

# Experts identify financing, SME devt as strategies for \$1trn GDP

● **say Nigeria loses about \$300bn to mismanagement, devaluation**

TELIAT SULE

Investment and financial experts under the aegis of the Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers (CIS) have emphasised the need for efficient and affordable access to financing and creating special

platforms for the listing of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as part of the strategies Nigeria should implement towards raising the country's gross domestic product (GDP) to \$1 trillion.

These were parts of the recommendations made at the

28th Annual Conference of the Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers (CIS), in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital. The annual conference has been the platform for the appraisal of the economy and offering professional suggestions on how to move the nation forward.

Welcoming the delegates to the annual conference and providing an insight on what informed this year's theme, which was "Capital market as a catalyst for \$1 trillion economy", Oluropo Dada, the 13th President and Chairman of Governing Council, Chartered

Institute of Stockbrokers (CIS), said the theme was chosen in order to help fast track the attainment of one of FG's cardinal objectives.

"The theme was deliberately crafted to serve as the Institute's contribution towards achieving one of the Federal Gov-

ernment of Nigeria's cardinal objectives, which is growing the GDP of Nigeria to \$1trn as quickly as possible," Dada said.

"The capital market plays a pivotal role in any nation's economy, especially as gov-

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

# The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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**Umahi douses concerns over state of federal roads as dry season sets in**

—Pg 2

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**₦200**

# Edo people expect improved security, social welfare, greater opportunities

● **as Okpebholo takes over reins of government**

CHUKS OLUIGBO

The people of Edo State, the Heartbeat of the Nation, are in great expectation as Senator Monday Okpebholo takes charge of the affairs of the state from the outgoing Governor Godwin Obaseki.

The Senator, who ran on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC), was declared winner of the September 21, 2024 governorship election in the state by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) after he scored the highest number of votes to defeat his closest rival, Asue Ighodalo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

The expectations of Edo people stem from the promises made by Senator Okpebholo, who hails from Udomi Community in Uwesan-Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, during the electioneering campaign. The senator, who said his governorship ambition was driven by a desire to address infrastructure challenges, insecurity, and transform key sectors such as education, health, and agriculture in Edo State, had anchored his campaign on three major planks of security and social welfare, massive development, and opportunities for all.

According to an 8-page

campaign document, which outlined his plans for the state, Okpebholo said his incoming government would enhance law enforcement and crime prevention measures by implementing a comprehensive strategy that includes increased police presence in high-crime areas, enhanced surveillance systems, and collaboration with relevant agencies to combat crime syndicates; strengthening emergency response capabilities by equipping and training firefighters to effectively handle fire incidents and other emergencies, and recruiting and training more local vigilante groups in conflict resolution, self-defence, and law enforcement procedures.

In the document titled 'The Manifesto', copies of which were publicly available during the campaign, Okpebholo promised to provide the vigilante groups with better incentives, funding, and necessary equipment for effectiveness in complementing law enforcement activities, as well as establish a collaborative framework between law enforcement agencies and vigilante groups to ensure effective coordination and information sharing, contributing to safer communities across Edo State.

In the area of health, Okpebholo said he would improve access to healthcare services and facilities by upgrading existing

healthcare facilities and establishing new clinics and health centres in underserved communities, and by providing free or subsidised healthcare services for pregnant women, children under five, and the elderly.

In order to promote so-

cial inclusion and address poverty alleviation, he said his government would implement poverty alleviation programmes such as micro-finance schemes, agricultural support programmes, and skills training initiatives to empower marginalised com-

munities and reduce income inequality. He also promised to launch awareness campaigns and sensitization programmes to promote social cohesion and combat discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.

Okpebholo said he would

strengthen community policing initiatives by establishing community policing forums in every local government area, with active participation from residents, traditional leaders, and law enforcement agencies

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



**JOINT ARAB-ISLAMIC SUMMIT:**

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (2nd left), being received by the Deputy Governor of Riyadh, Prince Mohammed AbdulRahman (2nd right), in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Sunday. Tinubu is in Saudi Arabia to participate in the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit.

**INSIDE**  
**Business & Economy**  
Commerce • Capital Market • Manufacturing • Finance • Import & Export • MSME  
—Pgs 11-14

**Cardoso unveils visionary strategies to boost growth, stability at first anniversary**  
—Pg 11

**Atiku envious of Tinubu's position as President —Presidency**  
—Pg 15

**Stop 36 govts, FCT minister tells Tinubu from giving cars, houses to judges, SERAP**  
—Pg 18

# Edo people expect improved security, social welfare, greater...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

to foster trust and cooperation in crime prevention efforts. He also promised to implement social welfare programmes to support vulnerable groups.

“To fortify our security efforts, the Edo State government will establish an Edo State security Trust Fund. This fund will help enhance law enforcement capabilities, support community policing, and provide vital training and equipment for local vigilante groups,” Okpebholo said.

“In addition, the initiative will create a sustainable pool of resources dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of all our citizens. With transparent management and effective allocation of this resource, we will bolster our security infrastructure and empower communities to actively participate in crime prevention efforts,” he said.

The incoming governor in the document promised massive development in the areas of infrastructure (roads, bridges, and transportation), indus-

trialization and job creation, sustainable environmental management and conservation, urban and rural development, among others.

In the area of infrastructure development, Okpebholo said his government would undertake major road construction projects to connect rural communities with urban centres and facilitate the movement of goods and people, and rehabilitate existing small bridges and construct new ones to improve connectivity and enhance transportation networks.

Under industrialization and job creation, he said his government would attract private sector investment through incentives such as tax breaks and infrastructure support to establish industries and manufacturing plants, as well as create job opportunities through public works projects, agricultural value chain development, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

To manage and conserve the environment sustainably, Okpebholo promised to imple-

ment programmes to reduce pollution and promote recycling and composting, and also protect natural resources through reforestation, watershed management, and wildlife conservation initiatives.

The incoming government promised to implement urban renewal projects to upgrade infrastructure in urban areas, including the construction of modern markets, recreational facilities, and affordable housing units, as well as facilitate agricultural development and support small-scale farmers through irrigation schemes, access to credit, and extension services in rural areas.

It promised to invest in education and skills development. In this regard, the government said it would build new schools and renovate existing ones to provide quality education for all children, with a focus on teacher training and curriculum improvement. It further said it would establish vocational training centres and technical colleges to equip youths with practical skills for employment and entrepre-

neurship.

“To propel massive development, our government will implement concrete measures to overhaul infrastructure, education, and industry. We will initiate public-private partnerships to accelerate progress and focus investments on critical sectors,” Okpebholo said.

“By upgrading roads, bridges, and transportation networks, we will enhance connectivity and spur economic growth. Investing in education and skills development will equip our workforce for the demands of tomorrow’s industries.

“Furthermore, we will prioritize industrialization initiatives to create jobs and drive economic diversification. Together, these actions will lay the foundation for a prosperous and sustainable future for Edo State,” he said.

Okpebholo said his government would promote economic diversification and entrepreneurship; expand access to affordable housing and land ownership opportunities; support agribusiness ventures,

agro-processing industries, and value-added agricultural products to diversify the economy and create employment opportunities; encourage innovation and technology-driven enterprises through incubation centres, startup funding, and mentorship programmes; encourage youth empowerment and engagement; support women’s empowerment initiatives and gender equality programmes, and foster inclusive governance and participatory decision-making processes.

To expand access to affordable housing and land ownership opportunities, Okpebholo said his government would implement housing schemes and mortgage financing programmes to make home ownership more accessible to low and middle-income earners; facilitate the acquisition of land titles and property rights for individuals and communities, with a focus on addressing land disputes and ensuring tenure security, and partner with private developers and housing cooperatives to construct affordable housing units and rental accommodations in urban and peri-urban areas.

The incoming governor said he would establish youth development centres and recreational facilities to provide a platform for skills acquisition, talent development, and civic engagement, as well as create youth-focused initiatives such as sport leagues, cultural festivals, and community service projects to foster leadership and social responsibility.

To support women’s empowerment initiatives, Okpebholo’s incoming government promised to implement policies and programmes to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres of life, including education, employment, and political participation.

The government further promised to provide training and capacity-building programmes for women entrepreneurs to enhance their skills and access to markets,

finance, and technology; establish women’s empowerment centers and safe spaces to provide support services, counseling, and legal assistance for victims of gender-based violence; and promote women’s leadership and representation in decision-making processes at all levels of government and ensure the implementation of gender-responsive policies and budgets.

In the area of inclusive governance and participatory decision-making processes, Okpebholo said his government would establish town hall meetings and stakeholder consultations at the local, senatorial and state levels to solicit inputs from citizens on policy formulation and implementation.

The incoming governor promised to ensure equitable representation and allocation of resources across the three senatorial districts through transparent budgeting processes and grassroots development projects.

“Importantly, we appreciate the contributions of Edos in the Diaspora to our GDP. As a result, we shall establish a Diaspora desk in government through which we will open a database for them. Thereafter, we will constructively engage and collaborate with them in achieving specific objectives such as the opportunity of creating a Diaspora Bond for the overall benefit of our people. To add, we will encourage them to visit and return home, and provide adequate security for them and their investments,” Okpebholo said.

“To ensure opportunities for all, our government is committed to fostering economic diversity, youth and women engagement for the purpose of achieving an inclusive government. We will actively promote entrepreneurship by providing grants and loans to aspiring business owners, while offering training and mentorship programs to enhance their skills and capabilities,” he said.



## N50M DONATION:

Former Anambra State governor, Mr. Peter Obi (middle front row), with management and students of Peter University in Anambra State, where Obi donated N50m to the school on the 10th November, 2024.

# Experts identify financing, SME devt as strategies for...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ernment and private organisations at various levels harness it to mobilize capital for their broad and varying needs, making people with ideas become entrepreneurs and helping small businesses grow into big companies. Likewise, it is an avenue to democratize assets through wealth creation and distribution, since individuals, corporates and even governments can participate in the fortune-making and distribution, as they provide opportunities to save and invest for our futures,” he added.

Dignitaries in attendance include the members of the CIS governing council and management team, as well as Dr. Emomotimi Agama, DG, Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC); Prof. Pius Deji Olanrewaju, President/Chairman of

Council, Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN); Amos Azi Esq - Honorable Commissioner/CEO, Investment & Securities Tribunal; Olufemi Shobanjo, Chief Executive Officer, NGX Regulation Limited; Sam Onukwue, Chairman, Association of Securities Dealing Houses of Nigeria (ASHON); Prof. Maryam Abdu, Professor of Finance at Kaduna State University; Prof. Uche Uwaleke, Professor of Finance & Capital Market, Nasarawa State University; Abdulrahman Yinusa, GMD/CEO, Odu’a Investment Company Limited; Johnson Chukwu, Managing Director/CEO, Cowry Asset Management Ltd, and Adetilewa Adebajo, CEO, CFG Advisory.

The roll call also included Olubukola Rufai, Director, Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC), Lagos Office; Jude

Chiemeka, CEO, Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX); Haruna Jalo-Waziri, Central Securities Clearing System (CSCS) Plc; Eguarekhide Longe, Managing Director, NASD OTC Exchange Plc, and Kemi Awoadin, President, Association of Issuing Houses of Nigeria, as well as Aminu Umar Sadiq, Managing Director/CEO, Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority, and Bonaventure Okhaimo, CFO, Development Bank of Nigeria who both presented keynote addresses.

Dr. Ishak Demir, a research economist at the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE) made his presentation virtually.

Identifying the roles SMEs will play in the race to become a \$1 trillion economy, Dr. Demir said SME markets tend to be illiquid in terms of capital in many jurisdictions, calling for the need to remove the

bottlenecks that prevent SMEs from raising capital to boost their operations. As SMEs contribute over 50 percent of GDP in most economies of the world, limited access to capital inhibits their contributions to economic growth.

“SMEs play a critical role in economic development, but access to finance can limit their ability to grow their business and, in extreme situations, to survive. The persistent global financing gap of SMEs points to the limitations of bank financing, as a traditional source of external finance, and has resulted in an increased interest in alternative finance channels such as equity instruments,” Dr. Demir said.

“Public equity markets act as a solution for addressing the funding shortfall for SMEs, offering access to extensive investment resources and bol-

stering creditworthiness, market transparency, visibility, and the capacity to secure bank financing and manage debt. The last two decades have seen stock exchanges create or improve SME markets worldwide, and there are currently 49 exchanges among WFE members with SME listing platforms/segments,” Dr. Demir said.

Adetilewa Adebajo, CEO, CFG Advisory said the Nigerian economy would have hit the \$1 trillion benchmark by now if not for the mismanagement of the economy, emphasising that the last eight years in the life of this country witnessed a huge decline in the worth of the Nigerian economy.

“The Nigerian economy is a \$1 trillion economy already if not for the mismanagement of the last eight years. In 2015, our GDP was close to \$600 billion and between 2015 and

2023, the country lost about \$250 billion. And with the 2023 devaluation, if you add these together, our GDP should be about \$850 billion which is just some few billions away from \$1 trillion,” Adebajo said.

Olubukola Rufai, Director, Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC), Lagos Office said the SEC has facilitated capital raising exercises for institutions such that approvals are granted within days, a development she said, was to ensure that companies in Nigeria are able to raise capital without hindrances, noting capital hassle-free capital raising exercises for companies will boost Nigeria’s drive towards a \$1 trillion economy.

The highpoint of the annual conference was the conferment of fellowships and associates on distinguished members of the society.



# Congratulations

APC Caucus in EDHA congratulate New Edo State Governor and Deputy

Your Excellencies  
**SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO**  
 AND **HONOURABLE DENNIS IDAHOSA**  
 on your inauguration

as the civilian elected Governor and Deputy Governor of Edo State. Under your able care, we hope to see a renewed Edo thriving in her glory above peer subnationals as we pray God for renewed strength, wisdom and goodwill of all sons and daughters of our land. May the rich cultural heritage and wisdom of our royal fathers guide you.

Being the chosen of our people in the last election, your Excellencies, we at the EDHA are ready for a fruitful and harmonious working relationship with you and your team for the good of Edo. As you consolidate on the foundation layed by our founding fathers and successive leaders, may your administration bring peace and unity to our great state.



SENATOR  
 MONDAY OKPEBHOLO  
 Governor, Edo State

HONOURABLE  
 DENNIS IDAHOSA  
 Deputy Governor, Edo State

## COURTESY:

HON. BARR. ERIC ALLISON OKAKA - *Minority Leader*, (Owan East);  
 HON. ATU OSAMWONYI EKHAGUEHITA - *Minority Whip* (Orhionmwon I); HON. SUNDAY ENOKHA AGHEDO (Ovia South West);  
 HON. KINGSLEY OGHENAGHOJE UGABI (Etsako East); HON. BARR. AHMED OSHOMA (Etsako Central);  
 HON. JONATHAN IBHAMAWU AIGBOKHA (Esan West); HON. MUSTAPHER HUSSEIN LECKY (Etsako West I);  
 HON. BARR. ADDEH EMAKHU ISIBOR (Esan North East I); Hon. Gani Akokhia (Etsako West II)

# Hearty Felicitations



On behalf of my entire family and myself, I warmly felicitate the new Governor of Edo State and his deputy, **Senator Monday Okpebholo** and **Honourable Dennis Idahosa**, on the occasion of their Swearing-in/Inauguration ceremony, today Tuesday, 12th November, 2024.

Your achievements as Senator representing Edo Central senatorial district and member representing Ovia North East/Ovia South West federal constituency respectively, speak eloquently to your abilities to jointly bring much-needed transformation and economic viability back to our state.

I wish you success and assure you of my continued support always.

**Congratulation Your Excellencies!**



COURTESY:  
ENGR. LAWRENCE OSAROBO OKAH (JP)  
—State Secretary, All Progressive Congress (APC), Edo State

# Inside Edo

## Prioritize security over politics, Obaseki charges incoming govt

OJEABULU AMANDA

Governor Godwin Obaseki of Edo State has tasked incoming government in the state to prioritize security over politics, linking the improved security in the state in the last few years to the massive investment flow, growth in economy and the state's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), among others.

Governor Obaseki said this last weekend, noting his government has over the last eight years prioritized security and invested hugely in the state's security architecture, transforming the state into one of Nigeria's safest states to live in and do business.

Obaseki, who spoke at the last State Security Council Meeting by his administration, commended the people and the various security agencies in the state for supporting and collab-

orating with his government in tackling insecurity and ensuring the safety and security of people and properties in the state.

Addressing the security chiefs at the EXCO Chambers in Government House, the governor called for the participation of all stakeholders in fixing the nation, noting that "No one can fix Nigeria but us."

According to him, "I thank all security agencies in the State for the collaboration as their efforts have made the state secure and safe for all."

"The spirit of collaboration has helped us solve many problems in the area of security. I commend the Department of State Security (DSS) as they were open and ready to give us information always. By adopting technology, we were able to cover the State and make it safe for our people."

"Using technology, we have been able to document every

incident in the State and review the same, and work together to provide responses to the security situation in the State.

"The civil defense corps has been a great collaborator in terms of improving security in the State and by extension the protection of federal assets in Edo State. As a State, we have the capacity to tackle security challenges head-on as our collaboration has yielded positive results."

He added, "The traffic agencies have done an amazing job in the last eight years as there have been improvements in the flow of traffic across the State."

Obaseki continued: "I am leaving Edo much better, security-wise, than when I met it. My advice to the incoming administration is to take security seriously and never prioritize politics over security because there will be problems as citizens need to demand for a se-

cure environment.

"We have shown that it's possible because we have men and women who have the capacity and training to offer security services to the State and the people of the State."

"We will continue to ensure you protect our country as nobody will fix Nigeria for us; we have to fix it ourselves. We should realize that we have no other country to call our own and no matter the frustration, we should ensure we fix the country."

The governor added, "My success is due to the collaboration and support I received from you. The development and growth in the domestic environment, as well as the interest of investors into the State is because of the secured environment we have in the State. Together, we have changed the narrative and the perception about security in the State."

## Any end to cultism in Edo?

OJEABULU AMANDA

Cultism in Edo State has been a persistent issue but took a new dimension since after the September 21 election, with various groups perpetrating violence and crime. Owing to this fact, some people refer to Edo State as "the home of Cultism."

A lot of cult wars and clashes have taken place over the years, killing so many people, some of whom are innocent. Earlier this year, the Edo State Special Task Force on Anti-Cultism arrested 11 suspected cultists, including leaders of notorious groups, in a bid to curb the menace. This move is part of Governor Godwin Obaseki's efforts to restore peace and security in the state.

The task force has demonstrated unwavering commitment to ridding the state of cultism. Initial efforts focused on education and persuasion, engaging with communities and stakeholders to dissuade youths from joining cults. However, the task force has now shifted its focus to making arrests and prosecuting cult members.

Three suspected cultists were arrested within the Auchi Polytechnic community on August 7, 2024, massive show of force was conducted in Benin City on August 10, 2024, resulting in the arrest of two suspects and a key cult leader was arrested in the Ekosodin axis of Ovia North East Local Government Area on August 13, 2024.

The Edo government said a total of 129 cases of homicide and cult related crises were recorded in the state within two months (June and July). This information was disclosed by Governor Obaseki. In an effort to curb this menace, Governor Obaseki banned cultism in the state, making it clear that his administration would not tolerate it.

More recently, six persons were reportedly killed in a renewed cult-related crisis in Auchi and South Ibie communities in Etsako West Local Government Area. It was also learned that the fight that was initially between Eiyee and Vicky confraternities later involved Black Axe, causing the clash among Eiyee, Vikys and Black Axe confraternities. This clash left several persons injured.

According to reports, the involvement of Black Axe ensued when one of the Black Axe members was mistakenly shot at a hotel during a misunderstanding between the two rival cult groups.

Two of the victims were reportedly killed on the 6th while four were killed between 8th and 10th of October, bringing the total number of

victims to six.

Meanwhile, the alleged war of supremacy between cult groups reportedly engulfed a university community in the state. The students were said to have been writing second semester examinations when the cult war started.

In the course of the fight, one of the victims who was said to be a driver was killed on October 10th in broad daylight in the area.

It was gathered that his assailants after shooting him severally without bullet penetration, tied him to their vehicle and dragged him on the tarred road till he gave up the ghost.

When contacted the Public Relations Officer of the Edo State Police Command, SP Moses Yamu, confirmed the incident but didn't state the numbers of casualties.

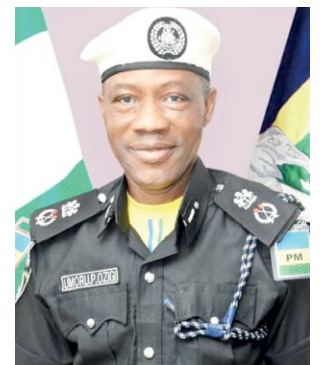
Yamu said the situation has been brought under control and that investigation is still ongoing.

