

Presidency under fire over new presidential jet

Obi, PDP, MBF, ACF, CAN, others accuse presidency of insensitivity



Governor Duoye Diri of Bayelsa State (middle) with Managing Director, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Dr Samuel Ogbuku (left) and the former NDDC MD, Chief Timi Alaibe (right) at the 31st Annual Meetings (AAM) of the African Export-Import Bank, Afreximbank, in Nassau, the Bahamas.



Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State (right) with Legal Assistant, Rangers Int'l FC, Enugu, Chuma Anozie (left); Club Player of the Match, Chidiebere Nwobodo (2nd left); Admin Secretary, Ferdinand Emeka (3rd left); Legal Assistant, Alex Egbo (4th right); GM/CEO, Amobi Ezeaku (2nd right) during presentation of prize to Nwobodo by the governor after Rangers' 2-0 NPFL title win at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, Enugu.

2027: Okigwe zone insists on producing Uzodimma's successor - 27

Fear grips Rivers as armed group emerges to evict LGs chairmen - 8

Asari Dokubo: Vacate office
CP warns troublemakers, vows to protect lives, property

AfCFTA: Made-in-Aba goods for display in Rwanda - 28

Southern leaders defend Wike

Urge Tinubu to ignore enemies after FCT Minister - 26

NAF bombards terrorists camps in Kastina, kills 80 - 4

Bill to mandate companies to remit 1% taxes to NITDA gets boost - 28

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Comptroller General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi (left) and former CGC, Ahmed Abdullahi (1999-2004) when the latter visited Adeniyi in his office in Abuja, recently.

BREAKFAST NEWS



Q1 2024: Agencies report 131% surge in revenue collection

AS key revenue generating agencies in the country declare a 131 per cent surge in tax collection costs during the first quarter of 2024, stakeholders are advocating for substantial reductions in these expenses.

The stark increase has sparked concerns among policy-makers and taxpayers alike, prompting calls for more efficient and cost-effective collection methods.

The growing demand for cost reduction is rooted in the belief that bloated tax collection expenses can strain government budgets and deter compliance.

In the first quarter of 2024, Nigeria's major revenue agencies including the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), and Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), recorded a remarkable 131 per cent rise in their costs of revenue collection, amounting to N214.29 billion.

This surge has sparked significant concern among state finance commissioners regarding its impact on revenue distribution.

The FIRS reported a substantial 115.53 per cent rise in its collection costs, escalating from N46.60 billion in Q1 2023 to N100.40 billion in Q1 2024. This increase is indicative of enhanced tax collection efforts, potentially driven by improved compliance measures and heightened economic activities.

Meanwhile, the NCS witnessed a more than twofold increase in its cost of collection, soaring from N29.92 billion in Q1 2023 to N59.85 billion in Q1 2024, marking a 100.18 per cent rise.

Continued on [www.sunnewsonline.com](#)

Loan sharks major threat to data privacy in Nigeria -NDPC

From **Adanna Nnamani, Abuja**

DESPITE regulatory efforts, the National Data Protection Commission (NDPC), says activities of online financial institutions, particularly loan sharks, have remained a major challenge to the fight against data privacy violations in the country.

The National Commissioner of NDPC, Dr Vincent Olatunji, disclosed this during an engagement with journalists recently in Abuja.

Olatunji said that of the 1,000 cases of data breaches and violations reported to the Commission in the last one year, about 80 percent were associated with loan sharks, while others were related to banks, telcos and others.

He said: "We looked at it cumulatively between when we started and now, and we have had over 2,000 reports and that is despite this low level of awareness and I keep telling my colleagues that the task ahead is huge.

"A country like Finland, with about 6 million population, they receive about 11,000 complaints every year.

"Then Nigeria that is a country of over 200 million people, with our level of advancement, you can imag-

ine the number of cases we should be receiving on daily basis.

"Now, out of this 1,000 cases, about 800 of them are coming from digital income companies; all these loan sharks. We have done investigations on the financial sector, education, consulting firms, insurance companies and others and as of today, the major ones that we have done, we have analyzed about four, and some of them

have even paid their remediation fees because in the law, we can fine them, depending on the nature of the breach, the impact on the data subjects, and the precautionary measures they took before the issue as well as the level of corporation with the commission during the cause of investigation. If all these things were there and the breach happened accidentally, all we tell you to do, is to pay remediation fee, then we

take you through compliance to ensure that you are doing the right thing."

The NC also expressed concern over the lack of identifiable addresses for many illicit digital loan platforms which makes it difficult to trace them.

He however, assured that the Commission has been working with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and anti graft agencies to combat the menace.

AU Ministers unveil AI strategy to drive digital transformation across Africa

By **Chinenye Anuforo**

AFRICAN nations are poised for a significant leap in digital transformation with the unanimous adoption of a Continental Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy by African Ministers of Information and Communications under the African Union (AU).

The landmark decision, announced yesterday by the AU, establishes a comprehensive roadmap for harnessing AI's potential to address Africa's development goals and improve the lives of its citizens.

The strategy emerged from a virtual meeting held between June 11th and 13th,

2024, where over 130 ministers and experts convened for the 2nd Extraordinary Session of the AU's Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and ICT. The gathering focused on igniting digital transformation across Africa in the face of rapid advancements in AI technology.

According to the AU's statement, the Continental AI Strategy prioritizes ethical considerations and responsible use of AI. It emphasizes minimizing potential risks while maximizing the vast opportunities this technology offers. Importantly, the strategy advocates for strong representation of African content and perspectives

within global AI governance structures.

The strategy outlines key actions to ensure Africa benefits fully from AI. It calls for an "Africa-owned, people-centered, development-oriented, and inclusive" approach. This comprehensive strategy focuses on building robust AI capabilities in infrastructure, talent, data collection, innovation, and partnerships across African countries. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of safeguards to protect against potential threats.

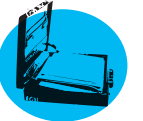
"The Strategy sets the roadmap to achieve developmental aspirations," the statement reads. These aspirations include advancements in education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, peace and security, and good governance. The strategy emphasizes developing human capital, fostering research and innovation ecosystems, and establishing an AI-ready legal and regulatory environment tailored to the African context.

Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, the African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, stressed the importance of investing in Africa's youth, innovators, and researchers to ensure success in the global AI arena. He underscored the significance of the strategy in capturing Africa's unique characteristics within AI systems.

"Adapting AI to African realities is critical," Dr. Abou-Zeid said. "AI systems should be able to reflect our diversity..."

Continued on [www.sunnewsonline.com](#)

BRIEFCASE



Companies info in brief

Banks may resume share issuances this week

NIGERIAN banks are likely to prepare to resume share issuances to meet new capital requirements mandated by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), market analysts told Daily Sun on Monday.

This is coming after bank stocks like Fidelity Bank, Access Bank and Zenith Bank, trading on the floor of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) accounted for 1.351 billion shares worth N20.222 billion in 6,631 deals, hence contributing 51.31 per cent and 46.33 per cent to the total equity turnover volume and value respectively.

Despite the shortened trading week due to Nigeria's democracy day celebration, bullish sentiments returned to the domestic bourse following renewed interest in banking stocks. Specifically, bargain hunting activities in Zenith Bank (+8.3 per cent) and GTCO (+5.6 per cent) drove the market's All Share Index (ASI) up by 0.7 per cent week-on-week (w/w) to close at 99,925.29 points.

Consequently, the Month-to-Date (MtD) and Year-to-Date (YtD) returns increased to +0.6 per cent and +33.6 per cent, respectively while market capitalisation grew to N56.527 trillion from the week's opening value of N56.128 trillion, this representing a gain of N399 billion.

Continued on [www.sunnewsonline.com](#)

Int'l crude oil and commodity prices



Brent crude oil -	\$82.26	-0.34%
WTI crude oil -	\$78.10	-0.40%
Natural Gas -	\$2.96	-0.089%
RBOB Gasoline -	\$2.39	-0.0011
Heating oil -	\$2.47	+0.0272%

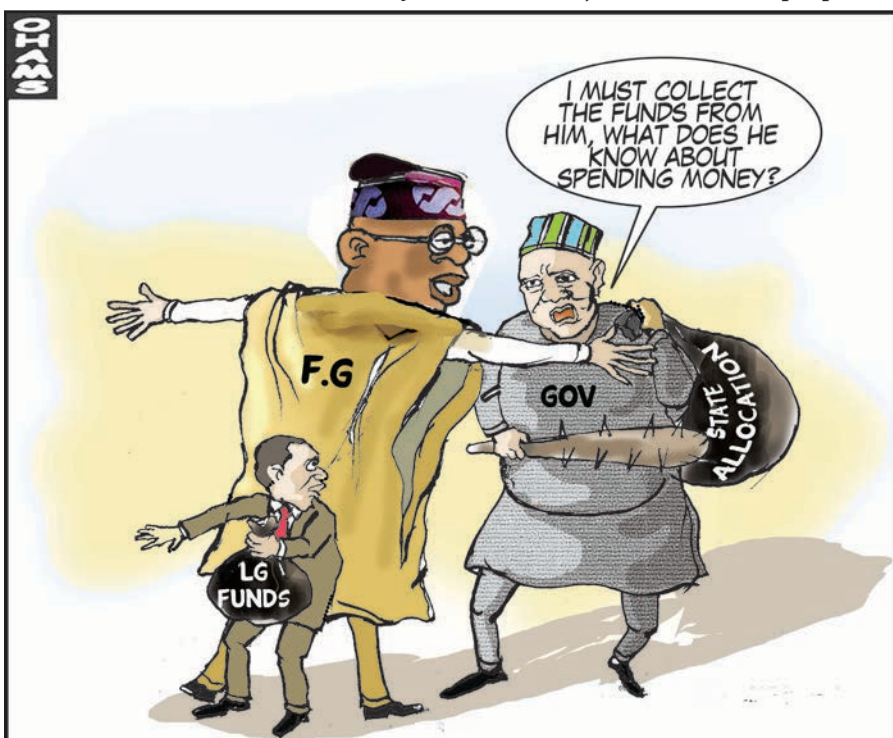
Prices as at 13/6/2024

CEO Quote

The most dangerous poison is the feeling of achievement. The antidote is to every evening think what can be done better tomorrow."



- Ben Silbermann, Founder of Pinterest



do it YOURSELF



HOW TO TURN YOUR OLD PHONE INTO A HOME SECURITY CAMERA FOR FREE



IF you have any old smartphones that are still good but collecting dust in a drawer somewhere in your house and you need home security camera, you don't need to worry. You can put them to good use in your home.

Step 1: Get a security camera app running on your old phone(s)

To begin, you will need to choose a security-camera app for your phone. Most apps offer many of the same features, such as local streaming, cloud streaming, recording and storing footage locally or remotely, and motion detection and alerts.

Once you're set up, you will be able to monitor your living space and control your security camera from anywhere, straight from your new phone.

One of the best options for setting up your phone as a security camera is Alfred. It's cross-platform, so it doesn't matter if your old phone was an Android phone or iPhone. And the same goes for your new phone.

Alfred is free to use and gives you a remote view of your live feed, motion detection with alerts, free cloud storage, a two-way audio feed and use of both the front and rear cameras. To unlock additional features, like higher-resolution viewing and recording, zoom capabilities, ad removal and 30-day cloud storage, you can upgrade to Alfred Premium.

- Download Alfred (Android, iOS) on both your old and new phones or any tablets you want to use.

- On the new phone, swipe through the introduction and tap Start. Select Viewer and tap Next.

- Once you get to the sign-in page, click Sign in with Google (a Google account is required) and sign in with your Google account credentials.

- On the old phone, repeat the same steps, but instead of selecting Viewer, select Camera. And make sure to sign in to the same Google account.

Once both phones are signed in to Alfred, you're pretty much done with the setup. Alfred has simplified the camera options to only include a few settings. On iOS, you can only enable motion detection, choose between the front and rear cameras and enable or disable audio. If you're using an Android device, you have those options and you can also enable continuous focus, have Alfred automatically reopen if the phone reboots, set a resolution and enable a passcode lock.

From your new phone, you can change a few more settings, such as turning notifications on or off, setting a camera or viewer name, adding other people to your Trust Circle (granting other people access to your video feeds), removing a camera, checking how many times a camera has disconnected, setting motion detection sensitivity and enabling a low-light filter on cameras.

While Alfred is a solid choice, keep in mind it's not the only choice. Far from it, in fact. Manything, Sallient Eye and Presence are all solid free choices with an affordable subscription model if you need more features. And IP Webcam is one of the more popular Android-only options.

Step 2: Choose a spot to position your camera

After you have the stream up and running, you will need to set up and position the camera. You may want it focused on the main entry point to your home, your backyard, the place where you store valuables or a point you think might be particularly vulnerable. You can also set up an IP camera as a baby monitor.

If you have multiple old phones lying around, you can set up multiple cameras for fairly robust video coverage.

Step 3: Mount and power your new security camera(s)

To mount or position the camera, a small smartphone tripod or suction cup car mount can work wonders and help you position the camera in an inconspicuous place.

To broaden the field of view, consider buying a wide-angle lens for your phone, something that can be purchased for between \$5 and \$20 online.

Streaming video is very power-intensive, and the phone will be on 24/7. To keep the phone from dying in the first few hours, you will need to position it close to a power source. A 10-foot Micro-USB or Lightning cable will give you more flexibility in where you put it.



Gunmen kill Nnewi vigilance group commander

From **David Onwuchekwa**, Nnewi

THE Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)'s sit-at-home order became bloody, yesterday, in Nnewi, Anambra State as the enforcers of the order killed a vigilance group commander and left many others with bullet wounds.

Daily Sun gathered that the Nnewi vigilance group reportedly got information that the gunmen were about to enter Nnewi through Nnobi in Idemili South Local Government Area and decided to engage them at the boundary between the two communities.

The source said it was at that point that the gunmen shot and killed the vigilance group commander, one Eloka Ubajekwe. Another account said the sit-at-home enforcers had the encounter with the vigilantes at Nnewichi, near St Peter's where the shooting happened, adding that many casualties were recorded.

It was gathered that many around the scene of the incident were hit by stray bullets as some of the wounded were evacuated with wheelbarrows to an undisclosed hospital.

Daily Sun could not get through with the PPRO, Anambra State Police Command, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, as he did not pick his phone when contacted. However, the Anambra State vigilance Commander in charge of the Anambra South Senatorial Zone, who doubles as the President General of Nzuko-Ora (Town Union), Nnewi, Dr Maduka Atuenyi, confirmed the incident.

Anambra police arrest gunrunner, recover 375 ammunition

From **Emmanuel Uzor**, Awka

POLICE attached to the Fegge division in Onitsha, Anambra State said they arrested one Felix Owaya, aged 48 years, of Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State and recovered 375 three live cartridges during an operation at Niger Street, Fegge, Onitsha.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Toochukwu Ikenga, said during interrogation, the suspect confessed that he was sent by one Mr Charles Ogboma to a man he was yet to mention, to collect the ammunition.

The Anambra State Commissioner of Police, Nnaghe Obono Itam, while commending police officers who made the recovery for their vigilance and tenacity of purpose directed all personnel in the Command to sustain the tempo of crime prevention and detection in service of the people of the State.

News around the C



Car burning at Bukuru, Jos South Local Government Area, Plateau State, yesterday

Herders kill 6 in Taraba community

By **Sylvanus Viashima**, Jalingo

AT least six people, including a 92-year-old man, were killed while several others were injured in an attack by suspected armed herders in a farming community, at Mararaba Azagwa in Maihula, Bali Local Government Area of Taraba State.

The Taraba State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Gambo Kwache, who confirmed the attack in a telephone interview, however, said only two bodies were recovered by the police. Gambo noted that no arrest had been made, so far, but security operatives were combing the area in search of the attackers.

The attack, which occurred on Sunday night, was targeted at the farmers living within the Mararaba Azagwa and Allele villages. A resident of the area, Mallam Isah Abdul, told journalists on phone that trouble started when a Fulani man, who was drunk and high on drugs, was found dead on his way home from Maihula market.

"It is an unfortunate development. The relatives of the deceased, who later recovered his body, accused the Tiv villagers, where the man died of being responsible for the death of their brother. There was nothing actually to point to the fact that the man was killed. He might have probably died from complications arising from the alcohol and the drugs he took. But his relatives, who suspected he was killed by the Tiv villagers, mobilised and started attacking and killing people," he said.

The Chairman, Taraba State Tiv Traditional Council, Zaki David Gbaa, who briefed journalists in Bali on the development, said six people were killed and four others were in critical conditions in the hospital. Gbaa identified those killed to include; Aondohemba Salemkaan, Tersuugh Dondo, Terkuma Mbatim, Kumaga

Ujam Asaaga Nev and Tersoo Menga. The Tiv leader, who condemned the attack, how-

ever, commended the security agencies for their quick intervention to calm the situation.

He expressed confidence that the attackers would be arrested by security agencies and

prosecuted, especially that all of them live in the community and could easily be identified.

NAF bombs terrorists' camps in Katsina, kills 80

From **Molly Kilete**, Abuja

THE Nigerian Air Force (NAF) said its Air Component of Operation Hadarin Daji bombarded terrorists' hideouts at the Gidan Kare village of Ruwan Godiya ward in Faskari Local Government Area of Katsina State, killing over 80 terrorists.

The terrorists, numbering over 100, were reported to have attacked a settlement about five kilometres away from Gidan Kare village, where they burnt several houses.

NAF Director, Public Relations and Information, Air Vice Marshal Edward Gabkwet, who made the disclosure, said the operation led to the destruction of 45 motorcycles.

Gabkwet, in a statement, said the strikes became necessary following intelligence that terrorists numbering over 100 were reported to have burnt houses at a settlement about 5 kilometres away from Gidan Kare village. Overhead the village, at about 8.30pm, several houses were observed to be on fire with the entire village in pandemonium. Moments later, 12 motor cycles were seen departing the village and trailed along a footpath out of the village to a location near Gidan Kare village and Kuka Shidda Camp, where they joined up with a large number of their cohorts. Other terrorists were also observed arriving at the location from different directions, an indication that the location was a massing up point with the terrorists likely planning to further attack nearby villages.

Having been presented with such a rare opportunity, authorisation was sought, obtained and the location was immediately struck at exactly 9:40pm, with over 80 terror-

ists confirmed eliminated and about 45 motorcycles burnt down, while few surviving terrorists were observed fleeing or limping off. Further intelligence received after the strike also revealed that the terrorists were closely linked with notorious terrorists kingpin Yusuf Yellow and his close associate, Rabe Imani. These strikes, along with others before now, have no doubt disrupted terrorist activities in the area.

Meanwhile, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Hasan Abubakar, has commended the efforts of the air compo-

nent as well as other security agencies in diminishing the capabilities of terrorist elements in the Northwest. He made the disclosure earlier yesterday, when he fête the Air Component of Operation Hadarin Daji at 213 Forward Operating Base, Katsina.

CAS said: "As we continue the fight against insurgency and banditry bedevilling our dear nation, I want to commend and appreciate your resoluteness and gallantry."

He also stated that the successes by the Air Component, Operation Hadarin Daji, in

synergy with other security agencies, has continued to contribute to security within the region. He then urged them not to relent in their efforts and dedication to the fight against terrorism and all forms of criminality in Nigeria.

Earlier, Marshal Abubakar had commissioned some airfield facilities such as the new taxiway link, operations and engineering building, and the new sports complex. Specifically, the airfield facilities commissioned will no doubt ensure air operations, especially with in the Northwest.

Plateau: 2 shot, property burnt as JMDB clears illegal structures in Bukuru

From **Jude Owuamanam**, Jos

ATTEMPTS by officials of the Jos Metropolitan Development Board (JMDB) to clear Bukuru metropolis of illegal structures snowballed into a crisis as traders went berserk, burning houses, shops and cars.

