

IMF Allays Fears, Says Nigeria's Public Debt Not High Risk

●Hails CBN's tight monetary policy stance ●Advises govts to intensify domestic revenue mobilisation ●Prescribes targeted social interventions ●FG announces historic 6,003MW peak power generation ●Reiterates need for cost-reflective electricity tariffs

Obinna Chima in Lagos and Ndubuisi Francis, Emmanuel Adede in Abuja

International Monetary Fund (IMF) allayed fears that the country was on the verge of sliding into a debt trap, saying Nigeria's debt level is

"moderate and not high risk". IMF's First Deputy Managing Director, Gita Gopinath, said this during an exclusive interview with THISDAY

in Lagos.

During a meeting with Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun,

in his office in Abuja, Gopinath acknowledged the economic challenges currently facing Nigeria. He underscored the need for the federal

government to embrace targeted social interventions.

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THIS DAY

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L-R: Director at Wylie Agency, Sarah Chalfant; 2023 general election Labour Party (LP) Presidential Candidate, Peter Obi; Award-winning and best-selling Author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; and Author, broadcaster, and moderator of the Conversation with Chimamanda, Elizabeth Day, at the unveiling of Adichie's latest novel, Dream Count, held at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre in London, United Kingdom... recently

Tinubu Greets Obasanjo at 88

Deji Elumoye, Chuks Okocha in Abuja, James Sowole in Abeokuta, Seriki Adinoyi in Jos and Laleye Dipo in Minna

President Bola Tinubu, yesterday, said the policies and reforms of former President Olusegun Obasanjo's era, both as military and civilian leader, impacted the lives of Nigerians

Continued on page 32

Akpabio Restates Regard for Women, Strongly Denies Sexually Harassing Senator Natasha

●Senate panel throws out Akpoti-Uduaghan's petition, submits report today

Story on page 32



GRADUATE MANAGEMENT ACCELERATED PROGRAMME...

L-R: Group Chairman of United Bank for Africa (UBA), Mr. Tony O. Elumelu; CEO of UBA Africa, Mrs. Abiola Bawuah; and GMD/CEO of UBA Group, Mr. Oliver Alawuba, flanked by graduates of the Bank's Graduate Management Accelerated Programme (GMAP) Class of 2025 at the graduation ceremony held for over one thousand trainees from across Africa in Lagos, yesterday

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FROM BAHAMAS WITH LOVE...

L-R: Group Managing Director of Access Bank, Mr. Roosevelt Ogbonna; Deputy Prime Minister of The Bahamas, Hon. Isaac Chester Cooper; Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu; and his Deputy, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat, during a courtesy visit by the Bahamian Deputy Prime Minister to the Lagos House, Marina, on Tuesday

Abbas: Nigeria Can Earn \$2.5bn Annually from Trade with Morocco

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

The Speaker of the House of Representatives Hon. Abbas Tajudeen, has expressed the possibility of Nigeria increasing its earning to about \$2.5 billion annually from bilateral trade

with Morocco.

The Speaker, who was represented by the Majority Leader, Hon. Julius Ihonvbere, made this known on yesterday at a meeting with stakeholders on Nigeria-Morocco trade relations held in his office.

Abbas in a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Musa Krishi, said the current trade percentage between Nigeria and Morocco was said to have barely increased to 1.88 per cent in the last five years.

He said: "If the trade barriers are removed, the possibility of increased trade relations by way of exports and imports would increase between the two countries."

Abbas noted that he expected the interaction would critically review the trade relations between Nigeria and Morocco to recommend changes that are legislatively necessary to improve trade relations and enable businesses from both countries to take maximum advantage of AfCFTA and other bilateral trade agreements to grow the GDP of our both countries.

He added: "We are prepared to partner with the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant institutions, agencies, and corporate organisations to ensure that all trade barriers are resolved and removed."

"We are ready to work with our counterparts in the Parliament of Morocco through our Parliamentary

Friendship Group with Morocco to speedily resolve any areas that need legislative attention."

Also, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Olajumoke Oduwale, said she had assurances of the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Dr. Wale Edun, that the federal government would prioritise the AfCFTA.

Oduwale also noted that the issue of double taxation, which the government is reviewing, would require the intervention of more stakeholders.

While noting that trade between Nigeria and Morocco revolve around petroleum, agriculture, telecommunications and financial technology, she stressed that the two countries have a great trading relationship, adding that though the trade volumes are gradually increasing, there was room for improvement.

Oduwale noted that Nigeria and

Morocco can explore more opportunities in the banking, telecoms, and energy sectors, especially on the green/renewable energy market and the trans-Sahara pipeline project. She also mentioned a direct shipping link between Nigeria and Morocco.

The minister, however, stated that some of the issues were beyond her ministry and required the involvement of other relevant ministries, departments, and agencies.

The Ambassador of Morocco to Nigeria, Tagma Moha Ou Ali, noted that Morocco and Nigeria share deep historical relationships and goals in Africa.

He also noted that trade between the two countries has recorded significant progress in recent years.

"We have to boost agriculture and industrial collaboration," he said , while calling on financial institutions in Morocco and Nigeria to work closely to facilitate financial support for trade between the two countries.

Ibrahim Shekarau Speaks on Relationship With Kwankwaso, Says We're Not Enemies

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

A former Kano State governor, Ibrahim Shekarau, has dismissed notions of animosity between him and another former governor of the state, Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, insisting that neither of them was responsible for past political disagreements.

In a viral video interview with an online media platform, Shekarau clarified that their political differences were shaped by circumstances beyond their control.

"Honestly, I believe that Kwankwaso and I have no issue sitting together under one roof. In everything that happened, neither he nor I was at fault," he said.

Reflecting on their time in different political parties, he recalled how Kwankwaso, as Kano's governor, joined other governors from Sokoto, Adamawa, Rivers and a few states in defecting from the PDP to the APC.

However, he noted that the APC interim leadership, comprising Bisi Akande, Muhammadu Buhari, and Bola Tinubu, failed to ensure fairness

in party structuring.

"In Kano, the ANPP formed 80 per cent of the APC structure, yet because he was a sitting governor, they allocated him 60 per cent of the party leadership, which we questioned as an injustice," Shekarau explained.

Using an analogy, he likened the situation to disrespecting one's parents in their home, only to later demand a choice of rooms in a newly built house by others.

"It doesn't work like that. That's why we refused to be part of such injustice," he said.

He also cited a similar experience within the PDP, stressing that Kwankwaso was not to blame there either, as the party leadership made the decisions.

According to him, the same issue of injustice arose in the NNPP, where an agreed power-sharing formula was later disregarded.

"Even now, Kwankwaso and I still sit down and discuss issues. We have never said we won't unite under one umbrella. Everything is in God's hands. Twenty years ago,

if someone had told you I would be governor, you would have sworn it was impossible—the same goes for him," Shekarau noted.

Emphasising divine destiny, he concluded that he, Kwankwaso and Abdullahi Ganduje were no different from any other Kano resident.

"There are many people ahead of us in all aspects of life, but God chose us," he said.

DStv/GOtv: FCCPC Sues Multichoice Over Alleged Violation of Regulatory Directives, Others

● Mulls sanctions, penalties to ensure compliance, accountability

James Emejo in Abuja

The Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) yesterday disclosed that it has formally instituted legal proceedings against MultiChoice Nigeria

Limited and its Chief Executive Officer, John Ugbe.

The commission accused the defendants of violating regulatory directives, obstructing an ongoing inquiry and engaging in conduct deemed violations of the provisions

of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act (FCCPA) 2018.

FCCPC had on February 27, 2025, directed MultiChoice to maintain its current pricing structure for DStv and GOtv pending the conclusion of an examination of its proposed price hike.

In a statement, FCCPC Director, Corporate Affairs, Ondaje Ijagwu, however, stated that despite the directive, the pay Tv company proceeded with its price increase on March 1, 2025, in clear defiance of the commission's directive.

Ijagwu said, "Following this blatant disregard for regulatory oversight, the FCCPC has filed charges against MultiChoice Nigeria and John Ugbe at the Federal High Court, Lagos Judicial Division, on three counts of offences under the FCCPA 2018, specifically for willfully obstructing the commission's inquiry by implementing a price hike contrary to directives (Section 33(4)), impeding the ongoing investigation by ignoring instructions to suspend the hike (Section 110).

"And attempting to mislead the commission by proceeding with the increase without objection (Section

159(2), punishable under Section 159(4)(a) and (b)).

"The commission views MultiChoice's actions as a deliberate and calculated attempt to undermine regulatory authority, disrupt market fairness, and deny Nigerian consumers the protection afforded under the law."

The commission stressed that by disregarding its directive and implementing the price hike before appearing before the commission's investigative hearing on March 6, 2025, MultiChoice had not only flouted regulatory processes but also demonstrated a pattern of conduct that undermines consumer rights and fair competition.

The consumer rights agency further noted that in addition to these legal actions, the FCCPC was reviewing further enforcement measures, including sanctions, penalties, and regulatory interventions, to ensure compliance and accountability.

"The FCCPC is committed to protecting Nigerian consumers from exploitative business practices and ensuring that dominant players in any sector adhere to fair market principles and legal compliance," the statement added.

Again, Nigeria's Oil Output Grows in February, OPEC Nation Pumps 70,000bpd Above Quota

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Nigeria's crude oil production was on the upward swing in February, with the country pumping about 70,000 barrels per day above its Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quota, a Reuters survey indicated yesterday.

It also saw OPEC oil output rise last month, as Iranian exports held strong, despite renewed US attempts to curb the flows, and Nigeria boosted output above its target of 1.5 million bpd within the wider OPEC+ group.

Nigeria's growing oil production means boosted revenues and

a stronger foothold in the global energy market as the government's coffers swell, offering opportunities for investment in public services, industrialisation, and the much-needed diversification of the economy.

The increased output also strengthens Nigeria's geopolitical influence, positioning it as a formidable player in OPEC and a crucial supplier to energy-hungry nations. However, it also exposes the country to the volatility of oil prices, where global market fluctuations can turn boom into bust in a heartbeat.

Thus, the implications of Nigeria's growing oil production are manifold—offering promise that

the country is able to produce its projected 2.06 million bpd in 2025 and ultimately fund its almost N55 trillion budget this year.

In all, OPEC pumped 26.74 million barrels per day last month, up 170,000 bpd from January's revised total, the survey showed on Wednesday, with Iran and Nigeria posting the largest gains.

OPEC+, which includes OPEC plus Russia and other allies, is keeping production cuts in place through March due to expectations of limited demand and rising output outside the group, the Reuters report stated.

But on Monday, it decided to stick with its plan to start raising output in

April. OPEC's biggest rise, of 80,000 bpd, came from Iran, with output of 3.30 million bpd. This matched September's figure which was the highest since 2018.

Iranian oil exports recovered during former US President Joe Biden's term, despite US sanctions. Under his successor Donald Trump the US is renewing efforts to cut them to zero.

The second-largest gain in output came from Nigeria where exports rose and domestic usage increased at the Dangote refinery. Nigeria is pumping 70,000 bpd above its OPEC+ target, according to the survey, the highest in the group.



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This 5-day programme is designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skill set required to develop their export business in line with global standards and take advantage of the AFCFTA Treaty as well as other enablers of export trade in Nigeria.

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Facilitators: Prof. Frank Ojadi, LBS Faculty; Dr. Uche Atttoh, LBS Faculty; key industry experts in Exports; Financial Management experts; and regulators.

Emmanuel Nwalor Phone: 0802 358 8372 Email: Emmanuel.Nwalor@fidelitybank.ng

Nkechi Iwegbu Phone: 0802 478 2906 E-mail: niwegbu@lbs.edu.ng,

Umar Idris E-mail: uidris@lbs.edu.ng Phone: 0703 166 7432

Targets Audience:

This 5-day programme is targeted at entrepreneurs, prospective exporters, and financiers of exports, export sector regulators, policy makers, MSMEs, state and federal government agencies, logistics service providers and any other interested parties.

Overview

Recent events in the world have resulted in major disruptions especially in supply chains, price stability as well as demand patterns. Foreign exchange liquidity has been impacted negatively in Nigeria, thereby making the need to diversify the country's foreign exchange revenue base an imperative.

Exports help improve foreign exchange earnings, create employment opportunities, engender wealth creation and sustainable poverty reduction.

Programme Outline

- Overview of Nigeria's export activities
- Export Finance Instruments
- Assessment of the Potentials to become a Successful Exporter
- Accessibility of Export Markets - EU, USA, ASIA, African Countries, etc.
- Definition and implementation of the activities required to make a product market-ready
- Understanding of Export documentation
- Understanding, Selection and Implementation of Supply Chain Management for Exports
- Definition and implementation of Financial Management for Exports
- Selection and Application of on-going Export Development Business Processes
- Understanding the AFCFTA Treaty and the Opportunities it presents.

DATE

MARCH
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2025

TIME

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VENUE

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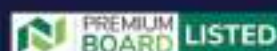
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NEWS



LAUNCH OF PATHWAY TO MALARIA PRE-ELIMINATION AND DIGITISATION PROGRAMME...

L-R: Lagos State Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi; Special Adviser on Health, Lagos State, Dr. (Mrs.) Kemi Ogunyemi; Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Minister of state for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Izaq Adekunle Salako; Medical Laboratory Scientist, Iru- Victoria Island Primary Healthcare Centre (PHC), Amudalat Adebayo; and Medical Laboratory Scientist, Lagos Island PHC, Omolara Oladipupo, during the demonstration of the usage of Malaria Rapid Test Kit by Healthcare workers at the Launch of Pathway to Malaria Pre-Elimination and Digitisation Programme in Lagos State at Eko Hotels and Suites, Victoria Island.... recently

FEC Okays N10.3bn for Procurement of Diabetes Diagnostic Kits, HIV/AIDs, Anti Hypertensive Drugs

- Mulls raising procurement thresholds for more focus on policy issues
- Approves 13 road contracts worth N679bn ●To prioritise road projects based on available funds

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

The Federal Executive Council (FEC) rose from its second meeting in three days yesterday with the approval of N10.299 billion for the procurement of diagnostic kits for diabetes, anti retroviral drugs for resistant HIV/ Aids patients, antibiotics, anti hypertensives and anti diabetic medications.

Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Ali Pate, who briefed newsmen after the FEC meeting presided over by President Bola Tinubu, at the Council Chamber, State House, Abuja, said government intervention in the health sector was in line with the President's aspiration to ensure that Nigerians get access to quality and affordable health services.

His words: "Today (Wednesday) two memos related to the health and social welfare sector, in line

with the President's aspiration to ensure that Nigerians get access to quality health services and that they can afford and for which we'll be making steady progress".

According to him, out of the total sum, N997 million was earmarked for another procurement of anti retroviral drugs for HIV/ Aids patients that are having resistant, N2 billion for the diagnostic kits for diabetes and N4.5 billion for the procurement of medical commodities such as antibiotics, anti hypertensives and anti diabetic medications.

The sum also includes N2.1 billion for the procurement of a mobile X ray machine for the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital in Bauchi as well as the rehabilitation and equipping of the hospital with a computerized tomography Cat scan and 64 slice CT scan.

FEC also approved contract worth 10,299,000,000 naira for

various products that are linked to enhancing the accessibility and affordability of health commodities, health services by Nigerians.

Pate said: "The first category was the third line antiretroviral drugs. A few weeks ago, we approved the first line antiretroviral drugs, second and third line for those who are resistant, Nigeria is putting forth resources, almost 997 million naira worth of contract to procure the third line antiretroviral drugs for those who are HIV infected.

"I believe you will understand the importance of this, given the changes in the global health financing and moving towards most of domestic financing to allow Nigerians to continue on treatment as they require.

"The second category is the procurement that was approved for locally manufactured diagnostic kits for diabetes. Diabetes is a major issue in our country. It's among the

fastest growing segment.

"We have lots of our population suffering from diabetes, and some are not even aware they have diabetes. In addition, we are having a local company for the first time, one of the first in the continent who will manufacture this diagnostic test kits in Nigeria.

"This is a company based in Lagos, which we had commissioned. It's a private company, but it's manufacturing in Nigeria. So government is procuring the diagnostic kits the Onpoint blood glucose monitoring system that is manufactured here in Nigeria. This is bringing to life the effort to unlock the healthcare value chain by encouraging local manufacturers.

"So federal government is procuring 2 billion naira worth of those diagnostic kits. Out of this total amount that I had mentioned, that will also be in addition Onpoint

of the glucose monitoring devices.

"But anybody who has diabetes will know that they will have to monitor over time. So the devices are also being procured and they will be distributed. The health workers will be trained through primary health care centers and other facilities, and those commodities, we believe will bring relief to many Nigerians who are poor and vulnerable and cannot otherwise afford it. So that's also what was approved by the Federal Executive Council."

He said President Tinubu had previously indicated that the country needs to have a medical relief program to lower the cost for other types of medical commodities, adding that the antibiotics, anti hypertensives and anti diabetic medications are among the approval beyond the test kits.

He further explained: "Those are also worth 4.5 billion naira, which will be procured and distributed to help lower the cost. These are also commodities that are manufactured by local manufacturers here in Nigeria, so we are beginning to pull the demand and patronize our local manufacturers. So that's one category of the approvals by the FEC today.

quality that we can make it and it serves as a referral not only in the state where it is located, but also in the region where it is located.

"So those are the two main items that the Federal Executive Council considered, which are in line with the transformation in Nigeria health sector and Mr President has been pursuing, we are relentlessly executing."

Also, FEC is considering a proposal to increase budget thresholds for ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) in order to reduce the time spent on procurement-related discussions and allow for greater focus on policy deliberations.

Information and National Orientation Minister, Mohammed Idris, yltold newsmen after the Council meeting; noted that most memos brought before the council pertain to contract approvals.

He said: "You will notice that so many of these memos coming to the council are related to procurement contracts at the FEC level. So FEC thought that it is good to review that so that more time will be given to policy discussions at different Executive Council meetings.

"If you observed, all the memos presented here largely related to procurements, and so we want that to be decongested at the Federal Executive Council level.

"This will give room for more detailed discussions on policy issues and reduce some of these memos coming by increasing the threshold of those procurement processes to be executed at the ministerial level".

The move is expected to enhance the efficiency of FEC meetings, ensuring that more attention is devoted to strategic policy matters crucial to national development.

Aviation: Keyamo Vows to Clamp Down on Illegal Charter Flights

Kasim Sumaina in Abuja

The Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo has vowed to tackle all illegal chartered operations in the country.

Keyamo made this known while receiving the report of the 7-Member Committee on Illegal Chartered Operations and Related Matters in Abuja.

He stated that the issue of illegal charter operations by private jets and private aircrafts owners in the country had been besetting the aviation sector, especially those who obtain licences under the permit for Non-Commercial Flight (PNCF) and use the aircraft to do other illegal transactions.

The Minister maintained that the President Bola Tinubu-led government was poised to mitigate these acts, pledging that his Ministry would not fail to safeguard the aviation industry in line with the mandate of the Ministry.

According to him, this practice had "been on for many years before I

became Minister, but I thought there was a need to confront it headlong."

He added: "When you cannot track them, it leads to money laundering, drug trafficking, illegal entry and exits into the country and all kinds of illegal activities."

While commending the Committee members and the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) for providing the committee with all necessary documents required in the course of their assignment, Keyamo promised to implement the recommendation of the committee. He assured that it would not be swept under the carpet.

The Chairman of the 7-member Ministerial Task Force on Illegal Charter operations, Captain Adu Sanusi, while presenting the final report of the committee, thanked Keyamo for his visionary leadership and for entrusting the committee with such an important assignment.

He noted that the committee conducted a thorough investigation into illegal private charter operations in Nigeria and identified critical challenges, which include regulatory

weaknesses, loopholes in the permit for Non-Commercial Flight (PNCF) system, inadequate oversight, security vulnerabilities and significant revenue losses to the government.

Sanusi stated that the findings did not only pose risks to aviation safety but also create an uneven playing field for legitimate operators.

"As part of the recommendation in the report is that government should strengthen regulatory oversight, enhance security measures, improve compliance with aviation laws, and

ensure that private charter operations are conducted transparently and in line with international standards."

He, however, appealed to the Minister to ensure speedy implementation of the recommendations which would create an economically viable aviation industry in Nigeria.

On his part, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Dr. Ibrahim Abubakar Kana, commended the aviation minister for his commitment in reviving the Nigeria Aviation sector.

President Bola Tinubu has approved the appointment of two new permanent secretaries in the Federal Civil Service to fill existing vacancies.

A statement yesterday by the Director, Information and Public Relations, Office of Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Eno

Olotu, said the newly appointed officials were Mr. Adelan Rafiu Olarinre and Mr. Mukhtar Yawale Muhammed representing Oyo State and the North-West geopolitical zone, respectively.

The statement said the appointments followed a rigorous and transparent selection process in line with the administration's commitment to meritocracy,

excellence, and competence in the civil service.

Olarinde and Muhammed bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their roles, which will further strengthen the delivery of public services and support the government's development agenda.

The Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, congratulated the

newly appointed permanent secretaries and commended Tinubu for his unwavering commitment to entrenching the principles of transparency, meritocracy, and professionalism in the civil service.

She stated that the appointments reflected the administration's dedication to fostering a competent and results-oriented public service that meets the needs of Nigerians.

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Tinubu Appoints Two Permanent Secretaries

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

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JULIUS BERGER’S COURTESY VISIT TO THISDAY...

L-R: THISDAY Sunday Editor, Mr. Davison Iriekpen; Head of Corporate Communications, Julius Berger Nigeria PLC, Mr. James Agama; Media Relations Officer, Lagos Office, Julius Berger Nigeria PLC, Mobolaji Ogunyomi; THISDAY Editor, Mr. Shaka Momodu; Media Relations Officer, Head Office Abuja, Julius Berger Nigeria PLC, Mr. Emmanuel Isibor; and THISDAY Saturday Editor, Mr. Chima Obinna, during a courtesy visit to the THISDAY Corporate Office by the Julius Berger Nigeria PLC team in Lagos, yesterday

PHOTO: SUNDAY ADIGUN

REA Boosts Off-grid Power Supply, Inaugurates 440kWp Mini-grid in C’River

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The Rural Electrification Agency (REA) yesterday commissioned a 440kWp interconnected mini-grid in Etomi, Agbokim, Abia, and Bendeghe communities, Etung Local Government Area, Cross River State, in a bid to boost the country’s off-grid electricity supply.

The project, implemented under the Interconnected Mini-Grid Acceleration Scheme (IMAS), is part of a €9.3 million in-kind grant initiative funded by the European Union (EU) and supported by the German Cooperation.

REA is the implementing agency of the federal government under the federal ministry of power tasked with the electrification of unserved and underserved communities to catalyse economic growth and improve the quality of life of Nigerians.

The initiative aims to accelerate the development of Nigeria’s interconnected mini-grid market and provide clean energy access to approximately 125,000 beneficiaries, including underserved communities.

In his address at the event, Governor Bassey Otu, represented by the Commissioner for Power and Renewable Energy, Eka Williams, emphasised the potential of the project to transform the socio-economic landscape of the state.

“It not only provides access to

sustainable energy for the communities of Etomi, Agbokim, Abia, and Bendeghe but also opens doors to numerous opportunities for growth and development,” Otu said.

The governor tasked the benefiting communities to scale up the project by actively participating in its maintenance and management, ensuring its long-term sustainability, emphasising the importance of community ownership.

He urged local leaders and residents to take responsibility for protecting the infrastructure and preventing any form of vandalism, encouraging the communities to explore innovative ways to expand the reach of the mini-grid, including the establishment of small businesses that can thrive with reliable power supply.

Also speaking, the Managing Director and Chief Executive of REA, Abba Aliyu, represented by the Director of the Rural Electrification Fund, Ngozi Chimdi-Ejiogu, lauded stakeholders for the success of the project.

“This project is not just about infrastructure; it’s about empowering the communities of Etomi, Agbokim, Abia, and Bendeghe with the transformative power of sustainable energy. This mini-grid will enhance local economic activities, support small businesses, improve education and healthcare services, and ultimately uplift the quality of life for the residents of

these communities,” he stated.

According to him, the mini-grid is a major step toward reducing reliance on harmful energy sources like kerosene, diesel, and firewood, offering a renewable energy solution to local households and businesses.

Darway Coast Limited, the project developer, stated that the successful implementation of the mini-grid was a testament to the power of collaboration and innovation, highlighting the potential of renewable energy to drive

positive change.

A representative of the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company (PHEDC), Mr. Augustine Obinna, said: “This project is a perfect example of how partnerships can drive progress. By collaborating with the REA Darway Coast Limited, and other stakeholders, we have been able to provide a solution that not only supplies power but also empowers communities.”

Representatives of GIZ, including

Mr. Eckhard Heine, and emphasised the importance of partnerships in achieving renewable energy development.

“This mini-grid is a clear demonstration of what can be achieved when governments, development partners, and local communities work together to address energy access challenges. GIZ is committed to supporting such initiatives as we collectively strive for a sustainable and prosperous future,” he said.

In addition to powering homes, the 440kWp mini-grid will energise local businesses, schools, and healthcare facilities, providing a foundation for greater economic and social development.

The REA is also collaborating with the Cross River State government to explore further opportunities for decentralised energy solutions, including additional mini-grids and solar power systems, to expand energy access throughout the state.

Globacom Offers SIM-less with e-SIM, 5G Free Data

Nigerians now have the opportunity to switch over to the Glo network through an e-SIM without having to worry about space for a physical SIM.

Globacom disclosed in a statement that a generous bonus of 5GB data comes with every e-SIM activated when the customer buys a data plan of N1,500 or more.

The e-SIM is a software-based digital chip built directly into smartphones or wearable devices, thus eliminating the need for a physical SIM card for customers.

It enables customers to have seamless switching between numbers without a physical SIM and is ideal for upwardly mobile people who travel frequently.

Another advantage of the e-SIM is security. Unlike physical SIM, it’s harder to remove from devices. It is also eco-friendly and reduces plastic waste.

This launch of the e-SIM enables

Globacom to cater to high-net-worth individuals and enterprise customers, and it also reinforces the company’s commitment to providing seamless and future-ready services to customers.

Existing Glo customers can enjoy “SIM-less” freedom with the Glo e-SIM, while customers on other networks can now join the Glo network with e-SIM as an additional SIM.

A customer seeking to activate the e-SIM can check the compatibility of the mobile handset by dialling *#06# on his or her phone.

If an EID number reflects on the mobile screen, the device is e-SIM compatible.

“The customer can then proceed to the nearest Gloworld shop or Glo Dealer outlet to migrate to e-SIM.

The process takes only a few minutes and the customer can thereafter begin to enjoy the use of an e-SIM”, the Marketing Department disclosed.

Fintiri Hails Diri on Road, Housing Projects in Bayelsa

Adamawa State Governor, Ahmadu Fintiri, yesterday commended his Bayelsa State counterpart, Senator Douye Diri, on what he described as an impressive five years in office.

According to a statement, Fintiri gave the commendation when he inaugurated a new Commissioners Quarters and a dual carriage road in the New Yenagoa City in continuation of Governor Diri’s fifth anniversary celebration.

The Adamawa governor said his Bayelsa counterpart has had a commendable five years and that their party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), was very proud of his performance.

Fintiri noted that leaders who provide infrastructure for the people have their interest and overall wellbeing at heart.

He said: “Anyone who provides infrastructure does so for the greatest number of the people. Senator Diri has etched his name as a governor doing wonders in Bayelsa State and has cultivated special friendship across the country and a fraternal bond within the PDP family.”

He also stated that Diri meant a lot to people of the country and that like every other PDP governor, he has rendered honest service while translating his vision into reality.

“Like every other PDP governor, Diri is delivering on his campaign promises and changing the narrative of Bayelsa with speed and precision in a manner that has never been witnessed before in the state.”

Fintiri observed that anyone that was in Yenagoa a few years ago would attest that the city was different today.

“We must therefore, congratulate the people of Bayelsa for the positive transformation. It is exciting to know

that this development is fairly distributed across the state. My brother, you have done what everybody knows is good for this state.

“This development has its challenges, especially in a terrain that is difficult as Bayelsa’s. It is a task that can only be executed by a large-hearted leader like Diri. You have not only responded to the yearnings of the people of Bayelsa but also made your party, the PDP, proud as well as your friends with this impressive score card.”

In his remarks, Diri expressed appreciation to the host communities of Onopa and Amarata for their peaceful conduct, which ensured the smooth

delivery of the projects.

He stressed that for a city to grow like other cities in the country, it had to be properly planned.

“We thank you for the support. From day one when we came in, Bayelsa and indeed Yenagoa, the state capital, has been peaceful. And because of your support, we have been performing.

“I also thank the contractor and the New Yenagoa City Development Agency for their hard work, and together, we will deliver the New Yenagoa City.”

The governor directed Lubrik Construction Company to extend the road to link the Tombia airport

road for easy accessibility, which he said should be completed by the end of this year.

While appreciating his Adamawa counterpart, Diri described him as a friend and brother of the Niger Delta, who had been very supportive of the region’s agitation for a fair deal on oil derivation.

In his remarks, the Commissioner for Lands and Survey, Mr. Perepuighe Biewari, said the completion of the housing project marked the beginning of development in the area as it would open it to more infrastructure and economic development, which would in turn stimulate the economic growth of the state.

Lagos Launches Africa’s First Subnational Carbon Exchange Clean Cookstoves Project

Oluchi Chibuzor

In a landmark move that positions Lagos as a global leader in climate action and green finance, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has launched Africa’s first subnational carbon exchange clean cookstoves project.

This initiative, established in collaboration with GreenPlinth Africa and international partners, will be housed within the Lagos Office of Climate Change & Circular Economy.

It aims to attract billions of dollars in climate capital, de-risk low-carbon development investments, and set a precedent for subnational governments across Africa and the Global South.

For Sanwo-Olu’s government

this initiative marks a pivotal step in positioning Lagos as a leader in clean energy access and climate finance innovation across Africa.

Speaking at the 80-million Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM), Compliant Clean Cookstoves Project Implementation Retreat, yesterday, themed, ‘Clean Cooking Access for Africa: Leaving No One Behind’, Sanwo-Olu emphasised it would ensure that climate action and economic growth are seamlessly integrated.

According to him, “At its core lies the world’s largest PACM-compliant Clean Cookstoves Project—a groundbreaking effort that transcends environmental impact to drive economic growth

and accelerate social development. By generating 1.2 billion tons of compliance-grade carbon offsets, this project unlocks multi-billion-dollar green revenue streams and creates 35 million green jobs over its lifespan.

“Lagos State will serve as the anchor, distributing 6 million clean cookstoves at no cost to beneficiaries through the Office of Climate Change and Circular Economy under the Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget.

“Today, we also celebrate a historic milestone: Lagos, in partnership with GreenPlinth Africa and global collaborators, unveils Africa’s first Subnational Carbon Exchange - the second globally after California.

NEWS



4STONE CAPITAL LIMITED LAUNCHED...

L-R: Chief Executive Officer, 4Stone Capital, Elizabeth Kings-Wali;Oluwo of Iwo, Abdul Rasheed Akanbi; Emir of Borgu Kingdom/Chairman, 4Stone Capital, Muhammed Dantoro, and chairman, Institute of Science and Technology/keynote speaker, Steve Azaiki, at the premier summit and launch of 4Stone Capital Limited in Lagos...recently

Edo Govt Demolishes Houses Linked to Kidnappers in Ekpoma, Uromi

Adibe Emenyonu in Benin-city

In a bid to ensure the safety of its citizens and residents as well as curbing criminal activities in the state, the Edo State Government yesterday commenced the demolition of houses linked to kidnappers.

Leading security personnel on the demolition exercise that took place in Illele, Esan West

Local Government Area and Uromi in Esan North East Local Government Area of Edo State, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Security, Mr. Akhere Paul, said the demolition exercise was in accordance with the law.

Stressing the state government's commitment to securing the lives and property of its citizens, Mr. Akhere emphasised that the administration of Governor

Monday Okpebholo will not tolerate any house or establishment used as a hideout for criminal activities, and called on landlords to ensure proper profiling of their tenants before subletting their properties.

He said: "This house has been used for criminal activities. They

keep kidnapped victims here, and a raid by men of the Nigerian Police Force recovered some dangerous weapons as well. According to the new law on kidnapping recently passed by the Edo State House of Assembly and signed by Governor Okpebholo, any house found to be being used for kidnapping activities

will be demolished

"This will serve as a deterrent to others. You must profile a person before giving out your house to him or her for rent. Go to the police station and let them help you in profiling the new person before you give out your property. You must verify their identity, where

they work, and who they are to avoid unfortunate incidence as this," Akhere assured the people of the state that the exercise would be a continuous one as the state government has given a marching order to flush out all criminal elements in the state and make it habitable for all.

Enugu Council Clarifies Eha-Amufu Women's Protest

Gideon Arinze in Enugu

The Isi-Uzo Local Government Council has clarified the Tuesday protest by some women of Eha-Amufu communities, blaming it on deliberate misinformation and politicisation of security matters in the Local Government Area, LGA, by some political actors.

The council explained that the recent video of women protesting alleged killings by herders in Eha-Amufu community were propelled by "total misinformation" and not a true reflection of current security realities in Isi-Uzo LGA since Governor Peter Mbah's

assumption of office.

The council's clarifications were contained in a statement personally issued by the Council Chairman, Barr. Obiora Obeagu, yesterday.

In the statement which was made available to THISDAY, Obeagu said that the development was a callous attempt to destroy the critical infrastructural and development interventions and initiatives by the governor in Eha-Amufu such as the landmark 21.7km Agape-Agu Mgbuji-Ogbete Road, Produce City, deployment of over 100 military and security personnel, plans for permanent security camps, among others.

NDDC Urges Monarchs, Youths, Others to Ensure Peace for Devt in Niger Delta

Sunday Okobi

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has made a passionate appeal to royal fathers, youths, and women leaders in the region to ensure sustainable peace in their respective communities.

According to the NDDC, peace is a prerequisite for development in the oil-rich region.

Speaking in Port Harcourt, River State, during a training session for community leaders, NDDC Managing Director Samuel Ogbuku, emphasised

the importance of peace in the Niger Delta.

He said: "As an interventionist agency, we are more interested in the peace of this region. Without peace, development cannot thrive."

At the training session, tagged: 'Inclusive Approach to Conflict

Management and Transformative Dispute Resolution', which was organised by the Department of Dispute and Conflict Resolution (DCR), Ogbuku called for stronger synergy among all stakeholders, highlighting the commission's interest in regional integration.

Security: Fubara Hands over Rivers Helicopter to NAF

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

Governor Siminalayi Fubara has officially transferred Rivers State ownership of its AgustaWestland AW139 Helicopter to the Nigerian Air Force (NAF).

Governor Fubara said that the reason for handing over

the helicopter is to strategically contribute to efforts to boost national security operations, enhance aerial surveillance and emergency response capabilities while increasing crude oil production to upscale revenue for development purposes.

Speaking at the 115 Special Operations Group of the Nigerian

Air Force Base in Rumuomasi, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, yesterday, the governor restated the commitment of his administration to safeguard national economic assets by improving performance, efficiency and adaptability of personnel to difficult terrains in the State.

Governor Fubara explained that

as a member of the committee saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that critical national assets of the Federal Government of Nigeria, domiciled in the Niger Delta are protected and secured to enhance increased oil production, it was incumbent on him to implement measures to achieve success.

Lent: Akinadewo Urges Nigerians to Seek the Face of God

Nigerians have been urged to seek the face of God, turn from their wicked ways and ask for forgiveness "for our Creator to heal the country completely."

Speaking yesterday during an Anointing Service to celebrate the beginning of Ash Wednesday, the Chairman, Board of Trustees (BoT) of Motalatu Church of God (MCG), Senior Superintendent Gabriel F. Akinadewo (Omo Jesu II), quoting from Isaiah 59, said: "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear" the cries of Nigerians but sin has

separated Nigerians from God.

