Nigeria Targets 4 Million bpd Oil Production, 10bcf Gas Output By 2030

FG seeks to unlock $10bn of $90bn deepwater fund *Survey shows nation's September oil volume dropped 40,000bpd*

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The federal government has said it is targeting about 4 million barrels per day oil production and 10bcf of gas output by 2030, especially given the recent offshore oil and gas incentives announced by President Bola Tinubu.

This was made known in a statement yesterday signed by the Special Adviser to the President on Energy and head of the Energy Office of the Presidency, Mrs. Olu Verheijen, who also coordinates the rollout of the reforms.

"Since Nigeria's last deepwater

Continued on page 9

NWDC: Women Fault Tinubu Over All-male Board Membership... Page 8

THISDAY

TRUTH & REASON

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L-R: Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Senator Atiku Bagudu; Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris; former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar; National Security Adviser, Malam Nuhu Ribadu; former Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Dr Mohammed Ibn Chambas; Minister of Steel Development, Alhaji Shuaibu Abubakar; and the Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa, at the first International Conference of the News Agency of Nigeria on Security in the Sahel held in Abuja... yesterday

Tinubu: A Secure Nigeria is Secure Sahel

Chuks Okocha, Olawale Ajimotokan and **Linus Aleke** in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu, yesterday, gave a more instructive reason why his administration was taking the issue of security seriously, explaining that a secure Nigeria means a secure Sahel

Continued on page 9

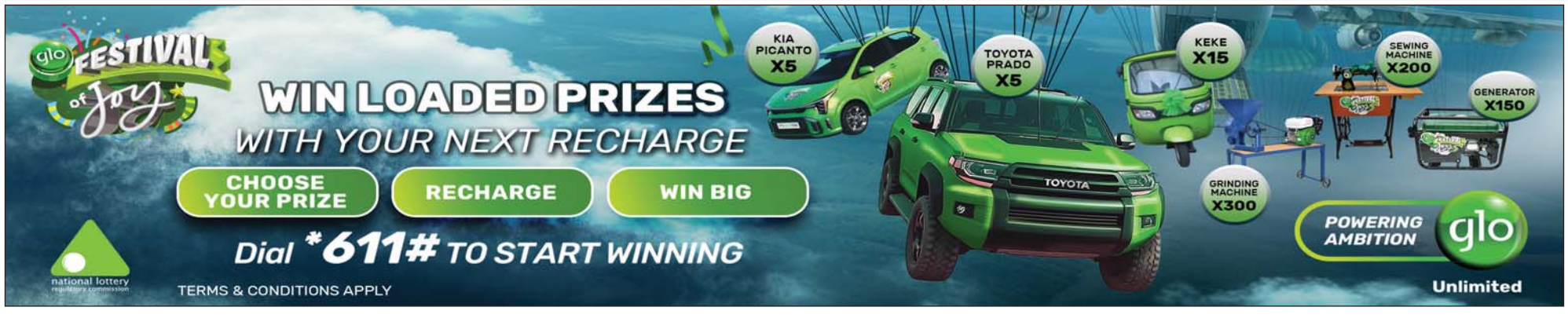
Kwankwaso: Wind of Change Will Blow in 2027, Security, INEC Will Run Helter-skelter

Story on page 9



LAUNCH OF EXPANDED MSMES CLINICS/INAUGURATION OF ENUGU GARMENT AND FASHION HUB...

L-R: Senate Minority Whip, Senator Osita Ngwu; Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon. Benjamin Kalu; Vice President, Senator Kashim Shettima; Governor of Enugu State, Dr. Peter Mbah; Minister of Science and Technology, Chief Uche Nnaji; and the Speaker, Enugu State House of Assembly, Hon. Uchenna Ugwu, during the launch of the 5th Expanded MSMEs Clinics and the inauguration of the Enugu State Garment and Fashion Hub by the vice president in Enugu... yesterday. *...see story on page 28*



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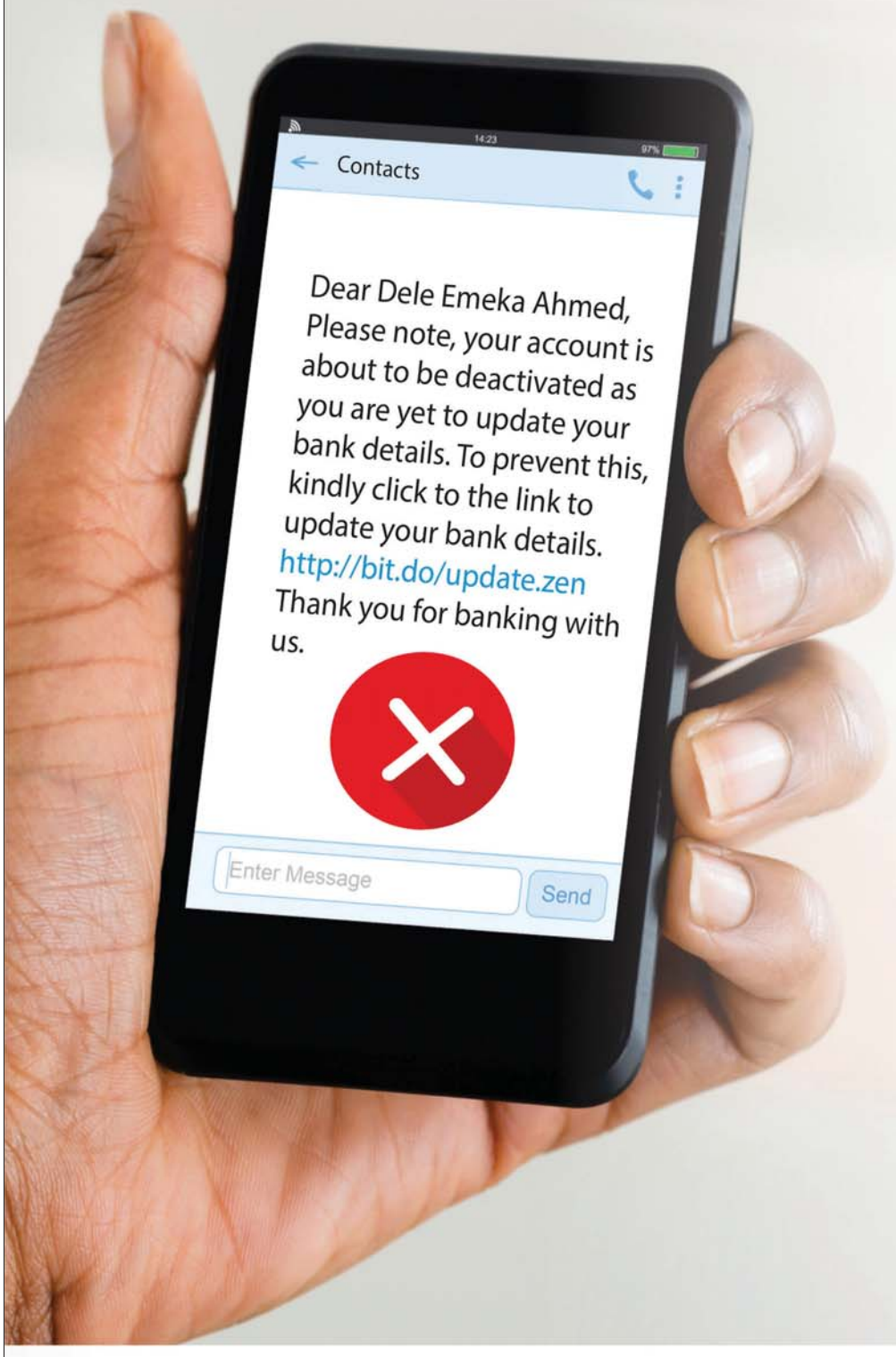
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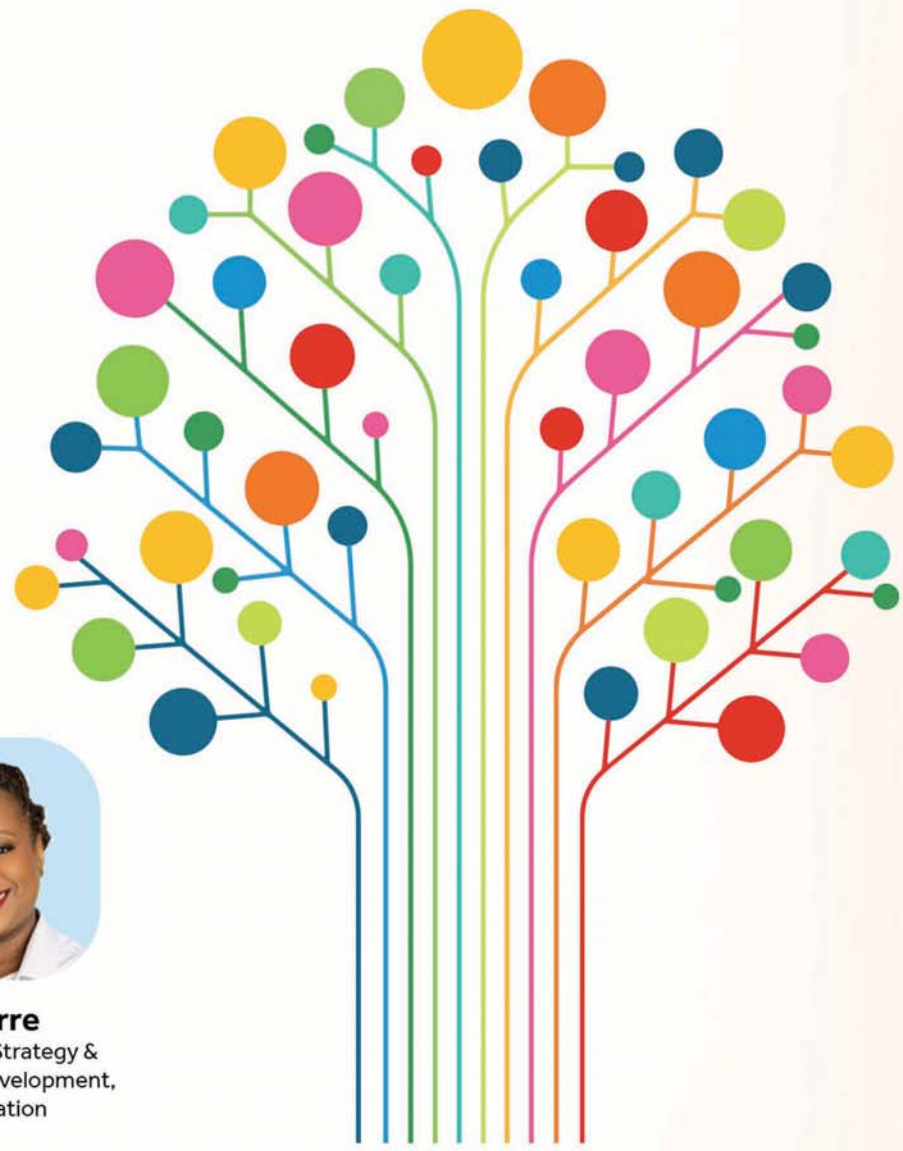
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Bankole Oloruntoba
CEO, Nigeria Climate
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Nneka Okekearu
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10th October, 2024

10:00am (WAT)

Register at:
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NDUKA OBAIGBENA HOSTS GERMAN CONSUL GENERAL...

L-R: German Consul General, Mr. Weert Borner; Chairman/Editor-In-Chief, THISDAY/ARISE Media Group, Prince Nduka Obaigbena, and Dr Imke Boerner, when Obaigbena hosted the duo at his residence in Ikoyi, Lagos,… yesterday

Report: Google Products Generated $1.8bn to Nigerian Economy in 2023

Emma Okonji

Google, yesterday, released an independent report carried out by Public First, a global policy and strategy consultancy, specialising in economic modelling and opinion research.

The report, tagged, "Google Nigeria Economic Impact Report," highlighted the transformative impact of digital technologies on Nigeria's economy, and how Google's products and infrastructure were driving digital transformation and contributing to economic growth across the country.

With Nigeria experiencing rapid digital development, the report highlighted the potential for further growth.

According to the study, in 2023, Google's products and services, which included Search, Ads, YouTube, and Cloud, contributed an estimated $1.8 billion in economic activity across Nigeria, which significantly boosted the productivity of Nigerian businesses, creators, and workers.

The report further explained that every $1 invested in digital technology in Nigeria generated over $8 in economic value, which emphasised the critical role of digital technology, including connectivity, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence (AI), in shaping Nigeria's economic future.

The report also provided strategic recommendations for policymakers, advocating for increased cloud-first policies and enhanced digital infrastructure to maximise AI's potential in Nigeria. Additionally, it highlighted the need for stronger Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and AI fluency to prepare Nigeria's workforce for the future.

The report's findings showed that Google's digital skills programmes, including Digital Skills for Africa and the Career Certificates Programme, had helped millions of Nigerians, with over 1.5 million young adults learning new digital skills in 2023 alone.

The report estimated that AI could increase Nigeria's economy by an additional $15 billion by 2030, with Google's commitment to responsible AI development set to play a pivotal role.

In 2021, Google committed $1 billion to accelerate Africa's digital economy, focusing on improving internet access, supporting local entrepreneurs, and fostering innovation. The Nigeria Digital Opportunity report illustrated how these investments were already creating lasting impacts in the country.

Analysing the report, Director, West Africa at Google, Olumide Balogun, said, "We are thrilled to see the positive impact that digital technology is having on Nigeria's economy. The report underscores the importance of continued investment in digital skills and infrastructure to unlock the full potential of Nigeria's vibrant digital economy."

Director/Head of Technology Policy at Public First, Amy Price, said, "Nigeria is a digital front-runner in Africa, and tech investment will be a powerful catalyst for further growth and development across the country. This is particularly true when it comes to connectivity, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence."

Speaking at a panel session yesterday to discuss the report, moderated by Communications Manager, Google West Africa, Taiwo Ogunlade, the Search Product Partnerships Manager at Google, Ugochi Agoreyo, highlighted the opportunities and challenges which AI was addressing across several sectors of the Nigerian economy. Agoreyo called for government partnership to address some of the identified challenges.

Head, Government Relations and Public Policy at Google West Africa, Adewolu Adene, in his submission, stressed the need for rapid acceleration of digital skills in Nigeria, using AI to boost STEM education. According to him, Gemini, which is Google's AI model, helps to drive efficiencies and everything from education to coding.

With AUM at N3 trillion, Access ARM Pension Debuts, Promises Innovation, Expanded Informal Sector Coverage

James Emejo in Abuja

The newly formed Access ARM Pensions Limited has officially launched operations, with a commitment to drive innovation and expand pension coverage into the country's vast informal sector.

The National Pension Commission (PenCom), recently granted its approval for the merger between ARM Pension Managers (PFA) Limited and Access Pensions Limited to form the new entity.

The commission stated that the merger was expected to result in the achievement of economies of scale, improved operational efficiency of the new entity, as well as improved service delivery to Retirement Savings Account (RSA) holders.

The merger creates a formidable player in the industry with over N3 trillion in Assets Under Management (AUM), accounting for 15 per cent of industry's total assets and over 20 per cent of customer base.

Speaking at the unveiling of the new company in Abuja, Managing Director, Access Pensions Limited, Mr. Dave Uduanu, emphasised the strength of the newly formed organisation with the support of Access Corporation.

Uduanu said the new entity was strongly capitalised with total shareholders' funds exceeding N20 billion, and well above the minimum regulatory requirement.

He further outlined plans to collaborate with regulators, partners, and the parent company to leverage technology for expanding pension coverage into the vast informal sector through a well-crafted on-boarding strategy for micro-pensions.

Uduanu said over the past 19 years, the legacy companies had thrived through unwavering determination, growing sustainably, and earning the loyalty of their customers.

He said, "This is the biggest merger in the pension industry. Access and ARM were number two and four in the industry. Coming together to create a PFA with N3 trillion of Asset Under Management (AUM) with 15 per cent of industry total asset and more than 20 per cent of customer base. It is an opportunity to create a brand that we can all be proud of."

Uduanu said the ceremony marked the dawn of a new era, with the unveiling of a formidable force in Nigerian pensions, bringing together two leading brands with histories dating back to 2004.

He said the pension industry had experienced tremendous growth since the advent of the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), with average annual growth of 15-20 per cent.

He said as of the end of July 2024, total pension assets stood at NGN20.9 trillion ($13 billion), serving over 10.4 million Nigerians.

Uduanu added that both entities had built significant brand equity with a track record of strong investment performance.

"We are coming together to deliver excellent pension solutions to our clients," he stated.

Uduanu also reflected on the rationale behind the merger.

He said, "This union positions us uniquely in the evolving landscape of pension fund administration.

"Firstly, advances in medical science implies longer life expectancies compared to 20 years ago when Nigeria's pension industry began.

"We face shifting regulatory landscapes, changing macroeconomic trends, and increasing demands for transparency and efficiency.

"Meeting these demands requires greater resources and pooled strengths to deliver improved customer satisfaction in retirement."

He also said, "The merger of Access Pensions Limited and ARM Pension Managers Limited is more than just a business transaction; it is a strategic alignment of strengths, expertise, and resources.

"With combined assets under management of over N3 trillion and over 2 million Retirement Savings Account (RSA) holders, this business exemplifies what can be achieved when industry leaders unite with a shared vision."

Acting Chairman, Access ARM Pensions Limited, Mr. Austin Opara, reaffirmed the board's commitment to the new brand, adding, "We are dedicated to making it a strong and successful entity."

Opara assured customers of reliability, growth, and commitment to service, saying, "For those who are not yet satisfied, we will work to earn your trust."

He also reaffirmed the company's commitment to stakeholders to grow their funds and assets as well as strengthen its culture of rewarding staff, and ensuring they were recognised for their contributions.

In his remarks, former Managing Director, ARM Pension Managers Limited, Mr. Wale Odutola, said the new entity was well-positioned to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of pension fund management in the country.

Odutola said, "We are thrilled to join forces with Access Pensions to create a stronger, more resilient organisation. Together, we will leverage our combined resources to drive innovation and excellence in pension fund management."

The gathering observed a moment silence for the late Access Bank Group Chief Executive, Mr. Herbert Wigwe, whose vision created Access Pensions in December 2022, through the merger of Sigma Pensions and First Guarantee Pension, and the acquisition of ARM Pensions in January 2024.

Uduanu described Wigwe as a pioneer and trailblazer in the financial industry, who also provided a platform for innovation and leadership in retirement planning in the country.

AfDB Targets Additional 120MT of Grains by 2025 to Douse Food Crisis

Insists Africa must strive to reduce imports

James Emejo in Abuja

The Director General for Nigeria, African Development Bank (AfDB), Mr. Abdul Kamara, yesterday said it is working to facilitate the production of an additional 120 million tons of food by 2025 to tackle food insecurity in Africa.

He said the move was also expected to lift 130 million people out of poverty.

Kamara, who at spoke a side event at the 2024 West and Central Africa Regional Wheat Summit, with the theme, "Prioritizing Policy, Innovative Technologies, and Investments in Wheat Transformation towards Sustainable Food Security and Economy", in Abuja, said the continent must work towards reducing food import dependency and bolster local wheat production to secure the region's food future.

He said the Feed Africa's Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation remained major initiative by the bank to boost agricultural productivity in all parts of Africa.

He pointed out that the rising demand for food was due to population growth and urbanisation, adding that domestic production had not kept pace with consumption, leading to massive reliance on imports.

The recent geopolitical tensions, particularly the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, had worsened the situation, leading to increased vulnerability in the region's food supply.

The AfDB country director also stated that the bank's response yo food challenges was encapsulated in its Feed Africa initiative, launched in 2016.

The 10-year strategy aims to transform agriculture across the continent into a competitive agribusiness sector.

He said, "The Feed Africa's Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation is a major initiative that aims to boost agricultural productivity in all parts of Africa. This will produce an additional 120 million tons of food and lift 130 million people out of poverty."

According to him, the initiative was designed to assist over 40 million farmers by 2025, aiming to double the productivity of crops, livestock, and fisheries.

Kamara stressed that wheat remained a staple food for millions across the continent and plays an essential role in ensuring food security and driving economic growth.

He expressed optimism that the challenges faced in food production would be turned into opportunities and create a prosperous wheat sector that serves the needs of the people.

He further urged stakeholders to engage in discussions aimed at building resilient agricultural systems capable of supporting Africa's food security and economic growth.

NEWS



SWEARING-IN CEREMONY OF NEWLY ELECTED COUNCIL CHAIRMEN...

L-R: Anambra State Governor, Prof Chukwuma Soludo; Idemili North Local Government Chairperson, Mrs Amaka Obi; her Deputy Chairman and Special Adviser to the governor on Youth Empowerment, Dr Nelson Omenugha, during the swearing in ceremony of newly elected council chairmen at the government house, Awka...yesterday

FG: Tinubu's Road Contracts Fairly Distributed with 52.4% Legacy Projects in North

●Says northern region has 45 of 82 ongoing Sukuk-funded projects ●Begins repair work on Lagos-Sango-Abeokuta Expressway

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The federal government yesterday responded to an allegation that it was favouring the South in the distribution of road projects across the country, stressing that 52.48 per cent of legacy projects initiated by the Bola Tinubu administration was located in the North.

One Muhammad Jamil, also known as Jadda Garko, had reportedly accused the David Umahi-led Ministry of Works of pandering to ethnic sentiments in the sharing of road projects nationally. He added that the federal government had abandoned the roads in the North in favour of the South.

But a statement from the ministry said that Garko did not have any recourse to facts, figures or records, but decided to blindly allege that the Northern region was neglected in the distribution of the ongoing projects executed by the ministry.

"For the records, the Federal Ministry of Works has continued to work diligently, transparently, and fairly in implementing the distribution of the ongoing road and bridge infrastructure interventions, nationwide.

"This applies to both the projects funded through budgetary provisions and other funding models such as the Renewed Hope Infrastructure Fund, SUKUK, Tax Credit Scheme in financing the Renewed Hope Legacy Road Projects, inherited ongoing projects and the emergency intervention ones.

"The Minister of Works, David Umahi, has commendably and unprecedentedly stepped up project monitoring and supervision mechanisms on these projects spread across the six geo-political zones, and Nigerians can attest to the fact that every zone has its fair share in the distribution of the ongoing projects.

"Facts and figures show that out of a total of 2,735km of the legacy projects initiated by the administration of President Bola Tinubu, the North has a cumulative total of 1,414km, while the South has 1,321km amounting to a percentage ratio of 52:48 respectively" the statement said.

Furthermore, it stated that out of 82 Sukuk-funded ongoing projects, the North has 45, while the South has 37 projects.

It states that of the 260 emergency projects, 98 are being executed in the South, while 108 are in the North, while out of the 44 road projects executed under the Road Tax Credit Scheme, 23 are domiciled in the North, while 21 numbers are in the South.

To further illustrate the sense of fairness in the treatment of all parts of Nigeria by the administration, at the last Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting of September 23, 2024, it said FEC approved the construction of 258 km three-lane carriageway using continuously reinforced concrete pavement in Kebbi and Sokoto States.

"Also is the 1,000km Sokoto-Badagry Superhighway, completion of the construction of the Bodo-Bonny Road with bridges across the Opobo Channel in Rivers State, the rescoping and downward review of the contract to rehabilitate the Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano Dual Carriageway, the construction of Cross River to Oferekpe road and the rehabilitation of Kabba (Kogi State) - Iyamoye-Omuo-Ikole-Ifaki-Ado Ekiti (Ekiti State) road.

"In addition is the repair of the Gamboru Bridge along Gamboru-Ngala-Kala Balde road in Borno State, the repair of the damaged loops and ramps of the Third Mainland Bridge Superstructure, the rehabilitation of Adeniji-Falomo roads, the construction of service lanes for the Lekki Deep Sea Port through Epe to Shagamu-Benin Expressway, the dualisation of Afikpo-Uturu-Okigwe Road in Ebonyi, Abia and Imo states, and the repair of 14 bridges, roads, and flooded sections of Federal Highways nationwide.

" The distribution of the aforementioned approved projects shows, as always, that fairness is a fundamental principle in the Renewed Hope agenda of Mr. President," the federal government stated.

The Ministry of Works, the statement said, has achieved a considerable milestone in the execution of critical projects in the North such as the construction and expansion of Mararaba - Keffi road (43.65km), the construction of Lafia Bypass both in Nasarawa State and the Dualisation of 9th Mile (Enugu State) –Otukpo - Makurdi road project (phase ii) in Nasarawa, Benue and Enugu State.

Besides, it highlighted the rehabilitation of Abuja - Abaji - Lokoja Road, Abuja - Lokoja Road, Kano – Maiduguri Dual Carriageway, Adamawa - Taraba Single Carriageway, Adamawa - Borno Single Carriageway, Kaduna-Jos Single Carriageway, Zaria-Funtua - Gusau -Sokoto Dual Carriageway and the Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano road.

It said the minister has not only visited these projects but has also set up a supervision mechanism to ensure quality and speed in the execution of the projects.

The ministry it is undoubtedly committed to applying the tenets of fairness, justice, equity, and good conscience in the distribution and execution of road infrastructure projects.

"The minister has proven stewardship of passion, professionalism, inclusiveness and an abiding devotion to nation-building. It is only persons of narrow minds or with cheap and ulterior motives that can be so petty as to engage in such unprovoked and mischievous misrepresentation of facts as contained in the said publication credited to Jadda Garko, described as a singer and politician.

"Members of the public are hereby enjoined to discountenance the allegations in the said publication, as it is baseless, unfounded, mendacious and calculated to demean the person of the Minister of Works for the personal gains of the sponsors," it stressed.

Meanwhile, the federal government has begun repairs on the 7km dilapidated sections of the Lagos-Sango-Ota-Abeokuta road. The road has been bad for some time.

But the Federal Ministry of Works said it was bringing relief on the dilapidated sections in conjunction with the concessionaire.

"The Federal Ministry of Works under the watch of Umahi is committed to providing relief to motorists and commuters on all the federal roads nationwide, hence the introduction of 'Operation Free Our Roads", it added.

Despite NDDC, Senate Approves New Development Commission for South-south

●Amends N/West, S/East Development Commissions Acts

Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The Senate at plenary yesterday passed for second reading a bill seeking the establishment of the South-South Development Commission (SSDC), a few months after kicking against it.

The federal lawmakers had rejected the bill when it was first presented because they claimed that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) had covered most of the functions of the proposed SSDC.

Arguments canvassed by the sponsor of the bill, Senator Asuquo Ekpenyong (APC Cross River South) and Senator Seriake Dickson (PDP Bayelsa West) during debate on the bill, convinced their colleagues across party lines and geopolitical zones to embrace the idea.

Dickson, in his contribution to the bill, said NDDC, being mistaken to be in the mode of zonal development commissions, was a resource-based commission that cut across the South-south geopolitical zone.

Dickson stated, "NDDC is a resource-based commission meant to mitigate environmental degradation caused by oil exploration across the oil producing states and fast track their development.

"The states covered by NDDC cut across South-south, South-east and South-west, unlike zonal based commissions, which the proposed South-South Commission falls under."

Elated by total support given the proposed commission by all the senators, who contributed, Senate President Godswill Akpabio thereafter referred the legislative proposal to the Senate Committee on Special Duties and required it to report back within one week.

The red chamber thereafter resolved to amend the North-West and South-East Development Commission Acts over positions of Managing Director and Chairman.

It passed for second reading the South-South Development Commission Bill.

In his separate lead debates on the amendment bills, the leader of the Senate, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele, said the amendment on the North-West Development Commission Act, 2024 sought to provide for geopolitical representation in the Governing Board of the Commission.

Bamidele said the amendment bill also sought to reconcile the lacuna that existed in the provisions relating to the appointments of the chairman and managing director of the commission by ensuring that the two were not appointed from the same state in the zone.

It also sought to subject the appointments to the confirmation of the senate in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Bamidele said, "For effective representation, and in line with the principles of Federal Character, it is imperative that membership of the commission be extended to other geopolitical zones of the country, which would be in tandem with extant Acts, relating to the establishment of federal commissions."

The senate leader gave similar reasons in his lead debate for amendment of the South East Development Commission Act.

In his remarks after passing the amendments bill for second reading, Akpabio, said the proposed amendments to the Acts were very necessary for smooth running of the commissions across the zones.

ECOWAS Insists Peace and Unity Important to Success of AfCTA in West Africa

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has said peace and unity in West Africa remains important to the success of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) in the region.

Speaking at the capacity building on dispute settlement mechanisms under the AfCTA organised by ECOWAS, the Director of Trade ECOWAS commission, Kolawole Sofola said given the complexity of cross border trade and investment, effective dispute resolution mechanisms are critical for ensuring the smooth operation of AfCTA agreement and its protocols.

He said this workshop comes at a pivotal moment in our collective journey towards regional and continental integration.

He added: "As we work towards realizing the full potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area, it is clear that the mechanisms for resolving trade disputes will be a cornerstone in ensuring the success and the credibility of this landmark agreement."

He noted that AfCFTA represents not just an opportunity, but a transformation for Africa, providing a platform for trade liberalization, economic growth and development, however, it would only succeed if the rules are adhered to and any disputes that arise are settled in a fair, efficient and transparent manner".

He added that: "The benefits of trade agreements could be undermined, affecting investor confidence, distorting fair competition and stifling economic progress.

"By ensuring that disputes are addressed swiftly, we foster an environment that promotes fair trade, protects intellectual property rights, enhances innovation and ultimately contributes to the economic development of West Africa and the African continent as a whole".

One of the organisers and facilitator at the workshop, Professor Muhammed Ladan, shed light on the reason why the workshop is so important,

His words: "Of all the 15 ECOWAS member states, only Benin Republic has signed, and that is yet to ratify, the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement and two out of 55 African member states, 54 are signatories to the African contributory agreement, and 48 are state parties through the African refugee area agreement, meaning as ECOWAS we are actually integrated into the African contributors area agreement, already by 14 out of 15 ECOWAS member states being signatories, are also parties, which means the agreement as of today are legally binding on 14 out of 15 states".

He further explained that, "because of the AfCTA agreement itself, article one defines the regional economic communities in Africa that they are the building blocks of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement.

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NEWS



DG MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA'S VISIT TO UNILEVER...

