbah commander, Sufi explained, "colluded with unscrupulous married couples and fraudulently sneaked them into the exercise with the intention of making them to benefit from the N10,000 dowry given to brides, the N20,000 given to women for empowerment and the free furniture and kitchen wares."

Indeed, there have been many reports of 'couples' who simply buy into the programme to collect the freebies, with the contrived marriages terminated soon after...

NOTE: Piece concluded online

UBA, Elumelu and The Power of Foresight

When on Monday I received an invitation by WhatsApp to the 75th anniversary of the United Bank for Africa (UBA) slated for Monday, it brought back memories of an encounter I had with five men two decades ago. It was captured in my 4 August 2005 column. From my recollection, that UBA is still a brand today, and a powerful one at that, is testimony to the foresight of Mr Tony Elumelu. Below is what I wrote 19 years ago...

I was privileged to attend a rather crucial business meeting in the morning of Saturday 22 January this year (2005). I had gone to interview Mr Tony Elumelu, then Group Managing Director of Standard Trust Bank (STB) at his Ikoyi, Lagos residence. By the time I arrived, he was already on the dining table, holding what appeared an informal meeting with four men. Those young men with him that day, as I would later identify, were Bunmi Akinremi, an Assistant General Manager with STB, Philip Oduzoa, an STB Executive Director, Obinna Ofudo, Elumelu's special assistant and Kennedy Uzoka, STB Managing Executive for the Lagos Region. The discussion, from an eavesdropping position, centred on the merger between the STB and the United Bank for Africa (UBA) that was then just evolving.

Apparently having realised that I was hearing what they were saying, Elumelu beckoned that I should come to the dining table. "Segun, come and join our discussion. Perhaps, we can benefit from your insights," he said. The discussion was about what name to give the new bank. It was apparent that Elumelu preferred a retention of the UBA name while the four men were opposed to the idea. I was persuaded by their argument. But from his interjections, often laced with humour and banter, Elumelu told his men he could see



Elumelu

beyond the surface. "Let us look at what we are gaining from this merger. UBA is already a global brand. That is an advantage for us and that is the way I want us to look at it." His men were not persuaded.

When he realised that he was losing the argument Elumelu turned to me: "Now, let's hear from Segun. Don't you agree with me that UBA would be the ideal name for the bank?" Put like that, I knew I was being set up to play a supporting cast to a predetermined position. But it was a role difficult for me to play because I shared the sentiment of the four other men in the room. I made my point: "From what I have heard here, it would appear you are going for a merger between

STB and UBA as equal partners. If I were told that STB and UBA merged and the new name is UBA, I would simply conclude that it is not a merger but an acquisition by the latter."

At this point, Elumelu became rather uneasy. Then he turned to one of his men who had a laptop. They had apparently been toying with some ideas. He asked that the STB logo be put before the name UBA. "Gentlemen, you know that on our logo is letter 'S'. What if we put the logo before UBA? That would still, in a way, give us Standard United Bank for Africa." That concession appealed to his men but when it was done on the computer, what came out was somehow incongruent. Putting a logo before a brand name did not quite make sense. Besides, the colour of STB logo (red) and UBA name (written in amber) looked riotous. While that was the compromise achieved that day before their session ended so I could have my interview, it was also evident that Elumelu was merely buying time. He wanted the UBA name. It was part of his strategic calculation, a new phase in his banking journey.

In retrospect now, especially as we move towards the December (2005) deadline for the N25 billion bank recapitalisation as directed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), I concede that Elumelu could see what his subordinates and this reporter could not see and that precisely is what sets him apart from the rest. Within the banking industry, Nigeria is steadily moving to fewer but more financially robust banks that are better able to compete in the local and international markets. Elumelu could see that in the emerging scenario, the banks that will survive and prosper are those that can meet the expectations of depositors and investors for better returns and security. And sentimental attachment to a brand name would not matter.

What I took away from the session that day was Elumelu's man-management style. One, all the young men who happened to be his subordinates were treated as equals with him as team captain and motivator. He was also addressed as Tony (his first name) by all of them and this created a relaxed atmosphere that allowed each person to air his view without any inhibition or fear. Elumelu equally did not force the issue as most bosses would do even when he felt a strong conviction about the benefit derivable from retaining the UBA name.

However, while the tenor of the conversation may have been friendly, there was no doubt about who was in charge and that explains why Elumelu ultimately had his way. The result of what transpired that day and the compromises that may have been reached by both sides along the way became evident when the new bank was unveiled on Monday. The name UBA was retained but it also comes in STB colour (red) rather than the UBA amber. The bank also retained the STB logo, a testimony to the negotiating skills of Elumelu and his men.

That Elumelu has become one of the biggest bank chiefs in Nigeria today is no longer in contention. But industry watchers would argue he is only reaping from his long-term vision that the future of banking would be in the retail market. That explains why STB was opening real time online branches, penetrating the whole country at a time when most banks preferred to stay just in one little corner of Lagos, content with accepting cheap government deposits...

ENDNOTE: As UBA marks its 75th anniversary with Elumelu as chairman, I can now see what he saw 19 years ago. He was not just interested in building a bigger bank, Elumelu was also buying into a legacy by retaining the brand name. Foresight!