Preaching on the Theme: 'If My People (II Chronicles 7:14)' at the Restoration Parish of the Church in Akute, Ogun State, Akinadewo declared that Nigerians must urgently seek the face of God to eradicate the socio-political, economic and security challenges in the country.

Quoting Isaiah 55:7, he said: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon".

FG, China Partner on Devt of Infrastructure in Navy Secondary Schools

Hammed Shittu in Ilorin

Federal government and Republic of China have partnered on development of infrastructure of the Nigeria Navy Secondary schools across the country so as to enhance the nation's quality of education.

Already, the collaboration

has led to the construction and equipping of facilities at the Navy Secondary School, Offa in Kwara state.

Facilities in the Offa school include: Examination and Dining Halls with 150 capacity, Computer centre with 50 capacity and 40 Home Economics Laboratories capacity for the

students of the institution.

Speaking at the unveiling of the facilities yesterday at Offa, the National President of Naval Wives Association (NOWA) Mrs. Blessing Ijeoma Ogalla said: "These new facilities are designed to enrich the learning experience of our students, equipping them with the

tools and resources they need to excel both academically and in practical skills."

She explained that the creation of the Examination and Dining Halls are particularly important, as it will offer a conducive space for students to concentrate and prepare for exams without distractions.

Tourism 'll Create Two Million Jobs in Five Years, Says Musawa

Segun James

The Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Musawa, has said that in view of the economic potential of the tourism industry in the country, her ministry is

targeting the creation of over two million jobs in the next five years.

This is as she said the federal government has allocated \$2 million for the revitalisation of the Obudu Cattle Ranch in Obudu, Cross Rivers State.

Speaking with journalists in Lagos on the plan of her ministry to become the major revenue generation sector for the country, Musawa said: "Our vision is to build an integrated, data-driven and investment friendly ecosystem, that really has the potential to

unlock the great opportunities abound in this industry."

She explained that President Bola Tinubu has mandated her to ensure that she did whatever was necessary to make sure that players in the industry get what they need to grow the industry.

Events Industry Inaugurates New Executives

Segun James

The Association of Professional Party Organisers and Event Managers of Nigeria (APPOEMN) has inaugurated its new executive team at this year's highly anticipated Owambe 2025, marking a new chapter of leadership, innovation, and excellence in the event industry.

The outgoing President, Oluwafumbi Akinyosoye, in her farewell speech, expressed profound gratitude to the members for their unwavering support throughout her tenure. She highlighted the strides made

in strengthening the association, fostering industry collaborations, and elevating the standards of event management in Nigeria.

"It has been an honour to serve this great association. Together, we have built a stronger APPOEMN, one that is recognized for its impact, professionalism, and dedication to excellence. I have no doubt that the new leadership will take us even further," she remarked.

Taking the mantle of leadership, the newly inaugurated President, Ayiri Oladunmoye, delivered an inspiring inaugural address, outlining her vision for the future of APPOEMN.

Court Orders INEC to Recognise Edozie Njoku as Duly Elected NRM Chairman

Alex Enumah in Abuja

A Federal High Court in Abuja yesterday ordered the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to immediately recognise Chief Edozie Njoku as duly elected National Chairman of the

National Rescue Movement (NRM).

Justice Obiora Egwuatu made the order while delivering judgement in the suit filed by the party against the electoral umpire.

Njoku had emerged as national chairman from the party's

emergency national convention held in Abuja, on January 17.

The emergency national convention was held to fill vacant positions in the party's National Executive Committee (NEC).

According to the leadership of the NRM, the convention became imperative to address

what it called "lopsidedness in its composition" in order to accord a national outlook and spread to the party.

However, INEC refused to accept the outcome of the convention on the grounds that it did not monitor the exercise, hence the current court action.

Bauchi Gov Flags Off Cement Drilling Campaign

Segun Awofadeji in Bauchi

As part of his administration's plan for industrial growth, Bauchi State Governor, Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, has officially launched the drilling campaign of Resident Cement

Company Ltd in Diji Village, Gwana District of Alkaleri Local Government Area of the state.

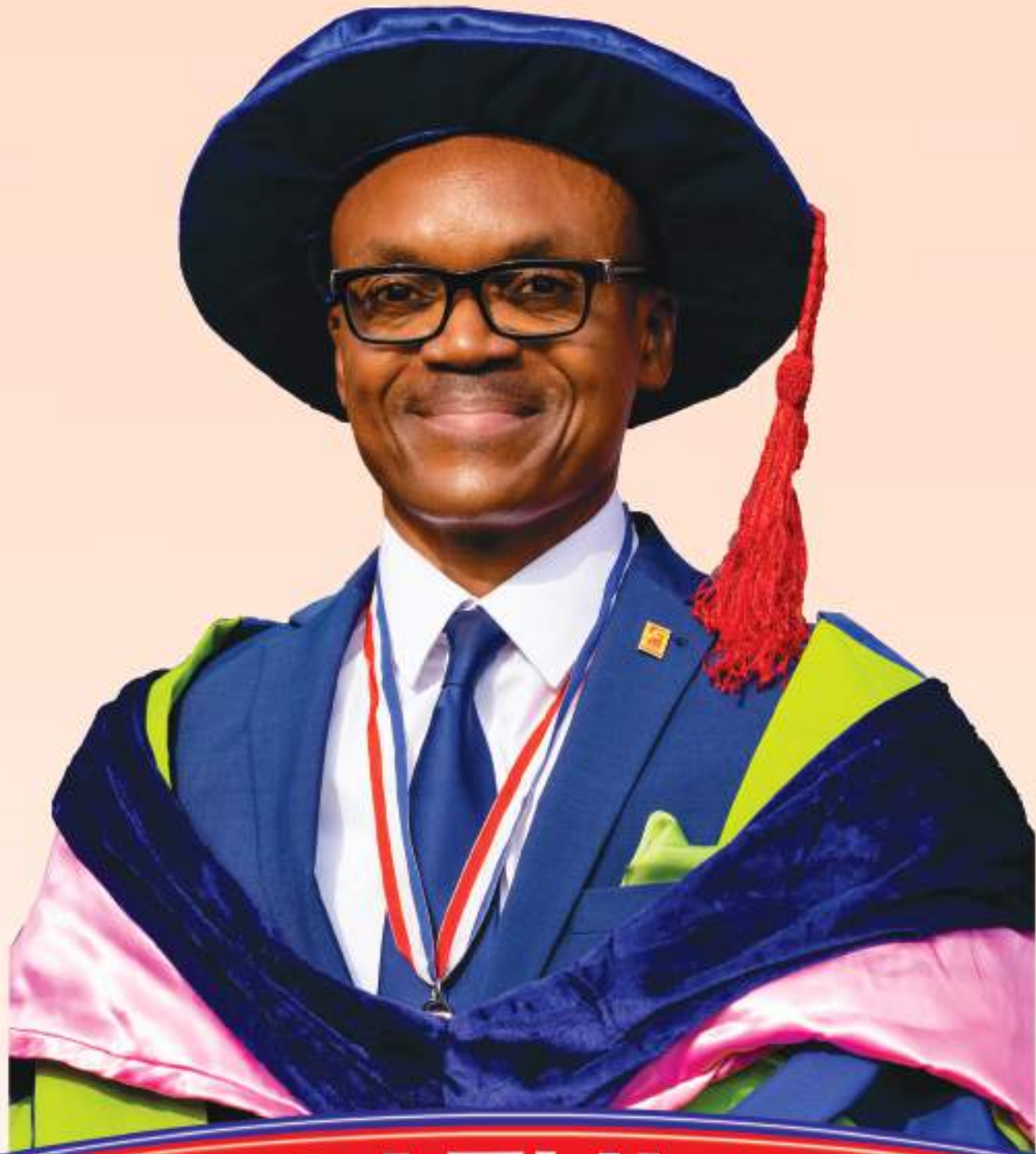
This significant milestone marks the beginning of a new era of economic prosperity and development in the state.

In a landmark ceremony, which

was held on Tuesday at the site of the drilling underscoring the state's commitment to unlocking its vast mineral and other natural resources for socioeconomic transformation, growth and development of the state.

Speaking at the ceremony,

which is regarded as unlocking the state's mineral potential, Governor Mohammed emphasised that Bauchi State's rich mineral deposits and natural resources are now opened for business by interested investors from across the world.



CONGRATULATIONS

Dr. Ehi Agenmonmen JP, FCA, FCTI, FNIM.

The Chairman, management and members of THE FREEDOM GROUP heartily congratulate our highly esteemed President Dr. Ehi Agenmonmen JP, FCA, FCTI, FNIM. on the conferment of the prestigious award of HONORARY DOCTORATE DEGREE IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (DBA) by Edo University, Iyamho, Edo State.

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STAR DEEP WATER PETROLEUM LIMITED
A Chevron Company
OPERATOR OF THE AGBAMI UNIT (PML 52/OML 128)

TENDER OPPORTUNITY
SUPPLY OF BULK METHANOL TO STAR DEEP WATER PETROLEUM LIMITED OPERATIONS
NipeX Tender: STARDEEP.00000125

1. INTRODUCTION:
Star Deep Water Petroleum Limited (“SDWPL”), a Chevron company and Operator of the Agbami Unit, on behalf of the Unit parties (Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited, FAMFA Oil Limited, Prime 127 Nigeria Limited, Chappal Energies Offshore Limited, and Texaco Nigeria Outershelf Limited) invites interested and prequalified companies with relevant experience for this tender opportunity for the **Supply of Bulk Methanol** To Star Deep Water Petroleum Limited Operations Services to support the Agbami Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) operations, which is located in approximately 5000 feet of water and about 70 miles offshore Nigeria. The work location shall be within Agbami Field Operations.

This service will be a call-out contract estimated to commence in the third quarter of 2025 for three (3) years with an optional two (2) years plus two (2) years extension subject to Contractor’s performance and obtaining NUIMS prior approval.

2. SCOPE OF WORK:
The scope of work for the services shall include the procurement of methanol in parcels ranging from 4,000 to 15,000 barrels, to be specified in the Service Order that will be issued by the Company based on operational need.

The contractor shall deliver methanol as approved by the Company at its Agbami field.

- The procurement opportunity will include but not limited to:
- Bundling opportunities with other International Oil Companies (IOCS) sharing logistics and handling costs
 - Procurement from Methanol plants in Africa
 - Procurement from locations outside Africa.

Safety Requirements
Contractor is expected to deliver Methanol to Agbami field in line with all chemical handling and shipping safety standards as stipulated by Company as well as in compliance with local and regional safety laws. The contractor shall deliver methanol as approved by the Company at its Agbami field.

- 3. MANDATORY TENDER REQUIREMENTS:**
- A. To be eligible for this tender exercise, interested bidders are required to have the requisite Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) permit, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) NOGIC JQS registration and be pre - qualified under NipeX Product Code **2.07.08 (Production / Process / Drilling Chemicals Agents, Bactericides, Barites, Bentonite, Brines, Clean-up, Corrosion inhibitors, Defoamers, Demulsifiers, Dispersants, Flocculants, Glycol, H2S scavengers, Hydrochloric acid, Loss Surface-active agents, Temperature stability agents, Treatment, Viscosifiers, Water)** on or before the advert close date in the NipeX Joint Qualification System (NJQS) database. All suppliers who are successfully **pre-qualified and “live”** in this category by the bid close date of this advert will receive the Invitation To Tender (ITT).
- B. To confirm if you are pre-qualified and to view the product/service category you are listed for; Open www.vendors.nipex-ng.com and access NJQS with your log in details. Click on the Products/Services tab to view your status and product codes.
- C. If you are not listed in this product/service category, and you are registered with NUPRC to conduct business for this category, please contact NipeX office at 27B Oyinkan Abayomi Drive, Ikoyi Lagos with your NUPRC certificate as evidence for verification and necessary update.
- D. To initiate the JQS pre-qualification process, please access www.nipex-ng.com and click on the services tab followed by NJQS registration.
- E. To be eligible, all interested bidders must comply with the Nigerian Content requirements in the NipeX system.

4. NIGERIAN CONTENT REQUIREMENT:
A. Tenderer shall demonstrate that entity is a Nigerian-registered company. Submit certified true copies of CAC forms 10, 02 & 07 (or its equivalent; CAC

- 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, etc.). Tenderer shall provide evidence of registration with the NCDMB NOGIC JQS and NUPRC.
- B. Tenderer shall provide documented evidence (not limited to ownership/rental of administrative office, laboratory facilities, warehouse) demonstrating presence in Nigeria for the execution of the work scope
- C. Tenderer shall provide evidence of Category 1,2,3,4 or 5 Procurement and supplies group NCEC demonstrating capacity to procure production enhancement chemicals.
- D. Tenderer shall provide evidence of what percentage of your key management positions is held by Nigerians and what percentage of the total work force are Nigerians. Also, show overall percentage of work to be performed in Nigeria and those by Nigerian resources relative to total work volume.
- E. Tenderer shall comply with the latest approved version of NCDMB HCD guideline by committing (via a letter of undertaking) to providing Project-Specific training, man-hour, budget, skill development and understudy plan for Nigerian personnel utilizing OGTA registered trainer(s) or other approved NCDMB training institution(s).
- F. Please note that interested bidders including their sub-contractor(s) shall be required to:
- a. Meet all Nigerian Content requirements stated in this advert in their responses to the Invitation to Technical Tender.

- 5. CONTRACT AWARD STRATEGY:**
- A. As part of the Nigerian Content bid evaluation, award of contract will be based on strict compliance with the provisions and requirements of the Nigerian Content Act.
- B. Bid Currency shall be United State Dollars (USD).
- C. Payment shall be based on currency split of 60% USD and 40% Nigerian Naira.
- D. The contract term will be Three (3) years with an optional two (2) years plus two (2) years extension subject to Contractor’s performance and obtaining NUIMS prior approval. The anticipated commencement date of the contract is July 1, 2025.

6. CLOSE DATE:
Only bidders who are **pre-qualified and ‘live’** with NJQS Product/Category **2.07.08** by **16:00 Hours, March 19, 2025** being the advert close date shall be invited to submit technical bid.

- 7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**
- A. The Invitation to Tender (ITT) and any further progression of this tender shall be via NipeX. Interested bidders are therefore advised to ensure they are set-up in NipeX with a valid and active official company email address accessible by all in their organization as this shall be the only means to transmit the ITT.
- B. Bidders, who, for this bid process enter a Joint Venture (JV), Partnership, Consortiums, etc. with another bidder that is bidding for this service will be disqualified.
- C. All costs incurred by a bidder in preparing / processing NJQS prequalification and participating in this tendering process shall be to the bidder’s accounts.
- D. This advertisement shall neither be construed as any form of commitment on the part of Star Deep Water Petroleum Limited (“Company”) to award any contract to any company and or associated companies, sub-contractors, or agents, nor shall it entitle prequalified companies to make any claims whatsoever, and/or seek any indemnity from Company and/or any of its partners by virtue of such companies having been prequalified in NJQS.
- E. The tendering process shall be the NNPC NipeX contracting process requiring pre-qualified companies to submit both technical and commercial tenders at the same time.
- F. Company reserves the right to reject any and or all pre-qualified bids at its sole discretion and at no cost to Company.
- G. Company will communicate only with authorized officers of the pre-qualifying companies and NOT through individuals or agents.



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A* - A GRADES : 93%
A* - B GRADES : 98%
A* - C GRADES : 100%

Subjects	Percentage (A* - C GRADES)
Geography	100% A*
Accounting	100% A* - A
Chemistry	100% A* - A
Design & Technology	100% A* - A
English Language	100% A* - A
Physics	100% A* - A
Religious Education	100% A* - A
Additional Mathematics	100% A* - B
Biology	100% A* - B
Literature	100% A* - B
Mathematics	100% A* - B
Computer Science	100% A* - C
Economics	100% A* - C

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ADEKEYE, AYOMIKUN *
(9A*)



ONAGA, IFUNANYA
(9A*)



OZE, EMMANUELLA
(8A*)

* Jim Ovia Foundation Scholarship Beneficiary

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(8A*, 1A)



KELECHI- SAMUEL, *
CHIDUMEME
(8A*, 1A)



IJIOMA, CHIMDINDU *
(5A*, 2A)



ASALU, MOBOLUWADURO
(5A*, 2A)



ONOCHIE, KAMSIYCHUKWU
(2A*, 5A)

* Jim Oyin Foundation Scholarship Beneficiary

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Email: info@mjnuma.com
Website: www.mjnuma.com

MJN/NAU/05/03/25 5th March, 2025

The Clerk
The National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Three Arms Zone
FCT - Abuja

Dear Sir,

RE: SUIT NO: FHC/ABJ/CS/384/2025 BETWEEN SENATOR NATASHA AKPOTI-UDUAGHAN V THE CLERK OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA & 3 ORS.

NOTIFICATION OF THE ORDERS OF THE COURT.

We are counsel to Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan (hereinafter referred to as our client), the Plaintiff in the above-referenced suit, on whose express instruction we write to you.

We respectfully bring to the attention of all parties in the aforementioned proceedings that the Federal High Court, sitting in Abuja, Coram: Hon. Justice Obiora Atuegwu Egwatu J., in its ruling delivered on 4th March 2025, granted, inter alia, an interim order restraining the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions from proceeding with any investigation against the Plaintiff concerning the alleged misconduct arising from the events that occurred during the Senate plenary on 20th February 2025, following the referral by the 2nd Defendant on 25th February 2025. This order is pending the hearing and determination of the motion on notice filed on the 3rd day of March, 2025.

The parties have also been ordered to show cause within 72 hours of service of the said order why an order of interlocutory injunction should not be granted, restraining the defendants from proceeding

1

with the purported investigation against the Plaintiff, pending the hearing and determination of the substantive matter. Enclosed herewith is a Certified Copy of the order of the Court.

We respectfully request that you comply with the said order while awaiting the outcome of the proceedings scheduled for 10th March 2025.

With the highest professional regards,



Michael Jonathan Numa, SAN FPD, UK



CC:

- The Senate of The Federal republic of Nigeria**
The National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Three Arms Zone
FCT – Abuja
- The President of the Senate, Federal Republic of Nigeria**
The National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Three Arms Zone
- The Chairman Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges & code of conduct; Senator Neda Imasuem**
The National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Three Arms Zone

2

**IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA
IN THE ABUJA JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT ABUJA**

SUIT NO. FHC/ABJ/CS/384/2025

BETWEEN

SENATOR NATASHA AKPOTI-UDUAGHAN.....PLAINTIFF/APPLICANT

AND

- CLERK OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
- THE SENATE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
- THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
- CHAIRMAN SENATE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS, PRIVILEGES & CODE OF CONDUCT SENATOR NEDA IMASUEM

DEFENDANTS

ENROLLED ORDER

UPON THIS Motion Exparte dated 28th February, 2025 but filed on the 3rd day of March, 2025 coming before this Honourable Court on the 4th day of March, 2025 and praying for the following reliefs: -

- AN ORDER OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** granting leave to the Plaintiff/Applicant to serve the 2nd – 4th Defendant/Respondents with the Originating Summons and all other accompanying Processes in this Suit by substituted means to wit: by serving same through the 1st Defendant; Clerk of the National Assembly or Pasting same on the Premises of the National Assembly or by publishing same on two national dailies.

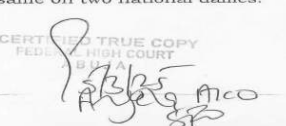
**FEDERAL HIGH COURT
ABUJA**

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FEDERAL HIGH COURT
ABUJA



ii. **AN ORDER OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** granting an Interim Injunction restraining the 2nd Defendant/Defendant's Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Code of Conduct headed by the 4th Defendant from proceeding with the purported investigation against the Plaintiff/Applicant for alleged misconduct sequel to the events that occurred at the plenary of the 2nd Defendant on the 20th day of February, 2025, pursuant to the referral by the 2nd Defendant on 25th February, 2025 pending the hearing and determination of the Motion on Notice for interlocutory injunction.

iii. **AN ORDER OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** directing the 1st – 4th Defendants to come and show cause; why an order of interlocutory injunction should not be granted against them restraining them from proceeding with purported investigation against the Plaintiff for alleged misconduct without affording her privileges as stipulated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended), the Senate Standing Order 2023 and the Legislative Houses (Powers and Privileges) Act.

iv. **AN ORDER OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** declaring that any action taken during the pendency of this Suit is null, void and of no effect whatsoever.

v. **AN ORDER OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** deeming the afore-referenced mode of substituted service, as good and sufficient service.

vi. **AND FOR SUCH FURTHER ORDER(S)** as the Court may deem appropriate to make in the circumstances.

UPON READING the twenty-five (25) paragraphed Affidavit in support of the Motion Exparte and Affidavit of Urgency both deposed to by Senator Natasha Akpoti – Uduaghan, Adult, Female, Christian, Nigerian citizen of Kogi Central Senatorial District and Written Address all filed at the Registry of this Court.

AFTER HEARING Sanusi Musa SAN, M. J. Numa SAN, Y. M. Zakari Esq., B. J. Tabai Esq., Tijanni Jimol Esq., and Miss M. C. Bekee Esq. Counsel for the Applicant arguing the application and urging the Court to grant the reliefs sought.

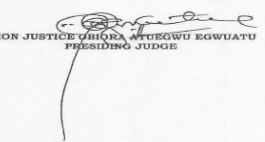
AND THE COURT having delivered its Bench Ruling in open Court, its reasonings and conclusions are as contained in the body of the Bench Ruling.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AS FOLLOWS:

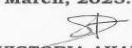
- 1. AN ORDER OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** is made granting leave to the Plaintiff/Applicant to serve the 2nd – 4th Defendants/Respondents the Originating Summons and all other accompanying Processes in this Suit by substituted means to wit: by serving same through the 1st Defendant (Clerk of the National Assembly) or pasting same on the Premises of the National Assembly and publishing same in two National dailies.
- 2. AN ORDER OF INTERIM INJUNCTION OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** is made restraining the 2nd Defendant/Defendant's Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Code of Conduct headed by the 4th Defendant from proceeding with the purported investigation against the Plaintiff/Applicant for alleged misconduct sequel to the events that occurred at the plenary of the 2nd Defendant on the 20th day of February, 2025, pursuant to the referral by the 2nd Defendant on the 25th of February, 2025 pending the hearing and determination of the Motion on Notice for interlocutory injunction.
- 3. AN ORDER OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** is made directing the 1st – 4th Defendants to come and show cause within 72 hours upon the service of this order on them why an order of interlocutory injunction should not be granted against them, restraining them from proceeding with the purported investigation against the Plaintiff for alleged misconduct without affording her privileges as stipulated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended), the Senate Standing Order 2023 and the Legislative Houses (Powers and Privileges) Act.
- 4. AN ORDER OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** is made declaring that any action taken during the pendency of this Suit is null, void and of no effect whatsoever.
- 5. AN ORDER OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT** is made deeming the afore-referenced mode of substituted service, as good and sufficient service.

This matter is adjourned to the 10th day of March, 2025 for the Respondents to show cause.

ISSUED AT ABUJA under the seal of the Court and the hand of the presiding Judge this 4th day of March, 2025.

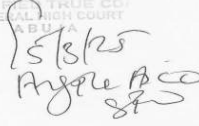


HON JUSTICE OBIORA ATUEGWU EGWATU
PRESIDING JUDGE



VICTORIA AKARE MATIYAK
REGISTRAR

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FEDERAL HIGH COURT
ABUJA



POLITICS

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Mustapha: Demonstrating Capacity with Empowerment Packages for Constituents

The multi-billion naira empowerment and human capital development programme put together by Kwara Central Senator, Saliu Mustapha in Ilorin recently, receive accolades from politicians and beneficiaries alike. **Sunday Aborisade** reports.



Senator Saliu Mustapha (left) and Agriculture Minister, Abubakar Kyari test-driving one of the tractors Mustapha donated to his constituents in Ilorin... recently

Chairman of Senate Committee on Agricultural Production Services and Rural Development, who is representing Kwara Central Senatorial District in the 10th National Assembly, Senator Saliu Mustapha, despite the campaign of calumny against his growing popularity in the state, last Friday put smiles on the faces of the All Progressives Congress party leadership in the senatorial district and over 2,500 constituents with various vocational tools, cash award, scholarships for students and numerous items to boost their trade.

The excited Turaki of the Ilorin Emirate, at the event which held at the premises of the Lower Niger River Development Authority in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital, expressed delight with the massive turnout and urged his constituents to keep the hope alive as that was just the beginning of greater things being planned for them.

Tagged, “Alubarika 1.0 Agricultural and Human Capital Development Empowerment Project,” Mustapha ensured that all constituents in various sectors of the economy, benefitted from his gesture.

This is because farmers, traders, indigent students, transporters, butchers, bakers, tailors, all got food items for constituents currently observing the ongoing Ramadan fast.

Some of the dignitaries at the occasion included the Deputy Senate President, Jibrin Barau; Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari; Deputy Senate Leader, Senator Lola Ashiru (Kwara South); Chief Whip of the Senate, Mohammed Tahir Monguno; and the Chairman, Senate Committee on Banking, Insurance and other financial institutions, Senator Adetokunbo Abiru.

Others included the National Secretary of the All Progressives Congress, Senator Ajibola Basiru; Chief Imam of Ilorin, Muhammadu Bashir; Emir of Ilorin, Sulu Gambari represented by Modibo Sulu Gambari; and Senator Aminu Iyal Abass, among other top political leaders and traditional rulers in the senatorial district.

Items distributed on the occasion by Senator Mustapha included 10,000 fertilizers; 20 tractors;

30 brand new Sienna vehicles; 55 tricycle trucks; 30 complete industrial rice milling equipment and 25 transformers.

He also distributed 25 complete garri processing machine; 400 pumping machine; 50 industrial baking oven; 50 fish smoking oven; 100 Cows; 500 Grinding machines; 400 deep freezers; 200 generators and 200 Sewing Machines

The senator also distributed 55 industrial sewing machines; 100 Rewire tools boxes; 100 Mechanic tools boxes; 100 Gas powered pressing irons; 100 Big bags of Watermelon; 100 Big cartons of apples; 200 complete solar installation equipment; and 200 various items for dry season farmers.

There were also 60 Aso Oke Weavers equipment for the beneficiaries; 100 bags of Coconut; 150 bags of pineapple fruits; 200 bags of oranges; 100 Bags of Cabbage; 200 Bunches of Banana; 200 Bags of Cucumber; 200 Baskets of Pepper; 200 Baskets of Tomatoes; 200 Bags of Onion; 200 Yam tubers; 200 Bags of Beans; 200 Bags of Garri; and 200 Bags of Maize.

Also distributed to the Kwara Central Senatorial District constituents were 50

Bags of Brocoli; 50 Baskets of Okro; 100 Basket of Sweet Potatoes; 400 Cartons of Fishes and 1000 umbrellas.

Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari and Barau, the Deputy President of the Senate, declared on the occasion that the reforms of President Bola Tinubu on Agriculture and food security was yielding positive results with the example demonstrated by Senator Mustapha.

They noted that the prices of foodstuffs are already coming down in the various markets across the country because top government functionaries were empowering their constituents with the right tools to enhance massive food production.

Kyari specifically said the collaboration between the National Assembly and his ministry on the implementation of the food security policy of the President was yielding positive results as more farmers were now back to farms due to the support from both the executive and the legislative arms of government.

His words: “Today, I can proudly beat my chest and boast that the reform that President Bola Tinubu initiated in terms of food security is working.

“We have seen and we are feeling that

foodstuffs are available, but gradually they are becoming affordable. That is to show the champion of food security, President Tinubu is working for the best interest of Nigerians.

“I would also commend my partners in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture for being in line with the aspiration of Mr. President.

“The Senate Committee on Agriculture chaired by Senator Saliu Mustapha, which is oversighting me, has been keeping us on our toes making us to fall in line with Mr. President’s aspiration. We have the same aspiration and we mean well for Nigeria and Nigerians.”

The Deputy Senate President, who represented the President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio, on the occasion, expressed delight that Mustapha concentrated a greater percentage of his empowerment programme on Agriculture.

Barau who donated 200 sewing machines on the occasion, said the special attention given to the agriculture sector by the President Tinubu’s administration was commendable and urged other federal lawmakers to channel their zonal intervention programme to agriculture.

Barau said, “I call this a great empowerment programme because it is intended to empower the constituents of Saliu Mustapha in the area of agriculture and human capital development.

“These are key areas that are very important to our national development. Of course, I don’t need to waste much time talking about the importance of agriculture to every society.

“Agriculture is something unknown to the survival of every society. It is, in my opinion, the foundation of every society, because without food, no life. It is a kind of programme that align with the Renew Hope Agenda of Mr. President to provide food for all.

“No wonder, Mustapha decided to empower his people with agriculture tools because we know he’s an outstanding legislator, an astounding person who has been in the leadership circle of this country, being a party leader, so he knows it all.

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

Today’s programme is just a symbolic one to flag off what we intend to do with most of our people we have trained. This time around, we decided that it is not only about giving out sewing machines or giving out things to people and they will not value it. We decided to put then through a series of programmes and trainings. In fact, we are missing out one vital aspect. Everywhere you go now, you’ll see solar streetlights. We took time to train our indigenes who are interested in learning to maintain, repair and install solar panels.

Chief (Dr.) Dennis Brutu Otuario: A Visionary Leader Transforming the Presidential Amnesty Programme

Since his appointment as Administrator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme, PAP, by President Bola Tinubu on 14 March 2024, Chief (Dr.) Dennis Brutu Otuario has spearheaded a series of transformative reforms that have redefined the programme's impact. Within his first year in office, he has introduced innovative strategies aimed at enhancing the reintegration of ex-agitators, fostering sustainable development in the Niger Delta, and ensuring the programme fulfils its mandate with greater efficiency and accountability. **Precious Ugwuzor** writes that his leadership has not only revitalised PAP but also reaffirmed its role in promoting lasting peace and economic empowerment in the region



Dr. Dennis Otuario, left, Administrator, Presidential Amnesty Programme, presenting award letter to a beneficiary of the marine training scholarship of the programme



Some of the beneficiaries of the PAP Marine Institute of Nautical Studies and Research

Dr. Dennis Otuario, appointed by President Bola Tinubu on March 14, 2024, as the Administrator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), has brought unprecedented reforms and achievements to the programme within his first year in office.

As the Ibe-Uyadonwei of Gbaramatu Kingdom, Dr. Otuario's leadership has been instrumental in repositioning the PAP for greater service delivery to the Niger Delta people. Education and Experience Otuario holds a PhD in Comparative Politics & Development Studies, an MSc in Public Administration, and a BSc in Education.

His extensive experience spans multiple sectors, including infrastructure development, security, environmental remediation, and oil and gas. He has served as a top-level executive at the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and as Chief Protocol Officer to the Chairman of the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC).

Leadership and Achievements

Otuario's leadership traits were evident during his university days, where he was involved in student activism. He has successfully navigated the political terrain, securing support from various stakeholders to execute projects and initiatives. His company, Owelle Global Resources, has thrived in the Logistics and Consultancy sector, with excellent records in programme execution and project support.

Recognition and Personal Life

The PAP boss was conferred with the chieftaincy title of Ibe Uyadonwei of Gbaramatu Kingdom at 30. He is married to Mrs. Ebimoboere Otuario, whom he credits for his successes. Otuario is driven by his desire to see the Niger Delta region accorded its deserved place in the Nigerian project, with a vision for improved infrastructure, industries, schools, and healthcare facilities.

PAP: One Year of Stellar Reforms and Transformational Leadership

Dr. Otuario's tenure as Administrator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) has ushered in a period of strategic reforms aimed at improving efficiency, transparency, and overall impact. Over the past year, PAP has recorded significant progress in data management, education, vocational training, stakeholder engagement, and administrative efficiency. These accomplishments underscore Dr. Otuario's dedication to ensuring that PAP

remains a vital tool for sustainable peace and development in the Niger Delta.

Enhancing Data Integrity and Security

The Data Management Unit has played a pivotal role in strengthening PAP's beneficiary records. In 2024, the unit verified 12,467 records, identified and corrected 783 duplicate or incomplete profiles, and removed 1,129 obsolete records. Efforts to resolve data discrepancies resulted in 528 cases being addressed, including 210 financial record inconsistencies.

Database updates were a priority, with 3,215 new entries added and 9,253 records updated to reflect graduations and training completions. Interdepartmental collaboration was enhanced through 152 data exchange sessions, integrating 6,842 shared records into broader PAP initiatives.

Security measures were reinforced by resolving 43 access control issues and implementing 12 new protocols to protect sensitive information. System performance was also optimised with three major infrastructure upgrades and the resolution of 27 technical issues.

Advancing Educational Opportunities

Under Otuario's leadership, the Education Department successfully deployed 1,554 onshore students to institutions for the 2024/2025 academic session, alongside 10 offshore students in the UK, USA, and Canada.

Graduation milestones were equally significant, with 316 onshore students completing their programs, including 41 Nigerian Law School graduates, and 10 offshore students earning their degrees. To ensure effective monitoring, verification exercises covered 1,594 students across 69 institutions. Facility inspections were conducted at six universities, and five new institutional partnerships were initiated to enhance academic standards.

Gender representation was balanced, with 744 male and 850 female students supported. State representation saw 37.2 per cent of beneficiaries from Bayelsa, 18.7 per cent from Delta, and 19.2 per cent from Ondo. Cost efficiency measures led to the identification of 16 absconded or withdrawn students, saving PAP over 41 million naira in tuition and allowances.

Additionally, financial commitments were fulfilled with 1.16 billion naira allocated for offshore education and 1.75 billion naira

for onshore tuition and allowances. The department also attended six convocation ceremonies to celebrate graduates' achievements.

Strengthening Peacebuilding and Stakeholder Engagement

The PAP's Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution (PBCR) and Strategic Management Department (SMD) facilitated extensive stakeholder engagement initiatives, hosting interactive sessions in Warri with traditional rulers, women leaders, and key figures from eight Niger Delta states.

These efforts reinforced trust and stability in the region. The department successfully resolved 100 out of 135 documented conflicts using Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), including 20 cases of data conflicts, 65 related to stipend payments, and 15 addressing other disputes. Leadership mediation in key camps such as Talless Man Camp, Lagos Man Camp, and Alaye Camp fostered operational stability, while 17 court cases were effectively managed to protect beneficiaries' rights.

Additionally, BVN-related discrepancies affecting stipend payments were resolved, benefiting hundreds of ex-agitators.

Expanding Vocational Training and Employment Readiness

Vocational training under Dr. Otuario's administration saw remarkable progress in maritime and aviation sectors. Notable achievements include the training of 40 Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AMES) on ERJ-145 and CRJ-900/B737 aircraft, with 39 deployed for On-the-Job Training (OJT) at organisation such as Seven Star Global Hangar and Aero Contractors Limited.

Four cadet pilots were deployed to South Africa for type-rating training and returned to Nigeria upon graduation. Maritime training was revitalised, with 98 cadets undergoing refresher courses at Joemarine Institute to prepare for Officer of the Watch (OOW) certification. Facility inspections at key maritime training centers ensured high-quality standards, and strategic partnerships with institutions such as Caverton Helicopters and Izisco Obos Institute were strengthened for future training programs.

Enhancing Communication and Beneficiary Support

The Call Centre recorded 23,813 calls in 2024, with 13,883 successfully answered.

Of 420 documented issues, 274 related to stipends, 82 to training, and 47 to post-training support. Staff capacity was improved through specialised training in emotional intelligence, conflict management, and problem-solving.

Operational efficiency was further strengthened by transitioning to user-friendly CRM platforms, positioning the Call Centre as the primary communication hub for PAP beneficiaries.

Improving Administrative Efficiency and Staff Welfare

Administrative reforms under Dr. Otuario included infrastructure upgrades, such as office renovations, car park expansions, and improved security accommodations.

