

TotalEnergies EP Agrees to Sell 10% Stake in Oil, Gas Assets to Chappal for \$860m

● *French oil giant confirms deal, announces retention of interest in gas supply to NLNG*

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja TotalEnergies EP Nigeria Limited's 10 per cent stake in key oil and gas assets for an aggregate consideration of \$860 million, subject to contractual and regulatory approvals. A statement by the company stated that the Sale and Purchase Agreement (SPA) is for TotalEnergies non-operated interest in its onshore and shallow water assets within the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) JV in the Niger Delta. The transaction is expected to close by December 31, 2024. The acquisition includes a 10 per cent interest in 15 Oil Mining Leases (OMLs) and two main export terminals in Nigeria, specifically the

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Financial Times to Tinubu: Shock Therapy Alone Won't Cure Nigeria's Economic Ills... Page 5

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THIS DAY

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PDP Govs: Tinubu Has Failed in Governance, Impoverished Nigerians, Worsened Economy

● *Vow to reclaim nation's leadership, decry drift into anarchy* ● *Warn INEC against bias in off-season elections*
● *Say APC mismanaging country's economy* ● *Demand inclusive congresses, support minimum wage, LG autonomy, Fubara*

Chuks Okocha in Abuja, **Gideon Arinze** in Enugu and **Blessing Ibunge** in Port Harcourt State governors elected on the platform of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), yesterday, came down hard on the leadership of President Bola Tinubu, saying he has not only failed to deliver good governance, but also impoverished the people, and worsened Nigeria's economy. The governors vowed to reclaim all leadership positions across Nigeria, including the presidency, to save the country from further drift into anarchy. They also accused the "lacklustre All-Progressives Congress (APC) led federal government of suc-

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NASS Okays Tinubu's Fresh Request for N6.2tn Injection into N27.5tn 2024 Budget

● *Reviews 2023 Finance Act to tax banks' FX gains* ● *Barau hints amendment meant to accommodate new minimum wage* ● *Edun: FG to reintroduce beverage tax*

Story on page 9



PDP GOVERNORS' FORUM MEETING...

L-R (Front Row): Governors Sheriff Oborevwori (Delta); Ahmadu Fintiri (Adamawa); Siminalayi Fubara (Rivers); Dauda Lawal (Zamfara); Peter Mbah (Enugu); Agbu Kefas (Taraba); and L-R (Back Row): Chairman, PDP Former Ministers Forum, Tanimu Turaki; Umo Eno (Akwa-Ibom); Caleb Mutfwang (Plateau); Seyi Makinde (Oyo); and former governor of Kaduna State, Ahmed Makarfi while Governor of Bauchi State/Chairman of the PDP Governors' Forum, Senator Bala Mohammed presents a communique after a meeting at the forum at the Government House, Enugu...yesterday

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SPECIAL 90TH BIRTHDAY DINNER IN HONOUR OF PROF. WOLE SOYINKA...

L-R: Chairman, Leaders & Company Limited, Prince Nduka Obaigbena; Chairman, Vanguard Media Limited, Chief Sam Amuka-Pemu; Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat; celebrant, Prof. Wole Soyinka; Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu; First Lady, Dr. Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu; Prof. Omofolabi Ajayi-Soyinka and the Soyinka family, during a special 90th birthday dinner in honour of Prof. Wole Soyinka, at the Lagos House, Marina, Lagos... on Tuesday

Financial Times to Tinubu: Shock Therapy Alone Won't Cure Nigeria's Economic Ills

●Says current policies largely disjointed

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

A Financial Times (FT) article has described current policies by the President Bola Tinubu administration as disjointed, stressing that his 'shock therapy' strategy alone will not cure Nigeria's many economic challenges. It stated that in the nearly 15 months since Tinubu became president, he has forced his 220 million fellow Nigerians to swallow some bitter medicine, removing a generous fuel subsidy, one of the few benefits citizens receive from their 'inefficient and corrupt' state. In addition, FT said that the Tinubu administration allowed the country's currency, the naira, to enter freefall, fuelling imported inflation and triggering the worst cost of living crisis in a generation. These measures, it said, have pushed tens of millions of already impoverished people deeper into misery. However, the news medium admitted that they were necessary to begin correcting the country's long-term economic demise. The fuel subsidy, it said, was ruinously expensive, guzzling nearly a third of the federal budget and distortionary, channelling Nigerians' energies into rent-seeking, smuggling and graft. The exchange rate regime, which vastly overvalued the naira, wiped out exports of everything but oil, it added. While genuine industries were starved of hard currency, cronies, it alleged, accessed cheap dollars

to sell on the black market. It stressed that Nigeria's elite learnt a lesson that was toxic to the nation's prospects, meaning that it would rather not produce anything when it can make a killing through arbitrage. "It is necessary, but insufficient. Tinubunomics' is so disjointed it barely deserves the name. Shock therapy will probably fail if important adjustments are not made. "First, the president must chart a course ahead and convince Nigerians they are in it together. For that to be remotely credible, the political class must make sacrifices. Out must go lavish pay rises for civil servants and flashy cars (not to mention jets) for government officials. "Tinubu only has to look at Kenya, where violent street demonstrations have forced the government to withdraw tax rises, to see what happens when a sense of injustice festers. Likewise some savings from the fuel subsidy should be redeployed to support the most economically vulnerable as a priority. "Hunger levels are soaring and millions of children are foregoing meals and school. Nigerian politicians love to be seen handing out bags of rice. But what is needed is direct cash payments to people's phones, the technology for which exists, and in the longer-term a proper safety net. "As things stand, the state lacks either the capacity or the probity to administer such a scheme. Tinubu needs to fix that urgently," it added. With a few exceptions, FT stated that the president's cabinet is full of

lightweights who owe their jobs to political patronage, not to expertise. "Technocratic talent exists in abundance. It must be marshalled. Corruption needs to be tackled. It does not help that Tinubu's own vast wealth is not easy to decipher, nor that his poverty minister was

suspended for alleged diversion of funds, something she denies. "It does not help either that the state is implicated in the wholesale theft of oil, depriving the nation's coffers of billions of dollars. Tinubu should use all his political guile to staunch the flow," it added.

The FT piece stated that Nigeria collects tax worth about 10 per cent of gross domestic product, one of the lowest rates in the world, a sure sign of how little trust exists between the government and the governed. "But if the economy is to be revived, the state needs to be an

enabler. It must provide power, roads, security and justice, not to mention schools, hospitals and support for the poorest in society. "Without a properly joined-up and articulated plan, Tinubu's bitter medicine will not cure Nigeria's ills. It will just leave a bad taste," it added.

President to Solid Minerals Ministry: Issue Mining Licenses to Only Firms with Local Value Addition

●Says directive will position Nigeria as critical metals leader
●Discloses nation has attracted \$2bn investment in renewable energy sector

Deji Elumoye and Folalumi Alaran in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu, yesterday, directed the Federal Ministry of Solid Minerals Development to issue only mining licences tied to local value addition. Tinubu said this was to ensure that young Nigerians were actively engaged in economic activities, acquiring skills and contributing to the overall development of the economy. The president gave the directive while declaring open the African Natural Resources and Energy Investment Summit, 2024, held at State House Conference Centre, Abuja. Tinubu, who was represented at the occasion by Vice President Kashim Shettima, said his administra-

tion was fully committed to creating an enabling business environment to attract investment that encouraged "value addition" on solid minerals before they were exported. According to him, "We recognise the losses incurred from exporting crude mineral commodities and understand that it is time to change this narrative. By doing so, we aim to ensure that our teeming youth are actively engaged in economic activities, acquiring skills, and contributing to the nation's foreign exchange earnings. "Therefore, the ministry will only issue mining licenses if they are tied to local value addition." The president stated that his administration's target in the solid minerals sector was "to make Nigeria a leader in critical metals". While commending stakeholders for the establishment of the

African Minerals Strategy Group, with Nigeria as the first chairman, Tinubu said, "We aim to set new standards in the mining industry and ensure that Africa gets an equitable slice of supplying the world with critical metals. "In our transition to cleaner and more sustainable energy systems, we also recognise the pivotal role that natural gas plays. Natural gas is a transition fuel that will fundamentally restructure our nation's economy." In leveraging opportunities in the renewable energy space, the president explained, "Nigeria has attracted over \$2 billion in investment in the renewable energy sector, making it a fast-growing sector in the economy. "Our commitment is to continue this trajectory and attract more private sector involvement in the renewable energy space, including

manufacturing locally produced solar panels and batteries." He emphasised that discussion on the energy transition must also include the significance of the petroleum industry as a cornerstone of the nation's economy. "While we strive to embrace renewable and cleaner energy sources, we acknowledge that oil and gas continue to play a vital role in our energy and economic landscape." Tinubu highlighted strategic priorities in the sector to include the goal to attract more investment in the oil and gas industry; grow oil production to 2.1 million barrels a day by December 2024; improve investment in midstream and downstream infrastructure; tackle theft; and hold developers accountable for the highest environmental standards.

Continues online

Tinubu Names Mrs. Walson-Jack as New Head of Service of the Federation

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has approved the appointment of Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, as Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, with effect from August 14, 2024. Walson-Jack was appointed as Federal Permanent Secretary in 2017 and has served in several Ministries. The new appointee, according to a release issued on Wednesday by presidential spokesperson,

Ajuri Ngelale, will take over from the incumbent Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Dr (Mrs) Folasade Yemi-Esan, who is due to retire on August 13, 2024. President Tinubu, while thanking the outgoing Head of Service for her stewardship, tasks the incoming Head of Service to discharge her duties with innovative flair, integrity, and stringent adherence to the extant rules and regulations of the Civil Service of the Federation.



Mrs. Walson-Jack

Nigeria, UAE to Strengthen Partnership, Collaboration

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

Plans are underway to further strengthen areas of partnership and collaboration between Nigeria and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This was revealed during the visit of the Chairman/CEO, Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM), Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa to the Embassy of UAE in Abuja, following the removal of the visa ban by placed on Nigeria by the Arab country. Dabiri-Erewa who was received by the UAE Ambassador to Nigeria, Salem Saeed Al-Shamsi, stated that NiDCOM intends to engage and

sensitise Nigerians in the UAE to be good ambassadors of their country of stay and country of origin, to excel in whatever they are doing and never to forget home. She added further "this initiative aims to foster better understanding and compliance with local regulations," while disclosing that 190 Nigerians were repatriated to Nigeria, with an additional 250 expected to return soon. She said the actions of individuals in a host country could greatly impact the overall image of their home country, noting that the role of Western media imperialism in perpetuating negative stereotypes

about Nigerians. The UAE Envoy on his part, explained that the visa ban on Nigeria has been officially lifted. He confirmed that the Visa on Arrival policy has been canceled for all countries, but assured that the new procedures are designed to facilitate tourism and ensure travelers' safe return. The Ambassador expressed his commitment to providing the best possible services for Nigerians, with the support of the determined Nigerian government. He also acknowledged the UAE's role in safely repatriating 96 Nigerians at no cost.

NEWS



INAUGURATION OF FIRST BRANCH OF NOVA BANK AS A COMMERCIAL BANK IN LAGOS...

L-R: Lagos State Commissioner for Budget and Planning, Mosopefolu George; Deputy Chief of Staff, Sam Egube; Chairman, NOVA Bank, Phillips Oduoza; Executive Governor of Lagos State Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Managing Director/CEO, NOVA Bank, Mr. Wale Oyedede; and Commissioner for Finance, Mr. Abayomi Oluyomi, at the inauguration of the first branch of NOVA Bank as a commercial bank in Victoria Island, Lagos...on Tuesday

Tinubu Identifies Education as Vital Tool to Combat Poverty

●Launches education loan fund ●Sawyerr: Northern institutions top loan applications ●Says southern schools initially skeptical about programme ●NANS President: it's new dawn in education sector

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu yesterday, launched the much-awaited Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFUND), stressing the importance of education as a vital tool in combating poverty as well as achieving national development.

Speaking at the formal launch of NELFUND and the ceremonial disbursement of funds at the State House, Abuja, the President emphasised that education remains the greatest weapon against poverty, providing vision, development and hope.

He noted that without education, conquering insecurity and achieving success was impossible, emphasising

that education provides the light at the end of the tunnel, no matter how slow the progress may seem.

Addressing the Board, members and management of the Fund, Tinubu reaffirmed the commitment of his administration to the Renewed Hope Agenda saying democracy was all about inclusiveness.

He added that the target of his administration was to build a fair society built on successful inclusiveness.

"What I believe is that education is the greatest weapon against poverty in any society, without education there is no vision, there is development, you cannot successfully conquer insecurity.

"Education is that light at the

end of the tunnel no matter how sluggish you move, it will give you the light and the hope," he said.

The President further noted that Nigeria would continue to invest in education to empower citizens and deploy it as a tool against terrorism, banditry and insecurity.

According to him: "We are investing, we don't want to try ignorance as alternative, we want education from foundation to the topmost level.

"There is available here the hope and the genuine and commitment, inclusiveness is what democracy is all about.

"Today I am fulfilling one of my greatest campaign agenda, you cannot find your way if you

are not well educated, you cannot even fight terrorism and banditry.

"If we have successful inclusive and loan that is necessary for our people to get educated and invest in their own lives we would have built a fair society and a promise that we will earn a banner without stain to our children.

He also symbolically presented loan cheques to students from each of the six geo-political zones, indicating the beginning of the disbursement of the fund to qualified Nigerian students.

Tinubu, later presented cheques to Vice Chancellors of Bayero University, Kano (BUK), Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO), among other institutions present.

Earlier in his speech, NELFUND's Executive Secretary, Akintunde Sawyerr, disclosed the portal's key metrics from 25th May, 2024 to date, saying a total of 164,000 students registered for the loan while 103,000 of them applied.

Sawyerr added that a total sum of N32 billion was currently available for disbursement to kick start the programme.

According to him, the aim of NELFUND was to empower Nigerian youth by providing fair, transparent funding and removing financial barriers to educational opportunities and academic pursuits.

Reeling out NELFUND's progress since the launch, Sawyerr said the Fund got key amendments of the Loan Act on April 3, 2024; secured dashboard metrics on May 25th till date as well as the Presidential disbursement of funds on 17th July, 2024.

He explained that students applied for two types of loans – "one is educational fees which is sent directly to institutions and the other is the student application for upkeep loan, which is the loan that covers monthly stipend."

Speaking with newsmen after the launch, the NELFUND Executive Secretary stated that the Fund has received more loan applications from institutions in the northern part of the country.

Sawyerr, attributed the high demand from northern institutions to their proactive approach and effective networking.

He, however, noted that there was

growing awareness and interest in the southern regions, despite initial skepticism and concerns about the legitimacy of the program.

The Executive Secretary assured that the disbursement program was real and backed by Tinubu, as he sought to alleviate doubts and increase participation from southern institutions.

His words: "The zones with the highest and the segments of the institutions with the highest, I can say to you that institutions in the north of the country have been very proactive at supporting and helping their students and in providing their data to us.

"So that's where the leaning is currently, but that's to be expected because they seem to be very well organized in terms of networking in the northern part of the country.

"In the southern part of the country, there's growing awareness and there's growing interest. I think there's been a lot of skepticism, generally and I think the most skeptical parts of the country is in the south, the question everything; is it true?

"Is it real? Is it a scam? and I think what you witnessed today with us actually starting this disbursement programme is to say that 'this is not NO FUND, this is NELFUND'.

"We're trying to ensure that people know that this is not a trick, it's not a game. Mr. President has backed this with cash and we're going to disburse that cash. So I think we'll see the skepticism that you can find mainly in the southern part begin to disappear when we start paying out."

Power Supply: FG Signs Performance Bonds with NERC, TCN, REA, Others

●Adelabu says sanctions for non-performance will be top-down

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The federal government has signed performance contracts with heads of agencies under the ministry of power in its avowed bid to raise electricity supply nationwide.

Speaking at the event which took place at the Power House in Abuja, the Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adelabu stressed that although he was confident that key targets will be met, nonetheless there will be repercussion for failure.

Nigeria's power supply to its over 200 million population is largely abysmal, with the volume of electricity that reaches homes in the country oscillating between 3,500mw

to 4,500mw.

Agencies which signed the bonds included the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), the Rural Electrification Agency (REA) and the National Power Training Institute (NAPTIN).

Also involved in signing the performance deals were the Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA), Nigerian Electricity Liability Management Company (NELMCO) and the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Plc (NBET).

"In terms of sanctions, let me tell you that I will not sit here today and start rolling out sanctions that will

be meted out to non-performance, because I am confident that we are all going to deliver.

"Just like the performance delivery is top-down, reward will also be top-down on achievement. Then, sanctions too, will be top-down. Depending on the sanctions that Mr. President is going to mete out to a non-performing minister and a non-performing council, we will determine the sanctions that will be meted out to everybody involved here.

"So there's no express or specific sanctions, it will just be that we do our best and put in our best to make sure we achieve our targets," Adelabu stated.

However, he expressed optimism that the ministry will deliver on some key mandates of the ministry to ensure specific responsibilities are delivered as expected of each chief executive of the agencies.

According to him, the key targets of the bond were painstakingly put together, to which everyone agreed to implement thoroughly.

Continues online

UK Appoints New Country Director for Nigeria

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

The United Kingdom has appointed Mr. Mark Smithson the Country Director for the UK's Department for Business and Trade (DBT) in Nigeria. He takes over from Chim Chalemera, who recently concluded a three-year posting in that role.

Smithson, is an experienced civil servant having undertaken a wide variety of roles both in the UK and overseas. In this new role, he would lead on the UK-Nigeria's trade and investment relations to deliver an increased high value

inward investment and greater exports into the UK and Nigeria as well as support market access and trade policy priorities.

To mark his arrival to Nigeria, Smithson said: "Nigeria is a country of huge importance to the UK and the world. Our historical, cultural, people to people and business ties are deep and ever growing.

"I am delighted to take up this new role as the DBT's country director and I look forward to forging partnerships with the Nigerian government, the private sector and the UK supply chain

and to seize the opportunities this great country and our unique partnership offer to deliver a more prosperous future to both our countries."

Prior to Smithson's arrival to Nigeria, he was based in London (2021-2024) where he led the DBT's Capital Investment agenda first covering European and US large corporates and since September 2022 as His Majesties Government's global account manager for large institutional investors from Southeast Asia with a focus on Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

Business stakeholders from Israel have advised Nigeria to take advantage of evolving technological innovations to develop the country's non-oil sector, especially agriculture.

Some of the Israeli business experts who spoke at the Annual General Meeting of the Nigeria-Israel Business Forum held in Abuja, yesterday, said one factor inhibiting the speedy development of Nigeria's agricultural potential was the inability to deploy modern technology innovations to enhance production of food commodities.

Speaking at the event, the Israeli Ambassador to Nigeria, Michael Freeman, said her country was

proud to partner the government of Nigeria on the development of the economic and business sectors.

The Ambassador who was represented by the Consul, Inbar Lipman Garden, said Israeli was open for business partnership with Nigeria.

"We are ready to partner with the government and the private sectors in areas of mutual benefit to our countries.

"I implore you to take advantage of today's presentations and join us in a quest to eradicate poverty and insecurity in the world. We look forward to receiving the dividends of this gathering, hoping it will improve the trade business between our countries," she said.

On her part, the Nigerian Ambassador in Tel-Aviv, Agatha Afoekelu, urged Nigerian entrepreneurs to take advantage of the friendly business relations with Israel to increase our export trade.

Ofoekelu who spoke through a virtual platform said: "For me, again, it is a great opportunity this time. I urge Nigerians to use this advantage to think of products to export to Israel.

"Now that the door is open for us, I heard the speech of the representative of Ambassador Freeman, and she said they are open to receive us, they are open for business. So I encourage all members to be ready. We are also ready to receive you, to make you feel at home, to make you happy."



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NEWS



SENATE GETS NEW CHIEF WHIP...

L-R: Deputy President of the Senate, Senator Barau I. Jibrin; President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio; New Chief Whip of the Senate, Senator Tahir Monguno and Leader of the Senate, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele after the removal of Senator Ali Ndume as the chief whip at the plenary of the Senate, National Assembly Complex, Abuja ... yesterday

Rewane: Nigeria Economy Underperformed in First Half 2024

● **Projects N100,000 minimum Wage** ● **Adedipe: Grow agriculture, manufacturing, otherwise ambitious growth expectation will be a mirage**

Dike Onwuamaeze

The Chief Executive of Financial Derivatives Company Limited (FDC), Mr. Bismarck Rewane, has declared that the Nigerian economy underperformed in the first half of 2024.

Rewane stated this during his presentation titled "Half-Year Economic Review and Outlook: Policy Options for Government and Emerging Business Opportunities," at the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (LCCI) Mid-Year Economic Review and Outlook, where he projected that the minimum wage negotiation would settle at N100,000 and the foreign exchange would trade between N1,550 and N1,650.

Also speaking at the forum, the Founder and Chief Consultant of B. Adedipe Associates Limited (BAA Consult), Dr. Biodun Adedipe, said the pace of growth in agriculture and manufacturing should be deliberately and intentionally quickened, otherwise the ambitious growth aspiration in the next seven years would end a mirage.

Rewane said: "The economy underperformed the expectations for H1'24. Oil production of 1.3mbpd remains below the budget benchmark of 1.7 mbpd.

"Economic growth of 2.98 per

cent in the Q1'24 is less than the government's benchmark of 3.76 per cent.

"Exchange rate depreciated massively by 34 per cent in H1 to N1,505 per Dollar and inflation remained untamed at a three decade high of 34.19 per cent."

He, however, stated that there are silver linings that would provide flicker of hope for the H2'24.

According to him, oil prices that averaged \$83 per barrel will remain above \$80 in the H2, adding that improvement in FAAC would alleviate fiscal pressure.

"Fiscal stabilisation fund of N2 trillion would stimulate growth but 0.85 per cent of the GDP is, no doubt, a drop in the ocean," he said.

Rewane also said that the implementation of food import could taper inflationary pressure but there are risks, which "may quicken currency pressure and stymie domestic agricultural activity."

He also said that the new minimum wage that would be announced in the coming day would increase wages and boost aggregate demand.

He, however, warned that it "carries inflation risks and test the fiscal sustainability of the state governments," adding that "what happened in Kenya will continue to reverberate across Africa, quickening

the risk of antigovernmental protests and ushering in a new wave of pro-people consciousness in government."

Making his presentation on "Nigeria's Economic Scorecard: Agriculture, Manufacturing and Trade – Trends and Perspectives," Adedipe, said the economy has maintained steady growth during the period under review even though that it was still highly volatile to external shocks, especially oil market variability and investment dynamics, which he noted are strong case for diversified external sector.

He also observed that agriculture has been consistently the largest sector contributor to GDP while industry has persistently declined, paving the way for services to drive the economy and filling the widening performance gap created in the industrial sector. "Agriculture growth dampened but has been fairly stable since 2018. Industry is highly volatile but trending downward. But services maintained strong growth, dampened only during the two recessions of 2016 and 2020," Adedipe said.

He, further, remarked that Nigeria

has applied the typical IMF recipe of eliminating premium by devaluation of the domestic currency, which is mere financial and would not solve the underlying structural problems of Nigerian economy.

According to him, "the enduring solution is expansive domestic manufacturing, agribusiness and relentless, deliberate and focused export drive.

"The pace of the drivers of agriculture and manufacturing has to be deliberately and intentionally quickened in order to bring them

into this class (fastest growing sector). Otherwise, the ambitious growth aspiration in the next seven years will end a mirage."

In his welcome address, the President of LCCI, Mr. Gabriel Idahosa, explained that the Mid-Year Economic Review and Outlook is an annual event of the LCCI that is designed to review key policy developments and macroeconomic performance in the first half of the year and discuss the outlook and expectations for the second half, focusing on risks and opportunities.

Shettima to Declare Open Workshop on AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol Friday

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

Vice President Kashim Shettima would tomorrow open a stakeholders' workshop aimed at bolstering Nigeria's position within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Digital Trade Protocol.

The workshop being put together by the Office of the Vice President is scheduled to commence by 10am at the Banquet Hall of the State House, Abuja.

At the event, stakeholders, including government agencies

and private sector representatives, are expected to contribute to the formulation of comprehensive strategies for the initiative titled, "Digital Trade in Nigeria: The Renewed Hope Strategy."

The initiative aligns with the federal government's ambition to leverage digital trade for economic growth and regional integration.

Shedding light on the event, Special Assistant to the President on ICT Policy, Dr. Salihu Dasuki, said, "The workshop signifies a shared commitment to advancing Nigeria's

trade landscape through the power of digital technology and regional integration under the AfCFTA.

"We aim to identify key opportunities for enhancing Nigeria's digital trade within the AfCFTA framework. We will discuss effective strategies for leveraging digital technologies to drive economic growth and support livelihoods."

Dasuki, added that the workshop also fits into the government's broader Renewed Hope Strategy, which focuses on rejuvenating Nigeria's economy and creating

sustainable development.

According to him: "Nigeria's economic vision is to achieve a \$1 trillion economy by 2026. This vision is within our reach, thanks to the digital economy which has transformed our daily lives and opened new pathways for economic growth."

"The successful implementation of the AfCFTA's Digital Trade Protocol requires the coordinated efforts of multiple government agencies, as well as the engagement of the private sector."

Governors Call Off Meeting Over Minimum Wage, Financial Autonomy for LGs

● **Legal team yet to get enrolled Supreme Court judgement**

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Governors in the country have cancelled a meeting they had planned to adopt a position on minimum wage for workers and financial autonomy which was recently granted local governments by the Supreme Court.

No reason was given for the meeting which was cancelled by the chairman of the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF), Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq of Kwara state.

The NGF chairman had last week announced that the governors would meet yesterday, to adopt a final position on the minimum wage

and the financial autonomy to the local government.

A source at the NGF secretariat told THISDAY that the cancellation may be due to the fact that their legal team has not obtained the enrolled order of the Supreme Court judgment.

"Their Excellencies had to put the meeting on hold until they have the enrollment order of the judgment. They feel it is not right to discuss an issue whose details are not clear yet," a source said.

"This explains why the meeting of the Governors was shifted to another date which has not been announced."

Abbas: Outdated Laws, Regulations Hinder Smooth Operations of Public Institutions

Juliet Akoje in Abuja

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Tajudeen Abbas, has said outdated laws and regulations were hindering smooth operations of public institutions responsible for facilitating business activities.

The Speaker said this at a public hearing on five Bills organised by the House Committee on Commerce chaired by Hon Ahmed Munir on Wednesday in Abuja.

The Bills included the establishment of the Chartered Institute of Co-operators and Social Enterprise Management, Institute of Debt Recovery Practitioners of Nigeria,

Agro Processing Export Free Zone, Integrated Corporate Data Management Commission, and Institute of Chartered Corporate and Business Affairs Management of Nigeria.

Abbas said the Bills were pivotal in fostering growth, innovation, and sustainability in various sectors of our economy and that they had the potential to shape the future of our nation's economic and business landscape.

"The economic landscape of our country is facing significant challenges, exacerbated by outdated laws and regulations that hinder the smooth operation of public institutions responsible for facilitating

business activities.

"These obstacles have created barriers to entry for entrepreneurs and investors, stifling innovation and growth in key sectors of our economy."

"One of the pressing issues we face is the absence of professional bodies to oversee and regulate important sectors such as debt recovery practitioners, co-operators, social entrepreneurs, agro-processing exporters, corporate data management, and corporate affairs management."

"Without proper oversight and regulation, these sectors are vulnerable to exploitation and malpractice, which can have far-reaching consequences

on our economy.

"The establishment of these proposed institutions therefore, signifies a proactive approach towards enhancing professionalism, efficiency, and accountability within these key sectors of our economy."

