

This Nigeria

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Monday September 9, 2024
Vol. 9 No 40 N250

Economic sabotage:
Senate postpones oil probe ▶ PG 4
over wider consultation

Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina lead in ransom payment to kidnappers - Report

▶ PG 2

• SBM Intelligence says over N1bn paid in one year • More than 7,000 abducted nationwide within same period



Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike; signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the President of CCECC, Chen Sichang, on lighting Abuja, in Beijing, China...at the weekend

FOCAC: Wike signs MoU with two Chinese coys for light, water supply

▶ PG 6

NDLEA intercepts Europe-bound cocaine, opioids in Lagos

▶ PG 26

Fuel crisis: 'Probe NNPC, reverse price'

• SERAP urges Tinubu to check critical situation
• It could lead to malnutrition, experts warn ▶ PGs 2,15



President Bola Tinubu (m); Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu (3rd l); his Niger State counterpart, Umar Bago (2nd l); Minister of Finance, Wale Edun (l); Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Tuggar (4th l); and members of the Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO), during a meeting with the President in China...at the weekend

Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina lead in ransom payment to kidnappers - Report

•SBM Intelligence says over N1bn paid in one year

By Seyi Odewale,
with agency report

Over N1.048bn have been paid as ransom to kidnappers between July 2023 and June 2024 in Nigeria, with states like Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina leading in its payment, a report by SBM Intelligence has said.

According to SBM Intelligence, an Africa-focused market/security intel gathering and strategic consulting firm, the ransom demanded was N10.99bn.

The worsening security situation in Nigeria was further exposed in the report by SBM Intelligence, a market intelligence and security analysis firm, revealing that over 7,000 Nigerians were abducted across the country in the last year, with over N1bn paid as ransom.

The report highlighted the deepening security crisis, particularly in Zamfara,

Kaduna, and Katsina states, which have seen the highest numbers of kidnapping incidents and victims.

According to the report, 7,568 people were kidnapped in 1,130 incidents between July 2023 and June 2024.

“Nigeria’s security crisis has become increasingly complex, with armed groups and non-state actors exploiting the state’s weakened influence,” SBM Intelligence noted in its analysis.

It identified various factors fuelling the crisis, including the resurgence of Boko Haram in the North-east, armed gangs in the North-central and North-west, secessionist violence in the South-east, and gang-related issues in the South-west.

It also revealed the rising lethality of kidnapping incidents, with 1,056 people killed during the 1,130 reported incidents. On average, one person is killed during each attempted abduction.

The report further stated that women were more frequently targeted than men in the recorded abductions.

Economic challenges in Nigeria are driving more people into kidnapping as a means of survival, according to the report. “As the country’s economic challenges deepen and more individuals fall below the poverty line, more people have taken to kidnapping for ransom for survival,” the report stated.

It urged the government to take urgent action to disrupt the financial flows sustaining these criminal activities.

***More than 7,000 abducted nationwide within same period**

Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina were identified as the most affected states, with Zamfara recording 132 kidnapping incidents involving 1,639 victims, Kaduna reporting 113 incidents with 1,113 victims, and Katsina with 119 incidents and 887 victims.

The three states also recorded the highest number of civilian deaths due to kidnappings.

The report highlighted the prevalence of mass abductions, with over 3,000 people kidnapped in 135 incidents from January to June 2024. The northern regions of the country were most affected by mass abductions, particularly in Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina.

In response to the growing kidnapping crisis, President Bola Tinubu has stated that the federal government will not pay ransom to kidnappers.

In March, Minister of Information and National Orientation Mohammed Idris reiterated the president’s stance, emphasizing that no ransom would be paid to criminal elements. However, despite the government’s position, many Nigerians continue to pay ransom to secure the release of kidnapped relatives.

Fuel crisis: ‘Probe NNPC, reverse price’

By Olusegun Olanrewaju

•SERAP urges Tinubu to check the critical situation

Transparency and Social Accountability group, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), has urged President Bola Tinubu to use his leadership position and good offices to direct the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) to immediately reverse the illegal and unconstitutional increase in the pump price of premium motor spirit (PMS), also known as petrol, across its retail outlets.

The group also urged the President to “direct the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice Mr Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, and appropriate anti-corruption agencies “to probe the allegations of corruption and mismanagement in the NNPC, including the spending of the reported \$300m ‘bailout funds’ collected from the Federal Government in August

2024, and the \$6bn debt it owes suppliers, despite allegedly failing to remit oil revenues to the treasury.”

SERAP said, “Suspected perpetrators of alleged corruption and mismanagement in the NNPC should face prosecution as appropriate if there is sufficient admissible evidence, and any proceeds of corruption should be fully recovered.”

In an open letter dated September 7, 2024, and signed by its deputy director, Kolawole Oluwadare, the organisation said, “The increase in petrol price constitutes a fundamental breach of constitutional guarantees and the country’s international human rights obligations.

“Nigerians have for far too long been denied justice and the opportunity to get to

the bottom of why they continue to pay the price for corruption in the oil sector.

“Rather than pursuing public policies to address the growing poverty and inequality in the country and holding the NNPC to account for the alleged corruption and mismanagement in the oil sector, your government seems to be punishing the poor.

“The increase in petrol price has rendered impoverished citizens incapable of satisfying their minimum survival needs. The growth is not inevitable, as it stems from the persistent failure of successive governments to address allegations of corruption and mismanagement in the oil sector and the impunity of suspected perpetrators.

“Corruption in the oil sector and the lack of transparency and accountability in using

public funds to support the operations of the NNPC have resulted in persistent and unlawful hikes in petrol prices. Holding the NNPC to account for alleged corruption and mismanagement in the oil sector would serve legitimate public interests.

“The increase is causing immense hardship to those less well-off. We are concerned that as Nigeria’s economic situation deteriorates, the rise in petrol prices is pushing people further into poverty.

“We would be grateful if the recommended measures are taken within 48 days of this letter’s receipt and publication. If we have not heard from you by then, SERAP shall consider appropriate legal actions to compel your government to comply with our request in the public interest.”

Continues on Page 4

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By Nathaniel Zaccheaus, Abuja

The Senate has postponed its investigation into the alleged sabotage in the petroleum industry.

The Red Chamber cited the need to engage in more comprehensive consultations with stakeholders whose input and participation will add value to the conclusion of the investigative hearing.

The Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele, the Chairman of the Senate Ad-hoc Committee to Investigate Alleged Economic Sabotage in the Nigerian Petroleum Industry, gave the reasons in a statement yesterday.

Bamidele also cited legislative exigencies aimed at further deepening due diligence in conducting the investigative hearing as another reason for postponing it.

The Senate set up the ad-hoc committee to investigate billions spent maintaining the nation's refineries.

It was also mandated to spotlight regulatory agencies regarding payment to transporters and unravel the alleged importation of hazardous petroleum products and dumping of substandard diesel into the country.

According to the statement, the ad-hoc committee had concluded its pre-investigation undertakings. It held an interactive session with the heads of ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) and some private interests in the downstream and midstream

Economic sabotage: Senate postpones oil probe over wider consultation



Chief Executive Officer, National Hospital Abuja, Prof. Mahmud Raji (r); with Co-Chair, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, during his visit to National Hospital, Abuja, as part of collaborative efforts to develop the health care system, in Nigeria

petroleum sector.

After the exhaustive engagement with select MDAs and private oil firms, the ad-hoc committee subsequently scheduled its investigative hearing for Tuesday, 10th to Thursday, 12th September 2024

However, in his statement, Bamidele explained that the ad-hoc committee decided to postpone the investigative hearing after due

consultation with all its members and key actors in the petroleum industry.

He further noted that the ad hoc committee would communicate a new date for conducting the investigative hearing to all the stakeholders in due course.

Explaining the compelling reasons for the postponement, Bamidele noted that the decision was made in the best interest of the

federation and its teeming population.

He further explained that the postponement became imperative considering the compelling need "to consult more widely with expanded stakeholders within and without the petroleum industry and legislative exigencies to deepen further due diligence in the conduct of the investigative hearing."

He added that the prevailing realities in the country that demanded urgent interventions from nearly all the public and private sectors. Stakeholders across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory informed the resolution for the postponement.

Bamidele said, "While we deeply regret any inconvenience this decision may have caused all the stakeholders collectively or individually, it was taken purely and solely in the national interest."

He explained that each of these decisions was taken to enable the ad hoc committee to take a holistic approach to the public hearing and find lasting solutions to the challenges confronting the petroleum sector of the economy.

Bamidele, therefore, assured all the stakeholders that a new date for the public hearing would be communicated to them soon.

Gbajabiamila urges youths to support solutions to national problems

By Nathaniel Zaccheaus, Abuja

The President's Chief of Staff, Femi Gbajabiamila, has challenged Nigerian youths to embrace leadership responsibilities and support the government's efforts to address the country's current economic crisis.

Gbajabiamila gave the advice during the Third Graduation of the Fellows of the Legislative Mentorship Initiative (LMI), held at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), Abuja.

The Speaker of the 9th House of Representatives, who founded the mentorship programme, pleaded with the youth not to be afraid of the country's current situation because similar economic and social crises are happening in many countries worldwide.

He urged them to embrace leadership training and generated help for leaders at all levels and

tiers of government in their efforts to free the country from its current challenges.

The Chief of Staff, the Speaker of the 9th House of Representatives, congratulated the 50 new fellows of the LMI programme to embrace leadership positions in public service.

Gbajabiamila said, "To our graduating fellows, today marks more than completing your journey through the LMI fellowship programme.

"It signifies your readiness to step into public service, to embrace the responsibilities and challenges that lie ahead as leaders.

"Leaders that will embody the correct values, the virtues of the right, and set clear visions to catalyze transformational change in our country and beyond.

"Do not be afraid. Like all nations worldwide, Nigeria has faced its share of challenges, mis-

takes, and setbacks. Yet, each time, we have emerged more potent as a people and as one nation under God.

"A new generation like you is learning from the past, taking these lessons to heart, and finding ways to improve things.

"You carry with you the wisdom of those who came before you, and now you carry within you the prospects of shaping the future of those that will come after you. LMI has equipped you with the skills and capacity to transform challenges into opportunities.

"So be brave. Be bold. Be audacious. History is not made by those who sit on the sidelines in fear but by those who step into the frontline of the battle for the future of nations with courage, clarity, and competence.

"Remember, fear is a natural part of any journey, but how you respond to it defines you. You

are that courageous generation, empowered to overcome the fears and obstacles that may come your way as you lead our nation into a brighter future.

"Always strive to do what is right. The path of public service is fraught with difficult decisions. There will be times when the more accessible, more convenient choice will tempt you when pressures around you push you toward compromise. But I urge you to listen to your inner voice that speaks of integrity and justice.

"Even when the road is hard, doing the right thing comes at a personal cost, and when it seems you are standing alone, do what is right. You may stumble, and you may err. That is part of being human. But if you remain true to our LMI values, you will build a legacy of which you can be proud."

In his speech on the occasion, the DG of NILDS, Prof Abubakar Sulaiman, said the LMI "has proven to be very impactful to our emerging young leaders due to the intensive mentorship and exposure to leadership skills as well as legislative practices and procedures."

Sulaiman said, "Since it was domiciled in the institute by the former Speaker of the 9th House of Representatives and the Chief of Staff to the President, Femi Gbajabiamila (CFR), the programme has continued to live up to its mandate of serving as a platform for enriching and nurturing the next generation of public sector leaders."

Former First Lady of the Republic of Liberia and Secretary-General of the African First Ladies Peace Mission, Dr Jewel Howard-Taylor, who was Special Guest of Honour, urged the management of NILDS to extend the mentorship program to other West African countries.

Fuel crisis: 'Probe NNPC, reverse price'

Continued from Page 2

SERAP regretted that increasing petrol prices at a time when millions of Nigerians continue to face worsening economic conditions was entirely inconsistent with your government's constitutional and international obligations to ensure the minimum living conditions compatible with human dignity.

The group also stated, "The arbitrary increase has placed a disproportionate burden on the marginalised and most vulnerable sectors of society, particularly those disadvantaged by poverty.

"The increase is seriously jeopardizing their living conditions and individuals' physical, emotional, and individual development, intensifying and worsening socio-economic conditions in the country.

"The increase constitutes a serious human rights problem because of the intensity with which it undermines the enjoyment and exercise by Nigerians of their human rights and renders their civic participation illusory.

"The fundamental right to life includes not only the right of every Nigerian not to be deprived of their life arbitrarily but also the right that they will not be prevented from

having access to the conditions that guarantee a dignified existence.

"The growing poverty and inequality in the country has continued to adversely affect the right of Nigerians to participatory democracy and impede their ability to participate in their government.

"Persistent increases in petrol prices keep people in poverty, which in turn perpetuates discriminatory attitudes and practices against them. Your government is legally obligated to mobilise the maximum available resources to ensure people's socio-economic rights and protect the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Nigerians."



High Commissioner of Pakistan, Retired Maj.-Gen. Sohail Khan (8th r); Defence Advisor Col. Mushtaq Kamran (5th r), and other Diplomatic Defence attachés, during the Pakistanis Defence and Martyrs Day celebration, in Abuja...at the weekend

By Clement Adeyi, Ben Adoga, Kenny Folowosele, David Lawani & Anthony Otaru, Abuja

Controversy trails N40, 000 bag of rice palliative nationwide

•Restore fuel subsidy, enforce wage increase instead, Nigerians cry out

As President Bola Tinubu's administration moves to contain the politics and economics of palliative administration in the country, officials need to make it easier to achieve good results.

The plank of the new problem arises from the difficulties encountered in making the rice component of the ambitious palliative control programme designed to contain the pangs of excruciating hunger in the land available to the citizenry at the 'advertised' price.

The Federal Government enacted the palliative measures to alleviate the burden and cushion the effects of the hardship on Nigerians after the removal of fuel subsidies and other economic policies to regulate the financial sector, particularly 'tax manipulation' and import duty regulation.

Recently, the Federal Government promised to create centres in 36 states of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to sell 50kg (one bag) of rice at N40,000 to Nigerians.

Already, there are insinuations that these rice are either unavailable anywhere or the management is being wracked by corruption, among other issues.

Government officials are accused of hoard-

ing the items to use for election campaigns in 2027, while other officials in charge of distribution are reportedly diverting them to their families and relations.

Apart from the contentious issue of availability and corruption, other problems relate to whether the government is even suitable to adopt the palliative distribution module as its strategy to contain hardship in the country.

In this spirit, ThisNigeria went to town to sample the scenarios and opinions of politicians, lawyers, analysts, farmers, economists, academics, and youths, who were nudged to bare their minds on the country's contentious issue of palliative administration.

An FCT resident and civil servant, Usman Kartum, criticized the government's use of palliatives and stipends to solve the hardship.

He described the approach as insulting to Nigerians' sensibilities because, according to him, it is not a long-term solution.

"In my own opinion, it's no, no, no. Fighting hunger and hardship by throwing palliatives

at Nigerians is insulting. Throwing grains and money at problems created by the people throwing the palliatives can never be the solution to the hardship and hunger in the country. It can't even be a temporary, long-term solution," Kartum said.

He said, "We know that our borders were closed because the government had 'invested' much in agriculture and didn't want the grains to be smuggled away. Even so, we have not seen the grains."

He also expressed disgust that the 50kg bags of rice promised by the federal government to be sold at N40k at specific centres across the country had yet to be released.

Kartum said, "Even if this is the way to go, how many Nigerians can access the so-called subsidised rice? How long will this continue? Would the government always be able to provide subsidized bags of rice because people must continue to feed?"

"For me, anything that has to do with the government giving products to citizens is the highest form of insult, except if the products

are farm produce or equipment for agriculture and educational materials." Human and civil society rights activist, Sam Ogbeifun, also criticised the Federal Government for using palliative measures to alleviate hardship.

Rather than alleviating the problem, he said, "The present palliative distribution is a wrong step in the wrong direction. How can you create and solve a problem through an ad hoc policy that will not work?"

"So, to be giving somebody palliative is an insult. That is meant for IDPs and refugees. You can only provide palliatives for people who are displaced. It's an insult to the nation.

Another legal practitioner, Emmanuel Ekwe, expressed dismay that the measures were cosmetic and the best money to proffer solutions to hardship.

A senior lawyer, Issa Manzuma, said when an economy finds itself in an inflationary trend, the government would always be compelled to devise a welfare package.

According to him, palliatives were justified in Section 14 of the 1999 constitution, which states that the government's primary responsibility is Nigeria's welfare and security.

A university lecturer and economic expert, Prof Peter Siyan, said the government should use palliatives as a short-term or temporary measure to assuage hardship.

"The use of palliative measures by the federal government of Nigeria to alleviate the burden of food scarcity can only provide temporary relief, but cannot serve as a long-term solution to the underlying structural issues causing food scarcity and economic problems," he said.

The Lead Director of the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), Eze Onyekpere, said, "It is not a right to sit down and feed somebody with palliatives. According to the dictionary, palliative is not a cure; it is like a doctor has finished checking on a patient and says, you have a particular ailment.

"Then the doctor gives you a pain reliever to seduce or reduce the pains before surgery is carried out when the need arises. So, what Nigerians need are not palliatives but a cure."

Clark condemns Atiku's 'hypocrisy' over Yar'Adua family condolence visit

By John Danjuma

Elder statesman Chief Edwin Clark has expressed both sorrow and frustration following the death of Hajia Rabi Yar'Adua, mother of the late President Umaru Yar'Adua, who passed away at the age of 102.

In a statement of Tribute, Clark praised Hajia Yar'Adua for her wisdom and strength, having raised prominent figures such as Major General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua and Umaru Musa Yar'Adua.

While paying tribute to the Yar'Adua family, Clark also took the opportunity to criticize former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, accusing him of hypocrisy in his recent condolence visit to the family.

Clark recalled how Atiku had a long-standing relationship with the Yar'Aduas. Still, after losing the 2007

presidential election to Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, he continued to pursue court actions rather than accept the outcome out of respect for the family.

Clark expressed his disappointment, noting that despite his open letter to Atiku in 2007 urging him to "eschew all bitterness," the former vice president pressed on with his legal challenges, showing what Clark described as a lack of respect for his mentor's family.

He berated Atiku for now leading a delegation to mourn Hajia Yar'Adua, claiming it was driven by political motivations rather than genuine sympathy.

"It is difficult for me to know where Atiku Abubakar stands in this matter," Clark said, questioning the former vice president's sincerity. He also accused other political figures of using the occasion to plot political gains rather than offering genuine condolences.

Clark urged Nigerian political leaders to act with integrity and place the country's interests above personal ambitions.

He emphasised the need for politics to be conducted with morality and good conscience, particularly as Nigerians struggle with various societal issues.

On a lighter note, Clark also celebrated Nigeria's Super Eagles victory over Benin Republic, crediting the win with helping improve his health.

He highlighted solidarity as an example of national unity, regardless of regional or state differences, which he believes is the direction the country should move toward.

Clark's admonition reminded me of the enduring complexities in Nigerian politics, where personal relationships and political ambitions frequently collide.

FOCAC: Wike signs MoU with two Chinese coys for light, water supply

By Ben Adoga, Abuja

Minister of Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, has signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with two Chinese companies regarding solar lights and water supply.

The Minister attended the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

In a statement by Anthony Ogunleye, Director of Press, Office of the FCT Minister, MoUs were signed on Saturday with the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation, CCECC, and the China Geo-Engineering Corporation Overseas Construction (CGCOC) Group for lighting up the FCT, using solar power, and ensuring rural water supply.

While signing the documents during the FOCAC Summit, Wike said the selected projects would be completed across the FCT in time to celebrate its 50th anniversary of creation.

To explain the project, Wike also assured that "CCECC will handle the whole area of Maitama, the whole area of Asokoro, Wuse, Central Business Area, the Airport Road, down to Bill Clinton Drive, while CGCOC will handle the districts of Mabushi, Katampe, and Garki."

On the provision of water, Wike said, "And then again, we have gone further. You know the Greater Abuja Water Works, which is being handled by CGCOC and has been awarded for years ... has reached 75 percent completion. We believe that by the grace of God, by this December, or thereabouts, they would have completed it."

Regarding the need to ensure equal water supply in the satellite areas of the FCT, the Minister said, "The President said, look, you can't only provide for the city; you have to talk about the rural areas. So, we are keeping up with the idea that there is a need for a satellite town water supply in Gwagwalada, Kwali, and Kuje. We have signed the MOU with CGCOC so they can complete this assignment."

The Minister stressed that the projects, which would further ensure the FCT's development, were pushed by Mr. President at the FOCAC summit as part of his agenda to bring hope back to FCT residents.