L-R: Customer Development Director and Vice Chairman, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria Export Group (MANEG), Tobi Adeniyi; Assistant Director, Membership Division, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Joseph Emoleke; National Finance Director, Unilever Nigeria, Folake Ogundipe; Director-General, MAN, Segun Ajayi-Kadir, mni; Managing Director, Unilever Nigeria, Tim Kleinebenne; Assistant Director, Special Duties, MAN, Kanayo Iwuchukwu; and Human Resources, Director, Unilever East and West Africa, Michael Duah, during the courtesy visit of MAN DG to Unilever Nigeria Head Office, Lagos ...yesterday

NWDC: Women Fault Tinubu Over All-male Board Membership

Insist on 35% affirmative action across board

Kuni Tyessi in Abuja

Women in northern Nigerian have faulted President Bola Tinubu over the recent appointment of an all-male board membership for the North West Development Commission (NWDC).

The women stated their position in a statement on Thursday titled, "A Stark Omission: Gender Representation in the North West Development Commission." It was signed by Asma'u Joda, Saudatu Mahdi, Maryam Uwais, Aisha Oyebode, Mairo Mandara, Qadriyya Ahmed, Fatima Akilu, and Rabi Jimeta.

They said the president's decision went against the National Gender Policy of 35 per cent affirmative action for women, which he had promised in all his appointments.

The women stated that the glaring absence of women in the NWDC Board was profoundly telling and troubling. They called it a blatant disregard of the female voice, which spoke volumes about the mind-set of those who were in charge of the nomination process.

They said the selection process conveyed reasons the North-west region was lagging behind in so many human capital indices, with alarming statistics and multi-dimensional poverty ratings in the seven states of the zone ranging from 72 per cent to 90 per cent.

While calling on Tinubu to review the board membership, the statement added that four of the seven states in the zone had more children out of formal school, than in school with a vast majority having less than 20 per cent girl-child literacy rates.

The statement read in part, "Not a single female name appears among the nominees forwarded to the Senate for confirmation. It goes against the grain of the National Gender Policy, the president's promise of at least 35 per cent affirmative action for women in his appointments, and all sense of justice and equity.

"Northern Nigeria has a rich history of formidable female leaders, professionals, and activists, who have tirelessly championed socio-economic progress.

"Indeed, numerous women exist, who through sheer determination and resilience, have driven initiatives to educate the girl child, combat malnutrition, reduce maternal and infant mortality, as well as address sexual and gender-based violence and the escalating mental health challenges.

"Their glaring absence from the NWDC Board is profoundly telling and troubling. The blatant disregard of the female voice also speaks volumes about the mind-set of those who are in charge of the nomination process.

"The decision to exclude women from pivotal decision-making roles suggests a conviction in high places that the contributions and perspectives of women are inconsequential to solving these pressing problems. This glaring omission is an opportunity lost for all. And the region can only be the worse for it.

"When will our leaders recognise that addressing these deep-rooted societal issues requires inclusive, diverse perspectives?

"While it is true that a handful of women may have already been tried and tested in the past, thousands of others do exist, that have the capacity and competencies to record huge successes in achieving the sustainable development goals in a timely manner."

Nigeria: Global Inequality Rising, Many Countries Incapable of Meeting SDG 2030

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

Nigeria has rued rising global inequality which is leaving many countries incapable of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.

Speaking on Thursday at the ongoing Nordic-African Business Summit in Oslo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, noted that the summit is potentially an epoch-making event in the history of the relationship between Nordic Countries and Africa

He said: "We gather at a time of weakening global economic performance, even if the Inflation Reduction Act has had a salutary effect on the largest economy on the planet- the US. Inequality is on the rise, as it becomes all the more apparent that we are unlikely to meet our Sustainable Development Goals by 2030."

Tuggar further said: "More unsettling is the state of geopolitical affairs, as we made the transition after the Cold War from a bipolar order to a unipolar moment and then a multipolar system.

"Protectionism and trade barriers have made a comeback in what we thought had become an interconnected, globalised world. Now whether or not this is a result of the transition to a less stable multipolar system should not detain us here.

"What is clear is that it has become a less safe, scarier world and the businessmen and women in this room should become all the more concerned. Conflicts rage in Ukraine, Sudan and the Levant, each with the potential of spilling into a wider global conflict.

"That of the Levant has already become one, with Israel's pre-emptive strikes at Iran drawing a response two days ago. In my region, the expanding Sahel has become a theatre for unconstitutional changes of government, organised criminal gangs and banditry.

"Migration has been weaponised, with eco-fascists calling for border closures and the far-right becoming mainstream in some countries. The gratuitous use of migrant fear has forgotten the admonishment of Adam Smith - the father of Economics: Free Circulation of Labour is the Foundation of any Free Trade System.

AMCE Plans $237m Cutting-Edge Cyclotron Facility for Cancer, Sickle Cell Treatment

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The African Medical Centre of Excellence (AMCE), has commenced the construction of modern medicine facility with advanced medical imaging technology essential for diagnosing and treating diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular and neurological disorders.

AMCE which is a tertiary-level multi-specialty medical institution being built in Abuja by Afreximbank in collaboration with King's College Hospital, London.

The Centre yesterday took Journalists on a facility tour of its $1 billion world-class, state-of-the-art medical facilities, including a Cyclotron that will significantly enhance diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities across the continent.

The Chief Executive Officer of AMCE, Mr. Brian Deaver, said the Cyclotron is a crucial component of AMCE, designed to facilitate advanced medical imaging technology essential for diagnosing and treating complex diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and neurological disorders - areas where AMCE will specialise.

Deaver said that the first stage of the hospital project will gulp $237 million with focus on four key areas of intervention-cancer, sickle cell, cardiovascular, hematology treatment and general medical and surgical services.

"This equipment will enable the production of radiopharmaceuticals, which are vital for PET-CT scans and other nuclear medicine procedures, offering unparalleled precision in disease detection and treatment planning,'" he said.

Currently, West Africa faces a significant gap in access to cyclotron technology, with only one operational cyclotron in the region.

According to a 2023 report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the majority of Africa's cyclotron facilities are concentrated in North Africa and South Africa, leaving West Africa with limited access to advanced diagnostic imaging and radiopharmaceutical production.

Brian said that the development of AMCE's Cyclotron facility aims to bridge this gap, providing much-needed access to cutting-edge medical technology in West Africa.

He said the medical centre presently in the final stages of construction will be completed in April 2025 and will commence operations by June of the same year.

"The development of the AMCE'sCyclotron facility at our Abuja medical centre represents a monumental leap forward in medical advancement and access across the continent.

"This facility will not only elevate our diagnostic capabilities but also democratise access to cutting-edge treatment options that have historically been out of reach for most people in Africa. Enhancing the accuracy and speed of disease detection and treatment will play a vital role in saving lives and improving patient outcomes," Brian said.

The AMCE boss said that by producing radiopharmaceuticals in-house, the health institution can ensure that patients receive the highest quality of care, a crucial step in the hospital's mission to deliver, "world-class, accessible, and affordable healthcare across the continent."

The AMCE Cyclotron has the capacity to supply radioisotopes to other PET CT facilities in the sub-region.

The Deputy General Manager, the Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NNRA); Fatima Ige who represented the Director General, said the agency is working with the hospital to ensure compliance to regulatory rules as it concerns ionizing radiation.

While explaining the various sections of the hospital complex during the tour, the Chief Medical Director of AMCE, Dr. Aisha Umar, said that everything is being put in place to ensure excellent service delivery on a sustainable basis.

As a tertiary health institution dedicated to ensuring the use of cutting age technology in the treatment and management of diseases, Deaver said that AMCE will no doubt help to reverse the brain drain syndrome and medical tourism.

Global Natural Gas Demand to Increase By 2.5% in 2024, Says IEA

Ndubuisi Francis in Abuja

Global gas demand is projected to rise by more than 2.5 per cent in 2024, with a similar growth expected in 2025, according to the latest edition of the International Energy Agency (IEA's) annual Global Gas Security Review.

Natural gas reserves in Africa totaled over 17.89 trillion standard cubic meters in 2023, with Nigeria housing the largest reserves of around 5.94 trillion standard cubic meters on the continent, (equivalent to roughly three per cent of the proved global natural gas reserves).

The report, which was released yesterday urged producers and consumers to work together to ensure secure global gas supplies amid mounting geopolitical concerns.

Noting that global demand for natural gas is increasing at a stronger rate in 2024 than in the previous two years, which were heavily affected by the turmoil of the global energy crisis, IEA observed that at the same time, new gas supplies coming to market in 2024 remain limited.

This, it explained, is due to the relatively slow growth of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) production while geopolitical tensions continue to fuel price volatility.

According to the IEA report, fast-growing markets in Asia account for a large amount of the increase in 2024 while a rebound in Europe's industrial gas demand is also contributing, even though it remains well below its pre-crisis levels.

The new Security Review also includes the IEA's latest quarterly Gas Market Report analysis.

IEA Director of Energy Markets and Security, Keisuke Sadamori said: "The growth we're seeing in global gas demand this year and next reflects the gradual recovery from a global energy crisis that hit markets hard,"

"But the balance between demand and supply trends is fragile, with clear risks of future volatility. Producers and consumers must work together closely to navigate these uncertain times while taking into account the need to advance clean energy transitions to ensure a secure and sustainable future."

The report revealed that markets remain sensitive to unexpected supply and demand side developments.

LNG's role in the global gas trade has grown since the onset of the global energy crisis, and it is likely to play a crucial part in maintaining the supply-demand balance globally.

Constraints across the Panama Canal and the Red Sea continue to impact shipping but have not led to a decline in LNG supply thus far.

However, they highlight the potential vulnerabilities of LNG trade in an increasingly interconnected global gas market.

The situation may shift in 2025 when LNG supply growth is set to accelerate to near 6 per cent as several large LNG projects come online, mainly in the second half of the year.

North America will account for the vast majority of new capacity, while new volumes from Africa and Asia will also contribute.

Adelabu: Electricity Tariff in Nigeria Low Compared to Other African Countries

● *Insists it's costlier to run generating sets than paying for grid power*

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adelabu, yesterday argued that the electricity tariff paid by Nigerians was still cheaper than what obtains in some African countries like Togo, Mali and Niger Republic.

Adelabu spoke when he received the Executive Secretary of the National Lottery Trust Fund (NLTF), Mr. Tosin Adeyanju, who led the management team of the agency on a visit to him at the headquarters of the ministry in Abuja.

The minister further assured of a reduction in the cost of electricity, with the current effort to step up generation and distribution of power in the country, according to a statement by his Special Adviser, Media, Mr Bolaji Tunji.

Adelabu said that that the low level of income in Nigeria was making the cost of electricity look high to power consumers in the country.

He also said that it was still far cheaper to use electricity than to run generators, using petrol or diesel, going by the prices of those fuels today.

He expressed the readiness of the ministry and its relevant agencies to collaborate and work with the NLTF to achieve the set objective.

The minister said the renewable power project of the ministry was established to address the areas of the country that the grid does not cover.

"We will be very happy to work and partner with you on this project. We have agencies that are driving this renewable power project, using solar, wind and other alternative sources of power supply where the grid cannot reach. Such agency is our Rural Electricity Agency (REA) and they will be of great value to you in this project.

"All over the world today, we are faced with two basic issues and these are food and energy security. We can see that the cost of gas is going up globally due partly to the war between Russia and Ukraine.

"However, we must be committed to providing electricity to our rural people, particularly the youths. We can see that even those of them who have learnt skills have abandoned those skills and are now riding Okada for quick money.

"President Tinubu is committed to the transformation of Nigeria and youths and rural development are of his great concern. If Nigerians are patient, they will realise that the government means well for them. We are happy with this effort and will be very willing to work and collaborate with you to achieve it", the minister said.

In his remarks, the lottery boss argued that Nigerians had not witnessed the improvement in the electricity supply in the country, as it is today.

"Before now, many were already opting for solar as supply was totally abysmal. But you have restored people's confidence in the sector since you came on board," Adeyanju said.

He informed the minister that the agency was working to get the youths, particularly in the rural areas, to be productive by training them on how to assemble one kilowatt of solar energy.

"We have come to you to seek partnership with you on how we can train our rural people, particularly the youths, on how they can assemble one kilowatt of solar energy.

"This will help a long way in addressing youth restiveness by creating employment for them, particularly those who have acquired skills such as hair dressing, vulcanising, welding and so on like that.

"This is part of our effort to help President Tinubu to achieve his aim of addressing the challenges of unemployment among the rural people and the youths in general.

"We want to carry this out in all the local government areas of the country and since we have seen your commitment in this area of power supply, we have decided to approach your ministry for partnership to achieve this," Adeyanju said.



Adelabu

TINUBU: A SECURE NIGERIA IS SECURE SAHEL

region, and offers invaluable benefits to the country's neighbours.

Tinubu flaunted his record in the area of security for the umpteenth time, saying fixing Nigeria would also help the country's neighbours facing similar challenges and difficulties.

He spoke in Abuja at the first News Agency of Nigeria Annual International Lecture. The lecture was themed, "Insecurity in the Sahel (2008-2024): Dissecting Nigeria's Challenges – Genesis, Impacts and Options."

The president, who was represented by National Security Adviser (NSA), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, was miffed by the multidimensional security threats confronting the country.

But Tinubu declared to terrorists, bandits, kidnappers, and other criminal elements making life unbearable for citizens that enough was enough.

He said the country's security forces had destroyed over 300 terrorist commanders in the last one year.

Former military Head of State and chairman of the occasion, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, said Nigeria's security challenges could not be divorced from the regional heritage, stressing that the Sahel has become a huge killing field.

In his goodwill message, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Christopher Musa, traced the regional instability and turmoil to both local and foreign factors.

At the same time, Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, asserted the federal government's commitment to tackling insecurity in the country through improved investment in equipment, manpower, and intelligence gathering.

Tinubu stated that for 15 years Nigeria had gone through hell in the hands of anti-social elements, who had continued to interfere with the livelihoods of citizens.

He said regarding the criminal elements, "They have continued to interfere where we live our lives, interfere with our commerce, interfere with our education, interfere with our health system, interfere with our transportation and so on.

"And we just sit down and stand and allow them. Enough is enough. It has to stop. It will stop. In the last one year, no fewer than 300 terrorists' commanders were killed. This is just a very conservative statistic."

The president said his administration in the last one year had also put in place policies and programmes to achieve improved security. He disclosed six key security objectives developed by his government to curtail insecurity.

They included strengthening institutions and promoting accountability to address the root causes of insecurity as well as investing in job creation, infrastructure development, social services to reduce poverty and inequality.

According to him, "We have developed both kinetic and non-kinetic strategies in eliminating the threats of Boko Haram cowards, banditry, kidnapping for ransom and violent extremists.

"A secure Nigeria is a secure Sahel region because of our number, because of our size, because of our strategic position, and where we are. We are fixing Nigeria, and, you see, it is going to translate into the other parts of our neighbours, who are, indeed, facing challenges and difficulties.

"This lecture organised by the News Agency of Nigeria is, therefore, a worthy contribution to the ongoing debate to the body of knowledge on the nation's security architecture and what prognosis to make going forward."

On his part, Abubakar said Nigeria's security challenges could not be divorced from the regional legacy in the Sahel, a vast landmass encompassing the troubled countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Cameroon.

He stated that public discourse on the debilitating challenges of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, malignancy, and violence, among others, would go a long way in providing solutions aimed at boosting the country's security architecture.

Abubakar stated, "In 2020, a whopping 4,660 people were killed in this region, while another 2,600 civilians lost their lives in banditry attacks in 2021.

"Today, this region is still one huge killing field, in spite of the best efforts of successive governments there. But who are the non-state actors at the heart of this ring of violence?

"How is it impacting on Nigeria? How do we as a nation contend with this presence and clear danger? What prognosis can we make going forward?"

Musa said the Sahel region had become synonymous with instability, violence, and insecurity. He averred that from the rise of insurgent groups, like Boko Haram and ISWAP, to the spread of violent extremism, human trafficking, and illegal arms proliferation, the region had witnessed unprecedented turmoil.

Stating that insecurity did not emerge in a vacuum, the CDS said its roots could be traced to a combination of local and global factors, including poor governance, economic marginalisation, climate change, ethnic tensions, and the spillover effects of conflicts in North Africa and the broader Middle East.

Idris said the NAN lecture was an invaluable opportunity to delve deeply into the root causes of the violence that had ravaged the Sahel region, examining its impact on Nigeria's territorial integrity, and exploring the options available to policy strategists based on Nigeria's security architecture.

The minister acknowledged that the country's porous borders with some countries in the Sahel, which had become a vortex of instability, violence, terrorism, organised crime, drug trafficking, smuggling of weapons and violent extremism was having a spillover effect on Nigeria.

Idris stated, "Nigeria shares a long and porous border with several Sahelian countries caught up in conflict, making us vulnerable to the spillover effects of the conflict. This not only threatens our security but also challenges our capacity to maintain effective control over our borders.

"Several scholars and experts had earlier attributed these challenges to socioeconomic marginalisation, weak governance structures, environmental degradation and climate change, transnational organised crime, and illegal trafficking in arms, among others, but the spillover effect of these conflicts is taking its toll on our economy, internal security and the socio-economic well-being of our people."

He said the federal government was committed to addressing the underlying issues both domestically and in collaboration with international partners.

The minister stressed that the violence in the Sahel was not an isolated issue, saying no country can tackle it alone.

He said Nigeria had stepped up engagement with its neighbours

Continued on page 14

KWANKWASO: WIND OF CHANGE WILL BLOW IN 2027, SECURITY, INEC WILL RUN HELTER-SKELTER

Ahmad Sorondinki in Kano

Former presidential candidate of New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP), Dr Rabiu Kwankwaso, has said the wind of change is gathering momentum, and it would chase away bad leaders in the 2027 elections.

Kwankwaso made the assertion yesterday, when he received many defectors from All Progressives Congress (APC) to NNPP at his residence in Kano.

He said the security operatives and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) would run helter-skelter at the dawning of the new Nigeria.

While stating that the people had suffered enough because of bad governance, Kwankwaso said, "Nigerians and northerners, in particular, have suffered enough and no amount of pressure, fear and deceit will prevent them from changing the situation.

"Regardless of their belief that they would use security and INEC in the forthcoming elections, Nigerians are fed up with them and will surely fight to change the narrative.

"When the wind of change blows, you will see those who think they have security and INEC running helter-skelter, and Nigerians will make the right choice of those who will address their unfortunate situation."

The former governor told the new NNPP members, "I am glad that you have now realised the imperatives of leaving your former party, having experienced the prevailing unfortunate happenings in the country, such as insecurity, poverty, hunger and starvation.

"I am also happy that you have realised that the NNPP is the only party that can rescue the country from the aforementioned challenges."

Some of the defectors, who spoke at occasion, said they joined NNPP because of the people-oriented programmes of the NNPP government in Kano State, which was positively impacting the lives of the people.

To Curb Speculation, Market Distortions, CBN Introduces Electronic Foreign Exchange Matching System

● *Platform effective December 01, 2024*

James Emejo in Abuja

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) yesterday announced the introduction of the Electronic Foreign Exchange Matching System (EFEMS), for Foreign Exchange (FX) transactions in the Nigerian Foreign Exchange Market (NFEM).

The new system which is to be implemented not later than December 01, 2024, and preceded by a two-week test run in November - is expected to enhance governance, transparency and facilitate a market-driven exchange rate that will be accessible to the public.

The central bank disclosed this in a circular dated October 2, 2024, which was addressed to all authorised dealers, and signed by CBN Director, Financial Markets Department, Dr. Omolara Duke.

The bank said the platform will further reduce speculative activities, eliminate market distortions and give the CBN improved oversight capabilities to effectively regulate the market.

The circular further noted that authorised dealers would subsequently conduct all FX transactions in the interbank FX market on the EFEMS approved by the apex bank where transactions will be reflected immediately.

Authorised dealers are therefore, required to comply with extant guidelines and regulations governing the Nigeria foreign exchange market, and ensure that all necessary documentation, training, and systems integrations are concluded ahead of the go live date.

The central bank added that it will publish real time prices and buy/sell orders data from the system, and in collaboration with the Financial Markets Dealers Association (FMDA), publish the rules for the EFEMS.

The Nigerian FX Code and revised Market Operating Guidelines for the Nigeria Foreign Exchange Market will also provide guidance to market participants.

NIGERIA TARGETS 4M BPD OIL PRODUCTION, 10BCF GAS OUTPUT BY 2030

project – the Egina project – was approved in 2013, International Oil Companies operating in Nigeria have committed more than $82 billion in deepwater investments to other countries that they deem more competitive.

"Over the next few years, they plan to spend another $90 billion to develop deepwater oil and gas projects. This is the pool of funds that our reforms are targeting, and we intend to unlock between $5 billion to $10 billion of new investments in Nigeria in the near- to medium-term," Verheijen said.

For years, Nigeria has been unable to meet its Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil production quota, blaming the problem on massive oil theft as well as lack of investment in the sector.

But the presidential aide recalled in the release signed by the Stakeholder Manager in her office, Morenike Adewunmi, that since assuming office in May 2023, the government of Nigeria has embarked on a series of new reforms to improve the competitiveness of its oil and gas industry.

This, she said , was aimed at bringing down the costs and timelines of doing business in a sector that continues to be the biggest earner of foreign exchange for the country.

These reforms, which include three presidential directives issued in February 2024, Verheijen said, will create tens of thousands of new jobs, improve foreign exchange earnings, stimulate tax revenues and contribute to Nigeria's macroeconomic stability.

She further highlighted Tinubu's approval during the week, of the issuance of two new sets of fiscal incentives: a Value Added Tax (VAT) waiver covering gas, diesel, electric vehicles and clean cooking equipment, and tax credits for new investments in the exploration and production of deepwater oil and gas.

The new fiscal incentives, expected to take effect immediately were contained in documents issued by the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun.

According to the presidential aide, the incentives are in alignment with the Presidential Gas for Growth Initiative, which aims to fast-track the development of natural gas, displace fossil fuels in transport, promote affordability of gas, and bolster the country's energy security.

Despite the intensifying urgency of the global energy transition, an estimated 76 per cent of Nigeria's gas, she stressed, remains undeveloped.

Commenting during the unveiling, the Chairman of the Oil Producers Trade (OPTS) Section, Osagie Okunbor, said: "The level of coordination and policy coherence we're seeing today is unprecedented. The accelerated pace of reforms over the past year has renewed our interest in Nigeria."

Also, Chairperson of the Petroleum Contractors Trade Section (PCTS), another industry group, Rosario Osobase, said: "For the first time in a long while, we're seeing positive momentum in our industry in Nigeria, thanks to the presidential directives and the government's deliberate efforts to engage the service sector."

Meanwhile, a survey by Reuters yesterday indicated that Nigeria pumped 40,000 bpd less oil leading to a decline in exports, quoting tanker tracking firms.

Overall, OPEC oil output fell in September to its lowest this year, the survey found, as unrest disrupted Libyan supply and Iraq made progress in complying with its cutbacks pledged to the wider OPEC+ alliance.

If the production deficit is confirmed by the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Company Limited (NUPRC) in the coming days, it would be a major setback for Nigeria, which has been looking to ramping up production to boost FX inflow.

OPEC countries pumped 26.14 million barrels per day last month, down 390,000 bpd from August's revised total, the survey found, with Libya accounting for the bulk of the drop.

A drop in Libyan exports and production amid a standoff between political factions over control of the central bank helped boost oil prices, which have come under pressure from concern about demand and rising supply outside OPEC+.

Libya provided the largest supply cut of 300,000 bpd. Output should rebound after a dispute over the leadership of the country's central bank was resolved and the national oil company lifted the force majeure at oilfields, Reuters reported.

Aside from Libya, which is exempt from OPEC+ agreements to limit production, the biggest decline came from Iraq, which is seeking to boost compliance with its OPEC target. Iraq is still pumping 90,000 bpd above quota, the survey found.

"Nigeria pumped 40,000 bpd less oil as exports declined, according to tanker tracking firms," the report said.

The Reuters survey aims to track supply to the market and is based on shipping data provided by external sources, LSEG flows data, information from companies that track flows such as Kpler and Petro-Logistics, and information provided by sources at oil companies, OPEC and consultants.

NEWS



MOU SIGNING OF MOWA-SARA ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME POWERED BY WEMA BANK...

L-R: CEO, OSC Garment, Mrs Olusola Babatunde; Divisional Head, Retail and SME, Wema Bank, Ayodele Olojede; CEO, Ample foods, Dr Aisha Ime-James; Executive Director, Retail and Digital Business, Wema Bank, Tunde Mabawonku, and Minster for Women Affairs, Uju Kennedy- Ohanenye at the MOU signing of the MOWA-SARA Accelerator program powered by Wema Bank in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs in Abuja...recently

Sen Buba Derides Gov Bala's 'Banditry Allegations' as Baseless, Malicious

Segun Awofadeji in Bauchi

Senator Shehu Umar Buba representing Bauchi South Senatorial District, also chairman of Senate Committee on National Security and Intelligence, has responded to allegations of sponsorship and support of banditry levelled against him by the Bauchi State Governor, Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed stating they are baseless, fabricated and malicious and that: "I cannot be intimidated by such allegations."

In his reply to the allegations addressed to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Shehu Buba Umar stated: "It is both laughable and regrettable that a governor who has consistently insulted and attacked President Bola Ahmed Tinubu while inciting citizens against the federal government, would dare to submit a petition against a legislator who has merely responded to his unfounded outbursts."

Senator Buba wrote: "As the Senator representing Bauchi South in the National Assembly, I have endured Governor Bala Mohammed's arrogance, excesses, and unbecoming behaviour, including his unfounded fabrications directed at my character - all because I defended the president against his incessant disparaging remarks."

According to him, "Not only did he orchestrate the withdrawal of my chieftaincy title, but he also employed political proxies to undermine my standing in the state. Such underhanded tactics clearly indicate his desperation, and I refuse to be intimidated.

"Therefore, I am unsurprised by his recent antics, which involve fabricating falsehoods in a petition to the president. In this letter, he alleges that one Abubakar Idris, a suspected bandit, and Zainab Aliyu Gado were registered to perform the pilgrimage through one Yahaya Ibrahim, purportedly a senior legislative aide to me, Senator Shehu Buba Umar."

Senator Buba further wrote: "Upon reviewing the petition, I wish to clarify the following: I do not have a senior legislative aide named Yahaya Ibrahim.

"While it falls within the jurisdiction of security services to conduct due diligence on prospective Hajj pilgrims, I sponsor numerous individuals for the pilgrimage each year based on recommendations from elders, community leaders, and religious figures."

He added: "I gather that Hajia Zainab Ali was thoroughly screened and permitted to perform the Hajj, whereas Abubakar Idris was arrested for further investigation without any interference from my office."

Shehu Buba Umar stressed: "As chairman of a critical senate committee, I have actively championed and supported initiatives aimed at counter-insurgency and anti-banditry, which have begun to yield positive results."

According to him, "Governor Bala Mohammed has maintained his attacks on the president and waged a political war against those of us who dare to question his leadership style and arrogance."

The senator further wrote that, "Mr. President, I'd like to remind you that in 2019, when Bala Mohammed faced political challenges, I personally introduced him to you through Mallam Nuhu Ribadu. However, just a few months later, he surprisingly turned against President Muhammadu Buhari, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and the APC at a PDP campaign rally in Bayelsa State, showcasing his ungrateful and duplicitous nature.

"In conclusion, I stand firm against these baseless allegations and remain committed to my responsibilities as a senator dedicated to my constituents' welfare and our nation's security. I attached with this letter, a list of media reports on the above as a reference."

Sanwo-Olu Congratulates APC Chieftain, Ajomale at 80

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State has congratulated former chairman of the state chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and now member of the Governance Advisory Council (GAC), Otunba Henry Ajomale, on his 80th birthday.

The governor, described the former Commissioner for Special Duties, who clocks 80 on Friday, October 4, as a respected and seasoned politician who has made a positive impact in governance and politics for over four decades.

Governor Sanwo-Olu, in a statement issued on Thursday by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mr. Gboyega Akosile, said Otunba Ajomale is an accomplished lawyer and business mogul who has made a mark in our society.

He said Otunba Ajomale deserves all the accolades at his 80th birthday for his immense contributions to the growth and development of good governance and politics in Lagos State and Nigeria as a whole.

The governor also praised the elder statesman and longest-serving chairman of the ruling party in Lagos State for his commitment and contributions to the victory of the party in many elections at state and national levels.

He said: "On behalf of my family, the government, and the people of Lagos State, as well as members of the Governance Advisory Council (GAC), leaders and members of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), I congratulate Otunba Henry Ajomale on his 80th birthday.

"Otunba Ajomale is a true democrat and experienced politician who is passionate about good governance and the delivery of democratic dividends to the people.

"He served our party passionately for many years and, till date, remains the longest-serving chairman of the ruling party in Lagos.

"Since he joined partisan politics, Otunba Ajomale has remained one of the respected leaders and leading voices in Lagos State politics. He is an uncompromised, disciplined, and principled politician.

"He led our party to victory as state chairman during many general and council elections. His contributions remain invaluable as a member of the Governance Advisory Council.

"As Otunba Henry Ajomale joins the league of octogenarians, I pray that God will grant him good health to enable him to render more service to humanity, his community, Lagos State, and Nigeria."

Switzerland Commits N1.9bn to Cushion Effects of Borno Flooding

Kuni Tyessi in Abuja

Trailing the Maiduguri floods and its devastating effects on Borno State, the government of Switzerland is committing approximately 1.9 billion Naira to support the humanitarian response.

The funding support will be channeled through the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund managed by the United Nations.

In a statement made available by the Swiss Embassy, Ambassador of Switzerland in Nigeria, Nicholas Lang, said the contribution will complement the efforts of the Nigerian government to respond to the crisis.

Expressing his satisfaction with Switzerland's ability to contribute to alleviating the suffering of the people affected by the floods, Lang noted that providing such humanitarian support has been a key pillar of the Swiss government in keeping close and longstanding relationship with Nigeria.

He said flood-affected people will be provided with multi-sectoral assistance to meet their immediate basic needs. This will include health, water and sanitation measures to prevent the spread of a cholera outbreak, temporary shelter, food security, as well as protection services.

He said: "This contribution to the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund will come in direct support to the government's efforts to provide immediate life-saving assistance.

"Providing such humanitarian support has been a key pillar of our close and longstanding relationship with Nigeria. We are also exploring ways to potentially assist efforts to strengthen disaster preparedness.

"With its ability to swiftly disburse funds and select the most relevant partners, including local organizations, I am confident that the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund will be an effective vehicle to provide immediate relief to the thousands of affected people in dire need of humanitarian assistance."