Some of the notable cult groups in the state include the Neo-Black Movement of Africa, also known as Black Axe, which allegedly emerged from the University of Benin. Other groups such as the Supreme Vikings Confraternity and the Eternal Fraternal Order of the Legion Consortium have also been linked to violent activities. These violent activities and constant clashes that always lead to deaths should encourage the young ones to steer clear of cult related activities. It is however surprising how cult clashes happen in Edo every month. The youths can do better.

While the government has a role to play in securing and managing the affairs of the state, residents also have a role to play by shunning vices as this will aid peace and calm in the state.

The government urges parents to be vigilant and steer their children away from cultism, emphasizing that no one is above the law.

The situation remains volatile, with concerns about the safety and security of residents. It's essential for stakeholders to prioritize peace and stability, ensuring that the state does not slide further into chaos.



UMORU OZIGI, CP



### LAUNCH OF THE FOUNDATION:

Part of the over 200 pupils from three primary schools in Edo South that benefited from Esohe Foundation's free distribution of reading, writing and instructional materials at the launch of the Foundation in Benin City on October 12, 2024.

## 200 pupils receive instructional materials from Esohe Foundation

TUNDE EIGBIREMOLEN

Following the successful launch of Esohe Foundation in Benin City on October 12, 2024, over 200 pupils from three primary schools in Edo South have benefited from the Foundation's free distribution of reading, writing and instructional materials.

The three beneficiary schools are Oluku Primary School, Idinowina Primary School and Okhun Primary School, all in Ovia South West

Local Government Area of Edo State.

In a statement at the launch held at the Foundation's office, 33, Stadium Road, Benin City, the founder, Mrs. Esohe Osagiede said the need to give back to the society and meaningfully empower the less privileged ones gave rise to the establishment of the Foundation.

She informed that although the empowerment programme was beginning in Edo South, plans were underway to extend the same to other schools in

Edo Central and North Senatorial Districts in due course.

Chairman of the occasion, Engr. Osahon Eribo in his remarks, commended the vision of the Founder, Esohe Osagiede, for having been able to put smiles on the faces of the less privileged in the society in these hard times in the Nigerian economy.

Speaking with newsmen at the event, some of the parents and benefiting pupils from the three primary schools appreciated the Foundation for the

kind gesture and sued for sustenance of the empowerment programme.

Dignitaries from all walks of life, including community elders, market women, educationists, media practitioners and civil society activists graced the occasion.

Highpoint of the well attended ceremony was the formal launch of the Foundation and distribution of reading and learning materials to the pupils of the three beneficiary schools who were visibly overjoyed.

# South-SouthReport

## Protect your integrity, Gov Diri tasks media practitioners

PHILIP EKE, YENAGOA

### ● President lauds journalists

Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, has charged media practitioners to protect their integrity, saying it is not only the cornerstone of their profession but that it also builds trust with the public and fortifies the foundations of a healthy democracy.

Senator Diri also said that the press as the fourth pillar of democracy had become more critical in serving as a beacon of hope and in promoting understanding and unity.

The Bayelsa governor stated this on Thursday as host of the three-day 20th All Nigerian Editors Conference (ANEC) 2024 held at the Chief DSP Alamiyeseigha Memorial Banquet Hall in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Daniel Alabrah, Chief Press Secretary to Governor of Bayelsa State, in a press state-

ment, noted that describing the theme of the conference: "Economic Growth and Development Strategies in Resource-Rich Country," as relevant and timely, the Bayelsa governor said Nigerians were at a pivotal moment in the country's journey towards sustainable development.

He emphasised that while Nigeria brims with abundant resources, poverty and underdevelopment persist across countless communities, a situation he described as paradoxical.

He said: "In Bayelsa State, for instance, a major contributor to Nigeria's oil and gas production, we face severe environmental challenges and economic hardship.

"As editors and chief communicators in our society, you have the power to shine a light on these injustices. Therefore,

we implore you as editors and influential voices to advocate for policies that prioritise sustainable development and empower local communities.

"The discussions are not just abstract concepts. They directly affect people's lives, particularly those suffering from resource exploitation, environmental harm, and unequal economic access."

President Bola Tinubu, while declaring the conference open, hailed the individual and collective efforts of veteran journalists towards ensuring Nigeria's democracy remained unbroken.

President Tinubu said the country's democracy could not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of the media.

Represented by the Minister of Information and Orienta-

tion, Alhaji Muhammad Idris, the president called on members of the Guild to see themselves as partners in progress with government at all levels.

His words: "It is your constitutional duty to criticize what is wrong, but you must not lose sight of the fact that you must have a nation. Nigeria must exist before its newspapers exist."

"So, when you play your very important role to keep Nigeria going, please also ensure that Nigeria has to survive; Nigeria has to exist."

Governor of Cross River State, Senator Bassey Otu, represented by his Commissioner for Information, Dr. Erasmus Ekpan, appreciated Senator Diri for hosting the conference.

He also applauded media veterans for their various contributions to this year's conference.

Also speaking, chairman of

ThisDay Newspaper and Arise Television, Prince Nduka Obaigbena, advocated that Nigeria should get its industries working, particularly the four Federal Government refineries as a way of fixing its economy.

Prince Obaigbena suggested that the current reforms by the President's administration needed to be humane towards supporting the poor and other vulnerable groups in society.

In his speech, President of the Nigeria Guild of Editors, Mr Eze Anaba, said the focus of the annual conference was on two inter-linked themes, which were the growth of the nation's economy and sustainability of the media industry.

He identified adaptability to modern trends and availability of resource materials as major threats to the survival of the industry.

Also speaking, former governor of Ogun State, Chief Segun Osoba, said he was impressed by the high turn out of participants.

Chief Osoba also hailed Senator Diri for his administration's effort at developing the state, noting that Yenagoa, the state capital, used to be known for its one-road city status.

In his remarks, founder and publisher of Vanguard Newspaper, Dr. Sam Amuka-Pemu, bemoaned the challenges facing the media industry, particularly the print media, which he attributed to the removal of oil subsidy by the present administration.

Dignitaries at the event included the Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo, Speaker of the Bayelsa State Assembly, Rt. Hon. Abraham Ingobere, Commissioners, chairman of the state traditional rulers' council, King Bubaraye Dakolo, Special Adviser to the President on Media, Bayo Onanuga, Special Adviser to the President on Strategic Communications, Chief Sunday Dare, among others.



### 20TH ALL NIGERIAN EDITORS CONFERENCE:

Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, in a handshake with founder and publisher of Vanguard Newspaper, Dr. Sam Amuka-Pemu, at the just concluded three-day 20th All Nigerian Editors Conference (ANEC) 2024 held at the Chief DSP Alamiyeseigha Memorial Banquet Hall in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

## Amori takes new national assignment, sworn-in as member, board of governors, Peoples Democratic Institute

AJUWA VICTOR, ASABA

The National Chairman, DC-23 and Senior Chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Delta State, Senator (Chief) Dr. Ighoyota Amori, has been sworn-in as member, Board of Governors of Peoples Democratic Institute, an institute of the PDP with a mandate to provide training and knowledge needed to advance democracy not just in Nigeria but across Africa.

Chief Amori was inaugurated among other members of the Board to take up a new national assignment at the party National Secretariat, Wadata Plaza, Abuja, at the weekend.

Speaking with newsmen shortly after the inauguration, Chief Amori appreciated His Excellency Rt. Hon. Elder Sheriff Oborewori, governor of Delta State, for nominating and giving him the privilege to serve the party and Nigeria in this new capacity.

He further assured of his input towards the development of

PDI, working with other members of the Board to ensure success and victory for the party.

In his welcome address, Hon. Umar Bature (National Organizing Secretary) who represented the Acting National Chairman of the party, extended his sincere appreciation to leaders and members of the party for the initiative to reposition the party through the knowledge-based institute.

Governor of Oyo State, Olu-seyi Makinde, who was special guest of honour, also appreciated

the party for providing him the platform to serve his people since 2019 till date with his second tenure currently running. He called for more unity in the party, while adding that he will never be a tool to destroy the party. He noted that PDI will be the calculated difference between the PDP and APC in Nigeria.

Former Senate President, Bukola Saraki, and Sen. Abba Moro (Senate Minority Leader) were among leaders of the party who spoke during the ceremony.

## Students shut down school in Akwa Ibom

PAULINUS NTA, UYO

For hours in the early hours of Wednesday, November 9, 2024, students of Comprehensive Secondary School, Midim Abak in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State locked the gates of the school for a serious, but peaceful protest for the release of the SS2 promotional, external examination.

Addressing the press during the protest, Senior Prefect of the School, Master Blessing Udo Okopedi said the protest became necessary after several calls and appeals for the release of their results from the principal, Mrs. Uwem Asikpo.

He said the condition has thrown them into depression and confusion as to whether they are promoted to the certificate class or should remain at status quo.

According to Okopedi, the principal has ignored several appeals and calls from their parents for the results of their examination.

Addressing the angry students, clan head of Midim, HRH, Obong Paul Ebong, appreciated the students for the decorum with which they conducted themselves during the protest. He however agreed that protests and demonstrations are legitimate, but should be peaceful. The monarch, who was attracted to the scene by a crowd that began to gather around the school gate, admonished the school man-

agement to complement the state government blueprint and policy thrust for improved quality of education.

The clan head said a couple of parents had complained about the issue of non release of their children's results, a development they noted has demoralized and traumatized their children.

Therefore, in a stern tone, the royal father charged the school management to sort out the issues, even as he urged the students to return to class.

Reacting on behalf of the youth of Midim, Mr. John Umama poured encomiums and lavished praises on the clan head for not only stopping by, but for accepting to step into the matter to ensure normalcy returns.

He appreciated the governor, Pastor Umo Eno for standing by the voice of the people of Midim over the choice of qualified and accepted candidate for the clan headship, which saw His Highness Obong Paul Ebong as clan head of Midim.

Corroborating others, he frowned at the school's management for withholding students' results, charging them to shift their ground in respect for public opinion.

Others who spoke were the councillor representing Midim Ward 1, in Abak Legislative Council, Hon. Cecilia Denis Nyarks, compound master of the school, Mr. Victor John, and others.

# Oborevori pledges to partner investors with Delta's interest

AJUWA VICTOR, ASABA

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevori, at the weekend expressed his administration's readiness to partner only investors who have the overall interest of the state.

Governor Oborevori disclosed this at a meeting with the chairman of Metwest Steel Limited, Mr. Arun Goswami, and the Managing Director of the company, Mr. Osaro Adusomwan in Government House, Asaba.

Oborevori noted that there were many people who wanted

to invest just to see what they could get from the state government, without giving back to the state, stressing that his administration would not partner with such investors.

"Last month, I went to inspect your factory and also to the Delta Free Trade Zone, Kwale; it was an assessment visit just to be sure of what is on the ground.

"There are so many people who want to come and invest to see what they can get from the government; they are not giving back and we are not ready to partner with such investors who just believe in the govern-

ment to see what they can get from the government.

"It has to be a private/partnership arrangement where both the government and the private sector will look at what they are bringing; that is why I said let us meet.

"We will look at what is on the ground and see if the state government is ready to continue. However, I want to assure you that we are ready to continue", the governor said.

On the requests made by the company about the free Trade Zone, he assured them that his administration would look into them.

"If we release our own equity, we need to know the actual time schedule for the successful take-off of the factory at the Kwale Industrial Park.

"Some investors will tell you this is the time frame and would not keep to it. So, we need you to quickly come with a time frame because we are ready to pay our own equity," he said, adding that all other issues would be looked into.

The governor expressed appreciation to the company for their interest in Delta State, saying that such investment was what was needed this time to create jobs that would take

the unemployed people off the streets.

Earlier, the chairman of the company, Mr. Goswami said the project would be located in Kwale within the Delta State Free Trade Zone, pointing out that they were investing heavily in the project.

He assured the governor that once they were given the necessary support, the plant would be ready for operation in the next eight months, adding that the project will generate 500 direct jobs in the first phase and 7,000 direct jobs over a

period of six years, aside from indirect job opportunities.

While saying that the whole effort was to be a key partner with the Delta State government, he noted that the project would boost the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of the state.

"I look forward to the favourable consideration of the project by the state government as the project will help the state government to achieve its dream to make it (the state) energy-based industrial hub", he said.

## Gov. Eno affirms commitment to good governance

● commissions more roads in Akwa Ibom

PAULINUS NTA, UYO

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno, has urged the people of the state to remain steadfast with his administration, affirming his commitment to continuity in good governance for the development of the state.

Governor Eno gave the assurance Wednesday, November 6, 2024, at the inauguration of the 10.519km Mkpato Enin-Ikot Ntot-Nkikara Road in Mkpato Enin/Ikot Abasi Local Government Area.

The state chief executive thanked the people of Mkpato Enin for the honour and warm reception accorded him, assuring them of more developmental interventions particularly in the rural areas to justify the Rural Development focal point of his administration's Arise Agenda.

He stated that the 10.519km road project was initiated by his predecessor, Governor Udom Emmanuel and expressed gratitude to the people of the area for the support given to him to complete the road project.

"We need to continue to develop our rural communities, not just in Mkpato Enin, but all around the State. We are thankful to God who has given us the grace to complete the projects of the last administration. That is why it is always good to vote for continuity. If you didn't support continuity, there is no way this project would have been completed now.

"When you check the commissioning stone, it is stated this project was initiated in Deacon Udom Emmanuel's administration, but completed and commissioned in Governor Umo Bassey Eno's administration."

Earlier, the chairman of Mkpato Enin Local Government Council, Hon Emmanuel Inyang, thanked the governor for the numerous value added projects he has executed, most of which he acknowledged are domiciled in the area.

He expressed gratitude to the governor for the construction of a strategic road network, which, according to him, has improved the economy and quality of life of the people.

The council boss noted that the Mkpato Enin-Ikot Ubo-Ikot Nkikara road project represents not only progress, but a testament of remarkable leadership and great vision for the state, acknowledging the state administration's commitment to quality infrastructure as exemplified in the road project.

On his part, the member representing Mkpato Enin State Constituency, Rt. Hon Uwem Imoh-Ita appreciated the governor for keeping to his campaign promises, adding that it was laudable to see his commitment at completing projects of past administrations, and assured of continuous support from the constituency.

Speaking on behalf of the women, the women leader, Mrs. Idara Akpan, thanked Governor Eno for his vision, pragmatic leadership, and unwavering commitment to rural development.

She stated that the road project is a great boost to economic activities in the area as it connects the people to various strategic economic centers where they market their farm produce, reaffirming their commitment and unalloyed loyalty to the Governor throughout his tenure.

Similarly, the Paramount Ruler of Mkpato Enin LGA, HRM Edidem (Eld) Akpan Ekpene, appreciated the Governor saying the gesture was an indication that he is indeed a God fearing leader, and assured of continuous support and prayers.

Speaking on behalf of the youths, Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on youth mobilisation, Comrade Inobong Akpan, who, incidentally, hails from Mkpato Enin, said the youths of the area and indeed the State were happy with the Governor and his leadership disposition and also assured him of their continuous support.



### HEAVENLY RACE FOOTBALL ACADEMY:

After a busy week of non-stop football action, Heavenly Race Football Academy edged finals favourite Greater Tomorrow Football Academy on penalties to emerge the champions of maiden Obong Isang Memorial Academies Championship in Uyo.

## NUGA 2024: FUTIA VC calls for accelerated development of sports

PAULINUS NTA, UYO

The Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Ikot Abasi (FUTIA), Akwa Ibom State, Professor Leo Daniel, has urged stakeholders in the sports industry and at all levels of government to invest strategically in sports education and extracurricular activities to enhance academic excellence in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Prof. Daniel made this call last Tuesday, as part of his remarks at a "one-day workshop and intensive training on University Sports Management and Financing in Nigeria." The event was organized by the

Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (CVCNU) and the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA), under the theme "Empowering Excellence: A Workshop on University Sports Management and Financing in Nigeria."

The Vice Chancellor emphasized that tertiary education is designed to offer students a well-rounded experience, encompassing academics, skills development, internships, and extracurricular activities, including sports. He highlighted that proficiency in each of these components is essential for graduates to be certified as individuals of learning, skill

and character.

Commending CVCNU and NUGA for hosting the intensive workshop, Prof. Daniel underscored the importance of raising awareness, funding, and partnerships for sports management and activities in Nigerian tertiary institutions as a means to improve academic outcomes.

During the workshop, the FUTIA Vice Chancellor assured CVCNU and NUGA of FUTIA's commitment to collaborate with both organizations and other stakeholders in the sports sector.

He reviewed his contributions to sports development at FUTIA, including hosting and

sponsoring the Maiden Edition of the Vice Chancellor's Football Cup Championship in 2024, an initiative that discovered young sports talents while promoting sportsmanship and teamwork.

Prof. Daniel also expressed the university's dedication to preparing FUTIA students and athletes for participation in upcoming Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA) events, with the aim of equipping them for global competitiveness.

The Vice Chancellor was accompanied by the university's Sports Coach, Mr. Uboho Uku. Certificates were presented to the participating institutions.

# EDITORIAL

## Addressing the scourge of exam malpractices

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The web portal of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has continued to buzz feverishly for weeks on end.

This comes on the heels of claims by the examination body that an alarming number - 215,627 or 11.92 per cent of the 1,805,216 candidates who sat for this year's (2024) West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) had had their results withheld on account of exam malpractices.

The concern is understandable since a sound education is one of the key legacies that responsible parents desire to bequeath to their children.

Concerning however, is the alarming number of suspects and even more concerning, is the observation by WAEC that persons assigned to roles of supervision and authority and in whom much confidence is reposed,

are commonly caught in the web of examination malpractices.

These are said to include school principals, teachers, exam invigilators, supervisors, and examiners.

This indicates that corruption has indeed eaten deep into the fabric of our society and that morality is becoming more and more of an illusion and a pipe dream.

Many of the older generation of parents, mentors and would be role models are endorsing and bequeathing antisocial values to the younger generations and indeed the message is well received and then displayed in the most exalted, sensitive and telling of places and situations.

It is so bad that even election results are often suspect and are commonly challenged in court, with claims of the presentation of fake ballot papers, artificial scarcity of electoral materi-

als, under-age voting, manipulation of voters, the use of thugs and intimidation, financial inducement and other corrupt practices.

And even in the courts which are supposed to be the last bastion of truth and civility, corruption looms large, with those who serve in the justice sector being commonly accused of bending the law in exchange for monetary bribes and other favours.

All of society seems to be going awry and life becomes unbearable, even hazardous, as there are manipulations at every turn and crookedness on almost every path.

To deal with the scourge, institutions responsible for the promotion of ethics in the society should be fortified and encouraged to combat examination malpractices through regular morality messaging.

Seminars and workshops

should be organised by schools to educate students, parents, teachers and school administrators on the consequences of examination malpractice.

Law enforcement agents and other related government functionaries should be drafted to public examination centers to assist in the eradication of this social ill.

Society must place less emphasis on materialism and paper qualification, while students should be put through oral and written interviews to justify the certificates they present when applying for jobs.

Society must encourage, edify and openly reward honesty, integrity and hard work.

Staff in all educational institutions should be continuously trained and adequately remunerated to promote hard works and commitment to duty.



### Cartoon Corner

...that the people may know





## Unpacking the impact of human connection on social wellbeing



**HAPPY WORKSPACE**  
by **OLAYINKA OPALEYE**  
A WELL-BEING SPECIALIST AND  
CORPORATE WELLNESS STRATEGIST

It's been a ride writing on seven out of the eight pillars of wellness, month in and month out. The last but not the least of them, which is social wellbeing will be covered this month. Considering the anticipated surge in social activities from this month on till next year, there is no better time to write on social wellbeing from the viewpoint of events and how to optimize attendance.

Even though it's common knowledge that human beings are social creatures and no one can truly survive, grow, and excel without others, navigating networking for business and social connections may be somewhat daunting. Just recently, it was a whole different experience even for me who knew the importance of connections as a social wellness enhancer.

In today's fast-paced, often isolating world, the value of meaningful connections cannot be overstated. This, succinctly buttressed by the ancient African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." encapsulates the transformative potential of human connections in achieving lasting success and wellbeing. However, it is imperative to be strategic with alliances not to lose focus, get slowed down, or be completely distracted. So, let's explore actionable plans to ensure we make the best of all the events we attend going forward.

Pre-Event Preparation: Preparation to attend an event or program should go beyond choosing those nice outfits or having eye-popping hairdos and makeup for photo ops especially when it's a business gathering. Ensure you obtain important information about the event's program/activities list well ahead. While going through the program, identify keynote speakers, panelists, and important attendees that align with your goals and interests. Then, research their backgrounds, works, and achievements to find conversation starters. Be clear on set objectives for attending the event, as they will shape your mindset, guide your engagement, and help with post-event assessment. So, determine well

ahead, if your presence will be strictly business, social, personal development, or a blend of some or all. Lastly, find a few friends, colleagues, or people in your industry attending, so you can be around and look out for each other. It simply makes it more fun and less stressful to be in the company of those you know and trust.

