

Edo points the way as FG steps up CNG conversion drive

BILL OKONEDO

As the Federal Government steps up the tempo of its Presidential Compressed Natural Gas Initiative (PCNGI), Edo State has emerged as a shining example for other states of

the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, in the conversion of road transport vehicles from the use of petrol and diesel to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG).

Over 5,600 vehicles already run on CNG in Edo State, according to data from NIPCO

Gas, a joint-venture company between NIPCO and the Nigeria Gas Company Limited (NGC).

This is even as the Presidential CNG Initiative - which aims to convert the bulk of road transport vehicles in Nigeria (especially commercial passenger buses and goods trucks) from the

use of more expensive fuels (petrol and diesel) to CNG, which is about 65 percent cheaper - is just gradually taking off.

President Bola Tinubu approved the establishment of the PCNGI last August in furtherance of his commitment to easing the impact of fuel subsidy removal

on Nigerians by reducing energy costs, which impact the cost of food, goods and transport.

Motor vehicles and other machinery in Nigeria currently use up about 93 million litres of petrol daily. The Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Agency

(NMDPRA) reveals a staggering average daily consumption of 14 million litres of diesel as at Q2, 2023, primarily driven by the unreliability of on-grid power.

Experts say CNG vehicles burn cleaner than petrol and diesel, re-

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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CBN's directives on oil proceeds repatriation to boost naira appreciation —Experts

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Telcos require new strategy as industry GDP falls to \$21bn —FDC

- **trend threatens FG's employment drive**
- **Indian telcos progress holds lessons for Nigeria**



COMMISSIONING OF CKD PLANT:

L-R: Senator Solomon Olamilekan Adeola; Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Chairman, Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote; Executive Director, Dangote Group, Halima Aliko-Dangote; Senate President, Godswill Apkabio, and his Deputy, Senator Barau Jibrin, during the commissioning of CKD plant at the Dangote Sinotruk West Africa Limited, Ikeja, Lagos, on Sunday.

TELIAT SULE

Nigeria's telecoms industry's GDP has begun to lose its tempo, implying that the Federal Government needs to implement policies that will attract more investments into the sector, according to analysts at Financial Derivatives Company Limited (FDC), a Lagos-based investment cum think tank firm.

The FDC analysts stressed that the forward and backward linkages the sector possesses means that a slowdown in the sector's productivity will cause many sectors to perform below their potential.

The telecoms industry's GDP which initially responded to reforms by increasing from \$0.04 billion in 2000 to \$32.8 billion in 2010, and further to \$37.1 billion in 2020, has begun to lose its tempo, declining to \$20.7 billion in 2024, an indication that a new strategy is needed for the sector to regain its allure, they said.

These disclosures were made last week during the Lagos

Business School (LBS) Breakfast Session which focused on "Nigerian Economy on the Brink: Adapt or Collapse?" The LBS Breakfast Session is a monthly top-down appraisal of the global, African and the Nigerian economy, coordinated by the Chief Executive Officer of FDC, Bismarck Rewane.

Nigeria's telecoms sector grew by 6.1 percent in 2000. And in response to the reforms in that sector in 2001, which saw the emergence of companies like MTN Nigeria, Globacom, and Airtel, the sector stupendously grew by 34.8 percent in 2010 but moderated to 15.9 percent in 2020. However, the sector only recorded a 6.2 percent real growth in 2024.

The declining growth in the telecoms sector affected the amount of taxes industry players paid to the central government, which also affected the amount of revenue available to the three tiers of government for develop-

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INVEST IN EDO

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Okomu clash: Obaseki visits wounded soldiers, pledges to apprehend perpetrators • to pay hospital bills of attack victims

The Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has visited soldiers wounded during an attack by assailants in Okomu Community.

The governor, who expressed

his displeasure over the incident, vowed that the State Government will fish out individuals and groups behind the attack.

The governor was represented during the visit at the Military Hospital in Benin City by the Edo State Commissioner for Communication and Orientation, Chris Nehikhare. He was received by the Director of the Military Hospital, Brig. Gen.

Pauline Olubunmi Aburime. Other government officials in the entourage include the Commissioner for Public Safety and Security, Kingsley Uwagbale; Commissioner for Mining

& Energy, Enaholo Ojiefu, and heads of security agencies in the State.

Obaseki said, "It is not right for the military personnel to be attacked in any community here in Edo State. A few weeks ago, we were aware of what happened in a community in Delta State where over twenty (20) soldiers were killed by youths.

"In Edo, we have the issues of cultism and Okaigheles. The data available to us at the State Security Council meeting showed that Okaigheles are largely responsible for the threat to the security of Edo State which led to the ban on their activities."

The governor said after the State Government banned Okaigheles and their activities, some people condemned the ban and asked people to ignore it, adding that it was such attitude that has encouraged those that went to Okomu forest to attack soldiers protecting the state's assets.

"Three soldiers were badly wounded. We have one here now while others are worse. Their gunboats were destroyed. We don't want a situation where we will be losing soldiers to reckless, dangerous cult groups," Obaseki said.

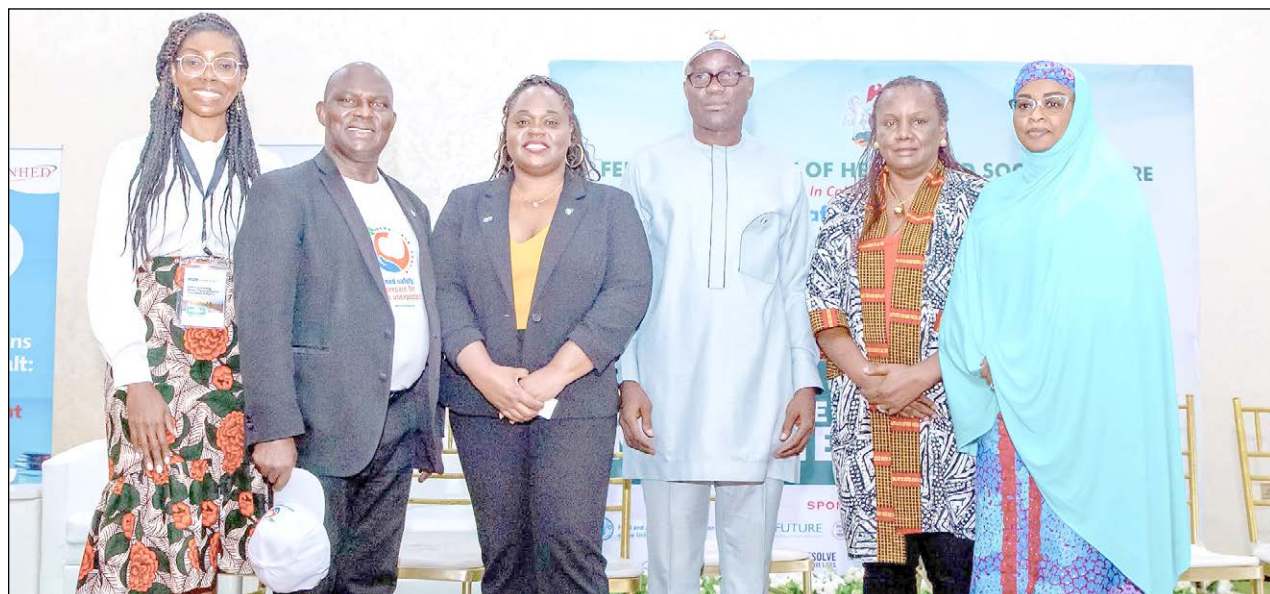
"We appeal to leaders of Edo

South to discourage the youths who are armed to desist from these acts as they are not only attacking soldiers but also civilians on the streets. We are here to visit the soldiers and appeal to them that the Edo State Government will take care of the bills incurred," he said.

Obaseki warned the perpetrators to desist from such acts because the State Government will not tolerate such acts to prevent what happened in Odi Community in Bayelsa State or the incident in Delta State.

"All Edo people, irrespective of party affiliation, must support the government in this fight against cultism and killings in the State as the State has lost over 150 people as a result of the acts. We thank the Nigerian Army, a responsible organisation that doesn't take the laws into their own hands, if not it would have been a different story.

"We will start an operation this week to flush these people out, as we have a lot of security information and data that will help us flush them out. We advise those that belong to any cult group to return the arms they have, renounce their membership of any cult groups they belong to," he said.



INAUGURATION:

L-R: Norma Toussaint, International Programme Specialist, US Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA-FAS); Prof. Olugbenga Ogunmoyela, President, Consumer Advocacy for Food Safety and Nutrition Initiative (CAFSANI); Kelly Scavella, Programme Manager, USDA-FAS; Atanda John, Coordinator, Food Safety Programme, Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (FMHSW); Gloria Ekpo, Facilitator, Agriculture and Food Security Policy Commission, Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) and Sugra Mahmood, Directorate of Nutrition and Food Safety, Federal Ministry of Agriculture at the inauguration of the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) on Food and Feed Safety in Nigeria held in Abuja...Friday.

Edo points the way as FG steps up CNG conversion...

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ducing greenhouse emissions by between 15 and 27 per cent, depending on vehicle type.

Impressed with the impact of CNG roll-out in Edo State years back, the Federal Government directed an expansion of the initiative into other parts of the country. A mega CNG station was then commissioned at Ibafo, Ogun State, to convert automobiles to CNG, as well as to supply nearby industries.

Currently, about 40,000 trucks ply Nigeria's roads dispatching solid, liquid and gaseous cargoes but only between 20,000 and 25,000 of them are required to effectively service the country's haulage needs, experts say. The majority of the trucks

currently run on the more expensive diesel fuel.

Analysts say that food prices would begin to noticeably trend downwards when up to 25 per cent of required haulage trucks (being 5,000 trucks) in the country are CNG-powered, and that the downward progression would flow incrementally as more trucks become CNG-enabled, reducing the burden of high food costs on the wallets of teeming Nigerians and freeing up disposable income for other pressing needs.

The cost of goods and services witnessed a marked upward spiral following the removal of the troubled fuel subsidy regime by President Tinubu in May last year and the free float of the naira.

Economy experts described

both moves as right, necessary and beneficial in the long run, adding, however, that they would cause severe discomfort to Nigerians in the short run.

As the Tinubu administration marked its first anniversary in office on May 29, the conversion to CNG featured prominently in presentations by the government.

Recently, the Federal Government inaugurated a 5.2 million Standard Cubic Feet Per Day (MMSCFD) CNG plant at the Isolo Industrial Area, Ilesama, Lagos State. The Federal Government said the move was aimed at providing an alternative source of fuel and alleviating the effect of petrol subsidy removal on Nigerians.

The CNG facility was built

through a partnership between the NNPC Gas Marketing Limited (NGML), a subsidiary of the Nigerian National, and Transit Gas Nigeria Limited, a subsidiary of Axxela Limited.

Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas), Ekperikpe Ekpo, who inaugurated the plant, said the occasion represented a critical turning point in the development of affordable, sustainable, and secure energy sources in the country.

Programme Director, PCNGI, Micheal Oluwagbemi, had said earlier that the Federal Government intends to establish 1,000 conversion workshops across the country, create 50,000 jobs in the process and deliver one million CNG vehicles by 2027.

"We have a goal, one million

vehicles by the year 2027 and that allows Nigeria to save about \$20 billion in 10 years and also allows us to manage transport inflation," Oluwagbemi added.

"If we have 1,000 workshops, we are talking about 5,000 jobs for technicians, including the cost of the labour and manpower that will go into the increased supply of CNG processing stations, model stations, and refuelling stations that will not run on this ecosystem," he said.

For his part, the Special Assistant on Special Duties and Domestic Affairs to the President, Toyin Subaru, said conversion to CNG would save Nigeria a huge cost on petrol import.

"We are going to develop an app that will enable you to know where a CNG station is located.

We should be able to buy gas for our cars at N230 when today petrol is N680. So, it will help save about two-thirds of your money," Subaru said.

Meanwhile, more and more Nigerians, especially commercial transporters, have been rushing to have their vehicles enabled to run on CNG so as to cut down on operating costs.

Consequently, private CNG conversion companies in Nigeria have raised their charges for converting vehicles to CNG from an average of N300,000 for salon cars to the range of N420,000, while the cost of converting mass transit buses and other heavy-duty vehicles has gone up from between N600,000 and N700,000 to between N1,000,000 and N1.2 million.

Nigeria's telecoms requires new strategy as...

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mental purposes.

According to the FDC analysts, the telecoms sector paid \$875.6 million as taxes to the Federal Government in 2015; \$390.2 billion in 2020; \$807.6 billion in 2022, and \$518.7 billion in 2023. But the naira float and subsidy removal policies of the FG affected the industry's biggest player, MTN Nigeria, which declared a loss after tax of N137 billion in 2023, showing the extent of the challenges the sector currently faces.

"Telecoms CAGR was 32% per annum between 2000 and 2010. The sector's growth is now stagnating at 6% but still above population growth rate of 2.2%. The telecoms industry is becoming

relatively unattractive. Expenditure has increased over the years, but returns and revenues have squeezed to negative margins," FDC said.

Citing the big push theory in economics, which says that a growth in one strategic sector of the economy could stimulate growth in other sectors, the analysts emphasised that the telecoms sector is such an area with potential to transform other sectors of the economy.

The sectors that stand to benefit immensely from a rebound in the telecoms sector include manufacturing, transportation and logistics, education, tourism and travel, financial services, healthcare, retail and commerce, among others.

"The telecoms sector has both

forward and backward linkages to various sectors. This linkage to other sectors is vital for economic growth, innovation, and productivity across various industries, making it a key enabler and driver of development in modern economies. If the telecoms industry collapses, all other sectors will follow," FDC stressed.

The FDC analysts added that countries with higher investment in the world usually end up having higher growth levels. The think tank firm said for Nigeria to be like the Asian Tigers - Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan - the country must invest more and investment in telecoms has a linkage effect on other sectors.

"India is the second largest telecoms market in the world

with a market size of \$44 billion. Massive reforms and investments in the sector supported the growth of the sector. 2021 spectrum auctions alone fetched a record-breaking amount of approximately \$10.5 billion, indicating the high level of investment and competition in the sector. National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP) aims to attract \$100 billion investment in the telecoms sector in four years," FDC said.

India currently has 1.19 billion subscribers, as the sector generates 4 million employment opportunities. The sector attracts an average of \$20.7 billion as foreign direct investment, making India's telecoms GDP worth \$232 billion.

Justifying why the focus of

the discourse was on telecoms, FDC said in a matter of 23 years, teledensity, which is the number of telephone connections for every individual in Nigeria, skyrocketed from 1.89 per cent in 2001 to 103.66 per cent in 2024. Internet users as a proportion of the nation's population increased from 0.02 per cent to 55.4 per cent in 2024 during the same period.

Also, base stations rose from 51,160 units in 2018 to 127,294 units in 2022. Total telephone subscribers increased from 100,000 in 2001 to 222 million in 2024, just as Nigeria's per capita income rose from \$538.2 in 2001 to \$1,109.9 in 2024.

Additionally, as of 2023, telecommunications sector contributed 10.97 per cent to the country's Gross Domestic Product

(GDP), which means for every N100 the Nigerian economy generates now, N11 comes from the telecoms sector.

Notwithstanding, the telecoms sector has witnessed some not-too-impressive performances in recent times, according to FDC analysts. The causes include limited access to foreign exchange, rising inflation, higher operating costs, regulatory burden, multiple taxation, right of way issues, and vandalism. All these combined acted as nexus leading the industry to have marginal cost far less than marginal revenue, which means should telecoms companies in the country attempt to invest more resources, the additional income will not be sufficient to recoup their investments.

NEWS

FG should allow states negotiate minimum wage based on their capacity —SANs

VICTORY OKONJO

As the argument between the Organised Labour and the Federal Government over a new National Minimum Wage continues, some Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs) have expressed divergent views on whether the proposed agreement between the two parties should be binding on states.

In their separate interviews with THISDAY, all the senior lawyers agreed that the issue of minimum wage is under the Exclusive List on Item 34 of Part 1 of the Second Schedule to the 1999 Constitution, which provides that the National Assembly has the power to “prescribe a national minimum wage for the Federation or any part thereof.”

However, Mike Ozekhome, Joseph Nwobike, Egun Adegboruwa, John Baiyesea, Ahmed Raji, and Dayo Akinlaja, argued that Nigeria is a federation, the different federating units should negotiate separately based on their individual financial capacities.

But human rights lawyer, Mr. Femi Falana, a former Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Abuja branch, Mr. Moses Ebute and Abiodun Olatunji, insisted that

by virtue of Section 4 of the Constitution, the National Assembly is exclusively empowered to legislate on National Minimum Wage in Nigeria.

This is as the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) described the claim by the Nigeria Governors’ Forum (NGF) that most of the states cannot pay a minimum wage of N60,000 as an act of bad faith.

Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, however, insisted that the states should be allowed to sort the issues out with the organised labour, saying, “If you ask for my position on this issue, I will say the states should be left to sort themselves out with the labour,” Makinde told THISDAY, Saturday night.

According to Ozekhome, the power given to the National Assembly by the 1999 Constitution “is somewhat curious, as one would have thought that, given our federal as against unitary structure under the self-same Constitution, the National Assembly ought to only legislate for the federal workers, while states did the same for theirs. But that is clearly not the case.”

The constitutional lawyer stated that until the Constitution is amended, the National Assembly possesses the exclusive

capacity to enact a national minimum wage for the whole country or any part thereof, which obviously includes the states.

He, however, argued that in practice, the states have always prescribed their own minimum wages as dictated by their individual financial capacities, adding that the Edo State government only just recently pegged theirs at N70,000.

On his part, Adegboruwa noted that Section 4 of the Con-

stitution provides that only the National Assembly has the powers to make laws relating to issues of national minimum wage.

“However, we run a federation, which consists of the Federal Government, the state government and the local government. When laws are made by the National Assembly that applies to federal institutions and employees.

According to him, when the National Assembly makes an Act such as the National Mini-

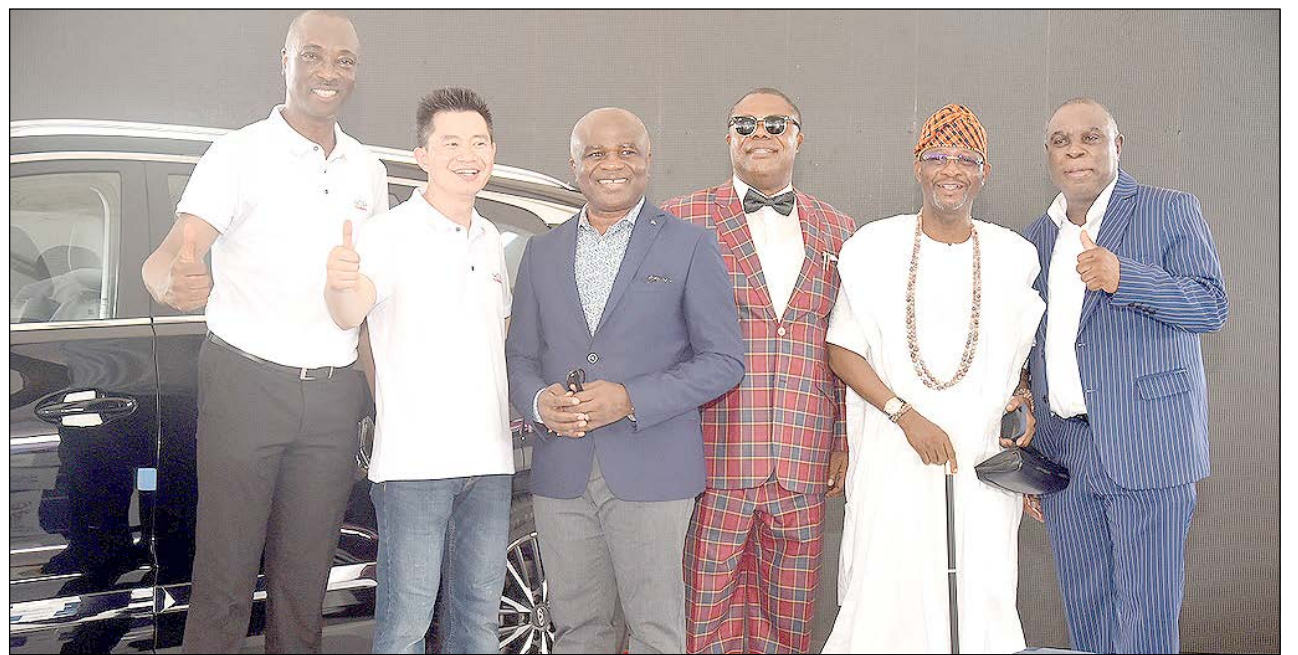
mum Wage Act, the state Houses of Assembly should work to also implement and incorporate that Act into their own laws for the purpose of enforcement.

He insisted that the Federal Government is not competent to negotiate on behalf of the states on minimum wage for workers.

Also contributing, Nwobike said the states being a legal entity are independent, and are entitled to enter into negotiations with their respective labour unions

before enforceable agreements can be reached or implied.

He said: “There is no agreement between the organised labour and the federal government which binds the state governments. The state governments are independent legal entities which are entitled to enter into negotiations with their respective labour unions before enforceable agreements can be reached or implied. That is the law.”



CHERY TIGGO 8 PRO:

L-R: Joseph Omokhapue, sales and marketing director at Carloha Nigeria; Liang Long, CEO of Carloha Incorporated; Okey Nwuke, member of the Board of Directors at Access Bank; Edward Benson, Esa Omu-Adekunle Oyinloye, traditional ruler of the day, and Sola Adigun, Managing Director of Carloha Nigeria, at the official launch of Chery Tiggo 8 Pro in Lagos recently.

Cut high cost of governance, minimise corruption to pay minimum wage, Labour tells govts

JENNIFER OSADOH

The Organised Labour has rejected the claim by state governors that they cannot pay N60,000 minimum wage and urged the governors not to send the nation into a severe financial crisis.

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) charged the governors with lying about their resource allocation, as the governors see the N60,000 the Federal Government had suggested to be impractical.

In a statement, Halima Ahmed, the Nigeria Governors’ Forum’s (NGF) acting director of media affairs and public relations, noted that many states would use their whole monthly allotment from the federation account to pay employee salaries if permitted to fly.

But a statement by NLC’s head of information and public affairs, Benson Upah, said Federation Account Allocation Committee’s (FAAC) allocations have since grown from N700 billion to N1.2 trillion, increasing the governors’ capacity to pay more than N60,000 as minimum wage.

The statement reads: “Nothing can be further from the truth as FAAC allocations have since grown from N700 billion to N1.2 trillion, making the gov-

ernments extremely rich at the expense of the people.

“We are alarmed by the statement credited to the Nigeria Governors’ Forum that state governments cannot even afford to pay N60,000 as minimum wage as a few states will end up borrowing to pay workers every month.

“We do believe the governors have acted in bad faith. It is unheard of for such a statement to be issued to the world in the middle of an ongoing negotiation. It is certainly in bad taste.

“As for the veracity of their claim, nothing can be further from the truth as FAAC allocations have since grown from N700 billion to N1.2 trillion, making the governments extremely rich at the expense of the people.

“All the governors need to do to be able to pay a reasonable national minimum wage (not even the N60,000) is cut the high cost of governance, minimise corruption as well as prioritise the welfare of workers.

“It is important to explain here that a national minimum wage is not synonymous with the different pay structures of different states. The national minimum wage is the lowest floor below which no employer is allowed to pay. The aim is to protect the weak and the poor.”

Nigeria Army kills 6 in raid of IPOB camp in Aba

TOBORE JEROME

Troops of Operation UDO KA have neutralised six terrorists following a successful raid on the camp of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in Igboro Forest, Arochuku Local Government Area of Abia State on Saturday.

The Nigerian Army disclosed this on its X handle on Sunday, saying the operation was embarked upon to apprehend the perpetrators of the attack on its troops in Aba last week.

According to the army, during the intelligence-led operation, troops encountered impro-

vised explosive devices along its axis of advance and one soldier sustained minor injury from the fragment.

“The terrorists’ feeble fire-fights were adequately subdued with superior firepower that led to the neutralization of six members of the criminal terrorists group while others escaped into adjoining bushes with varying degrees of gunshot wounds as blood stains were seen along their escape routes.

“The gallant troops recovered three locally fabricated Rocket Propelled Grenade launchers, two locally fabricated Artillery guns with tripods and bombs.

“Other items recovered include dane guns, Biafran flags as

well as Toyota Tundra and Hilux vehicles that were burnt. Also, all of their camps with different inscriptions were destroyed,” according to the statement.