Resist Pressure to Sack NDDC Boss, Ogbuku, Group Urges Tinubu

Sylvester Idowu in Warri

South-South Reawakening Group (SSRG), one of the foremost pressure groups in the Niger Delta region, has appealed to President Bola Tinubu not to heed renew calls for the sack of Dr. Samuel Ogbuku leadership of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) by some people

SSRG described those behind the latest agitations for the sack of the Commission's Managing Director as buccaneers who were bent on perpetually keeping the region underdeveloped and in turmoil.

In a statement issued in Warri, yesterday, and signed by its Convener, Mr. Joseph Ambakederimo, the group maintained the need to abide by the provisions in the NDDC Act which was paramount and remains sacrosanct noting that incessant political interference affects the operations of the Commission.

The group said: "We have warned before that incessant political interference is responsible for the stuttering jerks the NDDC has suffered in the past, wherein we have continued to blame appointed persons of non-performance even when these appointed persons will barely stay in office to complete their tenure.

"This trend is fast becoming a tradition in the NDDC and should be condemned and resisted by all well-meaning Nigerians, particularly the people of the region whom the NDDC is established to cater for."

The group said it was compelled to issue another statement again to reinforce its earlier position made last year calling on the President to safeguard and protect the sanctity of the statutory provisions as contained in the NDDC Act regarding the tenure of the office of the leadership of the new NDDC board and board of management to have a very clear path to sustainable development of the region, and to also preserve the peace in the region.

"Our position is strengthened on the face of subterranean moves by certain unidentified persons who are bent on perpetually keeping the region underdeveloped and in turmoil.

"A tenure should be allowed to run its full course; it is only on this premise that we can have stability in the region because the person's so appointed will remain focused to deliver on their mandate", it added.

SSRG noted that the present board has already achieved reviving and bringing a new and focused NDDC where things were done differently from the past.

It added that ambience of the work environment was a testament and a departure of rancorous system that was in place before the advent of the present board.

"We can see the hands of the buccaneers already at work. There is no place for interim management in the NDDC Act and never should we allow such aberration to rear its ugly head again. Those whose stock in trade is to destabilize the region for personal gains should desist forthwith.

"The Sam Ogbuku leadership should be allowed to run its full course. It is only when a government appointee completes the full tenure of office as stipulated in the act setting up such agency of government that we can have continuity and even hold such persons so appointed to such position to account", it added.

The group urged the people of the region to copy from the North East Development Commission (NEDC) which has been having a stable leadership since its establishment by the federal government.

"We urge our people at this time to be circumspect and take a leaf from the North East Development Commission NEDC and it's leadership since it was established.

"The leadership turn-over is astronomical in the NDDC when compared to that of the NEDC and this is not altruistic or to the benefit of the region and its people. Too much politics is clogging the progress of NDDC, the earlier we desist from this path the better it will be for the region.



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APPRECIATING OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS OF SAPETRO TO LASG, LIRS...

L-R: Monsurat Amasa-Oyelude, deputy director Corporate Communications LIRS; Chukwuemeke Anagbogu, managing director SAPETRO; Senator Daisy Danjuma, executive chairman SAPETRO; Ayo Subair, executive chairman LIRS; Moji Aboyade-Cole, assistant director Relationship Management Unit LIRS; and Jimi Aina, director New Growth Areas LIRS, during a courtesy visit by the Lagos State Internal Revenue Service, LIRS management to South Atlantic Petroleum (SAPETRO) in appreciation of the outstanding contributions of General Theophilus Yakubu Danjuma, Senator Daisy Danjuma and SAPETRO to the Lagos State government and LIRS in the discharge of their civic duties, through consistent and prompt remittance of their taxes at the South Atlantic Petroleum Towers, Victoria Island, Lagos…on Wednesday

Ireti Kingibe: Being a Woman in the National Assembly is Very Hard

Kuni Tyessi in Abuja

Senator representing the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Ireti Kingibe, has stated that being a woman in the National Assembly is very hard as lobbying to get things done has become a major preoccupation for her.

She said this not notwithstanding, she has empowered 10,000 people, is building a 50-bed hospital, establishing ICT centres in Gwagwalada and Nyanya, and has bought 2,000 JAMB forms from her personal money and savings.

The revelations came as her defense after rural women and female farmers in the FCT accused her of abandonment and ingratitude after casting their votes in her favour.

The speaker who preferred anonymity spoke at the 8th and 2024 edition of Voice of Women, VOW, conference and awards with the theme "Achieving Women's Inclusion for a Sustainable Nigeria" held on Thursday in Abuja.

The woman who revealed that FCT women voted in the senator due to trust in the capabilities of women and a want of new leaders have been disappointed as not even an iota of appreciation in terms of trainings and empowerments have reached the women.

She said: "Last year, during political campaign, all those women that were fighting for positions, they entered into all the rural villages and towns through the women leaders and asking them to mobilise the women to come out and ensure that women are being voted into power and we voted them.

"But do you know that since last year, there has not been any avenue, no town hall meeting, no thank you to all those local women that voted them.

"During the election, women that came out were looking for a woman to vote for especially here in FCT where I voted, but after that election, no thank you, none of them has come to see us.

"That road that they followed to go to the interior villages to look for those women leaders to mobilize women for them, they didn't go back to those women leaders, they did not go back to those community-based leaders.

"Now, those women we mobilised are now looking at us and saying that they have given us money, they have given us salt, rice and you are alone when there is nothing as such. They didn't even call us to their inauguration, they didn't come back to say thank you."

She added: "Thank you to me means - you voted me into power, you invite us and said thank you and then if there's anything I will remember you. Like in AMAC FCT now; I know there are some empowerment skills going on, those people are supposed to bring some forms to those women.

"If it is empowerment to train their children or train those women to acquire skills that will help their families, but there's nothing like that in FCT as I am talking now."

In her response, Kingibe who was visible irritated defended herself saying that "For the record, I am the only woman elected in the FCT. Now, there's this misconception as to what everybody defines what governance is. To me, it is bringing the most to the people.

I have been a senator for a year and half, I am primarily a legislator. I have bills waiting to be passed, creating the nursing and midwifery school In Gwagwalada, I have a maternal free healthcare for women. I have a few of such bills still pending.

She said: "But notwithstanding, since I have been a senator, I have empowered and I have everything on record. I have empowered 10,000 people. Now, it is not possible, FCT has 4 to 5 million people and for me to personally see everybody that voted for me.

"I am also building a 50-bed hospital, I am putting an ICT center in Gwagwalada and Nyanya, I paid with my personal money 2,000 JAMB forms for free. So, at the end of the day, governance means to me, bringing things for the general good and not for the individual.

"The truth is that being a woman in the National Assembly is very, very, very hard. So, I have to lobby for everything. When I leave here, I will go to the National Assembly, sign in and then go from ministry to ministry so that all those things that doesn't get attention by the executive, I can slip them into the budget from lobbying different ministers to put it in their budget.

"I have also renovated with my personal money and allowance the ante-natal center in Gwagwalada teaching hospital. Any of you can go and verify all these things.

"So, I'm sorry, yes women complain, I haven't come to them one by one; it is not possible. It is either I do that and then you don't get anything else. So that is my frustration and I want women to understand that you are voting for other women so that our general lives will improve not because she is going to come and meet you personally."

In the same vein, former Ekiti State first lady, Bisi Fayemi during her speech at the programme, commended rural women and advised politicians to keep to their promises once elected into office.

She said: "If you promise to construct a road for them, ensure that you use the road you have constructed when next you are going to meet them for campaigns."

The convener and CEO of Women's FM, Toun Oni, called for the inclusion of women and the assertiveness of the 35 percent slated for women in both elective and appointive positions.

Court Restrains VIO from Impounding, Imposing Fines on Motorists

Alex Enumah in Abuja

A Federal High Court sitting in Abuja, has made an order restraining the Directorate of Road Traffic Services popularly known as VIO from impounding, confiscating or imposing fine on any motorists over alleged road infractions.

Justice Nkeonye Evelyn Maha made the order on Wednesday October 2, 2024, while delivering judgement in a fundamental rights suit filed by rights activist and public interest lawyer, Mr. Marshal Abubakar Marshal.

Justice Maha in the judgement agreed with the applicant that there is no law empowering the respondents to stop, impound, confiscate, seize or impose fine on motorists.

Abubakar had dragged the Directorate of Road Traffic Services and four others to court, over the powers of the defendants to impound vehicles of motorists and fine then for alleged breach amongst others.

Delivering judgement in the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1695/2023, the judge held that the 1st (Directorate of Road Traffic Services) to 4th respondents under the control of the 5th respondent (Minister of the Federal Capital Territory) are not empowered by any law or statute to stop, impound, confiscate the vehicles of motorists and or impose fine on motorists.

The judge also made another order restraining the 1st to 4th respondents either through their agents, servants and or assigns from impounding, confiscating the vehicle of motorists and or imposing fine on any motorist as doing so is wrongful, oppressive and unlawful by themselves.

In addition, Justice Maha made an order of perpetual injunction restraining the respondents whether by themselves, agents, privies, allies or anybody acting on behalf of the 1st Respondent from further violating the rights of Nigerians to freedom of movement, presumption of innocence and right to own property without lawful justification.

FG Inaugurates Governing Council for Maritime Academy, Oron

Upgrades academic curriculum of institution to international maritime standards

Kasim Sumaina in Abuja

The federal government on Thursday in Abuja inaugurated members of the Governing Council of Maritime Academy, Oron, Akwa-Ibom State.

This was even as the government hinted that it has upgraded the academic curriculum of the institution to International Maritime Standards, earning accreditation from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA).

The Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola, while inaugurating the board stated that the vision of MAN, Oron, is to equip the country's teaming youth with specialised maritime education and practical skills, preparing them for jobs in shipping, marine engineering, port operations, and logistics by offering industry-aligned training and internationally recognized certifications.

According to him, as you are aware, the academy has made significant strides in recent years, establishing itself as a premier institution for maritime education in Africa by investing heavily in infrastructural development, including modern classrooms, hostels, and advanced simulators for ship handling and engine room operations, providing cadets with practical, real-world training.

The Minister, while emphasising that the objective of the academy remains the development of top and middle-class skilled manpower for the maritime sector, noted that the Academy, therefore, must continue to provide specialised, practical training in areas like marine engineering and nautical sciences, which are essential for filling technical and operational roles.

The Minister said: "As you assume your roles, I urge you to align yourselves with the ongoing reforms in the Marine and Blue Economy sector, under the Renewed Hope Agenda of this administration.

"The Maritime sector is critical to our national development, and the success of our broader economic policies depends heavily on our ability to provide the required manpower.

"The Maritime Academy of Nigeria is central to this effort and to achieve this, there must be a strong and seamless synergy between the Governing Board and the Academy's Management."

He added that, collaboration and mutual respect between both entities will ensure that the Academy functions efficiently and effectively, stating: "Your role is to provide strategic leadership and guidance, working closely with the management to create an environment that promotes academic excellence and practical training.

"The goal is to create a learning environment that not only meets national standards but also positions our graduates to compete on a regional and global scale," Oyetola said.

In his acceptance speech, the Chairman of the board, Engr. Kehinde Akinola, stated that they are looking forward to collaborating with the ministry and as a team to propel the Academy to greater heights.

Akinola disclosed that together, "we will foster excellence in maritime education, research and innovation and to the Academy's staff and students, I pledge to support your tireless efforts in shaping the future of Nigeria's maritime industry. Your dedication will be matched by our Council's commitment to strategic governance."

Glo Offers Toyota Prado, Other Prizes in Festival of Joy Promo

Glo customers all over Nigeria are in for a great and rewarding time as the digital solutions provider introduced a new season of its Festival of Joy promotion on Tuesday. The promo has lined up several exciting prizes, including Toyota Prado Sports SUVs.

In a statement issued in Lagos, Globacom stated that the end-of-year promotion, which began on October 1, will last until January 31, 2025. It also revealed that the rewards comprise five state-of-the-art Toyota Prado, five Kia Picanto automobiles, 15 tricycles, 150 power generating sets, 200 sewing machines and 300 grinding machines.

The Festival of Joy campaign was designed to align with the company's objective of empowering Glo customers and making them happy as the end of year season draws near. Globacom clarified that the awards were thoughtfully chosen to appeal to a wide range of clientele, including professionals, business executives, workers, students, and high net worth individuals (HNIs).

The company stated that although other businesses are cutting expenses in light of the current economic climate, Globacom has chosen to spend enormous amounts to reward its customers with prizes that will impact their lives.

According to the company, prize-presentation events will be conducted in various locations across Nigeria, including Lagos, Abuja, Ibadan, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Benin, Warri, enabling Nigerians from all corners of the nation to have a chance at winning any of the incredible items up for grabs.

The Festival of Joy promotion, Globacom said, is available to both new and current customers on the prepaid and postpaid platforms.

"To be eligible for the draw, a customer can easily opt into the promotion by dialing *611#, choose the prize they want, and recharge up to the required amount for the specific item during the promo period."

To be eligible for the draw for a Prado SUV, a customers must recharge his or her line up to N100,000 cumulatively during the promotion time, while for the Kia Picanto, the subscriber must recharge up to N50,000 cumulatively over the same period. Customers who recharge their lines up to N10,000 cumulatively in a month are eligible to be drawn to win any of the tricycles, while for generators, customers need to recharge their lines up to N5,000 in a month.

A minimum recharge of N2,500 must be made in a month for the draws for the sewing machines, while a daily recharge of N500 will qualify any subscriber for the draws for the grinding machines.

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NEWS



BANKING & FINANCE CONFERENCE...

Managing Director of First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Mrs. Yemisi Edun(right), receiving an award from the President/Chairman of Council, the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), Professor Pius Olanrewaju, during the Banking & Finance Conference in Abuja ...recently

Tinubu Writes National Assembly, Presents Four Tax Reform Bills

Asks lawmakers to change FIRS to NRS

Sunday Aborisade and **Juliet Akoje** in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu yesterday sent four official communications to the two chambers of the National Assembly, requesting the federal parliament to consider and approve his tax reform bills.

One of the requests sought the renaming of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) as the Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS). The request was contained in Tinubu's letter read during plenary by Senate President, Godswill Akpabio.

Titled: "The Nigeria Revenue Service (Establishment) Bill, the proposed legislation, according to Tinubu, "seeks to repeal the Federal Inland Revenue Service (Establishment) Act, No. 13, 2007 and establishes the Nigeria Revenue Service, to assess, collect and account for revenue accruable to the government of the federation."

The letter also contained another request titled: "The Nigeria Tax Bill which seeks to provide a consolidated fiscal framework for taxation in Nigeria."

It also contained "The Nigeria Tax Administration Bill," which seeks to provide a clear and concise legal framework for the fair, consistent and efficient administration of all the tax laws to facilitate ease of tax compliance, reduce tax disputes and optimise revenue."

Another one is, "The Joint Revenue Board (Establishment) Bill," which aims at establishing the Joint Revenue Board; the Tax Appeal Tribunal and the Office of The Tax Ombudsman for the harmonisation, coordination and settlement of disputes arising from revenue administration in Nigeria.

Tinubu explained that the proposed tax bill presented substantial benefits to economic growth by enhancing tax payers compliance, strengthening fiscal institutions, and fostering a more effective and transparent fiscal regime.

He said, "I am confident that the bill when passed, will encourage investment, boost consumer spending and stimulate Nigeria's economic growth."

Also Tinubu submitted the same bills to the House of Representatives for consideration and passage. The President in a letter read at the plenary by speaker Abbas Tajudeen, said the bills were in line with the objectives of his administration.

Alawuba: UBA Has Reached Advanced Stage in Recapitalisation Process

Says application submitted to SEC set for approval in weeks

Kayode Tokede

The Group Managing Director/CEO, United Bank for Africa Plc (UBA) , Mr. Oliver Alawuba has disclosed that the Pan-African financial institution has reached an advanced stage with its recapitalisation process.

He revealed that the application has been submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the bank is now awaiting approval in the next couple of weeks.

Alawuba, yesterday during UBA's investors' conference on its half year (H1) ended June 30, 2024 financial performance, stated that the economic environment in H1 2024 remained challenging across the regions where it operates.

He highlighted high inflation, rising debt levels, increasing interest rates, and tighter monetary policies that have created significant pressure on economies globally, maintaining that despite these headwinds, UBA has demonstrated resilience.

According to him, UBA in H1 2024 delivered strong double-digit growth across high-quality and sustainable revenue streams.

"This performance reflects our disciplined execution of strategic goals, focusing on balance sheet expansion, transaction banking, and digital banking businesses across our markets," he said.

He explained that the growth in profit before tax to N401.6billion in H1 2024 was a reflection of its ability to manage risks effectively amidst macroeconomic volatility.

He noted that UBA's intermediation business posted impressive growth, with net interest income expanding by 143per cent year-on-year to N675 billion in H1 2024, further underlining the strength of its core banking operations.

On 37 per cent growth in total assets, he said: "We saw a 37 per cent growth in total assets, reaching N28.3 trillion, up from N20.7 trillion at FYE 2023. This growth was driven by strong customer relationships and our ability to capitalise on opportunities across geographies.

"Our customer deposits grew by 34 per cent, from N17.4 trillion at year-end 2023 to N23.2 trillion in H1 2024, demonstrating the trust and loyalty of our customers," he said.

He expressed that UBA's digital banking income surged by 107.8per cent YoY to N106 billion in H1 2024, while funds transfer and remittance fees rose 188.7per cent and 228per cent, respectively.

"We continue to lead in digital banking and payment solutions, helping drive financial inclusion across Africa," the UBA boss said.

He added that income from trade transactions grew 83 per cent to N18 billion in H1 2024 as the management strengthened its role in facilitating intra-regional and international trade.

"Our strategy of investing in technology, innovation, and data analytics continues to yield significant returns, positioning us as a leader in digital transformation," Alawuba stated.

On building an even better bank, he said, "We continue to invest in building a better bank through improvements in People, Processes, and Technology."

He revealed that the Pan-African financial institution recognised that people are its greatest asset and this year alone, it has promoted over 2,000 employees and paid the 2023 bonus to eligible staff across Nigeria and UBA Africa.

He also said the Group had improved on its process amid its smart automation initiatives simplifying service delivery.

"For instance, our website now offers self-service options for BVN and NIN linkage, account updates, card blocking, and more. Additionally, a comprehensive review of our procurement processes has led to significant cost optimisation," he stated.

On technology investments, he added: "Our ongoing investments in technology are enabling us to deliver superior customer experiences, drive operational efficiency, and unlock new growth opportunities."

He stated that UBA's strategic partnerships remain central with its growth strategy.

"In 2024, UBA was one of six banks to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Pan-African Payment Settlement System (PAPSS), enhancing cross-border trade and financial integration across Africa. We successfully deployed instant payment systems in five African countries, with more to follow.

"Our collaborations with Telco partners have also expanded, with funds under management now exceeding $1 billion. These partnerships enable us to deliver impactful solutions such as micro-lending and savings products, enhancing financial inclusion," Alawuba stressed.

Looking ahead, he said: "We enter the second half of 2024 from a position of strength. Our proven resilience, strong capital position, and market-leading capabilities position us to continue our growth trajectory.

"Execution" will remain our driving force as we focus on market leadership and delivering excellent customer experiences at every touch point."

TINUBU: A SECURE NIGERIA IS SECURE SAHEL

and other regional and international partners, strengthening joint military operations, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force, and also supporting initiatives that aim to stabilise the Sahel.

Idris added, "On the home front, security has remained a top priority in President Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, and through investment in equipment, manpower, acquisition of more fighting platforms, and intelligence gathering, we are winning the war against insecurity."

He said the challenges would require collaboration among government agencies, international partners, and security experts in order to safeguard Nigeria's territorial integrity and contribute to lasting peace and stability in the Sahel region.

Guest speaker at the occasion, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, stated that although Boko Haram had been degraded and was on a retreat, the group constituted a significant threat, as it still maintained financing and supply networks, including links with other extremist groups.

Chambas, who is Chairman of African Union High Level Panel on Sudan, urged the Nigerian government to cut off the group's financing and supply chain network, including the source of the supply of the motorcycles deployed by insurgents to launch attacks on communities and armed forces.

Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar, said environmental, political and security challenges were affecting the prosperity and peace of the Sahel region.

The sultan, who was represented by the Emir of Gumi, Justice Lawal Hassan (rtd), stated that the vast Sahel region was blessed with abundant human resources, offering tremendous potential for rapid economic growth.

He said, "With its abundant mineral resources like lithium, cobalt and uranium, among many others, the Sahel could be described as the richest part of the globe.

"It is expected to be populated by 1.5 billion people by the year 2050 and has one of the largest, youngest populations in the world. Although it has abundant human and natural resources that offer tremendous potential for rapid economic growth.

"There are deep-rooted challenges – environmental, political and security, that are affecting the prosperity and peace of the Sahel."

The sultan called on the United Nations to address some of the challenges by coming up with a unique support plan targeting 10 countries to scale up efforts to accelerate prosperity and sustainable peace in the region.

The 10 countries, according to him, are Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, the Gambia, Haiti, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

Abuja Court Summons Ex-Kogi Governor, Yahaya Bello, over Alleged N110bn Fraud

Alex Enumah in Abuja

Justice Maryanne Anenih of a High Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in Maitama, Abuja, yesterday, summoned the immediate past governor of Kogi State, Mr Yahaya Bello to appear before her court on October 24, in respect of a fresh 16-count charge pending against him.

The order was sequel to an application filed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which sought the arraignment of the former governor and two others, over alleged fraud to the tune of N110 billion.

In the suit marked: CR/7781/2024, Bello, Umar Shuaibu Oricha and Abdulsalami Hudu, were being accused of spending over N110 billion of public funds to acquire several properties in Abuja and in Dubai.

The suit dated September 24 but filed on September 25, by the anti-graft lawyer, Mr kemi Pinheiro, SAN, accused the defendants of criminal breach of trust, an offence punishable under Section 312 of the Penal Code Laws of Northern Nigeria, 1963.

At yesterday's proceedings, the EFCC claimed that it had not been able to serve the fresh charge on the former governor and prayed the court to issue a public summons against Bello.

In a short ruling, the court granted the request and ordered

the EFCC to publish the public summons in a widely circulating newspaper.

She also ordered the EFCC to paste copies of the public summons on Bello's last known address and in conspicuous places in court premises.

In the last five months, the EFCC had attempted to arraign the Bello before a Federal High Court, Abuja, on an alleged money laundering charge to the tune of over N80 billion, but has not been successful.

POLITICS

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Outcome of Tinubu's Health Reforms

Fredrick Nwabufo, in this piece, writes about the positive results of the numerous health reforms embarked upon by the administration of President Bola Tinubu since it assumed office over a year ago.

The health sector is one of the President Bola Tinubu administration's axes of policy dynamos and triumphs. Reforms initiated to upskill manpower, strengthen structural integrity, upgrade infrastructure, provide essential equipment, and ensure efficiency in healthcare delivery are crystallising with evident outcomes.

In December 2023, President Tinubu unveiled the Nigeria Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative (NHSRII) – a programme steered by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare under the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Dr Muhammad Ali Pate.

The Nigeria Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative is a strategic blueprint -- with a sector-wide tack for improving population health outcomes through the primary healthcare system and enhancing reproductive, maternal, and child health services in the country. Primary healthcare is as fundamental as the understructure of an edifice in building a resilient and integrated healthcare system; hence, the Tinubu administration's comprehensive revamp of infrastructure and equipment and re-training of frontline health workers.

Specifically, the administration set out to raise the number of functional Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) from 8,809 to over 17,600 by 2027 across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), train 120,000 frontline health workers over 16 months, increase health personnel enrolment capacity of accredited nursing and midwifery institutions by two-fold to accommodate the demand created by new facilities, and establish a paid volunteer youth force of social accountability officers to monitor the functioning and financial integrity of these primary healthcare centres.

In addition, the administration sought to address the high cost of healthcare and enhance access to healthcare services by redesigning the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF). The BHCPF is a foundational element of the sector-wide approach – with pooled and non-pooled financing to advance the primary health system nationwide.

So far, the policy intentions and actions are yielding winsome outcomes.

HUMAN RESOURCE FOR HEALTH – 120,000 health workers' training.

A total of 40,240 health workers have been trained so far, of which frontline health workers comprising doctors, nurses, midwives, CHEWs, and JCHEWs providing clinical services in government-owned PHCs are 36,087.

24 states plus the FCT have completed Phase one training.

Phase one training will be completed in the outstanding states in the coming months.

Conversations are ongoing with states to accelerate recruitment of health workers to meet their PHC functionality gaps, starting with accelerated transition of volunteers to full-time salaried employees.

Transitioned volunteers and newly recruited health workers will be trained during Phase two.

To ensure sustained and continued capacity building, an e-learning programme is being developed to be deployed.

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMME

NPHCDA, in collaboration with FMOHSW, state governments, and partners, is redesigning a community health programme that will extend essential health services to remote and underserved communities towards improving health outcomes.

The community health programme will create 126,000 jobs for community health workers.

Services to be delivered will include Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and Nutrition, Routine Immunization, Non-Communicable Diseases, HIV, TB, Malaria, Health data collection, Disease surveillance, Risk Communication and Community Engagement and Health insurance.

REPRODUCTIVE, MATERNAL, NEWBORN, AND CHILD HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

Under reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health service delivery, the progressive outcomes are:

Expanded Midwives Service Scheme (eMSS) redesigned across four major areas: The scheme has expanded and recruited skilled birth attendants, enhancing maternal and child healthcare nationwide.



730 skilled birth attendants to be deployed to prioritised PHC facilities (in the first six months using the eMSS as an interim solution).

RMNCH commodities quantification was done for pooled procurement. This will enable the establishment of seed stock of a reliable end-to-end system that guarantees regular availability and visibility of the MNCH commodities in PHC facilities.

Service delivery models for traditional birth attendant referral and midwifery outreach were developed to generate demand and provide maternal and child health services to hard-to-reach communities.

.Conducted service readiness assessment across 1,508 BHCPF health facilities to identify service gaps and define interventions required to ensure all suites of maternal and reproductive health services are provided (family planning, post-delivery and miscarriage care, adolescent sexual and reproductive health, maternal health and gender-based violence services).

A draft framework for sustainable commodity distribution is being developed.

PRIMARY HEALTHCARE REVITALISATION

8,421 health facilities assessed in 36+1 states.

Identified 1,786 level 2 functional PHCs. These are PHCs that have everything in place for a pregnant woman to deliver her baby safely 24/7.

Identified 5,447 level 1 functional and 1,189 partially functional PHCs. These facilities lack at least 1 key component to be fully functional but can provide basic PHC services (e.g., ANC, RI, etc).

Revitalisation efforts have commenced to increase the number of functional health facilities across the country.

577 primary healthcare centres have been identified across the states for revitalization by the federal government.

-Nwabufo, Presidential aide on Public Engagement, writes from Abuja.

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

Mbah's Growth-related Scheme in Enugu's 17 LGAs

Oguejiofo Ujam writes about the numerous transformational projects being executed by Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State in all the 17 local government areas of the state and their impact on the citizenry.

All over Nigeria, the reformation of the Local Government system has become obvious and urgent. The new consciousness is permeating into the polity. As such, it should be taken for granted that it cannot be business as usual, as far as the activities at the local government councils, especially financial accountability and governance, are concerned.

The financial autonomy of Local Government councils has opened a new vista, thus encouraging democratic governance at the grassroots. That impetus has also challenged the ingenuity of state governors, such that it is becoming apparent how far state chief executives can go in moderating the affairs at the third tier of government without encouraging the impunity that has long held the councils down.

With the window for caretaker committees finally closed by the Supreme Court ruling on the direct allocation of federated funds to the Local Governments, many states have been holding council elections so as not to run foul of the law and incur the wrath of the Federal Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC).

As various states hold elections into the Local Councils, it is noteworthy that the current administration in Enugu State is one of the few state governments that never experimented with the bogey of Caretaker committees.

Consequently, three distinct takeaways emerged from recent Local Government council election in the Coal City State.

In the first place, Governor Peter Mbah showed his deep understanding of the challenges and shortcomings of grassroots governance in the state.

Secondly, the Enugu State chief executive



demonstrated in clear terms that he is intentional about taking the state to enviable heights through disruptive thinking. On this score, the LG poll exposed the governor's determination to trump political impunity, budgeting opacity and indolence with his developmental blueprint and imprint.

Then there is the silent issue of personnel quality selection by Mbah who has been deploying his eye for excellence in the choice of his lieutenants. As a high-flying private sector champion, the Enugu State chief executive seems to understand that it takes a competent and committed team to turn a grandiose and futuristic vision into a mission of limitless possibilities.

All these three indices factored into the recent election into the 17 Local Government councils of the state. The appointment of an academic, Prof. Christian Ngwu, as the Chairman of Enugu State Independent Electoral Commission (ENSIEC) signalled the Governor's resolve to get it right with the grassroots governance.

Ngwu, a no nonsense former Professor at the Department of Mass Communication in the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), showed himself a stickler for rules, when he worked with political parties to agree on September 21 as the election date after the State High Court presided over by Justice C. V. C. Ezeugwu ordered that the polls be held within 30 days.

The election, which was earlier scheduled for October 5, 2024 became a subject of litigation when some stakeholders observed the prolonged vacuum in the third tier of government. The last elected chairmen and councils vacated office on June 4, 2024 at the expiration of their two-year tenure and despite pressures from politicians, the state government refused to appoint caretaker committees for the 17 councils.

ENSIEC's insistence on holding the LG poll on September 21 demonstrated Ngwu's determination to guide the commission as an impartial arbiter not beholden to the governing Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

It was this single-minded resolve to play by the law by the ENSIEC chairman that roused opposition political parties to take active interest in the election, thereby making it very competitive.

That PDP decided to put its acts together by nominating acceptable candidates without the usual disdain for laid down regulations could in part be traceable to the nuances from the New Sheriff at the ENSIEC.

-Prof Ujam writes from University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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

CHARLES AMPITAN argues that the creation of JEOG has enhanced access to education by candidates with special needs

OLOYEDE's SILENT REVOLUTION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



The year 2017 would forever be etched in the collective memory of Nigerians as it marks perhaps the first concrete step by a national institution within the educational system to boost the access of People with Disabilities (PWDs) to tertiary education in the country. This feat was achieved by the Registrar of the Joint

Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Professor Is-haq Oloyede when, just a year after assuming office in 2016, he established the JAMB Equal Opportunity Group (JEOG).

The 11-member committee, headed by Professor Peter Okebukola has the mandate of ensuring that all eligible candidates are accorded a level playing field in the Board's administered Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). This is to ensure that no one is discriminated against at any point in the board's assessment and admission process on account of disability

The creation of JEOG is one of the board's policy initiatives for fostering a more-inclusive assessment outcome by the board. Others are the nine-key initiative, which reduces the entire operation of taking the UTME to just nine computer keys, while another is the establishment of eight other groups charged with the responsibility of fostering inclusive assessment regime in the board's operational processes.

