

# Edo govt writes Okpebholo, APC on formation of transition team

● **commits to providing incoming govt with necessary support for effective transition**

FAVOUR ANETOR

The Edo State Government has written to the governor-elect, Senator Monday Okpebholo, to initiate the formation of his transition team, which is expected to inter-

face with the transition team of the outgoing administration.

In a letter dated October 10, 2024, Secretary to the State Government, Mr. Joseph Eboigbe, said establishing the team will allow both parties to begin meaningful discussions and

share vital information that will ensure a seamless transfer of responsibilities and continuity of governance.

This is coming barely a month to the inauguration of a new administration as the tenure of the incumbent governor, Mr. God-

win Obaseki, comes to an end on November 12.

Governor Obaseki had in July 2024 inaugurated a 20-member transition committee, chaired by Mr. Eboigbe, to pilot the smooth transition of power and knowledge to the next administration.

In the letter to Senator Okpebholo, who was declared winner of the September 21, 2024 governorship election in Edo State by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the state government also committed itself to providing the

incoming government with the necessary support and resources to make the transition as effective and efficient as possible.

"As we prepare for the transition of power, we believe it is

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# The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Mark, Suswam, Agbo may lock horns over PDP chairmanship seat

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**₦200**

# NDLEA's over N100bn seizures in 2024 signal Nigeria's deep drug crisis

● **as Lagos, Port Harcourt top centres of seizures**

TELIAT SULE

That Nigeria is in the midst of a hard drug crisis is an understatement going by the huge amounts of hard drugs that the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has seized from January 2024 to date.

An analysis done by The Nigerian Observer team shows the growing involvement of many Nigerians across the states of the federation. Our analysis equally shows that based on the few street values of drugs seized by the NDLEA, the monetary value of the contraband drugs confiscated will be at least N100 billion, indicating the huge resources being wasted monthly by Nigerians at home and in the diaspora.

Drugs mostly involved were codeine, loud, opioids, colos, methamphetamine, tramadol, tapentadol, heroine, among others with both air and sea-ports in Lagos State, and Onne

Port in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, being the locations where the highest amounts of these banned drugs were seized. Other locations include Ogun, Abia, Kano, among others.

For the ten-month period covered by The Nigerian Observer's analysis, a total of N38.8 billion worth of banned drugs were seized in September 2024, making it the busiest month in drug seizures in Nigeria this year. This was followed by N15.2 billion worth of seizures in June; N12.2 billion worth of seizures within the first two weeks in October; N11.9 billion worth of seizures in July; N8.5 billion worth of seizures in August, and another N1.3 billion worth of seizures in May, based on street values provided by the NDLEA, just to mention a few. The suspects arrested were mostly males, with their ages ranging from 20 to 70 years.

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**HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT:**

L-R: Former Nasarawa State governors, Tanko Al-Makura; Abdulahi Adamu, and Vice President Kassim Shettima, during the launch of the Nasarawa State Human Capital Development Document & Gender Transformative Human Capital Development Policy Framework in Lafia, at the weekend.

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Oba of Benin, Omo N' Oba N' Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, His Majesty, Ewuare II, will be marking his 8th Coronation Anniversary as well as his birthday on October 20, 2024. The Nigerian Observer joins in the celebration and calls on the general public to seize this opportunity to felicitate our Royal Father on this momentous occasion. For enquiries on rates and to place your goodwill messages in The Nigerian Observer, call: 07035705299 & 07031029998.

**Oba Ghato Kpere - Ise**

The Nigerian Observer

# Mark, Suswam, Agbo may lock horns over PDP chairmanship seat • as governors meet over party crisis

TOBORE JEROME

Following the factionalisation of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the governors elected on the party's platform will meet Monday (today) to consider options for the resolution of the crisis in the main opposition party, reports state.

This is just as the former Senate President, David Mark; former Governor of Benue State, Gabriel Suswam, and the Director General of the PDP Governors' Forum, Dr. Emmanuel Agbo, have emerged the top contenders in the race for the position of the national chairman of the party.

The crisis rocking the PDP took a dangerous twist on Friday when its national leadership broke into two factions with Yayari Ahmed Mohammed, and the acting National Chairman, Illiya Umar

Damagum, leading each of the two factions.

PDP's factionalisation followed the suspension of its National Legal Adviser, Adeyemi Ajibade, and the National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba, by a faction of the National Working Committee (NWC) led by the acting national chairman, Damagum, on Friday, after the 593rd meeting of the NWC held on Thursday.

Ibrahim Abdullahi and Okechukwu Osuoha were appointed by the faction to replace the duo in acting capacities.

But in a counter statement, the National Publicity Secretary, Ologunagba announced the suspension of Damagum and the National Secretary, Samuel Anyanwu, by the NWC due to what the statement described as the series of complaints against them.

However, shortly after Damagum's suspension was

announced, news broke that Justice Peter Lifu of a Federal High Court in Abuja issued a restraining order against his removal by the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) as the acting national chairman of the party until December 2025.

Before the gale of suspensions on Friday, PDP had scheduled a NEC meeting for October 24 to elect a substantive national chairman who will complete the tenure of Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, while Damagum is expected to revert to his position as National Vice Chairman (North).

THISDAY reports, citing information gathered from a source close to the governors, that to resolve the crisis, one of the options before the governors is to facilitate the sack of the entire members of the NWC by the NEC and the appointment of a caretaker com-

mittee that will run the affairs of the party until December 2025, when the tenure of the present NWC will expire.

The newspaper quoted the source as saying that another option is to ask the two factions to return to the status quo and allow Damagum's successor to emerge at the NEC meeting on October 24, 2024, as originally planned before the factionalisation.

"Ayu's replacement was supposed to have emerged on the April 18, 2024, NEC meeting but the decision was suspended because many states had not concluded their congresses. When the NEC meeting was rescheduled, it coincided with the period of lesser Hajj and was postponed. Now that all the states have concluded their congresses, a new NEC meeting was scheduled for October 24 to choose Ayu's successor, whose tenure will expire in De-

cember 2025, along with other members of the NWC," the source was quoted as saying.

Reacting to the court order restraining the PDP from removing Damagum until December 2025, the source was quoted as saying he was not sure Damagum would use the court case to scuttle the peace efforts.

"Damagum was in Bauchi State to brief the Chairman of the PDP Governors' Forum, Bala Mohammed on the outcome of the NWC meeting when his suspension was announced and when the court order barring the PDP from removing him was issued. I am not sure he initiated it. It is expected that he won't use the court order to scuttle the peace efforts," the source said.

The source further disclosed that one of the outcomes of Damagum's visit to Bauchi was that the warring parties should maintain the status quo, pending the meeting of the PDP governors tomorrow.

According to him, Damagum and his NWC were also told that such a crisis was not needed as the party was preparing for the NEC meeting.

However, the crisis deepened as a top national officer of the party was said to have ordered that the offices of the National Legal Adviser, Ajibade, and the National Publicity Secretary, Ologunagba be broken into and the keys changed.

But the order was yet to be carried out as other top officers were not comfortable with it.

One of the national officers queried why the keys to the offices of the affected officers should be changed when "till this moment, the keys to the offices of the former national chairman, Iyorchia Ayu are still intact".

The party officer said: "The two were suspended under questionable circumstances. Why the rush to break into their offices, as if they were expelled from the party?"



**BRAND AMBASSADOR:**

Enugu State governor, Peter Mbah (2nd left); Miss Universe Nigeria, Chidimma Onwe Adetsina (2nd right), and others after the confirmation of her appointment as the brand ambassador of Enugu State at the weekend.

## NDLEA's over N100bn seizures in 2024 signal Nigeria's...

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A legal expert who did not want his name in print due to the sensitivity of the matter attributed the increasing involvement of people in drug trafficking to the slow pace of prosecution by the NDLEA, adding that most of the cases are not followed through.

"First, the return on drug business is high. That is why those involved in it hardly consider the implications of their actions especially to countries where the penalty for involvement in drugs is the death sentence," the legal expert said.

"And concerning the low number of suspects convicted, NDLEA has a poor record of prosecuting suspects. This is due to the few numbers of lawyers in their employ who are overwhelmed by the number

of cases they have to prosecute on a monthly basis," he said.

According to the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Retd), for a period of 38 months up to April 2024, the anti-narcotics agency had arrested 50,901 suspects and secured 9,034 convictions. This showed the agency was only able to prosecute just 18 per cent of all the drug suspects arrested during the period.

"During this period, the NDLEA achieved significant milestones in its mission to combat drug trafficking and abuse. With a total of 50,901 arrests, including the apprehension of 46 drug barons, our agency has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to bringing those involved in illicit drug activities to justice. Furthermore, the conviction of 9,034 offenders un-

derscores our relentless pursuit of accountability and deterrence in the fight against drug-related crimes," Marwa said back in April 2024.

According to the Africa Organised Crime Index 2023, the West African sub-region ranked as one of the lucrative markets for cocaine trade in Africa.

"The region is a well-established trans-shipment point for cocaine from Latin America destined for European consumer markets, and is growing in significance, as demonstrated, among other things, by the escalating number of seizures reported in 2021 and 2022," the ENACT Organised Crime Index stated.

"During this period, notable cocaine seizures were carried out by the competent authorities in Cabo Verde (7.50), Ni-

geria (7.0), Gambia (7.0) and Côte d'Ivoire (5.50). Furthermore, seizure data from Brazilian authorities identified Benin (7.0), Nigeria (7.0), Guinea (7.0) and Cabo Verde (7.50) as the most common destinations for cocaine trafficking," it said, indicating that countries are ranked on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least severe while 10 is the most severe.

Earlier in the year, Nigeria's Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Muhammed Ali Pate, admitted that about 14.4 per cent of the nation's population, translating into 14 million Nigerians within the ages of 15-64 years, use drugs like cannabis, amphetamines, tramadol, cocaine and codeine, adding that about 40 per cent of high-risk drugs users in the country cannot access the needed treatment.

## One injured, another killed as bandits invade Kwara community

An unidentified person has reportedly been injured while one other was killed on Thursday when bandits invaded the Oreke-Okegbo community in the Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Daily Post reports that the fully armed bandits dressed in military uniforms invaded the community at about 7:00 p.m.

The online newspaper quoted a source as saying, "They shot one person at Awere River, and all efforts made by Kabiesi Oloreke to contact the army at Oro Ago proved abortive."

It, however, quoted the Kabiyesi of Oreke, Oba Joseph Sunday Afolabi, as confirming the attack in a phone chat in Ilorin on Sunday, saying "one person was shot and injured, while one other was killed".

"The bandits, including a woman, came into my community from a nearby neigh-

bourhood and encountered some guards protecting some Chinese nationals in the area and in the process produced a gun to actualise their mission.

"After the attack, they got stuck at Awere river after Babanla town as the river was full and they could not cross, until the following morning when they were able to escape.

"They are not herdsmen, though they spoke the Hausa language, I suspect they are foreign nationals from neighbouring countries," he added.

In a reaction, the spokesperson of the State Police Command, DSP Ejire Adeyemi Toun, informed that "the command is aware of this information. Investigations have long begun to ascertain its authenticity".

"Notwithstanding all security measures have been employed to protect the lives and properties of Kwarans," she added.

## Edo govt writes Okpebholo, APC on formation of...

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crucial to establish a smooth and effective collaboration between your team and our current administration," the letter said.

"To facilitate this process, we invite you and your party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), to initiate the formation of your transition team at your earliest convenience.

"Establishing this team will allow us to begin meaningful discussions and share vital information that will ensure a seamless transfer of responsibilities and continuity of governance.

"We are committed to providing you with the necessary support and resources to make this transition as effective and ef-

ficient as possible. Consequently, 14th October, 2024 is proposed for the inaugural meeting for members of both Transition Committees.

"We look forward to your prompt response and to working closely with you and your team in the coming weeks. Together, we can set the foundation for a successful administration that meets the expectations of our constituents. Thank you for your attention," it said.

The letter by the Edo State Government to Senator Monday Okpebholo which was received by an admin secretary at the Secretariat of the Edo State Chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Mr. Joy Oyere, has not yet been responded to.

## NEWS

# SERAP to Tinubu: Reverse latest hike in fuel price pending court ruling

TOBORE JEROME

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has urged President Bola Tinubu to direct the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) to immediately reverse the second increase in petrol prices in one month, pending the hearing and determination of the suit before the Federal High Court, Abuja challenging the legality of the powers of the NNPCL to increase petrol prices.

This is coming on the heels of a suit filed by SERAP last month against the president and NNPCL “over the failure to reverse the apparently unlawful increase in the pump price of petrol, and to probe the alle-

gations of corruption and mismanagement in the NNPCL.”

In an open letter dated 12 October 2024 and signed by its deputy director, Kolawole Oluwadare, SERAP said, “The latest increase in petrol prices makes a mockery of the case pending before the Federal High Court, and creates a risk that the course of justice will be seriously impeded or prejudiced in this case.

“One of the fundamental principles of the rule of law is that it applies to everyone, including presidents and CEOs of public institutions.”

The organisation said it is in the public interest to keep the streams of justice clear and pure, and to maintain the authority and integrity of the court in the case.

“Allowing the Federal High

Court to hear and determine the case would be entirely consistent with the letter and spirit of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended], your oath of office and oft-repeated promises to uphold the rule of law,” it said.

SERAP noted that since assumption of office in May 2023, President Tinubu has repeatedly promised, including in his inaugural speech, that “Nigeria will be impartially governed according to the Constitution and the rule of law.”

“Increasing petrol prices while the Federal High Court case is pending would preju-

dice and undermine the ability of the court to do justice in the case, damage public confidence in the court, prejudice the outcome of the case, as well as impede the course of justice.

“We would be grateful if the recommended measures are immediately taken following the receipt and/or publication of this letter, failing which SERAP shall consider contempt proceedings and/or other appropriate legal actions to compel your government and NNPCL to comply with our request in the public interest.

“If not immediately re-

versed, the latest increase in petrol prices would seriously undermine the integrity of the Nigerian Constitution and have serious consequences for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Nigerians and the public interest.

“Protecting the right to a judicial recourse and due administration of justice is of utmost importance, being the cornerstone of an ordered society.

“The only way in which SERAP can have a fair and effective access to justice in this matter is to allow the court to decide, one way or the other,

on the merits of the case before it,” it said.

SERAP further said reversing the latest increase in petrol prices would allow the court to render a decision on the central issues in the case, and protect the applicant’s rights and interests.

“The latest increase in petrol prices while the Federal High Court case is pending constitutes an interference with the right of SERAP to fairly and effectively pursue a judicial challenge to the decision by your government and NNPCL regarding the first increase in petrol prices,” it said.

## Severe malnutrition rises by 51% in Northern Nigeria —MSF

International President of the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), also known as Doctors Without Borders, Dr. Christos Christou, has raised the alarm over what he described as a huge increase in the number of malnourished children in northern Nigeria.

Christou, who said this at the weekend at a press briefing in Abuja after he visited Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, noted that between January and August this year, there was a 51 percent increase in admission of children with severe malnutrition compared to the same period last year.

He said people in northern Nigeria had been through a lot with overwhelming levels of malnutrition, frequent outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, and lack of medical facilities and medical personnel, which were compounded by continuous insecurity.

He said: “During my visit to Maiduguri, I visited the hospitals and clinics where MSF works. We support the local healthcare system in tackling malaria and other diseases, as well as in providing access to maternity services. Recently, we had to launch a cholera treatment centre, after a cholera outbreak was officially declared. All this has happened in the background of a catastrophic malnutrition crisis.

“One of my colleagues, a Nigerian doctor who has been working with MSF for more than eight years, told me that this year is very different. Every year, he said, during this season, we see terrible numbers of malnourished children coming to the hospital in a severe condition. But this year, at a time when the peak is supposed to be over, the number of patients admitted to the hospital is not going down.

“Worse, the condition in

which they arrive is even more severe than usual. Very often people don’t have access even to basic medical care where they live and do not have enough money or available transport. As a result, they reach us too late.”

He stated that many organisations, which were providing support in Maiduguri and other parts of northern Nigeria, had to reduce their budgets or even stop their operations.

“For the past few years, MSF has seen a significant increase in the number of admissions for malnutrition. “The numbers in 2022 and 2023 were already critically high. But between January to August this year, we have seen a 51 per cent increase in admissions of children with severe malnutrition, compared to the same period last year. Over the first eight months of this year, we have treated 52,725 children with severe malnutrition, a life-threatening condition, across the whole of northern Nigeria.

“On top of this, outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles are recurrent in Nigeria and one of the leading causes of death among children. Between January and August this year alone, we had already treated over 12,500 cases of measles. That’s nearly double the same period last year. Outbreaks of infectious diseases significantly increase mortality risks for children under the age of five.

“Unvaccinated children in this age group are particularly vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases, diseases which elevate the risk of acute malnutrition. That’s nearly double the same period last year. Outbreaks of infectious diseases significantly increase mortality risks for children under the age of five.



**SENATE PRESS CORPUS:**

Deputy Senate President, Jubril Barau; Senate President Godswill Akpabio; Deputy Minority Leader, Onyekachukwu Nwaebonyi; Chairman Senate Committee on Media and Public Affairs, Yemi Adaramodu, and Senate Press Corps Chairman, James Itodo, during the inauguration of the renovated Senate Press Corps Media Centre at National Assembly in Abuja. PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU

## NERC reports N380bn electricity subsidy obligation for Q2'24, down 40% from previous quarter

TOBORE JEROME

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) says the Federal Government incurred an electricity subsidy obligation of N380 billion in the second quarter (Q2) of 2024. The agency said that distribution companies (DisCos) generated N431.16 billion between April and June of 2024.

NERC, in its quarterly report released at the weekend, said the electricity subsidy bill dropped by N253.24 billion (40%) from N633.3 billion recorded in Q1. The drop, according to the commission, was due to the upward review of tariffs for Band A customers in April.

“It is important to note that due to the absence of cost-reflective tariffs across all DisCos, the government incurred a subsidy obligation

of N380.06 billion (52.51% of total NBET invoice) in 2024/Q2 (average of N126.69bn per month),” NERC said.

“Between 2024/Q1 and 2024/Q2, the subsidy obligation of the government reduced by – N253.24 billion, from N633.30 billion (90.57% of total GenCo invoice) to N380.06 billion (52.51% of total GenCo invoice).

“The significant decrease in the subsidy obligation of the FGN is a result of the policy directive of the government to implement reviews of tariffs charged to Band A customers while the tariffs for Band B-E customers remain frozen at the rates payable since December 2022,” said the report.

The NERC said in the absence of a cost-reflective tariff, the government covered the resultant gap (between the cost-reflective and allowed tar-

iff) in the form of subsidies.

The commission said for ease of administration, subsidy was only applied to the generation cost payable by DisCos to NBET at source in the form of a DisCo’s Remittance Obligation (DRO).

“The total revenue collected by all DisCos in 2024/Q2 was N431.16 billion out of N543.64 billion billed to customers,” NERC said.

“This translates to a collection efficiency of 79.31 percent which represents an increase of +0.20pp when compared to 2024/Q1 (79.11%),” NERC said.

On revenue collection performance of all DisCos, NERC said Ikeja and Eko DisCos recorded the highest collection efficiencies of 94.67 percent (N87.36bn) and 88.03 percent (N75.33bn), respectively.

“Conversely, Yola DisCo recorded the lowest collection

efficiency of 55.67 percent (N4.78bn),” NERC said.

“A comparison of DisCos performance in 2024/Q1 and 2024/Q2 showed that six DisCos recorded improvements in collection efficiency in 2024/Q2 when compared to 2024/Q1 with Yola DisCo recording the highest increase of +12.64pp.

“Conversely, five DisCos recorded declines in collection efficiency with Kaduna having the most significant decrease (-10.04pp) during the period.”

According to The Cable, NERC said the cumulative upstream invoice payable by DisCos was N399.53 billion, consisting of N343.76 billion for DisCos remittance obligations (DRO)-adjusted generation costs from Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading (NBET) and N55.77 billion for transmission and administrative services by the market operator (MO).

# Inside Edo

## APC women show off ahead of Benin Monarch's anniversary

MONDAY OISE

Dance performances by the Edo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) women's group to the delight of the Benin Monarch, His Royal Majesty, Ewuare II, CFR, Oba of Benin, captured attention during the weekend at Oba Palace in Benin City.

A press statement signed by Osaigbovo Iguobaro, Chief

Press Secretary to the Oba of Benin, notes that the moment shows how the Royal personage has amazingly embraced modernity and is carrying out traditional duties in a convivial atmosphere.

The women were there with excitement in show of affection to the Oba as they sang, danced, clapped and cheered to the unwavering dedication and milestones recorded during the historical era of Oba Ewuare II,

who is billed to mark his eighth Coronation Anniversary on October 20, 2024.

Speaking about the group's mission, Mrs. Itohan Osahon Edokpolor, the Edo South Senatorial District APC women's leader, commended Oba Ewuare for his prayers and peaceful reign.

She expressed gratitude to God Almighty and Oba Ewuare's forebears for strengthening the Royal father to overcome his challenges after

repeated moments that test his nerves, and averting doomsday predictions that Saturday, September 21 Edo State governorship election will be violent, but the exercise turned out to be generally peaceful.

The former chairperson of Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Council solicited for continuous prayer and support from the traditional institution to enable the next administration to succeed and take development of the

state to higher heights.

According to her, "In this jubilation mood after the peaceful election, it's important to show our gratitude to God Almighty and our Royal father for your prayers that averted bloodshed in the Edo election.

"We pray that the administration of Senator Monday Okpebholo will record steady progress, respect traditional institutions. We pray that God will use him to his glory and

honour those who truly deserve to be honoured".

Responding through a prominent Benin Palace functionary, Mr Frank Irabor, the Oba enjoined the women not to renege in their individual worship and prayers for the peace of Nigeria.

He also assured the group that the Palace will continue to project the well-being of Edo people and their heritage at home and the diaspora.



### THANK-YOU VISIT:

Edo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) women's group paid a thank-you visit to the Benin Monarch, His Royal Majesty, Ewuare II, CFR, Oba of Benin, Saturday, at Oba Palace in Benin City.

## Industrial projects to be commissioned before November – chairman

LAMAI CASSIUS

Akoko-Edo Local Government Area chairman, Hon. Tajudeen Alade Suleman Esq, has disclosed that plans are underway by the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration to commission industrial projects in the local government before the end of his tenure in November 2024.

Hon. Alade, who made this disclosure during a meeting with the Commissioner for Energy, Mines and Power, Hon. Enaholo Ojeifo at his office, advised all in the locality to work together, irrespective of political affiliations, to ensure that Akoko-Edo becomes industrially and economically viable.

"The commissioner is not from here but you're all aware of his numerous engagements and passion to engender development and this is very well

appreciated. Akoko-Edo is highly mineralized and our audacious hope mantra is about delivering true governance to our people," he said.

The chairman also commended the commissioner and his team for their dedication in the discharge of their duties, explaining that security is key to checkmating the influx of people to the local government area when mining sites are eventually opened for business.