Speaking on lighting up the city, he said, "One key project that is very dear to us and one of the reasons why we are here today is to light up Abuja because Abuja will be fifty years old by next year, so it should be a jubilee year for us. And we want Abuja to be like other cities, like what we see in Beijing. We have gone round and we have seen light everywhere, and that is how we want Abuja to be."

He also appreciated CGCOC's efforts to ensure the commercial operation of the Abuja Metro line became possible during President Tinubu's first-anniversary celebration.

The Minister said the completion of the project was a testament to the President's Renewed Hope Agenda, adding that the rail is operational due to the efforts of CCECC

While expressing appreciation to the President for granting the FCTA approval to

embark on these significant projects for the FCT, the Minister urged the CGCOC to ensure quick delivery of the project and ensure that water supply in the satellite towns becomes a reality.

In their separate responses, the President of CCECC, Mr. Chen Sichang, and the Chairman of CGCOC, Mr. Lan Meizhong, both expressed appreciation for the confidence reposed in them to execute the projects while assuring the Minister of quality and timely delivery of the projects.

The signing of the MOUs is one of the fallouts of the just concluded summit on the Forum for China and Africa Cooperation held in Beijing, China.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu visited CCECC during the summit and explored areas of cooperation with Nigeria.

The Minister's entourage included the Permanent Secretary of Treasury, Alhaji Adamu Wanki, the Executive Director of Rural Water and Sanitation Agency, RUWASA, Dr. Mohammed Dan Hassan, the Director of Procurement, Alhaji Musa Idris, and other senior officials of the FCTA.



High Commissioner of Pakistan, Retired Maj.-Gen. Sohail Khan (l); receiving the Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba, in Nigeria, Morales Palmero, during the Pakistanis Defence and Martyrs Day celebration, in Abuja...at the weekend

Five bodies recovered from flood in Abuja, three rescued

By Ben Adoga, Abuja

Five dead bodies were recovered in Anguwan Hakimi Community in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) at the weekend.

The victims were said to have been washed away late Friday evening during a downpour when they were trying to cross the river, which is usually a shallow-flowing river.

Local divers who recovered the corpses said two were identified as natives, with a child strapped on the back of one and two unidentified others.

An eyewitness who also spoke with one of the divers, Abdul, confirmed that two were Gbagyi women.

At the time of filing this report, the PRO of the FCT Emergency Management Department (FEMD) had not responded despite several calls and WhatsApp messages.

In a related development, three persons, two women, and a man, were rescued from a flood in Zone D, Gidan Mangoro, popularly called Anguwan Mada.

One of the victims, who pleaded anonymity, said she operated a shop in Karu Market and that after closing the market on Friday evening, she returned in the rain.

Since she did not drive, she wanted to cross through Azhata Community to Anguwan Mada on foot as bikes were not operating in the rain.

"When I got to the river, the volume was so much. It was flowing with speed. So I joined others who were waiting and waited for the river to reduce," she said

After about an hour, it was getting dark, and the river had reduced a bit. So the first set of men crossed over, and then the women decided to hold their hands and cross, too. She said that just in the middle of the river, one of the women was being swept away swiftly, so she decided to help. When she stretched her hand to rescue the women, both of them were swept off.

She said her husband, who was waiting for her on the other side of the river, jumped into it to rescue her but was also swept away.

Households in FCT show resilience amid economic hardship

By Lucy Ogalue

Many households in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) are adopting various measures to break even and survive the country's economic hardship.

The residents told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the economic hardship caused them to adjust their spending habits, explore new income streams, and develop innovative strategies to survive.

NAN reports that the country's economy has been challenging due to rising inflation, fluctuating fuel prices, and the depreciation of the Naira, among other challenges.

Many families are now compelled to prioritise essential needs such as food, healthcare, and education while reducing non-essential expenses.

A mother of three, Ebere Chinaza, said luxuries like dining out, vacations, and even some household items had taken a backseat as families focused on necessities.

"I have a permanent list of things I buy every month with N20,000 to N30,000, but now, I cannot buy all those items with even N60,000. We plan our meals carefully, and there is no room for waste. Sometimes, I even give my kids meals they do not like because that is what I can afford.

"It is regrettable because our income is not increasing, whereas the cost of living has steadily been rising," Chinaza said.

She prayed for the government and relevant authorities to quickly intervene and take measures to reduce the prices of food items for the good of the poor masses.

Also, Mrs Nguaverse Gondo, a civil servant, said with the job market becoming increasingly competitive, many Nigerians are exploring alternative income streams to supplement their earnings.

According to Gondo, side hustles, online businesses, and freelancing have become common ways for individuals to generate additional income.

Similarly, Mr Collins Paul, another civil servant, said "The prices of goods have increased, and we are now being forced to prioritise our basic needs.

A driver and father of two, Moses Kelechi, also reiterated the need for government at all levels to ensure policies that would ameliorate Nigerians' sufferings.

Kelechi decried the inability of many residents with medical conditions to visit the clinic due to the high cost of drugs and low disposable income.

Don't give up on Nigeria, Atiku urges Nigerians in Diaspora

By **Adeyemi Adeleye**

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar has urged Nigerians in the Diaspora to remain strong and optimistic for a better future for Nigeria.

According to a statement, Abubakar made the call at the weekend during a virtual interactive session with some Nigerians in the Diaspora.

The statement was issued yesterday in Lagos by Prof Gold Emmanuel, Senior Special Assistant, Communications & Intelligence and Diaspora, Office of Atiku Abubakar.

Abubakar called on Nigerian citizens not to give up on the nation, regardless of the current socio-economic challenges.

According to him, the state of the economy has led to untold hardship for millions of Nigerians, and the poverty index has continued to rise.

"I urge you not to give up just yet. Your strength and resilience are crucial to Nigeria's future," Abubakar said.

Abubakar said Nigerians in the Diaspora played a significant role in shaping the country's future.

He said, "As Nigerians living abroad, you have a unique perspective on good governance and economic management. I encourage you to continue to pray for Nigeria's deliverance. Your prayers and support can help bring about the transformation we need."

"I believe in the potential of our great nation, and I know that with collective ef-

fort, we can overcome the current challenges and build a prosperous Nigeria for all."

The former vice president encouraged them to support their families and friends back home.

"Continue to engage with your loved ones, offering support and encouraging peace and unity in these difficult times. Your contributions to the Nigerian economy through remittances and investments are quite crucial," he added.

Abubakar, the 2023 PDP presidential candidate, also urged the Federal Government to release detained protesters charged with treason.

According to him, the right of any citizen to protest government policies is entrenched in the constitution and cannot be denied.

Abubakar said, "I will advise the government to release these young Nigerians without trial immediately."

He urged Nigerians in the Diaspora to continue embracing an acceptable civilised strategy for bringing the government's attention to policy missteps.

"I will appeal to all Nigerians in the diaspora to continue to support Nigeria and project it to the world as the country with great potential," Abubakar added.



L-R: Chairman of the occasion, Jacinta Opara, founder, Bemore Empowered Girls Foundation, Betty Anyanwu-Akeredolu; at Sanitation exhibition stand, during the closing of 2024 Bemore Boot Camp, in Ibadan...at the weekend

Natasha turns 2,500 students into entrepreneurs

By **Nathaniel Zaccheaus**, Abuja

A member of the National Assembly representing Kogi Central Senatorial District, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, has started empowering tertiary institution students in her constituency with multipurpose business carts.

She has also launched a free Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) registration of 2,500 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the district totaling N27.5m for students.

A statement by her media aide, Israel Arogbonlo, yesterday said the initiative was part of Natasha's continued efforts to drive innovation in governance and impact the lives of disadvantaged students of Kogi Central origin in tertiary institutions across the country.

The statement reads, "It also makes it possible for students, market women, and other business owners to register their businesses with the CAC at no cost. The distributed business empowerment carts aim to foster self-reliance and entrepreneurship among the students."

"The initiative is designed to equip them with the skills and resources to start and

grow profitable businesses, ensuring they contribute positively to society after graduation. This proactive measure will help reduce dependency on government support and ease societal burdens.

"The flag-off of the free CAC business registration also helped the students to register their businesses on the spot. Other business owners were also helped to register their businesses, and registration certificates were presented on the spot.

"With the flag-off, the CAC business registration across Kogi Central will commence in each constituency office in the five local government areas to capture 2,500 SMEs.

"The registration, which would have cost N11,000 each, was paid for by the lawmaker, covering the total cost of N27,500,000 for registering all 2,500 SMEs."

The statement also quoted Natasha, a social entrepreneur who advocated for self-reliance and skills for sustainable development before becoming a political reformer, as stressing the importance of youth empowerment.

The Chairman of the Senate Commit-

tee on Local Contents also emphasised the importance of learning about a business's ecosystem.

She added that it had become necessary for business owners to register their businesses, as it is the foundation of any legal business and the way to acquire the right benefits.

She disclosed that her office already takes care of the 2,500 businesses that will be registered by the CAC.

The Senator explained that the business cards are given to the National Association of Ebara Students (NAES) in the selected institutions to run the business and support the underprivileged students.

The lawmaker gave each of the beneficiaries a start-up fund and a token for transport to their various destinations.

The CAC team, led by Mr Bello Muftahu Esq, CAC FCT Zonal Office, said they were around to carry out the business registration as part of fulfilling the law.

They added that such businesses will have legal recognition, which will allow them to access government and private grants and loans.

Kano postpones schools' resumption date

By **Muhammad Nur Tijani**

Kano State Government has postponed the commencement date of both primary and post-primary schools for the 2024/2025 academic session.

This was contained in a statement issued in Kano by Balarabe Kiru, Director of Public Enlightenment and Ministry of Education.

According to him, the Commissioner for Education, Alhaji Umar Doguwa, said the decision was compelled by some undisclosed 'urgent reasons.'

Kiru quoted Doguwa as saying the ministry would soon announce a new date.

"I wish to inform pupils, students, and parents that the earlier announcement for school resumption on 8th and 9th September 2024 is now being postponed.

"This is due to some urgent reasons that will help improve the provision of a conducive learning atmosphere for our children. Another date for the resumption will be announced in due course," the director said.

Kiru, however, appealed to the people concerned, especially the students, parents, and guardians, to bear with any inconveniences that the postponement may cause.

Tinubu trying hard, inherited near-bankrupt nation –Tafawa-Balewa

By **Adeyemi Adeleye**

Dr Abdul-Jhalil Tafawa Balewa has urged Nigerians to be patient with President Bola Tinubu.

He said the President inherited a near-bankrupt nation but is trying hard to put things right.

Tafawa-Balewa made the statement in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday in Lagos.

According to him, rescuing a nation and setting it on a path of recovery is always very hard if a nation is near zero.

He said the President needed to do much more to reposition the country and address its many challenges.

Tafawa-Balewa urged Tinubu to reduce the cost of governance to free up resources for development, a step towards resolving the situation.

The politician also urged Tinubu to strengthen his cabinet with technocrats that could help actualise his development agenda for Nigeria.



L-R: National Women Leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Mary Alile; Deputy Senate President, Barau Jibrin; Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari; APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Ganduje; Imo State Governor, Hope Uzodimma; Secretary to the Government of Federation (SGF), George Akume and other dignitaries, during the inauguration of The Progressive Institute, in Abuja...at the weekend



L-R: Chairman, Senate Committee on Youth Development, Yemi Adaramodu; Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyeibanji; Senator Wasiu Eshinlokun and Senator Kenneth Eze; during a meeting with members of the committee on Youth Development, at the Governor's Office, Ado-Ekiti...at the weekend



Bauchi State Governor, Bala Mohammed (r), with the Managing Director of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) Ali Muhammad Ali, at the Governor's private residence, in Abuja



L-R: Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG), Rhoda Olofu; Senior Technical Advisor to Nigerian Governors' Forum, David Olofu; and her husband, retired AIG of Police, during Rhoda's decoration as AIG and appointment as second Female Force Secretary, in Nigeria, in Abuja



Kano State Governor, Abba Yusuf (l); signing the supplementary budget passed by the State House of Assembly. With him is the Speaker, Isma'il Falgore, in Kano...at the weekend



L-R: Chairman, Press Corps, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Segun Ojumu; representative of the National Commissioner and Chairman, Information and Voter Education Committee, Mary Nkem; and the Chief Press Secretary to the INEC Chairman, Rotimi Oyekanmi, during a news conference on the forthcoming 2024 Governorship Elections, in Edo and Ondo, at the INEC headquarters, in Abuja...at the weekend



L-R: Chairman, Nigerian Medical Association, Cross River State branch, Dr Ezoke Epoke; Guest Speaker and former 2nd Vice-President of NMA, Associate Prof, Ofem Enang; and Secretary of the state NMA, Dr Akaninyene Ekeruke, during a leadership retreat, organised by the state NMA for its officers, in Calabar...at the weekend

TheBigInterview

Restore subsidy, address corruption in NNPC to solve 60% of our problems –Pat Utomi

A professor of political economy and management expert, Pat Utomi, speaks on the economic situation in the country, particularly the current fuel crisis. The former presidential aspirant under the platform of the African Democratic Movement in 2015 and staunch supporter of the 'Obidient Movement' under the auspices of the Labour Party in the 2023 general elections said if he had the opportunity to become the president of Nigeria, he would return the fuel subsidy removed by the present administration and rescue the country from the economic hardship that the citizenry had been plunged into



Utomi

Did you see the recent outrageous fuel price increase announced last week by the NNPC, which has fuelled fury and pain among the Nigerian populace?

This issue is more complex than seeing or not seeing it coming. When you get to this kind of situation that we have gotten into, you need a lot of planning. Earlier, we didn't do the right planning before the fuel crisis. We did not clarify our strategies. Consequently, we have run into serious problems.

First and foremost, the typecasting of what subsidy is all about has put us in a bind. I would probably have begun by trying to clean up the mess in the industry, the NNPC. The NNPC is one of the world's opaque and most unreliable organizations. I have been writing and talking about it for a whole generation. A good part of what we call subsidy was graft. There is what we call smuggling; if you look at how the numbers oscillate, how much we consume and then what we consume just before COVID-19, the numbers multiplied significantly when movements dropped under COVID-19. Then you will tell anybody serious that it is not because petroleum was consumed. There are statistics from governments in Pakistan, California, and Nigeria, where everybody has a car, regarding the ratio of what we consume. In Nigeria, we have plenty of vehicles. Note also that very few of the poor population have cars. I look at the units of petrol that they say we consume. Before we punish citizens by passing on inefficiency to them in private, we must clear up the corruption in the system; that alone will bring down the thing dramatically. You have to choose strategic use of resources.

Is removing subsidy a good idea?

Removing the subsidy was not a good idea. Sometimes, you need to drive production and quality of life at a certain level, so you commit to some level of subsidy. We know that agriculture is massively subsidized in America and Europe. But this is a subsidy that drives production and puts more money in the hands of people who produce, enabling the system to keep running. But when you massively subsidize

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All the stories about the petrol on the Nigerian border are quite disturbing. With simple technology, you could see every car that uses Nigerian borders, not to mention petrol tankers. So, when they tell you this is how much petrol is consumed in Nigeria and this is how much is smuggled, it is a significant security issue

consumption for pleasure and stuff like that, when people don't have to think about how they use their resources, you are not doing what is best for the system. We are stuck here because we should have dealt with the heart of the matter first.

What should have been done?

First, if you had cleaned up the NNPC and reduced the system's so-called corruption, more than 60 per cent of the problem would have been solved.

Is it too late to do that? Where would you start if you were given that job to do?

I can do it if I am given the job. I have been saying it for years. If you go to the World Bank and the IMF, they will throw policies at you with templates- no problem. It is a good understanding of economics. However, every situation is different. Let us go back to Asia during the financial crisis in 1997. One of the things I am hearing now is that Washington's tax-to-GDP ratio is terrible. They need to increase taxes dramatically. The average person in the Western world who pays those taxes has no other commitment besides themselves. The average Nigerian middle class is a social net that the country doesn't have. They pay school fees for x number of people, and the extended family depends on them. If your book doesn't come in taxes, then the person does not understand economics. How do you programme them and take them into account in computing? How do you change taxes and all of that? This is the kind of conversation you must put on the table. If you take the numbers that they throw at you from the NNPC and they say, therefore, jack up prices, you will just be bothering overburdened people. When investments are not taking place, you need to free up money for savings and investments. People cannot save and invest; they are in a vicious circle going downward. We need a serious reflection on where we are, the processes, and what we must do first. There is a sequencing problem, but we are not managing it properly. That is why it is so hard on people.

The problem is that the government is

speaking about this matter for the first time. The Vice President summoned the ministers, the NSA, the GM of NNPC, and others to explain the issue. What is your take on this?

We really need to discuss the matter seriously and engage on it. Security is a critical issue. All the stories about the petrol on the Nigerian border are quite disturbing. With simple technology, you could see every car that uses Nigerian borders, not to mention petrol tankers. So, when they tell you this is how much petrol is consumed in Nigeria and this is how much is smuggled, it is a major security issue.

Is there complicity?

If we want to deal with that, let's deal with it. We need to deal with security issues and the corruptions in the NNPC to say to consumers, look, this thing is about output. Output doesn't justify anything for playing our role. We could introduce different kinds of public transportation and quality people with other forms of transportation. In 1984, I visited Zimbabwe for the first time. I had a classmate in the US. He was the Executive Director of Zipam, who was in public administration. We returned from the US and bought a lovely house, but he could not buy a car because the house was a priority then. But he later purchased a 1956 Morris Minor. During the day, on the weekdays, he would take a bus to work. On Sunday, he brought his Morris Minor and his family to church. If we have this kind of quality public transportation, fuelling it at this kind of level and subsidizing that kind of fuelling for the sake of the party, you would surely pay a different price for petrol. Let us not punish ourselves and shut out productivity possibilities from the resources that need to go to specific areas. That is what we are doing, and if it does not work, we need to talk and sort out this problem once and for all.

Can the government rescind those decisions? If it will not, how can we manage

Continues on Page 27

Tragedy: Petrol tanker explosion kills 48 in Niger

Niger State has been left in a state of mourning after 48 people lost their lives following a petrol tanker explosion that occurred along Bida-Agaie-Lapai road.

Director-General, Niger Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Abdullah- Baba-Arah, who confirmed this in a statement in Minna yesterday, said the agency received a report of a deadly tanker explosion that occurred on Sunday at about 12:30 am along Bida-Agaie-Lapai highway.

According to him, the scene of the disaster is two kilometres away from Dendo community in Agaie Local government Area.

He said the incident occurred when a petrol tanker loaded with petrol (PMS) collided with a trailer truck loaded with travelers and cattle from Wudil in Kano State en-route Lagos.

Baba-Arah said two other vehicles, a crane truck and a pickup van were also involved in the multiple incident.

He disclosed that over 30 people have been confirmed dead, with over 50 cattle burnt alive.

The director-general said the agency's 'Rapid Respond Team (RRT) and other 'Local Emergency Management Committees (LGEMCs)' were still at the scene of the incident.

He said that they were conducting search and rescue operations as more corpses were still trapped inside the ill-fated trucks. (NAN)



L-R: Director, Administration and Human Resources, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Khalil Abdulhadi; Executive Secretary, National Lottery Trust Fund (NLTF), Tosin Adeyanju; Managing Director of NAN, Ali M. Ali; Special Adviser on Special Duties to the Executive Secretary, NLTF, Ajiya Haliya Idris; Editor-in-Chief of NAN, Epharim Sheyin; and NAN Director of Special Duties, Mufta Ojo, during a visit by the Executive Secretary of NLTF to NAN headquarters, in Abuja...recently

Katsina invests N10bn in new schools to increase enrollment

The Katsina State Government has spent about N10 billion to encourage and ensure increased enrollment of children in schools, Kabir Magaji, Chairman, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), has said.

Magaji disclosed this on Saturday in Katsina during a meeting with stakeholders, organised by the committee on the implementation of school enrollment campaign.

According to him, the state government is concerned with the high rate of out-of-school children, especially in the rural areas.

"Government has so far invested over N10 billion to construct new schools, renovate existing ones, and provide teaching and learning materials.

"The aim is to ensure more enrollment of children into schools.

"Government has also recruited teachers and trained them to deliver quality education to the children," he said.

He identified activities of bandits and poverty as reasons for low enrollment drive, saying that the meeting was organised to come up with modalities towards solving the problem.

Magaji explained that the participants

were selected from areas with a high rate of out-of-school children, and expressed optimism that the meeting would yield positive results.

Earlier, the Secretary of the board, Dr Isah Idris, had commended the United Nations Children Funds (UNICEF), for its financial support to the educational sector in the state.