At the Event: Having clearly identified the type of event and how long it would last, be there early enough not to miss the meet and greet. There, you get to exchange pleasantries and business cards with people you ordinarily may not be able to walk up to for a chat, especially after delivering their speeches. Then, position yourself for meaningful interactions with these key individuals. Prepare elevator pitches for brief introductions as you seek to seize the opportunity to ask thoughtful questions without forgetting to commend the speakers or organizers before doing so. As you exchange business cards, remember to follow up with the new contacts. Also, if one of your goals is to learn, ensure you take notes during speeches and panel discussions. Otherwise, you can record those that interest you the most for you to listen to again and again. Use breaks or breakout sessions to initiate conversations with speakers and attendees, and join specific

groups or forums on social media. Lastly, remember to engage in group conversations and activities. Participate in activities and if you so much enjoy the event, ask how you can volunteer for the next one.

Post-Event Follow-up: As hinted above, send follow-up emails and messages to new contacts. Continue to connect with attendees on social media platforms, especially LinkedIn, or which best works for you. Don't be in haste to post during the program, rather share insightful statements, key takeaways, and well-thought-through posts weeks after. Schedule meetings or calls with key connections, review event materials and implement learned strategies.

Other tips you may want to consider are dressing appropriately bearing in mind the platforms you want your pictures to feature being prepared to make a good impression. Hence, dressing professionally may just be the safest if no dress code is stipulated. Practice active listening and be genuinely interested as this will show when you are given the opportunity to ask a question. Be sure to set boundaries and remember self-care. This is why you need not attend all events open to you. A few meaningful ones are worth a hundred with little or no engagement.

Embracing a together approach to life is far-reaching with profound impacts on social wellbeing through human connections, relationship building, and networking. Our mindset, preparedness, and willpower to actualize our goals can all be summed up as dream, dare, do, just as this year's Wimbiz conference was themed. Therefore, viewing events or gatherings as opportunities for growth and connection is crucial. Likewise giving values, being open minded/receptive, and ultimately, cultivating gratitude and appreciation for new connections.

CALL TO ACTION

Having shared these few tips, evaluate the success of the last event you attended. What would you do differently in terms of strategies to adopt for future events? Kindly share your thoughts by sending an email to oopaleye@gmail.com.

*Opaleye, a wellbeing specialist and corporate wellness strategist, writes from Lagos, and can be reached at oopaleye@gmail.com*

## Remi Tinubu's prayerthon to save Nigeria

PIUS MORDI

By the projections of the First Lady, Senator Remi Tinubu, 313 individuals will recite the Qur'an, culminating in the recitation of the Holy text 2,191 times for national stability over seven days. On the Christian side, "prayer warriors" [whatever that means] will meet at the National Ecumenical Centre for a week of intense prayers. The warriors will come from various denominations in the spiritual exercise focusing their efforts on the nation's adversities.

That is a massive outpouring of prayers through which "we believe that with God's wisdom, our leaders and citizens will find the strength to confront our common enemies," according to Chief Segun Balogun Afolunikan, Director General of the National Prayer Forum (NPF). I thought the NPF acronym is supposed to be the exclusive of the Police just like their uniform.

For daring to cross the red line without authorisation, Very Dark Man in his bid to create exciting content was said to have adorned himself in a Police officer's uniform without permission, and is being prosecuted. Well, being that the wife of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is the spearhead of the current prayer venture the Police will maintain their lane.

For the NPF, a special platform with a hilarious theme, "Seeking the Intervention of God in Nigeria's Affairs", has been coined. I am not sure

the organisers are implying that God has not been involved in Nigeria's affair until they came up with their latest prayer venture. But with the involvement of the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, this prayerton is unprecedented and will be decisive.

It is not like Nigerians are being summoned to pray for the country for the first time. General Yakubu Gowon, former head of state who led the country through a fratricidal civil war, left his well deserved peaceful life in retirement to convene Nigeria Prays in 1996 to, according to him, "put an end to the various problems plaguing Nigeria".

As desirable as prayers are, even Gowon had to wade through some potential political landmines to engage in it. Late Sani Abacha was head of state then and he had to secure his buy-in before he and his group could pray.

"I did not want to go to jail because at that time the situation in the country was not palatable. You never know what you could do that would lead you to jail. And I did not want to experience the mosquitoes in Kirikiri. That was why I had to get the nod of General Abacha because he probably would not understand why we had to pray and could in fact have read meaning to our prayers"

You see, prayers can be risky, even dangerous. Thankfully, there is no such concern for the NPF. All loopholes have been covered. Rather than have any fear, participants can consider the latest one bountiful and

rewarding. The 313 people to recite the Holy Qur'an over seven days have a herculean task. They have to travel from their abode to the National Mosque in Abuja, get accommodated and fed over the period. For their prayer warrior counterparts, they have to be head hunted from various denominations first. The head hunters have to be impressed with their prayer prowess during auditioning, I guess.

Like every labourer, the NPF brigade would have earned their pay after seven days. They should be paid. If not, and I hope not, it will be an incomplete exercise. As Godswill Akpabio, our Senate president admonished fellow Nigerians, whenever you see free food, go and chop there. On Akpabio's advice, I am in full agreement. Free food is hard to find. I would love to be part of a prayer bonanza given how expensive food is to find. But it will not take rocket science for the head hunters to disqualify me if I apply to be one of prayer warriors.

My major handicap which I will be unable to disguise is that I do not believe in praying for leaders, not just Nigerian leaders. When I am in church and the presiding minister calls for prayers for leaders, I switch off or pray for us, the people, to strive to hold leaders accountable. Before a politician offers himself to 'serve' the people, I believe he already knows the challenges facing the country and the path to our redemption. Despite this fact, Nigerians vociferously pray for their leaders for God to guide them in doing what is right and just. But it

is like the more leaders are prayed for, the worse they become.

By 1996, when Gowon founded his Nigeria Prays, he thought the people were living through excruciating times. But the minimum wage at the time actually took workers home. People went to their farms and travelled across without fear of their safety. There was a thriving middle class and the average Nigerian who could read bought newspapers of their choice. About 28 years later, the president's wife and the country's National Security Adviser are so concerned with the state of affairs that they are asking God to directly take over Nigeria.

Since they consider the leadership incapable of getting the job done, they may have to tell God to create the tablet that will provide the guide on how to "confront our common enemies". But first, the Moses that will go receive the tablets from God from wherever just as the biblical Moses did those days will have to be so designated. Probably, they may ask God to name a new set of leaders to do God's will. Whatever option they choose, the First Lady may not find it ennobling. Will her husband, the President, not be undermined? Will he, his ministers and acolytes drop their ostentatious living at the expense of the rest of us? Will INEC decide to organise credible elections so the people's vote will count?

For the prayer warriors on both sides of the aisle, my advice is listen to Godswill Akpabio. Whenever they are

done with the prayerton, their people will be waiting to get their own share of free food. They must bring food to their folks because on coming back home, the price of a bag of rice will still be N100,000 or more, other foods will still be very expensive and unaffordable, petrol will be N1,200 and may rise further. Meanwhile, let them pray!

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

# Esogbue and the Anioma history

JEROME-MARIO UTOMI

Going by his age and physical appearance, Emeka Esogbue, historian, journalist, Anioma advocate and author, is by no means an old man. But his understanding of and competence in promoting the culture of Anioma people has conspired to confer on him, the enviable title of an Elder. Indeed, this Ibusa, an Anioma community in Delta State, born historian has proved that history does matter and that ordinary calculation can be upturned by extraordinary personalities.

Essentially, separate from having to his credit six history books on the Anioma people, namely: "A study of the Origins and Migrations of Anioma Settlements", "A Short History of Omu", "Essentials of Anioma History", "A History of Ibusa", "The Ekumeku Movement and Resistance to Colonial Rule in Nigeria" and Book of Records: A Compendium of Ibusa Firsts and Achievers, in this particular order, there are multiple reasons to conclude that his latest on Ekumeku, Anioma historical account has blown fresh wind to the discourse in ways that will accelerate the process and shape the evolution conducive for the reemergence of a fully functional historical document that will be trusted by both present and future generations.

Take as an illustration, from his narrative, the age-long belief that the Aniomans principally has their historical Origin linked to Igbo Land, South Eastern Nigeria, no longer holds water as it currently faces embarrassing facts. Esogbue's account proves beyond reasonable doubt that Anioma is not a 'natural creation' but an amalgamation of people from different tribes and location within the Nigerian polity.

Before now, little did we know that; the people of Ebu are Igala. The people of Ugbodu, Ukwunzu, and Ukwunzu are Yoruba. The people of Ibrede are Isoko. The people of Amai are Igala. The people of Asaba, Illah and Okpanam have populations of Igala. The people of Ozanogogo are Bini. The people of Ibusa, Akwukwu-Igbo, Ishiagu and Ewulu are the only people that trace their origin to the Igbo.

From the above, it is evident that history does not obliterate the ancestry of anyone. It does not satisfy or dissatisfy people but gives account of the past.

Regardless of what others may say, this new awareness has the capacity to engineer disruptive as well as constructive ideas that will help shatter set patterns of thinking, threaten the status quo or at the very least raises peoples concern to further question time-honoured historical accounts. In my view, a circle of learning and empowerment has been created that will allow the people of Anioma to see things that others cannot see and to formulate transformational strategies.

Adding context to this discourse, in geographical landscape, Anioma nation could be likened to a dot in the map of Nigeria. But the people, in material terms, have, through hard work, planning, improvising established themselves in all sectors-finance, science/technology, sports and education, among others. Appreciably also, they daily manifest signs of a people that have left behind third world challenges of illiteracy and poverty, to become a successful centre for the dissemination and distribution of best human capital resources across the nation.

Despite these virtues and attributes, Anioma people with an estimated total population of approximately 1.1 million people would have needed, if not because of this latest intervention, yet another

generation to correct their sloppy historical account.

The reason is barefaced. The vast majority of the people were already free wheeled to wholeheartedly approve and endorse previous accounts with little or no opposition.

There is another reason to develop a second major interest in the newest account coming from Esogbue.

History, he noted, shows that the people called "Ika" today do not have related origins. In fact, the various communities have different origins. They trace their origins to different ethnic groups in the country. The name Ika has not always been limited to the present Ika people etymologically.

This name (Ika) was originally used to refer to the entire region that we know as Anioma or Delta North today. It was only a matter of time that the suffix "Ibo" was added to make it sound "Ika-Ibo". With time too, "Ika-Ibo" gave way to "Western-Ibo", the change that eventually replaced it. Eventually, the name "Ika" became limited to the present Ika North East and Ika South in Delta State.

It was as recent as year 2012, that Anioma historians started to accommodate Igbanke, Inyelen, Owanikeke, Owariuzo, Idu, Igbogiji, Ekpon and good number of other related settlements now lying in Edo State in the fold of Ika. Incidentally, these areas in Edo were never originally classified as parts of the Ika clan.

Again, it was Forde and Jones that popularised the name, "Ika" from the Benin word for the area "Eka", anglicized and gave it currency. Essentially, the name, "Ika" was first and foremost used by the Europeans to classify or give a description of the entire area called Delta North today before it was limited to its present use today. Agbor remains the



## UTOMI'S NOTE

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

largest of Ika communities and the best known and I believe this to be so due to the settlement's relations with Benin.

There are quite a number of Ika communities but only Agbor and Owa were able to withstand Benin in terms of military strength, proving to Benin that they were no push over. This brings us to the different wars in history between Agbor and Benin. When the British colonial government joined Agbor to Benin Province, they protested and instead decided on joining Asaba. It was the same way, Igbanke, an arch rival of Agbor protested to the colonialist, insisting they were not to be left under Agbor.

The Agbor-Igbanke War of 1895 is well recorded in this account. It was from this war that Igbanke gathered as much Igbanke patriotism as she has today and was able to match Agbor in some periods of its history. Igbanke is founded by six communities, out of which Benin founded just Oligie. Migrants of the rest five villages of the communities migrated from nearby Ika communities.

Till today, these six Igbanke villages have retained their various heads known by the people as "Enogie". The language spoken by the people of Ika is a mixture of Igbo and Bin but we have Igbo that also speaks a combination of Ika and Enuani dialects. The Ika is not to be mistaken for Enuani.

On the challenges confronting Anioma history, Emeka Esogbue, the thoroughbred historian with career training in History and International Studies and

also History and Diplomacy, noted that he took up interest in Anioma aspect of history because the people of Anioma rarely believed in their own past accounts. You write on others but your children do not know your own. At the completion of first-degree programmes in higher institutions, our children are faced with paucity of materials on our history to further research on their projects which compels them to write on other societies.

He, however, submitted that the greatest problem is that most laymen do not see history from the point of view of professionals. In fact, mere stories and other sources of history, which the historian requires to reconstruct history, is already history for them. It is worse that they expect you to favour them with your account whereas a good historical account should lack favouritism. They want to see in your account that their community was the first to be established in the whole world or that their own community is the best in society. Oftentimes they want their wishes boldly established in your account. Social media has also come to make some contributions. With copy and paste, you get more confused. He concluded.

For me, I hold the opinion that Emeka has raised some silent but salient points.

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

## Agenda setting for SMO: Blocking financial leakages in transportation sector

JUSTIN UWADIA

Today, November 12, Senator Monday Okpebholo will take oath of office as Edo State Governor. As a reminder, his party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), during the electioneering campaigns, assured that 'A New Edo Is Rising' and promised to lay great emphasis on agriculture, health, education and human capital development, environmental protection and safety and overhauling security architecture of Edo State. These achievable lofty ideals can only be actualized through fiscal and financially well managed resources.

Only recently, the chairman of the State Task Force on Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), Hon. John Oseyi Inegbedion disclosed during the Q3 2024 EIRS Quarterly Performance Review (QPR) meeting in Benin City an upward swing in Edo State yearly IGR between 2016, when the outgoing government came on board, and 2024, except in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the figures he brandished were as follows: In 2016, Edo IGR was N26.64 billion; 2017, N27.19 billion; 2018, N29.62 billion; 2019, N35.2 billion; 2020, N20.02 billion; 2021, N38.67 billion; 2022, N45.06 billion; 2023, N62.08 billion. He projected that 2024 will close at N85 billion, with an average of N7 billion monthly.

If these figures are correct and not to ingratiate the outgoing government, we must remind Governor Monday Okpebholo that for his administration

to discharge its onerous responsibilities effectively, all hands must be on deck to bolster the current IGR and expand the revenue base of the state. In doing these, though, Edo people must not be overburdened with excessive rates, levies and taxes in any guise. Rather, loopholes and leakages of revenue accruing to the state in all sectors of the economy should be blocked.

The transportation sector is a case in point. The dubious and excessive money drivers pay to touts, otherwise called 'agberos' is in bad taste. Rather, such funds could be channelled into the coffers of the Edo State government. Touts, operating in Edo State, especially in the state capital, have over the years enriched themselves at the expense of the government, under the guise of being authorized by the state. Daily official payment for commercial buses that ply the three Benin municipal councils is N1200: (N800, N200, N200). However, touts in some council areas compel drivers to pay for various levies, which include Chairman Chop Money, 'Priority', 'Blowing', Edo Drivers Welfare Empowerment Scheme, among others. The levies are paid in each local government area that commercial vehicle drivers ply. Any driver who refuses to comply with these illegal levies is beaten black and blue or his vehicle confiscated by the touts. For clarity, the illegal levies are hereby explained:

### CHAIRMAN CHOP MONEY:

Each park has a chairman. Commercial vehicle drivers are compelled

to pay N200 daily as 'Chairman Chop Money' to chairman (agbero) of each park. If he picks passengers in Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba Okha or Uhumwonde (Egba axis), he pays N200 at each park.

### PRIORITY:

In Benin City, apart from the Central Park, there are no officially designated motor parks for buses. Therefore, touts create their own parks and charge exorbitant rates. For example, commercial bus drivers who ply between New Benin Market and Aduwawa pay as much as between N3,500 and N5,000 daily as 'priority' to touts in New Benin, in Oredo Local Government and lesser amount at Aduwawa, in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area. By priority, it means drivers do not need to stay on line in government-designated parks (where available) to wait for passengers. Rather, they can go to parks created by touts, which usually have fewer vehicles.

### BLOWING:

Drivers who do not wish to operate in the parks illegally administered by touts but chose to pick passengers along the road are forced to pay between N500 and N2000 daily as 'blowing' to touts depending on the local government area.

### EDO DRIVERS WELFARE EMPOWERMENT SCHEME:

This scheme, as the name implies, is supposed to assist drivers one way or the other, financially or morally. But it is not. Rather, drivers pay N200 daily

to operators of the scheme in each local government area they operate.

### TICKET ENFORCERS:

This group of people come out daily as from 12pm to apprehend drivers who fail to buy tickets. However, some drivers are known to corrupt the ticket enforcers and ticket sellers by giving them tips in the place of buying tickets. It is alleged that some tickets sold to drivers are fake.

### POWVOV

When full grown adults decide to do government work pro-bono, often, mischief is in their minds. This is the story of Public Works Volunteers, POWVOV under outgoing Governor Godwin Obaseki. They were mere extortionists. POWVOV members make huge amounts of money daily from drivers. Stopping or parking in 'unauthorised' places, even though there are no signs of 'no parking' on such spots, attracts confiscation of vehicles or as much as N20,000 extortion of vehicles of culprits sent to mobile courts where lesser, same or higher fines were imposed on offenders.

Finally, as Governor, you know that so much is expected from you. As you said, Sir, you will continue from where a two-time Governor of Edo State, Senator Adams Oshiomhole stopped. Incidentally, both of you belong to same party, the APC, as it is at the Federal level. Senator Oshiomhole did very well as Governor of Edo State. It is expected that you will outshine him.

Please ignore Robert Green, who admonished in the first of his 48 Laws

of Power: 'Never Try to Outshine Your Master.' Edo people expect much of the so-called dividends of democracy from the APC and you, Sir. Therefore, you must do your utmost best to fulfil your electioneering manifestos and meet the yearnings and aspirations of Edo people.

As Edo State Chief Executive Officer, the bulk stops on your table. Only one person (Gov. Okpebholo) will be held accountable for the success or failure of Edo State in the next four years. Therefore, the interest of few persons, no matter the roles they played in your emergence as Edo State Governor should not override the collective and greater interest of Edo people. Moreover, Edo State should not be allowed to drift into anarchy and lawlessness caused by touts in the transportation sector. There should be structural and fundamental modifications in revenue collection and prescribed penalties for defaulters clearly spelt out. Few people cannot illegally amass wealth through revenue collection while your administration is confronted with challenges of meeting its obligations, as a result of financial incapacitation. Edo State Government should insist that drivers get receipts or tickets for any money paid, legal or illegal from its officials and touts. This will go a long way in boosting the state's revenue and ensure sanity in the sector.

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

# Pinnacle Oil, Dangote resolve to strengthen Nigeria's oil distribution network

TITILAYO ALABA

Dangote Refinery and Pinnacle Oil & Gas Limited have recently been at the center of a controversy regarding the importation and distribution of petroleum products in the country. However, it has come to light that these two companies have

a longstanding agreement concerning the operation of Pinnacle Oil's product distribution terminal located in the Lekki Free Zone.

This agreement, which spans 13 years, was designed to enhance the efficiency of petroleum product distribution across Nigeria, as disclosed by Pinnacle Oil's Managing Director,

Robert Dickerman, during a statement made in Lagos.

Dickerman expressed his surprise at the allegations made by Dangote Refinery, which claimed that Pinnacle Oil was undermining the refinery through its operations.

CONTINUES ON PG 12»

# Flour Mills posts 76% increase in revenue in H1'25

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

Flour Mills of Nigeria Plc (FMN), a leading food and agro-allied company in Nigeria, has posted impressive financial results in its recently released financial statements for the first half ended 30th September 2024 to the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX), with revenue surging by 76 percent to N1,697.5 billion. This strong performance reflects robust

growth across all business segments, underpinned by strategic cost optimisation and operational efficiency.

The company's gross profit for the first half of 2025 rose by 53 per cent to N161.1 billion, driven primarily by solid performances in its food and sugar divisions. Operating profit also saw a healthy increase of 40 percent, reaching N105.9 billion. Flour Mills Nigeria recorded a significant turnaround in its

profitability, with profit before tax returning to historical levels, rising to N19.7 billion, compared to a loss position in the same period of the previous year.

Despite the challenges posed by the complex macroeconomic environment, including foreign exchange volatility and high interest rates, the company has maintained a strong financial

CONTINUES ON PG 12»

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

# Business & Economy

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TUE. 12TH – THUR. 14TH NOV, 2024 www.nigerianobservernews.com

# Cardoso unveils visionary strategies to boost growth, stability at first anniversary

ERHUVWU ETARHIENYO

The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Olayemi Cardoso, has set an ambitious goal to increase foreign remittances to \$1 billion per month, as part of the bank's ongoing economic reform efforts.