"These institutions will not only provide much-needed oversight but also set standards, ethics, and best practices in their respective fields. By creating specialised bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Co-operators and Social Enterprise Management, we aim to promote cooperative enterprises and social entrepreneurship as viable means for inclusive economic development."

Dangote Lauds NUPRC for Publishing DCSO Guidelines, Insists IOCs Frustrating Crude Supply

- Says trading arms offer cargoes at \$2-\$4 above commission's official price
- Discloses only Sapetro selling oil directly to his refinery aside NNPC

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The management of Dangote Industries Limited (DIL) yesterday lauded the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) for publishing the Domestic Crude Supply Obligation (DCSO) guidelines to enshrine transparency in the oil industry.

DIL also commended the industry regulator for other various interventions in the oil company's crude supply requests from the International Oil Companies (IOCs).

Vice President, Oil & Gas, DIL, Mr. Devakumar Edwin said in a statement that if the DCSO guidelines are diligently implemented, they will ensure that the companies will deal directly with the companies producing

the crude oil in Nigeria as stipulated by the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA).

Edwin insisted that IOCs operating in Nigeria had consistently frustrated the company's requests for locally produced crude as feedstock for its refining process.

He highlighted that when cargoes are offered to the oil company by the trading arms, it is sometimes at \$2-\$4 (per barrel) premium above the official price set by NUPRC.

"As an example, we paid \$96.23 per barrel for a cargo of Bonga crude grade in April (excluding transport). The price consisted of \$90.15 dated Brent price plus \$5.08 NNPC premium (NSP) + \$1 trader premium.

"In the same month, we were able to buy West Texas Intermediate

(WTI) at a dated Brent price of \$90.15 + \$0.93 trader premium including transport.

"When NNPC subsequently lowered its premium based on market feedback that it was too high, some traders then started asking us for a premium of up to \$4 million over and above the NSP for a cargo of Bonny Light.

"Data on platforms like Platts and Argus shows that the price offered to us is way higher than the market prices tracked by these platforms. We recently had to escalate this to NUPRC," Edwin said, urging the regulatory commission to take a second look at the issue of pricing.

Edwin's response came against the background of a statement by the Chief Executive Officer of NUPRC,

Mr Gbenga Komolafe, who in an interview on ARISE News TV said that 'it is erroneous for one to say that the IOCs are refusing to make crude oil available to domestic refiners, as the PIA has a stipulation that calls for a willing buyer, willing seller relationship.

Edwin noted: "The NUPRC has been very supportive to the Dangote Refinery as it has intervened several times to help us secure crude supply. However, the NUPRC chief executive was probably misquoted by some people hence his statement that IOCs did not refuse to sell to us. To set the records straight, we would like to recap the facts below.

"Aside from Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPC), to date we have only

purchased crude directly from only one other local producer (Sapetro). All other producers refer us to their international trading arms.

"These international trading arms are non-value adding middlemen who sit abroad and earn margin from crude being produced and consumed in Nigeria. They are not bound by Nigerian laws and do not pay tax in Nigeria on the unjustifiable margin they earn.

"The trading arm of one of the IOCs refused to sell to us directly and asked us to find a middleman who will buy from them and then sell to us at a margin. We dialogued with them for 9 months and in the end, we had to escalate to NUPRC who helped resolve the situation," Edwin stated.



Dangote

According to him, when Dangote entered the market to purchase its crude requirement for August, the international trading arms said that they had entered their Nigerian cargoes into a Pertamina (the Indonesia National Oil Company) tender, and that the refinery had to wait for the tender to conclude to see what was still available.

NASS OKAYS TINUBU'S FRESH REQUEST FOR N6.2TN INJECTION INTO N27.5TN 2024 BUDGET

James Emejo and Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The two chambers of the National Assembly, yesterday, gave accelerated consideration and approval to President Bola Tinubu's request for fresh injection of N6.2 trillion into the N27.5 trillion 2024 budget.

The endorsement came as Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, yesterday, said the federal government would reintroduce Sugar-sweetened Beverages (SSB) tax to shore up its revenues as well as address health concerns.

Tinubu made the request to raise the budget via a letter read on the

floor of the senate by Senate President Godswill Akpabio during plenary on Wednesday.

The same letter was read on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Tinubu specifically sought the withdrawal of N3.2 trillion from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, for capital expenditure.

The letter was titled, "Transmission of Appropriation Amendment Bill 2024 And Finance Act Amendment Bill 2024 for Consideration."

It read, "Pursuant to Section 58(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), I forward, herewith, the above-named bills for consideration and passage by the Senate.

"The Appropriation Act (Amendment) Bill 2024 seeks to amend the Principal Act to provide the sum

of N3,200,000,000,000 for Renewed Hope Infrastructure Projects and other critical infrastructure projects to be undertaken across the country and N3,000,000,000,000 (Three Trillion Naira) to meet recurrent expenditure requirements necessary for the proper operation of the federal government, expenditure which is to be funded by expected revenues accruing to the federal government.

"Furthermore the proposed amendments to the Finance Act 2023 are required to impose a one-time windfall tax on the foreign exchange gains realised by banks in the 2023 financial statements to fund capital infrastructure development, education and healthcare access as well as public

welfare initiatives all of which are essential components of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

"While appreciating the Senate's expeditious consideration of this submission please accept, Distinguished Senate President, the assurances of my highest regard."

The senate consequently adjusted its rules to enable the red chamber consider the bill for second reading.

The request for its presentation for second reading was presented by Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele.

Bamidele, having moved for suspension of Senate Rules 78 to allow for the process of second reading, said the bills were first read on July 17, following transmission of the bills to Senate by President Bola Tinubu.

He said the 2024 Appropriation Act Amendment bill sought to amend the authorisation of issuance from the Consolidated Fund Sum of N3.2 trillion for capital expenditure and N3 trillion for recurrent expenditure.

He stated that the amendments sought in the Finance Act 2023 were to impose a one-time windfall tax on the banks on foreign exchange gains realised in their 2023 financial statements.

Bamidele said the amendment to the Finance Act was also designed to further provide for general tax administration in the country. He said the 2024 Appropriation Amendment bill was needed to fund "Renewed Hope" infrastructure projects and other critical infrastructure projects to be undertaken across the country.

The senate leader said the bills were also needed to meet other recurrent expenditure requirements necessary for proper operation of federal government expenditure.

According to him, the expenditure would be funded by expected revenue accruing to the federal government.

He said that would help fund capital infrastructure development,

education, health care access, and public welfare initiatives.

According to him, all the projects are essential components of the renewed hope agenda of the administration. He said all the projects embarked on were laudable and would enhance the provision of critical needs of Nigerians.

He informed his colleagues that the sum of N3.2 trillion would be for capital expenditure, while N3 trillion would go for recurrent expenditure, while both would be spent before the end of 2024.

Bamidele added, "The bill was read for the first time in this chamber today, Wednesday, 17th July 2024, (the 2024 Appropriation Act (Amendment) bill seeks to Amend the Appropriation Act, 2024 to authorise the issue from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation the total sum of N3,200,000,000,000.00 (Three Trillion Two Hundred Billion Naira) only is for Capital Expenditure and the sum of 33,000,000,000,000.01 (Three Trillion Naira) only is for recurrent expenditure for the year ending on the 31st day of December, 2024.

"The Finance Act 2023 (Amendment) bill seeks to amend the Finance Act, 2023 to impose and charge windfall tax on banks and to provide for the administration of the tax generally in the country.

"Mr. President, my highly respected colleagues, you will recall that the President C in-C through a communication to the President of the Senate forwarded both Bill to the Senate today Wednesday, 17th July, 2024.

"The 2024 Appropriation Act (Amendment Bill) is needed to fund the Renewed Hope infrastructure projects and other critical infrastructure projects to be undertaken across the country and to also meet recurrent

Continued on page 29

PDP GOVS: TINUBU HAS FAILED IN GOVERNANCE, IMPOVERISHED NIGERIANS, WORSENERD ECONOMY

PDP-led government".

Bauchi State Governor and Chairman of PDP Governors' Forum, Senator Bala Mohammed, made the governors' position known in his opening remarks at a meeting of the state chief executives and the leadership of the party's National Working Committee (NWC) at the Enugu State Government House, in Enugu.

In his address, Mohammed said, "Actions at the national level have shown that we are drifting to anarchy, and we cannot allow this."

He added, "We have a shared history and a shared aspiration to make sure that Nigeria places itself well in the comity of nations, where we lead as usual."

The governor stated that PDP was poised to bring back the good old days of low inflation rates, affordable food, fuel and transportation, high quality of life, and when the country's currency had value.

He said the meeting provided an opportunity for the governors to share ideas on how to move the party forward and also provide a credible alternative to Nigerians desirous of positive change.

Mohammed stated, "This meeting is very unique and auspicious because we are here to showcase our history as a party. We have been leading in this country as a party. We have all the structures established before the commencement of the APC administration."

The PDP governors also warned the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure a level playing field that guarantees transparent and fair off-season governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states. They said anything short of strict compliance with the provisions of the electoral act will not be tolerated.

In a communique issued at the end of the meeting, and read by Mohammed, the PDP governors vowed to resist any attempt to scuttle the election process in the Edo and Ondo states. They called on Tinubu to show leadership by not interfering with the election process.

The governors expressed support

for organised labour's demand for a substantial increase in minimum wage. But they sued for restraint in both actions and utterances that could lead to breakdown of law and order, as well as disrupt the economy.

The governors equally praised the Supreme Court's ruling on financial autonomy for local governments, stating that they would continue to support any move to ensure that governance is brought closer to the people, as provided in the constitution.

Mohammed commended governors of the party for their innovative approach to governance in their states, especially in terms of infrastructure, education, and health, and the timely delivery of projects across the country.

Speaking on the PDP leadership, the governors said, "In the spirit of the founding fathers of our great party, who adopted internal democracy as the fundamental principle on which our party was built, the congresses leading to the election of party leaders, at the various tiers, must be all-inclusive, transparent, fair and in strict compliance with the constitution of the party."

Mohammed said that was, "To ensure the successful conduct of the congresses across the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)."

On the off-season elections in Edo and Ondo states, the forum admonished "all the parties to the elections to ensure that campaigns are issues-based, violence-free and in strict compliance with the provisions of the electoral act".

The communique said, "The forum believes in the efficacy of the local government system, which ensures that governance is brought closer to the people, as provided for in the constitution."

It said PDP governors, "Will continue to support the autonomy of the local governments as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"Forum holds the Supreme Court in the highest esteem, and is committed to obedience to court orders. However, the forum urges that implementation of the court decision must be done in

a manner that does not create a trust deficit between the federal government and sub-national governments, while also ensuring that the system does not suffer."

On the crisis in Rivers State, the communique stated, "The forum notes the crisis in the Rivers State chapter of the party and commits to ensuring peace. The forum has resolved to stand by His Excellency, Sir Sim Fubara, Governor of Rivers State; while at the same time employ wider consultations with stakeholders for a peaceful resolution and, thus, find a lasting solution to the crisis."

The meeting thanked the host governor, Peter Mbah of Enugu State, for hosting the first meeting of the PDP governors outside Abuja in recent times and for holding the party together, not only in Enugu State, but also in the entire South-east geopolitical zone.

The governors extolled Mbah's virtues and achievements as evidenced by many landmark projects and interventions in the

state.

The meeting was attended by the governors of Rivers State; Akwa-Ibom State, Umo Eno; Oyo State, Seyi Makinde; Delta State, Sheriff Oborevwori; Edo State, Godwin Obaseki; and Plateau State, Caleb Mutfwang.

Others included Taraba State Governor, Agbu Kefas; Zamfara State Governor, Dauda Lawal; Adamawa State Governor, Ahmadu Fintiri; Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri; and the host governor, Mbah.

Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, was absent at the meeting.

Other participants were Chairman of PDP Board of Trustees, Senator Adolphus Wabara; and Acting National Chairman of the party, represented by Deputy National Chairman, South, Ambassador Taofeek Arapaaja; former governor of Kaduna State and former Acting National Chairman of PDP, Senator Ahmed Makarf; as well as former governor of Niger State, Dr. Babangida Aliyu.

TOTALENERGIES EP AGREES TO SELL 10% STAKE IN OIL, GAS ASSETS TO CHAPPAL FOR \$860M

Forcados and Bonny Terminals that are part of the SPDC JV.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPC) holds a 55 per cent stake, SPDC operates with a 30 per cent stake, and the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) has a 5 per cent stake in the JV.

The transaction will also see Chappal Energies acquire a 10 per cent participating interest in the three other OMLs within the SPDC JV which are mainly gas producing, specifically OML 23, OML 28 and OML 77.

However, it will see TotalEnergies retain an economic interest in the licenses which currently account for 40 per cent of Nigeria's Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) gas supply. Chappal Energies will have rights to the standalone undeveloped oil reserves within the three OMLs.

"Aggregate consideration for the transaction is \$860 million. Financing will be provided by a TotalEnergies company entity and/or any financial institution selected by TotalEnergies, Trafigura and a syndicate of international banks.

"This strategic acquisition increases Chappal Energies' asset base and adds significant reserves to the company's balance sheet. The portfolio includes over 40 producing fields with a network of pipelines, flow stations, processing facilities and two major terminals," the statement added.

Managing Director of Chappal Energies, Ufoma Immanuel, commented thus: "This acquisition marks a significant expansion in the Niger Delta, thereby diversifying our Nigeria footprint between the offshore and onshore basins. Chappal Energies becomes the first Nigerian company to execute two significant transactions within a 12-month period.

"The transaction is poised to bring substantial benefits to stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, local communities, and the national economy. The closing is subject to certain conditions, including all regulatory and contractual approvals."

Chappal Energies described itself as an energy company focusing on unlocking latent value in Africa's oil

and gas resources as well as revitalising aging assets with solutions that secure longevity in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

It added that the company will embark on value-harnessing activities, which will include enhancing operational efficiency, produced water management, improved evacuation logistics, gas development, capex optimisation, and infrastructure replacement.

Also yesterday, TotalEnergies, Paris, confirmed the deal, but stated that it will be retaining the supply of gas to Nigeria LNG (NLNG).

Under the SPA signed with Chappal Energies, TotalEnergies EP Nigeria, the statement said, production from the licenses represented approximately 14,000 barrels equivalent per day in company share in 2023.

"TotalEnergies continues to actively manage its portfolio in Nigeria, in line with its strategy to focus on its oil offshore and gas assets.

"After the launch of the Ubeta gas development on OML58 license last month, this divestment of our

interest in SPDC JV licenses allows us to focus our onshore Nigeria presence solely on the integrated gas value chain and is designed to ensure the continuity of feed gas supply to Nigeria LNG in the future", said the President, Exploration & Production of TotalEnergies, Nicolas Terraz.

TotalEnergies has been present in Nigeria for more than 60 years and employs today more than 1,800 people across different business segments. Nigeria is one of the main contributing countries to TotalEnergies' hydrocarbon production with 219,000 boe/d produced in 2023.

TotalEnergies also operates an extensive distribution network which includes about 540 service stations in the country.

Aside TotalEnergies, other ongoing divestment deals include: The proposed sale of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU) assets to Seplat Energies, divestment of SPDC assets to Renaissance Consortium, Sale of some Agip Nigeria assets to Oando as well as the SPA between Equinor and Chappal.



PROFESSIONAL INSURANCE LADIES ASSOCIATION

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(Women in Insurance)

We congratulate our esteemed President,

BIMBO ONAKOMAIYA

ON YOUR INVESTITURE AS THE 15TH PRESIDENT OF PILA

We extend our heartfelt wishes for your success in the discharge of your duties and hold the utmost confidence in your ability to guide PILA to new and enviable heights. May our distinguished association continue to advance and achieve even greater milestones under your exemplary leadership.

COMMITTEE OF FRIENDS

DR. MRS. JOYCE OJEMUDIA

MS. ADEOLA AKINRINMADE

MR. ALADEGBAIYE ADEWUNMI

MRS. ADEDOYIN ADEYINKA OLUMOROTI

MR. KOLAWOLE JOHN OSASONA

DR. MRS. BOLA ONIGBOGI

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MRS. MOYOSOLA OKEREMI

MRS. SCHOLASTICA ODUNSI

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MR. OLAYEMI AJAO

DR. ADESUA ABIMBOLA ATANDA

MRS. EFE USIN

FL FADARE GRACE





First@arts celebrates Professor Wole Soyinka @90

This month, to celebrate the accomplished Literary Powerhouse, Professor Wole Soyinka at 90, First@arts is sponsoring a theatre performance titled The Noble Warrior Eni Ogun, a play written in honour of the Icon by Aiye-ko-otoo, and produced by Adubiifa Network Company, in collaboration with Wole Soyinka International Cultural Exchange (WSICE).

Venue	Muson Centre, Onikan, Lagos
Date	20 July 2024
Time	6:00pm

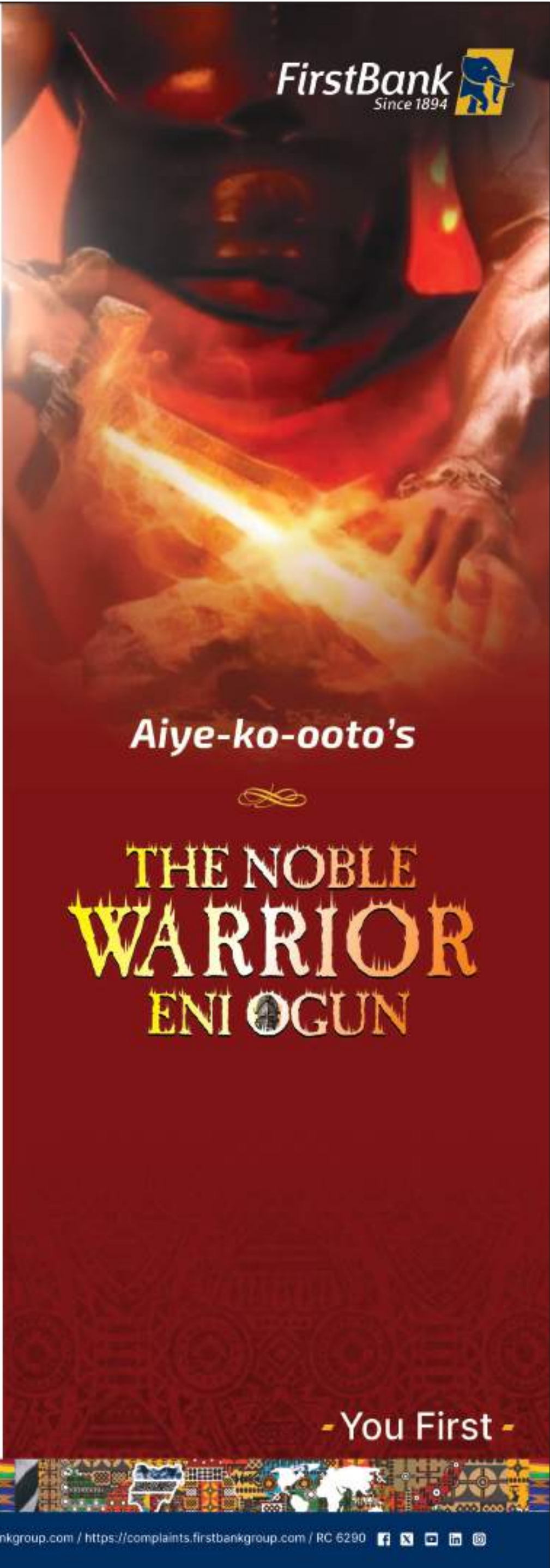
FirstBank through its First@arts initiative continues to enable giants, supporting SMEs and talents within Africa’s creative industry.



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Aiye-ko-otoo's

THE NOBLE WARRIOR ENI OGUN

- You First -

Recent incidents highlight a resurgence of human rights violations by the Nigerian police, raising concerns about the effectiveness of government reforms and the lingering culture of impunity within the police.

Nnamdi explained further

Community sources said the

Palowei, who hailed from Obrigbene community in Ekeremor

According to one source, students of the institution have also joined

Public Relations Officer of Niger Delta University, Indoni Engezi, who confirmed the incident, told THISDAY that the incident did not affect academic activities as "the university is a different community."

Gbenga Sodeinde in Ado Ekiti

Olatunbosun explained that the state government was strategic in the efforts at solving the ecological issues, stressing that the focus is to as much as possible

According to him, a total of 45.67km was dredged as at the end of 2023 at Oreremope community behind Obasanjo Estate on Ikere road; Olaoluwa-Omisanjana-Ureje- Olaoluwa-Alasia community; Federal Polytechnic road- ABUAD culverts to Emirin; Basiri-Olorunda-Crownbiz / Aayemi-Balemo-Onala; and Elemi-Afao road to Ado Poly, all within the Ado Ekiti metropolis.

Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The company affirmed that it has received substantial support

Some reports had claimed that Chairman of Brentex CPP Limited, Sani Abubakar, informed the committee of attempts by NNPC.

Nume Ekeghe

This directive aligns with international standards from

President of the Governing Council of CRMI, Dr. Ezekiel Oseni, who stated these praised the SEC's initiative as crucial for enhancing risk-based supervision in the capital market.

The company clarified that the committee had requested BCL to confirm its commitment to deliver its segment (318 km x 40" Segment 2) of the project by the first quarter of 2025.

The company added that it is collaborating with NNPC to deliver all the stations by the first quarter of 2025, except for two Terminal Gas Stations (TGS), which are currently under scope discussions between NNPC and BCL.

Nume Ekeghe

Oseni noted that adopting an ERM framework would minimise systemic risks and protect stakeholders' interests, ensuring better management of capital market activities and adding

He said: "This move is a significant milestone, aligning capital market practices with the rigorous risk management standards already established in the banking sector. It underscores our objective of promoting comprehensive ERM adoption across all sectors of the Nigerian economy for inclusive growth."



ONYX INVESTMENT ADVISORY LIMITED

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR THE OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SELECTED GOMBE STATE OWNED HOTELS

BACKGROUND
Our client, Gombe Revenue Optimization Company Limited (GROCOL) is a Gombe State owned company and the custodian of all commercial assets of the state with the mandate to own, manage and operate in a commercially profitable manner to optimize service delivery, revenue generation and job creation.

In keeping with its mandate, GROCOL, appointed Onyx Investment Advisory Limited to on its behalf, prepare the under listed assets, seek for and engage credible investors for their significant upgrade, operations and management thereof.

The under-listed hotels have been identified and earmarked:

LOT	Name	Location	Summary of Components
1	Gombe Jewel Hotel Abuja	22, N-domeni Crescent, Off Aminu Kano Crescent, Wuse 2, Abuja	Gombe Jewel Hotel Abuja has 57 rooms, a banquet hall w/ (3) up to 50 - 50 seating capacity, a spa facility, 1 bar/lobby area, an indoor restaurant, laundry, 2 generators and a transformer, ample parking space, swimming pool, bar/club house and landscaping etc.
2	Gombe Jewel Hotel Kaduna	7, Al-Muhammadiyah Road, Kaduna	The hotel consists of 44 - 40 bedded chalets, a banquet hall w/ (3) up to 50 - 50 seating capacity, laundry facility, (1) - 40 bedded restaurant, ample parking space, bar/club house and landscaping area and/or bar (4) open drop 2 generator sets and a dedicated transformer.
3	Jewel Hotel Kaltungo	Kaltungo, Gombe State	Gombe Jewel Hotel Kaltungo consists of 6 VIP rooms, 5 - 40 bedded rooms, 100 executive rooms and 7 - 40 bedded rooms, 2 bedrooms, guest accommodation, dining, bar/club house, 1 restaurant, 40 - 45 bedded capacity event hall, ample space for parking and additional structures, laundry, the hotel has a generator set, a dedicated transformer and produce the electricity as well as underground and overhead water supply tanks.
4	Gombe International Hotel, Gombe	Close to 5 Along Fafe Road, Gombe State	The hotel has up to nearly 300 (300) rooms comprising 47 executive rooms, 22 twin bed rooms, 12 executive suites, 6 VIP suites 2 Presidential suites and 5 Chancellors. Some of the facilities in the hotel include: 400 capacity banquet hall, 100 capacity auditorium, 3 conference rooms with a capacity of 40-70 and 30 - 40 people respectively, kitchen, swimming pool, restaurant, bar, lawn tennis and badminton courts, gymnasium, 9 shops, laundry, 3 standby generators, alternative power source (solar) and dedicated transformer, water storage reserve capacity for parking lot, children park, auditorium and staff quarters.
5	Gombe International Conference Center, Gombe	Along Gombe-Bauchi Road, Gombe, Gombe State	The Centre is divided into two (2) wings (West and East wing) by a five - function plaza situated in the middle. Capacity of facilities of the Centre includes: Hall A: 1,500 - 3,000, Hall B: 500 - 500, Auditorium: 100, 7 Meeting Rooms of 30 - 100 persons, VIP holding rooms, kitchen, restaurant, bar/club house, toilet facilities, open spaces for outdoor events, exhibition areas, alternative power sources, CCTV cameras, internet facility and substation for mobile telephone services. The facility also has 3 sets of generator, a dedicated transformer, ground and overhead water storage tanks, pool, car parking to 1 or well as outdoor events, etc. Furthermore, some hectares of land have been set aside for the construction of a five-star hotel within the facility in the near future.

In line with the Gombe State's policy of increased private sector participation in the management of public assets and our client's brief, we hereby invite interested and qualified firms to bid for the right to operate and maintain these hotels. The successful companies shall be granted a tenured concession over the facilities.

Prospective investors are assured of Gombe State's commitment to safeguarding and supporting their investments.

SCOPE OF ENGAGEMENT
The successful companies will be expected to amongst other requirements to:

- Invest in the significant upgrade of the assets subject to agreement.
- Manage, operate and maintain these facilities to the highest standards in keeping with agreed service levels.
- Propose a financial model whereby these facilities are developed into viable revenue sources for both the investors and GROCOL.
- Facilitate the objective of protecting and enhancing the landscape, environment and vistas of these hotels.
- Implement energy efficient and innovative hotel operations and management concepts including activities such as branding, marketing, accommodation, catering etc. for a concession period of thirty (30) years.

REQUIRED PRE-QUALIFICATION SUBMISSIONS
The prequalification submissions shall include the following:

- Full name and Nationality (country of registration of the company and evidence of registration).
- Profile of company including Certified True Copies (CTCs) of all registration documents.
- Evidence of partnership in case of a consortium.
- Evidence of Tax Clearance Certificate for 2021, 2022, 2023 from the Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS).
- Submission of three (3) years Audited Accounts for the period 2021, 2022 and 2023.
- Technical Bid including but not limited to the following information:
 - Company's profile.
 - Company's comprehensive business plan with regard to the selected hotel.
 - The resumes of key Managerial staff.
 - The company's proposed team structure.
 - Evidence of track record in hospitality service delivery.
 - References in support of the satisfactory delivery of hospitality services.
 - Evidence for quality assurance systems in place.
 - The Company's proposed revitalisation/work implementation plan for the chosen hotel.
- Proof of funds by way of Bank Statements over the last 12 months and/or approved loan facility from a major bank.
- VAT Registration and evidence of past VAT remittances.
- Certified Bank Draft made payable to Onyx Investment Advisory Limited as Processing Fee in the sum of:
 - ₦=900,000.00 (Five Hundred Thousand Naira) only with respect to submissions for LOT 2 and LOT 3 and;
 - ₦=1,000,000.00 (One Million Naira) only with respect to submissions for LOT 1, LOT 4 and LOT 5.