Perhaps, what is more striking is that, prior to this major policy initiative aimed at fashioning a more robust vehicle for inclusive education for candidates with special needs or disabilities, which include the blind, deaf, dumb, lame, and Down Syndrome patients, it should be borne in mind that Oloyede was not under any existential or official pressure to undertake the venture of crafting a more robust framework for assessing these sets of candidates as well as admitting them into the nation's tertiary institutions. In this regard, candidates with disabilities were able to gain admission to 133 institutions across the country in the 2023/2024 academic session alone.

To achieve the desired results, the group of eminent members of the academia with requisite backgrounds in special education along with the leadership of relevant bodies were saddled with the management of the affairs of the disabled. It is, therefore, no wonder that over the years, the logistics of administering the UTME to the candidates with disabilities and their subsequent admission statistics have been on the upward trend. As part of the measures to ease the burden of sitting for the UTME by candidates with disabilities, the board, under its current leadership, designated 11 centres across the six geopolitical zones of the country in 2021 where these candidates sat for their matriculation examination, while their transportation and lodging as well that of their guides were taking care of by the board.

Also, JEOG had been at the forefront of crafting appropriate and stress-free modes for the UTME by candidates with disabilities. Not surprisingly, all these measures have not only eased the taking of the UTME by candidates with special needs but also increased their enrolment statistics. For instance, in 2014, just 44 candidates with disabilities were admitted to the nation's higher institutions of learning, while in 2021, the figure had risen to 286.

Significantly, the board, through the agency of JEOG, has broadened the nation's awareness of the plight of people with disabilities by organising the first national conference in Abuja, with the theme, "Towards Increasing Equal Opportunity of Access to Higher Education in Nigeria". It held between 24th and 27th of September, 2023. The conference was attended by over 500 participants drawn from all strata of the Nigerian society.

Building on the successes recorded in the national conference, JEOG organised the just-concluded first Africa Regional Conference on Equal Opportunity of Access to Higher Education (ARCEAHED), held on 17th and 18th of September 2024 in Abuja, themed "Advancing the Potential of Persons with Disabilities in Educational and Economic Development". The conference was aimed at assessing the progress of African countries in implementing the African Union Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which seeks to foster inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning.

Also, the conference provided a platform to share experiences on the modalities for admission and retention of persons with disabilities, while proposing practical solutions to enhancing access to quality higher education for students with special needs in African countries.

Furthermore, the conference was able to bring into focus the challenges confronting people with disabilities in accessing higher education in the country to the attention of stakeholders in the sector; analysing the problems confronting higher education, especially in relation to people with special needs with a view to providing actionable and sustainable solutions to them; and proposing changes that can be made to the current national policy on education. Through that, the goal is to address the inequalities in the opportunity of access to higher education especially by the blind, the albino, persons with autism, Down Syndrome, prison inmates, and others.

Interestingly, the ARCHEAD event also afforded the Minister of Education, Professor Tahir Mamman to unveil the commitment of the federal government to inclusive education, while creating the right learning environment to facilitate inclusive access for people with disabilities through the Ministerial Road map for Inclusive Access to Quality Higher Education in Nigeria (2024-2028) Strategic Plan.

Similarly, participants made some far-reaching decisions as conveyed in the communique issued at the end of the conference. In the document, participants called for 100 per cent pro-rata rise of equitable space in admission for PWDs; provide adequate information about facilities that are available for PWDs in each institution at the point of advertisement for application for admission; and give adequate attention to the training of experts that will attend to individual needs of persons with disabilities, among others.

In the final analysis, the institution of inclusive education, as implemented by JAMB through the JEOG has become a veritable platform for engendering robust national discourse and strategies for boosting the enrolment rates of people with disabilities not only in Nigeria but also in Africa in general.

Ampitan
writes from Abuja

Ekeh's humanity is Tinubu's Renewed Hope, writes MESOMA CHUKWU

FUELLING THE FIRE OF INDUSTRIALISATION

Africa's serial digital entrepreneur, Leo Stan Ekeh, was the toast of Governor Hope Uzodimma on Friday, September 27 in Owerri, Imo State. The event was the maiden graduation ceremony of trainees of Leo Stan Ekeh Foundation (LSEF) Centre free entrepreneurship boost programme at Imo State University (IMSU).

Ekeh, the iconic Forbes Best of Africa Leading Tech Icon and his family have used the platform of the foundation to impact humanity at home and in the Diaspora. On April 4, this year, the foundation launched two entrepreneurship centres at IMSU and at St. Augustine University in Epe, Lagos. The birthing of the centres to fire up the passion of entrepreneurship in Nigerian youths was triggered by Ekeh's abiding desire to upskill Nigerians, irrespective of tribe and tongue, and prepare them to become wealth and job creators, rather than job-seekers.

At the IMSU centre, it was an epiphany for about 200 young Nigerians who were the first set of beneficiaries of the three-month entrepreneurship boost programme. The excitement that lit their faces, the raw confidence they exuded as they received their certificates showed the plucky courage of a people primed and ready to conquer new heights. They were taught the fundamentals of entrepreneurship, free of charge, by the best coaches and experts drawn from Nigeria, United States and United Kingdom. Not only were they tutored by the best whizzes in diverse fields of human endeavour, they were also kept on a stipend throughout the duration of the programme to augment their weekly commute to the centre. In addition, each trainee was gifted a new Z-pad tablet to aid their learning and upskilling process.

A key highpoint of the programme is the choice of the courses available to the trainees. They include social media marketing, Artificial Intelligence, career planning, public speaking, financial management, etiquette, business law and ideation, digital publishing, selling and branding, among others. These are contemporary skill sets that drive the marketplace in the 21st century. The essence, says Professor Gloria Ernest-Samuel, the Director of the Centre, is to prepare the trainees to become wealth-creators.

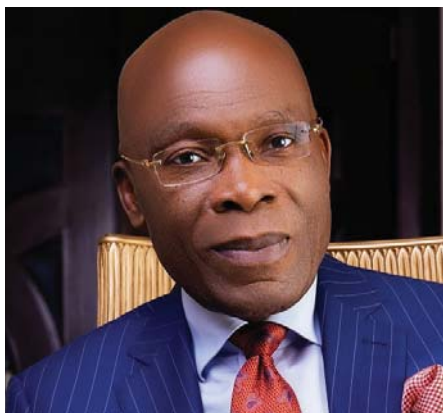
The centre is an expression of divinity and humanity. Ekeh loves God and in all his conversations, he never ceases to acknowledge God's role in his eventful life. From God giving him a good wife, Lady Chioma Ekeh, a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Certified Accountants (FCCA, UK) to blessing him with responsible and brilliant children, Ekeh gushes with gratitude to the Almighty. His humanity, humility and avid desire to make life better for the next man stands him out. Ever seen a man whose pastime is to seek out the poor and help them come up the ladder of life? Ever seen an entrepreneur who draws a distinction between capitalism and welfarism? Ekeh does. He believes that capitalism must wear a human face; that profit must not take the place of empathy.

A man of affluence and influence, yet he does not ascribe such success to himself. He links his fame and fortune to God. He believes in hard work, self-denial, discipline and strategy, but all that could come to zilch without a God factor, he says.

"I love God and will never hesitate to do anything in the service of God and humanity. I have the best wife any man would wish to have. She is a super star. She is intelligent, beautiful and unlike some women, she is not expensive and more importantly we operate on the same wavelength. If for any reason I get stuck she is the one to figure out the solution for me. God blessed me with brilliant and responsible children too. I am grateful to God because He has seen me through the valleys and mountains of life. As a mark of God's mercy to me, I pay tithe for my companies. I didn't read it in the Bible but I do it", he once told the audience at a Catholic Church he built in his community, Ubomiri, near Owerri.

The centre is one of such gestures of giving back to society. The gesture is not lost on Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodimma, who showered Ekeh with praises. The governor said Ekeh's commitment to give back to society is in tandem with the Shared Prosperity Initiative of his administration. He pleaded with other wealthy Imolites to toe the path of Ekeh by helping to empower Imo youths. Uzodimma was represented by his deputy, Lady Chinyere Ekomaru.

The Vice Chancellor of IMSU, Professor Uchefula Chukwumaeze, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, could not hold back his excitement as he narrated how Ekeh has intervened at different times in the university including sending them 100 laptops at short notice during a verification exercise. He described Ekeh and his wife as a "busy couple who share a passion for excellence, integrity and love for humanity."



With intake of the next batch of trainees ongoing, Ekeh through the centre, is helping to fuel the fire of industrialisation in Imo State. The same is being planned for the centre at Epe in Lagos – building and empowering the youths for the transformation of the nation's economy. Ekeh's philanthropy and humanity fit into the Renewed Hope agenda of President Bola Tinubu's government. Ekeh is renewing the hope of Nigerian youths in digital economy, creative arts, innovation and industrialisation to boost indigenous manufacture and entrepreneurship. Trainees graduate from the programme and become instant contributors to the nation's GDP. They become assets, not liabilities.

The nation needs more of such freewill initiatives from wealthy Nigerians across the country. It fills the needs gaps left by governments, both national and sub-nationals. Like Uzodimma pleaded, those who are wealthy should help to create oasis of hope for the less privileged. Ekeh has raised the bar through a rare and critical tool, entrepreneurship; others should follow suit and brick by brick, President Tinubu's Renewed hope vision will become a reality in no distant time.

The centre is a showpiece of the limitless possibilities that technology offers. Equipped with an intelligent smart board which enhances virtual learning, it is easy for resources persons and sundry experts to interact with the trainees and impart in them the critical skills needed in the 21st century marketplace. The fusion of technology into the mentorship process at the centre stands it out among the pantheon of skills acquisition centres dotting the nation.

The innovativeness at the centre has rubbed off on IMSU with the university now running a three-month programme on caregiving, far ahead of other universities in the country. Caregiving is a niche in the healthcare space and certified personnel in this specialty command high patronage in the healthcare ecosystem worldwide. IMSU has become a pacesetter in this area courtesy of Leo Stan Ekeh Foundation (LSEF) Centre.

Chukwu,
a development economist, writes from Owerri

Editor, Editorial Page **PETER ISHAKA**
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EDITORIAL

TIME TO CELEBRATE TEACHERS

Teachers should be well motivated

As Nigeria joins other countries to mark the 2024 World Teachers' Day tomorrow, it is important for authorities at all levels and other critical stakeholders to appreciate the sacrifices of teachers. In societies that value quality education, high premium is placed on teachers who are well-remunerated. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case in Nigeria. Today, many take to teaching for want of anything else to do. Unlike in the past, teaching is now a job of last resort for many people. Yet these are the people expected to shape the future of the country.

Held annually on 5th October since 1994, the aim of the World Teachers' Day is to celebrate all teachers around the globe. It commemorates the anniversary of the adoption of the 1996 International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNESCO joint recommendation "which sets benchmarks regarding the rights and responsibilities of teachers, and standards for their initial preparation and further education, recruitment, employment, and teaching and learning conditions." According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), It is a day not only to celebrate how teachers are transforming education "but also to reflect on the support they need to fully deploy their talent and vocation, and to rethink the way ahead for the profession globally."

Three years ago, apparently to encourage Nigerians to take up career in teaching, the federal government announced that those studying education in public universities would be paid N75,000 stipends every semester. Similarly, colleges of education students were also billed to receive N50,000 per semester. Not surprisingly, the promise was never fulfilled even when teachers need all the encouragement that they can get to take their work seriously. Indeed, the National Association of Parents-Teachers Association (NAPTAN) had rejected the offer outright, asking, "After being paid in school, do we have job placements waiting for them?"



Unlike in the past, teaching is now a job of last resort for many people. Yet these are the people expected to shape the future of the country

The same cynicism greeted the special salary package and other pecks for teachers, including the increase of their years of service and retirement age. While the rationale of attracting quality teachers to the classrooms is good, the federal government did not plan where the funds to implement the programme would come from. The states and local governments that own these schools were not even consulted before such a major policy decision was announced. The states have been agitating for a review of the revenue allocation formula to be able pick up their mounting bills. Besides, it makes little sense to elongate service year in the face of mass graduate unemployment of teachers and others.

Even worse, many teachers are under attack.

At the 2022 National Delegates Conference of the Nigeria Union of Teachers last year, the Chief Executive of Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), Josiah Ajiboye, revealed that repeated attacks on schools by terror affiliates have claimed the lives of more than 2,295 teachers while about 19,000 others were displaced between 2009 and 2022. This development has created classrooms without teachers particularly in many northern states. Since education is on the concurrent list, there is an urgent need for the federal government and the states to come together on how to create a safe space for teachers.

As we join the rest of the world tomorrow to celebrate our teachers, we urge the all stakeholders to appreciate teachers more. They mould the future of our country.

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Letters to the Editor

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

GOV FINTIRI AND GRASSROOTS POLITICIANS

Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri recently stated that his successor must be a grassroots politician. Whether or not you agree with Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri, it's impossible to ignore the fact that he delivered an impressive performance in just five years. His leadership style, marked by decisiveness and a strategic approach, has left a lasting impact on Adamawa State. Three key factors contributed to his success: first, he has a deep understanding of local politics at the grassroots level. This knowledge allowed him to manage diverse interests, bringing various stakeholders together while effectively navigating the political landscape. He knows how to utilize power not just to control, but to drive progress and development as well as the political-power itself.

Second, Fintiri is known for making bold decisions without hesitation, a quality that sets him apart from many political leaders who are often bogged down by fear or indecision. Whether in policy formulation or tackling difficult issues, he has consistently shown the courage to take risks where necessary. However, boldness doesn't equate to rashness. Fintiri rarely rushes critical decisions, opting instead for careful deliberation. He balances this decisiveness with a thoughtful approach, ensuring resources are allocated judiciously across various sectors, leading to sustainable development and equitable growth.

Finally, while he can be measured and calculated in his decision-making, Fintiri is also forthright. He doesn't shy away from expressing his views openly, making him a leader who is both pragmatic and real. This combination of boldness, caution, and openness has earned him recognition on a national level, bringing Adamawa into greater prominence. Recently, in Rivers State, Fintiri expressed his political views but remained balanced as a leader. That is how a true leader speaks

For Fintiri's successor, the road ahead will be marked by both challenge and opportunity—a situation that could be described as bitter-sweet. The primary challenge will be following in the footsteps of a highly successful leader. Succeeding a performer often comes with the burden of high expectations. The new leader will be required to exceed Governor Fintiri's accomplishments, as merely matching them or falling short would likely be seen as a failure. This catch-22 is often the hardest part of leadership transitions—especially when the predecessor has set a high bar.

On the flip side, there is a significant advantage. Fintiri has laid a strong foundation, which includes efficient tools, systems, and a skilled human resource base. Gov. Fintiri's successor will have the opportunity to build on these assets, improving where needed while inheriting a well-established structure. With the right approach, he or she can take Adamawa to even greater heights.

Fintiri's understanding of politics in Adamawa has been straightforward—he sees it as the art of balancing interests, driven by fairness and people's rights. His ability to manage conflicting interests while making decisive moves has been key to his success. Bold yet measured, he has used resources to create visible impacts, from infrastructural developments to social programs, all of which have put Adamawa in the national spotlight. His performance will give his successor a powerful momentum to capitalize on. However, whoever succeeds Governor Fintiri must recognize the weight of expectation that comes with succeeding a well-regarded and high-performing predecessor. It will require both vision and strategy to maintain the trajectory and deliver even greater results.

Zayyad I. Muhammad,
Abuja

IMAGES

Photo Editor Abiodun Ajala
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L-R: Managing Director/CEO, NEXIM Bank Plc, Abba Bello; Executive Director/CEO, Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) Nonye Ayeni; representative of the minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Umar Goni Ahmed; and representative of the managing director, Oil and Gas Free Zones Authority, Dr. Cynthia Eguridu, during the NEPC Conference on Service Export and E-Commerce, held in Abuja...recently

PHOTO: ENOCK REUBEN



Founder and President of the Adedeji Alebiosu Foundation, Mr. Adedeji Alebiosu (right), and President of France, Emmanuel Macron, on the sidelines of #UNGA79 in New York, United State of America...recently



L-R: First Vice President, Chartered Institute of Forensics and Certified Fraud Investigators of Nigeria (CIFCFIN), Dr. Johnson Oluata; President, CIFCFIN), Dr. Iliyasu Gashinbaki; and Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Abraham Aseimo, during the Institute's ninth direct membership graduation and fellowship award ceremony at EFCC Academy, Abuja...recently

PHOTO: KINGSLEY ADEBOYE



Former Senator, Ganiyu Solomon, and the writer of the movie entitled: 'Okikiola The Fisherman', Sisi Adeola Agoro, during the premiere of the movie in Lagos...recently

PHOTO: ETOP UKUTT



L-R: Chief Executive Officer, UAE VP Office, Political Affairs, Khalid Al Mannaei; Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations, Gulf, Middle East and Central Asia, Emirates, Adil Al Ghaith; Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo; UAE Consulate in Lagos, Abdulla Al Qahtani; and Emirates Country Manager in Nigeria, Paulos Legesse, during the welcome ceremony of Emirates Airline back to Nigeria after two years suspension, held at the Legend Hotel, Lagos...recently



L-R: Son, Mr. Otome Oyo; other family members, Mrs. Ote Abudiore, Samantha Oyo, Mrs. Lydia Oyo; and husband of the deceased, Mr. Vincent Oyo, during 10th remembrance service in honour of Dame Felicia Oluremi Oyo held at the Catholic Church, GRA Ikeja, Lagos...recently

PHOTO: ABAYOMI AKINYELE

BUSINESSWORLD

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08056356325

RATES AS AT OCTOBER 3, 2024

MONEY MARKET		REPO		S & P INDEX		S & P INDEX		EXCHANGE RATE
OPR	25.34%	CALL	23.25%	INDEX LEVEL	595.26	1/4 TO DATE	0.24%	N1,262.85/ 1 US DOLLAR*
OVERNIGHT	25.18%	1-MONTH	21.37%	1-DAY	0.10%	YEAR TO DATE	-10.99%	*AS AT THU., APRIL 18, 2024
		3-MONTH	22.41%	MONTH-TO-DATE	0.24%			

Ticket Racketeering Intensifies as Passengers Scramble for Limited Aircraft Seats

Chinedu Eze

The limited number of aircraft seats, which falls short of meeting passengers' demand on domestic routes has intensified ticket racketeering by airlines ground staff, especially ticketing officials in collaboration with airport touts that claim to be protocol officers.

THISDAY investigations carried out over the last three months, revealed that ticketing officials cancel tickets already sold to passengers and sell the same ticket to other passengers at higher prices, just as protocol officers resell tickets already bought in other people's names, an action that has security implications.

As passengers travel with wrong names, experts say this could be dangerous in case of mishap.

It was learnt that the ticketing officials also send messages to passengers falsely telling them that their flights have been rescheduled so that they arrive at the airport when the flights had left and when they arrive they would be asked to rebook for other flights and their tickets would be sold to other passengers who would pay more for them.

Although this illicit deals had been going on for years, it has intensified in the last two years because of the inability of Nigerian airlines to supply more aircraft seats, a trend that has catapulted airfares beyond the reach of average Nigerian.

THISDAY met Abuja bound passenger on early morning flight on Monday at one of the domestic terminals in Lagos, who revealed that he wanted to travel on Tuesday but all the flights were booked, but he checked and was lucky to get a seat in a flight for Monday, which he promptly booked and paid for.

According to the passenger, "When I came to checked in, the airline official told me that I have issue with my ticket but she was going to rectify it. I waited. At a time, I suspected, maybe, they have sold my ticket to another person. In fact, if they did not eventually check me in, I would have caused so much havoc. I know the game they play. I had bought another person's ticket before and the person was lamenting beside me that his flight was cancelled, as I walked away to board my flight," he said.

THISDAY tracked down a protocol official who arrange flights for a well-known company in Lagos to find out whether a passenger's ticket could be cancelled and sold to another person and whether a ticketing officer of an airline could collect money for ticket without issuing one and collaborate with station manager to secure boarding pass for the passenger.

This is was response, "It is possible because they can tell you that the flight has been rescheduled and most often they do this without the knowledge of the airline management. Another thing they do is that they close the counter before time; so, when you come they tell you that you are late; that the counter has been closed. They will quickly tell you to reschedule your flight. They will then sell your ticket at higher price to another passenger."

He also disclosed that that although this is done on all routes, it is rampant on the routes where airlines operate one flight a day.

He also disclosed that on those routes that have high demands, protocol officers buy the tickets of the flights and when the flights are full they start offloading the tickets at double or more the price the airline sold the tickets; so, passengers who are desperate to travel would buy the tickets and the protocol officers will cook up identity cards with the name on the tickets.

"They do this on all routes but mostly on the routes where airlines operate one flight a day, like Enugu, Kaduna, Asaba, Anambra, Warri, Benin and Osubi. Our people will even go and buy tickets of the airlines that fly there. When the flight is booked full they sell to any passenger who can pay higher. They will approach you, tell you that the flight is full and they will also tell you that they can sell a ticket if you want. If you pay they will do ID card for you and you fly with it. But when they don't get passengers they open the ticket so that they can sell it at another time. So, they open it for future use. They do this mostly during Christmas season. Everybody in the airport knows that," he said.

The story continues online on **www.thisdaylive.com**



L-R: Chief Executive Officer, Omotayo CPA LLC, Tosin Omotayo; Vice President, Delivery and PMO at Cencora, Khafid Gbadamosi; Business & Project Management Consultant, Morolake Babayeju; Chief Executive Officer, iCentra US and PMI Person of the Year, Taopheek Babayeju; Founder/Executive Director of Midlo Angel Network, Wale Salami at a homecoming mixer held in honour of Babayeju in Dallas, USA… recently

Dangote Cement, 10 Others Contribute 76.5% to Overall N56.64tn Market Cap

Kayode Tokede

Despite the challenging business environment, Dangote Cement Plc, Airtel Africa Plc, MTN Nigeria Communication Plc, BUA Foods Plc, BUA Cement Plc and six others blue-chip companies contributed about 76.5 per cent to N56.64 trillion overall market capitalisation in nine months of 2024.

Others are: Zenith Bank Plc, Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc, Geregu Power Plc, Transcorp Power Plc, Oando Plc and Seplat Petroleum Plc

These 11 companies have earned their places in the listed companies' trillion-naira market cap companies, driven by impressive corporate earnings and dividend payout to shareholders.

As of September 30, 2024, Nigeria's stock market capitalisation garnered about N15.7trillion to N56.6 trillion with these 11 companies contributing about 76.5 per cent or N43.35trillion.

THISDAY analysis of market data showed Dangote Cement earned the top spot on the list with N9.07 trillion market capitalisation, followed by Airtel Africa with N8.27 trillion market capitalisation and MTN Nigeria recorded N4.01 trillion in market capitalisation as of September 30, 2024.

An investigation by THISDAY revealed that the stock price of Dangote Cement in nine months of 2024 has appreciated by 66 per cent or N 212.1 per share to close at N532 per share as of September 30, 2024 from N319.9 per share it opened for trading this year.

The Cement manufacturing company has gained N3.6 trillion in market capitalisation this year on the backdrop of impressive performance.

Dangote Cement emerged one of the most profitable cement manufacturing companies in Nigeria, generating N292.96 billion profit before tax in half year ended June 2024, about 22 per cent increase from N239.86billiion in half year ended June 2023.

The research by THISDAY revealed that BUA Food recorded N7.11 trillion market capitalisation, and BUA Cement at N3.73trillion.

As of September 2024, Geregu Power, Seplat Energy and Transcorp Power have N2.88 trillion, N2.4 trillion and N2.26 trillion in market capitalisation, respectively.

In addition, GTCO in the banking sector has the highest market capitalisation, currently at N1.4 trillion, followed by Zenith Bank at N1.19trillion and Oando with an estimated N1.03 trillion in market capitalisation as of September 30, 2024.

The recent performance and acquisition of NAOC have play a critical role in the soaring price of Oando.

Stock price of the integrated oil and gas service in nine months of 2024 has appreciated by 687per cent or N72.1 per share from N10.5 per share when it opened 2024 to close September 30, 2024 at N82.6 per share.

Oando towards the end of August 2024 successfully completed its acquisition of Eni's Nigerian subsidiary, Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC), in a landmark deal valued at $783 million.

The story continues online on **www.thisdaylive.com**

MARKET DATA AS AT THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2024

BONDS

DESCRIPTION	Price	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time
^13.53 23-MAR-2025	95.65	23.67	0.15	October 3, 2024 ▲
^12.50 22-JAN-2026	92.31	19.40	0.01	October 3, 2024 ▲
^16.2884 17-MAR-2027	102.49	18.95	0.00	October 3, 2024 ▬
^13.98 23-FEB-2028	95.25	18.78	0.01	October 3, 2024 ▲
^14.55 26-APR-2029	101.60	19.08	0.00	October 3, 2024 ▬

BILLS

MATURITY	Discount	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time
NTB 24-Oct-24	19.29	19.37	-0.01	October 3, 2024 ▼
NTB 7-Nov-24	19.67	20.04	-0.02	October 3, 2024 ▼
NTB 5-Dec-24	20.04	20.76	-0.01	October 3, 2024 ▼
NTB 9-Jan-25	20.50	21.70	-0.01	October 3, 2024 ▼
NTB 6-Feb-25	20.88	22.50	-0.01	October 3, 2024 ▼

CPS

MATURITY	Discount	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time
AFRI CP II 21-OCT-24	26.53	26.88	-0.03	October 3, 2024 ▼
FBNQ CP XXVII 25-OCT-24	21.95	22.24	-0.03	October 3, 2024 ▼
UACN CP VIII 3-DEC-24	23.63	24.60	0.04	October 3, 2024 ▲
CTIL CP XIV 20-DEC-24	23.43	24.66	0.07	October 3, 2024 ▲
CPST CP X 14-FEB-25	23.89	26.18	0.08	October 3, 2024 ▲

OTC FX FUTURES

CONTRACT TENOR (MONTH)	Contract	Current Rate ($/₦)	Updated Time
13M	NGUS OCT 29 2025	–	October 3, 2024
14M	NGUS NOV 26 2025	–	October 3, 2024
15M	NGUS DEC 31 2025	–	October 3, 2024
16M	NGUS JAN 28 2026	–	October 3, 2024
17M	NGUS FEB 25 2026	–	October 3, 2024

NCS Tincan Island Command Intercepts N682m Worth of Cannabis from Canada

Oluchi Chibuzor

The Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), Tincan Island Port Command, has announced that it intercepted 684 packets of Cannabis Indica, worth N682 million with Canada as the source of origin.

Displaying the illicit drug in Lagos, the Custom Area Controller, TinCan Island Port Area Command, Dera Nnadi, said the occasion offers an opportunity to unveil three seizures in Tincan Island Area Command that worth N682 million.

According to him, "The command, having received actionable intelligence on the suspected importation of illicit dangerous drugs from one of the source countries, intercepted the three containers which we are showcasing today. In furtherance of the synergy between the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the NCS, the command is handing over the contents of the three containers totaling 684 packets of Cannabis Indica weighing 341.025kg with a street value of N682, 050,000.00."

Giving details of the container, Nnadi said, 100 per cent investigation on the containers on different days showed they had illicit drug.

According to him, "The details of each subject container are as follows: Container number MSMU 518030/2 (1X40FT). A joint 100% physical examination was conducted on 2 Aug 2024 and the examination revealed 77 packets of Cannabis Indica weighing 38.5kg. At the time of processing the intelligence, system profiling indicated that a declaration was made on an SGD Number withheld on 30-07-2024, listing three (3) used vehicles.

"Container number MSMU 602957/0 (1X40FT). A joint 100% physical examination was conducted on 8 Aug 2024 and the examination revealed 532 packets of Cannabis Indica weighing 265.025kg. At the time of processing the intelligence, no declaration had been entered. The shipping company with respect to the consignment is MSC.

"Container number FSCU 927461/3 (1X40FT). A joint 100% physical examination was conducted on 8 Aug 2024 and the examination revealed 75 packets of Cannabis Indica weighing 37.5kg. At the time of processing the intelligence, no declaration had been entered. The shipping company with respect to the consignment is MSC."

Speaking, the Deputy Narcotics Commander, Tin Can NDLEA, Adanu Edoh, lauded the effort of the service in the fight against illicit drug Importation.

Report Predicts Uncertainty in Nigeria's Oil Production in Q4

Ejiofor Alike

A new report by the Society of Energy Editors (SEE) has predicted that uncertainty will characterise Nigeria's crude oil production in this fourth quarter (Q4) of the year due to ongoing challenges in the oil and gas industry.

In its 2024 Fourth Quarter Outlook for the Nigerian Energy Sector released in Lagos, SEE, a professional association dedicated to promoting excellence in media coverage of the energy sector, noted a decline in the country's oil production.

According to the report, the trend would likely continue unless there were significant reforms in the sector.

The fourth quarter Outlook was the third to be issued by the SEE this year after the second and third quarter reports released earlier in the year.

The report stated that while investments, and oil and gas exploration and production were at an all-time low, the shortcomings on the part of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited and the Ministry of Petroleum Resources would negatively impact the success of projects.

"Investments are at an all-time low and this may remain unchanged in the fourth quarter. Oil and gas exploration and production (E&P) are at an all-time low and may remain that way in Q4. The NNPC Ltd is not able to take decisions on moving projects along and indications are that this will remain so in Q4.

"Similarly, the NNPC Ltd is not able to ensure that the divestment programme of the International Oil Companies (IOCs) doesn't negatively impact Joint Venture operations, and this may remain so in Q4. The Ministry of Petroleum Resources is also unable to move stalled projects along and this may remain so in Q4," the report explained.

SEE revealed that Nigeria currently has 14 oil rigs operating, citing the latest data from August 2024.

This number, the report said, had remained unchanged from the previous period and would likely remain so in Q4.

Ships & Ports Maritime Cup Kicks Off with Clash Between NPA, Micura

The highly anticipated 2024 Ships & Ports Maritime Cup Competition, Nigeria's premier maritime sporting event, is set to commence on Tuesday, 15th October 2024, with an electrifying opening match between defending champions Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) and 2010 winners Micura Stevedoring Services in a high-stakes encounter.

The competition, organised by leading maritime public relations and media firm, Ships & Ports Communication Company, brings together top-tier companies and government agencies from both the private and public sectors, making it the only competitive sporting event in the Nigerian maritime industry.