The statement noted that the Joint Task Force Operation UDO KA called on the people of Abia to continue to cooperate with security agencies by giving credible and timely information that will help to annihilate the criminals in the state and the whole of South Eastern Nigeria.

It could be recalled that six soldiers were killed last week in an attack by the IPOB/ESN, at Obikabia Junction Checkpoint in Obingwa Local Government Area adjoining Aba metropolis, where troops of Operation Udoka

were deployed to enforce peace in the area and protect the citizens.

The attackers were said to have come in three-tinted Toyota Prado SUVs and others, from built-up areas surrounding the checkpoint.

Six civilians were killed in the crossfire that ensued between the terrorists and the troops.

Following the killing of the soldiers, the Nigerian Military in a statement by its spokesperson, Major General Edward Buba, pledged to retaliate the attack on its troops brutally.

“The armed forces mourn the death of these troops as each and every soldier lost in battle is a terrible loss. Meanwhile, investigations are ongoing concerning the attack.”

Promosalons, SIAL Network to visit Nigeria on trade mission

TOBORE JEROME

Promosalons — Nigeria has announced that its French partner, SIAL Network, is set to visit Nigeria on a trade mission.

In a press release dated June 9, 2024, and signed by the Managing Director/CEO, Promosalons Nigeria, Cameroon and Gabon, Akin Akinbola, said SIAL Network will be visit Nigeria on a trade mission between June 9 and 11, 2024, with

the primary aim of securing business partners in Nigeria.

Akinbola explained that Promosalons Nigeria is part of the France economic team of the French Embassy in Nigeria with its headquarter based in Paris, France.

“Promosalons Nigeria is part of the France economic team of the French Embassy in Nigeria with its headquarter based in Paris, France. Promosalons is an associative network dedicated to

the promotion of French trade shows on international markets.

“We are pleased to inform you of the visiting team of SIAL Network from France to Nigeria.

“In its bid to explore business opportunities in the Nigerian market, SIAL Network has expressed its desire to visit Nigeria on a trade mission, between the 09th and 11st of June 2024, with the primary aim of securing business partners in Nigeria,” he said.

He went further to say that the

team will be visiting Nigeria to introduce SIAL Network as a global partner to support food business development and export. During the visit, the team will be led by Mr. Nicolas Trentesaux who is the Managing Director of SIAL Network in France.

This is to formally introduce SIAL Network, Inspiring Food Business Worldwide, No. 1 Food Innovation Network and your global partner to support food business development and export.

Inside Edo

Eranomigho visits Nigerian Observer, commends infrastructural development strides in Edo

TOBORE JEROME

A chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), MegaComrade Clement Eranomigho Edegbe, has lauded Governor Godwin Obaseki for his significant contributions to the infrastructural development in Edo State.

Eranomigho, who is a well-known critique of Governor Obaseki's administration, stated this on Friday when he paid a courtesy visit to The Nigerian Observer, where he expressed his admiration for the completed and ongoing projects that have transformed various sectors of the state.

During his visit, he highlighted several key areas where Governor Obaseki's administration had made impactful improvements, noting that the governor's focus on infrastructure had not only enhanced the state's aesthetic appeal but also boosted economic activities and improved the quality of life for its residents.

In his words, "First of all, I want to thank His Excellency, Governor Godwin Obaseki; I am on an unusual tour of the state. This is something that doesn't normally happen in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world for your number one critique to come and see what you have done. My Edo people, I must be honest with you because 'seeing is believing.'"

"We have toured the School of Nursing, and other laudable projects in the state; what I have seen is unbelievable. I want to thank him because he's doing a good job. I urge Edo people to come and see for themselves, if you argue that Governor Obaseki is not doing anything then you need to come and see for yourself his giant strides. I didn't know how we got here, the roads are so smooth."

Eranomigho specifically mentioned the extensive road network expansion under Governor Obaseki's leadership, and praised the construction and rehabilitation of major roads and rural pathways, which have facilitated better connectivity and eased transportation challenges. "The new and improved roads are a testament to the governor's commitment to making Edo State a hub of economic activity and social development," he stated.

The APC stalwart also commended the advancements in healthcare infrastructure. He pointed out the renovation and equipping of hospitals and health centres across the state, which have provided residents with better access to quality healthcare services. He emphasized that these improvements

are crucial for the well-being of the people and the overall development of the state.

In addition to roads and healthcare, Eranomigho acknowledged the strides made in the education sector, noting the renovation of schools and the construction of new classrooms, which have created a more conducive learning environment for students. "Education is the foundation of any society, and the governor's efforts in this sector will have long-lasting positive effects on the future of our state," he said.

He also highlighted the economic and industrial development initiatives spearheaded by Governor Obaseki, and commended the establishment of industrial parks and business hubs that have attracted both local and international investors. These initiatives have generated employment opportunities and contributed to the economic growth of Edo State.

In his concluding remarks, Eranomigho urged other political leaders and stakeholders to support Governor Obaseki's vision for Edo State, stating that no one has criticized the governor more than he had done. He therefore stressed the importance of unity and collaboration in achieving sustainable development. Eranomigho's visit to the Nigerian Observer underscores the recognition and appreciation of Governor Obaseki's efforts in transforming Edo State through strategic infrastructural development.

The MegaComrade said he is supporting the PDP governorship candidate in the forthcoming September 21 gubernatorial election, Dr Asue Ighodalo, and urged Edo people to vote Asue Ighodalo massively for continuity of the good works Governor Obaseki is doing.

Also speaking during the visit, a chieftain of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and a member of the Asue/Ogie campaign team, Goodluck Osaretin, applauded Governor Obaseki for turning the state around and for making Edo State an enviable state in the committee of states in Nigeria.

According to Osaretin, "From what we have seen here so far, right from the entrance of this place down to all the parts of this place we have toured, it is amazing the kind of world-class facilities that are here. It only takes a man who has a foresight, who is thinking as a leader to actually put in place this edifice and facilities we have seen today."

"The Nigerian Observer we use to know is one very old small dilapidated building, but from what we have seen so far,

there is now a digital session, a very large printing press where you can print any lengths and sizes of flex, banner, calendar, books, customized T-shirts, face caps, and other printing works".

He called on residents of Edo State to come out on September 21 to vote for the PDP governorship candidate, Dr Asue Ighodalo, for continuity of the amazing work that Governor Obaseki is doing in the state.

"Asue Ighodalo is a nobleman who is part and parcel of how all these projects were birthed, so he should be able to continue from wherever Obaseki stops. We need continuation of this and to also build more to it. Asue Ighodalo is the only one that can do that for Edo people", he said.

Responding, the Managing Director of The Nigerian Observer, Mr Osa Victor Obayagbona, appreciated MegaComrade Clement Eranomigho Edegbe and his team for visiting The Nigerian Observer as part of their tour of state to see the magnificent infrastructural development strides of Governor Obaseki and how he had turned the fortune of the state around.

Mr Obayagbona, who took out time to take his guest round the in and out of the facilities of the rebranded The Nigerian

Observer, which includes the conference/editorial room, the newsroom, the production department, the ICT room, as well as the Edo Printing Press where the newspaper is being printed, and other printing works that are open for the public for commercial purpose, thanked Governor Godwin Obaseki for reforming The Nigerian Observer and other critical infrastructure in the state.



COURTESY VISIT:

L-R: Managing Director of *The Nigerian Observer*, Osa Victor Obayagbona; General Manager, Edo Printing Centre, Chikordi Udenisi; MegaComrade Clement Eranomigho Edegbe, the number one critic of Governor Obaseki's administration, and Director of Marketing of Edo Printing Centre, Abigail Oimage, when Eranomigho paid a courtesy visit to *The Nigerian Observer's* compound in Benin City.

Second Edo Int'l book, arts festival ends in Benin

● **festival showcases govt's efforts at developing skills, talents**

OMI OIMAGE

At the opening of the second edition of the Edo International Book and Arts Festival last Wednesday, the Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki said the festival will showcase efforts by his government in the last seven and a half years to develop the skills, talents and creative minds of young people in the state.

Obaseki, who spoke with children and students across various schools in the state as well as international guests and other stakeholders at the event's opening ceremony at the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub, Benin City, said the event is about literacy, knowledge, and expression through arts and poetry.

The festival scheduled to run between June 5 and 8, 2024, showcased the successes recorded by this administration in developing the skills, talents, and creative minds of young people in Edo State as part of efforts to make them globally competitive

and contribute effectively to the state's development.

Other dignitaries at the event with the theme, "Every Child, a Reading Champion," include Deputy Governor of Edo State, Engr. Marvelous Omobayo Godwins, and the Esama of Benin Kingdom, Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, among other international guests, joined the governor to inspect the exhibition of the book stands.

Obaseki noted, "This festival is about Edo children. This is the second edition and it has come to stay. When we came to office about eight years ago, we told you that our purpose of being in government is about you and we have no regrets making all the investments we made in education."

"The festival is all about literacy, reading, and knowledge. What we are doing is not new to us in Edo State. Throughout our history, we expressed ourselves very creatively through our arts and poetry and were able to build an empire that lasted centuries.

"You can be creative just like our ancestors; Edo children are genetically designed for creativity. As a government, we have done everything possible to revamp our educational system. From an early age in life, our children know how to read and write. I am not surprised that today, with what we have done with our education system in the State, especially in foundational education, you compare favourably with your peers in the world in terms of reading and numerative skills."

He said, "This festival has been put together to showcase what we have done in our education system in the last eight years which is the emphasis we have been putting in developing the talents and skills of our young ones. You are here to see the exhibition done by people like you and to relate with authors and people who write books."

Earlier, the Commissioner for Education, Dr. Joan Osa-Oviawe said the festival is about literacy and appreciating learners in both private and public schools

across the state.

"We have over 60 exhibitors here and the majority of them are book publishers and authors," she said.

Dr. Osa-Oviawe stated that the reforms entrenched in the education sector by the present administration have formed the road map of providing quality and effective education to children in Edo State, noting that the Ministry of Education aims to continue to make progress in the literacy target.

According to Dr. Osa-Oviawe, "The progress we have made in literacy and numeracy in Edo State was the reason Edo State is now considered globally accelerated at par with countries like Brazil, Pakistan, Ecuador, Rwanda Kenyan and Mozambique."

The Education Commissioner called on stakeholders in the education sector to embrace the ongoing Education Week as it provides a veritable platform to share ideas on ways to move education forward in the country.

Don seeks support for persons infected with diseases at AAU's 112nd inaugural lecture

OMI OMAGE

In a landmark demonstration of its giant strides in the sphere of learning, Am-

brose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma has held its 112nd inaugural lecture, with a call to show support and kindness to people infected with diseases.

The inaugural lecture titled "To be infected is not to be stigmatised: An invitation to show support and kindness to people infected with diseases" was a captivating intellectual

journey through the lens of a medical sociologist, Professor Theophilus Agweda, who is the Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor (ADVC) of the university.

In his erudite presentation, Prof Agweda unravelled the major frantic efforts that could help to mitigate the discrimination and stigmatization levels against persons who have been infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Acquired ImmunoDeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

The distinguished Professor shared extensive knowledge, guiding his audience through his presentation which he divided into seven neatly knitted parts, viz: Reflecting on the Basics of Medical Sociology, Health and Illness Relations, Demystifying HIV/AIDS as Infectious Disease in History, Rethinking Stigmatization and Its Implication on HIV/AIDS Patients, Effects of Stigmatization, among others.

He shared his insightful experiences during the period under review, explaining how he had engaged people of different categories/professions (including teenagers, youths, the elderly as well as Persons Living with the Virus), to get adequate knowledge, while x-raying ways through which

HIV/AIDS can be contracted, managed and treated, noting that HIV/AIDS is not a death sentence.

He stressed the need to deliberately and consciously support PLWHA by showing some support, kindness, empathy, discipline, determination and circumspection which are key aspects of social medical balancing.

Earlier in his welcome address, the Acting Vice Chancellor of Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Prof. Sonnie Adagbonyin, disclosed that the lecture was delivered timely, as individuals who are infected with various diseases are often targeted and become victims of stigmatization, noting that socio-medical balancing is an approach that seeks to mitigate social and medical perspectives in addressing health and wellbeing.

High point of the ceremony was the official decoration of the Inaugural lecturer, Prof. Theophilus Agweda, by the Acting Vice Chancellor, who welcomed him to the Committee of AAU's academic giants.



31ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

L-R: Director, Presco Plc, Mr Osa Osunde; Director, Presco Plc, Amb Nonye Udo; Director, Presco Plc, Chief Bassey Edem; Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Presco Plc, Mr Felix Nwabuko; Chairman, Presco Plc, Mr Olakanmi Rasheed Sarumi; Director, Presco Plc, Mrs Grace Osuntoki; Director, Presco Plc, Mr Abdul Akhor Bello and Company Secretary, Presco Plc, Patrick Uwadia at the 31st Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Presco Plc held in Lagos on Thursday, June 6, 2024.

Edo diaspora support group unveils agenda

● **says Ighodalo's microcredit blue print an antidote to poverty**

BENJAMIN ATU

An Edo diaspora support group headed by an England-based surgeon, Dr. Uyi-Philip Ighodolor, has deployed the micro credit agenda of Asue Ighodalo, the PDP candidate in the forthcoming Edo Governorship election. The agenda aimed at crushing poverty and penetrating into the grassroots by providing interest free loans to those who are unable to access the conventional banking and credit system as a result of their social and economic status, he noted.

He said Asue Ighodalo is seeking to become a governor to give voice to the voiceless in the society, and assist the economically weak persons in the state through micro credit to set up their own businesses.

"The programme will empower the rural and urban poor to leap-frog the state into an active commercial territory as well-targeted poverty alleviation packages to meet the desire of the people at the grass-root, who have never experienced direct benefit from government in any form.

"Dr. Asue Ighodalo wants the poor in our midst to have access to micro credit and means of production that can turn them into entrepreneurs in their own rights, employers of labour and masters of their own destiny with the abilities to turn the economic fortune of the state around for the better," he said.

Speaking in a statement issued and signed by Sir Tonna Okey on behalf of the Diaspora support group, Dr. Ighodolor said, "The micro credit is grounded in the believe that the poor have skills that remain largely unused or underutilized and that charity is not the answer because it creates dependency and therefore perpetuate the poverty trap."

He called on various market groups and unions to commence the formation of cluster groups and Associations ahead of the Micro Credit Soft Loans that shall be made available to them upon Ighodalo's emergence as the next Governor of the State.

"Ighodalo is a banker and he knows how to make the poor become rich through financial assistance. The loans is not for individuals to consume but will only be made open to cluster groups like the traders Association, Farmers groups, cooperative societies and other

small but dynamic groups with a verifiable economically driven focus who will effectively use the resources to better their lives and the society" All Market unions should give their block votes to Dr. Asue Ighodalo the PDP candidate in the Edo election in order for them to benefit from the Micro credit program of the administration.

Ighodolor, who recently distributed to N10,000 each to market women in the Agenebode main market through the Benedicta's Market Women money, said Asue is concerned about the economic well-being of the citizens, and described systemic development of human resources as a major requirement for sustainable economic growth and prime engine for long term development.

Edo Vanguard accedes to support Asue Ighodalo

Edo Vanguard, a socio-political and economic pressure group whose aim is to foster unity, peace and progress among people of Edo State all over the world, has acceded to support the candidacy of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) governorship candidate, Dr. Asue Ighodalo in the September 21, 2024 governorship election in the state.

Introducing the group during a meeting with the candidate at his residence recently, the assistant secretary of the organisation, Mr Ilkponmwoza Gold, said

Edo Vanguard is a non-ethnic, non-religious, non-profit and non-governmental organisation founded in the year 2022 with the primary aim to foster unity, peace, progress and development among all sons and daughters of Edo who have distinguished themselves in both public and private sectors in Nigeria and the diaspora.

Mr Gold further stated that the group aims at channelling the course of good governance by giving support and direction on the best choice of candidate irrespective of political affilia-

tions, adding that their belief is to ensure that only those with the capacity to deliver on their mandate are allowed to hold political positions in the state.

According to him, "Edo Vanguard has been researching on whom to support for a long time, at a point we involved a marketing company to search and we got three names which eventually narrowed down to Prof. Oserhiemien Osunbor but the ruling party at the centre which is the All progressive congress (APC), chose to deny their best candidate its ticket for

the election as a result of endless sentiments.

"The Edo Vanguard aim in all of this is to ensure that there is a system of government that will become a model for other states in the country and the federation of Nigeria.

"Flowing from the above, the group decided to go into a search for the pedigree of the flag bearer of the three foremost political parties in Edo state using all search engines and then found out that none of them is anywhere near Asue Ighodalo."

Hon. Obomighie receives distinguished Nigerian Youth Award

LAMAI CASSIUS

Chairman of Etsako Central Local Government Area, Hon. Solomon Obomighie, has been acknowledged and recognized with an award by the management of Glamour International Magazine for his exceptional leadership and steadfast commitment to transparency and good governance.

The management of the news magazine, led by its CEO/Editor in Chief, Mr John Ehi Ikpea (JP), during the presentation of the Distinguished Nigerian Youth Award, praised the chairman for his extraordinary leadership qualities and a governing style that concentrated on progress and development, saying his dedication to serving the people of the local government with integrity and accountability is truly commendable.

Ikpea noted that under Obomighie's leadership, there have been notable improvements in multiple sectors that mirror his vision for an improved and prosperous community.

The CEO said Glamour International Magazine salutes Hon. Obomighie for his dedicated efforts to advocate transparency and accountability in governance adding that his commitment to maintaining high principles of public service sets a positive precedent for others to emulate.

He however expressed confidence that his continued leadership will result in further advancements and positive results for the residents of the local government.

"Glamour International Magazine remains devoted to spotlighting and honouring leaders who value transparency, integrity, and excellent governance for the betterment of their communities," he concluded.

In his acceptance speech, Hon. Solomon Obomighie thanked and appreciated the management of Glamour International Magazine for finding him worthy as a recipient of the 2023 Nigerian Youth Award.

The executive chairman also reiterated his commitment to continue his monthly support for the elderly in the local government which he started since his assumption of office closed to a year now

He also promised to leave a lasting legacy in the local government by ensuring that the Central Modern Market project currently ongoing is completed in the shortest time.

Among those present at the presentation were the Head Of Local Government Administration (HOLGA) Mr. James E. Okungbowa; Comrade Amedu Mathew (SA); Pst. Emmanuel Okhimamhe (P A); Hon. Solomon Eyogwe (Protocol Officer); and Comrade Igbonor Anthony Abu (CPS); HODs Agricultural, Information and Procurement.

South-South Report

Rivers approves N74.9bn for Assembly, hospitals, road

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM,
PORT HARCOURT

Rivers State Executive Council has deliberated and approved N74.9 billion contracts for the reconstruction of the Rivers State House of Assembly Auditorium, construction of Kalaibama/Epellema Road, and completion of four zonal hospitals across the state.

Also approved is the renovation of Bonny General Hospital; renovation and upgrade of Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Rumuigbo, as well as construction of new General Hospital at Rumuigbo in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of the state.

While the reconstruction of the demolished Assembly Auditorium in Port Harcourt will cost N19,566,621,284.24; the Kalaibama-Epellema Road and bridge in Opobo-Nkoro Local Government Area will gulp N29,035,907,233.76; just as the hospitals will cost N26,350,310,714.88.

The zonal hospitals are located in Ahoada Town in Ahoada Local Government; Degema Town in Degema Local Government; Omoku Town in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government, and Bori Town in Khana Local Government Area.

The state government said it decided to complete the construction of the zonal hospitals in four local government areas of the state in order to strengthen the secondary level healthcare service delivery to the people of the state.

At its meeting, presided over by Governor Siminalayi Fubara, and attended by Deputy Governor, Prof Ngozi Odu and other Council Members at Government House in Port Harcourt on Friday, approval was also given for the cancellation of all previous contracts awarded for the construction of those zonal hospitals.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting, Commissioner for Health, Dr Adaeze Oreh, said the approval was sequel to the memos presented by the Ministry of Health to the State Executive Council.

Specifically, Dr Oreh said the ministry requested for the approval of the cancellation and termination of all existing contracts for those zonal hospitals in the state, and the re-awarding of fresh contracts that will enable completion of the projects, including the renovation of the Bonny General Hospital.

Dr Oreh stated that there was also the request for the renovation and upgrade of the Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital

and the construction of a new General Hospital at Rumuigbo in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of the state.

She said, “We are thankful to the Rivers State Executive Council that the various decisions sought and prayers that were made by the Rivers State Ministry of Health for the approval of the termination of the contracts for completion of the zonal hospitals at Ahoada, Bori, Degema and Omoku, and the re-award of fresh contracts for their completion were approved.

“That the request to the State Executive Council for the approval of the award of these contracts in total summed up to N26,350,310,714.88k that was approved for the completion of those zonal hospitals, the renovation of Bonny General Hospital and the upgrade of the Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital.

“This also included the construction of a new General Hospital at Rumuigbo, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, which were not among those initially awarded for renovation.”

The commissioner explained that the State Executive Council also approved that following the termination of the previously awarded contracts, fresh contracts should be awarded to new competent contractors who have such capacity to deliver on those projects.

She emphasised that such contractors would also be mobilized to site so that they can commence construction work on those separate projects in the health sector in order to advance healthcare delivery in the state.

On his part, the Permanent Secretary of the Rivers State Ministry of Special Projects, Dr Roland Obed-Whyte, said his ministry presented two memos that requested for the award of separate contracts.

He said the first is a request for Council’s approval for the award of contract for the reconstruction and furnishing of Rivers State House of Assembly Auditorium Complex.

He said, “This contract has been awarded to Monier Construction Company Nigeria Limited (MCC) at the cost of N19,566,621,284.24 kobo with completion duration of nine months.

“This Rivers State House of Assembly Building Complex is made up of about 34 ensuite offices, two-storey building with elevator, gallery, meeting rooms and conference hall.

“It also includes the renovation and refurbishing of other existing structures within the House of Assembly Complex.

It also includes the provision of ambulances and other external works.”

Dr Obed-Whyte explained that by the time the work on the Rivers State House of Assembly building is completed, it will turn out to be one of the very best Assembly complexes in Nigeria.

Also, he said the second memo that was presented to the State Executive Council requested for the approval of the contract for the award of the construction of the 5.75 Km long Kalaibama-Epellema Road, with a 450 meters length of bridge and carriageway of 10.3 meters with solar lights.

He said, “It is awarded to Monier Construction Compa-

ny Nigeria Limited (MCC) at the cost N29, 035, 907, 233.76 kobo with completion duration of 12 months.

“Again, in these two contracts, 30 percent mobilization is to be paid as an advance payment. We believe strongly that when that road is completed, it will connect over four or five communities within that axis, and the issue of boat mishap and its attendant problems that riverine transportation faces will be a thing of the past.”

The Governor is determined with his mantra of “Rivers First” to open up the coastal areas with what he is doing on the Trans-Kalabari Road project, he said, adding that with

this project in the Opobo axis, the people will be the greatest beneficiaries.

In her presentation, the acting Director General of Rivers State Bureau for Public Procurement (RSBOPP), Engr. Ine Briggs, said due diligence has been done by the agency in scrutinising the projects and the cost efficiency, adding that after due diligence was conducted, the agency issued certificates of no objection to each of the projects.

She said, “The consideration of all these projects approved today by the Rivers State Executive Council, the Bureau is glad to inform the general public that it has duly carried out its regulatory function in

ensuring that value for money has been met, economy has been met, fitness for purpose has been met in defending the stakeholders’ position in expenditure of fund from the state.

“So, the Bureau has issued a certificate of no objection for the two projects from the Ministry of Special Projects and the projects for the Ministry of Health” The Bureau wants to assure the public that it will carry out its oversight functions at ensuring that quality specifications as enshrined in the approvals, would be met, and the people will feel their government, and that is our assurance as a regulatory body”.



IBORI'S VISIT:

Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri (m); former Governor of Delta State, Chief James Ibori (5ft r), with some Bayelsa State officials and traditional rulers during Chief Ibori’s visit to Government House, Yenagoa, after being honoured with a traditional title.

NDDC offers support for private sector participation in marine transport

PATRICK ABANG, CALABAR

Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Dr Samuel Ogbuku, has offered to partner the private sector in developing marine transportation across the Niger Delta region.

He disclosed this at the Marina Resort in Calabar on Saturday during the grand launching of Abitto Ferry Service and unveiling of a luxury maritime safety boat.

The boat service will ferry passengers from the Marina Resort in Calabar to the Nwan-

iba Timber Beach in Uyo.