The helmsman noted that as a member of the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), machinery had been put in place to drive security in the local government area, harping on the need for all parties involved to synergise in order to make Akoko-Edo safer, more industrialized and economically viable.

On his part, the commissioner for Energy, Mines and Power, Hon. Enaholo Ojeifo said the state government had

concluded plans to commission the Gold and Data Analysis Centre in Dagbala as well as the 200,000 Calcium Carbonate Industry in Lampese in the coming days, explaining that his passion for Akoko-Edo is driven by the need to help reshape the locality leveraging its abundant mineral deposits for sustainable development.

Hon. Ojeifo further advised miners to eschew all infighting and work together in order to improve the mining sector in Akoko-Edo, adding that the state government had provided equipment to enable miners get back to business as quickly as possible.

The commissioner, who harped on the need for miners to ensure payment of surface rents and royalty, noted that community development, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) would

guarantee social amenities for locals.

He enjoined them to contribute towards the Security Trust Fund designed by the government to guarantee adequate security in mining sites and the communities, stating the importance of profiling all miners and workers in the sector as a way of boosting security.

He further advised miners to work with the chairman and the council who would be collaborating with the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), saying the chairman would be monitoring the activities of the miners in order to ensure they operate under best acceptable practices.

Highpoint of the meeting was an inspection tour round all sites earmarked for commissioning by the local government chairman, the commissioner and members of their entourage.

## Chairman celebrates Etsako East girl child to mark international day

LAMAI CASSIUS

As the world celebrates the International Day of the Girl Child, the Executive Chairman of Etsako East Local Government Area, Hon. (Princess) Benedicta Attoh, has expressed the need for female children to take the lead in the larger society by personally breaking down every barrier and stereotypes that the girl child is not important in the society.

"We are in a global system in a global world where civilization has left many nations behind. Nigeria is one among many nations that globalization has left behind in terms of the value for Girl Children. Globalization has no respect for gender as life is all about what you can offer and not about gender," she said.

According to Benjamin Atu, Chief Press Secretary to Executive Chairman Etsako East, the chairman tasked Africa leaders and the Nigerian government to wake up to her moral obligations to girl children by ensuring that they are educated. Education is the greatest weapon in correcting gender disparities, she said.

The first elected female council chairman in Edo North frowned against the high level of girl children that are still labouring under early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and the burden of care of ill parents and younger siblings. These fundamental responsibilities, she said, have in no little way jeopardised the opportunity of many to attend school and be educated.

Hon. Attoh called on the girl child to emphasize their uniqueness and compete with their male folks in various spheres of life in spite of the unique challenges girls face worldwide in promoting their rights, educa-

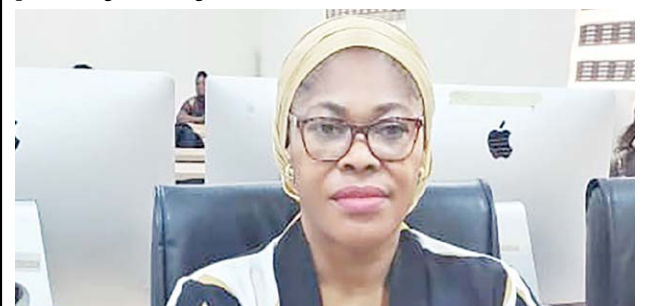
tion and empowerment.

According to her, "The key for Girl child liberation is in our hands as females. It is now Orthodox to wait for the Girl Child to be liberated by the law of the land, let us liberate ourselves from the strangulating and inhibiting laws of our culture and traditions by manifesting our best wherever we are given an opportunity to display our potential."

The Etsako East chairman blamed the high level of poverty in our society on the low level of the girl child education, maintaining that, the more females that are educated the faster the society will break out from poverty. This is because there are several benefits attached when a girl child is well educated, and some of these benefits include reducing poverty, improving the health of women and children, delay in marriage against early marriage that hinders education, reducing female genital cutting, increase self-confidence and decision-making power as well as increase the female visibility in public and private sectors.

"Educating a girl child will enable her to realize her full potential to act, question, think, and judge independently when necessary. However, the lack of this weapon of education will deny her the necessary skills to advance her status in society, hence the continuous discrimination against girls.

"As a female chairman of Etsako East, I want Etsako East girls to be inspired that they have me to always make a case for them. My office is constantly open to receive and support you as well as encourage our girls to fulfill their dreams. You can count on me as I wish you all happy Girls Day", she said.



HON. (PRINCESS) BENEDICTA ATTOH

# EdoGIS gets best state GIS in Nigeria award

TUNDE EIGBIREMOLEN

The Edo State Geographic Information Service (EDOGIS) at the weekend earned the Most Prestigious Award of being the Best GIS in Nigeria, at the nation's Federal Capital City, Abuja. The award was given by the Nigeria GovTech Public Service in recognition of EDOGIS as the Best State GIS in the country in 2024.

Recall that recently, more

states of the federation, particularly from the South-East, have visited Edo State Geographic Information Service (EDOGIS) to understudy the Agency with a view to getting their own GIS right, the way Edo State has done.

Within a space of two months early this year, Cross River, Enugu, Anambra and Abia states, in quick succession, took their turns to come to EDOGIS to learn from the Agency, considered to be

the Most - Structured in the South-South of Nigeria.

This followed the huge financial, technological and human capital investment of Governor Godwin Obaseki in EDOGIS.

On Monday, June 24, 2024 a 19-man delegation from the Anambra State Ministry of Lands led by the Permanent Secretary, Barr. (Mrs) Nkiruka Mokwe, was in Benin City to understudy EDOGIS; to learn and compare notes with the

Agency officials on how best to get their acts right.

The next day, Tuesday, June 25, 2024 another 15-member delegation from Abia State, led by the Surveyor-General of the State, Surv. N.K.C Abaraonye took their turn to visit EDOGIS and to learn, first-hand, how the Agency has perfected its business and made land administration in the state seamless.

The Managing Director, EDOGIS, ESV. Osaro Grace

Aihie, who conducted the teams round the offices, also painstakingly tutored them on the dynamics of the EDOGIS magic wand, leveraging on the template provided by His Excellency, Governor Godwin Obaseki.

Similarly, the six combined states in the Niger Delta, which make up the BRACED States (Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Delta) during their three-day strategic retreat organized by the Heads of Service in the region in Benin City, Edo State, took a working visit to EDOGIS to assess the level of digitisation of the Agency's operations and to seek ways of collaboration.

We recall too that on February 4, 2024 a GIS team from Enugu came; March 28, 2024, it was the turn of Cross River Geographic Information Agency (GIA); May 12, 2024 Abia Commissioner for Lands, Hon. Chaka Chukwumerijie visited to learn and take notes on the operations of the EDOGIS; June 24, 2024, Anambra Ministry of Lands

and Survey delegation took their turn, while next day on June 25, Abia made a second visit, this time, led by the Surveyor-General of the State.

It must be noted that these series of visits by other GIS agencies were not mere coincidence.

They were the aftermath of the monumental and remarkable achievements of EDOGIS in terms of its seamless land administration based on the huge financial, technological and human capital investment of His Excellency, Governor Godwin Obaseki in the operations of EDOGIS.

This has resulted in the Agency being declared and acknowledged as the "Best and Most Structured GIS not only in the South South of Nigeria", but the Country as a whole.

At the end of the visits, the teams were full of commendation for Governor Obaseki and the MD of EDOGIS, ESV Osaro Grace Aihie, for the great reforms that made the Agency to stand out as the best in the South-South region and the country at large.



## BEST STATE GIS IN NIGERIA AWARD:

L-R: Managing Director, EDOGIS, ESV. Osaro Grace Aihie, joined by the Edo State Head of Service, Dr. Anthony Osas Okungbowa Esq., received the "Best State GIS in Nigeria Award" bestowed on EDOGIS in Abuja on Friday, by the Nigeria Bureau of Public Service Reforms.

# Edo TVE board trains 25 teachers on gender-inclusive education

TEDDY ERAGABAI

The Edo State Board for Technical and Vocational Education in partnership with the GIZ-SKYE programme has trained 25 teachers on Disability and Inclusive Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

This training initiative, which commenced in September 2024, involves master trainers from six states—Lagos, Ogun, Enugu, Plateau, FCT, and Edo State—and aims to strengthen the capabilities of 25 instructors from five technical and vocational colleges: Benin Technical College, Afuze Technical College, Usugbenu Technical College, Igarra Technical College, and Ehor Technical College. The programme seeks to enhance competency in addressing the unique challenges faced by learners, particularly women and persons with disabilities.

During the three-day train-

ing in Benin City, the Edo State Commissioner for Education, Dr. Joan Osa-Oviawe, encouraged participants to share the knowledge gained with their colleagues, ensuring broader access to this vital information.

Dr. Oviawe expressed gratitude to GIZ-SKYE for its ongoing support, emphasizing the importance of the partnership as the current administration prepares to transition. She highlighted the need for sustained collaboration to enhance the technical and vocational education sectors, especially in light of the anticipated changes in government.

"I commend you all for participating in this training. It's inspiring to see your commitment," Dr. Oviawe said.

She also noted the need to cultivate interest in science subjects among students,

particularly girls, as current trends show a gender disparity in enrolment within technical vocational schools.

GIZ-SKYE Programme Component Manager for Gender and Inclusion, Helen Igboka, emphasized that competency and skills development should not be influenced by gender or disability. She advocated for creating a conducive learning environment free from barriers such as harmful cultural norms and inadequate infrastructure, which hinder individuals from reaching their potential.

Igboka urged teachers to champion the cause of inclusive technical and vocational education, highlighting its role in poverty eradication and economic empowerment.

"Our goal as trainers is to help all students harness their full potential and succeed in

their chosen fields," she said.

In his welcome address, Executive Secretary of the Edo State TVE Board, Dr. Terseer Nyulaku, represented by the Director of Learning Development, Mercy Imasuen Isibor, underscored the necessity of inclusive practices in TVET.

"By ensuring that every individual has access to quality training, we enhance their potential and contribute to a more equitable workforce," Dr. Nyulaku said.

A Chemistry and Mathematics teacher from Afuze Technical College, Mr. Asemota Emmanuel, shared his positive experience, noting that the training broadened his perspective on inclusivity. He expressed his commitment to removing barriers to education for all students, ensuring everyone feels included and valued.

# Etsako Central calls for action in response to flooding in Ofukpo, neighbouring communities

LAMAI CASSIUS

The recent flooding in Ofukpo and neighbouring communities in Etsako Central Local Government Area has caused significant distress and displacement among its residents. As the community grapples with the aftermath of this natural disaster, an urgent action is needed by residents of the affected communities to immediately move to the IDP Camp while relevant authorities put in effort to address the challenges and support for those affected.

A press statement at the weekend by Igbonor Anthony A., Chief Press Secretary, Office of the Executive Chairman Etsako Central Council, noted that the floods in Ofukpo and neighbouring communities have led to widespread discomfort and hardship, with many residents forced to evacuate their homes and seek shelter in temporary accommodations.

The Executive Chairman of Etsako Central LGA, Hon. Solomon Obomighie, has witnessed firsthand the pain and suffering experienced by the residents in the wake of this crisis, he noted.

The councillor representing Ward 8, Ozimah Joseph, has underscored the need for immediate intervention from relevant authorities such as SEMA or NEMA to provide relief and prevent further displacement of the community members. The gravity of the situation calls

for a coordinated response to ensure the well-being of the affected residents.

In light of the urgent needs of the Ofukpo and neighbouring communities, the Executive Chairman of Etsako Central LGA calls on all affected communities to move to the IDP Camp to save life, while we call upon SEMA, NEMA, and other relevant agencies to take proactive measures to address the flooding crisis.

Swift action is essential to mitigate the impact of the disaster and alleviate the suffering of the residents. Co-ordination among local authorities, emergency response teams, and community leaders is vital in ensuring an effective response to the current situation.

The challenges posed by the flooding in Ofukpo and neighbouring communities require immediate attention and decisive action. It is imperative that all stakeholders work together to provide the necessary support, resources, and assistance to the affected residents. By responding promptly and effectively to this crisis, we can help rebuild the community and restore normalcy to the lives of those impacted by the flooding.

The chairman highlights the critical need for a swift and coordinated response to the flooding crisis in the communities, emphasizing the importance of proactive measures and collaborative efforts to address the challenges at hand.

# South-SouthReport

## Fall-out of LG election: Gov. Eno lobbies candidates with contracts, appointments

PAULINUS NTA, UYO

In a bid to pacify aggrieved candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Essien Udim, Senator Godswill Akpabio's local government election was visibly ceded to the Senate president to avoid what pundits described as political embarrassment, Governor Umo Eno has lobbied candidates of the just concluded local government election with contract and appointments.

While the chairmanship candidate, Enobong Patrick was offered a contract, the vice chairmanship candidate is to be appointed as Special Assistant (SA) to the governor. Seven councillors, whose victories were allegedly traded off to the APC, are to be appointed Personal Assistants (PA) to the governor.

It is learnt that the meeting, where the decision was taken, had in attendance the governor's kitchen cabinet members such as the Secretary to State Government, Mr. Enobong Uwah, Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Frank Archibong, and the state government's favourite contractor, Engr. Uwem Okoko of Hensek Integrated Services.

During the meeting, our sources disclosed that a case was also made for the chairmanship candidate, Engr. Enobong Patrick to be given an appointment, possibly as Commissioner or Board Chairman in addition to the contract award.

The governor however failed to make a promise to that effect, but instead said he will give it a thought.

Analysts described this move by the governor as an effort to

placate the PDP stakeholders and faithful in the local government who felt humiliated and betrayed by him for trading off their victory to APC in order to sustain his current political romance with the Senate President, Senator Godswill Akpabio.

The PDP candidates swept the election as was announced on Saturday evening by the Returning Officer sent to the local government by Akwa Ibom State Independent Electoral Commission (AKSIEC).

According to the result announced by the Returning Officer, Prof. Inyang Ating, the PDP chairmanship candidate scored 55,612 votes, while the APC candidate harvested a paltry 686 votes in Senator Godswill Akpabio's local government.

But in a swift twist, the governor is said to have reached an understanding with the Senate

president to concede the local government area to him in order not to embarrass him.

Unconfirmed sources said Akpabio earlier demanded concessions in four other local government areas in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District. This, our correspondent learnt, was blatantly rejected by the governor's political advisers.

To the shock of many followers of the election and the consternation of the Essien Udim PDP faithful, AKSIEC, on Sunday morning, announced the APC candidate, Hon. Ntiedo Usoro was the winner of the election.

In the horse-trading, the governor is said to have thrown the party in the LGA and its candidates under the bus. Seven councillors seats were traded off to the APC while PDP was given six seats.

## Traditional ruler commends LG boss for job well done in Ika

AJUWA VICTOR

The traditional ruler of Abavo Kingdom, His Royal Majesty, Obi Uche Irenuma 11, has described the chairman of Ika South Local Government, Engr. Jerry Ehiwarior, as a resourceful leader desirous of enhancing development in the local government area.

The Obi made the description at his palace when he received the chairman of the local government, Engr. Ehiwarior and management team of the local government who came to felicitate with him on the occasion of New Yam festival of Abavo Kingdom.

The Abavo Monarch, who was full of praise for the chairman, said he was particularly impressed with his governance approach which, he said, was geared towards the accelerated development of the area.

"I am glad that we now have a youthful and resourceful young man piloting the affairs of our local government. With the reports we are getting, I can boldly say he is doing a great job.

"I am aware that there are numerous ongoing projects in different parts of Ika South initiated by the current administration. I believe the projects, when completed, will have a favourable impact on our people. I want to sincerely commend you for starting on a good note.

Do not lower the pace, as we are praying for you to succeed in your assignment," he stated.

Obi Irenuma urged the chairman to put measures in place to fight crime in Ika South, affirming that 'Abavo seems to be the epicentre of insecurity especially kidnapping,' which, he said, the community had had to contend with in recent times.

He assured Engr. Ehiwarior of the necessary support of Abavo people, and urged him to 'ensure security operatives are encouraged to be diligent in the fight against insecurity.'

Earlier, Engr. Ehiwarior expressed gratitude to the traditional ruler for his support and encouragement since he assumed office, noting that the support he had received of the traditional institution so far had been overwhelming, as the high level of support had been one of the core factors spurring him to do more for the people of Ika South.

He assured the Obi that every part of the local government area would receive the development attention of his administration, pointing out that he was elected to serve the people, and, therefore, would not fail them.

The chairman informed the king that efforts were on to effectively tackle crime and make the local government area safer, and called on residents to be vigilant and work as partners in the development of Ika South.



### 4TH EDITION OF THE BOWFT:

Six teams that failed to qualify for the quarter-finals in the 4th edition of the Betsy Obaseki Women Football Tournament (BOWFT) received consolation prizes from the chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Yusuf Alli, on behalf of the visioner and Edo State First Lady, Dr. (Mrs.) Betsy Obaseki, at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City, weekend, for participating in the tournament.

## I did not attack cocoa plantation worker with thugs as alleged – MD of Two Ends Nig. Ltd

PATRICK ABANG, CALABAR

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Two Ends Nigeria Limited, Mr. Njor Asu, has refuted allegation of taking part in the purported attack of workers of a rival cocoa farmer, Mr. Mark Prince, who accused him last week of attacking his workers with thugs at Abonita Cocoa Estate.

Njor made the refutation while answering questions from journalists Thursday in Calabar, stressing that the baseless allegation was orchestrated by Mr. Mark Prince to tarnish the good reputation he had worked tirelessly to earn.

"How could I have attacked Mark Prince's workers; am I a

spirit, to be in Calabar and at Abonita Cocoa Farm on the same day when he said the attack took place at Abonita Cocoa Plantation in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State?

"I was in Calabar, on September 30, and October 4, 2024, in preparation for a court session that took place October 2, 2024, by the publications which Mark Prince used to drag my name to the mud. That incident happened on October 2, this year, it means I was at Odukpani and at the same time at Abonita Cocoa Plantation to attack Mark Prince's worker.

"I don't understand if I had become a spirit to be in two different locations that are beyond 200 kms at the same time. Cala-

bar to Ikom Local Government Area is about 217 kms.

"It takes approximately about 3hrs and 9minutes or even beyond that to drive from Calabar to Ikom and another 7km to Agbokim where we have Abonita Cocoa Farm that had been in contention between Mark Prince and Mr. Asu Njor.

"You can see that it is a cooked story. Mark Prince's lawyer, the government lawyer and Barr. Mba Ukwani (SAN) who were in court on the day of the purported incident can attest to the fact that on October 2, and we came back to Ikom on October 4, I would be grateful if this allegation is investigated.

"Ask those who are from Etung

Local Government about my character to know if I am that kind of person. I'm not a violent person but a peaceful person. I see the allegations as a calculated attempt to cause disaffection, lower my reputation in the eyes of right thinking individuals and cause people to shun and avoid me. This is a lie from the pit of hell.

"For my native name and name of my company to be mentioned in the allegation, it shows that they had a plan to lie against me," the Two Ends MD maintained.

Njor accused Mark Prince of using military personnel on the Mfum Ekuk-Cameroon border axis to beat up one of Njor's workers, Effiong Asuquo, at Block 7A, 77.

## Hon. Oforji is a detribalized politician – KOLGA monarch

PHILIP EKE, YENAGOA

Paramount ruler of Abuwari in Opokuma Clan in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area (KOLGA) of Bayelsa State, HRH Chief Richard Boleigha (Abu XII), has described member representing Yenagoa/Kolokuma – Opokuma Federal Constituency, Hon. Oforji Oboku, as a blessing to KOLGA due to his benevolence and quality representation in the National Assembly.

Monarch Boleigha, who gave the description during a talk with New Waves in his palace in Abuwari, said the lawmaker displayed an uncommon fear by impacting positively on communities within KOLGA, noting that it has brought succor to the people of the area.

According to him, it was the first of its kind that a serving member of the House of Representatives brought free medical outreach to the grassroots, recalling the impactful medical outreach carried out by the lawmaker recently in Kaiama, headquarters of KOLGA.

"Those who do not have

money to do an operation got theirs free during the medical outreach programme. Ordinarily, payment for operations is not less than N200,000 to N300,000 and he was able to do it free for them. This is no ordinary feat," the Abuwari monarch stated.

The lawmaker also made payments of West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) for students of the communities in KOLGA, noting that the gesture helped parents who could not afford to pay the examination fees for their children and wards.

He said, in addition, Hon. Oforji distributed brand new transformers to several communities, both in Opokuma Kingdom and Kolokuma, of which Abuwari was a major beneficiary.

"Everyone knows that transformers are costly and he was able to bring them to our door posts. Apart from us (Abuwari), Gbaranma, Odi, Kaiama were amongst others who benefitted.

# We'll take you out, Military warns Asari Dokubo

PAULINUS NTA, UYO

The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) has issued a challenge to former militant leader, Asari Dokubo, inviting him to the battlefield to witness firsthand the effectiveness of the military.

This comes after Dokubo, in a viral video last Saturday alleged that two helicopters had hovered over his home and compound for over 30 minutes. The 60-year-old interpreted

the incident as provocation from the government, police, and supporters of Nyesom Wike, the former Rivers State governor and current Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Dokubo cautioned that if the helicopters were shot down, the responsibility should not fall on him.

"I didn't go and look for the helicopter to shoot them down. I will shoot down the helicopter. I swear by Allah that I will shoot down the helicopter," he said.

In response, the Director of Defence Media Operations, Major General Edward Buba, challenged Dokubo to join the battlefield and prove his claims of competing with the military.

He vowed that the former militant leader would be neutralized and called on relevant security agencies to take action on the issue.

He said: "Now, to comment that he can shoot down military helicopters is laughable, and I am tempted to laugh

about that. We are in a democracy, and we are professional; we cannot simply act on someone's comments without due consideration, lest we be accused of being undemocratic.

"The military is not the only security agency or department in the country. Other security forces have a constitutional role to play in addressing these issues.

"I assure you that he does not possess that capability, but I will leave it to the appropriate security forces to handle

the matter. Our mandate is to confront him on the battlefield and take him out. He should come to the battlefield and see whether we can react or not.

"Our enemy is the terrorists. While some may choose to label them differently depending on the region, in the northwest and northeast, some refer to them as bandits.

"I tell you, they are all terrorists. We must label them for what they are. Troops are making significant progress; as

I mentioned, we prioritise targeting terrorist leadership, and we have successfully eliminated over 300 terrorist commanders in the last three quarters, not to mention their foot soldiers.

"Our aim is to diminish their fighting capabilities and to damage their military potential, which we have been achieving. As indicated in the brief you have just received, you can see the number of weapons and ammunition we have recovered.



## DURING COMMISSIONING:

Acting Governor of Delta State, Sir Monday Onyeme, during commissioning of the Secretariat for Special Marshals of the Federal Road Safety Corps, Delta Sector Command, Saturday.