Staff welfare received significant attention, with bonuses provided during Easter and Salah, financial support extended for medical and academic needs, and timely leave approvals granted. Workforce management improvements led to the enrollment of 240 new staff members on the GIFMIS platform, pension account facilitation, and statutory remittances. Additionally, logistics management was optimised with the procurement of 600 laptops, executive chairs, and essential office items.

Efficient document handling ensured the processing of 2,539 official documents, while transport and utility services were enhanced through vehicle paper renewals and upgraded water and plumbing systems.

A Year of Impactful Leadership

Otuario's first year as the Administrator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme has been characterised by substantial improvements in data management, education, vocational training, conflict resolution, communication, and administrative efficiency.

These accomplishments have not only strengthened PAP's institutional capacity but have also reinforced its role in fostering sustainable development and peace in the Niger Delta. Looking ahead, the foundation laid in 2024 sets a solid path for continued progress and empowerment for PAP beneficiaries in the years to come.

As PAP moves forward, Dr. Otuario's leadership remains a beacon of hope for beneficiaries and stakeholders. His emphasis on accountability, skill development, and peacebuilding ensures that the programme continues to be a catalyst for growth in the Niger Delta. With continued focus on education, vocational training, and administrative efficiency, PAP is poised to deliver even greater impact in the years ahead.

China's Deepening Economic, Humanitarian Ties with Nigeria

At a high-profile media dialogue in Lagos, the Consul-General of the People's Republic of China, Yan Yuqing, painted a vivid picture of China's unwavering commitment to deepening its ties with Nigeria. With China's investment in Africa soaring beyond \$40 billion, she underscored the nation's role as a pillar of economic transformation, technological advancement, and humanitarian support. **Chiemelie Ezeobi** reports



The Consul-General of the People's Republic of China, Yan Yuqing flanked by consular staff and some media professionals after the dialogue in Lagos

At a time when investments from major economies and multinational corporations into Africa have remained relatively static, China's economic engagement with the continent has experienced a meteoric rise. Reports indicate that China's investment in Africa has now reached approximately \$40 billion, reflecting a sustained commitment to economic cooperation.

Among the countries benefitting from this deepening relationship, Nigeria stands out as a key partner, receiving substantial investments across multiple sectors.

In a recent media engagement held in Lagos, the Consul-General of the People's Republic of China, Yan Yuqing, reaffirmed China's dedication to systematic economic development initiatives that continue to buoy the African economy.

These initiatives extend beyond infrastructure to encompass scientific research, cultural exchange, and educational development—areas that the Chinese government views as critical to sustainable growth. She highlighted that human capital development remains at the heart of China's engagement strategy in Africa, with Nigeria playing a prominent role.

Speaking to a group of media professionals, Yan Yuqing emphasised that more Nigerians are visiting China for business, education, and cultural exchanges. She revealed that in 2024 alone, over 19,000 Nigerians have been issued Chinese visas, a number that underscores the growing importance of the Nigeria-China relationship. According to her, this trend surpasses the rate at which Nigerians visit other developed and developing economies.

China's Role in Technology and Research in Nigeria

China's rapid advancements in technology and artificial intelligence (AI) present significant opportunities for Nigeria. The Consul-General highlighted that China is at the forefront of AI innovation, with Deep-Seek, a cutting-edge AI development, drawing global attention. "China's development and research rank second in the world. China is today believed to have achieved more than thrice the US investment in AI. It also has the largest AI

investment in the world," she stated.

Nigeria stands to gain considerably from China's advancements in AI, research, and technology. The potential for knowledge transfer, investments in research institutions, and AI-driven industries could catalyse technological growth in Nigeria. With China's expertise in digital transformation, Nigeria has an opportunity to leverage these innovations for economic and industrial development.

Chinese Visas: Affordable and Accessible

One key aspect of China's outreach to Nigerians is its visa policy. Yan Yuqing stated that obtaining a Chinese visa is among the easiest and most affordable processes for Nigerians. "Last year, we issued more than 19,000 visas from our Lagos State Consulate," she said.

She further explained that the cost of a single-entry Chinese visa is approximately N10,500, making it significantly cheaper compared to the cost of obtaining a Nigerian visa for Chinese nationals, which is about N420,000. This visa policy is intended to encourage more Nigerians to visit China for business and education.

Yan Yuqing also clarified the requirements for Nigerian business travellers. "A businessman who wants to travel and has been to China before within four years requires just a commercial invitation from his partners in China.

For one who hasn't been to China, he can ask his partner from China to apply from the government authorities on his behalf."

This policy underscores China's interest in fostering greater economic and cultural ties between the two nations.

China's Economic Policies and Their Impact on Africa

China's economic growth continues to influence its engagements with Africa. Yan Yuqing stated that despite global economic challenges, China's economy remained resilient in 2024, achieving a 5 per cent GDP growth rate.

She noted that "last September, the government introduced policies that significantly improved the economy, and they aim to implement more proactive fiscal and monetary policies to strengthen businesses for continued transformation of China's economic growth."

She further assured that "more of such policies would be implemented in 2025 to improve the methods of economic governance. Efforts would be made to actively promote transformation of China's economic roles and greatly impact the quality and sustainability of economic growth."

Over the past 15 years, China has remained one of Africa's largest trading partners and one of the main sources of foreign investment. "China's direct investment in Africa in 2023 exceeded \$40 billion, and Africa is China's

second-largest overseas contracting and engineering market, with Chinese enterprises contributing business volume of \$100 billion over the past decade," she added.

Free Eye Surgeries: China's Humanitarian Efforts in Nigeria

Beyond economic investments, China has also played a significant humanitarian role in Nigeria. One of the most notable initiatives is the provision of free eye surgeries for Nigerians suffering from cataracts and other vision impairments. The Chinese government, through its medical outreach programmes, has sponsored surgeries for thousands of Nigerians, especially those in rural areas who lack access to quality healthcare.

These eye surgeries, conducted by Chinese medical teams in collaboration with Nigerian hospitals, have restored sight to many individuals who would otherwise have been unable to afford treatment. The initiative is part of China's broader commitment to strengthening Nigeria-China relations through social interventions.

Strengthening Bilateral Relations

China's engagement with Nigeria extends beyond trade and humanitarian aid. The two nations have continued to collaborate in areas such as education, infrastructure development, and cultural exchanges.

Chinese companies have invested heavily in Nigeria's construction sector, with major projects such as railway lines, highways, and power plants benefiting from Chinese expertise and financing.

Additionally, China has been instrumental in promoting educational exchanges, with Nigerian students receiving scholarships to study in China under various government-funded programmes. These initiatives contribute to strengthening the bonds between both countries, creating opportunities for cultural understanding and knowledge sharing.

As China continues to expand its influence in Africa, Nigeria remains a crucial partner in this evolving relationship. With investments spanning economic, technological, and humanitarian sectors, the partnership between the two nations is set to grow even stronger in the coming years.

The Consul-General of the People's Republic of China, Yan Yuqing, reaffirmed China's dedication to systematic economic development initiatives that continue to buoy the African economy. These initiatives extend beyond infrastructure to encompass scientific research, cultural exchange, and educational development—areas that the Chinese government views as critical to sustainable growth

Hacking down of trees and forests is dangerous to the environment, argues **ANDREW A. ERAKHRUMEN**

HAS THE ECONOMY TURNED A CORNER?

F FREDRICK NWABUFO reckons that prices of food items are coming down



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MOBILITY ON DEMAND

The promise of mobility-on-demand can redefine the transportation landscape in West Africa, argues **NICHOLAS UWERUONOYE**



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EDITORIAL

GOVERNMENT JOBS FOR HIGHEST BIDDERS



NIGERIA AND INDISCRIMINATE TREE FELLING

Without necessarily going into a detailed history of the eventual establishment, in 1983, of the Brundtland Commission, formerly the World Commission on Environment and Development (chaired by Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, former prime minister of Norway), we will define “sustainable development” using some words from the 1987 report of the commission entitled “Our Common Future”. In that report, sustainable development is defined as “...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” We will simplify this definition in line with the maxim “live and let live” thus: “The present should live and make solid arrangements available for the future to also be able to live”. However, like it was before the establishment of the commission, (replaced in 1988 by the Centre for Our Common Future), there still exists a conflict between globalised economic development and accelerating environmental degradation.

This is an issue requiring intensified efforts towards resolving because, as contained in the Brundtland Report, “...the ‘environment’ is where we live; and ‘development’ is what we do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode. The two are inseparable....” Environmental realities, worldwide, buttress this fact. Today, the world is battling with series of challenges associated with, and/or resulting from, what is referred to as climate change, at varied and varying levels, in different parts of the globe. This phenomenon is largely attributed to multiple chains of anthropogenic activities that result in the production and emission of certain gaseous substances, collectively known as greenhouse gases, mostly into the atmosphere. Luckily, solutions exist; that is, if human beings decide to be disciplined and stay so! Key choices among these solutions are the planting, replanting and maintenance of an increasing number of vigorous trees and land area of healthy (young) forests (including agroforests, urban trees/forests, etc.).

Owing to the wonderful capacity of trees and forests in sequestering carbon through their inherent process of massive biomass accumulation, it cannot be overemphasised that they are central to the efforts at combating negative impacts of climate change. Therefore, well-planned and well-managed forests are more of carbon sinks than emission. This centrality of trees and forests in carbon sequestration has scientific backing. This is not in dispute among knowledgeable environmentalists – worldwide. Consequently, we passionately state that without forests, humans’ life on earth will be jeopardised! We strongly believe that if the disappearance of forests from the earth’s surface is allowed, it will signal humanity’s march towards extinction! This is neither a threat nor a joke. There are empirical observations supporting this postulation but we will not dwell on technicalities in this piece. Hence, it is bewildering that indiscriminate tree felling and forest removal are still being experienced,



in Nigeria, for unplanned and unsustainable development including deliberately emplaced systemic ignorance in this age when environmental functions of trees/forests are valorised through concepts like carbon offsets and credits.

Many state governors, in Nigeria, are very good at this travesty! These are people accompanying those at the central level to sign all types of multilateral environmental agreements and treaties up and down! Whereas, to any of these governors whose state possesses forest or “something like forest”, the only thing that matters is revenue to be obtained from its exploitation as against environmental sustainability! They neither engage in forest inventory nor possess anything that may be perceived as forest management plan! Trees that were planted to prevent erosion and flood are brashly removed without replanting. In some places, they are replaced with “housing estates”. They do not have regard for something as necessary as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Perhaps, they do not know what EIA means and what is/are its usefulness! When the environment fights back tomorrow, some people will attribute it to spiritual problem! Nigeria should learn from countries that have made similar mistakes but are now retracing their steps. It appears that humans have not really come to terms with the fact that they need the environment more than them being needed by the environment; maybe, they are not even needed by the environment!

This issue of indiscriminate tree felling should be particularly worrisome to be happening in higher educational institutions, most especially those having academic departments where students are trained in the management of forest and environmental resources! In most of these cases, experts in those departments are not consulted before trees are hacked down. For instance, someone’s handbag was snatched! Response: Go fell those trees! Someone was raped! Response: Go fell those trees! We even read somewhere that an uninformed clown suggested that Sambisa Forest in Borno state should be destroyed in order to curb security challenges there. Imagine that kind of shallow thinking! Do not get us wrong; we are not supportive of criminalities but there are better ways to deal with them. You do not cure someone’s headache by beheading him/her! Nigeria should stop proceeding in

error! Trees are important to humans. We are aware of some trees that are older than the first generation universities on those campuses. If they are unimportant, would those universities’ founding fathers have left the trees unfelled?

Phases of advancements in human development have been standing on the shoulders of previous ones; no knowledge is actually useless! Stop thinking that our ancestors were stupid! They may not possess some of the current knowledge but they were not stupid. In fact, those expected to know better are many times part of this problem by not practicing what they preach. We will give University of Ibadan (UI) Heritage Parks and Gardens, which is no more, as a vivid example. We knew when it was established in 2008 to commemorate UI’s 60th anniversary. We will partly quote a report that states thus: “...like thieves in the night, workers deployed by the university authorities stole into the luxuriant, green, tree-rich park before dawn and took a chainsaw to it. By the time the residents in the university campus were waking up to a new day on Wednesday, November 21, 2024, the entire park had been destroyed. Over 100 trees were reportedly cut down...for a new Senate Building that had been provided for in a totally different location in the University of Ibadan Masterplan....” This event occurred at Nigeria’s oldest university! We are forced to agree with a commentator in the above-quoted report that “enlightenment is not about titles, or credentials; it’s about wisdom, foresight, and deep understanding of the consequences of one’s actions.”

Unfortunately, according to this commentator, “the destruction of the Heritage Parks and Gardens is a stark reminder that true enlightenment is sorely lacking in the university’s leadership....” Coincidentally and ludicrously so, this is where training at the university level in forestry (later expanded to become forest resources management) began in Nigeria! Such a sad and painful report is not unique to UI. There were such cases in other institutions like University of Benin in the recent past; although, the need for tree planting is getting more attention, lately, in that university. At this juncture, we need to clearly state that we are not averse to sustainable harvesting of these resources as they are useful for economic and other developmental ventures. People with the knowledge of sustainable management of forest resources are never afraid of sustainable harvesting. Trees get matured! They may outgrow their usefulness! They may even constitute threat to life/properties in some instances! We are aware of these possibilities but clear-felling should not always be the option. What we are saying, here, is that the necessary harvesting should be systematic and sustainable in line with the above-quoted definition from the Brundtland Commission.

Prof. Erakhrumen
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The promise of mobility-on-demand can redefine the transportation landscape in West Africa, argues
NICHOLAS UWERUONOYE

MOBILITY ON DEMAND

Mobility on Demand (MoD) is emerging as a transformative catalyst for urban transportation across West Africa, with promising applications in Nigeria. By enabling real-time, cost-effective ridesharing and integrating autonomous systems, MoD solutions have the potential to alleviate congestion, reduce travel times, and optimize transit operations in bustling urban centers throughout the region. MoD is a term that refers to flexible technology driven transportation services offering real time ride-sharing options. The inherent inefficiencies and how these MoD providers can optimize efficiency on their digital platforms have become a necessary concern in countries like Nigeria where dispatch response times fall short of meeting economic and social appointments. While looking up materials for MoD systems to write this article, I interestingly stumbled across the profile of an African in the diaspora and an expert in MoD systems, Dr. Benjamin Lartey. At the heart of Lartey's research is the transformative potential of demand ridesharing. He developed an innovative dynamic vehicle dispatch framework that uses a computationally efficient one-to-one assignment strategy, significantly reducing response times while maintaining competitive profit margins. Extensive experiments using New York City's taxicab open-source data, demonstrates that his framework operates up to ten times faster than current methods. Its scalability holds tremendous promise for high demand in urban centers such as Lagos, Accra, and other bustling cities throughout Nigeria, Ghana, and West Africa.

Intrigued by his expertise in both MoD and autonomous systems, I reached out to him to gain his insights on how these cutting-edge technologies can impact the transportation landscape across West Africa, particularly in Nigeria and Ghana. Dr. Lartey shared his perspective on the subject, submitting that, "MoD systems are currently focused on addressing urban mobility challenges in the USA and other developed countries; however, they can be seamlessly adapted to meet the demands of cities in Nigeria, Ghana, and other African nations. The MoD ridesharing approach is not just beneficial; it is essential for transforming daily commuting experiences in these regions." He continued, "Nigeria's urban areas present specific challenges that require scalable and rapid response solutions. I am committed to leveraging the power of artificial intelligence, optimization, and autonomous technology to enhance efficiency and drive economic growth across the region." The insights from Dr. Lartey highlights the immense potential of optimised Mobility-on-Demand systems to revolutionise urban transportation in West Africa and the entire continent at large. As cities in Nigeria, Ghana, and beyond face challenges such as traffic congestion, inefficient transit systems, and rising transportation costs, the integration of these advanced technologies offers a promising pathway to create more connected, efficient, and sustainable urban environments. By adopting efficient vehicle dispatch frameworks and embracing state-of-the-art technology, cities can achieve faster, more reliable, and cost-effective transportation services that significant-



ly enhance the quality of life for millions of residents.

Dr. Lartey's contributions extend beyond his research. I was sold on his impressive educational and social background that makes his odyssey even more inspirational. Born in Ghana and having risen from the challenging conditions of his Ghanaian backwater community, his journey is nothing short of inspirational. As one among a thousand determined youths, his relentless pursuit of academic excellence saw him top his class from elementary through high school. This dedication earned him admission to the premier Ghanaian institution, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, where he graduated with first class honors in Electrical and Electronics Engineering. His outstanding performance later led him to be selected as one of the top five candidates to pursue a PhD at the Testing, Evaluation, and Control of Heterogeneous Large-scale Systems of Autonomous Vehicles (TECHLAV) Center at North Carolina A&T State University, where he had the privilege of working under NASA Langley Distinguished Chair Professor, Dr. Abdollah Homaifar. His journey is a testament to how passion and perseverance can pave the way for groundbreaking achievements. In light of these remarkable accomplishments, there is a strong argument to be made for the Nigerian government to consider setting up transportation research centers in universities across Nigeria. Such centers would not only foster local talent and innovation but also create platforms where experts like Lartey can share their knowledge and expertise, further spurring technological advancement in the country.

The promise of Mobility-on-Demand can redefine the transportation landscape in West Africa. Alongside visionary researches in specialized transport focused university in West Africa, like the Federal University University of Transportation in Daura, Katsina State, which is the about the first of its kind in Nigeria and Africa providing specialized education in transportation Engineering, logistics and management. The Nigerian government's commitment to establishing research centers in local institutions outside of this transport focused university, could play a pivotal role in harnessing this potential. This approach will help ensure that the future of urban mobility is not only connected and efficient but innovative and sustainable.

Uweruonoye,
bureau chief of Daily Independent, writes
from Ilorin, Kwara State



FREDRICK NWABUFO reckons that prices of food items are coming down

HAS THE ECONOMY
TURNED A CORNER?



In the dusk of the last sweltering Saturday, under a nest of affiliates, Samuel, a critic, sidled up to me and said: "Things are improving". And I replied: "Yes. It was certain that they would."

Samuel is not alone in this volte-face and patriotic testimony. Many Nigerians across all artificial lines are affirming the same – the glorious dawn long predicted is nigh.

Performance is the best PR. PR avails not much without the undergirding of substance. PR without the stuff of performance is propaganda. Simply, the tangibles and intangibles of performance are the platter on which the smorgasbord of PR is prepared.

The verdict is unanimous. Nigerians, critics and proponents alike, are all agreed that the economy has turned the corner; that food prices are spiralling downwards; that the naira is strengthening against the dollar, and that there is stability in the supply of petroleum products.

Good governance is like the sweet palm oil of Edo State; it trickles around the fingers when in liaison with roasted yam. Good governance under President Bola Tinubu affects all; its blankets are wide and far-reaching.

Some months ago, President Tinubu promised that the economy would "roar back to glory." And in truth, today, the roar to life of the economy can be heard in Ogbomoso in Oyo State; in Nkalagu in Ebonyi State, and in Illela in Sokoto State.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 3.84% (year-on-year) in real terms in the fourth quarter of 2024 - higher than the 3.46% recorded in the fourth quarter of 2023 and the third quarter of 2024 growth rate (approximately 3.46%).

A front-page report titled, 'Food prices drop ahead of Ramadan', by Daily Trust on Wednesday, detailed the significant drop in the price of an array of food items across the country. For instance, in Kaduna, a 100kg bag of maize, which was sold between N70,000 and N75,000, is now N47, 000; while soybeans, which was sold for N110,000, is now N68,000.

Also, the white variety of beans, which was sold for N150,000 is now N100,000.

The report also said in Kano, a "mudu" of maize is now between N1,200 and N1,300; millet,

N1,000 and N1,100; beans, between N2,000 and N2,200 per mudu; a tuber of yam, between N2,500 and N4,000 depending on the size, and in Lagos, at Alaba Rago market, Ojo, a bag of rice which used to be sold for between N80,000 and N90,000, now sells for N65,000 and N70,000; while the price of a paint rubber of beans has dropped from N12,000 to N6,500.

In addition, with the full deregulation of the downstream sector, there is now stability in the supply of petroleum products; the hiccups from the capricious fuel subsidy regime removed and the price of petrol which shot above N1,000 per litre last year now oscillating between N860 per litre and N900 per litre.

Also, crude oil production has reached about 1.8m bpd - with a technical potential of 2.24m bpd, according to NUPRC.

There is also stability in the forex market with the scourge of arbitrage removed, and investor confidence returning as affirmed in the Bloomberg report, 'Has Nigeria Turned a Corner? Investors Think So'.

What is at play is a deft management of the economy by trained hands and prepared leadership.

The evidence of the Tinubu administration's nearly two years of quarry is palpable and bold. That is the tangibility of performance. It is clear to all. No frills, no thrills.

In an essay years ago, 'Food security and the anatomy of hunger', I wrote that we as a people must appreciate the power of hunger to deal delicately with matters of food security. Food security is national security. In policymaking, addressing hunger is pivotal because "foodology" is at the nucleus of existence. Hunger is a mad man. It is within this context that the federal government's expeditious efforts at stabilising the economy and bringing down food prices are situated and deserving of the mass commendation it is receiving.

Nwabufu
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EDITORIAL

GOVERNMENT JOBS FOR HIGHEST BIDDERS
Staffing government agencies with unqualified staff comes at a huge cost to the nation

Ordinarily, recruitment into public offices ought to celebrate competence and meritocracy. Regrettably, that is no longer the case in Nigeria. It is now a notorious fact that the federal government recruitment and payment of civil servants and public officers are fraught with corruption, enhanced by reports of filling vacancies through under-the-table deals. Indeed, reports are rampant that some job applicants pay as much as N5 million to be hired, especially in ‘juicy’ agencies where a lot of ill-gotten money could be made.

It is even more troubling that this malaise is not restricted to federal agencies. In fact, in many of the 36 states and 774 local government areas most of the job placements are handled by syndicates. The jobs being auctioned are also not restricted to political appointments. It is so bad that to secure a teaching job in some states, many applicants resort to taking loans from family members and financial agencies at exorbitant interest rates. This practice has been going on for years and the perpetrators seem emboldened because they appear untouchable.

To worsen the situation, various surveys conducted on recruitment process into the country’s public service have revealed that sentiment and other primordial issues like ethnicity, nepotism and favoritism attract higher premium than merit. A report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for instance, observed that 32 per cent of Nigerians who secured jobs in the nation’s public service in 2019 paid a bribe. The findings were not based on perception but on empirical findings backed by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

In 2022, the office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation granted the the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital (OAUTH), Ile-Ife, Osun State, a waiver to hire 450 clinical staff to fill then existing vacancies. But the acting chief med-



ical director of the institution allegedly connived with other management officials to commercialise job opportunities which were then sold to the highest bidders, some for as high as N500,000. With that, the hospital management reportedly recruited 2,423 people, thus exceeding the provision of the personnel budget by 1,973 workers. Even worse, only 55 of those hired have clinical background while the rest were mere administrative workers, most of them with no requisite academic and professional certificates. The OAUTH ended up with a staff strength of 7,279 out of which 4,245 were in the administrative cadre! There are many institutions in similar situation.

As we have argued several times in the past, resolving issues of job racketeering, as indeed other malpractices, involves applying principles and transparent measures. In 2023, the House of Representatives assigned itself the duty of investigating the sleaze in some federal agencies and mismanagement of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS). This includes inquiry on the allegations that the then chairperson of the Federal Character Commission was in the thick of job racketeering. Years after the House completed the exercise, the committee has not released its report. Meanwhile, some commissioners at the FCC continue to raise concerns over the delay, alleging unwholesome practices on the part of the lawmakers who worked to bury their own report.

The public service has largely been unable to meet the expectations of citizens both in terms of basic needs as well as institutional transformation. When somebody pays to secure a job, it stands to reason that such person will be there to serve themselves and not the public good. But this is a matter that smears the integrity of public institutions in Nigeria. Staffing government agencies with unqualified staff comes at a huge cost to the nation. We must all strive to rid our country of this emblem of shame.

Resolving issues of job racketeering, as indeed other malpractices, involves applying principles and transparent measures

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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

TALES FROM PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX REFORM BILLS

If Nigerians genuinely seek economic growth and financial stability, we must recognize that taxation is not a choice. It is a necessity. When President Bola Ahmed Tinubu introduced the Tax Reform Bills in October 2024, it signified another move toward creating a more efficient, transparent, and equal tax system (similar to removing fuel subsidies). As with every big reform or decision, there will always be people who see change as an opportunity and those who see it as a threat. For many years, Nigeria’s tax structure was inefficient, with leakages, multiple taxes, and an overreliance on oil money. Things changed when Dr. Zacch Adedeji became the Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), bringing with him transparency and efficiency.

The proposed bills, Nigeria Tax Administration Bill, Nigeria Revenue Service Bill, Joint Tax Board Bill, and Nigeria Tax Bill, seek to simplify tax collection, reduce tax evasion, and ensure revenue is directed toward national development. These measures will improve the ease of doing business, encourage investment, and establish a more equitable system in which big companies pay their fair share. With improved enforcement and fewer loopholes, the government can increase money without burdening citizens. However, instead of seeing the big picture, some opponents focus on minor issues, rejecting the reform rather than strengthening it.

The public hearing on these bills has been a battleground of ideas, where stakeholders have voiced their support, scepticism, and outright opposition. Over the past few days, lawmakers, tax professionals, industry leaders, and even religious organizations have all voiced their opinions, offering perspectives that range from practical concerns to strongly held beliefs. But amid the arguments, one thing is undeniable: Nigeria can not afford to maintain the status quo.

Some religious groups, like the Supreme Council for Shariah in Nigeria and the Committee of FCT Imams Initiative, oppose the inheritance tax, claiming it violates religious rights. But inheritance tax is not a new idea. It exists globally to promote economic fairness. Nigeria is not religious-rule. Our laws balance secular and customary principles. If there are concerns, the bill can be adjusted to ensure fairness. However, rejecting it entirely distracts from the goal of building a tax system that benefits everyone.

The Trade Union Congress and others oppose raising VAT from 7.5% to 15 percent by 2030, fearing it will worsen the cost of living for everyday Nigerians. While their concerns are valid, the government needs revenue for infrastructure and social amenities. A gradual increase, with exemptions for basic goods, can ease the impact. Many countries fund public services this way, and Nige-

ria can consider this approach. The Nigeria Customs Service also raised concerns that the new tax laws will interfere with its duties. But this is not about power. It is about making things work better. The reforms will help government agencies work together and fix long-standing problems in revenue collection.

Fighting change will only slow down progress. Now that the hearings are over, the next step is to improve the bill where needed, not abandon it. Those against it should ask themselves: Do we want a Nigeria where the rich avoid taxes while ordinary people struggle? Do we want to keep losing revenue due to loopholes? Or do we want a fair system where everyone contributes to national growth?

While the Senate and House of Representatives have promised to thoroughly review the bill, Nigerians have much to gain from its passage. This reform will enhance the economy, create a fairer tax system, and better livelihoods. If implemented effectively, it will ensure that the benefits of democracy reach everyone, not just a select few. The opportunity is here, we just need to seize it and make it work for everyone.

*Arabinrin Aderonke Atoyebi,
Technical assistant on broadcast media to the executive chairman,
Federal Inland Revenue Service*

R A T E S A S A T M A R C H 5 , 2 0 2 5							
MONEY MARKET		REPO		S & P INDEX		S & P INDEX	
OPR	25.34%	CALL	23.25%	INDEX LEVEL	595.26	1/4 TO DATE	0.24%
OVERNIGHT	25.18%	1-MONTH	21.37%	1-DAY	0.10%	YEAR TO DATE	-10.99%
		3-MONTH	22.41%	MONTH-TO-DATE	0.24%	*AS AT WED., MARCH 5, 2025	

After Three Years of 5G Commercial Rollout, 4G Maintains Highest Penetration Level across Networks

Percentage Market Share 2G, 3G, 4G, 5G Technologies (Jan 2024-Jan 2025)													
Month	Jan'25	Dec'24	Nov'24	Oct'24	Sept'24	Aug'24	Jul'24	Jun'24	May'24	Apr'24	Mar'24	Feb'24	Jan'24
2G	41.63	41.59	41.50	42	43.53	41.36	42.72	44.30	44.86	56.22	56.97	57.55	57.78
3G	8.60	8.75	9.03	9.40	9.32	10.24	10.43	10.54	10.78	8.92	9.04	9.17	9.36
4G	47.23	47.20	47.09	46.27	44.96	46.28	44.90	43.35	42.63	33.56	32.74	32.11	31.75
5G	2.54	2.46	2.39	2.33	2.19	2.12	1.95	1.18	1.73	1.31	1.24	1.18	1.11

Emma Okonji

With the high level hype that came with the commercial rollout of 5G technology in 2022, with regards to its high connectivity speed and lowest latency period, telecoms subscribers were quick to believe that the adoption rate of 5G will be much faster than the 2G, 3G and 4G technologies that were deployed before 5G technology.

But the reverse is the case, as 2G and 4G technologies are still widely utilised far and above 5G, with 4G still maintaining the lead, three years after 5G was rolled out in Nigeria.

Recent statistics released by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the telecoms

industry regulator, showed that more telecoms subscribers utilise 2G and 4G technologies than 5G technology, with 4G having the highest market share-47.23, followed by 2G with a percentage market share of 41.63, while 5G penetration remained at the lowest ebb, with a percentage market share of 2.54 as at January 2025.

THISDAY analysis of the NCC numbers showed that as at January 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 1.11, while 2G had 57.58 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 31.75 percentage market share.

In February 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 1.18, while 2G had 57.55 percentage market

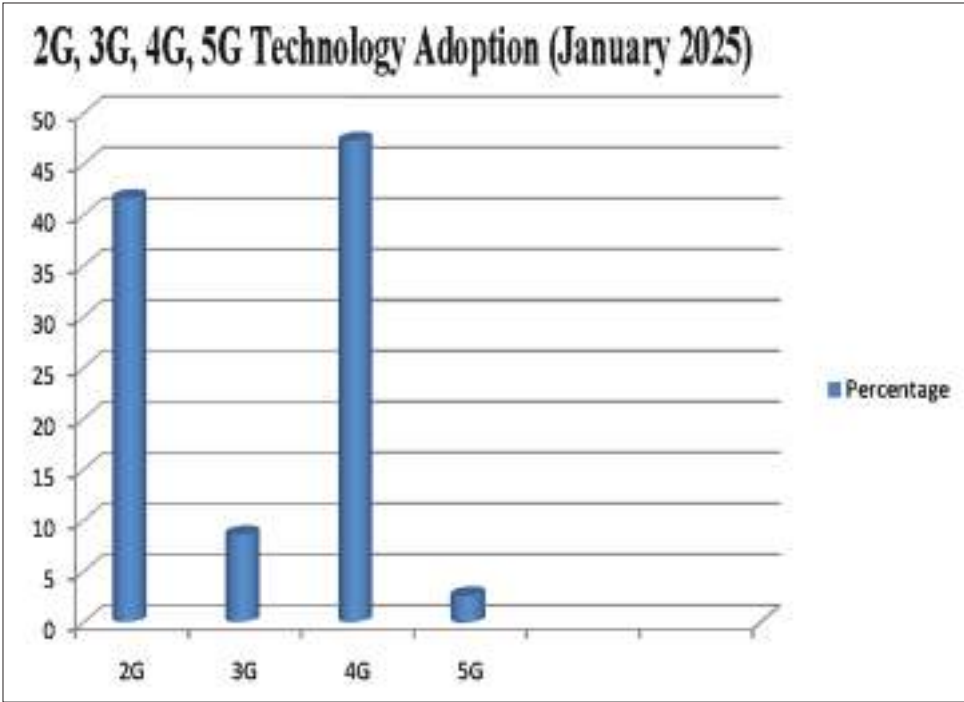
share, followed by 4G with 32.11 percentage market share.

In March 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 1.24, while 2G had 56.97 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 32.74 percentage market share.

In April 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 1.31, while 2G had 56.22 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 33.56 percentage market share.

In May 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 1.73, while 2G had 44.86 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 42.63 percentage market share.

In June 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks



was 1.81, while 2G had 44.30 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 43.35 percentage market share.

In July 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 1.95, while 2G had 42.72 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 44.90 percentage market share.

In August 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 2.12, while 2G had 41.36 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 46.28 percentage market share.

In September 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 2.19, while 2G had 43.53 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 44.96 percentage market share.

In October 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 2.33, while 2G had 42 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 46.27 percentage market share.

In November 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 2.39, while 2G had 41.50 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 47.09 percentage market share.

In December 2024, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 2.46, while 2G had 41.59 percentage market share, followed by 4G with 47.20 percentage market share.

In January 2025, the percentage market share of 5G across networks was 2.54, while 2G had 41.63 percentage market

share, followed by 4G with 47.23 percentage market share.

Giving reasons for the low adoption rate of 5G across networks, the Chairman, Association of Licensed Telecoms Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), Gbenga Adebayo, who doubles as the spokesperson for telecoms operators of Nigeria, told THISDAY that the high cost of deploying 5G technology, coupled with the limited number of 5G devices in Nigeria, largely affected the adoption rate of 5G technology. Adebayo however said that despite the low adoption rate, 5G technology, remained the fastest technology in terms of connectivity, with lowest time limit in completing tasks, also known as latency period.

Report: Despite Headwinds, Global Telecoms Industry Revenue Will Hit \$1.1tn in 2028

Emma Okonji

Global telecoms revenue is projected to rise at a CAGR of 2.9 per cent through to 2028, below inflation, even as the sector's total revenue across fixed and mobile verticals rose 4.3 per cent in 2023 to hit \$1.1 trillion, according to PwC's Global Telecoms Outlook, published recently for audience attending Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, which ended today, March 6, 2025.

The outlook report findings showed that the telecoms industry faces a sluggish outlook amid rising costs and competition, muted subscriber growth, and lingering macroeconomic and geopolitical

pressures.

According to the report, despite the volume growth in the sector, average revenue per unit (ARPU) is expected to decline on average two per cent annually until 2028, across mobile, fixed broadband, and voice services.

But while the report points to a challenging environment in need of re-invention, wide variation exists in the growth outlook between services and markets. For instance, fixed broadband and mobile subscriptions are projected to grow annually by 3.8 per cent and 4.3 per cent until 2028, respectively, while fixed voice subscriptions are expected to decline by 1.8 per cent. Across geographies, fixed

subscriptions are projected to grow between 0-6 per cent, with higher growth markets including India (17.2 per cent), Nigeria (9.2 per cent) and Malaysia (9 per cent), the report said.

The report explained that telecoms service ARPU would continue to decline over the next five years, with mobile ARPU falling at a CAGR of -1.3 per cent, and fixed broadband ARPU essentially flat at a CAGR of -0.1 per cent.

Analysing the report, Global Telecoms Leader, PwC US, Dr. Florian Gröne, said: "The telecoms industry must re-imagine how it creates, delivers and captures value in the face of rising costs

and competition. The industry faces enormous potential, particularly as consumers and societal actors increasingly operate across digital platforms and AI drives significant investments in digital connectivity infrastructure, but the industry remains sensitive to macroeconomic forces and is highly cost-intensive, with almost all the cash it generates absorbed by CapEx, dividends and servicing debt. As new and emerging technologies transform sectors, the telecoms industry must harness the power of AI, while working with investors and regulators to optimise market structure and deploy deals to build scale."

The report also projected global

5G subscriptions to quadruple as capital shifts to fixed connectivity.

According to the report, despite sluggish uptake in 5G services to-date, subscriptions for the service are expected to more than quadruple, from 1.79 billion in 2023 to 7.51 billion in 2028, with its share of total mobile subscriptions more than tripling, from 18.8 per cent in 2023 to 64.1 per cent in 2028.