The incident came after JMDB officials had, in the early hours of yesterday, done the same in the Terminus area of Jos metropolis.

Though the exercise in Terminus went on smoothly without hitches, that of Bukuru became violent as hoodlums, said to be aided by some traders averse to the exercise, decided to take the law into their hands.

General Manager of JMDB, Engr. Hart Bonkat, who spoke to Daily Sun on phone, said while the exercise in Bukuru was going on, some hoodlums attacked JMDB officials. He said he learnt that two people were shot, though he said he couldn't confirm that as he left the hoodlums burnt cars and

structures.

He said: "As usual, we were in Bukuru to clear the place of illegal structures and some people took the law into their hands by attacking our men. When I left, I learnt that they started burning cars and buildings. I also learnt that two people were shot, but I haven't confirmed that."

Speaking earlier at the Terminus Market, Bonkat said no matter what, the Caleb Mutfwang administration is determined to restore the Jos/Bukuru market as part of the urban renewal programme.

He said, "You know, his excellency was very clear when he highlighted urban renewal as part of the major policy thrust of this government. And part of urban renewal is having to resuscitate the old city to its initial state."

"As we've gone around now, you've seen that we are trying to demarcate the setbacks and then clear our drainages, where they've collapsed. We're going to have to construct new ones. And, then, where the

roads are filled, we'll try to see whether we can convince the government, so that it will be captured in the budget for those things to be done.

"And we are hoping that in the soonest possible time, the whole of these places will take shape again, and then the city will regain its place of glory."

The grace period given for regularisation of building permits is till June 10. So, right now, we're in the spirit of enforcement for the building control and then we are still ongoing with the vehicular traffic control.

"And while we are doing that, we are also going to try as much as possible to see that where buildings are done in error, we have to take them away. Like you noticed, when we went to the river, you could see the state of the buildings at that point. I definitely advise them on what to do and, then, where it is not condonable, we have to tell them to take it away to provide space for us for development.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline)

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NSCDC foils attack on state command in Lafia

From **Abel Leonard**, Lafia

OPERATIVES of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in Nasarawa State successfully repelled an attempted attack on its state

command headquarters in Lafia by suspected bandits in the early hours of yesterday.

The State Public Relations Officer of NSCDC, Mr. Jerry Victor, confirmed the incident in a telephone interview yesterday.

Victor disclosed that an unspecified number of gunmen, believed to be bandits, invaded the NSCDC headquarters. "The gunmen, who came in large numbers armed with iron rods, attempted to break some parts of the command's fence to gain entry into the facility," he explained. He further stated that some of the attackers positioned themselves around the building. Victor said the operatives of the NSCDC responded swiftly by opening fire on the assailants.

"Their mission was to release some high-profile suspected criminals, including informants of kidnapers, in our custody. The prompt response by the NSCDC operatives thwarted the attackers' plans. No casualty was re-

corded during the gun battle between the attackers and our operatives," he noted.

He added that calm had been restored following the incident, and the security around the command had been heightened to prevent future occurrences.

The NSCDC spokesperson revealed that five notorious suspects were detained by the command for various crimes. Among them were two informants of the kidnapers involved in the abduction and subsequent killing of the 82-year-old father of Mr. Daniel Umaru Lagi, a former state Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, after the payment of ransom.

In response to the rising cases of kidnapping in Lafia, the Nasarawa State capital, local authorities have imposed a restriction on the movement of motorcycles and tricycles. This measure, effective between 8pm and 6am, aims to curb the activities of criminals.

The NSCDC has reassured the public of its commitment to protecting lives and property. "We will continue to work tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of all residents," Mr. Victor affirmed.

Residents of Lafia have expressed concerns over the increasing insecurity in the area. Many hope that the recent action by the NSCDC and other security measures will restore peace and safety in the state capital.

Protest rocks Abia community over moves to impose monarch

Gunmen abduct Anambra Catholic priest, one other

From **Emmanuel Uzor**, Awka

GUNMEN have kidnapped the Parish priest of Saint Matthew's Catholic Church in Ajalli, Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Rev. Fr. Christian Ike, alongside one other person in an early morning attack.

The Catholic priest was reportedly whisked away with another parishioner, Mr. Ogonnia Aneke, on Sunday, at about 10am.

The Diocese of Ekwulobia confirmed the abduction in a letter from Diocesan Chancellor, Rev. Fr. Lawrence Nwankwo, and called for prayers for the safe release of the kidnapped individuals.

"Dear brothers and sisters, call for prayers. Kidnap case, Rev. Fr. Christian Ike. Please pray for the release of Rev. Fr. Christian Ike and Mr. Ogonnia Aneke, who were kidnapped this morning around 9:45am as they were returning from Mass in an outstation of St. Matthew's Parish, Ajalli, Orumba North L.G.A.," the church statement read.

Reacting to the development, the Anambra Police Command Spokesman, Iken-ga Tochukwu, said they've "received the information of the abduction of Rev Father Christian Ike and has deployed its intelligence and operational assets of the command for possible rescue unhurt.

"Eyewitness account revealed that by 10:30am, on 16/6/2024, the priest and two others were returning from

St. Michael Catholic Church Ndiokpaleke, where they attended morning service, along Amagu Junction, they were double-crossed by armed men operating in three vehicles,

MNJTF troops kill 1 terrorist, rescue 34 kidnapped women, children

From **Molly Kilete**, Abuja

THE Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), said troops of Operation Lake Sanity 2, under the Task Force Wulgo, have killed one terrorist and rescued 34 women and children abducted by Boko Haram terrorists.

MNJTF, Chief Military Public Information Officer Lieutenant Colonel Abubakar Abdulahi, who made this known, said the feat was recorded during a clearance operations conducted in the Mazuri, Itsari, Mudu, and Maleri villages on fringes of southern Lake Chad in Nigeria on June, 15.

Abdulahi in a statement, said three fighters from the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) based in the Jabilaram camp, a secluded islet on Lake Chad, surrendered to the vigilant troops of Task Force Wulgo. The fighters, identified as Babakura Abubaka, 20, Abacha Kyari, 28 and Mohammad Adam are currently undergoing interrogation for further action.

He further stated that in its continued air assault operations aimed at dismantling terrorist operations across the Lake Chad area, an air interdiction mission was conducted on 9 June 2024 at Kollaram.

while the other two escaped the scene, the criminals took away the priest and some personal belongings of the occupants in the vehicle.

"To this end, the command

This operation destroyed 3 suicide vehicle-borne IEDs poised for a major terrorist attack. This precise strike exemplifies the efficacy and capabilities of Troops Contributing Countries air force units in neutralizing high-value terrorist targets and mitigating potential threats.

The combined efforts of ground and air operations are significantly degrading the operational strength and morale of terrorist factions in the region. The MNJTF remain reso-

Protest rocks Abia community over moves to impose monarch

By **Brown Chimezie**

INDIGENES of Umuihueze autonomous community, Akwete Ndoki Ancient Kingdom, in Ukwa-East Local Government Area (LGA) of Abia State, last weekend, staged a peaceful protest over alleged plans to impose one Chief Daniel Nwuzor as the new traditional ruler of the area.

The protesters, who carried different placards urged the Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, to call the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Prince Uzor Nwachukwu, to order, to avoid a breakdown of law and order.

They also called on Governor

has activated its intelligence and operational assets for possible arrest of the assailants and rescue unhurt of the priest. Further development shall be communicated, please.

lute in the mission to eradicate terrorism, ensure the safety of civilians, and foster a secure and peaceful environment conducive to sustaining long-term stability.

The Force Commander Major-General Ibrahim Sallau Ali commended the bravery of the troops involved in these operations and reiterated the commitment of MNJTF to restoring normalcy and peace through continued vigilance and proactive engagements.

Otti to investigate the activities of the commissioner, who they alleged had been bribed by the federal lawmaker representing Ukwa Federal Constituency, Chris Nkwonta. The protesters insisted that they be allowed to choose their traditional ruler according to their customs and traditions.

Fielding questions from newsmen, the Palace Secretary of the community, Mr. Ogonnia Chijjuche, explained that Akwete ancient kingdom has existed for almost 500 years, and has a well-established monarchical dynasty of succession and not known for kingship tussle.

He explained that the Umuihueze Akwete Council of

Chiefs had written to the Abia State government through the office of the Commissioner of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, requesting to present the Onyenweala VII, using the old and subsisting regulations of Umuihueze autonomous community, which got a written approval.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline)

Niger council boss escapes death as thugs attack him over N1.3m debt

From **John Adams** Minna

THE Chairman, Katcha Local Government Area of Niger State, Danlami Abdullahi Saku, narrowly escaped being lynched on Saturday by some youths in the area suspected to be thugs.

The youths were said to have descended on the chairman over N1.3 million he allegedly owed an elderly man in the area, who had refused to pay back.

It was gathered that the embattled chairman had collected the money from the old man for over a year now and has defied all moves by the lender to get his money back, including a threat of legal action against him.

A close source said the chairman got more than what he bargained for as he was ambushed by the youths during his visit to the town for the Sallah celebration, when attempts to retrieve the money from him turned bloody.

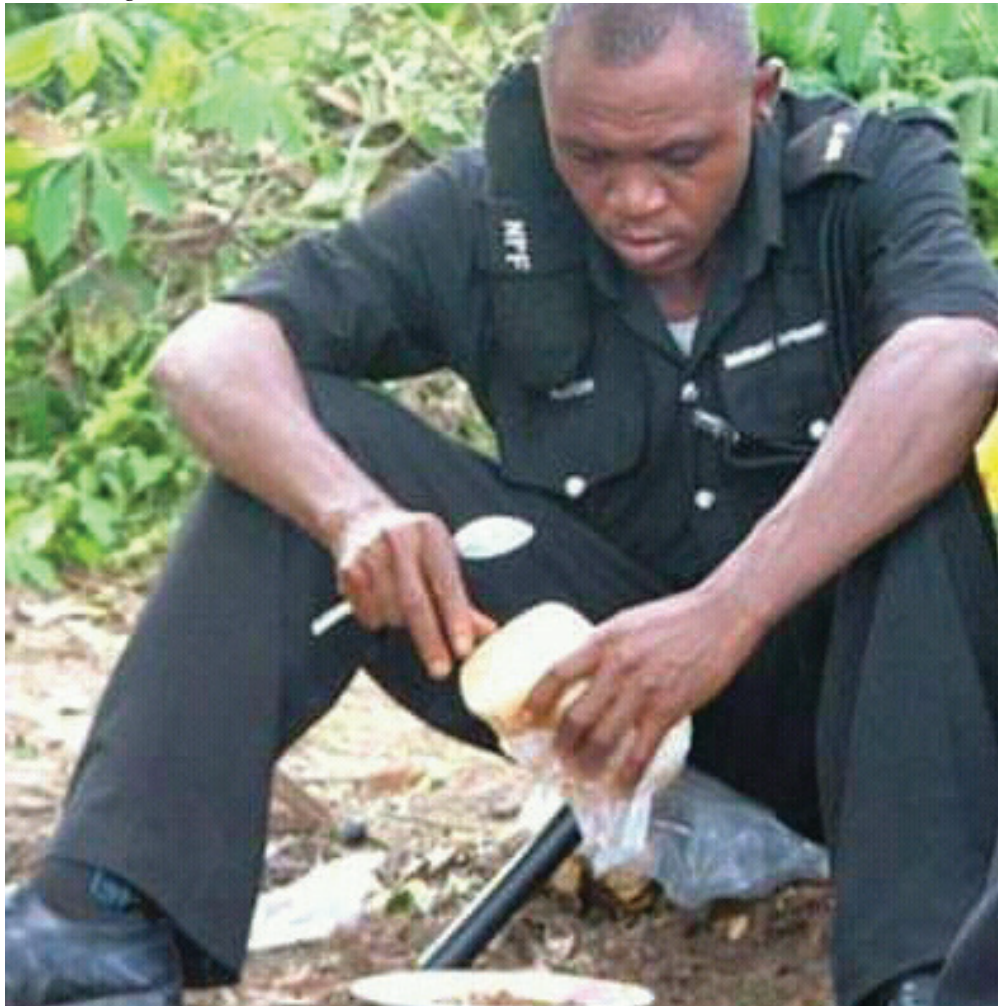
While our source said the youths were thugs, another insider in the area told Daily Sun that they were actually the children of the elderly man who gave the chairman the N1.3 million as loan.

The source disclosed that the chairman, who got infuriated and felt embarrassed by the actions of the youths

who accosted him over the debt, allegedly slapped one of them, asking if they knew that he is the council chairman and threatened to deal with them.

It was as a result of this that the youths, alongside some of their friends, descended on the chairman, and beat him to stupor and he was rushed to the hospital. It was, however, gathered that while in the hospital receiving treatment, the chairman quickly offset part of the debt, leaving the balance of N10,000, which the elderly man decided to let go.

Attempts to reach the embattled chairman to get his side of the whole drama was not successful as calls put across to him did not go through and he did not respond to text messages sent to him.



MAN MUST WACK

PHOTO: DELE ONATADE

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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Presidency under fire over new presidential jet

From Magnus Eze, Enugu, Chinelo Obogo, Ndubuisi Orji, Adanna Nnamani, Sola Ojo, Idu Jude, Abuja, Stanley Uzoaru, Owerri and Noah Ebije, Kaduna

PROMINENT Nigerians and groups have knocked the move to procure a new aircraft for President Bola Tinubu and his deputy, Kashim Shettima, despite the downturn in the nation's economy. They expressed shock that the presidency was making such a move when majority of Nigerians were struggling to feed.

The main opposition party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Middle Belt Forum (MBF), the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), the Northern Elders' Forum (NEF), the Arewa Youth Consultative Forum (AYCF), the presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi, Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Chief Mike Ahamba, and others said a jet should not be the priority of the presidency at a time Nigerians can barely feed.

Labour and the Federal Government have been at loggerheads over a new national minimum wage. Labour is pushing for N250,000, while government says it can only afford N62,000 due to economic constraints. Additionally, the government has urged Nigerians to embrace austerity measures and make sacrifices for the country during these challenging economic times.

•No moral justification to ask for sacrifices –PDP

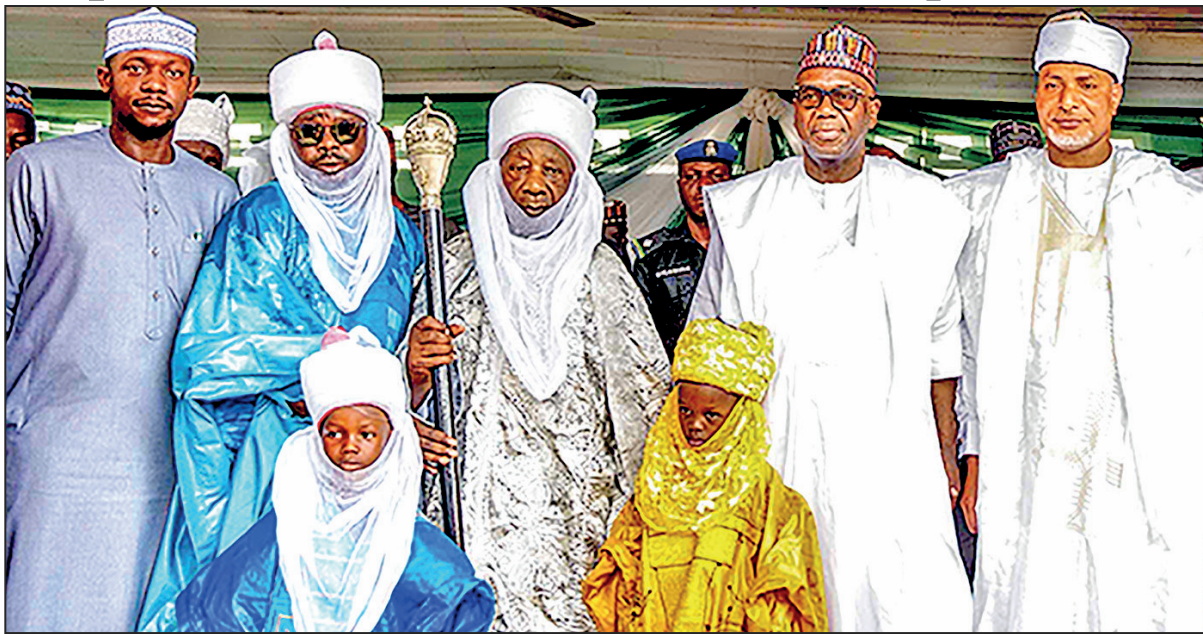
Reacting to the plan to boost the presidential fleet with a new aircraft, the PDP said President Tinubu has no moral justification to ask Nigerians to make further sacrifices.

Its National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba, in a telephone interview, said government must live by example by cutting luxury items.

Ologunagba, who stated that the citizens have been sacrificing since the advent of the Tinubu administration on May 29, 2023, said asking Nigerians to make further sacrifices would be tantamount to telling them to commit suicide.

"If the government is so reckless in spending, then it has no moral justification to ask the citizens to sacrifice. In any event, the appropriate word is to say to the government, 'Let the poor breathe.' That would be the right word to say to them.

"There are millions of families in this country that could not celebrate the very special celebration of eid. They couldn't celebrate it because they couldn't afford it. So, for the government to say what they have said (acquisition of new jet) showed they are disconnected with the realities on ground - that people are dying on a daily basis because they cannot afford food. People are dying on a daily basis because they cannot buy medicine. People are



L-R: Mukhtar Shagaya; Personal Assistant to the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Muri Abdulraheem; Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu Gambari; Governor Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq and Turaki of Ilorin, Mallam Saliu Mustapha; during Bareke in Government House in Ilorin, yesterday

dying by reason of the fact that they are frustrated and they commit suicide on a daily basis. And the government seems to be disconnected and averse to the reality in the nation.

"Our own advice, as a party, is that the President should live by example by first ensuring that the corruption and the excessive maintenance of their luxury appetite is cut. We have said it severally that the government must stop pursuing and fund their luxury appetite. And it comes in the form of vehicles, the nature of vehicles and the number of vehicles.

"Government has no moral justification. Indeed, Nigerians have been sacrificing. They have been sacrificing from day one; since May 29, 2023 when this government came in. It started by the rash and ill-thought programme of removing fuel subsidy. Nigerians have been suffering on the basis of that. They have been paying more on electricity tariff, and paying more on multiple taxes being imposed on the people.

"These people are suffocating. Telling them to sacrifice more is like saying go and commit suicide. That is what they are saying. It is the government that should sacrifice now. The leadership should show examples. And if there is any plan at all to purchase an aircraft, then President Tinubu should perish the thought. Number one, the British Prime Minister flies British Airways. The Prime Minister of the UK flies British Airways. At the last count, we have about seven or nine aircraft in the Presidential fleet. Former President Muhammadu Buhari came and said he was going to sell all of them; instead of selling, he acquired more."

•NLC: Prioritising luxury over needs

The NLC also kicked against the plan, accusing the ruling elite of prioritising luxury over the needs of the Nigerian people.

According to Mr. Benson Upah, spokesperson for the NLC, when it comes to the comfort of the members of the ruling political elite, there is no limit to what the state can do. But, when it comes to

the basic necessities of the ordinary Nigerian, they begin to use a calculator.

"As long as the ruling elite consider themselves over and above every other citizen, every need, and every necessity, there will continue to be hunger and anger in the land."

Lamenting the discrepancy between the government's priorities and public needs, Upah added: "There is always enough for the pleasures or the passions of the ruling political elite, but never enough for the necessities of the citizenry. Purchasing a presidential jet cannot be a necessity for now, given the complaints or comments from the ruling political elite. It cannot be a priority for now."

Drawing comparisons with leaders in other countries, he pointed out: "We have many leaders, including the Kenyan president, and others, who are flying commercial planes."

•MBF, Chamber of Commerce and Industry kick

MBF, through its president, Dr. Pogu Bitrus, said Tinubu should be more sensitive to the plight of Nigerians and not indulge in extravagant expenditures.