The Managing Director welcomed the initiative, saying all across the region there are communities yet to be connected by road and this service will fill that gap. “Thank you very much for reconnecting us back to our natural means of transportation.

“What you have done will make people appreciate the level of underdevelopment and what has been achieved so far. All across the Niger Delta we have places yet to be connected by road and this service will fill that gap.

“We will partner with you

to see how we can extend this service to other communities within the Niger Delta”, he said.

Also speaking, Chief Timi Alaibe, a former managing director of the NDDC, said he is excited to witness the birth of the ferry service, noting history has been made as the service will save travel time, create jobs and encourage the reduction of carbon emission.

On his part, the Chief Executive Officer of Abitto Global Services said the beauty of the service is that it is from the heart of one state to another, from one capital city to another capital city.

He said they have fully air-conditioned terminals at both ends with purpose built comfortable boats and jetties to make the service function optimally for comfort and safety.

Earlier, the Managing Director of the Cross River State Tourism Bureau, Prince Ojoi Ekpenyong, welcomed the investment in the marine transportation sector, and thanked the state governor for creating a conducive atmosphere for development partners to come in.

The Senator representing Cross River South Senatorial District, Asuquo Ekpenyong, formally flagged off the boat service.

I'm impressed with Bayelsa development, Ibori commends Diri

PHILIP EKE, YENAGOA

Former Governor of Delta State, Chief James Ibori, has given thumbs up to the Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri, for his impressive performance in office in the last four years.

Chief Ibori, who gave the commendation on Saturday during his visit to Government House, Yenagoa, said Governor Diri had made significant impact in governance of the state and in leadership in the Niger Delta.

The former Delta Governor, who is fondly called Odidigborigbo for his political sagacity,

described his visit to Bayelsa as homecoming as he had been a friend of the state since the days of the former governor, late Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha.

Describing Bayelsa as the heartbeat of the Niger Delta, Ibori commended Diri not only for his developmental strides in the state but also for his leadership qualities and for fostering peace and unity in the Niger Delta.

He said: "I am glad to be home. I came here last in 2017 and coming in now, I am impressed with the level of development I saw. I thank you for all you are doing for our people and we pray that God contin-

ues to guide you.

"This is the heartland of Niger Delta and let me recognise the contribution of Bayelsa people to the well-being of the region and I know you are not relenting.

"I encourage you to continue to perform. You did very well and that is why you got a second term. We all score you very high.

"You know how to unite people. You have the maturity and temperament to know when politics starts and ends. God will continue to give you more success."

According to Daniel Al-Abrah, Chief Press Secretary to

the Governor of Bayelsa State, in a statement at the weekend, Ibori was on Saturday honoured with a chieftaincy title by the king of Ogboin Clan, His Royal Majesty Oweipa Jones-Ere, at his palace in Amassoma town.

In his remarks, Governor Diri hailed Ibori for his contributions to the Niger Delta struggle.

He recalled how Ibori was in the forefront of agitations for resource control by states of the region and expressed delight that he had continued to fight for the region's interest.

Diri noted that the former Delta governor left lasting leg-

acies in his state and the region at large, stressing that true sons of the Niger Delta were proud to have him as leader.

He also stated that the injustices Ibori fought against as governor still existed today and appealed to him to continue to join forces with other stakeholders in the region to right the wrongs.

The Bayelsa helmsman restated the need for Nigeria to practice true federalism based on equity, fairness and justice.

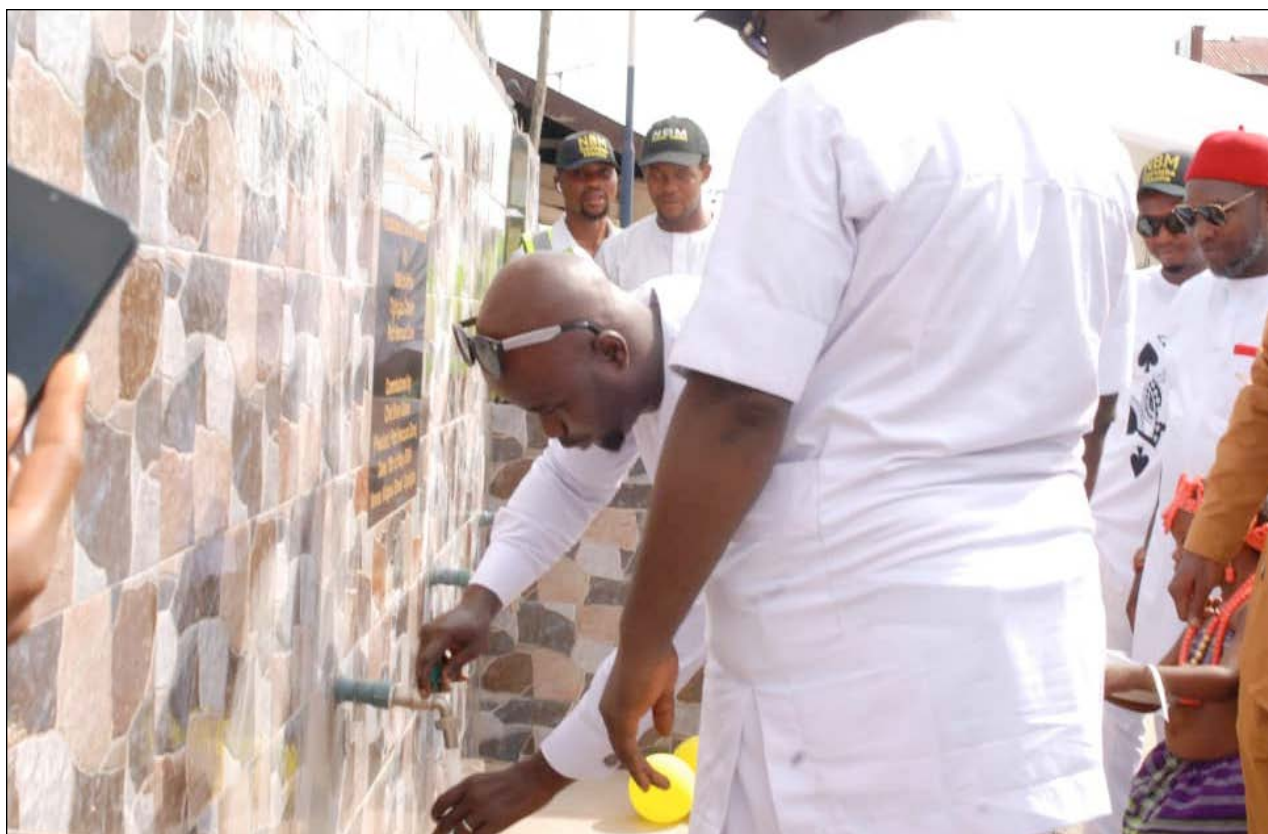
He said: "We are so happy to host you as we hold you in very high esteem. Your leadership is not only in Delta State but across our region. The bonding between you and Alamieyesei-

gha was second to none.

"Looking at your contribution to the Niger Delta struggle, which you are still doing, makes us happy. When we had issues with the former governor of Rivers State, you were the first to call us to settle. That is what an elder does.

"You were one of my strong external supporters during the election. I appreciate and thank you very much.

"You left your name in gold in Ijawland and Delta State as you are one person whose hands are open to everybody. We still need your knowledge. The struggle is still on. There is an imbalance in our federal system."



SOLAR BOREHOLE:

Residents taking water from the NBM of Africa, Oginigba chapter donated solar borehole to Rivers' community

NBM of Africa, Oginigba chapter donates solar borehole to Rivers' community

IDAHOUSA MUSA

A pan-African organization under the aegis of NBM of Africa, Oginigba Chapter, under Port-Harcourt Zone, has donated a 1,600-watt solar-powered borehole to Oginigba Community in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The humanitarian event, it was learnt, was part of the organization's Corporate Social Responsibility to give back to the community and support the welfare of the people.

It was gathered that the 1,600-watt solar-powered borehole is a significant investment in the community's water infrastructure.

This borehole, which was handed over to the communi-

ty on May 18th, is designed to provide clean water to the residents of Oginigba, reducing the risk of water-borne diseases.

Speaking on the development, president of NBM of Africa, Port Harcourt Zone, Chief Brain Gokpa, thanked members of the Oginigba Chapter for the borehole project in the area.

Gokpa, who was represented at the ceremony by his deputy, Mr. Eguono Akpevwe Kelvin, maintained that the project would no doubt bring succour to the people in the locality, especially in the area of potable water.

He recalled some previous projects done by the Oginigba Chapter to include renovation of the police post in the community and handing out over

1,000 exercise books to students of Oginigba Community Secondary School.

The chairman (parliamentary) of Port-Harcourt Zone, Chief Henry Oduose, commended the Oginigba Chapter for embarking on the project, saying NBM of Africa is dedicated to alleviating the suffering of people in any environment they are found.

In his opening address, the coordinator, Oginigba Chapter of NBM of Africa, Comrade Maxwell Dike, said the donation of the solar-powered borehole would provide clean water to thousands of people, reducing the risk of water-borne diseases and improving the overall health and well-being of the community.

Responding, the paramount

ruler of Oginigba Kingdom, Eze (Dr.) G. B. Odum (JP), thanked the organisation for the borehole project in his kingdom, describing it as laudable. He tasked other groups to emulate the philanthropic gestures of the NBM of Africa, stressing that it would go a long way to affect the society positively.

The people of the community said the 1,600-watt solar-powered borehole by NBM of Africa, Oginigba Chapter, is a commendable gesture that demonstrates the organization's commitment to giving back to the community. They said the borehole would have a significant impact on the lives of the people in Obio/Akpor, providing them with access to clean water and supporting their overall well-being.

Delta police arrests armed robbers, recovers Beretta pistols, locally made cut-to-size guns

AJUWA VICTOR, ASABA

The Delta State Police Command said that, on 05/06/2024 at about 1745hrs while acting on credible intelligence, the special squad deployed to Ughelli by the commissioner of Police Delta State, CP Abaniwonda Olufemi, to checkmate the activities of kidnappers and armed robbers in Ughelli, Warri, Sapele, and environs successfully arrested three suspected armed robbers and recovered their weapons used in terrorizing innocent residents in Sapele.

According to a press release made available to journalists on Friday by the police public relations officer, Mr Bright Edefe (SP) in Asaba, the Delta State capital, the team led by ASP Julius Robinson stormed Sapele town on the said date and effected the arrest of one Blessing Atima aged 23 years 'm' of Jesse Community in Ethiopie West LGA of Delta State.

The gang leader, Destiny Okpako, aged 23 years 'm' of Oviri-Okpe Community in Okpe LGA of Delta State and Wisdom Akpohirowho, aged 20 years 'm' of Jesse Community in Ethiopie West LGA of Delta State, all residents of Sapele town and the following exhibit were recovered from them; one Beretta pistol, one locally cut-to-size gun, three cutlasses, phones and ATM cards belonging to victims.

Some of their victims have identified the suspects and their valuables recovered from them. Interrogation of the suspects revealed that they have so far taken part in six of the armed robbery operations in Sapele. The said suspects are in police custody, while investigation is ongoing.

In the same vein, the police command said that, on 3/05/2024 at about 0830hrs, RRS Operatives, while acting on credible information that some suspected robbers were sighted in an uncompleted building along Issele-Asagba Expressway.

The operatives stormed the uncompleted building and arrested one Usman Bello 'm' aged 40 years, and one locally made fabricated Beretta pistol was recovered from him.

The suspect who pretends to be a mentally unstable person is in police custody and investigation is ongoing.

In another development, on 04/06/2024, at about 1300hrs, the Area commander Asaba, acting on intelligence reports on the activities of some suspects who come from across the Niger to Asaba at night, break into and loot the shops of their targeted victims.

The Asaba Area commander immediately deployed undercover operatives who embarked on a discreet operation that eventually paid off when the duo of one Ameachi Michael 'm' aged 42 years of Wuje Street Port Harcourt and Ogochukwu Ogbode 'm' aged 38 years of Aronomen Enugu were arrested along DLA Road, Asaba.

Preliminary investigations revealed that after breaking and looting the shops of their victims, they carried their loot to Port Harcourt to sell.

Investigation and efforts to arrest the receivers of these stolen items are ongoing.

The commissioner of Police CP Abaniwonda Olufemi has urged members of the public to always reach out to the command in cases of distress through any of the dedicated control room numbers 08036684974 or report to the nearest Police station.

EDITORIAL

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Connecting the CNG project to road repairs

Soaring food prices constitute one of the more telling manifestations of the ongoing economic crunch that Nigerians find themselves faced with as inflation rides high on the back of the Federal Government's decision to put a stop to fuel subsidy and set the local currency, the naira, on a free float on May 29, 2023.

Experts say the measures will bring relief to the economy in the long run but cause significant distress in the short term.

As part of measures to cushion the attendant rising cost of living, government has embarked on some mitigating ventures.

One of these is the Presidential Compressed Natural Gas Initiative (PCNGI), which aims to convert the bulk of road transport vehicles in Nigeria (especially commercial passenger buses and goods trucks) from the use of more expensive fuels, petrol and diesel, to CNG which is about 65 percent cheaper than the first two listed fuels.

Analysts say that food prices would begin to noticeably trend downwards when up to 25 percent of required haulage trucks (being 5,250 trucks) in the country are CNG-powered and that the downward progression would flow incrementally, as more trucks become CNG-enabled, reducing

the burden of high food costs on the wallets of teeming Nigerians and freeing up disposable income for other pressing needs.

The initial phase of the conversion programme is being initiated in Lagos, Kwara, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and Rivers states. This phase will be executed in partnership with major transport unions, including the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), the Road Transport Employers' Association of Nigeria (RTEAN), and the Nigerian Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO), according to government.

To ensure the success of the programme, the PCNGI says the rollout will commence in eight of over 120 designated conversion workshop sites, after which the key union partners, will have the opportunity to observe, evaluate the conversion process, and provide valuable feedback as the initiative plans to scale up operations across 15 states over the next few days.

The rollout, it is said, will be backed by a 50 per cent discount on equipment and kit costs, and support to qualified union members for installation cost.

The Federal Government says it will deliver 100 conversion workshops and 60 refuelling sites spread across 18 states before the

end of 2024.

Converting to a cheaper fuel does promise to offer significant relief from the current high costs. However, vehicles that run on more cost-effective fuels are only one half of the solution.

Another consideration is the state of the roads that these vehicles will ply.

Between late 2023 and the early weeks of 2024, the Federal Government kicked-off the rehabilitation of some of the largely deplorable network of federal highways linking Nigeria's 36 states and Abuja.

In November last year, Minister of Works, David Umahi, after a meeting with President Tinubu in Abuja, told journalists that the President had approved more than 260 road repairs across the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, to the tune of N217 billion.

Among the projects Umahi listed, were the resurfacing of the Third Mainland Bridge, construction of Lekki Deep Seaport Road, reconstruction of two collapsed bridges in Enugu, Benin-Sapele Road, reconstruction of two locations on the Onitsha-Owerri Road, upgrading of the Abuja-Keffi-Akwanga-Lafia Road, and dualisation of the Lafia by-pass.

Other areas slated for repair,

he said, were 17 points along the East-West Road that had been destroyed by floods.

He also spoke of two bridges that collapsed in Enugu, two locations on the Onitsha-Owerri Road, as well as points on the Lokoja-Abuja Road.

Also included was the reconstruction of the Benin-Warri Dual Carriageway (Section I, II and III) and dualisation of East-West Road Section III: Port Harcourt (Eleme Junction) Onne Port Junction Road in Rivers State, among others.

In all, the minister mentioned 260 emergency repairs approved all over the country to the value of about N217 billion.

Umahi, a civil engineer and former governor of Ebonyin comes with a worthy track record on road projects delivered in that state and is reported to have been hard at work since assuming office as works minister.

A brief summary of road repairs effected so far, and timelines for the conclusion of others, would make the vital connection between the Presidential Compressed Natural Gas initiative and the state of the roads that the project would ride to bring efficiency and financial reliefs to stakeholders, especially more affordable food to teeming beleaguered Nigerians.

Cartoon Corner

The Nigerian
Observer

...that the people may know



Eight tips to maintaining your spiritual wellbeing (2)



HAPPY WORKPLACE

by **OLAYINKA OPALEYE**

A WELL-BEING SPECIALIST AND CORPORATE WELLNESS STRATEGIST

Spiritual wellbeing is believed to be the ability to find and fulfill a purpose in life. Contrary to the general belief of adulthood, which means working to make ends meet, so much more is expected from us all. It is understandable to find ourselves on career paths we accidentally stumbled upon, never prepared for, and did not love or understand their workings.

However, there will be a point when the nudge of finding self comes on so strongly. This yearning or nudge is often linked to an aspect of our spiritual wellbeing or is sometimes used to describe spiritual wellness. Although the journey of finding self may be somewhat uncomfortable momentarily, it has its way of whipping us into the shape of fulfilling purpose.

This reawakening, which often happens at the age of 40, hence referred to as a mid-life crisis, brings us to the realization that there is so much more to life and living than just working to make money. Living a life full of positive impacts beyond our immediate environment becomes paramount here. This could mean volunteering for a charity, mentoring a younger colleague, or advocating for a cause we believe in. So, if whatever we are doing right now is still about us and our immediate families, we

have yet to find purpose. Three things will happen once you crack the high spiritual wellbeing score code.

(i) You will understand your role and its importance in the grand scheme of things, knowing that you are here for the greater good, which is humanity.

(ii) You will never work a day in your life again as every day as work becomes effortlessly easy. You will begin to enjoy every bit of what you do to the point that you are willing and happy to serve unpaid.

(iii) Money will inundate you. This is the most exciting part. You will be doing what you enjoy most and getting paid for it or at least all your needs will be met.

So, here are the remaining four tips for maintaining your spiritual wellbeing. These are not just theoretical concepts but practical steps that you can take to enhance your spiritual wellbeing and live a more fulfilling life. They include: Fulfilling Your Purpose, Sense of Right and Wrong, Practice Forgiveness and Compassion, and Life After Death Perspective.

Fulfilling your purpose: Whether our days' work takes us to a workplace or marketplace, the crux is finding and fulfilling our purpose. This quest is achievable by identifying our innate

abilities and talents and putting them to good use through enhancement, empowerment, and distribution. This act of self-discovery may spur self-reflection habits like journaling, creativity, quiet time, and mindfulness to achieve personal growth and development that lead to a more balanced, meaningful, and fulfilled life.

Sense of right and wrong: Although chaos is the absence of order, it's intriguing that some people can't tell chaos apart from orderliness because they have no sense of right and wrong. Our spirituality has a great way of reining us in through discernment, contentment, and patience.

Practice forgiveness and compas-

sion: Love through forgiveness and compassion is the most prominent tenet of spiritual wellbeing. Harry Emerson Fosdick states, "No one can get inner peace by pouncing on it." Taking offense, unforgiveness, and lack of compassion will rob us of inner peace and subject us to deafening noises that are distracting, draining, and destructive.

Life after death perspective: Although there are various beliefs about life after death, your spiritual wellbeing helps you make sense of it all. Whether it is reincarnation or judgment followed by eternity, our perspectives have a way of bringing this consciousness to how we live. More-

over, perspectives on death and what happens after that have a way of helping with how to cope with loss and grief. Acknowledging and accepting the universality of death, its finality, and the possibility of miraculous intervention stir up the quest for an in-depth understanding of one's spirituality and wellbeing. Therefore, this belief in something greater than oneself can be comforting while giving a broader outlook on life's challenges.

CALL TO ACTION

George Saunders, a New York Times bestselling writer, once shared that his life's regret was not being poor or working awful jobs but his failures at being kind. He regretted every opportunity he lost to be kind to someone else. This is a powerful reminder of the importance of kindness in our spiritual wellbeing. Even though we may not always realize it, our actions, or lack thereof, can have a profound impact on others. Let's keep sight of these opportunities to make a difference.

So, I invite you to share with me what this article has stirred up within you concerning your spiritual wellbeing. Kindly send your experiences, comments and insights to oopaleye@gmail.com.

Opaleye, a wellbeing specialist and corporate wellness strategist, writes from Lagos

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Sense of right and wrong: Although chaos is the absence of order, it's intriguing that some people can't tell chaos apart from orderliness because they have no sense of right and wrong. Our spirituality has a great way of reining us in through discernment, contentment, and patience.

The mind of a bigot

HENRY CHUKWUEMEKA ONYEMA

Bigotry. One of the ugliest words in the English Language, if you ask me. Its connotations are not beautiful: narrow-mindedness, intolerance, prejudice, ignorance, and in extreme cases, societal upheaval. The Cambridge English Dictionary defined bigotry as 'the fact of having and expressing strong, unreasonable beliefs and disliking other people who have different beliefs or a different way of life.'

Bigotry can be religious, political, cultural, and even sexual. It is a universal trait that manifests itself in various ways in different societies. Sadly, Nigeria is not exempted, even among her educated classes. Indeed the average Nigerian who knows what bigotry is will be offended if you call him or her a bigot. But a short objective interaction with such an individual will convince you that bigotry is probably embedded in his or her DNA.

At this point let us find out how to identify a bigot. There are basically five attributes of bigoted people. Studies show there are certainly more features of bigoted people but only five are discussed here.

First, bigots usually have a literal, one-track, narrow understanding of their beliefs. They do not accept that their beliefs, whether religious, political, cultural, etc. can be seen from different perspectives. Examples are Christian and Muslim fanatics and how they interpret the Bible and Quran.

Also, because they see their be-

liefs and ideas as sacrosanct, bigots do not question THEIR beliefs. Thus, the political bigot will never critically look at the candidate or ideology or political party he is prepared to kill or die for. The cultural bigot will say tradition should be followed unquestioningly. Anyone who has a different view is 'Haram' (to use the Arabic term for forbidden), even when logic and reason are brought to bear on such rigid beliefs. Interestingly most of the mindsets of bigots fall to pieces if you can get their owners to answer this fundamental question honestly: what really is the basis for this belief of yours?

Third, bigots are usually ignorant about views, people and ideas outside their narrow domain. This has absolutely nothing to do with being educated. The average bigot will not take the time to look at life beyond his or her cocoon. Why? Maybe the bigot was bred on a diet of ignorance and lies by authority figures like parents, teachers, religious leaders, etc. For those of them who went to school their education may be so wonky it only embedded prejudice, instead of expelling it. Perhaps this example from my experience in the classroom may amplify this point. I was teaching a history class of junior secondary school boys.

These lads come from different ethnic groups in Nigeria, and if you know Nigerians, you will know that tribal prejudices are passed from one generation to the next. As I was outlining some rather unsavoury historical facts committed in a pre colonial Nigerian

state, students who had been indoctrinated to regard people from the ethnic group that came from that area as bad people began to mock their mates, confident that they had history on their side. Of course I burst their bubble with some ugly facts about their own people. The essence of what they learnt from me that day is that every person has ugly stains recorded on them by history.

Bigots love emotionalism. That is why many leading bigots throughout history and right into our time are demagogues who draw crowds of unthinking and unquestioning followers. Bigots wrap their bigotry in different cloths to get their wonky beliefs into people's hearts and minds. Thus the jihadist will turn his aspiration to destroy the house of infidels into an appeal to Islam.

The Christian bigot will justify his maltreatment of unbelievers and destruction of worship places of adherents of African traditional religion with the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to spread the gospel. The tribalists will argue that the other tribe should be dealt with because they are responsible for the bigots' woes. Indeed there are so many apparels one can cover bigotry in.

If you are critical you will observe that bigots, including those in positions of power and influence, are hostile towards sincere and persistent thinkers and questionnaires? They put labels on them: 'philosophers who do not know God and will go to hell,' 'corrupters of morals,' 'haters of our culture and tradition,' 'atheists,'

etc. Some are even accused of reading many books! (I have been found guilty of this). In cases where power is on the side of the bigots, those who refuse to be swayed by their demagoguery may end up in unpleasant situations.

Finally, bigots are not outright liars. In many cases the average bigot's warped belief system and thought processes emanate from reality.

But the problem is how they chose to interpret reality. Do they work with full information about this reality? The 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria is a case study. The ethnic and religious backgrounds of the three major candidates were the reality political bigots drew upon and based their understanding of electoral outcomes. Subsequently, people from the other sides were labelled, and age-old myths were reinforced. Other realities did not matter. For example, there were Yoruba who truly believed in the Labour Party candidate. Just as there were Igbo committed to the APC candidate. But as we saw in ensuing narratives, bigots turned such realities on their heads and used them to justify their perceptions.