"At this rate, 5G is expected to become the dominant mobile standard from 2026. One particular application is Fixed-Wireless Access (FWA) - which is projected to be the fastest growing broadband technology to 2028, rising at a CAGR of 18.3 per cent.

Against this backdrop, momentum of capital is shifting decisively towards fixed connectivity - or fibre. In 2023, total telecom Capex fell 2.3 per cent driven by a 5.7 per cent decline in mobile. However, industry Capex is projected to grow at a 2.4 per cent CAGR from 2024, fuelled initially by fixed broadband investments for fibre roll-out, and later in the period by a revival in mobile Capex as operators prepare for 6G," the report said.

The report further said automotive and mobility sector would power cellular Internet-of-Things (IoT) services, driven in large part by increased adoption of smart automobiles.

MARKET DATA AS AT WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2025																		
BONDS					BILLS					CPS					OTC FX FUTURES			
DESCRIPTION	Price	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time	MATURITY	Discount	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time	MATURITY	Discount	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time	CONTRACT TENOR (MONTH)	Contract	Current Rate (\$/N)	Updated Time
^21.00 20-MAR-2026	101.44	19.37	0.00	March 5, 2025 ▬	NTB 10-Apr-25	16.70	16.98	-0.01	March 5, 2025 ▼	NSDL CP IVA 16-MAR-25	25.68	25.88	-0.01	March 5, 2025 ▼	13M	NGUS MAR 25 2026	-	March 5, 2025
^16.2884 17-MAR-2027	95.15	19.27	0.01	March 5, 2025 ▲	NTB 8-May-25	18.61	19.24	-0.01	March 5, 2025 ▼	DANC CP XVI 23-APR-25	18.62	19.10	0.00	March 5, 2025 ▬	14M	NGUS APR 29 2026	-	March 5, 2025
^19.94 20-MAR-2027	101.10	19.24	0.00	March 5, 2025 ▬	NTB 5-Jun-25	18.44	19.34	-0.01	March 5, 2025 ▼	TGIF CP II 3-JUN-25	25.69	27.42	-0.01	March 5, 2025 ▼	15M	NGUS MAY 27 2026	-	March 5, 2025
^13.98 23-FEB-2028	88.70	19.13	0.00	March 5, 2025 ▬	NTB 10-Jul-25	18.23	19.46	-0.01	March 5, 2025 ▼	MCIL CP II 16-JUL-25	21.51	23.34	0.02	March 5, 2025 ▲	16M	NGUS JUN 24 2026	-	March 5, 2025
^21.00 20-MAR-2028	104.20	19.10	0.00	March 5, 2025 ▬	NTB 7-Aug-25	18.06	19.56	-0.01	March 5, 2025 ▼	FDHC CP XI 16-APR-25	18.41	18.81	-0.01	March 5, 2025 ▼	17M	NGUS JUL 29 2026	-	March 5, 2025

Wema Bank Transformative Impact @ 80: Empowering the Next Generation

Wema Bank's approach to empowering the next generation includes youth empowerment initiatives and programmes designed to help them tap into the opportunities of the digital world, become economically active as early as possible and get a head start to success, writes **Oluchi Chibuzor**

What matters most in erecting an indestructible building: foundation or builders? Many would say that a building is only as strong as its foundation—and "many" would be right. However, a good foundation will remain dormant if the builders are not on board or equipped.

Applying this analogy to building a sustainable future for Nigeria, the youth can only do so much in the future if groundwork is not perfected today, and a huge part of perfecting this groundwork involves integrating the youth into existing realities and empowering them to carry on the legacy we have begun. What good is the solid foundation if the builders cannot build on it?

If the youth are to be the leaders of tomorrow, then the leaders of today must begin today, to empower the youth. If the world must survive, it is not enough for the existing generation to "lay the foundation", it is imperative that they also empower the next generation to maximise and build on that foundation to produce the best quality of results. In a nutshell, whatever impact that we generate in present-day Nigeria will be short-lived, unless we carry the youth along, set them on the right paths and empower them with the knowledge, resources and opportunities they need to carry on the good work that has begun.

As the world continues to evolve, it is glaring that the future is technology, digital and innovation driven. The youth have tapped into these and are moving forward in that light, and the older generation must begin to develop ways to incorporate these futuristic elements into existing areas of life and work, to get the buy-in of the youth and the alignment of the next generation, so that the legacy can continue to thrive from generation to generation.

The perfect case study for this is an institution that has existed since the silent generation and is thriving now more than ever in today's era of Gen Alpha, simultaneously catering to the needs of the older generation and remaining constantly innovative to serve the newer generations towards the greater good of a successful and sustainable future for Nigeria. This institution is Wema Bank, Nigeria's oldest indigenous bank, now regarded as Nigeria's most innovative bank.

Wema Bank was founded in 1945 under the silent generation era. The vision for the Bank at the time was to build an indigenous bank that could bridge the gaps created by foreign banks and serve the indigenes of Nigeria over the decades. Surviving the decades and eras of evolution since 1945, Wema Bank continued to evolve to serve the needs of each of the generation within which it operated, from the silent generation to the baby boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Zs and the Gen Alpha of today. For an indigenous bank that broke impossible ground by emerging amidst colonial struggles, Wema Bank's legacy is one that speaks volumes for Nigeria; one that must be carried on through generations to come. It is the legacy of an experienced and long-surviving bank that grew with the decades, remained innovative and tapped into the opportunities of digital innovation and technology to remain competitive and stand at the forefront of the future of Nigerian banking.

Recognising the indispensable role of the youth as the architects of Nigeria's future, Wema Bank assumed the role of a "big brother" or "big sister" to the Nigerian youth, developing solutions that introduce the youth to key aspects of human life, making room for the youth in existing spaces, helping them hone their skills, and empowering them to become economically active from as early as student years.

Wema Bank's efforts to empower the next generation can be classified in two categories: Digitising the traditional and Empowering Youth for sustainable success:

"DIGITISING" THE TRADITIONAL

As the only surviving indigenous Bank to have witnessed the different eras of Nigeria's development from the silent generation through to the Gen Alpha, one of Wema Bank's strong points is its wealth of experience. Over the years, Wema Bank has leveraged its strength of experience, intelligently innovating to provide sustainable solutions in banking and beyond by incorporating digital technology into traditional structures and procedures.

This smart approach would not only ensure that these structures live on as the world goes digital, but very importantly, making room for the next generation to participate in the way they are inclined to—digitally. Wema Bank's efforts in this regard cut across diverse areas and concepts ranging from banking to cooperative societies, business, and more.



PIONEERING AFRICA'S FIRST DIGITAL BANK, ALAT

In recognition of the position of digital as the future of banking and financial services, Wema Bank's return to digital banking in 2015 saw the Bank take a new and refreshed route, becoming youth-centric and launching a digital platform that would bring financial literacy to the youth, align banking with their lifestyle and begin to ingrain the idea of banking as a concept not limited to physical banking halls and touchpoints.

Not only has this proven effective, digital banking has now become the order of the day for the youth, maintaining the concept of banking that has existed for decades but adding an innovative touch to adapt banking to newer and future generations.

DIGITAL SOLUTION FOR COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES

The concept of cooperative societies in Nigeria is one that many of the older generation would resonate with. However, the "Gen Zs" and "Gen Alpha" would likely term cooperative societies as an outdated or archaic concept. Who wants to go through the stress of physical meetings, manual recordkeeping, poor communication structure and incessant conflicts over who paid what and who's owing? Not the generation that has been born into a digital world.

With the manual nature of cooperative societies in Nigeria, it wouldn't be wrong to predict that cooperative societies would be a thing of the past by the next century. So how would this gap be addressed? In Wema Bank's way, a digital intervention.

In May 2024, Wema Bank launched CoopHub, a digital solution designed to transform the way cooperative societies operate by optimising processes, digitising operations and fostering mutual transparency to prevent conflict. CoopHub brought the digital touch to the traditional concept of cooperative societies, serving the purpose of collective growth which cooperatives were established for, while eliminating tedious processes to ensure that both members and admins can function excellently from the comfort of their phones. Much like ALAT did for banking, CoopHub has introduced a new era where Nigerians can join cooperative societies with a few clicks on their phones, make contributions, track funds, get updated and announcements, make withdrawals and more, without ever having to make a physical trip. With CoopHub, both members and admins can view and track contributions and records with ease, significantly minimising chances of conflict and reducing the time that would have been spent sieving through tons of files to a one-minute record retrieval process. This groundbreaking innovation would essentially showcase cooperative societies in a new light, giving room for youth to participate and creating a foundation for cooperative societies to thrive beyond generations.

LAUNCHING ALAT XPLORE APP

As digital evolution continues to advance, there arises a need for practical education on real life concepts and procedures before adulthood. School

curriculums may not cover practical processes like making a transfer or writing a good CV, using a debit card, etc. While these may seem trivial, concepts like practical financial literacy should be inculcated ahead of adulthood, to ensure that by the time these adolescents become adults, they already have a hang of how things work and are better equipped to make smart financial decisions.

To this end, Wema Bank, in October 2024, launched the ALAT Xplore App, Nigeria's first licensed banking app for teenagers ages 13 to 17. Designed strategically with an understanding of the intricate nature of teenagers under 18 as minors, the ALAT Xplore App works with a parental control dynamic that allows teenagers practically explore financial literacy with a degree of supervision by the parent or guardian. With the ALAT Xplore App, teens can set savings goals towards any target of their choice, ranging from as critical as educational supplies and savings towards university to savings for hangouts with friends, gifts and more. Beyond savings, the ALAT Xplore App also offers teenagers access to debit cards issued in their own name, providing a sense of financial independence for teens where they can make payments on their own. As a safety measure, the parents or guardians can monitor these transactions to ensure their teens are using money the right way. Other features on the ALAT Xplore App include a "Send Money" feature where teens can make transfers of a limited amount of money, a "Request Money" feature where they can request funds from their parents or guardians through a simple notification, airtime and data purchases allowing teens to recharge airtime and data on the app, among other features.

With the ALAT Xplore App, the world will gradually get to a place where teenagers have mastered digital and financial literacy ahead of adulthood.

EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

Beyond providing digital alternatives to traditional concepts, Wema Bank's approach to empowering the next generation includes youth empowerment initiatives and programmes designed to help them tap into the opportunities of the digital world, become economically active as early as possible and get a head start to success. Among these are:

a. HACKAHOLICS

The startup and FinTech industries present a huge growth opportunity for the Nigerian economy, as the global landscape for technology and innovation continues to advance. With youth comprising the majority of Nigeria's population, Nigeria stands at an advantage. However, a gap exists in visibility and access to finance. This is where Wema Bank's Hackaholics comes in.

Launched in 2019, Hackaholics is Wema Bank's youth-focused startup competition which provides a platform for youth with creative, tech-driven or tech-enabled game-changing ideas to bring their ideas to life and build their own startups. Since its launch, Hackaholics has toured several university campuses, challenging Nigerian youth to develop solutions across key verticals ranging from health and education to finance and more,

connecting these youth with experts to refine their solutions, providing a platform for them to showcase these solutions and supporting them with financial resources to turn their ideas into meaningful ventures.

Hackaholics has grown to become Africa's largest campus based ideathon, disbursing over \$300,000 in grants since its launch. This trailblazing initiative continues to combat unemployment and underemployment by providing entrepreneurial options for youth while breaking silos to empower more Nigerian youth to make their big break into the tech industry. With each new edition, more youth are taking the bold step of venturing into tech from as early as their undergraduate years, becoming startup owners and in the long run, employers of labour.

b. ALAT SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Designed to cater to the needs of professionally inclined youth, Wema Bank launched its summer internship programme with the goal of nurturing young Nigerians for a successful career in the banking industry. Giving these youth a head start, the ALAT Summer internship targets undergraduate youth, offering hands-on experience and insights to bridge the gap between academia and the corporate world and giving them an understanding of what a career in the banking industry would entail, to ensure that upon graduation, these youth are experienced enough to add meaningful value to the organisations they work with.

The ALAT Summer Internship Programme holds annually, empowering the next generation of bankers ahead of the start of their careers.

c. NYSC-ALAT ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

Recognising the gap that exists between education and work, Wema Bank launched the NYSC-ALAT Accelerator Programme to enable a smooth education to employment transition for youth.

Launched in partnership with the National Youth Service Corps and Microsoft Philanthropy, the NYSC-ALAT Accelerator Programme is designed for youth who are serving under the NYSC, providing tailored intellectual and financial support for both professionally and business inclined youth to kickstart their careers and businesses and transition seamlessly from the NYSC to work-life, without having to struggle with unemployment. The NYSC-ALAT Accelerator Programme offers job placements, guidance on business plan writing for entrepreneurial youth, grants and many other opportunities, significantly minimising unemployment and empowering young people to make meaningful livings.

d. FGN-ALAT DIGITAL SKILLNOVATION PROGRAMME

The FGN-ALAT Digital Skillnovation Programme is birthed from a strategic partnership between Wema Bank and the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Office of the Vice President, with the goal of equipping young Nigerians with a versatile set of in demand and highly sought after skills and opportunities tailored to their individual aspirations for career and business and suited to market realities.

Since its launch in 2023, over 300,000 Nigerian youth have benefitted from the FGN-ALAT Digital Skillnovation Programme, acquiring business, career, digital literacy and employability skills to make them sought after in their respective fields. The FGN-ALAT Digital Skillnovation Programme has evolved beyond the individual successes of the Nigerian youth into investing in the broader goal of national progress, reducing unemployment, promoting job creation, boosting innovation, and empowering the youth of today as a whole, towards a more prosperous and sustainably successful future.

These are but a few of the many initiatives, solutions and efforts Wema Bank continues to make in empowering the next generation to carry on the legacy, meet global standards of excellence and build on the foundation that the older generation has laid.

SUMMARY

With over 60% of Africa's population being the youth, strategic and intelligent youth empowerment is the key to a sustainably successful and prosperous future for Africa. Wema Bank's perceptive strategy of driving digital empowerment and promoting a passion for innovation among Nigerian youth is a foolproof approach that is sure to shape the right future for Nigeria and by extension, Africa.

So yes, both the foundation and the builders are key to perfecting a great building; and Wema Bank is not just laying the foundation, it is empowering the youth to build upon that foundation and stand at the forefront of the global economy as the times progress.



R-L: Managing Director, THISDAY Newspapers, Eniola Bello; NIMASA Director, Ogbueshi Isichei Osamgbi; the winner of the Golfers Challenge, Luke Anele; Bayo Alli of Lakowe Lakes and Deputy Managing Director Bourbon Interoil Nigeria Limited, Magnus Ibe during the Rising Golfers Lakowe Challenge 2025 in Lagos... recently

Trade Minister Applauds Brands for Resilience, Belief in Nigerian Market

Raheem Akingbolu

Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, has commended promoters of various Nigerian brands for their resilience and belief in the Nigerian market.

Giving her remark in Lagos recently at the 12th edition of the African Awards for Marketing Excellence, an

annual recognition award of the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN), Oduwole commended the ingenuity and resilience demonstrated by brands and professionals in advancing the marketing industry in Nigeria.

She emphasised the awards as a powerful chance to honour outstanding excellence and leadership in the marketing and

advertising sectors across Nigeria and Africa. The annual ADVAN Awards, renowned for celebrating innovation and excellence within the marketing and advertising landscape, was held in Lagos and was used to recognize exceptional marketing campaigns, outstanding brands, and distinguished professionals within the marketing communications industry who have raised the bar of excellence

with their work in 2024.

The ceremony was attended by a distinguished audience, including top marketing professionals, government officials, industry leaders, and CEOs of companies; making it a key gathering for Africa’s marketing elite.

Speaking at the event, the ADVAN President, Osamede Uwubanmwun, expressed his

gratitude for the Minister’s presence, emphasising the significance of this milestone in the growth of the Nigerian marketing industry. “The ADVAN Awards is truly the Oscars of Marketing, and it brings together the finest talent and the most innovative campaigns in the industry,” Uwubanmwun said.

He also highlighted that 2025 is a pivotal year for Nigerian marketing, with opportunities to grow and innovate.

Also speaking at the event,

the Chief Executive Officer/ Executive Director, ADVAN, Ediri Ose-Ediale, said in total, over 200 entries were received for the 2025 awards, with an increase in the number of submissions from previous years.

One of the highlights of the evening was the recognition in the Industry Leadership category which recognized outstanding individuals who have contributed to all round development across faucets of the Nigerian society.

Dallas OAU Alumni Awards Scholarship to 104 Students

The second edition of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Alumni Association, Dallas Branch scholarship initiative, otherwise known as the Dallas Scholars Award 2025 has been held at the university campus, where it awarded scholarships to 104 students, spanning all 13 faculties of the university.

The value of the scholarship worth N20.8 million for the 2025 academic year, is a hundred per cent increase from the 2024 edition when 52 beneficiaries were awarded the scholarship, which brings the total number

of beneficiaries 156.

At the ceremony, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Professor Yomi Daramola, who represented the Vice Chancellor, expressed profound gratitude to God and the Dallas Alumni Branch for their commitment to academic excellence with the scholarship award.

“We are delighted to witness the growth of this noble initiative as our university takes pride in having alumni that is deeply committed to enhancing learning and the experience of our students in various ways,

as Dallas Alumni Branch has consistently demonstrated its dedication to supporting students amid economic challenges,” he stated.

The President of the Dallas Branch, Mr. Dolapo Ajayi, while speaking with the media, he explained the competitive nature of the scholarship stating that the committee received 1,350 applications for the 2025 edition, including submissions from students from other tertiary institutions.

The Scholarship Chairman of the Dallas Branch, Tokunbo

Adejuyigbe, while welcoming the beneficiaries into the Dallas Scholars Cohort, emphasised the importance of introducing them to the cohort mentoring programme, which aims to provide holistic support to the recipients.

Former President of Dallas Branch, now OAU Alumni United States President, Adeolu Esho, said: “Dallas Branch, aims to challenge other branches in the USA, UK including Nigeria to be united in supporting academically determined students who possess good character.”

APRA Harps on Africa’s Digital Future, Responsible Communication

The African Public Relations Association (APRA) is set to host its 50th Anniversary and 36th Annual Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, from 9-13 June, 2025, under the theme, “Transforming Africa through Safe and Responsible Digital Communication: Celebrating 50 Years of APRA’.

The milestone event will bring together communication professionals, policymakers, business leaders, and academics to explore how Africa can harness digital advancements while ensuring ethical, secure,

and responsible communication.

In a statement signed by APRA’s Secretary General, Dr. Omoniyi Ibieta, the body said: “In today’s digital era, African governments, under the auspices of the African Union (AU), are working collectively to address pressing challenges such as cyber threats, misinformation, and data privacy concerns. Several AU-led initiatives, including the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention), aim to strengthen cybersecurity frameworks across the continent.

As digital connectivity expands, ensuring safe and responsible communication remains a top priority for governments, businesses, and stakeholders in communication management.

As the host country, Kenya has been at the forefront of digital transformation and security, with increased investment in cybersecurity infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and policies to curb digital fraud and online misinformation. The APRA Kenya 2025 Conference will provide a platform to assess these efforts in the broader

context of Africa’s digital future, fostering cross-border collaboration and shared best practices.

According to the statement, key discussions at the conference will focus on:

The role of public relations in shaping ethical digital communication; Cybersecurity and misinformation management in Africa; AU’s vision for digital safety and sustainable communication policies; and The intersection of technology, media, and governance in Africa’s digital evolution.

Babaeko Makes ‘2025 Black At Dare List’

Raheem Akingbolu

Chief Executive Officer, X3M Group, Steve Babaeko has been honoured by Black At as one of the top black executives reshaping the creative industry towards models rooted in authenticity, representation, and cultural relevance.

The 2025 Black At Dare (Dream, Act, Reimagine, Empower) List released recently, recognised

Babaeko as one of the creatives breaking boundaries across advertising, media, entertainment, and technology, fostering inclusive storytelling, and driving business growth, while setting new standards for innovation and cultural influence.

Announcing the list, CEO, Black At, Peter Ukhurebor, emphasised the importance of diverse voices in shaping the creative space. “The

future of creativity lies in diverse voices leading the conversation. Black executives are not just participating in this shift, they’re leading it, creating space for new ideas, new perspectives, and game-changing innovation,” Ukhurebor stated.

Commenting on the recognition, Babaeko said: “I’m truly honored to be recognized by Black At as one of the top Black executives

reshaping the creative industry. This recognition is not just for me but for every visionary pushing creative and storytelling boundaries. Creativity has the power to change narratives, break barriers, and inspire generations and X3M Ideas remain committed to that mission. Thank you to Black At for this acknowledgment. Let’s keep building, innovating, and elevating.”

Glo Gives Customers 200% Data Bonus on New MiFi Purchase

Stories by Emma Okonji

Technology company, Globacom, has launched a new 200 per cent data value back offer on every MiFi device bought at Gloworld outlets across Nigeria.

The company said in a press statement issued in Lagos that the 200 per cent data bonus would await new MiFi customers registering with new Glo SIMs. The new MiFi devices are available at the rate of N14,999 at all Gloworld outlets, the company’s one-stop shop across the country.

Disclosing the details of the offer, Globacom explained that such customers would receive

30GB upon activation, valid for 30 days, and 100 per cent data bonus on all data plan purchases for 4 months. They will also get a 2.5GB bonus data every month for twelve months on purchase of a data plan of N2,500 or above.

According to the company, the Glo MiFi allows customers to connect multiple devices and share data among friends and peers, adding that the device comes with long-lasting in-built battery to enable the user stay connected like never before. The MiFi device, Globacom said, would offer high speed downloads and uploads, seamless video calls, faster music and movie streaming and faster gaming experience.

Eke Restates Commitment to Digital Technology Innovation

At the recently held Accra Synergy Summit, a high-profile event held in Ghana that brought together top strategic partners and Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), the CEO of TD Africa, Africa’s leading technology distribution powerhouse. Mrs. Chioma Ekeh, made a bold declaration, saying: “We are no longer waiting for change — we are driving it. We are no longer spectators in the digital revolution — we are architects, engineers, and visionaries shaping the future.” This statement, emblematic of her visionary leadership, underscores her commitment to driving Africa’s tech renaissance.

Ekeh’s words are backed by tangible achievements and a deep understanding of Africa’s digital potential. According to the International Finance Corporation

(IFC), Africa’s digital economy is on track to reach \$180 billion this year, with projections indicating it will soar to an astonishing \$712 billion by 2050. This growth is not just an increase in numbers — it signifies a paradigm shift in how Africa engages with technology and innovation.

With over 570 million internet users today, Africa is undergoing an unprecedented digital awakening, a number expected to double by 2030 according to the World Bank.

From financial inclusion to business automation, Africa is embracing the digital age at an accelerated pace, with 70 per cent of global mobile money transactions already occurring in sub-Saharan Africa. The widespread adoption is a testament to the ingenuity and resilience of African entrepreneurs and businesses.

PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

Title Search, Construction Experts Reduce Risks in Real Estate Investment

William C. Okpala is an entrepreneur with over 20 years of experience in the real estate industry; a chartered Estate Surveyor and Valuer with the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and valuers (NIESV). He tells **Bennett Oghifo** that anyone who wishes to invest in real estate should avoid smart talk by sales people, carry out due diligence in title search and compile a team of construction professionals, when they are ready to break ground

Give us your background in real estate and your key portfolios

I come from an entrepreneurial family, my father was a renowned Estate Surveyor and Valuer and a successful businessman and my mother was a businessperson. I believe strongly that I got the desire and love for the real estate business from my parents. I'm a graduate of the Estate Management programme, which equips me with foundational principles in Real Estate practice and business. Further to a plethora of courses and training within and outside of the industry to always update my set of skills and knowledge with ever-changing times. My journey in this industry started in 2003 with Sunbo Onitiri & Co. Subsequently, I joined my father Dr. Okpala William of William & Partners firm as a junior surveyor where I grew through the ranks. Our key portfolios range from commercial to residential assets under management in Lagos, Abuja and Enugu. These assets are proprietary and, also under management are clientele assets. There are also financial institutions and corporate entities under our portfolio where the business is on retainer offering Valuation and Advisory services.



William C. Okpala

Tell us what you think about the Lagos property market and its challenges

Lagos is a dynamic mega city with great prospects for significant growth. Lagos as a mega city commands an ever-growing population currently circa 23 million persons. The real estate market in Lagos drives the rest of the country's real estate opportunities by its location as a city with the convergence of both air and sea ports, its historical location as the capital state, its infrastructural advancements, its high urbanisation and its over 25 years of steady growth. Comparatively, Lagos outpaces other states and regions. Unfortunately, with its high population, Lagos has a large housing deficit of 17-20 million. However, the state's real estate comprises a comprehensive shelter and functional environment to make living sustainable. Lagos requires balanced attention to residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and associated infrastructure mix converging to make living in such an environment sustainable. What do I mean by that? The level of intentionality and attention given to a city like Dubai show all components of real estate connected to make Dubai what it is today. From the residential neighbourhoods to commercial hubs, down to the transportation infrastructure, all show how real estate is perceived in a broader scheme. Now in Lagos, a comprehensive framework is required, which would affect exponential growth in real estate activities all around Lagos.

commercial or residential?

My analytical training teaches me to create and claim value at the same time. That being said, the choice of residential or commercial would be made by an investment analysis of a proposed project taking into consideration the location. Business is purely benefit-driven so any analysis that gives the best benefits is where I invest.

A good number of people have suffer setbacks in terms of investment in property in Lagos. What is your advice for prospective investors?

Usually, the need for experts in this regard cannot be overemphasised when it comes to investments in real estate. From as little as carrying out due diligence in title search to compiling a construction team in building a project, requires experts that will reduce the risk factors associated with the investment. Experts are crucial in reducing risks also the purpose behind your investment has to be determined and realistic. Real Estate investment isn't a quick return scheme so a mid to long-term view is required. Your purpose for investing also has to be scrutinized. Is the purpose for status benefits, generational wealth purpose or speculative reasons all have to be identified as the objective before investing?

What's the ROI like with your projects What can tilt prospective buyers your way, considering the stiff competition out there in a depressed economy?

The projects that we have driven range from locations within Lagos from Lekki, Victoria Island, and Festac town respectively. Our experience over

the years speaks to satisfactory returns and realistic during the periods of transaction. Speaking of real estate as an investment asset class, I must be factual about the current market trends to my clients. What I strive to offer as added value is positioning projects within strategic locations to give that extra advantage.

There is an unwholesome trend now that is frustrating most investors, who don't get what they bargained for because of some terms and conditions that they either did not see at the beginning of negotiations or were introduced after the buyer commits. What is your advice in this regard?

Well, that is a tricky issue. Should some terms and conditions be contentious in an agreement, the investor should always employ the professional expertise of a legal representative ie a lawyer knowledgeable in real estate transactions. We can't overemphasise the need for experts and their critical role in the process. However, if there are adjustments in the transaction structure after commitments, then skilled negotiations between the investor's representatives and the promoters are required. As long as there is clear transparency and these adjustments are out of the promoters' control, negotiations to reach an amicable agreement should be available.

There are growing cases of conflict between developers of estates and homeowners in respect of control of facilities. What in your opinion can resolve this issue?

For every challenge, there are solutions. Firstly, what causes these disputes, primarily transparency? Data shows that estates, where the management of facilities is in the hands of the residents, are usually the trust deficit challenges when it involves management. I would advocate that promoters who intend to manage facilities of their estate should ensure that the requisite infrastructure is embedded during the construction stage. This is essential in deploying smart digital platforms and technology in managing facilities. Technology provides efficiency effectiveness and most especially transparency. There are so many facility management platforms in the market that come as web apps, some come bespoke curated for the peculiarities within individual estates while others can be found in Android or IOS stores.

Housing finance is a crucial component of homeownership. What do you think about Nigeria's mortgage system?

Financing housing is a crucial part of a country's GDP. In Nigeria, the ratio of mortgage loans to GDP stands at circa 0.6% which is significantly underserved. One of the major challenges in the current mortgage system is the inability to provide

sustainable long-term financing to mortgagees due to a lack of access to long-term funding and the high cost of funds. The population of Nigerians who can access some level of financing from financial institutions is far below 10% of the population.

What role do you think the government should play to enable more Nigerians have suitable accommodation?

The government currently have laudable initiatives to drive the industry. Such initiatives like the N100 billion private sector-led real estate financing scheme expand access to housing. This initiative is part of the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI) Real Estate Investment Fund (MREIF). Other schemes such as the National Social Housing Programme (NSHP) and National Housing Fund (NHF) provide over 300,000 homes with associated 1.5 million jobs. NHF initiative aims to assist Nigerians who cannot afford commercial housing loans such as civil servants, traders and artisans to own a home. There are a plethora of government-backed initiatives which when implemented with military precision would yield the required results. My encouragement to the government is to allow and engage private professionals to own and drive the processes end-to-end.

Is it compelling for everyone to build a house or have access to decent accommodation. What are your thoughts on this?

That is a thought-provoking question. Data has shown that recently, the short-let market has been on an upward trajectory. The demographic that significantly uses these short-term rentals is within the range of 18 years - to 40 years. This market feeds on well-furnished and maintained facilities for a temporary stay. The size of this market is growing exponentially resulting in higher demands in short-let accommodations witnessed in the last "Detty December". This now answers the argument for whether it's compelling to build your home or to have access to decent accommodation. The recent market trends show that both sides are critical, especially in the demographic one belongs.

Some people have bought land designated as government excision from people who are not authorized to sell. What do you think can prevent this, particularly with prospective buyers?

I believe in the use of professional experts from legal representatives to land surveyors and ultimately estate surveyors etc. The Bible tells us, "He who walks with wise men will be wise". I will always advocate for the use of seasoned professionals to guide you through the murky waters of land administration.

Producing Building Materials Locally Will Reduce Cost of Housing Construction, Says Dangiwa

Bennett Oghifo

The Minister of Housing, Ahmed Musa Dangiwa, a Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Architects, has said that local production of building materials will reduce the cost of housing development.

Dangiwa stated this in a keynote address at a stakeholders' forum on 'Development of Fiscal Incentives for Manufacturers of Local Building Materials Components in Nigeria', which was held in Lagos, recently. He underscored the impor-

tance of building materials in the overall cost of constructing a house. "On average, building materials account for approximately 50% to 70% of the total cost of building a house. Cement alone can account for 15% to 20% of the total cost,

while steel and reinforcement materials make up another 10% to 15%. Roofing materials account for 5% to 10%, doors, windows, and finishes can take up 10% to 15%, and electrical and plumbing materials round off with 5% to 10%.

"Sand, gravel, and aggregates contribute 5% to 10%, and blocks and bricks add another 5% to 10%. These figures highlight a clear reality: the cost of building materials is a major determinant of housing affordability. "If we can reduce the cost of

these materials through local production and strategic fiscal incentives, we can significantly lower the overall cost of housing construction. This, in turn, will make housing more accessible to the average Nigerian."

Haven Homes: Why We Named Street after Ghanaian YouTuber in Our Estate

Fadekemi Ajakaiye

Leading Lifestyle real estate developer, Haven Homes has announced the naming of a Street after a popular Ghanaian YouTuber, Wode Maya in its scintillating, newly completed estate, Richmond Pearl Estate. In a press statement released and signed by the Managing Director, Mrs Ufuoma Ilessanmi, Haven Homes gave reasons to justify the honour: "At Haven Homes, we

celebrate those who shape Africa's story and Wode Maya has done just that. Through his lenses, the world sees Africa's excellence-our entrepreneurs and boundless potential". Haven recalls down the memory lane: " In 2021, during a visit to our Richmond Gate Estate, he jokingly wished for a Street named after him, inspired by the names of other icons on our roads. Today we unveil Wode Maya as a tribute to a story teller

who expected nothing but gave everything." The statement continues: " This is more than just a name on a sign, it's a symbol of gratitude kept and a proof that hard work never goes unnoticed. At Haven Homes, we don't just build luxury living spaces, we build relationships, and a legacy of keeping our word. Just as we honoured this promise, we have also delivered about 200 housing units in Phase 1 of our

just completed Richmond Pearl Estate without any variation from the contracted prices since 2020". Haven Homes concluded in the statement, "we are known for our commitment on our promises to every client who entrusts us with their dreams. To Wode Maya and every dreamer out there, let this be a reminder- your voice matters, your work is seen and sometimes, the universe listens. Join us in celebrating this incredible moment."



L-R: Chief Executive Officer, Haven Homes, Tayo Sonuga; YouTuber Wode Maya; and Managing Director, Haven Homes Ufuoma Ilessanmi at the newly completed Richmond Pearl Estate Phase1, Lagos... recently

IMAGES

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Acting Controller-General of Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS), CGC Sylvester Nwakuche(left), during his courtesy visit to the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Director-General, Brigadier-General YD Ahmed(right), on effective collaboration, held at the NYSC National Directorate headquarters in Maitama, Abuja...recently



L-R: President, African Institute of Management and Administrative Science (AIMAS), Prof. Ike Christopher; wife of an awardee, Mrs. Lydia Alabi; the awardee, Dr. Ayodeji Olorunmeye Alabi; and Registrar of AIMAS, Dr. Ibrahim Simon, during the conferment of the Professional Research Fellow to Dr. Ayodeji Alabi by AIMAS, held in Abuja... recently

PHOTO: ENOCK REUBEN



L-R: His Royal Majesty Oba Kolawole Aremu Sowemimo, the Olu of Owode-Egba; Director, Admin and Supply, Ogun State Environmental Protection Agency (OGEPA), Mr. Odeyinka Temitayo; Chairman, Obafemi Owode Local Government Area, Hon. Ogunsola Adesina; beneficiary of the GTCO Waste for Gas Initiative, Madam Risikat Ayoka; and Chief Communication Officer, GTCO Plc, Mrs. Oyinade Adegite, at the GTCO Waste for Gas Initiative event, where gas cylinders were donated to residents at the Obafemi Owode Secretariat, Owode-Egba, Ogun State... recently



L-R: General Secretary to the Governing Council, Chartered Institute of Project Managers of Nigeria(CIPMN), Henry Mbadiwe; representative of the Minister Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Adedeji Adeshile; President/Chairman of the Council(CIPMN), Chief. Emmanuel Olabode Afolayan; and Vice President, North (CIPMN), Dr. Mohammed Danjuma; during the inauguration of the new council members of CIPMN in Abuja...recently

PHOTO: KINGSLEY ADEBOYE



L-R: Head of ST Tech Academy, Mr. Ejiro Awenayiri; Regional Head, Smart Treasures Team, Mr. Trust Otorudo; and Deputy Regional Head, ST Lagos Operations Office, Mr. Justice Ehirim, during the launch of the Tech Academy programme in the Lagos Operations Centre... recently



L-R: Assistant Chief Sports Officer and Manager of Elegbata Sports Complex, Ayodele Kehinde Akeem; Managing Director, Axxela Gas Distribution, Kehinde Alabi; Senior Special Assistant to the Governor of Lagos State on Sports, Damilare Orimoloye; and Director-General, Lagos State Sports Commission, Lekan Fatodu, during the handover ceremony of the newly renovated Elegbata Sports Complex on Lagos Island, to the Lagos State Sports Commission (LSSC) ... recently

Dantsoho: NPA Modernising Nigerian Ports to Enhance Competitiveness

Dike Onwuamaeze

Determined to ensure that the Nigerian ports take advantage of the intra African trade that is expected to increase with the coming into operation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Managing Director of Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Dr Abubakar Dantsoho has said that the authority is taking steps to reposition the Nigerian ports to improve its competitive strategy to stay ahead of its rival ports.

Dantsoho disclosed this in his presentation at the Nigerian-British Chamber of Commerce (NBCC) Maritime and Logistics event in Lagos yesterday.

The event was tagged: “Improving the competitiveness of the Nigerian ports in an era of regional integration.”