Officiated by FIFA-badge referees from the Lagos State Referees Council, the 15-year-old tournament will be fiercely contested, as participants compete for the prestigious trophy from 15th October to 6th November 2024.

The CEO of Ships & Ports Communication Company, Dr. Bolaji Akinola, said the importance of the Maritime Cup competition to the Nigerian maritime sector cannot be overstated.

"Beyond the competition, it serves as a platform to foster unity, teamwork, and collaboration among stakeholders. It encourages friendship and networking, promoting a sense of community and cooperation that is crucial for the growth and development of the maritime industry.

"The tournament also provides an opportunity for participants to bond outside of their usual work environments, enhancing communication and building stronger relationships across the sector. Through the Maritime Cup, players and supporters alike come together in a spirit of healthy competition, further solidifying the sense of togetherness that is vital for the progress of Nigeria's maritime industry," Akinola said.

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PalmPay Marks 5th Anniversary in Nigeria with Major Milestones

Emma Okonji

PalmPay, a leading emerging markets-focused fintech, has marked the 5th anniversary of its operations in Nigeria at a celebratory event held in Lagos recently.

During the event, Palmpay highlighted key milestones in its journey and updates on its growth and impact in the country.

Speaking at the anniversary, Managing Director of PalmPay Nigeria, Chika Nwosu, said: "We've built a platform that 35 million users trust, and with our growing network of agents and merchants, PalmPay is playing a key role in digitising Nigeria's economy. Looking ahead, our strategy is clear—continue to lead with secure, reliable solutions while fostering partnerships that empower more people and businesses to reach their financial goals."

At the core of PalmPay's approach, is making financial services more accessible in a market where traditional banking options have left many underserved. The new *861# USSD code allows customers to access PalmPay services without the internet, offering greater accessibility for users who run out of data or are in areas with low network coverage.

The company also emphasised its commitment to security at a time when financial fraud is increasing globally. PalmPay has implemented security measures such as facial recognition, biometric login, and AI-driven transaction monitoring to ensure secure payments. Every account is verified through NIN or BVN, and customers who lose their phones can now freeze their accounts via the newly launched USSD service.

AIR WATCH

Air Watch – in partnership with – AIR PEACE ..your peace, our goal www.flyairpeace.com

As Emirates Resumes Flights to Nigeria



Chinedu Eze

After a two-year hiatus, the Dubai based Emirates has resumed flights to Lagos, the commercial hub of Nigeria.

The Middle East mega carrier inaugural flight touched down at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), Lagos, on October 1, 2024, as Nigeria was celebrating its 64th Independence anniversary.

Commenting on the return of services, the Deputy President and Chief Commercial Officer, Emirates Airlines, Adnan Kazim, said: "This has been a long-awaited moment, and we are excited to resume operations to Lagos, helping reconnect travellers seamlessly to and through Dubai, coupled with a consistent, world-class experience onboard.

"We would like to thank the Nigerian authorities, including the Federal Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development and the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, as well as the UAE authorities including His Excellency Salem Saeed Al Shamsi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Abuja, Nigeria and His Excellency Dr Abdulla Almandoos, Consulate General of the United Arab Emirates in Lagos, for their support.

"We are committed to making this route a success and look forward to contributing to the Nigerian aviation industry's growth and offering travellers and businesses more choice and connectivity to key destination across our network."

Nigerian Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo said: "We are pleased to welcome Emirates back to Nigeria. Emirates has become a global brand and Nigeria, being the most populous black nation in the world, is the sure destination for all major airlines in the world. So, this is a mutually beneficial relationship and we look forward to many years of seamless operations for the designated airlines of both countries to ply the route."

With the resumption of operations to Lagos, Emirates provides frictionless connectivity to one of Africa's major economic hubs, facilitating global trade and strengthening business ties, in line with the UAE and Nigeria's strong bilateral trade relations.

The airline said Emirates SkyCargo would support Nigerian businesses by offering more than 300 tonnes of bellyhold cargo capacity in and out of Lagos every week, into key markets such as UAE, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Bahrain, among others.

Anticipated commodities such as Kola Nuts, food and beverages, and urgent courier material will be transported via the airline's state-of-the-art hub in Dubai, quickly, efficiently, and reliably via the airline's multi-vertical specialized product portfolio. Imports into Nigeria are anticipated from key markets such as UAE, India and Hong Kong, with key commodities including a mix of general cargo, pharmaceuticals and electronics.

The Dubai-Lagos service is operated with a Boeing 777-300ER, offering eight First class suites, 42 Business class seats and 304 economy class seats, with added comforts and perks in each cabin class. Emirates is one of only two airlines offering First Class in and out of Lagos, and offers an unrivalled experience with luxurious touches, a premium gastronomic selection of dishes and fine beverages, and one of the biggest screens in the sky, all in midst of comfort and privacy.

Offering the best experience across every class, passengers will dine on regionally inspired multi-course menus, complemented by a wide selection of premium beverages. Customers can tune in to over 6,500 channels of global entertainment, including 23 Nigerian movies, series and other content on ice, Emirates' award-winning inflight entertainment system.

To support travel to Dubai or onwards, Emirates will also facilitate 48 hour and 96 hour Dubai visa applications for travellers from Nigeria, an offer which is exclusive to the airline.

Celebrating the resumption of services, Emirates award-winning loyalty programme, Skywards, reinstated previous tier status levels for Skywards members to ensure continuation of earned benefits and recognition.

Speaking on the impact of Emirates Airlines return to Nigeria after two years, the Group Managing Director/CEO of Finchglow Holdings Limited and former President of National Association of Nigeria Travel Agencies (NANTA), Bankole Bernard, told THISDAY that credit should first go to the Federal Government, which made efforts to restore diplomatic relations between Nigeria and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) possible.

He said that the resolution of diplomatic impasse would enhance trade between the two countries, which would give rise to prosperity and business opportunities. Bernard said the resumption of flights to Nigeria would add to the value chain in aviation businesses because it will create jobs for ground handlers who would now generate more revenue. It would create opportunities for travel agents to sell more tickets and provide ancillary services.

Bernard also said that the resumption of flight service to Nigeria by Emirates would give opportunities to aviation fuel marketers to do business with them, and agencies like the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) will generate more revenues from their operations, but above all, it gives more choice to air travellers, enhances competition and drives down the fares with more seats available for international destinations.

The Managing Director/CEO of Finchglow Holdings Limited also reacted to the complaints about the new visa policy for Nigerians who wish to travel to Dubai, saying that the Middle East nation should be given more time.

"They have been out for two years; so, a lot of things have changed. My view of the prevailing visa challenge is a matter of time. It is too early to decide whether it is good or bad. Do you know that two years UK visa costs N1.2 million and if they deny you the request; that money is gone. When you really look at it; now that they have come back, they would not like to fly empty plane to Lagos. So, as time goes on they will look at it again; so, in two months we will evaluate them again.

"For travel agents, it increases our inventory. It also gives Air Peace an opportunity to operate in one of the most viable destinations from Nigeria. This is because, as far I am concerned, the most viable routes from Nigeria are London and Dubai. So, all the people going to Jeddah, Jordan, Kuwait and others, their airline is back," he said.

Emirates is one of the biggest airlines in the world. It is a favourite to many Nigerian travellers; that despite its relatively high fares with attendant premium service, many Nigerians prefer to travel with the airline to travelling with other airlines from Nigeria. With direct flight between Nigeria and the UAE, other international carriers, which hitherto benefitted from the airline's suspension of its operates to Nigeria, will lose that segment of its market.

The Minister, had noted while addressing journalists on arrival at the Lagos airport on Wednesday; that many airlines benefitted from the absence of that airline in Nigeria's airspace, noting that some airlines had to increase their fares and also their frequencies because Emirates absence reduced seat capacity from Nigeria.

At 64, Hope Rises for Aviation after Sloppy Past

Despite the high local passenger traffic in Nigeria's aviation sector, the country failed to maximise such opportunity in growing very strong airlines, until recently when government decided to make the air transport sector more viable, writes **Chinedu Eze**

In the past 63 years of Nigeria's Independence, there were not much to cheer, but in the last one year, hope started growing in the horizon as the current administration under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is beginning to address the key knotty issues that retarded the industry since Nigeria gained Independence in 1960.

In view of the new development taking place in the aviation industry in the last one year, industry stakeholders have highlighted key factors in Nigeria's aviation industry that can determine its growth to include: policies that drive the industry, effective implementation of such policies, strong airlines, high passenger growth, efficient regulation, modern airports, viability of operators and contribution to nation's GDP.

In the area of policies, the current Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, has realised that without the right policies in place the industry would still oscillate in the realm of mediocrity. So, he is putting things in place to grow strong airlines, to ensure that the airlines operate safely and also to ensure that the issues that hindered their growth in the past were eliminated.

His efforts so far have reawakened enthusiasm and high expectations in the industry. Airlines are feeling that they have got a working partner. But skepticism remains because the major challenge the industry faces is that every Minister that comes has his or her own ideas. No one knows how long positive policies made to drive the industry can last. They may not outlive the Minister that instituted them, as it has happened in the past.

So, the industry is embroiled in preemptory, knee-jack policies that serve the narrow interest of the Ministers in the past, but what the sector needs is long-term policies that can guarantee positive growth and consistency.

In the area of infrastructure, Keyamo has promised concession of major airports under the management of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), private sector driven with apparent transparent process. This may sound like a sing-song because the immediate past Minister, Hadi Sirika, played his lyre on that promise but it never materialised. So, it is with subdued hope that industry stakeholders look forward to the fulfillment of his promises. However, with what he has achieved so far, and his overall attitude, it is an endearing promise with high expectations.



THE PAST

Before the Tinubu administration, the priority of the government was creating opportunity for foreign airlines. In fact, some Ministers would say that Nigerian airlines did not have capacity, and there was no intentioned effort to help the airlines to grow capacity. Rather, foreign airlines were being begged to start some routes in Nigeria. But the current administration has departed from that past and the Aviation Minister is working with other Ministers to have strong aviation policies that can drive the industry to the future.

This is why earlier in the year, the Minister did everything possible to see that Nigerian major carrier, Air Peace, started flights to London and so far, it has been a successful story, going by the feedback from passengers who travelled with the airline's flight to London. Emirates Airlines resumed flight service to Nigeria on Tuesday. Before its flight, the Minister travelled to United Arab Emirates (UAE), where he, accompanied by technical officials from the aviation agencies met with UAE aviation authorities to review the Bilateral Air Service Agreement (BASA) to ensure that the interest of Nigerian airlines is protected. In the principle of reciprocity, the BASA allows Nigerian carrier to operate to Dubai, as Emirates is operating to Nigeria.

The Minister has also paved way for Nigerian carriers to tap into the Cape Town Convention (CTC) by reviving the signatory Nigeria had and abiding by the rules to make it easy for airlines to pay less for aircraft leasing and to also engage in dry lease. In addition, the new arrangement initiated by the Minister will prompt lessors to review insurance premium paid by Nigerian carriers and eventually remove the designation, high country risk on Nigeria.

BETTER SERVICE TO AIR TRAVELLERS

In order to serve air travellers better, NCAA has established consumer protection portal. The establishment marked a significant step towards creating platform for interface between airlines, NCAA and air travellers in accordance with international practices and standards.

The portal offers a comprehensive platform where passengers can lodge complaints, access real-time data on airline performance, and monitor punctuality and on-time operations of airlines.

NCAA said the portal would also serve as a valuable resource for the aviation industry, offering data and tools for research and development, and contributing to informed decision-making that can ultimately improve service delivery.

The Minister said the easiest way government could develop the aviation industry is to review and also introduce pro investment policies that would attract private investors, eliminate the policies, which are inimical to growth, and promote private enterprise.

In other words, there are hitherto stringent and conservative policies, which are disincentives to investment by the private sector. Such policies that will hinder their ability to make profit, encourage prolonged, boring bureaucracies and such other policies that can erode the confidence of investors in putting their money in the sector should be done away with. Then opaque actions of government and its agencies should be looked into. The Minister believes that when these seeming obstacles are removed, the private sector would be willing to invest in the industry.

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT

According to Keyamo, the federal government has the plan to build aerotropolis at the airports and establish hubs but this can only be done when private investors see attraction in what government can offer, which is reliability, policy consistency and other incentives, including transparency in the processes.

The story continues online on **www.thisdaylive.com**

Nigeria @ 64: A Lament for Lost Opportunities, Collapse of Indigenous Shipping

Bolaji Akinola

As Nigeria marks 64 years of independence, one of the most glaring failures of our post-colonial governance is the tragic collapse of our indigenous shipping industry. The Nigerian National Shipping Line (NNSL), bequeathed to us by the colonial administration as a robust national shipping carrier, once stood as a symbol of pride, sovereignty, and economic promise. Yet, within just two and a half decades after independence, the NNSL was thoroughly mismanaged and run aground, becoming a reflection of the broader dysfunction that has plagued our maritime sector.

At the time of independence in 1960, Nigeria inherited a fleet of ships that were not only operational but positioned to support our emerging economy. The NNSL was a testament to the vision of building a self-sufficient maritime power capable of transporting goods and commodities both in and out of our bustling seaports. But today, 64 years later, we find ourselves in a pitiful state, where no Nigerian shipping company owns even a single vessel among the over 5,000 ships that call at our ports annually. These ships, owned by foreign interests, dominate our waters, enriching their nations while we sit idly by, exporting oil, gas, and agricultural produce, and importing manufactured goods without a stake in the process.

This collapse is not due to a lack of potential or resources, but rather a systematic and pervasive failure of leadership and vision. The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), created with the primary mandate of promoting indigenous shipping, has failed spectacularly in this regard. Established to regulate and nurture the growth of local shipping companies, NIMASA has instead become a bureaucratic entity more interested in revenue collection than in fostering the growth of indigenous maritime capacity. The sad reality is that despite NIMASA's vast resources and regulatory power, Nigeria's presence in the global shipping industry remains negligible.

Worse still, the Federal Government's approach to the development of indigenous shipping has been nothing short of lackadaisical. Successive administrations have paid lip service to the need for a vibrant national shipping industry, but their actions have demonstrated a complete disregard for the sector's strategic importance. The national shipping line was allowed to decay, with successive governments failing to invest in its revival or even establish policies that could encourage the growth of indigenous companies capable of competing in the international shipping arena.

The creation of the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy by the present administration was seen by many as a step in the right direction. Yet, almost a year after its formation, there has been little to no improvement in the state of indigenous shipping. The ministry has yet to make any significant strides toward addressing the core issues plaguing the sector, including lack of infrastructure, access to capital, and policy support. The Nigerian government seems content to allow foreign-owned vessels to dominate our waters, extracting profit from our resources while we remain passive spectators.

The negative impact of this failure is far-reaching. Without a strong national shipping carrier, Nigeria is at the mercy of foreign shipping companies, paying exorbitant rates for the transportation of our goods. This erodes our trade balance, weakens our economic independence, and limits job creation in a sector that could employ tens of thousands of Nigerians. Moreover, the absence of a robust maritime industry stifles our ability to leverage the blue economy, a sector that could potentially contribute billions to our GDP if properly harnessed.

As we reflect on this tragic decline, the question must be asked: what is the way forward? First, the government must get serious about developing indigenous shipping. This requires more than the creation of ministries and agencies; it demands a focused, strategic plan that includes investment in shipbuilding infrastructure, access to credit for Nigerian ship owners, and policy frameworks that promote local participation in international trade. NIMASA must be refocused to fulfill its original mandate, not as a revenue-generating agency but as a true promoter of Nigerian shipping interests.

We must also recognize the strategic importance of having our own national shipping carriers. It is inconceivable that a country with the economic potential of Nigeria remains without its own fleet of vessels. Participation in the movement of international trade is not just about economic gain—it is about sovereignty, security, and our standing in the global maritime community.

The time for complacency is over. The Federal Government must act now to revive the dream of an indigenous shipping industry. Our future prosperity depends on it. The failure to do so will only deepen Nigeria's reliance on foreign powers, continuing the cycle of dependency and lost opportunities that has plagued our maritime sector for far too long.

• ***Bolaji Akinola, PhD is the CEO, Ships & Ports Limited***

This Weekend

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2024

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THISDAY
WEEKLY MAGAZINE



AYODELE ADIO: Providing Strategic Media Advisory Services, Reputation Management in Africa

COVER This Weekend

Ayodele Adio: Providing Strategic Media Advisory Services, Reputation Management in Africa

As the Managing Partner of Adio Strategy and Communications, a Reputation Management and Media agency, Mr. Ayodele Adio provides strategic media advisory services for senior corporate and public officials while also managing the reputation of major organisational and individual brands. In the course of duty, the alumnus of Pan Atlantic School of Media and Communications, who also doubles as a policy analyst, has developed and managed media relations strategies that supported the passing of the Nigeria startup Act, as well as handled some of the biggest tech events in Africa. The author of "Who Took My Socks" - a simple guide on reputation management, and "Pitch Perfect" - how to deliver powerful interviews, in this interview with **Chiemelie Ezeobi,** shared the trajectory of his duties and how he has helped shaped communications strategy for new policy implementation in private and public sector

As the Managing Partner of Adio Strategy and Communications, exactly what services does your firm offer and what type of clientele do you offer does services to?

In our firm, we believe that reputation is everything. We specialize in shaping and protecting personal and corporate brands. Whether you're a rising entrepreneur, an established business, or a public organization (or person), our mission is to ensure you get noticed, heard, and trusted.

Hence, we craft narratives that put our clients in the spotlight for all the right reasons. We focus on cultivating trust, building strong narratives, and delivering clear, impactful messaging that resonates with a targeted audience.

At the core, we help brands get noticed—strategically navigating the ever-changing media landscapes, building lasting relationships with key outlets, and creating opportunities that ensure your message reaches the right ears and eyes. And as I always say to my team, we don't just manage reputations—we build legacies.

One of the prefix is "Reputation Management", what does that entail?

In simple terms, Reputation Management is about influencing and controlling an individual's or organization's public perception. It is about shaping how an entity is perceived by stakeholders and the public. However, it entails quite a lot and it is all encompassing. It requires building a strong brand identity, engaging with audiences consistently, managing crises effectively and maintaining trust.

Would you like me to elaborate on any specific aspect of reputation management?

For the sake of this interview let me dwell on maintaining trust as a key aspect of reputation management. Every business that exists is making a promise to the customer, and its success will be determined by how committed it is at keeping that promise. Therefore, when an organization makes a habit of breaking its promises to the customer, it loses credibility and damages its reputation. And ones a business has a damaged reputation, it is difficult, if not impossible, to survive. That is why building and maintaining a culture of excellence, and a fanatical commitment to the customer, make up the foundation of every organization's reputation. With a great reputation, you can charge a premium, but with a battered reputation, you'd be out of business. It is the realization of this truism that compels brands and professionals to take reputation management very seriously.

When did this Brand start and what's the journey been like since its establishment to now?

We started out about five years ago and it's been an incredibly exciting journey. We've worked with professionals across industries, brands across various sectors, and public sector leaders from various parts of the country.

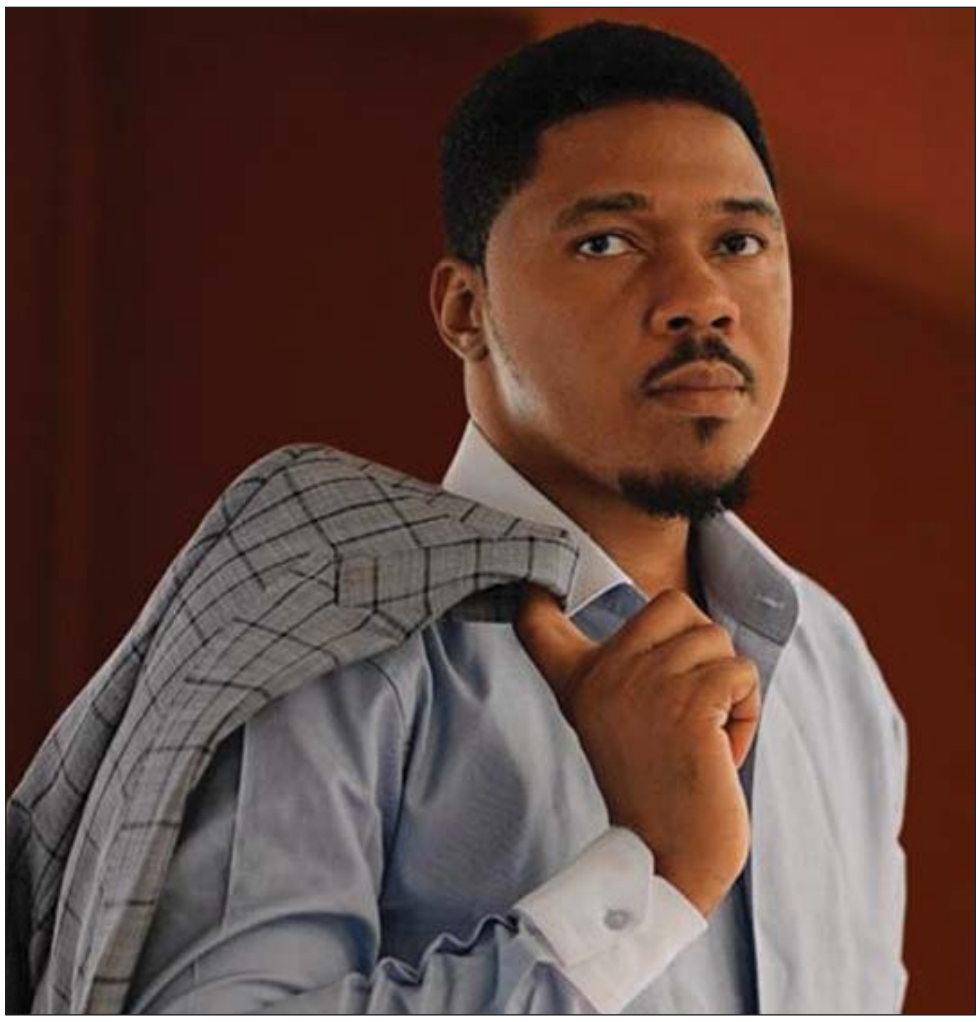
Any challenges and how did you navigate that?

There have been several challenges managing certain kinds of clients, managing crisis, and even finding the right talent internally to scale. One of the challenges most reputations managers deal with especially when managing a crisis is getting the client to understand that saving their reputation will first require saving them from themselves. There is always the tendency to centre themselves during a crisis, and every time this happens the crisis typically goes from bad to worse. So, managing the ego of successful brands or professional is the most daunting task you can encounter. It is challenging but crucial, because it doesn't matter if you publish a statement your client imposes on you, if there is a backlash from that statement, you would still bear the brunt. With reputation management, it is almost as if you are dammed if you do and damned of you don't.

That is why is it advisable to build trust, so when the day comes that you have to prioritize the brand over the emotions of the person, you will have the confident and support of the CinC.

One of your highlights says you provided strategic media and communications support towards managing the Youth Party's brand reputation after an illegal deregistration by INEC which was later overturned by the Supreme Court. Care to elucidate?

I'm sure you know the story. After the 2019 general elections, INEC, illegally deregistered the Youth party along with 72 other political parties. But rather than be cowered or intimidated, the party took INEC and the FG to court and secured a supreme court judgement legitimizing the party and ordering INEC to reinstate the party. But this journey took close to 5 years of a vigorous media and strategic communications campaign. We knew that to succeed we needed to make a convincing argument in court and to shape public opinion. It was a daunting task because resources were limited, and we needed to run a brilliant media and communications campaign. And so got to work leveraging the digital media space to gain traction and get attention, which we then used to get media appearances and features on mainstream media. Looking back now, it is clear that we pulled off the impossible: we went against institutions with budgets that we can only imagine in our dreams. The media and civil society in Nigeria had also leaned towards the argument that we didn't need more political parties and so it was fair to have deregistered the 73 political parties. And even more significantly is that none of the other 70 political parties put up a fight. Hence it was a cold lonely walk but our skills and resilience shone through. The courage, tenacity and brilliance of the like of Wale Irokosu, and the dexterity and imagination of Tomiwa Aladekomo who was the chair of the party at the time, made our work easy and helped us succeed.



Adio

When you say you have developed and managed media relations strategies that supported the passing of the Nigeria startup Act, just as you have done for some of the biggest tech events in Africa, can you give more details about that?

The Nigeria Start up act is one of the most consequential legislations for the tech ecosystem and perhaps for young people across the country. It was an audacious bill that was passed and signed within a year, which was a record. Although the bill was passed in a year, it took a lot of hard work and leadership by the like of Oswald Osaretin Guobadia, who were committed to the vision. Primarily, I was responsible for managing media relations and for shaping public opinion in favour of the bill. And to be honest, I also needed to use the media in certain instances to pressure the legislators to move the bill faster. And so, in a sense, I was managing narratives on both sides: getting the public and particularly the ecosystem to yearn for the bill and also getting the legislators to act swiftly on its passage. It also helped that there was a phenomenal communications team behind the efforts led at several times by Olanrewaju Odunowo and a couple of others.

You also worked with some politicians during the last election. In what capacity was that?

I have worked with political in every election cycle since 2014 and my roles has mostly been media advisory and communications strategy.

Can you also call yourself a crisis expert seeing that you have managed several crisis for corporate and government institutions? Any instances that stood out for you?

I would argue that shaping narratives (which is reaching hearts and minds) and crisis management would be my strongest points. I also sort of enjoy being in a crisis situation, the adrenalin rush, the tension and the demands it places on one to think radically. What I enjoy the most is the look of the face of the client when the notice that public perception is changing in their favour or when it is clear that they have gotten off the hook. Its almost like magic, sometimes.

But I think it is important to stress my view when managing a crisis situation. I always believe that the end goal for crisis management is for the customer, client or public to give the brand or organization another chance. As long as the organization or individual is given another chance, then the efforts in managing the crisis was successful. So, managing a crisis does not mean that everyone will be hypnotized to think in one direction or to suddenly start eating from your plate, no. In fact, sometimes, the anger or resentment would last a while depending on what triggered the crisis. My job is to get the audience, public or customers to give you another chance.

In shaping communications strategy for new policy implementation in private and public sector, how did that come about and what were the processes involved?

For any policy to succeed, the people must have (or at least feel they have) a stake it processes and the success. Without the buy in of the people, there will be sabotages and compromises that would either limit the impact of that policy or completely derail it. For me, this has been the bane of policy making in Nigeria, both at federal, state and local government level, where policies are implemented without taking the pain to engage. It explains why so many brilliant policies are resisted and why several others fail.

What I try to do, whether its in the public or private sector is to help policy makers to see how their policies would impact the people, the concerns people are likely to have, what is likely to be resisted and why. That way, two things follow: such concerns are addressed before its implementation and where such concerns are necessary for the success of the initiative, we then help to create a communications plan and engagement strategy that carries the public along. And every time this has happened, those policies succeed beyond expectation because the people take ownership.

Can you shed light on your book "Who took my socks" and how does one apply it to build a brand reputation?

Well, who took my socks is a book on reputation management and how brands can gain loyalty by building a reputation that is people or customer centric. And I use the analogy of the missing socks to explain the importance of building a culture of excellence and a fanatical commitment to certain standards and values.

Interestingly, and this is mostly for men, you wake up one morning and you are struggling to find a pair of socks that match. You are almost in shock how they got missing because the last time you could remember, you had more than enough. So what could have happened to your socks? Well, the truth is, you may have flung one in your sitting room last month and didn't remember to pick it up.

You may have left another in your car when you tried to take of your shoes and wear a slippers to feel a bit more comfortable. When you think about it deeply, you will see how those small and inconsequential actions you took when you had more than enough had suddenly forced a scarcity. Similarly, some organizations tend to be dismissive and sometimes condescending to customers because they are in abundance. And so they don't even notice when a customer never returns or when they lose them to their competition – until when it finally hits them that they are out of business because most of their customers have now migrated to where they are treated with more respect and dignity. That's the morale of the story.

You also wrote "Pitch Perfect" as the ultimate guide in delivering powerful interviews. What influenced that book and would you say it has made impact on the target audience?

I really enjoyed writing this book because it came from my experience managing and preparing hundreds of senior executives and government officials for interviews. The book is a simple guide to help people deliver radio or television interviews that are more appealing to their audience. It provides practical guides in managing the interview process to help achieve stated objectives. Every time I watch a television interview or listen to one on radio, I'm almost always disappointed how most people waste the opportunity to make a great impression and this book provides a solution to that problem.

As a policy analyst, what policies do you suggest to the government of the day to either focus or discard that will better society?

This is a difficult one because a lot has gone wrong across various sectors. But I believe that providing leadership from the top will be the most defining factor. By leadership here I mean the kind of leadership that a sheperd provides, where they sacrifice for their herd, where they lead from the front, where protect even at the cost of their lives. It is only that kind of leadership that can transform this country. As long as people see public office as a ticket to wealth, our country will continue to wallow in abject poverty and under-development.

What's in the future for your brand?

I believe that we will become the biggest indigenous reputation management firm in the subregion over the next decade.

FCMB MD: Banking Sector Recapitalisation Will Lift Nigeria's Private-sector Credit above 13%

Nume Ekeghe

Managing Director of First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Yemisi Edun has affirmed that the ongoing recapitalisation of Nigeria's banks will help address Nigeria's private sector significant credit shortfall.

Domestic lending to the sector is currently 13 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), far below the global average. This gap presents a major challenge to the country's economic growth, especially compared to countries with trillion-dollar economies, where private sector lending typically hovers around 80 per cent of GDP.

Speaking at the 17th Annual Banking and Finance Conference in Abuja, Edun stressed the need for increased private sector credit to fuel economic development, particularly for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

"In the country, SMEs, which play a major role in employment and economic growth, are struggling with limited access to credit. With the recapitalisation of banks, there will be more capacity to offer affordable loans to SMEs, enabling them to grow and contribute more effectively to GDP," Edun said.

Edun further explained that if Nigeria aims to reach a $1 trillion economy, the financial services sector must grow faster than the economy. Financial services account for around 4.7per cent of GDP. For the sector to hit a target of 5.5 per cent by 2030, it would need to grow by more than 18 per cent annually. The ongoing recapitalisation, expected to increase the banking sector's shareholders' funds by over 50 per cent, will be critical to this growth.

"With a larger capital base, banks will be better positioned to meet the financing needs of critical sectors like infrastructure and manufacturing, both of which are essential for Nigeria's long-term economic growth," she disclosed.

Beyond traditional lending, Edun advocated for alternative financing mechanisms such as joint ventures, venture capital, and loan guarantee schemes to support high-potential SMEs. "Diverse funding options, including equity and debt partnerships, are essential for overcoming the capital constraints many businesses face," she recommended.

