

# Resolution coming for \$1.3bn Shell-Renaissance divestment, says Olu Verheijen

BERA ESENE

The special adviser to President Bola Tinubu on energy, Olu Verheijen, has indicated that regulatory issues surrounding Shell's proposed sale of its Nigerian onshore assets to the local concern, the Renaissance Consortium, should soon be resolved.

"I am sure that in short order it will be resolved with the regulator in a way that addresses our

## ● as Nigeria seeks to rev up crude production, boost economy

own objectives to continue to accelerate exits for international oil companies," Verheijen said during a call with the energy reporters' association on Wednesday, according to Bloomberg.

On January 16, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) announced plans to sell its Nigerian onshore oil assets to a consortium of local

companies for over \$1.3 billion.

The consortium, known as Renaissance, is formed by local firms including ND Western, Aradel Energy, First Exploration & Production (E&P), Waltersmith, and Petrolin.

On October 21, Gbenga Komolafe, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), had

said the Federal Government approved four divestment deals.

The four deals that received ministerial consent were Eni's divestment of Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) to Oando Plc, and Equinor Nigeria Energy Company Limited's divestment to Project Odinmin Investments Limited.

Others are the TotalEnergies-Telema Energies deal and

ExxonMobil's sale of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU) to Seplat Energy.

However, Komolafe said the divestment of Shell's assets to Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited could not scale regulatory test.

Speaking during the call, Verheijen told journalists that Nigeria's government wants to ensure that smaller companies that take over

fields from major oil producers are able to invest adequately.

"For the independents who are coming in onshore, we want to make sure that they align with our objectives of rapidly growing production," she said.

The special adviser said there is a need "to ensure that there is a technical and financial capacity and that some of the obligations that need to be addressed are being addressed".

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...that the people may know



Edo College of Nursing graduates 81 at first convocation after revamp

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# Warnings, rebuke, humour as Senate confirms 7 ministerial nominees

## ● Aisosa Aiyamenkhue and Jeremiah Omuomwan, with agency reports

There were sparks of caution, rebuke and humour Wednesday, as all seven ministerial nominees put forward by President Bola Tinubu for confirmation presented themselves at the Senate chambers and were approved.

The nominees were screened on Wednesday following initial postponement on Tuesday.

First to be screened by the Senate was Nentawe Yilwatda, the nominee appointed to replace Betta Edu as the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction.

Other nominees including Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu nominated as the Minister of State Foreign Affairs, Maigari Dingyadi nominated as the Minister of Labour and Employment, Jumoke Oduwale, nominated as the Minister of Industry were subsequently screened.

Others who went through screening were Idi Maiha as Minister for the newly created Livestock Development Ministry, Yusuf Ata as the Minister of State, Housing and Urban Development, and Suwaiba Ahmad as Minister of State Education.

Senate President Godswill Akpabio cautioned Senator Osita Ngwu for praising the beauty of Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu during the ministerial screening.

When Akpabio opened the floor for questions, Ngwu, who is the Senator representing Enugu West District in the 10th National Assembly, started by applauding Bianca's beauty for which he attracted a rebuke.

"Mr President, the beautiful

nominee standing before us," the lawmaker said.

"Restrict yourself to the resume. Forget this word beautiful," Akpabio interjected with humour. "She didn't put in the CV that she is beautiful."

The conversation between Ngwu and Akpabio caused a ripple of laughter among Senators. Ngwu thereafter proceeded to laud the profile and competence of the nominee.

For his part, Enyinnaya Abaribe, the Senator representing Abia South District, said Bianca's competence and ability to perform was not in doubt.

He also commended President Bola Tinubu for nominating the "mother" of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) as a minister. "By bringing an APGA person to be a minister has already started a unity government and national

integration," Abaribe said.

The nominee was subsequently asked to take a bow.

Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu is an accomplished diplomat, lawyer, businesswoman and beauty pageant titleholder. She is also the widow of former Biafra warlord Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu.

Further sparks were caused when Senator Ali Ndume, representing Borno South Senatorial District, warned Nentawe Yilwat-

da, the nominee for the position of Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, to remember the circumstances that led to the removal of his predecessor, Betta Edu, and avoid any pitfall.

Former minister Beta Edu was suspended by President Tinubu last January, over the alleged diversion of more than N585 million (\$640,000; £500,000) of pub-

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Court grants Reps member Ikwechegh N500,000 bail on assault charge

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MINISTERIAL NOMINEES SCREENING:

Senate President Godswill Akpabio (left) exchanging greetings with other Senators after arriving at the Senate Chambers ahead of the screening of seven ministerial nominees sent by President Bola Tinubu, yesterday.