He said that it is envisaged that intra African trade will significantly increase with the collapse of trade barriers across Africa, saying, “it is therefore imperative that the Nigerian ports reposition to be competitive in order not to lose

its gateway traffic to the ports. Our vision is to be the Maritime Logistics Hub for sustainable port services in Africa.”

He said, “In the quest for our nation to optimize the benefits accruable from AFCFTA, there is no gainsaying that port plays a pivotal role as a nodal point in international logistics. Given the fact that port cost is a significant component of freight cost which ultimately affects the prices of goods in the market, this speaks to the imperativeness for our ports to be competitive and efficient.”

He explained that port competitiveness is driven mainly by institution, infrastructure and macroeconomics, saying strong institutions; provide the regulatory and governance framework necessary for stable and predictable business operations; while infrastructure is a cornerstone of port competitiveness, influencing both operational efficiency and long-term strategic viability.

“The quality of infrastructure affects transport costs, trade efficiency, and overall

competitiveness. Investments in inland terminals, logistic zones, and rail networks can expand a port’s influence beyond its traditional hinterland and bring about efficiency that makes the port competitive,” he said.

Similarly, he noted that the macroeconomic environment of a country is intricately linked to its ports’ performance and competitiveness, saying factors such as inflation, exchange rates, and economic stability influence trade flows and investments.

Dantsoho expressed his gratitude to the Honourable Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola, for his support to every step the Authority is taking to reposition the Nigerian ports.

He further disclosed that NPA in collaboration with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is working towards the actualisation of this project. “The Port Community System (PCS) is envisaged to culminate into the National Single Window (NSW) for maximum efficiency and competitiveness,” he said.



L-R: Managing Director Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Dr. Abubakar Dantsoho and President of PMAWCA, Jean Marie Koffi during a meeting with the staff at the PMAWCA Secretariat located in Apapa Lagos as part of efforts to rally the team towards actualising the overarching objective of cooperation and integration for regional ports’ competitiveness...recently

MARKET INDICATORS

MONEY AND CREDIT STATISTICS (MILLION NAIRA)

Month	NOVEMBER
MONEY SUPPLY (M₳)	108,966,480.44
-- CBN Bills Held by Money Holding Sectors	19,796.18
Money Supply (M2)	108,946,684.26
	72,672,756.90
-- Narrow Money (M1)	36,273,927.36
---- Currency Outside Banks	4,652,527.74
---- Demand Deposits	31,621,399.62
Net Foreign Assets (NFA)	17,347,112.78
Net Domestic Assets(NDA)	91,619,367.66
-- Net Domestic Credit (NDC)	115,576,757.67
---- Credit to Government (Net)	39,616,629.91
---- Memo: Credit to Govt. (Net) less FMA	0.00
---- Memo: Fed. and Mirror Accounts (FMA)	0.00
---- Credit to Private Sector (CPS)	75,960,127.77
--Other Assets Net	12,147,461.96
Reserve Money (Base Money)	30,871,571.25
--Currency in Circulation	4,878,125.22
--Banks Reserves	25,993,446.02
--Special Intervention Reserves	278,860.37

• Source - CBN

Money Market Indicators (in Percentage)

Month	November
Inter-Bank Call Rate	28.88
Minimum Rediscount Rate (MRR)	
Monetary Policy Rate (MPR)	27.50
Treasury Bill Rate	18.00
Savings Deposit Rate	6.56
1 Month Deposit Rate	8.48
3 Months Deposit Rate	9.53
6 Months Deposit Rate	12.13
12 Months Deposit Rate	14.22
Prime Lending rate	18.39
Maximum Lending Rate	31.06

NSE MARKET INDEX

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

• Monetary Policy Rate - 27.50%

OPEC DAILY BASKET PRICE AS AT 6TH JANUARY , 2025

The price of OPEC basket of twelve crudes stood at \$76.18 a barrel on Monday, compared with \$75.89 the previous Friday, 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).

Folay Unveils Locally Sourced Cereal Range, Boosts Agro-industrial Growth

In a significant move to bolster Nigeria’s agricultural value chain, Folay Industries FZE has introduced a range of cereals and snacks produced entirely from locally sourced raw materials.

The company, located in the Lekki Free Zone, Lagos, is leveraging Nigeria’s agricultural wealth to produce finished goods that meet international standards while promoting food security and economic growth. In a statement at the weekend, the Managing Director of Folay Industries, Yele Oladunni, reaffirmed the company’s commit-

ment to transforming Nigeria’s agro-industrial landscape through innovation and sustainability. He said, “We are proud to introduce products under the flagship Pocco brand, which reflect the potential of Nigeria’s agricultural sector and demonstrate our ability to compete globally.”

Oladunni explained that the company sources all raw materials locally, working closely with Nigerian farmers to ensure high-quality inputs while empowering rural communities. “At Folay Industries, we are creating

value that benefits everyone along the supply chain, from the farmer in the field to the family at the breakfast table,” he said.

The company’s production facility, equipped with state-of-the-art machinery, allows for rigorous quality control and ensures that consumers have access to nutritious, safe, and affordable food options. Oladunni noted that the products are designed to appeal to health-conscious consumers while offering competitive alternatives to imported brands.

FNSB Praises FCMB’s Continued Support for the Blind

The Federal Nigeria Society for the Blind (FNSB) has commended First City Monument Bank (FCMB), for supporting the visually impaired community in Nigeria. Through financial donations and essential supplies, FCMB has strengthened programmes at FNSB, Pacelli School for the Blind, Bethesda Home for the Blind, and Farmcraft Centre for the Blind, making a tangible difference in the lives of those it serves.

Chairman of the FNSB Executive Council, Arit Tunde-Imoyo, expressed profound gratitude for FCMB’s sustained partnership. “FCMB has been more than a supporter; it has been a true partner. Its generosity has helped sustain

our mission of empowering visually impaired individuals to lead independent lives,” she said.

Divisional Head of Corporate Affairs at FCMB, Diran Olojo, reaffirmed the bank’s commitment to fostering inclusivity. “Everyone deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential, regardless of ability. Our increased support this year reflects our dedication to empowering the visually impaired community,” he stated.

Olojo also emphasised the need to challenge societal stereotypes about disabilities. “The visually impaired are just as capable of success as anyone else. The real barriers are not their limitations but

the misconceptions and lack of support they face. At FCMB, we are committed to breaking these barriers by providing resources that enable them to pursue their ambitions and lead fulfilling lives.”

Executive Secretary of the FNSB Vocational Training Centre, Oluwamayowa Oke, acknowledged FCMB’s consistency in supporting the centre and its students. “FCMB’s generosity ensures the welfare of our students and enhances teaching and learning,” he said.

An assistant teacher at Bethesda Home for the Blind, Hameed Kareem, also lauded FCMB for its commitment and offered prayers for the bank’s continued success.

LPG Expo: Stakeholders Mull Consumer Awareness, Policy Reforms

Yinka Olatunbosun

Stakeholders at the two-day West Africa LPG Expo 2025 held at the Balmoral Convention Centre, Federal Palace Hotel, Lagos have expressed concerns on consumer awareness, price instability, lack of infrastructure as well as need for policy reforms to achieve Africa’s regional energy goals.

The event which is the 6th of its kind is a prime gathering for LPG professionals from across West Africa featuring the region’s largest LPG exhibition and expert-led sessions on new decarbonisation insights and

business opportunities for meeting West Africa’s energy needs.

In the keynote address by the Minister of State (Gas), Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Experikpe Expo which was delivered by Abel Igheghe, the technical adviser (Downstream), the Minister reaffirmed his commitment to improving LPG penetration, knowledge sharing as well as strengthening public-private collaborative efforts to increase local production and distribution.

Fisayo Duduyemi, who represented the President of Nigerian

Gas Association, Akachukwu Adeyinka Nwokedi at the event spoke on the long-term effect of LPG adoption.

The CEO, Bharat Tanks & Ship Vessels, the Darsh Agarwal revealed how his organisation has optimised gas operations for safety and efficiency in terminal operations using the latest technology. With reference to establishing automated fire fighting systems, cylinder testing unit, he demonstrated how improved infrastructure can boost consumer’s confidence in adopting LPG for domestic use.

MARKET NEWS

United Capital Rewards Shareholders With N2.40K Total Dividend

Kayode Tokede

The management of United Capital Plc (UCAP) has rewarded its shareholders with N2.40k per share total dividend payout in 2024, as the company experienced a remarkable seven-year growth trajectory, culminating in an explosive surge last year.

The company on the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) announced a Profit After Tax (PAT) that is more

than doubled, jumping from N11.42 billion in 2023 to N24.10 billion in 2024, representing a substantial 111.03per cent increase.

Building on a decade of consistent dividend payments, United Capital achieved a significant milestone in 2024 by introducing its inaugural interim dividend of 90 Kobo per share, showcasing its exceptional financial performance

Additionally, United Capital executed a 2-for-1 bonus share issuance in 2024, a strategic move to increase shareholder

participation. This action increased the total number of outstanding shares from 6 billion to 18 billion, adding 12 billion new shares.

This means that for each existing share, shareholders received two additional shares, bringing their total holdings to three shares for every initial share owned

United Capital continued to deliver value to its shareholders, proposing a final dividend of 50 Kobo per share for the

2024 financial year. This brings the company’s total dividend distribution for the year to N2.40 Kobo.

The company demonstrated strong dividend growth. In 2024, the company distributed N14.4 billion in dividends, reflecting a substantial 44% increase over the previous year’s N10.0 billion. Looking at the long-term, United Capital’s dividend payouts have skyrocketed by 860per cent in the last 10 years, moving

from 25 Kobo to N2.40.

The company announced that its total Asset rose by 83per cent year-on-year to N1.70 trillion, while shareholders’ funds grew by 47per cent year-on-year to N133.50 billion in 2024 financial year.

Commenting on United Capital group’s 2024 audited financial statements, the Board Chairman, Prof. Chika Mordi, said, “United Capital Group held true to its philosophy of creating

shared prosperity by delivering record profitability and significant corporate actions which culminated in increased total dividend payout to N14.4billion for the 2024 financial year, up 33per cent year-on-year from N10.8 billion payout in 2023.

“We will continue to strengthen governance frameworks across the Group to protect investors’ assets and sustain superior value delivery to our stakeholders well into the foreseeable future.

PRICES FOR SECURITIES TRADED AS OF MARCH/5/25

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	1,220,919.34	35.70	-0.63 ⬇️	588 15,252.358
2 ZENITH BANK PLC	1,995,191.37	47.85	-0.31 ⬇️	785 25,654.667
BANKING				1,373 40,907.025
S/N OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
3 ACCESS HOLDINGS PLC	1,294,959.91	24.10	-2.41 ⬇️	608 18,182.649
4 FBN HOLDINGS PLC	1,014,042.02	28.25	-0.35 ⬇️	333 7,929.513
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS				941 26,112.162
FINANCIAL SERVICES				2,314 67,619.187
ICT				
S/N TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
5 MTN NIGERIA COMMUNICATIONS PLC	5,547,026.98	264.20	-	501 1,291,136
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES				501 1,291,136
ICT				501 1,291,136
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				
S/N BUILDING MATERIALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
6 DANGOTE CEMENT PLC	8,099,308.44	480.00	-	223 119.575
7 LAFARGE AFRICA PLC	1,208,084.66	75.99	-	191 3,764.801
BUILDING MATERIALS				414 3,884.376
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				414 3,884.376
OIL AND GAS				
S/N EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
8 SEPLAT ENERGY PLC	3,354,134.00	5,700.00	-	55 2,045
EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION				55 2,045
OIL AND GAS				55 2,045
CROP PRODUCTION				
S/N CROP PRODUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
9 ELLAH LAKES PLC	8,261.36	3.00	1.00 ⬆️	270 26,160.724
10 FTM COCOA PROCESSORS PLC	6,552.00	1.68	-4.55 ⬇️	42 1,481.387
11 OKOMU OIL PALM PLC	519,880.05	545.00	-	99 127.635
12 PRESCO PLC	785,000.00	785.00	-	111 98.372
CROP PRODUCTION				522 27,869.118
S/N LIVESTOCK/ANIMAL SPECIALTIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
13 LIVESTOCK FEEDS PLC	23,550.00	7.85	4.53 ⬆️	181 3,691.377
LIVESTOCK/ANIMAL SPECIALTIES				181 3,691.377
AGRICULTURE				703 31,560.495
CONGLOMERATES				
S/N DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
14 CUSTODIAN INVESTMENT PLC	112,343.61	19.10	0.26 ⬆️	71 3,189.044
15 JOHN HOLT PLC	3,346.70	8.60	-	28 66.178
16 S C O A NIG. PLC.	2,235.40	3.44	-	18 21.173
17 TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATION PLC	521,310.48	51.30	-10.00 ⬇️	280 3,035.172
18 U A C N PLC	102,560.91	35.05	-0.57 ⬇️	55 471.183
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES				452 6,782.750
CONGLOMERATES				452 6,782.750
CONSTRUCTION/REAL ESTATE				
S/N INFRASTRUCTURE/HEAVY CONSTRUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
19 AVA INFRASTRUCTURE FUND	4,075.00	1,000.00.00	-	0 0
20 CHAPEL HILL DENHAM NIG. INFRAS DEBT FUND	117,876.12	111.70	-	21 38,460
21 JULIUS BERGER NIG. PLC.	202,080.00	126.30	-	62 52,679
INFRASTRUCTURE/HEAVY CONSTRUCTION				83 91,139
S/N REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
22 HALDANE MCCALL PLC	18,326.14	5.87	-	5 2,040
23 UPDC PLC	53,452.71	2.88	0.35 ⬆️	59 2,136.595
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT				64 2,138.635
CONSTRUCTION/REAL ESTATE				147 2,229.774
CONSUMER GOODS				
S/N AUTOMOBILES/AUTO PARTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
24 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
25 CHAMPION BREW. PLC.	34,897.18	3.90	-9.93 ⬇️	106 3,430.678
CONSUMER GOODS				
S/N BEVERAGES-BREWERS/DISTILLERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
26 GOLDEN GUINEA BREW. PLC.	7,264.90	7.09	-	4 55.061
27 GUINNESS NIG PLC	162,988.33	74.00	-	43 55.397
28 INTERNATIONAL BREWERIES PLC.	875,116.28	5.20	4.09 ⬆️	27 421.669
29 NIGERIAN BREW. PLC.	1,053,422.92	34.00	-	107 498.212
BEVERAGES-BREWERS/DISTILLERS				287 4,407.017
S/N FOOD PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
30 BUA FOODS PLC	7,524,000.00	418.00	-	60 5,343
31 DANGOTE SUGAR REFINERY PLC	437,287.62	36.00	-10.09 ⬇️	349 5,745.713
32 HONEYWELL FLOUR MILL PLC	97,541.43	12.50	-5.38 ⬇️	200 2,833.000
33 MULTI-TREX INTEGRATED FOODS PLC	1,624.01	0.36	-	0 0
34 N NIG. FLOUR MILLS PLC	12,928.41	72.55	-	16 17.773
35 NASCON ALLIED INDUSTRIES PLC	112,961.45	41.80	1.95 ⬆️	205 3,421.596
36 UNION DICON SALT PLC.	1,339.36	4.90	-	17 143.678
FOOD PRODUCTS				847 12,167.103
S/N FOOD PRODUCTS-DIVERSIFIED	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
37 CADBURY NIGERIA PLC.	56,779.09	24.90	-5.32 ⬇️	119 2,289.969
38 NESTLE NIGERIA PLC.	772,639.85	975.00	-	78 29,970
FOOD PRODUCTS-DIVERSIFIED				197 2,319.939
S/N HOUSEHOLD DURABLES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
39 NIGERIAN ENAMELWARE PLC.	1,763.94	23.20	-	2 40
40 VITAFAM NIG PLC.	46,844.11	37.45	-6.37 ⬇️	235 9,031.353
HOUSEHOLD DURABLES				237 9,031.393
S/N PERSONAL/HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
41 P Z CUSSONS NIGERIA PLC.	147,304.70	37.10	-	157 3,139.448
CONSUMER GOODS				
S/N PERSONAL/HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
42 UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC.	226,640.46	39.45	-	37 60,750
PERSONAL/HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS				194 3,191,198
CONSUMER GOODS				1,762 31,116,650
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N BANKING	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
43 ECOBANK TRANSNATIONAL INCORPORATED	541,311.76	29.50	-0.79 ⬇️	100 4,331.636
44 FIDELITY BANK PLC	863,650.03	17.20	-1.16 ⬇️	443 16,491,544
45 GUARANTY TRUST HOLDING COMPANY PLC	2,014,081.79	59.00	-2.07 ⬇️	301 13,873,524
46 JAIZ BANK PLC	156,062.94	3.50	-4.11 ⬇️	224 15,830,819
47 STERLING FINANCIAL HOLDINGS COMPANY PLC	149,710.17	5.20	-1.89 ⬇️	228 9,912,002
48 UNITY BANK PLC	17,650.90	1.51	-	0 0
49 WEMA BANK PLC.	257,162.14	12.00	-0.83 ⬇️	96 1,814,043
BANKING				1,392 62,253,568
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.	58,568.44	1.60	-5.33 ⬇️	178 6,463,321
52 AXAMANSARD INSURANCE PLC	81,000.00	9.00	-	81 2,446,666
53 CONSOLIDATED HALLMARK HOLDINGS PLC	42,818.00	3.95	6.76 ⬆️	34 1,183,676
54 CORNERSTONE INSURANCE PLC	59,949.10	3.30	0.92 ⬆️	33 1,198,329
55 CORONATION INSURANCE PLC	61,898.53	2.58	-0.77 ⬇️	50 1,419,007
56 GOLDLINK INSURANCE PLC	909.99	0.20	-	0 0
57 GUINEA INSURANCE PLC.	5,003.96	0.63	-10.00 ⬇️	59 3,254,643
58 INTERNATIONAL ENERGY INSURANCE PLC	2,491.13	1.94	-3.48 ⬇️	14 180,915
59 LASACO ASSURANCE PLC.	32,142.40	2.90	-	34 696,359
60 LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	20,328.00	1.32	1.54 ⬆️	27 1,281,019
61 MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC.	12,237.59	0.61	-	0 0
62 NEM INSURANCE PLC	71,484.81	14.25	8.78 ⬆️	125 5,040,151
63 PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC	13,650.14	1.03	-6.36 ⬇️	212 14,127,014
64 REGENCY ASSURANCE PLC	7,802.44	0.65	-4.41 ⬇️	40 10,216,620
65 SOVEREIGN TRUST INSURANCE PLC	14,085.86	0.99	-7.48 ⬇️	50 5,466,648
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.	31,959.40	5.50	3.58 ⬆️	46 735,892
69 UNIVERSAL INSURANCE PLC	10,240.00	0.64	3.23 ⬆️	73 22,000,724
70 VERITAS CAPITAL ASSURANCE PLC	15,808.00	1.14	-1.72 ⬇️	76 5,945,849
INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				1,132 81,656,633
S/N MICRO-FINANCE BANKS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
71 NPF MICROFINANCE BANK PLC	10,607.49	1.77	-1.67 ⬇️	23 380,818
MICRO-FINANCE BANKS				23 380,818

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	36,553.85	3.60	- 0	9	6,611
73	ASO SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC	7,370.87	0.50	- 0	0	0
74	INFINITY TRUST MORTGAGE BANK PLC	29,193.19	7.00	- 0	0	0
MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES					9	6,611
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	DEAP CAPITAL MANAGEMENT & TRUST PLC	1,350.00	0.90	-10.00 ↓	44	1,530,625
77	FCMB GROUP PLC.	396,054.22	10.00	-5.66 ↓	215	3,777,111
78	NIGERIAN EXCHANGE GROUP	66,779.94	34.00	3.03 ↑	114	1,455,754
79	ROYAL EXCHANGE PLC.	6,448.03	0.78	-8.24 ↓	57	1,713,010
80	STANBIC IBTC HOLDINGS PLC	829,247.82	64.00	-	89	299,537
81	UNITED CAPITAL PLC	333,000.00	18.50	-7.50 ↓	825	40,525,622
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					1,552	51,684,183
FINANCIAL SERVICES					4,108	195,982,013
HEALTHCARE						
S/N	HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
82	EKOCORP PLC.	2,891.89	5.80	-	0	0
HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS					0	0
S/N	MEDICAL SUPPLIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
83	MORISON INDUSTRIES PLC.	3,214.78	3.25	- 0	1	43
MEDICAL SUPPLIES					1	43
S/N	PHARMACEUTICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
84	FIDSON HEALTHCARE PLC	43,490.18	18.95	-	60	317,302
85	MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC.	12,766.74	7.40	-9.76 ↓	85	3,922,173
86	NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARMACEUTICALS PLC	11,964.69	2.80	-7.28 ↓	54	636,214
87	PHARMA-DEKO PLC.	396.78	1.83	- 0	0	0
PHARMACEUTICALS					199	4,875,689
HEALTHCARE					200	4,875,732
ICT						
S/N	COMPUTERS AND PERIPHERALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
88	OMATEK VENTURES PLC	2,471.10	0.84	1.20 ↑	35	1,415,149
COMPUTERS AND PERIPHERALS					35	1,415,149
S/N	IT SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
89	CWG PLC	22,723.44	9.00	3.45 ↑	98	2,144,030
90	NCR (NIGERIA) PLC.	788.40	7.30	- 0	2	10
IT SERVICES					100	2,144,040
S/N	PROCESSING SYSTEMS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
91	CHAMS HOLDING COMPANY PLC	10,753.98	2.29	-0.87 ↓	123	6,054,751
92	E-TRANZACT INTERNATIONAL PLC	59,800.00	6.50	- 0	12	36,152
PROCESSING SYSTEMS					135	6,090,993
S/N	TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
93	AIRTEL AFRICA PLC	8,105,956.98	2,156.90	- 0	5	856
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES					5	856
ICT					275	9,650,948
INDUSTRIAL GOODS						
S/N	BUILDING MATERIALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
94	BERGER PAINTS PLC	6,086.29	21.00	- 0	24	41,975
95	BUA CEMENT PLC	3,149,384.93	93.00	- 0	278	1,548,158
96	CAP PLC	38,293.13	47.00	- 0	17	44,759
97	MEYER PLC.	4,913.95	9.25	- 0	6	13,580
98	PREMIER PAINTS PLC.	1,230.00	10.00	- 0	0	0
BUILDING MATERIALS					325	1,648,472
S/N	ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
99	AUSTIN LAZ & COMPANY PLC	2,051.73	1.90	- 0	17	521,659
INDUSTRIAL GOODS						
S/N	ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
101	CUTIX PLC.	17,613.22	2.50	-6.72 ↓	73	5,505,437
ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS					74	5,505,537
S/N	PACKAGING/CONTAINERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
102	BETA GLASS PLC.	29,369.36	48.95	- 0	11	9,322
103	GREIF NIGERIA PLC	232.39	5.45	- 0	0	0
104	TRIPPLE GEE AND COMPANY PLC.	2,227.29	2.25	-9.84 ↓	59	1,986,405
PACKAGING/CONTAINERS					70	1,995,727
S/N	AGRO-ALLIED & CHEMICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
105	NOTORE CHEMICAL IND PLC	251,885.34	62.50	- 0	0	0
AGRO-ALLIED & CHEMICALS					0	0
INDUSTRIAL GOODS					305	8,003,974
NATURAL RESOURCES						
S/N	CHEMICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
106	INDUSTRIAL & MEDICAL GASES NIGERIA PLC	17,482.28	35.00	- 0	6	9,355
CHEMICALS					6	9,355
S/N	METALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
107	ALUMINIUM EXTRUSION IND. PLC.	1,572.09	7.15	- 0	0	0
METALS					0	0
S/N	MINING SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
108	MULTIVERSE MINING AND EXPLORATION PLC	3,750.51	8.80	- 0	46	541,270
MINING SERVICES					46	541,270
S/N	PAPER/FOREST PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
109	THOMAS WYATT NIG. PLC.	724.68	1.83	-7.58 ↓	13	935,597
PAPER/FOREST PRODUCTS					13	935,597
NATURAL RESOURCES					65	1,486,222
OIL AND GAS						
S/N	ENERGY EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
110	JAPAU GOLD & VENTURES PLC	37,368.28	2.62	4.38 ↑	113	6,992,763
ENERGY EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES					113	6,992,763
S/N	INTEGRATED OIL AND GAS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
111	OANDO PLC	957,218.76	77.00	1.99 ↑	589	5,181,214
INTEGRATED OIL AND GAS SERVICES					589	5,181,214
S/N	PETROLEUM AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS DISTRIBUTORS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
112	CONOIL PLC	116,583.96	168.00	- 0	52	269,491
113	ETERNA PLC.	35,211.91	27.00	-6.48 ↓	185	1,863,603
114	MRS OIL NIGERIA PLC.	45,500.80	132.70	- 0	19	30,343
115	TOTALENERGIES MARKETING NIGERIA PLC	228,803.77	673.90	- 0	51	9,745
PETROLEUM AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS DISTRIBUTORS					307	2,173,182
OIL AND GAS					1,009	14,347,159
SERVICES						
S/N	ADVERTISING	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
116	AFROMEDIA PLC	1,065.37	0.24	- 0	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	0
AIRLINES					0	0
S/N	AUTOMOBILE/AUTO PART RETAILERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
118	R T BRISCOE PLC.	4,234.88	3.60	2.86 ↑	111	3,366,521

MARKET NEWS



FUND MANAGERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

A Mutual fund (Unit Trust) is an investment vehicle managed by a SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) registered Fund Manager. Investors with similar objectives buy units of the Fund so that the Fund Manager can buy securities that will generate their desired return.

An ETF (Exchange Traded Fund) is a type of fund which owns the assets (shares of stock, bonds, oil futures, gold bars, foreign currency, etc.) and divides ownership of those assets into shares. Investors can buy these ‘shares’ on the

floor of the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

A REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) is an investment vehicle that allows both small and large investors to part-own real estate ventures (eg. Offices, Houses, Hospitals) in proportion to their investments. The assets are divided into shares that are traded on the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

Offer price: The price at which units of a trust or ETF are bought by investors.

Bid Price: The price at which Investors redeem (sell) units of a trust or ETF.

Yield/Total Return: Denotes the total return an investor would have earned on his investment. Money Market Funds report Yield while others report Year- to-date Total Return.

NAV: Is value per share of the real estate assets held by a REIT on a specific date.

DAILY PRICE LIST FOR MUTUAL FUNDS, REITS and ETFs

MUTUAL FUNDS / UNIT TRUSTS			
AFRINVEST ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD		aaml@afinvest.com	
Web: www.afinvest.com; Tel: +234 818 885 6757			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Afrinvest Equity Fund	420.01	422.42	5.66%
Afrinvest Plutus Fund	350.84	350.84	13.25%
Nigeria International Debt Fund	100.00	100.00	20.02%
Afrinvest Dollar Fund	111.52	111.52	1.30%
AIICO CAPITAL LTD		ammf@aicocapital.com	
Web: www.aicocapital.com, Tel: +234-1-2792974			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
AIICO Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	22.62%
AIICO Balanced Fund	6.01	6.09	5.24%
AIICO Eurobond Fund	100.00	100.00	6.94%
Web:www.anchoriaam.com, Tel: 08166830267; 08036814510; 08028419180			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Anchoria Money Market	N/A	N/A	N/A
Anchoria Equity Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Anchoria Fixed Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
ARM INVESTMENT MANAGERS LTD		enquiries@arminvestmentcenter.com	
Web: www.arm.com.ng; Tel: 0700 CALLARM (0700 225 5276)			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
ARM Aggressive Growth Fund	37.12	38.24	4.69%
ARM Discovery Balanced Fund	826.15	851.06	3.93%
ARM Ethical Fund	72.48	74.67	5.71%
ARM Eurobond Fund (\$)	1.15	1.15	22.60%
ARM Fixed Income Fund	1.22	1.22	43.67%
ARM Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	22.87%
ARM Short Term Bond Fund	1.10	1.10	36.85%
AVA GLOBAL ASSET MANAGERS LIMITED		info@avacapitalgroup.com	
Web: www.avacapitalgroup.com; Tel 08069294653			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
AVA GAM Fixed Income Dollar Fund	114.53	114.53	5.41%
AVA GAM Fixed Income Naira Fund	1,132.81	1,132.81	1.75%
AXA MANSARD INVESTMENTS LIMITED		investmentcare@axamansard.com	
Web: www.axamansard.com; Tel: +2341-4488482			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
AXA Mansard Equity Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
AXA Mansard Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
CAPITAL EXPRESS ASSET AND TRUST LIMITED		info@capitalexpressassetandtrust.com	
Web: www.capitalexpressassetandtrust.com; Tel: +234 803 307 5048			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
CEAT Fixed Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Capital Express Balanced Fund(Formerly: Union Trustees Mixed Fund)	N/A	N/A	N/A
CAPITALTRUST INVESTMENTS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED		info@capitalexpressassetandtrust.com	
Web: www.capitaltrustsnigeria.com; Tel: 08061458806			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Capitaltrust Halal Fixed Income Fund	NILL	NILL	NILL
CARDINALSTONE ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED		mutualfunds@cardinalstone.com	
Web: www.cardinalstoneassetmanagement.com; Tel: +234 (1) 710 0433 4			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
CardinalStone Fixed Income Alpha Fund	1.06	1.06	17.15%
CardinalStone Dollar Fund	1.09	1.09	8.51%
CardinalStone Equity Fund	1.33	1.35	7.22%
CHAPELHILL DENHAM MANAGEMENT LTD		investmentmanagement@chapelhilldenham.com	
Web: www.chapelhilldenham.com, Tel: +234 461 0691			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Chapel Hill Denham Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nigeria Bond Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nigeria Dollar Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Paramount Equity Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
CORDROS ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED		assetmgtteam@cordros.com	
Web: www.cordros.com, Tel: 019036947			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Cordros Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	0.00%
Cordros Fixed Income Fund	112.31	112.31	12.81%
Cordros Halal Fixed Income Fund	118.19	118.19	11.45%
Cordros Dollar Fund (\$)	117.78	117.78	6.57%
Cordros Milestone Fund	215.17	217.04	5.36%
CORONATION ASSETS MANAGEMENT		investment@coronationam.com	
Web:www.coronationam.com, Tel: 012366215			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Coronation Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Coronation Balanced Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Coronation Fixed Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
EDC FUNDS MANAGEMENT LIMITED		mutualfundng@ecobank.com	
Web: www.ecobank.com Tel: 012265281			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
EDC Nigeria Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
EDC Nigeria Balanced Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
EDC Nigeria Halal Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
EMERGING AFRICA ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED		assetmanagement@emergingafricafrroup.com	
Web:www.emergingafricagroup.com/emerging-africa-asset-management-limited/, Tel: 08039492594			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Emerging Africa Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	21.55%
Emerging Africa Bond Fund	1.17	1.17	13.16%
Emerging Africa Balanced Diversity Fund	1.35	1.36	5.67%
Emerging Africa Eurobond Fund	112.52	112.52	7.12%
Emerging Africa Halal Fund	1.06	1.06	12.19%
FBNQUEST ASSETS MANAGEMENT LIMITED		invest@fbnquest.com	
Web: www.fbnquest.com/asset-management; Tel: +234-81 0082 0082			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
FBN Money Market Fund	100	100	10000.00%
FBN Bond Fund	1701.24	1701.24	169959.00%
FBN Dollar Fund	128.11	128.11	12772.00%
FBN Halal Fund	147.87	147.87	14712.00%
FBN Specialized Dollar Fund	120.52	120.52	14712.00%
FBN Balanced Fund	342.31	344.94	5.61%
FBN Smart Beta Equity Fund	356.71	360.87	10.16%
FCMB ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED		fcbmamhelpdesk@fcbm.com	
Web: www.fcmbassetmanagement.com; Tel: +234 1 462 2596			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Legacy Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Legacy USD Bond Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Legacy Debt Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Legacy Equity Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
FSDH ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD		coralfunds@fsdhgroup.com	
Web: www.fsdhaml.com; Tel: 01-270 4884-5; 01-280 9740-1			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Coral income fund	4,479.74	4,479.74	12.61%
Coral money market fund	100.00	100.00	22.75%
FSDH HALAL FUND	1,219.65	1,219.65	15.94%
FSDH dollar fund	1.27	1.27	5.85%
Coral Balanced Fund	8,595.61	8,675.85	72.34%

INVESTMENT ONE FUNDS MANAGEMENT LTD				enquiries@investment-one.com
Web: www.investment-one.com; Tel: +234 812 992 1045,+234 1 448 8888				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
ABACUS: Guaranty Trust Money Market Fund (GTMMF)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
VEIF: Guaranty Trust Equity Income Fund (GTEIF)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
VBF: Guaranty Trust Balanced Fund (GTBF)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
VDF: Guaranty Trust Dollar Fund (GTDF)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
VGIF: Guaranty Trust Fixed Income Fund (GTFIF)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
HILLCREST CAPITAL MANAGEMENT		dabbey@hillcrestcapmgt.com		
Web: https://hillcrestcapmgt.com/; Tel: +2348075144540, 0214540094				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
Hillcrest Balanced Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A	
LOTUS CAPITAL LTD		fincon@lotuscapitallimited.com		
Web: www.lotuscapitallimited.com; Tel: +234 1-291 4626 / +234 1-291 4624				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
Lotus Halal Investment Fund	1,247.18	1,247.18	12.43%	
Lotus Halal Fixed Income Fund	2.35	2.40	23.64%	
Lotus Halal Equity Exchange Traded Fund	33.78	37.33	62.72%	
MERISTEM WEALTH MANAGEMENT LTD		info@meristemwealth.com		
Web: www.meristemwealth.com/funds/; Tel: +2348028496012				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
Meristem Equity Market Fund	26.60	26.71	9.42%	
Meristem Value ETF	67.41	67.93	1.69%	
Meristem Growth ETF	30.52	30.88	6.81%	
Meristem Fixed Income Fund	106.95	106.95	17.19%	
Meristem Dollar Income Fund	10.48	10.48	9.61%	
Meristem Money Market Fund	10.00	10.00	23.52%	
NORRENBERGER INVESTMENT AND CAPITAL MANAGEMENT LIMITED		enquiries@norrenberger.com		
Web: www.norrenberger.com, Tel: +234 (0) 908 781 2026				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
Norrenberger Money Market Fund (NMMF)	100.00	100.00	22.73%	
Norrenberger Islamic Fund (NIF)	105.35	105.35	14.22%	
NORRENBERGER DOLLAR FUND (NDF)----(\$)	104.92	104.92	10.19%	
NORRENBERGER TURBO FUND (NTF)----(N)	103.16	103.16	14.07%	
PAC ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD		info@pacassetmanagement.com		
Web: www.pacassetmanagement.com/mutualfunds; Tel: +234 1 271 8632				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
PACAM Balanced Fund	10.00	10.00	18.68	
PACAM Fixed Income Fund	12.38	12.74	1.58%	
PACAM Money Market Fund	2.71	2.77	3.56%	
PACAM Equity Fund	1.45	1.51	4.12%	
PACAM EuroBond Fund	137.86	142.01	0.33%	
SCM CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED		info@scmcapitalng.com		
Web: www.scmcapitalng.com; Tel: +234 1-280 2226,+234 1- 280 2227				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
SCM Capital The Frontier Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A	
SFS CAPITAL NIGERIA LTD		investments@sfsnigeria.com		
Web: www.sfsnigeria.com, Tel: +234 (01) 2801400				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
SFS Fixed Income Fund	1.03	1.03	19.02%	
Skye Shelter Fund*	-	156.37	1.74%	
Union Homes REIT	-	60.64	0.93%	
STANBIC IBTC ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD		assetmanagement@stanbicibtc.com		
Web: www.stanbicibtcassetmanagement.com; Tel: +234 1 280 1266; 0700 MUTUALFUNDS				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
Stanbic IBTC Money Market Fund	1.59	1.59	1.60%	
Stanbic IBTC Bond Fund	135.27	135.70	1.23%	
Stanbic IBTC Dollar Fund (USD)	139.68	141.89	1.92%	
Stanbic IBTC Shariah Fixed Income Fund	5,168.20	5,169.87	0.03%	
Stanbic IBTC Enhanced Short-Term Fixed Income Fund	11.59	11.59	2.42%	
Stanbic IBTC Balanced Fund	6,732.73	6,798.95	5.58%	
Stanbic IBTC ETF 30 Fund	400.00	400.00	-1.23%	
Stanbic IBTC Ethical Fund	3.12	3.16	-98.44%	
Stanbic IBTC Guaranteed Investment Fund	358.73	359.33	1.41%	
Stanbic IBTC Imaan Fund	557.22	564.03	11.81%	
Stanbic IBTC Nigerian Equity Fund	27,323.10	27,709.04	7.83%	
SIAML Pension ETF 40	361.00	361.00	-55.43%	
Stanbic IBTC Aggressive Fund	8,687.79	8,804.34	8.51%	
Stanbic IBTC Conservative Fund	7,283.87	7,317.61	7.19%	
STL ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED		jemenike@stlassetmgt.com		
Web: WWW.STLASSETMGT.COM; Tel: 8136115170				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
STL MONEY MARKET FUND	N/A	N/A	N/A	
STL BALANCED FUND	N/A	N/A	N/A	
UNITED CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD		unitedcapitalplcgroup.com		
Web: www.unitedcapitalplcgroup.com; Tel: +234 01-6317876				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
United Capital Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	20.57%	
United Capital Sukuk Fund	1.24	1.24	8.65%	
United Capital Fixed Income Fund	1.99	1.99	7.52%	
United Capital Nigerian Eurobond Fund	126.12	126.12	7.34%	
United Capital Global Fixed Income Fund	1.18	1.18	8.03%	
United Capital Stable Income Fund	112.57	112.57	20.61%	
United Capital Equity Fund	1.63	1.64	9.00%	
United Capital Balanced Fund	2.11	2.12	6.68%	
United Capital Wealth for Women Fund	1.63	1.63	6.98%	
VETIVA FUND MANAGERS LTD		funds@vetiva.com		
Web: www.vetiva.com; Tel: +234 1 453 0697				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
Vetiva Banking Exchange Traded Fund	11.47	11.57	39.05%	
Vetiva Consumer Goods Exchange Traded Fund	18.16	18.26	17.94%	
Vetiva Griffin 30 Exchange Traded Fund	39.29	39.49	8.93%	
Vetiva Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	21.75%	
Vetiva Industrial Goods Exchange Traded Fund	36.09	36.29	-22.85%	
Vetiva S&P Nigeria Sovereign Bond Exchange Traded Fund	147.83	149.83	0.00%	
QUANTUM ZENITH ASSET MANAGEMENT & INVESTMENTS LTD		service@quantumzenithasset.com.ng		
Web: www.quantumzenith.com.ng; Tel: +234 1-2784219				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
Zenith Balanced Strategy Fund	23.57	23.86	10.84%	
Zenith ESG Impact Fund	29.50	29.79	10.83%	
Zenith Income Fund	28.70	28.70	2.87%	
Zenith Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	21.82%	
ZEDCREST INVESTMENT MANAGER LIMITED		investmentoperations@zedcrest.com		
Web: www.zedcrestwealth.com; Tel: +2348075881240				
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn	
Zedcrest Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	25.47%	
Zedcrest Fixed Inocme Fund	1.18	1.18	55.62%	
Zedcrest Dollar Fund	1.29	1.29	20.02%	

REITS			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Chapel Hill Denham Nigeria Infrastructure Debt Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A

GAMINGWEEK

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Africa Gaming Expo Panelists Push for Greater Collaboration

As the appetite for gaming in Africa widens, **Nseobong Okon-Ekong** reports that a panel of distinguished gaming regulators from different African countries have identified knowledge sharing across borders as an effective mechanism for sustainable growth in the gaming industry



The recently concluded second edition of the Africa Gaming Expo (AGE) in Lagos showcased a series of stimulating discourses by engaging and knowledgeable panellists. Setting the tone for what would happen throughout the event was the opening panel on 'Emerging African Markets: Exploring

New Frontiers.' The session explored emerging gaming markets in Africa, focusing on market entry, regulations and opportunities. Ably moderated by Angela Mwelu Tshikhovohokhovho (arguably, the personality with the longest surname in African gaming) of Sharpvision, the forum featured John Erastus,

acting Chief Executive, Gaming Board of Namibia, Clésio Dias, Head of Department of Technological Innovation and Services Modernisation, Angola Gaming Supervision Institute, Dr. Mischeck P. Chingozha, Chief Executive Officer, Lotteries and Gaming Board, Zimbabwe and Jean Claude Mushimire,

Executive Director, Rwanda Gaming Association. With a potential market size of close to \$2 billion in 2024, opportunities in the African gaming market continue to be attractive to investors. However, what needs to be done to access these huge resources? Panellists identified collaboration as a key driver to respond to the needs of the African gaming market.