2.1 FOR THE SUBMISSION OF BIDDING DOCUMENTS AND OPENING OF BIDS

- The Bid process will be conducted through a Two-Envelope System. Interested Bidders are requested to submit their Technical Bid separately from their Financial Bid which will contain their financial offer for the purchase of the property.
- The Submission shall be in sealed envelopes. The outer envelope must be clearly marked with:

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR THE OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF.....HOTEL BY (Company Name)
- The submission shall consist of two inner envelopes, viz:
 - One envelope marked TECHNICAL BID containing one original set of all Technical Bid documents and five copies, all sealed in individual envelopes.
 - One envelope marked FINANCIAL BID containing one original document bearing the Company's financial offer, and five copies of the same sealed in separate envelopes.
- This should be submitted on or before 12 noon on 19th August, 2024 at the address below:
**Onyx Investment Advisory Limited
 No. 82, Sani Zango Daura Estate,
 Kado Estate, Abuja-FCI**
- The opening of the bids shall be by 12 noon on 19th August, 2024. Representatives of the bidding companies are invited to witness the bid opening.
- The evaluation of the Bids will be carried out in a two-step process by an evaluation panel, with evaluation of the Technical Bid being completed prior to any Financial Bid being opened and compared.
- The Financial Bid will be opened only for those Bidders, where Technical Bids reach the required minimum score.
- On completion of the evaluation of both Technical and Financial bids, only the 3 most responsive companies with the highest value will be picked for further consideration and negotiations.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Only shortlisted firms will be invited for further consideration.
- Late submissions shall be rejected.
- This advertisement shall not be construed as a commitment on the part of Gombe State or our client to contract any company nor shall it entitle any firm submitting documents to claim any indemnity.
- Onyx Investment Advisory reserves the right to take the final decision on any of the submissions received.
- All submissions must be made in English Language.
- Proposals may be submitted for more than one Lot.
- Innovative, energy efficient and "green" proposals will be given favorable consideration.

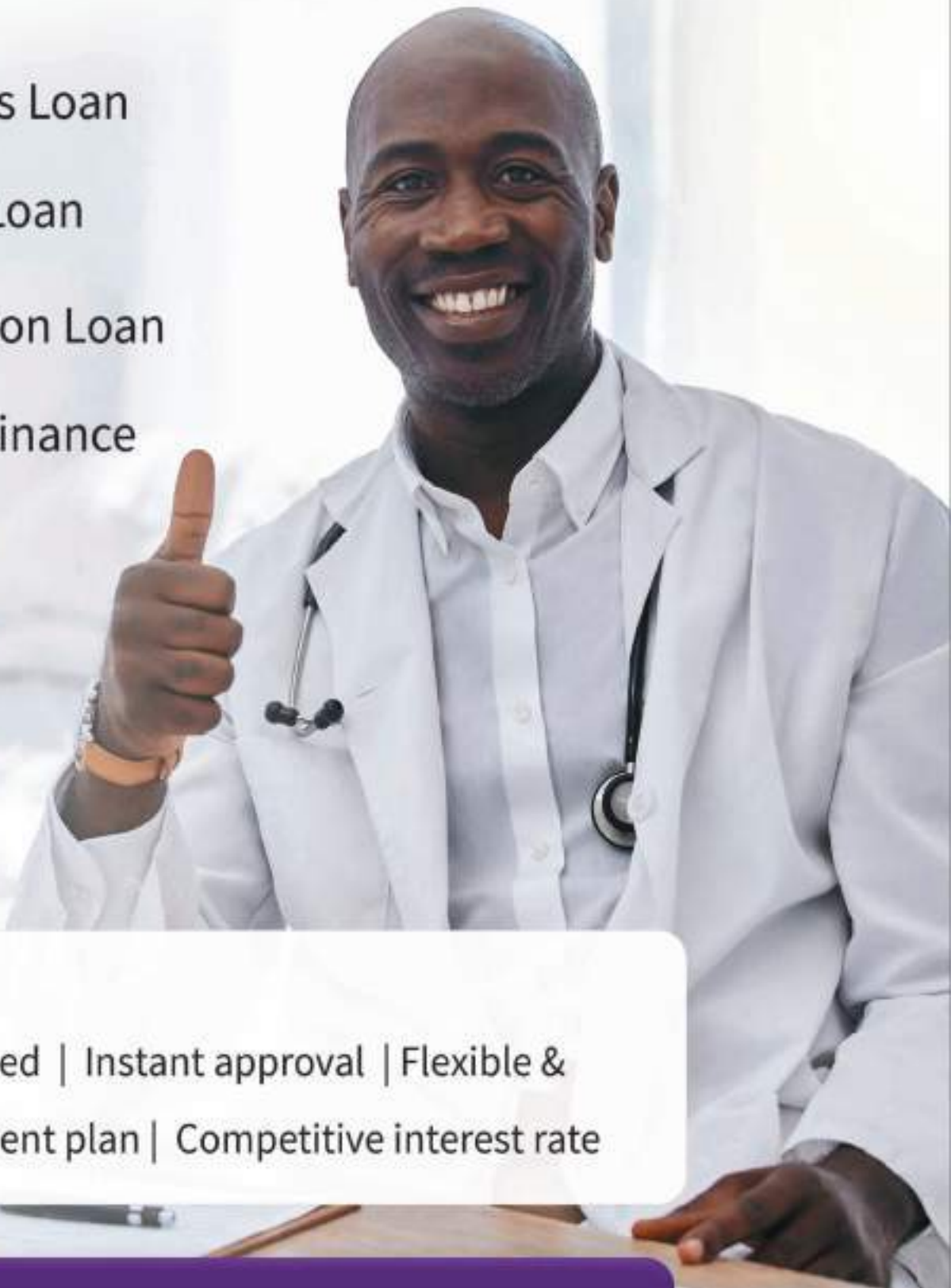
2.1 For any Questions relating to the Bid process and site visit arrangements, please contact:
 Mr. Rufa'lon gurnmi@onyxai.com, 09622334405 on or before 12th August 2024.

SIGNED
ONYX INVESTMENT ADVISORY LIMITED



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COUNTRY: **FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

Name of Assignment: **Engagement of Short-Term Consultant to conduct Mapping of value chain actors in Kano State**

REFERENCE NO: NCO/SAPZ -1/IFAD/CS/CQS/002/1

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has received financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development ("the Fund" or "IFAD") towards the cost of Special Agro – Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) Program ("the client" or "procuring entity"), and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the recruitment of consulting services, for which this REOI is issued.

The use of any IFAD financing shall be subject to IFAD's approval, pursuant to the terms and conditions of the financing agreement, as well as IFAD's rules, policies and procedures. IFAD and its officials, agents and employees shall be held harmless from and against all suits, proceedings, claims, demands, losses and liability of any kind or nature brought by any party in connection with Special Agro – Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) Program.

This request for expressions of interest (REOI) follows the general procurement notice that appeared in Thisday and Daily Trust newspapers on 17th April, 2023, on the IFAD website and on UNDB on 17th April, 2023.

The National Coordination Office of the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones Program now invites expressions of interest (EOIs) from legally constituted consulting firms (not individual consultants) ("consultants") to provide the mapping and analysis of all the stakeholders involved in Agricultural Transformation Centres in the selected LGAs viz Kura, Bebeji, Dawakin Tofa, Gezawa and Bagwai LGA of Kano State. More details on these consulting services are provided in the preliminary terms of reference (PTOR) on Annex 1. The consultant may sub-contract selected activities provided that said services do not exceed 20% of the total consultancy work.

Before preparing its EOIs, the consultant is advised to review the preliminary terms of reference attached as Annex 1, which describe the assignment and Annex 2 that details the evaluation of the technical qualifications. Note: All expression of interest must be submitted using the expression of interest submission form, **Annexes 1 and 2** referred to above. The expression of interest submission form can be obtained from the address below between the hours of 10am – 4pm local time on working days or downloaded from the website: **www.sapz.gov.ng**

The consultant shall not have any actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest. A consultant with an actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest shall be disqualified unless otherwise explicitly approved by the Fund. A consultant including their respective personnel and affiliates are considered to have a conflict of interest if they a) have a relationship that provides them with undue or undisclosed information about or influence over the selection process and the execution of the contract, b) participate in more than one EOI under this procurement action, c) have a business or family relationship with a member of the client's board of directors or its personnel, the Fund or its personnel, or any other individual that was, has been or might reasonably be directly or indirectly involved in any part of (i) the preparation of this expression of interest, (ii) the selection process for this procurement, or (iii) execution of the contract. The consultant has an ongoing obligation to disclose any situation of actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest during preparation of the EOI, the selection process or the contract execution. Failure to properly disclose any of said situations may lead to appropriate actions, including the disqualification of the consultant, the termination of the contract and any other as appropriate under the IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Projects and Operations. All consultants are required to comply with the Revised IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Activities and Operations (hereinafter, "IFAD's Anticorruption Policy") in competing for, or in executing, the contract.

a. If determined that a consultant or any of its personnel or agents, or its sub-consultants, sub-contractors, service providers, suppliers, sub-suppliers and/or any of their personnel or agents, has, directly or indirectly, engaged in any of the prohibited practices defined in IFAD's Anticorruption Policy or integrity violations such as sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse as established in IFAD's Policy to Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in competing for, or in executing, the contract, the EOI may be rejected or the contract may be terminated by the client.

b. In accordance with IFAD's Anticorruption Policy, the Fund has the right to sanction firms and individuals, including by declaring them ineligible, either indefinitely or for a stated period of time, to participate in any IFAD-financed and/or IFAD-managed activity or operation. The Fund also has the right to recognize debarments issued by other international financial institutions in accordance with its Anticorruption Policy.

c. Consultants and any of their personnel and agents, and their sub-consultants, sub-contractors, service providers, suppliers, sub-suppliers and any of their personnel and agents are required to fully cooperate with any investigation conducted by the Fund, including by making personnel available for interviews and by providing full access to any and all accounts, premises, documents and records (including electronic records) relating to this selection process or the execution of the contract and to have such accounts, premises, records and documents audited and/or inspected by auditors and/or investigators appointed by the Fund.

d. Consultants have the ongoing obligation to disclose in their EOI and later in writing as may become relevant: (i) any administrative sanctions, criminal convictions or temporary suspensions of themselves or any of their key personnel or agents for fraud and corruption, and (ii) any commissions or fees paid or to be paid to agents or other parties in connection with this selection process or the execution of the contract. As a minimum, consultants must disclose the name and contact details of the agent or other party and the reason, amount and currency of the commission or fee paid or to be paid. Failure to comply with these disclosure obligations may lead to rejection of the EOI or termination of the contract.

e. Consultants are required to keep all records and documents, including electronic records, relating to this selection process available for a minimum of three (3) years after notification of completion of the process or, in case the consultant is awarded the contract, execution of the contract.

The Fund requires that all beneficiaries of IFAD funding or funds administered by IFAD, including the client, any consultants, implementing partners, service providers and suppliers, observe the highest standards of integrity during the procurement and execution of such contracts, and commit to combat money laundering and terrorism financing consistent with IFAD's Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Policy.

Procedure: the selection process will be conducted using Consultant Qualification Selection (CQS) Method as laid out in the IFAD Procurement Handbook that can be accessed via the IFAD website at www.ifad.org/project-procurement. The client will evaluate the EOIs using the criteria provided in Annex 2. The shortlisted consultant(s) will be provided with the detailed TORs and asked to submit a detailed technical and financial offer. The evaluation will include a review and verification of qualifications and past performance, including a reference check, prior to the contract award.

Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected.

Any request for clarification on this EOI including the PTOR should be sent via e-mail to the address below no later than Noon local time on 22nd July, 2024. The client will provide responses to all clarification requests by 12 Noon local time on 25th July, 2024.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURE: Please submit your expression of interest using the forms provided for this purpose. Your EOI should comprise one (1) original copy of each EOI form annexed to this document. EOIs shall be submitted to the address below no later than 12 Noon local time on 29th July, 2024. Late Submissions will NOT be accepted. The Client is not bound to short-list any Consultant.

SIGNED: DR. KABIR YUSUF
National Program Coordinator, SAPZ
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COUNTRY: **FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

Name of Assignment: **Engagement of Short-Term Consultant for the Establishment of New Farmer Organizations and Enterprise Groups in Kano State**

REFERENCE NO: NCO/SAPZ -1/IFAD/CS/CQS/004/1

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has received financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development ("the Fund" or "IFAD") towards the cost of Special Agro – Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) Program ("the client" or "procuring entity"), and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the recruitment of consulting services, for which this REOI is issued.

The use of any IFAD financing shall be subject to IFAD's approval, pursuant to the terms and conditions of the financing agreement, as well as IFAD's rules, policies and procedures. IFAD and its officials, agents and employees shall be held harmless from and against all suits, proceedings, claims, demands, losses and liability of any kind or nature brought by any party in connection with Special Agro – Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) Program.

This request for expressions of interest (REOI) follows the general procurement notice that appeared in Thisday and Daily Trust newspapers on 17th April, 2023, on the IFAD website and on UNDB on 17th April, 2023.

The National Coordination Office of the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones Program now invites expressions of interest (EOIs) from legally constituted consulting firms (not individual consultants) ("consultants") to Establish new Farmer Organizations and Enterprise Groups on the basis of their individual economic needs, commodity of interest, compatibility with each other to respond to service market requirements and the need of the programme. More details on these consulting services are provided in the preliminary terms of reference (PTOR) on Annex 1. The consultant may sub-contract selected activities provided that said services do not exceed 20% of the total consultancy work.

Before preparing its EOIs, the consultant is advised to review the preliminary terms of reference attached as Annex 1, which describe the assignment and Annex 2 that details the evaluation of the technical qualifications.

Note: All expression of interest must be submitted using the expression of interest submission form, **Annexes 1 and 2** referred to above. The expression of interest submission form can be obtained from the address below between the hours of 10am – 4pm local time on working days or downloaded from the website: **www.sapz.gov.ng**

The consultant shall not have any actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest. A consultant with an actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest shall be disqualified unless otherwise explicitly approved by the Fund. A consultant including their respective personnel and affiliates are considered to have a conflict of interest if they a) have a relationship that provides them with undue or undisclosed information about or influence over the selection process and the execution of the contract, b) participate in more than one EOI under this procurement action, c) have a business or family relationship with a member of the client's board of directors or its personnel, the Fund or its personnel, or any other individual that was, has been or might reasonably be directly or indirectly involved in any part of (i) the preparation of this expression of interest, (ii) the selection process for this procurement, or (iii) execution of the contract. The consultant has an ongoing obligation to disclose any situation of actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest during preparation of the EOI, the selection process or the contract execution. Failure to properly disclose any of said situations may lead to appropriate actions, including the disqualification of the consultant, the termination of the contract and any other as appropriate under the IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Projects and Operations. All consultants are required to comply with the Revised IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Activities and Operations (hereinafter, "IFAD's Anticorruption Policy") in competing for, or in executing, the contract.

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b. In accordance with IFAD's Anticorruption Policy, the Fund has the right to sanction firms and individuals, including by declaring them ineligible, either indefinitely or for a stated period of time, to participate in any IFAD-financed and/or IFAD-managed activity or operation. The Fund also has the right to recognize debarments issued by other international financial institutions in accordance with its Anticorruption Policy.

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e. Consultants are required to keep all records and documents, including electronic records, relating to this selection process available for a minimum of three (3) years after notification of completion of the process or, in case the consultant is awarded the contract, execution of the contract.

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Kogi Gov Warns New Judicial Officers on Rule of Law

Ibrahim Oyewale in Lokoja

Kogi State Governor, Usman Ododo, has warned new Judges to always uphold the basic tenets of the rule of law and protect the dignity of the state judiciary. Ododo gave the charge while speaking during the swearing-in ceremony of 10 judicial officers at the Muhammadu Buhari Civic Centre in Lokoja yesterday. He urged the four High Court Judges five Khadis and a Judge of Customary Court of Appeal to dispense justice without fear of favour, noting that it is the collective responsibility for

everyone to ensure justice, equity and fearless. The governor stated that there must be justice for all because the judiciary is the last hope of the common man, noting that in administration of justice we must just be fair but must be seen to be done free and fair. “As the last hope of the common man, the judiciary owes society the obligation to be free fair and just at all times,” the governor stated. The governor pledged that the principle of separation of power is the fulcrum of his administration, pointing out that the governor

will not interfere in the decision of judiciary. He assured the judiciary in the state of adequate logistics to ensure they keep the arms of government floating. Earlier, the Chief Judge of Kogi State, Justice Josiah Majebi, expressed gratitude to the state Governor, Usman Ododo, for being a judiciary-friendly governor. The Chief Judge added that the process being completed today was initiated by the immediate-past Governor of the state, Yahaya Bello, who commenced the nomination of the Judges.

‘Nigeria Needs Transformational Leadership to Fix Energy Sector’

Kemi Olaitan in Ibadan

Emeritus Professor of Petroleum Economics, LSU Centre for Energy Studies, United States of America, Omowunmi Iledare, yesterday, said that Nigeria needed a transformational leader to fix right the petroleum sector. Iledare, who is the Executive Director of Emmanuel Egbogah Foundation, spoke in Ibadan during the 2nd edition of annual

lecture series of Dr. Diran Fawibe titled “Disrupting the Energy Landscape in Nigeria,” which was put together by the Centre for Petroleum Energy Economy and Law (CPEEL) and University of Ibadan. He noted that energy is critical for sustainable prosperity, stressing that if energy is disrupted in a rapid manner the consequences could be very dire and would take a

transformational mindset to make sure the country do the right thing. Speaking as the guest speaker, he disclosed that there are three institutions that are critical to the future of oil and gas industry in the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), which are regulation, commercial institutions and the Minister a designation for the policy institution and weakest leg in the oil and gas industry.

Two Commissioners Quit Otti’s Cabinet

Emmanuel Ugwu-Nwogo in Umuahia

Two commissioners have resigned their positions in Abia State barely 24 hours after Governor Alex Otti issued a threat to sack any government functionary involved in unwholesome practices. The cabinet members that quit their jobs yesterday are the Commissioner for Science and Technology, Mr. Chima Oriaku, and the Commissioner for Agriculture, Professor Monica

Ironkwe. A statement signed and issued by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Mr. Ukoha Njoku Ukoha, said that the two cabinet members “have tendered their resignation letters to the Governor of Abia State.” However, no reasons were given for their resignations from the State Executive Council of Abia State, but it was obvious that Otti accepted the resignations. “The Executive Governor thanked them for their service

and sacrifice to the state and wish them well in their future endeavours,” the CPS said. Earlier, when the news filtered out concerning the two commissioners, it was said that they were sacked by Governor Otti only for the official statement to say that they resigned. Otti constituted his cabinet in July 2023 and the latest resignations is the second hiccups to hit the cabinet barely a month after the Commissioner for Health, Dr. Ngozi Okoronkwo, was suspended.

‘Decay Infrastructure across Tertiary Institutions is Appalling’

Fidelis David in Akure

A Professor of Gynecology, Obstetrics and former Provost of the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Prof Akinyinka Omigbodun, has lamented the decay in infrastructure across tertiary institutions in Nigeria. He said the presence or otherwise and the quality of the basic facilities that an educational institution require to function will determine the productivity of the

institution. This is just as he said the increasing rate of an emerging urge to leave Nigeria by the old and the young is a benefit and not a loss. The former president West African College of Surgeons stated these at the 4th Emeritus Professor Oladipo Akinkugbe Distinguished Lecture at the University of Medical Sciences, Ondo City, Ondo State. According to him, “It saddens me that a lot of infrastructures in

our educational institutions are in a state of decay, and it shouldn’t be so, and it’s not a question of resources being unavailable, it’s a question of application of what’s available. You go to some countries which are not well endowed as Nigeria but where things are properly channeled, you find out that they maintain the infrastructure and work for a very long time. We need to also build a maintenance culture so that our various infrastructures can serve us for long.”

Adeleke Promises Fast Actions on Students’ Welfare

Yinka Kolawole in Osogbo

Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, at the Government House in Osogbo held a closed-door meeting with student leaders from across the unions with a joint resolution to jointly work for good governance for all residents of the state. At the meeting coordinated by the governor’s aide on Students Matters, Oladejo Bashiru Aderoju, and attended

by the President of NAOSS, Akinnibi Mufutai; Ogungbe Taiwo, NANS JCC chairman; Bamigboye Peter of NANS Zone D, and others, the parties addressed areas of concerns with the student leaders, expressing commendation for the governor’s delivery on good governance. According to NAOSS President, Akinnibi Mufutai, the students’ body appreciates the governor’s commitment to

addressing critical issues from workers welfare to infrastructure upgrade, urging the governor not to relent on the expansion and upgrade of roads network within the campuses. The JCC Chairman, Ogungbe Taiwo, in his presentation, listed the many progress already recorded by the state under Governor Adeleke, calling on the governor to further integrate students into the state policy decision-making process.

LG Electronics Draws Curtain on LG K-POP

Raheem Akingbolu

The LG K-POP grand finale has been concluded with overwhelming performances that showcased the immense talent of the winners. The event, which was organised by LG Electronics, saw some of the biggest names in K-POP compete fervently for the ultimate prize. The competition, held recently in Lagos showcased a stellar line-

up of 80 talented performers since April who left no stone unturned in their pursuit of glory. The event marked a milestone starting from Ibadan, Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt where the hearts and souls of the passionate youths went into giving so much to display their innate talents. For LG Electronics, combining the love for cutting-edge technology with the immense popularity of K-POP music was the main gain. The journey

culminated in the semi-finals held in these cities, where 18 exceptionally talented teams earned their place in the grand finale. Expressing his delight at the grand success of the event, the Managing Director, LG Electronics West Africa, Mr. Hyoung Sub Ji, said: “The LG K-POP Fiesta 2024 is a celebration of not only incredibly talented K-POP enthusiasts but also the rich tapestry of global culture.



COUNTRY: **FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**
Name of Assignment: **Engagement of Short-Term Consultant to Conduct Profiling of Farming Households Based on value chains in LGAs, Kano State**

REFERENCE NO: NCO/SAPZ -1/IFAD/CS/CQS/003/1

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has received financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development ("the Fund" or "IFAD") towards the cost of Special Agro – Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) Program ("the client" or "procuring entity"), and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the recruitment of consulting services, for which this REOI is issued.

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The National Coordination Office of the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones Program now invites expressions of interest (EOIs) from legally constituted consulting firms (not individual consultants) ("consultants") to provide a comprehensive profiling of Smallholder farmers, with a specific focus on women and youth involved in the Agricultural Value Chain crops of Rice, Tomato, Groundnut and Sesame in selected LGAs. More details on these consulting services are provided in the preliminary terms of reference (PTOR) on Annex 1. The consultant may sub-contract selected activities provided that said services do will not exceed 20% of the total consultancy work.

Before preparing its EOIs, the consultant is advised to review the preliminary terms of reference attached as Annex 1, which describe the assignment and Annex 2 that details the evaluation of the technical qualifications. Note: All expression of interest must be submitted using the expression of interest submission form, **Annexes 1 and 2** referred to above. The expression of interest submission form can be obtained from the address below between the hours of 10am – 4pm local time on working days or downloaded from the website: **www.sapz.gov.ng**

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All consultants are required to comply with the Revised IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Activities and Operations (hereinafter, "IFAD's Anticorruption Policy") in competing for, or in executing, the contract.

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Procedure: the selection process will be conducted using Consultant Qualification Selection (CQS) Method as laid out in the IFAD Procurement Handbook that can be accessed via the IFAD website at www.ifad.org/project-procurement. The client will evaluate the EOIs using the criteria provided in Annex 2. The shortlisted consultant(s) will be provided with the detailed TORs and asked to submit a detailed technical and financial offer. The evaluation will include a review and verification of qualifications and past performance, including a reference check, prior to the contract award.

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The road holds opportunities for Nigeria's sustained growth, reckons BASSEY ETUKUDO

LAGOS-CALABAR COASTAL ROAD IS A GAME CHANGER

The Lagos-Calabar coastal highway has come under focus for some time now. A 731.5-kilometre road that will link all the coastal states from Lagos State to Cross River State, traversing Ogun, Ondo, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom States, it is easily a signature project of the Bola Tinubu administration. To be clear, the coastal highway project has been in the news on and off since the First Republic when the then Finance Minister Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh mooted the idea of a limited version covering the Niger Delta states. It was again mentioned in the immediate past administration of President Muhammadu Buhari when the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) announced its interest in the project with the support of the federal government. But no administration picked up the gauntlet to activate and actualise the project like the Tinubu administration currently does under its Renewed Hope Agenda, which prioritises economic recovery and expansion through infrastructure provision.

No infrastructure project can be as ground-breaking and transformational as the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Road. With a provision for a rail line, it will open up the hydrocarbon belt of these coastal states, all of which are oil-producing states to new investment opportunities in refineries, petrochemicals and energy plants. Along with the massive potential for tourism from eco-tourism and beaches, marine investments and new town developments, the highway is a game-changer for the Nigerian economy. This is why it isn't easy to understand why some people prefer to play politics with an investment that holds such massive opportunities for Nigeria's sustained growth by opposing the decision of the federal government to commence the project. All over the world, developed economies find a way to envision and finance projects that expand their economies, creating new growth opportunities and opening up new frontiers to development. Even in tough economic times of tight money supply, the role of government to stimulate recovery through infrastructure spending cannot be downplayed. This is the basic idea behind the success of the Keynesian school of economics by John Maynard Keynes who advocated for targeted spending to get an economy out of the woods. That is the philosophy behind the coastal highway being constructed between Lagos and Calabar.

There have been worries as per the cost of the road, put at an estimated N15 trillion, especially because of the country's current economic difficulties and huge debt profile. Some critics have also pointed to issues such as the selection of the contractor; allegations that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was not done; and the sum of one trillion naira paid to the contractor. On the cost, it is important to note that the Lagos-Calabar Highway is a Greenfield road, which will traverse some of the harshest terrains in Nigeria, the swampy coastal belt, with several bridges along the route. This informs its huge construction cost. While the cost is seen as high, the fact of the matter, as Works Minister Dave Umahi has stated on several occasions, is that the federal government will only bear a fraction of that cost as the project will run un-



der the EPC+F (Engineering, Procurement and Construction plus Financing). This unique model ensures that the contractor sources the funds for the job, aside from the counterpart provided by the federal government, part of which has been paid to ensure that work commences. The contractor finance model frees up funds for the federal government to deploy to existing roads, where work is continuing at a pace that is commendable, ensuring that existing roads are not abandoned. Questions regarding the EIA for the road are misplaced as it has not only been done, it is constantly being reviewed since the road is an organic project and the government is responding to pleas to adjust. Given that the project traverses many coastal states and communities, the EIA will continue and cannot be a one-off exercise.

The pace at which the road project has taken off should be a source of satisfaction to critics and not a talking point for cynics. The government's decision to pay a counterpart fund of N1 trillion is a testament to its willingness to make the necessary investment to drive the project and the country's economic recovery, it is not a payment for work that will not be done as happened in the past. This commitment addresses the perennial problem of piecemeal financing of infrastructure jobs, which has made it impossible to finish up road projects.

The speed and professionalism in handling the project show an administration intent on delivering on its promises. One other factor that gives hope is the reputation of the Works Minister who has deployed his expertise as a civil engineer to the infrastructure agenda of the federal government, ensuring that Nigerians get value for their construction naira. Umahi is a thorough-bred and experienced engineer who acquitted himself well as governor of Ebonyi State where he registered exploits in infrastructure development.

The Tinubu administration inherited an economy challenged on many fronts, especially on the fiscal front where national income receipts have been dropping for many years now. The government has chosen to expand the country's economy by making much-needed investments in infrastructure such as Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway to create new opportunities. Already, the FG has got the buy-in of stakeholders across the states covered, and will soon turn the sod on the project from the Calabar end so that work progresses from both ends and the 2031 target for finishing the project is met. It is a commendable initiative and deserves the support of all Nigerians.