"He's supposed to live by example. If the economy is okay, he can buy a presidential jet and no one would raise an eyebrow. But, given that the economy is in a bad shape and he knows it, he should be sensitive enough to not spend money on things that are not necessary. But, if he can justify to Nigerians that the current jet is in such bad shape and that his security is at risk if he uses it, we can understand, but no one has given us such an explanation. As far as we are concerned, it is just one of those extravagant expenditures," he said.

The chairman, SMES Group of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Daniel Dickson-Okezie, said it was most unfortunate but not surprising that the president wanted to get a jet at this critical time.

"People like us, who understand what has been happening in the country and the hypocrisy about fighting for the common man, or

trying to solve the problems of the average Nigerian, are not surprised. We know that the politicians are not interested in that, particularly those in the corridors of power. If you look at it, since the administration of this present government, it has been this way, it's just that it's getting worse. The number of ministers appointed when this government came to power shouldn't have been. This is the highest Nigeria has ever had. So, there is nothing we have seen in this particular government of President Tinubu that indicates that they have any serious plan to cut down on the cost of administration and see how they can really solve the problems of the country.

President, Calabar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), David Etim, described the plan as bad optics, and bad timing, taking into consideration the current economic situation of the country.

"Though I have my issues with the minimum wage request by Labour and all of that for the public sector, the complaint is that the government cannot afford it or go beyond N62,000, and now the presidency is talking about a new jet; it's wrong. The cost of a new plane is significantly above N62,000."

•NEF, AYCF, CAN shocked

The Arewa Youth Consultative Forum (AYCF) president, Alhaji Yerima Shettima, described the idea as "insensitive" to the current economic hardship in the land.

"I am totally not in support of any new aircraft at the moment. Rather, he should stay at home and work or manage the available ones. Let us be honest with ourselves, this is not acceptable and Nigerians must not be in support of this idea.

"This is a clarion call that Nigerians must resist and condemn it because we cannot go and be pleading through hardship to give Mr. President time because we didn't expect him to perform a miracle in his one year in office. We are just recovering from the SUV for NASS members and they are now talking about buying a private jet, no. This is wrong," he said.

Reacting, the immediate past Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Kaduna State, Rev. John Joseph Hayab, expressed shock that President Tinubu wanted Nigerians to be patient with him but he was not ready to be patient with Nigerians.

"We know that the desire to add to the presidential fleet is fine but is that what is good for Nigerians now? Mr. President keeps telling us that he wants to put Nigerians first but from his actions, what he has been doing is what is good for the 'boys' and people around him.

"Do we need a presidential jet now when many Nigerians cannot eat; when labour is calling for improved salaries? I'm one of those pleading that labour must not ask for what the government cannot pay. For me, this is not right.

"I wish Mr. President would listen to us and not allow those that will mislead him succeed. The government must think about people and people's welfare and go for necessary things. We have seen presidents in other countries flying in public planes. Will that take away your being president? I don't think so. At the moment, the decision is not right," Hayab said.

Spokesman for the Northern Elders Forum (NEF), Abdul-Azeez Suleiman, said the decision to purchase a new jet at a time the bulk of the population cannot feed calls for serious concern.

"Many people, myself included, do not find this decision to be necessary given the current realities facing Nigeria. In a country where millions of people are struggling with hunger and poverty, where inflation is on the rise and necessities are becoming increasingly unaffordable, the plan by the government to splurge on a new luxury jet seems not only unnecessary but incredibly insensitive.

"The decision is unfortunately coming at a time when the country is facing numerous challenges, both economic and social, leading to job losses, a decline in the economy, and an increase in poverty levels. The government's response to these challenges should be focused on supporting the people who are most affected by them, not

on acquiring more luxury items for themselves.

"I feel the decision sends the wrong message to the citizens of the country. It conveys a sense of entitlement and extravagance, while many people are struggling to put food on the table and make ends meet. It also raises questions about the government's priorities and whether they are truly focused on serving the best interests of the people.

"It is important for the government to be mindful of the current realities facing the country and to prioritise the needs of the people above all else. While it may be convenient for the government officials to have access to a new jet for official travel, this luxury should not come at the expense of the well-being of the citizens they are meant to serve.

"I think the government should focus on addressing the pressing needs of the people, rather than indulging in luxury that only serves to showcase their privilege and disconnect from the struggles of the average citizen. It is time for the government to reassess its priorities and act in the best interests of the people they are elected to serve."

•Focus on alleviating sufferings of Nigerians - Obi

Writing on his X handle, yesterday, the former Anambra State Governor, Peter Obi, described the plan the Federal Government to purchase new aircraft to add to the presidential fleet as unacceptable and a clear show of insensitivity to the suffering of the Nigerian people.

"At a time when our country is on the front page of global newspapers for facing its worst economic crisis, marked by high inflation, a falling currency, and widespread poverty, the government is contemplating buying new presidential jets. This demonstrates extreme insensitivity to citizens' struggles.

"With rising insecurity, poverty, hunger, and homelessness, this decision highlights the disconnect that is apparent between the government and the people.

"It is unacceptable as the situation in the country today more than ever demands a more compassionate use of resources, prioritising citizens' welfare.

"It's on record that our presidential jets have an average age of 12 years, purchased when most Nigerians could afford necessities. Now, as our country faces significant challenges, including a high debt profile, our citizens are in even greater need. Instead of adding to our luxuries, we should be focused on alleviating their sufferings, and finding solutions to their problems.

"For long, our bad leadership has made our priorities, as leaders, to be at variance to the needs of society, which is why we are headed now south, as a nation.

•Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com

59 Hearty Cheers to a Colossus Happy Birthday

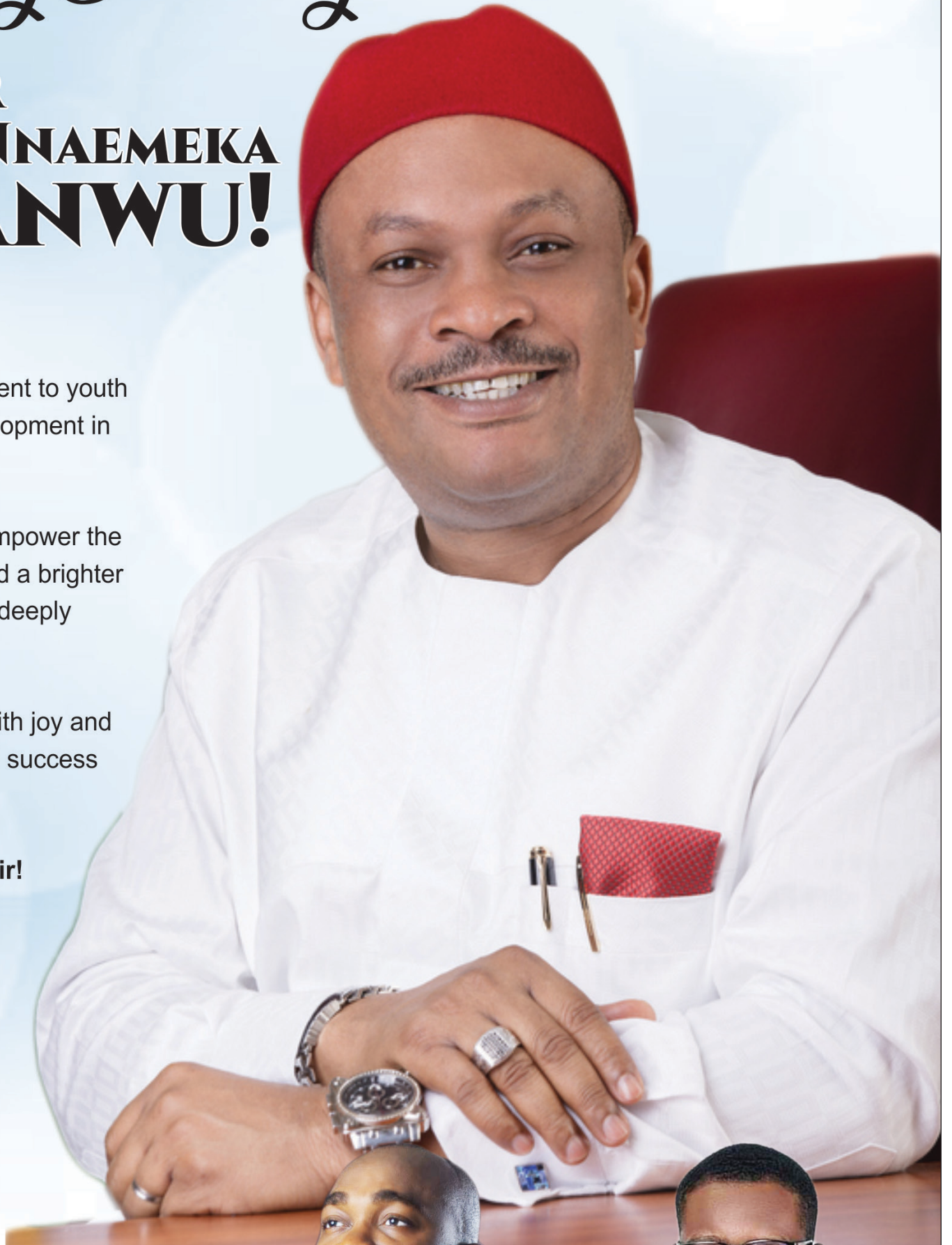
SENATOR SAMUEL NNAEMEKA ANYANWU!

Your steadfast commitment to youth and human capital development in Nigeria is truly inspiring.

Your tireless efforts to empower the next generation and build a brighter future for our nation are deeply appreciated.

May your day be filled with joy and your year with continued success and impact.

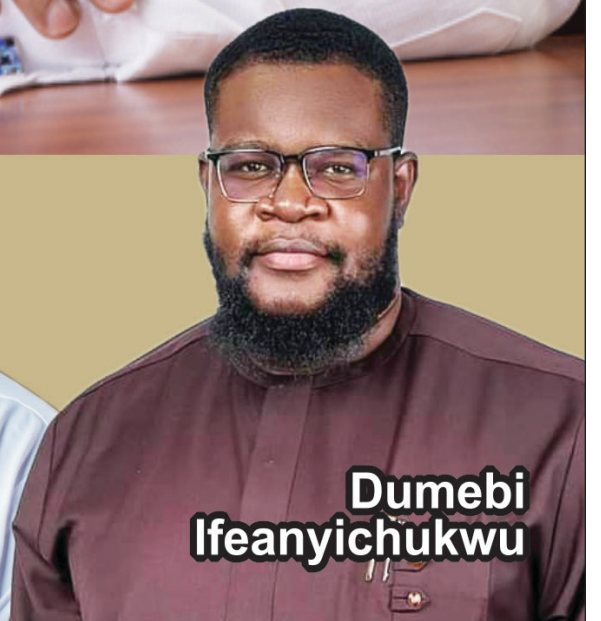
Many Happy Returns sir!



Signed:

**Arthur
Ugochukwu**

**Dumebi
Ifeanyichukwu**



Fear grips Rivers as armed group emerges to evict LGs chairmen

• Asari Dokubo: Vacate office • CP warns troublemakers, vows to protect lives, property

From **Tony John**, Port Harcourt

THERE is palpable fear in Rivers State following a trending video of armed men, who said they were prepared to ensure the exit of local government council chairmen, whose tenure expired yesterday.

Already, youths have occupied some of the local government headquarters, chanting that the chairmen should go.

In Degema and Asari-Toru local government areas, youths had taken over the headquarters, insisting that they would occupy the council secretariats until work would resume after the two-day public holiday to mark the Muslim festivities. They are youths that are against the elongation of the tenure of the council chairmen.

In Port Harcourt City and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas, security has been beefed up to forestall any breakdown of law and order.

But, in the viral five-minute, seven seconds video clip, some armed men were seen crossing the creek.

The leader of the group declared that they were back from the river ahead and prepared for resistance from any council chairman that would refuse to vacate office.

Donning a black polo cloth

engraved with G. ASABUJA, the leader said: "Today is Saturday, June 15, I am back from the river, the creek; preparing and about to take over local government areas on Wednesday, because Monday and Tuesday are public holidays.

"We are back to take over all the 23 local government councils. So, the council chairmen should wait for us. We are coming.

"It is my hobby and business to work with the government, to relate to the government to fight crime. Those who said the government will not drink water and keep cups, we will join hands and follow them anyhow they want it.

"I work with the Joint Task Force; I am in charge of anti-bunkering, South-South. I have come back home. Half of my men are back. We are taking over all the local government areas.

"But, for now, we are enjoying ourselves, flexing, and preparing for Wednesday. I am hosting my boys for Wednesday. So, let all the caretakers be prepared to host my boys on Wednesday. You have entered."

The leader specifically called on the chairman of Ikwerre LGA, Samuel Nwanosike, to expect them, adding that he (the group leader) would be present at the council secretariat.

"Nwanosike Ishi, wait for us on Wednesday. I volunteer to come to

Ikwerre Local Government Area. I will be there. Wait for us, there is no problem. You'll learn how to respect elders and authority.

"Let me go and see my boys, my soldiers. We want to prepare for Wednesday. We are ready."

The leader, thereafter, was seen distributing drinks to a group of entertainers within the vicinity.

Daily Sun gathered that Governor Siminalayi Fubara has sent names of a seven-man caretaker committee of the 23 LGAs to the House of Assembly led by Victor Oko-Jumbo for screening and confirmation.

The council chairmen and House of Assembly members loyal to the Minister of the Federal Territory, Nyesom Like, have been at loggerheads with the governor.

Meanwhile, the Police Commissioner, Olatunji Disu, has declared his preparedness to protect lives and property in a bid to reassure members of the public of Police's commitment to maintain law and order.

Disu, who spoke to journalists at the Command's Headquarters, Moscow Road, Port Harcourt, warned trouble-makers to shun any planned violence emphasising that anyone found doing so would face the full wrath of the law.

He appealed to parents to caution their children against getting involved in the crisis, warning that

they should not be used as "cannon fodder."

The Police boss vowed to protect all government property and human lives and ensure a safe and secure environment for all.

"My job as a policeman is to protect lives and property. And that is what we have gone out to do since morning.

"We are aware of the crisis that has to do with the tenure of the local government chairmen and we have gotten one court order or the other, and the Court of Appeal has given an order for everybody to exercise restraints till the 20th of this month (June), just three days.

"So we expect everybody to respect it and not take laws into their hands and allow peace to continue as it is."

He assured that his officers were working around the clock to safeguard the property and lives of residents of the State.

"Sincerely, you know our officers have been out for the past three days.

"I just finished addressing them and I thank them for the good job they have done; and because they have been out since 4am, and they just came back, we are not taking it lightly, we are ready to go.

"Our officers have been on a show of force and we have had additional men given to us from the Headquarters, the equipment

has been serviced and we are ready to go.

"This is just to assure members of the public that so far as we are concerned, we are ready to do our jobs of protecting lives and property.

"We have warned anybody who would want to take laws into their own hands. I want to use this opportunity to talk to parents to call their children to order and talk to them so that their children will not be used as cannon folds in this crisis.

"Everything that has to do with government property and every human being in this community would be protected."

Meanwhile, Muhajid Asari Dokubo, has advised the LG chairmen to accept the end of their three years' tenure in good faith and resist creating crisis.

Speaking while flanked by stakeholders of the Muslim community in Rivers State as part of activities to mark the 2024 Eid-el-Kabir celebrations, in Port Harcourt, yesterday, Asari Dokubo, said tenure elongation was an aberration to the Constitution of Nigeria.

He stated that the chairmen cannot force on themselves any extension of time that runs contrary to the oath of office they swore to, and be tolerated.

Dokubo, who is also the Edi Abali of Kalabariland, warned the

former chairmen not to invite the wrath of what he called, the people's power, because it would descend on them to their dismay.

"Local Government tenure has expired today (17th June, 2024). They should quietly go home. If they want to seek re-election in accordance with the Constitution, they should go and seek re-election.

"But there is no tenure elongation in the Constitution. Their position is tenure-bound, and that tenure has expired. Let them not cause unnecessary problems for the people of the State. And I want to advise young people, that: look, don't allow yourselves to be used."

Asari Dokubo said young Rivers people must know and understand what their roles are in protecting the State against those self-seeking individuals who think that it is their private estate.

Making reference to a popular radio jingle on Radio Rivers: "Love Rivers State or leave her alone. Don't pull her down. Think what you can do for her, engage yourself in meaningful activities...". Asari Dokubo insisted that the state is bigger than one individual.

"Only one man can be governor of Rivers State at a time. We would not have two governors at a time. The people of Rivers State are bigger than Muhajid Asari Dokubo. Rivers State is bigger than any individual. No individual can take Rivers State people for a ride and pocket us. It is not possible."



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Politics & Power

Bayelsa governorship tussle: The Unfinished Matter

From **Femi Folaranmi**,
Yenagoa

THE last is yet to be heard about the Bayelsa State governorship election. The election which was called in favour of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governorship candidate, Senator Douye Diri by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has been a subject of litigation.

The All Progressive Congress (APC) governorship candidate, Chief Timipre Sylva had alleged irregularities in the conduct of the election and had proceeded to the Bayelsa Elections Petitions Tribunal seeking the ouster of Diri.

However, the three-man tribunal headed by Justice Adekunle Adeleye which had been cleared of bias by the President, Court of Appeal, in a unanimous decision dismissed the petition of Sylva and upheld the re-election of Diri.

In its verdict, the Tribunal while evaluating evidence of petitioners' witnesses and arguments before it, concluded that Sylva's case lacked merit. According to it, Mr Sylva and the APC failed to provide any credible evidence to prove allegations of electoral fraud during the election.

The Tribunal also threw out allegations of forgery against Diri's deputy governor, Lawrence Ewruhadjako on the basis that it had been determined by a court of competent jurisdiction.

In the judgment, the Tribunal stated that Sylva and his party failed to discharge the burden of proof placed on them by the law by showing how electoral malpractices were perpetrated at the various polling units.

Expectedly, the outcome of the Tribunal verdict has generated reactions across the political divide. It has also rekindled the political rivalry between the APC and the PDP and their cross-section of supporters.

In its immediate reaction, Diri stated the victory at the tribunal would spur him to serve the state better in his second term.

While insisting that the petition was a "needless distraction", he noted that by the judgment, the judiciary has again proven that it remained the last hope for the common man.

"Once again, I use this opportunity to thank my people of Bayelsa State who graciously and freely gave me this mandate. It is not my victory but it is for the people of Bayelsa.

"As I always pledge, our administration is people-focused and people-oriented. So this will again give us a better latitude to continue to deliver the dividends of democracy to our people."

He described the judgment as very sound and one of the best



• Diri

that had been delivered in such election petition matters, saying there was still hope for the country.

"Matters like these are mere distractions in delivering the dividends of democracy to the people, particularly against the backdrop that we had an election that was adjudged to be one of the freest and the fairest. And yet we have been distracted over this period. I want to let Bayelsa people know that we are still for you and will continue to work for you and walk with you until the final day of our administration."

He used the occasion to throw a jab at Sylva when answering a question about whether he is prepared to work with his political opponent.

Hear him: "The days where you threaten your people, chase them out of their land, intimidate them, and go and write results are over. So if they change from those



The days where you threaten your people, chase them out of their land, intimidate them, and go and write results are over. So if they change from those ways, I will work with them."



• Sylva

ways, I will work with them."

Sylva in a counter-narrative expressed dissatisfaction with the verdict of the Tribunal.

In a statement signed by his Special Assistant on Media and Public Affairs, Julius Bokoru, Sylva who was said to have held a meeting immediately with elders and stakeholders of the party after the judgment, directed his legal team to immediately seek justice at the Court of Appeal.

Bokoru recalled that before the judgment, Sylva had accused the tribunal of bias following several infractions observed by his lawyers during the hearing of the case.