Isah also appreciated the contribution of School-Based Management Committees (SBMC) for their commitment toward the revival of education in Katsina.

The annual meeting was organised in collaboration with UNICEF, Kano field office. (NAN)

Mosque project: Emir of Potiskum seeks support of Kano Emirate

The Emir of Potiskum in Yobe, Umar Bubaram Ibn Wuriwa Bauya, has solicited support of the Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sunusi II, towards completion of the mosque project at his palace.

Bauya stated this during a visit to Sunusi II, yesterday in Kano.

"We are seeking your usual support for the completion of a Juma'at Mosque at my palace which we started about three years ago but the project has been stalled by some financial difficulties.

"We hope that you will help us to com-

plete it," he said.

Bauya, who is the first emir from the north to pay homage to Sunusi II, said he was at the palace to extend his support to Sanusi.

According to him, history is repeating itself with the second coming of Sunusi II, as the 16th Emir of Kano.

"This kind of historic development happened to me some 26 years ago, and with the help of Allah, I returned as an emir, and I'm living peacefully with my people.

"The return of Emir Muhammadu Sunu-

si II is a significant milestone that justified that he is a good leader who thinks and acts for his people.

"As such, you should count on my personal support and that of my people," Bauya said.

Responding, Sunusi thanked Bauya for the visit.

Sunusi, who is also the Nigerian Spiritual Leader of the Tijjaniyya Islamic Sect, said the visit signified unity and togetherness among the traditional leaders, adding that it would impact positively on their lives and security of their subjects. (NAN)

Lawal inaugurates Maru General Hospital, harps on maintenance

Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara on Saturday lamented the poor maintenance culture of infrastructure and facilities provided by the state government.

Lawal, who spoke at the inauguration of the upgraded Maru General Hospital in Maru Local Government Area, said that the hospital was upgraded and equipped with the state-of-the-art facilities that met global standards.

The Governor directed the Ministry of Health to ensure adequate maintenance measures of all the healthcare facilities provided in the state.

He said that the facilities provided at the hospital required effective maintenance, directing, "Therefore, the Ministry of Health should put adequate measures to ensure that personnel to handle the equipment are well trained.

"Misusing these equipment will be a setback to this administration's effort of providing health to all the citizens and the overall development of the state."

Lawal commended the contractors for doing a good job in renovating the structure and for providing facilities that met global standards.

Earlier, Lawal had laid a foundation for the reconstruction of the Mafara General Hospital in Talata Mafara Local Government Area.

Bago facilitates Emir of Suleja at 83

Governor Umaru-Bago of Niger, has congratulated the Emir of Suleja, Malam Awwal Ibrahim on his 83rd birthday.

In a birthday message through his Chief Press Secretary, Bologi Ibrahim, the Governor described the celebrant as selfless and one who has spent most of his lifetime in serving humanity from the public service, to politics and to traditional institutions.

The governor acknowledged the numerous contributions of the emir to the growth and development of Suleja Emirate, the State, and even Nigeria.

He said the octogenarian has written his name in the sands of time by laying a solid foundation as the first elected Governor of the State (1979-1983) and which other administrations have continued to build on.

Bago further observed that the emir has done so well in preserving and strengthening the cultural heritage of the emirate.

While appreciating Allah for being so gracious and kind to the celebrant, the governor promised to continue to support the emirate for its overall growth and development.

By Cajetan Mmuta, Awka

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has distributed relief materials worth several millions of naira to the people of Ogwuanocha and Ogwuikpele communities in Ogbaru federal constituency of Anambra State.

The items were facilitated by the member representing Ogbaru federal constituency in the House of Representatives, Afam Victor Ogene, through a motion he moved in the House of Representatives over the plight of the people of the communities.

In the motion, Ogene, a Labour Party (LP) member and Chairman of the House Committee on Renewable Energy, had narrated to the House members that the people of his Ogwuanocha had been living as refugees in camps outside their community since 2021 as a result of internal skirmishes that broke out amongst them, while their Ogwuikpele counterpart have been passing through unbearable hardship due to a seemingly intractable flood disasters in the area and a total absence of any government presence.

Speaking during the flag off ceremony for distribution of the items at Iyiowa-Odekpe area of Ogbaru local government area at the weekend, the South-East Zonal Coordinator of NEMA, Mrs. Ngozi Echeazu, lauded Ogene for his positive representation of his constituency; courage, and commitment towards the welfare of people of the constituency.

She said, "We want to thank everybody for coming and to let you know that the facilitator of the Federal Government's interventionist measure, and to remember you people through FEMA is your son, Hon. Afam Victor Ogene.

"You people voted for him; continue to support and vote for him in subsequent elections. He was the one who approached the Presidency and complained about the problem on ground within the communities sometime ago, and that the Federal Government had not come to the aid of his people; and that's why today, we are here to offer our help.

He wrote to us which made us bring all

NEMA, LP lawmaker, distribute millions of naira relief materials to Anambra communities

these things."

"We are here today to flag off the distribution exercise of the relief materials. The items of donation and distribution are for people of Ogwuanocha and Ogwuikpele communities. We also have other people to attain within the state in no distant time.

"We don't want the crisis to continue and we are ready to listen to Hon. Ogene in future. We are here with officials of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and Local Government Emergency Committee," Echeazu stated.

She urged the people to conduct themselves in a peaceful and orderly manner, as well as to rally their support around the LP lawmaker for more assistance of democratic dividends and effective representation at the National Assembly.

Ogene, who is also the LP Caucus leader in the House of Representatives, had within the week also empowered over 100 youths with skills training programmes on Renewable Energy to make them become

meaningful and engage them in productive ventures as responsible members of the society.

The three-day training exercise was organised in collaboration with the Border Communities Agency (BCDA) and MODESCOM Solution Ltd, with focus on solar energy installation, maintenance and equipping beneficiaries with practical skills, to thrive in the renewable energy sector.

However, items distributed to the IDPs include hundreds of bedding materials (foam and mats); hundreds of food items, including bags of rice, garri, gallons of groundnut oil, Maggi, noodles; baby wears, wrappers, towels, rubber buckets, and others.

Recall that the two oil rich communities, particularly, Ogwuaniocha, was on November 2021 sacked by gunmen who invaded the palace of the 71-year-old traditional ruler of the community, HRH Igwe Oliver Nnaji, and abducted him to an unknown destination, and his palace also

burnt down by the irate hoodlums. Sadly, the Ogwuaniocha people are currently taking refuge in neighbouring communities following the crisis which engulfed the area and led to the death of several persons, as well as wanton destruction of properties.

Investigations revealed that the state government had abandoned the communities in Ogbaru LGA to their fate without a single infrastructure nor street light following allegations that the people did not cast their votes for the state governor, Chukwuma Soludo, during the 2021 governorship election that brought the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)-led government to power.

Worst as the situation is, the 30-kilometre stretch of road leading from Onitsha-Ogbaru is presently deplorable and impassable, with residents of Ogbaru and others living along the route, including commuters, paying as high as N500 as against N200 through and fro short distance locations, while motorists suffer excruciating pains on daily basis.



L-R: Former Minister of Power, Chinedu Nebo; Chief Medical Director, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital (NAUTH), Prof. Joseph Ugboaja; and Founder, The Ethical Leadership Centre (TELC), Ben Etiaba, during a Gala Nite Dinner, in honour of Prof. Ugboaja by TELC, in Enugu...at the weekend

Stop parading self as acting leader, Igbo youths warn Okpalaezeukwu

By David Eze, Abakaliki

The Ohanaeze Ndigbo Youth wing Worldwide has warned the erstwhile acting leader, Chukwuma Okpalaezeukwu, to desist from parading himself as the Ohanaeze youth leader, having been declared 'persona non grata' by the Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide in Igbo land.

This was contained in a communique issued at the end of a stakeholders' meeting of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Youth in Abakaliki, which was signed by Damian Okafor, National Youth Leader, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide and made available to journalists.

According to Okafor, this designation means that Okpalaezeukwu is not fit to hold any position in Igbo-land again.

The Igbo youths who declared their support to the Secretary-General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo World wide, Okey Emuchay, said the leadership of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide are in intact, and there is no controversy as purportedly purveyed by some criminal elements and enemies of ALAIGBO.

Okafor said they had resolved to be taking instructions from the Secretary-General, Emuchay, pending when the Ime Obi is convened to decide on leadership change in the organisation. "That the leadership of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide is intact, and there is no controversy at all as purportedly purveyed by some criminal elements and enemies of ALAIGBO.

"We are saddened by the death of our President-General late Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu (Ahaejiejemba) who died after a brief illness.

'Ebonyi water scheme to commence operation soon'

By David Eze, Abakaliki

The multi-billion Naira Ebonyi State water scheme at Oferekpe - Ikwo will commence operation before the end of this month.

State Governor, Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru, dropped the hint when he led members of the State Executive Council on an inspection tour of the Old Abakaliki Water Scheme, Water Works, Abakaliki.

The multi-billion Naira Oferekpe water scheme was constructed by the administration of Chief Martin Elechi, but could not function till the administration left office.

"The governor said it is part of his administration's commitment to complete inherited projects and execute new ones in the interest of the masses.

"It is our target to provide water to ev-

ery home in the state. Oferekpe Water Scheme will start pumping water from the end of this month and water from the scheme will be reticulated to Izzi, Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Ezza North and Ezza South.

In no distant time, the Ukawu Water Scheme will also receive government attention".

The governor said in addition to the Oferekpe water scheme, the Old Abakaliki Water Scheme is being reactivated to boost water supply.

"Old Abakaliki Water Scheme will come alive again. For instance, at the low lift here, we are building a new pump house and the same thing is happening at the High lift at Juju Hill.

"They are cleaning and replacing obsolete facilities, while the Water Works' reservoir has been fully reactivated."

On the issue of power and energy, Governor Nwifuru said he had commenced discussions with the Transmission Company of Nigeria to establish 330 Mega Watts transmission stations to boost industrialisation.

"Though it is capital-intensive and estimated to take over N50 billion, we are already talking with TCN to know the possibility of embarking on the project because it is crucial for development".

"It is only three states, including Ebonyi, that do not have a Mega Watts station. We provided land for TCN at Umuogbara, but unfortunately, nothing was done," the governor said.

He also inspected the State pulverization plant at Umuogbara where all the recycling waste machines had been installed and were ready for use.

Police probe death of 20-year old man in Lagos

The Police Command in Lagos State says it has begun an investigation into the death of a 20-year old man allegedly killed by gunmen.

The command's spokesperson, SP Benjamin Hundeyin, confirmed this to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday.

Hundeyin said that the Okokomaiko Police Division received information from concerned members of the public about the case on Friday at about 10.30 p.m. "The informants said that at about 10.10 p.m of same date at Abeokuta Street, Okokomaiko in Ojo area of Lagos, four unidentified gunmen were seen chasing a young man in the area", he said.

He also said that the gunmen allegedly shot him many times on the head, stomach and leg till he died.

"After their evil act, they abandoned the body and took to their heels and escaped.

"Immediately after the police received the information, a team of anti-crime went to the scene and met one Vivian of the same address, who happened to be

the mother of the deceased. "She identified him as her son who lived with her at the same address.

"Photograph of the deceased was taken, the body was evacuated and deposited

at Mainland General Hospital Mortuary, Yaba for autopsy," he said.

Hundeyin said that investigation was in progress while efforts were on to arrest the fleeing suspects.



L-R: Members of the Senate Committee on Youth Development, Kenneth Eze; Wasiu Eshinlokun; Committee Chairman, Yemi Adaramodu; and Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyeibanji; during a meeting with members of the Committee, at the Governor's office, Ado-Ekiti...at the weekend

NDLEA destroys 100,000kg cannabis in Ekiti forest

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has destroyed over 100,000kg of cannabis spread across 51 hectares of farmland in Ekiti State.

This is contained in a statement by the Director, Media and Advocacy, NDLEA,

Femi Babafemi, yesterday in Abuja.

Babafemi said that NDLEA operatives supported by men of the Nigerian Army on Tuesday, September 3 and Wednesday September 4, stormed three camps inside the Ise-Ekiti forest reserve, in Ise/Orun local government area of the

state.

He named the affected areas to include: Aba Saalaja with 23 hectares; Aba Paanu with 12 hectares and Aba Arogunmatidi with 16 hectares, all within Ise-Ekiti forest reserve.

Ondo PDP knocks Aiyedatiwa over appointment of 344 new aides

The Ondo State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) have exchanged words over the recent political appointments made by Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa.

The state governor, on Friday, through his Chief Press Secretary, Ebenezer Adeniyani, announced the appointments of 344 people as senior special assistants and special assistants, but the PDP condemned the action of the governor, describing it as ridiculous.

This was contained in a statement issued by the Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to the PDP Campaign Organisation, Ayo Fadaka, yesterday.

The statement read in part, "Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa continues to remain a pitiable sight as the helmsman of our state. His acclaimed rudderlessness and incompetence is consistently impressed on our psyche as he misses no such opportunity to prove it .

"The appointment on Friday of 344 aides is a ridiculous action of a governor who is at sea over choices to make for the advancement of our state, confused largely over what should extend the

frontiers of our development but chose to prosecute petty partisanship desires at the expense of good governance, thus again confirming his unsuitability for the governorship seat he currently occupies, which he consistently uses to retard our quest for economic and societal growth.

"To appoint 344 aides, with no specific governmental responsibilities and defined functions is criminal, particularly when due cognisance is taken of the fact that their remuneration per month is going to cost the government about N1.2billion.

"In fact, their number and resources to be expended on them is enough to begin a new ministry. We declare that it is ridiculous and wrong for Lucky Aiyedatiwa to appoint APC ward canvassers as senior special assistants and special assistants, Ondo State has never been this unlucky!."

However, the Director of Media and Publicity of the APC, Steve Otoro, said Aiyedatiwa's appointment was a strategic move to drive development and progress in the state.

He described PDP's allegation as false

and desperate attempts to discredit the governor."

He said, "Governor Aiyedatiwa's recent appointments are a fulfillment of his earlier promise to engage more people in running his government, adding value to governance, and strengthening our democracy. These appointments are not superfluous, as claimed by the PDP, but rather a strategic move to harness the expertise and skills of Ondo State indigenes to drive development and progress.

"Furthermore, we want to remind the PDP that governance is not a solo affair, but a collective responsibility that requires the input of diverse stakeholders. Governor Aiyedatiwa's appointments are a testament to his commitment to inclusive governance and his desire to tap into the vast human resources available in Ondo state.

"These allegations against Governor Aiyedatiwa are false, with political undertones targeted solely at the November 16 governorship election. We urge the good people of Ondo state to discern the truth and see through the PDP's desperate attempts to discredit our performing governor."

Akeredolu's wife empowers 70 girls with laptops, solar systems

No fewer than 70 girls were empowered with laptops and home solar systems in Ibadan at the weekend, courtesy of BEMORE Empowered Girls Foundation.

The group's founder and wife of former Ondo State governor, Betty Anyanwu-Akeredolu, empowered the girls at the close of the BEMORE Summer Bootcamp.

She urged them to judiciously utilise the items to make a positive impact in their world.

She said that there was a connection between Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and poverty.

The ex-First Lady stressed the need for girls to be empowered so they could be financially independent.

Anyanwu-Akeredolu enjoined women to be concerned and work towards eliminating what she called 'feminised poverty' that bred violence at home and on the streets.

She reiterated the importance of aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by UN member states in 2015.

"At the heart of these 17 SDGs is an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership.

"They recognised that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand in hand with strategies that improve health and education.

"They reduce inequality and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests," she said.

Anyanwu-Akeredolu decried low awareness and programmes on SDGs despite their having offices and people appointed to man the offices.

"In BEMORE, we understand the role of SDGs and the benefits accruable, if it can be implemented.

"That is why SDGs are like a jingle in BEMORE Summer Bootcamp since its inception in 2017," she said.

The founder charged the participants of the 2024 BEMORE Oyo to step down the training to other girls, who were unable to attend.

Prof. Jacinta Okpara, Chairman of the occasion and Vice-Chancellor, Dominican University, charged the girls to put the training obtained into good use to contribute to the nation's development.

"Remember you are the architect of your future and the world is full of opportunities.

"Based on the skills acquired here, there is no limit to what you can do," Opara said.

The State Commissioner of Police, Sonubi Ayodele, represented by Assistant Commissioner of Police, Abayomi Akinpelu, commended the organiser of the programme.

MOSOP warned against NNPC, Sahara Energy joint venture in Ogoni oil resumption

A South-south region group, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) has warned against any backdoor joint venture partnership between the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) and Sahara Energy, saying it would not be acceptable to the Ogoni people.

It stated that any attempt to “foist Sahara Energy on the Ogoni people may lead to a major upheaval which will dampen MOSOP’s current efforts at achieving a mutually beneficial settlement of the conflicts”.

Its President, Fegalo Nsuke who made the position known at the end of a meeting with the leadership of the Council of Ogoni Leaders of Thought (COLT) at the weekend in Bori, Khana local government area of Rivers State warned against any manoeuvres to foist Sahara Energy on the Ogoni people and throw them into crisis.

“MOSOP rejects any backdoor move to transform the FTSA between Sahara Energy and the West African Gas Limited (WAGL, an affiliate of the NNPC) into a Joint Venture operatorship. The Ogoni people have maintained that the financial and technical services agreement, FTSA, between Sahara and NNPC is not acceptable to us, and we will strongly resist any move by the NNPC to force Sahara Energy on us by any means whatsoever,” Nsuke said.

He added: “We have laid down our conditions for a peaceful resolution of the Ogoni issue. The government should look into those demands and we are ready to make the necessary compromises on mutually beneficial terms”

He called on the government to immediately halt Sahara Energy’s moves to enter into a joint venture agreement with the NNPC over OML 11 without the in-

put and consideration of the position of MOSOP and the Ogoni people, noting that Sahara’s penchant to force itself on Ogoni was a threat to the peace of the Ogoni and the Niger Delta region.

He said: “The position of MOSOP is critical in discussions on oil production in Ogoni because we stopped Shell’s operations in the first place. Ogoni made enormous sacrifices to get Shell out of the fields. If the NNPC attempts to force Sahara Energy on us without consideration for our demands, it may lead to another phase of crisis.

“We will therefore strongly advise against any attempt to kill our people through some backdoor moves to force Sahara Energy on us without consideration for our position on the issue.”

He added: “We urge the Nigerian government to give peace a chance and accept discussions on the recommendations we have made in the interest of peace in our land. We do not want anything to take away our peace and the NNPC should spare us that trouble.”

“We have proposed a pathway to address the Ogoni problem, and that option should be given a chance. Our proposal calls for the operationalization of the Ogoni Development Authority (the ODA)” he said.

Sahara Energy had, during the regime of President Muhammadu Buhari, entered an FTSA with WAGL in a deal that was not transparent and did not pass through due process. MOSOP rejected the move. Sahara later attempted to acquire OML 11 through the National Assembly and was blocked.



Edo State First Lady, Betsy Obaseki (l), with wife of the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for the September 21 governorship election, Ifeyinwa Ighodalo, during a Zoom meeting with Edo women in the Diaspora, monitored in Government House, Benin City

I’m not barren, Obaseki’s wife replies Oshiomhole

The wife of the Edo State governor, Betsy Obaseki, has charged childless women not to be discouraged as they can fulfill God’s purpose in various ways beyond motherhood.

She spoke at the weekend at a virtual Town Hall meeting, organised by Edo women in the Diaspora for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governorship candidate, Asue Ighodalo. “I am not a barren woman; I am fruitful and currently fulfilling God’s purpose,” she said.

She was responding to a question by one of the diaspora women regarding the remark made by Senator Adams Oshiomhole on her being childless.

Oshiomhole’s outburst was in response to Betsy’s statement at a rally in Igueben that only Ighodalo has a wife among the leading contenders.

“As a human being everyone is structured to have a purpose in life, it wouldn’t matter if jabs are thrown at you.

“I had conceived and had miscarriages and painful evacuation and as a result babies died in our wombs and don’t have children to show for the pains,” she said.

While encouraging women like her who had to cope with pains and miscarriages, she said “for such women, my word of comfort to you is that you are not barren, and don’t be discouraged.

“I call you fruitful. You and I are potential and proud mothers of children,” she

said. She explained that being fruitful is not limited to childbearing alone but also about impacting lives and creating positive change in society.

The wife of the PDP governorship candidate, Ifeyinwa Ighodalo, commended the Edo State women in the diaspora for organizing the meeting in support of her husband and pledged to continue the social intervention programmes for women instituted by the First Lady if her husband is elected.