Etukudo writes from Calabar, Cross River State

OLU OBAFEMI pays tribute to his friend, mate and brother, Funsho Aiyejina

ADIEU, FUNSO AYEJINA

The demise of my friend and schoolmate, Emeritus Professor Funsho Aiyejina is a rude and devastating shock to me. It is a friendship of nearly 60 years. We met at the Provincial Secondary School (later christened as Government School Dekina) in 1965, he had entered PSS a year before. The friendship was instant and permanent. We were both about the most active members and leaders of all the clubs and societies in the college, namely, The Dramatic Society, in which we were both star actors. I remember, in 1966, we acted in Henshaw's 'This Is Our Chance' in which Funsho, with his effeminate frame and pretty face, acted the role of the girl, Ayi. A few years later, I, obviously less 'pretty-looking', was cast to act the role of Louka, in Bernard Shaw's 'Arms and the Man', to my greatest surprise. Other Clubs, in which we featured remarkably together, were Current Affairs, Debating Society, and the School Reporter, the College newspaper. Because of its adjudged, fiery, acerbic and vitriolic nature, we were subjected to punitive actions of cane-lashing. I recalled that many of us resisted the caning but Funsho went through the very humiliating public lashing. Many of us held it against him but later in life, he explained to me that he had carried that burden on our behalf as the chairman of the Society - a manifest exemplar of responsible leadership which stood Funsho out in his career and leadership positions throughout his life. In sport, Funsho was outstanding in spite of his deceptive delicate physiognomy. We were both in the junior football team of the College, called the Mosquito Rovers but we later parted company as he took to Basketball and played for our State, Kwara State, the Obafemi Awolowo University and was on the Nigerian National Basketball Team. In classroom academic work, he was one of the best Arts students in his class, just as I was one of the best two in my class.

We have remained very close friends ever since, long after his repatriation to Trinidad and Tobago, and from his incredible talent, compulsive industry, creativity, he shone like a Glowworm all through his career as a scholar-poet, public intellectual, university administrator and dependable and humane humanist: kind, generous, selfless, and as an uncompromising radical ideologue: loyal friend and inimitable man of the family. Each time I had visited the Caribbean, he ensured he hosted me. In 1990 for instance, I had been invited by Prof Timothy Paine to the University of the West Indies at St Augustine to give a paper at a Conference on Women. I was housed in a decent hotel but on the second day of the Conference, Funsho had arrived at the hotel, quietly removed my things and left. Bewildered, I followed him into his car and he drove off. : "How could you come and stay in a hotel" in a city where I live? His wife Lyndia was a perfect host even though we were out every night to social and cultural Orisha festivals events, long into the nights. She managed to forgive us all the time. And this genuine family and social hospitality subtended on every visit.

I recall in 2005, after several nudging that we must go back to our Alma Mater in Dekina, also because his Memoir would be incomplete without a physical visit and some picture tokens of those crucial features that

made our lives in Dekina memorable, he extracted a firm promise from me, with that his penetrating, unblinking eyes. I consented. He followed it up with several emails and chats. So in 2006, on the invitation of CBAAC, he came to Nigeria as a Guest Speaker on a Lecture that I Chaired. Event over, Funsho, Isah Momoh another younger schoolmate residing in Lagos, set on the long journey from Lagos to Dekina in my reliable Honda Accord. To make the journey longer, Funsho insisted that we must go through Ilorin to see my wife and family. This additional diversion stretched the journey to two full days. Before leaving Lagos, I had taken him to attend the Editorial Board Meeting of The Sun Newspapers, where I was both a columnist, a member of the Editorial Board and Adviser. He participated very actively in the Editorial



sessions, and long after his return to T&T, he continued to relish the experience. The trip to Dekina and the actual visit were memorable. We were all saddened by the state of disrepair that we found Dekina, our beloved school. Little did both of us know that that was the last physical encounter that we would have. Funsho's request that I found him a Sabbatical placement in Nigeria was being arranged until the painful news of his departure came to me through a statement sent to Odia Ofeimum and copied to me by our great friend, Professor Biodun Jeyifo (BJ).

We will all answer this inevitable call of death, one day but it seems to me that the rascally, unfeeling cruelty of death cannot be more shameless than the sudden removal of Professor Titus Funsho Aiyejina. His immortality is assured in his mammoth creative products, the undying memory in the minds of his numerous friends all over the world and humanity at large. He was a rare gem too hard to lose and surrender to wanton death. Adieu dear timeless friend and brother.

Obafemi

FNAL, NNOM, Pro-Chancellor, Conference University of Science and Technology, Kogi State is a professor of Dramatic Literature, playwright, poet and literary scholar

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EDITORIAL

BEYOND THE AGRICULTURE CENSUS REPORT...(1)

The NASC census offers an insight into the state and structure of agriculture across the nation

After 30 years of information and knowledge gap in a critical sector of the economy, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has published a survey of agricultural activities in the country conducted across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Titled, 'National Agricultural Sample Census (NASC) Report 2022', it detailed the various agricultural practices being carried out by Nigerian households across the country. That the report came when Nigeria's food inflation rate hit a record high of 40.87 per cent in June 2024, surpassing the previous month's 40.66 increase, should not be lost on the authorities. Agora Policy, a think tank that focuses on development and governance, has released a paper which highlights some of the key issues from the census report while providing data on resource management, labour dynamics, and diverse agricultural activities at the household level that are useful for policymakers in Nigeria.

The NASC survey, conducted using digitised enumeration area maps, marks a significant milestone. Even though the exercise is supposed to be carried out every five to 10 years in line with the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) standards, the NBS last agricultural census was done in 1993/1994. But the new report provides comprehensive information on the size, land use, structure of farm holding, crop production, livestock, poultry, fisheries activities, and agricultural inputs. "It offers invaluable insights into our very foundation of our agricultural sector", said Statistician-General of the Federation and NBS Chief Executive of Officer, Adeyemi Adeniran. "This year's results are alarming: approximately 22 million Nigerians will face food insecurity in 2023, and around 80-82 million are at risk of severe food insecurity by 2030," said the FAO humanitarian coordinator in Nigeria on the implications of the figures released.

According to the report, about 40.2 million agriculture households across the country are



Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi is apt to say that the most significant thing about the data is that the government can now measure, and whatever you can measure you can manage

involved in agricultural practices. Kano State is ranked the highest with about 2.4 million agricultural households followed by Kaduna State with about two million. Bayelsa State recorded the least with 0.34 million agricultural households. Besides, the report revealed that about 26.7 per cent of the households have five-six members, while 14 per cent have just one-two members. And of the 91 per cent of agricultural households that cultivated crops, only 48 per cent reported raising any livestock.

The survey also found that 16 per cent of the households raised 58 million cattle, 41.2 per cent about 124 million goats, 42.5 per cent of poultry (most commonly chickens), while only 5 per cent practised fisheries. Lagos State recorded the lowest percentage of agricultural households in crop cultivation, while

Ebonyi had the highest with 99.5 per cent. Similarly, Jigawa had the highest percentage of agricultural households engaged in livestock production followed by Bauchi while the highest percentage of agricultural households was recorded in Benue

with 65.2 per cent, closely followed by Ebonyi with 63.3 per cent. In addition, about 16 per cent of the agricultural households in the country are headed by females, while the majority are headed by male. The exception to this, according to the survey, are states like Anambra and Enugu, where there were relatively high numbers of female-headed households.

Furthermore, most of the heads of households are aged 35-44 years; followed by those aged 45-54 years. The Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari noted that the NASC census sets a new data collection and analysis benchmark and offers an unprecedented insight into the state and structure of agriculture across the nation. Indeed, Kyari's colleague and Minister of State, Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi is apt to say that the most significant thing about the data "is that the government can now measure, and whatever you can measure you can manage."

To be concluded tomorrow

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Letters in response to specific publications in THISDAY should be brief (150-300 words) and straight to the point. Interested readers may send such letters along with their contact details to opinion@thisdaylive.com. We also welcome comments and opinions on topical local, national and international issues provided they are well-written and should also not be longer than (750-1000 words). They should be sent to opinion@thisdaylive.com along with photograph, email address and phone numbers of the writer.

LETTERS

MILITARISATION OF THE NIGER DELTA

The news that security forces will takeover the Niger Delta region as the solution to the oil theft menace is not right. The Presidential directive as relayed by the Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa, along with all the Service Chiefs including the Group Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited, comes across as a President that is misinformed of what is going on in the region. The security forces will be seen as occupier forces and it is indeed a recipe for disaster for the Nigerian economy if the forces do not conduct themselves within the ambit of standard operational procedures. The way the security forces conduct themselves in the region will determine the reaction of the people. The elderly and the innocent ones should not be made to suffer undue consequences of what they know nothing about. The people should not be used as cannon fodder.

If we want to go deeper some mischief is at play here. The mischief is that some people are trying to cover up their incompetence and failures in meeting the three million barrels of oil they promised nine years ago when they were appointed to take charge of the NNPC. A few days ago the Special Adviser to the President on Policy and Coordination and Head, Central Delivery Coordination took a swipe on the Group Chief Executive

Officer of the NNPC, Mallam Mele Kyari for the flip-flops in the oil industry. The truth is that there are no new investments in the oil sector for over two decades; it is not the unlicensed refineries operators that are responsible for this dearth in the oil industry, it is not the unlicensed refineries operations that is the reason for Nigeria's inability to meet its OPEC quota. The truth is that the oil industry has grossly been mismanaged by the present leadership, and all of its subsidiaries as a result of corruption. So this fire brigade approach of deploying security forces to the region won't solve anything, it is a face-saving measure put up as though some persons are working.

Why we are not making a case to absolve the communities, there has been, over time, mismanagement of resources that hitherto would have been deployed to the development of these communities. The people have become disenchanted, hopelessness is rife as many years of neglect have taken a toll on the people. Therefore they have ceased to care about the destruction of Oil infrastructure in their domain. We cannot take our eyes off the activities happening in the high seas; and also in the crude oil terminals.

We as the Community Development Committees of Niger Delta Oil and Gas Producing Areas (CDC) have made concerted

efforts to proffer a near-fool-proof strategy to reducing to the barest minimum oil theft. Save for some government agencies that have bought into our strategies, the real critical stakeholders are pushing back on the CDC for reasons best known to them. Perhaps the CDC strategy is seen as a solution that will put them out of business but we will continue to push until the government listens to us. We have said many times that bombing is not the solution as there has been many more breaches and construction of many new refining outlets.

We must begin to talk with these unlicensed refinery operators and provide alternative incentives to make them look away. The CDC leadership has taken the responsibility to engage with many of the operators and we have made significant progress even when many of them are skeptical of government keeping to their own side of whatever bargains are reached. So there is a trust issue but we keep assuring them that they will be treated fairly by the President Bola Tinubu's government. Therefore the CDC leadership is appealing to the federal government to partner with the CDC to bring about a drastic cut of oil theft.

Joseph Ambakederimo,
BoT Chairman, CDC, Warri

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Maduka: I’m Ready to Help Tinubu Solve Nigeria’s Economic Problems

A Chieftain of the Labour Party, Basil Maduka, in this interview bears his mind on economic policies of President Bola Tinubu and his willingness to help government at the centre to solve nation’s economic problems. **Adedayo Akinwale** brings excerpts:

How effective do you think President Bola Tinubu’s economic policies have been and what is the prospect that we would get out of this economic crisis soon?

Yes, as it was captioned by Mr. President and his economic team, “Renewed Hope”. In the first instance, what Mr. President did was removing the fuel subsidy. He was trying to make sure that there’s a lot of resources coming into the Nigerian government so that they can spend money. If you look at it, yes, the money is coming in. But the question is the value of that money in the markets, does it reflect on the people? Yes, he has very good policy, as we speak, but who drives that policy is another question. Mr. President needs technocrats; he needs people who will not say I’m APC, this is APC government.

Mr. President has to bring everybody together, irrespective of party. Nothing stops Mr. President from inviting Peter Obi, what do you have for the people, you need to support the government. Obi can go to Mr. President and say I want to suggest this to you so that the people can be liberated.

Just like myself, Maduka. Why am I doing this address? It is to let him know that somebody like Basil Maduka has something have on the table for him. If he asks me, Basil, what do you have on the table for Nigerians so that we can create this economic prosperity? I wouldn’t mind because in my own private sector I have 100 staff across the globe. For us to come together to drive this policy, I think within the four years, Nigerians will be liberated.

As a chieftain of the Labour Party, one year after, if you try to look at what the presidential candidate of the Labour Party has been doing so far, it is criticism of the government policies. In fact, the recent supreme court judgment on local government financial autonomy where everybody is hailing the President, I think he has not spoken about that. It is criticism upon criticism. So what do you have to say about that?

I think to my own understanding, he as an individual, your perception is what you can say. You see, government is collectivism.

I think opposition is better when you are in the house. So that when you are saying it, they will now know that you are contributing. If you are outside, saying the same thing, people might not take you serious, because at times you can say that talk is cheap.

Oh! If I were Mr. President, I would have done this. But when you are given an opportunity, you know that the dynamics will change. Now, since he is not Mr. President now, I think his views would be more pronounced, will yield more fruitfulness, if once in a while he visits Mr. President and says Mr. President, I want you to do this, do that. Because all the people we want to rule are Nigerians. It doesn’t matter, you must be the driver or you must be the best driver. No! Anybody can drive, some people might have their own shortcut, I think may be he (Obi) might say something. I cannot answer for him. I think the judgement came in about one week ago.

I think he still has something to say. But opposition is good when it is well channeled. He can call Mr. President and say this program you can add it to liberate the people of Nigeria. I think it will be more meaningful.

The Labour Party is in crisis, and the party is yet to resolve the crisis. Do you think the President can trust you to help solve Nigeria’s problems if you cannot resolve the issues in your party.

I think they are on it. Party crises are always normal. In a polygamous home, there must be a fight. I think they are trying to solve their problems. What we’re talking about now is about Nigeria’s problems. The economic problems, it is not a party affair again. Everybody goes to the same market, inflation all over the place. The issue now is how do everybody come together in collectivism to see to the welfare of Nigerian people. Because if everybody’s hungry, you are criticizing, you’re



Maduka

running helter skelter, nobody will listen to you. The Labour Party will solve their problems. What we’re talking about today is not a party issue. We’re talking about Nigerian people.

What is it that you want to bring to the table that those there have not brought?

If someone like me about 15 years ago, I was able to set up Virgin Group. Today, I have over 100 staff across the globe - three Ph.D holders, some expatriates - across the globe with the initiative I have...I want to tell you something, sometime in February/ March, 2024, six companies from Nigeria were invited by the US embassy. We were in Las Vegas where all the world’s major players in the industry were gathered. It was then the representative from Iran, when they heard I am from Nigeria, and it happens I led the team, they said Nigeria is a great country, I said Yes of course! They said how is your President doing? I told them what my President was doing. Are we talking

about party? No! The image of every country matters. So as an international businessman, when such people are trying to reach Mr. President, it does not mean that it’s only a Minister, or a Senator, or whatever.

It is people like us that will tell Mr. President, this is what is happening in the business world, the international best practices for us to have direct investments.

So, I’m available for Mr. President, either to support me in my business. Moreover, I’ve not done any contract in my life with government. I don’t do government contracts. I’ve never, from local government to the federal. I’ve never and I’m not interested. It is how do we link Nigeria to international economics, where foreign direct investors see our place as a destination point. So if Mr. President ask for my opinion, and say Basil, what do you have on the table? I will put what I have on the table. He will put his own for us to drive Nigeria.

You’ve shown commitment that you’re

It is people like us that will tell Mr. President, this is what is happening in the business world, the international best practices for us to have direct investments. So, I’m available for Mr. President, either to support me in my business. Moreover, I’ve not done any contract in my life with government. I don’t do government contracts. I’ve never, from local government to the federal. I’ve never and I’m not interested. It is how do we link Nigeria to international economics, where foreign direct investors see our place as a destination point. So if Mr. President ask for my opinion, and say Basil, what do you have on the table? I will put what I have on the table. He will put his own for us to drive Nigeria.

ready to help, if he’s not coming to you, are you ready to approach the President or are you waiting to be called?

I’m waiting to be called. I’m yet to make such a move. I believe that opposition at times is better in the house. If you are within, we promise Nigerians economic prosperity —renewed hope. If those government teams are sincere, because that is the policy statement, they will always remind themselves of what they promised Nigerians. Mr. President, we need to do this, we need to do that. Because If you’re outside, people will look at it and say opposition people, they are looking for contracts, they’re looking for recognition. You will go and give them money, you won’t hear them again.

To the glory of God, I’m not part of that. It is what do I contribute to Nigeria in my time, because every government come and go.

The coming generations will hold us responsible someday, that all of us were there. Nobody will be talking about opposition. They would say you people squander the Nigerian economy, you have done this. That is why it is not good for a party when they are in government.

They will not see themselves as you know ‘carry go’, that is opportunity to do whatever, we are in government. Anybody God helped to be in power should see it as an opportunity with their team. Let them not use it to witch-hunt people. Let them not see it as just to deal with people. It is a call to service all over.

A year and some months after President Tinubu assumed office, Nigerians are of the opinion that the President should reshuffle his cabinets and allow the Ministers that are not performing to go. Do you share that sentiment?

Yes, of course. At times, the political parties from what happened in the past were blaming the PDP government for squandering the Nigerian economy for 16 years. Because they were looking at it as a party affair. If Mr. President will look at Nigeria as a country where everybody is a stakeholder, you won’t say the only person that will work with me is my party members. If you believe in your country, you want to liberate them, you go outside the box, those people criticising, bring them in. That thing you said you have, let us see if it is talk and do or you are just saying.

We can say for instance, somebody like the Minister of FCT, if you drive within Abuja, you will feel that you know that he’s working. You will be happy that so many roads abandoned for some years, you will be happy that something is going on. So every government feels happy when the people and the environment is happy.

What would you say is the silver bullet to the crisis in your party?

I think political party will always have its own problems and they are solving things and they know that it is a litmus test for them. Because if you said they are going to put this on the table, you must show capacity, you must show that you can be trusted. It’s not what you tell the people that matters. It is what the practical thing you have done. So I think they will resolve their problem as a political party.

Are you still a member of the Labour Party?

As we are today, it’s not an issue of party. Nobody is talking about the party. What I’m talking about today is Nigeria’s interests. The people as an employer of labour. Just like every tribe, there is no tribe that is not in my organisation. What is important is your input as a team. Political party comes and goes, it is just a vehicle to achieve your political ambition. Now we have a party in government, within the four years or the eight years, whatever it is, let everybody come together in making sure that this government succeeds to the glory of the people.

So is it right to say that you are no longer a member of the Labour Party?

I cannot tell you that I’m not a member of the Labour Party or would I tell you am a member of APC or would I tell you I am a member of PDP, the issue on ground is the welfare of Nigerians, are they faring well? Fuel crisis, inflation crisis, the economy not flourishing well.

R A T E S A S A T J U L Y 1 7 , 2 0 2 4							
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WATRA: Fintech, E-commerce, Digital Market Contribute 80% Growth in Telecoms Business across West Africa



Emma Okonji

The Executive Secretary of the West African Telecommunications Regulators' Assembly (WATRA), Mr. Aliyu Aboki has said Fintech, E-commerce and Digital Marketing contributed as much as 80 per cent growth rate in telecoms business across West Africa in 2024.

Such growth, he stated, is largely driven by payment services offered by Fintech players, which cut across e-commerce and digital marketing.

Aboki who spoke at a virtual media interactive session recently, while presenting WATRA's agenda with the theme: "Driving Digital Transformation Prosperity Through Collaborative Regulations: The WATRA Agenda," said the growth rate increased to 21 per cent in 2019

and 60 per cent in 2023, before reaching 80 in 2024, occasioned largely by telecoms investments and infrastructural development across the region.

According to him, the growth rate enhanced digital economy in West Africa, contributing \$30 billion annually to the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Giving WATRA's role in the growth of telecommunications business across West African countries, Aboki said: "WATRA is not a regulator, but an association of regulators in the sub-region of West Africa, with a responsibility to improve telecoms service delivery in West Africa, through collaboration. WATRA's role in all of these growth areas is that it supports and promotes

regulatory harmonisation, facilitates infrastructure development and encourages development across the regulatory bodies in different West African countries. WATRA helps to bring speed of development in West Africa."

Giving details of WATRA's plan and focus areas, Aboki said: "WATRA will continue to focus on its service expansion pan and increase collaboration in order to extend connectivity to rural areas and under-developed areas in West Africa. We will collaborate with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) to leverage technology that will advance development in West Africa. We will ensure that new entrants in satellite and space technologies, maximise the benefits to enhance the growth of telecoms

business across West African countries, and as well promote cybersecurity and data protection among member states.

Fielding questions from journalists on how best to address, the issue of disparity in telecoms infrastructure among ECOWAS states, Aboki said WATRA would ensure that countries with more advanced telecoms infrastructure, share their experiences and methodologies with countries that have less telecoms infrastructure.

"For example, some countries do not have policies on co-location of telecoms infrastructure and WATRA was able to help build the capacities of some of the regulators in such a way that it attracted investors to invest in their telecoms infrastructure rollout. WATRA is

also encouraging infrastructure sharing among telecoms operators in different regions," Aboki said.

In the area of possible cost reduction in spectrum management across regions, Aboki said spectrum management remained key, but stressed that most times, different regions use spectrum management to raise revenue for the regions. He however said if spectrum was overpriced, it would affect the level of investments. At WATRA, we advocate best practices in spectrum pricing to ensure even distribution and easy access to spectrum. We will continue to advocate for best practices to be followed by regions in spectrum allocation, Aboki further said.

Addressing the challenges of high roaming charges and the

disparity in roaming charges across West African countries, the WATRA boss called for a uniform tariff rate for roaming charges in West Africa, adding that WATRA will ensure a bilateral agreement between countries to achieve it.

Worried that data generated in West Africa, are still transmitted to internet hubs in Europe and America, before getting to its final destination in West Africa, Aboki said WATRA had been advocating for Internet Exchange Point structure for West Africa, insisting that it will boost connectivity across West African countries, and also reduce cost of data in West Africa.

The story continues online on www.thisdaylive.com

FG Set to Leverage Technology Solutions for Livestock, Dairy Production

Emma Okonji

With the rise of technology evolution and its increasing benefits across all sectors of the Nigerian economy, the federal government is considering leveraging technology solutions to enhance livestock and dairy production.

The Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani, who dropped the hint in his verified X handle, is of the opinion that the time has come for the federal government to leverage emerging technology solutions in

livestock and dairy production to increase food supply across the country.

According to the minister, "Following the inauguration of the Presidential Committee on the Implementation of Livestock Reforms last week in line with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's agenda, we will be engaging the technology innovation ecosystem over the coming weeks to explore ways to design and apply technological solutions in the livestock, dairy production and other associated sectors. Our

belief is that with the strength of our innovation ecosystem, we will stimulate economic growth through increased agricultural productivity."

Chairman, National Association of Telecoms Subscribers (NATCOMS), Chief Diolu Ogunbanjo, who commended the initiative of the federal government, said such initiative would help enhance food production in the country, especially when technology is applied.

According to Ogunbanjo, emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine

Learning (ML), can revolutionise livestock production in Nigeria by enabling predictive analytics for disease outbreaks, optimising feed efficiency, and improving breeding practices. Drones and IoT devices can monitor livestock health and grazing patterns in real time.

A recent study, which delves into smart technologies in animal production, covering opportunities, challenges, and solutions, shows that smart livestock farmers can leverage technology to boost production and meet food demand and sustainably.

Tech experts are of the view that smart agriculture can employ modern technology to enhance efficiency, sustainability, and animal welfare in livestock farming. According to the experts, it includes remote monitoring, GPS-based animal care, robotic milking, smart health collars, predictive disease control, and other innovations to achieve the goals.

"While smart animal production holds great promise, it does face challenges related to cost, data management, and connectivity. To address the challenges, potential

solutions include remote sensing, technology integration, and farmer education. Smart agriculture offers opportunities for increased efficiency, improved animal welfare, and enhanced environmental conservation. A well-planned approach is crucial to maximise the benefits of smart livestock production while ensuring its long-term sustainability," some of the technology experts who spoke to THISDAY, said.

The story continues online on www.thisdaylive.com

MARKET DATA AS AT WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 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	93.50	24.25	0.04	July 17, 2024 ▲	NTB 8-Aug-24	18.89	19.11	0.75	July 17, 2024 ▲	DUFIL CP III 25-JUL-24	22.98	23.09	3.18	July 17, 2024 ▲	13M	NGUS JUL 30 2025	June 26, 2024	July 17, 2024
^12.50 22-JAN-2026	90.91	19.73	0.01	July 17, 2024 ▲	NTB 5-Sep-24	19.42	19.95	0.84	July 17, 2024 ▲	FDHC CP VI 2-AUG-24	20.68	20.87	2.93	July 17, 2024 ▲	14M	NGUS AUG 27 2025	June 26, 2024	July 17, 2024
^16.2884 17-MAR-2027	102.28	19.27	0.00	July 17, 2024 ➡	NTB 24-Oct-24	20.00	21.15	-0.01	July 17, 2024 ▼	GZIL CP II 13-AUG-24	23.14	23.54	2.53	July 17, 2024 ▲	15M	NGUS SEP 24 2025	June 26, 2024	July 17, 2024
^16.2884 17-MAR-2027	93.21	19.64	0.01	July 17, 2024 ▲	NTB 7-Nov-24	20.60	22.00	0.15	July 17, 2024 ▲	DANC CP XII 27-AUG-24	23.46	24.09	2.03	July 17, 2024 ▲	16M	NGUS OCT 29 2025	June 26, 2024	July 17, 2024
^19.94 20-MAR-2027	100.53	19.62	0.00	July 17, 2024 ➡	NTB 5-Dec-24	20.20	21.91	-0.01	July 17, 2024 ▼	AFRI CP II 21-OCT-24	25.36	27.17	0.25	July 17, 2024 ▲	17M	NGUS NOV 26 2025	June 26, 2024	July 17, 2024



L-R: Chief Regional Bureau-Africa, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Victor Djemba; Deputy Director-General and Managing Director of the Directorate of Global Partnerships and External Relations, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Fatou Haidara; CEO, Sterling One Foundation, Olapeju Ibekwe and Head, UNIDO-ITPO Nigeria, Abimbola Wycliffe during a courtesy call and partnership discussions on the Africa Social Impact Summit (ASIS) 2024 between UNIDO officials and the CEO of Sterling One Foundation in Lagos... recently

NCC, FintechNGR Set to Improve Connectivity in Public Infrastructure

Stories by Emma Okonji

The Governing Council of FintechNGR, led by its President, Ade Bajomo, has engaged the Executive Vice Chairman of

the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Dr. Aminu Maida and his management team, in a bid to deepen the role of the telecommunications sector as a crucial enabler of

Fintech in Nigeria. The engagement, which was triggered by recent discussions between the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Central Bank of

Nigeria (CBN), addressed the critical issue of connectivity and investment in public infrastructure, emphasising the need for improved connectivity to support essential services

such as schools, airports, fire services, police stations, and parks, thereby enhancing timely emergency response.

Bajomo highlighted the inclusive nature of FintechNGR as a strength that regulators should leverage to develop robust policies and regulatory frameworks. He underscored the importance of harnessing Nigeria's natural resources, particularly lithium, to power base stations and reduce operating costs for telecommunications players.

"Leveraging alternative energy sources built on lithium batteries will greatly enhance connectivity, facilitate efficiency, and drive environmental sustainability," Bajomo said. He proposed a public-private collaboration to develop these mineral resources.