In a statement released by the CBN, Cardoso said during his keynote speech at a symposium on economic reforms.

The event also included the unveiling of the compendium, "Promoting Stability in an Era of Economic Reforms: The Journey So Far", held in Abuja on Thursday, marking the first anniversary of the bank's management team.

Cardoso reflected on the impactful policies introduced over the last year, underscoring the CBN's strong commitment to economic stability, controlling inflation, and boosting

investor confidence.

He clarified that the event was not intended as a celebration but rather as a recognition of the milestones the bank has achieved over the past year, despite the challenging circumstances faced when he and his team took office in 2023. He characterised the past year as both highly challenging and transformational for the bank, noting their success in addressing the credibility gap that existed at that time.

The CBN governor stated that the reforms are beginning to deliver positive outcomes, with significant improvements in the FX market and the stabilisation of foreign reserves, now above the \$40 billion mark—the highest level in 33 months. Although inflation remains high, he noted it is trending downward, indicating that the reforms are successfully restoring market balance and promoting growth.

Cardoso outlined the eco-

nomical challenges inherited by the bank, including a slowdown in GDP growth to 2.31 percent in Q1 2023, a notable drop from previous years, and a sharp increase in inflation, which reached 24.1 percent by mid-2023.

He pointed out that the CBN had addressed these challenges with a strong policy response over the past 12 months, focusing on measures to strengthen stability in the foreign exchange (FX) market, refine monetary policy, and curb inflation.

He emphasised the need for urgent action to address the fiscal deficit, citing the CBN's "Ways and Means Advances," which had reached N22.7 trillion by mid-2023. Additionally, he discussed the country's struggles with capital importation, highlighting the significant decline in both foreign direct investments and portfolio investments over the past decade.

The CBN governor recognized the negative impact of having multiple exchange rate windows, which fostered arbitrage, diminished foreign investment, and resulted in a backlog of FX settlements. He noted that the revenue losses resulting from these exchange rate challenges were estimated at N6.2 trillion in 2022 alone.

He stated that the CBN had implemented a series of significant reforms, such as recalibrating the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR), which was increased by

850 basis points to 27.25 percent, as well as raising the Cash Reserve Ratio for commercial banks to 50 percent.

According to Cardoso, these adjustments were part of the broader strategy, adding that they were crucial for tackling inflationary pressures and promoting a stable economic environment.

He said that the core of the reforms was the CBN's new 2024-2028 Corporate Strategy, which is built on the principles of Integrity, Meritocracy, Professionalism, Accountability, Courage, and Tenacity (IMPACT). As part of this strategy, he noted that the bank had shifted away from quasi-fiscal interventions, focusing instead on conventional monetary policies and simplified FX windows to rebuild market confidence.

He mentioned that the CBN had introduced new guidelines for Bureau de Change (BDC) operations to improve regulation and reduce disruptions in the FX market, even as he emphasised the bank's efforts to enhance internal efficiency through the "Digital-First Initiative," which has automated critical processes, lowered operational costs, and implemented data-driven tools to support more effective policy-making.

Cardoso expressed his gratitude to his team and the bank's

CONTINUES ON PG 12»



28TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

L-R: Segun Adams, Research Analyst at Afrinvest; Teliat Abiodun Sule, Business Editor/Chief Economist, The Nigerian Observer newspaper, and Innocent Unah, President/CEO at Bemike & Brian Advisory Partners Limited, during the 28th Annual Conference of The Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers (2024) in Ibadan, Oyo State.

**NDIC CONDUCTS ASSET VALUATION OF DEFUNCT HERITAGE BANK**  
—Pg 12

**FCCPC ORDERS IKEJA, EKO DISCOS TO HALT REPLACEMENT OF UNISTAR PREPAID METERS**  
—Pg 13

**IDH TO SUPPORT 10,500 SMALLHOLDER OIL PALM FARMERS IN EDO**  
—Pg 14

**OIL PRICES RISE TO \$75 OVER TRUMP'S 2024 WIN**  
—Pg 14

# NDIC conducts asset valuation of defunct Heritage Bank

LAJU UWANIKONE

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) has announced that it has conducted a nationwide assets valuation of the defunct Heritage Bank as part of its ongoing efforts to compensate depositors following the bank's closure.

During the NDIC's special day at the Lagos International Trade Fair, Bello Hassan, NDIC's Managing Director and CEO, revealed that the corporation has conducted a nationwide assets valuation of the defunct Heritage Bank as part of its ongoing efforts to compensate depositors following the bank's closure. Nuhu Bashir Alhassan, Director of Communication and Public Affairs, represented him.

Bello Hassan emphasized NDIC's commitment to safeguarding the stability of the

banking sector, especially when a bank fails. He stated, "Over the years, the NDIC has been instrumental in promoting stability by ensuring that depositors are promptly compensated when a bank fails."

The recent revocation of Heritage Bank's license by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) on June 3, 2024, underscored NDIC's critical role, with Bello Hassan noting that 86 percent of the bank's depositors have already received payments.

To expedite these payments, NDIC utilized the Bank Verification Number (BVN) as a unique identifier, allowing for direct crediting of insured amounts into depositors' alternative bank accounts within just four days of the closure.

Hassan urged depositors who have not yet received their insured amounts to come forward. He advised, "We encourage any remaining depositors

to provide their BVN, proof of account ownership, identification, and alternative account details." Claims can be submitted through multiple channels, including the NDIC website,

email, and social media platforms.

He extended a warm invitation to the public to visit NDIC's pavilion at the trade fair for further information. He

expressed his gratitude to the president and executive members of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce, royal dignitaries, esteemed guests, and the media for their presence. "I wish

you all a fruitful trade fair and a safe journey back to your respective destinations," he concluded, highlighting NDIC's dedication to financial stability and public trust.



## TRAINING BY PING:

A cross section of participants at the just concluded cocoa seedling training programme organised by PIND Foundation in collaboration with partners where over 20 nursery operators in the Niger Delta gained essential skills in seed multiplication and nursery management to meet the demand for quality seedlings.

## Pinnacle Oil, Dangote resolve to strengthen Nigeria's oil...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 11

He emphasized that Pinnacle Oil invested significantly in developing the terminal at Lekki Free Zone, aimed at improving the distribution of petroleum products throughout the country. He questioned the rationale behind Dangote's accusations, given their cooperative history and the mutual benefits expected from their agreement.

In response to the accusations from Dangote Refinery, which included claims of Pinnacle Oil distributing sub-standard petroleum products, Dickerman defended his company's practices, highlighting that Pinnacle Oil had proposed an efficient pipeline distribution system to transport products from Dangote Refinery, which would be more cost-effective than traditional ship-

ping or trucking methods. This proposal was met with approval from Dangote, leading to the signing of an interconnection agreement that facilitated the project's development.

Furthermore, Dickerman pointed out that Dangote had played a supportive role in helping Pinnacle Oil obtain the necessary regulatory approvals for the project. He advocated for a market-driven approach to Nigeria's petroleum sector, arguing that such a strategy would enhance energy security and pricing. He asserted that a diverse supply chain, which includes contributions from local refineries, imports, and other sources, is essential for the optimal functioning of the market. By adhering to these principles, Pinnacle Oil aims to foster a competitive environment that benefits consumers and the industry as a whole.

## Cardoso unveils visionary strategies to boost growth...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 11

staff for their collaboration, while also conveying optimism for the future. He urged for strong leadership, a shared vision, and collective resilience in tackling Nigeria's challenges and striving towards the nation's economic goals.

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, praised the CBN management team for their committed efforts in stabilising the economy. He praised the team's dedication to self-assessment, highlighting their openness to critically evaluate their performance, ask honest questions, and seek constructive feedback from industry stakeholders.

Governor Sanwo-Olu, alongside Hope Uzodinma, the Governor of Imo State, emphasised the vital role of collaboration

between fiscal and monetary authorities, underscoring the importance of coordinated policymaking that delivers a unified goal and message to the public.

The Deputy Governor for Economic Policy, Muhammad Sani Abdullahi, pointed out that the event was dedicated to recognizing the Central Bank of Nigeria's growing successes and celebrating the collective efforts of the institution as a unified team.

He went on to emphasise that the unveiling of the compendium, "Promoting Stability in an Era of Economic Reforms: The Journey So Far," was the central highlight of the event, even as he referred to the book as a testament to the bank's unified vision, steadfast dedication, and commitment to excellence in managing a dynamic economic environment.

## Africa's downstream sector to unlock potential as Oando targets 100,000bpd

### ● Afreximbank to launch African Energy Bank with \$5bn in 2025

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

The African Energy Week (AEW) 2024, held from 4 to 8 November in Cape Town, South Africa, brought together key industry leaders to address pressing issues around the growth and financing of Africa's energy sector.

The conference featured a panel discussion titled "From Feasibility to Bankability – Developing a Sustainable Finance Strategy for African Downstream." The session explored the essential steps required to secure financial backing for the continent's growing downstream sector.

According to AEW reports, "Africa needs to prioritize the development of its downstream sector to ensure maximum exploitation of local resources and to achieve energy security. Across the continent, there is rising demand for petroleum, leading to new developments launching across the downstream sector."

"Nigeria's Dangote Refin-

ery - the largest in Africa began producing diesel and aviation fuel this year. With a capacity of 650,000 barrels per day, the facility is set to meet Nigeria's domestic energy needs and will, upon reaching full capacity in mid-2025, position the country as a major exporter."

Anibor Kragha, Executive Secretary of the African Refiners and Distributors Association (ARDA), emphasised the importance of a clear investment path for the downstream sector.

"With a growing population and economy, we have to have a clear path to making investments downstream. We must have the right regulatory frameworks in place, and we have to drive project realization. We also need an ESG [environmental, social and governance] overlay as well as human capital, who will actually make the investments. When you have these things in place, you can start to have discussions with financiers," Kragha said.

ARDA, which has been at

the forefront of harmonising financial strategies for the African downstream sector, also revealed plans to launch a database of sustainable energy projects across the continent. This initiative aims to support the creation of an actionable downstream plan for the association, aligning with efforts to develop sustainable pan-African infrastructure.

One of the main challenges discussed during the session was the limited access to finance within the sector. René Awambeng, Founder and Managing Partner at Premier Invest, pointed out that financing gaps are a major barrier.

"The critical challenge in investment is the lack of access to finance. That finance will power infrastructure development, but we as a continent, we continue to suffer a lack of access to affordable finance. As a continent, the way the financial sector is shaped, we have constraints. We need to find solutions to this to bridge the \$200-

billion-per-year financing gap," Awambeng stated.

Vinay Guddy, Director of Financial Services and Africa Center of Excellence at the Economic Development Board, Mauritius, added, "We need to attract more private funding into projects going forward." His comments underscored the growing need for private investment to support Africa's downstream expansion.

Lloyd Manokore, Managing Principal Consultant at Emerging Africa Advisory Group, explained, "[The entry of private players in the downstream market] has served to attract significant capital for the sector and showcases significant changes in the downstream funding space."

In an interview with Bloomberg, Oando's Managing Director for Energy Resources, Ainojie Alex Irune, outlined the company's strategies to significantly contribute to Nigeria's oil production goals, with an aim to exceed 2 million bpd in the coming years.

## Flour Mills posts 76% increase in revenue in...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 11

position, with cash reserves standing at N149 billion. This provides the company with the operational flexibility and investment capacity to navigate the current landscape and capitalise on future opportunities.

Commenting on the results, Boye Olusanya, Group Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of FMN, said, "At the core of our business operations and commitment is to build a sustainable business that is big in local con-

tent development and utilization. This commitment is what we leverage as a Group in withstanding both existing and emerging volatility in the business environment. Despite the complex macroeconomic environment, including significant FX volatility and high interest rates, we have maintained solid growth in the H1'25 across all our business segments while managing our costs and operational efficiency."

The food segment, which remains a core driver of the business, saw a remarkable

74 per cent increase in revenue, reaching N1,140.2 billion. This performance was largely driven by improved profitability through the optimisation of material costs. Meanwhile, the sugar segment also performed exceptionally well, achieving an 84 per cent growth in revenue to N274.2 billion.

Anders Kristiansson, Group Chief Finance Officer, highlighted the company's financial resilience, saying, "Our H1'25 results reflect our commitment to maintaining strong financial

performance while building resilience. With a robust cash position of N149 billion we have maintained the financial flexibility needed to support our operations and future growth initiatives, despite the increased cost of financing."

Looking ahead, Flour Mills Nigeria remains focused on executing its strategic initiatives, including new product innovations, further cost optimisation, and the exploration of strategic alliances to drive growth across the African continent.

# FCCPC orders Ikeja, Eko Discos to halt replacement of Unistar prepaid meters

OKAFOR VIVIAN

The Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) at a recent Stakeholders' meeting, urged Electricity Distribution Companies (DisCos) to carry energy consumers along before classifying them into bands and also to comply strictly to industry regulations on billing unmetered consumers.

This statement was made by the Commission's Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Tunji Bello, at stakeholders' meeting held at the FCCPC headquarters in

Abuja which was attended by representatives from the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), the Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA), various electricity distribution companies (DISCOs) and Unistar Hitech Systems Limited to address pressing metering issues impacting Nigerian consumers.

The meeting was held to address a recent announcement by one of the DisCos regarding the phase-out of the Unistar prepaid meter model, effective November 14, 2024, which has caused considerable fear and anxiety among consumers.

Citing the noncompliance of Ikeja Electricity Distribution Company (IKEDC) and Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDP) with NERC's order, FCCPC directed the both companies to immediately halt their replacement of the Unistar prepaid meters.

Bello further went on to talk on important issues facing electricity consumers some of which include billing inaccuracies and inadequate customer care. He noted that systemic inefficiencies and a culture of impunity among some service providers have intensified these issues, leading to the routine exploita-

tion of consumers. He expressed his concern over practices that require consumers to pay ahead for meters without reimbursement which is a direct violation of the NERC Meter Asset Provider and National Mass Metering Regulations 2021, noting that DisCos frequently place consumers with faulty meters on estimated billing, which goes against the regulations of NERC.

To prevent potential exploitation, the Commission has directed that all meter replacement processes be conducted transparently, with costs borne by the DisCos and not passed on to consumers, stressing that

FCCPC will enforce strict compliance with these regulatory requirements to protect consumers from arbitrary charges and estimated billing.

The Commission is also committed to enhancing consumer education on metering and billing practices to guard against potential exploitation by service providers. The Executive Vice Chairman concluded by expressing appreciation for the collaborative efforts of NERC and NEMSA in building a transparent, accountable, and consumer-centered electricity sector. He reaffirmed FCCPC's dedication to enforcing all relevant consumer protection laws within the electricity industry to uphold consumer rights and promote fair market practices.

The FCCPC's directive to discontinue the replacement process stems from the non-compliance of Discos with NERC's "Order on Structured Replace-

ment of Faulty and Obsolete End-user Customer Meters in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry." Both NERC and NEMSA endorsed the FCCPC's stance on the issue.

The NERC's Order mandates that DisCos must prioritise metering for unmetered customers under the National Mass Metering Programme (NMMP) and follow strict guidelines for replacing faulty or obsolete meters. These guidelines further require DisCos to inspect faulty meters and provide detailed information in the replacement notice, including the inspection date, the inspecting officer's credentials, the identified fault, and the scheduled replacement date.

Furthermore, DisCos are prohibited from placing customers on estimated billing due to delays in meter replacement, as new meters must be installed immediately upon removing any faulty or obsolete unit.



**UBA 75TH ANNIVERSARY:**

Officials of United Bank for Africa (UBA), in partnership with Mastercard, launched the UBA 75th Anniversary Commemorative Card, showcasing its commitment to innovation and empowering millions of Nigerians and Africans with access to secure financial services and opportunities.

## Ethiopian Airlines launches Airbus A350-1000 on Lagos route

HAPPY OSAGIE

Ethiopian Airlines has its first Airbus A350-1000 aircraft from Addis Ababa to Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) in Lagos, making the airline the first country in Africa to receive the state-of-the-art aircraft, delivered from Airbus major factory in Toulouse, France amid fanfare. The aircraft arrived Nigeria with 272 passengers: 15 in business class and 257 in the economy class.

Ethiopian Airlines celebrated the aircraft's arrival and highlighted its commitment to providing Nigerian passengers with a premium travel experience. The A350-1000, the longest version of Airbus' popular A350 model, is designed with advanced technological features and increased passenger comfort in mind.

Ethiopian Airlines' introduction of the A350-1000

represents an important milestone as the airline seeks to expand its reach and improve its service quality. The General Manager of Ethiopian Airlines in Lagos, Wondwossen Beyene, said the flight was the first commercial flight of the aircraft and reiterated the commitment of Ethiopian Airlines to the Nigerian market.

The A350-1000 boasts a revolutionary design with innovative aerodynamics and a carbon-fiber fuselage, powered by the fuel-efficient Rolls-Royce Trent XWB engines, ensuring a quieter, smoother journey for long-haul travel.

"It is a game-changer in the aviation industry, boasting unparalleled comfort, efficiency, and technological advancements. On board, passengers will experience unparalleled comfort on this aircraft because it is the first aircraft to feature Thales's AVANT Up inflight entertainment system

and the HBC+ connectivity system, providing travelers luxurious amenities, spaciousness, high speed internet connection, large screens, and state-of-the-art amenities to its Lagos passengers.

Notably, the A350-1000 offers a quieter cabin, wider seats, and more legroom, along with cutting-edge in-flight entertainment and Wi-Fi capabilities, catering to the needs of both business and leisure travelers. Beyene said the aircraft provides increased cargo capacity, facilitating seamless transportation of goods and services, assuring that the aircraft will not only elevate the travel experience for passengers but also strengthen trade and economic ties between Africa and the rest of the world.

The event would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Ethiopian Airlines' team, and Federal Government of Nigeria, the

Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, and the Lagos State Government for their unwavering support.

"We are expecting three more Airbus A350-1000 aircraft in a few months ahead," he added. Some of the passengers who were onboard the aircraft expressed excitement about the experience, as one of the passengers described the flight as the best experience he has ever had since he started travelling by air.

According to Airbus, A350's has unique airspace cabin is the quietest of any twin-aisle in the sky featuring a 50 percent noise footprint reduction versus the previous generation aircraft. It offers passengers and crews the latest modern in-flight products for a comfortable flying experience. The aircraft's new generation engines and use of lightweight materials make it the most fuel efficient large widebody aircraft.

## Proposed tax reforms to streamline revenue collection, focus on NUPRC, Customs' efficiency

FAITH AIGBE

A significant appraisal of Nigeria's tax system is on the horizon as new tax reform bills under consideration by the National Assembly propose ending revenue collection responsibilities for federal agencies, including the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) and the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), Taiwo Oyedele, chairman of the Presidential Tax and Fiscal Reform Committee, confirmed this development in an interview with Channels TV.

Oyedele explained that the reforms aim to simplify the tax collection process across the country, enabling government agencies to refocus on their core mandates.

"We are proposing to halt revenue collection by about 60 federal agencies," he stated, emphasizing the need for streamlining tax collection under a single body.

The tax reform bills suggest that all federal taxes would be collected by a rebranded Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), which would be renamed the Nigerian Inland Revenue Service (NIRS). This new agency would centralize tax collection, handling both federal taxes and some state taxes.

Highlighting the inefficiencies of the current system, Oyedele pointed to NUPRC's role. "If you think about the Nigeria Upstream Regulatory Commission, they collect royalties from oil companies. Royalty is a tax. So, what they should do is regulate upstream activities, not collect taxes," he noted.

He also addressed the NCS, remarking, "Even the Nigeria

Customs Service collects revenue related to import duties and VAT, but their main focus should be trade facilitation and border protection."

The committee found that having numerous agencies collecting taxes creates complexities and inefficiencies. Oyedele added, "We do not know of any country where this is the case, whether in Africa or elsewhere. Why not allow one agency to collect taxes and levies so that others can concentrate on their primary responsibilities?"

The proposed bill would also formally change FIRS's name to the Nigerian Inland Revenue Service. Oyedele explained that this reflects the agency's true role, which has always been to collect revenue on behalf of the federation rather than the federal government alone.

"We considered various naming options, but the simplest and most appropriate choice was the Nigeria Revenue Service," he said.

This tax reform push follows the inauguration of the Tax and Fiscal Reform Committee by President Bola Tinubu in August 2023. The committee, chaired by Oyedele, was tasked with restructuring Nigeria's tax system to make it more efficient and supportive of economic growth. The broader goals include enhancing revenue collection, promoting compliance, and ensuring the tax burden is distributed equitably.

Key elements of the tax reform initiative include raising the Value Added Tax (VAT) to increase government revenue and introducing tax exemptions to aid low-income earners. These efforts aim to reduce income inequality and create a fairer tax system.