Esan group rallies support for Ighodalo

By Nefishetu Yakubu

A group, the Esan4OsadebeHouse-2024Team, has called all Esan sons and daughters to vote for the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Dr Asue Ighodalo, in the upcoming Edo governorship election.

The election is slated for September 21.

The group’s call was conveyed in a communiqué by its coordinator, Patrick Okpebholo, at the end of its emergency meeting and made available to newsmen yesterday in Benin.

According to Okpebholo, there was a need for the Esan people to act as one united family to avoid the possibility of splitting their votes, adding that Esan was at a critical juncture in its history as the opportunity to produce the next governor of the state in the person of Ighodalo had been presented to them.

Okpebholo said if the Esan people allowed themselves to be led by emotions rather than reason, it could become counterproductive for their aspirations.

“We, the Esan people, stand at a critical juncture in our history.

“The upcoming Edo governorship election presents a rare opportunity for our community to produce a candidate, Ighodalo, who has consistently demonstrated respect, commitment, and dedication to our welfare.

“However, we face a danger that threatens to undermine our progress: division and splitting of votes.

“If we allow emotions to dictate our actions and fragment our support, we risk inadvertently contributing to the victory of opposing forces.

“The consequences of such an outcome would be dire; it may take another two decades for Esan to have a similar opportunity to produce a gubernatorial candidate; we cannot afford to squander this chance.

“Therefore, we urge all Esan people to unite behind Ighodalo, our chosen candidate.”

According to him, there is a need to pool resources, energies, and votes to ensure Ighodalo’s victory. “This is our moment, and we must seize it,” he said.

Fubara inaugurates investment promotion board today

The Rivers State governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, will today, inaugurate members of the newly constituted Rivers State Investment Promotion Agency Governing Board.

According to a memo by the Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Tammy Wenike Danagogo, yesterday, the ceremony is slated for 11 am, at the Executive Council Chambers of Government

House, Port Harcourt.

The memo directed the newly appointed Board Members to be seated at the venue by 10:30 am, alongside two guests each.

The members include Anga Fubara, SAN, serving as Chairman; Dr. Chamberlain Peterside, as Director-General; Goodlife Nmekini; Havey Ideozu and Baritor

Lenusikpugi Kpagih as members, while Mrs Tamunoibuemi Life-George would serve as Secretary

Fubara had on August 5, signed an Executive Order to give impetus to the establishment of the agency, disclosing that the agency would coordinate enquiries and business interests expressed by investors considering the state as a destination of first choice for investments.

SEC warn against infractions in capital market

By Anthony Otaru, Abuja

Amid serious concerns, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has vowed to deploy the full weight of the law against individuals and entities that engages in activities contrary to laid down regulations in the capital market.

SEC Director General, Dr. Emomotimi Agama who stated this in an interview in Abuja weekend, said the Commission remain committed to protect investors including those in the crypto space even as he enjoined participants in the market to play by the rules.

Agama said, "We are certainly going to commence enforcement actions on anyone who wants to operate in this market and does not have the intention of being regulated, this also applies to those in the crypto space. We are sending this signal to all those that want to play by the books that they are welcome to our space. But for those that do not want to play by the books, of course we definitely will not allow them operate within our space".

The DG disclosed that the Commission has decided to take the recent step of issuing Approval-in-Principle to two crypto exchanges because it observed that Nigerian youths were becoming increasingly interested in the digital space.

He explained that base on the development, it was important to provide regulation, clarity and indeed the protection of investors which is its primary responsibility.

bility.

"All this we seek to do without hindering innovation because part of our primary responsibility as the SEC is market development and we are aware that Mr. President is very interested in youths and the activities of youths. Clearly, the majority of persons involved in this space are the youths. Therefore, it is no gainsaying that providing a regulated space for these individuals is a primary responsibility of the SEC. So we had to provide a guide, clarity and the knowledge it requires to put all of these things

in place and that is why we have done what we did.

"It is important to understand that being the apex regulator of the capital market, we follow international guidelines and one of which is about disclosure. Full disclosure and making sure that they meet the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism reports, making sure that disclosures are made to investors and also education is important as well as a guided regulatory space" he stated



Executive Secretary, National Lottery Trust Fund (NLTF), Tosin Adeyanju (I); and Managing Director, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Ali M. Ali, during a visit by the Executive Secretary to NAN headquarters, in Abuja...recently

NGX: Domestic transactions reach N2.49trn in seven month

The Nigerian Exchange Limited recorded a substantial rise in domestic transactions for the first seven months of 2024, totaling N2.498trn.

This figure significantly outpaced the N598bn in foreign transactions over the same period.

The information was disclosed in the NGX's July 2024 Domestic and Foreign Portfolio Investment report.

An analysis of the report reveals that domestic transactions exceeded foreign investor activity by N1.9tn, representing 317.73 per cent increase.

This disparity is largely driven by low foreign investor sentiment, which has been dampened by economic uncertainty.

Foreign portfolio investors typically reduce their exposure in volatile markets, contributing to the subdued foreign participation.

As of July 31, 2024, the total value of

transactions on the NGX saw a significant 38.66 per cent increase, rising from N354.55bn (approximately \$241.06m) in June 2024 to N491.61bn (approximately \$305.02m) in July 2024.

However, a year-on-year comparison showed that the total transaction value in July 2024 represented a 30.07 per cent decline compared to the N702.98bn recorded in July 2023.

For July 2024, domestic investors accounted for approximately 76 per cent of total transaction value, once again outperforming foreign investors.

A further analysis of the total transactions executed between the current and prior month (June 2024) revealed that total domestic transactions increased by 59.38 per cent from N272.36bn in June 2024 to N434.09bn in July 2024.

Total foreign transactions, however decreased by 30.02 per cent from N82.19bn (about \$55.88m) to N57.52bn (about \$35.69m) between June 2024 and July 2024.

According to the report, retail investors outperformed institutional investors by 26 per cent.

A comparison of domestic transactions in July and prior month (June 2024) revealed that retail transactions increased significantly by 138.48 per cent from N114.02bn in June 2024 to N271.92bn in July 2024.

Also, the institutional composition of the domestic market increased by 2.42 per cent from N158.34bn in June 2024 to N162.17bn in July 2024.

Over a seventeen (17) year period, domestic transactions decreased by 10.94 per cent from N3.56tn in 2007 to N3.167tn in 2023; whilst foreign transactions also decreased by 33.28 per cent from N616bn to N411bn over the same period.

Total domestic transactions accounted for about 89 per cent of the total transactions carried out in 2023, whilst foreign transactions accounted for about 11 per cent of the total transactions in the same period. (Source: thewhistler.ng)

Stanbic IBTC reveals interim dividend worth N25.9bn to shareholders

Stanbic IBTC Holdings has announced an interim dividend of N2.00 per ordinary share of 50 kobo each, worth N25.9 billion, according to a corporate action statement released by the NGX.

This follows the bank's recent second-quarter financial results, where it reported a remarkable 80.4 per cent year-over-year growth in pre-tax profit, accompanied by a 37.1 per cent surge in total assets.

The total interim dividend, amounting to N25.9 billion, was disclosed in the corporate action release on September 4, 2024, signaling strong performance in the second quarter of the year.

The interim dividend pertains to the period ending June 30, 2024, and will be distributed to shareholders listed in the company's records as of September 18, 2024.

Stanbic IBTC also stated that dividends would be paid electronically on Monday, September 30, 2024, to registered shareholders who have completed their e-dividend registration.

The company's registrar, First Registrars & Investor Services Limited, will facilitate the electronic payment process.

In the corporate actions disclosure, the bank encouraged shareholders who have not completed their e-dividend registration to do so by visiting the registrar's website.

"On Monday, 30 September 2024, dividends will be paid electronically to shareholders whose names appear on the Register of Members as of the close of trading on Wednesday, 18 September 2024, and who have completed the e-dividend registration and mandated the Registrar to pay their dividends directly into their bank accounts."

"Shareholders who are yet to complete the e-dividend registration are advised to download the Registrar's E-Dividend Mandate Activation Form, which is also available on our Registrars website."

Members with dividend warrants and share certificates that have remained unclaimed or are yet to be presented for payment were advised to complete the e-dividend registration or contact the Registrar.

Stanbic IBTC's stock has shown a moderately strong buy trend, bouncing back from a dip of N49.50 in April. The stock has closed three consecutive months in positive territory, with a recent rise to N58.40 in early September.

The interim dividend announcement is expected to further boost positive sentiment, potentially driving the share price higher in the coming weeks.

Operational performance has been good in 2024, with the dividend and overall financial growth indicating strong fundamentals for the bank. (Source: nairametrics)

By Cross Udo, Abuja

Group Managing Director of UTM Floating Liquefied Natural Gas (FLNG) Limited, Dr. Julius Rone, has assured the commitment of the company to conduct its operations with integrity, sustainability and respect for the communities and environment in which it operates.

Recall that the Federal Government at the weekend officially granted UTM FLNG Limited "License to Construct" (LTC) Nigeria's first FLNG facility, opening a new economic gateway for Africa's largest crude oil producer, Nigeria, in the global gas market.

The issuance of the LTC to UTM FLNG by the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) came as a major fulfillment of the assurance by President Bola Tinubu in July 2023 to give all necessary support to the Nigerian firm to ensure the actualization of the landmark gas project.

Expressing gratitude to President Tinubu,

UTM FLNG assures to conduct operations with integrity, respect for communities

for his "unwavering support to the gas sector and the UTM FLNG project in particular, Dr. Rone stated that the project aligns with the President's promise to develop Nigerian gas resources as a source of sustainable energy and economic development for the country.

The UTM boss acknowledged the collaborative efforts of the NMDPRA and the dedication of all stakeholders involved in bringing the project to fruition.

He also thanked the GCEO of the Nigeria National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), Mallam Mele Kyari for supporting and believing in UTM Offshore to deliver on the project.

"This achievement is not just a License to Construct; it is a testament to the collab-

orative spirit and commitment to excellence shared by our teams. The guidance and thorough review process by NMDPRA have been instrumental in navigating the complexities of this endeavour, ensuring compliance with industry standards and fostering a productive partnership," he said.

According to the UTM FLNG boss, the journey toward this milestone began with concept studies in 2019, followed by the pre-FEED phase in June 2021 and the successful completion of the FEED phase in October 2023.

"UTM Offshore Limited, the main sponsor of the UTM FLNG Project, signed the Head of Terms with NNPC Limited in July 2023 and finalized the Shareholders Agreement with NNPC Ltd and the Delta State Government in December 2023.

"As UTM FLNG Limited moves forward into the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) phase, the company remains committed to conducting operations with integrity, sustainability and respect for the communities and environment in which it operates," he said.

The UTM FLNG Plant which is located offshore Akwa Ibom State in the oil-rich Niger Delta of the South-South region of Nigeria is expected to be completed and commissioned in 2028 with gas production projected to commence the following year.

President Tinubu had during an audience with the management of the company and its foreign partners at the State House, Abuja pledged to remove all impediments to the timely completion of the facility.

The UTM FLNG plant with a capacity of 2.8 million tons per annum (MTPA), will produce Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), and condensate from re-injected gas at the OML 104 Yoho Field.

This project represents a significant step forward in Nigeria's energy sector, enhancing the country's ability to harness its untapped 209 trillion cubic feet of natural gas for both export and domestic consumption. This is expected to leapfrog the national economy by ensuring availability of gas at lower cost, generate massive employment and multi-million Naira business opportunities for Nigerians and other nationals.

Speaking at the event at the NMDPRA headquarters in Abuja which was attended by key industry players, including the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas), Ekperikpe Ekpo, Chief Executive Officer of NMDPRA, Engr. Farouk Ahmed, said the LTC signing ceremony "marks a significant milestone and aligns with the gas expansion ambitions of the government" as contained in the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021.

Engr. Farouk Ahmed noted that the FLNG is a yield of President Tinubu's effort in the expansion of the Midstream Gas Sector adding that the Federal Government under Tinubu administration will continue to give all necessary support and conducive environment for the firm to operate.



L-R: Manager, Legal Services, Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Charles Nwachukwu; Executive Director, Hydrocarbon Processing Plants, Installations and Transportation Infrastructure, NMDPRA, Francis Ogaree; Chief Executive Officer of NMDPRA, Farouk Ahmed; Managing Director, UTM Floating Liquefied Natural Gas (FLNG), Julius Rone; Minister of Petroleum (Gas), Ekperikpe Ekpo; and the Executive Director, Health, Safety, Environment and Community, NMDPRA, Mustapha Lamorde, during the presentation of License To Construct (LTC) UTM Offshore for floating LNG to Dr Rone, at the NMDPRA headquarters, in Abuja...at the weekend

Digitalisation key to drive Africa's economic prosperity –Expert

The Managing Director, Remita Payment Services Ltd. (RPSL), Mr Deremi Atanda, has emphasised the important role of robust digital infrastructure in driving Africa's economic growth.

Atanda, who was quoted in a statement in Lagos yesterday, said this at a panel session of the Hyperscalers Convergence Africa Conference with the theme: "Innovating Towards Africa's Digital Future".

Atanda noted that Africa's development depends on innovative strategies that cater to the continent's unique challenges and opportunities.

"Africa's prosperity is fundamentally tied to the quality of its digital infrastructure and solving these problems within its context will yield multidimensional benefits," he said.

According to him, improved digital infrastructure will enhance the quality of life across the continent, connecting Africa in unprecedented ways.

Atanda noted that expanding digital infrastructure would significantly enhance skills development in Africa, connecting more people and creating vast opportunities, crucial for the continent's growth. Atanda stated that Africa's digital trans-

formation requires a unified vision and a comprehensive infrastructure agenda, driven by dedicated promoters and community involvement.

He added that integration of diverse skills and collaboration could accelerate trade, expand local economies, and enhance the quality of life across the continent.

Petrol price hike could lead to malnutrition, experts warn

Some experts have expressed concern that the hike in the pump price of petrol could lead to malnutrition in the country.

The experts, who said this yesterday in Abuja, explained that the situation could occur due to the increased cost of living for many households.

That the Nigeria National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) Retail Management on Sept. 3 approved the upward review of petrol pump price from N568 -N617 per litre to N897 per litre.

A development economist, Mr Mohammad Nazifi noted that low income earners would be worse hit by the new price, because of the likely increase in cost of transportation which would also affect food prices.

Nezifi said that the situation could lead

He said, "Continuous monitoring and evaluation will ensure sustainable progress, making Africa a significant player in the global digital landscape."

Atanda further explained the critical role that innovation plays in addressing Africa's challenges, noting the significant advancements in the digital payment space.

to health challenges such as malnutrition and increased food insecurity in the country.

"The rising cost of food and other essentials can lead to malnutrition or food insecurity, particularly among vulnerable populations. These factors can exacerbate health inequalities and strain public health systems," he said.

According to him, the increased price can contribute to inflationary pressure on the economy, causing the cost of production to rise.

"The increase in Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) prices contributes to overall inflationary pressure. Nigeria's inflation rate is already high at 34.19 per cent as of September 2024.

"As transportation and production costs rise due to higher fuel prices, these costs are

passed on to consumers, leading to higher prices across board.

"This can create a cycle of rising costs and wages, potentially leading to cost-push inflation, which further erodes purchasing power and can slow economic growth," he said.

An economic expert, Mr David Ambi, who also spoke to NAN, said that petroleum prices were a critical determinant of inflation, particularly in economies that heavily rely on petrol for transportation and production.

He maintained that the rising fuel costs typically lead to higher expenses throughout the supply chain, which in turn affects the prices of goods and services, including foodstuff.

"This phenomenon is known as 'cost-push inflation, higher transportation and production costs lead to more expensive goods, from food to consumer electronics," he said



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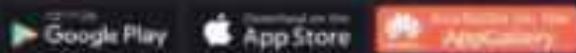



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Imperatives of non-oil export contributions to Nigeria's economic growth

By Anthony Otaru

Over time, Nigeria's non-oil exports have exhibited massive potential for economic growth and development, given the robust foreign exchange earnings they have generated for the national treasury in years past.

Although expectations from the sector's contributions remain daunting, the impact reveals a readiness for economic diversification, signaling hope for increased revenues if proper attention is given by all concerned.

For example, figures obtained from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) show that in real terms, the non-oil sector contributed 94.52 per cent to the country's Gross Domestic Products (GDP) in the third quarter of 2023, higher than the share recorded in the third quarter of 2022 and lower than the second quarter of 2023 record of 94.66 per cent.

Similarly, figures recently released by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council [NEPC] indicate that Nigeria generated \$2.7bn from the non-oil sector in the first half of 2024, an increase of 6.26 per cent compared to the \$2.539bn recorded in the same period of 2023.

Also, a release by the Pre-shipment Inspection Agents (PLAs) clearly showed that of 15 products exported in the period under review, cocoa beans were the most exported commodity, with 23.18 per cent in percentage value, followed by urea-fertiliser, which was 13.78 per cent, and sesame seeds, with 11.04 per cent of the total exported non-oil products.

The PLAs said a total of 211 products, ranging from agricultural commodities to extractive industries, were exported in the first half of 2024, indicating that Nigerian products are gradually diversifying from traditional raw agricultural exports to semi-processed manufacturing products.

On job creation, NBS said the non-oil export sector has positively impacted unemployment reduction. Direct employment within the non-oil export companies alone is estimated at 200,000. In contrast, indirect employment in the agricultural industry, which gains from the market linkages provided by the exporting companies, is estimated at over 10 million.

Speaking at a forum in Abuja, the NEPC Executive Director, Nonye Ayeni, attributed the increase in the value of exported products in the first half of 2024 to a strategic achievement of the council's "Operation Double Your Exports." These results came to fruition through partnerships, advocacy, capacity building, and export intervention programmes, among other things.

Ayeni said it is pertinent to note that so many exportable products and their derivatives are progressively gaining prominence as demands for them are also gradually gaining prominence.

"These include but are not limited to fresh vegetables, citrus peel, and Sorghum. While their contributions are still in the process of attaining significant levels, their regular inclusion on the export table suggests a growing presence in the export landscape; there are also a lot of potentials in services that need to be explored and harnessed, especially for logistics and ICT among others," she said.

The NEPC boss explained that of the top 20 exporting companies in Nigeria, Indoram-Elleme Fertilizer and Chemical Limited took the lead with \$198.8m, while Starlink Global and Idea Limited recorded the second-highest value of \$184.7m for agricultural



Non-oil exports from Nigeria

product exports.

"Thirty-two banks contributed to the non-oil export for the first half of 2024. Zenith Bank Plc led with 43.09 per cent of total exports for non-oil while First Bank Nigeria Plc and Fidelity Bank took the 2nd and 3rd positions with 6.56 percent and 6.38 percent, respectively," she said.

The NBS said that a critical look at the contributions of agricultural products to the economy also shows that Nigeria's cocoa exports rose by 304 percent in the period under review due to higher demand and naira depreciation.

It added, "A close look at elected agricultural export products speaks volumes as to why the non-oil exports contributions to the national economy cannot be overemphasized."

According to NBS, the country's cocoa exports, which accounted for 42.4 per cent of the N1.04trn agricultural exports for the period under review, surged to N438.7bn in the first half of 2024 from N108.6bn in the corresponding period of 2023.

It also said that Nigeria exported \$14.8m worth of raw cotton, making it the 42nd largest exporter of raw cotton in the world. At the same time, raw cotton was the 65th most exported product in Nigeria.

"The leading destination of raw cotton exports from Nigeria are India (\$5.1m), Pakistan (\$3.65m), Vietnam (\$3.6m), Bangladesh (\$1.77m), and China (\$135m).

Corroborating the NBS figures on agricultural contributions, the President of the Cocoa Farmers Association of Nigeria [CFAN], Adeola Adegoke, said, "Cocoa has become an alternative to oil exports, and the government needs to protect and promote its cultivation, especially given the current economic challenges facing the country."



Cocoa has become an alternative to oil exports, and the government needs to protect and promote its cultivation, especially in the current economic challenges facing the country

Adegoke explained that though the Federal government has inaugurated the National Cocoa Management Committee [NCOMC] to tackle some challenges facing cocoa production, poor post-harvest processing practices by farmers need special attention.

For his part, renowned economics professor Sheriffdeen Tella stated that contributions from agriculture, manufacturing, and other services in the non-oil sector remain the way to go in terms of policy initiatives and implementation rather than relying more on crude oil revenues.

Tella lamented over the poor handling of the sector by successive governments.

He stressed, "Every government has been giving the impression that it is promoting the non-oil sector to improve contributions to Gross Domestic Product [GDP] from the sector, but experiences have shown that it has little to do with the production aspect but all about revenues. That is why whenever revenue from oil improves, production in the non-oil sector is ignored."