## Security: VGN gives report on flashpoints

PHILIP EKE, YENAGOA

The Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), Bayelsa State Command, has given a security report of some areas in the Yenagoa metropolis for the months of May-August, 2024.

In the report signed by the VGN Bayelsa State/South-South Zonal Commander, Mr. Jonathan Tolumobofa, it noted that on May 5, 2024 the security outfit in collaboration with the Gwegwe Street security committee were able to restore calmness to the street by successfully securing and protecting lives and property of residents.

According to Tolumobofa, VGN also curtailed the worrisome activities of armed cult gangs from robbing and snatching people's phones, including killing innocent people, raping girls and women and burglary, among other ills.

The commander however said that on May 26, 2024 at about 9:00pm, a five-man armed gang equipped with pump action guns robbed A. A. Zurmi Business Centre, a POS/phone charging shop and stole cash and valuables including mobile phones running into hundreds of thousand at 21 Arietalin Street.

On the night of May 31, 2024, the vigilante officer said some unidentified burglars within the Arietalin axis stole 28 wrappers allegedly worth N262,000.00 from a clothes and bags shop belonging to one Mrs. Ebiere Offongo, adding that before then some other persons also burgled a provision shop owned by one Mrs. Benedicta Timothy, close to Church of God Mission, when they broke through the ceiling and stole a 50kg bag of rice.

Commenting on the month of June, the VGN commander said unidentified burglars stole computers also from the Church of God Mission, while on June 9, 2024, one suspect popularly called Barakin, in company of three others, suspected to be from Ovom enclave vandalized a transformer feeders cables (four in number and estimated to cost over two million naira) calculated to be 124ft in length at Arietalin.

"The armed gangs were fearless and confidently vandalized the cables at gunpoint. One Abson Abalaba who courageously challenged the gangsters was threatened to be killed. They also threatened one lady, Chima who resides opposite the control panel of the transformer.

"After the operation, the same armed gang also left Arietalin to vandalize a transformer and stole cables at UPE Primary Secondary School opposite Gwegwe junction on the same day", he stated.

On the report for July, 2024, the security chief said six unknown assailants with pump action gun shot at their officer, David Effiong at his residence in Obele Street around 9.00pm on July 18, 2024 on the chest and shot at another, Peter Adechi on his rib and right hand as well as two other persons on their legs.

"They were admitted at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Yenagoa Emergency ward. From our investigations, drug cartels are behind the upsurge of crime backing criminal gangs and cult boys in order to operate their drug business unhindered in the affected areas.

"Because of the incessant attacks, the community constituted a vigilante team in collaboration with the Police to counter the criminals at Obele area," Tolumobofa said.

He said that the month of August was not also left out in the brutal assault on innocent citizens as a meat seller at Swali market, called Prosper who hails from Akwa-Ibom

State was shot on the head and died as a result at Obele on the 28th of August, adding that his corpse has been deposited at the FMC morgue.

"Again on the 29th of August, 2024 one vigilante guard named George at Obele (Emi school, now defunct) was shot on his leg, waist and left hand severally around Assemblies of God Church, Obele street by Greenland Cultists.

"Their reason for attacking George was for them to have free operation at Obele as the cultists have vowed to kill vigilantes preventing them from carrying out their notorious activities", the officer said.

He explained that the resurgence of crime and criminality usually occur between March and July every year before the presence of VGN brought respite to the area from 2020-2023, tremendously impacting the area in terms of security.

The commander recommended that conventional security agencies such as the Army, Navy, Police, NCDSC embark on joint patrol campaigns with them to deter armed gangs terrorizing the affected areas and to beef up security at the Flashpoints to checkmate cultists and douse tension and fear of residents.

## Amaewhule, 26 others not reinstated by court

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM, PORT HARCOURT

The Rivers State government has insisted that the Appeal Court judgement of last Thursday in Abuja did not reinstate the Martin Amaewhule-led faction of the Rivers State House of Assembly by any stretch of imagination.

In a statement signed by the State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Israel Dagogo Iboroma, SAN, in Port Harcourt on Thursday, the government clarified that Amaewhule and 26 others had defected on December 11, 2023, adding that their seats became automatically vacant from the day they announced their defection from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC) to the whole world.

The Attorney General insisted that the issue of defection of Amaewhule and 26 others was never before the Federal High Court and the Court of Appeal, Abuja, and therefore, no court has legitimised their membership of the House of Assembly on the basis of the defection.

Iboroma said, "Today, the 10th day of October 2024, the Court of Appeal, Abuja Division dismissed Appeal No. CA/ABJ/133/CS/2024 filed by His Excellency, the Governor of Rivers State against the judgment of the Federal High Court, Abuja Division in suit No. FHC/ABJ/133/CS/2023 delivered on the 22nd day of January, 2024.

"It is important to state the facts and history of the case and the appeal thereof.

"On the 30th day of October, 2023, after the failed attempt to impeach His Excellency, the Governor of Rivers State, the Rivers State House of Assembly became polarized into two factions. The faction led by Martin Amaewhule proceeded to the Federal High Court, Abuja Division and filed Suit No. FHC/ABJ/1613/CS/2023, on the 29th day of November, 2023.

"Subsequently, on the 11th day of December, 2023, Martin Amaewhule and others defected from the Peoples Democratic Party that sponsored their election in the 2023 Legislative

Assembly Election, to the All Progressives Congress.

"By operation of Law, particularly Section 109(i) (g) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), Martin Amaewhule and 26 others automatically lost their seats as members of the Rivers State House of Assembly on the 11th day of December, 2023, as Section 109(1)(g) is self-executory as no court order is required thereof.

"His Excellency, the Governor of Rivers State on the 13th day of December, 2023, presented the 2024 Appropriation Bill to the Rivers State House of Assembly, led by Rt. Hon. Edison Ehie, who was recognized as the Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly at the time. The Appropriation Bill was later passed into Law and became the Appropriation Law of 2024. An Appropriation Law is a state law within the purview of the High Court of Rivers State.

"Following the crisis in the Rivers State House of Assembly and the intervention by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, that the parties withdraw their cases in Court, to allow peace reign, His Excellency the Governor of Rivers State obeyed the President's directive and withdrew his cases and the processes he filed in Suit No FHC/ABJ/1613/CS/2023. Martin Amaewhule and others disobeyed the President and did not withdraw Suit No. FHC/ABJ/1613/CS/2023 and proceeded to obtain judgment against His Excellency, the Governor of Rivers State.

"After the judgment of the Court of Appeal today, there is a gale of misrepresentation and misinterpretation that Martin Amaewhule & 26 others remain members of the Rivers State House of Assembly with Martin Amaewhule as the speaker thereof. This is patently false.

"The defection of Martin Amaewhule and 26 others was not an issue for determination in the Federal High Court, Abuja and the Court of Appeal. What was in issue were the 2023 Appropriation Law and the National Assembly taking over the Legislative functions of the Rivers State House of Assembly.

# EDITORIAL

## The Banks: Digital upgrades and stalling transactions

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Many of Nigeria's estimated 75 million bank account holders are set to face stalled and halting transactions in the days and weeks to come, as the country's 24 commercial banks engage in a race to migrate their core banking systems to more secure software.

The move, which many banks have already begun is expected to intensify in the coming weeks, potentially leading to further outages and transaction delays, causing hiccups to trade and investment.

It is said that the rush to upgrade is driven by the need to address rising costs and increasing security threats.

Many Nigerian banks have been paying for core banking software in US dollars which poses a rising burden, given the ongoing devaluation of

the naira.

To save cost, fend off fraud threats and help their bottom lines, banks are looking for cheaper and more secure alternatives, be they local or foreign.

Also, annual fraud count in the country has increased by 112% from 44,947 in 2019 to 95,620 in 2023, while the amount lost to fraud has grown by 496% from N2.9bn to N17.67bn within the same time, making the security concerns of the banks understandable.

Sterling Bank was one of the first to experience service outages after it transitioned from the T24 system to SEABaaS, a locally developed platform, in September. Customers were unable to transact for days during the migration. GTBank has also joined the wave, recently announcing its plan to

switch from Jordanian/UK software provider ICS Financial Services to India's Finacle platform.

Zenith Bank likewise experienced a major service outage on October 1 when it began migrating from Phoenix, developed by UK-based Finastra, to Oracle's Flexcube. Access Bank, which had scheduled its migration, recently notified its customers of a postponement. They noted that a new date for migrations would be communicated to their customers.

While the purpose of the upgrades is to improve services to customers, and stem security threats, it is curious and questionable that they should happen at the same time, given the disruptions and discomforts they are sure to cause.

Furthermore, this rush for upgrades has tended to sneak

in like a thief in the night with scanty information and short notice, leaving customers largely unprepared.

Given the critical and sensitive role that the commercial banking sector plays in Nigeria's economy by providing access to financial services, facilitating trade and investment, and supporting economic growth, the dissemination of information about the upgrades could and should have been better managed and the rush tempered and spaced out so as not to create a numbing logjam.

However, it's not too late to instil some order into the process and given the way things are going, it would behoove the industry regulator, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to move in to raise the messaging and temper the rush.

The Nigerian Observer  
**Cartoon Corner**

...that the people may know





## Promoting physical wellbeing with new habits... continued



### HAPPY WORKSPACE

by **OLAYINKA OPALEYE**

A WELL-BEING SPECIALIST AND  
CORPORATE WELLNESS STRATEGIST

Generally, there are almost a thousand character traits out there. However, research has shown that just 24 of them are considered strengths present in everyone. These attributes are further classified into six groups, namely, knowledge/wisdom, justice, temperance, humanity, courage, and transcendence.

Understanding and leveraging the core strengths that make up these categories is not just a passive act, but a transformative power that can enhance physical wellbeing and overall quality of life. Interestingly, everyone has these virtues to varying degrees, so only four to five make up your core, defining who you are and what makes you unique.

Knowing your core: As stated last week, knowing is just half a battle; applying the knowledge wins it all. The importance of being aware of one's core strengths and using them cannot be overemphasized, as they often help increase happiness levels at home and work. Moreover, knowing your top strengths gives you a sense of ownership and authenticity to the point that you want to learn how to harness

and put them to new and better use even faster. Another advantage is that because you know your strengths, you will start understanding people well enough for a peaceful co-exist. As your confidence level is boosted, you begin to thrive and flourish in every aspect of your life with a powerful burst of energy and satisfaction. Coming full circle becomes apparent with your ability to identify your areas of improvement regarding weaknesses.

Some of the impacts of this heightened level of consciousness on physical wellbeing include the ability to positively use them to reduce stress, especially those linked to various health challenges. Whenever you engage these strengths, you boost your positive emotions, build resilience, and strengthen the social connections required for better relationships. Focusing more on your core strengths increases your motivation to lead a healthier life, just like the founder of the Huffington Post did after an unfortunate incident in 2007.

Arianna Huffington was a high achieving but relentless entrepre-

neur. Seventeen years ago, her life took a different turn after she collapsed and broke her cheekbone due to exhaustion. Waking up to the reality of burnout, she put her core character strengths to positive use. With self-awareness, she could prioritize sleep, meditation, and self-care. With her resilience and courage, she launched a workplace wellness promotion platform called Thrive Global and quickly adapted her business policies to encourage flexible work hours.

Furthermore, she encouraged employees to set boundaries and prioritize wellbeing, which showed her other strengths, such as compassion and adaptability. Arianna's moves, spurred by her core virtues, impacted the entire workforce's physical and mental health. It reduced stress and burnout with improved focus, productivity, and creativity, which enhanced her company's employee engagement, job satisfaction, and work-life balance.

Social connection: All human beings are social creatures, whether we like it or not, because no one can thrive in isolation. Professor Wole Soyinka recently attested to this in an interview with CNN's Larry Madowo on African Voices. The nonagenarian admitted that even though he treasured his solitude above everything else, he still yearned for some form of company, which led to his impressive collection of artworks and carvings as

an expression of substitution.

Nurturing social connections is not just a social activity, but a significant enhancer of physical wellbeing. It can lower blood pressure, reduce inflammation and chronic pain, improve sleep quality, boost immunity, and improve cardiovascular health. The mechanisms underlying these social connections' impact are stress reduction, hormonal regulation, behavioural influence, emotional support, and practical assistance. This underscores the importance of relationships in our lives and their direct impact on our health.

The habits to cultivate these physical health benefits involve scheduling regular social activities, joining community groups or clubs, volunteering, prioritizing family and friends, and participating in neighbourhood events. A good story for this is that of a small town called Roseto in Pennsylvania in the United States, where residents lived longer and healthier lives.

According to Stewart Wolf, the researcher who studied the community in 1960, the people's strong social bonds and community habits not only contributed to their remarkable health but also fostered resilience and longevity. Their seniors and retirees were actively engaged in community work and volunteering, a testament to the value of social engagement in

our lives.

#### CALL TO ACTION

Inspired by Arianna's story, big companies started incorporating wellness programmes into their policies. Google introduced mindfulness programmes, Microsoft observed Mental Health Days, and Patagonia created an on-site childcare. What wellness programme would you be glad to see your organization implement? Kindly send your response to oopaleye@gmail.com.

*Opaleye, a wellbeing specialist and corporate wellness strategist, writes from Lagos, and can be reached on +234 8100371304*

## The President's speech

PIUS MORDI

We rarely get to hear President Bola Ahmed Tinubu speak beyond formal ceremonies. And those occasions are few and far between. That luxury ended with President Goodluck Jonathan who routinely fielded questions with journalists and had unscheduled and scheduled media chats.

Under President Muhammadu Buhari, Aso Rock was like a mountain occupied by the gods. Those that got round to meet the god of the Rock came back exultant with exuberant stories of what the president said. As governor of Lagos State, Bola Ahmed Tinubu was everywhere and spoke freely.

It took the 64th Independence anniversary for Nigerians to hear the president address them again after the uninspiring and colourless address he was coaxed into making in the heat of the #EndBadGovernance protests. Unfortunately, when a leader has not connected with his people for what is generally seen as an unusually long time, he tends to see such occasions as an opportunity to justify his time in office.

Invariably, it ends up sounding like a campaign speech. For the people, they already see it differently even before the address is made. That perception builds an air of skepticism and distrust. President Tinubu used the Independence address to unveil what he considered to be his landmark accomplishments recorded in his 16 months in office. Expectedly, it met a brick wall and was roundly savaged.

As a presidential aspirant, he never

attended any debate or unveiled any economic reform agenda. His promise to scrap the subsidy on petrol was not peculiar to him. Other presidential aspirants, including his main rivals, equally promised to do away with the controversial regime. Where he differed was to infamously announce that subsidy had ceased right from the moment of his swearing in. It was not part of his inaugural address and the fact that he made the pronouncement without a road map on its implementation was not lost on Nigerians. The economic chaos that followed only reinforced the air of distrust.

Having acknowledged the "struggles many of you face in these challenging times", Tinubu went for the esoteric in explaining how his reforms were addressing the challenges. "Thanks to the reforms, our country attracted foreign direct investments worth more than \$30 billion in the last year", he declared. Additionally, "we have cleared the Ways and Means debt of over N30 trillion", he claimed. It was a claim that did not resonate with people knowledgeable with the dynamics of the economy. In the second quarter of 2024 (April to June), the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) had reported that Foreign Direct Investment amounted to only \$28.83 million. Just imagine if that stupendous \$30 billion was truly ploughed into the economy. Or the wayward printing of the naira by Buhari under Ways and Means that was supposed to be cleared over a 40-year period was suddenly paid by Tinubu. When President Olusegun Obasanjo successfully negotiated the repayment of Nigeria's external debt owed

to the Paris Club and other foreign creditors, he did not have to wait for a national event to announce it. He did so promptly through a nationwide address. And it was momentous.

With nothing having been heard from the president for a considerable time, his October 1 claim attracted widespread incredulity. The claims were made campaign-style. What Nigerians looked forward to hearing from their president was a clearly defined strategy on how their hardship could be alleviated beyond the token of distributing some kilogrammes of rice that got to only a few. In the absence of such news, the repeated call for more patience for the reforms to kick in was hollow.

The address was devoid of the message of hope Nigerians have been waiting for. Even though he proclaimed empathy for their hardship, the choice of achievements to flaunt was academic. How does the payment of Ways and Means of N30 trillion impact their wellbeing? What is the wisdom in considering the conferment of awards on politicians at a time the government had inflicted untold pain and hardship on the people to be cheery news to the people in a national day address? The president's failure to connect with the people through regular communication only for media aides to issue routine press statements has created a huge gap that watered an already inevitable fertile ground for distrust to deepen.

#### EGBETOKUN'S GAMBIT

The Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, displayed the classical inclination of typical pub-

lic office to scandalously show their loyalty to whoever appointed them to office, rather than the country. They are not inspired by goings-on in other climes where public office holders stand firm with their oath of office to defend the rule of law. The resilience of Mike Pence who shunned all entreaties and threats from maverick President Donald Trump to manipulate the process of confirming the victory of Joe Biden does not inspire Nigerian politicians. After emerging Senate President, Godswill Akpabio did not hesitate to demonstrate where his loyalty lies. In an early state event, he chose Tinubu's customized headgear to show his appreciation and loyalty to the man that ensured his emergence.

In the recent council election in Rivers State, all the powers domiciled in Abuja were deployed to frustrate the election as part of the concerted bid to oust Sim Fubara from Government House in Port Harcourt. When Governor Fubara outwitted them, Egbetokun contrived to take over the headquarters of the State Independent Electoral Commission and scuttle the election. Beaten to the game, Egbetokun's belated explanation for invading the premises is dumb. He recalled the Policemen already premises only to replace them still with his men specially deployed to the state for the election.

Egbetokun epitomizes the deep seated challenge of having strong institutions in the polity. His oath of office to uphold the rule of law and maintain order ranks second to doing what will please his boss even when such directives undermine the

independent status of a state that like others ceded some of its powers to the government at the centre. If there was any proof that the proposed bid to hand over state council elections to Aso Rock's INEC is a brazen attempt at state capture, the failed attempts by Abuja to hand over Rivers State to their post boy on power grab, Nyesom Wike, will threaten democracy in Nigeria has demonstrated it.

Yes, state electoral commissions organize sham elections, but they took it from INEC's playbook. If INEC decides to play by the rule and organize credible elections, the states will follow suit. Abuja cannot impose the do-what-I-say-and-not-what-I-do doctrine. This is still a federal republic despite its numerous imperfections.

*Mordi, a veteran journalist/ columnist, writes from Asaba, the Delta State capital*

# Why Niger Delta region is achieving peace and progress

Many years ago, a certain sage within the religious circle was asked to name the three most important virtues to mankind, and he thus responded; the first is humility, the second is humility and the third is humility. This is because it is through humility that every other virtue flows. Without humility, every other virtue will lose their meaning, he concluded.

In like manner, if I am asked to mention three factors responsible for the sustained peace and progress presently enjoyed in the Niger Delta region, I need not pause to figure out that the three factors are, leadership, leadership and leadership.

Before delving into details of how leadership is rewriting the narrative of the region, it is always important, at least for the benefits of the readers, to highlight the region's condition before now.

Aside from being perceived as a backward and degraded region, occasioned by crude oil exploration, exploitation and production, the Niger Delta region before now was considered as a location where fierce war raged between ethnic and social forces in Nigeria over the ownership and control of oil resources. And as a direct result, a long dark shadow was cast on efforts to improve the wellbeing and economic development of the region's individuals, peoples, and communities.

To curb the scenario, the Federal Government in 2000 established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as a response to the social and economic crisis in the Niger Delta. It was conceived as an organization with the capacity to articulate the developmental needs of the Niger Delta and draw up a master plan for economic and social development in the region. This much is evident in the agency's mission and vision statement. It expresses its mission as "to facilitate the rapid, even and sustainable development of the

Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful." The vision of the agency is "to offer a lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta region." The strategy for accomplishing its mission includes the preparation and implementation of a master plan.

But contrary to expectation of bringing coordinated development, the agency for many years, through protracted rancorous relationships that at different times and places existed between the members of the governing boards and managements, became a clog to achieving its statutory objective and brought to a halt the wheels of development of the region.

This ugly occurrence affected the region's peace and development because as the saying goes, "when two elephants fight, the grass suffers".

The situation was so bad that analysts described NDDC as a temporary political configuration set up by the Federal Government with neither the capacity to ease the tension in the area nor provide concrete solution to the socioeconomic and infrastructural challenges that bedevilled the region. That argument and perception lasted for an appreciable period of time.

However, today, there is a change in narrative as squabbles within the Commission have become a thing of the past. The NDDC may not have reached where it is supposed to be but in the last 10 months, it has moved far from where it used to be and the people of the region feel and appreciate this rising hope.

The emergence of Mr. Chiedu Ebieled governing board and management has without doubt fought and won the menace division that used to characterize the governing board and management. The new leadership were intentional in unravelling subterfuges and impediments placed on the Commission's part to peace and from the be-

ginning, resolved to put to rest the ghost of this notorious malady.

Undoubtedly, it may be convenient for some to argue that the present peace and ongoing development flows from luck and therefore sees nothing spectacular or newsworthy about it. But for Niger Deltans of goodwill with critical minds and interests, it goes beyond luck to include the art and science of the present leadership monitoring and analysing past trends, understanding how such occurrences set the stage for past failures and avoiding similar mistakes, recognizing the strategic importance of stakeholders and implementing planned programmes and mutually reinforcing action for the benefit of NDDC as a Commission and Niger Delta region and its people.

Take as an illustration of assertion on the present leadership's respect for planning and maintaining strategic relationships, during the inauguration of the NDDC board in November, 2023, at the Conference Room of the Ministry of Niger Delta Development in Abuja, the Chairman of the board, Chiedu Ebie, stressed the need for collaboration with all stakeholders in driving the 'Renewed Hope Agenda' of the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, for Nigeria and the Niger Delta region in particular.

He stated: "To maintain focus on our development efforts, the Board will honour and collaborate with critical stakeholders in the region. We will execute legacy projects based on detailed needs assessment. Furthermore, we will seek strategic collaborations and partnerships with opinion leaders, community leaders, professionals and development partners to leverage constructive and attainable outlooks."

The NDDC chairman remarked that effective communication with key stakeholders was paramount in the discharge of the Commission's duties, noting that it would foster trust, restore



## UTOMI'S NOTE

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

transparency and promote accountability. Ebie affirmed: "The board will stand on the pedestal of Mr. President's Renewed Hope mantra. We will look back at the vision and history of NDDC's 23-year existential journey, aligning it with current realities and the objectives of the current administration.

"In tandem with the Presidency, National Assembly and Ministry of Niger Delta Development, we will take coordinated steps to come up with plans that will systematically guide our actions and efforts in actualizing our mandate. "We earnestly seek the support and goodwill of stakeholders and people of the Niger Delta Region to enable us usher in a new era of vitality, hope, peace and sustainable development for the region," he said.

Providing level playing ground for all Niger Deltans to opportunities irrespective of tribe, sex, creed, social or political status, is another sterling example of how the present leadership and management of the Commission is promoting peace and attracting development.