# Education

• Primary Education • Secondary Education • Tertiary Education

## Kiddies Kollege visits The Nigerian Observer on educational excursion

NGOZI OKECHUKWU & VIVIAN OKAFOR

On Friday, October 25, 2024, 75 students from JSS1-JSS3 of Kiddies Kollege Secondary School located at Upper Igun in Benin City, embarked on an educational excursion to The Nigerian Observer, located at 24 Airport Road, Benin City. Accompanied by three staff members, the students aimed to broaden their understanding of the printing industry and newspaper production processes.

Upon arrival, journalists warmly welcomed them and introduced them to the exciting world of newspaper production. The students shared their expectations and future aspirations. Simeon Divine, a JSS3 student, expressed her desire to learn about news sourcing and writing.

The Managing Director of The Nigerian Observer, Mr. Osa Victor Obayagbona, delivered a thrilling lecture on news writing, emphasizing the importance of verification to avoid libel. He stressed that journalists must excel in their field, as the profession has become increas-



Students of Kiddies Kollege visit to The Nigerian Observer on educational excursion

ingly competitive. "Journalism will expose you, if you distinguish yourself," he noted.

The students were introduced to the various sections of the newspaper, including the different reporting beats. A curious student posed an intriguing question about the influence of print media on other media outlets.

The Managing Director commended the student's inquiry and responded, "The media complements each other." He illustrated this point by citing broadcast reviews of newspapers, explaining that broadcasting is an extension of

print media, as print is the first medium of information.

During the tour, students visited various sections of the newspaper house, including the newsroom, where reporters write and gather news. At the Edo Printing Centre, they were amazed by the machines, including the web machine, folder, and page planning. They learned that the Web Machine printer, due to its speed, can produce 30,000-40,000 copies of newspapers, saving time and money.

The Editor, Mr. Chuks Oluigbo quizzed the students on their newfound knowledge, who also saw the Speed Mas-

ter machine, used for printing magazines, notebooks, and textbooks, and the Large Format machine, which prints billboards, banners, and outdoor advertising materials on flex banners.

The educational visit successfully broadened the students' understanding of the printing industry and newspaper production, preparing them for future endeavours, and the students concluded their visit by taking memorable photos to capture the excitement and knowledge gained during their time at The Nigerian Observer.

## Revolutionizing education the Montessori way

NGOZI OKECHUKWU

For over the century, the Montessori system of teaching has been transforming the way children learn. Developed by a French physician and educator, Maria Montessori, in 1907, it is a unique system of teaching that focuses on self-directed learning instead of the traditional teacher teaching method, empowering the children to take ownership of their educational journey.

Maria Montessori, Italy's first female doctor, pioneered this groundbreaking method by opening her school, Casa dei Bambini, a children learning house in Rome on January 6, 1907 to support underprivileged children with learning difficulties. Maria encouraged the children to take ownership of their learning, bringing about personalised learning, she helped the children learn based on their development strengths and abilities. Her work led to her publication "Il Metodo della Pedagogia Scientifica applicato all'educazione infantile nelle Case dei Bambini," in 1909 gaining international recognition.

### WHY IS MONTESSORI UNIQUE?

The Montessori method of teaching differs significantly from the traditional teaching method where the teacher has to stand in front of the class and give instructions to the children. It is a unique system because it focuses on the child's individual learning ability. The Montessori teacher is trained to observe the children and guide them while they learn on their own, like Maria quotes, "The greatest sign of success for a teacher is to be able to say 'The children are now working as if I did not exist'."

The child becomes independent of themselves in learning. The Montessori method will give the child the freedom of choice to learn either with their peers or on their own, providing practical materials for them to work with. This helps the child to develop social skills and be capable of him/her enhancing also critical thinking, cognitive and social skills needed in this 21st Century.

The Montessori teacher uses

practical materials and teaching aids to help make learning better. She/he observes each child's learning ability and helps to put them through. It emphasizes practical life skills teaching the child everyday activities like cooking, cleaning, caring for themselves and their environment.

Montessori also encourages mixed-age learning, the children are grouped into 0-3 years old for infant-toddlers, 3-6 years old for the nursery, 6-12 years old for the elementary, and 12-18 years old for secondary, fostering leadership skills and cooperation. Self correction and assessment is also achieved as they carry out their work independently, they learn to correct and help themselves through the guidance of the teacher.

The Montessori classroom is beautifully designed to meet the child's needs and is equipped with practical materials like colouring, plants, movable letters and other teaching aids to help give the child a good learning environment. It is like an open field where the child learns and explores satisfying their curiosity. Research indicates that 75 percent of Montessori students report higher academic achievements according to the Montessori Research Project.

In view of this, some Montessori teachers expressed their opinions on the importance of Montessori learning. A teacher from Diamond Montessori Academy in Benin City, Miss Favour Okechukwu, notes, "Montessori helps the children capture what they are learning. For example, when a Montessori teacher wants to teach a topic on soil or colouring, she has to show the different soils to the child or use colourful things like balloons to show them the colours, and it will help the child remember easily what they taught."

Another teacher, Mrs Favour Isah, who had taught in two different Montessori schools - UPSS and Diamond Montessori School, says, "The method helps to make learning fun for the child using tools and materials that engage the five senses.

"The teachers in Montessori give the children opportunities to take control of their learning through directions from the teacher, and it promotes self-confidence, independent thoughts and actions in the child."

She also implies that children learn in different ways and the Montessori method caters for those differences.

A proprietor of Jenas Montessori adds that the method aids teachers to use practical methods to teach any subjects he/she wants to teach the children. The Montessori method of learning is very effective in children learning, developing both the mental, physical, social and cognitive skills.

## Reflect on passions, skills, careers that align with personal interests, Akande tells students

CHIDINMA KALU

The Chairman, Chartered Institute of Bankers (CIB), Edo State, Ibukun Akande, has advised that students should reflect on passions, skills and careers that align with their interests.

Akande, the keynote speaker, made the statement during the Institute's maiden career talk on Monday, at St. Mary Dedication British International School (SMDIBS) in Benin City, the Edo State capital.

The event, aimed at guiding young students toward informed career choices, with SMDIBS as the first beneficiary school, was chaired by Ibukun Akande.

It is the first time the Chartered Institute of Bankers (CIB), Edo State, is providing such a programme to a secondary school in Edo, with a mission to help students understand the importance of choosing the right career paths early.

Akande emphasized that many students only discover their true career interests after their first degree, and this often leads to a need for further education and training.

"Some people after their

first degree, that is when they choose their career plan, then go back for a second degree. To curb that, that is why we are doing this," he said, and advised SMDIBS students to utilize their spare time wisely, focusing on skill-building activities rather than distractions.

"Start by doing things you love doing. When you join groups, you connect with like-minded people. Utilise your spare time, try to develop what you can do that others can benefit from, don't waste your spare time, it's not the time to play games, it's to reflect on what you want," he said.

The workshop covered practical strategies for achieving career goals, as Akande highlighted the value of volunteering, not just to gain experience but also to build connections and potentially secure future employment. He urged the students to seek mentorship, take executive classes, and consider opportunities that align with their long-term goals.

Some students shared their takeaways from the session. Michael Olojokosoko, an SS2 student, appreciated the organisers for such the initiative, stating, "I

was able to understand different careers and their paths, and the steps to obtaining it.

"It has also made me understand that you should know your career path and what it entails, and also seek mentorship from people who are well-informed."

On her part, Ivy, a SS1 student, expressed her appreciation, noting, "I was able to learn that when we want to choose our career path we need to develop our interest, learn skills, and focus on interests and how to build them.

"I will say thank you because it was really enlightening. Before, I

thought when you have many interests you can juggle everything at once not considering the consequences. But now, I know you can have partners that can help you and encourage you."

Akanda further counselled with a message on integrity, especially for those considering a career in banking, stressing, "Banking and finance industry looks for individuals of integrity. Programmes like this ensure that when students graduate, they have a clear vision and support system, and they are well-prepared to pursue a career that aligns with their interest without being tossed around"



St. Mary Dedication British International School's Senior Secondary School students and teachers with the Chairman, Chartered Institute of Bankers, Edo State, Ibukun Akande (in light blue colour jacket), during career talk workshop in Benin City.

# The Polity

• Policy • Legislation • Enforcement

## Beyond the minority of the minors

IKE WILLIE-NWOBU

Nigeria is a country given to hysteria, histrionics, and even the occasional huff of hubris. The tendency to overblow things here, and mount its inflated wings, is never far away.

This tendency to be lured into crowdsourcing anger borders on gullibility and usually clouds more important issues.

To protest against a government that has been disappointing, for want of a better word, protesters mobilized across the country between August 1 and August 10. The protests were meant to last about ten days but never survived beyond the sixth day as the government clamped down, and many retreated to the safety and anonymity of their houses.

However, just as one cleans up after a child, the government has had a lot to do after the protests. The aim of the protesters was to disrupt as well as disturb a government that appeared too comfortable in its listlessness and careless.

To clean up after the protests, the government deployed the Department of State Services (DSS) which has continued to hound those who participated in the protests in a bid to forestall future protests. If the DSS was not such a desperately poor student of history, it would know that the reason such tactics don't work is that when people protest, they are responding to something primal, something that is almost impossible to contain.



While protesters in other parts of the country had the dignity and civility to keep their protests peaceful and measured, things took a dangerous turn in many parts of the North where the protests were not only violent but bloody.

In Kano State, protesters attacked public buildings including courtrooms and libraries, clashed with security personnel and even called for a regime change.

If the sudden spike of hunger and anger in the North after eight years of stony silence was suspicious, the call for regime change confirmed that the protests were hardly about hunger.

The government's response which included rounding up some of the protesters, many of them minors, and moving them to Abuja for trial ended in a fatal misstep when they were arraigned on 1st November 2024 at the Federal High Court.

The charge for treason which is a capital offense and the stringent bail conditions were always going to draw flak for the government. However, when some minors fainted ostensibly out of illness, ill-treatment and malnutrition, the uproar home and abroad was deafening, forcing the government to release them.

Protests should never be criminalized in Nigeria whose resilient democracy is still going strong more than twenty-five years later. However, what must be done to those who criminalize protests, hiding under protests to unleash the worst version of themselves, especially when their bodies are those of minors but their minds those of master criminals?

Public property was destroyed in Kano State during the protests. Will no one be held responsible? If no one is punished, won't those who never want Nigerians to protest hold up the destruction of public property as a rea-

son to suppress protests in the future? There are landmines everywhere.

The minors have been flown back to Kano and other states. The governor of Kaduna State has offered thirty-nine of the minors who are from his state the sum of one hundred thousand Naira each, as well as smartphones while reuniting them with their families. Yet, the rush to score cheap political points must not be allowed to mask systemic issues which will explode in the future with frightening consequences if left unaddressed.

The question must be asked: how many of the minors who participated in the protests in the North were enrolled in any school when the protests started? It is doubtful that they would have joined if they were in school on that day.

Northern Nigeria has the highest number of Nigeria's millions of out-of-school children. These children, many of whom beg for a living are also amenable to many crimes which no society can live with.

In fettering them for escaping the government's 'oppressive claws', crime must not be rewarded. Beyond giving them gifts in an attempt to be considered responsive, the government must confront what are human bombs bidding their time to detonate.

Failing to do this, then it is only a matter of time.

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## Atiku envious of Tinubu's position as President — Presidency

The Presidency has accused former Vice President Atiku Abubakar of being envious of President Bola Tinubu, especially as he failed repeatedly to clinch the position after several attempts.

Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, made the allegation on Sunday, a development that has heightened the political rift between both parties.

Onanuga also alleged that Atiku, the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, candidate in the 2023 general election, was proposing untested, hypothetical economic theories which lacked popular appeal.

Onanuga said since Atiku's defeat in the last election, the former Vice President has shown more interest in undermining Tinubu than in addressing his party's implosion.

The statement reads: "We suspect he is envious of Tinubu's position—an office he has unsuccessfully sought six times," the presidential media aide stated.

"It is perplexing that he would elevate his untested, hypothetical proposal, which Nigerians soundly rejected during the 2023 Presidential Election, and seek to present it as a superior alternative to the multi-faceted reform programmes implemented by the Tinubu

administration.

"If his plan lacked popular appeal, he must acknowledge that merely repackaging it will not resolve the social and economic challenges his People's Democratic Party (PDP) bequeathed after 16 years in power.

"Atiku's economic analysis demonstrates a significant misunderstanding of Nigeria's realities. His narrative, 'What We Would Have Done Differently,' indicates an inability to engage with the pressing economic realities being revitalised multidimensionally under President Tinubu's leadership.

"What reforms would Atiku propose at the onset of his hypothetical and fabled presidency? While he suggests a consultation period upon assuming office, the reality is that the Nigerian economy requires immediate and decisive action. A leader must be prepared to tackle challenges from Day One, as President Tinubu has done.

"Atiku, going further to accuse President Tinubu of 'stealing his presidency,' exposed his sense of entitlement and his disconnect from the electorate. The truth is that Tinubu rightfully won the presidency, a position Atiku was simply unqualified for due to his arrogance, insensitivity to Nigeria's diversity, and the decision to disregard his party's pow-

er rotation arrangement between the North and the South after eight years of President Muhammadu Buhari.

"Atiku's idea of a consultation period upon entering office shows a troubling lack of awareness regarding the state of the economy, which was in dire need of urgent action. The Tinubu administration came prepared with a firm action plan to address the shortcomings that persisted during President Olusegun Obasanjo's time when Atiku was vice president.

"We can only speculate what detrimental impact Atiku's proposed lengthy town hall and Village Square meetings would have had on Nigeria's economy if he had been elected president and taken such an approach. The country needed a proactive leader such as Tinubu, who immediately set to work on addressing economic challenges rather than one who would have squandered precious time on consultations and a questionable privatisation agenda.

"Atiku's critiques of Tinubu's presidency are mere harebrained propositions devoid of realistic alternatives. He must reckon with the decades of mismanaged economy inherited by the current administration, including exorbitant subsidy expenditures far exceeding government earnings from crude

oil. As of mid-2023, the landing cost of fuel was between N500 and N600, while it was sold nationwide at an average of N200. The 2023 budget allocated N3.36 trillion for fuel subsidies until June 2023 against a projected N2.23 trillion in oil revenue for the year. The Nigerian state was on life support.

"Instead of conjuring imaginary scenarios, we expect the former vice president to engage with these urgent realities.

"The estimated N5.4 trillion savings from subsidy removal in 2024 are being actively directed toward infrastructure development and social intervention programmes, initiatives that will benefit all tiers of government and enhance Nigerians' quality of life.

"We expect Atiku to commend what the Tinubu administration has done concerning revenue generation for the Federation. Without factoring in oil sales, revenue proceeds generated by the Federal Inland Revenue Service almost doubled in the first half of 2024, compared with the level Tinubu met in 2023. The states and councils are more prosperous because of it, as many states have increased the minimum wage for their workers to between N70,000 and N85,000.

"Atiku's proposal to privatise the four

government-owned refineries, which collectively can only meet a fraction of the nation's daily fuel consumption when activated, lacks originality.

"In 2007, investors were only willing to offer \$160 million for 51% equity in the Port Harcourt Refinery, while the Kaduna Refinery had an offer of \$102 million. According to industry experts and the late President Umar Musa Yar'Adua, Nigeria's Head of State at the time, who cancelled the sale of the refineries by the Obasanjo-Atiku government, the offered bids were considered scrap value.

"As vice president, Atiku oversaw the sale of the nation's assets to private individuals and cronies at low prices. Today, most public enterprises Atiku sold have been stripped and become dead assets.

"The model of farming the completely rehabilitated refineries to private sector managers at an agreed-upon rate of return to the government, as adopted by Tinubu's government, is more practical and value-laden than selling our national patrimony to some private interests that are not technically capable of operating the refineries. The Tinubu administration focuses on revitalising these refineries while supporting modular refineries and the Dangote Refinery, which has greater capacity."

# Few judges tarnishing judiciary's image, says CJN

PEACE AKPOBOME, WITH  
AGENCY REPORT

The Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, has acknowledged that few judges were giving the Nigerian judiciary a bad name, insisting that the country's judiciary is blessed with upright and courageous judges.

The Emir of Kano, His Royal Majesty Khalifa Muhammad Sanusi II, also asked the Nigerian judges especially justices of the Supreme Court to administer justice with the fear of God, and also remember that they are accountable to God.

This is just as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Dr Wale Babalakin, has lamented what he described as the deterioration of judicial independence in Nigeria occasioned by the increasing influence of state governors and other political figures over judges.

ARISENews reports that Justice Kekere-Ekun state this on Saturday at a public discourse on 'Ethics, Morality And The Law', organised by the Movement for Islamic Culture and Awareness (MICA) to mark its 30th anniversary and the elevation of Justice Habeeb Adewale Abiru to the Supreme Court.

She maintained that Nigeria was endowed with very hard-working and knowledgeable judges, warning however, that judges should remember that as "individuals we are accountable to ourselves and to God".

The CJN said that the perspective of the ordinary citizen, who observed and assessed the extent to which ethics, morality and the law co-existed harmoniously in the society must be taken into consideration.

She added that public acceptance of the law also hinged on its alignment with fundamental principles, the need for clarity, stability and independence of the judiciary, as well as the fair exercise of authority by law enforcement.

According to her, the foundations of justice were influenced by the Abrahamic faith prevalent in the society, adding that both Islam and Christiani-

ty preach morality upright, and righteousness.

"The role of the legal practitioner within this framework, merits a particular attention. The lawyer, often seen as both antagonist and protagonist in the pursuit of justice, must navigate a terrain where law, ethics, and morality intersect," Kekere-Ekun said.

"This dual role requires balancing the scriptures and the law with ethical constitutions, often containing moral and legal questions that may seem at odds. As a minister in the temple of justice, the lawyer's commitment to justice involves upholding legal standards, while advancing principles that follow society's ethical expectations.

"The degree to which this alignment is achieved influences public trust in the judiciary and the law, affirming that our legal system should not only administer justice but also resonate with the community's moral convictions.

"I will say we take notes of everything that has been said. As the Honourable Attorney General pointed out, and this happens in every sector of our society, it is unfortunate that by and large our judges are knowledgeable, upright, courageous, and hard-working but few ones are giving us a bad name," she said.

In his remarks at the event, the Emir of Kano, Sanusi II, asked Nigerian judges, especially the justices of the Supreme Court, to administer justice with the fear of God.

The Emir, who said his New Year resolution is not to be controversial, however, urged the judges not to allow hatred for people to make them do what is not right.

He said judges should focus more on substantive justice, and not rely on technicalities.

"Do not be an advocate for wrongdoers and do not be an advocate for those who deceive themselves, because Allah does not love sinful wrongdoers.

"When your friends come to you when the government comes to you, and you listen to them and you tilt judgment in their favour. Ask yourself, who will be your ad-



**PUBLIC DISCOURSE:**

Lagos State governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu (2nd left); Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun (2nd right); Wale Babalakin (SAN - right) and a guest, during a public discourse on 'Ethics, Morality And The Law', organised by the Movement for Islamic Culture and Awareness (MICA).

vocate before God, on the Day of Judgment?" Sanusi queried.

In his remarks, the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Prince Laiteef Fagbemi (SAN) underscored the importance of fairness and integrity in the Nigerian legal system, urging legal professionals to recommit to ethical values.

"First, you have to be good. On the inside, you have to be good," he said.

"You have to be able to improve our personnel, our sister, our brother, our colleague," he added.

Speaking on the theme 'Ethics, Morality, and the Law - Christian Perspective', the Very Reverend Professor Konyinsola Ajayi (SAN) condemned what he termed "lawlessness in the law" and urged Nigeria's legal professionals to reflect on the role of ethics and morality within the judiciary.

Ajayi cited specific cases as examples of the judicial system's failure, including the controversy surrounding the Emir of Kano, which he described as "an emanation of lawlessness."

He questioned whether the rule of law truly underpins current judicial practices, adding

that the decisions of the courts often confuse the public rather than provide clarity.

He said: "The law today is providing the greatest uncertainty you can think about. The Nigerian judiciary was one of the best in the world. Australia, New Zealand, and the Commonwealth referenced Nigerian court decisions," he said.

The senior lawyer said today's legal system suffered from an erosion of this reputation due to inconsistent judgments and a perceived lack of accountability among judges.

Addressing the religious implications of the judiciary's role, Ajayi appealed to the moral and ethical responsibilities that judges bear.

"God is the author of morality and ethics. He created the law and requires it to be underpinned by these things."

Ajayi called for all Nigerians, particularly those in positions of power, to examine their actions within the broader ethical framework of their faiths.

"Justice is the foundation of society, and we must be careful to ensure that it does not become what will bring the house down," he concluded.

Earlier, speaking on the theme: "Ethics, Morality, and the Law - Role of Legal Practitioner," a former Governor of Lagos State, Babatunde Fashola (SAN) said the greatest tool that humans invented was the law, adding that law separated humans from animals.