Infrastructure financing, she noted, is another pressing issue, with Nigeria needing about $100 billion annually to address its infrastructure deficit. Edun recommended that banks collaborate on issuing long-term infrastructure bonds and forming public-private partnerships (PPPs) to make this happen.



L-R: Convener, Insurance Meets Tech, Odion Aleobua; MD/CEO, Peakthrust Insurance Brokers Ltd / President, Professional Insurance Ladies Association, Abimbola Onakomaiya; Representing Commissioner for Insurance, National Insurance Commission (NAICOM), Head, Lagos Control Office, Dr Julius Odidi; President, Chartered Insurance Institute of Nigeria (CIIN), Yetunde Ilori; and Deputy Manager, National Insurance Commission, (NAICOM) Abuja, Kenneth Aroh, at the Insurance Meets Tech (IMT) Conference held at Victoria Island, Lagos...recently

Learn Africa Records 18% Revenue Growth, Total Asset Now N4.862bn

Oluchi Chibuzor

Learn Africa Plc, has announced that it recorded 18 per cent growth in revenue in their 2023/2024 financial year, increasing from N3.472 billion in 2023 to N4.084 billion in 2024.

The Chairman, Board of Directors, Learn Africa Plc, Emeke Iwerebon, disclosed this at the company's 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM), held in Lagos. He stated that the year 2023 would be remembered as one of the most challenging yet transformative periods in Learn Africa's history.

According to him, "In the 2023 fiscal year, our company, despite the harsh economic environment, achieved an 18 percent growth in revenue, increasing from N3.472 billion in 2023 to N4.084 billion in 2024.

"The company also achieved a marginal increase in gross profit from N1.908 billion in 2023 to N2.122 billion in 2024, having been profoundly affected by the unprecedented surge in publication costs of over 70 percent during the calendar year.

"Operating profit, however, declined significantly by 57 percent, dropping from N607 million in 2023 to N260 million in 2024, following the company's recognition of the expected credit loss provision on trade receiveables of N439 million. While this directly impacted short-term profitability, it nonetheless was a necessary step to safeguard our financial health and ensure the stability and sustainability of our operations."

Dallas Business Community Celebrates Nigerian Entrepreneur, Taopheek Babayeju

The Dallas-Forth Worth business community has celebrated a Nigerian entrepreneur, who is also the Founder/Chief Executive Officer of iCentra, Taopheek Babayeju, by hosting a homecoming mixer in his honour.

The organisers of the event hosted by Midlo Angels, in partnership with Omotayo CPA LLC, iCentra US, and Vesti, themed, "Building Bridges: Celebrating Success," said in a statement that they put the homecoming mixer together to celebrate Babayeju's historic achievement and recognition as the PMI Eric Jennet Person of the Year by the Project Management Institute (PMI), USA.

According to the statement, "The mixer was a unique blend of thought leadership, networking, and celebration, reflecting Babayeju's wide-reaching influence in project management. A notable highlight was the participation of PMI Dallas and PMI Fort Worth executives, who spoke highly of Babayeju's international recognition, reinforcing the event's theme of excellence and community pride."

Speaking at the event, Vice President, Delivery and PMO at Cencora, Khafid Gbadamosi, who delved into Babayeju's career journey, his leadership in project management, and his well-deserved global recognition, remarked, "Taopheek, you've made us all proud. And not just because of this big win, but because you've shown that Africa doesn't just have a seat at the table—we've got the head of the table.

In his welcome speech, CEO of Omotayo CPA LLC, Tosin Omotayo, congratulated Babayeju on his achievements in business and leadership.

Founder/Executive Director of Midlo Angel Network, Wale Salami, who gave the vote of thanks at the event, appreciated Babayeju for his over two decades of impactful leadership. He said, "Babayeju's journey exemplifies resilience, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to empowering others through project management and strategic leadership."

In his speech, Taopheek Babayeju expressed profound gratitude for the support he has received throughout his career. He emphasised the importance of collaboration across industries and borders, encouraging professionals to continue bridging gaps between continents to pursue excellence.

WIW 20224: SEC to Hold Investor Clinics In Abuja, Two States

Kayode Tokede

The Securities and Exchange Commission is set to hold investor clinics in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt as part of activities marking the World Investor Week (WIW) 2024 from October 7 to 11 with the theme "Technology and digital Finance, Crypto Assets and sustainable Finance"

Director General of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Dr. Emomotimi Agama who stated this Wednesday in Abuja, said the clinics will hold in the Commission's Zonal offices in the aforementioned locations, the Head office in Abuja as well as at the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigerian Conference at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel in Abuja

The SEC DG said the Clinics will afford investors the opportunity of having various issues relating to their participation in the capital market addressed as well as educate intending investors on the workings of the investment climate.

He said it is also an opportunity for investors to attend the investor clinic to resolve issues with their investments, make inquiries, mandate their e-dividend accounts and also directly engage with the capital market players (Stock Brokers, Registrars and Fund Managers).

The WIW is an annual event organized by IOSCO to promote investor education and protection globally. This year, the theme focuses on "Technology and Digital Finance, Crypto Assets, and Sustainable Finance," highlighting how innovations in finance are reshaping investment opportunities. The week's activities aim to empower investors with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions in this evolving financial landscape.

Agama said the week's events provide investors with practical knowledge and insights into key trends like crypto assets and sustainable finance.

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 17,537,083.47	21,230,656.70
--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

Investors in Stock Market Lose N858.7bn In Two Days

Kayode Tokede

Following negative sentiment trading activities, investors in the Nigerian stock market have lost an estimated N858.7nillion of their investment in two days as profit-taking continued to rock some fundamental stocks.

THISDAY gathered that the overall market capitalisation dropped between October 2 and 3, 2024 to N55.777 trillion, representing a decline of N858.7billion or 1.52 per cent from N56.635 trillion it opened for trading.

When the market capitalisation of all listed companies opened trading October 2, it dropped by N187.6 billion and closing yesterday, it depreciated further by N671.2 billion.

The stock market depreciated by N187.6billion in the first trading day on the backdrop of investors sentiments trading leading to profit-taking activities in Oando Plc that dropped by 6.8per cent, United Bank for Africa Plc that was down by 4.6 per cent and FBN Holdings that fell by 4.4 per cent.

While in the second trading day, investors' sell pressures in Dangote Cement Plc (10 per cent decline to N478.80 per share) contributed to the N671.2 billion decline by market capitalisation.

Consequently, the Nigerian Exchange Limited All-Share Index (NGX) closed yesterday trading at 97,064.42basis points, a decline of 1,494.38basis points or 1.52per cent in two days from 98,558.79basis points the stock market opened for trading., while Year-to-Date returns stood at 29.8per cent.

Capital market analysts had anticipated a bearish performance on the Nigerian stock market as investors reassess their portfolio following the recent increase in the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) to 27.25 per cent.

They noted that "all eyes are also on the third quarter (Q3) earnings reporting season expected to usher in seasonality and sentiments necessary for discerning investors and smart traders to take advantage of the last quarter of the year volatility and season to create wealth."

The current state of the market with likely continuation of trend or reversal has created opportunity to buy into real value and fairly priced companies as revealed by their half-year corporate numbers and price to earnings ratios ahead of their Q3 scorecards. As correction at this point makes the stock market attractive due to sentiments associated with year-end and last quarter of every year.

Already, companies have started notifying the market of their closed period and board meeting to approve their scorecards in the new month. The pullbacks of some companies that seen profit taking or selloffs in recent days creates another opportunity for new entrants who understand the big picture and market dynamics.

PRICES FOR SECURITIES TRADED ASOF OCTOBER 3/24

MAIN BOARD	DEALS	MARKET PRICE	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE TRADED (N)
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N BANKING	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
1 UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC	923,384.38	27.00	-0.19	909	37,099,812
2 ZENITH BANK PLC	1,183,647.82	37.70	-0.13	323	19,013,141
BANKING				1,232	56,103,953
S/N OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
3 ACCESS HOLDINGS PLC	710,904.51	20.00	1.27	399	11,501,469
4 FBN HOLDINGS PLC	886,613.73	24.70	-4.26	299	4,420,982
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS				698	15,922,471
FINANCIAL SERVICES				1,930	72,026,424
ICT					
S/N TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
5 MTN NIGERIA COMMUNICATIONS PLC	3,995,455.09	190.30	0.16	239	617,879
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES				239	617,879
ICT				239	617,879
INDUSTRIAL GOODS					
S/N BUILDING MATERIALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
6 DANGOTE CEMENT PLC	8,158,994.95	478.80	-10.00	73	154,499
7 LAFARGE AFRICA PLC.	585,518.37	36.35	-1.76	106	559,296
BUILDING MATERIALS				179	713,795
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				179	713,795
OIL AND GAS					
S/N EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
8 SEPLAT ENERGY PLC	2,655,885.68	4,513.40	10.00	13	518,054
EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION				13	518,054
OIL AND GAS				13	518,054
AGRICULTURE					
S/N CROP PRODUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
9 ELLAH LAKES PLC.	11,428.22	4.15	4.01	112	3,844,357
10 FTN COCOA PROCESSORS PLC	7,137.00	1.83	-0.55	46	4,773,477
11 OKOMU OIL PALM PLC.	346,269.33	363.00	-	30	9,524
12 PRESCO PLC	485,400.00	485.40	-	53	153,074
CROP PRODUCTION				241	8,780,432
S/N LIVESTOCK/ANIMAL SPECIALTIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
13 LIVESTOCK FEEDS PLC.	8,970.00	2.99	9.93	97	7,063,130
LIVESTOCK/ANIMAL SPECIALTIES				97	7,063,130
AGRICULTURE				338	15,843,562
CONGLOMERATES					
S/N DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
14 CUSTODIAN INVESTMENT PLC	75,287.86	12.80	-	35	188,624
15 JOHN HOLT PLC.	1,081.84	2.78	-	10	81,786
16 S C O A NIG. PLC.	1,234.67	1.90	-	8	5,363
17 TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATION PLC	449,160.29	11.05	-1.34	145	5,938,238
18 U A C N PLC.	61,448.76	21.00	-1.43	74	1,370,947
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES				272	7,584,958
CONGLOMERATES				272	7,584,958
CONSTRUCTION/REAL ESTATE					
S/N INFRASTRUCTURE/HEAVY CONSTRUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
19 AVA INFRASTRUCTURE FUND	4,075.00	1,000,000.00	-	0	0
20 CHAPEL HILL DENHAM NIG. INFRAS DEBT FUND	107,357.54	111.70	-	9	24,250
21 JULIUS BERGER NIG. PLC.	224,000.00	140.00	-	40	18,135
INFRASTRUCTURE/HEAVY CONSTRUCTION				49	42,385
S/N REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
22 UPDC PLC	31,551.95	1.70	-	32	610,241
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT				32	610,241
CONSTRUCTION/REAL ESTATE				81	652,626
CONSUMER GOODS					
S/N AUTOMOBILES/AUTO PARTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
23 DN TYRE & RUBBER PLC	954.53	0.20	-	0	0
AUTOMOBILES/AUTO PARTS				0	0
S/N BEVERAGES--BREWERS/DISTILLERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
24 CHAMPION BREW. PLC.	27,828.27	3.11	-	10	18,961
25 GOLDEN GUINEA BREW. PLC.	3,227.70	3.15	-	1	10
CONSUMER GOODS					
S/N BEVERAGES--BREWERS/DISTILLERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
26 GUINNESS NIG PLC	142,374.88	65.00	-	82	418,771
27 INTERNATIONAL BREWERIES PLC.	742,165.92	4.41	-	36	390,507
28 NIGERIAN BREW. PLC.	308,283.97	30.00	2.74	88	1,879,348
BEVERAGES--BREWERS/DISTILLERS				217	2,707,597
S/N FOOD PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
29 BUA FOODS PLC	7,108,200.00	394.90	-	32	1,216
30 DANGOTE SUGAR REFINERY PLC	394,773.54	32.50	-4.41	212	3,232,632
31 FLOUR MILLS NIG. PLC.	254,428.55	62.05	-	92	954,276
32 HONEYWELL FLOUR MILL PLC	36,082.40	4.55	-4.21	110	3,410,704
33 MULTI-TREX INTEGRATED FOODS PLC	1,624.01	0.36	-	0	0
34 N NIG. FLOUR MILLS PLC.	5,800.41	32.55	-	30	252,382
35 NASCON ALLIED INDUSTRIES PLC	83,505.00	30.90	-0.32	85	1,741,980
36 UNION DICON SALT PLC.	2,186.71	8.00	-	0	0
FOOD PRODUCTS				561	9,593,190
S/N FOOD PRODUCTS--DIVERSIFIED	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
37 CADBURY NIGERIA PLC.	41,501.18	18.20	1.96	62	470,157
38 NESTLE NIGERIA PLC.	705,464.06	890.00	-	59	22,650
FOOD PRODUCTS--DIVERSIFIED				121	492,807
S/N HOUSEHOLD DURABLES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
39 NIGERIAN ENAMELWARE PLC.	1,467.42	19.30	-	0	0
40 VITAFOAM NIG PLC.	27,518.57	22.00	-	42	461,313
HOUSEHOLD DURABLES				42	461,313
S/N PERSONAL/HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
41 P Z CUSSONS NIGERIA PLC.	77,424.30	19.50	-	22	68,617
CONSUMER GOODS					
S/N PERSONAL/HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
42 UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC.	112,027.61	19.50	-	38	295,994
PERSONAL/HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS				60	364,611
CONSUMER GOODS				1,001	13,619,518
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
S/N BANKING	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
43 ECOBANK TRANSNATIONAL INCORPORATED	440,389.23	24.00	-	39	324,088
44 FIDELITY BANK PLC	436,966.68	13.65	0.37	230	6,362,566
45 GUARANTY TRUST HOLDING COMPANY PLC	1,433,298.43	48.70	1.78	205	3,988,327
46 JAIZ BANK PLC	87,043.75	2.52	-3.08	126	3,761,755
47 STERLING FINANCIAL HOLDINGS COMPANY PLC	146,831.13	5.10	6.25	257	13,061,061
48 UNITY BANK PLC	17,650.90	1.51	-	0	0
49 WEMA BANK PLC.	169,298.41	7.90	6.76	87	2,060,441
BANKING				944	29,558,238
S/N INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
50 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
51 AIICO INSURANCE PLC.	43,194.23	1.18	0.85	74	3,511,172
52 AXAMANSARD INSURANCE PLC	53,370.00	5.93	7.82	60	3,656,080
53 CONSOLIDATED HALLMARK HOLDINGS PLC	15,284.40	1.41	-	17	1,283,785
54 CORNERSTONE INSURANCE PLC	47,232.62	2.60	5.69	14	696,613
55 CORONATION INSURANCE PLC	20,392.93	0.85	1.19	27	1,044,042
56 GOLDLINK INSURANCE PLC	909.99	0.20	-	0	0
57 GUINEA INSURANCE PLC.	3,574.26	0.45	-2.17	31	4,111,778
58 INTERNATIONAL ENERGY INSURANCE PLC	2,028.86	1.58	-1.25	13	696,776
59 LASACO ASSURANCE PLC.	4,217.25	2.30	-	0	0
60 LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	15,092.00	0.98	-1.01	11	391,388
61 MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC.	12,237.59	0.61	-	0	0
62 NEM INSURANCE PLC	41,636.77	8.30	-2.35	62	1,750,201
63 PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC	6,891.33	0.52	-1.92	19	4,278,515
64 REGENCY ASSURANCE PLC	6,001.88	0.90	9.76	89	5,455,110
65 SOVEREIGN TRUST INSURANCE PLC	8,679.17	0.61	-	23	1,846,481
66 STACO INSURANCE PLC	4,483.72	0.48	-	0	0
67 STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE PLC.	2,582.21	0.20	-	0	0
68 SUNU ASSURANCES NIGERIA PLC.	9,587.82	1.65	-2.94	40	2,201,025
69 UNIVERSAL INSURANCE PLC	5,760.00	0.36	2.86	58	7,653,639
70 VERITAS KAPITAL ASSURANCE PLC	22,880.00	1.65	-0.60	150	11,537,944
INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				688	50,114,549
S/N MICRO-FINANCE BANKS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
71 NPF MICROFINANCE BANK PLC	10,187.98	1.70	-1.16	25	407,729
MICRO-FINANCE BANKS				25	407,729

MAIN BOARD	DEALS	MARKET PRICE	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE TRADED (N)
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
72 ABBEY MORTGAGE BANK PLC	27,923.08	2.75	10.00	24	491,187
73 ASO SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC	7,370.87	0.50	-	0	0
74 INFINITY TRUST MORTGAGE BANK PLC	29,193.19	7.00	-	2	327
75 UNION HOMES SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC.	2,949.22	3.02	-	0	0
MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				26	491,514
S/N OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
S/N OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
76 AFRICA PRUDENTIAL PLC	18,500.00	9.25	-	68	341,838
77 DEAP CAPITAL MANAGEMENT & TRUST PLC	705.00	0.47	-	22	989,284
78 FCMB GROUP PLC.	151,490.74	7.65	-1.96	179	2,457,473
79 NIGERIAN EXCHANGE GROUP	41,933.87	21.35	-	26	500,975
80 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLC.	5,373.35	0.65	-	24	853,628
81 STANBIC IBTC HOLDINGS PLC	686,720.85	53.00	-	33	82,637
82 UNITED CAPITAL PLC	282,600.00	15.70	-1.57	612	10,986,864
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS				964	16,212,699
FINANCIAL SERVICES				3,157	269,476,928
HEALTHCARE					
S/N HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
83 EKOCORP PLC.	2,891.89	5.80	-	0	0
HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS				0	0
S/N MEDICAL SUPPLIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
84 MORISON INDUSTRIES PLC.	4,401.77	4.45	-	5	668
MEDICAL SUPPLIES				5	668
S/N PHARMACEUTICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
85 FIDSON HEALTHCARE PLC	31,556.20	13.75	-	19	61,637
86 MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC.	12,801.24	7.42	9.93	84	6,639,604
87 NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARMACEUTICALS PLC	8,204.36	1.92	-	30	524,920
88 PHARMA-DEKO PLC.	396.78	1.83	-	0	0
PHARMACEUTICALS				133	7,226,161
HEALTHCARE				138	7,226,829
ICT					
S/N COMPUTERS AND PERIPHERALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
89 OMATEK VENTURES PLC	2,029.83	0.69	6.15	37	1,220,250
COMPUTERS AND PERIPHERALS				37	1,220,250
S/N IT SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
90 CWG PLC	15,527.68	6.15	-2.38	64	2,671,609
91 NCR (NIGERIA) PLC.	466.56	4.32	-	2	600
IT SERVICES				66	2,672,209
S/N PROCESSING SYSTEMS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
92 CHAMS HOLDING COMPANY PLC	10,753.98	2.29	1.78	110	4,173,365
93 E-TRANZACT INTERNATIONAL PLC	46,000.00	5.00	-	17	96,910
PROCESSING SYSTEMS				127	4,270,275
S/N TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
94 AIRTEL AFRICA PLC	8,267,933.31	2,200.00	-	11	195
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES				11	195
ICT				241	8,162,929
INDUSTRIAL GOODS					
S/N BUILDING MATERIALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
95 BERGER PAINTS PLC	3,767.70	13.00	-	31	104,101
96 BUA CEMENT PLC	3,870,695.67	114.30	-9.93	242	845,540
97 CAP PLC	29,290.17	35.95	-	29	275,316
98 MEYER PLC.	2,815.56	5.30	-	4	15,600
99 PREMIER PAINTS PLC.	1,230.00	10.00	-	0	0
BUILDING MATERIALS				306	1,240,557
S/N ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
100 AUSTIN LAZ & COMPANY PLC	2,159.72	2.00	-	0	0
INDUSTRIAL GOODS					
S/N ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
101 CUTIX PLC.	20,783.60	5.90	-1.50	112	1,366,829
ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS				113	1,367,329
S/N PACKAGING/CONTAINERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
102 BETA GLASS PLC.	31,798.22	53.00	-	2	30
103 GREIF NIGERIA PLC	232.39	5.45	-	0	0
104 TRIPPLE GEE AND COMPANY PLC.	2,044.16	4.13	-	2	280
PACKAGING/CONTAINERS				4	310
S/N AGRO-ALLIED & CHEMICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
105 NOTORE CHEMICAL IND PLC	100,754.14	62.50	-	1	20
AGRO-ALLIED & CHEMICALS				1	20
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				203	1,412,569
NATURAL RESOURCES					
S/N CHEMICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
106 INDUSTRIAL & MEDICAL GASES NIGERIA PLC	6,493.42	13.00	-	5	30,000
CHEMICALS				5	30,000
S/N METALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
107 ALUMINIUM EXTRUSION IND. PLC.	1,572.69	7.15	-	2	270
METALS				2	270
S/N MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
108 MULTIVERSE MINING AND EXPLORATION PLC	4,773.37	11.20	-	9	56,890
MINING SERVICES				9	56,890
S/N PAPER/FOREST PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
109 THOMAS WYATT NIG. PLC.	855.36	2.16	-	0	0
PAPER/FOREST PRODUCTS				0	0
NATURAL RESOURCES					
NATURAL RESOURCES				16	87,160
OIL AND GAS					
S/N ENERGY EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
110 JAPAUL GOLD & VENTURES PLC	11,899.13	1.90	-0.52	81	2,781,247
ENERGY EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES				81	2,781,247
S/N INTEGRATED OIL AND GAS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
111 OANDO PLC	218,792.86	17.60	-3.56	267	4,567,085
INTEGRATED OIL AND GAS SERVICES				267	4,567,085
S/N PETROLEUM AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS DISTRIBUTORS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
112 CONOIL PLC	95,036.74	136.95	-	32	64,487
113 ETERNA PLC.	23,474.60	18.00	-	37	119,638
114 MRS OIL NIGERIA PLC.	45,483.66	132.65	-	31	17,781
115 TOTALENERGIES MARKETING NIGERIA PLC	132,040.04	388.90	-	60	47,997
PETROLEUM AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS DISTRIBUTORS				160	249,903
OIL AND GAS				508	7,598,235
SERVICES					
S/N ADVERTISING	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
116 AFROMEDIA PLC	1,065.37	0.24	-	0	0
ADVERTISING				0	0
S/N AIRLINES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
117 MEDVIEW AIRLINE PLC	15,796.05	1.62	-	0	0
AIRLINES				0	0
S/N AUTOMOBILE/AUTO PART RETAILERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
118 R T BRISCOE PLC.	858.74	0.73	-	10	616,188

THISDAY | Afrinvest 40 INDEX

Friday October 4th, 2024

Thisday Afrinvest Index Down 1.0%

Thisday Afrinvest 40 index dipped 1.0% to print at 4,313.08 points due to price decline in **DANGCEM** (-10.0%), **FBNH** (-4.3%), and **WAPCO** (-1.8%). Cumulatively, these stocks account for 12.9% of the index.

Bears Maintain Hold...ASI down 1.2%

Yesterday, the NGX-ASI fell 1.2% to 97,064.42 points, the largest decline in six weeks, driven by price decline in **DANGCEM** (-10.0%), **FBNH** (-4.3%), and **DANGSUGAR** (-4.4%). Resultantly, YTD return dipped to 29.8% (previously 31.4%), while market capitalisation lost 1.2% to ₦55.8tn. Similarly, activity level waned as volume and value traded fell 37.0% and 20.0% to 268.4m units and ₦6.8bn, respectively.

Bullish Sector Performance

Performance across our coverage sectors was positive as four indices closed northward while the other two lost. Topping the leaderboard, the **Oil & Gas** and **Insurance** indices rose 3.8% and 2.0% respectively, owing to buying interest in SEPLAT (+10.0%), MANSARD (+7.8%) and CORNERST (+5.7%). Following, the **AFR-ICT** and **Banking** indices inched higher by 0.7% and 3bps accordingly, due to price appreciation in MTNN (+0.2%), GTCO (+1.8%) and ACCESSCORP (+1.3%). Conversely, the **Industrial** and **Consumer Goods** indices fell 6.0% and 0.2% sequentially, following sell offs on DANGCEM (-10.0%), WAPCO (-1.8%), DANGSUGAR (-4.4%) and HONYFLOUR (-4.2%).

Outlook

Investor sentiment, as measured by market breadth marginally inclined to -0.07x (previously -0.09x) as 23 stocks advanced, 28 declined, while 68 closed flat. We anticipate sustained negative pressure today as investors shift towards more attractive risk-adjusted returns in the fixed income market.

Fundamental Performance Metrics for THISDAY AFRINVEST 40 Index

		Current Price	Previous Price Change	Current Weighting	Price Change YTD	Price Change Index to Date	ROE	ROA	P/E	P/BV	Divindend Yield	Earnings Yield
`	**THISDAY AFRINVEST 40**	**4313.08**	**-0.96%**		**82.6%**	**331.3%**	**20.3%**	**-1.6%**	**3.7x**	**0.9x**	**5.0%**	**3.4%**
1	Transcorp Power Ltd	301.70	0.0%	12.3%		-19.3%				20.8x	0.5%	
2	Airtel Africa PLC	2,200.00	0.0%	11.7%	16.6%	4.9%	0.5%	0.1%			3.3%	
3	Guaranty Trust Holding Co PLC	48.70	1.8%	7.8%	20.2%	8.2%	65.6%	10.0%	1.2x	0.6x	7.6%	84.7%
4	Dangote Cement PLC	478.80	-10.0%	5.2%	49.7%	-27.1%	26.9%	10.6%	17.6x	3.9x	6.3%	5.7%
5	MTN Nigeria Communications PLC	190.30	0.2%	5.8%	-27.9%	-11.1%		-24.3%				-19.2%
6	SEPLAT Energy PLC	4,513.40	10.0%	6.8%	97.7%	18.9%	4.6%	2.4%	20.7x	0.9x	3.5%	4.8%
7	Zenith Bank PLC	37.70	-0.1%	5.6%	-2.5%	5.6%	38.7%	4.4%	1.3x	0.4x	11.9%	78.0%
8	FBN Holdings Plc	24.70	-4.3%	4.5%	4.9%	12.8%	27.3%	2.6%	1.8x	0.4x	1.6%	54.5%
9	Access Holdings PLC	20.00	1.3%	3.8%	-13.6%	5.5%			0.9x	0.3x	11.3%	109.5%
10	Lafarge Africa PLC	36.35	-1.8%	3.2%	15.4%	6.8%	10.6%	6.5%	13.0x	1.3x	5.2%	7.7%
11	Geregu Power PLC	1,150.00	0.0%	3.3%	188.2%	15.0%	68.1%	15.4%	102.7x	63.7x	0.8%	1.0%
12	Transnational Corp of Nigeria	11.05	-1.3%	2.4%	27.6%	-15.0%			11.7x	2.8x	0.9%	8.6%
13	BUA Foods PLC	394.90	0.0%	2.8%	104.2%	3.9%	41.6%	16.0%	47.6x	18.1x	1.5%	2.1%
14	Fidelity Bank PLC	13.65	0.0%	2.3%	25.8%	33.8%	28.3%	2.0%	3.9x		6.2%	25.3%
15	United Bank for Africa PLC	27.00	0.0%	4.8%	5.3%	190.3%	23.2%	2.4%	1.8x	0.3x	15.8%	57.1%
16	Ecobank Transnational Inc	24.00	0.0%	1.6%	14.8%	12.4%	27.3%	1.1%	1.2x	0.4x		81.4%
17	Nestle Nigeria PLC	890.00	0.0%	1.3%	-19.1%	-3.3%		-31.0%				-29.3%
18	Stanbic IBTC Holdings PLC	57.95	0.0%	1.3%	-16.8%	11.4%	36.4%	3.5%	4.0x	1.3x	7.4%	24.7%
19	Flour Mills of Nigeria PLC	62.05	0.0%	1.4%	87.7%	39.4%	8.7%	1.4%	13.8x	1.1x	2.9%	7.2%
20	Dangote Sugar Refinery PLC	32.50	-4.4%	0.6%	-43.0%	-24.4%		-29.6%				-48.1%
21	FCMB Group Plc	8.35	0.6%	0.8%	12.8%	7.7%	26.8%	2.4%	1.4x	0.3x	6.0%	71.1%
22	Presco PLC	485.40	0.0%	1.0%	151.5%	37.0%	93.7%	32.0%	8.6x	6.8x	5.4%	11.7%
23	Nigerian Breweries PLC	30.00	2.7%	0.8%	-12.9%	6.3%		-17.7%				-52.8%
24	Transcorp Hotels Plc	90.00	0.0%	0.6%	28.2%	-8.5%	14.8%	7.9%	88.1x	12.5x	0.1%	1.1%
25	United Capital PLC	17.95	-0.3%	1.3%	134.1%	103.2%	17.1%	1.5%	22.3x	2.7x	1.7%	4.5%
26	International Breweries PLC	4.41	0.0%	0.6%	-8.1%	1.8%	-59.1%	-23.7%				-130.0%
27	BUA Cement Plc	110.00	0.0%	0.5%	13.4%	-23.2%	17.4%	6.6%	53.7x		1.9%	1.9%
28	Chapel Hill Denham Management	111.70	0.0%	0.6%	-2.0%	-2.0%					15.3%	
29	NASCON Allied Industries PLC	30.90	-0.3%	0.5%	-41.4%	-10.4%	45.4%	16.1%	3.1x		3.2%	32.1%
30	Okomu Oil Palm PLC	363.00	0.0%	0.6%	39.6%	24.5%	58.3%	25.8%	14.1x	7.6x	6.1%	7.1%
31	PZ Cussons Nigeria PLC	19.50	0.0%	0.4%	-27.0%	-11.4%		-57.8%				-132.2%
32	Julius Berger Nigeria PLC	140.00	0.0%	0.6%	225.6%	42.9%	14.0%	2.6%	13.0x	1.4x	2.2%	7.7%
33	Guinness Nigeria PLC	65.00	0.0%	0.4%	-1.5%	-3.0%	-187.0%	-23.4%		65.9x		-38.5%
34	Sterling Financial Holdings Co	5.10	6.3%	0.3%	18.9%	18.3%	14.9%	1.0%	5.5x	0.8x		18.3%
35	TotalEnergies Marketing Nigeri	673.90	0.0%	0.5%	75.0%	73.3%	41.1%	5.8%	9.3x	3.4x	4.1%	10.8%
36	Oando PLC	77.00	0.0%	1.4%	633.3%	413.3%		3.6%	12.0x			8.4%
37	Wema Bank PLC	7.90	6.8%	0.3%	41.1%	8.2%	36.2%	2.2%	2.2x	0.9x	6.8%	44.6%
38	Unilever Nigeria PLC	19.50	0.0%	0.1%	31.8%	8.3%	14.2%	7.4%	9.6x	1.5x	3.8%	10.4%
39	Conoil PLC	168.00	0.0%	0.2%	100.2%	60.0%	32.1%	13.5%	10.0x	2.8x	2.3%	10.0%
40	Notore Chemical Industries Ltd	62.50	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		-57.7%				-217.4%

Top 10 Gainers

Ticker	Price	Price Chg %
SEPLAT	4513.40	10.0%
LIVESTOCK	2.99	9.9%
REGALINS	0.90	9.8%
CAVERTON	2.39	9.6%
MANSARD	5.93	7.8%
ABCTRANS	1.12	7.7%
WEMABANK	7.90	6.8%
STERLINGNG	5.10	6.3%
CORNERST	2.60	5.7%
DEAPCAP	1.40	4.5%

Top 10 Losers

Ticker	Price	Price Chg %
DANGCEM	478.80	-10.0%
MCNICHOLS	1.35	-10.0%
NSLTECH	0.61	-7.6%
UPDCREIT	5.05	-4.7%
CWG	6.20	-4.6%
DANGSUGAR	32.50	-4.4%
FBNH	24.70	-4.3%
CUTIX	2.50	-4.2%
HONYFLOUR	4.55	-4.2%
CHAMS	2.07	-3.3%

Top 10 Trades by Volume

Ticker	Volume	Price Chg %
UBA	37.1	0.0%
ZENITHBANK	19.0	-0.1%
DEAPCAP	13.9	4.5%
STERLINGNG	13.1	6.3%
CAVERTON	12.1	9.6%
VERITASKAP	11.5	-0.6%
ACCESSCORP	11.5	1.3%
UNIVINSURE	7.7	2.9%
LIVESTOCK	7.1	9.9%
CHAMS	6.8	-3.3%

Top 10 Trades by Value

Ticker	Value	Price Chg %
SEPLAT	2338.2	10.0%
UBA	994.0	0.0%
ZENITHBANK	716.7	-0.1%
OANDO	353.3	0.0%
TRANSPOWER	270.2	0.0%
ACCESSCORP	227.3	1.3%
GTCO	192.8	1.8%
CAP	136.2	0.0%
MTNN	117.8	0.2%
FBNH	110.1	-4.3%

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AWARD OF EXCELLENCE...