Take as another illustration, speaking recently in Port Harcourt, during the launch of the second phase of Holistic Opportunities Programmes for Engagement, Project HOPE, which has registered 3.2million youths, the Commission's Managing Director, Dr. Samuel Ogbuku reportedly said "Over the years what has been happening is that because of political interests, people are given slots to nominate participants for empowerment programmes and most of these participants never had passion for these training programmes. After the training programmes, you see people selling off the starter-packs and oth-

er equipment that were given to them after the training.

"In this case, we believe that once we pick you from the data based on your area of interest and passion, you are going to excel from there. And since you are in our database, we will also have our monitoring process to track your performance."

While noting that the second phase is the implementation phase of eight meticulously designed programmes aimed at creating jobs and empowering our youth across various sectors such as agriculture and technology, he noted that the success of Project HOPE requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders and therefore encouraged the Niger Delta youths to embrace the opportunities with zeal and determination."

This piece holds the opinion that there is no way peace and development will not flourish in any environment where people with development mindset like members of the NDDC governing board and management are in charge. The present NDDC governing board and management have truly strengthened the belief and in the past ten months demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that leadership is everything just as "everything rises and falls on Leadership".

For me, what they need is our collective support and not distractions.

*Utomi is the programme coordinator (media and public policy), Social and Economic Justice Advocacy (SEJA), a Lagos-based NGO*

## No-tithe-no-heaven: Daddy Adeboye's u-turn

JUSTIN UWADIA

Since the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, made his controversial apology that those who do not pay tithe would not make heaven, the mainstream and social media have been awashed with comments and editorials on the matter.

Their opinions have even drawn more controversies with some claiming that Pastor Adeboye's apology meant that payment of tithes is not necessary to make heaven. The exact words of Pastor Adeboye were: 'I am going to be apologizing for making a mistake, for saying that if you don't pay tithe, you might not make it to heaven. I am sorry; that is wrong. That is not in the bible. What the bible says is, be at peace with all men and holiness, without which, no man shall see God...'

From his quote, it is very clear that the religious leader never asked people not to pay tithe. However, he was right and humble to have apologised for linking payment of tithe to going to heaven because the bible did not say so. Moreover, Deuteronomy 4:2 clearly states that: 'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.' However, there is an element of

controversy in his apology and Pastor Adeboye understood this when he said 'now, listen to me. It is possible to be right and wrong at the same time...' The bible states in Exodus 20:15 'you shall not steal.' Payment of tithe is a biblical command as stated in Malachi 3:10-12, which also states the benefits of paying tithes.

In the same Malachi 3:8-9, the bible describes those who do not pay tithes as robbers and under a curse. The question, therefore, is will those who steal/rob make heaven? For those whose answer is No, they can make meaning from what Pastor Adeboye said that it is possible to be right and wrong at the same time - the payment or non-payment of tithe and not making heaven is not in the bible, yet, it is God's command.

Even when Pastor Adeboye held his earlier position, it was not compulsory, but optional for any member of the RCCG to pay tithes. Those who do not pay tithes have their reasons as it is for those who pay.

For some Christians who do not pay tithes, their reason is that the command was directed at the Levites. Conversely, those who pay tithes have their reasons and until and unless otherwise, nothing will stop them. Tithe payment should not be added to the

recent controversies in Christendom.

For a while now, some Pastors and General Overseers have openly condemned religious beliefs they hitherto espoused on the altars of God, while some have joined in condemning the beliefs and religious practices of other pastors and churches. It is beginning to look like doggy dog world scenarios. The Christian faith took aback when well known Televangelist, Benny Hynn, apologized for his many years of prosperity gospel and prophecies not authorized by God. Lately, the Senior Pastor, Kingdom Life Network, Abel Damina, has been making headline news while some religious ministers claim his preachings are heresies.

The sermons associated with Pastor Damina include: 'your spirit is the holy spirit; Jesus is not the Lion of the tribe of Judah; Angel does not know much; Abraham was a dubious businessman - we should copy only his faith; God didn't tell Noah to build ark; Sin does not condemn anyone; Mary, the mother of Jesus was never a virgin.' For many Nigerian Christians, the heresies of Pastor Damina are not in any way near that of the Indian-British, Salmon Rushdie in his book, The Satanic Verses, first published in 1988, while for others, he is preaching the truth.

Ordinarily, the body of Christ is

one. But different denominations have come up with different doctrines and beliefs, making it look as if the bible contradicts itself. A good example is drinking alcohol. Many Christians or denominations take alcohol and many are tuthetolas. Both classes cite the bible as the basis for their decisions.

For those that take, they point to the bible verse where Jesus turned water into wine, John 2:7-10. Also, 1Timothy 5:23, states: 'No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.' Ecclesiastes 10:19 is categorical that 'a feast is made for laughter, wine makes life merry...'

Conversely, there are Christians who are tuthetolas simply because the bible makes references to the dangers of taking alcoholic drinks. For example, Proverbs 20:1 is clear that "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." It is for this reason John Fautit Saville said that 'the sight of a drunkard is a better sermon against the vice than the best that was ever preached on the subject.'

Many people have met their Waterloo or caused the deaths of others as a result of drunkenness. So, when the bible says in Proverbs 31:6: 'Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish and wine unto the bitter in soul,' we should understand

what it means. Nevertheless, the bible did not condemn drinking of alcohol. My understanding is that Christians should drink moderately and not get drunk as drunkenness can lead to sin and death.

There are other controversial topics in the bible. For example, polygamy versus monogamy. Some polygamists in the Old Testament that God lauded for doing exploits were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, while the chief chronic polygamist was Solomon. But critics of polygamy would say these examples are in the Old Testament. Yet, it is the same Old Testament in Malachi that those in support of tithe payment anchor their reference.

In order not to be confused by preachings of some so-called 'Men of God', Christians must read and understand the bible for themselves, as recommended in 2Timothy 2:15 'study to show your self approved like a workman rightly dividing the word.' Finally, 2Timothy: 2:19, states that 'the Lord knows those who are His.' There is only one way to make heaven: 'fear God and keep His commandments for this is the only duty of man' - Ecclesiastes 12:13.

*Uwadia, an administrator/columnist, writes from Benin City, the Edo State capital*

# Aradel Holdings to list 4.34bn shares on NGX Oct 14

TELIAT SULE

The authorities of the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) will list 4,344,844,360 ordinary shares of 50 Kobo each of Aradel Holdings on the Main Board of NGX today, October 14, 2024. Each share of the company will be listed at N702.69 per

share, the NGX has disclosed through a notice sent to the stakeholders.

"We are delighted to invite you to the "Facts Behind the Listing" presentation and "Closing Gong Ceremony" by the board and management of Aradel Holdings Plc. This event represents a significant milestone for the company as

it prepares to list 4,344,844,360 ordinary shares of 50 Kobo each at N702.69 per share on the Main Board of Nigerian Exchange Limited.

"Led by Mr. Ladi Jadesimi, Chairman, Aradel Holdings Plc, the Executive Management

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# Nigerian Economic Summit 2024 begins Oct. 14

ERHUVWU ETARHIENYO

The 30th Nigerian Economic Summit (NES) will begin on October 14, 2024 at the nation's capital, Abuja, where sessions have been packaged for an inspiring blend of conversations that will leave participants brimming with new ideas and perspectives.

The annual programme, organised by the Nigerian Eco-

nommic Summit Group (NESG), will have in attendance CEOs and investors from the local and international investing communities. The summit will be focusing on ways to enhance economic growth, competitiveness and stability.

"The summit will emphasize the importance of achieving Africa's aspirations in a new global context through bold ideas and actions, supported by strong leadership at the in-

dustry, national, regional and global levels," NESG said.

The summit will begin on Monday 14th October to Wednesday 16th October, 2024 with the theme being "Collaborative Action for Growth, competitiveness and stability".

Panel discussions will focus on topical issues including regulatory reforms for economic

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The Nigerian Observer *...that the people may know*

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MON. 14TH – THUR. 17TH OCT, 2024 [www.nigerianobservernews.com](http://www.nigerianobservernews.com)

# NNPC, IOCs sign gas deal for \$3.5bn Brass Fertilizer Project in Bayelsa

● *as Petroleum Ministry inaugurates committees to drive gas utilisation*

TELIAT SULE,  
ERHUVWU ETARHIENYO  
AND VIVIAN OKAFOR

Nigeria's fertilizer industry received a boost at the weekend when the nation's oil and gas industry regulator, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) and three other International Oil companies (IOCs) announced the signing of a Gas Sales and Purchase Agreement (GSPA) for the \$3.5bn Brass Fertilizer and Petrochemical Company Limited in Bayelsa State, south-south Nigeria.

The agreement was supervised by the Minister of State Petroleum Resources (Gas), Ekperikpe Ekpo.

According to the disclosure made by the minister, the Joint Venture Partners include the NNPCL, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), TotalEnergies, and the Italian petroleum giant, Eni. The agreement will ensure the supply of 270 million standard cubic feet of gas per day to Bayelsa Fertilizer and Petrochemical Company Limited marking it the largest single GSPA to any domestic gas off-taker in Nigeria.

Brass Fertilizer & Petrochemical Company Limited (BFPCL), a registered compa-

ny in Nigeria since 2009, is the sponsor of the Brass Methanol Project. The firm is a joint venture between DSV Engineering Limited (DSV) and two Nigerian state-owned enterprises – the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) and the Nigerian Content Development & Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

BFPCL is located on Brass Island in Bayelsa State, Nigeria and is made up of a number of elements that include a gas supply network comprising gas fields, wells and pipelines, a natural gas processing plant, a methanol production and refining plant, product export facilities, and associated utilities and infrastructure.

"After nearly a decade of what appeared a herculean hurdle to scale through, I had the privilege of supervising the signing of a landmark Gas Sales and Purchase Agreement (GSPA) for the Brass Fertilizer and Petrochemical Project in Bayelsa State.

"Let me state that this project is expected to generate over \$1.5 billion annually from the export of fertilizers, petrochemicals, and gas-based products, directly benefiting our economy. It will also reduce fertilizer imports by 30%, saving the country \$200 million annually in foreign

exchange, and contribute \$600 million annually to our GDP," Ekpo said on his X handle (Formerly Twitter).

"More importantly, the project will create over 5,000 direct jobs and 35,000 indirect jobs, uplifting livelihoods, especially in the Niger Delta region.

"Without doubt, this project will transform the host Bayelsa State, offering economic benefits, jobs, and development for

the local community, while also enhancing Nigeria's energy security," he added.

The latest progress recorded in the nation's oil and gas sector, followed the earlier announcement that Nigeria would soon receive investments worth \$50 billion in its oil and gas industry. It also followed the inauguration of two committees saddled with the responsibility to drive the

utilisation of the country's gas resources.

"With \$50 billion in investments expected, it is evident that our efforts to attract more investment and promote investment in the oil sector, aimed at ramping up production, are yielding results. And we are not stopping yet," Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State Petroleum Resources (Oil), said.

"We have moved production from the 1 million barrels per day (mbpd) I met on the ground to 1.5 mbpd, though our target is to go beyond that, and we are on course. Achieving this has required significant investment from International Oil Companies (IOCs) and Indigenous Petroleum

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**GAS SALES AND PURCHASE AGREEMENT:**

Ekperikpe Ekpo (centre), Minister of State Petroleum Resources (Gas), and delegates from IOCs, during the signing of Gas Sales and Purchase Agreement in Abuja.

**CUSTOMS LILYPOND COMMAND FACILITATES AGRIC EXPORTS WORTH \$937M IN Q3 2024**  
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**EDO INTENSIFIES INVESTMENT PROMOTION DRIVE, ONBOARDS LGAS OF ONE-STOP-INVESTMENT CENTRE**  
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**BOARD MEETINGS, AGMS SCHEDULED FOR OCT. 2024**  
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**AFDB, PARTNERS TO FAST TRACK SPECIAL AGRO INDUSTRIAL ZONES IN NIGERIA**  
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# Customs Lilypond Command facilitates agric exports worth \$937m in Q3 2024

FAITH AIGBE

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) Lilypond Export Command (LEXC) has announced a significant leap in export activities for the third quarter of 2024. The Command facilitated the export of agricultural and manufactured goods valued at \$937,357,129.90, marking an astounding 407.05 percent increase compared to the

\$184,880,029.35 recorded in the second quarter of the year.

The disclosure was made at the command headquarters in Apapa, Lagos State as Customs Area Controller (CAC) Comptroller Odusanya attributed this remarkable growth to the consolidation of export operations at the Lilypond Command.

"This substantial rise can be attributed to enhanced efficiency following the consolidation of export seats at the

LEXC," he noted.

The third-quarter surge reflected the impact of improved processes, with export activities benefiting from streamlined procedures. In September alone, the LEXC processed 3,363 export containers, totaling 221,961.53 metric tons of goods, with a declared value of \$202,267,327.46. September's operations also generated N1.49 billion through the Nigerian Export Supervision Scheme (NESS) and N88.3 mil-

lion in duties on exports of previously imported goods under the 2022 Fiscal Policy.

Comptroller Odusanya highlighted the benefits of centralizing export seats, eliminating bureaucratic bottlenecks, and enhancing compliance with customs guidelines.

"The centralisation of export operations has allowed for faster processing times for export documentation, improved compliance with NCS guide-

lines, and a more transparent and traceable export value chain," he said.

He also commended the dedication of customs officers and collaboration with regulatory agencies, expressing confidence that the ongoing reforms would further boost Nigeria's

global competitiveness in exports.

With continued improvements in place, the LEXC is set to further facilitate Nigeria's economic growth by enhancing export processes and reducing logistical challenges faced by exporters.

## Board meetings, AGMs scheduled for Oct. 2024

ONYNYECHUKWU JULIET

Some listed companies on the Nigerian Exchange Group [NGX] have started releasing the dates for their fourth quarter 2024 board meetings, in preparation to release their financial statements for the period.

Most companies will be holding their board of directors' meetings, while a few will hold their Annual General Meetings [AGMs] in October 2024. Board meetings are held at intervals to check the performance of a company, their financial statements, while AGMs are held once every year.

Based on the compilations done by the Nigerian Observer, below are some of the companies that will hold their board meetings, and their Annual General Meetings in October 2024.

The Nigerian Observer will continue to update this table more often as companies release the dates of their board meetings and Annual General Meetings on the Nigerian Exchange Group [NGX].

COMPANY NAME	DATE OF MEETING	MEETING TYPE
United Banks for Africa Plc	17th October 2024	Board Meeting
Nigeria Breweries	23rd October 2024	Board Meeting
Guinness Nigeria Plc	23rd October 202	Annual General Meeting
Africa Prudential Plc	23rd October 2024	Board Meeting
Chemical and Allied Product Plc	23rd October 2024	Board Meeting
NCR NIGERIA PLC	23rd October 2024	Board Meeting
NPF Microfinance Bank plc	24th October 2024	Board Meeting
Fidelity Bank	24th October 2024	Board Meeting
Zenith Bank Plc	24th October 2024	Board Meeting
Lasaco Assurance Company	25th October 2024	Annual General Meeting
Okumu Oil Palm Company Plc	25th October 2024	Board Meeting
Tripple Gee and Company Plc	25th October 2024	Annual General Meeting
FCMB	25th October 2024	Board Meeting
SUNU Assurances Nigeria Plc	25th October 202	Board Meeting
Skyway Aviation Handling Company Plc	25th October 2024	Board Meeting
Meyer Plc	28th October 2024	Board Meeting
Presco Plc	28th October 2024	Board Meeting
Nigerian Aviation Handling Company	28th October 2024	Board Meeting
Custodian Investment Plc	29th October 2024	Board Meeting
Mrs Oil Nigeria	29th October 2024	Board Meeting
FBN Holding	29th October 2024	Board Meeting
Prestige Assurance Plc	29th October 2024	Board Meeting
Access Holdings	30th October 2024	Board Meeting

## Italian Neos commences direct flight to Nigeria Oct. 30

ONYNYECHUKWU JULIET

Italian Neos, a leading European airline, has announced the commencement of direct flights from Milano, Italy to Lagos, Nigeria effective on the 30th of October 2024. The airline will run once a week for the first month and increase its frequency to three times a week by the second month of its operations. The airline would operate a Boeing 787-800 before it will deploy a wider body aircraft.

According to Neos air, flight tickets will start from 210 euros.

According to AlpiTour World, Neos is Italy's second largest airline and a leader in the aviation sector. Specialising in major holiday routes, it has one of Boeing's youngest fleets in Europe, with 16 state-of-the-art aircraft. It covers short-, medium- and long-haul destinations, in the main holiday destinations in the world, flying from the main Italian airports: Milano Malpensa, Verona, Rome and Bologna.

Neos Airline was initially es-

tablished as an airline supporting the tour operating area, it now also operates scheduled flights and carries out cargo flights, ad hoc operations and cross-sector partnerships to expand its business.

Neos is able to operate with 20 percent less fuel consumption compared to previous generation aircraft, as well as to ensure the highest safety and quality standards on board.

"Neos Air's low-cost flights to Lagos connect Italy to this fascinating and modern city, which

is a pleasure to discover. Be captivated by its lively and creative atmosphere and enchanting beaches. Thanks to direct flights to Lagos, getting to your destination is easy and straightforward. On our site you can check all the flight offers to Lagos: just choose the date you prefer and get ready for departure," Neos Air said.

This development is coming after the return of Emirates Airlines to Nigeria, indicating the growing confidence of the global airline brands in the Nigerian economy.

## What moved the local and global markets last week?

MERISTEM SECURITIES

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that inflation eased to 2.40 percent in September 2024, down from 2.50 percent in August, marking the lowest level since February 2021. This decline was primarily driven by falling gas prices, which offset modest increases in food costs, while service sector prices remained

elevated. Improved labour market conditions also contributed, with hiring picking up in September and the unemployment rate dipping from 4.20 percent to 4.10 percent.

Looking ahead, we expect inflation to continue its downward trend, supported by lower gas prices and stronger employment figures. This positive trajectory brings inflation closer to the Federal Reserve's 2.00 percent

target, raising the possibility of a rate cut in their upcoming meeting. However, geopolitical tensions between Iran and Israel pose a potential risk to this outlook, especially if its significantly impacts global energy prices.

The UK's economy grew by 0.20 percent in August, bouncing back after two months of stagnation, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The growth was sup-

ported across all major sectors, with strong gains in manufacturing and construction offsetting weaker-than-expected performance in the services sector. However, given the UK's sluggish recovery from the pandemic and lingering uncertainties around the government's long-term economic strategy, challenges remain for sustaining this momentum and attracting significant investment.

## NNPC, IOCs sign gas deal for \$3.5bn Brass Fertilizer...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 11

Producers Group (IPPGs), and we are working harmoniously," he added.

The two Technical Working Groups (TWGs) inaugurated are expected to drive the objectives of the National Gas Expansion Programme (NGEP).

The groups are the NGEF/National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and NGEF/Council of Registered Builders of Nigeria (CORBON).

"It is now a norm that graduates of Technical Colleges possess soft skills that make them entrepreneurs as soon as

they leave the institution. This is a deliberate effort of those nations to introduce specialized skills into the curriculum of higher institutions, most especially technical colleges that bridge the skill gaps in key sectors of the economy," Amb. Nicholas Agbo Ella, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum Resources, said during the inauguration last week in Abuja.

The objective of the Technical Working Group between the NGEF and CORBON, according to the Permanent Secretary, was to make energy available in estates, districts, commercial and industrial sites.

## Aradel Holdings to list 4.34bn shares on...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 11

will offer insights into the company's strategic vision for the future, its growth trajectory, key business strategies and the anticipated impact of this listing on its operations and market positioning," NGX stated.

Aradel Holdings Plc is a fully integrated energy group, having interests in multiple oil and gas assets, and its business spanning the upstream, midstream and downstream value chain of the oil and gas industry. The group takes a long-term view to energy provision and the global energy

transition.

Aradel Holdings continues to seek avenues to introduce technology that harnesses the abundant and diverse sources of energy in Nigeria and Africa into an energy bouquet that is affordable and sustainable in reaching net zero and promotes energy access.

The listing of Aradel Holdings' shares on Monday will increase the market capitalisation of the NGX by over N3 trillion.

At the close of business on October 11, 2024, the market capitalisation of NGX stood at N56.09 trillion.

## Nigerian Economic Summit 2024...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 11

growth and competitiveness; is the market ready for increased local manufacturing of medicines? power sector dynamics: building state-level energy systems; launch of the AMV private sector compact in Nigeria; reforming Nigeria's economy: a view from business; strengthening food security systems, and digital inclusion: closing the accessibility gap. Other topics for panel discussions include fostering gender inclusive policies for economic development; bridging gaps: a framework for mainstreaming youth inclusive policies; fiscal & monetary policy reforms: removing barriers to private sector investment; Africa's economic transformation and resilience: the next priorities, and

leveraging the global trading system for inclusive growth.

The chairman of the planning committee for the 30th NES#30 Omoboyede Olusanya has earlier explained that the summit is a pivotal platform for discussing regulatory reforms vital for essential economic use and competitiveness. The summit is to mobilise leaders towards creating good opportunities for both the present and the future.

The chairman outlined that the summit will include meetings with CEOs from the French speaking countries (Francophone) and deliberate on topics like local pharmaceutical manufacturing and energy sector dynamics, aiming to foster collaboration among stakeholders for good and sustainable development.

# Edo intensifies investment promotion drive, onboards LGAs of One-Stop-Investment Centre

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

In a bid to attract more investments and improve the ease of doing business in the state, the Edo State Government, through the Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO)-Ease of Doing Business Secretariat, embarked on a three-day onboarding session for staff and local government liaison officers of the Edo State One-Stop-Investment Centre (ES-OSIC).

The training session, which ended on Friday 11th October was supported by the German Development Cooperation (GIZ-SEDIN), and it aimed to equip participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively facilitate invest-

ments in the state.

In a presentation on the roles and responsibilities of staff and liaison officers" the Managing Director Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO), Kelvin Uwaibi, outlined the state's investment priorities, emphasising sectors such as technology, agriculture (particularly oil palm), and infrastructure development, healthcare, energy and solid minerals.

Uwaibi underscored the importance of simplifying processes and creating a conducive environment for businesses to thrive.

According to him, "The inclusion of local government liaison officers in the training reflects the state's commitment

to fostering a decentralized approach to investment promotion. The establishment of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Office in Edo State with the executive order signed by His Excellency, Governor Godwin Obaseki in 2023 was a strategic move to attract private sector investment.

Uwaibi emphasized the need for continuous engagement with stakeholders to understand their needs and expectations. He noted that the state's achievements in attracting investments, particularly in the oil palm sector, were showcased as evidence of its progress.

"Our Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPO), which has attracted over \$500 million

is a success story and about four other states are under studying Edo currently," he noted.

In a good will message by the Honorable Commissioner for Local Government, Community & Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon. Monday Osaigbovo who was represented by his Public Relations Officer, Lucy Daniel-Nwosu described the onboarding session as a significant step in transforming the business environment.