Despite its lofty contributions to the national economy, the non-oil export sector, like any other, is faced with several challenges that, according to stakeholders, need to be resolved as soon as possible.

Adegoke said, "Nigeria's non-oil export sector lacks an articulated export policy and limited access to finance. Infrastructure deficits, regulatory bottlenecks, and insufficient laboratories, all of which have led to constant product rejects at international markets, are some of the numerous challenges facing the sector."

"Nigeria has not done well in global non-oil export trade as it ranked 52nd among nations; the country has not also done well domestically in terms of the share of the non-oil exports with the people," she added.

However, given the potential inherent in the sector, it has become necessary for stakeholders to take the bull by the horns by finding solutions to all the teething problems that have held the sector down for long so that the nation's dreams of economic diversification from oil revenues will be realized as quickly as possible and in the country's interest.

NNPC indebtedness to suppliers not good image for Nigeria –Economist

By **Emmanuella Anokam**

An Economist, Dr Chijioke Ekechukwu has said the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) indebtedness to fuel suppliers was not good for the country's credit rating globally.

According to him, the chaos the debt may cause could be devastating to Nigeria's already fragile economy.

Ekechukwu, the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Dignity Finance and Investment Ltd. disclosed this in an interview yesterday in Abuja.

The NNPC Ltd. had recently acknowledged that its \$6 billion debt to petrol suppliers was a financial strain that has placed considerable pressure on the company and poses a threat to fuel supply sustainability.

Reacting to the development, Ekechukwu said for the credibility and credit rating of Nigeria in the global arena, the NNPC Ltd. should as a matter of urgency and necessity find a means of paying their creditors.

He said the NNPC Ltd. should not be seen to be defaulting in its obligations to contractors.

"The chaos that may be caused by NNPC Ltd. continuously owing these suppliers may be very devastating to our already fragile economy and state of affairs. It makes a mockery of the so-called profit declared.

"However, it can still have and still make a profit. Such liabilities should be considered before declaring profit," he said.

The NNPC Ltd. Retail Management last week approved an upward review of the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) and adjusted it to N897 per litre as against N617 per litre.

Petroleum pricing, Dangote 'll not guarantee lower prices, –NNPCL

The Nigeria National Petroleum Company Ltd (NNPCL) at the weekend said there was no guarantee of lower prices as it set to begin lifting petrol from the Dangote refinery.

In a statement by its spokesman, Olu-femi Soneye, the company said the pricing of petroleum products from any refinery, including the Dangote Refinery Ltd, would be determined by global market forces.

Soneye, who is NNPCL's Chief Corporate Communications Officer, said there was no guarantee of lower prices associated with domestic refining of the products in the country. "The pricing of petroleum products from any refinery, including the Dangote Refinery Ltd. (DRL), is determined by global market forces," he said.

His response came amid rumours that the company was attempting to monopolise the offtake of all products from the Dangote Refinery Ltd.

"The attention of the NNPC Ltd has been drawn to a press release by the Muslim Rights Concern, MURIC, which claims that the Dangote Refinery Limited (DRL) is being undermined by actions of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd).

"Specifically, MURIC asserts that recent changes to the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) will prevent the Dangote Refinery from offering lower prices and that NNPC Ltd. has become the sole off-taker of all products from the refinery," he stated.

Meanwhile, the NNPCL said Premium Motor Spirit or petrol from the Dangote Refinery would begin to flood the market from September 15, 2024.

Soneye, who quoted the NNPCL's Executive Vice President of Downstream, NNPC Ltd, Adedapo Segun, said the downstream sector had been fully deregulated, and the company would no longer fix prices.



L-R: Executive Director, Distribution Systems, Storage & Retailing Infrastructure, Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Obugo Ukoha; Executive Director of Finance, NMDPRA, Abiodun Adeniji; Group Chief Projects Officer, Waltersmith Refining and Petrochemical Company (WRPC), Rowland Ogundu; Managing Director of WRPC, Muhammed Musa; Chief Executive Officer of NMDPRA, Farouk Ahmed; Executive Director, Hydrocarbon Processing Plants, Installations and Transportation Infrastructure, NMDPRA, Francis Ogaree; and the Executive Director, Health, Safety, Environment and Community, NMDPRA, Dr Mustapha Lamorde, during the presentation of License to Construct (LTC) to WRPC, at the NMDPRA's headquarters, in Abuja

Electricity consumers decry transfer to Band A, say supply inadequate

By **Constance Athekame**

Electricity consumers in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have decried the transfer of their electricity tariff to Band A despite not having 20 hours power supply.

Some of the consumers, who reside in Kubwa, Lugbe, and environs spoke in Abuja yesterday.

According to them, they are shocked to see themselves in Band A without any notice from the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC).

Band A customers are those who receive at least 20 hours of electricity supply daily and are expected to pay N209.5 Kilowatts (KWh) per hour.

The consumers also complained that they do not have an electricity supply for up to 10 hours a day.

A civil servant, Mrs Erica Ekama, who resides in Kubwa said she was shocked when she recharged her meter and was given 22.2 units for N5,000.

Ekama said the area she lived in Kubwa does not get a power supply for 10 hours a day adding that it was even more annoying that in the same Kubwa, some consumers were still buying at the old tariff rate.

She said: "Why should I be paying for

Band A services when I hardly get a power supply for 10 hours a day?

"Why are some consumers in the same Kubwa still buying at the old rate? I don't understand AEDC anymore. The company should look into this issue seriously because it is not right to be collecting money for services not rendered," she said.

Mr Mathew Ojei, who also resides at Kubwa, said he experienced the same thing as he recharged N2,000 but was given just 8.2 units, adding that he was not on Band A and if AEDC was putting consumers in that area on Band A, they should give them the services required. "I am not on Band A, why am I paying so much for electricity when I don't enjoy up to 20 hours a day power supply?" he asked.

Another resident, Mrs. Osas Iwinosa said she recharged ₦5,000 and was given 22.2 units, adding that when she saw the units and inquired from her neighbours in the same compound if they were now on Band A, they said they were still buying the old rate.

"My problem is that how can there be five flats in a compound and only one flat is buying Band A tariff and others are still on the old tariff?"

"I cannot understand the way the movement of consumers to Band A is taking place, so AEDC should please look into the issue and make amendments," she

said.

Also, a consumer residing at Lugbe, Mrs Omolara Taiwo complained of the same movement to Band A, saying she did not understand why some people are on Band C and others in the same compound are forced to Band A.

She said AEDC should look into the issue, adding that it was not fair on those paying higher tariffs than others and having the same number of hours of power supply.

Oando explains 100% divestment from downstream business

Oando Plc, an indigenous oil and gas company, has issued a statement to correct what it called misinformation about its hundred percent divestment from its downstream business.

According to the firm, the process of divestment began in June 2016 and was concluded in 2019, long before the coming of President Bola Tinubu's administration.

"Over recent weeks, various print and digital platforms have been used to circulate baseless and damaging claims about Oando PLC and its Group Chief Executive, Mr. Adewale Tinubu, specifically alleging that NNPC Limited has fraudulently transferred ownership of all petrol stations to our Group Chief Executive, Mr Adewale Tinubu. These statements are entirely without foundation and have been made with

reckless disregard for the truth.

The misinformation being spread has caused significant reputational harm to both the company and its leadership and their continued circulation is both legally and ethically unacceptable," it said.

It continued: "Basic research of publicly available information would confirm that on the 30th of June 2016, Oando partially divested of the majority interest in its downstream business, when it sold 60% of its shares in Oando Marketing Limited to a consortium consisting of International Trading Company, Vitol Group ("Vitol") and Helios Investment Partners (Helios), an International Private Equity firm. The resulting entity was called OVH Energy BV reflecting the names of the three partners (Oando, Vitol, and Helios)."

LP crisis: Abure-led NEC to meet, prepare response for Obi, Otti

There are strong indications that the Labour Party (LP), under the leadership of Julius Abure, is preparing a strong response to what it considers an affront by the party's Presidential Candidate in the 2023 election and Abia State Governor, Alex Otti.

Obi and Otti had convened a stakeholder 'meeting in Umuahia, the Abia State capital last week.

At the end of the expanded stakeholders' meeting, the two leaders announced the formation of an interim leadership for the party with former Finance Minister, Nandedi Usman as chairperson.

Already, the party secretary, Umar Farouk Ibrahim, is said to have sent out invitations to members of the National Executive Committee (NEC), loyal to Abure to attend a crucial meeting, in Abuja, on Monday.

Although the agenda of the Abuja NEC meeting is shrouded in secrecy, it was gathered that the meeting is likely to discuss steps to be taken to mitigate what some describe as "Umuahia rebellion" and possible disciplinary measures to be taken against "ring leaders."

National Publicly Secretary of the LP,



L-R: Executive Secretary, National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult Education, Prof. Simon Apama; Minister of State for Education, Dr Yusuf Sununu, and the UNESCO Country Representative in Nigeria, Abdourahamane Diallo, during a news conference to commemorate 2024 International Literacy Day, in Abuja

Obiora Ifoh, could not be reached for comments as he is said to have traveled out of the country.

However, a top ranking party source familiar with the development confirmed that plans for the NEC meeting "are in top gear."

The source said, "NEC will meet tomorrow to discuss the state of the nation and of course, the Umuahia insurrection.

"We are a political party built on the respect for the rule of law. All members no matter how highly placed must be guided in their conduct and utterances by the party's constitution."

Edo youths trapped in cycle of unemployment, despair – Akpata

The governorship candidate of the Labour Party in Edo, Olumide Akpata has bemoaned youths in the state being trapped in a cycle of 'unemployment and despair'.

Akpata made this known in a statement issued on Sunday where he claimed that Godwin Obaseki, governor of Edo, has failed to fulfil his campaign promises to the people of the state.

He said amid the challenges in the state, he sees hope, while he urged residents to vote for a future that truly reflects their greatness.

"The current administration celebrates our 33rd anniversary with pomp and pageantry, brandishing statistics of its supposed achievements. Yet, as I have traversed the length and breadth of our state – from Benin City to Auchu to Uromi – I have witnessed a stark disconnect between these lofty claims and the harsh realities on the ground," the statement reads.

"This political somersault has brought no relief to the common man. Instead, it has only deepened the wounds of misgovernance and unfulfilled promises.

"The past eight years have been a masterclass in the politics of deception – a government that changed parties but maintained the same disregard for the welfare of its citizens.

"Our youths, once brimming with hope

and vigour, now find themselves trapped in a cycle of unemployment and despair. "Our elderly, who should be enjoying the fruits of their labour, are struggling. Our farmers, the backbone of our economy, grapple with inadequate support and crumbling infrastructure.

"But even in these challenging times, I see reason for hope. In my journeys across the state, I have been inspired by the resilience of our people. I have met young people who, despite all odds, are creating innovative solutions to local problems.

"The stories of everyday courage and perseverance remind us of the true spirit of Edo State – a spirit that no amount of misgovernance can extinguish."

Akpata said the forthcoming governorship election in the state is an opportunity to embark on a journey of genuine transformation.

"It is this indomitable spirit that we must now channel into charting a new course for our state. In just 23 days, on September 21 2024, we stand at a critical crossroads," the LP governorship candidate said.

"In 23 days, we have the power to rewrite the story of our state to cast aside the failures of the past and vote for a future that truly reflects the greatness of our people. This election is more than a political contest.

"It is a battle for the soul of Edo state. It is a choice between continuing down the path of unfulfilled promises and embarking on a journey of genuine transformation.

"Together, we can transform Edo state into a land of opportunity where every citizen has the chance to reach their full potential. We can create a state where our children no longer dream of escaping abroad but aspire to build their futures right here at home.

"A state where innovation thrives, where small businesses flourish, and where our natural and human resources are leveraged to create sustainable wealth for all." Akpata said if elected, he would work with residents to build the state and give them "genuine reasons to celebrate in the years to come".

"A state where innovation thrives, where small businesses flourish, and where our natural and human resources are leveraged to create sustainable wealth for all."

Akpata said if elected, he would work with residents to build the state and give them "genuine reasons to celebrate in the years to come".

"The history of Edo state is replete with stories of triumph over adversity, and I have no doubt that we will rise to this occasion once again," Akpata noted.

The Edo governorship election is scheduled to be held on September 21.

NBM dissociates self from Black Axe

The Neo-Black Movement of Africa has unequivocally dissociated itself from an alleged criminal organization, Black Axe.

It will be recalled that the International Police (Interpol) labeled the Black Axe a criminal organization, whose members it said were linked to strings of international financial scams and other criminal activities.

NBM, at a world press conference in Lagos, Nigeria, last week Friday, explained that concerted effort in the clarification of its unique identity as a responsible body that touches and impacts positively on lives and communities all over Africa was being deliberately twisted by those it said benefit from so doing.

Ese Kakor (JP), the National President, and Efe Akpokiniovu, a member of the Body of Founders and the Board of Trustees of NBM of Africa, disclosed this in a statement issued at the end of the conference.

It disclosed that some expelled group members were behind intentions to malign and defame it, pointing out that NBM of Africa has a database.

They stated that the NBM of Africa, as a structured and disciplined entity, is working continually on the ideals for which it was established, under the principles of Pan-Africanism and the advancement of Black solidarity, social justice, and equality for all disadvantaged persons globally.

They added that the motto of the NBM of Africa is social justice, equality, and equity for all, describing it as unfortunate that anyone would malign and defame it by associating the former with Black Axe.

According to the group, "There is a conspiracy to malign members of NBM of Africa. We have tried to bring down that particular page on Wikipedia, but as much as we try, these malicious people, in an attempt to malign NBM members, have conspired and vowed to ensure that the page remains, all with the intent to malign the characters of NBM members. We totally dissociate ourselves from Black Axe and all efforts on social media to discredit NBM of Africa.

"NBM of Africa has nothing to do with the Black Axe Confraternity. NBM is not a criminal organization and should not be dragged into needless comparison with Black Axe and criminal activities committed by unscrupulous elements.

"Black Axe is well known to be a criminal organization. NBM of Africa has no link whatsoever with Black Axe, and NBM of Africa finds it maligning, disparaging, and defamatory for anyone or group to associate it with Black Axe Confraternity.

"Let us place it on record that the logo of NBM is being copied, imitated, and plagiarized by unscrupulous elements, all in a bid to tarnish the NBM of Africa.

"We smell a conspiracy to malign this organization. Activities on social media handles like Facebook, TikTok, Wikipedia, and Instagram operated by sanctioned/expelled members and non-members claiming to be members clearly show the conspiracy to defame, disparage, and tarnish the organization's character.

Kwankwaso affirms PDP 'dead,' declares for 2027 presidency

The 2023 presidential candidate of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Rabiu Kwankwaso, has declared the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) 'dead' in Nigeria.

Speaking at the weekend at the inauguration of a newly-renovated NNPP office in Katsina State, Kwankwaso explained that he and his supporters had left the PDP because it no longer aligned with their vision.

"I wish to remind you that PDP is dead because we left the party. Since they have gone out of the line, we decided to check out," Kwankwaso said.

The former governor of Kano State expressed confidence in his chances, stating that the NNPP is poised to take over the presidency and secure significant wins across the states.

Kwankwaso also advised Nigerians not to be swayed by financial incentives or gifts during future elections, urging them to make informed decisions.

The NNPP leader's comments come as the party strengthens its grassroots presence, focusing on education and other core reforms in preparation for future electoral contests.

Ihonybere, Kukah assure support for progressive institute

By David Lawani, Abuja

The Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, Prof. Julius Ihonybere, has assured the National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Abdullahi Ganduje, and The Progressive Institute, saying the Federal House of Representatives will be available for support anytime.

In a remark during the official unveiling of the Progressive Institute held at the Continental Hotel, Abuja, the Owan West/East member of the Lower Legislative Chamber noted that the idea of the institute had long been overdue for take off.

He said: "Be rest assured that the House of Representatives is available to work with you in the best way that will be beneficial to all.

"What we are doing here today is not just ground-breaking, but actually long overdue. But Lanre, whom I have known for decades, is somebody who has the energy, intellect, network, and the capability to put the right thing in the right place. "A progressive institute must define its membership and what it takes to be a progressive.

"What are those values, actions that you must avoid? You have to do the necessary things within and beyond.

"You have to be careful. In reactionary, action, post status quo, politicians, a chronic conversative, cannot cause a fight for progressive ideals.

"A progressive analysis, network, and progressive projections," he noted. Speaking further, the Bishop of Catholic

Diocese, Sokoto State, Rev. Fr. Mathew Hassan Kukah, stated that at the Kukah Centre, they have decided to raise the bar, noting that they see politics as a noble cause.

According to the Bishop: "Our interest is to see that politicians appreciate and value knowledge so that we can make governance a priority.

"We want our politics to be based on sound resilience and transparency.

"If you want to help our country, change the rules of the game. For politicians and political actors to know that there is dignity in winning and dignity in losing.

"We want politics to deliver judgement and justice, peace and harmony. This cannot be done in a vacuum. This can be

done by creating a level playing field.

"Nigerians and Nigeria have been consumed by mythism, voodooism, sorcery, occultism, necromancy, witchcraft etc.

"There was a growing fear that no sooner than our leaders were elected that marabouts, spiritualists, and all kinds of people hid behind them.

"Rather than being guided by science, major policy decisions in this country are taken through necromancy of illiterate people who are sitting somewhere and chewing kolanut.

"I am saying, therefore, this institution is geared towards its importance and we need to move from speculation to science.



L-R: Secretary to the Government of Federation (SGF), George Akume; APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Ganduje; Imo State Governor, Hope Uzodimma; Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari; and other dignitaries, during the inauguration of The Progressive Institute, in Abuja...at the weekend

APC should be voted out at all levels, says PDP chieftain

Chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Ekiti State, and philanthropist, Emmanuel Fayose, has advocated that All Progressives Congress (APC) should be voted out in the coming general elections at all levels.

Fayose, a former House of Representatives aspirant and founder of the Otunba Fayose Foundation said the present suffering and economic hardship in the country could not be overemphasised.

According to him, the masses are experiencing untold hardship as a result of the high cost of food and other essential items.

"As a result of the downturn economy, things are getting worse, no hope for citizens at all.

"I urge the youth to do the needful by voting the APC out of power in the coming elections, as all hopes are gone presently."

He also challenged President Bola Tinubu to lead by example by resigning his position as nothing is working in the country presently.

The party chieftain also congratulated the new Ekiti PDP caretaker chairman, Dare Adeleke, and his team, charging him to reposition the party and ensure

discipline among members.

"I wish Adeleke success, I also charge him to reposition the party and ensure discipline among members. No one should be above the party constitution. "Anti-party activities should be discouraged and offenders should also be sanctioned.

"The party has strong chances of taking over the state and at all levels of the country in the next general election as the electorate are tired of the incumbent APC and they need a change as nothing is working," Fayose concluded.

Edo guber: I'd like to be remembered like Oshiomhole —APC's Okpebholo

The governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) for the September 21, 2024 gubernatorial election in Edo State, Monday Okpebholo, has said that, if elected, he would work tirelessly to be remembered like the former governor of the state, Adams Oshiomhole.

Speaking as the APC Governorship Campaign Council brought the campaign to Etsako East and Etsako Central local government areas of the state, Okpebholo thanked the people of Agenebode, Okpilla, and Imiegba for their large turnout and pledged to pursue his five-point agenda.

The agenda, he said, includes health, security, education, road construction, and agriculture.

The governorship candidate told the people that he aspired to be like Oshiomhole, adding, "I will work so I can walk freely on the streets of Edo State after office."

In Ugbekpe Ekperi, Okpebholo assured the people of adequate security on election day, following an exchange of gunfire between the campaign team's security and some suspected thugs. He urged the people to remain calm.

"They will pay for these attacks on innocent voters. How can you shoot at unarmed civilians and expect them to vote for you?" he questioned.

At Anegbette, Okpebholo promised to provide a road linking Ugboha and Anegbette, ensuring the construction of the road between the two communities.

Former governor of the state, Oshiomhole, called on the people of Ward 8, Udaba, to go out and vote for the APC on September 21, saying, "I know that you are straightforward, and you have never disappointed. You are consistent."

He emphasised that Okpebholo is homegrown, unlike the candidate presented by the PDP, who knows nothing about the people but wants to govern them.

"During my tenure, I ensured that the cement factory in Okpilla employed community members.

"They didn't need to sign an MoU before agreeing to hire people from the surrounding communities."

"Obaseki and Asue Ighodalo have technically failed, and they have nothing good to offer the people of Edo State. "So, go and cast your vote for the APC on September 21."