Maida responded by emphasising the need for Nigeria to build internal capacity

for creating mobile devices. He noted that approximately 57 per cent of mobile phones in Nigeria still operate on 2G networks, which do not provide broadband speed for users, and that the commission is working with the industry and other cross-sectors to advance user transition to newer technologies such as 5G. He stressed the importance of FintechNGR working with regulators to facilitate the maturity of Fintechs through corporate governance empowerment, training, and mentorship. The NCC boss also highlighted the need for a coordinated approach to combat fraud and cybersecurity threats in the financial sector.

"Deepening partnerships between Fintechs, financial services providers, and the telecoms sector through collaboration will significantly strengthen innovation in Nigeria," Maida said.

World PR Day: APRA Advocates Ethical, Responsible Use of AI

The African Public Relations Association (APRA) has called on its members to leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and associated technologies for insights towards transformation of lives, the PR industry and contemporary life, with a caveat for ethical and responsible use of AI.

The advice came in a message sent to members of the continental body by its president, Mr. Arik Karani. The message, which came in commemoration of the 2024

World Public Relations Day (World PR Day) and resonates with the theme of this year's celebration, "The Future of Public Relations in a Changing World", noted that the unfolding reality of contemporary world signaled 'unprecedented change and opportunity'.

In a statement released by APRA and signed by its Secretary General, Dr. Omoniyi Ibieta, APRA president stated that communication, analyses and strategies in PR such as sentiment analysis, predictive

analytics, automated content creation, were spheres where AI enhances the human agency and capabilities of the public relations practitioners and bolsters capacity for improvement in crisis communication, brand and stakeholder relationship management and otherwise complex issues.

Sounding a note of caution in AI utilisation, Karani urged PR practitioners in Africa to ensure that "the principles of transparency, accountability and inclusivity should guide our use

of AI in public relations, because PR practitioners have a duty to promote truth, bridge gaps and cultivate trust." He reminded all members of APRA that those precepts were in congruence with the vision of APRA and promised the organisation's dedication to advancing PR practice to foster promotional development, promote ethical standards to enhance the contribution of APRA to society through sustainable development of all sectors to drive social impact.

EdTech Sector Urged to Focus on 36m Unemployed Africans

Experts who spoke at the inaugural Mastercard EdTech Conference in Abuja have advised the EdTech startups in Africa to focus on the 36 million unemployed population in the continent.

The experts said EdTech startups have emerged as powerful tools, offering innovative alternatives to traditional learning.

These firms, they posited, have

harnessed digital platforms to democratise learning, offering hope for a brighter future in the African job market.

At a panel session, Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Dr Bosun Tijani; Director, Mastercard Foundation Centre for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Joseph Nsengimana and Executive Secretary,

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Albert Nsengiyumva, stressed the need for government and education stakeholders to leverage technology to increase inclusivity among learners.

Tijani stressed the need for a growing literacy agenda where Africans can be digitally literates and bridge the connection between

the government and the private sector.

The minister explained that stakeholders most especially product designers should consider the infrastructure available to implement the stand-alone product.

"The main issue is not a lack of product innovation but the product being adopted as a stand-alone," Tijani said.

New Curriculum Underway for SMEs on Risk Management

Stories by Raheem Akingbolu

The Enterprise Development Centre (EDC), has announced a strategic partnership with International Energy Insurance (IEI). This collaboration focuses on developing a comprehensive curriculum and providing specialized training on Risk Management and Insurance, as well as creating detailed case studies for real-world application.

The partnership was announced at the EDC office in Lagos during the inauguration of EDC Studio.

According to Director, Programme and Partnership Enterprise Development Centre, Pan-Atlantic University, Dr. Olawale Anifowose, "This partnership signifies a significant step towards empowering SMEs with essential knowledge and tools to navigate risks and secure their future. EDC and IEI are committed to fostering a robust support system for small and medium enterprises through this innovative educational initiative."

He added, "I think this is a very welcome partnership and initiative with International Energy Insurance.

As far back as 4 years ago, when we had the ENDSAR protest in Lagos states, I believe that that period was an eye-opener for many businesses because during those protest, many businesses were destroyed and the data is out there that showed that a large number of those businesses that had their stores, properties, and business destroyed were not insured."

Enlightening some prospective SMEs, Managing Director/CEO, International Energy Insurance (IEI), Mr. Olasupo Sogelola, said study had shown that over 59.1 million Nigerians work in small and medium enterprises sand micro, small and medium enterprises organisations in the country and over 41 million SMEs and MSMEs have been registered, therefore, it is a viable sector to look after.

"Apart from providing a dedicated insurance product and risk management strategies for these SMEs and MSMEs, the partnership also extended to the Clear Pay Microfinance Bank, our sister organisation providing funding support to them," Sogelola said.

Ijesha Digital Hub Celebrates Job Placements for 17 Graduates

Stories by Agnes Ekebuike

The Ijesha Digital Hub has announced that 17 graduates from its first cohort are to receive job offers following their successful completion of the training programme.

The milestone was announced to the graduates and the large crowd that gathered to witness the historic event by the keynote speaker and member of the Board of Trustees of Ijesha Global Alliance for Development (IGAD), Sir Aladekomo, who is also the Chairman, SmartCity Resorts Plc and founder of Chams Plc.

The graduation ceremony celebrated the achievements

of 48 trainees who completed intensive training in various digital disciplines: 10 in UI/UX Design, 23 in Cybersecurity, and 15 in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.

The graduates are now equipped with cutting-edge skills and knowledge and recognized professional certificates in their respective digital domains ready to embark on their professional journeys.

The Executive Director, Ijesha Global Alliance for Development (IGAD), Dr. Cornelius Adewale, said: "The immediate job opportunities for our trainees are a testament to the hub's commitment to providing skills

development training today so that participants can build tomorrow. We are proud of the engagement framework, training delivery, monitoring mechanism, and effective assessment we have developed. This initiative has the potential to transform Nigeria into a digital economy powerhouse."

Chairman of IGAD, Prince Abimbola Olashore, said: "The success of the first cohort of Ijesha Digital Hub underscores the significant role that targeted training programs play in addressing the skills gap in the Nigerian tech industry. The job placements of these graduates not only validate the quality of the training provided but also

highlight the growing demand for skilled professionals in UI/UX Design, Cybersecurity, and Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning."

Vice President of IGAD, Dr. Adewale Alonge, also emphasised the broader impact of this achievement, stating, "This milestone demonstrates the effectiveness of our comprehensive training approach and the dedication of our trainees. By equipping them with relevant skills, we are not only empowering individuals but also contributing to the overall growth and development of the tech sector in Nigeria."

FEATURES

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Commemorating the 248th U.S Independence Celebration the Lagos Way

When Governors Sanwo-Olu, Obaseki, Obasa, and other eminent Nigerians graced the 248th U.S. Independence Celebration recently, amongst other things, it was a night to remember as the crème de la creme marked it the only way possible- the Lagos way known for splendour, panache and class. **Funke Olaode** reports



L-R: Speaker, Lagos State of House of Assembly, Hon. Mudashiru Obasa, Governors Godwin Obaseki and Babajide Sanwo-Olu, U.S. Consul-General, Will Stevens and other dignitaries during 248th years Independence Day Celebration of United States held in Lagos...recently.

U.S. Consul-General, Will Stevens during his opening remarks at 248th years Independence Day Celebration of United States of America held in Lagos...recently

PHOTOS: BIODUN AJALA

Traditional rulers, politicians, members of the diplomatic community, corporate titans and other gorgeously-dressed guests, all of them being people who matter, converged on the expansive Ikoyi residence of the Consul-General of United States of America, Will Stevens, on Monday July 1, 2024 to mark the 248th Independence Day Celebration held in Lagos.

With lovely music and food shaping the event, the US Consul-General, whose country is widely regarded as the most powerful country on earth, might as well get the title of the Most Distinguished Chief Host if the day's resplendent charm, sonorous music and convivial atmosphere were to be considered. Right from the gate, all invited guests had the view of what was to come, adding to the thrill of walking through the tunnel and strutting the red carpet into the embrace of the pleasantly welcoming Stevens. Beaming with smiles and a sense of fulfilment, he welcomed what later turned out to be a crowd into his abode, posing for photograph with each visitor.

Unknown to most guests, the popular American saying – You ain't seen nothing yet – would be as literal as they come as the entire compound was soon transformed into an exotic destination. This year's celebration was themed: "The Great American Roadtrip". And there was no doubt it was indeed a road trip of interesting discovery as booths dedicated to the states in God's own country like California, Georgia, New York, and Texas, adorned the nook and cranny of the expansive compound.

The United States' audience was led by Stevens while the Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, led the Lagos crowd notable personalities like Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Hon. Mudashiru Obasa; automobile magnate, Dr. Cosmas Maduka; Guardian publisher, Mrs. Maiden Ibru; Erelu Abiola Dosunmu, Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer (PPPRO), SP Benjamin Hundeyin; Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu, Mr. Tunde Rahman; Obanikoro of Lagos, among other dignitaries.

On standby to serenade guests as everyone let their hair down to savour the moments in excitement was DJ Exclusive, dishing out different sounds from 'Old School' tunes to sounds by the raves of the moment, much to the admiration and enjoyment of invited guests who lapped it all up by dancing their hearts out. Food and drinks were surplus, champaign flowed freely, it was indeed a night to remember,

with a guest, apparently unable to help it, exclaiming: "This is the best organised Independence Anniversary event."

Shortly after the melodious renditions of the national anthem of both countries, the man of the moment, Will Stevens, mounted the stage. Basking in the euphoria of a successful outing going by the excitement shown so far by the mammoth crowd that graced his occasion, he said "It's a pleasure to see so many familiar faces here tonight and to welcome new guests to the residence for this special occasion. Before I begin, I'd like to recognise Lagos State Governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu, as well as all the Governors; Deputy Governors; Members of the National Assembly; Traditional Rulers, Religious Leaders, and Members of the Diplomatic Corps in attendance today, along with any dignitaries I may have overlooked. As we say in Nigeria, 'You are welcome.'"

He continued: "Independence Day, or the 4th of July, is one of the United States' most cherished holidays. It's a day when family and friends gather to celebrate the founding of our country, to reflect on the challenges we have overcome as a nation, and to affirm the democratic principles that have guided us for nearly 250 years.

"Similarly, a few weeks ago, we gathered with our Nigerian partners to observe Democracy Day and celebrate 25 years since Nigeria's return to democracy. As the two largest presidential democracies in the world, the United States and Nigeria serve as robust examples for the rest of the globe. We have a shared commitment, as President Lincoln said, to a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And we recognise that democracy is not a destination, but a continuous journey where elected officials and citizens work together to address the needs of all.

"This shared vision makes the United States and Nigeria natural partners, friends, and allies on many important issues across the continent and the globe.

"Since the beginning of the year, the U.S. Mission in Nigeria has had the opportunity to host high-level delegations from Washington, including the Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary, and many others. They all came seeking to better understand and expand the U.S.-Nigeria partnership in key sectors including trade and investment, security, health, technology, and cultural exchange.

"In April, our governments participated in the 6th U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission where we launched new projects in energy, agriculture, and the

digital economy. And just last week in Abuja, we had the pleasure of welcoming our new Ambassador, Richard Mills, to Nigeria. He looks forward to his first trip to Lagos and future engagements with all of you. These events are a testament to the strength of the partnership between our two nations."

Highlighting the theme of this year's Independence celebration, "The Great American Roadtrip" with booths dedicated to the states of California, Georgia, New York, and Texas, Stevens said these states were selected because they boast some of the highest numbers of Nigerian Diaspora in the United States. "Over 700,000 people of Nigerian descent live in the United States, the largest of any African country. Nigerian culture and heritage are an integral part of the American story. And later this month we will welcome President Biden's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement, which includes two Nigerian-Americans, to explore how these people-to-people ties translate into increased economic prosperity for both our nations."

In his closing remarks, the diplomat thanked many partners for their collaboration, including those he described as 'our sponsors' for their generosity which made the event possible while also expressing his gratitude to the amazing Consulate team who put the event together.

In his remarks, the Guest of Honour, Governor Sanwo-Olu, commended Mr. Will Stevens for putting up such a spectacular show in celebrating the great country. "To see this marvelous array of outstanding Nigerians and our international community all coming together, I say 'it is only Will that can pull this off'. You know, this massive ground, this residence that has a lot of history and that has a lot of, I mean, cultural heritage to it, he is just throwing it open for all of us.

"I want to thank you for the great work you are doing. And I want to, on behalf of the people and government of Lagos State, say how truly proud we are to be identified with you. How truly honoured we are to be asked to come to the United States' 248th birthday.

"United States and Nigeria are the first and the second largest presidential democracies in the world. You know, and that speaks a lot to the commonality and the real

reason why we need to do a lot of things together. There are so many things we could have learned. We are still learning from United States. And you can see that being reflected here today."

While praising United States for supporting and grooming creative talents and tech start-ups in Nigeria, Sanwo-Olu added: "Will and all of his staff have supported the creative industry at a level which is unimaginable. I have seen all of them here. He has taken them everywhere. He has opened the doors for them. He has helped the tech industry in Nigeria to also flourish, to be able to hand-hold each other and he has helped us to also deepen our democracy.

"And we are just a young guy, 64 years old. And so what that tells us is that we need to believe in ourselves. We need to believe in our country. We need to know that indeed, there are problems everywhere in the world. There are issues. America has gone through its own for 248 years, it has stumbled, it has fallen, it has gotten up. It has even somersaulted, but here they are. The old 248 man is still moving on and is still getting stronger and stronger by the day."

Admonishing citizens to believe in themselves, Sanwo-Olu urged further: "So as Nigerians, let's raise our heads up. Let's say that indeed for every path that we have to play, let's play it with our heads up, knowing fully well that Nigerians do not come last, with every strength in our body, with every goodness in us, ensuring like I said, that we are the best, not only in our country, but in every part of the world. Let's give it up to Nigerians.

"For today, it is about the United States of America, of which we are truly honoured that in our country, they have a reason to celebrate. They have a reason to remember what that partnership has been for them. And so on behalf of our government, on behalf of the over 1,000 heads that Will has opened the door for today and several others outside there, we want to congratulate the government and the people of United States.

We want to congratulate the relationship that we have and we are believing that we still have a lot more to fuse together in culture, in art, in technology, in politics, in innovation, in creativity, in everything that human beings can think and can dream of. Thank you very much. Congratulations once again to you Will and the United States." And just when you thought it couldn't get any more colourful, a spectacular display of fireworks brought the evening of glitz, glamour and pageantry to a close.

FirstBank, 100WF Reiterates Commitment to Empower More Women in Finance

Nume Ekeghe

First Bank of Nigeria Limited and 100 Women in Finance (100WF) have reiterated their commitment to continually avail more women in the financial industry with the necessary tools to empower them to reach the peak of their careers.

Speaking at the first anniversary of the 100WF Nigeria, with the theme, ‘Empower the Women Within,’ the Head Brand Strategy, Budget and Planning, FirstBank, Abimbola Meshinoye, stated that the decision to sponsor the event is consistent with the bank’s commitment to achieving gender parity.

She acknowledged that

they have a lot of women in their system, adding, “we have a good balance, and we will continue to grow the number of women in leadership within the Bank. Sponsoring programs like this, help women to empower themselves and also avail them the opportunities to network, become stronger and believe in themselves within the system that FirstBank operates.”

The keynote speaker, Nimi Akinkugbe, advised middle-career women in the financial sector to strive to focus on achieving results and improving their competence in the industry.

According to her, “middle-career women in the financial sector must focus on devel-

oping their skills to achieve results and become more competent, while learning to diversify their funds and educating themselves constantly.”

Also speaking, the Head, Strategy and Corporate Development, FBNHoldings, and Co-Chair, 100WF Nigeria, Yemi Okojie, said empowerment for women means giving them the right tools to become more successful.

According to her, “Our focus is to enable women in the finance industry to see how they can shine and do more within their different organisations and also making sure we have more senior women in finance across the sectors and subsectors.”



FG to Save \$120,000 Capital Flight from Seafarers’ Certification

The Executive Director, National Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR), Prof. Sule Abiodun has said that the federal government will save about \$120,000 (N190 million) by training of seafarers locally.

Abiodun, noted that the development is a big win for the Nigerian Maritime industry as cadets would no longer have to travel outside the country to acquire the certification.

He stated this yesterday while speaking at the 2024 Marine and Blue Economy Human Capital Development Programme held in Lagos.

The certification, he said, is part of the mandatory certificates required by international seafarers around the world with focus on emergency

response, occupational safety, security, medical care and survival on board ships.

He said, “The training period would last for three days covering courses in Personal Safety and Social Responsibility (PSSR), Personal Survival Techniques (PST), Elementary First Aid (EFA), Fire Fighting and Fire Prevention (FFFP) and Security Awareness Training for All Seafarers (SAT). The project executed by the NIOMR will strengthen Nigeria’s maritime workforce and increase seafarers’ global competitiveness.”

Speaking President, National Association of Master Mariners, Capt. Tajudeen Alao, while lauding the ministry for the timely intervention noted that prior to this scheme, Nigerians spent as much

as \$1,000 to acquire this certification in Ghana.

He said: “This course has not come cheap. Our people used to go to Ghana for over 10 years for this course and it became very expensive. Nigerians spent as much as \$1,000 for this training in Ghana but in Nigeria, it’s not less than N500,000 and the government is giving this free of charge. I thank the Honourable Minister of Marine and Blue Economy for this intervention.”

On his part, Senior Lecturer, Federal College of Fisheries and Marine Technology, Capt Fola Ojutalayo, noted that for many past granduants, the financial requirements of obtaining the certification has been a source of frustration and the intervention has come at the nick of time.

Firm Reaffirms Commitment to Sustainability, Appoints COO

Omolabake Fasogbon

Foremost sustainability advocacy and consulting firm, CSR-in-Action Group has stepped up efforts towards enhancing sustainability and growth in organizations by making new key appointment.

The firm stated that its appointment of Mrs Bolaji Sanyaolu as the new Chief Operating Officer (COO) comes with great task to further drive the objective of providing innovative solutions and ideas with regards to CSR and sustainability management.

According to the organization in a statement, Sanyaolu, a master’s degree graduate in

Business Administration (Human Resources Management) from Lagos State University brings on board 32 years of extensive cognate experience and 18 years in corporate social responsibility (CSR), human resources, and communications.

Her profile boasts notable achievements in developing and implementing human-driven communication strategies, managing government relations, and spearheading environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives.

Commenting, Chief Executive of CSR-in-Action, Bekeme Olowola stated that Sanyaolu’s appointment

marks a significant milestone in the company’s journey towards business transformation and enhanced client services.

“Her extensive experience and proven track record in ESG, CSR, HR, and communications will be instrumental in driving our mission forward. Bolaji’s leadership will not only bring efficiency but also foster symbiotic growth for all our stakeholders. With her passion for sustainability and excellence, we are confident that her leadership will significantly enhance our efforts in promoting sustainable practices and fostering a positive societal impact,” she asserted.

Teach For Nigeria Announces Olajiga as Interim CEO

Teach For Nigeria has announced the appointment of Ayodele Olajiga, a member of our board of trustees, as its Interim CEO, succeeding Folawe Omikunle after her nine years of exemplary leadership

In a farewell message to the organization’s team members, Folawe said, “Working alongside you all has been an extraordinary and fulfilling journey. Together, we have strived to nurture the next generation of Nigerian leaders, and I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished.”

Teach For Nigeria’s Board

Chairman, Mr. Kunle Elebute, commenting on the leadership change stated, “Folawe is a true example of an exceptional leader. The entire Board and Management team of Teach For Nigeria appreciates her guidance and leadership and wishes her well in her future endeavours. I welcome Mr. Ayodele Olajiga as the interim CEO and look forward to working closely with him to drive the mission of Teach For Nigeria.”

In his acceptance remarks, Ayodele Olajiga said, “I am honoured to be appointed

as the Interim CEO. Together, we will continue to build on the solid foundation laid by Folawe, mobilizing more leaders to expand educational and life opportunities for one million children annually over the next decade.”

Ayodele holds an Electronics and Electrical Engineering degree from Obafemi Awolowo University, an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management, and a Master’s in Telecommunications from the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

MARKET INDICATORS	
MONEY AND CREDIT STATISTICS (MILLION NAIRA)	
-- 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 Domestic Assets(NDA)	88,149,253.67
---- 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
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

NSE MARKET INDEX	
NSE	% Change
CAP	0.75%(52% YoY)
Index	0.9%(29%Y/D)

• 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 Merey (Venezuela).	

MARKET NEWS

United Capital Reports N9.06bn Profit, to Pay N0.90 Interim Dividend

Kayode Tokede

United Capital Plc has released its unaudited result and accounts for half year (H1) ended June 30, 2024 with N9.06 billion profit after tax, about 63 per cent increase from N5.54 billion reported in half year ended June 30, 2023.

The company on the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX), yesterday in its profit & loss figures declared N7.74billion

profit after tax, representing an increase of 65 per cent as against N4.69 billion declared in H1 2023.

Gross earnings stood at N15.15billion in H1 2024, a growth of 38 per cent when compared to N11.01 billion reported in H1 2023, and it is majorly driven by 72 per cent growth in Fee and Commission income, 183 per cent increase in net trading income and 75 per cent rise in other income.

For the first time, the company is rewarding shareholders with an interim dividend of N0.90 for every 50 kobo ordinary share, and Bonus Shares of “2 for 1”

United Capital annualized Earnings Per Share stood at 258 kobo in H1 2024, compared to 156 kobo in H1 2023 (65per cent growth year-on-year).

Statement of financial position of United Capital showed that its total assets stood at

N1.19 trillion as of June 30, 2024, about 27 per cent increase from N931.95billion as at December 2023.

Total liabilities closed June 2024 at N1.07 trillion, an increase of 27 per cent when compared to N841.23 billion as at December 2023, while shareholders fund hits N120.34 billion, a growth of 33 per cent from N90.71 billion as at December 2023.

The Group Chief Executive Officer, United Capital, Mr.

Peter Ashade, in a statement said, “I am pleased to inform all stakeholders that United Capital Plc closed the first half of the year on a strong note as evident in our impressive earnings growth and performance across key financial parameters.

“For the first time ever, we declared interim dividend payment of N0.90 for every 50 kobo ordinary share, and Bonus Shares of “2 for 1”. This affirms our commit-

ment to wealth creation and superior value delivery to our shareholders.

“We are assured about sustaining our performance in 2024 having kicked off the second half of the year 2024 in a robust financial position with close to N1.3trillion funds under management comprising trusts, mutual funds, and other professionally managed investments for our clients across diverse segments.

PRICES FOR SECURITIES TRADED AS OF JULY 17/24

MAIN BOARD	DEALS	MARKET PRICE	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE TRADED (N)
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N BANKING	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
1 ECOBANK TRANSNATIONAL INCORPORATED	396,350.31	21.60	0.47 ⬆	34 1,716,954
2 FIDELITY BANK PLC	336,128.22	10.50	-0.47 ⬇	334 11,817,945
3 GUARANTY TRUST HOLDING COMPANY PLC	1,342,061.77	45.60	0.44 ⬆	439 29,160,806
4 JAIZ BANK PLC	74,283.52	2.15	1.42 ⬆	219 28,342,285
5 STERLING FINANCIAL HOLDINGS COMPANY PLC	113,722.15	3.95	2.60 ⬆	91 6,612,418
6 UNITY BANK PLC	17,650.90	1.51	-	0 0
7 WEMA BANK PLC	142,510.68	6.65	-0.75 ⬇	214 7,508,969
8 FINANCIAL SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
9 AFRICAN ALLIANCE INSURANCE PLC	4,117.00	0.20	-	0 0
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
10 AICO INSURANCE PLC	18,093.75	1.90	3.63 ⬆	111 10,075,061
11 GUARANTY INSURANCE PLC	18,903.33	5.70	5.78 ⬆	56 3,616,721
12 CONSOLIDATED INSURANCE HOLDINGS PLC	15,719.59	1.40	-	9 274,520
13 CONNEXION INSURANCE PLC	38,149.42	2.10	7.89 ⬆	22 1,294,751
14 COOPERATION INSURANCE PLC	18,191.36	6.80	-	33 556,121
15 OCEANIC INSURANCE PLC	909.99	0.20	-	0 0
16 GUINIA INSURANCE PLC	5,790.55	0.34	-	0 0
17 INTERNATIONAL ENERGY INSURANCE PLC	3,016.01	1.57	-	7 20,247
18 LAPARCO ASSURANCE PLC	4,377.75	3.30	-	0 0
19 LYNAGE ASSURANCE PLC	15,403.39	1.80	4.17 ⬆	55 3,161,839
20 MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC	12,237.58	0.81	-	0 0
21 NEM INSURANCE PLC	41,381.94	6.20	-	25 196,047
22 NIGER INSURANCE PLC	1,547.39	0.20	-	0 0
23 PRISTINE ASSURANCE PLC	6,738.85	0.51	-	11 454,333
24 REVENUE ASSURANCE PLC	3,084.96	0.48	-	0 0
25 SOVEREIGN TRUST INSURANCE PLC	6,977.19	0.48	-	12 363,444
26 STANO ASSURANCE PLC	4,481.22	0.68	-	0 0
27 STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE PLC	2,581.21	0.30	-	0 0
28 SURU ASSURANCE NIGERIA PLC	6,007.01	1.39	7.75 ⬆	41 1,000,446
29 UNIVERSAL ASSURANCE PLC	5,600.00	0.35	3.79 ⬆	42 6,203,079
30 VERTUS CAPITAL ASSURANCE PLC	18,081.59	1.20	-3.33 ⬇	59 54,594,031
INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				
S/N MICRO-FINANCE BANKS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
31 NFI MICROFINANCE BANK PLC	15,081.13	1.88	-	0 0