He said: "I would like to extend my heartfelt greetings to all of you at this onboarding session for the Edo State One-Stop Investment Centre for Staff and Local Government Liaison Officers. Today marks a significant step to-

wards transforming our business landscape and enhancing the ease of doing business in our state.

"As public servants, you are on the front lines of creating an environment that encourages investment and innovation. Your roles are crucial in streamlining processes, providing guidance, and ultimately paving the way for both local and foreign investors to thrive.

"The establishment of the One-Stop Investment Centre signifies our commitment to positioning Edo State on the global marketplace as a destination for business. It embodies our collective vision of building a sustainable economy, creating job opportunities, and improving the overall quality of life for our people."

The training session also featured presentations from experts from the Nigeria Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), Bolanle Baba, Assistant Director NIPC who shared insights on the con-

cept of One-Stop-Investment Centers and best practices from other regions, and Adejumo Fashola, a One-Stop-Shop Expert who facilitated a hands-on session on "Investment Procedures and Approval Processes".

Osahon Okoh, Policy Advisor to GIZ, who was one of the facilitators, spoke on GIZ work through its SEDIN programme on ease of doing business and investment facilitation in the state. He also shared learnings from Edo State One-Stop-Investment's (ES-OSIC) user-research feedback which was carried out recently in preparation for the onboarding session.

The Edo State Government's commitment to investment promotion is evident through initiatives such as the onboarding session and the establishment of the ES-OSIC. By enhancing the capacity of its officials and creating a favourable business climate, the state aims to attract more investors and drive economic growth.



## ONBOARDING:

L-R: Adejumo Fashola One-Stop-Shop Expert; Kelvin Uwaibi Managing Director Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO); Bolanle Baba Assistant Director Nigeria Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC); Osahon Okoh Policy Advisor GIZ SEDIN; and Philomena Ogechukwu Okonkwo, Service Provider Administration, OSIC, NIPC during the three days onboarding session for staff and local government liaison officers of the Edo State One-Stop-Investment Centre (ES-OSIC) held last week in Benin City.

## FG launches CNG conversion programme portal

### ● to ease impact of fuel price hike

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

Amidst the recent hike in fuel prices, the Federal Government of Nigeria has commenced the implementation of the Presidential Compressed Natural Gas Initiative (PCNGI), through the introduction of the Commercial Vehicle Conversion Incentive Programme (CV-CIP). This initiative aims to facilitate the conversion of commercial vehicles and tricycles to run on Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) at no cost to registered union vehicles in major cities while ride-share operators can access a 50% discount.

"The FGN through the Presidential CNG Initiative is implementing a Commercial Vehicle Conversion Incentive Program (CV-CIP) that provides for FREE conversion (la-

bour inclusive) of union registered vehicles in major cities where conversion program has been activated in Nigeria as well as ride-share vehicles, who operators can benefit from a 50% discount," FG said.

As fuel prices soar, the government is making strides to ensure that transporters can transit to CNG more easily through the portal. The CNG conversion programme is currently available in Lagos, Ogun, Kogi, Kaduna, Oyo, Edo, Nasarawa, Abuja, Ekiti, Delta, Rivers and Kwara with CNG priced between 320 - 350 naira per comparable litre to petrol. This move is designed to alleviate the financial burden on vehicle operators who are grappling with increased operating costs.

To access the programme, vehicle owners can visit the PCNGI portal, provide vehicle

details, including the owner's name, email, phone number, vehicle registration number (VIN), national identification number (NIN), and select association, operating motor park, and conversion center.

Vehicle owners are enjoined to enter the brands of the vehicles, make of the vehicles, engine capacity, cylinder KG, usual vehicle routes, year of manufacture, and engine condition.

The platform also provides the vehicle owners to indicate their specifications, including fuel type, transmission, colour, mileage, vehicle identification number, and registration expiry date.

In addition, owners of vehicles are required to provide additional information, such as state of residence, local government area, address, and any additional notes to process and

register for the CNG conversion programme.

Kingsley Eze, co-founder and CEO of NAIRAXI, in an interview with Arise TV on Friday, emphasized the importance of attracting private sector involvement in the credit aspect of the initiative to enhance the adoption of CNG among transporters.

According to the reports from Ministry of Finance, CNG, diesel, LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas), feed gas, electric vehicles amongst others are exempted from Value Added Tax, further incentivizing its use.

With the launch of the CV-CIP, the Federal Government is not only addressing the immediate impact of rising fuel costs but also promoting a more sustainable and cost-effective fuel option for Nigeria's transport sector.

## FG sidesteps NNPC, orders marketers to lift PMS directly from Dangote Refinery

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

The Federal Government has granted approval for marketers to lift premium motor spirit (PMS), commonly known as petrol directly from the Dangote Refinery eliminating the need to go through the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL). This significant move follows a directive from the Federal Executive Council (FEC) and the implementation of a new naira-based sales mechanism in a second review meeting held last week.

In a statement released on Friday October 11 2024, Finance Minister and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, acknowledged ongoing discussions regarding this shift in market structure. He emphasized the government's commitment to providing clarity and ensuring a seamless transition for all stakeholders involved.

"The most significant change under the new regime is that petroleum product marketers can now purchase PMS directly from local refineries. This marks a departure from the previous arrangement where the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPCL) served as the sole purchaser and distributor of PMS from the refineries," Edun said.

"This direct purchasing mechanism allows marketers to negotiate commercial terms directly with the refineries, fostering a more competitive market environment and enabling

a smoother supply chain for petroleum products.

"With the commencement of local PMS production, the market is better equipped to support these direct transactions. This transition is expected to enhance efficiency in product availability and stabilize market conditions for the benefit of all Nigerians," he added.

Regarding the local production of PMS, Edun said with the commencement of local PMS production, the market is better equipped to support these direct transactions, noting that this transition is expected to enhance efficiency in product availability and stabilize market conditions for the benefit of all Nigerians.

"The Committee recognizes that there are questions and discussions regarding this change in the market structure. We are committed to providing clarity on this development and will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure a seamless transition process," he assured.

With this new arrangement, marketers can negotiate commercial terms directly with the Dangote Refinery, promoting a more competitive market environment and enhancing the supply chain for petroleum products.

This decision is seen as a major advancement for the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN), which has long sought the opportunity to source products directly from the Dangote Refinery in Lagos.

# AfDB, partners to fast track Special Agro Industrial Zones in Nigeria

The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) has reached an agreement with participating Nigerian state governments to speed up implementation of a programme designed to develop eight new agro-industrial zones in the country. The agreement emerged from a two-day meeting in Abuja, on 7 – 8 October, attended by senior government and bank officials and representatives of financing partners and the private sector.

The Nigeria Special Agro Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) programme, launched in 2022, aims to create new hubs that integrate the production, processing and distribution of targeted crops and livestock to achieve food security, increase incomes, improve livelihoods, and support economic diversification. By significantly reducing dependence on food imports and boosting exports, SAPZs are expected to boost the country's foreign exchange reserves.

To implement the first phase of the SAPZ project in seven states and the Federal Capital Territory, the programme

has mobilized \$538m in co-financing from the African Development Bank Group, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Federal Government of Nigeria.

“With inflation coming down, the reserves growing and the exchange rate stabilizing, success is being seen under the macroeconomic stabilization efforts of President Bola Tinubu. That is why the SAPZ programme cannot and must not disappoint,” Wale Edun, Minister of Finance and the Coordinating Minister of the Economy, said,

Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari, said, “The need to align all our efforts at the federal and state levels as well as with our development partners is germane, so that the momentum we gain here translates into tangible outcomes for the target beneficiaries, particularly those in rural areas where the SAPZs will have their greatest impact.”

According to the Director

General of the African Development Bank's Nigeria Country Department, Dr. Abdul Kamara, the meetings were aimed at strengthening collaboration among key stakeholders, including the private sector. Participants shared ideas and lessons learned, goals, and agreed on practical next steps to accelerate the implementation of Phase 1 of the program. The next phase of the programme will expand to include other state governments.

Emphasising the urgency of overcoming delays that have dogged program implementation, the Senior Special Ad-

viser to the Bank President on Industrialisation, Prof. Banji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, said the rapid implementation and take-off of SAPZs provides a solution to the declining contribution of manufacturing and manufacturing exports to Nigeria's GDP.

The second day of the meeting featured a workshop that brought together officials from the federal and state governments, representatives of partner institutions, and private sector investors to discuss the program's financial, procurement and operational processes, as well as an accelerated implementation plan. The

federal and state governments committed to implementing transparent and competitively driven procurement processes, including the independent selection of vendors.

The sessions, moderated by Dr. Victor Oladokun, Senior Advisor on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement to the president of the African Development Bank, also provided a platform to highlight the complementary roles of stakeholders. While governments and financing institutions are expected to play a catalytic role, the private sector will focus on investing in the

construction and operation of the key components of the zones: Agro Industrial Processing Hubs (AIHs) and Agricultural Transformation Centres (ATCs).

The first phase of the Nigeria SAPZ program is expected to unlock about \$1 billion in private sector investments, benefiting an estimated 1.5 million households, including private agribusinesses, agro-processors, smallholder farmers, agripreneurs, and agro dealers, and creating a minimum of 400,000 direct jobs and 1.6 million indirect jobs, especially for women and youth.

## Gateway Inland Dry Port to transform Nigeria into logistics hub —Oyetola

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

The Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola, last Friday performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the Gateway Inland Dry Port pledging to establish it as a model for other inland dry ports across Nigeria. The event took place in Kajola, Ewekoro Local Government Area, Ogun State.

At the ceremony, Minister Oyetola stated, “This project is not merely about building infrastructure but about laying the foundation for a key logistics hub that will facilitate the movement of goods across Nigeria creating over 5,000 direct jobs and 15,000 indirect jobs while stimulating local businesses. Moreover, it will attract investments that will spur regional development, benefiting Ogun State and beyond.”

He emphasised that the port which will be built to international standards will incorporate the latest digital systems for tracking, clearance and cargo movement, ensuring efficiency, transparency and global competitiveness.

“No doubt, this project aligns seamlessly with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu as we are committed to creating an enabling environment that fosters innovation, economic growth and infrastructural development”, he added.

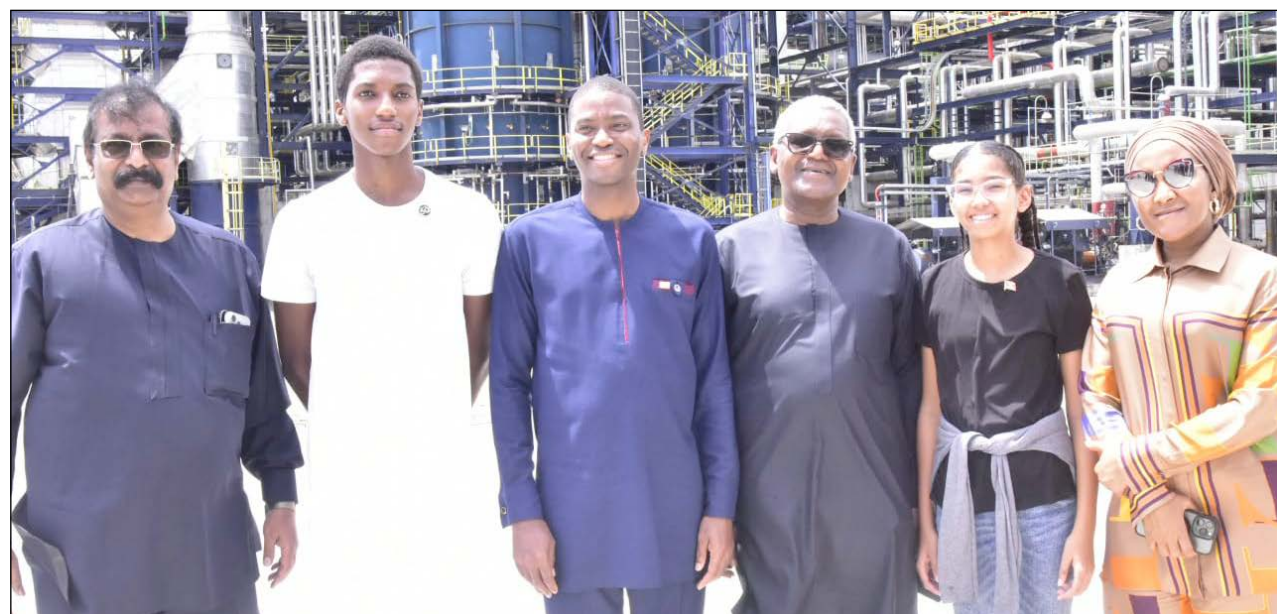
Oyetola highlighted the necessity for such a facility noting his observations of the congestion at traditional seaports during his visit to a logistics hub in Lagos.

“Inland dry ports provide faster and more efficient alternatives for moving goods, ultimately benefiting our economy and reducing the burden on our coastal seaports.

“It is imperative that the Nigerian Shippers' Council works closely with the Ogun State Government and the concessionaire to build a maritime ecosystem that is not only competitive but also a leader in innovation and technological advancement. Sustainability must be at the core of all our infrastructure projects.

“This Inland Dry Port is expected to significantly contribute to achieving that goal by enhancing the efficiency of our logistics network, reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with road transportation and promoting environmentally sustainable practices in line with global standards,” the Minister stated.

Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun, noted that the groundbreaking event is not merely the foundation of a dry port, but the beginning of a new era of economic growth, job creation and increased prosperity. He added that the project would transform the state into a leading logistics and commercial centre, both in Nigeria and across West Africa.



**DANGOTE REFINERY:**

L-R: Vice President, Oil & Gas, Dangote Industries Limited, Devakumar Edwin; Prime Minister, Grenada and Chairman CARICOM, Hon. Dickon Mitchell; President/CE, Dangote Industries Limited, Aliko Dangote; Group Executive Director, Commercial Operations, Dangote Industries Limited, Fatima Aliko Dangote; with the Prime Minister's children, Olivia Mitchell and Kristian Mitchell during the Prime Minister's visit to Dangote Petroleum Refinery, Petrochemicals and Fertiliser Plant in Lekki, on Thursday, October 10, 2024..

## Grenada's Prime Minister discloses plans to partner Dangote Refinery

VIVIAN OKAFOR

Grenada's Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell has disclosed that his country plans to partner with Dangote Refinery in the export of cement, fertilizer production and petroleum products, Channels TV reports.

Mitchell, who is the chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM OR CC), made this known in a recent visit to the Lekki-based refinery where he also stated that the achievement was one that showed Dangote's vision, not just for his company alone, but also for Nigeria and Africa at large.

“This is an incredible achievement and a testament to Mr. Dangote's vision, not just for his company, but for Nigeria and Africa as a whole,” Mitchell said.

He also commended Dangote for being a great Leader noting he is what an Africa leader should be. He com-

mended him for his efforts in investing in manufacturing and industrialization stating that such investment would help to prevent Africa from being a collection center where our raw materials are taken and returned to us as sophisticated products.

“Dangote exemplifies what an African leader should be. We need not just political leaders, but business leaders who are willing to invest in Africa, particularly in manufacturing and industrialization.

“We must ensure that we don't continue to export our raw materials to the developed world, where they can be turned into sophisticated products and sent back to us,” he added.

Mitchell further emphasized on the need to support the growth of Africa with investment in job opportunities and training as this would further help to grow the wealth of the nation.

“We need to reverse that cycle; it is the only way to grow the wealth of Africa and the developing world. Additionally, we need to support this with training and invest in job opportunities,” he added.

Grenada's PM further disclosed the nation's plan to develop partnership with the firm in order to develop the nation's economy.

“One of the reasons I am here is to pursue synergies and partnerships between the diaspora and Africa, particularly in areas such as the refinery, cement, and fertilizer. We believe there are fantastic opportunities to develop partnerships between the Caribbean and Africa,” he stated.

While responding, Dangote stated that this was a good achievement for Africa emphasizing on the fact that although many Caribbean nations were beginning to discover crude oil, they still largely depended on exporting crude and im-

porting petroleum products.

He further stated that their dream was to build a refinery that would cater to the Caribbean people.

“This would help them address the challenge of exporting crude while importing refined petroleum products at high costs. The visit shows that many countries are proud of what we have been able to achieve because a lot of countries have been unable to deliver their refineries,” Dangote said.

“It shows their pride in seeing a black person like them in the Caribbean, although I am from Nigeria, succeed.

“For them, this is a dream, especially as many Caribbean countries are beginning to discover oil but still depend largely on exporting crude while importing petroleum products, which is costlier than in America. Their dream is to set up a refinery, perhaps not of this size- but one that would cater to their people,” he said.

# The Polity

• Policy • Legislation • Enforcement

## Edo 2024: I won't challenge election outcome — Akpata

### ● says his decision 'transcends mere political calculation'

PEACE AKPOBOME

The candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in the September 21, 2024 governorship election in Edo State, Olumide Akpata, has said he

would not be approaching the tribunal to challenge the result of the election, despite irregularities and electoral malpractices that characterised the exercise.

Akpata, in a statement posted on his X (formerly Twitter)

account on Saturday night, said his decision not to challenge the election outcome goes beyond "mere political calculation."

He said it "is not an indication of compromise; rather, it is a strategic move aimed at redirect-

ing our energies towards systemic changes that our democracy desperately needs".

Akpata, a former president of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), garnered 22,763 votes to come a distant third in

the election in which the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Monday Okpebholo, was declared winner by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), with 291,667 votes. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate, Asue Ighodalo, polled 247,274 votes to emerge second.

The statutory window for filing petitions at the gubernatorial election tribunal closed on Saturday.

According to Akpata's statement, the decision not to challenge the election results before the tribunal came after extensive deliberations with his legal team and key stakeholders.

"This choice, borne out of deep reflection and rigorous analysis, transcends mere political calculation," Akpata said.

"It is a statement on the state of our democracy and a clarion call for all who cherish the principles of free and fair elections.

"As a legal practitioner with over three decades of experience, alongside my deputy, a distinguished Senior Advocate of Nigeria, we have scrutinised every facet of this election.

"Our conclusion, reached after consulting with some of the nation's finest legal minds, is not just about the outcome of a single election but about the very foundations of our democratic process," he stated.

Akpata claimed that irregularities such as vote-buying and questionable collation procedures marred the election.

The irregularities, he said, are "symptomatic of a deeper malaise" afflicting the country's electoral system.

"These are not mere technical infractions but fundamental breaches of the social contract between the government and the governed," Akpata said.

"My decision not to approach the tribunal is not a capitulation to injustice but a resolute stand against a flawed system.

"I choose to rise above the quagmire of protracted legal battles that sometimes serve to legitimise a fundamentally compromised process.

"Instead, I commit myself to the arduous but necessary task of systemic reform. Our fight transcends the confines of a courtroom; it is a battle for the very soul of our democracy.

"The stark reality we face is this: Nigeria's electoral adjudication framework has become a labyrinth where justice is often lost to technicalities.

"The burden of proof placed on petitioners is not just high; it is often insurmountable."

Akpata said henceforth he would dedicate his time to spearheading electoral reforms and building a vibrant opposition.



#### PROJECT INSPECTION:

Representative of Shapoorji Pallonji & Company Private Limited, Project Contractor; Special Adviser to the Governor on Works, Engr. Adekunle Olayinka; Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, and Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi, during an inspection of the ongoing construction work of the New Massey Street Children's Hospital, Adeniji Adele, Lagos Island, recently.

## Sunday Igboho takes petition for Yoruba Nation to UK Prime Minister Starmer

FAVOUR ANETOR

Yoruba separatist agitator Freedom fighter, Sunday Adeyemo, popularly known as Igboho, has submitted a petition to the UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer to consider the creation of a Yoruba nation.

Multiple media sources report that Igboho submitted the petition on behalf of the leader of the Yoruba Nation movement, Prof. Adebajani Akintoye.

The movement is seeking the immediate intervention of

the UK Prime Minister and his government in their agitation to set up a country that will be predominantly owned by indigenous Yoruba people.

Igboho's spokesman, Koiki, disclosed this via his X page.

"At exactly 14:00 hrs Dr. Chief Sunday Igboho delivered a petition to the UK Prime Minister on behalf of Prof. Adebajani Akintoye, leader of the YORUBA NATION movement, and Olayomi Koiki, his spokesman @10Downing-Street," the post said.

Igboho has been at the fore-

front of the actualization of a Yoruba nation.

Recall that Akintoye had earlier accused the Nigerian government of trying to cajole Igboho into withdrawing from the agitations.

The octogenarian said during the agitator's travails in Benin Republic, a former Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai (retd.), had used his influence as an envoy to sneak a paper to Igboho in prison, promising him billions of naira if only he would renounce his agitations for a Yoruba nation.

He, however, said Igboho refused to sign the paper, which was later taken away by Buratai.

"Former Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai, came to him in the prison, promising him billions of naira if he would just sign a paper that Buratai brought," Akintoye alleged.

"That he (Igboho) should say he had renounced the Yoruba Nation struggle, that he didn't want the Yoruba Nation struggle anymore, that he had opted out of it," he said.

## 'Premature' statement on N70,000 minimum wage earns Jigawa gov's aide suspension

Jigawa State Governor Umar Namadi has suspended his Special Adviser on Salary and Pensions, Alhaji Bashir Ado, over an alleged premature statement on N70,000 minimum wage.

The Secretary to the State Government, Mallam Bala Ibrahim, said in a statement that "the government viewed with serious concern, a statement circulating in various sections of the media alleging

that the governor has approved N70,000 as the new minimum wage for workers in the state".

According to the SSG, the statement by the Special Adviser on Salary and Pensions to the Governor was embarrassing and premature as the committee set up by the government to advise on the appropriate wage, headed by the Head of the State Civil Service, was yet to complete its assignment and submit a report.

He pointed out that as a result of the development, the governor has approved Ado's immediate suspension, pending findings of a committee set up under the chairmanship of the state Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Barr. Bello Abdulkadir.

According to the SSG, a committee given two weeks to submit its report is to investigate the source, actual content

of Ado's statement and the motive behind it.

Commissioner for Information, Youth, Sports and Culture, Sagir Musa, Commissioner for Health, Dr Abdullahi Muhammad, and Permanent Secretary, Establishment and Service Matters, Office of the SSG, Muhammad Yahaya, are members of the committee set up to probe Ado's premature statement on N70,000 minimum wage.

## Okupe calls for quick resolution of Rivers' political crisis

### ● suggests political solution

A former presidential spokesman, Doyin Okupe, on Sunday called for a quick resolution of the political crisis rocking Rivers State as it may soon begin to cause serious harm to the nation's democracy.

Okupe disclosed this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), saying if not quickly resolved, the crisis could destabilise the nation.

He described the rift between Rivers State Governor Siminalayi Fubara and his predecessor and FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, as well as the attendant political turmoil in the state as unfortunate.

"Going down memory lane, one is sad to note that the feud between Wike and Fubara is comparable to that between late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the then Premier of the Western Region, Chief Samuel Akintola," Okupe said.