He had subsequently filed an interlocutory appeal demanding the dissolution of the panel and reconstitution of a new one.

Sylva said: "We are not satisfied with the decision of the tribunal. But this is just a court of first instance and after meeting with the elders and critical stakeholders of our great party, the APC, we directed our legal team to seek justice for Bayelsa at the Supreme Court".

The governorship candidate assured the people of Bayelsa that the court of appeal would surely correct the travesty perpetrated by the tribunal.

He declared that the liberation of Bayelsa was close and that justice was inevitable for the traumatized people of the state appealing to them to remain positive, law-abiding, and steadfast.

Diri not willing to allow Sylva to have the last word mocked his political opponent, pointing out that the governorship election petition tribunal exposed the electoral fraud perpetrated by Sylva, the party's chairman and a serving Commissioner of Police.

nesses said all INEC result sheets had barcodes but that presented as result sheets by the APC had none.

"We also witnessed how a Commissioner of Police made himself an APC commissioner in the state. This was an officer who had been transferred from the state following an indictment by the IG due to a misdemeanour but he got his way back through the APC candidate's influence to supervise the election. The same person became the APC star witness in a case he was no longer party to, following his re-deployment out of the state.

"If you look at the veracity of our matter, you will know that it was between light and darkness. Technically, they were even knocked out by the tribunal and their case was dismissed. But the panel did not only base their judgment on that. Rather, the judges addressed their points one by one. So, we are waiting for their appeal."

Diri described the litigation process by Sylva as a deceptive plot by those who attempted to steal in broad daylight and still crying wolf about a miscarriage of justice by the tribunal.

A former political protege of Sylva, Hon Israel Sunny- Goli who parted ways with his former principal before the election and pitched a tent with Diri while commending the judiciary, called on Sylva to stop further litigation to allow Diri to concentrate on governance.

"May I, at this juncture call upon my former principal, and the candidate of the All Progressives Congress, APC, Chief Timipre Sylva, to at this point take a cue from me, by putting an end to litigation as I did in my case against the member, representing Brass/Nembe Federal Constituency, Hon. Marie Ebikake, wherein, after I lost at the election petition tribunal, I opted not to go an appeal.

"This decision was taken with the overall interest of our people in mind, taking into consideration the disruptive tendencies posed by continuous litigations. My cessation of litigation has availed her ample time to concentrate on giving our people effective representation.

"This is why I am also seizing this opportunity to offer my candid advice to you, to join hands with Governor Douye Diri to build the state. This will be a wise decision on your part and a great contribution from you to the development of the state."

The matter has since been placed at the doorstep of the Appeal Court and has further extended the tension surrounding the Bayelsa governorship election, the candidates, their political parties, and their supporters.

Speaking to a crowd of supporters in Yenagoa, the state capital, Diri derided the APC for their ridiculous performance during cross-examination at the tribunal. According to him, the APC witnesses shot themselves in the foot with frivolous claims and inconsistent exhibits.

The governor narrated how a former Commissioner of Police in the state, Mr. Tolani Alausa, who was procured as a star witness in the case, tainted his image by tendering false evidence before the court and was humiliated for parading fake INEC documents.

He noted that although Mr Alausa was no longer the CP in the state, the senior police officer presented himself at the tribunal to defend the fraud perpetrated by the APC candidate.

Governor Diri also said the tribunal equally excoriated the party's chairman in the state, Chief Dennis Otiotio, for his "unprofessional conduct" being a legal practitioner.

He called on the judiciary to place heavy sanctions on frivolous matters and abuse of court processes by those desperate to subvert the wishes of the people.

"During one of the sittings, I physically went to the tribunal and I saw what transpired. Our party's secretary, in the witness box, stated that most of the election materials the APC presented as INEC's documents before the court were manufactured by the APC state chairman, Dennis Otiotio.

"To confirm this, our lawyers scanned an INEC form that they (APC) presented and it was established that the form was printed in Yenagoa. The counsel to INEC in his cross-examination of Otiotio and their party's wit-

Politics & Power

Charter of equity'll create disunity in Owerri –Obinna

OCTOGENARIAN, Paddy Obinna is a notable leader from Emekuku in Owerri North LGA of Imo State and the elder brother of the retired Archbishop of Owerri Catholic diocese, His Grace, Anthony Obinna. He is also an artist and owns the Paddy Obinna Art Gallery. In this interview, he discusses political developments in Imo State among other issues.

During the last governorship election, the Imo State Council of Elders came up with the Charter of Equity for the rotation of the seat of governor, starting from Owerri Zone, your zone. This view was adopted by the governor, but of late, there are arguments about where the next governor should come from. What is your view?

Well, the gathering of the elders, those who are selected as elders, even though some of them are younger than some of us, took their decision within the context of the time. In the world we live in, there is only one person who is infallible. Even though in the Catholic domain, they say the Pope is infallible. But there are certain things he has said now that are being questioned. The infallibility of man makes it that we too can make mistakes. To suit a particular time, a father, for peace to reign, could come up with a decision but when he is also approached to review that thing he has said, he might as well change his mind, especially when it is clear that he made a mistake. Even wills are challenged. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is also challenged. Some people go to court to challenge the will made by their parents before they died. However, this issue is a thorny issue. I have read a lot of things people are writing about it. I want to believe that the governor made a political statement at that point in time. In politics, there is no permanent friend, no permanent enemy, but permanent interest.

In the interest of the issue at stake, the governor needed the votes. He needed it from all the people. If it is by numerical strength, the question is, now that the elections have come and gone, who gave the governor the highest number of votes? Probably Orlu. Who were the next people who gave him the highest number of votes? Probably, it is Okigwe. Who gave him the least number of votes? It's Owerri Zone. Besides the number of votes, I am also saying that, as a father, if somebody brought me three bags of rice here to share to three children, and two were available, or one of my children was shortchanged in the sharing of that rice and I tell my son that was shortchanged to wait till the next time around, and the next time around, some other person comes and brings three bags of rice, the other two would say, "No. Please, balance our brother's share before we can now share the remaining equitably". That is justice. I would agree that that should be done for Okigwe for justice to reign in Imo. It is in the interest of fairness. Then, at

the end of the day, when it is shared, it is shared equitably. These are the three key words: justice, fairness, and equity. So, that is the premise of my thinking. We have to do justice and fairness before we now decide on equity.

You talked about short-changing a brother in the sharing of three bags of rice, and it reminds one of the events of 2011, when Okigwe was stopped from getting a second term. What do you have to say about the 2011 experience?

Now, let me ask you this question: What was Ohakim's sin? Why did they stop Okigwe Zone in 2011? Didn't Ohakim do well as governor? What was Ohakim's sin? The only sin he committed was that he was falsely accused by our people of what didn't exist, what he didn't do. It was just the sin of a false allegation. Have you ever watched an entourage of a governor? How could a governor know when somebody was trying to run into the last group of security people? And then they stopped. Whosoever was in mufti and whatever that happened, they handed it on Ohakim and the church was deceived and bought into it - whosoever was in mufti for wanting to cause an accident for himself and the convoy that was moving. What was Ohakim's sin? What was Ohakim's involvement in all that? That individual was now identified as a Reverend Father of the Catholic Church, and he became a church martyr, not a universal martyr. They now brought in Reverend Father Ejike Mbaka, whom everybody thought was a god, and he composed a song that went viral against Ohakim. The church believed what Mbaka and politicians said because the people believe that the church was infallible.

So what did Ohakim do wrong?



What was Ohakim's sin? Why did they stop Okigwe Zone in 2011? Didn't Ohakim do well as governor? What was Ohakim's sin? The only sin he committed was that he was falsely accused by our people of what didn't exist, what he didn't do. It was just the sin of a false allegation."



Obinna

I don't want to hear about all this Owerri man's talk and how his election was disrupted in 2007. How did Ohakim disturb you from your channel? Did he even come into your party for that contest? Were they in the same party? Let me tell you, the charter of equity was one of those things said to win votes, to convince the people, and they bought into it. A lot of people are now carrying bags of promises by the governor that they now claim that they are already the governor after him, and this will now expose the disunity of Owerri. What I am saying is, for justice sake, if you know that person that had been injured, you have a duty to wash him clean, apologize to him for accusing him of the sin he did not commit, especially those who carried banners against him. They should please apologize.

At the same time, if equity through APC will stand, what of the equity of the other parties who are still contesting even against the APC governor until today? They are still in court, from Owerri, from Okigwe. If they believe that there should be equity, these people in court should also withdraw so that there is a level playing ground to now start talking about a universal decision of equity by all people of Imo State. But for now, the one man that is unjustifiably removed has not said that he is not running for the governorship. Yes, the people who were injured are the Okigwe people. They were short-changed and deserve the apologies. When Ohakim declares intention to run, Owerri Zone will now see that he has just one term and he is the only man who is qualified to complete a second term, and this man is the answer to the charter. So we should let him go back and complete his term. That is justice. That is fairness, and then you share in equity.

In 2014, Father Mbaka, during a church service in Enugu State, apologized to Ohakim.

I also remember that the Catholic Church in Owerri has, at an event at the Protea Hotel, Owerri, in 2014 given Ohakim an award of excellence as the best governor

and told him to let the bygone be bygone. The Archbishop at the time reminded him how he was nice to the Catholic Church and returned mission schools to the church and also gave them the subvention to run the schools. I remember all that. But is that the apology? I say no. You insulted him in public, and it was an open insult. There was a black mass against him by the church. There were all kinds of things to damage the image of an innocent man. The proper thing to do is to come back to the public, go back to the marketplace, and announce thatw Ohakim didn't do what we said he did. An opportunity has come for the church to now say we are sorry.

Do you think the church will take this challenge to apologize?

I don't know. But they are preaching to us to always go back and confess our sins. If you hurt your brother, please go back to him and say, "I'm sorry" for God to accept your apologies. Isn't it? I'm not asking the church to, but they should know where they went wrong and make amends. If I were them too, I would ask that the Reverend Father, who was said to have been flogged or beaten by Ohakim, should even make an open speech about whether he was really beaten.

Are you worried that for 13 years now, the Reverend Father that was allegedly assaulted has not uttered a word?

He has been transferred to America. But right there in America, he preaches forgiveness and confession of sin. I am a Catholic, but if you must talk about true confession, it's not the private confession I go to the Reverend Father to make when the person I offended is still hurting. Go and reconcile with your brother. That is the proper thing to do. You have to go back and make amends with your brother. Ohakim is our brother. I am an Imo man, and we are supposed to be brothers.

That is why I am also believing in the old national anthem. The words there are more meaningful than Arise Oh Compatriots. Which compatriot is arising? Let us talk about our unity. Except for the boundaries, and with the development of Imo State, it is becoming a city state. In this our village, there are more non-indigenes living here than the owners of this village. Therefore, I prefer to be more of an Imo man than saying I am an Owerri Zone man. We don't all accept ourselves as Owerri Zone, and there are nations within Owerri Zone. We are divided into blocks. So what will divide us will still divide us when it comes to the turn of Owerri Zone without a proper arrangement.

Please, tell us about yourself for the purpose of this interview?

Thank you. Paddy Obinna is a long story of many chapters. It is now over eight major long chapters, so it can cover 80 books. So we have to narrow it down to the fact that, I thank God, I am who I am, aging on gracefully. I was born an artist, from a parental background of teachers, who were very skilled people. Looking at my parlour, you would see an organ - that organ continues to remind me of my father and mother, who were organists. They played music together. My mother was also a domestic teacher, while my father was a teacher and a headmaster, and he ended up being called Mr. Thorough. Mr. Thorough was a man who did everything and asked you to look back and ask yourself whether you are thorough; whether you have done it efficiently. That is the background of Ndaa Paddy Obinna, and that has carried me on through secondary to higher institutions, to colleges, within and without.

As an artist, I didn't study arts, even in secondary school, up to the Cambridge level. No, they never taught me Arts in secondary school, but I was taught technical drawing, woodwork, and metalwork. I was already skilled in my secondary school days. Because when you now look at the courses then in school, like Geometry which teaches you patterns, squares, circles, triangles and rectangles and all that, and you discover that they are playing a lot of roles in my Arts form today. So this is a foundation education that is lost within the school system, and that's why I have been bothered about ensuring that we take handcraft back to the elementary and secondary schools, instead of stuffing us with the classics of those, like those days when we studied Latin and French and History and all that.

How many countries have you travelled to?

I have visited not less than 10 countries, including Turkey, Germany, Holland, which is also called The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Britain and the different countries of America that make one country, one United States. So, I have been more educated by travelling. That is why I said my education is from the universal university. I am a skilled man, more than a certificate man. What I do is my certificate.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)



Voice of The Nation

Let FG end gas flaring in 2030

THE National Oil Spill Detection Remediation Agency (NOSDRA) has revealed that Nigeria lost N569 billion or about \$372 million to gas flaring in the first quarter of 2024. This represents about 106.3 billion standard cubic feet (scf) of gas. The estimate of gas flared by oil companies in the country is put at 2.53 trillion scf annually. All the deadlines given by the federal government to end gas flaring in the country could not stop the colossal economic waste.

Available figures show that the money lost to gas flaring by oil companies could power over four million homes. It is unfortunate that despite these huge losses, and the health and environmental hazards of gas flaring, the federal government has not been able to rein in the oil firms involved in the evil practice. The oil firms have also not been prompt in paying the penalties for their actions. According to the NOSDRA report, the revenue loss for the four months in review was 14.21 per cent higher than the \$325.7 million (N498 billion) lost to gas flaring in the same period in 2023.

At a time when the government is facing acute financial crisis and cannot afford the new national minimum wage demanded by organised labour, the NOSDRA explained that the country would have received N521 billion or \$325 million for penalties from offending oil companies for the four months period. Sadly, the penalties were hardly paid. Furthermore, the amount of gas flared between January and April 2024 emitted 3.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which could generate 10,600 gigawatt hours (Gwh).

In comparison, the 93.1 billion scf of gas flared in the same period in 2023 emitted about 4.9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and could generate about 9,300Gwh. The offending oil firms, including Shell Petroleum, Mobil, Chevron and Elf, are reportedly liable for penalties totaling N285 billion or \$186 million.

The federal government should demonstrate seriousness in ending gas flaring. Last year, NOSDRA revealed that the Nigeria lost N702 billion between January and November 2023 to gas flaring. This translates to 241 standard cubic feet (scf) of gas. It also represents 18.9 per cent increase compared to 195.5 percent of scf flared in the corresponding period of 2022. This unbridled gas flaring is unac-

ceptable and must be stopped forthwith.

The volume of gas flared during the period under review was equivalent to carbon dioxide emissions of 673 million tonnes. Also, oil companies operating offshore are reported to have flared 132.9 million scf, while those operating onshore have flared 108.1 million scf. Last year, the House of Representatives vowed to probe the huge loss of revenue caused by gas flaring. Also, President Bola Tinubu, at last year's Conference on Climate Change (COP28) in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, pledged Nigeria's commitment to end gas flaring. His promise came on the heels of the current global push to reduce methane emissions and other greenhouse gases.

No long ago, the federal government set in motion plans to check gas flaring with the approval of 139 investors to commercialise gas flares from the 48 gas-flare sites across the country. The successful investors emerged from over 300 firms that responded to government's request. Little has been heard from that plan. Statistics from the Nigerian gas tracker, an arm of NOSDRA, show that flared natural gas in Nigeria was valued at \$685 million as of November 2022.

In today's carbon constrained world, where fossil fuel is becoming less popular, natural gas has become vital in bridging the gap in petrol consumption for many oil and gas-producing nations. Nigeria is among the top ten gas flaring countries in the world, and the second biggest gas flaring country in the world. Others are Russia, Iran, Iraq, United States, Algeria and Kazakhstan.

Three years ago, former President Muhammadu Buhari promised at the United Nations (UN) that Nigeria would work in collaboration with the rest of the international community to end gas flaring in 2030. It will be a remarkable achievement if this goal is realised. It is sad that successive administrations have promised to end gas flaring but failed.

According to the World Bank report, gas flaring in Nigeria persists mainly due to economic constraints such as lack of appropriate regulation and political will to deal with the problem. The call to end gas flaring is more urgent now than ever. What is needed includes the political will and the regulatory framework to deal with offending oil companies.

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The paranoid style of governance



**TUESDAY WITH
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HISTORY sometimes provides a striking opportunity for understanding the interplay between leaders and circumstances. It also provides a valuable look at both changeless dynamics of power, the changing structure of political system and utterances of those that society accords recognition and respect. Whether they deserve such honour, times and circumstances almost always become the best judge. That's why history often vindicates the just. Nonetheless, the historical environment of every democracy may differ, but the circumstances do provide a panoramic view of what drives a leader and those who surround him. Let's go back in time, just briefly.

At a press conference at the Freedom Park in Lagos, December 2, 2014, Nobel laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka, in response to what he called an "emergency of dire public concern" in Nigeria, came hard on the then President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. He described Jonathan as "worst than Nebuchadnezzar". If you may recall, Nebuchadnezzar was one of the ancient biblical Babylonian autocrats that ever lived. Soyinka said that Nigeria under the leadership of Jonathan had been cast into a furnace in the manner of the three Jewish young men, Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego. And I ask: Where is the Nobel laureate now after he assured Nigerians last year that he would comment on President Tinubu's performance after one year in office?

Wherever he is, he may not be too far away. Why has Soyinka been so quiet these days, even after the federal government named the recently inaugurated Abuja arterial highway in

after him? Or is he busy renewing his American passport, which he vowed he would throw away if Donald Trump won the 2016 American presidential election. Trump won, anyway. The same way Chief Bode George swore that he would go into exile if Tinubu won the 2023 presidential election. George hasn't gone anywhere. He is now a "new convert" of Tinubu. Who says Nigerian politics is not a fun to follow? Again, I ask, why is the voice of our esteemed Nobel laureate always heard when matters concerning Mr. Peter Obi and the 'Obidient Movement' are involved? Anyway, who takes the Nobel laureate seriously anymore? That's what happens when 'elders' sit on the fence at a critical time that their attention is needed.

Looking back, and now, Soyinka misfired. He played the ostrich when he attacked Jonathan, the same way he's obsessed with Obi, throwing volleys and tantrums with no evidence why Obi should be barred from contesting the 2027 presidential election. Is Soyinka afraid of Obi and why? Who is now worse than Nebuchadnezzar? Definitely not Jonathan. An attempt to find answers to these questions leads to yet two gritty questions: why does the performance of every incumbent President in Nigeria appear to be worse than that of his predecessor? Why is Nigeria's present generation of politicians not measuring up on the scale of leadership test? Are Nigerians better off today than they were this time last year? For our Muslim brothers who are rounding off the Sallah holidays today, is the cost of a ram today cheaper than it was last year?

Nigeria is at a critical juncture today and everyone must take a stand. If you think the present administration cares for you, you probably have not heard what Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, Governor of Anambra State, said last week when he featured at The Platform, an event organised by The Covenant Nation Church, in Lagos. Soludo had lamented with an ironic graphic evidence that while the government will give us excuses that the "country is broke, elected officials continue to live in denial and show off flamboyant lifestyles to the detriment of the masses." That's why the federal government will continue to stonewall on a new minimum wage, and state governments saying they will not be able to pay N60,000 minimum wage, yet they are living in obscene opulence,

and federal and state lawmakers are driving expensive cars bought with public resources.