Bigotry is far deadlier than cancer. It destroys individuals, societies and nations. The Rwandan genocide of 1994 is just one eloquent testimony to the power of bigotry. While the war against bigotry should be fought by all, those of us who are called to create worlds with words, pictures, songs and symbols are unique front liners in this age-old war. How much of other worlds, cultures and lives do

we know? Do our creations speak to the principle of humanity before any other creed?

Do we, the creatives, give our gifts to the service of bigots just to satisfy our stomachs and bank accounts? Worse, do we use our talents to push the narratives of the bigots? Let nobody be fooled: the writer, singer, sculptor, film maker, is human and thus capable of bigotry. But it is doubly painful because by our calling we are supposed to be arrowheads that pierce the deepest hearts of systems of bigotry. Perhaps the first imaginative step in fumigating the minds of bigots with our creations is to immerse ourselves in cultures that are not ours by the accident of birth. That is why my hat remains permanently doffed for two great writers who did this admirably. The immortal Cyprian Ekwensi, an Igbo, who so immersed himself in Hausa/Fulani/Kanuri worldviews that his fiction set in those cultures remain evergreen in the hearts of all who read them. Contemporaneously, Henry Akubiro walked the same line with 'Yamtarawala, the Warrior King' which deservedly made the shortlist of the NLNG Nigeria Prize for Literature last year. The play opened up the cultures of the vast swath of North-eastern Nigeria far better than any history textbook. These are just a few of the measures we creatives can take to kill the seeds and plants of bigotry.

Henry Chukwuemeka Onyema is a historian, teacher and author

Federalism as a circle of chaos

According to available information at Wikipedia, the world's information power house, Nigeria is among the roughly/about 25 countries in the world where the federal system of government is practiced today. Interestingly also, these countries when put together represent 40 percent of the world's population. These countries include but are not limited to; namely, India, the United States of America (USA), Brazil, Germany and Mexico, among others.

Typically, the federal system of government tends to have so much passion for constitutional governance based on a mixed or compound mode of government that combines a general government with regional governments in a single political system.

While many political commentators accept as true that its greatest strength as a system of government is that in a country where there are many diversities and the establishment of a unitary government is not possible, a political organization can be established through this form of Government. In this type of government, local self-government, regional autonomy and national unity are possible, others argue that with the division of powers, the burden of work on the centre is lessened and the centre has not to bother about the problems of a purely local nature. It can devote its full attention to the problems of national importance. Because of provincial or regional autonomy, the administration of these areas becomes very efficient. To the rest, in a federal government the provinces, regions or the states enjoy separate rights and they have separate cabinets and legislatures. Local governments also have separate rights and the councils are elected by the people to run the local administration.

Despite these virtues, recent con-

versations about this system of government across the globe manifest signs that it enjoys appreciable burdens and in some cases act as pathways to discord.

Take as an illustration, in India, the system presents a conflicting scenario.

It is a quasi-federal system containing features of both a federation and a union that allows power to be divided between the central government and the states. Article 1 of the Indian Constitution suggests that the territory of India shall be classified into three categories; the Union Government (also known as the Central Government), representing the Union of India, the State governments and the Panchayats/ Municipalities. Basically, it implies an inculcation of a strong sense of love and respect for one's region, ethnicity, language, and culture.

It is this love which makes regions fight for greater autonomy within the nation and directly puts the authenticity of Indian federalism in danger. Another area of concern is that the most important power of the Governor sometimes comes in conflict with the federal structure of the country. To illustrate this claim, the power vested upon him by Article 154 of the Indian Constitution states that all the executive powers of the state are held by the Governor. This provision going by analysis implies that the Governor can appoint the Chief Minister and the Advocate General of the State, and State Election Commissioners. The most paramount and in my view troubling executive power at his disposal is that he can recommend the imposition of constitutional emergency in a state.

In Brazil, the burden of challenge is not different. More specifically, the problems facing the federal system and constitutional governance in the country involve several issues.

First and most importantly, Brazil is a federation characterized by regional and social inequality.

Although the 1988 Constitution and those preceding it have provided several political and fiscal mechanisms for offsetting regional inequality and tackling poverty, these mechanisms have not been able to overcome the historical differences among regions and social classes. Governments of the three orders have not been able to reduce poverty and regional inequality.

Their ability to act is limited by a number of factors, not the least of which is the fiscal requirements of international leaders and federal financial institutions and regulations.

Another factor, says a report; adversely affecting states is the opening up of Brazil's economy. This tends to make intergovernmental relations more complex, as it increases the differences between developed and less developed states. This also contributes to the current trend towards reversing previous, although timid, initiatives favouring economic decentralization. An added issue is that in Brazil there are few mechanisms to provide for coordination between the three orders of government. This has become more important because municipal governments have had their financial standing upgraded within the federation vis-à-vis the states and have also been given responsibility for important social policies. The prospect of transforming constitutional principles into policies for regional development is not currently on the agenda for Brazil.

While the world sympathizes with Brazilians on whose shoulders lay this awkward situation, the federal system in Germany, says 75 years old Rain-Olaf Schultze, author of the book; the Politics of Constitutional Reforms in Northern America, is at a crossroad



UTOMI'S NOTE

by
JEROME-MARIO CHIJOKE UTOMI
 A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE ADVOCATE

and dramatizes worrying concerns.

Schultze noted that the new weaknesses have emerged in the success story of the postwar German federal system.

The highly successful West German federal system, which for 40 years brought economic and social prosperity to Germany's "second" democracy, has fallen into a state of crisis, mostly as a result of the momentous changes that occurred toward the end of recent decades.

On the surface, German reunification looks complete – however, reunification is still in progress on the cultural and economic levels, the consequences of which will continue to evaluate German politics for decades to come. These strains have made structural reforms essential for the political system.

From Germany to Nigeria, the situation is not different.

Today, restructuring debate rends the political wavelength of the political space called Nigeria.

Synoptically, this is how the whole debate was recently captured by a political commentator; the south-south claim continued deprivation and blight from oil pollution, despite being the hub for the nation's oil wealth. The south-east legitimately gripes that nothing will change the history of the Igbos being divested of some of their properties and wealth after the war and being handed only twenty pounds each; and that fifty-six years after independence, the Nigerian presidency continues to elude the Igbos. The North has valid stitches too. Most of Nigeria's insolvent states are in the

North; the broadest swathes of underdeveloped Nigeria are in the North and the largest numbers of uneducated and unskilled youths are from the north. Because northern states are not oil producing, they also lose out on preferential derivation from oil.

While it has, from the above concern, become obvious that the Federal System is riddled with challenges particularly in a country like Nigeria, the truth must be told to the fact that, in absolute terms, federalism remains the answer to many of the nation's political and socioeconomic challenges if well practiced.

Aside from many supporting the validity of a federal system of government, the greatest lesson of the federal system, says Scott Moore, a research fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, is that countries can often become stronger by adopting a looser union.

By this assertion, it will also not be characterized as unfounded to conclude that we are doing this country more harm than good and quickening its disintegration by refusing to restructure the nation Nigeria.

Jerome-Mario is the programme coordinator (Media and Public Policy), Social and Economic Justice Advocacy (SEJA)

Edo Cult Prohibition Law: A lifeline to end secret cult killings

EBEN ENASCO

In December 2018, the Edo State government took a bold step to address the menace of secret cults by passing a bill to repeal and re-enact the law prohibiting their existence, membership, and activities.

The move came after a protracted war between rival cult groups that left several people dead in Benin City metropolis.

The law prescribes a 21-year jail term for secret cult members and a seven-year imprisonment for anyone who harbours a cultist. It also empowers the Police to arrest suspected cultists without a warrant and ensures that all offenses under the law are tried summarily.

The motion to consider the Bill at the committee of Edo State House of Assembly was moved by the then Majority Leader, Roland Asoro, a member representing APC Orhionmwon South, and seconded by the former Chief Whip, Hon. Iyoha Osaigbovo APC-Oredo East and now the Chief of Staff to the Edo State government.

The passage of the 11-Section Bill followed the suspension of House Rules 20, 27, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48

and 49.

The set objective of summary trials by the then House of Assembly was to ensure that justice is delivered swiftly, without compromising on the principles of natural justice and fair trial.

This was also to ensure that only offenses of certain gravity are tried summarily, and cases with higher potential punishments are dealt with through regular trials.

Summary trials are appropriate in cases where the Court can determine the facts of the case through written documents only, and there is no need to fully present evidence through the testimony and cross-examination of witnesses. An application strike is a "chamber's proceedings".

In July 2023, the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Hon. Osaigbovo Iyoha, reassured Edo people that the Government would flush out cultism and cult-related activities in the State.

Iyoha while reacting to viral audio attacks on him and the clampdown on suspected cultists in their hideouts said with support from security agencies, cultism would become history in the state adding that the strategy being deployed would be extended to tertiary institutions in the state.

He added that the government cannot be intimidated or blackmailed.

However, between July and December 2023, the Governor declared that no fewer than 135 lives were lost to cult-related activities, and again recently, the Governor said over 150 deaths were recorded in the first half of 2024.

This seriously created doubt on whether the government was ready to face the menace.

Many have observed that despite the passage of the law, its implementation has been lax.

Following this, Governor Godwin Obaseki has declared a total war against cultism and has set up a special task force headed by the Director of SSS to review every cult-related incident.

The Governor disclosed that what is particularly worrisome about cultism is the related homicide that goes with cult-related activities.

From January to date, according to him, "We have lost over 150 people to cult-related activities and homicide. We can't tolerate and accept this situation anymore."

Obaseki stated that in his first attempt, cultism would be addressed

from two distinct approaches, which include ensuring diligent investigation and prosecution of cult-related crimes and ensuring high publicity.

With the new Secret Cult Prohibition Law of Edo State, any student or public officer who is involved in a secret cult by way of membership, initiation, behaviour, identification marks, regalia, etc, assaults, uses threats, or threatens to use actual violence on anybody or property in promotion of secret cult within the state is guilty of an offense and liable to 21 years imprisonment.

The law also stated that any person who directly or indirectly assists, permits, promotes, or helps secret cults in getting members, retaining its existence, or any other activities; And/or any person who knowingly provides housing, shelters, or quarters to any member of a secret cult, is guilty of a felony and is liable to 5 years imprisonment.

The most adorable part of the law is that when a person is caught, he has no claims for Option of Fine.

The government must act decisively to implement the Secret Cult Prohibition Law, and hotel operators and security operatives must join the fight

against killer cultists.

With the law in place, anyone involved in secret cult activities faces 21 years imprisonment without an option of a fine.

The government must ensure that no one is exempted from arrest, and the right to association must not be used to assemble and kill.

As Governor Obaseki's tenure comes to an end, his legacy will be defined by his ability to sanitize Edo State and rid it of killing sprees, restoring nightlife and investor confidence.

The people of Edo State demand action and the government must respond with decisive action against secret cults.

Enough blood has been shed; it's time for justice to prevail.

Enasco, a socio-political commentator, writes from Benin City

Oando announces successful \$550m participation in Project Gazelle

TELIAT SULE

Oando Plc, Nigeria's leading indigenous energy group, has notified the public that on May 17, 2024, it was party to the successful closure of a \$925 million accordion arranged and coordinated by the African Export-Import Bank (Afrex-

imbank) for Project Gazelle. The accordion arrangement saw a contribution of \$550 million by Oando Trading, a subsidiary of Oando Plc. The balance of \$375m was raised by other parties to get a total disbursement amount of \$925 million.

Oando Plc is listed on both the Nigerian Exchange Limited

(NGX) and Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) in South Africa.

Project Gazelle is a \$3.3 billion structured crude oil-backed forward-sale finance facility sponsored by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Limited). This

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Airtel Africa announces exchanges rates for 2024 final dividend

TELIAT SULE

Airtel Africa has announced the naira-dollar exchange rate and the naira-British Pounds exchange rate for the dividend announced for the financial year ended March 31, 2024. According to the telecoms giant, one United States dollar will be exchanged for N1485.99 while one US dol-

lar will equally be exchanged for 0.7859 GB pounds.

"Airtel Africa, a leading pan-African provider of telecommunications and mobile money services, with a presence in 14 countries across Africa, today confirms that the default currency and options on currency election for the proposed final dividend (recommended by the Board to be 3.57 cents

per ordinary share payable on 26 July 2024 to shareholders on the register at of close of business on 21 June 2024), and the currency exchange rates that will be applicable in determination of the final dividend payment to any shareholders that qualify for and have elected to receive the final

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Business & Economy

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CBN's directives on oil proceeds repatriation to boost naira appreciation —Experts

TELIAT SULE

Nigeria's national currency, the naira, is set to experience appreciation in value against major international currencies, especially the United States dollar, in view of the new directives of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to International Oil Companies (IOCs), through deposit money banks in the country, economic experts at the Financial Derivatives Company (FDC) have said. This prediction was based on the assumption that the directives of the CBN will increase dollar supplies to authorised forex dealers in the country.

Recalled that on May 31, 2024, the CBN, through a circular with reference number TED/FEM/PUB/FPC/001/017 explained the purpose of the earlier directives given to deposit money banks on IOCs' proceeds, to the effect that 50 percent of IOCs' repatriated proceeds could be used to settle financial obligations in Nigeria.

"The 50% balance of the repatriated export proceeds could be used to settle financial obligations in Nigeria, whenever required, during the prescribed 90-day period," the CBN said in a circular to banks in the country.

It further listed the eligible transactions for which the 50 percent balance of their pro-

ceeds could be used for, and these include the petroleum profit tax, royalty, domestic contract invoices, cash call, domestic loan principal and interest payment, transaction taxes including the Nigerian Content Development (NCD) levy, education tax, and forex sales at the Nigerian Foreign Exchange Market.

The naira has oscillated against the US dollar in recent times. According to the exchange rates data provided by the CBN, the naira-dollar exchange rate was N1330.76 as of March 2024. The rate remained almost the same as at the end of April this year. The naira depreciated to N1483.48 to the US dollar as at the end of May 2024. And on June 6 2024, the naira traded at N1485.82 to the US dollar at the NFEM market.

The naira also depreciated against the Chinese Yuan. As of March 2024, the exchange rate of naira/yuan was N184.11/Yuan. It became N190.26/Yuan by the end of April 2024. The naira further depreciated to N204.90/Yuan as of May 2024. And by June 6, 2024, the naira was exchanged for N205.07 to the Yuan.

"The forex market is about to witness a turnaround as the CBN continues its efforts to bring stability in the market. Recently, the CBN permitted IOCs to sell 50% of repatriated export proceeds directly to authorized FX dealers and

eligible users of foreign exchange. This move is aimed at increasing forex availability in the market, thereby aiding in exchange rate stabilization," FDC stated.

The research firm added that naira will likely trade within the band of N1,350 to

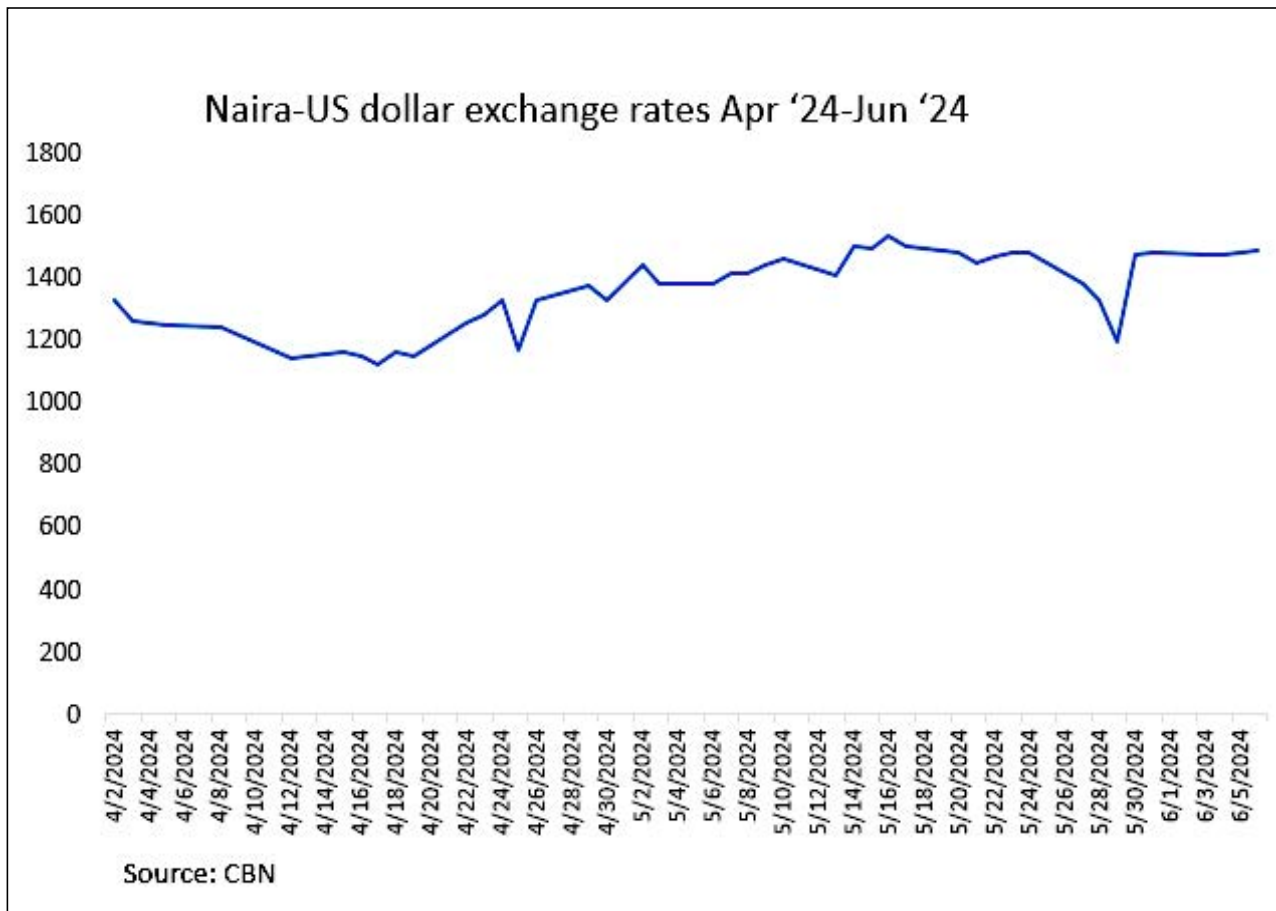
N1,450/\$, through June. But due to lags, the positive impact of the CBN position will come later towards the end of 2024 and beyond.

In the event Nigeria's naira appreciates against international functional currencies, the Nigerian economy stands

to benefit in the forms of reduction in the cost of imported inputs for domestic production, reduction in the cost of living for Nigerians, boost in consumer spending, that will further stimulate economic growth, job creation, and lower prices of imported goods,

which will further increase the standard of living in Nigeria.

As a follow up to the above, the experts said a strong naira will lead to reduction in borrowing costs for consumers, businesses and governments, improved asset quality for banks due to high performing



WHAT MOVED THE MONEY AND CAPITAL MARKETS LAST WEEK?

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PRODUCT MGT IN NIGERIA RAPIDLY EVOLVING –ADESANYA

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AFDB 2024: EXPERTS CALL FOR NEW FINANCIAL MECHANISM TO MITIGATE FOREIGN EXCHANGE RISK IN ENERGY FINANCING

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LANDMARK ECB CUT VINDICATES LAGARDE'S MONETARY STRATEGY

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What moved the money and capital markets last week?

MERISTEM RESEARCH

During its June meeting, the European Central Bank (ECB) cut interest rates by 25bps to 4.25% in June 2024 (marking the first rate cut in five years). The monetary authority attributed this decision to recent price stability and the downward trend in the area's inflation (EU area's inflation decreased from 10.60% in October 2022 to 2.60% in May 2024). In the near term, we anticipate the ECB will adopt a wait-and-see approach, closely monitoring relevant indicators to ensure prices remain on the downtrend and achieve its 2.00% inflation objective.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Statistics South Africa reported that the country's economy shrank by 0.10% in Q1:2024, down from a revised 0.30% growth in Q4:2023 and 0.60% in Q1:2023. The downturn is attributed to widespread contraction across six economic sectors, including manufacturing (-1.40%), mining (-2.30%), and construction (-3.10%), exacerbated by intensified power outages. However, we anticipate a return to economic growth in the upcoming quarters, driven by the government's efforts to stimulate economic expansion, potentially influenced by changes in government dynamics and subsequent fiscal reforms.

Lastly, Zambia's bondholders have approved a debt restructuring plan, a potential relief to the country's debt crisis following its default over three years ago. The plan (which is a prerequisite to access the previously secured \$1.30 billion facility from the IMF) involves swapping three bonds due in 2022, 2024, and 2027 for two amortising bonds with revised payment terms. Additionally, Zambia has requested an increase in the IMF's loan programme from \$1.30 billion to \$1.70 billion to bolster its response to the worst drought in four decades and support the country's economic recovery.

On the domestic scene, the

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies (OPEC+) have adjusted Nigeria's oil production quota to 1.50 million barrels per day (mbd) until December 2025, an increase from the initial 1.38mbpd. Although this falls short of the 1.78mbpd target set in the country's 2024 budget, the upward review offers Nigeria a chance to enhance its oil production and consequently boost its oil revenue.

Going forward, we expect the government to intensify efforts to boost output in the sector, potentially leading to further quota increases in the near to mid-term. In a separate development, the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) has disbursed \$925.00 million under the \$3.30 billion crude-backed facility sponsored by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited. This latest disbursement brings the total amount disbursed under the facility to \$3.18bn. We anticipate that this additional funding will improve liquidity in Nigeria's foreign exchange market in the near term. Moreover, since repayments are tied to oil production, we do not expect this increased borrowing to significantly strain the country's debt service capacity.

Furthermore, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has revoked Heritage Bank Plc's licence, citing the failure of its board and management to improve financial performance, posing a risk to financial stability. The CBN appointed the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) as the bank's liquidator, with depositors expected to receive insured benefits of up to N5.00 million. We believe this action by the CBN aims to strengthen public trust in the banking sector and also sends a signal to other banks to adhere to regulatory standards and maintain strong financial performance.

FIDELITY BANK GOES FOR RIGHTS Issue, Public Offer

On the corporate scene, Fidelity Bank Plc has announced plans to raise up to N127.10 billion through a Rights Issue and Public Offer. This capital-raising initiative aligns with the bank's efforts to meet the CBN's recapitalization requirements and aims to support sustainable growth and diversify earnings streams. The Rights Issue programme offers 3.20 billion ordinary shares at a ratio of one new share for every ten shares held as of January 5, 2024, priced at N9.25 per share, which is a 0.54% premium to the closing price on June 7, 2024. Additionally, the Public

Offer presents 10 billion ordinary shares to the general public at N9.75 per share, a 5.98% premium to the closing price on June 7, 2024.

BEARS REIGN IN NIGERIA'S CAPITAL MARKET

The Nigerian equities market ended last week in the negative territory, with the NGX All Share Index (ASI) declining by 0.08% to 99,222.33 points, resulting in a year-to-date return of 32.70%. Performance across sectors varied as the NGX INS (+0.84% WoW), NGX CNSMRGDS (+0.33% WoW), and NGX IN-

DUSTR (+0.00% WoW) closed positively while the NGX BNK (-0.62% WoW) and NGX OIL/GAS (-0.18% WoW) closed in the red zone.

During this week's OMO auction, the total amount offered was N250.00 billion, with a total subscription of N513.95 billion resulting in a subscription-to-offer ratio of 2.08x. Stop rates for the 105, 189, and 357-day instruments were 18.74%, 19.59%, and 22.33% respectively. Additionally, at the treasury bills primary auction held last week, the total amount offered was N221.17 billion with a subscrip-

tion of N713.89 billion.

Subsequently, the stop rate for the 182-day instrument increased marginally to 17.50% (from 17.45% in the previous auction), while the stop rate for the 364-day instrument declined to 20.67% from 20.69%. However, the stop rate for the 91-day instrument remained unchanged at 16.50%. The fixed-income secondary market registered mixed sentiments during the week as the average treasury yield rose to 21.45% from 21.02%, while the average bond yield decreased to 17.03% from 17.58% in the previous week.



FIRST BANK-NESG PARTNERSHIP:

L-R: Acting MD, First Bank of Nigeria Limited, Olusegun Alebiosu and CEO, NESG, Dr Tayo Aduloju on how to strengthen partnership between the two institutions.

Ibom Air unveils future plans as it marks 5th year anniversary

HAPPY OSAGIE

Ibom Air, one of Nigeria's leading airlines, proudly celebrated its 5th year anniversary on the 7th of June 2024, marking a significant milestone in its journey to provide reliable and exceptional air travel services.