"As remote and limited this crisis was then, it was one of

the precursors of the collapse of that republic.

"It will be wise for the Federal Government and men of goodwill in Rivers and the entire nation to move in on this matter before it goes completely, and uncontrollably out of hands," he said.

The ex-presidential spokesman said only a political solution can effectively resolve all issues and all sides in the crisis.

Fubara and his predecessor, Nyesom Wike, have been at daggers drawn for more than a year now over who controls the state, leaving the state in a state of tension and turmoil.

There have been orgies of violence and attacks leading to loss of lives and destruction of property.

Okupe's call comes amidst several such calls, from political heavyweights and other stakeholders within and outside the state, for peace to reign in Rivers in the interest of the people of Rivers State.

# Desecrating the Rivers

IKE WILLIE-NWOBU

Nigeria's fitful attempts to clean up its politics is suffering a seismic setback in Rivers State where bitter politics of succession is combining with the desperation of politicians to pollute the environment.

The flames which licked up some local government secretariats in Rivers State may have only flared up on 7th October 2024, but their provenance lay in the past, in the bitter rivalry between Nyesom Wike, former governor of the state and current minister of the Federal Capital Territory, and Siminalayi Fubara, his successor and the incumbent governor of the state.

The recent judgment of the supreme court on autonomy for local government areas has apparently turned local governments in the state into charged battlegrounds for the former governor and his successor with their supporters at each other's throats.

What is clear is that the fiery chaos in Rivers State is the handiwork of politicians who place personal interests above principles of state policy, and the the public, defying and denying what may burn in the process which invariably is Nigeria's fragile commitment to the rule of law. It is they now who must now be forced to leash their rabid dogs. It is as simple as that. The Nigerian state cannot be forced to wait on them or for them as no state which works properly can afford to.

Those responsible for the arson must be prosecuted and incarcerated.



FUBARA



WIKE

They are criminals because only criminals burn public buildings, and they must be treated as such.

Again, what is the governor doing conducting elections in defiance of valid court orders? As the chief law officer of the state, he should be seen complying with the law embodied in court decisions at all times rather than pulling out bag after bag of tricks and maneuvers to shirk his responsibility.

At inauguration, every governor in Nigeria pledges allegiance to the con-

stitution which is the law establishing courts. But like most Nigerian presidents, these governors then go on to devise crafty ways to circumvent the constitution and all those who enforce it. As expected, this does incalculable harm to the rule of law in Nigeria.

Nigeria needs to dig deeper to pull out new ways by which the Rule of law can find a real presence in Nigeria beyond what is on paper and in the lip service of extremely unreliable politicians.

The unfortunate situation in Rivers State ominously foreshadows what is to come in many states across the country. For many years, local governments in Nigeria operated only at the whims of state governors with no form of autonomy, financial or otherwise. The state of many rural areas across the country is testament to the neglect those areas have suffered because the closest tier of government to them has failed to function properly for decades.

The supreme court judgment can

change that, but it is only if the forces holding Nigeria to ransom allow or are forced to relinquish their hold.

As for those young people who continue to allow themselves to be used as tools by desperate politicians, the time for common sense is now. Folly has been extortionate for many years, and having been emboldened by indifference, it is now proving fatal.

Why burn public buildings when it will only give thieving politicians an opportunity to dip even deeper into the public till?

Why the descent into violence when they know that the parties and politicians they are fighting for don't really care about them?

Politicians in the country must do more to clean up their politics, and de-escalate the tension in the body politic. No one's grievance should become projectiles raining down on public buildings, or flames burning them down.

While Nigerians wait for the holy grail of political reforms, those in the rural areas must recognize the historic opportunity offered by the Supreme Court decision on financial autonomy for local governments. They must now play their part if the local governments are ever to wriggle free from the suffocating grasp of state governors.

Their part begins from participating in elections into local government areas, and insisting that their votes must count.

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## The monster in the Middle East

KENE OBIEZU

Israel's ongoing offensive against Palestinians in the Lebanon and the Gaza Strip is plunging millions into impossible situations, exposing the fairness of all in war as an atrocious injustice.

Who is the monster in the Middle East? It should be Hamas, the militant Iran-backed pro-Palestine group. On 7th October 2023, it launched an unprecedented attack against Israel, breaching its supposed impenetrable security, killing 1200 Israelis and tak-

ing many others hostage.

The monster in the Middle East should be Israel, which has since the attack launched an unprecedented crackdown against the Gaza Strip. More than 42,000 people have been killed, thousands more injured, and life irreversibly altered even for unborn Palestinians.

The monster in the Middle East should be the US and UK, which continue to back the devastating Israeli offensive – and the International Community, which choosing the easy escape route of international law, pre-

fers largely to stand by.

The monster in the Middle East could yet be Iran, which backs Hamas, and Hezbollah in Lebanon, which has been drawn into an increasingly complicated war.

The monster in the Middle East could yet be the vagaries of history, which seems to give each of the parties in the renewed hostilities a slice of justification for digging it their heels and putting millions of women and children in harm's way.

The monstrous conflict in the Middle East is a product of warped

histories and complicities which are conspiring to sentence innocent Palestinian women and children to a living hell.

But of all possible monsters in the conflict in the Middle East, Israel stands out for its complicated engagement with the history of the region and its egregious refusal to countenance any arrangement that may bring lasting peace to the region.

Israel has starkly and strenuously refused to make significant concessions for peace, stubbornly clinging on to the land it has annexed, and blindingly branding all who disagree with it as enemies.

In this expedition of enmity, it has been actively backed by the US in what is actively a collaboration of death against many innocent women and children.

No matter how superior a party to a war is, once the first shot is fired, there is no certainty how it will end or who would suffer what casualty. This is what makes the unpredictability of war so dangerous.

But what is going on in the Gaza Strip cannot even rightly be described as a war. Rather it is a genocide perpetrated by the colonizer against the colonized. This oppression and operation streaked with blood has been decades in the making.

Israel's annexation and subsequent occupation of Palestinian lands did not inspire as much horror in the rest of the world as it should because of the staunch support of the USA and UK, and the unflinching hypocrisy of

the international community.

But it was always going to inspire fierce resistance from a people suddenly turned to strangers and slaves on their ancestral lands. That is undoubtedly what has happened.

Through invasions, displacement, curfews, embargoes, airstrikes, horrific psychological and emotional persecution, generations of Palestinians have been born into the struggle, lived through it and died in becoming generations of martyrs for their cause.

There have also been poets like Mahmoud Darwish and Fadwa Tuqan who have deployed literature as resistance, resilience, and rebellion against a ruthless foe with Darwish famously asking, "Where should we go after the last frontiers, where should the birds fly after the last sky?"

Much like the Rohingya who have been left at the mercy and butchery of the immeasurably cruel state of Myanmar, the Palestinians have been left at the mercy of Israel, a state that does not know what mercy is.

Peace is the only option that can guarantee lasting security for Israel in the region. Experience has shown that those fighting for their land are willing to continue writing their names with scarlet steam to achieve their cause.

The hostility and humiliation of the world will not break them neither will the hypocrisy of the international community.

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MIDDLE EAST



# Fellow Nigerians, how are you coping with T-Pain?

ABDULKADIR SALAUDEEN

It is painful that the T-Pain Nigerians are going through seems to be endless. If it will eventually come to an end one day, the end isn't in sight. The end to T-Pain or, if you like, of T-Pain, is not known to "T" himself. Nigerians just have to endure, perhaps till 2027, when the time will be ripe to do away with T-Pain, to re-examine our political sense, and to re-chart our political course.

But endurance has limit, and one needs to live to endure. My fear is that I don't know how many Nigerians will be alive to make that political re-examination. And even for those who will be alive, I still do not know if they will have the strength to re-chart a new political course. The political choice made by the few Nigerians among us (37 per cent or thereabouts) who elected this APC President that now subjects us to T-Pain is the most terrible political miscarriage, as far as I know, in Nigerian history.

I don't know how Nigerians came up with this T-Pain appellation which is, in other words, Tinubu's pain-inflicting-presidency. It must have been through Nigerians' unique ability to joke over hardship as if hardship is a norm. But I do know T-Pain is a name of an American singer and songwriter, Faheem Rashad Najm. Najm is professionally known as T-Pain. He was born and raised in Tallahassee—the capital city of the U.S. state of Florida. His stage name is said to be short for "Tallahassee Pain" which he chose because of the hardships he experienced while living there.

Like Najm, Nigerians in Nigeria chose T-Pain to describe how painful it is to experience hell on earth under Tinubu and to tell the whole world what they are going through in Nigeria. We read a report from Peoples Gazette: "The president has been very sad and not hiding his frustration

over how quickly the so-called Tpain label was allowed to spread on social media." That is to say, the president is not only making a terrible history, he is reading the harsh judgement of history while in office. Let him be sad; he should also be frustrated. Nigerians are also sad and frustrated—courtesy of T-Pain.

But how can someone be sad for deliberately inflicting pains—which he can stop to inflict—on those he should make happy? Perhaps, the president deliberately chose to be sad. If the president is truly sad, all he needs to do is to reverse those dangerous policies that continue to fuel Nigerians' woes and pains. He should reverse the hike in fuel price that consequentially fuels T-Pain. The president can re-write his history if what he is reading about himself is truly unpalatable.

Peoples Gazette further reports that the president was said to be "mostly angry with unpatriotic people who sit on social media to call him names without offering any unique solutions of their own but only to malign the government". We are actually learning a lot from this regime through T-Pain. If given opportunity to teach Civil Education in our basic schools, T-Pain (personified) would teach pupils that one becomes unpatriotic for wailing while being flogged.

The president reportedly complains like complaint king about those sitting on social media to call him names without proffering any unique solutions. Does the president need any advice anymore after being advised for a thousand and one times? Could it be that the president has an axe to grind with those sitting on social media? If that is the case, I am not one of those. Here again is my advise to the president for the umpteenth time: "reverse those dangerous policies with devil face; for, they lack human face."

If the president could not toler-



TINUBU

ate those sitting on social media and could not take advice from them due to their mannerisms, he should humble himself to take advice from those in the ivory towers who, by expertise, are in a vantage position to advise government and show it direction. Or are Nigerian academics also unpatriotic? Are the rulers in Abuja paranoid of the country's intellectuals whom they employ and pay? But because T-Pain has completely impoverished and pulverized Nigerian intellectuals, our rulers find it demeaning to take

advice from them. If ASUU makes real its threat to embark on strike in a few days to come, the union, for sure, will be tagged unpatriotic in the totalitarian dictionary of T-Pain regime.

If the presidency is in search of unique advice, it should read some of the recommendations in the papers presented at the recently concluded State of the Nation Conference organized by ASUU in Abuja. Or does the government think its intellectuals are intellectually impoverished so much so that they are bereft of ideas? The

president who is pained by being labelled T-Pain should read the conference communique. The president and his co-travellers—in T-Paining Nigerians—should read the paper titled "Patriotism and Sacrifice: Twin Catalysts for National Development" by Adam Muhammad and my humble self. In that paper, we advise Nigerian rulers that for the country to develop, they (rulers) need to be patriotically intoxicated and prioritize national interests above personal and foreign interests.

The president should patriotically sack himself from Ministry of Petroleum as Minister. The patriotism which he claims those sitting on social media lack should be extended to the NNPC (or is it NNPC?) which is overdue for overhaul. The overhauling should be extended to its managers whose actions and/or inactions have continued to push the price of fuel northwards. I learnt the NNPC is providing free medical eye care outreach in some communities in Lagos. Kudos to NNPC! But it should extend its free eye care outreach to all other communities across the country so that every Nigerian could see the pump price clearly each time it is reviewed upward to increase our doses of T-Pain.

Dear President Tinubu, whether you like it or not, T-Pain will continue to gain widespread popularity. Not only that, numerous derivatives and inflections will be derived from it as long as Nigerians continue to be T-Pained by your T-Painful regime. You still have all the time to change the narrative. T-Pain can become T-Relieve, I hope so. It all depends on your policies and how they are prioritized and their philosophical underpinnings.

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## Umahi, Abike Dabiri, others risk arrest warrant from Senate

CAROLINE AMEH

The Minister of Works, Senator David Umahi, and Chairman of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM), Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, along with other public officials, are at risk of facing a warrant of arrest from the Senate.

The threat comes after they failed to appear before the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions regarding petitions filed against their agencies.

Other agencies whose chief executives may face similar warrants include Union Homes Savings and Loans Plc, Enugu Electricity Distribution Company, and Sally Best Properties Limited.

The Senate's decision was reached last Wednesday when the Committee's Chairman, Senator Neda Imasuen (LP Edo South), expressed frustration over the refusal of these public figures to respond to several invitations issued by the committee. The committee sought explanations and defences in response to grievances filed by aggrieved Nigerians and corporate bodies.

Senator Imasuen raised the issue during a motion anchored on Order 42 of the Senate's standing rules. He lamented that despite repeated invitations, the heads of these agencies ignored the requests, hindering the committee's ability to address the petitions.

In response, the Senate President,

Godswill Akpabio, granted the committee the mandate to issue arrest warrants if necessary, citing powers granted under Section 89 of the 1999 Constitution.

"You already have the power as provided for by Section 89 of the 1999 Constitution. Please use it by issuing a warrant of arrest against any head of agencies refusing to appear before the public petition committee," Akpabio stated.

The Senate President further emphasized the importance of these appearances to ensure justice and fairness for those who had filed petitions.

Following the Senate's decision, Senator Imasuen informed journalists that fresh letters of invitation have been dispatched to the concerned

agencies, warning that failure to comply would result in the issuance of arrest warrants.

"Fresh letters of invitations have been sent to heads of the affected agencies, upon which warrant of arrest would be issued if any one of them fails to appear," Imasuen said in a statement released on Sunday.

In addition to this, Imasuen announced that the committee would expedite its review of a petition submitted by Mr. Onyebuchi Obioha regarding the withholding of his daughter's exam results by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). The complaint alleges that the results were withheld due to a vindictive report filed by an exam supervisor.



GODSWILL AKPABIO, SENATE PRESIDENT

## APC chieftain warns politicians not to incite Nigerians against Tinubu's govt

Achieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun State, Olatunbosun Oyintiloye, has appealed to politicians to guard against utterances that could incite Nigerians into violent protest against the government.

Oyintiloye said that any politician who might be hiding under the current ongoing hardship in the country to incite the masses against the consti-

tuted authorities should be regarded as an enemy of the state.

Daily Post reports that the APC chieftain made the remarks while speaking with journalists on Sunday in Osogbo.

Oyintiloye said that what President Bola Tinubu needed at this period is prayers and the support of all Nigerians to enable him stabilise the economy for the benefit of the masses.

He said that the economic challenges the country is passing through required the understanding and collaborative approach towards finding lasting solutions to them and not inciting comment that could lead to public unrest.

Oyintiloye, a former lawmaker, who noted that the president was doing everything humanly possible to turn the economy around, said it would

amount to being unpatriotic for anyone, no matter how highly placed to incite the masses into a protest.

He called on the security agencies to be alert and ensure that anyone who is attempting to incite the masses to cause havoc in the country is made to face the law.

"There is no doubt that the economy is not in its best shape, but this is just temporary.

"The president is working assiduously to ensure that the economy is brought back to shape for Nigerians to enjoy.

"While we are waiting for that, I do not think inciting the masses against the government is the best way to go.

"I will strongly advise those politicians who are calling people to protest against the government to desist or be ready to face the law," he said.

# Technology

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## NCC concludes NIN-SIM harmonisation

BILL OKONEDO

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) says it has successfully carried out the Federal Government's directive to

link all phone subscriber numbers to their National Identification Numbers (NIN).

Aminu Maida, executive vice-chairman, NCC, made this known at the 2024 Annual Corporate Governance Conference

held in Lagos on Thursday.

Acknowledging the challenges faced by Nigerians during the process, Maida emphasised the significance of the concluded NIN-SIM linkage initiative, observing that the

Federal Government's policy would help curb crime and insecurity in the country.

He said: "We have recently concluded the implementation of the Federal Government's 2020 policy of linking every

phone number to the NIN.

"Though it was a bit painful for Nigerians, I think we also need to appreciate what this does for us.

"Today, there is no phone number that we cannot associate with a verified NIN. Not just a number, but a number that has been verified."

A few months ago, the NCC announced September 14, 2024 as the final deadline for Nigerians for the SIM-NIN linkage exercise.

According to the telecom regulator, as at August 2024, over 153 million SIMs were successfully linked to NINs, reflecting an impressive compliance rate of 96%, a substantial increase from 69.7% in January 2024.

This, however, showed there were still millions of lines yet to be linked with NIN. As of March

2024, data from the NCC indicated that there were 219 million active lines on the networks of mobile telephony operators, MTN, Globacom, Airtel, and 9mobile put together.

Announcing the final deadline in a statement signed by Reuben Muoka, director of Public Affairs, the NCC said the target was to achieve 100% compliance by the said date. This meant that all lines not linked by September 14 would be blocked.

Beyond linking, all the NINs submitted, by the subscribers must have been verified, which is where many telecom consumers had challenges.

According to the telecom operators, irregularities in registered data have been a major hinderance to the verification of NINs of millions of customers.



MTN RAFFLE DRAW:

L-R: Senior Manager, Customer Relations and Experience, MTN Nigeria, Bimbo Wole-Oyedepo; Senior Manager, Customer Relations and Experience, MTN Nigeria, Angela Babalola; Chief Human Resources Officer, MTN Nigeria, Esther Akinnukawe; Chief Customer Relations and Experience Officer, Ugonwa Nwoye and Senior Manager, Customer Relations and Experience, MTN Nigeria, Sonny Onyegbula during the MTN Raffle Draw, held at Y'ello City Service Centre in commemoration of Customer Service Week.

## Zenith Bank restores digital access after infrastructure upgrade

JESSICA OSEBHOR

Zenith Bank has restored full operational services across its electronic transaction channels, ensuring that customers can resume seamless access to digital banking services.

This comes on the back of disruptions caused by an up-

grading of the bank's technology infrastructure aimed at optimising service delivery.

The bank sent out messages on its social media platforms, Thursday, that all services across its electronic channels have been fully restored.

Zenith Bank restated its commitment to providing quality digital services with its

newly enhanced technology infrastructure, designed to deliver seamless and innovative financial solutions.

The announcement stated: "We are pleased to inform you that access to our digital channels has been restored, allowing you to perform transactions conveniently via your preferred platform.

"We appreciate your patience during the IT infrastructure upgrade and sincerely apologise for any inconveniences you experienced.

"Rest assured, we are dedicated to providing you with exceptional service, and the new IT infrastructure we have implemented will enable us to do so moving forward.

## MTN celebrates Customer Service Week with gifts, gratitude, smiles

BERA ESEOSE

MTN Nigeria kicked off a series of activities to mark Customer Service Week celebration, a global event dedicated to recognising the role of customer service in driving business growth while celebrating those who support and engage with customers daily. Customers were treated to a special goodwill message from the company's Chief Executive Officer, Karl Toriola via its CallerTunez Service.

For customers who walked into the company's Y'ello City Service Centre, they were treated to a surprise raffle

draw. To qualify for the raffle draw, they were encouraged to write down their phone numbers, allowing the MTN team led by its Chief Customer Relations and Experience Officer, Ugonwa Nwoye, and Chief Human Resources Officer, Esther Akinnukawe take turns in spinning the wheel, drawing numbers at random.

Each lucky number pulled from the pool corresponded to a prize, and the atmosphere buzzed with excitement as the lucky winners walked away with tokens of appreciation from MTN. The prizes ranged from new smartphones to gift packs, power banks, umbrellas, t-shirts, bags, mini hand fans,

USB chargers, and stationery among many other mouthwatering gifts.

The vibrant energy which filled the air at Y'ello City was evident of the company's continued commitment to going over and beyond to ensure customer satisfaction.

Expressing her gratitude, Ugonwa Nwoye said "To us, our customers are at the helm of our affairs, they are the true bosses. We are deeply grateful for your loyalty and will continue to serve and celebrate you. We remain committed to giving you a unique Y'ello experience."

Adding to the sentiment, Esther Akinnukawe stated,

"We're always thinking about how we can delight you better. This Customer Service Week, we want to thank you and reassure you that every interaction with us is aimed at giving you a wonderful experience. Your happiness is our priority."

As the week unfolds, customers can look forward to even more activities, including the My MTN App Trivia and a photo competition, designed to engage and reward customers throughout the celebration. Every year, MTN hosts its Customer Service Week celebrations to renew its promise to deliver excellent service and experiences to customers across the nation.

## Samsung unveils Galaxy A06

FRANK AWUHE

Samsung Electronics has officially unveiled the latest addition to the popular Galaxy A series smartphones – the Samsung Galaxy A06.

Joining a fan favorite series and combining powerful performance with a sleek design, the Galaxy A06 offers customers and loyal A series fans unique features and premium experience at an affordable price.

The stylish Galaxy A06 is set to redefine what users expect from entry-level smartphones, offering cutting-edge technology without compromise.

Aptly, tagged "Galaxy Wey Sabi", the Galaxy A06 stands out in the competitive category as it aims to resolve the customers' needs in a smartphone with focus on durability, functionality, security, camera, and entertainment.

Users can enjoy capturing high-resolution photos with

the 50MP rear camera, now equipped with Nightography for capturing the essence of every detail especially in low-light conditions. The 8MP front and 2MP (depth) cameras also provide crystal-clear selfies with advanced beautification features.

Spotting a slimmer design and comfortable grip, as well as a side fingerprint scanner, the new Galaxy A06 features a stunning 6.7" HD+ display, providing vivid colors and crisp clarity for an immersive viewing experience that delivers seamless visuals on the infinity-U display with enhanced brightness, especially for outdoor visibility.

Galaxy A06 – Galaxy Wey Sabi is truly a device, which understands your needs, equipped with a 5000mAh long-lasting battery, you can enjoy more device usage without worrying about battery life. The 25W Super-Fast Charging feature ensures up to 50% battery charge in just 30mins, meaning you are back in action quickly.

## TikTok creators driving tourism in Nigeria

BERA ESEOSE

TikTok creators originating from Nigeria are leveraging the platform to boost cultural tourism to the country as the festive season sets in.

A statement from the video platform says December marks a vibrant period for Nigeria, filled with concerts, festivals, and cultural gatherings, offering both locals and international tourists a unique opportunity to explore the country's rich cultural offerings.

"Nigerian content creators are at the forefront, leveraging TikTok to highlight the excitement of World Tourism Day and the upcoming Detty December for

a global audience. With TikTok's short-form video format and viral potential, these creators are shining a spotlight on Nigeria's hidden tourism treasures, from vibrant cultural sites to festive celebrations," the company noted.

According to TikTok, popular destinations highlighted by creators include Yankari Game Reserve, Lekki Conservation Center, Obudu Mountain Resort, and Agbokim Waterfall.

It added that creators like Lade Ibikunle explored urban and rural adventures, showcasing festivities in smaller towns, noting that Steven Ndukwu provided insights into unique cultural practices.