That's why government had to spent a hefty \$13.9 million (about N21bn) to renovate the official residence of VP Kashim Shettima, yet the country cannot afford to pay workers a living wage. Again, the country is 'broke', but the House of Representatives has given approval for the purchase of two additional aircraft to the presidential fleet. As Soludo succinctly captured the foolish lifestyle of political officeholders in the country, many Nigerians are hungry, while the ruling class continues to live extravagantly at the expense of the poor masses. "Let's come clean and straight with Nigerians," he said. Truth sometimes hurts. That's the message that Soludo has delivered, even though he's part of the ruling class. But he's against the wasteful spending that has become commonplace among the present crop of public officials. It calls for drastic cut in the cost of governance. But is the President listening? Last week (June 11), one of America's most influential newspapers, *The New York Times*, exposed the filthy rich in Nigeria amid extreme poverty among its vast population. The paper wrote, "Nigeria is facing its worst economic crisis in decades, with skyrocketing inflation, a national currency in free-fall, and millions of people struggling to buy food. Only two years ago, Africa's biggest economy, Nigeria is projected to drop to 4th place this year". The "pain", the paper added, "is widespread... people die in stampedes, desperate for free sacks of rice. Hospitals are overrun with women wracked by spasms from calcium deficiencies". It says the current crisis in Nigeria is rooted largely in two major implementation changes by Tinubu, 14 months ago: subsidy removal on petrol and the floating of the naira, which together have caused major increase in prices of essential commodities and medicines. That's the gritty truth of where Nigeria and its citizens are today, yet the government and its officials continue to live in denial.

Instead of dealing with the challenges that confront the country, the government is pursuing perceived political opponents and perfecting plans on how to destroy businesses in which these individuals have interests. Muhammadu Buhari did the same thing, and nothing happened. This is pure paranoid style of politics.

It reminds one of the classic essay written in November 1964, titled, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," by Richard Hotstradter, an acclaimed historian and public intellectual. The essay, which x-rayed American electoral politics, also offers an invaluable perspective on contemporary domestic affairs. It's relevant to the present style of Nigerian politics. According to Hotstradter, paranoid style of politics expresses itself in three habits: first, "heated exaggeration", second, "suspiciousness" and, third, "conspiratorial fantasy." In a paranoid style of politics, ideas matter very little. Truth is always the first casualty. He argues that a President who suffers from such delusional conditions often embarks on "unchecked power that is only "reserved for kings and potentates."

Hotstradter also noted that, in such a political atmosphere, no matter the growing chorus of outrage over abuses of power, the President is unlikely to pay heed. Tools deployed by the state to rein in political opponents include tapping into phone conversations of such political adversaries. The President, he explains in the essay, may not be a 'dictator' but he "does manifest the characteristics of one in embryonic form." Can you now pick the reasoning in Hotstradter's essay and situate it to Nigerian politics of today? Any difference? Not much. This classic essay was written in Barry Goldwater's insurgency in American politics. You may recall that Goldwater was most associated in American politics of the 1960s with anti-union work. He also articulated an alternative, radical interpretation of conservatism. He got humiliated in the outcome of the 1964 presidential election by Lyndon Johnson. Now, back to Nigeria. During his 'Democracy Day' (June 12) speech last Wednesday, President Tinubu raised the alarm over perceived threat he claimed was posed by "some individuals within the country to undermine democracy in the country." He also alleged that some persons were trying to exploit the current challenges facing the nation. His exact words, "we must be aware that there are those among us who will try to exploit current challenges to undermine, if not destroy this democracy for which so much has already been given. These people do not make things better but to subject all other

Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com

Deepening Nigeria's democracy

By **Ike Willie-Nwobu**

NIGERIA'S June 12 celebration of its democracy day is itself a historical thumbs up to the distance the country has covered in the past two decades. June 12, 1993, was the day Nigeria held an election deemed free and fair amidst a repressive military regime, which turned out to be a cruel charade that ushered in a more brutal military regime. The winner of that election, M.K.O Abiola, which was annulled, died in custody just a year before Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999. If history holds lessons for Nigeria's democracy, it is one of resilience and rootedness found in the will of the Nigerian people and repeatedly dipped in blood over the years – like at the Lekki Toll Gate in 2020. Twenty four years later after its epochal return, Nigeria's democracy is all cause for celebration especially with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in power. The president may be flawed, like every other person and president. His presidency may be as imperfect as the country and humanity that sustain it, but the small steps made so far show a man who knows the stringent demands of democracy and is prepared to walk its painful path.

President Tinubu's readiness to embrace the sacrifices that democracy demands departs from the misadventures of his predecessor who preferred a militarized kind of democracy marked by understated autocracy and insularity. The clear difference between the two governments can be explained by the different backgrounds of the two men in charge. One a former military coup plotter, the other a democrat at heart who once found the courage to go on exile to court the democracy he believed in. It also has something to do with courage and counsel. Where Muhammadu Buhari preferred to surround himself with tribal leaders from the North, giving their parochial views the gravitas of law, President Tinubu has shown the kind of openness that democracy is so fond of. This key difference in personality and poli-



Nigerians must agree to work together to sustain their democracy. It is beyond President Tinubu who is only a temporary totem of the transience of power tethered to Aso Rock. It is also beyond any ethnic or religious group. Sustaining Nigeria's democracy is a fight for the present but especially for the future. Nigerians must eschew a return to the past, especially for the sake of those fixed in the country's future. For Nigerians to remain free of the cage that dictatorship is, vigilance is key."

tics has reflected in appointments made so far. While Muhammadu Buhari deemed only people of his ethnic and religious stock fit enough for key security and government positions, mostly ignoring people from the Southeast, President Tinubu has been willing to deal every section of the country a fairer hand. This inclusive approach has been key to tackling the insecurity that reduced the country to such chaos between 2015 and 2023. It has also taken a lot of sting out of secessionist agitations within the country.

There is a distinct feeling that he will do more the longer he stays in office. The president's approach is the balm that democracy offers, the elixir to the divisions that are inevitable in the coming together of many disparate parts. Like mathematics, democracy is about numbers and power. For democracy to operate smoothly, the majority as well as the minority must have access to clear and uncluttered space at the table. While power must remain with the people being the majority, democracy is often fair enough to include the minority whose feeling of exclusion can lead to dangerous levels of animosity and hostility. In a country where democracy has not always reflected diversity, reducing political appointments to ethnic or sectarian affairs is a recipe for the kind of disaster that was the Muhammadu Buhari presidency. In electing Tinubu who went into exile in the days when Nigerians fought to restore democracy, Nigerians went for someone who had made sacrifices for the country and democracy, someone who knew and loved democracy enough to fight and flee for it.

The 2023 elections may have been deeply flawed the way Nigeria's democracy has remained deeply flawed since 1999. But something is cooking, and has been cooking for twenty-four unbroken years. In a continent brimming with dictators and their pseudo democracy, it is no mean feat for a country of Nigeria's size and challenges to have emerged from thirteen

years of military rule to sustain democracy for more than two decades. Slowly, Nigeria, surrounded by poor, landlocked crisis-ridden countries, has become a beacon of democracy. The military who have seized power in Mali, Guinea, Niger, Burkina Faso and Gabon as well as elsewhere in Africa know that Nigeria's model repudiates as well as rebukes them for truncating democracy in their countries. President Tinubu showed as much in strongly reprimanding the coup plotters in Niger Republic shortly after he assumed office.

Nigeria remains a deeply divided country with many people waiting for the slightest opportunity to flash their ethnic and religious cards. It is also a country of many dictators and potential dictators many of whom have been sworn in as state governors. But with each day that passes, democracy makes a giant stride, increasing the distance between the country and the days when the military caused the country to bleed nonstop. This is worth celebrating, especially because stability comes from consistency and continuity and Nigeria's democracy continues. Democracy means freedom beginning from free speech, which is the fulcrum of all other freedoms. It means the freedom to vote and be voted for, it means freedom under the law. What democracy means is indescribable, and Nigerians must guard against the darkness that imperils what is invaluable precisely because it is indescribable. Nigerians must agree to work together to sustain their democracy. It is beyond President Tinubu who is only a temporary totem of the transience of power tethered to Aso Rock. It is also beyond any ethnic or religious group. Sustaining Nigeria's democracy is a fight for the present but especially for the future. Nigerians must eschew a return to the past, especially for the sake of those fixed in the country's future. For Nigerians to remain free of the cage that dictatorship is, vigilance is key.

• *Willie-Nwobu writes via ikewilly9@gmail.com*

Politics & Power

Excitement as Mutfwang pursues peace, targets agriculture to drive Plateau economy

By Henry Uche

FROM one part of the country to the other, critical observers are engrossed in stocktaking with the state governors as the main focus. The reasons are not farfetched as majority of them completed their one year in office on May 29, 2024. One of the states in perspective here is Plateau State under Governor Caleb Mutfwang of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Currently in Plateau State, the slogan on everyone's lips is "The Time is Now; The Land is Green." This is because beyond the signature white and green colours associated with Governor Mutfwang, the state is aggressively pursuing peace and agriculture to drive its economy.

The governor has consistently stressed the urgent need to secure the land and the people saying, "The Time is Now to secure the future of the people and to make a deliberate effort to develop the land for the people, by the people, and with the people."

To make good his promises, Governor Mutfwang in collaboration with other critical stakeholders is working to maintain relative peace in the state. He has directed a large-scale mechanized cultivation of thousands of hectares of land to boost food security, empower the people, and secure the land.

Recall that many communities in the state have been deserted due to senseless attacks by armed men and last year, the governor directed that 900 hectares of land be cultivated to ensure the land doesn't lay fallow.

This year, apart from designating the state into three crop zones for the cultivation of crops of comparative advantage on 4,000 hectares of land in each zone, the state-owned Agriculture Services Training Centre and Marketing Limited, ASTC has commenced the cultivation of 6,000 hectares of land in the

displaced communities to ensure their source of livelihood is restored.

Speaking on his efforts to drive the state's economy, the governor said, "We have been tackling the security challenges but after security, we have to survive. In addressing the challenges of poverty, we looked at building the Plateau economy that is sustainable beyond oil revenue using some critical economic drivers like agriculture which is natural to us.

"Food production in the state has dropped because of the challenges, we had earlier mobilized resources and got the ASTC to cultivate 900 hectares of land for the displaced communities but it was late; they could not plant much, only soybeans.

"This year, we have divided the state into three agricultural zones, the Southern belt will focus on the local governments that have the advantage in rice, palm oil, and yam production. We are working at achieving international standards in food production.

"In the Central belt, there is a strategic advantage in Irish potatoes and maize production. We will aggressively promote the marketing of acha (fonio).

"The Northern zone primarily produces fruits and vegetables, coffee, flowers, and wheat, at least 4,000 hectares of land will be cultivated in each zone to boost food production. We must not lose our contribution to the nation's food basket.

"We are also looking at reducing post-harvest losses that is why we set up the Plateau Commodities Market company to improve the marketing opportunities available to farmers."

6,000 Hectares cultivated in Displaced Communities

To assist the displaced persons in earning a living, the governor directed an extensive



• Mutfwang

mechanized farming intervention for 6,000 hectares of land across the communities using the ASTC.

Flagging off the exercise on Monday in the Mangu Local Government, the State Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Samson Bugama, reiterated the governor's concern about the displaced persons and efforts being intensified to return them home.

His words, "Today marks the beginning of a comprehensive engagement in the field. The strategy is to provide mechanization services to displaced communities and help them return to their livelihoods.

"The governor has commissioned the mechanization service intervention. We are targeting 6,000 hectares as resources are available and would do the minimum of 3,000 hectares. We will provide seeds to bring a bumper harvest and provide food.

"The intervention focuses primarily on dis-

placed communities. However, the scope may extend to other areas as resources allow. Our major goal is to resettle displaced communities back into their farming activities.

"Governor Mutfwang is deeply concerned about the hunger problem, and this intervention is a deliberate effort to boost food production and reduce prices."

The Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of ASTC, Susan Bentu explained that the four-week cultivation period would cover areas in the three zones of the state, with a focus on maize, potatoes, and rice, depending on the zone.

She noted: "ASTC is a household name, we are dedicated to assisting farmers, whether in rain-fed or dry seasons. This intervention programme which starts from crop cultivation to harvest is free, the state government covers all the costs.

"The cultivation will last for about four weeks, the communities in the Northern Zone are Jol, Wereng, Kwi, Rim, Bachit, Sho, Vom-Chol, some parts of Jos East, and the BARC Farms.

"The Central Zone will cover Tam, Aloghom, Vodni Pushit, Changal, Kombili, Washna, Larkas, Longkat Irrigation, Chip, Mabel, Burtura, Manguna, and Mbar communities. The Southern Zone will include Wase River, Shendam Dam, Jenta Yelwa, Shimangkar, Pandam, Sabon Gida, Namu, and Gidan Adamu.

"Our vision is to raise self-sufficient farmers, financially stable and empowered, contributing to the state's food security and economic stability."

She stressed, "The intervention in mechanized farming for farmers, is principally in displaced areas as well as for those in large clusters.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

Why Soludo deserves second term – Ifediba

By Dickson Okafor

DR. Uche Ifediba, National President, Advocacy for Transparent Governance and Promotion Initiative (ATGPI) has said the achievements of Governor Charles Soludo of Anambra State within three years in office will earn him a second term in 2025.

Ifediba gave his assessment of President Ahmed Bola Tinubu's one year in office among other issues.

As President Tinubu marked one year in office, how would you rate the performance of his administration?

So far, it has been continuing expectations by Nigerians that things will be better but under the one year of the present administration led by Tinubu, there is gross economic hardship in the country. Prices of food stuff and essential items have gone beyond the reach of most Nigerians due to unexpected removal of fuel subsidy. So, for the past one year, families are in pains because of economic hardship. I urge President Tinubu to re-examine his economic policy so that Nigerians can heave a sigh of relief.

What is your take on the recent meeting between former vice President and Presidential candidate of PDP in the 2023 Presidential election, Atiku Abubakar and his counterpart Peter Obi of Labour Party which is geared towards realignment of the main opposition political parties to merge and wrest power from the ruling APC in 2027?

That will be a formidable step if it comes to fruition for us to have a strong opposition party that can keep the ruling APC in check. Also, it will prevent Nigeria from sliding into one party state. A strong opposition party will help to strengthen democracy in the country. So, it depends on the electorate to decide in 2027 if they are satisfied with the ruling APC or they want a real change, time will tell.



• Ifediba

As an exponent of reelection of Governor Charles Soludo in 2025, what are some of the achievements of the governor in Anambra State that has endeared him to the people which you think will make them reelect him?

If going by the huge amounts he has invested in human resources development, you will think that Governor Soludo has spent all the state funds on education and giving employment to the citizens, then wait and see what he is doing in the modern city transformation and in the infrastructural sector. Soludo's selling-point became clear on assuming office, he promptly declared a state of emergency on roads in the state, and with the spirit of providing 'Solution' he quickly followed it up with matching action. He flagged off the construction of hundreds of kilometers of roads across all the Local government areas of the state and most of them have been completed. One unique thing about his projects is that they are evenly and fairly distributed to all parts of the state. No community needs to lobby or have influential personalities before their areas could attract government projects. With Governor Soludo, every community is important, every area is strategic. He

builds bridges and flyovers, and constructs new roads while widening and dualising some of the existing ones. For instance, several streets in Onitsha, the commercial nerve center of the state, have, through better road construction and lighting been transformed into facilities befitting a modern city. Needless to mention, Awka the state capital has witnessed greater infrastructural augmentation in the last two years. It is fast assuming the prestigious status of the capital of a bubbling smart mega city that Anambra is on transit to. So far, the state has become a huge construction site as massive road work simultaneously goes on in every part of the state. While constructing durable roads, the government is also making unprecedented strides in erosion control.

Many may not see these as being spectacular considering the fact that they are replications of what former Governor Chris Ngige began in 2003 which former Governors Peter Obi and Willie Obiano sustained, do you see these as enough performance that will guarantee Soludo's reelection next year?

Yes, the achievements are spectacular and so far has met the needs of people. You may be surprised that since its creation in 1991, Anambra State has not got a permanent Government House or a Secretariat except the make-shift arrangements that all the past governors had managed with. Perhaps because of the gigantic nature of those projects and the huge cost involved, they had all shied away from them. All the same, the present government's vision and mission cannot be realized by evading such big and vital projects. Thus, the multipurpose 'solution' had, once again, to be applied with decisive certainty. Before clocking two years in office, Governor Soludo embarked on holistic housing development first with the construction of Government House and Government lodge including the expansion of Commissioners' Quarters as well as making impressive progress in housing the judiciary, and so on. These are enough progress and performance by Governor

Soludo that will warrant the people to reelect him in 2025. Without doubt, Governor Soludo has come to lay the foundation of Anambra State after thirty-two years of its creation. Looking at the massive structures put in place in these areas, many have continued to wonder how the funds for these and other numerous projects are generated. However, the huge success actually lies the 'Solution' which to me, is the judicious deployment of state resources for problem solving and prevention purposes with expert managerial prudence and zero tolerance of corruption.

But some political heavyweights have declared interest to contest the governorship position; they include Sen Uche Ekwunife, Sen Ifeanyi Ubah and Sen Andy Uba and others and with these caliber of politicians in the race, do you think Soludo stands the chance to emerge victorious?

His scorecard is an evidence that the people want him to continue the good work he is doing. For instance, the health sector is not left out in the development and transformation spree. The government has announced that it will build one strong General Hospital in each local government area, and work has commenced. While it has built and equipped eye Care Centres in some of the existing ones, the governor has declared free antenatal care and free delivery to all pregnant mothers in the state. Nevertheless, Soludo has embarked on the renovation of three General Hospitals in the state which include Ekwulobia, Enugwu-Ukwu and Umueri. The human face of the government is also glaring, particularly considering the immediate measures it took to cushion the hardship brought by the recent fuel, subsidy removal in the country. Governor Soludo has among other things, removed tax payment by business owners with less than a hundred thousand Naira operating capital. He also reduced the taxes payable by transport operators like Keke, bus and truck drivers.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

The Lifeline

How bandits killed family of four, pastor, wife, others in Plateau

• Stakeholders preach peace, seek justice for victims

From **Jude Dangwam, Jos**

THE months of May and June will always bring ugly memories to the Sule family of Tim Naanle in Bwai District of Mangu LGA following the killing of four members of the family, as well as Kimakpa village of Bassa Local Government Area of the state where five persons were murdered, including a pastor and his wife, by gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen in renewed attacks.

The renewed trend of operation by the marauders after the return of some peace in the two councils has also claimed the life of 13-year-old Nanshak Cletus of Aloghom village of Mangu, who was macheted to death on May 28, 2024, in his village by some suspected Fulani militia while struggling at a tin mining site for survival.

This also followed the killing of a pastor of Assemblies of God Church in Kimakpa village in Bassa LGA of Plateau State and his wife, as well as three others who paid with their lives.

Mr. Enoch Markus, a native of Mwangavul in Mangu, told Daily Sun that the attackers came heavily on the mining site in the early hours of Tuesday, around 7am, and killed the 13 year-old boy in cold blood, as other people run for their lives from the marauders.

"Nanshak Cletus of Aloghom was macheted to death on May 28 in Aloghom village by Fulani militia. He was struggling at the tin mining site as a means for survival but they came around 7am, attacked and killed the 13 year-old boy," he explained.

National publicity secretary of Mwangavul Development Association, Mr. Lawrence Kyarshik, had earlier disclosed that suspected Fulani mercenaries have attacked Tim Naanle village in Bwai District of Mangu LGA, Plateau State on two occasions where four members of a family were killed.

"These are the names of those killed by the Fulani militias on the 21/5/2024 at exactly 8:42pm. Rinfwang Haruna (20) was killed by the Fulani militia. Also, on 22/5/2024 10:08pm Raymond Sule (father, 38), Victoria Sule (his aunt, 42), Disa Sule (Mother, 67) were killed," he lamented.

The new trend is being accompanied with destruction of farmlands as maize at their tender stage were pulled out while planted potatoes were removed from the ground. Gardens with economic crops worth millions of naira at Tilengpaat village of Pushit District in Mangu local government area of the state were equally destroyed even when Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang reiterated that no one will stop the cultivation of farmlands across the troubled councils and the state by at large.