Also speaking, Babalakin (SAN) decried the deterioration of judicial independence in Nigeria.

He condemned what he described as a "systemic collapse" of the nation's judicial system, calling for urgent reform to restore its independence and integrity.

He noted that the declining autonomy of the judiciary was due to the increasing influence of state governors and political figures over judges.

He said: "The problem of the legal system is systemic. We are trying to treat the consequences, not the causes of the problem."

He argued that the decline in the judiciary began in the mid-1970s, when "most eminent judges were arbitrarily retired without trial, without questioning, marking a turning point for the nation's judicial standards."

Reflecting on the past, Babalakin recalled the reverence

once held for judges.

He recounted how Mobolaji Johnson, the former military governor of Lagos State, had reportedly invited the esteemed Justice JIC Taylor to a state function.

According to him, Taylor declined, "prioritising his judicial duties over the governor's invitation. That was the end of the story."

"There is no system that can have the judicial officers under a strong influence of the executive that can do well," he said.

He condemned the practice where some governors referred to judges as 'my judges', adding that in those days, no governor would have had the audacity to refer to a judge as 'my judge'.

Babalakin further highlighted the financial challenges faced by judges, particularly in state courts.

Criticising what he called a "culture of mediocrity" that infiltrated Nigeria's legal practice, Babalakin called on legal professionals to "reposition and rebuild" the profession from foundational levels, including law school and the bar.

He urged the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) to step up and reclaim its historic role as a moral and legal force.

## Police assure of security in Ondo guber election

FAVOUR ANETOR

The Nigeria Police Force has assured the general public of its unwavering readiness to ensure security in the forthcoming November 16 governorship election in Ondo State.

In a statement released on Sunday, the Force spokesman, Muyiwa Adejobi, said specialized police units, including the Special Intervention Squad, Police Mobile Force, Counter-Terrorism unit, among others, have been deployed to Ondo ahead of the election.

He further said the aerial patrols would be conducted with

police helicopters, while gunboats would patrol the state's waterways and riverine areas to ensure security across all terrains.

"As the Ondo State Gubernatorial Election, scheduled for November 16, 2024, draws near, the Inspector-General of Police has unequivocally assured the public of the Nigeria Police Force's unwavering readiness to ensure a peaceful and orderly election process across all 18 Local Government Areas, 203 Wards, and 3,933 Polling Units in the state," Adejobi said.

"The IGP has confirmed that comprehensive plans have been set in motion to guarantee a smooth election, including the

strategic deployment of adequate personnel, resources, and state-of-the-art equipment.

"The deployment will see officers from various specialised units, including the Special Intervention Squad, Police Mobile Force, Counter-Terrorism Unit, Special Protection Unit, Explosive Ordinance Disposal Unit, K-9 Unit, Federal Investigation and Intelligence Response Team, and Federal Intelligence and Security Task Force working in concert with other security agencies. These agencies will adhere strictly to the guidelines of the Electoral Act, 2022, ensuring that all measures taken align with the principles of fairness,

transparency, and order," he said.

"In addition to ground personnel, aerial patrols will be conducted with police helicopters, while gunboats will patrol the state's waterways and riverine areas to ensure security across all terrains. These comprehensive measures will serve as a deterrent to any attempt to disrupt the electoral process and will enhance the overall stability of the elections," he said.

Adejobi also said that the IGP, Kayode Egbetokun, has vowed to deal with political thugs or individuals planning to disrupt the elections as only federal security agencies and members of the Inter-Agency Consultative

Committee on Election Security will be allowed to participate.

"The IGP has also issued a stern warning to political thugs and any individuals or groups who may contemplate acts of violence or disruption before, during, or after the election: they will face the full force of the law. The message is clear, those who attempt to jeopardise the peace and security of the state will not go unpunished," Adejobi said.

"Furthermore, the IGP reaffirmed the established guidelines governing election security management in Nigeria, stressing that no quasi-security organisation, including state-backed groups like Vigilante

Corps or Amotekun, will be permitted to participate in the election process.

"The security of this election is a responsibility entrusted solely to the Nigeria Police Force and other federal security agencies, along with the broader membership of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security.

"The Nigeria Police Force, in collaboration with other federal security agencies, remains committed, vigilant, and fully prepared to ensure that the Ondo State Gubernatorial Election proceeds smoothly, without incident, and by the highest standards of electoral integrity," he said.



# Endless collapse of Nigeria's national grid

*The constant collapse of Nigeria's national grid is causing widespread disruptions to daily life, businesses, and the economy, writes PEACE AKPOBOME.*

Nigeria's national grid has become notoriously unreliable, with frequent collapses plunging the country into darkness. The frequency and persistence of these disruptions suggest that the grid could be operating under significant strain, bordering on constant failure. This alarming frequency underscores the grid's vulnerability and raises concerns about its stability and reliability, warranting urgent attention and comprehensive reforms.

Data showed that under President Buhari, the grid collapsed three times in 2015, 28 times in 2016, 24 times in 2017, 13 times in 2018, and 11 times in 2019. Between 2020 and May 29, 2023, it collapsed 14 times. In the last one year that President Tinubu assumed office, the grid has collapsed 11 times. This incessant collapse has left many Nigerians frustrated due to the constant power outages in the country. The situation is very dire, the grid's fragility is causing widespread disruptions to daily life, businesses, and the economy.

According to a 2023 report published by the World Bank, Nigeria ranked as the country with the poorest power supply to its citizens globally. The report highlighted that 85 million Nigerians are not connected to the national grid and a loss of \$26 billion annually.

The frequency of these collapses has made it clear that authorities in the power sector are not capable of handling the sector any more. Then, grid collapse used to be due to major faults but now, it is collapsing every other day.

## CAUSE OF THE CONSTANT COLLAPSE

Nigeria's electricity challenges are due to a fundamental mismatch between supply and demand. The country's power generation capacity is not sufficient to meet the growing demand thereby resulting in load-shedding protocols and when left unmanaged, the grid collapses.

The chairman of Transmission Company of Nigeria, Sule Abdulaziz, has come out to say that there are big problems with the power equipment in the country. He said most of the equipment are very old and have been in use since 40 or 50 years ago. He said this when he appeared on Sunday Politics in Channels TV to explain why the grid keeps failing.

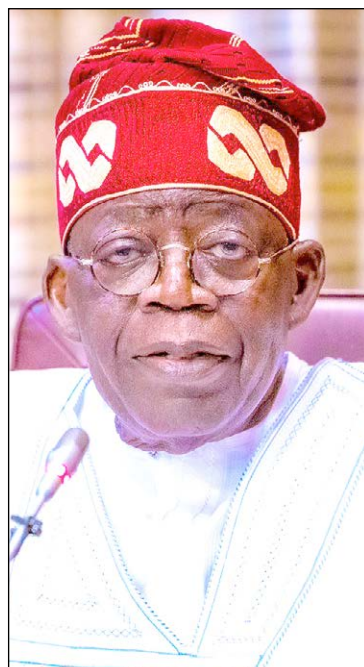
"Most of the equipment we use is 40 or 50 years old. So it is not possible to work properly," Abdulaziz said. "The transmission company needs a lot of investment and for so many years in this country, that sector has been neglected."

The Minister of Power, Adebayo Adelalu, attributed the cause of the frequent collapses to vandalism and lack of maintenance. The minister, while receiving the report of the committee set up to address the cause of the collapses in Abuja, maintained that this year's collapse is due to vandalism and theft of power equipment.

Recently, Jos Electricity Distribution reported that 37 of its transmission towers were targeted in Benue State. The company's Head



POWER INFRASTRUCTURE



TINUBU

of Corporate Communications, Mr Adakole Elijah, who condemned the act, called on police and vigilantes to assist in safeguarding the facilities.

"It has become impossible for the company to protect these assets single-handedly. That is why we are pleading with communities to take ownership of electricity facilities in their areas, as it is them that the facility serves," Elijah said.

"Each time our facilities are vandalized, we spend significant amounts of money to restore services, only for them to be vandalized again. While the assets belong to the company, the communities are the end users. We continue to plead with people, especially community policing and vigilantes, to assist in safeguarding these assets," he said.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

The constant collapse of the grid has been a major concern to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN). The association says the huge

“*Each time our facilities are vandalized, we spend significant amounts of money to restore services, only for them to be vandalized again. While the assets belong to the company, the communities are the end users*”

cost spent on reenergizing production lines whenever the grid goes off is frustrating manufacturers.

"It is unacceptable that most manufacturers have to always shut down production lines anytime national grid collapse occurs in the country. To re-energise those production lines takes extra production costs, and they are still expected to be billed 250 per cent electricity tariff by power electric companies without factoring the menace causing the frequent breakdown in the national grid. There is no way manufacturing can thrive perfectly when you don't have a steady and affordable power supply," MAN's Director General, Segun Ayayi-Kadiri, stated.

Similarly, the President of Nigeria Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry Mines and Agriculture NACCIMA, Dele Oye, said the state of the grid affects business pro-



OJO

ductivity, increases inflation and affects profitability.

"With the grid failing multiple times in recent months, businesses have been grappling with erratic power supply, which disrupts production lines, inflates operational costs, and ultimately affects profitability," Oye said.

"The implications are dire. Prolonged outages hinder productivity and lead to lost revenue, while small and medium enterprises, often the backbone of our economy, struggle to survive under the weight of high generator costs and maintenance. This situation not only stifles business growth but also erodes consumer confidence and limits job creation," he said.

The added power costs incurred by businesses will be directly reflected in higher consumer prices and this will increase the financial strain on individuals and households. As a result, families may struggle to afford essential goods and services, undermining

overall economic well-being and potentially stifling economic recovery.

The surge in Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) prices has rendered generator-powered electricity unaffordable for many households, crippling their ability to access basic necessities like lighting, food preservation, and essential appliances.

Darkness provides cover for criminal activities. It raises security concerns as the current energy crisis may lead to an alarming increase in evil deeds, compromising community safety and social stability.

## ANY WAY OUT?

A renowned energy expert and Lead Consultant on Power to the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF), Mr. Odion Omonfoman, in a phone chat with THISDAY highlighted some possible solutions to the constant failing. He advocated for a decentralized grid system, enabling state governments to contribute to distributed power generation. He also emphasized that relying solely on the national grid is unrealistic, given Nigeria's vast geography, which demands a reinforced and adaptable infrastructure.

"The cost of reinforcing a grid is elastic and states are already taking their own initiatives to make sure they have their own generation within their states. That's the only thing that will solve this whole thing where we are not all reliant on the national grid," Omonfoman explained.

He stressed the importance of states creating their own electricity market where they could get the supplier side of the national grid and have a number of energy sources to apply. He also added that Nigeria cannot work with the existing 11 distribution companies (Discos) due to their bankruptcy.

He said, "They cannot sustain energy supply to the end users. So states must now take charge and license new operators that are more efficient and more reliable. At the end of the day, there has to be new entrants into the distribution space so that as more power is generated, end users can have relief in terms of reliable supply. It's a no brainer, it's just that we work from a centralized market. If you are in Abuja, everything is rocket science."

Also, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria and a professor of Energy and Electricity law at the University of Lagos, Prof. Yemi Oke, said Nigeria's power supply needs to be decentralized as the national grid is weak, unreliable and expensive to maintain.

In an interview with *ARISE NEWS*, Oke called for immediate reforms. He stressed the need for regional grids, saying it is better to be late than never.

Reflecting on the incessant grid collapses, Oke stated, "I think we started too late. I would agree to the fact that now we have started taking the right steps, but it's too late because we ought to have started taking those steps years back."

He further emphasized the need for Nigeria to adopt decentralized power solutions, citing global shifts towards alternative grid structures.

# Stop 36 govs, FCT minister from giving cars, houses to judges, SERAP tells Tinubu

TOBORE JEROME

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has urged President Bola Tinubu to stop the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, and Nigeria's 36 governors from "usurping the authority and responsibilities of the National Judicial Council and heads of courts through the giving of cars and houses to judges."

According to SERAP, these actions likely indicate that the judiciary is becoming submis-

sive to the executive arm of government.

This statement is contained in a letter dated November 9, 2024, and signed and released by SERAP's Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare, a copy of which was made available to PUNCH Online on Sunday, November 10, 2024.

SERAP also urged the president to direct the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr Lateef Fagbemi, "to challenge in court the constitutionality and legality of the practice of

members of the executive giving cars and houses to judges in Abuja and across the states".

The organisation asked Tinubu to improve the working conditions and welfare of the nation's judiciary "through existing constitutional arrangements and mechanisms," as his government is constitutionally mandated to "safeguard the rule of law"

SERAP's position follows a report from September 24, 2024, when the Federal Executive Council approved the construction of 40 housing units for judges and justices in the FCT.

The FCT Minister disclosed this while addressing State House Correspondents after the 18th Council meeting chaired by the President at Aso Rock Villa, Abuja. Wike said the initiative was part of the government's Renewed Hope Housing agenda to provide secure and convenient accommodation for judicial officers.

Of the 40 units to be constructed in the Katampe District, 20 will be allocated to the FCT High Court, 10 to the Federal High Court, and 10 to the Court of Appeal.

SERAP stated, "Such practices

are antithetical to the constitutional principles of separation of powers, checks and balances, and the rule of law, and may create the perception that the judiciary is subservient to the executive.

"Politicians ought to keep their hands off the judiciary, respect and protect its integrity and independence. Politicians must treat judges with dignity and respect. The Nigerian Constitution and international standards make clear that the judiciary is neither subservient to the executive nor the legislature."

The letter, which was copied to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Margaret Satterthwaite, noted, "Undermining the fundamental principle of separation of powers risks constraining the ability of the judiciary to act as a check on the executive."

"SERAP urges you to substantially improve funding for the judiciary to enhance their working conditions, welfare, and pensions through existing constitutional arrangements and mechanisms, to uphold the independence and autonomy of the judiciary and to protect judges from executive interference.

"Your government has constitutional and international obligations to promote public confidence in the judiciary and safeguard the rule of law. We

would be grateful if the recommended measures are taken within seven days of the receipt and/or publication of this letter. If we have not heard from you by then, SERAP shall consider appropriate legal actions to compel your government and the attorneys general of the 36 states to comply with our request in the public interest.

"The reports that members of the executive in the FCT and across several states are giving cars and houses to judges appear to take place without following any constitutional or procedural process, which may have a chilling effect on the rule of law, access to justice, and effective remedies.

The organisation admonished Tinubu to "ensure that the Federal Executive Council (FEC) under your leadership stops the practice of approving the construction of houses for judges, as the exercise of such responsibility is entirely inconsistent and incompatible with the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution and the country's international obligations."

"Several of Nigeria's 36 state governors, including those of Abia, Benue, Cross River, Delta, Imo, Kogi, Lagos, Oyo, Osun, and Rivers, also reportedly routinely engage in the practices of giving cars and houses to judges in their states," the letter read, among others."



PRESENTATION OF AWARD:

Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri (left), and Publisher, Vanguard Newspapers, Dr. Sam Amuka-Pemu, during the presentation of award to Governor Diri at the gala night on Saturday in honour of members of the Guild who held the 20th All-Nigerian Editors Conference in Yenagoa.

## WTO confirms Okonjo-Iweala as sole candidate for DG position

PEACE AKPOBOME

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has confirmed that its current Director-General, Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, is the sole candidate for the position and is now poised to serve a second four-year term when her current term ends August 31, 2025.

According to a statement from the organization on Saturday, Okonjo-Iweala had earlier confirmed her willingness to serve a second four-year term in a letter to the chair on September 16.

The WTO formally initiated the process of appointing its next Director-General on October 8, setting a nomination deadline of November 8. However, no additional nominations were received by the deadline, solidifying Okonjo-Iweala's position as the sole candidate.

Chair of the General Council, Ambassador Petter Ølberg of Norway, informed WTO members on November 9 that no further nominations had been submitted.

"Under the procedures for the appointment of Directors-General (WT/L/509), I am

required to communicate to Members a consolidated list of candidates received for the post of Director-General immediately after the close of the nomination period, in this case 8 November 2024," Ambassador Ølberg said in the statement.

"I would like to inform members that at the end of the nomination period the only candidate received for this post is from Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the incumbent director-general. "The notification received from Dr Okonjo-Iweala pursuant to paragraph 12 of the Procedures

in WT/L/509, was circulated to all Members together with my communication in document JOB/GC/406, dated 16 September 2024," he said.

The organization added that the General Council chair would communicate the next steps in the process soon. It said Okonjo-Iweala's current term will come to an end on August 31, 2025.

Okonjo-Iweala assumed office as the seventh Director-General of the WTO on March 1, 2021. She is the first woman and the first African to lead the organization.

## Tinubu in Saudi Arabia for Islamic-Arab summit

FAVOUR ANETOR

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has arrived in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, to attend the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit, which kicks off on Monday, November 11, 2024.

Tinubu, who touched down at the King Abdulaziz international airport at 10:00am (local time) Sunday, was received by the Deputy Governor of Riyadh, Prince Mohammed AbdulRahman.

Tinubu is in Saudi Arabia on the invitation of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to participate in the summit that will focus on the current situation in the Middle East.

Announcing the President's travel plan in a statement on Saturday, his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo

Onanuga, said Tinubu would be delivering an address on the ongoing Israel-Palestinian conflict.

The statement said he would be emphasising Nigeria's call for an immediate ceasefire and the urgent need for a peaceful resolution in the region, including call for a two-state solution as pathway to lasting peace in the region.

Key Nigerian officials including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, accompanied the President.

Other members of the entourage are the National Security Adviser (NSA) Mallam Nuhu Ribadu; Minister of Information and National Orientation Mohammed Idris; and the Director General of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Mohammed Mohammed.

After the conclusion of the summit, President Tinubu is expected to return to Abuja.

## Agric reform, rural revitalisation key to Nigeria's devt —Izedonmwen

TOBORE JEROME

The candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) in the 2024 Edo State governorship election, Engr. Osarenren Derek Izedonmwen, has urged both the federal and state governments to prioritize agricultural reforms and rural revitalization as essential pathways to Nigeria's develop-

ment.

Izedonmwen also commended the governments of Tanzania and Burkina Faso for their notable achievements in reforming their agricultural sectors and revitalizing rural communities to achieve food sufficiency and boost exports.

He highlighted that these countries have successfully implemented agricultural and ru-

ral revitalization models similar to his RAIISE Agenda, which he championed during the just-concluded 2024 Edo governorship election.

Izedonmwen's plan emphasized empowering youth and local farmers by granting them access to farmland, with long-term land rights of one to five acres per youth or household. He proposed that the govern-

ment should create an enabling environment that includes affordable credit and market access for local and export sales. Such 'state-guided' intensive farming at scale, he noted, would ensure food sufficiency, supply essential feedstock for agro-allied industries, and generate wealth for youths and rural communities.

On rural revitalization, Izedonmwen called on both federal

and state governments to focus on quick-impact projects, such as developing infrastructure to support efficient farming and cottage industries in rural areas. He stressed that this approach would promote balanced and inclusive economic growth across rural and urban areas, contributing to a decline in the rising insecurity that currently plagues the country.

On Tuesday, November 5th, 2024, Business Insider Africa reported that Tanzania has achieved 128 per cent food security, allowing it to export surplus produce to neighbouring countries. Tanzania has also achieved a new milestone by becoming a processor and net exporter of cashew nuts, a rarity among African countries, as cashews are typically processed in Asia.

# Technology

• ICT • Startups • Telecoms • Devcoms • Blockchain • Cloud

## Africhange secures IMTO licence to streamline remittances to Nigeria

JEREMIAH OMUOMWAN  
AND JESSICA OSEBHO

Africhange, a cross-border remittance service provider, has announced that its Nigerian subsidiary, Currenzo, has secured the International Money Transfer Operator [IMTO] licence from the Central Bank of Nigeria [CBN].

This strategic move significantly improves Africhange's ability to facilitate inward remittances for immigrants and diaspora communities sending money to Nigeria.

Nigeria remains one of the largest recipients of remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the World Bank's Migration and Development Brief, in 2023 alone, remittance to Nigeria accounted for 38% of the region's \$54 billion total.

For many Nigerian individuals, these funds are essential for education, healthcare, and daily living, making accessible and cost-effective remittance solutions vital. With the IMTO licence, Africhange is positioned to deliver a trusted service that

improves access to much-needed financial support across borders.

Founded in 2020, Africhange has achieved impressive growth as a fully bootstrapped company, serving over 200,000 users globally and facilitating more than two million successful transactions. Operating in over 100 countries—including Canada, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and Australia—Africhange offers an extensive range of currencies and services that simplify international money transfers.

By leveraging advanced technology, the platform minimises the cost and complexity of cross-border transactions, enhancing the immigrant experience and supporting communities, especially those of African descent.

After four years of deep market understanding, maximising unit economics, and reaching cash flow positivity, Africhange is now poised to raise funds in the coming year to fuel rapid expansion and bring its impactful solutions to even more users worldwide.