**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA**  
**BENIN-OWENA RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
 KM 24, BENIN/SAPELE ROAD, OBAYANTOR, BENIN CITY



**INVITATION TO TENDER AND EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR FY2024 CAPITAL PROJECTS (PHASE II)**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority (BORBDA), hereinafter referred to as "the Authority", a Parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation, is desirous of executing her FY2024 Capital Projects. In compliance with the Public Procurement Act, 2007, the Authority hereby invites interested, experienced and competent Contractors to submit bids for the implementation of the following projects:

**2.0 SCOPE OF WORKS/GOODS/SERVICES**

The Scope of Works/Services are categorised and packaged into Lots as shown in the table below:

LOT NOS.	PROJECT NAME
LOT B33	Provision of Solar Powered Boreholes in Selected Farming Communities in Edo North Senatorial District, Edo State.
LOT B34	Construction of Idumu Ezeaja Community Hall, Ute Okpu, Ika North East LGA, Delta State
LOT B35	Provision and Installation of Solar Powered Street Light in Azu Agbor, Boji-Boji Agbor, Ika South LGA, Delta State
LOT B36	Construction of Access Roads Kpeere Road, Bera Gokana, Rivers State
LOT B37	Construction of Ungwa Abakwa Bridge, Culverts, and Road Rehabilitation Wamba-Raga Nasarawa North Senatorial District
LOT B38	Ukhun-Erha Irrigation Project
LOT B39	Rahabilitation of Headworks and Reticulation at Auchi
LOT B40	Isua Electrification Project, Edo State
LOT C2	Procurement of Equipment for Farmland Clearing and Preparation-D7 Bulldozer and G12 Grader (Supply of Roller)

**2.2. CATEGORY D: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EoI)**

LOT D13	Consultancy Services for the Design Review of Drip Irrigation Project at Obayantor
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**2.3 CATEGORY E: INVITATION TO TENDER FOR NON-CONSULTANCY SERVICE**

LOT E1	Procurement of Security Services
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**3.0 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

- Evidence of Certificate of Incorporation issued by Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) including Form CAC1.1 or CAC2 and CAC7. Business Name with Form BN1 is also acceptable for Services;
- Evidence of Company's Income Tax Clearance Certificate (or Personal Income Tax Clearance Certificates of all Partners in case of Business Name) for the last three (3) years (2021, 2022 & 2023) valid till 31st December, 2024;
- Evidence of Pension Clearance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024 (this requirement is only applicable to bidders whose number of staff is 15 and above);
- Evidence of Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Compliance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024 (this requirement is only applicable to bidders whose number of staff is 5 and above or the bidder's annual turnover is N50m and above);
- Evidence of Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) Clearance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024;
- Evidence of Registration on the National Database of Federal Contractors, Consultants and Service Providers by submission of Interim Registration Report (IRR) expiring on 31st December, 2024 or valid Certificate issued by BPP;
- Sworn Affidavit disclosing whether or not any officer of the relevant committees of the Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority or the Bureau of Public Procurement is a former or present Director, Shareholder or has any pecuniary interest in the bidder and to confirm that all information presented in its bid are true and correct in all particulars;
- Company's Audited Accounts for the last three (3) years - 2021, 2022 & 2023;
- Reference Letter from a reputable Commercial Bank in Nigeria, indicating willingness to provide credit facility for the execution of the project when needed;
- Company's Profile with the Curriculum Vitae of Key Staff to be deployed for the project, including copies of their Academic/ Professional qualifications such as COREN, QSRBN, ARCON, CORBON, SURCON, etc.;
- Verifiable documentary evidence of at least three (3) similar jobs executed in the last five (5) years including Letters of Awards, Valuation/Job Completion Certificates and Photographs of the projects;
- Works: List of Plants/Equipment with proof of Ownership/Lease Agreement;
- For Supply of Equipment: Letter of Authorisation as representative of the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs);
- Lot D13: Evidence of Firm's current registration with the relevant regulatory professional body(ies) such as ARCON, COREN, SURCON, etc.;
- Lot E1: Evidence of Firm's current License Issued by the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC);
- Electricity Jobs: Evidence of current Licence issued by Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA);
- For Joint Venture/Partnership, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be provided (CAC, Tax Clearance Certificate, Pension Clearance Certificate, ITF Compliance Certificate, NSITF Clearance Certificate, IRR & Sworn Affidavit are compulsory for each JV partner).

**Note:** All documents for submission must be transmitted with a Covering/Forwarding letter under the Company/Firm's Letter Head Paper bearing amongst others, the Registration Number (RC) as issued by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), Contact Address, Telephone Number (preferably GSM No.), and e-mail address. The Letterhead Paper must bear the Names and Nationalities of the Directors of the Company at the bottom of the page, duly signed by the authorised officer of the Firm.

**4.0 COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS (CATEGORIES B, C & E)**

Interested Companies are to collect the Standard Bidding Document (SBD) from the office of Head of Procurement Unit, Room 067, Ground Floor, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor on presentation of evidence of payment of a non-refundable tender fee of **N10,000.00** per Lot, paid into the Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority's Remita account in any reputable Commercial Bank in Nigeria, and bidders are to generate Remita Retrieval Reference (RRR) and pay into the BORBDA Remita e-collection IGR Account Number **025203800100** and the GIFMIS code for the Tender fees is **1000020623**.

**5.0 SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST AND TENDER DOCUMENTS**

- For Expression of Interest (EoI), interested firms should submit two (2) bound copies of EoI documents duly signed, paginated, separated by dividers and arranged in the order outlined in 3.0 above. The documents should be submitted in a sealed envelope and addressed to the Managing Director, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor, P.M.B.1381, Benin City. The reverse side of each sealed envelope should bear the name and address of the bidder and dropped in the designated Tender Box at the New Conference Room, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor not later than 12:00 noon, Monday, 28th October, 2024.
- CATEGORIES B, C & E:** Prospective bidders for Invitation to Tender are to submit two (2) hard copies each for technical and financial bids with softcopy of the financial bid only in MS-Excel format; packaged separately in sealed envelopes and marked as "Technical Bid" or "Financial Bid". Thereafter, put the two sealed envelopes together in a bigger sealed envelope addressed to the Managing Director, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor, P.M.B.1381, Benin City, and clearly marked with the name of the project and the Lot number at the top right corner. Furthermore, the reverse side of each sealed envelope should bear the name and address of the bidder and dropped in the designated Tender Box at the New Conference Room, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor not later than 12:00 noon, Monday, 11th November, 2024.
- Inclusion of a bid security of 2% of the bid price for Works of Three Hundred Million Naira (N300m) and above; and for Goods of One Hundred Million Naira (N100m) and above.

**6.0 OPENING OF EOI AND TECHNICAL BIDS**

- The EoI documents and only the Technical bids will be opened immediately after the deadlines for submission at 12:00 noon Monday, 28th October, 2024 and 12:00 noon, Monday, 11th November, 2024 respectively in the New Conference Room, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor, Benin City in the presence of bidders or their representatives. Please ensure that you sign the EOI/Bid Submission Register in the office of the Head, Procurement Unit, Ground Floor, Room 067, BORBDA Headquarters Complex, Km 24, Benin/Sapele Road, Obayantor, Benin City, as the Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority will not be held liable for misplaced or wrongly submitted EoIs/bids. For further enquiries, please contact the "Head Procurement Unit" on e-mail: [aochukwuyem@beninowena.gov.ng](mailto:aochukwuyem@beninowena.gov.ng), [info@beninowena.gov.ng](mailto:info@beninowena.gov.ng) or call any of these mobile Telephone Numbers: **07039591337, 08059625635**.

**7.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

- EoIs/Bids must be in English Language and signed by an official authorised by the bidder;
- The authorised official shall be introduced to the Authority by a Letter of Authority duly signed by the Director or Secretary of the Company;
- EoIs/Bids submitted after the deadline for submission would be returned un-opened;
- All costs will be borne by the bidders;
- For Category B, C & E: Only pre-qualified bidders at technical evaluation will be invited at a later date for financial bids opening, while the financial bids of unsuccessful bidders will be returned unopened;
- For Category D: Only shortlisted firms will be invited at a later date for collection of Request for Proposals;
- The EoIs and Technical Bids will be opened in the presence of Bidders or their representatives, CSOs in the areas of Anti-Corruption and Transparency and Private Professional bodies;
- Bid documents can also be collected in soft copies and Bidders can submit through post (Courier Services). Bids submitted through post must be received before the deadline for submission of bids, otherwise the bid will be returned un-opened;
- The Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority is not bound to pre-qualify/shortlist any Applicant and reserves the right to annul the Procurement process at any time without incurring any liabilities in accordance with Section 28 of the Public Procurement Act, 2007.

Signed:  
**MANAGING DIRECTOR,**  
 Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority.

**Technology**

**JICA partnership lifts Nigeria's start-ups on global stage —NITDA scribe**

BERA ESOSE

The Director General of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Kashifu Inuwa, says that the agency's partnership with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has put Nigeria's Startup ecosystem on the global map.

Inuwa made the observation at a meeting with JICA President, Dr. Akihiko Tanaka when he visited the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR) a Special Purpose Vehicle office established by NITDA, in Abuja.

Highlighting the impact of

the Agency's partnership with JICA Inuwa, said: "Through this collaboration, we have sponsored Nigerian startups to participate in tech exhibitions and conferences across Africa and the Middle East.

"Additionally, we've connected them with Japanese corporations, such as Mitsubishi, resulting in training for 112 startup founders from 56 companies and creation of over 300 direct jobs in Nigeria

He added: "Established in 2001, NITDA's mandate is to implement the national IT policy. At inception, less than 500,000 Nigerians had access to computers. Today, we have made

significant progress in bridging the digital divide." He noted that there is significant growth in Nigeria's ICT sector, from less than 0.5 per cent to over 16 per cent of GDP, with 120 million citizens now having computer access.

Citing the World Bank research predicting a global talent deficit of 85 million by 2030, potentially leading to \$8.5 trillion in lost annual value, he, however, suggested that to bridge this looming gap, "A strategic talent pipeline between Nigeria and Japan can leverage

Nigeria's youthful population to address Japan's aging workforce challenges, creating a symbiotic partnership."

**CLASSIFIED**

**MISSING DOCUMENTS**

That I, **MR. LAWRENCE EHIMARE OSEGHLE** is the brother to **MR. OSEGHLE IBHAGBE PATRICK**. That **OSEGHLE IBHAGBE PATRICK** is the rightful owner of a piece of land measuring 100ft x 100ft, lying and situate at **No. 8, Orkhata Avenue, off Gapiona, off Benoni, G.R.A Benin City, Edo State**. That he took possession of the property by inheritance from his father, late **MR. CHRISTOPHER ASAZOBOR OSEGHLE**. That all the documents relating to the said property got missing unknowingly. All efforts to trace it proved abortive. Concerned authorities and the general public should take note.

**EROMOSELE**

I, formerly known and addressed as **OSAZUWA-EKPUDA PRINCE EROMOSELE**, now wish to be known and addressed as **UDA PRINCE EROMOSELE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**OBEHI**

I, formerly known and addressed as **OSAZUWA EMMANUELLA OBEHI**, now wish to be known and addressed as **UDA EMMANUELLA OBEHI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**BLESSING**

I, formerly known and addressed as **MISS BLESSING O. LABARAN**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. BLESSING JOEL IBRAHIM, BLESSING** is my (first name), **JOEL** is my (middle name) and **IBRAHIM** is my (surname). All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**TINA**

That **OSAIKHUWOMWAN PRINCESS TINA, OBARETIN TINA OSARO**, and **OSAIKHUWOMWAN TINA OSARO** are one and the same person. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**IK**

That my name was wrongly captured on my NIN as **OSUBOR IK** now wish to be known and addressed as **OSUMBR IK, OSUMBR** is my (surname) and **IK** is my (first name). All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**GLORY OF ALL NATION BIBLE CHURCH**

THIS IS TO INFORM THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE ABOVE NAMED HAS APPLIED TO THE CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMISSION (CAC), ABUJA FOR REGISTRATION UNDER PART 'F' OF COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT, (CAMA).

**TRUSTEES:**

- ONYESOM KENNEDY ONYEMECHI
- ONYESOM RUTH EJEMEN
- OSEJI CLIFFORD
- OYEMECHI CHIDIEBERE

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:**

- TO LEAD PEOPLE TO LIVE A CHRIST LIKE LIFE OF RELEVANCE.
- TO MAKE LASTING POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS AND THE SOCIETY.
- LEADING SINNERS TO CHRIST AND IMPORTANCE OF MAKING HEAVEN.

ANY OBJECTION OF THIS REGISTRATION SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL, CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMISSION, 420MB TIGRIS CRESCENT, OFF AGUYI IRONSI STREET, PMB 198, MAITAMA, ABUJA WITHIN 28 DAYS FROM THE DATE OF PUBLICATION.

**OGHOMWEN**

I, formerly known and addressed as **MISS OGHOMWEN NOSAZE OKUNDAYE**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. OLAFIMIHAN OGHOMWEN NOSAZE OKUNDAYE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**ORHEWERE**

I, formerly known and addressed as **ORHEWERE DIVINE FAVOUR**, now wish to be known and addressed as **ORHEWERE FAVOUR**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**JEGBEFU**

I, formerly known and addressed as **MRS. OSAZUWA JEGBEFU HELEN**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. UDA JEGBEFU HELEN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**OSEMUDIAMEN**

I, formerly known and addressed as **OSAZUWA-EKPUDA DIVINE OSEMUDIAMEN**, now wish to be known and addressed as **UDA DIVINE OSEMUDIAMEN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**EHIMARE**

I, formerly known and addressed as **OSAZUWA-EKPUDA PETER EHIMARE**, now wish to be known and addressed as **UDA PETER EHIMARE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**EHIREMEN**

I, formerly known and addressed as **OSAZUWA-EKPUDA PAUL EHIREMEN**, now wish to be known and addressed as **UDA PAUL EHIREMEN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

**SPACE FOR SALE**

# Education

• Primary Education • Secondary Education • Tertiary Education

## FG, ASUU saga: Which way for our education sector?

ESTHER OGBODO

In recent years, strike actions taken by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have resulted in various adverse effects on both education and economic sectors of Nigerian society.

The trade union has expressed their dissatisfaction and frustration with the current government's lack of commitment and delays in responding to the demands of the union.

ASUU President, Professor Emmanuel Osodeke in an interview last Wednesday said, "In

view of the foregoing, the union resolved to give the Nigerian government another 14 days, in addition to the earlier 21 days, beginning from Monday, September 23, 2024, during which all the lingering issues must be concretely addressed to the satisfaction of the membership of the union. The union should not be held responsible for any industrial disharmony that arises from the government's failure to seize the new opportunity offered by ASUU to nip the looming crisis in the bud".

The silence on the part of the Federal Government to the de-

mands of ASUU is not unusual. The Federal Government has gradually gained the reputation of silence towards the demands of the trade unions due to its constant use of delay tactics in handling matters concerning them - ASUU.

However, the Federal Ministry of Education on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, set up a committee to begin talks with the ASUU in order to avoid the impending strike action planned by the trade union. The 31-man committee would be inaugurated on Wednesday, October 16, 2024. Note here that the com-

mittee will start work about six days after the last ASUU 14-day ultimatum elapsed. This has made some ASUU members say the Federal Government is not really serious about negotiation but just wants to buy time with the committee set-up.

In the statement made by the Director of Press for the Federal Ministry of Education, Folasade Boriowo, "The government has started working and I am sure that ASUU won't be embarking on a strike because a number of developments are on-going. A 31-man committee has been formed and they will be inaugu-

rated next week Wednesday".

It is expected that the 31-man committee would review the demands of ASUU, which involve the renegotiation of the 2009 agreement with the Federal Government that has not been concluded, poor funding for the

revitalization of public universities, non payment of the Earned Academic Allowance (EAA) and non payment of all academic staff on adjunct appointment, which was partly included in the 2023 Federal Government budget, among others.



## Continuous decline in JAMB cut-off marks: What is really the problem?

ESTHER OGBODO

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has since released its bench mark for admission of students into tertiary institutions for the 2024/2025 academic session. The Admissions Board released its cut-off mark as 140 out of 400 as the minimum score that can be used to admit an applicant into any university in Nigeria.

In recent years, one cannot help but notice the gradual decline of the cut-off marks set by the admission board each year. Statistics show that in 2008-2017, the cut-off mark was 180. However, due to difficulty of candidates in meeting the cut-off mark it was reduced to as low as 120 between 2017 and 2019. For the 2024/2025 session, the board has taken the cut-off mark to 140, which is equivalent to 35 percent of the required grade.

Many lecturers have condemned the board's decision to make its cut-off mark lower

than 160, which was the cut-off mark for the previous session. Professor Poju Tejumaiye of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos, said, "It is distressing and unfortunate. Scoring below 40 percent reflects a significant decline in our educational standards. This decision merely encourages a 'spoil system' rather than meritocracy. JAMB should revert to a minimum of 40 percent, aligning with the pass mark in Nigerian higher institutions."

"The Ministry of Education should prioritize teacher's training and encourage professional development courses. School curricula should also be updated to reflect modern perspectives".

The admission board however has maintained that 140 is only the minimum and that it is not a requirement of any university to admit from 140. It is only required of universities not to admit applicants who scored less than 140 in their UTME.

On the contrary, ASUU

president, Professor Emmanuel Osodeke said it was descending admitting students with scores as low as 30 percent.

"So, why are we descending to this level where universities are admitting candidates who scored as low as 30 percent in their examinations? When you look at reputable institutions like the University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University, they won't accept anything less than 200. Yet, some universities, especially newer private ones, admit students with scores as low as 140."

"This situation is widespread across the country, not just in the north. Many schools are lowering their admission standards".

He complained about the quality of teachers at the secondary school level, saying, "My concern isn't just about JAMB scores. It's about the quality of education from primary to secondary school. How can we expect quality teaching when teachers are paid as little as N16,000 a month in govern-

ment schools? This is a national disaster. Nigeria urgently needs to declare a state of emergency in education."

"Back in the days, you couldn't even dream of getting into a good school with a score below 200. But now, government schools at all levels are struggling, and admissions are increasingly going to private institutions that operate on a cash-and-carry basis. If action isn't taken soon, our universities will continue to decline".

With this steady decline, one cannot help but ponder on the cause(s) of the declining average mark made by applicants. It draws attention to the standard of both the primary and secondary school education in Nigeria, as earlier raised by Professor Osodeke. Also, the question of how well the students are taught in schools and the kind of distractions they face, which range from social media and technology interplays to the time spent on gallivanting and playing around, are issues worth realigning.

## Improving children's learning ability: Parents, teachers to the rescue

NGOZI OKECHUKWU

Despite the hardship faced in Nigeria due to the poor economy, there are still ways parents and teachers can help their wards improve their learning ability in order to excel. Education, they say, is the key to success, but then, one would consider if due to the hardship in Nigeria, parents and teachers can still focus on giving their wards the best of education they deserve to propel them and prepare them for the future.

As some parents would ask, 'what can I do to help my children get good grades in school? How can I improve their learning ability?' As known parents would not be happy seeing their children always performing poorly in class, they would want their children to come out tops, even up to tertiary institution, which is always a thing of joy.

You hear words like, "The person that came out first in your class does he have two heads?", and it is worse off if the child comes out last in class, you see the child being chided by both teachers and peers calling him/her shameful names like 'olodo!' 'dullard!' 'empty heads' or 'empty brains'.

These are no good stories but then, there are ways for parents and teachers to improve the learning ability of their children.

During an interview, Mrs. Blessing Emmanuel, a mother and teacher, shares her thoughts on how one can help the children in learning. "As a mother, you can improve your children's learning by creating time for them. You should be a best friend to your children. It is not just working all the time, you should sit with them and assist them too because they need you there, they can't do it alone."

"If the teachers are doing their part and the parents too, it will help the children to learn faster", she said.

Mrs. Magdalene, a working class mother of three, also voices her opinion, thus, "It is not easy as a working mother, but it is not supposed to be a yardstick to abandon my children's academics and learning. What I do is that after the day's activity I engage them with their as-

signments and offer assistance. Anything that I find lacking I try to give extra-moral lessons."

"When teachers give assignments they receive complaints from children that 'my mummy said she is tired or my mother said she does not understand it hence they bring it back to the teachers, which becomes a problem because it now seems like what the teachers taught nothing was taken back home to be practiced'."

She advised that parents in this category should go to the teachers and ask for ways to help, and any children lacking behind they should help them with extra lessons and make out time to be involved in the children's learning.

Improving on children's learning ability can also be done by creating an environment conducive for learning. It should be applicable both in school and home. In schools, where there are no good facilities for learning, some children might not be able to learn well. A conducive learning environment can be online materials like YouTube educational channels, MathWay, Wolfram Alpha, and online platforms like Google classroom.

Parents should not fold their hands leaving everything in the hands of the children; they can be part of the child's education by assisting in little ways like assignments and engaging them.

Helping the child to write, as some parents are fond of, really would not help the child. If a child fails any assignment, corrections should be made and taught to the child. Extra lessons can be of great help to help either after school or at home if need be.

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" but there are games that can help improve the child's learning, which you can engage them in as a parent. For example, Math bingo, Sudoku for children, language and reading games online like word search, word scramble, puzzle games, riddles and many more. These games can build the child's brain and retainability. So, instead of the films in phones they spend time watching, they can utilize their time well by learning and having fun too.

# Sports

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

## BOWFT 2024: Edo Queens, Heartland Queens, Bayelsa Queens, Nasarawa Amazons advance to semifinals

EDWARD OSEGHE

The 2024 Betsy Obaseki Women International Football Tournament has entered its semifinal stage with four teams set to battle today after an explosive quarter-final stage matches were decided on Saturday, with the postponed Remo Ladies versus Nasarawa Amazons game concluded on Sunday.

Defending champions Edo Queens, Nasarawa Amazons, Bayelsa Queens and Heartland Queens are the remaining teams

in contention for finals tickets.

Nasarawa Amazons came from behind to beat Remo Ladies 2-1 in the game that started on Saturday afternoon but was forced to be put on hold as a result of the heavy rain at the University of Benin Sports Complex. The match officials had to postpone the match at about 72 minutes of play due to the heavy downpour when the game stood at 1-1. The remaining part of the game was concluded on Sunday morning at the same venue with the Amazons progressing to the semifinals after a 2-1 victory over Remo Ladies

The defending champions of the Betsy Obaseki Women International Football Tournament (BOWFT) and reigning premier league champions Edo Queens Football Club look good enough to retain the cup after thrashing Abia Angels 4-0 in the first quarter-finals match at the University of Benin Sports Complex.

The Moses Aduku-managed Edo Queens will be hosting Nasarawa Amazons in one of the semifinal matches today at the University of Benin Sports Complex Kickoff time is 10:00 AM.