In order to get the most from the market, regulators were urged to be attentive, responsive and alive to the mutating tendencies in the African gaming environment, which continues to present huge potentials for growth. As the appetite for gaming in Africa widens, sharing knowledge across borders could guarantee uncontaminated cooperation, seeing that no one knows it all. Through such engagements, technologies that can help Africa will be identified.

Clésio Dias from Angola made the point that his country may not be interested in a "one size fits all" solution. He stated that his nation was not as tech-savvy as its neighbours because Angola is still comfortable with the brick-and-mortar methods of operation. He called on promoters to bridge the gap.

Sharing a similar experience, John Erastus admitted Namibia is "a young nation" in the industry, adding that "our laws were not inclusive of the advent of online gaming."

He was hopeful, however, for an impending change with the inauguration of the country's first female president.

"After that, the parliament will deliberate on matters concerning the gaming industry in Namibia," said Erastus. "There will be a lot of space for operators who want to come to our country. We are a new market, and we are very welcoming."

Chingozha made a strong case for working together between African countries to achieve the goal of a better and mutually beneficial gaming environment. By working together, Chingozha, who ended every contribution with the phrase, "I do submit, Madam", argued that African countries could harness their strengths.

The session on 'Emerging African Markets', which focussed on exploring new frontiers, wound up on a hopeful note that the challenges that militate against the successes that are in view can be overcome if there is adequate political will and commitment to the process. The moderator and panellists discharged their obligation to prod the diverse interests at the conference to consider regional and inter-country fraternisation as one of the surest paths to advancement in the African gaming environment.

How Betano Plans to Become a Trusted Betting Platform in Nigeria

Nseobong Okon-Ekong delves into Betano's journey and what distinguishes it from other betting platforms

It's been close to two years since Betano, the international online betting and gaming brand of Kaizen Gaming, entered the Nigerian market as part of its ambitious "2626 vision" to operate in 26 markets by 2026. The company was attracted by Nigeria's vibrant sports culture and regulatory framework, which made the operator dive into this irresistible "ideal fit."

There is no doubt that the brand has an impeccable global reputation. Recently named Operator of the Year at the 2024 EGR Operator Awards, as well as at the SBC Awards, Betano partners with globally renowned sports associations and clubs like UEFA, CONMEBOL, Aston Villa FC, and Portugal's Sporting CP, SL Benfica, and Porto FC.

However, the challenge before its Country Manager, Otunba Olamuyiwa and his team is to replicate this success story in Nigeria. He expressed confidence that this can be done.

"What sets Betano apart is its commitment to innovation, customer satisfaction, and responsible gaming, supported by an in-house tech stack that delivers cutting-edge experiences," said Olamuyiwa.

Moreover, he stimulated interest in its potentials with a cryptic remark saying, "Betano actively gives back to the communities it operates. We have exciting local initiatives planned for Nigeria, too."

This statement is pregnant with meaning, the outcome of which will be manifest in the coming months. The priority on the cards for Olamuyiwa in terms of Betano's current goals and strategies for expansion in the Nigerian market is the big push to solidify its position as a trusted and innovative betting platform in Nigeria. How does it hope to do that?

"We aim to achieve this by increasing brand visibility, enhancing our product offering, and leveraging strategic partnerships with local champions and global brands like Aston Villa," Olamuyiwa explained. "We want to grow our customer base by tailoring promotions, localizing further our platform, and improving customer experience."

Another key success driver that the Betano team in Nigeria does not joke with is compliance with Nigerian regulations and guidelines. Betano operates with complete transparency and adheres strictly to regulatory guidelines.

"We ensure compliance by working closely with regulatory bodies, maintaining accurate reporting, and implementing responsible gaming policies," said the Betano boss in Nigeria. "Our platform is regularly audited to guarantee adherence to the highest industry standards. This applies to every country we operate in. We are a responsible operator, working closely with local authorities to create a safe environment for players."

Olamuyiwa shared some insights into its user demographics and the most popular types of bets on the platform.

"Betano in Nigeria attracts a broad audience, with the majority of users being between the ages of 25 and 40, primarily male, and passionate football fans," he added. "The English Premier League is a fan favourite, with single and accumulator bets being the most popular. We also see growing interest in other sports like basketball and tennis."

Already, Betano is looking at trends that may shape the betting industry in Nigeria in the coming years. Therefore, it has initiated plans to make the next few years really exciting for the Nigerian gaming sector.

"Areas we are working in or closely following include mobile betting, live betting, and an increased integration of esports. We are investing heavily in technologies like live-streaming capabilities and significantly expanding our esports offerings to stay ahead of these trends and ensure we can provide players with the best experience possible," Olamuyiwa said with the confidence of someone who has perfected his preparation.



Olamuyiwa

Cast eSports Wins CODM Africa Champions League in Fierce Showdown

The Call of Duty Mobile (CODM) Africa Champions League has wrapped up its latest edition, with Cast eSports emerging as the top team after weeks of intense competition, writes **Iyke Bede**

The tournament featured some of the strongest teams in Africa, delivering high-stakes battles, unexpected upsets, and a final ranking that kept fans on edge.

From the start, three teams stood out as favourites—SSS, Ace Gamers, and Cast eSports. SSS put up a strong fight, finishing with 27 points after winning 25 matches and losing eight. Ace Gamers did slightly better with 28 points, securing 26 wins and dropping seven matches. But it was Cast eSports that outperformed them all, finishing with 30 points to take the championship. It was a major comeback for the team after a disappointing performance at the Carry1st tournament, proving they could rise to the occasion when it mattered most.

Not every team had a successful run. Aggressive Ops struggled throughout, managing only one map win out of a possible 33. Deathly Crow also had a rough outing, finishing 11th with just six points.

The tournament drew significant attention from the gaming community. Fans followed the matches closely, with live streams on YouTube and TikTok generating thousands of views. On the first day alone, YouTube recorded around 4,000 views, with the tournament peaking at over 4,600 viewers as it progressed. Many fans said they were hooked from start to finish, with casters like Torri Kål and Onaga keeping the action engaging.

ACL organisers said they would plan to improve live production for future editions, aiming to make broadcasts more polished and interactive. Plans include pre- and post-match analysis sessions with guests and expanding the league's reach to a wider audience. The latest edition has already set a strong tone. With adjustments, organisers hope to push the competition to even greater heights.

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ADVISORY: +18 PERSONS UNDER 18 MUST NOT PARTICIPATE IN BETTING, GAMING OR LOTTERY ACTIVITY

THIRTY-TWO

Divided Supreme Court Rejects Trump's Request to Keep Foreign Aid Frozen

- President pauses tariffs on cars from Canada, Mexico
- If you want war, we will give you war, China tells America
- US cuts off intelligence sharing with Ukraine

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

A divided US Supreme Court yesterday rejected the Donald Trump administration's request to keep billions of dollars in foreign aid approved by Congress frozen, but failed to immediately say when the money must be released, allowing the White House to continue to dispute the issue in lower courts.

With the ruling being five-four, four conservative justices—Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh dissented, putting five justices—Chief Justice John Roberts, Amy Coney Barrett, Elena Kagan, Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson in the majority.

The majority noted that given a court-ordered deadline to spend the money last week had already passed, the lower courts should clarify what obligations the government must fulfil to ensure compliance with the temporary restraining order.

But in a strongly worded dissent, Alito wrote that he was “stunned”

by the court's decision to permit the lower-court judge to order the administration to unfreeze the foreign aid at issue in the case, CNN reported.

However, the order does not actually require the Trump administration to immediately make up to \$2 billion in foreign aid payments; it merely clears the way for the district court to compel those payments, presumably if it is more specific about the contracts that have to be honoured.

“The fact that four justices nevertheless dissented – vigorously – from such a decision is a sign that the Court is going to be divided, perhaps along these exact lines, in many of the more impactful Trump-related cases that are already on their way,” the report stated.

At the centre of the case is billions in foreign aid from the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) that Trump froze in January as he sought to clamp down spending and bring those agencies in line with his agenda.

Several nonprofit groups that rely

on the funding for global health and other programs sued, asserting that the administration's moves usurped the power of Congress to control government spending and violated a federal law that dictates how agencies make decisions.

In a brief on Friday, the groups described the administration's actions as having a “devastating” impact.

They told the court that the funding “advances US interests abroad and improves – and, in many cases, literally saves – the lives of millions of people across the globe.” “In doing so, it helps stop problems like disease and instability overseas before they reach our shores,” the groups said.

Besides, in what looked like a softening of his hard stance, Trump said on Wednesday he would pause tariffs on cars coming into America from Canada and Mexico for a period of one month, after a 25 per cent tariff that he placed on America's closest trading partners a day earlier roiled stock markets and caused pushback from industry.

White House Press Secretary, Karoline Leavitt, in a statement from Trump, said that the White House had spoken with the three largest automakers, and that a one-month exemption would be given to cars coming in through the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

Additional trade-related tariffs that may affect the auto industry will still go into effect on April 2, Leavitt said. But “at the request of the companies associated with USMCA, the president is giving them an exemption for one month so they are not at an economic disadvantage,” the statement said. The three automakers that Mr. Trump spoke with were General Motors, Ford Motor and Stellantis.

Asked why Trump granted only a one-month reprieve, Leavitt said the president expected the automakers to move production back to the United States. The message, she said, was to “get on it, shift production here to America where they will pay no tariffs,” she said.

The president declined to offer a

broadier reprieve to Canada, despite overtures by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Trump wrote on social media that he had talked with Trudeau and was still not convinced that Canada had done enough to stop the flow of fentanyl over the border.

On Truth Social, Trump wrote that he had told Trudeau that “many people have died from Fentanyl that came through the Borders of Canada and Mexico, and nothing has convinced me that it has stopped. The president added: “He said that it's gotten better, but I said, ‘That's not good enough.’”

In another development, the US has cut off intelligence sharing with Kyiv in a move that could seriously hamper the Ukrainian military's ability to target Russian forces, officials familiar with the matter have told the Financial Times.

The move followed the decision on Monday by the Trump administration to suspend military aid deliveries to Ukraine and comes after a dramatic breakdown in relations between the



US President Donald Trump

US president and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

US intelligence co-operation has been essential for Ukraine's ability to identify and strike Russian military targets. Three officials familiar with the decision confirmed that Washington had frozen intelligence channels with Kyiv.

While the US has also formally blocked its allies from sharing US intelligence with Ukraine, two officials said that recipients with assets inside the country were likely to continue passing on relevant intelligence to Kyiv. But that would not apply to time-sensitive and high-value intelligence, such as that needed for Ukraine to conduct precision strikes on moveable Russian targets.

IMF ALLAYS FEARS, SAYS NIGERIA'S PUBLIC DEBT NOT HIGH RISK

In another development, the federal government announced the achievement of 6,003 megawatts (mw) peak power generation, the highest electricity generation ever recorded in the country.

Nigeria's total public debt had risen to N142.3 trillion as of September 30, 2024, compared to N134.3 trillion in June 2024. The rise in the country's debt level (external and domestic) was as a result of the exchange rate devaluation.

Data from the Debt Management Office had shown that external debt in dollar terms increased marginally from \$42.90 billion in June to \$43.03 billion in September in naira terms, while external debt rose by 9.22 per cent, from N63.07 trillion to N68.89 trillion in the comparable period.

A “moderate debt level” means a level of debt considered manageable and sustainable, where the amount of debt owed by a country is not so high that it significantly impacts its

ability to meet its financial obligations while still allowing for some flexibility in spending.

Responding to a question on how sustainable the country's debt level was, Gopinath said, “We (IMF) assess debt sustainability for countries every year and we did this for Nigeria in our report for 2024. Our assessment was that the risk of sovereign stress for Nigeria is moderate and not high risk.”

When asked if at moderate

debt level, it meant the country had enough room to take more debts, Gopinath said, “No, I will not go that path.”

According to her, “The point is that you want to stay moderate and you don't want to move into a high risk debt level.”

“But I just want to highlight the fact that while the country's sovereign debt is said to be moderate, we are living in a world with a lot of shocks and large amount

of uncertainty.

“And if you look at the interest payment as a share of revenues, that is 75 per cent of revenues go into interest payment. That means there is hardly any money for doing social support or development spending.”

Therefore, to make sure that debt stays in a manageable level, it is also important to do more domestic revenue mobilisation, which is to be able to raise more revenue.

“That is going to be very helpful in meeting other needs of the society. Also, all other macro-adjustments that are necessary to bring down inflation would over time help in reducing interest payment. So, Nigeria's debt is a moderate risk, but it is important to stay the course in terms of sound policies and also pro-growth policies because that is very helpful from a debt perspective.”

Commenting on the multilateral institution's recommendations for Nigeria to ramp up domestic revenue, IMF official pointed out that the significant savings from ending fuel subsidies should be re-channelled into the government's coffers so that it could be used for

important development spending. This, Gopinath stated, would raise revenues for the government.

Gopinath said, “The second step, of course, is in terms of improving administration. More can be done on that front and the government needs to invest in automation and digitalisation to make that happen. They also tend to be a lot of tax exemptions and tax expenditure.

“Closing those loopholes would also help to raise tax revenues. More generally, putting policies in place, like improving security, power, infrastructure, ease of doing business, which the government has done with the recent national single window to help importers and exporters.

“Those kinds of measures would bring back investment and growth and that would also be helpful.”

For the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to keep the naira exchange rate stable, Gopinath advised the monetary policymakers to keep monetary policy tight. She said this was necessary to help bring inflation down and stabilise the

TINUBU GREETS OBASANJO AT 88

positively.

Tinubu made the statement while paying tribute to Obasanjo on his 88th birthday.

In a congratulatory message personally signed, the president, who described Obasanjo as sometimes controversial, said he was an extraordinary leader and statesman.

But Obasanjo, who made some remarks on the occasion of his birthday, warned that Africans might go back into slavery if they forgot their dark history, painful past, and failed to chart a new way forward.

Prominent Nigerians, including

former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and governors, also congratulated Obasanjo on his birthday, describing him as one of Nigeria's foremost leaders.

Tinubu said Obasanjo's regular interventions in the national discourse had helped to shape public policies and check the leadership.

The president stated in the congratulatory message, “Today, as former President Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo turns 88, I pay a special tribute to an extraordinary leader and statesman, who has made enormous contributions to Nigeria's development

and whose life for the past six decades is woven deeply into the fabric of Nigeria's history.

“Providence has constantly thrust General Obasanjo to the forefront at critical junctures in Nigeria's story. He served the country meritoriously in the Nigerian Army.

“As a Colonel, fate beckoned on him while commanding the Third Marine Division to receive the instrument of surrender from Col. Philip Effiong, the Biafran Army Commander, signalling the end of Nigeria's 30-month civil war. “General Obasanjo also made

history as the military leader, who took over the reins of power following General Murtala Mohammed's death in 1976. He completed the administration's transition programme and successfully handed power to a civilian regime in 1979.

“Twenty years later, in 1999, he emerged as civilian president, freed from prison a year earlier, to herald the rebirth of another democratic dispensation, which recently clocked 25 years and still counting.

“During the two eras, General

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AKPABIO RESTATES REGARD FOR WOMEN, STRONGLY DENIES SEXUALLY HARASSING SENATOR NATASHA

Chuks Okocha, Sunday Aborisade and Alex Enumah in Abuja

Senate President Godswill Akpabio has finally defended himself against allegations of sexual harassment by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, saying at no time did he ever attempt it.

Reiterating his respect for women in general, Akpabio, who said he was aware that the matters were in court, strongly insisted on clearing the air of the falsehood trending about him.

The comments came as Senate Committee on Ethics, Code of Conduct and Public Petitions, yesterday, threw out Akpoti-Uduaghan's petition against Akpabio.

Confusion attended yesterday's sitting, as Akpabio asked the committee to commence investigation into the allegation of sexual harassment levelled against him.

The development followed the presentation of a petition personally written by Akpoti-Uduaghan to the senate at plenary, which was monitored by a delegation of a United Kingdom parliamentarian led by a woman, Kate Ofunne Osamor.

Akpoti-Uduaghan, who arrived the National Assembly complex with her husband, Chief Emmanuel Uduaghan, entered the chamber after sharing kisses.

But attempts by Leader of the Senate, Opeyemi Bamidele, and Chief Whip, Tahir Monguno, to make Akpabio reverse his decision to allow the investigation by the panel failed.

Bamidele and Monguno had quoted the relevant rules of the senate to try to convince Akpabio to rescind his decision on the matter because it was against the practice of the red chamber to allow petitions personally written and signed by a serving senator.

Akpabio acknowledged their observations but insisted the decision will not be reversed. He even refused to allow the senate dissolve into a closed session because of the foreign and local visitors, who were observing the proceeding.

The senate president described Akpoti-Uduaghan's sexual harassment allegation as spurious, saying he has highest regard for women.

He stated, “In February 2025, there were some spurious allegations making the rounds in the social media and on television of a purported harassment by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

“While I am aware that the matters are in court, however, I would like to state clearly that at no time did I ever attempt any sexual harassment.

“I have my siblings who were raised very well by my late single mother through very difficult times. She died in the year 2000. I, therefore, have the highest regards for women.

“I also wish to say that I have four beautiful daughters. At no time will I ever harass any woman. I never do so. In addition, even as a state governor, I was awarded various awards. One of them was ‘the most gender-friendly governor’ in Nigeria.

“I served between 2007 and 2015. In conclusion, I urge all Nigerians, particularly, the media and members of the social media to await the court's decision. Please, do not jump to conclusions on this allegation.”

The UK parliamentarian delegation, led by Osamor of Edmonton and Winchmore Hill, also had Member of Parliament for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale, Rt. Hon. David Mundell, and Member of Parliament for Westminster North, Dame Karen Buck.

The rest were from the House of Lords, Lord Jonathan Oates; Member of Parliament for Worthing West, Dr. Becky Cooper; and Member of Parliament for Plymouth Moor View, Rt. Hon. Fred Thomas, among others.

The senator for Ekiti North Senatorial District, Cyril Fasuyi, vowed to come up with a petition against Akpoti-Uduaghan, who had allegedly claimed that former Ekiti State Governor, Kayode Fayemi, sold the Ajaokuta steel company, when he was a minister.

But in a statement by head of Fayemi's media office, Mallam Ahmad Sajoh, the former governor denied reports that Akpoti-Uduaghan had once accused him of sexual harassment.

The statement said, “We wish to categorically state that this report is inaccurate and a misrepresentation of the actual comments made by the Distinguished Senator from Ekiti. Upon reviewing the proceedings, it

is evident that Senator Fasuyi never made such an allegation.

“Instead, what he actually stated was that Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan had, in the past, made false and defamatory claims against Dr. Fayemi when he served as Minister of Mines and Steel Development, specifically, regarding issues related to the Ajaokuta Steel Company.

“At no point did Senator Fasuyi link Dr. Fayemi to any allegations of sexual misconduct by Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan.”

Sajoh added, “For the avoidance of doubt, we wish to reiterate that Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan – or anyone else, for that matter – has never accused Dr. Fayemi of any form of sexual misconduct.”

Early yesterday, a Federal High Court in Abuja restrained Senate Committee on Code of Conduct and Public Petitions from probing the senator for Kogi Central Senatorial District, Akpoti-Uduaghan, over alleged disorder regarding reallocation of seats in the chamber.

Justice Obiora Egwuatu, who granted the interim injunction, among others, ordered the National Assembly, Senate, and Senate Committee on Ethics to suspend the hearing scheduled for yesterday.

The defendants, including Clerk to the National Assembly, Clerk of the Senate, and Committee on Ethics, were to show cause within 72 hours why an interlocutory injunction to stop

the hearing should not be granted.

The court action was sequel to the decision of the senate, through its ethics committee, to probe the allegations of misconduct against Akpoti-Uduaghan during plenary last week.

The ethics panel had asked Akpoti-Uduaghan to appear before it to answer questions on the alleged misconduct during plenary.

The committee chaired by Senator Neda Imasuen shunned the court order and sat on the matter after plenary yesterday.

The panel listened to presentation by the senate spokesperson, Adeyemi Adaramodu, who had moved the motion on the floor that led to the senate's resolution to probe Akpoti-Uduaghan's alleged misconduct through the ethics panel.

Adaramodu lamented that the actions of Akpoti-Uduaghan, through the interviews she granted to the media, had negativity affected the image of the senate.

Chairman, Senate Committee on Rules and Business, Senator Titus Zam, also made a presentation before the panel.

Zam debunked claims that Akpabio was deliberately frustrating Akpoti-Uduaghan's motions and bills because of her alleged refusal to accept the senate president's sexual advances.

Similarly, Head of the Sergeant-at-Arms in the chamber, Mr. Muktar Daudawa, made a presentation before the panel, and explained that the issue

of seat reallocation was a normal routine in the chamber. Daudawa stated that Akpoti-Uduaghan was not the only senator affected.

The chairman of the committee said the Kogi Central senator, probably, did not honour the panel's invitation because she was obviously obeying her lawyers' legal advice.

Imasuen said the judiciary, a different arm of government, could not interfere in the affairs of the legislature, hence, the court order obtained by Akpoti-Uduaghan was not binding on the committee.

He also declared that the Kogi Central senator's petition, referred to it by the senate president, was dead on arrival.

Imasuen stated, “In the plenary on the floor of the senate, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan presented a petition before the senate. There were a lot of objections to that petition because of the manner in which it came. But in the wisdom of the senate president, it was still referred to us, to this committee.

“And for us to save time, because we need to report back to the senate tomorrow (today), I will address that petition. But I will go through our rules and our standing orders, as amended.

“That petition, for what you read on the floor and for what I've seen, is making some allegations that are already in court.

“The matter is already in court. And

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2025 NIGERIA INTERNATIONAL ENERGY SUMMIT...

L-R: Chief Technical Officer, Lekoil Nigeria Limited, Sam Olotu; Head of West Africa Upstream Content, Sub-Saharan Africa Oil & Gas for Wood Mackenzie, Mansur Mohammed; Managing Director, Chevron Nigeria, Jim Swartz; Minister of state for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri; and Managing Director, Heirs Energies Limited, Osayande Igiehon, during the 2025 Nigeria International Energy Summit in Abuja, recently

Nigeria Records 54 New Cases of Lassa Fever, 6 Casualties

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) has said the country recorded 54 new confirmed cases of Lassa Fever in the last one week from 38 the previous week.

It said that out of the 54 cases, 6 casualties were reported across

the country.

These confirmed cases were reported in Bauchi, Ondo, Edo, Taraba, Ebonyi, Plateau, Benue, and Kogi States.

A situation report by NCDC highlighting update in Lassa Fever disease prevalence showed cumulatively in week 8 of this year that 95 deaths have been reported

with a case fatality rate (CFR) of 18.8 percent which is the same CFR for the same period in 2024 (18.8 percent).

The report said that in total for 2025, 12 states have recorded at least one confirmed case across 70 local government areas.

It said that 73 percent of all confirmed Lassa fever cases were

reported from these three states of Ondo, Bauchi and Edo while 27 percent were reported from 9 states with confirmed Lassa fever cases.

Of the 73 percent confirmed cases, Ondo reported 32 percent, Bauchi 24 percent, and Edo 17 percent.

NCDC explained that the predominant age group affected was 21-30 years.

"The male-to-female ratio for confirmed cases is 1:0.8. The number of suspected cases decreased compared to that reported for the same period in 2024.

"One new healthcare worker

was affected in the reporting week 8. National Lassa fever multi-partner, multi-sectoral Incident Management System (IMS) activated to coordinate the response activities at all levels," it said.

UNICEF Boosts Neonatal Healthcare in Rivers State with Oxygen Equipment

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is collaborating with the Rivers State Ministry of Health to improve facilities at the Primary Healthcare Centres.

Through the installation of oxygen equipment at the Primary Healthcare Centres, the Fund was able to significantly improve services at the health centre thereby reducing child mortality rate, especially among the new born in rural areas.

Speaking during a field tour by journalists to the Model Primary Healthcare Centre located in Akpajo – Eleme, Rivers State, Chief Medical Director, Rivers State Hospitals Management Board, Dr. Bright Ogbondah, said that UNICEF has built and equipped the neonatal healthcare unit at the Eleme General Hospital as well as assisted the state in providing the oxygen plants.

The facility visit conducted as part of the UNICEF Media Dialogue held in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital on Tuesday, enabled

journalists to inspect hospital facilities and also interface with patients as well as health workers.

Ogbondah who is in-charge of operations at the Medical Oxygen Plant located at Ncha in Eleme, explained the impact of the oxygen plant saying it has been of immense help in the treatment of critical illnesses, especially complications arising from child birth.

"The Oxygen Plant has gone a long way in alleviating the plight of the people when it comes to the issue of medical emergencies," he said.

Ogbondah said the initiative to establish the oxygen plant came during the outbreak of COVID-19 and desperate demand for oxygen ventilators to take care emergency cases at the isolation centre located within Eleme General Hospital.

He noted that with the slowing down of COVID-19 cases, the oxygen plant has turned its attention to supplying medical oxygen to hospitals within the area, including the newly established Neonatal Healthcare Centre.

On the observation by journalists that there were few numbers of children and other patients at the neonatal facility, the Medical Director, Dr. Leechi Okere, said the clinic was recently opened for operations hence people are not yet fully aware of its services.

Earlier at the Primary Healthcare Centre in Akpajo in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, the Director, Public Health and Disease Control in the state, Dr. Ndubisi Akpah, said the collaboration between the state and UNICEF has brought tremendous improvement in the healthcare delivery in the communities.

For instance, he explained that the healthcare centre recently handled a critical case of a baby with mild birth Asphyxia with the help of Oxygen concentrator and the child recovered.

He said before now such cases would have been referred to another facility which most times are private medical facility at huge cost to the parents.

On its part, UNICEF Chief of Field Office Dr. Anslem Otobo Audu called for more investment in facilities to improve children's healthcare, especially the new born.

He said that this can be done by providing more funds towards upgrading of the Primary Healthcare Centres.

Audu said that neonatal healthcare and childhood illnesses have remained pressing challenges in Nigeria where too many children still face premature deaths and debilitating health issues that could otherwise be prevented.

He said although the country has witnessed remarkable progress in maternal and child health, government must continue to implement interventions that ensure every child receives the healthcare they deserve from the moment they are born.

"It is crucial that we strengthen our healthcare systems, increase access to quality services, and raise awareness about the importance of early and continuous weather for children," he said.

NSCDC Boss Charges Officers to Desist from Inter-agency Rivalry

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

Commandant-General (CG) of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Dr. Ahmed Audi, charged officers of the Corps against inter-agency rivalry and called for strengthened synergy.

The CG also urged personnel to leverage the already existing relationships between security agencies by respecting boundaries.

Speaking on Wednesday at the commissioning of the newly renovated NSCDC FCT Command Headquarters Quarter Guard, Audi told the officers and men of the command to be more committed in the discharge of their duties and build synergy.

While urging the personnel to leverage the already existing relationships between security agencies by respecting boundaries, Audi said: "Don't envy your brothers rather leverage the experiences of officers and agencies that had been there for years and learn from them.

"Humble yourself, don't embarrass the corps by ensuring you don't intimidate anyone as accidental discharge is not acceptable according

to the standard operating procedures of the corps."

The CG called on officers to be committed in the discharge of their duties while adequately protecting Critical National Assets and Infrastructure (CNAI).

While inaugurating the quarter guard, Audi said that "quarter guard" symbolised regimental discipline which was essential for the image of the corps.

He said: "Quarter guard is a highly regimented exercise that is precisely used to commission dignitaries during visits.

"This is commendable as I urge you to put it to use maximally so that the service will be portrayed in a good manner."

He commended the NSCDC FCT Commandant, Olusola Odumosu, for his exemplary leadership roles in ensuring the Corps was strategically positioned in the territory.

"As a leader you should be able to impact the lives of your subject; Dr. Odumosu knows where he is going and the management of the corps is proud of you and will continue to support you," Audi said.

Gov Soludo: Arrested Native Doctors will be Jailed if Charms Show Human Parts

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State is not taking the war against insecurity in the state lying low.

The governor who has, through the Anambra Homeland Security Law, began a clampdown on native doctors, through the launch of a new security outfit, Agunchemba has arrested over 30 native doctors, who are said to have been preparing charms for criminals.

The native doctors are also known for the preparation of local charms, knowns as Oke Ite, which allegedly

attracts wealth to youths.

But in a recent meeting at the Governor's Lodge, Amawbia, Soludo said there is a nexus between drug, activities of native doctors and crime in the state, and what his government plans to do was to deal with the root cause of insecurity.

He announced that samples have been taken from all confiscated 'Oke ite' charms, for pathological analysis, and that if traces of human blood are found in them, the owners will face severe consequences.

He said: "these native doctors have deceived our youths enough. You will see them throwing bales

of money at functions and they have become the new role model of our boys.

"Some indigenes of Oba came to see me in Lagos when I visited, big businessmen, professors and the rest, and I told them that a native doctor in your village claims to be the address of your community.

"What it means is that the native doctor is the most well-known person in the community, where as we have respected people like these.

"They (native doctors) are the root cause of insecurity in the society today. They make you believe that they can make charms for you and

you get a crown without a cross. They celebrate success without hard work. They have ruined a lot of our young boys.

"They make youths believe they can prepare charms for them, and they will carry drugs abroad and will not be detected. You carry the drug and you entered the airport and the white man's scanner will go blind and you will go with your drug.

"Because of this deceit, many of our young people have remained in several prisons across the world. They arrest them for drug and lock them up.

"When you get arrested, they tell

you it is because you failed the rules of the charm. They can even tell you it is because you winked at a woman at the airport, that was why the charm failed. Deception.

"One of the native doctors from Okija who we arrested, who is always boasting of making people rich under four days, his son is a waiter in a hotel in Owerri. Why is his own son working to earn a living if he can make people wealthy without work? Deception.

"As early as 8am, you see youths in beer parlour drinking, and the next thing is they are thinking of how to make quick money, then they

go for kidnapping or other vices."

The governor said one of the native doctors recently arrested in the state was the one preparing anti-gunshot charms for criminals.

"He is from Kogi State. When we arrested him, he started begging us that he would like to be preparing the charms for our security men. He is in our custody undergoing interrogation, and he must let us know who his clients are.

"As I speak to you, many native doctors in Anambra are on the run. They have run away, and we will not relent. We will continue to go after them," the governor said.

NEWS



BASHORUN J. K. RANDLE EMERGES AS NEW CHAIRMAN OF NBGN...

L-R: Directors of NEPAD Business Group Nigeria (NBGN): Dr. Toyin Sanni; Group CEO of Emerging Africa Capital Group, Dr. (Mrs.) Nike Akande, CON; Former Chairman of NBGN, Bashorun J. K. Randle, OFR; Chairman of NBGN, HRH Erelu Dr. Abiola Dosumu; Vice Chairman of NBGN, Dr. Comfort Eytayo, OON; and Executive Secretary/CEO of NBGN, Mr. Oluwole Dosumu, during the board meeting where Bashorun Randle emerged as the new chairman of the organisation in Lagos... recently

UNESCO, EU Unveil Project to Strengthen Education Policies in Katsina State

●Radda inaugurates steering committee for implementation

Francis Sardauna in Katsina

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has unveiled the second phase of its education initiative project to strengthen education policies and build teachers' capacity and resilience in Katsina State.