The Nigerian Observer

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## NEWS

# Edo College of Nursing graduates 81 at first convocation after revamp

The Edo State College of Nursing Sciences (ESCNS), has held its maiden convocation, marking the first graduation ceremony since the institution was revamped, upgraded, and reopened by the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration in 2021.

The event, held at the college's main campus, on Sapele Road, Benin City, saw 81 newly qualified nurses receive their diplomas, prepared to contribute to the healthcare sector both within the State and beyond.

## Obaseki gets accolades for institution's upgrade to global standards

The graduates were presented with the award of Diploma in Basic Nursing by the Provost of the College, Prof. Patricia Ukaigwe.

Governor Obaseki, while delivering his goodwill message at the convocation ceremony, charged the graduates to utilize the world-class education acquired to make a meaningful impact in the healthcare value chain and health ecosystem.

Obaseki, represented by the State Commissioner for Education, Dr.

Joan Osa-Oviawe said, "You have received a world-class education which will stand you out from your peers. It's left for you to go all out and conquer the world. Move your school forward, I urge you."

"It's my hope that as you go all out to conquer the world, remember when it started and come back and contribute your quota to the development of the school, State, and country at large. We thank the alumni for all they have done for the school."

Delivering the convocation lecture, alumni of the school, Nurse Obi Anthonia, of the 1988-91 set, commended the governor for revamping and reopening the institution after eight years of inactivity.

Acknowledging the state-of-the-art facilities in the school, she said the institution ranks as the best in the country, urging the 81 graduating students to carry on the legacy of compassion, resilience and unwavering dedication to the profession.



### MAIDEN CONVOCATION:

L-R: Guest lecturer and alumni of the Edo State College of Nursing Sciences (ESCNS), Nurse Obi Anthonia; Commissioner for Education/representative of Edo State Governor, Dr. Joan Osa-Oviawe; Provost, ESCNS, Prof. Patricia Ukaigwe, and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Stanley Ehiarhimwian, during the maiden convocation of the Edo State College of Nursing Sciences since the institution was revamped, upgraded, and reopened by the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration, in Benin City, recently.

# Court grants Reps member Ikwechegh ₦500,000 bail on assault charge

A Magistrate Court sitting in Kuje has granted bail to a House of Representatives member for Aba North and South, Alex Ikwechegh, in the sum of N500,000 and two sureties in like sum.

In a brief ruling, the Presiding Judge, Abubakar Sai'id, said the sureties must reside within the court's jurisdiction and provide utility bills as proof of evidence.

The charges brought against him include abuse of office, assault, and threat to life.

He pleaded not guilty when it was read to him.

His counsel, thereafter, made an oral application for bail which was granted by the court.

The case has been adjourned to November 8, 2024.

Ikwechegh was arraigned for allegedly assaulting an e-hailing cab driver, Stephen Abuwatseya in Abuja.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives has urged Nigerians to wait for the outcome of an investigation by the police.

On Monday, the Federal Cap-

ital Territory (FCT) Police Command detained and quizzed Ikwechegh at the Maitama Police Station over the incident.

In a now-viral video, the House of Representatives member was seen slapping the Bolt driver.

Ikwechegh represents Aba North & South Federal Constituency in the Green Chamber on the platform of the All Progress-

sives Grand Alliance (APGA).

Going by the conversation recorded in the viral video, the lawmaker had ordered some snails from a vendor who engaged the services of the e-hailing App driver to deliver the goods.

A heated disagreement ensued when the Bolt driver, Stephen Abuwatseya, arrived at the lawmaker's residence and asked to be paid.

A furious Ikwechegh was heard speaking with the vendor on the phone. "How can this stupid idiot come to me and tell me that I am supposed to come and meet him in his car and pick up a snail I am buying from you? I can make this man disappear in the whole of Nigeria and nothing will happen," the lawmaker blurted to the speaker on the other side.

# Tinubu appoints Oloyede Acting Chief of Army Staff

JESSICA OSEBHOR

President Bola Tinubu has appointed an acting Chief of Army Staff (COAS) to stand guard until the return of Lieutenant General Taoreed Lagbaja who is away on medical leave.

Presidential spokesman, Bayo Onanuga disclosed in a statement on Wednesday

The new appointee is Major General Olufemi Olatubosun Oloyede.