Since inception, Ibom Air has been committed to excellence in the aviation industry, rapidly becoming a preferred choice for travelers across Nigeria. The airline's focus on punctuality, customer satisfaction, and safety

has distinguished it in a competitive market, the airline management stated in an anniversary statement shared on the Ibom Air's official X handle.

"Ibom Air, Nigeria's leading Airline, proudly celebrates its 5th anniversary marking a significant milestone on its journey to provide reliable, exceptional air travel service in Africa. Since inception Ibom Air has committed to offering world class schedule, reliability, on-time departures and excellent service earning the confidence and loyalty of pas-

sengers across the region," Mfo Udom, CEO of Ibom Air, said.

He added, "Since launching commercial operations in June 2019, Ibom Air has grown remarkably, expanding its fleet, increasing its route network and enhancing the overall customer experience. The airline has consistently achieved impressive performance metrics, including industry-leading, on-time performance, which has become a hallmark of its operations.

"We are incredibly proud of what we have accomplished over

the past five years. Our success is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team and the unwavering patronage of our passengers. As we celebrate this milestone, we also congratulate our shareholders, the Government and the people of Akwa Ibom and commend them for their committed ownership and strong support from the start. Because of this, we remain focused on connecting people and places

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Oando announces successful...

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landmark \$3.3 billion Afreximbank-arranged financing is the largest syndicated loan ever raised by Nigeria in the international market and one of the largest syndicated debts raised in Africa in recent years.

"The successful completion of this facility signifies another win for the company and the country at large. The transaction further reinforces Oando's ability to create value and the company's status as the indigenous partner of choice in Nigeria," Wale Tinubu, Group Chief Executive, Oando Plc, said.

He added, "As a proudly indigenous company our ambition has always been to use our platform to support the sustainable development of the nation. Against this backdrop,

Project Gazelle will be instrumental in realizing the Federal Government's efforts to boost the country's socioeconomic indices. Afreximbank as lead arranger continues to support African corporations - public and private growing confidence in the market and continent."

Meanwhile, Oando Plc announced it has received confirmation from the JSE on the lifting of the suspension on the secondary listing of the company's securities. This change took effect from June 5, 2024, allowing trading to resume.

The energy firm acknowledged and appreciated the patience of its stakeholders during the time the suspension lasted even as it remains committed to maintaining the highest standards of corporate governance and transparency.

Airtel Africa announces exchanges rates for...

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dividend payment in U.S. dollars, GB pounds or Nigerian naira will be as set out below. The latest date to trade shares in order to be entitled to the dividend is 19 June 2024," Airtel Africa stated.

At the end of the year ended March 31, 2024, Airtel Africa's customer base grew by 9 percent to 152.7 million. Internet users rose by 17.8 percent to 64.4 million and data usage per customer increased by 20.8 percent during the period.

"The Board has approved a

share buyback programme of up to \$100m, over a period of up to 12 months. On 1 March 2024, we announced the commencement of the first tranche of this buyback up to a maximum of \$50m. During March 2024, the company purchased 7.4 million shares for a total consideration of \$9m," Airtel Africa said.

Revenue for the period declined by 5.3 percent to \$4,979 million as of March 2024 compared with \$5,255 million in the corresponding period of 2023. Loss after tax stood at \$89 million in 2024 as against \$750 million as of March 2023.

"The consistent deployment of our 'Win with' strategy supported the acceleration in constant currency revenue growth over the recent quarters which has reduced the impact of currency headwinds faced across most of our markets. This strong revenue performance is a reflection not only of the opportunity that is inherent across our markets, but also the resilience of our affordable offerings despite the inflationary pressure many of our customers have experienced," Olusegun Ogunsanya, Airtel Africa's chief executive officer, said.

He added, "The growth op-

portunity that exists across our markets remains compelling, and we are well positioned to deliver against this opportunity. We will continue to focus on margin improvement from the recent level as we progress through the year."

The company further stated that shareholders that hold their shares on the London Stock Exchange may elect to receive their dividend payment in GB pounds or U.S. dollars. Likewise, shareholders that hold their shares on the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NGX) may elect to receive their entire dividend payment in Nigerian naira or U.S. dollars.

Product mgt in Nigeria rapidly evolving –Adesanya

Adeyinka Adesanya is one of the fastest-growing Nigerian female Product Managers who is revolutionizing the tech space. She is passionate and detail-oriented with a strong focus on process, strategy, and solving user problems. Despite her relatively young age in the industry, she has developed a deep understanding of how to leverage market feedback, stakeholder management, and cross-functional team inputs to develop nimble processes and create concise product road maps. In this interview which was monitored by THE NIGERIAN OBSERVER, she gives deep insight into how product management is evolving in Nigeria and what it takes to be a successful product manager. Excerpts:

How did you get into product management?

My journey into product management was not planned. After completing a degree in Mass Communication, I was drawn to the vibrant world of technology. My first job was at iTap Solutions Limited, where I worked as a Customer Service Representative. While helping customers troubleshoot issues with our software, some expressed their struggles with understanding how to utilize our Deluxe application effectively. They found the setup to be rigid and confusing, which led to frequent queries and mounting frustration.

Based on the feedback I got from our users, I proposed the development of a Comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the application. My idea was to create a clear, step-by-step guide that would walk users through the various functionalities of the Deluxe application, making it more accessible and user-friendly.

To support my proposal, I shared specific examples from user feedback, highlighting common areas of confusion and frustration. I emphasised how a well-structured SOP could empower users with the knowledge they needed to navigate the application confidently. This, in turn, would likely reduce the volume of support queries and enhance the overall user experience. My proposal was met with enthusiasm from the team. We collaborated to design and implement the SOP, ensuring it was comprehensive yet easy to understand. After the launch, we monitored user feedback closely and observed a significant decrease in support queries related to navigation and functionality. Users reported a smoother, more intuitive experience with the Deluxe application, validating the positive impact of the SOP.

This experience underscored the value of listening to user feedback and proactively acting on their queries. It also highlighted the importance of clear communication and thorough documentation in improving product usability and customer satisfaction. Although the journey was not without its challenges, transitioning from Mass Communication to a tech-focused role required me to learn new skills and adapt to a different way of thinking. I spent countless hours studying, attending workshops, and seeking advice from industry experts to bridge the gap.

Looking back on my journey, I am reminded of the importance of staying open to new opportunities and embracing challenges and opportunities for growth. While my path into product management may have been unconventional, it has been a rewarding journey filled with learning, growing, and the thrill of bringing innovative ideas to life in the ever-evolving tech landscape of Nigeria.



How important is a product manager to a company, and which companies need their services?

Product managers are essential in today's business landscape, providing strategic vision, fostering cross-functional collaboration, and driving product success. We ensure product development aligns with company goals and market needs, and act as the voice of the customer, by overseeing the entire product lifecycle from ideation to post-launch evaluation. Their decisions directly impact market performance and revenue.

For example, in the tech sector, product managers are pivotal in the sense that they guide the development of innovative software and hardware products, ensuring they meet market demands and stay ahead of competitors. Our expertise in agile methodologies and user-centric design is crucial for creating products that resonate with users and drive adoption.

What's your view on product management in Nigeria today?

Driven by a flourishing tech ecosystem and a growing number of startups, I would say that product management in Nigeria is rapidly evolving. Despite the challenges such as limited funding, regulatory hurdles, and a shortage of experienced mentors, the field is maturing daily and Nigerian product managers are gaining global recognition by participating in international forums, and fostering a strong sense of community through professional groups and meetups.

What should companies be looking forward to in a product manager?

In selecting product managers, companies need to look for individuals who embody a unique blend of skills and qualities tailored to the demands of the role. For instance, for a tech company, candidates should demonstrate a solid grasp of technical concepts relevant to the company's products or services. While they don't necessarily need to be software programmers, a thorough understanding of how technology works enables effective collaboration with engineering teams, which ensures that product development aligns with technical feasibility.

Moreover, successful product managers should possess a strategic mindset, capable of envisioning the trajectory of the product and aligning it with overarching business objectives. This strategic acumen allows them to define a clear product vision, develop long-term roadmaps, and identify market opportunities that drive sustainable growth.



Driven by a flourishing tech ecosystem and a growing number of startups, I would say that product management in Nigeria is rapidly evolving. Despite the challenges such as limited funding, regulatory hurdles, and a shortage of experienced mentors, the field is maturing daily and Nigerian product managers are gaining global recognition by participating in international forums, and fostering a strong sense of community through professional groups and meetups.

Also, a keen understanding of customer's needs and behaviour is paramount since it allows them to make informed decisions that resonate with the target audience. By prioritising user experience and satisfaction, they can ensure that products meet and exceed customer expectations.

Leadership skills are equally paramount. Product managers must inspire and guide cross-functional teams comprising individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise. Effective leadership fosters collaboration, motivates team members, and ensures alignment towards common goals, ultimately driving product success.

Furthermore, the ability to communicate well is indispensable. Product managers must possess the ability to articulate complex ideas clearly and persuasively to diverse stakeholders, both internally and externally. Whether conveying the product vision, aligning teams, or presenting progress updates, strong communication skills are instrumental in driving consensus and facilitating collaboration.

Analytical prowess is another prerequisite. Data-driven decision-making enables product managers to prioritize features, assess market trends, and optimize product strategies for maximum impact. By leveraging insights gleaned from metrics and analytics, they can steer product development in the right direction and drive continuous improvement. In today's fast-paced tech landscape, adaptability and resilience are indispensable qualities. Product managers must thrive in dynamic environments characterised by rapid change and uncertainty. The ability to pivot strategies quickly in response to evolving market conditions or unforeseen challenges is essential for maintaining momentum and achieving long-term success.

Moreover, a culture of innovation is fundamental to driving product excellence. Product managers should encourage creativity and experimentation within their teams, fostering an environment where novel ideas are embraced, explored, and translated into tangible product innovations.

Effective project management is also critical. Proficiency in Agile methodologies enables product managers to orchestrate product development cycles efficiently, prioritise tasks effectively, and ensure the timely delivery of high-quality products.

Finally, a strong grasp of business fundamentals rounds out the ideal skill set for a product manager. Understanding financial aspects such as budgeting, pricing strategies, and revenue models equips them to make informed decisions that drive business success while maximizing return on investment.

In essence, by seeking candidates who embody these qualities, companies can ensure they have the leadership and expertise necessary to drive innovation, deliver value to customers, and maintain a competitive edge in today's dynamic business landscape.

United Nigeria Airlines records 80% performance in May 2024

HAPPY OSAGIE

In May 2024, United Nigeria Airlines continued to demonstrate its commitment to safety and customer service, achieving significant operational milestones with dedication to providing reliable and punctual air travel for their passengers.

Sharing on its official X handle, United Nigeria Airlines emphasized that it will continue to prioritize safety and customer service.

According to the flight data provided for May 2024, a total of 696 flights were scheduled, out of which 673 were operated, with only 23 cancellations.

"We achieved an 80 percent On-Time Performance, with 145 delayed flights (not exceeding one hour). The few disruptions were due to unfavorable

weather conditions and other operational constraints, in line with our strict compliance with safety standards.

"However, with a schedule reliability of 97 percent and an on-time performance of 80 percent, we surpassed our performance from last month and are committed to continuous improvement all-round.

"While we acknowledge areas for further improvement in service delivery, we promise to continually optimise our operations to meet and exceed passengers' expectations."

United Nigeria Airlines is focused on continually refining its services to meet and exceed passenger expectations. Its commitment to safety, reliability, and customer satisfaction drives the airline firm to maintain high standards in all aspects of its operations.

AfDB 2024: Experts call for new financial mechanism to mitigate foreign exchange risk in energy financing

Financial experts and policy makers have called for a new financial mechanism to address foreign exchange risk in energy financing in Africa. These calls were made at a session organised by the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group as part of its 2024 Annual Meetings in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital. The debates focused on rethinking how clean energy projects are financed in Africa.

Moderated by Wale Shonibare, Director for Energy Financial Solutions, Policy and Regulation at the Bank, the panel included Maureen Hinda-Mbuende, Namibia's Deputy Minister of Finance, Amadou Hott, Special Envoy of the AfDB Group President for the Alliance for Green Infrastructure in Africa (AGIA), Demba Diallo, Executive Director and ehad of Project Development at Africa50, and Auguste Claude-Nguetsopde, partner and head of Banking Sector Advisory at KPMG in South Africa.

Kevin Kariuki, AfDB Vice-President for Power, Energy, Climate and Green Growth, pointed to the issue at the opening of the session: "Energy transition remains a priority for Africa's development, but it is underfinanced. The main problem is exchange rate volatility, which remains a concern for investors."

"So long as we do not have a common currency, we need a transparent and well-governed mechanism in order to guarantee stability for investors, facilitate borrowing and reduce currency risks," he said.

Demba Diallo seconded Kariuki's comments: "Africa50 investors have borne the brunt of the devaluations of several African currencies, such as the Nigerian naira. Reducing currency risk will lower costs and offer a better return per project," he said.

Wale Shonibare pointed out that for Africa to meet its energy and climate targets by 2030, annual investments of \$200 billion are needed whereas investments

in 2022 were less than \$90 billion.

"African countries need to increase their national savings and pool their natural resources so that they can use these resources to raise the funds they need for investment in energy infrastructure. That calls for a paradigm shift in project financing in Africa," he said.

Achieving the paradigm shift depends on three key factors. First, access to long-term sustainable financing that mitigates currency risk and keeps electricity tariffs affordable in a context where 600 million Africans still lack access to electricity. Second, African countries must pool and harness their wealth to attract international investors to projects that earn local currency without the need for government guarantees. Third, the continent must make best use of its rare

mineral wealth. Many of these minerals are essential for clean energy technologies and should create new export markets.

The African continent has 60 percent of the world's solar capacity and 50 percent of its wind power capacity. It also has 71.4 percent of the global reserves of cobalt, 76 percent of platinum and 58 percent of manganese. And yet, Africa currently attracts just 3 percent of global investment in energy and 2 percent of all investments in green energy.

African countries could avoid long-term borrowing in hard currency for infrastructure projects that generate revenue in local currency given this context, and pool their natural resources to facilitate borrowing in African accounting units. Panelists made the point that these units would be exchangeable against

international currencies while maintaining stability in relation to local African currencies.

Most countries on the continent rely on hard-currency debt to provide the capital needed for development, exposing project developers to significant currency mismatches and currency risks that are difficult to hedge. This often has a very significant impact on national energy costs. Currency hedges exist, but can be costly and are not available for the currencies of many African countries, particularly in the long term, at low cost, and on the scale necessary to support clean-energy investments.

"We need to engage all stakeholders in the creation of a financial mechanism that enables African countries to mitigate exchange-rate risk in financing of energy infrastructure," Maureen

Hinda-Mbuende said.

"If we want to lift Africa out of poverty, we need to do more than pool our resources – we also need to act on pricing. Many of our resources leave our continent without us being aware of their real value," said the Namibian Minister. Namibia is particularly rich in rare earths.

"African countries fail to recognise the immense wealth that they possess. Borrowing on the basis of a basket of currencies would be beneficial to them, and if they can pool their resources, it will bear fruit," said Auguste Claude-Nguetsopde.

"We know that Africa possesses immense commodity wealth. Let's start by looking at the resources in each of our countries and consider how we can make the most of them," Hott concluded.

Ibom Air unveils future plans as...

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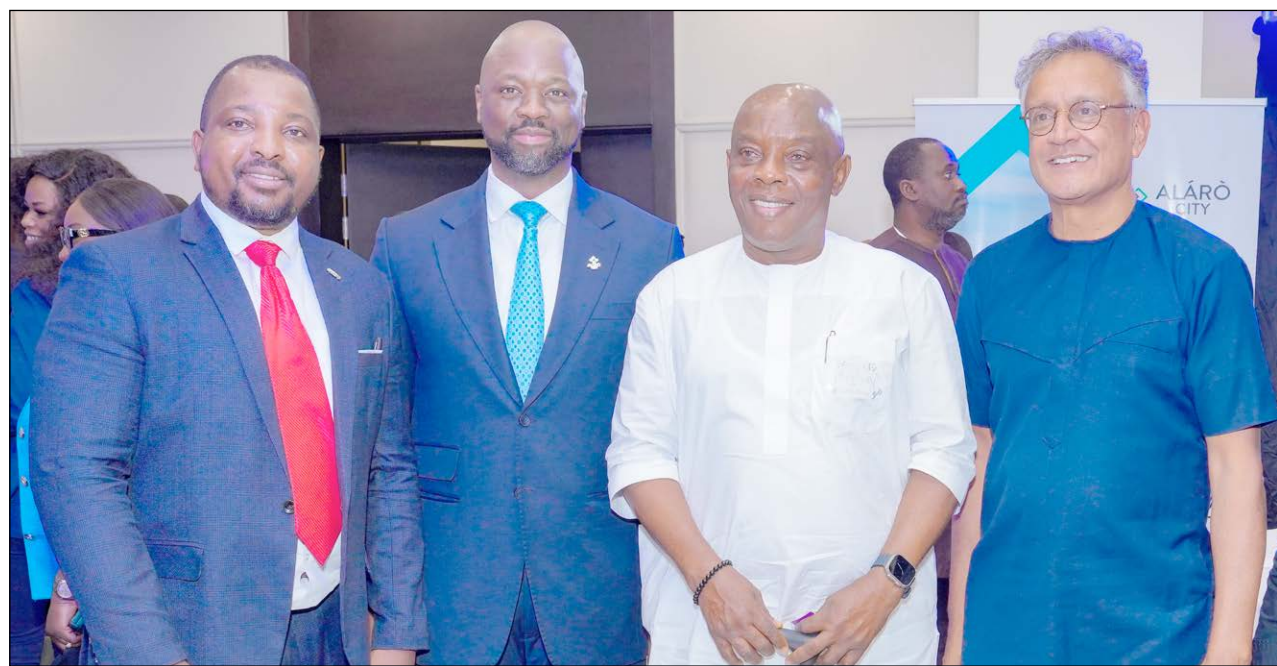
with excellence.

"As part of its anniversary celebrations, Ibom Air is excited to unveil an ambitious plan for the future. This includes positioning itself as an ESG-responsible company with a clear sustainability vision and a rapid fleet and route expansion plan to tackle connectivity issues within the Africa region. It also plans to focus on technology."

George Uriesi, chief operating officer of Ibom Air, corroborated the statement above saying, "We have recently unveiled cutting edge and infrastructure to improve booking, check-in and in-flight services while enhancing our self-service portal on

the website to make it more user-friendly. Similar attention will be paid to one of our most critical touchpoints: our call center, we plan to make it a 24-hours service very shortly.

"In the area of sustainability, Ibom Air's initiative aims to reduce its environmental impact through sustainable practices, including the introduction of their brand new, fuel-efficient Airbus A220-300 aircraft. The expected fleet of 11 of these aircraft will ensure that the airline carbon full print is in line with global best practice, while its corporate social responsibility programme will focus on giving back to the less privileged and the vulnerable, positively impacting its communities."



X:

L-R: Owen Akinwande, Plant Director, Cadbury Nigeria Plc; Yomi Ademola, Managing Director, Alaro City; Emmanuel Okonkwo, Chairman, Ekulo Group of Companies; and Dhiren Chandria, Managing Director, Ariel Foods at the Alaro City Trade and Business Summit held in Lagos recently.

Landmark ECB cut vindicates Lagarde's monetary strategy

DAVID MARSH

The landmark 0.25 percentage point cut in euro bloc interest rates caps an extraordinary period when the European Central Bank has coped much better than expected in mitigating strains on its 26-member governing council.

Christine Lagarde, ECB president, has managed to steer a middle path between steadfastness in the anti-inflation fight and sensitivity towards central bank governors chafing over the 0.25-point rise in the key deposit rate in September 2023, which an important minority on the council thought was unnecessary.

Announcing the cut on 6 June, the first for five years, Lagarde pointed to the need for prudence in coming months in view of continued upward wage pressures and a headline inflation rate still above the 2%

target. The bank said it was 'now appropriate to moderate the degree of monetary policy restriction' after a 2.5-point fall in inflation since the September hike.

Although the ECB said it was not 'pre-committing' to further interest rate reductions, leading figures on the council have spoken in favour of quarterly rate cuts over the rest of the year. There is a significant belief that above-average wage rises do not indicate any danger of a wage-price spiral. Rather they are seen as a normal catch-up reaction to sharp falls in real wages in the euro area throughout the past few years' inflationary spell.

The ECB is aware of potential vulnerability in moving relatively fast on rates in the current easing cycle, ahead of the Federal Reserve and Bank of England. However, these risks are felt to be manageable in view of the fragile state of large parts of the

euro bloc economy, especially Germany. In view of the Bank of Canada's 0.25-point rate cut on 5 June, as well as reductions in Switzerland and Sweden since March, the ECB can be viewed as occupying the rate-cutting middle ground among a wider group of leading central banks.

The controversial interest rate rise in September was pushed through following a decisive intervention by Joachim Nagel, the Bundesbank president, who has forged a strong strategic bond with Lagarde since taking over in January 2022. The September rise is now termed an 'insurance' hike guarding against the risk that internal and external price pressures could have accelerated during the winter. This eventuality turned out not to materialise. Yet Nagel can be expected to garner credit in managing to push through the rise and stiffen ECB resistance to any slackening of the restrictive stance

in the last few months.

Lagarde has spoken out against formal 'forward guidance' on interest rates and insisted on adherence to a 'meeting by meeting' assessment of the economic and monetary position. However, the ECB's reduction represents vindication of the position she has maintained for several months that rate cuts were not likely before June.

On his appointment in December 2021 Nagel was enjoined by his backers in the German finance ministry both to help forge a tight ECB monetary policy and to overcome the Bundesbank's previous frequent isolation in the council. Nagel's predecessor Jens Weidmann, now president of the supervisory board of Commerzbank, suffered spells of fractiousness with previous ECB president Mario Draghi.

The relationship between Lagarde and Nagel has gained in

importance amid general praise, even from some monetary hardliners on the council, for the ECB president's deft psychological handling of her colleagues compared with the often secretive and acerbic Draghi.

The strength of the Lagarde-Nagel axis was underlined already in July 2022 when the Bundesbank president engineered a 0.5-point rate increase to launch a belated start to the ECB's tightening cycle. This was part of a bold and somewhat risky compromise with Lagarde and other key council members. To secure bargaining power over winning the sharp interest rate rise, Nagel first agreed to back the ECB's hotly debated 'transmission protection instrument' to safeguard the position of higher-debt euro members.

In other moves to underpin cohesion in the council, Nagel has organised behind-the-scenes diplomatic initiatives with Fabio

Panetta and Pablo Hernández de Cos, heads of Banca d'Italia and Banco de España, two central banks whose monetary views in the past have frequently been at odds with the Bundesbank's.

An intriguing role in delicate ECB council maneuverings has been played by Robert Holzmann, president of Oesterreichische Nationalbank. He has frequently taken up provocative minority positions on interest rates as well as other issues such as optimal levels of minimum reserves.

Part of Holzmann's reasoning is that, by adopting extreme positions, he allows leeway for other traditionally hawkish council members such as Nagel and Klaas Knot, president of De Nederlandsche Bank, to present their views as relatively centrist. In line with this strategy, Holzmann was the only member of the council on 6 June to argue against the interest rate reduction.



How to plan and develop a new product for your business

Day by day, people and companies get innovative and come up with ideas of new products, which they bring to fruition. They manufacture products and introduce them into the market to meet the needs of consumers and for profit. Before a product is developed, there are some factors to consider in order to ensure its success. New products are a vital part of a company's competitive growth strategy. Most manufacturers cannot live without new products because they can have more of current sales in good new products.

Below are the product attributes that have significant impacts on a new product purchase and acceptance by consumers:

Superiority: For a new product to be accepted by consumers, it should be unique and better than the existing products. It should provide something beneficial that the old ones don't. If it's a product that has never existed, it should be of high quality and assurance.

Sociability: The new product should be compatible or consistent with consumers' beliefs, values, and lifestyles. For example, if you want to produce a new design of clothes for elderly women, you should produce wears that will fit and cover their bodies properly and not skimpy ones.

Satisfaction: You should consider if consumers will be content with your product. Every new product should be designed and developed to meet a need, and consumers should be pleased and satisfied after using it.

Simplicity: Your new product should be easy for consumers to understand and use and for marketers to promote. Don't go designing a product that a consumer can't easily fathom opening it. I've seen products

like that: sometimes, you would have to start looking for an intelligent guy around to help you open it or show you how it works. There are even some food grinders that you cannot use for the first time, even with the instructions on the cartons, unless someone else shows you how to operate them.