L-R: Group Managing Director SO&U, Mr Udeme Ufot; Sir Steve Bamidele Omojafor, Chairman of the occasion presenting award of Excellence to Mr Yinka Oyebode, Chief Press Secretary to Ekiti State Governor on behalf of the governor; President AAAN, Lanre Adisa; and Publisher/CEO, Marketing Edge Publications Ltd, Mr. John Ajayi, at the 2024 The Edge Awards held in Lagos…recently

Fubara: I'm the Greatest Loser in Rivers Council Polls Since PDP Won't Participate

●Party protests, urges RSIEC to obey court ●IYC says it won't allow disruption of exercise ●Federal lawmaker boasts election will hold

Chuks Okocha, Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja and **Blessing Ibunge** in Port Harcourt

Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has lamented that he is the greatest loser in the October 5 local government election in the state since members of his Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were not participating in the polls. Fubara stated this yesterday while addressing Rivers Political Stakeholders at Government House, Port Harcourt, ahead of the election.

But PDP members loyal to Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, protested on major streets of Port Harcourt yesterday, declaring their opposition and non-participation in the polls slated to hold in 319 wards in the 23 local government areas of the state.

Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) said it will not allow any individual or group to disrupt the council poll.

Fubara stated that his administration was determined to support the cause of sustainable democracy. He warned that he will not tolerate any misguided group or individual attempting to create confusion or any form of instability in the state.

Addressing the stakeholders, the governor said, "You know this election, I am the greatest loser because my party is not participating. It is the truth! But because of the Supreme Court ruling that there must be elected officials to manage the affairs of local governments, as a governor, I have to obey that.

"It did not end there. The president, after the Supreme Court ruling, invited us and we had an understanding that we have a compliance duration of 90 days. So what we are doing here is to make sure that even if my party is not participating, the local council process must stand for Rivers State.

"And a good number of you here are my party faithful and you are not even benefiting from it, and you are here supporting us. So, what is the problem?

"I want to thank everyone of you for being very peaceful. You see, I didn't make any mistake when I said we need to follow this struggle with a different tactic. If you have very special egg that you are carrying, and somebody is coming to fight you, do you need to fight the person?

"Won't you use your two hands to grab the basket of the egg? Even if the person is chasing you, if you run and hit your foot and the basket of egg falls, who is going to lose, is it not you? You can see why we are very careful, and we are following this course with AI."

He added, "Secondly, I want to assure you that the local government election is about the state. I might not be a lawyer but at least, I understand that it is a state matter.

"Thirdly, from the beginning of this process to the end, it is within the purview of the state. It has nothing to do with any federal judicial institution to disrupt it. So we should understand this fact and play according to the rule."

But members of the party loyal to Wike, yesterday, mobilised their supporters across the 319 wards of the 23 local government areas of the state to hold a peaceful protest. They called on the police to ensure the enforcement of the order allegedly barring the conduct of the election.

THISDAY observed that the protest was led by prominent politicians of the state from Abuja, including Minority Leader, House of Representatives, Kingsley Chinda; and Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Host Committees, Dumnamene Dekor.

Others were Director General, National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), Emeka Beke; representative of Etche/Omuma Federal Constituency, Kelechi Nworgu; former House of Representatives member, Emma Deeyah, Felix Nwaeke, and former state PDP chairman, Desmond Akawor.

Also sighted among the protesters were former local government chairmen, including Chidi Lloyd (Emohua), Erastus Awortu (Andoni), Obarillomate Ollor (Eleme), Hope Ikiriko (Ahoada West), George Ariolu (Obio/Akpor) others.

The protesters, who defied the early morning downpour, marched from the PDP secretariat on Aba Road, through the office of the Department of Security Services (DSS) to the state police headquarters on Moscow Road.

Addressing party supporters at the DSS office, where they submitted their protest letter, the PDP state chairman, Chukwuemeka Aaron, said the party, as a law abiding party, had complied with the judgement of Justice Lifu by opting out of the election. Aaron called on the security agency to prevail on the government to comply with the judgement. At the police headquarters, Aaron stated the reason for the protest.

"We are here to submit a petition to you from Peoples Democratic Party, being led by me. Attached to this letter is an order of court, is a judgement of Federal High Court of September 30, 2024," he said.

Meanwhile, President of IYC, Dr. Theophilus Alaye, while addressing a press conference in Port Harcourt, said periodic elections were tools and democratic processes in any liberal democracy to elect leaders from the federal to the state levels.

Alaye stated that it was in compliance with this democratic tradition of allowing the people elect those to govern at the grassroots that Fubara decided to start the process earlier this year that would eventually culminate in the conduct of local government election on Saturday.

Alaye stressed that the importance of electing chairmen and councillors to man the local government councils could not be overemphasised. He said over 10 governors had conducted their state local government elections peacefully, and wondered why Rivers State was different.

In a related development, a member of the House of representatives, Ikenga Ugochinyere, yesterday, told the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in Rivers State, Johnson Alalibo, to stop wasting his time because the council election would hold.

Alalibo had said Rivers State had not received voter registration materials for the local government election. Speaking on Wednesday at a press conference in Port Harcourt, Alalibo said although RSIEC had applied for the register, it had not yet been made available to them due to administrative factors.

Kalu Shocked, Horrified as Abia Police Recover Couple's Headless Bodies in Bende

Emmanuel Ugwu-Nwogo in Umuahia

Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon. Benjamin Kalu, has expressed shock and horror as the Abia State Police Command, yesterday, recovered the headless bodies of a couple in Bende Local Government.

In a two-paragraph statement, the state police public relations officer (PPRO), Maureen Chinaka, said that the murderous act was reported at the Bende Divisional Headquarters on Wednesday, prompting the police to take act on the information.

Disclosing that the command had since evacuated the headless bodies to the morgue, she said, "The crime scene has been visited, exhibits recovered, bodies deposited at the mortuary, and investigation is ongoing."

Jacob Udo and his wife, Comfort, were reportedly murdered on Tuesday night at Isiala Autonomous Community in Bende by hoodlums whose identities were yet to be unravelled.

The murderers, after killing the couple, were said to have beheaded them and mutilated their bodies.

Kalu, who represents Bende Federal constituency, expressed shock and horror over the dastardly act.

In a statement by his chief press secretary, Livinus Nwabughiogu, Kalu condemned the killing of the couple, describing it as "horrific and senseless.

"I unequivocally condemn the brutal killing of the couple. This shocking act of violence contradicts humanity's basic principles," he said, adding: "My thoughts are with the victims' families and their loved ones."

The Deputy Speaker insisted that heinous act of violence of any kind remained unacceptable as it violated the fundamental human right to life.

Edo Lawmaker Seeks Transporters' Partnership to Curb Human Trafficking

Adibe Emenyonu in Benin City

The Deputy Speaker of Edo State House of Assembly, Maria Edeko yesterday urged members of the Edo State Transport Authority (ESTA) to develop policy framework in the fight against the menace of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

Edeko who spoke at the end a two-day training workshop organised by the Centre for Development and Cultural Interchange, (CDCI) in Benin City, noted that the state assembly was ready to give legal backing to such policy framework.

She disclosed the support of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and Ministry of Justice, Netherland efforts in supporting the fight against the danger of human exploitation and deprivation.

According to her: "Transport sector plays a major role because it has to do with movement of people. The training is an eye opener for the body."

The Resource Person and the Executive Director, Patriotic Citizen Initiative (PCI), Osita Osemene, who spoke at the two-day training for stakeholders in fight said many transport companies were involved in human trafficking unknown to them.

He alleged that transport authorities were stakeholders in the business of human trafficking, irregular migration and smuggling of migrants and that is why the training workshop was vital to the transporters.

Osemene urged attendees at the training workshop to always alert the appropriate authority whenever there is a red flag indicating trafficked persons to enable victims to be rescued .

"Basically, our area of focus is the protection of migrants, in terms of promoting their dignity and to ensure they are integrated back to the society.

"This training is very important for transport authorities, those that regulate transport sector. They are critical stakeholders and first contact that have direct contact with the transport organisations and they need a practical understanding about human trafficking.

"One of the key thing this programme is coming out with is to equip them with the knowledge which will help them to transfer the knowledge to the beneficiaries, who are the transporters."

Abiodun Charges Religious Leaders to Partner in Fight against Poverty, Insecurity

James Sowole in Abeokuta

The Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, has charged religious bodies to collaborate with governments at all levels to address the societal challenges confronting Nigeria such as poverty and insecurity.

The governor spoke during the official induction of the South West officers of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the 56th birthday celebration of the President of CAN in the South West, Bishop Akintunde Akin-Akinsanya, in Abeokuta, yesterday.

Abiodun, said his administration acknowledged the role of the Christian community in shaping the socio-cultural and spiritual fabric of the country.

"As a government, we deeply acknowledge the role the Christian community plays in shaping the socio-cultural and spiritual fabric of our nation.

"In these trying times, it is important that we come together to address the pressing challenges of our society, primarily poverty, inequality, and insecurity," he said.

He called on members of CAN, South West region, to embrace the responsibility of leadership with integrity, compassion, dedication, and a heart of service.

The governor further urged them to inspire a new nation that would engage in meaningful dialogue and actions that wouldadvance the cause of Christ and the good of the society.

He, therefore, called on all religious leaders of all faiths to continue to offer their support to the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, even as he praised the President for his steadfast leadership in navigating the complexities of the nation's economy.



UNDP, AFCFTA AND LELOOK ONBOARDING STUDENTS TRAINING PROGRAMME...

L-R: The Director General, Maryam Babangida Women Development Centre, Hajia Asabe Bashir; Senior International Trade Policy Officer, National Action Committee on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA), Mr Olusegun Olutayo; Founder / CEO, LeLook Bags Academy, Chief Mrs Chinwe Ezenwa; Former Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen; and the Program Director, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mrs Clare Henshaw, during the UNDP, AfCFTA and Lelook Bags Academy first onboarding students training programme for Women, Youths, and Persons with disabilities in fashion, bag-making and innovative accessories, held at the LeLook Bags Academy Head Office in Abuja ... recently

Shettima Inaugurates Projects, Says Enugu Back to Life under Mbah

Vice President, Senator Kashim Shettima yesterday lauded Governor Peter Mbah's development strides in Enugu State, noting that he was turning the state around through multiple projects across all sectors.

Shettima was in Enugu to commission the Enugu State Garment and Fashion Hub as well as unveil the 5th Expanded National Micro, Small, and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSME) Clinics, which are collaborative efforts of the Federal Government and Enugu to boost MSMEs in the state.

He also used the opportunity to tour some of the infrastructural projects by the Mbah administration, such as the command and control security infrastructure and the International Conference Centre.

He stressed that time for politics was over and stressed federal government's readiness to work with visionary leaders across party lines to move the country forward.

"Let us put politics aside. We are now in the phase of development. Politics is over. We have to coalesce into a single force and face the challenges of under development in our Nation. Governor Peter Mbah means well for the people of Enugu State and he is humble.

"I am specifically enamoured of his security project. I am happy for his investment in supplying water to Enugu. Most importantly, education is the greatest changer. Within a generation, the son of a peasant can become a celebrated icon. The investment of Peter Mbah in Smart School will yield a bountiful harvest in the coming years.

"He is one of the few CEOs, who are versatile in the potentiality of the Information Technology industry. I want to join all of us here in thanking Governor Peter Mbah for taking charge of the opportunities that abound and incidentally the Minister of Science and Technology is here and he is a son of Enugu. I want you to join forces to see that Enugu occupies its rightful place.

"Enugu is an equivalent of Kaduna and Ibadan. But till the emergence of Governor Peter Mbah, Enugu was sleeping, a town that did not even have water supply.

"Your Excellency, we want to commend and identify with you. We have to sustain that brotherhood and relationship for the good of our people, both in development, infrastructure, we can change the narrative from negativity to positivity," he said.

The Vice President emphasised that MSMEs were critical to economic growth, noting that the garment and fashion hub would serve as "a stepping stone to the economic highways, providing an exchange in support of manufacturing in Enugu State, boosting production capacity and in enabling economy of scale."

Shettima said the hub was capable of creating about 48,000 jobs and announced a N150,000 outright grant to all the MSMEs that distinguished themselves during the MSME clinics.

He reiterated FG's commitment to tackling the problem of erosion and infrastructural deficit in the South East region, citing the signing into law the South East Development Commission Bill.

Speaking, Mbah restated his administration's commitment to boosting MSMEs, describing them as the lifeblood of economic growth and thanked the Federal Government for its continued support to Enugu in regard.

The governor, who was a recipient of the 2024 MSMEs Awards by the Office of the Vice President, observed that almost 90 percent of businesses in the country were small scale.

"But as important as MSMEs may be, their success is no chance occurrence. They thrive only through careful policies that enhance the ease-of-doing-business climate, comprising key enablers like the sustained provision of infrastructure, security, efficient legal and regulatory framework, among others," he stated.

The Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Benjamin Kalu, commended the collaborative efforts of the FG and Enugu State to grow MSMEs noting that what he saw at the Enugu State Garment and Fashion Hub was a clear indication that the youths of Nigeria had so much to offer if provided with the right opportunity and environment.

Earlier in their welcome addresses, the Special Adviser to Mbah on MSMEs and Digital Economy, Arinze Chilo-Offia, and the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Job Creation and MSMEs, Temitola Adekunle Johnson, thanked the federal government and Enugu State Government for the collaboration and support that saw to the success of the initiatives.

NACCIMA Commends Tinubu's Efforts to Address Socio-economic Challenges

Dike Onwuamaeze

The Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) has commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration commitment to address the Nigeria's economic, political, and security challenges and place the country on the path of prosperity.

In a statement to mark Nigeria's 64th independence anniversary, the National President of NACCIMA, Mr. Kelvin Oye, noted that Tinubu's efforts have repositioned Nigeria as one of Africa's largest economies and ranking among the global Top 20, driven by growth in sectors like agriculture, the creative industries, and the digital economy.

Oye said: "On behalf of the NACCIMA, I am honoured to convey our heartfelt congratulations to our esteemed members, the private sector and our respected President, His Excellency Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on Nigeria's 64th independence anniversary.

"This milestone celebrates the resilience and determination of the Nigerian people.

"As the voice of the organised private sector, NACCIMA acknowledges the government's efforts to address the economic, political, and security challenges inherited at the inception of the current administration, while recognising that some issues persist."

According to him, Nigeria's remarkable economic achievements are a source of great pride.

He said: "As of 2024, the country has emerged as one of Africa's largest economies and ranks among the global top 20, driven by growth in sectors like agriculture, the creative industries, and the digital economy. With over 220 million people, Nigeria remains the most populous nation in Africa.

"The country's economic diversification, including its position as the 15th largest oil producer and the rise of its vibrant Nollywood film industry, the second-largest in the world, has further cemented Nigeria's global significance.

"The country's active role in UN peacekeeping and regional integration efforts through ECOWAS and the AU are also testament to its international influence.

"As entrepreneurs, we have experienced both challenges and successes, highlighted by the commissioning of the iconic Dangote Refinery, a testament to the ingenuity of the Nigerian private sector.

"Despite economic headwinds, we remain hopeful and confident that through collaboration, innovation, and commitment to nation-building, the private sector will continue to drive Nigeria's growth and development.

"On this auspicious occasion, NACCIMA, the private sector, and all Nigerians join in celebrating our nation's independence. May the next chapter be filled with prosperity, security, and the realization of our shared aspirations for a stronger, more prosperous Nigeria."

LP N'Assembly Caucus Warns Soludo, Assembly over Proposed Joint Account Law

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

The Labour Party Caucus in the National Assembly has expressed concerns over alleged moves by Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State to enact joint State and Local Government joint Account law.

To this end, the caucus vowed to challenge plans by the state to circumvent the Supreme Court ruling on local government financial autonomy.

The Supreme Court had on Thursday, July 11, 2024, in SC/343/2024, delivered a judgment in which Justice Emmanuel Agim ruled that all funds due to the 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria must be paid directly into council accounts and no longer through State and Local Government Joint Account.

Addressing a press briefing on behalf of the caucus in Abuja, Senator Tony Nwoye, said the Anambra State Local Government Administration Law, 2024' currently at the committee stage, was subservient to the landmark Supreme Court rulings as well as extant provisions of the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

The caucus, therefore, called on the speaker and members of the Anambra State House of Assembly, to toe the path of honour by stopping forthwith further consideration of the obnoxious Executive bill for posterity sake.

"We all have gathered to raise the alarm over the growing threat by Anambra State Government led by Professor Chukwuma Soludo to financially strangulate the 21 Local Government Areas in Anambra State and deprive them their financial autonomy recently confirmed by the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

"(1A) We are seriously worried that Anambra State Government wants to take our dear state back to era of impunity especially, where the House of Assembly seems to be complicit in this show of ignominy.

"Section 13(1) of the proposed Anambra State Local Government Administration law 2024, under the subheading: 'State, Joint Local Government Account', stated that the 'State shall maintain a special account called State Joint Local Government Account and shall pay into it all allocations from federation to the local governments of the State.

"Clause 13(1) stipulates that 'the state shall maintain a special account called State Joint Local Government Account and shall pay into it all allocations from the Federation to the Local Governments, of the State.

"(2) The State shall distribute the funds due to the Local Governments as provided in subsection (1) of section 11, on such terms and in such manner as prescribed by the State House of Assembly," Nwoye said.

The caucus also protested against the provisions of Clause 14 on Local Government Consolidated Account, which stipulates that, "There shall be established a Local Government Consolidated Account which shall be managed on behalf of the Local Government Areas in the State.

The caucus stressed that Clause 14(2) also stipulated that Consolidated Account shall be administered for the uniform provision of common services across all the local government areas in the state.



MERGED ACCESS ARM PENSION BRAND REVEAL...

L-R: Executive Director, North, Access Arm Pensions, Nuhu Modibbo; Executive Director, Technical, Afolabi Folayan; Managing Director/CEO, Dave Uduanu; Non-Executive Director, Dr. Okey Nwuke; Acting Chairman, Austin Opara, and Company Secretary, Mojisola Oyewole, during the merger announcement and new brand reveal of Access Arm Pension in Abuja… yesterday

Hoodlums Kill Two Police Operatives in Anambra

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Two police operatives attached to Anambra State command were yesterday killed by hoodlums.

The operatives were attacked and killed in Nnewi during a gun duel with the hoodlums.

It was gathered that during the duel, the hoodlums tossed an improvised explosive device (IED) at the police operatives, and it exploded, killing two of the men in the squad, while their patrol van was also set ablaze.

The state police command confirmed the incident. The spokesperson of the command, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, in a press release, said the manhunt for the attackers has commenced.

He said: "Joint Security Force, begins manhunt operation on armed men who murdered two police operatives on investigation activities in the early hours of today 3/10/2024 at Uruagu, Nnewi North.

"Preliminary information reveals that the armed men started shooting sporadically on sighting the police operatives and threw an improvised explosive into their operational vehicle.

"Unfortunately, two of the operatives paid the supreme price while the vehicle caught fire.

"Given the above, the command calls on members of the public especially the eyewitnesses and others to aid the ongoing Police operations in the area.

Police Arrest Two Women for N2m Baby Sale in Delta

Omon-Julius Onabu in Asaba

Two women have been held by the Delta State Police Command while allegedly attempting to conclude the sale of a three-day old baby boy for the sum of N2 million.

The women were arrested during the process of delivering the innocent child, reportedly from a "baby factory" in Port-Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, to the alleged "buyer" in Delta State, the police command spokesman, Mr Bright Edafe (a superintendent of police, SP) said in Asaba yesterday..

The victim was rescued through the intervention of a "good-hearted commercial motorcycle operator, otherwise known as 'keke' rider," he disclosed.

The two women, cooling their feet with the police in Delta, suspected to belong to a child-selling and trafficking syndicate, were said to have boarded the tricycle in the process of delivering the baby around Warri area of the state, on the evening of Nigeria's Independence Day, when they were arrested.

"The vigilant motorcycle operator, suspicious of the mission of the duo, swiftly headed to a nearby police station instead of the agreed destination," the spokesman added.

Tackle Brain Drain Syndrome, Insecurity to Save Health Sector, FG Urged

Ibrahim Oyewale in Lokoja

The Medical Director, Federal Teaching Hospital, Lokoja, Dr. Olatunde Alabi has urged the federal government to as a matter of urgency tackle the menace of the brain drain in the Nigeria health sector.

Dr Alabi made this call while speaking during the interactive season with the member of the Correspondents Chapel of Nigeria Union of Journalists, Kogi State Council in Lokoja on Thursday.

He explained that the rate at which the trained medical personnel are leaving the country in search of greener pastures abroad has become a source of concern and this brain drain syndrome is already threatening the foundation of the health delivery system in Nigeria.

"The health system in Nigeria is on the keg of gun power now and if allowed to explode it would be catastrophic, the government at all levels must rise to the occasion now to salvage the ailing sector, he expressed.

He also highlighted some of the factors that are responsible for the challenges militating against the good health delivery system, noting that brain drain is a minor one,

He noted that non-availability of trained medical personnel is rocking the boat of the system, while those available are leaving daily.

Experts to Explore Governance Strategies for Corporate Survival in Nigeria

Sunday Okobi

As businesses around the globe confront rising interest rates, inflation, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical uncertainties, various business and corporate experts have stated that corporate governance is proving to be the only cornerstone for survival and sustainability.

They stated that with the Central Bank of Nigeria raising interest rates to 27.3 per cent, companies are faced with the challenge of navigating high capital costs, declining consumer demand, and overall financial instability.

The Chief Executive Officer of Society for Corporate Governance Nigeria (SCGN), Mrs. Chioma Mordi, stated that this year's annual corporate governance conference would delve into how businesses can adapt their governance frameworks to thrive amid such challenges.

Organised by the SCGN, the conference is scheduled to be held on October 10, 2024, in Victoria Island, Lagos with the theme: 'Corporate Survival and Sustainability: The New Face of Governance,' adding that it will examine the vital role of governance in steering companies through the current global economic landscape and ensuring their long-term resilience.

Niger Plans for the Return of IDPs to their Ancestral Homes

Laleye Dipo in Minnal(

The Niger State Government in partnership with stakeholders has commenced plans to return Internally Displaced People's (IDPs) to their ancestral homes.

There are over 5,000 IDPs mostly women and children in different camps in Zumba and Kuta as a result of attacks on their communities by bandits and terrorists.

The Senator representing Niger East Senatorial Zone of Niger State, Senator Mohammed Sani Musa, made this known when he led a high powered team to the IDP Camp in Kuta..

Senator Musa who is the Senate committee chairman on finance disclosed that he was collaborating with the state government and other agencies for a smooth return of the IDPs to their homes.

"With the commitments I have seen so far and the hope of stabilisation of security soonest, you will all return to your homes soon," Musa declared.

He charged the IDPs to continue to live peacefully with one another, adding that for the period before they returned home efforts will be made to make them as comfortable as possible

Soludo Swears in Elected LG Chairmen

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Anambra State Governor, Professor Chaukwuma Soludo, has sworn in the 21 newly elected local government chairmen of the state.

The chairmen, who are all from the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), were last weekend elected during council elections that was conducted by Anambra State Independent Electoral Commission (ANSIEC).

Soludo, while swearing them in at the Executive Chambers of the Anambra State Government House in Awka charged them to ensure the development of their respective council areas.

He said: "I charge you to champion and deepen development at the grassroot level.

"I congratulate you on your election victories, and I emphasise to you all the need for collaboration between the state government and the local governments to ensure that the state continues to experience its current growth and progress trajectory.

"You must focus on providing basic amenities to the people and improving the lives of the citizens in your various constituencies.

Systemic Gender Inequality Bane of Poverty among Women,Says Zainab Marwa

Systemic gender inequality is one of the major causes of poverty among women in Nigeria especially in North Central part of the country, Founder, Aspire Women Forum, a non-governmental organisation, Dr. Zainab Marwa, has said.

Dr. Zainab, who stated this in her paper titled "The Intersectionality of Poverty and Gender in North Central Nigeria" presented as the guest lecturer at the 9th Distinguished Public Lecture of the Federal University, Lokoja, Kogi state, regretted that despite several intervention programmes, poverty still persists among women.

She said: "Imagine a land where resources are plentiful, yet the hands that toil hardest remain the most deprived. In the heart of North Central Nigeria, this paradox is the daily reality for millions of women. While the region is celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and abundant resources, its women are caught in the relentless grip of poverty working tirelessly but rarely reaping the rewards of their labour. These women don't just face economic hardship; they endure a web of systemic inequalities that restrict their progress, dim their potential, and amplify their struggles."

Court Remands Father for Allegedly Raping Daughter in Ekiti

Gbenga Sodeinde in Ado Ekiti

An Ado-Ekiti Magistrates' Court, on Wednesday, ordered the remand of a 42-year-old man, Christopher Israel, in the correctional centre in Ado-Ekiti over alleged rape and assault.

The defendant, whose address was not provided, is being tried for alleged rape and assault.

The prosecutor, Inspector Olubu Apata, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on September 21 in Ado-Ekiti.

He alleged that the defendant, raped his 22-year-old daughter, who came to pay him a visit and inflicted injury on her while struggling with him.

According to him, the offence contravene Sections 265 and 256 of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State 2021.

The prosecutor urged the court to remand the defendant in a correctional centre, pending legal advice from the office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP).

The plea of the defendant was, however, not taken.

Lagos to Enforce Action on Continued Ban on Styrofoam Plastic

Segun James

Lagos state government has warned that it would employ actionable strategies to sustain the ban on the use and sale of styrofoam food containers and single use plastics (SUPs) in the state.

Addressing participants at a one-day stakeholders' workshop on the implementation of the ban on usage of Styrofoam plastics and single use plastics held in Ikeja, the Commissioner for the Environment and Water Resources, Tokunbo Wahab, who was represented by the Special Adviser Environment, Kunle Rotimi-Akodu, said the workshop will fashion out necessary strategies to implement and sustain the ban on Styrofoam and other single-use plastics in Lagos state.

Wahab said statistics showed that Lagos generates over 13,000 tonnes of waste daily with a significant percentage being single-use-plastics and Styrofoam adding that these plastics have been scientifically proven to take up to a thousand years before degrading.

Firm Launches Campaign in UK to Attract Investments to Nigeria

A firm, Enirez Investment Nigeria Limited, has launched an investment campaign programme in the United Kingdom (UK) with the aim of attracting both foreign and local investors to boost the economy of Nigeria.

Speaking in Southampton, UK, the Managing Director/CEO of Enirez Investment Nigeria Limited, Esanerovo Agbodo said that the campaign which is tagged "Nigerians invest Nigeria' is meant to mobilise Nigerians all over the world to boost the economy of the nation in this trying times by directing their investments and expertise to the country.

"We are mobilising Nigerians all over the world to invest in Nigeria in order to urgently boost the Nigerian economy. Nigeria is our country and our home and we must do everything to ensure the economy is good for everyone," Agbodo said.

"This initiative is entirely private sector driven and we are already fine tuning our strategies with financial institutions in Nigeria to ensure a smooth collaboration. We are also working to attract other foreign investors who are willing to invest in Nigeria in order to have smooth investments," he added.

NEWS XTRA

Aiyedatiwa Swears in Six New High Court Judges

● Appoints Kayode Fasua MD of Hope Newspaper

Fidelis David in Akure

The Governor of Ondo State, Mr. Lucky Aiyedatiwa, yesterday inaugurated six newly appointed judges of the State High Court in Akure, the state capital.

Also, the governor has has approved the appointment of Mr. Kayode Fasua as the new Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of Owena Press Ltd, publishers of The Hope titles.

The six newly sworn-in judges are Hon. Justices Adebisi Williams Daomi, Adeola Olufunke Adegoroye, Justinah Ojufisintei Kpemi, Happiness Inumidun Demehin-Ogunbayo, Wumi Fabuluje, and Idowu Mobayonle Ogunwumiju.

The governor described the event as a significant step in strengthening the judiciary and advancing the administration of justice in the state.

Aiyedatiwa emphasised the importance of the appointments, which mark the second large-scale judicial swearing-in during his tenure.

"This is particularly fulfilling for me, as it marks the second instance on record in our administration that appointment to the bench of the state judiciary would be carried out and in large number.