The second phase of the four-year project, tagged: 'Expand, Integrate and Strengthen Systems (EISS) to Build Teachers' Capacity and Resilience

in Katsina State', is funded by the European Union (EU).

With support from the Federal and State Ministries of Education, the project is being implemented by UNESCO in Katsina, Adamawa, Plateau, Oyo, Enugu and Bayelsa states in order to build the capacity of 20,000 teachers in the benefiting states.

Speaking at the ceremonial launch of the project at the Katsina State Government House, Wednesday, the

UNESCO Representative to Nigeria, Albert Mendy, said the project would review and implement educational policies and programmes in the state.

He said the project would also strengthen the state's educational system by improving quality teaching and learning through enhanced teacher education programmes and improved teacher resilience.

Mendy said: "The objectives of this project are to review, strengthen and implement education policies and programmes by addressing teacher shortage and work conditions.

"It will also reinforce and support individual teacher capacities by developing an expanded teacher

programme with a focus on resilience in fragile context, and build better teacher connections to their students and colleagues in the communities."

Launching the EU-UNESCO project, Governor Dikko Umaru Radda vowed to provide necessary policy backing for the implementation of the project's objectives in the state.

He said the project aligns "perfectly" with his administration's vision of inclusive and quality education for all, adding that the state government was committed to ensuring that girls, persons with disabilities and out-of-school children have access to learning opportunities.

He explained that the project

comes at a crucial time when the state government is intensifying efforts to enhance literacy, digital education, technical skill training and community engagement in the education sector.

He commended the European Union and UNESCO for their unwavering commitment in supporting the state government's education and social development initiatives.

Radda said: "Through this project, we seek to expand access to quality education for all, particularly in the rural and underserved areas, improve teachers' training and curriculum development to meet global standards.

"As a government, we are fully

committed to supporting and sustaining the objectives of the EU-UNESCO project. We will continue to provide necessary education policy backing in terms of resources and institutional support to ensure the implementation of the project across the state."

Governor Radda directed the State Ministry of Education to provide office accommodation for staff of the project for its immediate implementation.

He also inaugurated the State Project Steering Committee headed by the Commissioner for Basic and Secondary Education, Zainab Musawa, to provide overall guidance for the implementation of the project.

Nigerian Breweries Says Company Now Sources Raw Materials Locally

Gideon Arinze in Enugu

The Nigerian Breweries Plc has said the company now sources most of its raw materials for production locally amid the current harsh economic realities in Nigeria.

Corporate Affairs Manager (East Region) of the company, Job Egolum made this known yesterday during a media parley held as part of activities leading to the relaunch of Life Beer.

In her address, Egolum said the ongoing economic difficulties in Nigeria has compelled the company to be more creative by growing some of its raw materials in the country to be able to reduce the cost of production and offer products at friendly prices to consumers.

Her words: "Our consumers are at the heart of what we do at the Nigerian Breweries and that has made us more innovative because

we want to keep satisfying their desires, we are now looking inwards for localized production."

Earlier, Portfolio Manager for Mainstream at NBL, Olaoluwa Babalola, said the relaunch of Life Beer is more than just a redesign, adding it represents a transformation that aligns with the evolving needs and preferences of consumers.

He maintained that the new Life Beer embodies a bold new identity featuring symbols such as the rising sun, the Niger Bridge, and the Isi-Agu (leopard head), each symbolizing hope, progress, and strength - values that are central to Igbo heritage.

"You also have a refined drinking experience, a triple-filtered, 3X smoother taste, delivering a richer, more refreshing experience, crafted for those who never stop pushing forward," he said

Tunde Ayeni Tells Court Why Ex-Mistress Resorted to Blackmail

Alex Enumah in Abuja

Former chairman of defunct Skye Bank, Tunde Ayeni, has told a Customary Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) sitting in Dawaki, Abuja, that his former mistress, Adaobi Alagwu, resorted to blackmail because he discontinued the monthly allowance he had been giving her since October, 2024.

Another reason Ayeni gave for the alleged blackmail was her eviction from a N400 million property in Jabi, which she hitherto held as a trustee.

Ayeni and Alagwu have been embroiled in a paternity dispute over Alagwu's daughter, who's

paternity Ayeni has publicly denied.

Aggrieved by the paternity claims, Ayeni initiated a legal suit, marked FCT/CC/CV/DKDK, urging the court to take judicial notice that he is not the child's father and that no marriage exists between him and Ms. Alagwu.

However, Ms. Alagwu insisted that a Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) test conducted at a laboratory in London, United Kingdom, with report reference number 0Z5167, showed a 99.999997% probability that Mr. Ayeni is the biological father of her daughter.

The petitioner disputed the DNA test results, alleging manipulation.

At the resumed hearing, Ayeni's

counsel, Joseph Silas, informed the court that the matter was scheduled for the petitioner's definite defense but noted that the respondent had served a preliminary objection.

Silas stated: "The matter today is set for definite defense, and we are ready to proceed. However, they served us with a notice of preliminary objection."

He added that the petitioner also had demands to make after the court ruled on the objection, explaining that the respondent's objection challenged the court's jurisdiction to hear the suit.

"My Lord, the respondent's objection is that this court does not have jurisdiction because the petitioner submitted his marriage certificate with his wife to the court. However, the respondent's application is unfounded and misplaced," Silas argued.

He further noted that the dowry had been refunded after the petitioner demanded it back, clarifying that the payment was never intended to establish a marriage.

Silas urged the court to pronounce that the parties are not married, emphasizing that Ms. Alagwu was using the assumption of marriage to blackmail the petitioner.

"This court is invited to make a pronouncement on the respondent's false belief that she is married to the petitioner. This belief has enabled her to continue blackmailing him after he discovered the child, she claimed was his was not and discontinued her N5 million monthly allowance in October 2024. He has also asked her to vacate the petitioners N400 million property in Jabi that she occupies as a trustee," Silas stated.

Reacting, the respondent's lawyer, T.G. Okechukwu, argued that the court no longer had jurisdiction to entertain the suit and urged the court to dismiss the suit.

"My Lord, the respondent filed a notice of preliminary objection dated February 26, 2025, pursuant to the rules of this honorable court. We urge the court to dismiss this suit on the grounds that it no longer has jurisdiction to hear it," Okechukwu submitted.

SOSG Releases N1.35bn for Ramadan Feeding Across 244 Wards in the State

Onuminya Innocent in Sokoto

Governor Ahmed Aliyu of Sokoto State has released N1.355 billion to support Ramadan feeding centers across Sokoto State to ensure food reaches the less privileged and vulnerable during the holy month.

According to the governor, the funds will be distributed across 244 wards in 23 local government areas and 27 feeding centers for physically challenged persons.

Speaking at the Government

House Sokoto on Tuesday, Governor Aliyu reaffirmed his administration's commitment to supporting the needy and vulnerable.

He recalled that the Ramadan feeding program, originally introduced by former Governor Senator Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko, had been abandoned by the previous administration but has now been revived and expanded.

His words: "Last week, the governor inaugurated the state Ramadan feeding committee and

flagged off food distribution to 155 feeding centers in the metropolis. The program has now been extended to all 244 political wards and 27 feeding centers for persons with disabilities.

"Each of the 244 wards will receive N5 million, while the 27 feeding centers for persons with disabilities will also receive N5 million each to provide food and essential items for breaking fast."

Governor Aliyu urged those entrusted with the funds to handle them responsibly and with integrity.

"You must put the fear of Allah first in whatever you do and remember that one day, we will all account for our deeds before our Creator," he warned. The governor also called on beneficiaries to remain orderly and cooperative during food distribution to ensure a smooth and stress-free process.

This initiative reaffirms Governor Aliyu's administration's commitment to social welfare and supporting the needy and vulnerable during the holy month of Ramadan

He emphasized that the court has jurisdiction as it is established by law. "Section 14, subsection 2 of the Customary Court Act 2007 clearly recognizes that parties who submit themselves to this court confer jurisdiction on the court."

Silas added: "The matter before this court is not about determining the statutory marriage between the petitioner and his wife but about declaring that no marriage exists between the petitioner and the respondent following the return of a dowry paid out of ignorance of the respondent's native law and custom."

After hearing arguments from both parties, the three-member panel of judges, presided over by Justice Adlin Achoru, adjourned the matter until March 11 for ruling.



PRESS CONFERENCE AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION RETREAT ON THE 80M CLEAN COOKSTOVES...

L-R: Mr Moses Gbadebo, Director, GreenPlinth Africa; Dr. Victor Fodeke, co-founder, Vice President/GMD, GreenPlinth Africa; Dr. Olawale Akinwumi, President/CEO, GreenPlinth Africa; Bode Agoro, Head of Service/representative of Governor, Lagos State; Mrs. Titi Oshodi, Special Adviser on Climate Change and Circular Economy to the Governor, Lagos State; and Dr. Daniel Habila Galadima, Director-General, Niger State Agency for Green Initiatives/representative of Governor, Niger State, during the press conference and project implementation retreat on the 80m Clean Cookstoves Project in Nigeria, held at Sheraton Hotel in Ikeja, Lagos, on Tuesday.

Fubara: We're Yet to Receive Assembly's Letter of Ultimatum on 2025 Appropriation

- House summons RSIEC chair over LG poll, demands sack of new commissioners
- Asari, eastern zone IYC warn against impeachment plan

Chuks Okocha in Abuja and Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi

AKPABIO RESTATES REGARD FOR WOMEN, STRONGLY DENIES SEXUALLY HARASSING SENATOR NATASHA

it is the procedure of this committee. As a matter of fact, the first thing we ask when the petition comes before us is whether or not that petition is before any law court. If the answer is yes, we do not touch such petitions. "In addition to that, our Rule Book, also, under Order 40, has laid down the processes that must be followed before a petition is laid. And if you will allow me, Order 40 of our Rule Book, Subsection 4, says that no senator may present to the senate a petition signed by him or herself. "In other words, I cannot submit a petition about myself, signed by myself. That petition ought to be presented by another senator. And I'm sure that there are three senators from Kogi State, as it is with other states.

"The issue before us today is the issue of an alleged misconduct of one of our distinguished senators on the floor of the senate.

"The petition she presented today is actually dead on arrival. I say that because it runs contrary to Order 40, Subsection 4, that no senator should present to the senate a petition signed by him or herself. And that petition, having been signed by her, will not be entertained by this committee.

"She (Akpoti-Uduaghan) is not here. Now I can understand why she's not here. She's probably not here on the order of her lawyers. That being the case, the committee will sit and we will deliberate on what we've gotten from distinguished senators that have presented their cases before us.

"We will use our rule books and all other documents that are available to us, to make a decision here and then make a referral to the full senate."

A group, Kogi Central Concerned Stakeholders, also faulted Akpoti-Uduaghan's action against Akpabio and had tendered an unreserved apology.

Convener of the group, Abdul-Raheem Adeku, in an open letter to Akpabio, dissociated the district from Akpoti-Uduaghan's actions.

Nevertheless, protesters, who were supporters of Akpoti-Uduaghan, on their way to Mopol gate of the National Assembly were chased away from the arcade, opposite Eagle Square.

The protesters were waiting for the arrival of others to enable them converge on the entrance of the National Assembly. But they were dispersed with tear gas by security men, who were

Fubara, said he was yet to receive any letter on the resolutions of the House of Assembly asking him to re-present the 2025 budget, pursuant

not in uniforms to ascertain whether they were policemen or soldiers.

Led by one of the lawyers to Akpoti-Uduaghan, Victor Giwa, the protesters, who carried placards, banners, and a national flag, had started arriving about 9am for the demonstration planned ahead of the resumption of plenary.

Obi: Akpabio, Natasha, Rivers, Lagos Crises unnecessary

Former presidential candidate and ex-governor of Anambra State, Peter Obi, regretting the recent crises in various states and at the senate, decried what he described as too much attention to frivolities than transformative solutions to the challenges facing Nigeria.

Obi said the Akpabio, Akpoti-Uduaghan sexual harassment allegation, crisis in the Lagos State House of Assembly over speakership, and the Rivers State executive /legislative controversy were unnecessary

Obi, in a statement yesterday, said, "One would expect our leaders to be focusing and sacrificing solely on providing urgent, transformative solutions to this myriad of problems but not necessarily.

"Instead, the national discourse is consumed by trivialities, whether it is allegations of sexual harassment or budget padding in the National Assembly, controversies surrounding state Houses of Assembly speakership, reckless court judgments threatening to destabilise or deprive the state of funding to provide needed services to the citizens.

"What is coming out of the three arms of government, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary is disgusting and uninspiring. The executive show of negative power, as seen in Osun State, the judiciary pronouncement on Rivers State that is capable of threatening democracy, plus the embarrassing scandal from the National Assembly all combined to give a gloomy picture of our democratic journey.

"Leaders in these three arms should avoid undue disruptive interference in affairs of sub-national government activities. Urgent steps should be taken by the leadership of the three arms to stabilise our polity and stem politicians from defecting to parties where they feel it will be easier to rig them into office."

to the Supreme Court judgement of February 28, 2025.

The Martin Amaewhule-led Assembly had given Fubara a 48-hour ultimatum to represent the 2025 Appropriation Bill to the legislature. Amaewhule issued the ultimatum, in a letter he signed and addressed to the governor, a copy of which was sent to the deputy governor, Rivers State Accountant-General, and Chairman, Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission (RSIEC), on Monday.

Reacting, the governor stated that he was yet to receive the said letter, stressing that he is waiting for the certified true copy of the apex court judgement before he would take action based on the court order.

In a letter he addressed to Speaker of the House Assembly, through the Secretary to the State Government, Dr Tammy Danagogo, the governor said neither he nor his deputy and accountant general had received the warning letter.

The letter said, "As at the close of work on Tuesday 4th March, 2025, we are yet to receive the said letter. Neither the office of the Governor, nor the Deputy Governor's office, nor the office of the Accountant-General of the State has received the said letter.

"Please, recall that His Excellency, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, Governor of River State, had in a State Broadcast on Sunday 2nd March, 2025, stated clearly that notwithstanding his personal opinion on the Supreme Court Judgments, he will, as a law-abiding Nigerian, obey and implement their decisions in accordance with the rule of law and the best interest of the

people of Rivers State.

"We have since been in contact with our lawyers who are still awaiting the certified true copy of the judgments of the Supreme Court, and hereby reassure you and all the good people of Rivers State that as soon as His Excellency receives the judgments, he will strive to implement same timeously in the best interest of our people. Please, accept the esteemed regards of His Excellency, the Governor of Rivers State."

Assembly Summons RSIEC Chairman

The House of Assembly summoned the chairman of RSIEC, Justice Adolphus Enebeli (ret'd), to appear before it within 48 hours over the conduct of the October 5, 2024 local government elections.

The Assembly, during its plenary presided by Amaewhule, threatened to issue a warrant for the arrest of the RSIEC chairman if he failed to appear at the expiration of the ultimatum.

The Assembly also resolved to write Fubara to forward the names of all his commissioners that were not screened by the Amaewhule-led Assembly to the legislature for proper screening.

But at the end of the plenary, the Assembly demanded that the governor should sack all his appointed commissioners within 48 hours.

RSIEC Fixes August 9 for Council Elections

The state electoral commission fixed

August 9 for a fresh local government election.

Enebeli stated that by Section 5 of the Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission law number 12 of 2018, the electoral body was saddled with the responsibilities of providing guidelines for political parties, stipulating the rules and procedure for electioneering campaigns for local government elections.

He said, "There shall be local government council election on Saturday, August 9, 2025 in all the 23 local government areas of Rivers state. RSIEC is mandated by law to fix the date for elections in the state."

The RSIEC chairman explained at a well-attended stakeholders meeting in Port Harcourt, "Contrary to the misconception of a few persons as expressed in the media, I make bold to say without equivocation that the fixing of date of election into local government councils in Rivers state is the sole and undoubted statutory power of RSIEC by virtue of section 13, p 1 to 4 of RSIEC law number 2 of 2018.

"The criteria for participation and other sundry provisions are articulated in the booklet."

Asari, Eastern Zone IYC Warn against Impeachment Plan

Prominent Niger Delta leader and traditional ruler, Asari Dokubo, issued a warning to President Bola Tinubu, Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, and the 27 lawmakers in Rivers State against any plan to

impeach Fubara.

Dokubo, who is the Da-Amakiri Tubo and Amanyanabo of the Elem Kalabari Kingdom, made his position clear during a live broadcast on Facebook, where he cautioned that any move to remove Fubara from office could destabilise the state and lead to political unrest.

Similarly, Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) Eastern Zone expressed concern over the current tense political situation in the state. It warned that they would not stand by and allow detractors to steal the current mandate.

"We are committed to defending our rights and ensuring that the voices of the Ijaw people are heard and respected," the group stated.

In a statement by Chairman, IYC Eastern Zone, Datolu Sukubo; Secretary, Tamunokuro Danggo; and Information Officer, Odia Igbikis, the group stated, "We are aware of alarming plans by certain elements to destabilise Rivers State and undermine the mandate given to our elected officials.

"The purported 48-hour ultimatum issued to the Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, by the defected Martins Amaewhule-led House of Assembly to present the 2025 budget is a clear indication of an orchestrated effort to create chaos and potentially impeach the governor.

"We call upon the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the National Security Adviser to intervene immediately and halt the ongoing madness that threatens to plunge Rivers State into an avoidable crisis.

Police Misconduct: PSC Threatens to Sanction Personnel of Zone 13, Anambra

Linus Aleke in Abuja

The Police Service Commission (PSC) yesterday warned that it will no longer tolerate the prevailing notoriety in the conduct of police personnel attached to Zone 13 Police Headquarters in Ukpo, Anambra State.

A statement by the Head of Press and Public Relations, Ikechukwu Ani, said the Commission is disturbed that the Zone has continued to engage in police misconduct, despite several warnings that officers should stay away from civil matters such as land, marital, and rent disputes.

"The Commission is in receipt of a petition addressed to its Chairman, DIG Hashimu Argungu (rtd),

captioned 'Complaints of Disregard to Judicial Process: Abuse of Power; Intimidation and Harassment against Inspector James of Zone 13, Nigeria Police Force, Ukpo Command' by the members of Umu Ukwueze Family, Umudikwu, Ihe Nsukka from Agbo & Agbo & Associates, and signed by C.S. Agbo Esq. of Divine Chambers," he said.

The petitioner alleged that one Mr. Jude Onah broke into a part of their family land and started erecting a perimeter fence using bricklayers and other labourers.

He noted that all efforts to get the said intruder to vacate the land proved abortive, but surprisingly, his clients and the property owners were whisked away to Zone 13,

Ukpo, without the family members' knowledge.

"When our clients saw the handwriting on the wall, they instructed us to challenge their arrest, as it became clear to them that the whole situation was meant to persecute them. We then filed a motion for the enforcement of our clients' fundamental rights.. the said motion was promptly served on the respondents," Ani said.

The lawyer in the petition stated that despite serving Inspector James with a motion for fundamental rights and the subsequent arrest of Mr. Amaechi Ezeugwu, the inspector continued to threaten their clients with more arrests.

"We filed a motion for an

injunction to restrain the police from further harassing our clients, pending the hearing and determination of the main motion," the statement added.

Ani said the Commission finds this development shameful and notes that all officers involved in this serious act of misconduct will face disciplinary action.

The Commission's Chairman, DIG Hashimu Argungu (rtd), said he would not rest until he eradicates human rights abuses in the South-east, particularly in the illegal handling of civil matters such as land disputes. He warned the police to stay away from such matters and allow the courts to do their job.



LAUNCH OF APPS DESIGNED TO REVOLUTIONISE THE REAL ESTATE SECTOR...

L-R: Managing Director of Food Concept Plc, Kofi Abunu; Convener of The Deal Room, Ify Oji; Special Adviser to the President on Capacity Development, Hon. Sadiq Rabi; and CEO of WillMoon Technologies, Mr. Kenny Imarah, at the launch of WillMoon Technologies' apps, designed to revolutionise the real estate, transportation, and retail sectors, held in Lagos... recently

Benue State Assembly Rebuffs Senate's Intervention in Sack of Benue Chief Judge

●Insists it acted within the law

George Okoh in Makurdi

The Benue State House of Assembly, has rebuffed insinuations by the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters, that it acted without due regard to the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution in the suspension of the Benue State Chief Judge, Justice Maurice Ikpambese, insisting the Assembly acted within the ambit of the law.

This was contained in a letter dated March 5th, 2025, signed by

the Speaker of the Benue State House of Assembly, and addressed to the Chairman, Senate Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters. The Senate had in a letter signed by the Chairman, Senate Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters, Senator Adegbanmire Adeniyi Ayodele, SAN, and addressed to the Benue Assembly Speaker, expressing deep concern over the purported removal of the Chief Judge, Justice Maurice

Ikpambese. He insisting that the action was carried out without due regard to the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution, particularly in respect to the tenure and removal of judicial officers under the provision of Section 292 of the 1999 constitution. Senator Ayodele, had urged the assembly members to take necessary steps to address the issue, ensuring that all the decisions regarding the suspension of Justice Ikpambese, were in accordance with the con-

stitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. But in its response, the Benue State House of Assembly through the Speaker, Hon. Aondona Dajoh, said the assembly remained deeply committed to the rule of law and fully understands the constitutional safeguards surrounding the tenure and removal of judicial officers as enshrined in Section 292 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). Dajoh, however, asked the Senate to consider the constitutional doctrine

of federalism and separation of powers, insisting that matters concerning the appointment and removal of judicial officers fall within the jurisdiction of the state government, subject to constitutional requirement. According to the Speaker, the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters could only play an advisory role, emphasising that any of their directive or resolution, which encroached on the constitutional autonomy of

the State Assembly could only be persuasive, especiallyas the constitution did not give them the right to superintend over the affairs of the State Assemblies. While appreciating the Senate Committee for its concern and insights over the matter, the Speaker reiterated that the Benue Assembly acted well within its constitutional mandate in the case and as such, its decision remained lawful, final, and conclusive, except set aside by a court of competent jurisdiction.

TINUBU GREETS OBASANJO AT 88

Obasanjo implemented critical policies and reforms and made important decisions that profoundly impacted the lives of many Nigerians. As the head of state, he consistently demonstrated a selfless commitment to national unity, peace, and progress. Tinubu added, "Out of office, only a few will deny that the former president continues to wield considerable influence among the political elite at home and is well-regarded abroad, where he is an ambassador of global peace and a troubleshooter. His tireless efforts in conflict resolution, advocacy for good governance, and dedication to Pan-Africanism through institutions like the African Union and the United Nations are testaments to his statesmanship. "Sometimes controversial, former President Obasanjo's regular interventions in national affairs have helped shape public policies and acted as a check on leadership. I thank General Obasanjo for his onerous contributions to Nigeria. I commend him for his statesmanship and leadership. "At 88, the former president is still gaining strength. I pray that God Almighty will grant him the grace and strength to live for more years so the nation and Africa can continue to benefit from his wisdom and knowledge. "On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, I extend heartfelt congratulations to this great patriot. Happy 88th Birthday, President Obasanjo!"

Obasanjo: Africa May Return to Slavery If

Obasanjo warned that Africans might go back into slavery if they forgot their history. He said Africa had yet to recover from the effects of slave trade it suffered, over two centuries after.

The former president made the remarks during his 88th birthday celebration and unveiling of two books, held within the premises

of Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library (COPL), Abeokuta, Ogun State. The books titled, "Lest we Forget: Slavery, Slave Trade, Emancipation and Reparation," and, "Nigeria: Past and the Future," are authored by Obasanjo. The event attracted eminent personalities from different walks of life, including traditional rulers, former and sitting governors, captains of industry, as well as expatriates and people from the academia. Obasanjo said there was need for Africans to acknowledge their history, learn from it, and use it as a foundation for building a better future, in order to avoid a return into slavery. According to him, forgetting the devastating impact of slavery on Africa would not only affect the present but equally jeopardise the future of the continent. Obasanjo said, "We must not forget slavery, whether transatlantic or trans-Sahara slave trade, they have the same effect on us. If we forget, not only will we continue to suffer from the effect, but we will be re-enslaved again. "We haven't come out from the one we have suffered for more than two centuries. It is for us to see where we have gone wrong without any exception as a group and seek the way out. "For me, I am an incurable optimist about Nigeria. Yes, the situation is bad, no doubt, but I believe that in my lifetime, we will have a Nigerian that we will be proud of." Director-General, Nigerian Institute for International Affairs, who was the guest lecturer at the event, Professor Eghosa Osaghae, disclosed that over 12.5 million people were trapped in modern slavery in Africa. Osaghae said the number represented about 60 per cent of the global total of 20.9 million enslaved people. According to him, "For Africa to really experience true liberation, there

is need for another independence of meaningful decolonisation, where Africans will firmly confront the devils of colonisation." In his goodwill message, the Ogun State governor, Dapo Abiodun, who was represented by his deputy, Engineer Noimot Salako-Oyedele, poured encomium on Obasanjo, describing him as a leader of thought and a true African leader. "He continues to be a leader of thought. He has not only impacted Nigeria but also Africa and the world. He is strong, active, and purposeful in guiding the next generation," he said. Among those present were Governor of Osun State, Ademola Adeleke; former governor of Ogun State, Senator Ibikunle Amosun; presidential candidate of Labour Party in the last general election, Mr Peter Obi; former Osun State governor, Lagunsoye Oyinlola; and former governor of Jigawa State, Sule Lamido. Meanwhile, tributes continued to pour in for Obasanjo from across the country.

Atiku Abubakar

Atiku described Obasanjo as a rare gem and precious gift to Nigeria. Writing on X, the former vice president stated, "Baba, even your opponents will concede that your commitment to the unity of Nigeria is bar none. You have, ever since you happened on our country's leadership landscape, pursued deliberate policies of inclusiveness and promotion of a one Nigeria agenda. "On this score, you've been consistent and given your all. It was an honour to have served with you in advancing a pan-Nigerian agenda to give everyone, irrespective of tribe and tongue, religion or political inclinations, the opportunity to thrive for the greater good of our people and beloved country. "On this occasion of your 88th birthday, I, on behalf of my family

and team, join millions in Nigeria and worldwide to wish you a happy birthday. I wish you more years in good health and service to our country and humanity."

Peter Mbah

Enugu State Governor, Dr. Peter Mbah, said Obasanjo was not only a consummate nationalist, but also Nigeria's gift to the world. Mbah said on his verified X handle, "It is a great honour for me to felicitate former President, His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, on his 88th birthday. "Chief Obasanjo is an international icon, elder statesman, consummate leader, and quintessential global citizen, who by dint of tenacity, hard work, and fate, has played important roles in Nigeria's political development and in shaping African and global affairs. "He midwived the transition to democratic rule as a military ruler in 1979 and as a man of destiny, he emerged from a widely condemned incarceration to take up the onerous task of rebuilding Nigeria's international image and economy as the first elected President in the current democratic dispensation in 1999. "While you may not always agree with all his views, his love for his country and Africa as well as the fact that he speaks and acts from the depth of his conviction and conscience is never in doubt. "Therefore, it is my pleasure to salute and celebrate Chief Olusegun Matthew Okikiola Aremu Obasanjo, GCFR, the Balogun of Owu Kingdom, a pan Nigerian, unapologetic patriot, Pan-Africanist, and a man of courage and principle on his special day. "On behalf of my family, Government and good people of Enugu State, I pray God to grant him many more years in sound health that we may continue to draw from his wealth of knowledge, experience, and

international goodwill as we strive to build the Nigeria of our dreams."

Caleb Mutfwang

Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang, described Obasanjo as a statesman of immense wisdom. In a congratulatory message by his Director of Press, Gyang Bere, the governor said, "General Obasanjo is a reservoir of knowledge, a statesman of immense wisdom, and a mentor to numerous Nigerians, both in the military and in the democratic space, where he played a pivotal role in nurturing leaders." Mutfwang praised Obasanjo's commitment to national unity and peace, emphasising that his selfless service to Nigeria and humanity remains a testament to his enduring legacy. He commended the remarkable contributions of the former president, stating that his leadership between 1999 and 2007 laid a strong foundation for the country's democracy, economic growth, security framework, and overall stability. Describing him as a symbol of hope and a solution-driven leader, the governor acknowledged Obasanjo's relentless pursuit of strategies to address Nigeria's socio-political and economic challenges.

Mohammed Bago

Governor Mohammed Bago of Niger State described Obasanjo as a committed and patriotic leader, who used the best part of his years to ensure peace, unity, and stability of Nigeria and the African continent. Bago's comments were contained in the 88th birthday congratulatory message to the former president. In the message signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Bologi Ibrahim, the governor said the former Nigerian leader had become "a living legend" because of his impact in Nigeria and other African countries. Bago added that Obasanjo "is

among leaders who have had very rare opportunities to serve the country both as a military head of state and democratically elected president where he performed remarkably well". He said, "The celebrant has undoubtedly written his name in gold, and he stands tall among great African leaders."

Gbenga Olawepo-Hashim

Businessman and former presidential candidate, Dr Gbenga Olawepo-Hashim, said Obasanjo was a towering figure in Nigeria's political history and a global statesman, whose impact transcended generations. In a release by his media unit, Olawepo-Hashim lauded Obasanjo's contributions to Nigeria's political stability, economic reforms, and diplomatic engagements, emphasising his pivotal role in the country's democratic transition between 1998 and 1999. Olawepo-Hashim stated, "At a defining moment in our nation's history, I had the privilege of working closely with him during Nigeria's return to democracy. I witnessed his unwavering determination to steer the country towards a democratic path despite the complex political challenges of the time. "Baba, your life is a testament to service, resilience, and unwavering commitment to Nigeria, Africa, and global peace and understanding. "From your days as a young officer in the Nigerian Army to your role in the civil war, your leadership as Head of State, and your transformational tenure as a democratically elected President, you have remained a towering figure in our national history." He prayed for Obasanjo's health and strength, saying, "On this special day, I celebrate his wisdom, courage, and enduring contributions to humanity. May God bless him with many more years in good health and strength."



EDGE IFC CERTIFICATION OF ACCESS TOWER...

L-R: Regional Industry Manager, IFC Financial Institutions Group (Central Africa and Anglophone West Africa), Alexandra Celestin; Head of Retail Banking, Access Bank PLC, Njideka Esojemu; Executive Director of Risk Management, Access Bank PLC, Dr. Gregory Jobome; IFC Regional Director (Central Africa and Anglophone West Africa), Dahlia Khalifa; and Chief Communication Officer of Access Holdings PLC, Amaechi Okobi, after the presentation of the IFC EDGE Certification of Access Tower to Access Bank at its headquarters in Oniru, Victoria Island, Lagos, yesterday

PHOTO: SUNDAY ADIGUN

Dilapidated PDP Can't Be Trusted to Rule Nigeria Again, Declares APC Scribe, Bashir

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

The National Secretary of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator

Ajibola Bashir, has said the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was left with a 'dilapidated structure' that Nigerians could no longer trust to rule the country

again. He, therefore, said the party was in serious crisis occasioned by inordinate ambitions and lack of proper

coordination. Bashir stated this yesterday in Abuja, when he formally received a former member of the PDP, Hon. Nicholas

Ossai, at the national secretariat, Abuja. He said, "On behalf of our leader, the National chairman of APC, Dr Abdullahi Ganduje, it is my joy

to welcome you not only to the headquarters of the APC but to the vault of the progressives and the team that is working seriously renewed the hope of the Nigerian people."

He recalled that one of the cardinal objectives of the Ganduje-led National Working Committee (NWC) was to revitalise the ruling party to make it stronger and to bring seasoned politicians who are capable of ensuring that in all elections in the nooks and crannies of Nigeria would be won by the party.

"Of course, of all political parties in Nigeria, our party continues to wax stronger and you see opposition parties, particularly the Peoples Democratic Party are in serious crisis occasioned by inordinate ambitions and lack of proper coordination.

"The question is, can Nigerians trust a party that cannot even put its house in order to rule the country. So, thank you for abandoning that already dilapidated structure."

Addressing newsmen after his meeting with Bashir, Ossai who represented Ndokwa East/Ndokwa West/Ukwuani of Delta State, in the House of Representatives said the centre could no longer hold in PDP because the umbrella has broken.

IMF ALLAYS FEARS, SAYS NIGERIA'S PUBLIC DEBT NOT HIGH RISK

naira exchange rate.

He stated, "The central bank has also done a good job in terms of fixing the forex market and functioning of the market to prevent big and unnecessary volatile moves.

"So, making sure that the forex market continues to work efficiently is going to be important. It is not just about monetary policy; it also depends on fiscal policy.

"Fiscal policy also needs to be in line with bringing inflation down. Containing deficits is going to be important and making sure that you don't go back to when central banks were financing fiscal deficits because that obviously would be detrimental to the naira.

"So, these set of measures, staying the pack and letting the currency be a shock absorber and not doing too much interventions, are very important to keep confidence in the currency."

On how long the tight monetary policy regime should last, considering complaints from members of the organised private sector, the IMF deputy managing director said, "We align with the policies of the central bank in terms of keeping interest rate high. It is going to be important to bring interest rate down. I think they are going to benefit from the fact that food inflation is expected to soften.

"And through that channel, you will get a decline in inflation and that is going to help in terms of monetary policy and bring overall inflation down.

"Again, it is important to stay the course, it takes time to bring inflation down from high levels and so it is important to stay the course and make sure that inflation comes down considerably.

"We have had many episodes of countries where you declare success prematurely and you end up with another bout of very high inflation. Nobody wants that to happen."

Gopinath acknowledged the economic challenges currently facing Nigeria and highlighted the need for the federal government to embrace targeted social interventions. She prescribed this when she met Edun on Tuesday in Abuja.

The finance ministry's Director of Information and Public Relations, Mohammed Manga, disclosed in a

statement that Gopinath acknowledged the economic challenges facing Nigeria and emphasised the importance of targeted social interventions.

"We discussed Nigeria's outlook and efforts to address the high cost of living, including the need to accelerate social support," she was quoted as saying, reaffirming the IMF's commitment to supporting sustainable economic policies.

The high-level discussion with Edun focused on economic reforms, private sector investment, and Nigeria's engagement in global financial affairs.

The finance minister outlined Nigeria's effort to enhance social investment programmes, stating that the government is transitioning to a biometric-based transparent system to improve efficiency and accountability.

He stated that the government was also advancing tax reforms, revenue assurance mechanisms, and digitalisation to strengthen domestic resource mobilisation.

Additionally, he said crude oil production had increased from 1.2 million to 1.7-1.8 million barrels per day, significantly boosting national revenue.

Highlighting the role of private sector investment, the minister emphasised policy shifts aimed at expanding renewable energy, improving the investment climate for solar, and promoting service exports.

Edun also addressed electricity sector reforms, and advocated expanded metering to enhance efficiency.

On the international front, discussions focused on Nigeria's participation in global financial policy and efforts to secure fairer and improved credit ratings for African economies.

Edun stressed that enhancing fiscal data transparency could strengthen Nigeria's credit profile, attract investors, and reduce borrowing costs.

Meanwhile, the federal government yesterday announced what it termed a significant step forward in the country's quest for sustainable and reliable electricity supply, with the achievement of 6,003mw, the highest generation ever recorded

in the country.

According to a statement by Bolaji Tunji, the Special Adviser on Strategic Communication to the Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adedun, on March 2, 2025, Nigeria achieved a record available power generation of 6,003mw, the highest in the nation's history.