Speed: The extent to which the benefits of the product are being experienced immediately, rather than at a later time should be considered.

After a new product is developed, the steps that should be taken include:

Test marketing: Until now, the product has been the company's secret. During test marketing, there should be programs in line with plans for launching the product, which involve general marketing strategies that would entail lots of promotions. The product is introduced to wholesalers, who then introduce it to retailers, who introduce it to consumers. At this stage, feedback is vital and required to help improve the product to make it consumer-friendly. It would be bad for the product if 1000 consumers buy it at the initial stage and have negative experiences with it. Thus, further improvement might not really help the product stand well in the market.

Commercialization: This is the launching step. During this stage, great emphasis is on the organization structure and management talent needed to implement the marketing strategy. Emphasis is also given to following up on such things as faults in the design, production costs, quality control, and inventory requirements. Furthermore, procedures and responsibility for evaluating the success of the new product by comparison with projections are also finalized.

CAUSES OF NEW PRODUCT FAILURE

Many new products with satisfactory potential have failed to make the grade. Some of the reasons for new product failure are connected with execution and control problems. Below are the main causes of new products' failures after they have been carefully screened, developed, and marketed:

1. Faulty estimates and market potential.
2. Unexpected reactions from competitors.
3. Poor timing in the introduction of the product.
4. Rapid change in the marketing procedures after the product was approved.
5. Inadequate quality control.
6. Faulty estimates in production costs.
7. Inadequate expenditures regarding the initial promotion process.
8. Faulty marketing testing.
9. Improper channel of distribution.

Some of the above problems are beyond the control of management, but it is clear that successful new product planning requires large amounts of reliable information in diverse areas. Each department assigned functional responsibility for product development automatically becomes an input to the information system needed by the new product decision-maker. For instance, when a company is developing a new product, it is wise for both engineers and marketers to consider both the kind of market to be entered, such as consumer, industrial, defense, and specific target segments. These decisions will be of paramount influence in the design and cost of finished goods, which will directly influence price,

sales, and profits.

THE NEED FOR RESEARCH

The keystone activity of new product planning is research, not just marketing research but technical research also. New product project reports should be more than a collection of expert opinions. The following questions should be answered during the research:

1. What is the anticipated market demand? Are the potential applications for the product restricted?
2. Can the product be patented? Are there any antitrust problems?
3. Can the product be sold through present channels and sales force?
4. At different volume levels, what will be the unit manufacturing costs?
5. What is the most appropriate package to use in terms of color, material, design, and so forth?
6. What is the estimated return on investment?
7. What is the appropriate pricing strategy?

While the above list is not exhaustive, it serves to illustrate the serious need for reliable information, which can be obtained through time-consuming and expensive marketing research studies. Other data can be generated in the engineering laboratories or pulled from accounting records. Certain types of information must be based on assumptions, which may or may not hold true, and on expectations about what will happen in the future, in the case of anticipated competitive reaction or the projected level of sales.

NEW PRODUCT POLICY

In developing a new product policy, the first question a marketing manager should ask is, in how many ways can a product be new? There are at least nine different ways:

1. A product performing an entirely new function, such as television, which for the first time permitted the transmission of audiovisual signals.
2. A product that offers improved performance of an existing function, such as a wristwatch, whose balance wheel has been replaced by a timing fork.
3. A product that is a new application of an existing product.
4. A product that offers additional functions. The hands-free telephone, for instance, does what the earlier telephone did and more.
5. An existing product that, through lower cost, is able to reach more buyers. The hand calculator is an example.
6. An existing product offered to a new market. This may be done by repositioning or taking a regional brand into other regions.
7. An upgraded product defined as an existing product integrated into another existing product, such as the clock-radio.
8. A downgraded product. For example, a manufacturer that switches from buying a component to producing a cheaper component in-house and marketing it.
9. A restyled product, such as annual auto and clothing changes.

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The Polity

• Policy • Legislation • Enforcement

Nigeria and the regionalism question

VICTORY OKONJO

Despite the House of Representatives' coming out to publicly deny any Bill entertaining the thought of regionalism, the mere suggestion of reintroducing regionalism has resurrected a long-simmering discussion on the nation's political framework. Recently, a trending draft bill that proposes a return to the regional system of government in Nigeria surfaced, kicking off a maelstrom of scrutiny and speculation.

The proposed legislation aims for the revival of the regional system of government, dormant since 1967, which would mean that the existing 36-state federal structure would be supplanted. Intense dialogue has followed this revelation, leading many to speculate on the country's future.

The document was titled "A Bill for an Act to substitute the annexure to Decree 24 of 1999 with a new governance model for the Federal Republic of Nigeria", and was authored by Dr. Akin Fapohunda, who is neither a senator nor a member of the House of Representatives.

Proponents of regionalism have argued in the past that it would promote greater autonomy, decentralization, and more effective governance. On the other hand, critics fear it could exacerbate ethnic tensions and undermine national unity.

At any rate, the House of Representatives spokesman, Akin Rotimi, apparently dismissed the bill, stating, "The Committees on Rules and Business and Constitution Review have confirmed that there is no such bill before them." However, Nigerians are still left wondering if regionalism might be the answer to the country's political woes or a step backward into a tumultuous past.

NIGERIA AND REGIONALISM

The roots of regionalism in Nigeria can be traced back to the pre-independence era, when the British colonial administration fragmented the country into three autonomous regions: Northern, Western, and Eastern. Each region was endowed with its own government and premier, in a bid to accommodate the country's kaleidoscopic ethnic and cultural diversity. The Hausa-Fulani dominated the North, the Yoruba the West, and the Igbo the East.

However, this system was fraught with political tensions, corruption, and ethnic rivalries, which ultimately led to its demise in 1967. The federal government, under the leadership of General Yakubu Gowon, supplanted the regional structure with a 12-state federal system, which has since undergone multiple transformations, culminating in the current 36-state framework.

Can Nigeria's development truly be revolutionized by actively decentralizing power to the country's geopolitical zones? With deep consideration of the political landscape and strengths of each region, many believe that by



harnessing the unique resources and advantages of each zone, Nigeria has the potential to unlock more effective governance and tackle its entrenched challenges.

But what are the potential benefits and drawbacks of this approach? And how do the political dynamics of each zone shape the viability of regionalism as a solution to the country's political quagmire?

DELTA, A MICROCOSM OF NIGERIA'S ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Let's take Delta State. Located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the state offers a compelling case study for the potential benefits of regionalism in the country. As a microcosm of Nigeria's ethnic diversity, with various ethnic groups including the Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, Isoko, Anioma, etc, this diversity had often led to tensions and conflicts over resources and political power.

However, with their organized governorship rotation system among its ethnic zones, Delta State has demonstrated that regionalism can be a powerful tool for promoting peace, stability, and development.

Under the zoning system, the governorship of the state is rotated among the three senatorial districts, each representing a distinct ethnic zone. The rotation is based on a principle of equity and fairness, ensuring that each zone has an opportunity to produce the governor of the state. This system is expected to promote a sense of belonging and inclusivity among the various ethnic groups, reducing tensions and conflicts over political power.

The success of Delta State's governorship rotation system has impor-

tant implications for regionalism in Nigeria. It suggests that by devolving power to the regions and promoting a sense of ownership and inclusivity among ethnic groups, Nigeria can harness the unique strengths and resources of each zone and promote more effective governance.

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST REGIONALISM

As Nigeria grapples with the challenges of governance and development, many are turning to regionalism as a potential solution. Last year, Aare Onakakanfo of Yoruba land, Iba Gani Adams, described regionalism as the best option to salvage Nigeria's future.

"Democracy thrives in a country where the majority of the people have their ways in determining the quality of their lives. Democracy is the best form of government when the leaders place the general good of the people above theirs," Adams said.

"That is when there is unity, peace and tranquility in the country. But in a situation where there is prolonged hardship, both economic, social and political tension and insecurity, the purpose of government is defeated," he said.

On the other side of the debate, Stanley Osifo, a former presidential aspirant in the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), rejected the concept of regionalism, instead choosing to stress the importance of national unity and collaboration with the current administration to foster development across Nigeria.

When asked in an interview with the New Telegraph about his take on restructuring and regionalism some months back, Osifo asserted that re-

verting to regionalism would stifle development, and that the creation of more states was a more feasible approach to the idea of restructuring.

He said, "If you say we should go back to regionalism, is it because of the cost of governance? If we want to develop, we will incur cost, we cannot develop in isolation. If we want to make Nigeria one of the most developed countries in the world, we must create more states and have capitals in areas that are not developed so that this would lead to many other things that come with development."

Meanwhile, under the auspices of De Renaissance Patriots Foundation, the Lagos Indigenes issued a statement recently via their Media Office, asserting their refusal to accept any Bill aimed at reverting Nigeria to a regional system. The group vehemently declared that Lagos State will not be absorbed into the Western Region.

Adelani Adeniji-Adele, representing De Renaissance Patriots Foundation, posited that the Bill portends an ominous fate for Lagos State, threatening to subsume their distinct aspirations within a larger entity that fundamentally contradicts their values and beliefs as Lagos Indigenes.

"In recent times, our various indigenous groups had always maintained that we as indigenes of Lagos had always been having a raw deal from our neighbours in the South West, who see nothing good in us as they are only for a project to marginalize us and see our state as 'spoils of war,'" Adeniji-Adele said.

"We recall that in our history of over 100 years, Lagos indigenes in their various forms, towns and villages have never made progress and development as part of any region not to

talk of the Western Region. The brief balkanization of our state to be part of the Western Region was an aberration," he said.

PRESIDENTIAL OR PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM?

There have also been calls for a parliamentary system of government, where the head of government draws their legitimacy from the support of the legislature, to which they are accountable.

In this setup, the head of government's authority stems from their ability to command the confidence of the parliament, fostering a more collaborative and representative democracy. Many believe that this system has the potential to revolutionize Nigeria's political dynamics, promoting a more responsive and accountable government.

However, the former Lagos State governor, Babatunde Raji Fashola (SAN), cautioned proponents of a parliamentary system comeback to reassess their stance, pondering whether the underlying factors that led to its downfall in the First Republic still linger, necessitating a thorough examination of the political landscape before revisiting a seemingly antiquated governance model.

He posited, "Those calling for the system change are instigated by economic reasons, if only they are confident the government would provide their economic needs, they won't chant this clamour for change."

GEOPOLITICAL ZONES AND THEIR STRENGTHS

While this debate may seem to have no end in sight, it is essential to recognize the unique strengths of each geopolitical zone. By doing so, the country can unlock its full potential and create a more prosperous and equitable future for all.

The North-East region, comprising six states (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe), boasts fertile soil and a favourable climate, making it an agricultural powerhouse. Crops such as cotton, groundnuts, and maize thrive in this region, offering vast opportunities for agricultural development. With its unique blend of agricultural, aquaculture, and cultural potential, the North-East region is poised for transformation. By harnessing its resources and celebrating its cultural heritage, this region is ready to unlock its full potential and take its rightful place as a hub of economic and cultural prosperity.

The North-West region, comprising Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara states, is Nigeria's industrial and commercial hub. The city of Kano, the capital of Kano State, is one of the largest industrial centres in Africa, with a thriving textile industry and a bustling commercial sector. The region is also home to several educational institutions, including Bayero University Kano, one of Nigeria's most prestigious universities.

Is Bola Tinubu really a master strategist?

BOB MAJIRIOGHENE ETEMIKU

In the days and weeks before Bola Tinubu became president, he had many sobriquets. The sobriquets depended on the side of the aisle that the admirers or the traducers stood. To the Obidients, Tinubu was Balabue, emilokan and an alleged drug lord. But to his admirers and fans, he was the man with the magic wand who with just an abracadabra, had come to take away the heavy burdens that Muhammadu Buhari inflicted on us all. They couched that belief in President Bola Tinubu as a 'master strategist'.

There are many reasons why Bola Tinubu was often referred to as 'master strategist'. A very close person had told me that the man is a very good listener who has a knack for taking notes. He is said to keep a notepad somewhere with which he records sensitive info on which he peruses before taking crucial decisions. Another story said to be responsible for Tinubu's vaunted deftness is that he has a knack for spotting great talent, and would often discard ethnic, religious and primordial considerations to get at those talents for his own use. Critics of his adoption of this strategy say that he stole the idea of pooling outstanding talents from MKO Abiola. Before June 12, 1993, MKO Abiola who was criticized for not having any economy or finance background had fired back that as president of Nigeria, he had no need of an economy background if as president he can hire and fire an economist.

In his years as governor of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu had gone ahead to get as many talented people, Lagosians and non-Lagosians, to join him with running the state. They include Mr Yemi Osinbajo SAN, Ben Akabueze, Babatunde Fas-hola, Rauf Aregbesola and their ilk. It is mostly the successes recorded with his grooming his lieutenants and propping them for future leadership that more or less made him to be perceived as a strategic thinker and political tactician. He has also been said to have built a political empire like a behemoth that has a better reach and connection than the tentacles of an octopus.

But one year after being president of Nigeria, is his 'master strategist' sobriquet still relevant and strong? Less than one year after being sworn in as president of Nigeria, the master strategist so-called has unleashed suffering so intense on Nigerians. One of the very first things he did was remove fuel subsidy. Said to be a good move not well-thought through, the fuel subsidy removal spiralled and set off a chain reaction of pain and suffering among Nigerians so intense that many Nigerians began to wish for the return of the life and times of Muhammadu Buhari instead of that by Bola Tinubu. A little while after that fuel subsidy removal came a staccato of tax after tax after tax. Those taxes have begun to look very much like the biblical story of a king who told his subjects that while his father flogged his subjects with whips, he would do his own flogging with scorpions. Whilst the rest of

Nigerians were carrying these extremely heavy burdens, and were requested to make more and more sacrifices, the ruling elite were having what looks like a field day on a spending spree: members of parliament were getting fantastic monies for state-of-the-art vehicles, and

the presidency was still junketing here and there with extremely large entourage. It seemed as though there were two Nigerias – the one which hardly pays those taxes, buys its own food, pays those electricity bills, but which goes to the same market as the other who does.

The questions then are: what happened to the stratagems of the master strategist? With all of his political stratagems, how come the cost of fuel, the exchange rate of the dollar to the naira, cost of transport and cost of living are the highest in Nigeria since independence? If he is really following in the mould of MKO Abiola, to be able to hire and fire an economist or financial adviser, what in God's name is holding his thunder, just so that Nigerians may get a feel that he is somewhere at least feeling the fire we all feel? Why is his primary constituency, the North (Bola Tinubu lost the election in Lagos), already dubbing him as OTP – One Term President – in spite of his being a master strategist?

Some people have said that Bola Tinubu is no 'master strategist', but one adept at throwing money at problems to get his way. As one of the richest Nigerians alive today, gist in the mill allege that he has a penchant for buying and selling. What sadly makes just buying and selling unworkable in an economy as Nigeria, and indeed in most parts of the world, is that to sell, a country must be able to produce something that it then sells. It involves the production of goods and services – it involves leadership in the sacrifices coming from the leadership. That is where we get at the true meaning of strategic thinking, not the sort that the Bola Tinubu administration seems to be doing now.

Emetiku is editor in chief/publisher, WADONOR, cultural voice of Nigeria.



TINUBU

Asue Ighodalo and Osarodion Ogie: A necessary combination for greater Edo

WELLINGTON OSADOLOR

The dynamic duo of Asue Ighodalo and Osarodion Ogie represents a potent combination for the future development of Edo State.

Asue Ighodalo, a renowned lawyer and businessman, has extensive influence across various sectors of Nigeria and the global economy. His reputation as a strategic thinker and an effective leader makes him an invaluable asset for driving investment and economic growth in Edo. With Ighodalo's deep

understanding of economic dynamics and his vast network, he is well-positioned to attract significant investments to the state, creating opportunities for sustainable development.

Ighodalo's credentials and standing in the business community are expected to draw a substantial influx of investors eager to capitalise on the potential of Edo State. His established capacity to build and influence successful ventures offers a promise of stability and profitability that is highly attractive to investors. The resultant

economic activity from this investment surge, will likely spur job creation, enhance infrastructure, and improve public services, contributing to a robust economic landscape. Ighodalo's leadership could thus catalyze a new era of prosperity in Edo.

Complementing Ighodalo's economic prowess is Barrister Osarodion Ogie, a distinguished lawyer and adept politician. Ogie's legal expertise and political savvy ensure a balanced and stable governance framework. His ability to navigate the intricacies of political engage-

ments with tact and intellectual rigour will support Ighodalo's economic initiatives by providing a stable political environment. Ogie's dedication to human capacity building underscores his commitment to sustainable development, ensuring that the people of Edo are empowered and equipped to contribute to and benefit from the state's growth.

Edo State stands at a critical juncture, needing continuous development to build on the foundation laid by Governor Godwin Obaseki.

Obaseki's achievements in vari-

ous sectors speak volumes about his dedication to the state's progress. This momentum must be maintained and expanded over the next eight years.

The combination of Ighodalo's economic leadership and Ogie's political acumen provides a balanced and strategic approach to governance, promising a future of sustained development and enhanced quality of life for the people of Edo. This partnership is poised to drive the state towards greater heights, ensuring that Obaseki's legacy of good works is preserved and amplified.

Nigeria and the regionalism question

The North-Central region, comprising Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau states, is strategically located at the heart of Nigeria, with close proximity to the federal capital, Abuja, making it an attractive location for businesses and investors. The region is blessed with vast agricultural land and lush vegetation, making it the food basket of the nation. It is also endowed with vast mineral resources, including iron ore, coal, and limestone.

The South-West region, comprising Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo states, is considered Nigeria's economic powerhouse. The city of Lagos, the former capital of Nigeria, is one of Africa's largest commercial centres, with a thriving financial sector and a bustling port. This region is also culturally rich, with a vibrant music and film industry. The region is home to several cultural festivals, which showcase the region's rich cultural heritage.

The South-South region, com-

prising Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states, is Nigeria's oil and gas hub, home to several oil refineries and petrochemical plants, making it a vital contributor to Nigeria's economy. However, the region also faces significant environmental challenges, including oil spills and pollution. Despite these challenges, the South-South region is culturally rich, with a vibrant music and art scene. The region is home to several cultural festivals, including the famous Calabar Carnival, which showcases the region's rich cultural heritage.

The South-East region, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states, is Nigeria's industrial and commercial hub. The region is home to several industrial centres, including the famous Nnewi industrial town, which is a major centre for automotive manufacturing. The South-East is also culturally rich, with a vibrant music and art scene. The region is home to several cultural festivals, in-

cluding the famous Igbo New Yam Festival, which showcases the region's rich cultural heritage.

As the nation strives to unleash its latent capabilities, fostering regional cooperation and collaboration is paramount. By synergizing their diverse strengths, the six geopolitical zones can catalyze transformative development and propel sustainable growth.

For instance, the North-East and North-West regions can collaborate to develop Nigeria's agricultural sector. The North-East can provide the agricultural produce, while the North-West can provide the industrial infrastructure to process and export the produce.

In the same vein, Nigeria's industrial sector may benefit from the North-West and South-East regions working in tandem, with the North-West providing the industrial infrastructure, and the South-East providing the technological expertise to drive industrial growth.

BUMPY ROAD AHEAD

As pointed out by many critics, the implementation of regionalism, while appealing, faces significant challenges that must be addressed. The country's complex political landscape, competing economic interests, and deep-seated ethnic tensions pose substantial obstacles to harnessing the potential of regionalism.

One of the primary hurdles is political resistance from those who fear decentralization of power and resources. The current centralized governance structure concentrates authority and funding in the federal government, which may be reluctant to relinquish control.

It's not difficult to see how some politicians and government officials may view regionalism as a threat to their power and influence, leading to resistance to any reforms that aim to decentralize authority.

Another significant challenge would be the control of resources. Nigeria's wealth is largely derived from oil and gas, which are primarily lo-

cated in the Niger Delta region. The allocation of resources and revenue sharing between the federal government and the regions could become a contentious issue. The regions may demand greater control over their natural resources, while the federal government may be hesitant to relinquish its grip on the country's wealth.

Furthermore, Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture, language, and identity. Historical grievances and tensions between ethnic groups can still resurface, potentially leading to conflicts over resources, territory, and political power.

The debate on regionalism in Nigeria is complex and there is no easy answer. While regionalism has the potential to address some of the country's challenges, it also comes with significant risks. Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to pursue regionalism is a difficult one that will require careful consideration of all the potential benefits and drawbacks.

How I saved Tinubu's political career —Atiku

TOBORE JEROME

The Presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 general election and former Vice-President of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar, has revealed that he saved President Bola Tinubu's political career.

Atiku stated this while reacting to the narrative that Tinubu came to his rescue following his spat with former President Olusegun Obasanjo, leading to his contesting the presidential election on the platform of Action Congress (AC) in 2007.

The former president said without his support, President Tinubu's political career could have ended as the governor of Lagos State.

"Vice President Kashim Shettima goofed when he claimed that former Vice President of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar benefitted from President Bola Tinubu's goodwill when he was being 'persecuted' in the PDP," Atiku said in a statement through his media adviser, Paul Ibe.

"Truth be told, it was Tinubu that actually benefited immensely from Atiku's goodwill. But for Atiku's support, hinged on his pro-democracy instincts and rule of law, Tinubu's tenure as governor of Lagos would have



TINNUBU



ATIKU

been rough with a wide possibility of termination of his political career.

"For some time, and especially leading up to the 2023 election, there has been a deliberate attempt to dis-

tort the history of the politics of the early 4th Republic by ascribing the AC, the political platform that Atiku ran in 2007 as Tinubu's party.

"Nothing can be further from the

truth. Vice President Shettima, obviously carried away with the euphoria of the unveiling of his official residence as Vice President, repeated the same lie.

"Shettima needs to be reminded

that Atiku did not run under the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), but Action Congress (AC). AC came out of a coalition of ACD (Advance Congress of Democrats), formed by mainly PDM members and other associates and Tinubu's faction of AD."

According to the former Vice President, President Tinubu was not in a position to lend the platform to Atiku "as erroneously being suggested, as he (Atiku) was nominated by all the delegates from all the states."

He went further to name the delegates to the primaries of the election that threw up the former Vice President as the party's presidential candidate to include Atiku Abubakar himself, Lawal Keita, Amb. Yahaya Kwande, Dr. Okwesilieze Nwodo, Alexis Aniello, Titi Ajanaku, former Governor Rasheed Ladoja, Chief Tom Ikimi, and Chief Dapo Sarumi.

Others, he said, were Chief Sergeant Awuse, Alh. Lawan, Dr. Chris Ngige, Prof. Ango Abdulahi, Dr. Farouk Abdul Azeze, Chief Audu Ogbek, Chief Ejiofor Onyia, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, among others.

He added that from Tinubu's Alliance for Democracy were Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, Chief Segun Osoba, Chief Adebayo Adefarati, Chief Bisi Akande, among others.

Pro-democracy group in A/Ibom to mark June 12 with symposium

DENNIS UDOMA, UYO

All is now set for a one-day symposium in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State capital, to mark the 2024 Democracy Day with the theme "Civil Society as the Pivot of Good Governance in a Democratic Setting".

The event will be hosted by a pro-democracy group, Center for Human Rights and Accountability Network (CHRAN).

Nigeria marks Democracy Day on June 12 annually.

A statement signed by the CHRAN Director, Otuekong Franklyn Isong, and Secretary, Barr. Christopher Ekpo, and made available to newsmen in Uyo on Sunday said the event is part of its annual commemoration of the June 12, 1993

presidential election won by late Chief Moshood Abiola but annulled by then Military Head of State and self-styled president, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, even when the election was adjudged by both national and international observers as the freest and fairest ever in Nigeria.

The Center stated that the event, billed to begin at 10am on Wednesday, June 12, 2024 at the CHRAN Conference Hall in Uyo, will be chaired by a renowned legal practitioner, scholar, elder statesman and astute politician, Barr. Ekpenyong Ntekim, while the Secretary to the Government of Akwa Ibom State, Prince Enobong Uwah, will serve as the Special Guest of Honour.

According to the Center, a former Speaker of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly and immediate past member of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Onofiok Luke, is billed to deliver a keynote address while the Chairman of the House Committee on Public Accounts and member representing Ukanafun/Oruk Anam Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Unyime Idem, will be the distinguished guest of honour.

CHRAN further stated that the Deputy Speaker of Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly, Hon. Kufre Abasi Edidem, will be the Guest of Honour, while the Akwa Ibom State Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon.