Onanuga said Oloyede will hold sway as the COAS pending the return of Lt. General Taoreed

## pending Lagbaja's return from medical leave

Abiodun Lagbaja, who is said to be indisposed and is receiving treatment abroad.

"President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, has appointed Major General Olufemi Olatubosun Oloyede as the acting Chief of Army Staff (COAS)," the statement read.

"Oloyede will act in the position pending the return of the indisposed substantive Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Taoreed Abiodun Lagbaja."

Until his appointment, Oloyede served as the 56th Commander of the elite Infantry Corps of the Nigerian Army, based in Jaji, Kaduna.

The 56-year-old Oloyede and Lagbaja were classmates and members of the 39th Regular Course.

He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1992, effective from 1987. He rose to Major-General in September 2020.

Oloyede has held many commands since his commissioning as

# Court halts FG allocation to Rivers Govt

JENNIFER ODUWARE

A Federal High Court in Abuja presided over by Justice Joyce Abdulmalik has stopped the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) from further releasing monthly financial allocations to the Rivers State Government.

Justice Abdulmalik held that the receipt and disbursement of monthly allocations since January this year by the Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, was a breach of the Constitution and an aberration that must not be allowed to continue.

The judge held that the presentation of the 2024 budget by Fubara before a four-member Rivers House of Assembly was an affront to the constitutional provision.

She said that the governor's action was a gross violation of the 1999 Constitution.

The judge subsequently restrained the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Accountant General of the Federation, Zenith Bank

and Access Bank from further allowing Fubara to access money from the Consolidated Revenue and Federation Account.

Earlier in October, the Court of Appeal in Abuja affirmed the judgment of the Federal High Court which set aside the N800 billion budget passed by five members of the Rivers State House of Assembly which was led by Edison Ehie-led.

The appellate court dismissed the appeal filed by Fubara on grounds that it lacked merit.

The court held that Fubara withdrew his counter-affidavit at the lower court in the matter and as such cannot commence an appeal in a matter he did not challenge at the trial stage.

In the unanimous judgement, the court said that Governor Fubara is expected to apply the rule of law and not the rule of might.

The court further says that the situation in Rivers State House of Assembly is an executive dictatorship by the governor and a joke taken too far.

# Two arrested over kidnap of Catholic priest in Edo State

JENNIFER ODUWARE

Two suspects have been arrested in connection with the abduction of a Catholic church Priest, Rev. Fr. Thomas Ayode, in Edo State.

This was disclosed by the Edo State Commissioner of Police, Umoru Ozigi on Wednesday while parading seven suspects arrested for various crimes.

According to Ozigi, the suspects were arrested across the state for armed robbery kidnapping, cultism, and car snatching among others.

The Police Commissioner said, "The command has responded to the unfortunate incident of the kidnap of Rev. Fr. Thomas Ayode by rejigging the security architecture in the area in synergy with the Communi-

ty through the deployment of a unit of the Police Mobile Force.

"Two suspects have been arrested in connection with the kidnapping of the Reverend Father?"

Ozigi said that efforts were ongoing to rescue the cleric, apprehend other suspects and bring them to justice.

He assured that all the arrested suspects would be charged in court as soon as the investigation is concluded.

Reverend Ayode, who is also the Rector, Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary School, Ivanokpodi, in Agenegbode, Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State was kidnapped last Sunday by gunmen suspected to be kidnapers.

The kidnapers are demanding a N200 million ransom.

# Warnings, rebuke, humour as Senate...

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lic money into a personal bank account and eventually replaced.

Quizzing the nominee, Ndume said the humanitarian ministry is the most important because about 60% of Nigerians are living in poverty and the nominee is coming at a time

when the whole world is concerned about the escalating humanitarian crisis in the country.

"What would you do as a case of emergency to make sure that the humanitarian crisis that we are facing, and are likely to face more, will be addressed?"

Replying, the nominee said he would deploy technology and innovation to tackle the humanitarian crisis in the country.

Senate President Godswill Akpabio subsequently asked the nominee to take a bow.

They subsequently screened other appointees including Mai-gari Dingyadi nominated as the Minister of Labour and Employment, Jumoke Oduwale nominated as the Minister of Industry.

Also screened were Idi Mai-ha as Minister for the newly created Livestock Development Ministry, Yusuf Ata as the Minister of State, Housing and Urban Development, and Suwaiba Ahmad as Minister of State Education.