He said this was followed by another landmark within the period, when the country recorded a peak generation evacuation of 5,801.84 MW and a daily maximum energy output of 128,370.75 megawatt-hours.

"These achievements represent a significant leap forward in the sector's capacity to meet the growing energy demands in the country, ongoing reforms in the power sector and the avowed commitment of the administration of President Bola Tinubu to ensure regular electricity supply in order to galvanise the nation's economy," the federal government said.

The statement expressed optimism on the sustainability of the "records" and the potential for further improvements in the coming days.

It said, "We are thrilled to announce these historic milestones in Nigeria's power sector. The record available generation of 6,003mw, the peak evacuation of 5,801.84mw, and the daily maximum energy output of 128,370.75 MWh are testaments to the hard work, dedication, and strategic reforms being implemented under the leadership of the Minister of Power, Adelabu.

"These achievements are not just numbers; they represent a brighter future for Nigeria, where businesses can thrive, households can enjoy uninterrupted power supply, and the economy can grow sustainably."

The statement also said the recent milestones were the result of concerted efforts by the Federal Ministry of Power, in collaboration with key stakeholders in the sector, to address longstanding challenges and optimise the nation's power infrastructure.

"These efforts include the rehabilitation and upgrading of transmission and distribution networks, the implementation of innovative technologies, and the introduction of policy reforms aimed at enhancing efficiency and

accountability," the statement said.

The federal government said one of the key factors that contributed to the recent achievements was the tariff review, which ensured liquidity in the sector and created a more sustainable and investment-friendly environment for the power sector.

The statement added, "By ensuring that tariffs reflect the true cost of power generation and distribution, the government is paving the way for increased private sector participation and the mobilisation of much-needed capital for infrastructure development."

According to Adelabu, the regularisation of tariffs will play a critical role in unlocking the sector's full potential and driving further improvements in power generation and distribution.

To sustain the improvements, the government would have to pay down on the tariff shortfalls of N1.94 trillion for 2024 and legacy debts of N2 trillion to the Generation Companies (GENCOs), the government said.

Adelabu said, "It would be important to continue the tariff reforms to ensure consumers start to pay for the energy consumed. By the time the tariffs are fully regularised, we will be moving closer to 7,000 MW of available generation capacity.

"This will mark another significant milestone in our journey towards a stable, reliable, and efficient power sector that meets the needs of all Nigerians."

He admitted that there was still much work to be done, stating that Nigeria cannot afford to rest on its laurels.

The minister said, "The support and cooperation of all stakeholders are critical to sustaining these achievements and driving further progress in the sector. Together, we can build a power sector that serves as a catalyst for Nigeria's economic growth and development."

Adelabu inaugurated the planning committee on the proposed conference of the National Council on Power (NACOP), the highest decision making body for the power sector.

He charged members of the committee to ensure a successful and hitch-free event.

The event is scheduled for the second quarter of this year.

The minister underscored the importance of the conference, stressing that the council meeting has become more important against the background of the ongoing reforms and revitalisation of the power sector.

Adelabu stated, "As we are all aware, this is the highest decision making body for the power sector, so we have an important assignment at hand and not just a meeting. It must be planned and executed to ensure that the desired outcome of the meeting is achieved.

"The last of this meeting, I understand, was held in December 2022, so we have a lot of grounds to cover because it is supposed to be an annual meeting. We have a backlog of issues to discuss at the coming meeting and we must be fully prepared for it."

Court Orders Forfeiture of N1.37bn Allegedly Looted Under El-Rufai's Govt

John Shiklam in Kaduna

A Federal High Court in Kaduna, has ordered the interim forfeiture of N1.373 billion to the federal government following allegations that the funds were diverted into the account of Kaduna Marts JV Nigeria Limited.

Justice G. M. Kabara, the presiding judge, issued the order on February 28, 2025, following an application filed on February 14, 2025, by the Federal Government.

The court documents made available to journalists on Wednesday in Kaduna indicated that the forfeited amount was lodged in the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) recovery account at the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The money, according to the documents, was part of an ongoing probe into financial dealings involving Kaduna State Government officials between 2015 and 2023.

Sources said the funds were recovered in the course of investiga-

tions into suspected misappropriation by state officials.

The source said, "The forfeited amount was recovered in the course of an ongoing investigation into officials of the Kaduna State Government."

As part of the legal proceedings, the court has directed that a notice be published in two national newspapers, inviting any interested parties to present reasons why the funds should not be permanently forfeited to the Federal Government.

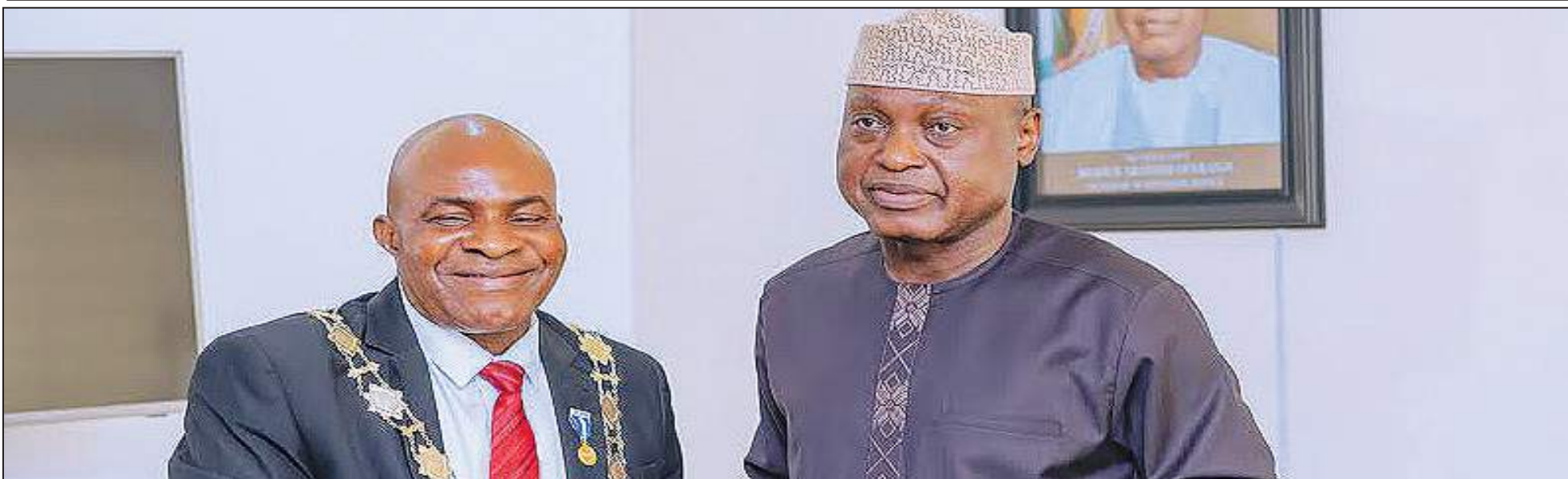
"The defendant is hereby ordered to temporarily forfeit the sum of N1,373,180,510.07 to the federal government of Nigeria," the court ruled.

The case, marked FHC/KD/C5/28/2025, was brought under the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act, 2006, and the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Act, 2022.

The defendant, Indo Kaduna Marts JV Nigeria Limited, has been charged accordingly.

The judge adjourned the matter to April 8, 2025.

NEWSXTRA



THANKS FOR THE VISIT...

Ekiti State Governor, Mr. Biodun Oyebanji(right), and President, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), Chief Davidson Chizuoike Alaribe, during the visit of members of ICAN to the governor in Ado-Ekiti...yesterday

Group Slams Abia PDP over Wabara's Purported Expulsion, Says Joke Going Too Far

Emmanuel Ugwu-Nwogoin Umuahia

The Abia State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has been flayed over its purported expulsion of the party's Board of Trustees (BoT) Chairman, Senator Adolphus Wabara.

The former Senate President was on Tuesday expelled from the state PDP after being placed on suspension

since February 11, 2025, even though the national leadership of the party rejected it.

But a pressure group in the party under the aegis of 'PDP Frontiers for Change and Progress' flayed the leadership of Abia PDP, saying that: "The purported expulsion" of the BoT chairman represents "a joke taken too far."

The group in a statement issued by its National Coordinator, Mr. Emeka Yellow Ikpegbu, and made available to the media in Umuahia, knocked the state party leadership

for disrespecting Wabara.

It said that the action of the Abia PDP under the leadership of Elder Abraham Amah amounted to engaging in "a futile hatchet job

by desperate political hirelings with seared conscience."

According to the group, "We are not surprised at this shameless dance by these characters and

their paymasters knowing their antecedents," adding that the ultimate aim of the anti-democratic forces in PDP was to remove the BoT chairman.

Uphold Your High Standards, Oyebanji Urges ICAN

Gbenga Sodeinde in Ado Ekiti

Ekiti State Governor, Mr. Biodun Oyebanji, has called on the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) to remain steadfast in maintaining its high standards and rigorous certification process for accountants in the country.

Governor Oyebanji, who gave the charge yesterday while playing host to the leadership of the ICAN led by its President, Chief Davidson Chizuoike Alaribe, in his office in Ado-Ekiti, urged the leadership not to compromise the institute's rigorous examination process which is the foundation of its current high reputation.

The governor, while noting that some people have expressed concern about the toughness of ICAN's examinations, pointed out that the seeming difficulty is what sets the institute apart and preserves its credibility as a leading professional body.

While commending members of the Institute in his government for their role in promoting transparency and accountability,

Governor Oyebanji acknowledged that the professionalism and expertise of ICAN-certified accountants serving in various capacities in his administration have significantly contributed to the effective management of resources available to the state, earning the state national recognition as a model of accountability and transparency in Nigeria.

The governor assured the Institute of the readiness of the state government to partner it through the "Catch Them Young" to train more youths in accounting and financial management. He emphasized the importance of equipping young people with the necessary skills to build a strong foundation for future professionals.

The governor said: "Mr. President, I am not an accountant but I will just give you this piece of advice because I listened to you when you said people have expressed concerns over the toughness of your examinations. I will just plead with you not to compromise the process."

IPAC Pledges Support for Niger Governor

Laleye Dipo in Minna

The Inter Party Advisory Council (IPAC) in Niger State has pledged the support of the organisation to the state Governor, Mohammed Umaru Bago.

Alhaji Muhammad Bello, the chairman of the council, also assured Governor Bago that IPAC would continue to give him the desired support to promote good governance and consequently deliver more dividends of democracy to the people.

Bello, who was silent on backing the governor for the 2027 governorship election, said its members are satisfied with the "tremendous work Governor Bago is doing to transform the state.

"We will continue to give you the desired support to promote good governance and consequently deliver more dividends of democracy to the

people," Bello said when he led 18 other leaders of the council on a courtesy visit to Governor Bago at the government house.

Governor Bago, in his response, appreciated his guests, and promised to provide the organisation with a land to build its permanent secretariat.

Similarly Governor Bago told the visitors that they should consider their request for the payment of their outstanding office rents done.

He said the administration would continue to carry everyone along in the governance of the state, saying: "The New Niger Agenda is not for only members of the ruling party.

"This administration is all-inclusive, and welcomes constructive criticisms on government policies and programmes from opposition parties, to deepen democracy for the best interest of the people."

Delta Gifts Student Associations New Buses

Omon-Julius Onabu in Asaba

Delta State Government has presented a new bus each to the National Association of Nigeria Students/Joint Campus Committee (NANS/JCC) in the state and the National Association of Delta State Students (NADESSTU) with a

charge to be good ambassadors of the state by their commitment to legitimate activities at all times.

Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Dr. Kingsley Ewu, presented keys of the two brand new vehicles to the Chairman of NANS/JCC, Comrade Samson Ikpahwore, and NADESSTU National President,

Comrade Monday Wiska at the Government House Asaba, urging the two bodies to use the buses for the purpose they were meant.

Ewu said that the donation was meant to ease logistical challenges by facilitating the positive and legitimate programmes and activities of the two student

associations.

The SSG, who noted that the donation was in keeping with the promise made by Governor Sheriff Oborevwori, urged the respective student leaders to reciprocate government's gesture of goodwill by being worthy ambassadors, and by not misusing the buses.

Minister of Interior Unveils Reforms to Transform Nigeria's Security, Economy

Mary Nnah

In a landmark meeting with stakeholders in Lagos, the Minister of Interior, Dr. Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, announced a comprehensive overhaul of the country's immigration and interior affairs, aimed at streamlining processes, enhancing

security, and fostering economic growth.

The minister's declaration was made during a high-stakes meeting with stakeholders yesterday, at the NECA House in Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos.

The minister revealed that the government is set to introduce a contactless passport application

system, allowing Nigerians to apply for passports online without needing physical presence. This move is expected to significantly reduce processing time and increase efficiency.

According to him, "We are committed to making life easier for Nigerians and foreigners alike. The contactless passport

application system is just one of the many reforms we are introducing to streamline our processes and enhance our services", Tunji-Ojo said.

Additionally, the ministry has introduced an e-gate solution at Nigerian airports, facilitating seamless entry and exit for travelers.

Seek Information on Export Potential, NEPC Tells Nigerian Manufacturers

James Sowole in Abeokuta

The Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) has tasked manufacturers of made-in-Nigeria goods to seek information on how to export their products to the outside world.

The NEPC said one of the causes of problems confronting

Nigerian manufacturers in exporting their goods was their inability to seek information on procedure they should follow on export market.

The Head of Product and Marketing Department of NEPC, Ogun State office, Hadiza Kashi, stated this in Abeokuta, Ogun State, at Strategic Focus Group meeting

organised by the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) on made-in-Nigeria products.

The meeting had in attendance various stakeholders including some manufacturers, representatives of Nigeria Association of Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines

and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Ogun State Chamber of Commerce, Mines and Agriculture (OGCCIMA), Small, Medium Enterprise Development of Nigeria (SMEDAN), National Association of Small Scale Industry (NASENI), Faculty of Engineering of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAB) among others.

Igweship Tussle: Soludo Stops Anambra Monarch from Parading Self as King

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Anambra State Governor, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, has stopped a supposed monarch of Oba community in Idemili South Local Government Area, Augustine Chinedu Emelube, from parading himself as monarch.

The state Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters, Hon. Tonycollins Nwabunwanne, who made the declaration on behalf of the governor, said the election that brought Emelube was illegal.

Nwabunwanne said the cancellation of the election was

because it was conducted against a pending matter in court and would not be recognised by the government.

Nwabunwanne said there was no traditional ruler or Igwe cabinet in Oba community because there is a pending court matter relating to the conduct of the traditional

rulership election when it was conducted.

Reacting to this, a contestant against the restrained Emelube, Mr. Chukwuma Ananti, hailed the decision of the state governor in stopping his opponent from parading himself as the monarch of the community.

Police Arrest Suspect with Human Skulls, Firearms in Ebonyi

Benjamin Nworie in Abakaliki

The Ebonyi State Command has arrested a suspect, Ovuta Chigozie, with two human skulls and three locally made guns.

In a statement issued by the Command's spokesman, SP Joshua Ukandu, the suspect is from Okoffia community in Ezza

South Local Government Area of the state.

According to Ukandu, "During further interrogation, Chigozie confessed that the human skulls were given to him for the preparation of a spiritual concoction. Authorities are actively pursuing the individual mentioned in connection with

this case.

"In a separate operation, while tracking a stolen tricycle, operatives of the command uncovered a criminal syndicate specialising in altering the colours of stolen tricycles from neighbouring states.

"This operation led to the arrest of Nweke Chukwudi 'm', Nwankwo Obinna 'm',

John Abba 'm', and Uche Abba 'm'. Three stolen tricycles were recovered from the suspects, who admitted to receiving the vehicles from accomplices for colour modifications."

The police spokesman said that all suspects would be charged to court upon the completion of investigations.

Lagos Taskforce Denies Extortion on Oshodi Pedestrian Bridge

Yinka Olatunbosun

The Lagos State Task Force has responded to a viral video alleging that its officials were collecting tolls from pedestrians using the Oshodi pedestrian bridge, describing such claims

as "false."

In a statement issued by the Director, Public Affairs, Lagos State Task Force, Mr. Gbadeyan Abdulraheem, it was declared that the Taskforce does not charge or authorise the collection of tolls on pedestrian bridges.

The statement read: "Officials of the Lagos State Taskforce and the Kick Against Indiscipline (KAI) are stationed at pedestrian bridges to enforce their usage for public safety and the preservation of human lives, not to extort pedestrians.

"Relevant enforcement agencies have been notified to address the situation and ensure the safety of all road users. We urge the public to disregard the misinformation and report any such illegal activities through the appropriate Government channels."

We Can Upset Super Eagles in Uyo, Zimbabwe Coach Boasts

Zimbabwe Head Coach, Michael Nees, has boasted his team can cause a big upset by beating the Super Eagles in Uyo when both teams clash in a crucial 2026 World Cup qualifier later this month.

Zimbabwe will be guests of Nigeria on March 25 in Uyo in continuation of the 2026 World Cup qualifying series.

With Rwanda, South Africa and Benin Republic all tied on seven points in Group C, Super Eagles are fifth on three points, next to fourth placed Lesotho with five points from four matches. Zimbabwe are bottom on two points.

But in what appears a mind game, the Zimbabwe's Copper Bullets gaffer believes that they are in the same boat

RESULTS	
UCL	
Feyenoord	0-2 Inter
B'Munich	3-0 Leverkusen
Benfica	0-1 Barcelona
PSG	0-1 Liverpool
Europa League	
(Playoffs)	
Alkmaar	v Tottenham
FCSB	v Lyon
Fenerbahce	v Rangers
Sociedad	v Man Utd
Ajax	v E'Frankfurt
AS Roma	v Bilbao
Bodo/Glimt	v Olympiacos
Plzen	v Lazio

2026 WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

as lowly Eagles after four games. "Like us, Nigeria have their back against the wall, they are like wounded lions who want to turn the page (after a poor start to the qualifiers," Nees said on Brila FM radio yesterday

"It will be an exciting game and Nigeria are beatable in Uyo."

Both teams played out a 1-1 draw in Rwanda when they clashed in the reverse tie in November 2023.



ADVANTAGE BAYERN MUNICH...

Harry Kane scored a brace as Bayern Munich defeated Leverkusen 3-0 in the Champions League Last 16 playoff first leg clash last night.

Martinez Fires Inter Milan into Advantage against Feyenoord

Lautaro Martinez was on target as Inter Milan took a commanding 2-0 lead against Feyenoord in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie.

Marcus Thuram opened the scoring seven minutes before the break when he stabbed home Nicolo Barella's looping ball into the box from close range.

Kristjan Asllani's free-kick from

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

25 yards was tipped over the bar by Feyenoord goalkeeper Timon Wellenreuther in the final action of the first half.

But Inter doubled their lead five minutes after the interval as captain

Martinez fired high into the roof of the net from Piotr Zielinski's lay-off.

It was the Argentine's 18th goal in the competition and took him one clear of the legendary Sandro Mazzola as the club's record scorer in the European

Cup/Champions League.

Polish midfielder Zielinski had a chance to get on the scoresheet when Thuram was fouled in the box by Jeyland Mitchell - but Wellenreuther got down low to his right to save the penalty.

The return leg takes place at the San Siro on Tuesday, 11 March (20:00 GMT).

Nigeria Wins First Medal at 2025 African Junior Fencing Championships

Teenage fencing sensation, Inkosi Brou, has secured Nigeria's first medal at the ongoing 2025 African Junior Fencing Championships in Luanda, Angola.

This achievement marks a significant milestone for the Nigerian Fencing Federation (NFF), showcasing their strides in the sport through intense preparations, strategic partnerships, and notable achievements. Brou, a US-based athlete, won the only medal for a Sub-Saharan African nation on March 1.

The grandson of the former Direc-

tor General of NAFDAC, Prof. Dora Akunyili, Brou, recently displayed his burgeoning talent at the Almaty Saber FIE Junior World Cup, held from February 14 to 16, before heading to Angola to clinch a medal for Nigeria.

Representing Nigeria from the Diaspora, Brou delivered a stellar performance, demonstrating skill, resilience, and the fighting spirit of Nigerian athletes. His achievement further cements Nigeria's rising status in international fencing.

Competing on the international

stage presents both opportunities and challenges for the teenager. Brou's dedication to representing Nigeria, despite being born and raised in the United States, exemplifies his passion and commitment. His journey from an unranked 15-year-old in October 2023 to his current standings reflects significant progress.

Another promising Nigerian fencer, Peluola Akinbamiro, was also set to make her mark in the competition but unfortunately missed her first bout due to a last-minute schedule change

that was not communicated on time.

Despite this setback, she remained focused and determined, embodying the resilience that defines Nigeria's growing fencing community.

Looking beyond Angola, the NFF has been making strategic preparations for the Wuxi World Championship (April 7th-15th) and the Senior African Championship in June. These efforts include team selection, logistics, and training plans to ensure Nigerian fencers compete at their best on the world stage.

NDSF's Scouting Committee to Unearth Next Generation Athletes

Scouting and Mentorship Committee of the inaugural Niger Delta Sports Festival (NDSF) is poised to discover and showcase the best budding athletes from the Niger Delta region during the event that will hold from April 1 to 8 in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

Chairman of the committee, Godwin Enakhena, stressed that its commitment to unearthing talents that will replace Nigerian sports icons like Tobikoba Amusan, Ese Brume, Blessing Oborodudu, Odunayo Adekunroye, Austin JJ Okocha and many others was not negotiable.

Aside discovering new athletes for

Nigeria, the Niger Delta region will regain its position as the number one sports hub in the country.

The Festival is more than just a sporting event to the committee led by the veteran broadcast journalist. "It is a platform for empowering the youth, promoting peace and unity, and showcasing the rich cultural heritage of our region. By participating in the festival, individuals are contributing to a brighter future for the Niger Delta. This is where passion meets opportunity, showcasing the region's culture, empowering its youth, and uniting the region in celebration."

According to Enakhena "the committee's primary responsibility is to ensure that the best athletes from the 17 sporting events that will feature at the festival are selected by a group of professionals comprising local and foreign coaches and scouts. This Herculean task requires a collaborative effort to identify and showcase the region's budding talents. The selected athletes will tell the story of the success of the inaugural Niger Delta Sports Festival and the talents that abound in the region."

Enakhena who has successfully midwifed football and sports teams

in Nigeria added that "the NDSF will afford the Niger Delta region the opportunity to regain its number one position in sports, not only as a reservoir of talents but to dominate sports in Nigeria like it used to in the past. In carrying out this assignment, the committee will work as a unit, ensuring that standards are not compromised across board. Only the very best athletes will be picked and showcased to the world through the aid of technology and the invitation of foreign scouts to Nigeria during the event", concluded the veteran sports journalist.

Also, the Super Eagles drew two of their home games in the campaign (1-1 vs Lesotho, 1-1 vs South Africa) to find themselves in this precarious situation.

Looking ahead of this month's clash Nees is confident his side can add to the Eagles' poor home form.

"Everybody knows Nigeria (Super Eagles) are better than their

current position and our positions are similar," the 57-year-old German said on Brila FM.

The Eagles are unbeaten against Zimbabwe in their last seven clashes, recording four wins and three draws.

Also, the first and only time the Eagles lost to Zimbabwe was in 1981, which was a 2-0 defeat in a friendly game.

U17 WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

SAFA Throws Gates Open for Clash with Nigeria's Flamingos

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

Ahead of the crucial first leg of the U17 Women's World Cup qualifier this Saturday, the South African Football Association (SAFA) has announced free entry for fans.

South Africa's Bantwana will face Nigeria's Flamingos in the opening leg of the second qualifying round. The team aims to get a good result, which will make the reverse fixture less important if need be.

SAFA took to social media yesterday morning, urging supporters to come in large numbers for a free-pay encounter against Nigeria.

"Come show your love and support the team in this crucial World Cup qualifier—entry is free," SAFA stated.

Bantwana heads into the fixture with momentum, having secured a dominant 21-2 aggregate victory over Gabon in the first round.

The match is scheduled for Saturday at Lucas Moripe Stadium in Pretoria.

Nigeria's U17 girls, Flamingos, left for South Africa on Tuesday and Head Coach Bankole Olo-wookere selected 19 players, with goalkeeper Christiana Uzoma, defenders Hannah Ibrahim and Jumai Adebayo, midfielders Shakirat Moshood and Muinat

Rotimi, and forwards Harmony Chidi and Chisom Nwachukwu included.

Meanwhile, the Confederation of African Football (CAF), has selected Kenyan officials to superintend, which will kick off at 3 pm South Africa time (2 pm Nigeria).

While 2022 FIFA World Cup bronze medallists Nigeria drew bye to the second round.

In a related development, CAF has appointed Josephine Wanjiku as the referee, with her compatriots Mary Njoroge, Elizabeth Njoroge and Juma Lucy Awino to serve as assistant 1, assistant 2 and fourth official respectively.

Cindy Barbara Dlodlu from Eswatini will be the commissioner, with Moroccan Khadija Rezzag to be in the role of referee assessor.

Both teams will battle things out in the return leg at the Remo Stars Stadium, Ikenne-Remo on Saturday, 15th March, with the winner on aggregate progressing to the third round of the qualification campaign.

This year's FIFA U17 Women's World Cup will be hosted by Morocco, from 17 October – 8 November, with Africa to present five teams (including host nation Morocco) at the finals, which has been expanded to a 24-nation championship.

8th Edition of Sovereign Trust Insurance Open Golf to Begin March 7

Sovereign Trust Insurance Plc, has said that it has set the stage to host the 8th edition of the Sovereign Trust Insurance Open Golf Tournament in Ibadan, Oyo State.

The event is scheduled to hold from March 7 to 9, 2025, at the Ibadan Golf Club, Onireke Reservation Area, Ibadan, Oyo State.

The 3-day tournament is expected to bring together some of the country's top golfers from different Golf Clubs in the country both at the Amateur and Professional levels in the male and female categories to be competed for.

The Captain of Ibadan Golf Club, Mr. Seyi Alaba, expressed great appreciation to the Management of Sovereign Trust Insurance for staying true to its promise of sponsoring the tournament on an annual basis.

He said he was very optimistic that this year's tournament would be far thrilling and exciting than the last edition. He enjoined all golf enthusiasts across the

country to make the ancient city the converging point during the 3-day tournament.

According to him, "Sovereign Trust Insurance has consistently been leading the pack amongst insurance companies in the country in promoting sporting activities at all levels and urged more participation from other corporate organisations in advancing the game of golf and other sports in order to further enhance the human capacity in the burgeoning sports industry in the country."

Also speaking, Sovereign Trust Managing Director/CEO, Mr. Olaotan Soyinka stated that "the gesture was a further indication of the company's affirmed commitment to the development of sports in the country".

"We are resolute in our commitment to the ideals of promoting development in all areas of human endeavours as much as we can accommodate, which explains why our CSR philosophy is hinged on health, sports and the community, and this to us, is all-encompassing".



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MISSILE

CAN President to Northern Governors

Nations like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates—where Islam is central, and Ramadan deeply revered—do not shut down schools for the entire fasting period. Instead, they adapt schedules, shortening hours or offering flexibility, to balance education with religious practice. A month-long closure, or five weeks in Bauchi's case, is excessive and departs from sensible precedent—Christian Association of Nigeria President, Daniel Okoh, on the decision to close schools in Bauchi, Katsina, Kano, and Kebbi states, for the Ramadan fast



OLUSEGUN ADENIYI

THE VERDICT

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Tales of the Unexpected, Part II

In a December 2016 piece titled 'Tales of the Unexpected', I used a 'case study' involving five scenarios to explain the Nigerian condition. And since every Nollywood movie must have a sequel, I crave the indulgence of readers to release 'Part 2' of that column today.

SCENE ONE: In the course of a break-in at a local branch of the Central Bank (not Nigeria), one of the robbers, holding a pump action gun, shouted: "Don't move, if you don't want to die. The money in this bank belongs to the government while your life belongs to you." With that message, everyone in the banking hall lay down quietly. That was a "mind changing concept".

When Mudashiru Obasa—who was removed as Speaker on 13 January 2025 by 36 out of the 40 members for alleged misconduct, abuse of office and financial impropriety—invaded the Lagos State House of Assembly last Thursday, his replacement, Mojisola Meranda, said he was acting a theatre. By Monday afternoon, it had dawned on Meranda that the forces bent on bringing Obasa back to office were not play-acting. Smelling the coffee, Meranda surrendered, and 'King Obasa' is now back on the throne! All the huffing and puffing of the past two months against a power-drunk presiding officer who has lorded himself over them for a decade have now been upended. After succumbing with tears, the Lagos State House of Assembly members now know that in Nigerian politics 'two plus two' does not always equal four. In our country, as Obasa has demonstrated, to adapt a popular saying, 'one with God(father) is the majority'.

SCENE TWO: When a lady in the banking hall lay on the floor in a suggestively provocative manner that exposed too much flesh, one of the robbers shouted at her: "Please cover up! This is a robbery, not a rape operation!" That is called "being professional".

The Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation recently presented its 2019 report to the National Assembly. It revealed that 178,459 firearms, mostly AK-47 rifles, were missing from various police formations nationwide. Some 3,907 assorted rifles and pistols could also not be accounted for as of January 2020. But the police high command, according to a Daily Trust report on Monday, has traced the development to negligence and poor knowledge of weapon handling by some of their personnel. Put simply, it is about lack of professionalism! While that may be true, it cannot be the only plausible official explanation for this malaise. "Countries that are experiencing conflict or widespread armed violence tend to lose control of ammunition in their national stockpiles, be it through theft, loss, or battlefield capture," Conflict Armament Research, a UK-based non-profit organisation, once stated after revealing that many weapons recovered from bandits in Zamfara State belonged to Nigeria's security forces. The federal government must fish out and deal with the rogue elements within these agencies who are selling weapons to criminals.

SCENE THREE: When the bank robbers returned home with the loot, the youngest



Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan

of them (a graduate of a local university) asked the leader of the gang, who did not complete primary education, "Big brother, can we begin to count the money so as to ascertain how much we got from the operation?" He received an instant response: "You must be very naive! There is so much money in these bags that it will take us several hours to count. Just put on the television. It will not be long before we know from the news how much we took from the bank!" That is called "experience" which, as they say, is the best teacher.

Almost all the Senators who have spoken on the sexual harassment allegation by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan against the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio have been dismissive. Essentially because the allegation first came not on the floor of the senate but on television and only after Akpoti-Uduaghan had been dragged before the ethics committee. "The Senate does not conduct its affairs based on what is trending on social media," chairman of senate committee on media and publicity, Yemi Adaramodu, said on Monday. "The only issue before the Senate is Senator Natasha's non-compliance with the standing orders. All lawmakers are expected to speak from their designated seats, and any breach of this rule undermines order in the chamber."

Even before Akpoti-Uduaghan formally presented her petition yesterday, I knew this matter would not go away quickly since it borders on alleged transactional sex. Nigerians enjoy such salacious stories. That perhaps explains why one of the most trending issues in the last two weeks has been the 'bedroom cost' of a Lamborghini between a female influencer and a top male musician. Yesterday, there was a public protest by Akpoti-Uduaghan's supporters who were later countered by pro-Akpabio

supporters. From experience, no matter what happens on the streets, it is not too difficult to predict that at the end, it is God's-Will that shall be done!

SCENE FOUR: When the robbers had left the bank, the manager directed the supervisor to call the police quickly. But the supervisor said to him: "Not yet time for that! Let us take \$1 million from the vault for ourselves and add it to the \$7 million that we previously embezzled". That is called "thinking outside the box" or to put it in the proper Nigerian lexicon, "applying wisdom".

Following last Friday's Supreme Court ruling, Governor Siminalayi Fubara directed the recently elected local government chairmen in Rivers State to transfer power to Heads of Local Government Administration (HLGAs) in their respective councils to prevent any vacuum. The apex court had nullified the local government elections conducted on 5 October 2024, effectively removing the chairmen and councillors across the 23 local government areas of the state. But the forces against the governor are not relenting and he knows which accounts for stories about the State Chief Judge mooted the idea of going on leave for one year. Regardless of all pretensions to the contrary, the fight in Rivers State is not, and has never been, about principle or public good. It is a fight for supremacy between a godfather and his estranged godson, even when public opinion appears to be on the side of the latter.

SCENE FIVE: That night, there were media reports that \$10 million was taken from the bank. Meanwhile, the robbers counted and counted and counted, but they could only find \$2 million. Immediately sensing what must have happened, the near-illiterate leader of the robbery gang told his boys:

"We risked our lives for only \$2 million while bank manager took \$8 million with just a stroke of his pen." Lost in thought, he began to hum Fela Anikulapo's famous song, 'Authority Stealing' until others joined him: 'Armed robber him need gun/Authority man him need pen/Authority man in charge of money/Him no need gun, him need pen/ Pen got power, gun no get/If gun steal eighty thousand naira/Pen go steal two billion naira...'

I doubt there is any admonition I have repeated on this page as many times as that by Laolu Samuel-Biyi that "If you want to keep hope alive in Nigeria, don't look at the budget." Yet, I find it difficult to keep my own counsel. Anybody who has tried a run-through of the 2025 budget cannot but see isolated billions of Naira in many MDAs that are not tied to any specific projects—funds that are going to 'disappear' by December before we introduce another cycle of money-sharing (that the budgeting process has become in our country) for 2026.

Not knowing what to write about this week, I decided to 'improve' on that bank robbery joke first deployed nine years ago. The 'five scenes' offer embedded lessons, even if in a perverse sense, about contemporary events in our country. If the task of modern politics, is "to tame the power of the state, to direct its activities towards ends regarded as legitimate by the people it serves, and to regularise the exercise of power under a rule of law," according to Francis Fukuyama, the crisis of Nigeria today, in practically all spheres of our national life, is that the elite cannot see that it is ultimately in their enlightened interest to subscribe to such ideals. That then explains why wherever you turn in Nigeria today, what you find is a flight of common-sense.

A Day in Kebbi Tomato Farm

Armed with a ventilated plastic crate, each of the 600 young men and women (all wearing hijab uniforms) competed furiously penultimate Friday afternoon at the GB Foods in Ngaski, Kebbi State. As they harvested tomatoes, I watched the workers (each of whom would be paid according to the number of crates they filled by the end of the day), I could see the opportunities for empowerment through agriculture that we have failed to harness in Nigeria. But first, what took me to the farm that also has a tomato paste factory?

On my way from China last October through Qatar Airlines, I met a young man at the airport in Doha who introduced himself to me as Tokunbo Aderibigbe, a media/communication manager for GB Foods. After the usual exchanges, Tokunbo said he would like me to see what they are doing with tomatoes at their agro-processing farm in Kebbi State. While I agreed to the idea, I said that for security reasons, my visit would have to coincide with whenever a government delegation visited the farm. So, when Tokunbo informed me two weeks ago that the Minister of State for Trade and Investment, John Enoh, was visiting their farm in Kebbi, I signed on to the trip. And I was impressed with what I saw.

Spanning 1,500 hectares, the farm boasts a 620-metric-tonnes-per-day processing plant that generates hundreds of direct jobs, which the company plans to double in the next expansion phase. On average, the number of casual workers engaged on the farm daily is put at about 1,200. By focusing on local production, GB Foods and Tomato Jos, another leading company in the sector, are playing a key role in the reduction of our dependence on imported tomato paste. But much more importantly is how they are empowering smallholder farmers and creating employment opportunities for local people in the communities where they operate.

Nigeria is reputed as the second-largest producer of tomatoes in Africa after Egypt and the 13th-largest in the world. But with about 2.3 million metric tons of tomatoes annually, our country still depends on the importation of tomato paste, largely due to post-harvest losses and the number of inadequate processing facilities. Meanwhile, the trip to GB Foods in Kebbi from Abuja took us on a 50-minute flight to the airstrip in Kontagora, Niger State, before a punishing four-hour journey that should ordinarily take no more than one and a half hours if the road were good...

Note: Piece concluded online