Daily Sun gathered that the sad development is coming after similar operations were carried out on farmlands at Vodni community in the same Pushit District of Mangu local government area of the state few days after a security meeting between the natives and Fulani at the instance of the council chairman for truce among the warring parties.

The National Youth President of Mwangavul Youth Movement Worldwide, Dawap Sunday Dankaka, has point accusing fingers at Fulani herdsmen, alleging that destructive mercenaries of-



Some of the destroyed farmlands and gardens with cabbage



Stakeholders at the News Central Television Town Hall Meeting for warring parties held at Crispian Hotel in Plateau State

ten moved for about 15 to 16 kilometers to come and perpetrates the evil act on farmlands.

"Just to draw your attention to this again, a whole garden was destroyed by the Fulani in the early hours of Sunday 26/5/2024 before day break at Tilengpaat village of Pushit District, Mangu LGA Plateau State.

"I feel that arrest should be made and people be made to pay for their deeds. Please do something about this before it escalates," he cried out.

Kimakpa village in Kwall District of Bassa LGA of Plateau State also share in these renewed attacks that came in the midnight of June 2, 2024 when the evil men invaded the community, leaving behind five residents dead at Ari Songo (Songo's House) Kimakpa Kwall District of the council.

The National Publicity Secretary of Irigwe Development Association (IDA), Sam Jugo, in a statement, noted that criminal elements came in their numbers with heavy weapons and killed "Pastor Dauda Dalyop (63) of Assemblies of God Church Kwall, his wife, Mrs Chummy Dauda (57) as well as Mr. Chwe Ajuhs (26), Mr. Joshua Kusa (45) and Mrs Rikwe Doro (43).

Two persons were reported to been severely

injured and were undergoing treatment. He further disclosed that troops of Operation Safe Haven (OPSH) were instantly mobilized to avert further genocide, adding that there is an uneasy calm in Kwall district of the state as locals have been tasked to be vigilant.

"This sad incident came just two days after some disgruntled elements ambushed some Rigwe youths on motorcycle while returning from Gero mining site and killed instantly Mr Irmiya Musa Timbi and severely injured one other person," said Jugo.

He called on local community members to upscale their vigilance, by avoiding night movements to distant destinations and suppress the urge for reprisal or taking the law in their hands and give the security agencies the benefit of the doubt.

According to the publicity secretary, "In as much as we are quite saddened by this condemnable incident, we cannot afford to aggravate the situation by seeking self help at this time. We call on the security agencies to do the needful by fishing out the culprits so that the affected will see justice being served as that is the only way to restore the confidence of our people."



• Late Pastor Dauda Dalyop and his wife, Mrs. Chummy Dauda

The Coalition of Ethics Youth Nationalities in Plateau State has described the ongoing trend as not far from economic control of resources following the pattern of operations the attackers have been using over the years. The marauders, over the years, strike on innocent communities and immediately move in to occupied such communities rich with mineral resources.

The President of the Ethics Youth Nationalities in Plateau State, Mr Paul Dekete, shared the collective experience of the communities from 2017 to 2023 which are concept of land grabbing and annexation of various villages after displacing the natives by the attackers.

"From our collective community experiences, we strongly believe there is a curious connection between the areas where our people have suffered the worse forms of displacement and denial of access to the rich natural and mineral endowment of such locations.

"It's common knowledge that hamlets and villages in Barkin Ladi, Bassa, Bokkos, Mangu and Riyom local government areas are richly endowed with resources such as favourable weather conditions, natural tourist sites, fertile soils, water bodies, cassiterite, columbite and so many other minerals.

"It is instructive, therefore, to judiciously note the rapidly changing economic and occupational demographics in the occupied territories," he lamented.

The suspected Fulani herder are said to have in Gashish District of Barkin Ladi LGA currently taken over the economic activities of the area, having largely displaced native farmers from their ancestral areas. As the exploitation and domination of the people is evidenced at local produce markets and transport businesses in and around the said District.

"It's quite provoking to imagine that foundation of churches that were destroyed by these terrorist elements have overnight been reconstructed as mosques to the utter disregard of the fundamental rights of the displaced people. A case in point is the Rankum (Mahanga) in Jol, Ranchos and Kak in Sopp, all in Riyom local government area.

"Every murder strikes at the heart of civilization; it is an attack on all mankind." - Rae Foley

"For the avoidance of doubt, over 151 hamlets and villages are either totally annexed or effectively being occupied by the Fulani militants, bandits or terrorists in the aforementioned local government of Barkin Ladi, Bassa, Bokkos, Mangu and Riyom. A worrisome dimension is that this vicious trend is still ongoing, and is assuming greater intensity and sophistry as was witnessed during the Christmas-Eve massacre that claimed over 257 human lives and millions of Naira worth of properties," he lamented

The youths body reiterated that it is their firm belief that the victims of the massacres deserved to get back their lands from the forceful occupiers. The urged government at all levels to do the needful beyond journalistic condemnation of such onslaughts, killings, displacements and land grabbing.

Meanwhile, a coalition of civil societies across Nigeria in commemoration of the 2024 National Day of Mourning again called on President Bola Tinubu to fulfill his constitutional duty of ensuring the security and well-being of Nigerians, account for the missing and the dead and ensure justice for the victims of various atrocities across the country.

The coordinator of the National Day of Mourning (NDOM) and Team Lead, Srarina Initiative for Peace Justice and Development (SIPJAD), Redzie D. Jugo, lamented that the intractable insecurity in Nigeria has earned it a place as one of the most insecure countries in the world.

Jugo stated: "Nigeria ranked 144th out of 163 countries on the Global Peace Index in 2024, sandwiched between countries in active warfare and 5th on the Global Conflict Index, ranking as extremely vulnerable to conflict.

"Since the commemoration of the last National Day of Mourning #NDOM2023 on May 28, 2023, and President Tinubu's first year in office, our records show that at least 4416 people were killed and at least 4334 were abducted in incidents of mass atrocities across the country, aside the regular crimes of armed robbery and other forms of criminality."

They expressed concern that the incidents of violence have reduced the citizens'

right to life and dignity guaranteed under Sections 33 and 34 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) to a mere inscription.

The frequency of the atrocities is said to have kept Nigerians in a state of perpetual fear, uncertainty and is impacting negatively on social cohesion, economy and education across the country.

They disclosed that the central part of Nigeria account for the highest number of fatalities even though no region of the country has been spared in the last one year under Tinubu's watch.

"The North Central region has accounted for the highest number of fatalities from mass atrocities, with at least 1,600 lives claimed in terror pillages, communal clashes, and herdsmen attacks," he said.

The North Central was closely followed by the North West, with at least "1,136 killed mainly in terror pillages." Particularly hard-hit were communities like Maradun local government in Zamfara State, which has endured at least five separate incidents of terror pillages in 2023, a series of attacks that claimed the lives of at least 118 people.

"At least 904 people were killed in the North East in the past year. Boko Haram/ISWAP activities still account for the highest number of atrocious killings in the Northeast, particularly in Borno State, with pockets of incidents in Yobe and Adamawa states. We also noted an upsurge in insurgent group clashes. For example, at least 82 Boko Haram insurgents were killed in an inter-insurgent group clash in the Kukawa Local Government Area of Borno State.

"The South-East recorded the highest number of killings in the southern part of the country, with at least 344 people killed, and most of these killings occurred in Imo and Anambra states. As reported in previous years, most of the killings were due to secessionist activities in the region. Cult gangs, communal clashes and pockets of banditry attacks continued to cost lives in the South-South region, where at least 272 people were killed. In the Southwest, at least 160 people were killed due to cult clashes, herdsmen militia and other isolated attacks," Jugo explained.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)



•CSOs marking the National Day of Mourning in Jos



•Ashoms



•Dankaka

How Daily Sun gave lifeline to blind pastor

From **Noah Ebije**, Kaduna

IN June 2022, Daily Sun ran a story on a man who went blind shortly after training as a pastor in a theology school, Kaduna.

He is Mr. Ogana Aluka Marcel, 56, who had previously hawked and distributed newspapers and newsmagazines on the streets of Kaduna, capital of Kaduna State, for over 20 years before he decided to enrol into a school of theology, where he trained as a pastor.

Marcel said soon after the Daily Sun interview, some public-spirited Nigerians called and expressed empathy and indicated interest to sponsor him to a Braille reading and writing and vocational training centre, Lagos.

"I want to disclose that following The Sun interview in 2022 about my visual impairment, I received a lot of calls, encouragement and empathy. The interview helped a lot in bringing me to my present academic qualification at the training centre.

"So permit me once again to use this opportunity to appeal to the government at all levels to come to my aid because I want to go into full work of God, my challenges not withstanding. And to The Sun newspaper, keep up the good work you are doing for the less privileged in the society," Marcel said.

According to him, he took the opportunity offered by the Deeper Life Bible Church, Kaduna, to train at Nigeria Society for the Blind, Vocational and Training Centre, Oshodi, Lagos.

He told Daily Sun in this interview that he was able to complete the one-year training programme, having enrolled in January 2023 and completed it in December of the same year.

Marcel majored in Braille reading and writing, soap making, tie-and-dye and he was issued a certificate of proficiency by the centre.

The visually impaired pastor, who hails from Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State, told Daily Sun that he started having eye problems when he was posted to Danja Local Government Area of Katsina State to minister in a church in the area sometimes in 2020.

One fateful morning, he said his eyes became reddish and from that moment he began to move from one eye hospital to another across the country to seek remedy but to no avail.

At a point, he added, the medical experts concluded that it was too late to cure him of the eye infection because "the glaucoma had gone worst to withstand surgery."

He said despite his eye problems, there was no going back in doing God's work, and that all he needed was sponsorship that would provide him Braille educa-



•Marcel

tion and lift him into evangelism, thanking God that he has got the education.

He narrated his experience at the rehabilitation centre to Daily Sun. He said: "I was sponsored to the rehabilitation centre by Deeper Life Bible Church, Kaduna. It was a one year training programme. I started in January 2023 and completed the training in December 2023.

"We were given a certificate after the graduation. I was given a certificate in Braille reading and writing. The certificate also covers other courses that I attended like mobility and orientation.

"I also underwent vocational training where I learned how to make soap. It was a wonderful experience. On the first day at the centre, we were given guide materials by some visitors that came to school.

"On this particular day, I lost my way. I missed my track from the lecture hall going to the dining hall. It was a funny experience. We shared experiences among ourselves.

"There is this particular colleague who said that after his primary school education he got blind and as such he couldn't go further. He had to come to the centre to learn. Others said they got blind after their tertiary education.

"They found themselves at the centre to obtain this certificate. Another one told me that he got blind as a result of snake bite. One said he was born blind. These are some of the pathetic stories I listened to while I was there. So, to God be the glory. In our common challenge we were all happy at the centre. The centre was established in 1955.

"I realised that no matter your situation in life, you can still get to where you want academically or otherwise. The training is on two sides, academics and vocation, that is skills acquisition. For those

at the vocation, there is nylon rope making, beads making, flower base making and others. On academic side, we were taught ICT, mobility and orientation and other courses that were involved. So it was an experience that is memorable. We were involved in sports to keep ourselves fit.

"It is a place where a 15-year-old boy and a 78-year-old man can sit in the same classroom. We see ourselves as having a common challenge, that is blindness. The little I have learnt will serve as a foundation for me to build upon to get to whatever God has ordained in my life.

"My appeal is to the government because I heard of recent about passage of the bill for students loan scheme. I was so excited by the development. I pray to God to help them do what is ought to be done.

"I want this government to revisit the disability bill by the last administration. I want to also suggest that the loan scheme should be extended to the physically challenged persons in the society for equity and justice to prevail. I also want government to take head count of the blind people so that we should be abreast with authentic figure instead of relying on rumoured figure of over three million Nigerians being blind. It is a serious case that those blind people that are not exposed to the rehabilitation centre are really in pains. They have become liabilities in many homes. And that is why you hear of broken homes, suicide cases and others.

"I think government can intervene to reduce this socio-economic problem. Government should establish national eye treatment centre in all the geopolitical zones in the country because the only existing one is over stressed. Government should also establish vocational centres in these zones to cater for the blind to reduce their plight.

WOMAN OF THE SUN

Navigating through legal profession challenging for women – Uzokwe

By Bianca Iboma-Emefu

IFY Uzokwe works with the Federal Ministry of Justice, at the Ministry of Defence, Lagos. A member of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, Nigeria, Lagos chapter, Uzokwe passionately advocates for women's right while promoting the rights of vulnerable women, including children and girls through various platforms and organizations.

She recently celebrated her 50th birthday and donated food items to orphanages and widows in order to cushion the effects of present economic realities.

Uzokwe, in this a recent chat with Daily Sun, said navigating the legal profession is a challenging feat, especially for women. She also spoke on other issues.

How has the role of women changed from the past compared to the present?

In the past, women's roles were predominantly confined to the private sphere. They were expected to prioritize family and household responsibilities, often with limited access to education, employment, and participation in public life.

Women are the epitome of strength, love, sacrifice and courage. The role of women in today's world has changed significantly and for better. Women are now self-sufficient, well aware and financially independent. They have attained immense success in every field, whether it is sports, politics or academics.

What is the role of women in society today and what difference have they made?

Women are making a lot of differences around their environment and globally. They are challenging the status quo and working to create a more just and equitable society.

The future of women in society is very bright. Women are making progress in every area of life and play an essential role in shaping the world. Women are leaders, entrepreneurs, activists, and change agents. They are the future.

What can be done to support young women and girls to realize their potential?

We can help the next generation of women achieve their goals by sharing our knowledge and experience. We can also take time to understand and learn about the challenges they face. The more we know, the better equipped we are to advocate for positive change. We must denounce gender-based discrimination and violence. When we see something wrong, we must speak out against it. We need to invest in women-led initiatives and cultivate the culture of entrepreneurship as that can equally help create a more equitable economy.

Women play an important role in all aspects of society. They are caregivers, mothers, leaders, entrepreneurs, and activists. They are the pillars of the family and community. Women make significant contributions to the world and continue to break down barriers and achieve equality. We must all work together to create a world where women are valued, respected, and empowered.

Empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and countries. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential. In contributing their skills to the workforce, they raise happier and healthier children. Empowering



Uzokwe

women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and countries. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential.

How vital is the role women play in society to their empowerment?

Women are the pillars of the family and community. Despite the challenges they face, women remain resilient and determined to create a better world for themselves and future generations. They work to promote gender equality, end violence against women, and create a more inclusive and equitable society.

They are responsible for raising children, taking care of elderly parents and other family members, and running the household. Women's unpaid domestic work is essential to the functioning of society, but it is often undervalued and neglected. However, women still face discrimination in the workplace. They are

paid less than men for the same work and are less likely to be promoted to management positions. Women are also more likely to experience sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination.

Nigerian women consistently earn less than men in the legal profession, how do you bridge the gap?

Nigerian women in the legal profession earn on 15% less than their male counterparts. This pay gap is wider for women of colour, Black women facing the largest disparity in pay compared to their male colleagues. This discrepancy can be attributed to a number of factors, unconscious bias, lack of representation in leadership positions, and systemic barriers that prevent women from advancing in their careers.

Women are often perceived as less than men in traditionally male-dominated fields such as law. This bias can result in women

being passed over for promotions and pay raises, leading to lower overall earnings compared to their male colleagues.

Another factor that contributes to the wage gap in the legal profession in Nigeria is the lack of representation of women in leadership positions. Women make up a smaller percentage of partners and senior associates in law firms, which can limit their opportunities for career advancement and higher pay. Additionally, women in underdeveloped society face additional barriers to advancement due to intersectional discrimination that can compound the effects of gender bias.

Also, addressing these disparities, it is important for organizations in the legal profession to actively work towards closing the gender wage gap through policies that promote pay equity, transparency in salary negotiations, and opportunities for career advancement for women. Speaking about unconscious bias and creating a more inclusive work environment can also help to level the playing field for all women in the legal profession, regardless of race or ethnicity.

How would you describe the progress of females in the legal profession?

The number of female and male law school graduates has been almost equal for nearly a decade, yet the number of women remaining and advancing in the field does not reflect gender equality within the profession.

There are some hitches here and there that affect their climbing the ladder, but it gets better by the day.

What impacts have women in the legal profession made, what is their present state is in the industry and what lies ahead for them?

The legal profession has historically been male-dominated, with women facing numerous challenges and barriers to equality. However, significant progress has been made in recent years, with women making remarkable strides in the legal field.

Women have truly impacted, but we still have to strive harder.

This is why an organization like FIDA and other professional bodies are there for the advancement of female lawyers.

How can women be heard, seen and conquer in the legal profession, considering that it is a male-dominated career?

Navigating the legal profession is a challenging feat, especially for women. The distinct challenges that a female lawyer encounters while balancing her professional and personal life, basically seem impossible. This is part of what makes it look as if they are behind their male counterparts. The legal landscape has traditionally been a playground for male lawyers. However, the wind of change is blowing as clients now encourage law firms to increase women's roles within their teams.

What advice would you offer young women who aspire to reach the apex of their legal career, considering the distinct challenges for women?

Previously, women were underrepresented in leadership roles, including law firm partnerships, judiciary positions, and corporate legal departments, which hinders their advancement and influence within the profession.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

NOUN students ineligible for loan – NELFUND

THE Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) has clarified reasons students of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) were not eligible for the loan facility put in place by the Federal Government.

Managing director of NELFUND, Mr. Akintunde Sawyerr, explained that it was due to their inability to possess the Joint Admissions and Matriculation

Board (JAMB) number, one of the major requirements of the loan scheme.

He also revealed that 60,000 students had registered for the facility in one week, out of which 30,000, representing 50 per cent of the figure, successfully applied.

He said the fund had strict criteria and guidelines, and would not bend the rules for any institution or individual, no matter

how highly placed.

According to him, the fund would ensure due diligence, “protect taxpayers’ money and safeguard the scheme from frivolously handing out money without accountability.

“We have strict criteria and guidelines around how people can access this loan opportunity.

All of them are non-negotiable: JAMB (number) is non-negotiable using this



Sawyerr

application process. Unfortunately, if an applicant hasn’t got a JAMB number, and hasn’t gone through the JAMB application process, it is going to be impossible to grant that individual a loan at this stage.”

The fund was set up to support indigent Nigerians in their higher education pursuit, while they pay back in instalments, two years, after complet-

ing their National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) programme.

The loan would be paid directly to the institutions where the applicant’s admission was domiciled to avoid diversion, while repayment of 10 per cent of the loan would also be done by the employer of any beneficiary at source.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

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DAILY SUN

Tuesday, June 18, 2024

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The Education Report

NO REGRETS!

■ Says Chijioke, EBSU overall best graduate, who dumped Medicine for Mathematics

From Wilson Okereke, Afikpo

TWENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD

Miss Chiamaka Nnenna Chijioke recently graduated with first class in industrial mathematics and applied statistics from the Ebonyi State University (EBSU), Abakaliki, Ebonyi State.

She was the cynosure of all eyes as she bagged various awards during the convocation, including the overall best graduating student (2022), best graduating student in the Department of Industrial Mathematics and Applied Statistics and best graduating student in Faculty of Sciences.

She spoke with *Daily Sun*. Excerpts:

Briefly tell us about your educational background

I started school at Holy Ghost Foundation Schools, Abakaliki. I passed out in primary 5 as the best graduating pupil. I gained admission into Federal Government Girls’ College (FGGC), Ezzamgbo, Ohaukwu Local Government, and finished in 2018.

In the 2018/2019 session, I registered for the Joint Universities Preliminary Examination Board (JUPEB) in EBSU. I entered the second year of my studies in 2019/2020.

Why did you go for JUPEB?

It helps one to get a certain mark to enable him gain direct entry into 200 level of the university. I did not pause my secondary education.

What then caused the deficiency in your result?