The new IMTO licence allows Africhange to manage inward remittances directly into Nigeria

without relying on intermediaries. By removing third-party involvement, this capability enables partnerships with local banks, streamlining payment processes and lowering costs for customers.

Furthermore, the company can offer better rates and faster services for Africans living on the continent and abroad. Africhange is dedicated to maintaining the highest compliance standards with regulatory requirements across all markets, ensuring that customer transactions are secure and transparent.

David Ajala, CEO of Africhange, stated: "As an immigrant-founded company, we understand first-hand that sending

and receiving money across borders is a key part of daily life for our users, who are immigrants of African descent. Securing the IMTO licence allows us to offer a faster, more affordable way for people to support their loved ones back home.

For Africhange, it means we're stepping into a new era where we can empower both individuals and businesses to make seamless, direct transactions in Nigeria. We're excited about the doors this opens to bring greater impact to the lives of the communities we serve."

With a strong track record of success, Africhange has established partnerships with three Ni-

gerian banks and is actively seeking to expand these relationships. It also has a reliable settlement partner in Nigeria, ensuring secure processing for local transactions. Building on this partnership alongside the IMTO licence.

Tega Gabriel, Head of Growth of Africhange, added: "This IMTO licence acquired from the CBN brings incredible opportunities to form direct partnerships with Nigerian banks and other international money transfer operators.

"Connecting directly with local partners lets us speed up transactions and improve the remittance experience for our users sending money to Nigeria. As we scale,

these partnerships will strengthen our reach across Nigeria and beyond, bringing us closer to our vision of accessible financial services for the global diaspora."

The licence acquisition follows Africhange's recent expansion to the UK and builds on the licences already acquired in its Canadian and UK markets, intending to strengthen its service offerings. Looking ahead, the money transfer platform is preparing to launch operations in the US and EU markets, further scaling its footprint in the remittance sector and reinforcing its position as a leader in cross-border financial services.

## NCC says judiciary is key to Nigeria's digital transformation

BERA ESENE AND  
JENNIFER ODUWARE

Nigeria's telecom regulator, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) says the judiciary has a critical role to play in the country's digital transformation.

NCC Executive Vice Chairman, Aminu Maida said during the annual workshop for judges on legal issues in telecommunications, that the judiciary's reliance on digital tools to enhance justice delivery indicates it is a stakeholder in the digital services sector and as such has a key role to play in the upliftment of the industry.

Maida stressed the need for special protections for telecommunication infrastructure, which faces disruptions from vandalism, theft, and restricted access.

He additionally called for judicial support to implement the Presidential Order designating telecommunications infrastructure as Critical National Information Infrastructure.

The said order prohibits unauthorised actions against such infrastructure without a lawful court order.

The judiciary's role in protecting fundamental rights, enforcing digital contracts, and developing digital jurisprudence is vital for Nigeria's digital transformation, Maida stressed.

Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, commended the NCC's efforts to protect consumers from unfair practices and emphasised the judiciary's commitment to the telecommunications sector.

She highlighted concerns such as cybersecurity risks, consumer data protection, and the need for improved dispute resolution frameworks within the digital economy.

The workshop aims to equip judicial officers with the technical expertise required to address emerging legal challenges in telecommunications.

Nigeria's digital economy has significant growth potential, with projected revenues of \$18.30 billion by 2026, expected to create employment opportunities, reduce poverty, and promote innovation.

The NCC is working with key stakeholders to ensure the seamless implementation of the Presidential Order and to keep Nigeria competitive in the global digital economy.



**BETKING DANFO:**

L-R: National Operations Manager, Telema Synger; Head of Marketing, Nengi Akinola; and Integrated Marketing Manager, Oludare Kafar, all from BetKing Nigeria, during the launch of the BetKing Danfo Lagos Casino game in Victoria Island, Lagos.

## MTN harvests multiple awards at 8th Tech Innovation Project

AISOSA AIYAMENKHUE

The MTN Foundation has won more laurels for its leadership in innovation through CSR initiatives, receiving the "Transformational Solutions in Education & Skills Acquisition Award" at the eighth edition of the Tech Innovation Awards, which held recently at Oriental Hotel, Lagos.

Executive Director of the MTN Foundation, Odunayo Sanya was likewise recognised as the "Corporate Social Investment Personality of the Year", while the MTN Foundation team was named "Foundation Team of the Year".

The Tech Innovation Awards

saw the coming together of executives, leaders and employees of various organisations in the ICT sector to celebrate businesses and personalities who have contributed to the transformation of Nigeria's digital ecosystem.

In his opening remarks, convener and Chief Executive Officer of Instinct Wave, Akin Naphtal, described the event as an avenue to celebrate achievements within Nigeria's ICT industry and recognise the excellence and grit of people and institutions driving digital transformation. "We're not just here to celebrate the innovations and growth in our ICT sector, but also to acknowledge the tremendous resilience that keeps this industry at the forefront of transfor-

mation. We celebrate excellence, tenacity and audacious dreamers shaping our digital space and pushing the boundaries of what we never thought was possible."

Commenting on the awards, Executive Director, MTN Foundation, Odunayo Sanya appreciated the organisers of the Tech Innovation Awards, while also affirming the foundation's commitment to impactful causes. "I'd like to appreciate Instinct Wave for these awards and for choosing to constantly recognise those who are notably driving innovation in the country. Interestingly, this is coming right ahead of MTN Foundation's 20th anniversary. We strongly believe that everyone deserves to have a great quality

of life and access to transformative opportunities. This belief has driven us for the past 20 years and will continue to drive our vision of transforming lives and inspiring impact where it matters."

The awards received by the MTN Foundation are a testament to its reach and impact of its CSR initiatives over the past 20 years.

Other notable recognitions at the Tech Innovation Awards were "Telecom Infrastructure Provider of the Year" and "Telecom Infrastructure Team of the Year" received by IHS Towers, as well as the award for "Technology Person of the Year" presented to Chief Executive Officer of Open Access Data Centres, Ayotunde Coker.

# African fintech sector growth enhancing access-EIB research

JENNIFER ODUWARE

A new European Investment Bank (EIB) research release shows the number of fintech companies in Africa has nearly tripled since 2020, boosting access to

finance for people and businesses across the continent.

The report Finance in Africa 2024 highlights developments in the African financial sector and constraints to the region's economic progress.

According to the report, Afri-

ca's fintech sector is prospering as digital finance grows at a faster rate than traditional banks.

The EIB report says the number of African companies offering new financial services increased from 450 in 2020 to 1,263 at the beginning of 2024.

"Fintech is revolutionising the way we think about finance in Africa," says EIB vice-president Thomas Östros. "By leveraging technology, we can improve access to finance for millions and foster sustainable economic growth."

The Finance in Africa report

includes data from the ninth annual EIB Banking in Africa survey that details diverse challenges and confirms resilience of the African banking sector.

"While we see some signs of improvement, the high cost of finance remains a source of con-

cern," says EIB chief economist Debora Revoltella. "As we navigate the dual challenges of climate change and the digital transformation, the role of multilateral development bank lending is even more relevant in supporting sustainable growth on the continent."

# Umahi douses concerns over state of federal roads as dry season sets in

BILL OKONEDO

The dry season, which typically spans November to March, has set in, bringing with it concerns about the state of Nigeria's 195,000-kilometre road network and its significant impact on the cost of transportation for millions of commuters as well as goods, especially foodstuffs, and general cost of living.

But the Minister of Works, David Umahi, says government has reached over 85 per cent completion in the procurement and execution of 330 road palliatives and bridge repairs across the country, which is expected to reduce time and cost to destination.

This is more so against the background of the Federal Government's removal of the troublesome fuel subsidy and the free float of the local currency, the naira, 18 months ago, which led to an upward spiral in cost of living.

Umahi's declaration ties up with the Federal Government's Compressed Natural Gas initiative (CNGi) which has so far converted over 100,000 vehicles in the country to the use of the cheaper CNG/bi-fuel, according to government's spokesperson, Bayo Onanuga.

Government's CNGi seeks to lower the cost of living for Nigerians with the prospect of an up to 75 per cent cut in fuel cost.

Much of the masterplan for

road repairs connect the country's major food belts to commercial centres where demand for food is highest.

Umahi, speaking in response to the Chairman of the House Committee on the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA), Hon. Remi Oseni, said the report of these achievements would be published soon.

Oseni had at a recent press conference criticised Umahi, saying funds were not being allocated effectively to critical road maintenance projects.

"The President has given very special attention to the Ministry of Works, and that's why in the 2023 supplementary budget, he approved N300 billion to take care of a number

of palliatives. We are going to publish what success we have achieved in those N300 billion projects," Umahi said.

"We used it to procure over 330 roads palliatives and bridge repairs, which were properly procured and properly executed. Today, we have achieved over 85% completion. And so, when we publish it, I want him to go there if he can leave his oversighting FERMA, and he can check these projects," he said.

Umahi also revealed that the Ministry of Works has "terminated over ten projects, following due process. Some of them have lasted 17 years, 18 years."

The works minister said his ministry has been diligently working to improve Nigeria's

road infrastructure despite limited resources.

"We have done tremendously very well in a number of our

projects. Of course, there is no amount of resources that can fix 2,604 projects in four years," he said.

# Okpebholo appoints Fred Itua as Chief Press Secretary

FAVOUR ANETOR

Edo State Governor-elect, Monday Okpebholo, on Monday named Fred Itua as Chief Press Secretary, making it the first appointment ahead of today's assumption of office.

Itua, who is expected to resume office on today, 12th November, 2024 will head the media team of the Governor.

Itua is a cerebral journalist with The Sun Newspaper, an accomplished writer, media and communications consultant with over 13 years of experience. He is known for his strategic and resourceful approach in crafting compelling narratives and breaking down complex topics for wide audiences.

With experience ranging

from covering the National Assembly, migration issues, health, anti-corruption and environmental concerns, he possesses deep insight into national and international affairs.

Mr Itua holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, a Master's degree in Media Arts from the University of Abuja, and is currently in the final stages of his Ph.D thesis in Development Communication at Veritas University, Abuja.

He is also known for his strong foundation in public relations and communication strategy. Itua is committed to delivering accurate, high-impact journalism as he builds and maintains relationships across government, media and public spheres.

## CLASSIFIED

### MISSING ORIGINAL COMMUNITY APPROVAL

This is to inform the general public that I, MR. OGIE SUNDAY AKUBOR is a brother to MR. ELVIS EGHOSA OGIEKPOLOR who is the rightful owner of a property situate at No. 22 Igbobauwa Street, Ugbor Quarters Benin City, Edo State, a plot of land measuring 80 feet by 220 feet situate at Sapele road, Opposite Ekae Amusement Park, Benin city Edo state, a plot of land being situate at Plot 3195 Prayer Estate, Amuwo-Odoin Residential Scheme, Lagos State, a fully detached four bedroom duplex situate at Tulip heaven Estate 1, Alternative Road, off Chevron Drive, Etin Osa L.G.A. Lagos State and a fully detached four bedroom duplex situate at No. 1 Lily Street, Tulip Heaven Estate Phase 2, Alternative Road, off Chevron Drive, Etin Osa L.G.A. Lagos State. The documents for the above mentioned properties are missing and all efforts to locate them have proved abortive. Land administration, Concerned Authorities should take note.

### OBAKPOLOR

That my name was wrongly arranged on my BVN as OSAGIE KINGSLEY OBAKPOLOR instead of OBAKPOLOR KINGSLEY OSAGIE. I now wish to be known and addressed as OBAKPOLOR KINGSLEY OSAGIE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

### OLUEBUBE

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS EGBOCHUE FAVOUR OLUEBUBE, now wish to be addressed as MRS. ONWUNEME FAVOUR OLUEBUBE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and the general public should take note.

### OSAGHAE

I wish to state that my name in my bank account was wrongly written as OSAGHAE OSA GODWIN. My correct name is OSAGHAE GODWIN OSARENMWINAGHARU. OSAGHAE is my surname, GODWIN is my first name and OSARENMWINAGHARU is my middle name. All former documents remain valid. General public should take note.

### OMOROTIONMWAN

That my name was wrongly captured as LAURA OMOROTIONMWAN UWANGUE on my BVN and NIN. My correct name as appeared on my international passport is LAURA OMOROTIONMWAN UWANGUE. That LAURA is my first name, OMOROTIONMWAN is my middle name and UWANGUE is my surname. And my date of birth was wrongly captured on my BVN and NIN as May 5, 1992. My correct date of birth as captured on my international passport is May 5, 1993. All documents remain valid. General public should take note.

### OSAWONAMEN

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS FAVOUR OSAWONAMEN OMOROGBE, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS FAVOUR OSAWONAMEN OMOZINO. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities should please take note.

### ITOHAN

I, formerly known and addressed as EKI MERCY ITOHAN, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS FOFANA MERCY ITOHAN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities should please take note.

### SOPHIA

I, formerly known as OMOREGBE SOPHIA now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. IMAGBOSORIA SOPHIA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and General Public please take note.

### REGINA

I, formerly known and addressed as OGBIMI REGINA ITAMEN, now wish to be known and addressed as IGURE REGINA OHITAMEN. My date of birth was wrongly captured 28th July 1987 and my correct date of birth is 28th May 1987. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities should please take note.

### EVELYN

I, formerly known as OBODIWE EVELYN EYITEMI now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. AKIOYAME EVELYN NWAKEAGO. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and General Public please take note.

### AGHAFEKOKHIAN

I, formerly known as MISS EBOSE AGHAFEKOKHIAN SANDRA now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. EHIGIAMUSOE AGHAFEKOKHIAN SANDRA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and General Public please take note.

### OSAYOMWANBOR

I, formerly known as OSAYOMWANBOR IRABOR now wish to be known and addressed as OSAYOMWANBOR IRABOR HAYBLE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and General Public please take note.

SPACE FOR SALE

SPACE FOR SALE

SPACE FOR SALE

## CAVEAT EMPTOR

This is to inform the General Public that a Caveat Notice (EDOGIS/ADM/016/107) has been placed in our records in favor of ODIN BISCUITS MANUFACTURING LIMITED situate at Evbioria Village, Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State in respect of a parcel land with Certificate of Occupancy No. BDSR 3004 dated 2nd April 1984 measuring an area of approximately 2,0711 Hectares delineated in Survey Plan No. ISO/BD/86/81 registered at No. 2 at Page 2 in Volume B.49 at the EDOGIS Lands Registry, Benin City. Anyone who carries any dealing with anyone else in respect of the above mentioned property does so at his or her own risk. Concerned Authorities and Land Administration should please take note.

## CAVEAT EMPTOR

**AHOR COMMUNITY**  
This is to sound a note of warning to patronage of any kind to would be buyer of a parcel of land measuring 500ft by 1000ft from Ahor Kara market to trailer garage by Ahor junction, opposite oil end filling station, Ahor community, Uhunmwonde Local Government, Edo State.


Anyone who does any land transaction or business regarding the said property, does so at his/her own risk. The said land belongs to Ahor community and it is reserved for community development purpose. Please be warned.

Signed:  
PA ODUWARE EHIOBO  
Ozukpogieva (2IC), Ahor Community.


## Congratulations

My heartiest congratulations to you upon your inauguration as the 5th Democratically Elected Governor of Edo State. I join with all other Progressive in wishing you good health and divine guidance in your every labor for the peace and welfare of the people of our state.

*Sincerely yours.*



Engr. **Alasa BRAIMOH**



**SEN. MONDAY OKPEBHOLO**

**The Nigerian Observer** 

# Congratulations

The staff and management of *The Nigerian Observer* joyfully felicitate the new Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, and his deputy, Honourable Dennis Idahosa, on the occasion of their Swearing-in/Inauguration ceremony, today Tuesday, 12th November, 2024.

We wish you a very successful tenure. May your tenure usher in a better life for the people of Edo State.



SENATOR  
MONDAY OKPEBHOLO  
Governor, Edo State

HONOURABLE  
DENNIS IDAHOSA  
Deputy Governor, Edo State

SIGNED:  
**MANAGEMENT**

# Sports

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

## Better days ahead for sports in Edo, says Shaibu, Tenebe, Isibor

EDWARD OSEGHE, OLUSEWA SIMON, DANIEL NWEZE AND SUCCESS GEORGE

● **as ex-international wins gov's team in Akpakomiza and friends novelty match**

The much anticipated Akpakomiza and Friends novelty/victory match's ex-international side defeated the governor's team with a thrilling 2-1 victory in the celebrated game organised to usher in the Governor-elect of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo and his Deputy, Rt Hon. Dennis Idahosa.

The well-attended match was held on Sunday, at the prestigious Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium ahead of Okpebholo and Idahosa's inauguration / swearing-in ceremony.

The match had in attendance, former Governor of Edo State, Senator Adams Oshiomole, and Senator Monday Okpebholo among other All Progressives Congress (APC) political stalwarts.

The match ended in favour of the ex-internationals who showed agility and experience



on the pitch.

The Akpakomiza XI opened the scoring line with Idemudia Osakue netting a low left-footed shot, but the ex-international team bounced back as former Deputy Governor, His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Comrade Philip Shaibu scored an equal-

izer and Mutiu Adepoku scored the winner for the team.

Following the end of the novelty match, APC leaders and game officials expressed optimism about the future of Edo sports under the incoming administration.

Shaibu shared his enthusi-

asm, pledging ongoing dedication to football and other sports.

"By the grace of God, I can bet that football will not die in Edo. We've established Edo as a sports hub, and despite recent setbacks, the institution of sports we created is strong.

"I am optimistic the next administration will build on what we've done. Insurance will be back, and the fifteen sports we're developing will be the pride of Edo and Nigeria in the Olympics and African Games," he said.

Shaibu added that he remains committed as Chairman of Bendel Insurance and Edo Queens and reaffirmed his ambition to revive the glory days of Edo's sports.

On his part, the Chairman of All the Progressives Congress in the State, Emperor Jarret Tenebe said, "Better days are ahead for Edo State sports.

"This is the first time a new governor's inauguration is being celebrated with a football match, which speaks volumes about his commitment to sports".

Pastor Comrade Jude Isibor, Deputy Director Admin, Edo Transformation Agenda, and Media Aide to Hon. Dr. Felix

Akhabue also emphasised the incoming governor's focus on youth empowerment.

"The interest displayed in this event shows where the heart lies. The cardinal point of the incoming administration is to empower the youth through football, which is one of the games, if not number one, that brings unity among the youth," Isibor said.

"Apart from that, there's something you call the lost glory of the then Bendel Insurance, the team used to be the best, we produced renowned international footballers. This will be an avenue to bring the young ones interested in football," he added.

These declarations of support and excitement come just hours before the inauguration ceremony, signaling a promising future for Edo sports and a renewed dedication to youth engagement and talent development across the state.

## Sport devt in Edo and the divining wand of Obaseki

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The success of any venture, be it skyscraper building construction; development programmes, projects, or even a society is largely dependent on the foundation laid by the vision bearer and his team of experts devoid of mediocrity.

It requires a lot of sacrifices, courage, commitment, sincerity of purpose and patriotism for the team leaders to succeed amid political challenges.

This can be said of the new Edo state with Governor Obaseki as the vision bearer and pragmatic team leader with a clear sense of direction; sincerity of purpose, commitment, loyalty, and doggedness in tackling issues that have lifted the state in virtually all sectors

On assumption of office in 2016, Governor Obaseki made plans and programme of his administration very clear. It is an administrative programme carefully designed to address issues of decadence, deprivation, maladministration, and fast eroding culture of hard work and poor reward system with its attendant consequences on citizens' sense of patriotism among other sundry issues to make Edo Great Again.

In the Edo state sports sector, there are many good stories to tell about the successes of the Governor Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki's administration since its inception in 2016.

Known for his clearheaded-

ness and purposefulness; a man who does not believe in building on a wrong foundation, he started the foundation of new Edo as sports destination in Nigeria and beyond by setting up a team of experts headed by a renowned sports administrator and former Captain of glorious Green Eagles of Nigeria who won the 1980 Africa Cup of Nations for Nigeria Dr Shegun Odegbami to organize a Sports Summit which brought the who-is-who in sports together in Benin to faction out a roadmap for sustainable sports development in Edo state.

The mandate for the Mathematical Odegbami's committee was to exray Edo Youth and the Sports subsector of the economy; the history, population; record of achievement in the past that made it Bendel Number 1, the issues affecting the process of growth and development of the sector with a view to finding solution.

The committee did not disappoint, and neither did the Obaseki administration. Soon after the committee was done with its job; and a white paper issued, Governor Obaseki hit the ground running by putting his hands on the plough without entertaining any distractions.