Former champions Bayelsa

Queens and Heartland Queens of Owerri will also be engaged in their semifinal battle at the same time at the Western Boys High School Mini stadium.

In the quarter-finals match, Edo Queens' prolific winger Chioma Moses scored twice, while Emem Essien and Fola-shade Ijamilusi made it 4-0 for the WAFU-B Champions to reach the semifinals.

Bayelsa Queens' victory over Benin-based Fortress Ladies was delayed to the second half after a strong challenge by the Benin side before ending it 2-0



to advance.

Heartland Queens on the other hand pipped Espoir FC of Benin Republic 1-0 to advance to the semifinals.

The twelve-day tournament, in its fourth edition, started on October 6 and will run through

October 17 in Benin City.

The FIFA-accredited tournament is a brainchild of the Edo State First Lady, Mrs. Betsy Obaseki. The 2024 edition of the tournament is themed "Say No to Teenage Pregnancy and Child Motherhood".

## Super Eagles eyes victory against Libya Tuesday, in second leg AFCON 2025 qualifier

PRINCESS NZEREM

Nigeria's Super Eagles are poised to battle Libya's Mediterranean Knights in the second leg of their 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifier, riding a wave of strong form that has seen them remain undefeated in their first three group matches.

The Super Eagles launched their campaign with an impressive 3-0 victory over Benin Republic's Cheetahs, followed by a goalless draw away to Rwanda's Amavubi.

A late strike from Nigeria's Fisayo Dele-Bashiru secured a hard-fought 1-0 win against Libya on Friday in Uyo, cementing the Super Eagles' top position in Group D with seven points from three matches, ahead of Benin Republic, Rwanda, and Libya.

In stark contrast, Libya's journey has been marked by struggle. The Mediterranean Knights currently occupy the bottom spot in Group D, having managed a meager one point from three games. Their campaign began with a 1-1 draw at home against Rwanda, but subsequent defeats – a 2-1 loss to Benin Republic and a 1-0 setback against Nigeria – have left them reeling.

Undeterred, Libya will be

seeking to reverse their fortunes in the upcoming match against Nigeria. The second leg presents a crucial opportunity for the Mediterranean Knights to exact revenge and improve their standings in the group.

The two teams will clash on Tuesday, with kickoff scheduled for 8:00 PM local time. Fans can catch the action live on AfroSport TV.



## Eguavoen addresses Boniface's goal-scoring challenges for Nigeria

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Super Eagles striker Victor Boniface has extended his goalless streak for Nigeria to seven matches after failing to score in the team's 1-0 victory over Libya during the 2025 Africa Cup

of Nations qualifier on Friday.

This marks just one day shy of a year since Boniface last found the net for Nigeria, having opened his international account with a goal in a 2-2 friendly against Saudi Arabia on October 13, 2023.

Since that initial goal, Boniface has gone seven games without scoring for the national team.

In response, Super Eagles interim head coach Austin Eguavoen provided insights into Boniface's current form, highlighting both the striker's potential and his struggles in front of goal while representing Nigeria.

After Nigeria's narrow 1-0 victory over Libya, Eguavoen stated, "Boniface is a clinical striker, a clinical finisher, but he is struggling in national colours. Sometimes these chances don't come."

Eguavoen also pointed out that decision-making in crucial moments has been a challenge for the young forward.



## Osimhen resumes solo training following injury layoff

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Nigerian striker Victor Osimhen, currently out due to injury, has been spotted training solo as he makes strides towards recovery.

On Saturday evening, Galatasaray shared a 1.52-second video showing Osimhen engaging in an individual training session, sparking optimism about

his return to the pitch. Earlier in the day, the club also posted photos confirming the 25-year-old forward's return to training, although it remains uncertain whether he will feature in the upcoming match against Antalyaspor on Saturday.

A statement on the club's official X (formerly Twitter) account read, "Victor Osimhen worked separately from

the team within the scope of a special program prepared for him."

Fans are eager for Osimhen's comeback, but Galatasaray has not yet confirmed his availability for the next fixture.

Osimhen sustained his injury during a thrilling 3-3 draw against Kasimpasa, where he made a stunning impact by scoring twice within the first eight

minutes, signaling a return to form after a brief goal drought.

On October 6, Osimhen celebrated his first Turkish Super Lig accolade since joining Galatasaray on a season-long loan from Napoli. His brilliant goal against Kasimpasa earned him the Goal of the Week award, voted by beIN SPORTS viewers, with an overwhelming 77.96% of the total votes.

## NPFL25 MD6: Bendel Insurance suffers defeat at Ikorodu City

● *host Bayelsa United on Thursday*

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club against all expectations suffered a 3-0 defeat at Ikorodu City in the Match Day Six of the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) game in Lagos on Saturday.

The match played at the Onikan Stadium in Lagos saw the Benin Arsenal conceding three unreplied goals in the second half of the game after a goalless first half had raised their hope for a point away from home.

The three goals came from Ayemwenre (48mins), Kelechi (55mins) and Ajeyigbe in the 73rd minute to give Ikorodu City their first victory in the season.

The embarrassing result has left the dressing room of the Benin Arsenal devastated as team members questioned what could be responsible for the shocking defeat in the hands of the league's new entrants Ogbabos.

Some of the players, including the captain Meyiwa Oritseweginmi in their reactions said, "This is the worst result. What's happening to us? We

just have to wake up and tackle the problems."

The captain added that the boys just have to work harder to get their lost grounds recovered, beginning with the Thursday clash with Bayelsa Utd. in Benin City.

Bendel Insurance FC's start to the new football season has been challenging, following the exit of their most regular first eleven of Amas Obasogie, Benjamin Tanimu, Sunday Anyanwu, Ebuka Akobundu, Divine Nwachukwu, Evans Ogbonda, Chisom Okereke and others who made the team solid since past two seasons.

Insurance FC has six points in the six matches played so far with one home victory against 3SC; two home draws (Rivers Utd, El-Kandmi Warriors) and one away draw at Tornadoes, and two away losses at Katsina Utd and Ikorodu City.

The Benin Arsenal are host to Bayelsa Utd on Thursday in a South-South derby. The live broadcast match is scheduled to kick off at 3:00 PM at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium.



OSIMHEN

Sports

# Three super sports crew feared dead In Anambra

OLATOMIWA OYEDELE

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has condoled with the families of the three media persons killed in a kidnapping ambush in Anambra State.

The victims were part of a SuperSport crew traveling to Uyo, Akwa Ibom to broadcast the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifying match between Nigeria and Libya — a game the Super Eagles won on Friday.

They were said to have been ambushed along Ihiala-Orlu Road on Tuesday while traveling from Lagos to Uyo.

The suspected bandits were said to have opened fire on the

bus carrying the crew members and security personnel, resulting in the deaths of a cameraman, a police officer, and the bus driver.

It was gathered that of the 14 persons in the vehicle at the time of the ambush, eight were rescued, two escaped, three were killed and one unaccounted for.

In a statement released on Saturday, Musa Gusau, the NFF president, confirmed the incident while expressing condolences to the family of the deceased persons.

The NFF president, Ibrahim Musa Gusau also prayed for the safe return of the one person still unaccounted for.

He further praised SuperSport's professionalism and



dedication to Nigerian football, acknowledging their role in "spreading joy through the sport".

"Yes, we won the match against Libya and took three points, but the fact that three

lives were lost created a situation in which we were unable to celebrate properly, and it hurts seriously to even think back at the unfortunate incident," the statement reads.

# Malawi's Temwa Chawinga Makes History

● breaks Kerr's single-season goal record in NWSL

PRINCESS NZEREM

In a remarkable achievement, Malawi's Temwa Chawinga has shattered Sam Kerr's record for most goals in a single National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) season, netting an impressive 19 goals.

According to Fabrizio Romano's X handle, Chawinga, a talented forward for Kansas City Current and the Malawi national team, accomplished this feat in her inaugural NWSL season.

Chawinga's remarkable journey to breaking the record began after joining Kansas City Current from Swedish club Kvarnsvedens IK and Chinese club Wuhan Jiangnan University. Her impressive tally of 19 goals has come from just 24 games, with an average of a goal every 109 minutes. Her impressive statistics also include 103

shots and a shot conversion rate of 18.63%.

While Chawinga now holds the single-season record, Sam Kerr remains the outright record holder for NWSL goals, boasting an impressive 77 goals – 13 more than Lynn Williams, who sits second with 64 goals.

Chawinga's record-breaking goal proved decisive, securing a 1-0 victory for Kansas City Current over Bay FC. This win propelled the Current to third place in the NWSL standings.

Chawinga's remarkable feat has sent shockwaves throughout the soccer community, earning praise from fans, coaches, and fellow players alike.

As the NWSL season continues, all eyes will be on Chawinga to see if she can further extend her record-breaking tally and lead Kansas City Current to even greater heights.



CHAWINGA

# EPL: Cole Palmer crowned Player of the Month for September

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Cole Palmer has been awarded the EA SPORTS Player of the Month for September 2024.

The announcement, made on Friday via the official Premier League website, highlights Palmer's impressive performance, as he led the league in both goals and goal involvement during September, scoring five goals and providing one assist in just four appearances.

One of Palmer's standout achievements occurred during Chelsea's 6-1 victory over Brighton & Hove Albion, where he made history as the first player to score four goals in the first half of a Premier League match. This remarkable feat came within just 21 minutes, showcasing his exceptional finishing skills and composure under pressure, and securing his place in the league's record books.

In addition to his four goals against Brighton, Palmer contributed an assist in Chelsea's 1-1 draw with Crystal Palace and scored again in the team's 3-0 win over West Ham United, further solidifying his candidacy for the award.

This marks Palmer's second Player of the Month title, with his first win occurring in April 2024. His consistency is notable, as he has now claimed two of the last three Player of the Month awards.

The 22-year-old topped an eight-man shortlist, with



the public vote on the EA SPORTS website combined

with the votes of a panel of football experts.

Palmer has started October strongly, providing an assist in a 1-1 draw against Nottingham Forest. He currently leads the Premier League with 11 goal involvements this season and aims to increase his tally when Chelsea faces Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday, October 20.

As reported by the official Premier League website, the Barclays Manager of the Month for September will also be announced soon, adding to the series of prestigious recognitions for Premier League stars.

# Basketball: Kalu sets sights on WNBA defender of the Year Award

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

D'Tigress and Atlanta Dream guard Ezinne Kalu sets her sights on winning the Defensive Player of the Year award in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA).

The 32-year-old had an impressive campaign at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, where she helped Nigeria become the first African country to reach the quarterfinals. Recently, Kalu fulfilled her dream of playing in the WNBA by joining the Atlanta Dream.

In doing so, the New Jersey native became the first Black athlete from a historically Black college to compete in the WNBA in over 15 years, a milestone she celebrated with a post on her X handle on Thursday.

Her university coach, Cedric Baker, praised Kalu's dedication and leadership, reflecting on her pivotal role in helping the Tigers secure their Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference championship in 2015.

Kalu has represented Nige-

ria at the Afrobasket tournaments in 2017, 2019, and 2021, contributing to the team's three consecutive championships as Africa's highest-ranked side. She was named the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the 2019 Women's Afrobasket.



KALU

# Shanghai Final: Djokovic aims for 100th title against World No.1 Sinner

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Novak Djokovic overcame "an incredible fight" with Taylor Fritz on Saturday, pushing through physical discomfort to reach the Shanghai Masters final, where he will face world number one Jannik Sinner in pursuit of his 100th career title.

Djokovic defeated Fritz 6-4, 7-6 (8/6), after Sinner had secured his spot by beating Tomas Machac 6-4, 7-5, ensuring that Sinner will finish the year

ranked at the top. Only Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger Federer (103) have

previously surpassed the 100-title milestone in men's tennis.



"I won't be the favorite on the court, but I hope to come out physically fresh enough to challenge him in what could be a long match.

"I expect it to be the toughest encounter of the tournament, and I must be prepared," Djokovic noted regarding Sunday's final.

Sinner remarked that facing Djokovic would make the final "even more special." "It's going to be a very tough match; it's one of the biggest challenges we face in our sport," he said.

# Falcons set for two-legged friendly clash against Algeria

OKOEGUALE ADOLOR

Nigeria's women's senior team, the Super Falcons are set to face Algeria in a two-legged international friendly later this month, as confirmed by a source within the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF).

Both matches will feature home-based players and are intended to prepare the two nations for the 2024 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON), which will be held in Morocco next year. The first leg is scheduled for October 26, with the return fixture taking place three days later at venues that have yet to be announced.



This initiative aligns with the NFF's goal of integrating quality players from the Nigeria Women's

Football League into the Super Falcons' lineup for WAFCON.

To secure their place in the continental tournament, the Super Falcons triumphed over Cabo Verde with a commanding 7-1 aggregate score in the second round, following a walkover against São Tomé e Príncipe in the first round.

This marks Nigeria's 15th appearance in the competition, where they have claimed a record 11 titles (1991, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2018). They will compete against eleven other qualified nations—Morocco, South Africa, Algeria, Ghana, Botswana, DR Congo, Tunisia, Senegal, Zambia, Tanzania, and Mali—during the tournament, which is set to run from July 5 to 26, 2025.



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# INSIGHT

## Tinubu, Remi, and Akpabio mocking Nigerians' hardship

### COMMENTARY

FAROOQ A. KPEROGI

The torment of incessantly escalating petrol prices and the consequent surge in the cost of everything have plunged Nigerians into a precipitous decline in quality of life. This dire situation is exacerbated by insensitive, almost mocking remarks from those responsible for inflicting this pain.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, aptly nicknamed "T-Pain," recently stated from London that Nigerians would, in the future, appreciate the wisdom of his "reforms." Such a statement is both callous and mendacious.

It is callous because these "reforms" are literally destroying the livelihoods of millions and causing the deaths of many. What possible benefit could the deceased derive from economic reforms that precipitated their untimely demise?

It is mendacious because, as evidenced by the history of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) in Nigeria—and the experiences of other nations implementing similar neoliberal economic reforms—such policies invariably erode the middle class, exacerbate poverty among the lower classes, yet please the markets, thereby benefiting the upper classes.

Almost without exception, neoliberal policies—such as the elimination of subsidies, deregulation, reductions in social spending, and fiscal auster-

ity—exacerbate economic inequality and hinder sustainable development in developing economies. These policies often benefit large corporations and the wealthy, which creates an inequitable concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and widens the chasm between the rich and the poor.

Thus, the deferred benefits for which Tinubu wants Nigerians to endure mass deaths and hopelessness are the opening of Nigerian markets to international competition—which may please global markets but will overwhelm local businesses lacking the resources and technology to compete—and the freeing up of resources to invest in infrastructure.

However, the reality is that contemporary Nigeria is inhospitable to foreign investment due to the absence of security, social, and physical infrastructure, and because Tinubu's policies have so impoverished the majority that they cannot afford to purchase what foreign businesses produce. This explains the mass exodus of foreign companies since 2023.

Furthermore, given the culture of endemic corruption entrenched within the upper echelons of power, most of the funds saved from subsidy withdrawals, tariff increases, intensified taxation, and cuts in social programs will likely be misappropriated. The government will still resort to borrowing from the World Bank and the IMF to finance its operations.

We are already witnessing this phenomenon. Despite massive inflows of

cash into government coffers, no new projects are being constructed or even initiated. In fact, governments at all levels are procrastinating over implementing the ₦70,000 per month minimum wage. State governors convert the excess funds they receive from federal allocations into dollars and stash them away, thereby putting pressure on the naira.

Now, the vast majority of Nigerians have resigned themselves to the fact that death, starvation, and hopelessness are the only certain outcomes of Tinubu's "reforms" and are seeking a way out. Middle-class citizens are saving up to leave the country, and, for the first time ever, even the majority of northern Nigeria's middle class is investing in plans to escape from Nigeria.

In response, Senate President Godswill Akpabio declared that Nigerians fleeing the blazing neoliberal hellhole that Tinubu has created are ungrateful and unpatriotic cowards who should be stopped. "I believe people should place love for their country above financial gains. That is why many of us choose to remain here," he said.

Akpabio and his ilk choose to stay in Nigeria not out of love for the country but because they thrive off it and are insulated from the harm they inflict upon it. The professionals leaving Nigeria in droves are not doing so because they lack love for their country. They love their country; they simply abhor the raging neoliberal inferno it has become. British Somali poet Warsan Shire once

pointed out, "No one leaves home unless/home is the mouth of a shark."

It is insulting to suggest, as Akpabio did, that Nigerian emigrants are motivated by base and unpatriotic motives. Even more insulting is Akpabio's proposed solution to halt emigration: that dissatisfied Nigerians should reduce the number of cars they own.

At times, one wonders whether Akpabio retains any functioning brain cells.

Meanwhile, Remi Tinubu, Bola Tinubu's wife, continued this pattern of insulting Nigerians amidst their suffering. On Thursday, she told the Ooni of Ife that her husband is not responsible for Nigeria's current travails, which contradicts her husband's own acceptance of responsibility for the hardships Nigerians are enduring—with a promise of an illusory better tomorrow as compensation for the pain he is inflicting.

"We are just 18 months into our administration," she said. "We are not the cause of the current situation. We are trying to fix it and secure the future."

She then inverted logic and implied that Nigerians are suffering not because her husband has increased petrol prices more times and at higher rates than any previous president, but because prior presidents did not do what her husband is doing.

"We know that subsidy has been removed, but with God on our side, in the next two years, Nigeria will be greater than this," she said. "Those who attempted removing subsidies before

could not see it through. But with your prayers in the next two years, we will build a nation for the future."

The rage that overcame me upon reading this is beyond description. Do these insensate individuals utilize their cognitive faculties at all?

I have long harbored a suspicion that the upper echelons of Nigeria's power structure have been displeased with the emergence of a middle class since 1999. The markers of middle-class status—such as car and home ownership, fine dining, foreign education, and sartorial sophistication—have deprived the upper class of privileges they believed should remain exclusive to them.

In the early 2000s, they used to speak derisively of "Obasanjo drivers"—individuals who could afford to own cars due to minimum wage increase and arrears of the minimum wage during Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency. It isn't Obasanjo who gave people cars or created the middle class, of course. By its nature, the practice of democracy creates certain jobs and circulates opportunities that foster the middle class.

Now, Tinubu's neoliberal policies are eradicating the middle class and plunging the poor into deeper, more excruciating poverty, reminiscent of the days of military dictatorship. I wonder how much longer this can continue. Yet we will be observing from afar, as nothing that is happening now comes as a shock. I forewarned that this would occur even before Tinubu assumed power.

## The Internet is littered in 'educated guesses' without the 'education'



Although no one likes a know-it-all, they dominate the Internet.

The Internet began as a vast repository of information. It quickly became a breeding ground for self-proclaimed experts seeking what most people desire: recognition and money.

Today, anyone with an Internet connection and some typing skills can position themselves, regardless of their education or experience, as a subject matter expert (SME). From relationship advice, career coaching, and health and nutrition tips to citizen journalists practicing pseudo-journalism, the Internet is awash with individuals—Internet talking heads—sharing their "insights," which are, in large part, essentially educated guesses without the education or experience.

The Internet has become a 24/7/365 sitcom where armchair experts think they're the star.

Not long ago, years, sometimes decades, of dedicated work and acquiring education in one's field was once required to be recognized as an expert.

The knowledge and opinions of doctors, scientists, historians, et al. were respected due to their education and experience. Today, a social media account and a knack for hyperbole are all it takes to present oneself as an "expert" to achieve Internet fame that can be monetized.

On the Internet, nearly every piece of content is self-serving in some way.

The line between actual expertise and self-professed knowledge has become blurry as an out-of-focus selfie. Inadvertently, social media platforms have created an informal degree program where likes and shares are equivalent to degrees. After reading selective articles they've found via and watching some TikTok videos, a person can post a video claiming they're an herbal medicine expert. Their new "knowledge," which their followers will absorb, claims that Panda dung tea—one of the most expensive teas in the world and isn't what its name implies—cures everything from hypertension to existential crisis. Meanwhile, registered dietitians are shaking their heads, wondering how to compete against all the misinformation

their clients are exposed to.

More disturbing are individuals obsessed with evangelizing their beliefs or conspiracy theories. These people write in-depth blog posts, such as *Elvis Is Alive and the Moon Landings Were Staged*, with links to obscure YouTube videos, websites, social media accounts, and blogs. Regardless of your beliefs, someone or a group on the Internet shares them, thus confirming your beliefs.

Misinformation is the Internet's currency used to get likes, shares, and engagement; thus, it often spreads like a cosmic joke. Consider the prevalence of clickbait headlines: "You Won't Believe What Taylor Swift Says About Climate Change!"; "This Bedtime Drink Melts Belly Fat While You Sleep!"; and "In One Week, I Turned \$10 Into \$1 Million!"

Titles that make outrageous claims are how the content creator gets reads and views, which generates revenue via affiliate marketing, product placement, and pay-per-click (PPC) ads. Clickbait headlines are how you end up watching a TikTok video by a purported nutrition expert adamantly asserting you can lose belly fat while you sleep by drinking, for 14 consecutive days, a concoction of raw eggs, cinnamon, and apple cider vinegar 15 minutes before going to bed.

Our constant search for answers that'll explain our convoluted world

and our desire for shortcuts to success is how Internet talking heads achieve influencer status. Because we tend to seek low-hanging fruits, we listen to those with little experience or knowledge of the topics they discuss yet are astute enough to know what most people want to hear.

There's a trend, more disturbing than spreading misinformation, that needs to be called out: individuals who've never achieved significant wealth or traded stocks giving how-to-make-easy-money advice, the appeal of which is undeniable. Several people I know have lost substantial money by following the "advice" of Internet talking heads.

Anyone on social media claiming to have a foolproof money-making strategy is lying. They wouldn't be peddling their money-making strategy if they could make easy money.

Successful people tend to be secretive.

Social media companies design their respective algorithms to serve their advertisers'—their source of revenue—interest; hence, content from Internet talking heads appears most prominent in your feeds. When a video of a self-professed expert goes viral, likely because it pressed an emotional button, the more people see it, the more engagement it receives, such as likes, shares and comments, creating a cycle akin to

a tornado.

Imagine scrolling through your TikTok feed and stumbling upon a "scientist" who claims they can predict the weather using only aluminum foil, copper wire, sea salt and baking soda. You chuckle, but you notice his video got over 7,000 likes, has been shared over 600 times and received over 400 comments. You think to yourself, "Maybe this guy is onto something." What started as a quest to achieve Internet fame evolved into an Internet-wide belief that weather forecasting can be as easy as DIY crafts.

Since anyone can call themselves "an expert," you must cultivate critical thinking skills to distinguish genuine expertise from self-professed experts' self-promoting nonsense. While the absurdity of the Internet can be entertaining, misinformation has serious consequences. The next time you read a headline that sounds too good to be true, it's probably an Internet talking head making an educated guess; without the education seeking Internet fame they can monetize.

Kossovan, a self-described connoisseur of human psychology, can be reached on Twitter and Instagram@NKossovan.