No, my results were complete. Initially, I registered chemistry, physics and biology in JAMB and got admission to study medicine and surgery. I changed my mind



• Chiamaka



Chiamaka with parents and sibling

to go for mathematics.

That was what brought about my enrolment into the one-year programme. I did not take mathematics in JAMB and I did not want to lose the session.

If you had gone for medi-

cine, by now you would have been a medical doctor. Are you not regretting your decision?

The answer is simply, no. I am even thanking God extremely over my choice of course, industrial mathematics and applied statistics. I started in 2019 and

graduated as the best student in 2022. In short, I would have regretted, if I did not go for this particular calling.

What is industrial mathematics and applied statistics all about?

The course can be best understood by professionals. In a nutshell, it is all about the study of numbers, shapes, patterns and how they relate to each other. In a layman’s language, the course is generally mathematics.

In addition, statistics is a branch of mathematics. It is industrial in the sense that it is not only the study of mathematics but also how it will be applied.

What firms or institutions will need your services?

Though I have not stopped my quest for more qualifications, I am planning to go for master’s in data science or data analysis. But, concerning my B.Sc, I can work in banks, institutions, industries and other places.

What is the secret of your success?

I was able to set a goal for myself. That was what made me to remain focused even amid my friends and mates. When I got admission into the university, I had to set a goal to graduate with first class and I worked towards achieving it. However, for the overall best graduating student, I started sensing the possibility in my final year.

What role did your former schools play in your success?

Holy Ghost Foundation Schools is the foundation of my success. Right from the outset of my education, I was under the tutelage of good teachers.

I owe all my former teachers

appreciation. The further mathematics teacher at FGGC, Ezzamgbo, my project supervisor and my HoD in EBSU, they really encouraged me.

During my undergraduate studies, I set a timeline that I must understand every lecture before the end of each day. The determination actually helped me. I did reflect on the lecture of each day before going to bed.

Were you provided with private teachers in your school days?

Besides the schools’ teachers, my father was always there for me, right from my pre-nursery. He had been my private teacher because he is extremely good in mathematics, although he did not study the course.

He passed the knowledge down to us.

Every member of my family has fallen in love with the subject, courtesy of my dad. I can boldly describe mathematics as my family’s favourite subject owing to the fact that everybody knows it optimally, starting from myself being the eldest down to the youngest. I can simply say that we do not fidget whenever it is mentioned.

What is your advice to other young ones like you?

They should always work hard. After all, a saying goes that hard work does not kill though it may be painful.

Do you plan to relax before proceeding for further studies?

I will continue in a stretch but in another institution. EBSU does not offer master’s in data science, courtesy of my Governor, Chief Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

Nigerian varsities must embrace paradigm shift – Ogundipe



Ogundipe, Major-General Awosanya and Prof. Saburi Adesanya

By Gabriel Dike

THE immediate past vice-chancellor of University of Lagos (UNILAG), Akoka, Prof. Oluwatoyin Ogundipe, has tasked Nigerian universities to embrace a paradigm shift from the old ideas of how universities operates to new ideas in the 21st century.

He stressed that, since the beginning of the 20th century, the rate of change has accelerated in various fields with the term ‘acceleration of history’ commonly used to describe this phenomenon.

Ogundipe, who delivered a lecture at the first matriculation of the Alethia University,

Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, said, “Today we are living in a world that is constantly transforming” and universities must embrace new ideas.

The lecture, titled “Paradigm Shift University Education: The Alethia University Ago-Iwoye Perspective,” said paradigm shift requires a gradual process, evolutionary and piecemeal.

According to him, the new ideas for university education, would lead to authentic, fulfilling experience, and greater success for students and learners everywhere.

He noted that, like a leap from Newtonian physics to quantum mechanics revolutionized the understanding of the universe, universities must encourage the

redefinition of beliefs and perspectives on higher education.

“By adjusting and changing perspectives, we should transition from old paradigms to new ones, encouraging groundbreaking viewpoints like moving from a 20th century exclusionary approach to higher education to a 21st century inclusionary model where the getting in, getting through and getting out framework of linear educational institution can efficiently be substituted, reconsidered, and adapted to provide individual and professional success for all learners globally,” he said.

Ogundipe acknowledged that inspiring innovation was one of the tools to embrace novel methods and techniques that could revolutionize the approach to university education.

He advised universities to let go of outdated beliefs and embrace new ideas and paths “as we begin to close the door in the first quarter of the 21st century.”

The former VC observed that many colleges and universities were already opening their doors to some of these changes, fostering creativity and discovery to unleash a wave of innovation and progress.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

Kuriga: Schools wear new look 4 months after abduction of students

• As pupils receive lessons in clusters

From Noah Ebije, Kaduna

FOLLOWING the abduction of 137 students and pupils of Government Secondary School (GSS), and LEA Primary School, Kuriga community, Chikun Local Government, Kaduna State, on March 7, 2023, and their subsequent release by bandits on March 24, the two schools are now wearing a new look.

This is even as the students/pupils are receiving lessons in clusters through radio and UNICEF gadgets for educational development.

Chairman, Northern Christian Youth Professionals (NCYP), Isaac Abrak, who visited the area recently, told Daily Sun that Government Primary and Secondary School, Kuriga, had taken on a new look due to ongoing renovation approved by Governor Uba Sani.

Abrak noted that the school gates were being fixed to the newly erected perimeter fence; corrugated roofs have been replaced with new sheets; walls painted, and blackboards installed, among others.

He said while the schools are closed for renovation, classes are ongoing in the communities, powered by UNICEF, which has supplied radios, chairs and textbooks for learning.

“These classes commenced about five weeks ago, with each cluster taking 10 students, three different classes in a day (morning, afternoon and evening). This is replicated in 10 different locations in the whole of Kuriga community,” Abrak said.

He added: “I witnessed one of the sessions. I was moved by the



Renovated Kuriga School



Pupils receiving lesson under tree

passion displayed by pupils and teachers toward learning. I can say with a big voice that despite Boko Haram attacks on education, the schools have come back more resolute than when they were attacked.

“The agenda to take away education from the kids so as to indoctrinate them with bandits, violent extremists cannot work as our children now know better. The education sector in Nigeria, especially in the North, has fought a good war.

“We are now more susceptible to economic well-being. The economic sector should increase its resilience, especially in rural ar-

reas; let’s push more employment and efficient distribution of government palliatives, private sector’s employment programmes to the villages to improve their living conditions.

“This will reduce the recruitment level of the terrorists and making it easier for the security men to eradicate them.

“The forest guards/forest rapid response squad should recruit more of these villagers to help keep the fight against these criminals constantly and also take the fight to them more often than just reacting to their attacks.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

Why public education must be accorded national priority – Moghalu

By Gabriel Dike

PRESIDENT, Institute for Governance and Economic Transformation and former deputy governor, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Prof. Kingsley Moghalu, has advocated a reform of the nation’s public education system.

Moghalu, presidential candidate of Young Progressives Party (YPP) in the 2023 general election, said there was no alternative but to reform Nigeria’s public education system and make it world class.

He spoke at the fifth Arthur Mbanefo Lecture, titled “Education and National Development: Meeting Nigeria’s Challenge in the 21st Century,” held at Arthur Mbanefo Digital Research Centre (AM-DRC), University of Lagos, Akoka.

His words: “We must return to education as a national priority, and to education that has a clear objective and purpose. No country in the world has risen with a reliance on private sector educational institutions alone. The reason is obvious: private education is expensive, and only a tiny percentage of citizens can afford it.

“Education is a fundamental human right. If that right is to be respected, then education must be a national public good – accessible, qualitative and affordable. This is the path to Nigeria’s rise in the 21st century.”

Moghalu disclosed that Nigeria was urgently in need of educational policy that could enhance its human capital, make it globally competitive and bolster its standing within the global community.

According to him, this kind of education must prioritize access and quality by emphasizing literacy, skills and national values, adding that the country has suffered a massive, progressive collapse of values over the past several decades.

He said the situation has persisted because the nation have taken its eyes off the ball of education, which is the foundation upon which every society rises or falls: “the progressive loss of respect for ideas and education as a value naturally extended to a loss of priority for education as a

national priority, as the national focus shifted to the effects of Nigeria’s resource curse from the oil boom – easy money and illicit wealth from rent-seeking activities.”

Moghalu explained that the domino effect of the decline in values was felt in the death of a drive for access to education and the quality of education.

“As the private sector became increasingly involved in education through the establishment of both elite and pseudo-elite private schools, Nigeria’s public education system increasingly faced a struggle for survival and relevance,” he observed.

He acknowledged that the nation does not lack education policy but implementation, which has always been a big weakness, noting, “even the policies we have are out of date and out of place, if we seek to transform Nigeria to become a nation, not just a country, to become a global power and not just a potential power.”

The presidential candidate said: “We can do it. Just look at how our compatriots thrive in foreign lands where the right philosophies drive education, making it a true national priority in terms of purpose, strategy, and investment.”

He stressed that, given the rapidly evolving global landscape and the increasing importance of technology, science, entrepreneurship, and teacher training in driving economic growth and innovation, Nigeria must realign its education curriculum, particularly at the tertiary level, to prioritize these areas.

Moghalu said the reform must include allocating 70 percent of the curriculum to technology, science, entrepreneurship, and teacher training, Nigeria could better equip its youth with the skills and knowledge needed to compete in the 21st-century economy, foster entrepreneurship, and improve the quality of education across the board.

Said he: “I also recommend that ethics becomes a compulsory subject in the education curriculum in Nigeria at both primary (in a simplified and elementary form) and secondary school in a more comprehensive form. This will help achieve the educational objective of creating good and responsible citizens.”



L-R: Moghalu, Chief Mbanefo and Dr. Tolulope Adewole at the lecture



STRATEGIC INSIGHT

By JASPER UCHE

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IN Igbo folklore, vultures opined that elders should not die off so that young people will not take them as edible meat. I considered the foregoing in the context of the hasty, uncritical, exuberant and self-serving motion for the creation of Orlu State at the floor of the House of Representatives recently by the Imo State-born Ikenga Ugochinyere Ikeagwuonu, the member representing Ideato North/Ideato South federal constituency. He abrasively went solo on an issue that all hands should be on deck. Igbo elders have been deftly persuading other sections of Nigeria to see it as an inclusive national project, and not just political balancing. Three LGAs in the North-West alone have almost the same number of LGAs in the entire five states of the South-East.

The return to civil rule in 1999 gave vent to the agitation, from the Oputa Panel to Obasanjo's constitution amendment in 2006, and the 2014 constitutional conference under Goodluck Jonathan's presidency. Grapevine holds it that Obasanjo was willing to give another state to the South-East if he was given support for the proposed constitutional amendment to extend his tenure. Some Igbo leaders, led by Senator Uche Chuk-

Quest for additional state in South East

wumerije (of blessed memory!) turned it down as a poisoned chalice that would destroy the pillars of Nigeria's constitutional democracy. The agitation continued with different requests like, Aba State from the present Abia State, Adada State from the present Enugu State, Njaba/Orashi State from the present Imo State and some parts of Anambra State, as well as Equity State, with some component parts of all the five states in the South-East.

By Ugochinyere's official age, he was less than 20 years old as of 1999 when these efforts took off in earnest. And like a smart young man on a high speed lane, he wants to be seen populist and ahead of the elders' quiet networking. No consultation. No consensus-building. No alliance-formation around the cause. No diplomatic back-channel. No vertical and horizontal linkages. History is really self-reinforcing! But conversely, Anthony Enahoro's premature motion for self-dependence in 1953 had the backing of some fiery southern nationalists. Ugochinyere does not have the support of his colleagues in the same chamber whose part of their constituencies are included with a fiat of a ballpoint pen in the proposed Orlu State. Hon. Peter Ifeanyi Uzokwe, the member representing Nnewi North/Nnewi South/Ekwusigo federal constituency, whose hometown, Ozubulu, was included in the proposed Orlu State, was not carried along.

He declared that he was bamboozled and baffled by Ugochinyere's ambush. Ozubulu people have since sent a disclaimer to the vexed motion. The inclusion of Umuaku, a boundary community in Isuochi, Abia State, in Ugochinyere's hurriedly-packaged state is without the buy-in of the community. Umuaku is an

enlightened community that produced the likes of D.N. Achara, the then Supervisor of Schools in the old Eastern Region. His younger brother, S.O. Achara, later was a member of the Eastern Region House of Assembly. The octogenarian traditional ruler of the community, Professor S.I. Nwankwo, whose scientific inventions at a critical time in Nigeria's history could have been deployed to jumpstart our national technological advancement, served in the committee that defended Equity State's creation before a Committee of the National Assembly, Abuja.

Umuaku has no geographical contiguity with Orlu. The most laughable thing is that the adjoining communities between Umuaku and Umunze (Ogbunka, Umu-chukwu and Owerre-Ezukala) are nowhere in the picture. The map would have been a new wonder. Besides, the motion has no support of Hon. Amaobi Ogah, the member representing Isuikwuato/Umunneochi constituency where Umuaku belongs. The umbrella body of Isuochi's nine communities, Isuochi Development Union (IDU), has formally notified the public that no part of Isuochi will be ceded to the proposed Orlu State and that Equity State is their choice. Come to think of it, nobody is against Orlu people getting a state. But can it fly in the face of these protests? Even the Berlin Conference of 1884, where colonized territories of the third world were allotted, was done in agreement between and among the powers on global expansionism.

Why Equity State? It appears as the most acceptable of all the proposals. The 2014 national confab harmonized all the proposals and opted for it. It was a result of painstaking study, robust engagements and combined networking of Igbo lead-

ers like Professor Joe Irukwa (of blessed memory!), Senator Ike Nwachukwu, and Professor I.C. Madubuike, among others, at the conference. There are four strong points that count in favour of the proposed Equity State. First, the component units suffer marginalization in their existing states. Second, each state in the South-East volunteered a federal constituency: Abia – Isuikwuato/Umunneochi; Anambra – Orumba North and Orumba South; Ebonyi – Ivo/Ohaozara/Onicha; Enugu – Aninri/Awgu/Oji River; and Imo – Okigwe North, comprising Okigwe, Onuimo and Isiala Mbano. Third, the constituent areas have close access to Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway, where the proposed capital territory lies. Fourth, the leaders of these federal constituencies gave their consent and signed all the necessary documents.

The initial name – Etitu was stood down because of its similarity with the existing Ekiti State; only an alphabet difference. On the other hand, Equity has no Igbo word but remains the ideology. Insider sources indicate that the present leadership of Ohanaeze may be at home with Equity State. But beyond the media razzmatazz, it has been discovered that the process of state creation is tedious and cumbersome. Section 8 of the 1999 Constitution (amended) provides daunting steps it must undergo. It does not automatically lead to delimitation of constituencies and creation of new LGAs, as insinuated by some people. And, for political correctness, Ndigbo cannot pull through such a strategic project with a lawmaker in the opposition political party. It could entail a tradeoff in a serious national political power bargaining.

The younger generation in the corridors of power should show a high sense of responsibility by learning the ropes from the elders who are like seasoned wine tappers. Ugochinyere should stop stoking tension and dissension with his professional alarmist grandstanding. The proposed Equity State is of sterner stuff. Period!

Adedeji, a different kind of taxman

By Aliyu Gaya

OVER dinner at the restaurant of the latest five-star hotel in upscale Lagos penultimate Saturday, there was a pervading sense of confidence in the tax ecosystem expressed among diners, a motley crop of corporate Nigeria captains. They had broken off from their meeting at a nearby highbrow club to serenade their mortal bodies with a sumptuous dinner. And, my goodness, it was worth the time.

The talk centred on Zacch Adedeji, the barely nine-month on the job chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS). At 46, Adedeji, a first-class accounting graduate of the great Obafemi Awolowo University and a PhD holder to crown his scholastic pursuit, is rated as one of the best appointees of President Bola Tinubu. While a lot was said about FIRS, past and present, the industry captains praised Tinubu for head-hunting a young man who is at home with the rudiments of revenue management in the 21st century economy. Adedeji was spotlighted for a couple of innovations that he brought to bear in revenue management at his new job. He was said to have kept the books open; defined, with clarity, the rules that govern revenue collection under his watch; given a human face to matters of taxes and tax collection; and shown a high sense of integrity, which also governs the manner FIRS personnel now relate with taxpayers. The undeniable undertone in their discussion

was that in the past the FIRS saw every business as an entity to be taxed, but now the same revenue service approaches every business with an attitude to help the business grow, make profit and in the long run pay more tax. This is the concept in modern revenue management. The taxman has ceased to be an unfeeling, stern-faced collector. Not anymore! These days, the taxman (revenue man, as they should be addressed) helps to grow the business, sustain the business and collect more revenue from the same business that would have been forced out of existence with an overbearing tax attitude.

One of the complaints of business owners in Nigeria is the knotty issue of multiple taxation. Adedeji is helping to navigate businesses out of this 'complicated nest', as described by one of the CEOs.

I was in the company of one of the CEOs of a major construction company in Nigeria and a huge taxpayer too. We had arrived in Lagos from Abuja that afternoon for the meeting and I could notice how he was nodding in affirmation, without uttering a word to the adjectives and kind words used to describe Adedeji. All I could take away from the conversation was that a star will always shine, even in the darkest of nights. I felt a sense of pride for the FIRS chief as men older and far more experienced than him, with scars to show for their decades of entrepreneurship and hard knocks in the competitive corporate space, spoke



Adedeji

glowingly about his exploits on the job in so short a time. All under-50s in Nigeria should be proud that one of their own is so well-spoken of by persons who, ordinarily, should be his most acerbic antagonists and critics. The taxman is never loved by the taxpayer, they say. But here's Adedeji being showered with encomium by the creme de la creme in the tax-paying community.

Adedeji is already a shining star and has entrenched himself as one of the veritable arrowheads that would help President Tinubu achieve his Renewed Hope mandate. A popular African proverb says that morning shows the day. While it may yet be morning in Adedeji's four-year journey (which is renewable), his bold and expressive imprints these past months can only help us make the

conjecture that the right man for the job is here, primed and fully prepped.

Now it shows. In first quarter (Q1) of 2024, the service collected the sum of N3.94 trillion in tax revenue, representing a 56.7 percent jump compared to the figure recorded in the corresponding period of 2023. This is a new lease and it speaks to the leadership style of the man many address by his first name, Zacch. He is said to have no airs, not popped up by vainglory. He is said to lead from the front, a leadership template that he has effectively emplaced in the service. Adedeji is reputed to be an unobtrusive leader. Such leaders are not overbearing. They do not lord it over you and they are not the every-moment in your face leader. They give you enough leg room to take your own initiative and navigate through the headwinds that assail you as you execute your daily brief. This is the type of leadership that births grand results. Adedeji has established this culture of leadership at FIRS and the impact is a workplace buzzing with innovation, devotion and fresh ideas; a rare meeting of commitment and capacity.

Already, he has set a lofty target for himself and his team: to achieve a revenue target of N19.4 trillion this year. For a service that grossed about N13 trillion last year, this new target appears unrealistic. But given the interplay of the fresh

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

• Gaya, public finance expert, writes from Abuja

NDDC 2024 budget and funding of legacy projects

By Willie Etim

It took the composure, confidence and sincerity of the managing director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Dr. Samuel Ogbuku, to win the approval of the Senate for the N1.911 trillion 2024 budget of the commission within 24 hours.

Appearing before members of the National Assembly for budget defence could test the wits of many and push their adrenalin into overdrive. Luckily for the current leadership of the NDDC, its performance scorecard is loaded with positive outcomes that inspire hope.

The Senate President, Chief Godswill Akpabio, attested to this recently during the inauguration of the 600-metre Ibeno Bridge and the 6.87-kilometre Iko-Atabri-kang-Opolom-IwuoAchang Road, in Akwa Ibom State.