Knowing the importance of modern sports infrastructure and facilities as major catalyst for sports for stimulating citizen's enthusiasm and participation in sports activities which has given Edo athletes some comparative advantage, Gov-

ernor Obaseki began the process of revolutionizing the state sports sector by deliberately investing huge resources in the reconstruction and remodeling of the famous Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium. Putting the round pegs in the round holes, the Obaseki team succeeded in changing the narratives by re-inventing the AESTHETICS of the stadium both in terms of facilities and modern infrastructure thus making it the new bride of national sports federations, particularly the Athletic Federation, Handball and Basketball etc.

The state at the moment can boast of the best Gymnasium which the world gymnastics body has rated best in West Africa. The gymnastics facility is being appreciated by Edo athletes and, national and international ones who have always chosen Benin City as their choice venue

to host events of highest level.

The Tartan tracks for athletics is second to none and endearing. The Athletic Federation of Nigeria has again made Edo their host for this year's National and African qualifications meet.

The Samuel Ogbemudia stadium is not standing alone in the magical touch of Governor Obaseki's administration as other sports facilities across the eighteen local government areas got the state government's attention. Among them is the Ete GRA multipurpose Hall; School of Health, Western Boys mini stadia among other mini stadia across the eighteen local government areas, including the Emotan College Basketball Court.

Continuing the pursuit of his set goals and objectives in fixing the sports sector, the government shifted its focus on hu-

man capital development in the sports sector as it consciously started investing in the turnaround of the two state owned football clubs; Bendel Insurance Football Club and Edo Queens.

Obaseki's concerted efforts paid off in 2018/2019 football season when the encouragement of players and officials of Bendel Insurance FC caused them to qualify for promotion to the second tier of the nation's football leagues to the Premier League after eleven years of wandering around in the wilderness of relegation. The team unfortunately couldn't stand the pressure in the top-flight league and went back almost immediately the following season.

Notwithstanding, the Governor invested more on the team, raising the remuneration package of the team. In 2022 football season, Insurance gained

promotion to the premier League and also won the NFL title in the process. The team since then has stamped its authority as a premier team and surprised the nation by finishing fifth in the league table and also won the 2023 Federation Cup which earned them the qualification ticket to represent Nigeria at the CAF Confederation Cup last year. All these highlighted achievements and more in other sports including gymnastics have reposed Edo and Nigeria in the world map.

To ensure proper management and maintenance of the world class sports facilities in the state, Governor Obaseki reconstituted and inaugurated the Edo State Sports Commission on 11th of March 2022. He made the right choice of Olympian Yussuf Alli as the Executive Chairman of the commission.



GOV. OBASEKI



ODEGBAMI

# Oshimen scores brace as Galatasaray edge Samsunspor



OLATOMIWA OYEDELE

Victor Oshimen scored a brace for Galatasaray in their thrilling 3-2 win over Samsunspor at the RAMS park on Sunday.

Oshimen nodded home superbly from Lucas Torreira's cross after three minutes. The visitors fought back with Oliver Ntcham netting the equaliser from the penalty spot on 55 minutes.

However, Oshimen scored his second goal five minutes later to give Galatasaray the lead for the second time in the game. The in-form striker has now scored eight goals and registered four assists in nine appearances for Okan Buruk's side.

The Nigerian International was replaced by Hakim Ziyech seven minutes from time. Substitute Michy Batshuayi scored

the third goal for the home team in the 85th minute. Youssef Ben-nasser reduced the deficit for Samsunspor in stoppage time.

## Ghana to start the use of VAR

CHIDINMA KALU

The Ghana Football Association (GFA) has announced that the 2025/2026 league season will mark the official launch of Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology in Ghanaian football.

This decision follows recent training sessions and consultations held with FIFA's Competition and Training Department, which has been working

with officials in Ghana over the past few days to provide hands-on training on VAR operations.

In a statement released on Saturday morning, the GFA confirmed that VAR would be introduced in the upcoming league season, with this year's FA Cup set to serve as a pilot phase for the new technology. The association expressed optimism that VAR will enhance the accuracy and fairness of officiating in Ghanaian football.

## In the red zone: Arsenal continues to struggle

DANIEL NWEZE

Arteta side have just been able to secure just two points in their last four premier league games.

But Mikel Arteta insists he's confident with his team.

The manager has said he doesn't need a reset despite failing to win any of their last four league matches

Arsenal have just taken two points against Bournemouth, Liverpool, Newcastle, and their London neighbour. This run leaves them in fourth position with nineteen points behind the league leader, Liverpool who has twenty-eight points.

Notwithstanding, Mikel Arteta hasn't shown signs of panic or fright.

"I don't think about [needing

a reset]," he told a press conference. "Nobody works harder than me, I guarantee you that.

"We don't need a reset. In one particular aspect, we need to go from 95 [effort] to 100. I will not tell you what that is," he added.

The Spaniard is still assured that his team will return to winning ways after the international break as they welcome Nottingham Forest.

After the draw at Stamford Bridge, the manager said in a postmatch press conference: "Disappointed, but I think we should have done more. I'm proud of this team of how far we've gone. The way we played here against this opponent, in this stadium, they have battered every opponent here and obviously it wasn't the case today.

## Joseph Parker: Preferred opponent to face Daniel Dubois

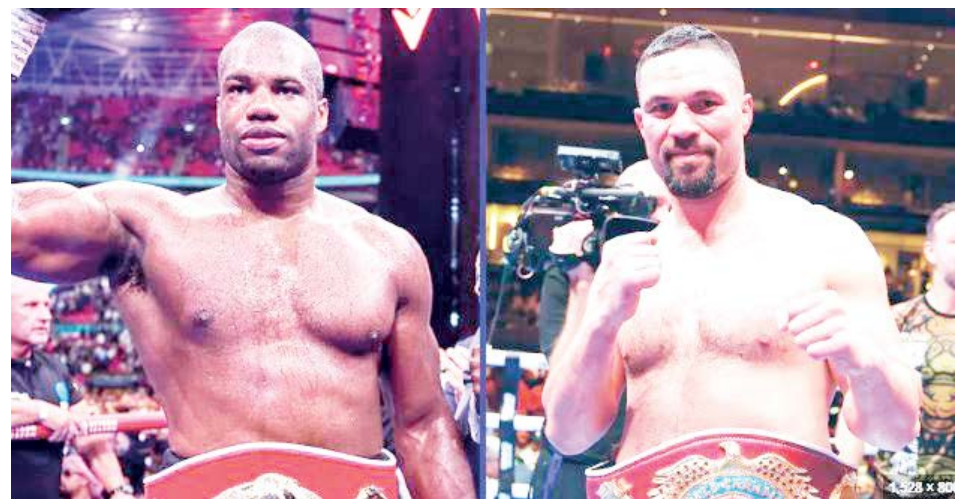
FOLUSEWA AKINOLA

Daniel Dubois could face Joseph Parker next in February with the IBF world heavyweight title at stake.

Dubois retained his world title with a stunning fifth-round knockout win over Anthony Joshua at Wembley in September.

A number of opponents are being considered for a title defence in early 2025 as Joshua will not pursue an immediate rematch as the scheduled date does not fit into his plans for next year, but WBO interim champion Parker has emerged as the leading candidate to share the ring with Dubois.

The New Zealander has propelled himself back into world title contention with impressive wins over Deontay Wilder and Zhilei Zhang after a stoppage loss to Joe Joyce.



Parker is not listed in the IBF top 15 and the governing body would still need to give the 32-year-old the green light to become a challenger for their champion Dubois.

When asked about Parker in

an interview with Sky Sports, Dubois' promoter Frank Warren said: "It's got to be sensible and certainly for him fighting Daniel he fits the criteria. He's re-established himself after Joe Joyce in a big way."

Zhang and Martin Bakole have also welcomed the opportunity to fight Dubois, while Fabio Wardley had been linked with a world title shot after his first-round knockout of Frazer Clarke.

## NPFL25: Fans, players, officials complain of bad officiating

### ● as Bendel Insurance record second home lost to Kano Pillars

EDWARD OSEGHE AND CHIDINMA KALU

Fans, players and officials of Bendel Insurance Football Club in a protest have questioned the rationale behind the penalty kick awarded to Kano Pillars by the center referee, Adeniyi Adewale, that led to the Benin Arsenal's home loss in the MarchDay 11 encounter.

In a dramatic and contentious finish, Bendel Insurance Football Club suffered their second consecutive home defeat on Saturday, losing 1-0 to Kano Pillars at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City.

The game's decisive moment came in the 98th minute, when Adeniyi Adewale from Oyo State awarded a penalty to Kano Pillars after ruling that a Bendel defender handled the ball while attempting to clear it from his team's goal area.

The penalty decision immediately sparked protests from Bendel Insurance players, coaches, and fans alike, who felt the call was unwarranted. After a tense delay, Kano Pil-

lars' captain, Rabiun Ali, stepped up to take the spot kick, converting it to clinch three crucial points for his team.

Veteran midfielder Rabiun Ali proved to be the hero of the game after converting the decisive penalty deep into stoppage time to seal the win.

The goal marked Ali's sixth of the season, showcasing his reliable scoring form for the club.

The 1-0 victory handed Bendel Insurance their second home loss this season, leaving fans and team officials deeply frustrated.

The match was fiercely competitive, with both teams

deploying a range of tactical strategies to break the deadlock. Bendel Insurance maintained control for much of the game, generating dangerous chances in both halves, but Kano Pillars' defense proved unyielding. Even former Nigerian international Ahmed Musa struggled to make an impact, as Insurance's defenders effectively neutralized him throughout the 90 minutes.

In an effort to boost their offensive play, Bendel Insurance's coach, Monday Odigie, made multiple substitutions, but the home side's persistence ultimately went unrewarded.



## WESIE League set to transform basketball, ignite investor's interest in sports

### ● says founder, Funke Adeniji

PRINCESS NZEREM

Funke A. Adeniji, the visionary founder of the Women's Elite Sports Empowerment Initiative (WESIE), announced that the WESIE Basketball League is a groundbreaking endeavour designed to reimagine basketball in Nigeria and attract increased business investment in sports.

Speaking on the sidelines of the league's kickoff, Adeniji emphasized that the initiative is more than just a competition—it's a platform aimed at elevating the visibility and commercial appeal of sports, particularly for women athletes.

"This is the first basketball league of its kind in Nigeria, featuring women's teams across 15 states," Adeniji explained. "Every weekend for the next six weeks, fans will see teams battle it out in a home-

and-away format, bringing an international-standard experience to audiences nationwide."

The league, exclusively for players over 18, is rooted in addressing gender disparities in sports. By providing elite female athletes with equal opportunities, WESIE hopes to drive greater recognition, paving the way for enhanced visibility on national and global stages. "This isn't just about competition; it's about transforming the sports landscape to inspire businesses to support and invest in women's sports, amplifying their market reach and social impact," Adeniji stated.

The inaugural weekend saw thrilling matchups across seven games, delivering powerful performances and a taste of the excitement to come. Victoria Queens defeated Hope Dreams 52-37, while Life League secured a victory over Book and Ball with a score of 58-47.

# COMMENTARY

## What Trump's comeback may mean for Africa

FAROOQ KPEROGI

A few weeks ago, I spoke at a symposium in my university here in Georgia on the implications of the U.S. presidential election for the African diaspora. To the bemusement of my audience (who were a mix of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris supporters), I explained the curious phenomenon of African support for Donald Trump, particularly among Nigerian and Kenyan evangelicals.

I described how a surprising number of African Christians (and, in fact, some Muslims) consider Trump "God's chosen one," a valiant defender of conservative religious values whom they imagine will take on global LG-BTQ rights with righteous vengeance.

The audience was incredulous and struggled to reconcile Trump's infamous moral transgressions with his appeal to African conservatives. When I explained that these supporters see Trump as a warrior against the "cultural liberalism" they believe threatens their faith, eyebrows raised.

The eyebrows raised even further when I pointed out that there are Muslims who are so disillusioned with the Biden/Harris administration's support for Israel that they prayed for a Trump win even when Trump is more manifestly hawkish than Biden/Harris and so disdains Muslims that he enacted a "Muslim ban" (which actually included non-Muslims) within the first few months of his first presidency.

But here's the crux: Donald Trump is no more interested in religious morality than he is in the theological reveries of his African fan base. He is, in truth, a transactional man, a walking paradox of deals and calculations, utterly bereft of the very spiritual or moral foundation his African supporters so naively project onto him.

Trump's "faith," such as it is, is at best a performance, an asset to be deployed for strategic gains among America's own conservative Christians, whom he has calculatedly courted for votes. To imagine Trump as the champion of conservative religious values is to mistake calculation for conviction and propaganda for principle.

His record speaks louder than his rhetoric. In 2015, for example, at a gathering of conservative Christians in Iowa, he openly admitted he never asks God for forgiveness, a theological anathema for any believer.

Later, on the campaign trail, he betrayed his biblical unfamiliarity, when he clumsily referred to "Two Corinthians" rather than the more common "Second Corinthians." A slip of the tongue, perhaps, but in a subsequent interview, he tried to salvage his Christian credibility but ended up quoting a verse that doesn't even exist: "Never bend to envy," he offered, an adage Christians say is found nowhere in the Bible.



TRUMP

Even when cornered about his favorite Bible verse, he misfired by citing "an eye for an eye," a command Jesus explicitly repudiated. These are not the errors of a deeply religious man but the floundering of someone who considers faith a tool, not a calling.

Two Trump biographers sum up his attitude to Christianity and God nicely. Timothy O'Brien, in a 2007 book titled *Trump Nation: The Art of Being Donald*, wrote: "Donald has never been a spiritually or religiously serious person."

And in 2001 book titled *The Trumps: Three Generations That Built an Empire* (which was revised and reissued as *The Trumps: Three Generations of Builders and a President*), Gwenda Blair wrote: "He's a transactional guy with humans, and it's no different with God — it's all about whatever is to his advantage with regard to his supporters, and referencing God is exactly and only that."

Yet for all his transparent artifice, Trump has nonetheless cast a beguiling spell on certain parts of Africa and the African diaspora, who see in him a savior of conservative values. They seem unfazed by the fact that his administration's policies, his rhetoric, and his track record show little regard for Black humanity.

This disdain was palpable during his last tenure, and his recent rallies have done nothing to dispel it. Take, for instance, his unfounded claim during the first and only presidential debate that Black Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, were eating cats and dogs, a baseless assertion that isn't just false but revelatory: it reveals a mind committed to degrading Blackness wherever he sees it.

There's a dark and disheartening history here. Trump's disdain for Black people isn't new, nor has it emerged from thin air. His bigotry is old news,

woven through an embroidery of disparaging comments, discriminatory practices, and racially motivated policies dating back decades.

In 1973, the Department of Justice sued Trump for refusing to rent apartments to Black families, citing his blatant violation of the Fair Housing Act. He fought the case before reluctantly signing an agreement to stop his racist practices.

His remarks afterward? He railed that the government was forcing him to rent to "welfare recipients," the vile code by which he aligned poverty with Blackness. The sentiment was clear: in his mind, Black people didn't belong, and it was his duty to keep them out.

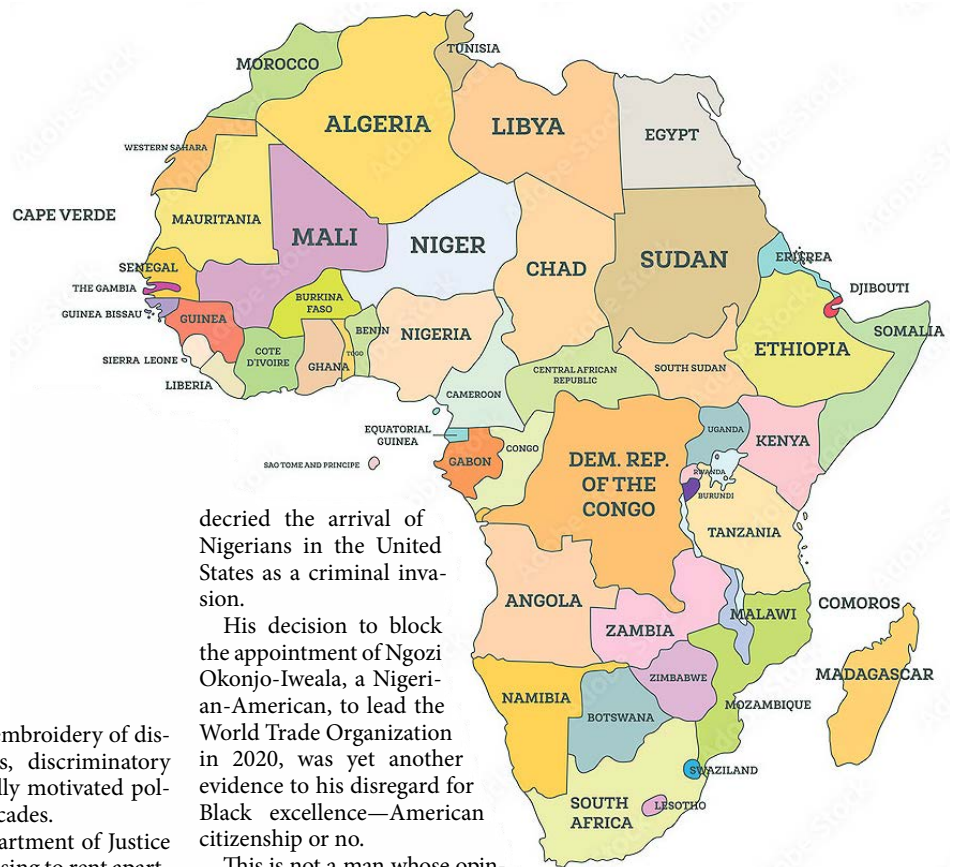
Such is Trump's enduring perspective, made all the more alarming by his political ascendance. The implications of his return for Africa are both direct and symbolic. During his previous presidency, Trump cut aid programs that many African countries rely on and dismissed African immigrants as a detriment to American society.

His rhetoric went beyond mere words; his policies made a statement, a policy posture that informed his supporters, shaped the broader narrative around Black immigration, and foreshadowed his now-infamous "shithole countries" comment in 2018.

When Trump disparaged Haiti, Nigeria, and other Black-majority nations in favor of immigration from Norway, it wasn't just a one-off gaffe; it was a worldview rooted in negrophobic disdain.

In truth, Trump has never reckoned with the humanity of Black people. Even before his "shithole countries" remark, he lambasted a Black accountant in 1991, citing "laziness as a trait in Blacks."

Years later, during his 2016 campaign, he praised Ann Coulter's venomously xenophobic book, which



decried the arrival of Nigerians in the United States as a criminal invasion.

His decision to block the appointment of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a Nigerian-American, to lead the World Trade Organization in 2020, was yet another evidence to his disregard for Black excellence—American citizenship or no.

This is not a man whose opinions have been shaped by reasoned disagreement but by ingrained prejudice and an unwavering belief that Black lives, both within and outside of America, are lesser. Such a man at the helm of one of the world's most powerful nations isn't just a potential diplomatic nightmare; it's a moral catastrophe for those who value the dignity of human life.

For Africa, the implications of a Trump resurgence are manifold. His approach to immigration alone could lead to increased restrictions on Africans seeking opportunity or refuge in the United States.

His contempt for Africans doesn't only taint those who seek to immigrate but extends to those who remain. His willingness to denigrate entire nations with his vile language reinforces a global view of Africa as "the other," a place he deemed too backward to deserve respect or dignity.

But Trump's leadership affects more than just immigration. His previous administration gutted health programs that African nations relied on to tackle AIDS, malaria, and other epidemics. His withdrawal from multilateral agreements and climate initiatives destabilized African countries that disproportionately suffer from the effects of global warming and benefit the least from its economic causes.

Africa is neither immune to nor shielded from Trump's reign. From economic pressures to ideological disrespect, his contempt manifests as policies that undermine progress and sow the seeds of isolationism.

For Africans, Trump's victory isn't just a foreign policy issue; it's a personal

affront. It's a slap in the face to the millions of Africans who know America as a country that historically symbolized freedom, opportunity, and hope.

Africa's bond with the United States transcends politics; it is the memory of independence movements supported by the promise of democracy, the aspiration for economic opportunity, and the reverence for cultural exchange. Trump's worldview, with its utter disregard for Black humanity, threatens to erode this bond, leaving in its wake a continent left to question its ties with the West.

The challenge before Africa is to use this moment as an opportunity for unity and self-determination.

Trump's contempt is an ugly mirror, a stark reminder that Africa cannot rely on foreign validation. Leaders and citizens alike must demand dignity, both in their interactions with the United States and in their own national narratives.

The message should be clear: Africa is neither a pawn nor a supplicant. It is a continent rich in resources, diversity, and human potential, undeserving of the scorn Trump so freely dispenses.

Trump's victory may symbolize a return to darkness, but it is also an opportunity to galvanize resilience. Africa need not waste energy on a man who cannot see beyond his prejudice; instead, it should look to the future with resolve.

Africa's destiny lies not in the hands of a foreign leader, and certainly not in one so blind to its humanity. Let his disdain be a rallying cry, not for despair, but for Africa to rise on its own terms.