At Fugar, the hometown of the former Chief of Staff to Goodluck Jonathan, Mike Ogiadomhe, Oshiomhole told voters that the Edo State Government House would be accessible to everyone once Okpebholo becomes governor on September 21.

China applauds Nigeria's leading role in ECOWAS sub-region

China has applauded Nigeria's leading role in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), especially the country's efforts toward enthroning stability in the sub-region.

This is contained in a joint statement between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu from the latter's just-concluded state visit to China.

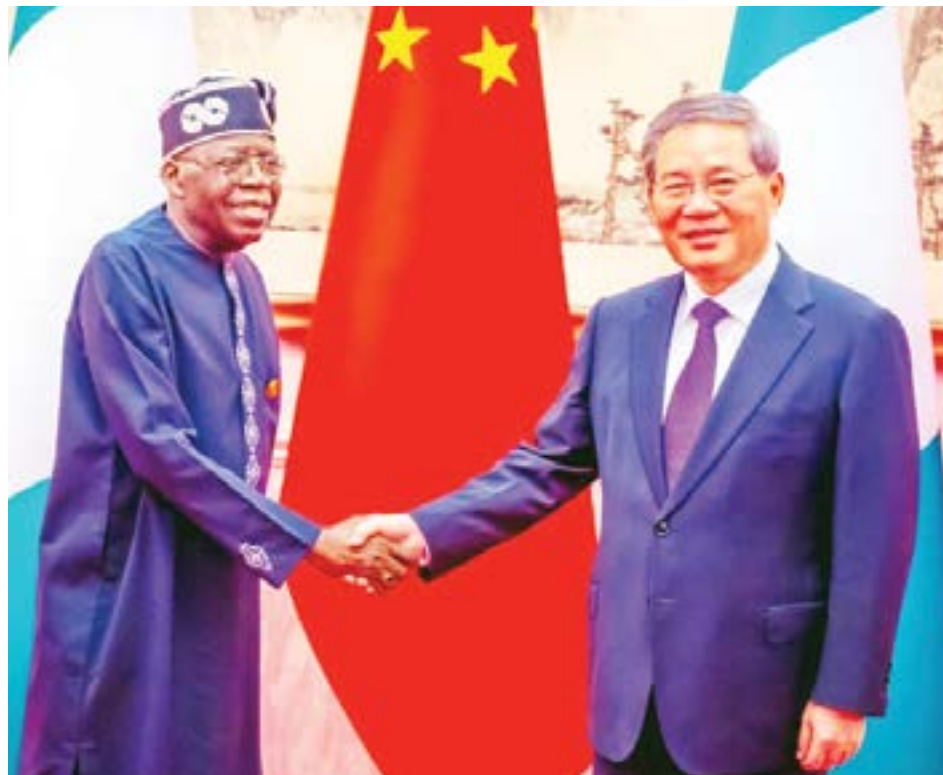
The statement indicated that the event was aimed at: "Establishing a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and Building a High-Level China-Nigeria Community with a Shared Future."

It affirmed that China and Nigeria would make joint efforts to fully support Nigeria's geographical and development advantage in West Africa.

The statement explained that such a diplomatic approach was to establish Africa's flagship projects on cross-national and cross-regional cooperation.

"China supports Nigeria to play a strong leading role in the region's affairs, including the fight against terrorism and managing differences.

"China appreciates the efforts of Nigeria in enhancing regional peace and solidarity and promoting regional integration, with a strong emphasis on respecting democracy, good governance, and the



President Bola Tinubu (l); and Chinese Premier, Li Qiang

rights of citizens.

"China supports the West African countries' efforts toward addressing their differences through friendly dialogue and consultations and to carry forward the regional integration.

"In this regard, China also urges other international actors to refrain from ac-

tions that could turn the region into a space for geopolitical contestation," the joint statement said.

It added that the two sides agreed to remain committed to safeguarding peace, security, and stability in the ECOWAS sub-region, including the Sahel and Gulf of Guinea.

Ethiopia warns against invasion amid regional tensions

Ethiopia's Prime Minister has warned that anyone planning on invading his country should "think 10 times" before doing so because, he said, any attack would be repelled.

Abiy Ahmed did not direct his comments at any particular nation, but they come at a time of rising tensions with neighbouring Somalia and Egypt.

Somalia has described a maritime pact that Mr Abiy's government signed with the self-declared republic of Somaliland in January as an act of "aggression" and has responded by forging closer military ties with Egypt.

Somaliland broke away from Somalia more than 30 years ago, but Mogadishu regards it as part of its territory.

Egypt has been involved in a long-running dispute of its own with Ethiopia over Addis Ababa's decision to build a large dam on a tributary of the River Nile.

It is reportedly planning to send troops to Somalia following the signing of a military pact between the two governments last month.

In a televised address marking Ethiopia's Sovereignty Day, Mr Abiy said the East African nation had no intention of creating conflict.

However, he said "those who are afar and nearby" should know that "we usually embarrass and repel those who dare try to

invade us".

"Anyone intending to invade Ethiopia should think not just once but 10 times because one great thing we Ethiopians know is [how] to defend ourselves," Mr Abiy added.

Somalia has been angered by landlocked Ethiopia's decision to reach a deal with Somaliland to give it access to a port.

Somaliland has also said it could lease a section of the coast to Ethiopia's navy, in exchange for Mr. Abiy's government becoming the first to recognise it as an independent state.

Tensions in the region escalated last month after two Egyptian C-130 military planes arrived in Somalia's capital to mark the strengthening of ties.

Egypt reportedly plans to send up to 5,000

soldiers to join a new-look African Union (AU) force in Somalia at the end of the year, with another 5,000 to be deployed separately.

An AU force has been in Somalia since 2007 to help the government fight al-Shabab, a jihadist group waging a brutal insurgency in the country.

Ethiopian troops are part of the force, but Somalia has announced that they will have to withdraw next year.

For its part, Egypt has accused Ethiopia of threatening its supply of water from the River Nile following the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (Gerd) in the northern Ethiopia highlands, from where 85% of the Nile's waters flow.

The Gerd is Africa's biggest hydroelectric dam project, and Ethiopia sees it as vital to meeting its energy needs. (BBC)



Ahmed

Algeria presidential election sees low turnout as Tebboune poised for victory

Less than half of Algeria's eligible voters cast a ballot in the country's presidential poll, preliminary figures from electoral authorities showed early Sunday, despite incumbent Abdelmadjid Tebboune's hopes for a high turnout.

Tebboune, 78, is heavily favored to secure a second term, seeing off moderate Islamist Abdelaali Hassani, 57, and socialist candidate Youcef Aouchiche, 41.

His main challenge was to increase the voter participation level in Saturday's vote after a historic abstention rate of over 60 percent in 2019, the year he became president.

More than 24 million Algerians were registered to vote this year, with about a third under the age of 40.

Electoral board ANIE announced early yesterday an "average turnout" rate of 48 percent but did not provide the total number of people who cast a ballot.

ANIE said the figure was "provisional", adding that it would give an official turnout rate later yesterday along with the election's results.

The announcement came three hours behind schedule after the election board said at the weekend that it was extending voting by one hour, expecting more voters to show up.

"Voters wondered what was the point of voting when all predictions are in favor of the president," said analyst Hasni Abidi, calling the candidates' bids "mediocre".

He said Tebboune "barely did four rallies", while his challengers "weren't up to the task".

"Not voting does not mean political opposition," he added. "Rather, it means people did not see themselves as part of the electoral game."

Both of Tebboune's challengers had called for a large turnout Saturday morning.

"Today we start building our future by voting for our project and leaving boycott and despair behind us," Aouchiche said on national television after voting.

Hassani told newsmen that he hoped "the Algerian people will vote in force" because "a high turnout gives greater credibility to these elections".

But Tebboune did not mention voter numbers, saying only that he hoped "Algeria will win in any case" after voting in Algiers.

He said whoever wins "will continue the project" of what he often calls the New Algeria - the country that emerged following mass pro-democracy protests.

Thousands in Israel turn out to demand hostage deal

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities for an agreement to release around 100 hostages held by Palestinian Islamist Hamas at the weekend.

"We must not sacrifice any more lives; we must not sacrifice them [the remaining hostages]," said a relative of a hostage who died last week, at the Tel Aviv rally.

Carmel Gat, another woman, and four men were shot at close range last week, according to Israel's Health Ministry, after Israeli soldiers found their bodies last Sunday in a tunnel in Gaza.

"The six would be here with us today if [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had said yes to a deal]," Gat's relative called out to the crowd, sorrow and anger in her voice.

On October 7 last year, militants from Hamas and other extremist Palestinian

organisations invaded southern Israel, killing more than 1,200 people and taking some 250 others as hostages into Gaza, an unprecedented massacre that

triggered the Gaza war. According to Israel, Hamas is still holding 101 people, although it is unclear how many of them are still alive.



Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in Tel Aviv

Indirect negotiations for their release, mediated by the US, Egypt, and Qatar, have been stalled for months.

Negotiators seek to bring about a deal that also ends the war and includes the withdrawal of the Israeli military from the Gaza Strip and the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

Critics accuse Netanyahu of obstructing the conclusion of an agreement by making excessive demands such as to permanently station the Israeli military at strategic points in the Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu heads a coalition with far-right parties who oppose any concessions to Hamas and threaten otherwise to withdraw which would lead to a collapse of the government alliance.

There were further demonstrations in Jerusalem, Haifa, Beersheba, Nahariya, and Caesarea, according to media reports.

BBC rejects claim it breached guidelines 1,500 times with Gaza coverage

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has strongly denied an accusation that it has breached its guidelines more than 1,500 times in its coverage of the Israel-Hamas war.

Claims of "worrying" anti-Israel bias had been made in a report led by lawyer Trevor Asserson.

The report alleged that some BBC correspondents had excused and downplayed Hamas' activities, while contributors used by the corporation were sympathetic to the group.

Mr. Asserson's team analysed coverage of the four-month aftermath after the October 7 massacre, which saw Hamas kill around 1,200 Israelis and take 250 hostages.

Researchers found that Israel was associated with the term "war crimes" four more times and "genocide" over 14 times more than Hamas in BBC coverage. The report concluded that there were 1,553 breaches of editorial guidelines.

"The findings reveal a deeply worrying pattern of bias and multiple breaches by the BBC of its own editorial guidelines on impartiality, fairness, and establishing the truth," the report said.

A spokesperson for the BBC said the corporation would "carefully consider" the research but denied claims of bias and questioned the researchers' methodology.

The research, which involved lawyers and data scientists, used artificial intelligence (AI) tools to look at nine million words of the broadcaster's output.

A BBC spokesman said: "We have serious questions about the methodology of this report, particularly its heavy reliance on AI to analyse impartiality, and its interpretation of the BBC's editorial guidelines."

"We don't think coverage can be assessed solely by counting particular words divorced from context."

The broadcaster also said it believed

its correspondents were achieving impartiality "despite the highly complex, challenging, and polarising nature of the conflict".

The spokesman added: "We strongly reject the claims that our reporters 'celebrated acts of terror' and we strongly reject the attack on individual members of BBC staff, all of whom are working to the same editorial guidelines."

Mr. Asserson said the BBC had "showed a clear partiality towards one side", adding that it was "even more pronounced in the BBC's Arabic content".

The full report is set to be published today with the Campaign for Media Standards. The bulk of the research was carried out pro bono by Mr. Asserson's law firm, Asserson Law Offices, which has offices in the UK, the US, and Israel.

The National Jewish Assembly and the Campaign Against Antisemitism said there should be an independent review of the broadcaster's coverage of the conflict.

Gideon Falter, chief executive of the Campaign Against Antisemitism, said "the BBC's ideological bias is now shamefully clear".

Recent research of BBC coverage by academics Mike Berry of Cardiff University and Greg Philo of Glasgow University suggested that Israeli arguments were given more prominence than Palestinian ones.

Their study of four weeks of BBC One coverage in the first four weeks since the October 7 massacre found that "murder" or words associated with murder were used 52 times by the broadcaster's journalists to refer to Israeli deaths, but such words were not used at all in relation to Palestinian deaths.



Venezuelan opposition leader flees to Spain for political asylum

Former Venezuelan opposition presidential candidate Edmundo Gonzalez has fled into exile after being granted asylum in Spain. The move is a major blow to the United States-backed opposition.

Venezuelan Vice-President Delcy Rodriguez announced his departure late over the weekend.

She said the government had decided to grant Mr Gonzalez safe passage out of the country, just days after ordering his arrest, to help restore Venezuela's "political peace and tranquillity."

Neither Mr Gonzalez nor opposition leader Maria Corina Machado have commented.

Spain's socialist government said the decision to abandon Venezuela was Mr Gonzalez's alone and he departed on a plane sent by the country's air force.

"Spain is committed to the political rights and physical integrity of all Venezuelans," Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said on Twitter.

Venezuelan Attorney General Tarek William Saab sought Mr Gonzalez's arrest after he failed to appear three times in connection with a criminal investigation into what the government considers an act of electoral sabotage.

Mr. Saab told reporters the voting records the opposition shared online were forged and an attempt to undermine the national electoral council.



File photo: Protesters hold placards and wave Israeli flags demonstrating outside the BBC headquarters, in London

Chris Morgan, Naomi Classik electrify audience at CBCC's 17th Anniversary Convention, 'Dominion'



By Quadri Akanbi

Covenant Believers Christian Centre (CBCC) recently celebrated its 17th anniversary in grand style with a seven-day convention-themed 'Dominion'.

The event, which was held from September 1st to 8th, featured dynamic performances, soul-stirring music, and life-changing sermons.

Headlining the convention were renowned gospel artists Naomi Classik and Chris Morgan, who delivered breathtaking performances that left the congregation in awe.

Naomi Classik, known for her powerful vocals, took the congregation on a spiritual journey with her melodious voice on September 4th and 5th.

Her messages were a testament to her skill and dedication to spreading the message of God's love.

Chris Morgan, a veteran gospel musician and minister, preached the gospel with his melodious voice for three consecutive days, from September 4th to the grand finale on September 7th.

His performances were a testament to his skill and dedication to spreading the message of God's love.

The CBCC Levites, the church's music team, also delivered a dynamic performance that left the congregation in awe. Their energetic and spirit-filled ministry was a testament to their dedication and passion for worship.

Naomi Classik is a Nigerian gospel singer and songwriter who has quickly become a household name in the gospel music industry.

With her unique voice and style, she has captured the hearts of many, ministering to audiences across the globe. Her music is a blend of contemporary and traditional gospel, with a focus on spreading the message of hope and redemption.

Chris Morgan is a Nigerian gospel musician, singer, and songwriter who has been active in the music industry for over two decades.

He is known for his powerful vocals and inspiring lyrics, which have made him a beloved figure in the gospel music scene.

With numerous awards and accolades to his name, Chris Morgan continues to be a driving force in the gospel music industry, using his platform to spread the message of God's love and redemption.

The 'Dominion' convention was indeed a memorable event that will be etched in the minds of attendees for a long time.

With its powerful performances, inspiring sermons, and spirit-filled atmosphere, it was a testament to the power of faith and the impact of gospel music on our lives.

The convention was a celebration of CBCC's 17th anniversary and a testament to the church's commitment to spreading the gospel and serving the

community.

The event was well-attended by members of the church and gospel music enthusiasts from across the city.

The atmosphere was electric, with attendees eagerly anticipating each performance and sermon.

The convention was a resounding success, with many testifying to the life-changing impact of the messages and performances.

In addition to the dynamic performances and sermons, the convention also featured a series of workshops and seminars on topics such as worship, evangelism, and discipleship.

These sessions were led by experienced facilitators and provided attendees with practical tools and insights to enhance their spiritual growth and ministry.

The grand finale of the convention was a spectacular event that featured a combined choir performance, a special offering, and a closing sermon by the senior pastor of CBCC.

The event was a fitting conclusion to an unforgettable week of spiritual refreshment, renewal, and celebration.

In conclusion, the 'Dominion' convention was a resounding success that showcased the power of gospel music and the impact of faith on our lives.

It was a testament to the commitment of CBCC to spreading the gospel and serving the community, and a celebration of the church's 17th anniversary.

Yoruba movie, 'Ipele', debuts Sept 12

By Femi Ogunshola

A Yoruba movie, "Ipele" (Veil), directed by Nollywood actress, Foluke Daramola, is set to make its debut on September 12.

Mr Peter Ayeni, the Executive Producer of Ipele, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Sunday in Abuja that the movie would feature on "Apatata", one of the most watched Yoruba movie YouTube channels.

According to him, Ipele, a gripping thriller, promises to captivate audiences with its intense storyline and stellar performances from a star-studded cast.

"Ipele, which was shot in Lagos, Nigeria, tells the compelling story of a reckless young man who, after committing a grievous crime by raping a young girl, later transforms his life by becoming a Pastor.

"However, as he attempts to move forward, the ghosts of his past resurfaces, threatening to confuse his new-found path and challenge his journey toward redemption.

"The past that had resurfaced, left him shattered, reducing him to a shadow of himself with everyone casting aspersions on his new-found life."

Ayeni added that with its intricate web of deceit, friendship and redemption, Ipele explored deep moral questions about guilt, forgiveness and the inescapable consequences of one's actions.

Ayeni said that the audiences should expect a thought-provoking narrative brought to life by powerful performances and unrivalled interpretation of scripts to drive home points.

"The movie features a strong presence of Nollywood veterans including Yemi Solade, who plays Pastor Adebiyi, Ayo Adesanya, Ladi Folarin and Rotimi Salami, among other renowned actors, who bring depth and emotion to this intense story," he said.

He said that Ipele is a must-watch for lovers of Yoruba cinema with its debut performance expected to draw significant attention and teach lessons.

According to him, the drama's tension-filled plot and top-tier performances makes it one of the most anticipated releases of the year.

Ayeni said that the storyline is quite compelling while urging Nigerians to take a cue from the movie in a bid to ensure that societal norms and values are upheld.

He urged lovers of Yoruba movies to ensure that they did not only see the movie, but learn the necessary lessons that come with it and imbibe the culture of sanity.



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By Seyi Odewale

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) yesterday said it has intercepted a consignment of cocaine and pharmaceutical opioids at three courier firms in Lagos. It also destroyed over 100,000 Kilogrammes of Cannabis Sativa, otherwise known as Indian Hemp, in Ekiti forest.

Its spokesperson, Femi Babafemi, who disclosed this in a statement yesterday in Abuja, said the drugs were concealed in ladies' sanitary pads and hair treatment cream containers.

He added that the consignments were heading to the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Cyprus respectively.

In one of the logistics companies, Babafemi said, not less than 30 parcels of cocaine weighing 1.1 kilogrammes were concealed in hair cream containers.

"They were recovered by NDLEA officers of the Directorate of Operations and General Investigation, (DOGI), during an examination of cargoes going to Ireland on Tuesday, September 3.

"Another consignment of 24 parcels of cocaine weighing 862 grams also hidden in hair cream containers meant for delivery in the United Kingdom was equally intercepted at the same company on Friday, September 5.

In the same vein, he said a total of 525 pills of tramadol 225mg and ecstasy (MDMA) concealed in ladies' sanitary pads going to Cyprus were seized at another courier firm in Lagos by the drug law operatives on Tuesday, September 3.

Meanwhile, a shipment of 200 ampoules of promethazine injection and pentazocine injection hidden in food items and herbs heading to London, UK, was also seized by operatives on Wednesday, September 4.

"Operatives equally intercepted another consignment of tramadol 225mg buried in granulated melon that came from Cameroon and was going to South Africa on Friday 6th September," he said.

In another development, no fewer than 550,000 pills of tramadol were also intercepted at the Port Harcourt International Airport, (PHIA) Port Harcourt on Monday,

NDLEA intercepts UK, Europe-bound cocaine, opioids in Lagos

September 2.

According to Babafemi, the tramadol pills were seized during a joint examination of a cargo that came from Delhi, India, with men of the Nigerian Customs Service. "A suspect was already arrested in connection with the seizure," he said.

The Agency also said it destroyed over 100,000kg of cannabis spread across 51 hectares of farmland in Ekiti State.

Babafemi said the NDLEA operatives, supported by men of the Nigerian Army on September 3 and September 4 stormed three camps inside the Ise-Ekiti forest reserve, in the Ise/Orun Local Government Area of the state.

The affected areas, he said, included Aba Saalaja with 23 hectares; Aba Paanu with 12 hectares, and Aba Arogunmatidi with 16 hectares, all within the Ise-Ekiti forest reserve, adding that two suspects were arrested on the Toro-Jos Road, Kaduna, with 305kg cannabis (Indian hemp) concealed in a false compartment of a J5 boxer bus marked YLA 682 XM.