MAIN BOARD	DEALS	MARKET PRICE	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE TRADED (N)
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N MICRO-FINANCE BANKS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
32 MICRO-FINANCE BANKS	15,081.13	1.88	-	0 0
MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				
S/N MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
33 ASSET MORTGAGE BANK PLC	27,415.98	2.70	-	17 78,488
34 ASSET SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC	1,730.87	0.90	-	0 0
35 INFINITY TRUST MORTGAGE BANK PLC	29,401.71	1.80	-	1 80
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
36 RESORT SAVINGS & LOANS PLC	2,280.90	0.20	-	0 0
37 UNION HOMES SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC	2,049.20	3.00	-	0 0
MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				
S/N OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
38 AFRICA RECREATIAL PLC	18,381.89	6.10	3.85 ⬆	89 3,791,378
39 DEEP CAPITAL MANAGEMENT & TRUST PLC	731.08	0.48	-5.77 ⬇	30 1,596,348
40 FOMO GROUP PLC	152,483.87	7.70	-2.60 ⬆	218 14,426,520
41 MODERN EXCHANGE GROUP	15,793.39	13.10	-	19 91,880
42 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLC	6,091.89	6.72	-	47 4,596,216
43 SPARKING BTC HOLDINGS PLC	693,194.20	30.00	-1.47 ⬆	24 1,703,143
44 UNITED CAPITAL PLC	118,000.00	33.00	19.00 ⬆	439 17,321,334
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS				
S/N FINANCIAL SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
45 HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS	2,891.88	5.80	-	0 0
HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS				
S/N MEDICAL SUPPLIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
46 MEDICAL SUPPLIES PLC	4,491.77	4.45	-	3 182
MEDICAL SUPPLIES				
S/N PHARMACEUTICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
47 FOOD HEALTHCARE PLC	33,851.29	14.75	-	42 172,339
48 MAY & SAKER NIGERIA PLC	18,178.89	9.90	-	41 621,577
49 NIGERIAN INTERNATIONAL PHARMACEUTICALS PLC	7,384.28	1.10	-	0 298,183
PHARMACEUTICALS				
S/N PHARMACEUTICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
50 PHARMACEUTICALS PLC	386.78	1.82	-	0 0
PHARMACEUTICALS				
S/N HEALTHCARE	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
51 COMPUTERS AND PERIPHERALS	2,226.78	0.76	-	10 18,630
52 COMPUTER VENTURES PLC	2,226.78	0.76	-	10 18,630
COMPUTERS AND PERIPHERALS				
S/N IT SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
53 EDV PLC	17,421.30	6.80	-	23 234,500
54 NTA INDUSTRIAL PLC	486.88	0.32	-	0 4,000
IT SERVICES				
S/N PROCESSING SYSTEMS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
55 CHAMPS HOLDING COMPANY PLC	90,284.37	2.19	0.46 ⬆	61 1,691,871
56 E. TRANZACT INTERNATIONAL PLC	45,980.80	4.80	-	7 111,341
PROCESSING SYSTEMS				
S/N TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
57 AFRICA TELECOM PLC	7,880,119.15	2,000.00	-	52 1,330
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES				
S/N TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
58 TELECOMUNICATIONS SERVICES	7,880,119.15	2,000.00	-	52 1,330
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				
S/N BUILDING MATERIALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
59 BETA GLASS PLC	3,874.83	5.80	-	18 281,381
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				
S/N BUILDING MATERIALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
60 BETA GLASS PLC	3,874.83	5.80	-	18 281,381
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				
S/N BUILDING MATERIALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
61 PREMIER PATENTS PLC	1,230.00	10.00	-	0 0
BUILDING MATERIALS				
S/N ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
62 AUSTIN LAZ & COMPANY PLC	2,159.72	2.00	-	0 0
63 CUTIX PLC	15,499.63	4.40	10.00 ⬆	55 2,211,252
ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS				
S/N PACKAGING/CONTAINERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
64 BETA GLASS PLC	31,798.22	63.00	-	11 5,988
65 GREIF NIGERIA PLC	232.39	5.45	-	0 0
66 TRIPPLE GEE AND COMPANY PLC	2,044.16	4.13	-	1 1,005
PACKAGING/CONTAINERS				
S/N AGRO-ALLIED & CHEMICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
67 NOTORE CHEMICAL IND. PLC	100,754.14	62.50	-	0 0
AGRO-ALLIED & CHEMICALS				
S/N INDUSTRIAL GOODS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
68 INDUSTRIAL & MEDICAL GASES NIGERIA PLC	5,943.97	11.90	-	3 5,600
CHEMICALS				
S/N METALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
69 ALUMINIUM EXTRUSION IND. PLC	1,572.09	7.15	-	0 0
METALS				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
70 MULTIVERSE MINING AND EXPLORATION PLC	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
71 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
MINING SERVICES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
72 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
73 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
74 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
75 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
76 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
77 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
78 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
79 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
80 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
81 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
82 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
83 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
84 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
85 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
86 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
87 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
88 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
89 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
90 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
91 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
92 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
93 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
94 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
95 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333
NATURAL RESOURCES				
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
96 MINING SERVICES	4,773.37	11.20	-	4 15,333

GAMINGWEEK

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Spain's Triumphant Victory and Betting Successes in Euro 2024 Final

Spain's national football team celebrated a historic fourth European Championship victory, defeating England 2-1 in a thrilling final at the Olympiastadion in Berlin. This win underscored Spain's dominance in European football and highlighted several successful betting options that rewarded astute bettors handsomely. **Davidson Abraham** reports

A GLORIOUS NIGHT FOR SPAIN

Spain's victory in the Euro 2024 final was a testament to their resilience and tactical prowess. The match began cautiously, with both teams navigating pre-match nerves and probing each other's defenses. As expected, Spain dominated possession in the first half but failed to convert their control into clear goal-scoring opportunities. England, meanwhile, had the first significant shot on target through Phil Foden, whose attempt was comfortably saved by Spain's goalkeeper, Unai Simón. The first half ended goalless, but Spain suffered a setback when their key midfielder, Rodri, had to leave the field due to an injury. He was replaced by Martín Zubimendi, a switch that did little to dampen Spain's spirits. Two minutes into the second half, Spain's Nico Williams

broke the deadlock, scoring with a precise finish from a pass by the prodigious 17-year-old Lamine Yamal.

England fought back and equalized midway through the second half with a stunning left-footed strike from Cole Palmer, igniting hopes of a comeback. However, Spain reclaimed the lead with just under five minutes of regulation time remaining. Mikel Oyarzabal's close-range finish from a Marc Cucurella pass sealed the victory and secured Spain's place in history as four-time European champions, following their previous triumphs in 1964, 2008, and 2012.

BETTING OPTIONS THAT PAID OFF

The Euro 2024 final was not only a spectacle for football fans but also a lucrative opportunity for bettors. Here are the betting options that came through:

- Spain to win (1): Bettors who placed their money on Spain to win outright were rewarded as Spain emerged victorious with a 2-1 scoreline.
- Spain to win or draw (1x): This bet also succeeded as Spain won the match, ensuring that those who hedged with a draw were still in for a payday.
- Over 0.5 goals: Given that the final score was 2-1, this bet, which required at least one goal to be scored, was a safe and successful option.
- Over 1.5 goals: With three goals scored in total, this bet also paid off.
- Over 2.5 goals: Bettors who predicted at least three goals in the match were correct, as the final tally reached three.
- Under 3.5 goals: This bet also won, given that the total number of goals did not exceed three.
- No goal within first 30 minutes:



This option succeeded as the first goal was not scored until the 47th minute.

- Total goals 3: This specific bet hit the mark exactly, with the match ending 2-1.

- Correct score 2:1: Bettors who predicted the exact score of 2-1 in favor of Spain were handsomely rewarded.
 - First half correct score 1:0: Since the score at halftime was 1-0 to Spain, this bet was a winner.
 - Home win first half: Spain, designated as the home team, led 1-0 at halftime, making this bet successful.
 - Home goals exact -2: Spain scored exactly two goals, making this bet a winner.
- These betting options reflect a well-fought match that delivered both footballing drama and betting excitement. The successful bets underscore the predictability of certain outcomes based on team form and match conditions.

match seemed destined for extra time, Spain struck again. Mikel Oyarzabal finished from close range after receiving a precise pass from Marc Cucurella, ensuring Spain's victory.

KEY PERFORMERS

Nico Williams: The 22-year-old forward was instrumental in Spain's victory, scoring the opening goal and constantly troubling England's defense with his pace and skill.

Lamine Yamal: At just 17 years old, the young prodigy provided a crucial assist for the first goal and showcased his immense potential throughout the match.

Cole Palmer: His equalising goal was a moment of brilliance, demonstrating his ability to perform under pressure in crucial moments.

Marc Cucurella: Provided the assist for the winning goal and was a constant threat down the left flank, contributing both defensively and offensively.

THE MATCH IN DETAIL

The Euro 2024 final was a match filled with strategic plays, standout performances, and pivotal moments. Here is a detailed summary:

The first half was a tactical battle. The match began with both teams showing caution, focusing on maintaining solid defensive structures while seeking opportunities to counter-attack. Spain dominated possession but struggled to create clear chances, a common scenario in high-stakes finals where teams are wary of conceding early goals. England's Phil Foden had the first significant attempt on goal, but Unai Simón easily saved his shot. The half ended with a significant blow to Spain as Rodri, one of their key players, had to be substituted due to injury.

The second half was about goals and glory. Spain quickly adapted to Rodri's absence, with Martín Zubimendi stepping in seamlessly.

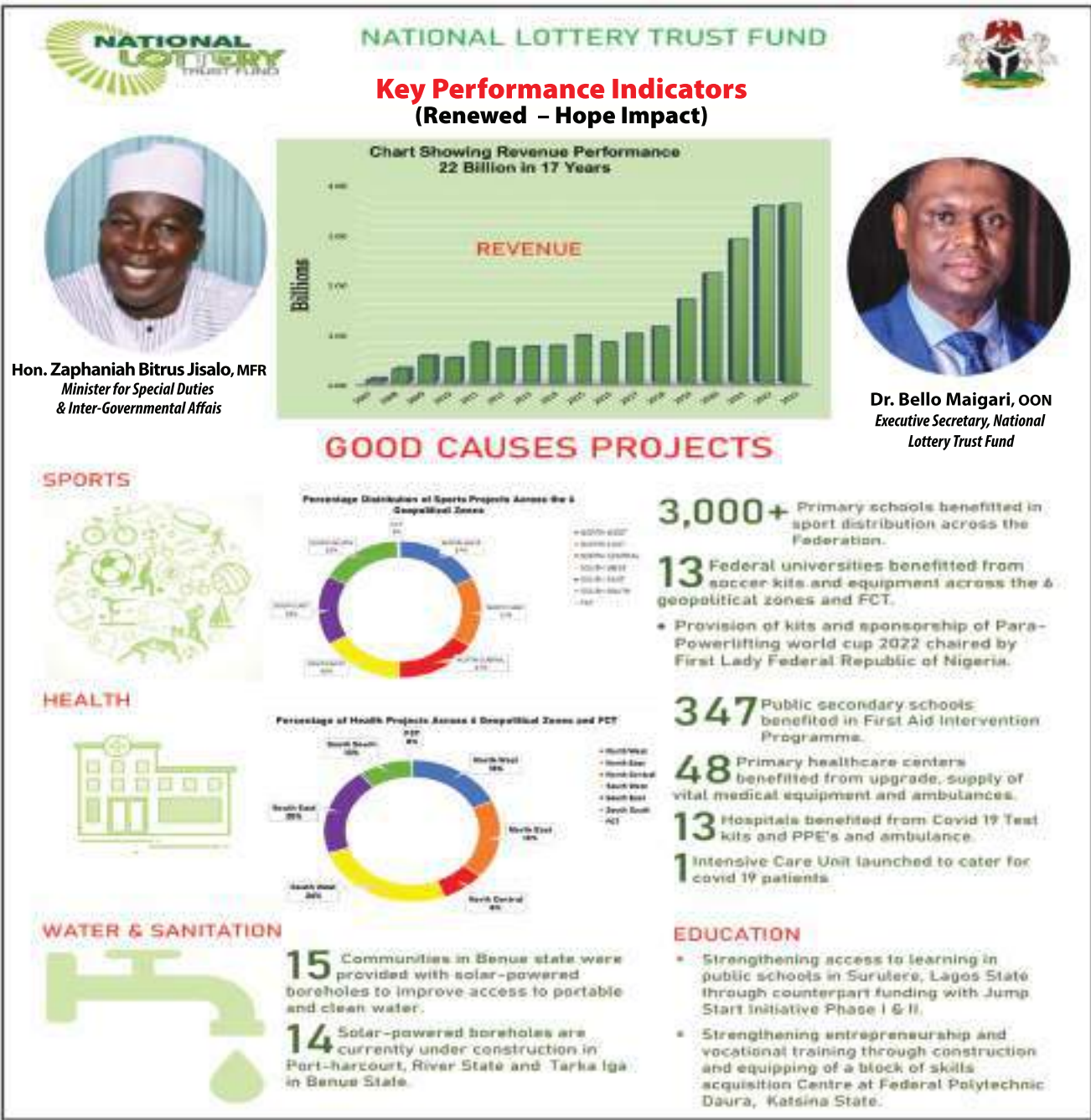
Just two minutes into the second half, Nico Williams scored the opening goal, capitalizing on a well-timed pass from Lamine Yamal. This goal was a culmination of Spain's persistent attacking efforts. England responded with determination, and their efforts paid off when Cole Palmer scored a brilliant equaliser, striking from outside the box with his left foot. As the

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Spain's fourth European Championship title places them above Germany as the most successful nations in the tournament's history. This victory, coming 12 years after their last triumph in 2012, underscores the country's consistent excellence in international football. The defeat marked another heartbreak for England following their loss to Italy in the Euro 2020 final.

CONCLUSION

The Euro 2024 final was a match that will be remembered for its intensity, strategic depth, and dramatic conclusion. Spain's victory added another chapter to their illustrious footballing history, while bettors who placed their faith in specific outcomes enjoyed significant returns. The successful betting options highlighted in this article showcase the potential rewards of well-informed betting strategies. As football continues to captivate global audiences, both on the field and in betting markets, the Euro 2024 final stands as a testament to the sport's enduring allure and excitement.



Next-Gen Entrepreneurs: How Nigerian Youths Are Monetising Gaming Via Streaming

With Nigeria’s ongoing socio-economic challenges, many youths are now turning to alternative forms of employment that allow them to harness their passion to earn a living. Some are making significant strides, transitioning from playing video games at home to showcasing their skills to a global audience of millions, writes **Iyke Bede**



Odusote



Amaan



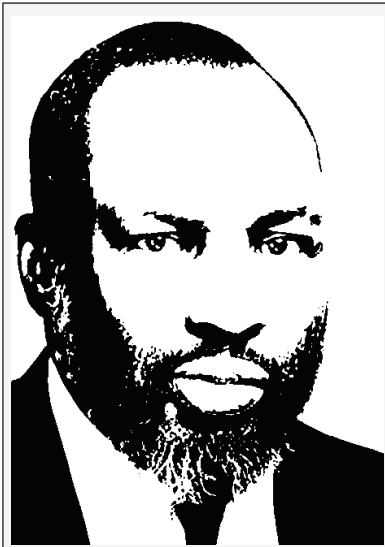
Tactical Ceza

Globally, video game streaming and content creation have continued to witness significant growth in the past decade, driven by technological advancements, high-speed internet, and the ever-growing \$282 billion video games sector. Online platforms such as Twitch, YouTube Gaming, Facebook Gaming, and, more recently, TikTok, have become central hubs for gamers to broadcast their gameplay, interact with audiences, and build communities. Twitch boasts over 140 million monthly active users, with 30 million users tuning in daily. YouTube Gaming reported a total of 1.18 billion hours of content watched in the third quarter of 2022, while Facebook Gaming claims to host over 700 million individuals who either play games, watch gaming videos, or participate in gaming communities. Cumulatively, these platforms and more, attract approximately 1.2 billion active users across the video game streaming landscape. Content creators, from professional gamers to casual players, have leveraged these platforms to monetise their passion through the following avenues: Subscriptions fees to their channels,

donations from viewers, ad revenue, brand sponsorships, merch sales, tournament winnings (eSports), affiliate marketing, coaching on game play, and crowdfunding among others. With the integration of social media, an increasing number of people are becoming familiar with and embracing this facet of the video game industry, often turning to it for entertainment. This trend reflects a cultural shift towards a new era of community-driven media consumption. The Nigerian youth population is not far behind these global trends. They are slowly building communities broadcasting their passion to an audience fascinated by the intricacies of gameplay. Their dexterity playing popular games like Fortnite, League of Legends, Valorant, Among Us, Minecraft, Call of Duty: Warzone, Apex Legends, GTA V (Grand Theft Auto V), FIFA and many more, have helped amass them crowds with similar taste. With Nigeria’s ongoing socio-economic challenges, many youths are now turning to alternative forms of employment that allow them to harness their passion to earn a living. Some are making significant strides, transitioning from playing video

games at home to showcasing their skills to a global audience of millions. Current revenue projections for the Nigerian games live streaming market are \$55.44 million. With a cumulative annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.98 per cent, the market volume is projected to rise to \$74.11 million by 2029 with an estimated 35.8 million users. Although these figures pale compared to China’s \$2.5 billion, the new market is driving a surge in local content creation and consumption. Contributing to this \$55.44 million revenue generating sector are notable gamers like PlaywithTomide (Odusote David), Tactical Ceza (Okoawo Jonah), Khalamanja (Ayere Victor), Lordmoon the Pope (Franklyn Nnamdi), Queen of Venus (Oyesanya Tosin), Amaar, NigeriaBotty, and a host of others. Predominantly, Nigerian streamers have a larger audience on TikTok, allowing them to engage with TikTok’s 23.84 million users in Nigeria and beyond. “The algorithm doesn’t choose a part of the country it sends your videos to. It is worldwide. When you get people to reach out, you want to make sure that you are friendly. I always pay attention to my comments. I have worked with

people from the UK and the USA to create gaming content,” Ayere noted at a TikTok gaming conference hosted in Nigeria last year. Via the video-sharing platform, players enjoy the gifting feature on the app’s livestream. Additionally, other streamers like PlaywithTomide and Amaar have successfully landed ambassadorial gigs with Cade eSports and Zagg Energy Drink respectively. The achievements of these first-generation streamers are gradually inspiring future streamers to strategically position themselves to leverage the system and forge career paths. Moreover, they are shaping non-gamers interests towards gaming activities, thereby expanding outreach through word of mouth and actions that could lead to educational and training opportunities in the gaming and content creation industry. This shift also promises to challenge the negative cultural perception of gaming in Nigeria, create additional avenues for employment, and foster community engagement. As more young Nigerians enter this space, they are set to transform the country’s digital content creation landscape.



WORDS ON MARBLE

Things started moving online. Many state governments did not know how to generate revenue from this industry. That’s where we came on board. We came on board again, not just even helping them in terms of the law or in terms of revenue collection, but we came in terms of investing in a proper state lottery, but I think they did not understand what it meant, and many people felt threatened. They did not seem to understand the structure of the transaction. There was a bit of frustration. Eventually, we went on to work in Anambra State for years, maybe seven years or thereabout, but the full value of what we could have brought couldn’t succeed because it became politicised.

–Yahaya Maikori, Principal Partner, Law Allianz

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LAUNCH OF NIGERIA EDUCATION LOAN FUND...

L-R: Chairman, Zenith Bank, Jim Ovia; Minister of Education, Professor Tahir Mamman; Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun; and the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, at the launch of the Nigeria Education Loan Fund held at the Presidential Villa, Abuja...yesterday

PHOTO: GODWIN OMOIGUI

COREN: Lagos, Anambra Top Building Collapse Cases, Rising Incidences Worrisome

Seeks insurance for selected building types nationwide Senate asks FG to check menace

Emmanuel Addeh and Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN), the regulatory body that governs the practice of engineering in the country, yesterday disclosed that Lagos, Anambra, Ekiti and Plateau topped the states with the highest incidences of building collapse in the first six and a half months of 2024.

Briefing the press in Abuja, the council's President, Prof Sadiq Abubakar, said that the organisation was perturbed by the incessant and avoidable incidences of building collapse in Nigeria and the loss of lives in recent times.

Although COREN said that as a body it does not rush to make conclusive comments after building

collapses without failure to investigate, it said causes vary from one location to the other.

In Nigeria, COREN stated that from its investigations and researches conducted over the years, the collapses are usually caused by substandard construction materials, structural failure, illegal change of use of buildings as well as illegal addition of floors.

Others, it said, include quackery, inadequate or lack of supervision and oversight, faulty foundations or lack of conduct of soil and geotechnical investigation, sharp and corrupt practices, amongst others.

It added that while relevant professionals continue to engage cement manufacturers through relevant joint committee of the National Assembly, it will continue to collaborate with

the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) towards sanitising the market of inappropriate building materials.

"From January to 14 July, 2024 alone, at least 22 cases of building collapses have been reported in Nigeria with Lagos accounting for 27.27 per cent, Abuja and Anambra 18.18 per cent each, Ekiti and Plateau 9.09 per cent each and Kano, Taraba and Niger States accounting for 4.55 per cent each.

"Records have also shown that Lagos takes the lead in the incidences of building collapse. As a matter of fact, over 91 buildings have collapsed, resulting in the death of over 354 persons in Lagos from 2012 to date. Similarly in Abuja, about 30 buildings have collapsed from 1993 till date resulting in the death of more than 64 persons and injury of many.

"The most recent occurrences of building collapse close to DMGS Onitsha, Anambra State on June 12, 2024, a School (Saint Academy) in Plateau State on Friday, July 13, 2024 where it was reported that 22 students died and 134 injured as well as the building collapse in Kubwa, Abuja, on Saturday, July 14, 2024 where five persons were rescued is worrisome and calls for deep reflection and collaboration of all stakeholders in stemming the tide," it added.

While commiserating with all victims and families of the collapse, the council lauded states for constituting panels to unravel the causes of the building collapses.

"This is not the time for apportioning blames or contest of superiority within the built environment but a time for all stakeholders to unite and

proffer workable and lasting solution particularly in the prevention of building collapses," it added.

All professionals within the built environment, Abubakar said, have a role to play in this, noting that COREN had identified and categorised many stakeholders that it will be engaging shortly.

The proliferation of illegal miners even within residential areas as reported in some quarters, it said, was a danger to the structural stability of buildings and urged affected states to take urgent steps to reverse the trend.

According to COREN, it is also time to enforce the compulsory insurance of some buildings under construction.

"COREN has taken some steps in monitoring and prevention of the building collapse by doing the following. COREN is poised to train and license Engineering Regulation Monitoring (ERM) inspectors.

"COREN has reconstituted its Council Committee on Engineering Regulation Monitoring (ERM) and added the role of enforcement to its role in line with the amended COREN Act.

"COREN has constituted ERM&E Task Force at regional levels including Ibadan, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Kano, FCT, Gombe and Lagos. COREN Council has approved the establishment of Engineering Intelligence and Surveillance Whistle Blowers to ease of identifying sharp practices and distressed buildings.

"Investigation panel is in place. Disciplinary tribunal is also in place. COREN has initiated effort to develop critical mass of engineering infrastructure failure and forensic investigators.

"Discussions are ongoing with

the Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute (NBRI) and the Chartered Institute of Fraud and Forensic Investigators (CIFI) in this regard.

"We want to encourage the general public to share useful information with us and concerned authorities as soon as signs of distress are observed in any building so that proactive steps can be taken," Abubakar stated.

Meanwhile, the Senate yesterday asked the federal government and all relevant government agencies to urgently put necessary structures in place to handle construction failures and bring to book all those violating lay down procedures for construction activities.

This was sequel to a motion by Senator Dickey Plang, Plateau Central, on the recent building collapse that claimed the lives of 22 students in Jos, the Plateau State capital.

He noted with sadness that it was a depressing sight seeing healthy and agile children who left home to write their examination to return to their parents as dead bodies.

Senator Abdul Ningi (PDP-Bauchi) who seconded the motion said the tragedy in Jos North had become too many. He said it was painful to send a child to school only for such parent to hear that the child was no more.

"These ugly incidences of building collapses have been a recurring decimal in Nigeria as a result of poor workmanship, substandard building materials and construction standards leading to wanton destruction of precious lives and various properties valued hundreds of millions of naira," he said.

Olusi: Bol Remains Cornerstone of Economic Growth

Explores new opportunities in green finance, modular refineries, others

James Emejo in Abuja

Managing Director/Chief Executive, Bank of Industry (BoI), Dr. Olasupo Olusi, said the bank will continue to serve as cornerstone in the country's economic transformation, fostering innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability.

He said bank's intervention in the MSMEs sector remained strategic as the sector faced challenges including limited access to finance, poor infrastructure and capacity deficits - underscoring the need for targeted support to enhance their growth and sustainability.

The development finance institution had deployed series of initiatives designed to maximize

value of funds by taking advantage of emerging opportunities in line with its mandate and as the largest development institution in the country.

Olusi told THISDAY that BoI's mandate was to provide financial assistance for the establishment of large, medium and small projects as well as the expansion, diversification, rehabilitation and modernisation of existing industries.

The new initiatives are in green finance, modular refineries and new pathways in financial empowerment.

In November 2023, bank secured a significant milestone by acquiring a €100 million credit line from the French Development Agency (AFD)

to fund an on-lending financing scheme designed to support the adoption of clean energy solutions.

The credit line will boost green finance initiatives within Nigeria, in line with President Bola Tinubu's vision for a climate-smart nation.

According to him, BoI's project portfolio reflected a significant investment in renewable energy projects through which it is working to contribute to the continental ambition of 27 per cent of renewable power generation by 2030.

The bank is also exploring collaboration with serious investors on modular refineries to boost the country's low refining capacity.

The commitment was reiterated during Olusi's recent visit to the

Waltersmith Refinery in Ibagwa, Imo State, where the bank, the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), and Waltersmith launched a partnership aimed at fostering local content production to support the country's efforts to mitigate inflation and other economic challenges.

Earlier this year, BoI announced plans to disburse N75 billion in loans targeted at MSMEs to further support the federal government's commitment to uplift Nigerian businesses.

Nigeria, US Seek to Bolster Trade, Investment Ties

James Emejo in Abuja

Minister of Industry, Trade, and Investment, Dr. Doris Uzoka-Anite, yesterday said the country remained committed to enhancing bilateral trade and investment relations with the United States.

Speaking at a meeting with a high-level US delegation led by Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Global Markets, Mr. Arun Venkataraman, the minister emphasised the importance of diversifying Nigeria's exports, as well as promote innovation, and create a conducive environment for businesses to thrive.

She said the country's vast economic potential including a large market and abundant natural resources renders it as favourable

investment destination, adding that the National Talent Export Programme further positions it as an export hub for talent outsourcing.

The minister also emphasised the importance of the US-Nigeria partnership, noting that, "Nigeria and the United States share a deep and enduring relationship built on a foundation of mutual respect, shared values, and a commitment to open trade and economic collaboration."

However, Venkataraman expressed the US government's commitment to supporting Nigeria's economic reforms and addressing challenges faced by US companies in Nigeria.

He said, "Our work to deepen business ties and build a strategic commercial partnership underscores our commitment to further enhance

ing these ties, fostering economic growth, and creating opportunities that benefit people across both our great nations."

The US delegation showed keen interest in Nigeria's economic reforms and expressed their readiness to support initiatives that promote trade and investment.

Uzoka-Anite said, "We are committed to deepening our partnership in trade and investment. This includes promoting non-oil exports to the USA under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and creating an environment where businesses can flourish."

The meeting marks a significant step towards enhancing commercial and investment relations between both countries as expressed optimism for future collaboration.

Leadership Crisis: ASCN Seeks Stay of Execution on Industrial Court's Ruling

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCN), said it has appealed the recent judgement of the National Industrial Court of Nigeria (NICN) reinstating its former president, Comrade Innocent Bola-Audu.

President of the union Comrade Tommy Okon who addressed journalists alongside officials of the union said they have also applied for the stay of execution

preventing Bola-Audu from taking over leadership of the union.

While alerting security officials on threats by Bola-Audu to forcefully take back authority using "thugs," officials of the union urged members to disregard any move by Bola-Audu to mobilise them for any cause.

He said: "Dissatisfied with the ruling, the leadership and members and the organs of the Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria decided as our fundamental rights, to appeal the judgement and also

apply for stay of execution.

"By virtue of that, it therefore means that Innocent Bola-Audu has not been reinstated because of our appeal and stay of execution.

"We are also aware of the clandestine move to take laws into his hands by threatening to reinstate himself either at night or day with some hoodlums. It is proper to put on record that Nigeria is not a banana republic where you have the certified copy of the true ruling and you feel that is execution order.



2ND EDITION OF THE ANNUAL DR DIRAN FAWIBE LECTURE SERIES...

L-R: Keynote speaker and Professor Emeritus, Petroleum Economics, LSU Centre for Energy Studies, USA, Prof. Omowunmi Iledare; Honouree and Group Chairman, International Energy Services Limited (IESL), Dr Diran Fawibe; Chairman of occasion and Chairman, Julius Berger, Mr Mutiu Sunmonu; and the Managing Director IESL, Mr Bayo Ige, at the 2nd Edition of the Annual Dr Diran Fawibe Lecture series, themed, 'Disrupting the Energy Landscape in Nigeria' at the University of Ibadan...yesterday

Obi at 63: 'Celebrate Me By Channeling Resources to Poor, Needy'

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Labour Party presidential candidate in the 2023 general election, Mr. Peter Obi, has appealed to Nigerians to channel resources to mark his 63rd birthday on Friday, to the needy and poor in the country.