Frank Archibong, will serve as the Special Guest Invitee.

The Ntison Akwa Esop Imaison Ibibio, Ntison Pius Okon, will be the Father of the Day, while the progenitor of the Female Youth Association (Purple Girls) and Senior Special Assistant to the Governor of Akwa Ibom State on Female Youth Mobilisation, Lady (Mrs.) Edna E. D. Udeme, will be the Mother of the Day.

Other participants, according to the Center, will be delegates from various civil society organisations (CSOs), human rights groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), professional bodies, trade unions, community-based organisations, town unions, students unions and members of the press.

A/Ibom Assembly gives 6 months extension to LG transition c'tees

DENNIS UDOMA, UYO

The Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly has approved additional six months extension for local government transition committees in the state.

The extension, announced on Thursday, followed a report of the House of Assembly Committee on Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs presented by its Chairman, Hon. Mfon Idung, during today's plenary.

Idung said the extension was to allow for the conduct of the council polls slated for October 26.

"The current Transition Committee Chairmen and members in all the local government councils were enthusiastic to

implement the ARISE Agenda of His Excellency, Pastor Umo Eno through implementation of capital projects, personnel development and humanitarian services," Idung said.

"The House Committee in carrying out its mandate, visited each local government council and upon arrival, was received by the Transition Committee Chairmen and their team, and subsequently taken round project sites such as the Arise Demonstration Farms and other projects of each Council.

"Full allocation accruable to each local government council has been released to the Councils by the Governor, since inception of the Interim Administration.

"Most of the Local Gov-

ernment Transition Committee made judicious use of the funds allocated to their councils. There was no local government council without a signature project," he said.

Hon Idung said the House Committee was satisfied with the performance of the Local Government Interim Administration, except for a few Local Government Councils which are under the watch of the Committee.

The Deputy Leader of the House, Hon. Otobong Bob (Nsit Ubuim), also clarified that despite the resolution of the House, the State Governor reserves the right to re-appoint or drop any Transition Committee Chairman.

Sequel to the committee's report, the Speaker, Hon. Udeme

Otong, directed the Clerk of the Assembly to communicate the resolution of the House to the Executive Governor for assent.



ENO

LG Polls: APC clears all 17 council seats in Yobe

TOBORE JEROME

The Yobe State Independent Electoral Commission has declared the All Progressives Congress (APC) winner of all 17 chairmanship seats and 178 councillor positions in the just concluded local government elections.

Announcing the winners after the collation of all results, the Chairman of the Commission, Dr. Mamman Mohammed, explained that other political parties participated but could not win at any level.

The state electoral umpire is expected to present certificates of return to the winners while their swearing-in by Governor Mai Mala Buni would be at a later date.

Governor Buni had while voting at his home town said

his concept when he came on board in 2019 as governor was to give local government areas autonomy, saying he does not oppose the federal government's plan to grant autonomy to local government areas.

"I am not opposed to local government autonomy. When I came on board in 2019, my concept was to give autonomy to the local government. Unfortunately, about 6 out of the 17 local government areas can't even pay their salaries, so the wisdom behind this joint account complements the efforts of the local governments with the state," he said.

The election was conducted under a peaceful atmosphere unlike in the past when voters would go to exercise their civic rights amidst threats of the Boko Haram insurgency.

Edo did not close down Ambrose Alli University —AAU Management

ESOSA OMOROGBE

The Ambrose Alli University Management has reacted to a video and news being circulated online with the narration: "Obaseki Closes AAU to Favour Asue's Family University".

Answering questions from journalists in Benin City at the weekend, the Head of the University's Corporate Communication and Protocol, Otunba Mike Aladenika, described the video and its narration as the handiwork of mischief makers as there is no iota of truth in the video and the news embellishing it.

Otunba Aladenika stated that in the early hours of Thursday the

6th of June 2024, some students went to lock up the entrance gate to the main campus of the University in the name of protest.

"There were mainly two groups of students involved in the protest. These were the students who failed to register for their courses in the already concluded 2022/2023 academic session, and students from the Faculty of Law who could not attain the minimum CGPA of 3.0 to proceed to the next level of study as prescribed by the Faculty of Law Academic Board of Studies and as earlier approved by the University Senate to ensure compliance with the quota provisions of the Council for Legal Education."

Technology

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Electronic transactions stall as NIBBS suffers glitch

BILL OKONEDO

The Nigerian Inter-Bank Settlement System (NIBSS) has been experiencing glitches which have caused downtime and large-

scale delays in electronic transactions to financial institutions across the country.

The said downtime has affected the efficiency of banks and financial technology firms across the board, stalling and

delaying the transactions of teeming customers.

Fintechs including Eversend and Kuda Bank have alerted their customers about the development.

Eversend informed its users

that delays in naira transactions are expected to persist, affecting top-ups and payouts within the app. Similarly, Kuda Bank notified its customers that intermittent issues with NIBSS are causing delays in

money transfers.

Transfers to and from Kuda accounts, as well as transfers between Kuda and PalmPay accounts, are reportedly unaffected.

"We'll keep you updated on our status page – status.kuda.com," Kuda said in a notice to its customers.

NIBSS provides infrastructure for the automated processing and settlement of transactions between banks acting on their own account as regards deposit placements, treasury bills transaction, naira settle-

ment on inter-bank foreign exchange transactions

It also initiates and develops an integrated nationwide network for the electronic or paperless payments, funds transfer and settlement of transactions.

The exact cause of the downtime and the estimated time for resolution have not been disclosed. In the meantime, customers are advised to use alternative means of transactions where possible and remain patient as efforts to restore the NIBSS platform continue.



YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE:

L-R: Coordinator, YALI Network Lagos, George Adjete; Country General Manager, ALX Nigeria, Ruby Igwe; Partnerships Lead, ALX Nigeria, Adebimpe Odulana-Animashawun, and Acting Director, American Corner Ikeja, Adeniyi Ogunbanjo at the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Network Tech Summit 2024, held at the American Corner, Lagos, recently.

AfDB joins Intel to upskill three million Africans on AI

BILL OKONEDO

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has entered into a cooperation with global tech firm, Intel to train three million Africans and 30,000 government officials in AI skills.

The partnership aims to transform the African digital ecosystem, according to a statement released by the bank.

Sealed at the recent African Development Bank's Annual Meetings in Nairobi, Kenya, the deal will help create a critical mass of Africans proficient in Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) skills to accelerate growth and productivity and position Africans as contributors, not just consumers of 4IR.

The AfDB added that the training will address socio-economic challenges and boost productivity in key growth sectors such as agriculture, health, and education, thereby disrupting traditional growth cycles.

Speaking on the partnership, the African Development Bank's Acting Director of Industrial and Trade, Development, Ousmane Fall, emphasised the importance of digital skills for Africa's youth.

"With advancements in

digital technology, our world is rapidly evolving, and so is our youthful population, projected to reach 830 million by 2050. To develop skills on a large scale and at the necessary speed, we need everyone's cooperation," Fall said.

"The Bank is thrilled to collaborate with Intel to work towards this shared commitment. Together, we are shaping the digital future of Africa and empowering our youth," he added.

Also speaking, the Director of Government Affairs Africa and IGA CTO Liaison at Intel, Bienvenu Agbokponto Soglo, stated,

"Intel looks forward to furthering its collaboration with African governments to make advanced technologies such as AI accessible to all, breaking down barriers related to geography, gender, and ethnicity, and enabling widespread participation in the digital economy."

The partnership is also expected to support African countries, regional economic communities, and continental organizations in developing harmonised policy and regulatory frameworks in AI, 5G, Wi-Fi 6E, data, and cloud.

Cybercrime a big challenge for fintechs, says RoutePay MD

Abayomi Olomu, Managing Director of RoutePay, says an industry-wide collaboration is required to protect fintech businesses from the hazard of cybercrime.

Olomu said the huge cost of deploying solutions to check the menace would make it impossible for individual companies to cope, and advocated a joint effort to tame the tide.

He also spoke of the need for enabling policies and regulations that can drive collaboration among players in the industry to curb criminal activities.

Acknowledging efforts such as the sanction list that all in-

dustry players are expected to contribute to, the RoutePay MD seeks a well-defined process driven by technology to fight cybercrimes. "The CBN insists on the interoperability of the systems. The regulators are making efforts. Everyone is expected to contribute to the sanction list—that is, the name of any blacklisted merchant. It is an obligation to submit these names," he said.

To him, a central database of records will prevent businesses from on-boarding blacklisted merchants. "We need a tech-driven approach to reporting and solving the problem. It should be a well-defined sys-

tem of collaboration capable of fighting fraud. Yes, WhatsApp groups of industry players are essential, we must go beyond informal relationships to fight cybercrime.

"The name of the game is collaboration. There is a need to leverage on partnership. Systems should not run in silos. The level of collaboration needs to be improved and that's why we need a centralised database to supply report on blacklisted merchants."

He also emphasised the need for a joint session on fintech to discuss the issue, noting that Service providers should en-

courage the use of common database.

RoutePay provides solutions that enhance the ease of payments and collections. Its products and services are omnichannel and available across all channels of payments including, web, mobile, POS, ATM, and USSD.

Olomu noted that Artificial Intelligence is critical in fintech now due to the volume of transactions in the industry, adding that without AI, the system will collapse. He however advocated some validation checks as businesses grow their volume, harping on the need for partnership.

LG donates solar-powered borehole to Lagos community

UYIOSA ISAAC

LG Electronics, has provided a solar-powered borehole to the Abule Osun community in Lagos, Nigeria. This marks the second similar project in Nigeria, demonstrating the company's commitment to addressing the pressing issue of access to clean drinking water in local areas.

The solar water pumping system reaches a depth of 120m and has a pumping capacity of around 40m³ per day, equipped with advanced treatment technology to guarantee

safe drinking water. Moreover, a 3,000-liter tank ensures a continuous 24-hour water supply for the residents of Abule Osun, significantly improving their daily lives.

The solar-powered borehole is a vital initiative aimed at delivering clean and safe drinking water to the community, in line with LG Electronics' unwavering dedication to environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

By harnessing solar energy, this borehole not only ensures access to quality water but also plays a crucial role in mitigat-

ing the spread of waterborne diseases, thereby fostering better health and well-being within the community. LG Electronics' commitment to this project signifies a significant step towards creating a healthier and more sustainable future for all those involved, said Mr. Hyoung Sub Ji, Managing Director of LG Electronics.

He added, "We are proud to contribute to the development of the Abule Osun community. Access to clean water is a fundamental human right and we are committed to doing our

part to ensure that communities like Abule Osun have access to this basic necessity.

"We have already given a community in Abuja a solar-powered borehole and here today we are doing likewise. I assure Nigerians that before the end of this year, we will give as many as possible to several communities both in Lagos and other states of the federation.

"We express our gratitude for the chance, appreciating the backing from our distributor Fouani Nigeria Limited, along with the youth and community

leaders, in aiding this community's welfare. It is our aspiration that this borehole will not only bring happiness but also enhance health and stimulate economic development for future generations, as conveyed by the spokesperson."

According to Mr. Mohammed Fouani (Jnr), Fouani Nigeria Limited Factory Manager, "the donation of the solar-powered borehole is a key component of LG Electronics' ongoing endeavors to support sustainable development and enhance the well-being of individuals in Nigeria.



Technology

The Nigerian
Observer
...that the people may know

Price slashes as Konga announces Mid-Year Shopping Festival

Konga, Nigeria's leading e-commerce giant, is thrilled to announce the third edition of its highly anticipated Mid-Year Shopping Festival. This epic sales campaign, which runs from June 1st through July 31st, 2024, offers two months of intense price slashes across all product categories. It promises to be the biggest discount sale in the first half of the year, rivaled only by Konga's legendary Black Friday extravaganza, Yakata.

This year's Mid-Year Shopping Festival holds even greater significance, as it coincides with Konga's 13th anniversary. To celebrate this milestone and reward loyal customers, Konga has pledged massive discounts on a staggering range of products.

Partnering with renowned global brands such as Apple, Samsung, HP, Lenovo, Starlink, LOreal, Haier Thermocool, LG,

Nestle, and others, Konga is offering shoppers genuine products at irresistible prices.

The e-commerce giant has pledged massive discounts across all categories and products, including Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), Home and Kitchen Appliances, Electronics, Computing, Mobile Phones, Wine & Spirits, Fashion, and much more. Whether for personal use or bulk purchases, Konga's Mid-Year Shopping Festival presents an opportunity for customers to make significant savings on their favorite products.

"We are incredibly excited to kick off our Mid-Year Shopping Festival and celebrate Konga's 13th anniversary with our esteemed customers," said Kunle Ajani, Head of Marketing at Konga. "At Konga, we are dedicated to providing our customers with genuine products at un-

beatable prices. It is our way of saying thank you for your unwavering support over the years."

In addition to the massive discounts, the Mid-Year Shopping Festival will feature exciting events such as Flash Sales, Treasure Hunts, and Live Auctions on specific campaign days. These events offer customers the opportunity to snag incredible deals and win exclusive prizes while enjoying the thrill of the shopping experience. Furthermore, Konga is extending special deals to walk-in customers at Konga stores, providing another avenue for shoppers to access exclusive discounts and savings.

Adding to the excitement, Konga will launch its revolutionary delivery solution, KongaNow, which enhances customers' overall shopping experience through free same-day delivery in the major cities.



ADMISSION INTO ND NURSING, HND PUBLIC HEALTH, POST BASIC NURSING, AND POST BASIC MIDWIFERY PROGRAMMES FOR THE 2024/2025 ACADEMIC SESSION

APPLICANTS MUST POSSESS

1. WAEC/NECO (O'Level) or NABTEB with at least five credits in English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology at not more than two sittings.
2. No Awaiting results
3. Must be seventeen (17) years old upon application.
4. National Diploma (ND) applicants must have sat for JAMB 2024
5. HND Public Health Nursing applicants must have RN and two years post qualification experience.
6. Post Basic Nursing and Midwifery applicants must have RN and RM respectively

STUDY PERIOD

- 2 years national Diploma (ND) Nursing Programme (Non-terminal)
- 18 months HND Public Health Nursing Programme
- 18 months Post Basic Nursing and Midwifery Programmes

EXAMINATION INFORMATION

Date: August 26th - 28th, 2024

Venue: EDOCNS - Computer lab

Time: 9:00am - 3:00pm

(Check portal for allotted time)

APPLICATION OPENS

Wednesday 29th, May 2024

closing date

Sunday 18th, August, 2024

Please use your personal email address and not that of a business centre

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REV. OSAYUKI JACKSON OBASEKI FCIPDM, FNIM

Registrar

CLASSIFIED

IYARE

That my name wrongly written on my BVN as STEPHEN IYARE instead of OMENIWAN STEPHEN IYARE. My correct and full name is OMENIWAN STEPHEN IYARE. Concerned authorities and the general public should take note.

IBIE

I, formerly known and addressed as AJAYI TINA IBIE now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. IDIAGHE TINA IBIE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

AYO

I, formerly known and addressed as SOLOMON SOLOMA AYO now wish to be known and addressed as SOLOMON AYOMI AYO. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

HAPPY

That my name was captured on my BVN as OTUOKPAKISHAN HAPPY AMIGHOGHO instead of OTUOKPAKISHAN HAPPY. My correct and full name is OTUOKPAKISHAN HAPPY. OTUOKPAKISHAN is my surname, HAPPY is my first name. Concerned authorities should take note.

OSASU

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS OSASU PRECIOUS ASEMOTA, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. OSASU PRECIOUS EHIGIE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

IGWEOGU

That my name was captured on my BVN/Bank Account as IGWEOGU MARYBEST O. instead of IGWEOGU MARYBEST OBUENEME. My correct and full name is IGWEOGU MARYBEST OBUENEME. Concerned authorities and the general public should take note.

EBOZELE

That EBOZELE DANIEL and EBOZELE DANIEL OSAZELE is one and the same person. Any documents bearing EBOZELE DANIEL and EBOZELE DANIEL OSAZELE remain valid. Concerned authorities should take note.

PUBLIC NOTICE

St. Mary Magdalene Hospital located at No. 8, Isibor Street, near Bight Engineering Benin City, wishes to notify the general public particularly persons who deposited corpses of deceased relatives in its morgue between year 2000 and 2020, but are yet to claim them should please do so within one month from the date of this publication.

Note that all unclaimed corpses after the present window, will be given a mass burial in line with established procedures.

Signed: Nathaniel Gaye
For- ST Mary Magdalene Hospital

MUHAMMAD

That my name was wrongly captured on my BVN/Bank Account as MOHAMMED MOHAMMED instead of MUHAMMAD MUHAMMAD. My correct and full name is MUHAMMAD MUHAMMAD. MUHAMMAD is my surname, MUHAMMAD is my first name. Concerned authorities should take note.

EBUWA

That I wish to remove OSAYEKEMWEN from my names EBUWA OSAYEKEMWEN COURAGE. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as EBUWA COURAGE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities should take note.

IDIARU

I, formerly known as IDIARU VICTORY, now wish to be known and addressed as IDIARU OSASERE VICTORY. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

ENECHOJO

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS SULE RUTH ENECHOJO now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. AUDU RUTH ENECHOJO. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

OTOGHILE

That I wish to add AGHO to my names OTOGHILE ISAAC. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as OTOGHILE AGHO ISAAC. OTOGHILE is surname, AGHO is my first name and ISAAC is my middle name. My correct date of birth is 12th April 1952 and not 13th April 1952. Concerned authorities and the general public should take note.

**SPACE
FOR SALE**

CampusGist

Students tap away as Tapswap frenzy sweeps across Nigeria

KELVIN OFEIMU

The Nigerian crypto community is hot at the moment due to the Telegram-based crypto mining game which has captured the attention of many as they continuously tap their phones in

hopes of earning money.

University of Benin students are not left out as many are now engrossed in a Solana-based crypto mining game renowned for its low fees, high output, and exciting features such as staking and margin trading known as Tapswap.

As described by its official Twitter account, what sets Tap Swap apart is its innovative approach to mining, which gamifies the process through a fun and interactive interface.

Tapswap's approach to crypto mining has garnered significant interest, with many

eagerly awaiting the official pre-launch of the platform.

A crypto enthusiast, Adjus Godbless, a final year student of Mass Communication at UNIBEN, in an interview expressed optimism about the upcoming launch.

"Tappers are in for a good

time. This launch will include the ability to exchange points for the Taps token, making significant steps in the road map towards functionality," Godbless said.

However, amidst the excitement, concerns have emerged, particularly among newcomers to the world of crypto mining. Questions about the legitimacy of Tapswap and its potential risks have circulated within the community. In response, Godbless reassured that while there may be apprehensions among newbies, he believes that Tapswap has the potential to create thousandaires and millionaires, especially among students.

Delving deeper into what sets Tap Swap apart from traditional crypto platforms, Godbless emphasized its social aspect. He said unlike other mining platforms that require downloading additional applications, Tapswap can be accessed directly through Telegram, making it more accessible and user-friendly.

Central to the Tapswap experience is its native token, built on the Solana blockchain. Tokens serve as digital currency within the platform, allowing users to participate in mining activities and exchange them for fiat currency. This feature has contributed to the platform's popularity, as it provides users with the opportunity to cash out in their local currency.

Despite the growing popularity of Tapswap, concerns linger within the community. The influx of newcomers into the space has raised questions about security, legitimacy, and the overall sustainability of the platform. However, enthusiasts remain optimistic about the potential for Tapswap to revolutionize the crypto mining landscape in Nigeria.

As the countdown to the official launch of Tapswap on 1st July 2024 continues, eager users await the opportunity to tap into this exciting new venture and potentially reshape their financial futures.



MACSA VISITS OBSERVER:

L-R: Former Editor-in-Chief of MACSA Ekehuan Watch, University of Benin, Goodluck Nwabor; Acting Editor of The Nigerian Observer, Chuks Oluigbo, and former Production Manager of MACSA Ekehuan Watch, Michael Akpan, when the team paid a visit to *The Nigerian Observer* office in Benin City.

UNIBEN Mgt reconsiders SUG, sets up electoral commission

CHIDINMA KALU

Amid controversy concerning the suspension of Student Union Government (SUG) activities as well as several executives, the management of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) late May released a memo containing the list of cleared electoral commission members ahead of the 2024 SUG elections.

According to the memo dated 27th May, the Senate, in a meeting held on 2nd May 2024, approved the recommendation

for the setting up of an electoral commission comprising representatives from the various faculties and schools across the university to oversee student affairs, amongst other functions.

The university management had suspended SUG activities due to an incident that occurred at the Senior Staff Club on 12th April 2024 during the visit of the Labour Party governorship candidate in the Edo 2024 election, Olumide Akpata.

"The commission was set in place to handle issues pertaining to the interests, welfare and

development of students and conduct the election of a new set leadership," the memo said.

The list of the cleared members includes Mr Collins Obhiozone (Pharmacy), Miss Ido-de F. (Law), Mr Peter Omotosho (Agriculture), Mr Eric Bassey (Arts), Mr Eghosa T. Eghiosun (Dentistry), Mr Omosigho J. Owire (Education), and Mr Caleb J. Cookeygam (Engineering).

Others are Mr Jeremiah Wilson-Koro (Environmental Sciences), Miss Margaret Iyas-ele (Life Sciences), Miss Clara Kikeboh (Pharmacy), Miss Lucy

Eriamiatoe (Physical Sciences), Mr James Olawale (Basic Medical Sciences), Miss Okpare Ojiyovwi (Social Sciences), Mr Osayi M. Eubadloyi (Veterinary Medicine), Mr wisdom Omorogbe (Medicine), and Mr Stanley I. Ige (Management Science).

The memo said the commission is to ensure the election process is carried out smoothly and efficiently, as well as maintain student decorum in the days leading up to the election.

A date for the election has not been fixed.

Ogunwusi Opeyemi Gideon: Student artist with a passion for creativity

In the world of art, there are those who merely dabble in creativity and those who fully immerse themselves in its depths. Ogunwusi Opeyemi Gideon, a 300-level sculpture major in Fine Arts, falls squarely into the latter category.

Born in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria, Gideon was destined for a life of artistry. With a passion for creativity that courses through his veins, he has dedicated himself to exploring the world through various mediums. His art is a testament

to his unique perspective, tackling themes of identity, mental health, and personal growth with grace and vulnerability.

Gideon's artistry knows no bounds. He has honed his skills in painting, sculpting, poetry, reading, music, and even chess. His versatility is a reflection of his insatiable curiosity and desire to continuously push the boundaries of his craft.

Gideon's achievements are a testament to his dedication and talent. He has had the privilege of working as an artist and assis-

tant set designer at Enina Festival, Benin, and has undergone rigorous training in painting at Olokun Art Studio, Lagos, and an internship at Ant-men Studio, Benin. His ultimate goal? To become a contemporary extraordinary artist, leaving an indelible mark on the art world.

For Gideon, art is not just a medium but a way of life. He believes that art has the power to transform and uplift, offering a unique perspective on the world around us. His inspiration comes from the world itself, and

he is driven by a desire to create something that will outlast him.

Gideon's philosophy is simple yet profound: "Life is beautiful." This quote guides him in his artistic journey, reminding him to always seek the beauty in the world and to never stop creating.

With his talent, drive, and passion, the future looks bright for Ogunwusi Opeyemi Gideon. He is a shining example of what it means to live a life of purpose and creativity, and his art will undoubtedly continue to inspire and uplift generations to come.

UNIBEN Mass Comm has moved into the realm of digitalization

—Dr. Ekereafu

The Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin (MACSA UNIBEN) has taken a significant leap forward with the introduction of new facilities and equipment, poised to revolutionize the learning experience for students.

The Acting Head of Department, Dr. Dan Ekereafu, who disclosed this, said the department has overcome the long-standing challenge of inadequate equipment, achieving significant milestones in recent times. The acoustic work on all studios has been completed, the radio studio has been revived awaiting the installation of a transmitter, a cinema room has been set up, equipped with a 75-inch television for an immersive experience, he said.

Dr. Ekereafu emphasized the importance of digital skills in today's media landscape, highlighting the department's commitment to organizing monthly workshops to address specific areas of digital media. He said students will receive hands-on training in editing, studio editing, and software applications, empowering them with practical skills.

"We have hands-on experiential and appropriate software what we call self-learning

andragogy. So, part of the vision is to teach and allow students to practice what they've learnt," he said.

To ensure proper maintenance and safety, the department has implemented measures such as requiring permission for studio usage, restricting flash drives, and providing technical guidance. The cinema room offers a cinematic experience, and the department has established a YouTube channel and blog to showcase student content and serve as a reference site for future projects.