Another suspect, Babafemi said, was ar-

rested in possession of 18 kilogrammes of the same substance at Makarfi town. "Two other suspects others: were arrested on the Zaria- Kaduna highway in possession of 1300 tablets of Tramadol, all the same day," he said.

Also, in Jigawa State, Babafemi said a 30-year-old man was nabbed with 32.6kg of cannabis (Indian hemp) on September 5 at Koran Shehu, adding that operatives in Kogi on September 4 intercepted 77,300 pills of Tramadol, Diazepam and Exol-5 with 1,230 bottles of Codeine in a commercial bus driven by Attai Okolo, 68, along Aloma - Ejule road, Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State.

"Another was nabbed on the Okene-Lokoja-Abuja expressway on Tuesday, September 3, with 42.400kg cannabis (Indian hemp) coming from Lagos en route Kano.

"NDLEA operatives in Borno arrested a 40-year-old man at Ramat area of Maiduguri on Thursday, Sept. 5 with 13,100 pills of Tramadol.

"Also, operatives in Kano on Sept. 4 nabbed a man with 25.8kg cannabis and 3,000 pills of Diazepam along Kano - Dau-

ra Road," he said.

The NDLEA spokesman said that no fewer than 87,790 pills of Tramadol were recovered from Musa Adamu, 30 when he was arrested in Zing, Taraba State.

Babafemi said a raid on the home of a drug kingpin, Mayowa Abayomi Awe (a.k.a Bishop) in Ilesa, Osun state on September 4 led to the seizure of 43grammes of crack cocaine, 23grams of Methamphetamine, 17.126kg cannabis and a locally made pistol.

Man, 55, drowns in Hadejia River

A 55-year-old man, Sulain Potiskum, drowned after swimming in a river in Hadejia Local Government Area of Jigawa State.

The spokesperson, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Jigawa Command, Mr Badaruddeen Tijjani, who confirmed the incident in a statement yesterday in Dutse, said the incident occurred over the weekend at about 9:45 a.m. when the deceased went swimming in the river.

"One Sulaiman Potiskum aged 55, lost his life in a river located at Gada, Bakin Kogi area of Hadejia. The tragic incident occurred when the deceased attempted to take his bath along the riverbank, but was overwhelmed by the wave," he said.

Tijjani said the Corps' search team and local divers rescued the man, adding that he was later confirmed dead by medical personnel at the Hadejia General Hospital, adding that the remains of the deceased had since been handed over to his family for burial.

The spokesperson advised residents of the state to desist from swimming or fishing in rivers as they outflow due to the rising volume of water occasioned by heavy rainfall.



The consignment...yesterday

NSCDC nabs sexagenarian for vandalising high-tension wire

By Abbas Bamalli

The Katsina State Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has arrested a 60-year-old man for allegedly vandalising high-tension electric wire.

The Command's spokesman, Buhari Hamisu, a Deputy Superintendent of Corps (DSP), disclosed this to newsmen while parading the suspect in Katsina.

According to him, the suspect, Hassan Abdullahi, was arrested by the NSCDC personnel of the Funtua Division.

He said: "The special Anti-vandal patrol team attached to Funtua division, successfully apprehended the suspect, of

Lasanawa village in Maska, Funtua Local Government Areas.

"The suspect was later handed to the state command headquarters for further investigation.

"Abubakar is a suspected vandal of high-tension electric cables belonging to the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) and theft.

"During the investigation, the suspect confessed to committing the crimes and revealed that on August 28, 2024, he went to the outskirts of the village, climbed high-tension electric poles, and vandalised the wires.

"He also disclosed that he removed different items, packed some of the items

in bags, and headed to scrap dealers at Funtua town," he said.

Hamisu said that further investigation revealed that the suspect met two scrap dealers in Funtua town who refused to buy the items from him.

He said the exhibits recovered from the suspect included an angle iron, channel iron, pension clamp, strap, isolator handle, and scattered disc insulator.

Hamisu said other exhibits were adaptor sockets, bolt and nuts, J-huck, spindles, electric aluminium conductors, spanners, pinches, and iron rods.

He further said the suspect would be charged to a competent court for prosecution after completing the investigation.

The NSCDC spokesman called on the good people of the state to be law-abiding and obey rules and regulations, adding that the command would not relent in its commitment to uncovering all the activities of vandals, economic saboteurs, and other criminals in the state.

Hamisu said the corps in the state also thanked the public for the continuous cooperation and urged for more support for the security agencies by providing actionable and timely intelligence that would help uncover the activities of miscreants in the state.

Hamisu said the command remained dedicated to ensuring a peaceful atmosphere for the good people of the state and Nigeria as a whole.

In death, Dimgba Igwe remains my co-author forever –Awoyinfra

By Babs Oyetoro

The pioneer Managing Director of The Sun Newspapers, Mr Mike Awoyinfra, has revealed that all his works after the demise of his bosom friend, Dimgba Igwe, will bear the latter's name as co-author.

Awoyinfra made this disclosure during the 10th Anniversary Lecture organised by the former staff of The Sun Newspaper and Concord media allies of the duo iconic legends in the media profession.

"This is a promise I have made, and nothing will alter it. The book I authored after Dimgba passed away bore his name as co-author. All other books I am working on will bear his name as co-author, except if such work is my biography or personal book, then his name will not be included," he disclosed.

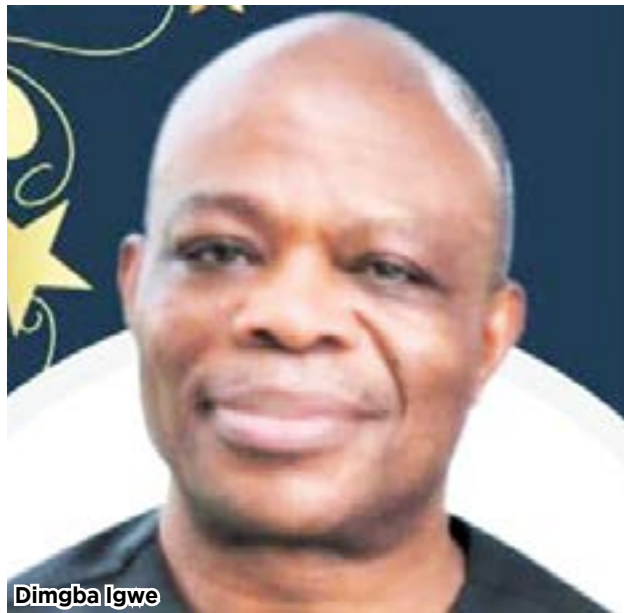
The former defunct weekend Concord editor disclosed that life had remained unchanged since Dimgba's passing.

He summarised his lamentation in a prepared paper he dubbed a "letter to Dimgba, which he read to the audience at the event held at the Colossus Hotel in Ikeja on Saturday.

"Oh, life without Dimgba Igwe is solitude, full of pains and unending grief.."

"How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph," as he alluded to the Book of II Samuel chapter 1:19-21 to convey the message of the painful loss of his dear friend over these past 10 years.

Awoyinfra, who miraculously survived a life-threatening sickness, said God, in His infinite mercies, preserved his life, noting that he would have gone to meet his



Dimgba Igwe

friend in the great beyond.

The matriarch of the Igwe family, Mrs Obioma Dimgba, was full of thanks to the Almighty God, whom she claimed had been the family's pillar since her beloved husband's death.

She also commended Awoyinfra as a dependable ally who never abandoned her family, even after her husband's death.

One of the closest associates of the late Dimgba Igwe, Femi Adesina, the pioneer editor of The Sun Newspapers, referred to Igwe as a boss and a friend.

According to him, Dimgba lived a careful, clean life and died at 58. He lived his life in tabloid journalism.

Areemo Olusegun Osoba, the doyen of Nigerian me-

dia, who Mr. Lanre Idowu represented, noted that it would be difficult to talk about Dimgba in the past, adding that the late media icon stood for responsible journalism.

Another legend in the media profession, President of Tell, Nosa Igiebor, described the late Dimgba as a fine journalist with an unquenchable passion for the profession.

"He was humble to a fault. One of the books he co-authored with Mike Awoyinfra- Captains of Industries, remains one of the best books in our contemporary time," he noted.

The President of the Nigeria Guild of Editors, Eze Anaba, said Dimgba was committed to serving humanity through responsible journalism. He lived an impactful life, mentored superstars, and died as a professional crusader. He will greatly be remembered for his service to humanity. "

The event's climax was when Mr Muiyiwa Adetiba delivered the lecture paper "Tabloid Journalism: Yesterday, Today, and the Future."

The former defunct Prime People publisher hilariously dispelled the general misconception about tabloid journalism, which many referred to as yellow or gutter journalism.

He was bold to tell his audience that tabloid journalism is responsible journalism embellished with facts but reported in a lucid manner or form.

He called tabloid journalism "liberal journalism built around people, expressed through vivid news presentation.

"This is what Dimgba Igwe stood for as a professional journalist," he added.

'Nigeria's political class is responsible for our misery'

Continued from page 9

it? Are we between the hard places of the rock, the sea, and the devil? Where are we exactly?

We are in all of those. We made some very terrible mistakes. We've got to work and walk our way back. But how do we act when public officials are seen as plugging? We've got to show dramatically that the public sector and the leadership have erred in their flagrant abuse of the public treasury. Then people will say, all these people have shared these loads. Again, I will give examples of President Obasanjo coming down to Peugeot 504. Oil prices dropped in 1976 or thereabout. We cut our coats according to our clothes. Public officials live in homes paid for by the public and power 24/7 and fly new jets. We need to say no to this. We have to come together as a society and say our country has done things with the wrong policies. We have to rebuild. This is how we rebuild- this is how we can sacrifice. You go out there, get 1,000 new buses of different qualities, put them out there, and park your car. I have seen Nigeria go through phases. When I was growing up, there was a time when Lagos was so congested that people were not allowed to drive into Lagos Island. You parked your car at Orile-Iganmu or somewhere and entered the Island as big man. These are the kinds of things we need to do now. Collective shielding- coming from the top. First, it must be the top. Shed all



Utomi

the load. No more motorcade. Then, people would take you seriously, and we would know the country is trying to solve a problem and our mistakes collectively. This can be done.

How can Nigeria get out of this situation?

Nigeria's political class is responsible for Nigeria's misery. The country's political class has failed the nation. Look at the choices

that we have repeatedly made. Look at the kind of National Assembly that we have. Look at the behaviours of the executive class. The political class needs to come out publicly and make a public confession before the country. In South-East Asia, people would come out and do a humiliating bow for what the public had suffered due to the irresponsibility of the political class in Nigeria.

Is this a joke?

It is not. Please don't joke about it because it is also a solution and because people feel disconnected from the political class. That is a major solution. Once people start feeling connected, we solve the problems.

If you were in President Tinubu's shoes, how would you handle the issues, and what would you do now?

The first thing I would do is to identify the essential things that Nigerians need fuel for, and then I would subsidise those things.

Does that mean you are going to bring back the subsidy?

I don't care what you call it. There will be a subsidy. I just told you that the Americans have an agriculture subsidy. It is a matter of where you direct it to. Is it something that

we produce that will help us rebuild? If it is something that will help us to produce and rebuild, then I would subsidize. If it made us consume frivolously, I would not do that, but I will give an example. There was a time when an American president used to run around in a Volkswagen Beetle. That was a show of commitment. Let our politicians not think that, oh, befitting. Befitting what? Public resources are limited and must be treated as something people have in short supply. They must be managed primarily and promptly by the political class.

If you bring back subsidy, will it reduce inflation or rewind prices of commodities that are skyrocketing?

There are all kinds of things that you will do that are going to reduce price pressures. Produce food. If you produce plenty of food, the price pressures will come down. Inflation will keep rising if we do not do enough to stimulate food production. In January, I gave this advice and said look, legumes take three months. If we are serious and want to prevent inflation, let us condone off some regions of the country, put soldiers there permanently, and get farmers to go in, and within three months, there will be plenty of food all over the place and prices will drop. But had anybody done that? We need seriousness. I am not just talking. That is what the problem is.

An x-ray of Tinubu's romance with China



By Rekpene Bassey

Ultimately, President Tinubu's diplomatic strategy must be anchored in a comprehensive vision for Nigeria's future that integrates economic growth, social development, and national security within a robust framework of international cooperation. This balanced approach will enable Nigeria to harness the opportunities presented by its relationships with China and the United States, ensuring the nation's prosperous and stable future

The burgeoning relationship between Nigeria and China under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu deserves significant interest and debate. This feature x-rays the historical context and current dynamics shaping this relationship. The essay will expound on the rationale behind Tinubu's strategic shift towards China, the underlying currents influencing this move, and its short- and long-term implications for Nigeria, particularly its relations with the United States.

It is essential to revisit the historical context of Nigeria-China relations to understand Tinubu's current diplomatic inclinations.

The late General Sani Abacha, known for his fer-

vent commitment to Nigeria's national security, exemplified this during the Nigerian-Cameroonian crisis over the Bakassi Peninsula. Abacha's strategic military alliance with China was a calculated move to counter France's support for Cameroon and secure Nigeria's territorial integrity. Subsequent political developments and international interventions rendered this military pact inactive.

Since then, China has maintained a steadfast and pragmatic approach to its relations with Nigeria, focusing on mutual economic benefits and strategic interests. Unlike the United States, which often emphasizes human rights and anti-corruption measures, China adopts a more hands-off approach to internal political matters, making it an attractive partner for Nigeria's political elite.

President Tinubu's recent engagement with China at the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) signifies a renewed and intensified diplomatic effort to strengthen bilateral ties. The rationale behind this move is multifaceted.

Economically, China offers substantial investments in infrastructure, technology, and resource exploitation, aligning with Nigeria's development goals. Politically, China's non-interference policy provides a comfortable space for Nigeria to navigate its internal affairs without external pressures.

Several underlying currents are shaping this evolving relationship. Firstly, China's strategic interest in Nigeria's vast mineral resources, including oil, natural gas, and rare earth minerals, drives its engagement. The Chinese government's collaboration with powerful local stakeholders facilitates access to these resources, often bypassing stringent regulatory frameworks.

Secondly, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aligns with Nigeria's infrastructure development ambitions. Chinese investments in roads, railways, ports, and telecommunications are transforming Nigeria's economic landscape, fostering growth and connectivity. This synergy enhances Nigeria's strategic importance in China's broader geopolitical agenda.

Moreover, Nigeria's domestic political landscape plays a crucial role. Tinubu's administration seeks to diversify its foreign partnerships to reduce dependency on Western nations, particularly the United States. By strengthening ties with China, Nigeria aims to leverage alternative sources of economic and military support, thereby enhancing its negotiating power on the global stage.

Tinubu's pivot towards China will likely yield significant economic benefits in the short term. Increased Chinese investments in critical sectors will stimulate job creation, infrastructural development, and technological advancement.

The success of FOCAC and broader partnership engagements, as highlighted by the former presidential spokesperson, Ajuri Ngelale, underscores the positive trajectory of Nigeria-China relations.

However, this shift also carries potential risks. China's focus on resource extraction could exacerbate environmental degradation and socio-economic disparities. Moreover, the influx of Chinese labor and goods might undermine local industries, leading to economic dependencies that could be detrimental in the long run.

The long-term implications of Tinubu's romance

with China are profound and complex. On the one hand, sustained Chinese investments could transform Nigeria into a regional economic powerhouse, enhancing its global standing and influence. Developing critical infrastructure and technological capabilities will bolster Nigeria's economic resilience and competitiveness.

On the other hand, deepening ties with China may strain Nigeria's relationship with the United States. The US has historically been a significant ally, providing military aid, economic assistance, and diplomatic support. A perceived shift towards China could lead to a realignment of US foreign policy, potentially reducing American support for Nigeria.

Furthermore, while China's non-interference policy might be appealing in the short term, it might limit Nigeria's capacity to address critical governance issues. Without pressure to tackle corruption and human rights violations, Nigeria could entrench systemic challenges, undermining long-term stability and development.

Nigeria's potential overreliance on Chinese investment and technology could raise concerns about debt sustainability. Instances of debt distress in other countries that have participated in China's BRI highlight the risks of accumulating substantial debt under less transparent terms.

Additionally, China's strategic objectives in Nigeria may sometimes align with Nigeria's long-term national interests. China's focus on resource extraction and infrastructure development might prioritize Chinese commercial interests over Nigeria's broader developmental goals, leading to an unbalanced relationship.

In light of these factors, Nigeria must balance its burgeoning relationship with China by maintaining strong ties with other global powers, especially the United States. The U.S. offers a complementary partnership emphasizing governance, human rights, and institutional development, which is crucial for sustainable growth and stability.

President Tinubu's strategic engagement with China reflects a pragmatic approach to Nigeria's economic and geopolitical ambitions. While the immediate benefits of this relationship are evident, it is essential to navigate the underlying currents and potential risks carefully. Balancing relations with China and the United States will be crucial for Nigeria's long-term prosperity and global standing.

By leveraging the strengths of both partnerships, Nigeria can chart a path towards sustainable development, security, and sovereignty. Ensuring that economic growth is inclusive and environmentally sustainable while strengthening democratic institutions and governance will be key to maximizing the benefits of these international relationships.

Ultimately, President Tinubu's diplomatic strategy must be anchored in a comprehensive vision for Nigeria's future that integrates economic growth, social development, and national security within a robust framework of international cooperation. This balanced approach will enable Nigeria to harness the opportunities presented by its relationships with China and the United States, ensuring the nation's prosperous and stable future.

***Rekpene Bassey is the President of the African Council on Narcotics (ACON) and an expert in Security and Drug Prevention.**

Ngelale and occasional obstacles of occupation



By Bala Ibrahim

I don't envy whoever is coming next, because the job does not have a bed of roses. It always carries the keg of political problems, that have adverse consequences on the title holder

In every profession, there is the permanent probability of work incident. It is a dangerous event that can occur in the course of an employee's activity, or time of service. It carries different names, depending on the nature of the work and the conditions in which the work activity is carried

out. Some call it professional risk, while others refer to it as job threat. However, the generally adopted title for such professional problems or obstacles that occur in the course of duty is, occupational hazard. These hazards are classified into categories that vary according to the nature of the job. It can be biological. It can be chemical. And sometimes, it is a physical hazard. No matter the nature or type, it always comes with a consequence, the consequence of setback.

Up until yesterday, Saturday, 07/09/2024, Ajuri Ngelale was the Special Adviser to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on Media and Publicity. But, effective from that yesterday, he announced that he was proceeding on "an indefinite leave of absence from office". I put the indefinite leave of absence from office in inverted commas on purpose, because I believe, not too far from now, the story would expatiate further. Something sensitive may follow. And the incident may dovetail to the platform of occupational hazard, encountered by the person that has resigned.

Although Ajuri had solicited the cooperation of everyone, to accord him the respect of privacy, in order to permit him pay attention to pressing family health challenge, by virtue of the position he held, and the volume or magnitude of attention it carries, such privacy may not necessarily come, particularly from his colleagues in the media, one of whom is, yours truly. Being a journalist, and having served at the Presidency, the peak of political interest, it would be extremely naive of him, to forget the action of paparazzi, whose assignment, mostly freelance, is to aggressively pursue celebrities for the purpose of taking candid photographs. And regardless of the situation, or the delicate nature of Ajuri's problems, a paparazzi is primarily obligated to the calling of his assignment, which is sensationalization. Yes, theirs is to present information in a way that tries to make it as shocking, or exciting as possible. And they often do it with photographs.

Indeed, no sooner than Ajuri's appeal came out, and despite the time he spent explaining how he sent the memo of his resignation to the office of the Chief of Staff to the President, alongside his plea for privacy, some of his colleagues, commenced communicating with conflicting contents. Some said they have carried out some checks, and the checks have revealed the reverse of what Ajuri wants the public to swallow, as his reasons for exiting the Presidency.

They said, right from the day he took up the appointment on 31st July, 2023, his reign was faced by turbulent attacks from some members of the cabal that are very close to the President, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This means, contrary to his submission, Ngelale did not resign. He was fired. By definition, he was dismissed. He said he resigned, to earn the sympathy of the public, but some of his colleagues have put out a hostile story to rubbish him. That is a jeopardy, and it falls in line with the meaning of occupational hazard.

When you resign from an appointment, you have time to plan for your employment transition. This can take time. But when your employer terminates your appointment, depending on the circumstances, you may not have as much time to prepare for your next steps. The situation becomes disastrous for you, and falls in line with the definition of occupational hazard.