In a statement by his media aide, Dr. Tanko Yunusa, Obi said he would be 63 years old on Friday, July 19, 2024, and would therefore appreciate if all activities marking it should be channeled to the poor and needy.

Writing on his X handle on Wednesday ahead of the day Obi said he would wish for a solemn celebration as usual especially now that the poor and the needy are swelling in our midst.

According to him "On Friday, July 19th, I will be celebrating my 63rd birthday. As usual, it is a time for personal reflection and thanksgiving to Almighty God, who has graciously granted me life, good health, and the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of humanity.

"I am humbled by the numerous well-wishers, both locally and internationally, who have already begun sending birthday wishes and organising events in my honour.

"My appeal to my well-wishers and supporters, particularly in Nigeria and Africa, is to use this occasion to fervently pray for our nation and respective countries.

"Let us present ourselves, as political leaders, to God, so that

He may touch our hearts to make sacrifices, utilise public resources for the greater good, and prioritise the needs of the poor and marginalised. Let us also provide better opportunities for our youth to thrive."

He added: "To those organis-

ing events and spending funds in celebration of my birthday, I kindly request that you redirect those resources towards supporting the needy, particularly those in hospitals and schools. Your contributions can help pay medical bills and school fees for

the less privileged.

"I also appeal that all gifts intended for my birthday be donated to care homes, schools, and hospitals, which will greatly benefit from your generosity.

"I have therefore personally, redirected the resources I would

have used for celebrations towards supporting critical areas such as health, education, and poverty alleviation.

"I firmly believe that through these sacrifices, God Almighty will grant your heartfelt wishes for me and answer our prayers.

"Thank you for your kind thoughts and prayers. I urge you all to remain faithful to Nigeria, our beloved country, and your respective nations. May God Almighty protect, bless, and prosper you and your families, and may He bless our dear nation.", he stated.

Zulum Urges Citizens to Shun Protest, Says Government Working to Ease Hardship

Governor Babagana Umara Zulum of Borno State has urged citizens of the state to shun ideas of protest resulting from the hardship faced in the country.

The governor said that the hike in the prices of food and other commodities was temporary and assured that the government at all levels was working to ease the hardship.

Zulum spoke on Wednesday during a multi-stakeholder meeting he convened at the multi-purpose hall of the Government House in Maiduguri, the state capital.

His words: "While the right to protest is fundamental in a democracy, we must acknowledge the high likelihood of such actions being manipulated by anarchists and enemies of peace. These elements thrive on chaos and discord, seeking to derail our collective efforts and

exploit our vulnerabilities.

"Such manipulation could lead to violence, property destruction, and a setback in the progress we have painstakingly achieved. It is within this context that I urge you all to reflect deeply on the path we choose to take.

The governor added: "While this hardship exists today, we are also aware that the negative impacts are temporary. It is our hope that we will ride the wave of this hardship to arrive at the shores of prosperity.

"We will do whatever it takes, and we are doing whatever it takes and more, to protect the dignity, pride and independence of our people. The leadership is not asleep.

"The leadership has not given up the fight for a better Borno State, despite our underlying problems. The leadership at the federal level

has not given up on Nigeria.

"Our current socio-economic circumstances do not result from a lack of empathy for others' plights or inaction to address pressing issues. The government (at the state and federal levels) is taking necessary measures to tackle challenges such as food insecurity, unemployment, and healthcare.

Zulum, however, noted that it requires time, patience and the collective effort of all stakeholders for the measures being taken to bear fruits.

"It is vital that we do not aggravate the situation or jeopardise the returning peace in our state. Any attempt to join the protest could have adverse consequences for the lives and property of our people.

"Therefore, I am appealing to all stakeholders to ponder the

consequences the intended protest might cause our beloved state and consider how we collectively can address the challenges facing us," the governor stated.

According to him, the good people of Borno State cannot allow a return to the dark days of tears, fears and losses of lives and livelihoods.

"To bring back Borno State, as your elected leader, I have done and continue to do the very best for the people of Borno State. There is not enough time to list what we have done," he said.

He further stated: "To the youth of Borno State, you are the backbone

of our society, the shapers of both today and tomorrow. Your energy, creativity, and passion are invaluable assets to our community. However, let your conscience guide you in these trying times."

The governor urged the youth of the state to always choose dialogue as the means to negotiate their demands.

Further according to him, "Peaceful and constructive engagement is the cornerstone of sustainable development. Remember, the future we desire is built on the foundations we lay today. Let those foundations be solidly rooted in peace, dialogue, and mutual respect.

NPC Warns Mothers against E-birth Registration Scams

Funmi Ogundare

The National Population Commission (NPC) yesterday cautioned mothers against falling victim to fraudsters posing as commission officials, conducting fake e-registrations, and issuing counterfeit certificates.

The commission identified the activities of these unscrupulous individuals as a significant challenge to birth registrations, emphasizing that e-registration will help curb their operations.

Mr. Isiaka Okesanjo, the NPC Comptroller for Eti Osa Local Government Area, revealed this during a field trip to Sangotedo Primary Health Centre (PHC), an e-registration center. The visit was part of a two-day media dialogue organised by UNICEF in collaboration with the Lagos State Government and NPC.

Okesanjo explained to journalists that these fraudsters impersonate the commission, issuing fake certificates to unsuspecting parents and extorting money from them.

He urged parents or informants to visit the five designated centers for e-registration and to ensure they interact only with NPC officers.

According to him, "Parents or informants should visit the five centers designated for the e-registration and ensure that they relate with the NPC officers."

Okesanjo disclosed that 1,363 registrations have been conducted so far this year, noting that the process is less cumbersome than manual registration.

In case of fire outbreaks or flooding destroying registration files, the data can be retrieved," he stated, adding that every child born in the country is entitled to a birth certificate once in a lifetime.

For lost birth certificates, he explained that it is the responsibility of the state office to go through the NPC record and search for the appropriate ledger where the details were captured for a reissuance.

"Birth registration, from age one to 18 is free and are entitled to birth certificates," the comptroller said.

AAAN's 51st AGM/Congress Begins Today

The attention of the country's advertising professionals and industry stakeholders will focus on Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital, where the 51st Annual General Meeting (AGM)/Congress of the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN) begins today.

The three-day event, to be flagged off by the governor of Ogun State, Prince Adedapo Abiodun, will also have in attendance Alhaji Mohammed Idris Malagi, Minister of Information and National Orientation, among other dignitaries.

The AGM/Congress will kick off with courtesy visits by members of the Steve Babaeko-led AAAN executive committee to the Alake of Egbaland, Oba Adedotun Gbadebo Aremu 111; and Osile of Oke-Ona, Oba Adedapo Tejuosho.

Themed "Breaking the Mold-Creativity and National Development", the event is expected to

highlight how Advertising practice can better aid national development, review the activities of the association and feature the election of a new executive committee that will drive the association's processes over the next two years.

Shedding light on what to expect from the AGM/Congress, Babaeko, the AAAN President, explained that in addition to looking at how creativity can aid the acceleration of national development, the sessions lined up will also provide room for the assessment of the association's activities over the last one year, the stewardship of the outgoing leadership as well as the election of a new one.

His words: "The 51st AGM/Congress presents advertising professionals the opportunity to assess the impact of what we do and how we can add more value, which informed this year's theme,

"Breaking the Mold-Creativity and National Development.

"The impact of advertising on the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is considerable. The fact of it was recently reiterated by a study carried out by PwC, which was commissioned by the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and funded by industry associations.

"The report of the study, presented to the public in Lagos last month, puts the value of the advertising industry at N605.2 billion."

Tomorrow, the AGM/Congress will host a seminal discussion session by experts from different economic sectors.

Chairman of the events planning committee, Mr. Doyin Adewumi, noted that the association has a tradition of using multi-disciplinary and multi-industry expertise to improve advertising practice, the

reason it has, again, invited experts from other fields to speak on the theme of the event.

"The AAAN is a body that is receptive to knowledge from other professions. It is why we have invited accomplished professionals from other fields to lend their knowledge to what we do. We believe that this approach will provide new thinking that Advertising professionals can put to use," he stated.

The speakers expected at the conference session are Mr. Obi Asika, Director-General, National Council for Arts and Culture; Mr. Femi Odugbemi, founder/CEO, Zuri35 Media; Ms. Chichi Nwoko, CEO and founder, WHAT Media; Mr. Olumide Balogun, Director, Google West Africa; and Mr. Olatunbosun Alake, Lagos State Commissioner for Innovation, Science and Technology.



BIG BROTHER NAIJA SEASON 9 PRESS CONFERENCE...

L-R: Marketing Manager Mainstream Spirits & RTD, Guinness Nigeria, Uche Onwudiwe; CEO of West Africa, MultiChoice, John Ugbe; Executive Head, Content and Channels, West Africa, MultiChoice, Dr. Busola Tejumola; Head of Beer, Guinness Nigeria, Mayor Esiaba; and Executive Head of Marketing, West Africa, MultiChoice, Tope Oshunkeye at Big Brother Naija Press Conference held at The Hall, Lagos... yesterday PHOTO: SUNDAY ADIGUN

We Removed Ali Ndume as Senate Whip Because He's a Mole in Our Party, Says APC

●Asks him to resign from party, Mongunu steps in as motion to sanction ex-chief whip fails
●LP: speaking truth to power is now criminal ●Warns Falana to stop intimidating INEC, terrorising party members

Chuks Okocha and Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The leadership of All Progressives Congress (APC), yesterday, announced the removal of Senator Ali Ndume as Chief Whip of the 10th Senate, saying it is convinced that Ndume is a mole in the party. Ndume was instantly replaced by Chairman, Senate Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters, Senator Tahir Mongunu. Ndume is senator for Borno South Senatorial District, while Mongunu is from Borno North, in the North-east geopolitical zone. The change followed a directive in a letter signed by National Chairman of APC, Alhaji Umar Ganduje, and National Secretary, Senator Bashir Ajibola. The request for removal of Ndume as Chief Whip was put to voice vote by Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, at plenary on Wednesday, and was affirmed by majority of the APC senators. Ndume's removal was not unconnected with his comments last week

during an interview with journalists, which many in the governing APC considered an anti-President Bola Tinubu stance. He alleged in the interview that the president had been caged at the villa and was not aware of the acute hunger being experienced by Nigerians. Ndume had suffered a similar fate in January 2017, when he was removed as Leader of the eighth Senate. But the leadership of Labour Party (LP) condemned Ndume's removal as Chief Whip because he stood with the suffering masses. LP said the action signified that in the current dispensation, "speaking truth to power" had become a crime in Nigeria. LP, in a separate reaction, condemned a letter and statement by foremost lawyer, Mr. Femi Falana, SAN, and his law firm, which it said were meant to disparage the party and damage its hard earned image and character. The APC National Working Committee (NWC) had in a letter to the senate president alleged that Ndume

seriously abused his office through ungarded utterances and outbursts against the federal government and Tinubu, in particular. The NWC further alleged that Ndume was more of a mole in the party and advised him to honourably resign his membership. The letter read, "We write on behalf of the National Working Committee of our great party to express our displeasure, our outrage and our deep disappointment at the unbecoming, unfounded and baseless criticism of the government and the party, the APC, by your majority whip of the senate, Sen. Ali Ndume, as a member of the ruling party. "We expected a much more responsible and decorous behaviour from him. But this has not been the case. "His uncouth and rabid outbursts against the government before the global community is not only harmful to the government's image alone but also undermines the party's unity and cohesion and, in addition, undermines the government's effort to bring in foreign direct investments to Nigeria. "As he is a ranking member of our party, his actions are unbecoming of a senior member of the senate and sets a very poor example for others in future to follow. "His latest tirade on air, during a programme on Arise Television, where he referred to the government of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Commander-in-Chief, as being run by thieves, portrays Ali Ndume as a person, who is bent on running the country down and running the party aground through incitements and cheap propaganda. "We have reviewed that Sen. Ali Ndume should honourably resign the membership of APC and join any opposition party of his choice formally instead of hiding behind the veil of crass activism to decimate the hard earned cohesion and goodwill that our party, the APC, is enjoying within and outside the country." The letter added regarding Ndume, "His utterances, which are sheer propaganda, are not based on verifiable facts, are unbecoming of member of the APC caucus of the Senate of the National Assembly.

"It, therefore, behoves the APC caucus to bring this to the attention of its members for necessary actions to curtail his deliberate mission to undermine the government and the party and the progress of Nigerians, particularly, those appointed by Mr President to work against his administration. "We, therefore, urge the senate caucus to take appropriate steps to address this issue and ensure that members of the senate, particularly those within the All Progressives Congress, hold and maintain decorum in their public utterances. "Accordingly, we realise that the position of the whip of the senate belongs to our party and we are not opposed to whatever position the members of the APC caucus in the senate may have. "But we are of the opinion that distinguished Senator Mohammed Tahir Monguno should immediately replace distinguished Sen. Ali Ndume, who is bent on bringing down the country, as the majority whip of the senate. Akpabio, after reading the letter, put the NWC's request to voice vote among the APC senators, and majority of the senators supported Ndume's removal. Apart from removing Ndume as Chief Whip of the Senate, he was also removed from his deputy chairmanship position of Senate Committee on Appropriation, and made Chairman of Committee on Tourism. Monguno, who replaced Ndume as Chief Whip, also replaced him as deputy chairman of the appropria-

tions committee. The senate, however, gave Ndume a soft landing, when Senator Cyril Fasuyi (APC Ekiti North) moved a motion for him to face the Senate Committee on Code of Conduct, Ethics and Privileges on allegations bordering on alleged kleptomania. In an apparent move to save Ndume from suspension, Akpabio, in his remarks on Fasuyi's motion, said since the APC NWC had requested for his removal as Chief Whip and it was approved, he should be forgiven for now.

LP: Speaking Truth to Power Now a Crime Labour Party (LP), in a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Obiora Ifoh, said the humiliation of Ndume by the Akpabio-led senate portrayed the dictatorial inclination of the ruling APC. LP said Ndume's crime was the bold expression of his concerns regarding the escalating cost of living and food scarcity in Nigeria, and his revelation that Tinubu had chosen to play the ostrich even in the face of acute starvation in Nigeria. LP stated, "The dimension this administration is taking is grave. A few months ago, Senator Abdul Ningi exposed the rot in the government, where the senate leadership and the executive collaborators, allegedly, padded the budget. That got him suspended and intimidated out of his lawful representative role as a senator.

Continues online

Re-introducing Religious Knowledge Will Solve Some of Nigeria's Problems, Says IBB

Laleye Dipo in Minna

Former Military President, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, has said the reintroduction of the teaching of both Christian and Islamic religious knowledge in schools will partly solve the social problems being faced by the country. Babangida, therefore, pledged to speak with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the Niger State Governor, Mohammed Umaru Bago, to facilitate the reintroduction of the subjects throughout schools in the country. Babangida made the observation on yesterday at his Minna Uphill residence, when he received in audience, the Niger State Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Most Reverend Dr Bulus Dauwa Yohanna and other state officials of the association. "This is the only way we can change our society, by teaching Christian Religious Knowledge, Islamic Religious Knowledge and other moral subjects in our

public schools "It may not be easy, but I know it is what this country needs at the moment. We need to go back to what it used to be especially in the teachings of religious knowledge," Babangida asserted. The former military leader, however, commended CAN for its efforts in ensuring that morals were inculcated in the lives of youths, saying, "I will be ready to champion the cause for a better society." Recalling his days in secondary school "when Christians and Muslims prayed and played together in love and unity" Babangida submitted that, "religious knowledge was one factor that sharpened the society in my growing days but somehow as a nation, we missed it somewhere. "I think we can still get it right. I am very confident that, with people like you (CAN Chairman), and your efforts, we can get things back to normal." Earlier, Yohanna told the former

Nigerian leader that he and other officials were in his residence to formally introduce themselves get counsels and draw from his wealth of experience. He described Babangida as "one who believes in the unity and peaceful coexistence of Nigeria irrespective of tribe, religion or political differences." The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, has said the ruling party could not continue to allow Anambra State to remain on the sidelines of Nigerian politics. To this end, the chairman called on all party members in the state to work in unison for the actualisation of the mission. Ganduje disclosed this yesterday in Abuja at the inauguration of Anambra consultative council. He said he believed that the

meeting was part of the strategy by the State APC to re-organise and unite party members in preparation for the forthcoming 2025 governorship election. The chairman pointed out that the strategic nature of Anambra in the South East, and by extension Nigeria, made it expedient for the state to join the center. Ganduje said he was convinced that those in attendance had the capacity and ability to deliver APC in the upcoming election. "Let me also emphasise the importance of unity as the most

potent tool for the sustenance of such stakeholders. You can only succeed if critical stakeholders like you and others are bonded together in unity. Just like the party's logo, the broom, a united body can never be defeated. "Your strength and success are inherent in your unity. Therefore, I encourage you to be united to achieve the set goal. I extend the party hands of fellowship and support to all stakeholders in Anambra. I assure you of the national headquarters' support towards the party in Anambra

in the 2025 gubernatorial election. "That election is crucial to the party and the government at the center because Anambra deserves to be at the mainstream of Nigeria's politics. "We cannot continue to allow Anambra to remain on the sidelines of Nigerian politics, hence the need for all to work in unison for the actualization of this mission." Ganduje said their commitment and sincerity of purpose would attract supports, which would act as a strong motivation towards this imminent success.

2025: We Can't Afford to Let Anambra Remain on Sidelines of Nigerian Politics, Says Ganduje

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, has said the ruling party could not continue to allow Anambra State to remain on the sidelines of Nigerian politics. To this end, the chairman called on all party members in the state to work in unison for the actualisation of the mission. Ganduje disclosed this yesterday in Abuja at the inauguration of Anambra consultative council. He said he believed that the

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INVESTITURE CEREMONY...

L-R: Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Dr. Kemi Ogunyemi; Lagos Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi; Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat; Chairman, Lagos State Health Management Agency (LASHMA), Dr. Adebayo Adedewe and Permanent Secretary, LASHMA, Dr. Emmanuella Zamba, during the Investiture of the Governor and Deputy Governor as Ilera Eko Ambassadors at the Launch of Ilera Eko Standard Jaara Plan and inauguration of the Virtual Booth in Lagos...recently

PHOTO: ETOP UKUTT

It's Win-Win in Edo as Court Reinstates Shaibu, Upholds Asue Ighodalo's Candidacy

●Reactions trail both rulings

Chuks Okocha, Alex Enumah in Abuja, Mary Nnah in Lagos, and Adibe Emeyonu in Benin-City

In what turned out to be a win-win situation for the feuding camps in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Edo State, a Federal High Court in Abuja, yesterday, affirmed Dr. Asue Ighodalo as the duly nominated and authentic governorship candidate PDP in the state.

At the same time, the Court also reinstated Hon. Philip Shaibu as the Deputy Governor of Edo State, following his earlier impeachment and removal by the Edo State House of Assembly.

In the judgement delivered by Justice James Omotosho of the Federal High Court in the suit marked CS/469/24, the Court held that Ighodalo was duly nominated at the February 22nd primary election of the PDP.

The governorship primary exercise took place in Benin City. The Court consequently dismissed the case filed against his nomination by the Plaintiff, Shaibu.

Ighodalo emerged governorship candidate of the PDP in a primary election, which held on February

22nd 2024 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City, Edo State.

He scored a total of 577 votes to beat his closest rival, Philip Shaibu and 10 other aspirants.

However, the Court presided over by Hon. Justice James Omotosho held that the removal of Shaibu from office as Deputy Governor of Edo State and the subsequent appointment of Omobayo Godwins as his replacement by the Governor Godwin Obaseki was illegal, unconstitutional, null and void.

The Court held that there was a breach of the provisions of the procedure laid out in Section 188 (1) to (9) in the way and manner the impeachment process was conducted.

The court noted that the ouster clause in Section 188(10) limiting the jurisdiction was not a stand alone provision, and referred to the decision of the Nigerian Supreme Court in Inakoju v. Adeleke (2007).

The court, therefore, ordered the 1st Defendant, the Inspector General of Police to immediately restore the security of the Plaintiff as Deputy Governor of Edo State.

As of the time of filing this report, supporters of Shaibu were seen in and around the court premises

celebrating the court verdict.

The court held that the impeachment was politically motivated because of his aspiration to contest the office of Governor of Edo State.

Meanwhile, reactions have started to trail the two judgments.

The suspended vice national chairman of the party in the South South, Dan Orbih, has congratulated Shaibu, and urged him to use the remaining days in office to remove shame from the PDP.

In a letter to Shaibu, Orbih said, "I want to sincerely congratulate the Deputy Governor of Edo State, Rt. Hon. Philip Shaibu over his landmark victory in the legal battle against his unlawful impeachment by some members of the Edo State House of Assembly.

I am particularly delighted by this judgment being the one who led the campaign that brought you and Governor Godwin Obaseki to serve a second term as Governor and Deputy-Governor of the state in 2020.

"I was greatly pained to watch the unfortunate drama of your impeachment, which was generally reported to have been stoked by some elements in the Government of the state.

"As you return as deputy governor of Edo State, I implore you to use your office to bring zeal to governance programmes and policies, to wit, so that we would not be totally left in shame as a party that failed in our promises to the good people of Edo State."

Also, a one-time ally of Governor Obaseki and former APC chairman, Aslem Ojezua, said the rule of law has prevailed.

Ojezua, who contested the PDP primary election, said, "I knew this is how it would end and I am very happy about the fact that common sense and the rule of law have prevailed in Edo State.

"I was surprised about the trumped up charges against Shaibu. I condemned it and said it was a shame that this could happen in Edo. Today, the rule of law has prevailed. We can't rule Edo State like a banana republic or as if we are being teleguided by uncivilised people."

Govt: Godwins Remains Deputy Governor

The Edo State Government has said the incumbent Deputy Governor

of the state, Omobayo Marvellous Godwins remained and continues to serve in his capacity pending the hearing of the appeal of the judgement that faulted the impeachment of Shaibu.

In a statement, Commissioner for Communication and Orientation, Chris Nehikhare, said the state has filed a stay of execution on the judgement, urging the people of Edo State to remain calm and go about their lawful businesses.

The statement read: "Following the Federal High Court, Abuja judgement that faulted the impeachment of the erstwhile deputy governor, Philip Shaibu, the Edo State Government has filed a stay of execution of the judgement.

"Pending the hearing of the appeal of the judgement, the incumbent Deputy Governor, His Excellency, Omobayo Marvellous Godwins remains and continues to serve as the valid Deputy Governor of Edo State.

"He will continue to serve in this capacity and would be recognized as such. The government hereby calls on the people of Edo State to remain calm and go about their lawful businesses."

PDP Hails Court Judgement Affirming Ighodalo's Candidacy

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has commended the judgement of the Federal High Court, Abuja, which affirmed the nomination of its candidate, Dr. Asue Ighodalo, in the September 21, 2024 Governorship election in

Edo State.

The Party in a statement by the National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba, described the landmark judgement which upheld the governorship primary election held on February 22, 2024 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City as victory for democracy, Rule of Law and a well-founded affirmation of the propriety and credibility of the Primary election and PDP's internal democracy.

The party said that the spontaneous jubilation across Edo State at the news of the judgement reaffirmed the PDP candidate, Ighodalo, as the undisputed preference of the majority of the people of Edo State in the coming Governorship election.

Also, in a statement made by the media aide in the PDP Campaign Council, Felix Osaro, the PDP reaffirmed Ighodalo as the undisputed choice of the majority of the people of Edo State.

The statement said the party was aware of a well-oiled plot by certain egocentric and overtly ambitious individuals to orchestrate a series of coordinated smear campaigns against Ighodalo.

Similarly, the Team Asue Media Organisation (TAMO) has hailed the judgement, too.

In a statement issued in Benin City, TAMO said "the judgment represents a landmark pronouncement by upholding the sanctity of the PDP Governorship primary in Edo State which held on February 22, 2024 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City. It's surely a good victory for democracy and rule of law."

NASS OKAYS TINUBU'S FRESH REQUEST FOR N6.2TN INJECTION INTO N27.5TN 2024 BUDGET

expenditure requirements necessary for proper operations of the federal government expenditure, which is to be funded by expected revenue accruing to the federal government.

"Furthermore the proposed amendments to the Finance Act, 2023 are required to impose a one-time windfall tax on foreign gains realised by banks in their 2023 financial statements to fund capital infrastructure development, education and healthcare access as well as public welfare initiatives to give sound and solid footing to the Renewed Hope Agenda of Mr. President C-in-C.

"Finally, I believe that all the proposals in this bills are laudable and will enhance critical needs of the citizens of this country."

Senator Adamu Aliero (PDP, Kebbi), who seconded the motion, said it was necessary to support the bill because of the expected minimum wage for workers.

He urged the lawmakers to pass the amendment, as the bill was required to source the required fund for minimum wage payment and infrastructure projects construction.

Aliero stated, "Because there is no money in 2024 budget, if we don't provide this money for the minimum wage this month, there will be public outcry, Nigerians have been patient and have waited."

Aliero commended Tinubu for the bills, saying their passage would also help in completion of legacy projects.

Senator Seriake Dickson (PDP, Bayelsa) suggested that the bill on the amendment of the Finance Act should be stood down. Dickson advised on the need to seek experts' views on the proposed imposition of taxes on banks.

He also said details of the documents were not yet before the federal lawmakers.

He recalled the backlash from the public over a bill he said was previously passed in a hurry, stating that legislators should avoid public ridicule in the handling of legislative activities.

Dickson also disagreed with suggestions that the amendment to the Appropriation Act and the amendment to the Finance Act, 2023 should be lumped together.

Other senators, who supported the bills, included Garuba Maidoki (APC, Kebbi), Adetokunbo Abiru (APC, Lagos), and Adams Oshiomhole (APC, Edo).

Chairman, Senate Committee on Finance, Senator Sani Musa, stated that banks earned enormous profit, which could be inferred from their end of year reports.

Musa stated, "I think banks should be well taxed because they make this profit out of the pronouncement made by this government. The reason for removing oil subsidy, the reason for abridging the gap is for the good of this country."

Deputy President of Senate, Senator

Jibrin Barau (APC, Kano), after the bills passed second reading, referred them separately to Senate Committees on Appropriations and Finance for further legislative input.

Barau informed his colleagues that part of the additional funds sought would be used to finance the minimum wage, which was expected to arrive in the National Assembly before the end of July.

Edun: FG to Reinroduce Beverage Tax

Minister of Finance, Mr. Wale Edun, said the federal government will reintroduce Sugar-sweetened Beverages (SSB) tax to shore up its revenues and address health concerns.

Although the country had a N10 sugar tax in place, implementation was halted following the recent discontinuation of the Finance Act.

Speaking when he received members of the National Action on Sugar Reduction Coalition (NASR) and Gatefield, on a courtesy visit to his office, the minister said the government will review the current delay at reinstating the tax.

He pointed out that though beverage companies had the capacity to create jobs, some of their products had negative consequences for both health and the environment.

Edun encouraged the coalition to continue to create data-driven analysis for public enlightenment

about the dangers of sugary drinks.

He stressed that the ministry was not in favour of companies that sold unhealthy products, adding that the "overriding situation in Nigeria is that we need to help people cope with the cost-of-living spike".

The minister said there was a six-month economic stabilisation plan to keep beverage companies afloat as well as provide temporary relief to citizens.

He said notwithstanding current delay, the plan was to reintroduce the SSB taxes, stressing, "It is a delay, not a denial."

The minister pointed out that the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, under Dr. Ali Pate, was doing its best to bring down the cost of drugs and pharmaceuticals.

He assured that the federal government was in support of SSB taxes to also improve its fiscal position.