"These appointees have distinguished themselves in the practice of law and administration of justice in our dear state," the governor remarked.

Tinubu Commiserates with Niger over Mokwa Boat Mishap

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has condoled with the government and people of Niger State over a boat accident which occurred Tuesday night at Mokwa Local Government Area.

The boat, which was said to be carrying about 300 people, primarily women and children, was sailing on the Gbajibo River from the Mundi community when it capsised.

While at least 150 people were rescued from the scene, 25 bodies have so far been recovered.

The President, in a release issued yesterday by his Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, commiserated with the families of the victims and prayed for the repose of the souls of the dead.

President Tinubu directed the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) to investigate the spate of boat accidents in Niger state and across the country and devise modalities to check the trend.

He ordered NIWA to expand the scope of its surveillance of inland waters to ensure our people's safety and prosecute boat operators violating the ban on night sailing.

The president thanked emergency workers and local divers who were working to find the remaining people.

'Over 30 Road Projects Ongoing in Delta'

Omon-Julius Onabu in Asaba

At least 35 infrastructural projects, including roads, bridges and drainage projects, are ongoing across the three senatorial districts of Delta State, the state Commissioner for Works (Rural and Riverine Areas), Mr Charles Aniagwu, has revealed.

The various projects, which are at various stages of completion, are being overseen by both the Ministry of Works (Urban and Highways) and the Ministry of Works (Rural and Riverine), he said.

Aniagwu, who noted that the government has been quite modest in telling the world about the numerous infrastructural projects, stressed that this was in tandem with Governor Sheriff Oborevwori's electoral promise to complete old or inherited projects while embarking on new ones, adding that the governor has maintained "a bird-view of the 25 local government areas of Delta State."

The commissioner made these remarks while fielding questions from newsmen on the State Executive Council (EXCO) meeting, presided over by Governor Oborevwori, Wednesday evening at the Government House Asaba.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and addressed as UZUEGBU GINIKA, now wish to be known and addressed as EMEANU GINIKA BLESSING. All former documents remain valid. The general public should take note.

I formerly known and addressed as ANISHE JACOBS BABATOPE ***or*** ANISHE BABATOPE, now wish to be known and addressed as ANISHE JACOB BABATOPE. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.

I, formerly known and addressed as AUGUSTINE PATRICIA, now wish to be known and addressed as VBAGBONARIE O PATRICIA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should take note.

I, formerly known and addressed as SAMUEL ASUQUO OSOYONG, now wish to be known and addressed as SAMUEL OBASE OZEM. All former documents remain valid. The general public should take note.

I, formerly known and addressed as UMORU ABDULLAHI, now wish to be known and addressed as UWANI ABDULLAHI. All former documents remain valid. The general public should take note.

I, formerly known and addressed as NWABU NOBLE UGOALA, now wish to be known and addressed as NWABU NOBLE CHIWUOKE-UGOALA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should take note.

I, formerly known and addressed as NWABU NOBLE UGOALA, now wish to be known and addressed as NWABU NOBLE CHIWUOKE-UGOALA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should take note.

NAOWA Supports 80 Widows of War Heroes in Adamawa

Daji Sani in Yola

The Nigerian Army Officers' Wives Association (NAOWA) 23 Brigade Chapter celebrated Nigeria's 64th Independence anniversary with a charitable outreach programme, supporting 80 widows and children who were mostly victims of war.

NAOWA 23 Brigade Chapter Zonal Coordinator, Mrs. Comfort Zawaya, made the disclosure at the event organized by NAOWA at Warrant Officers and Sergeant Mess at the headquarters of 23 Armourd Bridge in Yola Adamawa State.

She said about 80 widows and less privilege were drawn from the barrack community to receive financial support and food items. Mrs Zawaya, reaffirmed the association's commitment to empowering women and children.

"We recognise your challenges and sacrifices, NAOWA will continue to support you, ensuring your well-being and dignity,"she said

She further explained that the outreach programme was aimed at providing relief and hope to families affected by the loss of their loved ones

"NAOWA's efforts have consistently demonstrated compassion and dedication" said Mrs Zawaya.

Woodhall Capital, NACC to Recognise Mo Abudu with Award

Woodhall Capital has announced its partnership with the Nigerian-American Chamber of Commerce (NACC) for their upcoming Breakfast Meeting with the topic, "How the Changing Banking Sector Landscape Can Support Nigeria's Socioeconomic Reforms," taking place on Tuesday, October 8th, 2024 in Lagos.

Also at the meeting, Woodhall Capital will honour Mo Abudu with the Visionary Leadership Award as she celebrates her 60th birthday. Mo Abudu has significantly influenced the growth of the entertainment and media sectors in Nigeria, promoting cultural exchange between Nigeria and the United States.

According to statement issued by the Acting Director General of NACC, Ms. Wofai Samuel, the guest speaker of the breakfast meeting is the immediate past President of Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), Mr. Kenneth Opara, while the discussants are: Chief Executive Officer(CEO) of the American Business Council (ABC), Mrs. Margaret Olele; former Director of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and Chairman, ICC Banking Commission of the International Chamber of Commerce Nigeria, Dr. (Mrs) Omolara Akanji.

WORLD OF ISLAM

Edited by: MJO Mustapha Email deji.mustapha@thisdaylive.com

The Unparalleled Greatness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Spahic Omer/IslamiCity

A visitor to the Prophet's grave (burial chamber) should bear in mind the actual import of the spot he is standing at and of the body (luminary) he is visiting.

A visitor should feel privileged that he could stand just a few meters away from the body of the one who has been sent to bring honour to the world and to save it by taking it from the darkness of falsehood to the light of the truth, and from the chasm or black hole of senselessness to the gratification of reason.

A visitor is advised to remember that the Prophet is not dead in the wider sense of the word and an Islamic understanding of life and death. This applies to the physical and metaphysical dimensions of existence, but of course in agreement with the specifications of the next world.

Beyond Mortality

Which is to say that the Prophet's current life is not in a tangible sense, but in the sense of al-barzakh as a stage of the Hereafter.

This affirmation is analogous to the Qur'anic statements: "And do not say about those who are killed in the way of Allah, 'They are dead.' Rather, they are alive, but you perceive (it) not" (al-Baqarah, 154) and "Never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision, rejoicing in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty, and they receive good tidings about those (to be martyred) after them who have not yet joined them - that there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve" (Al 'Imran, 169-170).

If this is the prestige of martyrs, the same is more appropriate in the case of not just Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), but also all prophets. The office of prophethood is so illustrious that it also entails the boons of martyrdom. Prophethood represents the pinnacle in the hierarchy of ranks and distinctions associated with them.

In fact, prophethood is the source from which all other ranks and their distinctions stem; whatever repute they may have is sourced from it. Prophethood is the cause, other categories are effects. While every prophet by definition is a martyr, no martyr can ever be elevated to the degree of a prophet. The Prophet is reported to have said: "The prophets are alive in their graves, praying" (Musnad al-Bazzar; the hadith is classed as sahih).

The Prophet as humankind's only hope

By virtue of being the seal of prophets, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the only hope humankind has. He is the true and only messiah (the liberator and saviour of the world). After him, the only correspondingly big thing to occur will be the end of time. He thus can also be portrayed as a Noah's Ark for the latter chapters of human existence.

Accordingly, there is no genuine goodness enjoyed by people nowadays, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims, that is not harvested, one way or another, from the Prophet's legacy and the legacies of those who down the ages walked in his footsteps.

There can be no truth beyond that which was delivered by the Prophet, and no goodness other than the one his teachings have produced and keep producing whenever given the chance. There is only one way: the Prophet's way (the way of Islam).

The Prophet was the embodiment of perfection. He was the quintessence of what every leader has ever aspired to, yet could not reach, and the consummation of what all utopians have ever fantasized about. In brief, he was the superman par excellence.

This undisputable veracity about the Prophet compelled George Bernard Shaw (d. 1950), an Irish playwright, critic, polemicist and political activist, to say about him: "He must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness."

Alphonse of Lamartine (d. 1869), a French author, poet and statesman, also wrote: "If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad (pbuh)? Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational beliefs, a founder of twenty terrestrial empires and one spiritual empire. Of all standards by which human greatness can be measured, we may well ask ... is there any man greater than Mohammed (pbuh)?"

The Prophet's legacy versus the legacies of other leaders of the world

A visitor to the Prophet's grave can quickly juxtapose the reputation and legacy of the Prophet with the reputations and legacies of the rest of religious and secular leaders of the world. He will easily realize that the latter pale in comparison with what the Prophet has done for humankind.

If carefully examined against the background of the standards of the truth and all the other essentials the human race has been yearning for since time immemorial, such as universal peace, happiness, prosperity and overall wellbeing, most world leaders' bequests to the world are either inflated or manipulated.

They are certainly not what they are presented to be. The value of an item is not always judged by its shine. For the most part, the legacies and their records do not speak for themselves; instead, it is the persons and the narrow circles of their brainwashed devotees who do the talking.

Those leaders and icons are but the products of sustained and aggressive national and even international campaigns. Many were idolized by a people (nation) – or a group of them, forming political and economic alliances or blocs - but loathed, or simply disregarded, by others. Their roles and contributions were average at best but were inflated by means of their indoctrinated or ignorant followers.

From Heroes to Crossroads

Owing to the recurrent fabrication of history and the meddling with the truth, it is unsurprising that, often, falsehood is extolled – and paraded - in lieu of the truth, tyranny in lieu of justice, ignorance in lieu of knowledge, and savagery in lieu of civilization. That this is all true bears witness the fact that on the heels of hundreds of socio-political, scientific, philosophical and religious heroes, the world is still at a crossroads. The most fundamental ontological questions are yet to be answered, and the most critical existential needs of man are yet to be adequately satisfied.

En bloc, humanity is experiencing distress; and why it wouldn't when it suffers from spiritual, moral, intellectual and civilizational malnutrition. The most that is regularly served to it are such venomous dogmas as advocate that the truth is neither known nor knowable.

The Dilemma of Modern Leadership and the Earth's Sustainability

It follows that virtually all leaders had narrow agendas rooted in dubious worldviews, which in turn translated themselves into correspondingly either narrow or dubious programs of action. Since problematic ideas can only lead to problematic consequences, the predicaments of mankind were piling up and their effects expanding exponentially over the years, so much so that the modern man, after his designs had assumed global proportions, managed to bring the whole world ever closer to the point of extinction.

As a result, the foremost theme that is being widely debated amongst influential global social circles is the sustainability of the planet earth and the survival of the human race. Such is a sign of one's intellectualism as well as benevolence.

Although some may deem this to be a commendable development, it highlights nothing but acts of desperation and panic. The truth of the matter is becoming increasingly clear and time is running out with fewer solutions at hand. It is difficult to deny that the religious and secular leaders of the world, in many ways, lack authenticity.

Many are out-and-out frauds. They deceived the masses by making them believe in mirages and follow civilizational cul-de-sac or dead-end paths. The responsibility for the compounding misery of the world is to be placed directly at their feet. Undoubtedly, those leaders are of Pharaoh's, Nimrud's, Haman's, Qarun's, Samiri's and Abu Jahal's ilk. In the name of ostensible pre-eminence, all they could demonstrate, again and again, was predictability and smallness.

The Day of Resurrection

On the Day of Judgment many leaders and their followers will reproach each other That said, when people gather on the Day of Judgment, things will be made plain and scores settled in such a way that everyone will be able to understand what and how went wrong. In a remarkably vivid style, the Qur'an presents two dialogues between the weak (manipulated ones) and those who were superior and big-headed (deceiving chiefs).

The dialogues will unfold on the Day of Resurrection when everyone will appear before Almighty Allah for the judgment, and in the Hellfire when people will dispute and accuse one another.

The Qur'an says: "And they will come out (for judgement) before Allah all together, and the weak will say to those who were arrogant (leaders and influencing societal elites): 'Indeed, we were your followers, so can you avail us anything against the punishment of Allah?' They will say: 'If Allah had guided us, we would have guided you. It is all the same for us whether we show intolerance or are patient: there is for us no place of escape'" (Ibrahim, 21).

Also: "And (mention) when they will argue within the Fire, and the weak will say to those who had been arrogant: 'Indeed, we were (only) your followers, so will you relieve us of a share of the Fire?' Those who had been arrogant will say: 'Indeed, all (of us) are in it. Indeed, Allah has judged between the servants'" (Ghafir, 47-48). And when the matter is settled, as residents of the Hellfire, non-believers will wish that they "had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger (Muhammad (pbuh) the Saviour)" (al-Ahzab, 66).

Drawing attention once more to the source of their torment, non-believers will disclose: "Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our masters and our dignitaries, and they led us astray from the (right) way" (al-Ahzab, 67). Non-believers will then beseech Allah that the main culprits' punishment be proportionate to the nature and severity of their crimes: "Our Lord, give them (chiefs and dignitaries) double the punishment and curse them with a great curse" (al-Ahzab, 68).

To Be Continued

FRIDAYSPORTS

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The Task Before NFF's General Assembly in Asaba Today

Duro Ikhazuagbe



The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) board at the inception of the Ibrahim Musa Gusau-led executive two years ago. The Federation's Annual General Assembly is to take decisions on several crucial issues that may decide the future of Nigeria's football today in Asaba.

The 2024 Annual General Assembly of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) scheduled to hold today in Asaba, Delta State, is likely to decide wether Nigeria will miss a second, consecutive FIFA World Cup after the Super Eagles failed to qualify for the last edition in Qatar.

This Congress, in the Delta State capital, is the highest decision making body for the game in the country and will largely share in the blame for any wrong decision it takes today that may lead to Nigeria missing the Mundial in the country were the Super Eagles earned their debut in 1994. The USA will jointly host the 2026 World Cup with Canada and Mexico.

Eagles are presently precariously sitting fifth on three miserable points from a possible 12. Rwanda, South Africa and Benin Republic are the leading countries in Group C on seven points each, only separated by goals difference. Lesotho are fifth on five points from same four matches. Zimbabwe on two points in sixth place are the only team that Nigeria are ahead of in the race where only the winner will get the automatic ticket to the 2026 World Cup. The runners up will face the lottery of potentially competing in the second round to advance to the inter-confederation play-offs where there is no certainty of progressing.

This is the stark reality that faces this Congress today as this assemblage of football administrators and stakeholders in a given year meet to deliberate on the way forward for the game in the country. It is also the duty of this August body that serves as the melting pot of interplay of ideas and eventual formulation of policies and rules and regulations that govern the administration and organization of the game nationally for the succeeding one year, to take the right decision.

Since the expiration of the contract of Portuguese gaffer, Jose Santos Peseiro, the NFF under the watch of Ibrahim Musa Gusau, appears bereft of ideas on what to do. Gusau's NFF has experimented with the choice of Finidi George as Eagles Supremo. That ended after just two games with poor results. Then Augustine Eguavoen came in for his fourth 'Missionary Journey' in-charge of the team. Of course, he was pronounced as coming on interim basis. After the Benin Republic and Rwandan Games in the AFCON 2025 qualifiers, NFF has asked him to stay on the job without a contract.

But Eguavoen, who in his three previous appointments never stayed more than six months in each outing, appears not ready to take the blame should Eagles fail to make the cut to the 2026 Mundial. Just early this week, he told Brila FM the conditions that will make him accept the offer as substantive Eagles boss.

"The Super Eagles job I'm doing right now, if I were to switch permanently, it's something I'd need to sit down, reflect, and think deeply about because it's not a small job," the NFF Technical Director told Brila FM.

He admitted that as a tough job, he needs a long term contract with clauses stating he was not going to be sacked should Eagles fail to win crucial games.

"It will be a tough one. You have to give me a long-term contract with patience and clauses in that contract because winning is not guaranteed every week or day. You will give me time to tweak the team till I find what I want," Eguavoen stressed.

What this Congress should be asking Gusau and his board members today is what is so difficult in appointing a replacement for Peseiro since March when the contract expired? Why announce the deal with German Bruno Labbadia when the contract was not properly tidied up only for him to embarrass Nigeria with his rejection of the offer? If Eguavoen is now the choice of the Gusau board, what is causing the delay in negotiating a proper contract for the ex-international for him to settle down to the job?

As reported in THISDAY this week, it is now clear that the Gusau-led board has concluded the move to grant the General Secretary of the NFF, Dr Mohammed Sanusi, a third term tenure of three years at this Congress. Is that the proper and fit thing to do in line with the unwritten agreement of football stakeholders in the country for both the President and the General Secretary to come from the same zone? The President is from Zamfara, while the GS, whose 11th year as head of the secretariat ends in December, is from Kebbi State.

As the General Assembly welcomes the chairmen and secretaries of Football Associations in the 36 states and the FCT, chairmen and secretaries of the Nigeria Premier Football League, Nigeria National League, Nigeria Women Football League and the Nationwide League One, as well as chairmen and secretaries of the referees' association, players' union, coaches' association and past presidents and general secretaries of the NFF to Asaba today, let them be guided by what is in the interest of the millions of Nigerians who are bounded by their love for the Super Eagles and other national teams. After Super Eagles missed Qatar 2022, Nigeria just cannot afford to miss back-to-back another World Cup in 2026.

615 Schools for Zenith Bank/Delta Principals' Cup Football Tournament

The annual Delta State Principals' Cup football competition organised for all secondary schools in the state and sponsored by Zenith Bank Plc, has recorded huge rise in entries.

The competition has witnessed remarkable surge of participating schools from 167 in the maiden edition to 615 schools in the current years.

The Branch Head, Zenith Bank PLC, Asaba, Dr. Ifeanyi Attama, stated this in Asaba during press briefing for the commencement of the 2024 Zenith Bank/Delta Principals' Cup Football Competition.

He charged the State's Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education to keep records of the outstanding players from the edition, stressing that hopefully, they would not only play in the national team but have opportunity to join prestigious clubs in Europe and other parts of the world.

Dr. Attama said Zenith Bank was proud that talents were discovered in the previous editions,

The State's Commissioner for Secondary Education, Mrs. Rose Ezewu, said that the competition was organized to foster the love of sports in youths and to also provide an avenue to discover young talents in the game.

Ezewu stressed that there would be an improvement on the past editions as the bank and the Ministry had introduced the use of the National Identification Number (NIN) to check and avoid cheating in the competition

The CEO of Hideaplus and consultant of the event, Mr. Tony Pemu, explained that the competition was open to students from JS1 to SS2 with the exception of the certificate class which is SS3.

Pemu added that the winner of the competition would represent Delta State at the National Principals' Cup Football tournament.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Mr. Augustine Oghoro, who appreciated Zenith Bank for their partnership and sustenance of the competition, urged the media for a better and wider coverage of the competition.

The competition starts at various preliminaries centers on Monday October 7 with the official Kick-Off slated for Asaba on October 9.

NNL Shows Accountability, Presents Audited Account to Congress

The board of the Nigeria National League (NNL) for the first time presented an audited financial report to its congress held last week in Bauchi.

This feat which was praised by stakeholders opened a fresh chapter in the history of the league's financial management.

Chairman of the NNL Board, Mr. George Aluo, said the essence of auditing the books and making it open to the congress was to encourage openness and transparency.

"We need to gain public confidence in all we do, especially in the area of finance," he said.

A partner in the Audit firm, Vincent Akinbami, who asides from being a chartered accountant worked with clubs like Ranchers Bees and Osun United in the past, said an 18-month audited account was prepared in order to have a stable accounting year that runs from July of a particular year to June of the following year.

According to Akinbami, the NNL management has done what others must emulate.

Galatasaray Coach Admits Osimhen a Major Miss Last Night

Omorodion scores brace in FC Porto's 3-3 draw with Red Devils

EUROPA LEAGUE

Galatasaray admitted missing injured Victor Osimhen in last night's UEFA Europa League clash at Latvian club Rigas FS that ended 2-2.

The Turkish Lig giants were forced from two goals up to the draw, with Osimhen's pacy play conspicuously missing.

The Nigerian international who is a Napoli loanee in the Turkish capital is nursing a muscle injury from a league match against Kenneth Omeruo's Kasimpasa.

Galatasaray coach, Okan Buruk, admitted even before the match that Osimhen was going to be a major absentee for his team, but believed the other players were going to step up their games in his absence. The coach was let down with the draw result.

"We have a good squad. The players coming from the bench are also strong players. We have a major absence like Victor Osimhen, but there are still very valuable and important players on the bench," Buruk had hoped before the kickoff.

He stressed that it was his wish to continue on the winning line since Osimhen joined Galatasaray.

"It is an important match, we want to continue by winning. We are playing away, an environment that our opponents are more familiar with we want to show our own game quality.

"The favorite of the match is Galatasaray. We need to play with the same fighting power."

Osimhen who because of the hamstring injury will now be a major doubt in Nigeria's AFCON 2025 qualifiers to Libya, however took to Instagram to wish the team the best in the game. "Good luck guys," he posted before the 2-2 draw result last night.

Elsewhere, Harry Maguire rescued a dramatic 3-3 draw for 10-man Manchester United after they had surrendered a two-goal lead - and had Bruno Fernandes sent off - at Porto in the Europa League.

Nigerian-born Spain forward, Samuel Omorodion, was on cruise control as he scored a brace in FC Porto's three goals

The Europa League match saw Marcus Rashford give Erik ten Hag's side a dream start early on before Rasmus Hojlund's first goal of the season doubled that advantage.

The momentum however left and allowed Porto back into the game, with Pepe and Omorodion both on the score sheet to make it 2-2 by half-time.

Omorodion, who nearly joined Chelsea in the summer, then put Porto into the lead as United conceded three goals for the third time in just ten games this season.

Things looked to go from bad to worse when Bruno Fernandes, playing in his home city, was sent off for the second game running. But Maguire's late header ensured United remained unbeaten in Europe after two matchdays and slightly suppressed the enormous pressure building on Ten Hag.



FC Porto's Samuel Omorodion (right) scored a brace as Manchester United forced a 3-3 draw in their Europa League clash in Portugal...last night PHOTO: Reuters

RESULTS

Ferencvaros	1-2 Tottenham
Hoffenheim	2-0 Dy'Kyiv
Lazio	4-1 Nice
M'Tel Aviv	0-2 Midtjylland
Olympiacos	3-0 Braga
Qarabag	1-2 Malmo
Sociedad	1-2 Anderlecht
Rigas FS	2-2 Galatasaray
Sla' Prague	1-1 Ajax
Bilbao	2-0 AZ Alkmaar
Besiktas	1-3 E'Frankfurt
Elfsborg	1-0 AS Roma
FC Porto	3-3 Man Utd
PAOK	0-1 FCSB
Plzen	0-0 Ludogorets
Rangers	1-4 Lyon
Twente	1-1 Fenerbache
Union SG	0-0 Bodo/Glimt



THISDAY

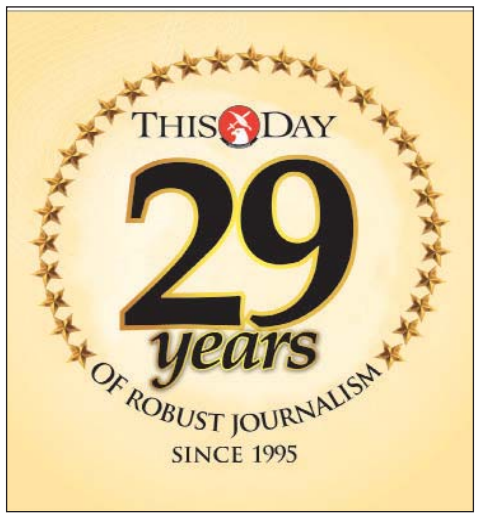
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MISSILE

Kwankwaso to PDP, APC

"I mentioned that the two parties, especially the PDP, were dead, and there are so many concerns within the fold of the PDP. The APC, as it stands today, you can see that the leadership is just up there in the air, and the entire nation, the people of this country, are on the ground. At that level,...all of us, especially the voters in this country, believe that they are performing very, very badly..." *--NNPP Leader, Senator Rabiu Kwankwaso, flays the two opposition parties, as unruly and dead.*



IBOROOTONGARAN

GUEST COLUMNIST



80 Toasts to Don Etiebet

All too often traditional titles are thrown around as confetti to scratch egoistic itch. The title for Atuekong Donald Obot Etiebet, pre-eminent geoscientist and IT geek, came from a different kind of consideration. His chieftaincy title, Atuekong, which translates literally as the head of the people's army, speaks to his amazing persona on the life stage, his fighting spirit for the liberation of his people from all manner of shackles, and the untameable hunger in his belly to make a difference wherever he is.

For these and more reasons I'm at one with the Petroleum Club and all people of goodwill in celebrating the people's general, the Atuekong of Akwa Abasi Ibom State, a dream-maker, an epitome of excellence and a man of vision, as he marks three score years and ten plus ten on earth. A man whose heart beats with so much goodness, Etiebet has in the course of his illustrious career reached out and lifted countless homes and families with jobs and mentoring for their bread winners, laying out a huge personal fortune—through endowments, scholarships, prizes, donations and sponsorships—for the benefit of many across the nation. A personal fortune he built by dint of hard work through a business empire stretching across real estate, oil and gas, banking, education, as well as information and communication technology (ICT)!

For years his IT company, Data Sciences, was an incubator for skill acquisition and leadership training. So many people in leadership positions today in Akwa Ibom State and across the country learned at Etiebet's feet in Data Sciences. Etiebet's positive impact has graced my family—so I should know—just as he has impacted many other families around the country. There are therefore compelling personal reasons for a host of grateful folks to celebrate with him on this very happy occasion of his birthday. We celebrate and thank God that we have him as a blessing at a personal level, and even more so as a bigger blessing for the country.

For the country, Etiebet offers a luminous profile in exemplary leadership. This is not to be taken lightly. The question of leadership in the world's most populous black nation, Nigeria, is just so elemental it deserves every shred of interest. I agree wholly with Chinua Achebe that the trouble with Nigeria is the problem of leadership. So when a man like Atuekong Etiebet comes along with a sterling private sector record as a business leader, and serves in the public sector as Petroleum Minister creditably, not singed by the sludge of sleaze, then we simply have a perfect case study in desirable and effective leadership.



Don Etiebet

For country, Etiebet's outstanding achievements are many. He it was who cracked the conundrum that held back the consummation of the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) project by nudging the Federal Authorities away from hankering after keeping the controlling shares in the investment, a policy stance that had proven to be the stumbling block to the realisation of the project for years. By his common-sense leadership and power of vision the nation built the NLNG which is today a bellwether for the national treasury. It was also during his tenure as Petroleum Minister that the Petroleum Trust Fund was established as a major interventionist agency used to address serious infrastructure and human capital deficits in many sectors of the society, particularly in tertiary education.

As Minister, Etiebet oversaw the roll-out of a range of other farsighted reforms in the petroleum sector that have since served as the defining features of the industry. They include deep offshore exploration and drilling—a slice of the sector that still retains the interest of relocating oil majors; introduction of the country's first instance of monetisation policy in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC); and the streamlining of operational processes in the then Department of Petroleum Resources to tame its unwieldy bureaucracy and optimise productivity and efficiency in that critical department in the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources at the time. He equally promoted the policy of local content to domesticate the oil and gas industry and integrate it with the local economy. The local content policy would later crystallise in the establishment of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board in 2010 during the Obasanjo presidency, a culmination of a policy articulation that has been a shot in the arm for local players in the oil and gas industry.

Etiebet's leadership impact is not limited to his pathfinding work in the private sector; nor is it to his transformational policy initiatives and execution in government at the federal level. At the state level in Akwa Ibom and at the regional stage in the Niger Delta, Etiebet lived up to his stripes as Atuekong when he joined forces with his compatriots that include but are not limited to His Excellency Obong Victor Attah, Senator Udoma Udo Udoma, Obong Umana Okon Umana, Senator Effiong Bob, Senator James Akpanudoedehe, Senator Aloysius Etok, Senator Ita Enang and other champions of equity in the country to fight and win the resource control battle. The resource control victory against a most vicious asphyxiation of a region of the country has provided a source of much-needed development and sustenance for the Niger Delta—though there appears to be a consensus that in spite of the victorious battle against the plot of entrenched interests to deny the region the benefits due to it from its natural resources, the real war for the common ownership and equitable enjoyment of those resources delivered through the 13 percent derivation funds is still raging.

Etiebet is indeed a general leading the way for his people in many theatres of their struggle. His leadership does not show through only in interpersonal relationships and in business. It has been particularly demonstrated in politics. Etiebet's footprints are unmistakeable in every political epoch and in every major political movement in the country in the last 30 years. During the efforts to disengage from military rule, Etiebet formed and funded the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) as a platform with which to rally like minds and steer a centrist path on a political rescue mission. But as it's well known the uncertainties and duplicity of those times guaranteed that the NCPN faced no fate different from what befell all political efforts of that period.

In 1997 or thereabouts, there was another political sunshine moment on the tortuous road to freedom from a wearingly long military rule. Again, Etiebet huddled up with others to form the People's Democratic Party (PDP) that went on to win the 1999 general elections and formed the central government led by President Olusegun Obasanjo. The PDP also won the local election in his native state of Akwa Ibom. Etiebet was easily acknowledged as the kingmaker of that government which took over from the military in the state. But it's an open secret that he was not accorded a godfather's due. The uneasy relationship would only get worse until a rupture happened during the government that succeeded the inaugural 1999 democratic administration in the state. Etiebet then joined the All Progressives Congress (APC) where he has functioned since as an elder statesman.

As I write this tribute, I'm nursing a concern. It's a concern that has enjoyed resonance among Nigerians late and living. I remember the late Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu honouring the late Obafemi Awolowo in his condolence register with the epitaph, "The best president Nigeria never had." Ojukwu was here lamenting the road not taken, indeed the road not seen. It's a statement that completes the Nigerian paradox when taken together with Achebe's uncontested argument that the problem with Nigeria is a problem of leadership. So, here you have a situation where Ojukwu says, hey, this is a rare gem that would have perfectly met our leadership need. Etiebet and others like him abound, perfect samplers in leadership fits that the nation is in dire need of, yet we agonise over the lack of good leadership in the country.

Why is it that we don't see, during leadership recruitment cycles, what we have in the best of leadership potential around us? To be sure, Etiebet has had good opportunities to serve his people and the nation, and has discharged his commissions creditably. But as I would ask regarding all other exquisite cases of the best Nigeria has on offer, have we made the best use of our ablest men and women? It's time we began to have a different kind of conversation about leadership recruitment in Nigeria.

I'm sorry, I guess I digressed. This is not the day for gripes. It's a moment to fill our glasses and join the toast to a great man, an outstanding intellectual, a man with eagle focus and of manifest achievements.

Happy birthday, Sir, and many joyous returns of the day!

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