The photo studio boasts basic equipment, with plans to replace obsolete items. The control room is now equipped with necessary tools for studio production and editing processes. However, the department still faces the challenge of acquiring cameras, with a goal to secure three cameras for the studio and two for the photography studio.

Despite ongoing challenges, the department has secured funding from registration revenue and alumni contributions, channelling these resources into specific needs.

The library has also been enriched with book donations from Dr. Ekereafu, Prof Okhaku, Prof Asemah, and De Wilfred Oyegun, a former staff member.

Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Golf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

Again Super Eagles fail to defeat Bafana Bafana

● remain winless?, play Benin Republic today

EDWARD OSEGHE

Finidi's first match as Nigeria's coach saw the Super Eagles again rallied to another 1-1 draw against Bafana Bafana of South Africa in the first leg of their fading

hopes of 2026 World Cup qualification encounter on Friday at the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium, Uyo.

As a result, Nigeria is now placed fifth in a six-team table after three matches in the 10-match competition. Nigeria

has drawn all three of their matches so far.

Fisayo Dele-Bashiru's second-half strike earned the team a point, thereby cancelling Thembo Zwane's first-half strike to ensure the Super Eagles earned a share of the spoils.

In pursuit of a desired win, coach Finidi opted for Stanley Nwabali in goal behind the defensive four of Calvin Bassey, Semi Ajayi, Bright Osayi-Samuel and Tanimu Benjamin.

Wilfred Ndidi marshalled the team in midfield alongside Alex Iwobi and Dele-Bashiru, while Paul Onuachu, Kelechi Iheanacho and Ademola Lookman led the attack.

Ndidi had said the team's preparation for the game was partly hampered by Nigeria's Organised Labour strike that shut down Nigeria earlier last week.

The stretchy preparedness was apparent in the early stage of the game, and the South Africans took the lead in the 29th minute. Themba Zwane drove into the Nigerian goal area and received a brilliant pass before waltzing through to smash the ball into the net beyond Nwabali.

Bafana Bafana looked better until the halftime break when the Eagles emerged as an improved side. Immediately after

the restart, Nigeria got the equaliser after Dele-Bashiru swivelled beyond Mthobeli Mvala on the edge of the South African goal area and slotted his shot past a sprawled Ronwen Williams.

Nigeria remain winless after three games of the 2026 World Cup qualifiers. Recall Nigeria drew Lesotho and Zimbabwe last year.

The team sits fifth on the log with three points.

With three consecutive draws from two home matches and an away duel, the Super Eagles appear unlikely to emerge leaders at the end of the 10-match series. They may not even emerge among those to go for the playoff.

It had been envisaged that Nigeria would not drop any of the six obtainable points on Matchdays 3 and 4. But that has faded out like smoke.

The Super Eagles will play the Benin Republic, their fourth game of the campaign, in Abidjan today, Monday, June 10, 2024.

Meanwhile, South Africa head coach, Hugo Broos has praised his players after their hard-earned 1-1 draw against Nigeria on Friday night.

The South Africans who have never lost a match to Nigeria at the Uyo stadium, were even

more daring and more purposeful in the attack. They were forced to a 2-2 draw in their first match with Nigeria in Uyo 10 years ago.

They followed up with a shock 2-0 win seven years ago before this Friday's 1-1 draw.

Bafana Bafana now have four points from three games and remain in contention to secure a place at the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

With a home match against bottom-placed Zimbabwe at the Free State Stadium, Bloemfontein on Tuesday, they look a more candidate to emerge from the group, although they are currently fourth on the log.

Benin Republic national team, Cheetahs, must be elated with the 1-1 draw the Super Eagles laboured to grab against Bafana Bafana on Friday in the ongoing World Cup qualifiers. The scoreline put Benin Republic ahead of Nigeria just as three others – Lesotho, Rwanda and South Africa.

The group winners will qualify for the 2026 World Cup in Canada, Mexico, and the United States; the four best-ranked runners-up will enter play-offs, with the winners advancing to an intercontinental tournament where six nations will compete for two spots



WAFU-B Women's Champions League: Edo Queens kick off qualifiers in Côte d'Ivoire

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Edo Queens, the champions of the 2023/2024 Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Premiership, are set to kick off their journey to qualify for the 4th edition of the CAF Women's Champions League during the upcoming West Africa Zone B (WAFU-B) qualifiers in Abidjan, the capital of Côte d'Ivoire, in August.

The venue and dates for this year's Women's Champions League Qualifiers were announced by WAFU-B on Wednesday. The fourth edition of the WAFU-B qualifying tournament for the women's champions league will be held from August 10 to 23, 2024, in Côte d'Ivoire.

Champions from seven countries within the WAFU-B Zone, including Benin, Burki-

na Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Niger Republic, Nigeria, and Togo, will compete for the sole slot in the finals.

Edo Queens clinched their first-ever Nigerian title last month in Yenegoa and will represent Nigeria after finishing at the top of the NWFL Premiership Super Six table in a thrilling finale.

In the past three years, the final of the WAFU-B Women's Champions League Qualifiers has predominantly featured a showdown between Nigeria and Ghana, with Ghana emerging victorious in two out of three editions.

During the inaugural WAFU-B Women's Champions League Qualifiers in 2021, Rivers Angels represented Nigeria and reached the final, where they were defeated by Ghanaian side Hasaacas Ladies.

Bayelsa Queens emerged victorious in the second edition of the WAFU-B Women's Champions League Qualifiers, securing a 3-0 victory over another Ghanaian side, Ampem Darkoa, in Cote d'Ivoire. In a separate match, Ampem Darkoa defeated Nigeria's Del-

ta Queens 1-0 to claim the title in the 2023 edition.

Cote d'Ivoire has hosted two out of the past three editions of the WAFU-B Women's Champions League Qualifiers, in 2021 and 2022, while the last edition in 2023 was held in Benin City, Nigeria.



Athletes eagerly anticipate AFN's national trials in Benin City

PRINCESS NZEREM

Foreign-based athletes are expressing significant interest in the National Olympic Trials, slated to take place in Benin, Edo State, from June 16 to 18, according to the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN).

Samuel Onikeku, AFN's Technical Director, revealed during the Confederation of African Athletics (CAA) Region 2 championship in Ghana that athletes have demonstrated their keenness for the National Trials.

The AFN National Trials will serve as the platform for selecting athletes to represent the nation at both the Senior Africa Athletics Championships in Douala, Cameroon, from June 21 to 28, and the Paris 2024 Olympics.

The Technical Director reiterated the AFN's unwavering commitment to a strict selection process for members of Team Nigeria Athletics.

Onikeku mentioned that following the two competitions in Benin City, Edo State, and Douala, Cameroon, Team Nigeria athletes will head to Paris with confidence.

Jaylen Brown shines as Celtics take control against Mavericks in Game One of NBA finals

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Jaylen Brown led the Boston Celtics to a commanding 107-89 victory over the Dallas Mavericks in the first-game standout performance of the NBA Finals.

The 27-year-old led the scoring with 22 points, sup-

ported by five of his teammates who also reached double figures. The Celtics, who are vying for their record 18th title, displayed an impressive defensive effort, securing a 29-point lead in the first half at the TD Garden in Massachusetts.

Despite Mavericks star Luka Dončić's strong performance

with 30 points and 10 rebounds, helping his team narrow the deficit to eight points in the third quarter, the Celtics maintained their momentum, pulling away again in the fourth quarter.

Making his comeback from injury, Kristaps Porzingis returned to the Celtics lineup after sitting out for 10 games

due to a calf injury sustained during the playoffs.

Facing his former team, the Latvian contributed 20 points, 11 of which came from rebounds.

Despite a disappointing outcome for the Mavericks, the team from Texas will draw encouragement from their performance in the third quarter.



Man United's managerial uncertainty: Ten Hag's future in a balance

IKPONMWOSA ODIGIE

Reports suggest that Dutch manager Erik ten Hag would be relieved of his duties after the clash at Wembley on May 25.

However, the 2-1 victory has certainly thrown a spanner in the works, with the club's new co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe re-considering the decision to sack the former Ajax boss.

As of now, there has been no statement from Manchester United nor a briefing to the media regarding Ten Hag's future at Old Trafford, leaving the situation extremely uncertain. This ambiguity is far from ideal for the club and its supporters, with clarity needed urgently ahead of a crucial summer.

MANAGERIAL SPECULATIONS

AND CONSIDERATIONS

Former Chelsea head coach Thomas Tuchel and England manager Gareth Southgate have been heavily linked with the Old Trafford job in recent months. Additionally, ex-Brighton bosses Roberto De Zerbi and Graham Potter are also under consideration. Mauricio Pochettino, who quickly became a favourite following his departure from Chelsea, is another name in the mix.

FABRIZIO ROMANO'S INSIGHTS: A 50/50 POSSIBILITY

Transfer expert Fabrizio Romano has provided some insights into the situation. Writing in his CaughtOffside column, Romano claimed that Ratcliffe and the club's co-owners are in discussions with other managers, indicating that

Ten Hag's position is "not safe."

CRUCIAL DECISION LOOMS

It remains anyone's guess what Ratcliffe and the board will decide to do, but one thing is certain: a decision needs to be made swiftly. The uncertainty surrounding the managerial position at Manchester United is not conducive to a stable and successful pre-season. Clarity and decisiveness are crucial as the club navigates this pivotal period.

Manchester United's immediate future remains in a state of flux. The fate of Erik ten Hag hangs in the balance, with significant deliberations ongoing behind the scenes. For the club and its supporters, a swift resolution is essential to ensure stability and set the stage for a successful campaign ahead.



RATCLIFFE

TEN HAG

Swiatek tops Paolini, wins fourth French Open title in five years

EDWARD OSEGHEE

Iga Swiatek of Poland has defeated Jasmine Paolini, her Italian counterpart, to clinch the 2024 French Open women's singles title.

The Polish tennis star continued her relentless dominance on clay as she claimed her fifth Grand Slam title overall with the victory at the Court Philippe Chatrier on Saturday.

It took Swiatek just 68 minutes to close the final out in an utterly ruthless display against Paolini, who was in her first Grand Slam final.

Swiatek successfully defended her French Open title with an emphatic two sets 6-2, 6-1 win over Paolini.

Swiatek becomes the third woman to win three French Open titles, and the victory is her fourth French Open title in five years, having triumphed in 2020, 2022, 2023 and now 2024, and the third in a row, matching the feats of only Monica Seles (1990-92) and Justine Henin (2005-07) in the Open era by winning three consecutive finals at Roland Garros.

At just 23 years old, she's now three off equaling Chris Evert's record of seven women's singles titles at Roland Garros. Fittingly, it was Evert and Martina Navratilova who handed over the Suzanne Lenglen trophy to the new master of clay.

The 12th-seeded Italian broke Swiatek in the third game of the opening set to take a 2-1 lead. However, the number one seed prevailed over Paolini in 69 minutes.

The second set was a stroll in the park for Swiatek as she dispatched off the 28-year-old Italian easily to her fourth Coupe Suzanne Lenglen.

The 23-year-old inked her name as the youngest woman in the Open Era to win four

French Opens.

Swiatek was the overwhelming favourite heading into the final. She had to survive a match point in her second-round tie with Naomi Osaka, but from there, she was in complete control -- including winning her fourth-round match against Anastasia Potapova 6-0, 6-0 in just 40 minutes. She then overcame 2023 Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova in the quarterfinals and Coco Gauff in the final four, winning that 6-2, 6-4.

Paolini was an outsider for the title heading into the competition, but she put together a brilliant run that included knocking out 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in the quarterfinals and

then 17-year-old prodigy Mirra Andreeva in the semifinals.

Swiatek will turn her attention to Wimbledon and grass, the last remaining surface on which she has yet to win a Grand Slam.

IGA SWIATEK STATISTICS:

- Swiatek has now won her last 21 matches at the French Open.
- She becomes the youngest woman to win four titles at Roland Garros.
- Swiatek has a 35-2 win record at the French Open, having not lost a match there since 2021.
- The 23-year-old has won all five of her Grand Slam finals.
- She is the only player - male or female - born after 1990 to have five major titles.



SWIATEK

Tyson vs. Jake clash postponed to November 15 in USA

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

The bout between former World Heavyweight Champion, Mike Tyson and YouTuber-turned-boxer, Jake Paul has been rescheduled for November 15th in Texas, following a postponement of the original date.

In the co-main event, Ireland's Katie Taylor, the undisputed women's light-welterweight world champion, will face Puerto Rico's Amanda Serrano in a rematch at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, home of the NFL side

Dallas Cowboys.

Originally slated for July 20th, the two fights were delayed due to medical advice after Tyson, who will turn 58 later this month, experienced a recent flare-up of an ulcer.

The Tyson-Paul match, set

to be aired on Netflix, has received official sanctioning as a professional fight and will consist of 10 two-minute rounds.

Tyson's last professional fight dates back to 2005, although he did participate in an exhibition match in 2020.



PAUL

TYSON

NPFL Matchday 35: Obasogie impresses, as Insurance holds Abia Warriors to goalless draw in Umuahia

EDWARD OSEGHEE

Goalkeeper and stand-in captain of Bendel Insurance FC, Amas Obasogie, on Sunday put up an impressive performance to help the Benin Arsenal run away with a goalless draw at Abia Warriors in the Matchday 35 of the Nigeria Premier Football League game.

The valuable away point at Umuahia keeps Insurance safe as the nation's Premier League is approaching its end with just three fixtures remaining.

Obasogie has been maintaining a high standard of reflexes for Bendel Insurance, keeping a record of eighteen matches with clean sheet so far, and six consecutive matches without conceding any goal in the second round.

In the 11th and 70th minutes of play at the Umuahia Township Stadium, Obasogie made superb saves among others to deny the Warriors the chances to score.

Insurance strikers however made some efforts in search of goals and victory but the home team put up a tough resistance.

In the 38 minutes of the game, Meze Chukwudi and Chisom Okereke made a good combination in Insurance's attack to unsettle Abia Warriors but the host team's defenders prevented the upset.

Meze Chukwudi again, came close to getting the breakthrough for Insurance in the 56th and 63rd minutes but his close range

shot went wide.

The hosts however made some last minute rush but the Benin Arsenal held on and remained resilient to the end and ensured the spoils were shared.

Recall that Insurance defeated the Warriors 1-0 in their first round encounter in Benin City,

thanks to Evans Ogbonda's 6th minute goal in the Matchday 15 game at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium.

Bendel Insurance FC now have 50 points to remain comfortable and will be playing host to Rivers Utd in the Matchday 36 fixture in Benin City.



ABIA WARRIOR (L), AND INSURANCE PLAYERS

Alcaraz defeats Zverev in five sets to win maiden French Open title at Roland Garros

EDWARD OSEGHEE

Carlos Alcaraz becomes the seventh man - and the youngest - to capture Grand Slam titles on all three surfaces after winning the French Open.

Carlos Alcaraz was made to sweat but clinched his first French Open title by outlasting Alexander Zverev 6-3 2-6 5-7 6-1 6-2 in Sunday's final at Roland Garros.

The 21-year-old filled a Rafael Nadal-sized void at Roland Garros with a marathon victory in four hours and 19 minutes.

Fourth seed Zverev had sent old warrior Nadal out on his shield for probably the last

time in the first round.

But young pretender Alcaraz vanquished the German to join fellow Spaniard Nadal as the only men to lift the Roland Garros trophy aged under 22.

The Spaniard became the youngest man to win a Grand Slam title on all three surfaces, adding the Paris clay to his hard-court US Open success and last year's win on the Wimbledon grass.

He boasts a perfect record in major finals, while for Zverev it is two defeats from two following his loss to Dominic Thiem at the US Open four years ago.

Alcaraz was the clear aggressor as the first set wore on and he took it in 43 minutes.



ALCARAZ

THE NEWS WORLD FROM AROUND WITH **MICHAEL OVIENTMHADA**



The Nigerian Observer ...that the people may know

Karma is a B

Only recently, America and the rest of the world watched in horror as a former President was convicted on all 34 charges against him. One of the great beauties of the American judicial system is the Jury system. While it is novel and unique, it was widely used to perpetrate and perpetuate injustice in the post-Civil War era after the Emancipation Declaration set the slaves free but ushered in Jim Crow, which was an attempt to disenfranchise Blacks all over again and send them back to a new form of servitude through the prison system. This came to a head after Emmet Till, a charming 14-year-old boy from Chicago was brutally murdered in Money, Mississippi while a wholly White Jury acquitted his murderers. In recent years, it was made famous by the O.J Simpson case when the jury infamously acquitted O.J. That case was a pointer to racial dichotomy in America as the defendant was Black while his victims were White.

Interestingly, in the recent Trump trial, the racial composition of the Jury was barely mentioned. Of further interest was the fact that it was Trump who invented the "Lock her up" chant in the email matters of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election. On the day of his conviction, Hilary was at an event at the Kennedy Center. She could not help but gloat, saying, "There's no

place I would rather be than here."

If there's any lesson for the most important new felon in the world to learn, one doubts that he is capable of learning it for the well-known reason that he does not read. His vocabulary is limited. He was reported to have had trouble as Commander-in-Chief reading 10 pages of summarized daily National Security briefings. All he was reportedly interested in was watching television. Hence, he did not learn and could never understand that "those who live in glass houses should not throw stones." He'll probably just say—"that's tremendous" if he heard those words. But what do voters care? He may well be President again by telling us "tremendous" things. Anyone who wants to know what a second Trump term would represent only needs to do a little dive into the history of the Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany to get a perspective on how fragile democracy can be. A former President of the United States put it more bluntly—"Democracy," he said, "will survive if we fight for it."

MORE WORK FOR KARMA

In Nigeria, Karma found some work to do as Labor Unions shut down the country for two harrowing days. The electricity grid was shut down, and even though we had never really felt their presence in our lives, we did feel their absence those two

days that Labour was on strike. It goes to show that a little light is better than zero. The question is: Do we really need this level of suffering that a protracted strike will unleash upon the populace added to our already high level of pain at this time? People are weighed down by scarcity of food, and high prices, fueled by a dollar-driven economy, high prices of petroleum products, and the preponderance of herdsmen in our daily lives which has driven small farmers away from their farms.

Nigeria, by its unique issues, presents a conundrum to foreign investors in a way they cannot see with any other country.

And so, as companies from the core West are making decisions to pull out of Nigeria, investors from other countries are trooping in. They understand us. We are very much like they used to be. They smell the money—human rights and the environment be damned. Essentially, countries from the West are being switched out by countries from the East and Asia. They know that Nigeria has few regulations and plenty of unofficial channels through which they can get things done.

The shutdown was reminiscent of the great country shutdown in 2011/2012 against the Jonathan Administration with its epicenter at Ojota Park, championed by the Op-

position at the time which today is the government in power. It would seem that they have run out of ideas as the problem with many people in power is that they do not read. There's no problem any country is having today that another country has not experienced in the past. We just need to read and find out what they did to come out of the hole. Whatever we do, we should never forget rule number one: Stop digging.

ELECTION 2024 IN MY HOME STATE

This is a great appeal to all the peoples of Edo State, especially our older brothers, the Benin people. Let me tell a story here. I am Esan, from the heritage of Ogbediabomhen, in the serene valley of Ozenyen, Oshodua with a mighty hill overlooking, giving shade and providing the wondrous beauty that nature has to offer. Over 30 years ago, one of my younger sisters was getting married. When it was time to break the kola nut, as it is our tradition, we asked if there was a Benin man present, his age not withstanding. He broke the kola. Why was it so? Because we are one big family in Edo, and the Benins are our older brothers.

In the race for governorship in Edo State, no one doubts the competence of Asue Ighodalo to be an effective Governor of our State. This is not to undermine the competence of the

others. So, the issue now is about fairness, equity and inclusivity. The younger brothers, the Esans, feel deprived and marginalized. It is expected in a good family as we are in Edo State that we should take into consideration those who feel neglected. This is why we plead that having established that Asue is competent and is also from our marginalized Esan family, we should all rally round Asue to solidify the family unit.

I beg make una look the matter well, well (SIC). Which one of the three would you want to hire to run your business? If you can answer this question by interrogating your heart and soul, you may come to the same conclusion as I have arrived at.

HEADS AND SHOULDERS, THE GENTLEMAN ASUE IGHODALO TOWERS

I shall remain on my knees until we all unite to deliver the gentleman on September 21, 2024. Oba gha to kpere—Iseeeeé. Long live the great people of Igodomigodo, and may God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

**Oviemhada, author, poet, playwright, and public affairs commentator, can be reached via omeeky@hotmail.com.*

Think of ways you can be attractive to employers

NICK KOSSOVAN

Shiny objects catch our attention. When job searching, you want to be that shiny object that catches the attention of employers; exposure is the key. There's no "shiny" without exposure.

Some people—perhaps you know one or two—are constantly sought after by employers, while most chase employers. Sought-after people understand it's not their knowledge or experience that will make them attractive to employers, but what they show. (read: expose) Consequently, the adage "It's who you know, not what you know" has been replaced with "It's not who you know, it's who knows you."

In today's job market, finding a job boils down to making yourself as attractive to employers as possible. When you appear on an employer's radar, you want them to say, "I must meet this person!" The more attractive you are as a "must-meet," the more opportunities will present themselves.

Whether or not you successfully attract opportunities depends on what you strategically (keyword) show the world. Fundamentally, when searching for a job, your skills and experience matter less than what you show.

(Of course, you must show employers what they want to see.) Showing requires visibility; visibility requires exposure, which can be achieved in several ways.

UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD A STRONG PRESENCE

Employers and recruiters pay attention to online "goings-on," hence the obvious: Use social media to promote yourself.

When done correctly and consistently, your digital footprint will showcase your expertise and connect you with influencers in your field and industry, along with:

1. Positioning you as an expert in your industry and/or profession.

2. Demonstrating your communication skills, a skill employers highly value.

The key is to be active, ideally daily, and not just passively observe. Don't just create profiles and let them sit there. Participate in LinkedIn groups, write posts and guest blogs, share insightful content, and ask questions.

Social media's reach is unfathomable. You never know who might read your profile or content and contact you. Years ago, I got a call from Crocs's VP of Human Resources. The head of marketing had seen my Pinterest

board, 'Brands That Have My Heart,' which included Crocs— it's common for employers to Google themselves to see what's being said about their products—and after reviewing my LinkedIn profile, felt I might be a good fit for an open position he had. I ended up working for Crocs for several years.

My social media posts often lead to recruiters and employers contacting me. When used to build a visible personal brand, the Internet and social media are job seekers' best friends.

BECOME AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

Professional associations are the perfect place to increase your visibility with like-minded individuals who share a passion for a particular profession or industry. Employers often look for candidates among association members. Understandably, employers prefer players in their industry, people who exhibit an affinity for their profession and industry by staying current with news, trends, and market changes, information that can come in handy during interviews.

As with not leaving your social media idle, don't join an association solely to list it on your resume and LinkedIn profile. Being visible in an

organization requires active participation. Volunteer to recruit conference speakers, or, even better, be a speaker/panellist yourself. Write for the association's newsletter, offer to manage their social media, or sit on a committee.

Becoming a member of an association opens you up to a smorgasbord of networking opportunities with people who are most likely attached to opportunities in some way. Hence, to be top of mind for the opportunities they're connected to, they first need to know you.

VOLUNTEER 'STRATEGICALLY'

You probably know someone whom everyone knows because of their volunteer work.

Strategic volunteering means volunteering for a position (e.g., fundraiser, social media manager, event planner) within a cause that'll leverage and enhance your core skills while making a tangible contribution to the cause, which is where creating your visibility happens -difference-makers are noticed- and provides an opportunity to expand your network.

Volunteerism brings together people from a wide variety of industries and backgrounds for a common goal, thereby creating uncommon connec-

tion opportunities that often lead to rare opportunities. All networking, no matter with whom, has potential benefits. Additionally, many employers gravitate to charitable candidates.

MAKE YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE STAND OUT WITH NUMBERS

According to Hootsuite, every month, 1.6 billion people visit LinkedIn. You don't need statistical evidence to know LinkedIn profiles receive many more views than resumes, so give your LinkedIn profile lots of love!

Your LinkedIn profile and resume should follow the cardinal rule of emphasizing your results rather than your responsibilities. An employer's success largely depends on its employees' results; therefore, understandably, your past results are all they care about.

Use quantifying numbers that illustrate your achievements to make your LinkedIn profile and resume stand out. For instance, mention that you managed a \$4 million annual budget or that you sourced a new Internet service provider that reduced costs by 15%. Numbers that show that you improved your employer's bottom line or increased revenue are eye-catching, making you a shiny object.