Earlier, the advocacy lead at Gatefield, Shirley Ewang, said sugary drink taxes mattered a lot given their revenue generation potential and prospect of reducing the burden of diseases, including heart disease, cancers, and type 2 diabetes.

Ewang said the risk of these diseases could be increased by sugary drink consumption.

Vice President, Diabetes Association of Nigeria/Co-chair, NASR Coalition, Comrade Bernard Enyia, added that the cost of insulin and diabetes care had doubled.

Student Unions Opt Out of Planned Nationwide Protest, Say Motive Unknown

Ahmad Sorondinki in Kano

Northern youths and students' unions have announced the withdrawal of their members across Northern states, from the planned nationwide protest over economic hardship in the country.

The group leader, Jibril Bello, who addressed press conference in Kano, yesterday, directed all their members not to participate in the mass actions scheduled to begin from the end of this month.

"Following our just concluded general meeting, we have reached the decision to call on students to withdraw from the planned nationwide protest. This has become

necessary because we cannot reach out to the organisers or understand the real motive behind that.

"We accept the fact that there is hardship in the country, yes it is true, but two wrongs cannot make a right. That we cannot find those behind the protest and cannot understand why they are planning it.

"We appreciate the government of President Bola Tinubu for providing interest free students loan to support education in the country," he stated.

He, however, urged the Nigerian government to invest more on local scholarships than foreign scholarships in order to make students academic journeys easier and affordable.



GLOBAL CLEAN TECH INNOVATION PROGRAMME...
L-R: Country Representative, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), Mr. Yomi Banjo; representative of the Minister for Budget and Economic Planning, Mrs. Elizabeth Akpana; Executive Director, Rural Electrification Fund, Rural Electrification Agency, Engr. Doris Uboh; Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Chief Uche Nnaji and Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Mrs. Esuabana Nko Asange, during the Global Clean Tech Innovation Program (GCIP), Themed "Strengthening Nigeria's Clean Innovation Entrepreneurship Ecosystem" (S-NCIEE) in Abuja...yesterday
PHOTO: ENOCK REUBEN

Petroleum Depot Owners Write Tinubu, Call for Sustenance of Deregulation

●Raise concerns over perceived Dangote refinery's monopoly

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The Depot and Petroleum Products Marketers Association of Nigeria (DAPPMAN), has written President Bola Tinubu, urging him to intervene to engender the sustenance of de-regulation and free market policies intended by the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021.

In the letter to the president, DAPPMAN said it recognised the need for the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) to remain committed to the legislation establishing it with consistent policies being maintained.

Signed by the organisation's Executive Secretary, Olufemi Adewole,

the group insisted that deregulation and free market were critical to the survival of the industry.

It added that stipulations must remain fair and consistent to achieve the real intendment of deregulation and liberalisation of the petroleum sector.

DAPPMAN said that prior to the establishment of the Dangote Refinery, Nigerian business entrepreneurs already had investments in the nation's downstream petroleum sector running into trillions of naira, with taxes remitted to the various state governments by their respective employers.

The group cited several investments made by Dangote in the past and how they have allegedly monopolised

certain sectors, stressing that all its investments in the past would be jeopardised by a Dangote refinery monopoly.

"With a hindsight of the foregoing however, we note with dismay the apparent tilt towards the creation of a monopoly for the supply of Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) to Nigeria's downstream operators solely by the Dangote Refinery.

"We understand that this is due to the implementation of the restrictions placed on ECOWAS member nations by 'Afri 5' gasoil and gasoline specifications... which have the resultant effect that AGO purchases can only be made from one source being the Dangote Refinery.

"It is on credible record that mar-

keters' AGO imports have complied with the Afri 5' gasoil and gasoline specification of sulphur content not exceeding 50/parts per million (ppm) from January 2024 despite the inability of local refining capacity, including the Dangote refinery, to meet this specification to date.

"Dangote Refinery's AGO presently has sulphur content exceeding 700/ppm in accordance with waiver granted by the NMDPRA. This far exceeds the average of 50/ppm sulphur required for AGO imports by marketers, yet the regulator has restricted all other downstream operators from sourcing this product exclusively from the Dangote Refinery.

"This is a clear adoption of Dangote Oil Refinery as the sole

supplier of AGO to the nation. This situation is detrimental not only to the downstream operators but the nation at large. It deprives Nigerians of cheaper options as the Dangote Refinery always has the final say and dictate prices without any competing alternatives," the group added.

It opined that while AGO had been deregulated and left to market forces for price determination, the regulator must continue to ensure consistent level field policies and issue adequate notices to all and sundry for any changes that may be required in the spirit of deregulation.

"It is important that market forces are allowed free reign in the sector within appropriate rule of law.

"Dangote refinery's initial step was to crash the price of AGO from a 'high' price of N1,700 per litres to N1,200/litre and later to N1,000 and later to N900/litre despite the large inventory of the imported AGO with marketers which thus could not be sold as it was imported with very high forex rate.

Regrettably, despite assurances at the meeting, Dangote Refinery continues to offer refined petroleum products to foreign traders at \$50 per metric tonne, cheaper than the pricing to local companies, "DAPPMAN said.

Besides, it said that payments for cargo offtakes from the refinery are in dollars, explaining that it believes that trade with Dangote oil refinery should have an option of payment in naira.

"This will greatly reduce any attraction to trade with international suppliers and significantly reduce the pressure on the naira. We emphasise that all the scenarios listed above are neither in tandem with the spirit of PIA 2021 nor with the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act, 2018 (FCCPA) which collectively restrict monopoly of any sort and indeed run contrary to President Bola Tinubu administration's admirable policies to foster ease-of-doing-business in Nigeria.

"Thus, we respectfully crave the indulgence of Mr. President to urgently intervene in the above situation and our prayers are thus: There should be no restriction or forced limitation of any marketer to be sourcing his product from Dangote Refinery until the Port Harcourt and Warri Refineries are fully rehabilitated and re-streamed to increase local refining capacity and provide price competitive product options for Nigerians.

"There should be no monopoly of product sourcing and all marketers should be allowed to import fuels into the country in line with internationally recognised healthy product specifications and price competitiveness.

Katsina Gov Demands FG's Clarification on Loans Repayment Following LG Autonomy

●BBS seeks collaborative research-based model for success

Francis Sardauna in Katsina and Oluchi Chibuzor in Lagos

Following the Supreme Court verdict on local government autonomy, Katsina State Governor, Dikko Umaru Radda, has demanded clarifications from the federal government on how loans jointly taken by the local and state governments would be repaid.

Radda, at an expanded council meeting yesterday, said the state and local governments had various loan-based projects funded by the World Bank and other multilateral organisations, hence the need for the federal government's clarification on repayment.

"We must carefully understand the implication of this judgement on how loans will be repaid and how the future subsidiary loan agreements will be structured.

"These are severe areas for consideration, and it will help for the federal government to clarify this and other matters arising from the judgement," he said.

He added that the fate of the state's local government civil service commission and the local government pension board "become uncertain" following the Supreme Court judgement.

He explained that the Apex court judgement would also affect the state's 2024 budget because it was

designed based on the previous funding agreements between the state and local governments.

He said some critical engagements such as payment of salaries of teachers under the state universal basic education board, local government workers, pension and gratuity, among others impediments have to be addressed.

Radda said the Supreme Court verdict on the local government financial autonomy has jettisoned the nation's constitutional provision for the state and local government joint account "on the basis that state governors abused the process."

He added: "I will respectfully say that some of us try our best to manage our joint funds in a collective approach."

He, however, said he has inaugurated a committee with representatives from the state, local governments, state House of Assembly and other experts to chart a way forward on the apex court judgement.

Meanwhile, the Babcock University Business School (BBS) has called for a collaborative research-based model to ensure that the newly financial autonomy granted to local governments was translated to impact at grassroots level.

The school made this position at the three-day hybrid seminar with the theme, 'The Uniqueness of

Engagement At A Business School', held in Lagos recently.

Speaking on the significance of the school's 30 to 70 model in national development, Head BBS, Professor Akintoye Ishola, said the local governments must adopt collaborative research as a basis for funding social projects.

"Now, we are talking about local autonomy. There must be research, the government should now as-

Borno State Governor, Professor Babagana Zulum, has dismissed reports that his son was currently being held in custody in India for alleged murder, saying there was no such thing involving his child.

The governor, in a statement by the media unit in his office, said the report was false and far from the truth.

The statement signed by the Senior Special Assistant on New Media, Abdurrahman Bundi, read: "The Borno State Governor's media unit's attention has been drawn to rumours circulating that the son of the Borno

semble academics like what we do in the business school. How can academics look at local governments to advance Nigeria's economy? If not It is going to turn into another system where you just share the national cake.

"When we identify those problems, who are the researchers now? Like I told you at the business school you do not just come to school, register and take courses.

State Governor has been arrested for the alleged murder of some Indian citizen.

"This misinformation was published in an online blog, Nairaland, titled: 'Son of Borno State Governor Murders Someone In India—Politics'. The blog claimed that the Governor also travelled to India, attempting to use diplomatic status to resolve the matter.

"It is on record that Governor Babagana Zulum was on a one-month vacation in Saudi Arabia for the 2024 Hajj and later travelled to Egypt to attend the annual ASUWAN forum conference in Cairo.

"The Media Unit would like to

clarify and set the record straight that Nairaland and other online blogs have mischievously spread defamatory content without any speak of truth.

"We hereby warn Nairaland and all those who have spread the false information to pull down this misinformation from its website and platforms within the next 24 hours and offer an unreserved apology to Governor Zulum, his son, and the entire family, or risk legal action.

"The Governor shall also not hesitate to take legal action against any media outlet that continues to publicise this defamatory information on its platform.

"We would like to inform the public that none of Governor's Zulum's son was either arrested or charged with any crime, or involved in any unlawful activities anywhere.

"We urge the public to exercise caution when consuming and sharing information, particularly when it comes from unverified sources and blogs instead of credible media outlets.

"We enjoin all media organisations to engage in responsible journalism of truth and factual verification while recognising the potential harm and psychological trauma the spread of false information might have caused to the Governor's family."

My Son Not Held in Custody for Murder in India, Zulum Clears Air of Misinformation

Michael Olugbode in Maiduguri

Borno State Governor, Professor Babagana Zulum, has dismissed reports that his son was currently being held in custody in India for alleged murder, saying there was no such thing involving his child.

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Osimhen's Rant Was a Moment of Madness, Says Amaju Pinnick

Femi Solaja

Former Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) President and a FIFA Council member, Amaju Pinnick has expressed his displeasure at last month's outburst by Super Eagles striker, Victor Osimhen against the former coach of the national team, Finidi George.

The FIFA Council member was a guest on Arise TV programme yesterday morning and perhaps the first a high-ranking football personality will speak on the issue following the stay-mute mode of the Glasshouse and the Sports Ministry as well.

"It is very unfortunate", Amaju Pinnick remarked on an Arise Television programme. The former NFF president said he had put a call to Osimhen who was very remorseful while the telephone conversation lasted.

"I told him he has to apologise and Channel it to the appropriate quarters I am sure he would have done that," Amaju remarked that he could not comprehend what went wrong as Osimhen was the most cool-headed player in the national



FIFA Council Member, Amaju Pinnick with the FIFA President, Gianni Infantino

team.

"He played a prominent role in Golden Eaglets' win of the FIFA U-17 tournament in Chile in 2015 which happens to be my first trophy as the NFF President.

"I just could not comprehend what

went wrong with but he needs to do the right thing and let the matter rest," he pointed out.

He went on to remark that Finidi George was not a personality to be disregarded like that. "He has won virtually every honour available

during his playing days and was a member of the Super Eagles at their peak when Nigeria ranked fifth in the world. "I believe players should learn to respect their coaches", said the former NFF boss.

Pinnick also explained his reason for being averse to Indigenous coaches stemmed from a lack of respect for them by the players.

"Yes, the Nigerian coaches have the requisite knowledge and the technical ability, but modern football is beyond that in managing players.

"Will the national team players respect the coach? The sad thing is that they don't", said Amaju Pinnick.

He explained that he supported the appointment of Finidi George owing to the circumstances that the NFF found itself in after the exit of Jose Peseiro.

"If the NFF says they don't have the funding to secure a foreign coach at that time, I think the best option was to hire someone who had worked with the out-going manager to ensure a smooth transition at the time we were engaged in the last World Cup qualifying matches.

"Finidi was part of the coaching crew of Peseiro and it was therefore

logical to ask him to continue unfortunately it did not work as expected.

On the precarious situation the Super Eagles have found themselves and the possibility of missing out for the second consecutive time, Pinnick said the team still has a chance to qualify and he trusted the NFF to do a diligent job at getting the right personnel to fill the vacant position.

"NFF doesn't need to rush and appoint anybody, they don't want to make a mistake and they are working with the Sports Ministry

to get things in order.

"We need to come together and ensure that we win all our remaining matches and wait for a slip from South Africa through the Republic of Benin," he pointed out.

He also thanked President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for the support he has given him towards his re-election bid next FIFA Council election.

"The presidential support is a huge advantage not just to me but the nation and I've been able to secure endorsement for my re-election bid," he explained.

Chukwuma Blasts NFF over Bosso's Appointment as U-23 Coach

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

The former Vice President of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Chief Gabriel Chukwuma has condemned the appointment of Ladan Bosso as the coach of the U-23 national team despite his poor records with the U-21, the Flying Eagles.

According to the proprietor Gabros FC International, the decision was a wrong one by the NFF board led by Ibrahim Gusau and should be immediately reversed because it was anathema to the growth of football in the country.

He said Bosso could not be trusted to handle the U-23 ahead of the 2028 Olympic Games having crashed with U-21 sides on several occasions and failed to win any silverware for the country when assigned as the gaffer of the team.

"He may have bought it again as it is the case with most Nigerian coaches who buy their way to coaching positions and end up disgracing

Nigeria. He is warming up again to crash the U-23 National Team once again," Chukwuma said.

He also threatened to institute legal action against NFF if they fail to reverse the decision within seven days and look for a better and a serious coach out of the plethora of coaches in the country.

"I can even take the matter to the president so that he will know the implications of Bosso's reappointment and how it stands to affect football-loving Nigerians psychologically.

"What NFF has done is degrading. Are they telling Nigerians that they no longer have good coaches in the country? Are they saying that Bosso is the best among them all or that he is what the country can afford? Let them get a better coach for the country to enable football fans to enjoy good football. I can help them pay his salaries because our concern is what will be good for the more than 200 million Nigerians, most of who are football lovers," he concluded.



L-R: NBA Africa Vice-President and Country Head, NBA Nigeria, Gbemisola Abudu, Two-Time WNBA All-Star, Chiney Ogwumike, and United States Consul General to Nigeria, Will Stevens when NBA Nigeria hosted the first Jr. NBA / Jr. WNBA Elite Camp which coincided with the U.S. President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement's first visit to Nigeria.... recently

Photo NBA

NBA Nigeria Hosts the First Junior NBA/WNBA Elite Camp

NBA Nigeria recently hosted the first junior NBA / Junior WNBA Elite Camp in Nigeria, which coincided with the U.S. President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement's first visit to the country.

The event featured a basketball clinic for 40 boys and girls ages 16 and younger led by two-time WNBA All-Star and Council Member Chiney Ogwumike.

The clinic was followed by three-on-three and five-on-five games.

The Jr. NBA / Jr. WNBA, the league's global youth basketball participation programme for boys and girls, aimed to teach the fundamental skills as well as the core values of the game at the grassroots level to help grow and improve the youth basketball experience for players, coaches and parents.

Last year, Jr. NBA / Jr. WNBA programming directly reached more than 170,000 youth across Africa and will host one per quarter going forward for talent identification.

NBA Nigeria has continued to create a platform for the youth to learn and showcase their skills.

Through initiatives like the Jr. NBA / Jr. WNBA Elite Camp, young athletes are allowed to receive top-tier coaching, participate in competitive games, and develop both their athletic abilities and personal growth.

By emphasizing fundamental skills and core values, NBA Nigeria is not only fostering the next generation of basketball talent but also empower-

ing these young individuals to excel in all aspects of life.

The programme's ongoing commitment to quarterly camps ensures a steady pipeline of emerging talent, poised to make their mark on the sport both locally and globally.

"We are excited about introducing an elite camp in Nigeria. It speaks to our broader efforts to uncover and develop young basketball

talent here in Nigeria and across the continent and provide more elite young athletes with a disciplined and high-quality training environment for developing their skills as basketball players and leaders. We intend to do more elite camps and allow as many young athletes to showcase their talent." Said Gbemisola Abudu, NBA Africa Vice President and Country Head, NBA Nigeria.

EStars Officially Launches in Nigeria

EStars, an innovative educational Esports platform is thrilled to announce its launch in Nigeria. Marking this milestone, EStars has welcomed over 20 Nigerian schools to its launch, signalling a significant step towards revolutionizing education through Esports in the country.

The formal launch event, which was held at the Residence of the British Deputy High Commissioner in Lagos, was graced by dignitaries from both the public and private sectors.

EStars was established by Mags Byrne, who saw the potential of sports beyond entertainment. By integrating Esports into school curricula, EStars seeks to make learning more engaging and relevant to student's interests, thereby enhancing educational outcomes and preparing students for various sporting careers in the industry.

Founded with the belief that Esports can revolutionize education, EStars aims to be the leading educational Esports company on

the African continent.

Speaking at the launch event at his Residence, the British Deputy High Commissioner, Jonny Baxter said:

"Esports, albeit emerging, is now fully professional and is expected to contribute \$1.8 billion to the UK GDP by 2025. The esports ecosystem also offers a wide array of career opportunities, and we are happy to support EStars in partnering with Nigerian schools to give their students this exposure."



L-R: Stef Genesis; COO, EStars, Mags Byrne; CEO & Founder, EStars, Jonny Baxter; British Deputy High Commissioner, Joel Popoola; Africa Adviser, EStars



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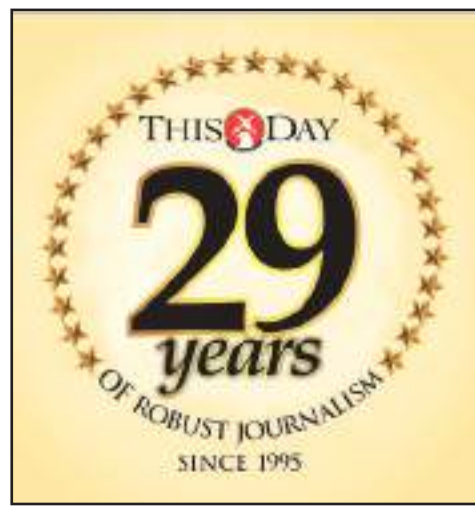
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MISSILE

Afe Babalola to Government

"The civil service of today is riddled with corruption, indolence and eye-service. I am a victim myself, and some of my key staff can testify to this. It is so bad that if you write ordinary letter to the minister, you have to do 'follow-ups', and I think you understand what I mean by that, without which the letter will not get to its destination."—Legal luminary and proprietor of Afe Babalola University on the rising cases of corruption in Nigeria



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The Illusion of Local Government Autonomy

The controversy began in April 2004 following the creation of 37 Local Government Areas (LGAs) by then Lagos State Governor, now President Bola Tinubu. Riled by what he considered to be an impudent act, then President Olusegun Obasanjo directed that funds for the LGAs in the state be withheld until Lagos reverted to the 20 LGA structure. As I highlighted in my book, 'Power, Politics and Death: A front-row account of Nigeria under the late President Yar'Adua', Tinubu filed a lawsuit against the federal government, urging the Supreme Court to determine the propriety and legality of Obasanjo's action. And in a somewhat controversial judgment, the apex court declared the 37 LGAs created by Tinubu "inchoate and inoperable" since the National Assembly had not listed them in the Constitution. But the same court also ruled that the federal government had no right to withhold the funds.

With both the federal government and Lagos state claiming victory in what had become a personality clash between Obasanjo and Tinubu, prominent Yoruba citizens intervened through a committee of elders led by a former Attorney General of the Federation, the late Prince Bola Ajibola. That effort culminated in the 37 Lagos LGAs being rechristened Local Council Development Authority (LCDAs) by Tinubu. This brought a temporary truce and Obasanjo ordered the release of a first tranche of N10 billion from the entitlements of the 20 LGAs then estimated at about N21 billion. When Tinubu insisted on conducting elections for the 37 LCDAs, Obasanjo viewed it as an affront. So, for the rest of his tenure, funds for Lagos LGAs were not paid. This was the situation at the time the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua assumed office on May 29, 2007. Following consultations, he ordered the release of the accumulated council funds to Lagos State under Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola.

I therefore find it ironic that Tinubu would drag governors before the supreme court over local government funds, even though I support the idea behind it. With the apex court judgment, four key issues have been settled. One, section 162 of the 1999 Constitution is now completely redundant. Two, all funds standing to the credit of the 774 LGAs in the federation account shall henceforth be paid directly to them. Three, governors can no longer dissolve democratically elected councils, and/or replace them with caretaker committees. Four, no funds will be released to councils run by caretaker committees. But several issues beg for answers with perhaps the most significant being: What happens to the funding of LCDAs created in some states by their governors? Incidentally, Tinubu was the first governor to take that route before others followed, which is why many governors seem surprised by his move.

As I said, I support the principle behind the judgement given how governors play with local government funds. Besides, since President Muhammadu Buhari failed to achieve the same objective with 'Executive Order 10', I understand why Tinubu chose the apex court route. My main concern is that I do not think the judgement will change anything concerning the administration of local government in Nigeria. And that is why I believe we require a reform that is more practical. In his piece, 'Let the Third Tier Breathe', published yesterday, Special Adviser to the president on Information and Strategy, Mr Bayo Onanuga raised pertinent issues. But I do not share his optimism that the apex court judgment will make much difference to the people at the grassroots.



President Bola Tinubu

Perhaps the only person who has spoken to the heart of the issue is Shehu Sani, a civil rights activist and former Senator from Kaduna State. In his characteristic way of reducing serious issues to humour, this was his summation of what will follow the judgement: "Your Excellency Sir, I received the alert (from the federation account). What should I do with it?" Despite the Supreme Court ruling, many LG chairmen will still behave like this when their account is credited directly," he wrote. Before drawing my conclusion, I crave the indulgence of readers to reproduce my 27 August 2020 column, 'Democracy and the Grassroots'.

The 1999 Constitution (as amended), provides that each of the 774 local governments in the country is vested with powers to establish and maintain cemeteries, burial grounds and homes for the destitute or infirm; license bicycles, vehicles, canoes, wheel barrows and carts; regulate slaughter houses, markets, motor parks and public conveniences as well as construct and maintain roads, streets lightings, drains, parks, gardens, open spaces etc. They are also to register births, deaths and marriages and name roads, streets, and houses, while providing and maintaining public conveniences and refuse disposal among other functions. Perhaps most significantly, local governments are expected to provide and maintain primary, adult and vocational education and health services.

These, no doubt, are heavy responsibilities for which 20.60 percent of our total national earnings is allocated from the federation account. That is one fifth of the entire resources accruing to the nation. Available data from the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) indicates that no less than about N25 trillion has been shared by the 774 local governments in the past 21 years. Even if we use the prevailing exchange rate, that still exceeds \$60 billion! For instance, last year (2019), all the local governments shared N1.649 trillion; In 2018, they shared N1.667 trillion; in

2017, they shared N1.502 trillion; in 2016, they shared 1.011 trillion; in 2015, they shared N1.205 trillion; in 2014, they shared N1.557 trillion; in 2013, they shared N1.708 trillion; in 2012, they shared N1.535 trillion; in 2011, they shared N1.255 trillion; in 2010, they shared N1.328 trillion; in 2009, they shared N976.817 trillion and in 2008, they shared N1.206 trillion.

Despite such huge financial resources, local governments are not playing their roles because governors have conspired to render them completely prostrate. The national president of the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Comrade Ibrahim Khaleel once argued that "the concept of bringing governance closer to the people through a third-tier participatory form of government has not materialized in Nigeria." After tracing the history of reforms of local government from the Dasuki Committee of 1976 to the Etsu Nupe report of 2003 and several Supreme Court rulings, Khaleel gave a damning verdict: "there is no state in Nigeria where one form of illegality or the other is not committed with the funds of local governments. Through over deduction of primary school teachers' salaries; spurious state/local government joint projects, sponsoring of elections, taking over the statutory functions of local governments and handing them over to cronies and consultants; non-payments of pensioners and non-utilization of training fund despite the mandatory deduction of stipulated percentages for these purposes, we can go on and on. Most of these shameful activities are known to all of us."

To be sure, local government administration in Nigeria has always presented a challenge, but it has never been as bad as it is now under the current dispensation. Even though democracy is a never-ending process of inquiry that requires the validation of voters, what we have witnessed over the years in the name of local government elections has been no more than a charade. For

the benefit of readers, let me highlight results of the last local government polls in all the 36 states of the federation (in alphabetical order).

In December 2016, the Abia State Independent Electoral Commission conducted LG polls, where almost a million people were recorded as having voted. The ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state won all 17 chairmanship and 292 councillorship seats. "There was no election anywhere in the state," the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) secretary, Sunday Onukwubiri, told reporters. A year earlier during the 2015 general election, Governor Okezie Ikpeazu had secured 264,713 votes (representing 59.4 percent of total votes cast) to defeat Dr Alex Otti, the then APGA candidate who secured 180,882 votes (representing 40.6 percent of total votes cast). Yet, APGA could not win any seat at the LG polls. That has been the pattern in all the states where the Independent National Election (INEC) results are at variance with the figures churned out by the state electoral commission that conducts LG polls.

Last December (2019) in Adamawa, candidates of the ruling PDP in the state won all the 21 chairmanship and 226 councillorship seats. Akwa Ibom is billed to conduct the local government election on 31st October this year, but the APC has already seen the handwriting on the wall by threatening a boycott. In the last one conducted in December 2017, PDP won all the 31 chairmanship and 329 councillorship seats. "Details of scores will be made available by the field operations/logistics department of the commission," according to the chairman, Aniedi Ikoiwak, who only gave round figures without providing any breakdown of the results!

In Anambra State where council polls have not been held in the past six years, businessman, Chief Arthur Eze, has issued a stern warning to Governor Willie Obiano...

NOTE: Concluded online...

Eniola Bello @ 60

In the first decade of THISDAY Newspaper, our Chairman, Prince Nduka Obaigbena (who clocked 65 last Sunday) established a unique selection and recruitment tradition regarding editors of the three titles: Saturday, Sunday and Daily. Even though there was a clear line of succession, he still allowed each title editor to nominate their successor. So, on two occasions, the Managing Director of THISDAY Newspapers, Mr Eniola Bello, known mostly as EniB, nominated me to succeed him, first as Sunday editor and later as editor of the main title. While the second occasion in August 2005 was fairly straightforward, the earlier one in 2003 was not. Having been labelled 'ambitious deputy' by mischief-makers, EniB could have played office politics to frustrate me. But he was comfortable enough that we worked harmoniously. And he has remained a brother and friend.

As a member of the foundation staff in 1995, EniB has, over the years, played a significant role in the evolution of THISDAY as a formidable institution in Nigerian journalism. Strong in prose (he read English as his first degree), EniB writes the way he speaks (never takes prisoners) and was the first to earn the distinction of editing all THISDAY titles before I and later, Ijeoma Nwogwugwu joined the club.

Come Sunday, EniB will be 60 and while a



Bello

few of us were planning to host him to one of those 'surprise celebrations', it turns out he has his own plan. Having gotten wind of the plot (as often happens with competent reporters), he called me a few days ago to say we should save ourselves any trouble. By this weekend, he would already be out of the country with his family for a quiet holiday. That's the quintessential Eni-B!

As he joins the sexagenarian club on Sunday, I wish him long life and good health. Happy birthday, Baba Wura!