Indeed every profession has its job hazards, but I think, probably because I am more familiar with it, public relations advisers, pollsters, or media consultants, particularly those working with high profile politicians, suffer the hazard of humiliation most. This is because, while on the job, they are made to sometimes develop, deceptive, or misleading messages as damage control, which are referred to as, spin doctoring. Yes, there is always the need for expert professional advisers at the heart of government, because government functionaries need to hear an alternative opinion to that of the civil service, especially from highly experienced media handlers. But on a number of cases, such spin doctors end up with terribly bad names. They are called experts in wheeler-dealing, shoot-from-the-hip political spin doctors, that earn a living from the taxpayers money.

And when the bubble bursts, they are clandestinely fired, while another one gets hired. That's an occupational hazard, to which many have suffered such fate at the Nigeria's seat of power, the Aso rock villa.

I don't envy whoever is coming next, because the job does not have a bed of roses. It always carries the keg of political problems, that have adverse consequences on the title holder. One of such consequences is being silently dismissed, but asked to openly say, you have resigned. Which is the occasional obstacle of occupation.
Yahoo Mail: Search, organise, conquer

NewsExtra

Act quickly, save masses from hardship, APC chieftain appeals to Tinubu

By Olusegun Olanrewaju

Achieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun State, Olatunbosun Oyintiloye, has appealed to President Bola Tinubu to act quickly and save the masses from further hardship.

Oyintiloye, a former lawmaker, said that the suffering Nigerians are experiencing at the moment has made it mandatory for the President to act faster and employ strategies that would bring instant reprieve.

While speaking with journalists yesterday in Osogbo, the APC chieftain expressed confidence in President Tinubu's ability to alleviate the suffering of the masses.

However, he suggested adopting strategies that would bring instant relief.

Oyintiloye, a member of the defunct APC Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), also noted the economic hardship the masses were currently going through due to the increase in pump prices, which has led to the

rise in the prices of foodstuffs, as well as the rise in electricity tariffs and the cost of cooking gas, among other things, thus making life unbearable for Nigerians.

He said the recent increment in the pump price has worsened the hardship Nigerian masses are contending with.

He further said, "Nigerians are hopeful that the country will turn a positive corner, but measures to achieve this must be accelerated.

"There is no doubt that the President is doing everything humanly possible to alleviate the suffering of the masses, but a faster approach must be considered.

"The President should ensure that every bureaucratic bottleneck that is impeding the swift implementation of policies that will put smiles on the faces of the masses is removed.

"The economic suffering the masses are currently going through is becoming unbearable,

and the president must act fast."

Oyintiloye also urged the President to address the delay in implementing the suspension of customs duties and taxes on imported food items two months after the initiative was announced.

The ex-lawmaker also said that since the initiative was intended to combat rising food inflation across the country, its implementation should not be delayed.

Oyintiloye recalled that on August 7, the Comptroller-General of Customs, Bashir Adeniyi, assured that the implementation of the policy would commence the following week once the guidelines were ready, lamenting that up till now, the policy was yet to be implemented

He said, "There is no doubt that the President is passionate and willing to put smiles on the faces of the masses, but those who are in charge of implementing these policies should not be seen as roadblocks.

"The President gave a directive to the au-

thorities of the Nigeria Customs Services that a 150-day duty-free window to allow the importation of maize, husked brown rice, and wheat and almost two months after this is yet to be implemented.

"That is not good enough. The President cannot be everywhere, so his foot soldiers must be proactive in taking steps to achieve the President's desire.

"The masses are angry and hungry. And that is why all measures to facilitate this should be implemented quickly."

He appealed to the people responsible for drafting the guidelines for implementing the policy to do what is necessary, adding that the initiative, when implemented, would crash food prices without affecting local production.

He urged Nigerians to continue supporting the President, saying that while all the policies implemented at the moment might seem painful, they would be of great benefit in the long run.

The interim coach of the Super Eagles, Augustine Eguavoen, says his team can beat any team with the quality of players it has at its disposal.

Eguavoen stated this after Super Eagles spanked the Cheetahs of Benin Republic 3-0 in a 2025 Africa Cup Of Nations (AFCON) qualifier at the Godswill Akpabio Stadium in Uyo at the weekend.

“We have quality players to beat any team, but we respect (other) teams anyway. Any coach can come in and do the same job with the Super Eagles.

“It is a mindset, we have the potential and how you perceive your opponent, given the information about them and then go out and do the job,” he said.

Eguavoen attributed the victory to the formation adopted by the technical crew, adding that any formation could be used to ensure that the team was successful.

“We can decide to use any system. It is something we discussed and I slept over it. I know with the calibre of players that we have, we can decide to play any formation.

These Super Eagles can beat any team –Eguavoen



Red-hot Lookman dribbles past two helpless Cheetahs on his way to scoring Super Eagles first goal

“Football is about a win, a loss or a draw, I don’t believe we have a poor result,” he said.

“But it has to do with belief, what is at

stake and what you want to achieve.

“Psychologically as a group, we are agreed, where we are and where we are going to be. We will definitely achieve it,” Eguavoen said.

Paralympic Games: Oluwafemiayo grabs last day gold for Nigeria with new world record

Nigeria ended the 2024 Paris Paralympics games on golden note as Folashade Oluwafemiayo won the gold medal in the +86kg Para Powerlifting division yesterday.

Oluwafemiayo, who won the gold medal with a World Record lift of 167 kg, a 2kg improvement on the previous World Record held by her, left no one in doubt when she cleanly lifted 157kg, in her first attempt, an effort which is 7kg more than her closest challenger, China’s Xuemi who lifted 150kg.

Oluwafemiayo lifted 162kg on her second attempt to equal the Paralympics record

in the event set by compatriots, Josephine Orji’s 162kg.

She went on to break the record with a lift of 166kg to win the gold before she attempted the new record of 167kg.

It was a good ending to Nigeria quest at the games, going in the final day on Sunday hopes were high on the possibility of winning two gold medals but Loveline Obiji was disqualified in the up to 86kg in the morning session but Oluwafemiayo feat makes up for the sad disqualification of Obiji.

After 11 days of top competition, Nigeria powerful contingents of 23 Athletics won a

total of seven medals comprising 2 gold, 3 silver and 2 bronze medals.

The event which started on August 28 2024 comes to an end today, Sunday 8 September 2024 with a closing ceremony in France.



Oluwafemiayo

Osimhen, Moses, Dele-Bashiru too hot for Cheetahs to handle, Rohr admits

Gernot Rohr has named three players that helped the Super Eagles ease past his Benin side 3-0 in the opening fixture of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualification campaign.

The Cheetahs had beaten Nigeria in June in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers but were paid back in their own coin by the three-time African champions who swept them aside.

Benin defended doggedly for almost the entire duration of the first half, but their resilience was broken with a moment of sheer brilliance from Ballon d’Or nominee Ademola Lookman, which dealt their chances of picking a result a huge blow.

They managed to muster some chances in the second half, but Austin Eguavoen rang some changes, which included Victor Osimhen, Moses Simon and Fisayo

Dele-Bashiru to put the game beyond the reach of Rohr’s side.

Osimhen scored the second goal, and Simon created the assist for the third goal, which guaranteed the victory for the 2013 AFCON champions.

Speaking in his post-match conference, Rohr admitted that the Super Eagles bench was stronger than that of his side and that helped them to bring on Osimhen, Simon and Dele-Bashiru which helped to secure the victory.

The German tactician said: “It is hard result for us, we conceded the first goal in the first additional minute of the first half and it was a shock little bit for my team I think and then the team of Nigeria could start the second half in confidence.

“And this victory without any discussion

when I see players coming in Moses, Osimhen, Dele-Bashiru.

“The bench you have here in Nigeria is fantastic and we don’t have that but my young team is learning and we showed that against the Super Eagles in June and full of future and we have to learn from the mistakes today.”

The Cheetahs will face Libya on Tuesday in their second group game while the Super Eagles will clash with Rwanda on the same day.

Nigeria have taken an early lead in the group as they were the only side to pick up maximum points in the opening matchday.



Nigerian player (r), being challenged by Ugandan opponent (l), during the game

FIBA U18 Afrobasket: Nigeria bow 64-80 to Uganda

Nigeria’s youth women’s basketball team were back in action at the FIBA U18 Afrobasket qualifiers.

The young team suffered a 64-80 loss to their counterparts from Uganda on Saturday, September 8, 2024.

There were flight troubles involving the younger D’Tigress and the South African Embassy.

However, they have now spent a week and played three games at the competition.

They arrived in time but suffered an 80-72 loss to their counterparts from Egypt to start the tournament.

In their second group game against Zimbabwe, they made a massive statement with a 77-point blowout victory winning 107-30.

They were under pressure in their final group game against Uganda and needed victory to advance to the knockout stages.

They started with the right intensity taking an 11-1 lead in the game.

Uganda however would turn the tides with several runs to record a 16-point blowout victory.

Resty Nanangwe was the hero for the Ugandans recording 31 points, 10 rebounds, and four assists leading her side to victory.

Nigeria now has a tough challenge to pick up one of the continents’ tickets to the World Cup next year.



Anthony Joshua vs Daniel Dubois will cost less than £20 worldwide on pay-per-view - marking a significant discount for American fans.

Staged at a sold-out Wembley, the showdown will see Dubois' IBF heavyweight title on the line.

The belt was previously held by Oleksandr Usyk after he became the division's first undisputed champion in more than two decades after defeating Tyson Fury earlier this year.

Following his victory Usyk was stripped of the belt and Dubois' interim title was elevated to full status, opening up the possibility for Joshua to become just the fifth man ever to become a three-time heavyweight champion.

While the clash is garnering significant attention, fans across the Atlantic have been overjoyed to find out the price of the pay-per-view.

Viewers in the US will be able to purchase the event for just \$19.99, marking a significant price cut.

Joshua vs Dubois blockbuster clash goes for below £20 on pay-per-view



Joshua and Dubois set for a blockbuster clash

For comparison, Canelo Alvarez's clash with Edgar Berlanga will set fans back \$89.99.

The price reduction comes after His Excellency Turki Alalshikh introduced plans to tackle illegal streaming and make boxing

more accessible by drastically reducing the price of PPVs.

Speaking earlier this week he explained: 'I dream of a PPV with a good price to make the fans happy and subscribe and get them to watch it legally.'

"Usually when I see a high PPV, a lot of people go and watch the fight illegally and this is not healthy for boxing and the platform.

"What I will try to push is to have our Riyadh Season shows at less than £20 in England and less than \$20 around the world...

"I would prefer to have one million fans subscribe and buy the PPV for £20 than less than 500,000 [for £40].

"The people go around it illegally because the price is high. In the future, this will not build boxing.

AFCON 2025: Eguavoen aims for win as Eagles land in Kigali

Coach Augustine Eguavoen says his squad "is on a momentum" as they countenance Tuesday's 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying match against the Amavubi of Rwanda at the Amahoro Stadium in Kigali.

"We have the right mentality now, and the mood in camp is excellent. Everyone in camp is eager for us to pick up the three points in Rwanda and stay firmly

on top of the qualifying table. We are here for business and I am happy that everyone is on the same page.

"I am also happy that we have arrived here in good time, and the players can rest well while we look forward to the official training on Monday afternoon."

The Nigerian delegation to Tuesday's match, departed the Victor Attah International Airport, Uyo at 12.48pm on Sunday aboard a ValueJet Airline's Regional Jet 900, landed at the Kigali International Airport at 5.20pm Rwanda time. Rwanda is one hour ahead of Nigeria.

The delegation, which included 23 players and the team's officials, was led by President of NFF, Ibrahim Musa Gusau, and also had NFF 1st Vice President

Felix Anyansi-Agwu and a couple of Executive Committee Members, General Secretary Mohammed Sanusi, a couple of NFF Staff, few stakeholders and few media representatives.

Team captain William Troost-Ekong said: "There is nothing much to say other than that we are here for a purpose. Our target is the three points, and we have spoken among ourselves on the imperative of going hard for it from the first blast of the referee's whistle.

"It is going to be a tough game because Rwanda have a good team and got a point from their first match. We must not relent throughout the 90 minutes."

The Amavubi forced Libya's Mediterranean Knights to a 1-1 draw in Tripoli in their own Matchday 1 encounter.

Tomorrow's match will kick off at 3pm Rwanda time (2pm Nigeria time).



Eagles at Kigali International Airport yesterday evening

Sabalenka savours US Open victory



Sabalenka give a kiss to her US Open trophy

Aryna Sabalenka said she felt "super proud" to win the US Open and claim her third Grand Slam crown with a thrilling victory over a gallant Jessica Pegula in a rollercoaster final on Saturday.

The world number two triumphed 7-5, 7-5 to add the New York title to her back-to-back Australian Open victories.

Pegula went down fighting, however, recovering from 0-3 and break point down to lead 5-3 in the second set before Sabalenka came through.

The 26-year-old from Belarus clubbed 40 winners to become the first woman since Angelique Kerber in 2016 to capture both hardcourt majors in the same season.

"I remember all those tough losses in the past here and it's going to sound easy but never give up on your dream and just keep trying, keep working hard," said Sabalenka, the runner-up last year and semi-finalist in 2022 and 2023.

"I'm speechless right now. So many times I thought I was so close to get the US Open title. It has always been a dream of mine and finally I got this beautiful trophy.

"I'm just super proud of myself. I'm super proud of my team as well."

Pegula had arrived in New York with a title in Toronto and runner-up spot to Sabalenka in Cincinnati.

Honey Badgers make NWFL Premiership debut as Ibom Angels secure return

Honey Badgers and Ibom Angels have secured promotion to the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Premiership following their victories in the NWFL Championship playoff matches held yesterday at UJ Esuene Stadium, Calabar, Cross River State.

The Benue State-based Honey Badgers made history with a 1-0 win over Pelican Stars, securing their first-ever promotion to the country's top-flight.

A second-half goal from Hellen Daniel proved to be the difference for Honey Badgers, who displayed resilience and composure throughout the match. Both teams started brightly, with the Badgers missing an early chance to take the lead. Moments later, their goalkeeper Stella

Okereke made a crucial save to deny Pelican Stars an opening goal.

The hosts pressed hard in search of the opener, but Honey Badgers' defense held firm. The breakthrough came in the 67th minute when Daniel converted a chance to give the visitors the lead. Despite relentless support from the home crowd, Pelican Stars couldn't find an equalizer as the Badgers held on for the win.

This victory marks a significant milestone for Honey Badgers as they prepare to make their debut in the NWFL Premiership. The team will join Ibom Angels, who also earned promotion earlier in the day with a 2-0 win over Osun Babes in another playoff match.

Ibom Angels dominated their match against Osun Babes, scoring through Abasiofon Uwah and Ijeoma Onweagba. Uwah gave the Uyo-based side an early lead in the 10th minute, while Onuma doubled the advantage in the 61st minute with a long-range effort. Osun Babes earned a penalty late in the game, but Kafayat Bashiru missed the spot-kick.

The victory sees Ibom Angels return to the NWFL Premiership just a season after their relegation in 2021. This marks the second consecutive season in which Ibom Angels have secured immediate promotion back to the topflight, showcasing their resilience and strong team spirit.



These Super Eagles can beat any team –Eguavoen

▶ PG 30

Monday September 9, 2024 Vol. 9 No 40

The Backpage



Prince Charles Dickson PhD

A garbage in, garbage about educational system

The easiest and most attractive national pastime remains buck passing especially with the bunch of leaders that we have, that can hardly peel a banana nor wash an already white handkerchief. Not many of us want to take responsibility for anything, from personal, to family or national life.

The blame is on the system. We do not need to create demons out of our leaders because they are already specimens of demons, so we hang our sins on them appropriately and inappropriately too. And unfortunately, their behaviour has made it easy for the critic to descend on them.

We at most, talk, write and discuss the Nigerian myth with a sense of fatalism. If everyone thought as much as I did about justice and fairness, life would be better. I am a critic, but I am also the critics' critic, the unrepentant believer that the best way to keep the government on its toes is to keep harping on their flaws so they can improve.

Often, I say I believe the things I write on, are important for our nation as they are for other nations, but when it appears to me, Nigerians especially those in authority do not react to these issues as people in other lands do, I repeat them in new essays to remind old readers and recruit new ones to participate in the continuing dialogue.

Sadly, this is Nigeria where nothing works and no one cares, when it works, it is because someone's interest is about to be served or being served not the people's interest. We talk about our institutions despairingly. Our leaders do not watch network news except when their faces would be there on occasion of their sons/daughters' wedding or such. They do not need the newspapers anymore because it is full of their lies, or paid adverts exchanging banter together.

Government bashing remains a national pastime and every drinking joint, and suya spot has a sitting parliament with an expert on every and any issue but we forget that no matter the input, if the politicians and actors in our national scene have questionable lives both on personal and domestic level, nothing will change, the best government policy cannot change the individual. It is because the policies are formulated on a bad foundation and by people with warped thinking.

When a witch proclaims her presence, and an invalid does not make away; he must have money for sacrifices at home.

So, for some several weeks, it has been a back and forth between the regulator of our education, in this case the Ministry of Education and parents, on exactly the right age for a child to write the regulatory tran-

sitional exams, and let me say whether it is 18years, Or 5 years, a dullard or an intelligent kid, it is garbage in, garbage out.

That may sound cold, especially in the light of the exploits of Nigerian graduates in other climes, remember I said other climes, and the few who do well here in Nigeria. Like my friend Ndo puts it, the quality is scarily dropping.

Have you noticed the ever increasing cases of graduates and interview candidates having shallow knowledge of the subject matter, poor command of the use of English language, poor knowledge of the examination techniques, as well disregard for correct interpretation of questions before attempting them.

Or that many candidates lack requisite mathematical and manipulative skills for subjects involving calculations, while handwriting of some are illegible and their answers scripts are full of spelling errors. (Not that my maths is so good either)

Many candidates try to cut corners by engaging in various forms of examination malpractice in order to obtain marks.

A good many of us spat on the education we had yesterday, and of course what passes for education today. And there is, certainly, a stratum of our society that looks back, nostalgically, at the quality of yesterday's education". How many of us today can argue that this is not the truth, even the generation that had its education in 2000 now looks back with nostalgia.

By and large, however, most of us believed that there was very much missing in the content of our yesterday's education. What we have today, in spite of innovations and the bold attempts to re-orientate it, remains, as it was yesterday, orthodox, slow foot, myopic.

Our educational system today only sharpens the head to near pin end quality and this is even rare but it also makes the possessors limb atrophied by long disuse. Our education is money centered. It is an education which goads the possessor asking "what can my country do for me?"

In 2024, we are left to define the quality of education we want for tomorrow when our peers have gone far in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, neighbouring Ghana has even refused to wait for us. To chart out how to tread to win through, we now send our kids anywhere so far it is outside the country the education is better be it Iraq or Zimbabwe.

Do we have an education in which a possessor wants

to elevate the less privileged that surge him round, the answer is no. Today what is the value of the education given to a young man who lives or is doing his mandatory service year in a guinea worm infested area and yet is incapable of causing a revolution in the lives of the villagers by transforming their drinking water into healthy supply?

Please, what is the use of education given in physics to a young girl when the lights go out, she does not know what to do to get light again. In Nigerian education, how many graduates can carry aloft an oasis of light, very few because the education is short on quality and is therefore poor.

While there is despair, there is hope and despair, a case of "we can" or "we can't". While we battle the scourge of local terrorism, bad leadership, kidnap, health, and countless issues, there is need to come up with some measures that could help both the students and schools to improve on their output, by extension resuscitate a nation's dying if not dead educational sector.

Our students need to develop a good understanding of questions and also learn the basic rudiments of the English language for better and clearer presentation of their answers. The sex for grade, bribe for certificate syndrome needs to be checked.

There is a need to ensure the appropriate textbooks in all subjects are procured and studied side by side with the examination syllabus, and should be completed before the commencement of examination. Libraries need to go info-tech, not littered with books of 1914. While practical on-hands learning away from just examination should be incorporated.

There is a need to provide basic infrastructure, and a conducive atmosphere in schools, only qualified and committed teachers who will teach their subjects effectively and guide students to become exemplary in their studies should be employed. Not like the teacher in Bauchi State (SUEB) that inherited his grandfather's grade II certificate and was teaching with it or University dons that have become experts in plagiarism, selling handouts pirated from other works.

The question of whatever happened to the old school inspectorate system should be addressed.

We must move away from the examcentric, conversation curriculum that takes away critical thinking and qualitative reasoning and educate with intention for a future world. If these and even more rigorous steps are taken, we may be saved the irony of the clowns we are churning out these days—May Nigeria win