Akpabio, who represented President Bola Ahmed Tinubu at the ceremony, showered praises on the NDDC board and management for delivering impactful projects in the Niger Delta region. He said that despite the enormous challenges of developing the region, the NDDC had risen to the task by executing projects that have improved the lives of the people.

Against this background, one can understand why the NDDC budget was treated with dispatch and approved with minimal queries. The Senators were convinced that the proposals presented by the NDDC, represented a clear roadmap for the rapid development of the Niger Delta region.

In retrospect, the NDDC has been fortunate to enjoy a somewhat cordial relationship with both chambers of the National Assembly. Last year, after initial misgivings over the accumulated budgets of 2021, 2022 and 2023, the National Assembly was convinced to pass the budgets for the three years.

Indeed, the rapport between the NDDC

and the lawmakers shone light a bright light in 2017 when the legislators facilitated the expeditious passage of the amendment to the NDDC Act as it relates to the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas, NLNG.

The amended law included a clause that the NLNG and other gas-producing companies must pay not less than three per cent of their annual total budget into the coffers of the NNDC as their contributions to the fund of the Commission. It also included that the percentage should be fixed by the Minister of Petroleum Resources.

Evidently, the NDDC has very good reasons to be thankful to the lawmakers, who are among its numerous supervisors. For the records, the Act establishing the NDDC makes it one of the most monitored Federal Government agencies in the country.

The relevant committees in the Senate and the House of Representatives, the office of the Secretary to the Federal Government, the Advisory Committee made up of all the governors of the region, among others, take turns to beam searchlights on the activities of this very important interventionist agency. In a way, this has helped the commission to always be on its toes.

The intention of the Act setting up the NDDC was for the key development actors in the region, especially the state governments, to play a strategic role and indeed take leadership in the harmonisation of the development strides in the region.

The Act provided and constituted the nine governors of the region into the NDDC Advisory Committee, thereby creating a window for the joint inputs of the governors and most importantly a platform for regional integration of plans, projects and programmes.

It is expected that the NDDC Advisory Committee will use the window of the impending review of the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan to reflect the vision of the various states into the



Dr. Ogbuku, NDDC MD

development compass and take ownership of the plan.

The NDDC Managing Director, Dr Ogbuku, underlines the fact that regional development requires robust funding to effectively address specific and urgent development needs in the Niger Delta region. He notes that timely and flexible financial decision-making is crucial to respond effectively to dynamic regional challenges, stating: "There is no doubt that funding is critical to the development of the Niger Delta region and the implementation of the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Tinubu's administration."

Ogbuku, said that the 2024 appropriation was anchored on the theme: "Budget of Renewed Hope" in line with the Federal Government's budget, noting that "the proposed budget seeks to move the Commission from transaction to transformation and it is a product of participatory budgeting process that involves all the major stakeholders in the Niger Delta Region."

He said further: "In preparing the 2024 budget, our primary objective has been to sustain our robust foundation for sustainable economic development. A critical focus of this budget is this present management's commitment to a greener future.

Seeing that investing in critical infrastructure is a key component of its fiscal strategy, the NDDC launched a 'Rewind to Rebirth' initiative as "a strategic vision designed to recalibrate engagement with the Niger Delta and the Commission's overall intervention implementation plan." That initiative provided the bulwark for the Commission's drive to do things differently, as it also embraced the Public Private Partnership, PPP, model to provide alternative sources of funding for key development projects and programmes.

It is important to leverage private capital to augment public funding, hence the NDDC's deliberate decision to pursue the PPP option. By partnering with the private sector, the Commission can unlock a wealth of resources, expertise, and innovation that will enable it tackle complex development challenges more effectively.

Perhaps, this informed the new strategy of seeking bank credits to bridge the funding gap and accelerate the completion of signature projects. This approach, while requiring careful planning and risk management, offers a unique opportunity to achieve more results within a short period of time.

The plan in the 2024 budget to raise N1 trillion, to be sourced from the development and commercial banks, for the completion of 1,006 legacy projects spread across the region, is pragmatic and should be encouraged to succeed because it is targeted at specific projects, which includes roads, bridges, electricity projects, school buildings, hospitals, shore protection and reclamation, among others.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

Nigeria's protracted wait for fresh census

By Chekwube Nzomiwu

NIGERIANS are waiting eagerly for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (PBAT) to make a proclamation on the new date for the rescheduled Digital National Population and Housing Census. The immediate past administration of President Muhammadu Buhari earlier scheduled the exercise to hold between May 3 and 7, 2023. However, in the course of the transition of power from the former to the new government, Buhari deemed it fit and proper to put the exercise on hold, to allow the incoming administration to make inputs and determine the date of the census.

A year after taking over power, President Tinubu is yet to announce a date for the exercise. Nigerians who know the importance of census are bothered by the delay in the announcement of the new date. They are more worried that no provision was made for it in the N27.5 trillion 2024 budget. Furthermore, information in public domain shows that prior to the rescheduling, the National Population Commission (NPC) had concluded the implementation of all the necessary preparatory activities. They include the Enumeration Area Demarcation (EAD), conduct of pre-test and trial census, recruitment and training of census field staff, procurement and configuration of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), and the establishment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure across the country.

According to the NPC, all the processes of the census are going to be technology driven. As the enumerators are getting information in the field using the PDA,



Nasir Kwarra, NPC chairman

it would be transmitted automatically from the system to the server. The use of technology would make the fresh census more credible, transparent and acceptable than previous censuses conducted in the country.

The commission equally conducted robust advocacy and publicity campaigns across the country, to sensitise Nigerians on the exercise. They were in the process of recruiting enumerators when the immediate past administration rescheduled the exercise. Given that Tinubu promised during the campaigns to continue where Buhari stopped, many Nigerians, including this writer, thought that the census would be handled with sense of urgency, considering its immense benefits to the country. So far, our expectations on the exercise have not been met.

Conducting census is a very capital

intensive exercise. There is no doubt about that. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) described the census as "the most expensive data collection activity a country can undertake, involving thousands of workers and millions of dollars of cost." The process of conducting census involves many events and stages. However, in considering the cost and the rigourousness, we should also look at the numerous benefits.

The census is the spine of the national statistical system. For example, development planners need population information for all kinds of development work, including assessing demographic trends and analyzing socio-economic trends and economic conditions. Similarly, data generated from the exercise are vital to budgeting and the implementation, monitoring, as well as evaluation of the effectiveness of government programmes and policies, including immunisation and Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmes.

Likewise, census data could be used for tracking the progress towards national and international agreed development plans, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), designing evidence based poverty reduction strategies and empowering local communities with information to enable them to participate in decision making.

In the political sphere, census data are used for the creation of federal and state constituencies to enhance effective representation in government. Nigeria practices representative democracy and the constitution makes population a prerequisite for the creation of federal and state constituencies, which constitute a critical

basis of representation in the country. The Senate and House of Representatives have passed resolutions, asking the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to carry out its mandate of creating new federal constituencies in line with Section 73 (1) of the Constitution. The electoral umpire often used the prolonged non-conduct of population census as an excuse for refusing to do so.

In addition, data generated from census could be used for academic research and feasibility studies by Research and Development (R&D) departments of companies and corporate organizations, for promotions, programmes and projects. These are to mention but a few.

Regrettably, Nigeria, the widely acclaimed "Giant of Africa" has been deprived of these benefits for almost two decades, as a result of her inability to conduct census. The last population enumeration in the country took place in 2006. Since then, Nigeria has been planning based on population estimates and projections, using outdated data. We should also not lose sight of the fact that the last census was marred by controversies like previous ones.

By international convention, a census exercise should be held in a country at least once every 10 years. The United Nations recommends at least once every five years to guarantee better and more current data. Nigeria held its last census 18 years ago. If we should go by the UN recommendation, Nigeria ought to have held at least

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

• Nzomiwu, a policy analyst, wrote from Awka, Anambra State



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THE ruling elite have us by the balls. Our collective capacity for short memory is like none anywhere else in the world. So it's usually easy for our rulers to make egregious appointments into critical public positions or to proclaim vexatious policy and then sit back. We, Nigerians, will huff and puff and threaten fire and brimstone if the appointment or policy was not reviewed or reversed. Our rulers will conveniently keep quiet knowing that 'nothing mega' or nothing will happen. After a few days, maximum one week, we will move on and the hitherto concerning appointment and/or policy will disappear from the news media headlines.

Almost every federal administration since 1999 has used this strategy to wear out the people and overcome citizens' inconveniences. But the extant regime of the All Progressives Congress (APC) political party has elevated this practice to an art form. Whenever it backpedals from chosen options it was usually to create the impression that it was a listening government. No, it's not. It has never been since 2015 when its candidate and the affliction of

Edu, Sadiya, Halima, Bello, et al

Nigeria, Maj.-Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, assumed office as president. That utter failure who approximated what a ruler should not be in a country desperate for rescue from political and economic morass and paralysis regarded the presidency as a trophy and not a call to service. When Buhari failed in his three consecutive quests to be elected Nigeria's president, he publicly bemoaned his fate but later claimed that Nigeria and Nigerians would be the ultimate losers. He had told us that he was offering himself for the presidency because he was the Messiah Nigeria was waiting for. Some shallow Nigerians including pseudo intellectuals believed him and his coterie of choristers that if given a chance at the topmost office he would turn the country around. Buhari got the chance in 2015 and actually succeeded in turning the country around - for the worse. Through incompetence and 'non-governance' he took Nigeria back by 30 years or one generation.

Everything that could go wrong went wrong under Buhari. Politics was bastardised. Merit was whimsically discarded in appointments to sensitive and non-sensitive offices. His tribesmen seized virtually every level of governance. Religion became a vital consideration for recruitment so much so that for almost eight years of his ruinous reign, national security meetings could conveniently be conducted in Hausa language and the attendees would be at home. Buhari reserved the greater carnage for the economy. He so borrowed funds from offshore financial institutions that an impression was created that borrowing was fast going out of fashion and that international funds were about to dry up. Buhari's Nigeria scrambled for foreign loans in a manner that

resembled European powers' scramble and partition of Africa in Germany in 1885. Yet that regime was not satisfied with the quantum of the foreign loans it saddled Nigeria with. It turned inward and started borrowing from the domestic money market through the issuing of treasury bills and other debt instruments. It was still not satisfied. Then it resorted to printing Naira that was backed by nothing until it accumulated a staggering N30 trillion through the Ways and Means of the central bank. You will be grossly mistaken if you think it ended there. No. That calamity called Buhari then proceeded to auction millions of barrels of Nigeria's crude oil whilst they were yet to be extracted from under the ground. He collected the payments upfront and squandered them. As these were happening the national leader of the APC and now Buhari's successor, Alhaji Bola Ahmed Tinubu cheered him on, saying Buhari was the next best thing to happen to Nigeria after sliced bread.

Buhari introduced or at least aggravated rulers not feeling obligated to explain anything to Nigerians. As president he once spent 103 days abroad on medical tourism without telling Nigerians what he suffered from nor how much was taken from the treasury to offset his medical bills. It has to be acknowledged that the impunity started with Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua, our sick president who eventually died in office in 2010.

Here in this column last week we said that Tinubu is contemptuous of Nigerians. He is not alone. Agencies of the government under Tinubu are fast learning how not to take Nigerians seriously. They are learning that an issue, no matter how serious, can go away if you just ignore it long enough.

And there are quite a handful of such matters that are being forced to fade from our memories. One of such serious issues of alleged sleaze is the case of Betta Chimaobim Edu, the suspended minister of humanitarian affairs. When Minister Edu was suspended from office last January, a presidential spokesman said it was in line with Tinubu's commitment to upholding the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability in the management of the commonwealth of Nigerians. Of course, Nigerians knew that the Presidency was lying. All the same she was referred to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Edu reported to the anti-graft agency which quizzed her and released her on bail before the sunset same day. The bail terms were not disclosed then. They have still not been published. The EFCC is still investigating her alleged sleaze the least of which had to do with paying government money running into hundreds of millions of Naira into a private individual's personal bank account contrary to regulations. It's now six months and counting and the Edu saga is receding from our memories.

Ms Halima Shehu is the national coordinator and chief executive officer of the National Social Investment Programme Agency, a parastatal of the corruption-prone humanitarian affairs ministry. Ms Shehu whose agency oversees the government's conditional cash transfer programme had a few days earlier had herself suspended by Minister Edu on allegation of tampering with billions of Naira of public funds. The last that was heard of Ms Shehu's case was six months ago when the EFCC said it was still investigating her alleged sleaze. Edu and Shehu are walking

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

Binanace executives innocent, after all



THUMBPRINT With ANDY EZEANI

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NIGERIA'S official record in combating corruption and tackling systemic rot, especially at the upper section of its elite cadre in government, remains shambolic. That is not about to change. As a matter of fact, the good old system, which has served governments and the political elite quite well over the years, is alive and doing well.

The situation does assume a more compounded nature when nagging issues bordering on legitimacy of government come into play. With or without such a legitimacy problem, however, Nigeria remains soft on corruption. The records are there to testify.

The 1995 Halliburton scandal, as it came to be known, will stand, perhaps, forever, as a monument to Nigeria's ignoble official embrace with corruption. In that year, after what had turned out to be protracted behind-the-scenes negotiations, immersed in sleaze, Nigeria

awarded a \$2 billion liquified natural gas plant construction contract to TSKJ, a consortium of international contractors. In the mix was Halliburton, the giant United States of America (USA) oil services and contractor firm, Dresser Industries, the parent company of M.V. Kellogg and others. Between the time, in 1994, when the bid for the LNG plant in Bonny Island was initially made and 1995 when the job was awarded, a deluge of dirty water had passed under the bridge.

At the end of the day, with the saying that nothing under the sun is hidden holding true, the shady deal that yielded the Nigerian LNG plant contract was exposed. It turned out that all of \$180 million was involved in bribery. The oil literally spread through the fingers of many prime executives of the international consortium that the TSKJ umbrella covered, as well as top Nigerian government officials.

To cut the long-documented story short, the US and some other European countries, living up to the ethics that guide business in their societies, meticulously investigated and apprehended their citizens [corporate and individual] involved in the LNG plant contract scandal. These were duly prosecuted. In the US, Halliburton and its subsidiary, Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), eventually pleaded guilty and paid a whopping fine of N579 million. That fine stands as the largest corruption fine in the US.

What happened in Nigeria, the root of the sleaze? Not a single person was prosecuted, not a single entity paid any known penalty. The allegation was that some former heads of the Nigerian state were involved in the unscrupulous deal. With no entity at the Nigerian end of

the scandal prosecuted, the profile of the country as a comfort zone for corruption was reinforced.

In the early years of Muhammadu Buhari's stretched reign of deception, it was reported in the media with delight that the new President asked that the Halliburton scandal file be dusted up. Needless to say, the matter remained where Buhari met it. Going by how his presidency turned out subsequently, he couldn't have been serious with any reference to the Halliburton scandal file, assuming he actually asked about it. Against the backdrop of how Nigeria responded to the Halliburton scandal of the mid-1990s, any reference by the governments of the country subsequently to fighting corruption cannot but be viewed with cynicism, especially by America and the other countries that watched in horror as the LNG sleaze was swept under the carpet.

The arrival of Bola Tinubu as President of Nigeria in 2023 was bound to be interesting in the area of fighting corruption, for many reasons. In the first one year of the Tinubu government, there have been sparks here and there from the primary anti-corruption agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission [EFCC], showing commitment to its assignment. But the main issue, in truth, is not EFCC. It is the government. There is ample ground for cynicism. The overarching policies of the government that determine how far the anti-corruption agencies can go remain, at best, shaky.

Last week, June 14, 2024, 81 days after Nigeria charged to court Binanace, the cryptocurrency platform, and two of its executives for economic sabotage, the same government, through a federal

high court in Abuja, discharged the two American executives. The government now says it is charging only Binanace, as an entity, but not its executives.

In the original case against Binanace and its two executives, Tigran Gambaryan and Nadeem Anjarwalla, the government charged them on four counts, flouting of the tax laws, viz, failing to pay income tax, failing to pay value added tax, failure to comply with tax return obligation and finally, facilitating tax evasion for Binanace users. In the course of searching for a scapegoat for the plummeting value of the naira, the government also accused Binanace and its officials of trying to manipulate the national currency.

To give expression to the seriousness of the charges against the Binanace executives, the Nigerian government arrested and detained them. Subsequently, one of them, Mr. Nadeem Anjarwalla, brushed aside the security around him and fled the country. The story of how Mr. Anjarwalla escaped is entirely a different matter, a statement on how a country's security system feels no sense of embarrassment in declaring that a subject in its custody has escaped. Just like that. There is no known record that any affected security official was sanctioned for such a high-level detainee walking away. For good measure, he flew out through the airport.

Anyway, the government assured us that it was collaborating with the International Criminal Police Organization [Interpol] to track down the Binanace executive who fled. That collaboration was still going on, ostensibly, when the government, last week, discontinued the case against Mr.

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L-R: Dr. Roger W. Ferguson, former Vice Chair, Federal Reserve, USA; Dr. Yemi Kale, Afreximbank's Group Chief Economist and Managing Director of Research and International Cooperation; H.E. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson, African Union Commission and Prof. Benedict Oramah, President and Chairman of Board of Directors, Afreximbank hold copies of African Trade Report 2024 and African Trade and Economic Outlook Report 2024 during the launch of the two reports.

BoI's total assets hit N3.91trn, PBT rises by 117.69%

From **Adanna Nnamani**, Abuja

THE Bank of Industry (BOI) has posted an impressive growth and achievement record for the year 2023, despite facing significant global and local economic challenges.

The Bank's total assets grew by an impressive 64.6 per cent, rising from N2.37 trillion to N3.91 trillion.

The bank reported that this impacted on its profits, as profit before tax increased by 117.69 per cent, increasing from N70.7 billion to N153.81 billion, which is the highest in the Bank's history.

The Bank's total equity experienced a significant boost, growing by 57.7 per cent from N427 billion to N678 billion, reinforcing the institution's financial stability and capacity for future investments.

Also, the Bank's loans and advances saw a substantial increase of 41.5 per cent, rising to N1.14 trillion and N803.6 billion respectively.

Chairman of the BOI Shareholders Committee, Mallam Muhammed Bala, explained that this was due to increased interventions and disbursements to enterprises, which reflects the Bank's ongoing efforts to provide essential financial support to businesses across various sectors.

Bala, who spoke while dishing out the data at the BOI 64th General Annual Meeting in Abuja, said the bank also significantly increased its disbursements to large, medium, small and micro enterprises, advancing credit amounting to N496.717 billion to 75,809 beneficiaries.

He said that the move was in furtherance to the bank's drive to boost job creation through its interventions, adding that the efforts have had a substantial socio-economic impact, creating approximately 2,198,953 direct and indirect jobs across the country.

We're tackling piracy, illegal fishing with maritime security assets –NIMASA DG

By **Steve Agbota**

THE Director General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Dr Dayo Mobereola, has assured that the maritime security assets under the Deep Blue Project (DBP) will continue to tackle piracy, illegal fishing and other maritime crimes in the nation's waters.

Mobereola, who stated this at the 2024 graduation ceremony of the advanced combat training programme for the maritime security unit of the DBP recently, said that Nigeria was delisted from list of piracy prone countries in 2023 due to efforts put in place by the federal government through investment in maritime security assets known as the DBP.

He assured that the agency will continue to make capacity development training a top priority to make the nation's waters safe and cut back on huge capital hurting the nation.

The NIMASA noted that the graduates of the continuous capacity development training will serve as guardians of the nation's maritime assets, safeguarding Nigerian waters against piracy, illegal fishing, smuggling, and ensuring the safety and security of the marine resources in the country.

Their training in tactical shooting drills, operational demonstrations, and other essential skills prepares them to respond effectively to any challenges that may arise, thereby safeguarding our national interests and driving economic prosperity.

"The commissioning of the Armoured Vehicle Workshop demonstrates the Agency's commitment to modernising and optimizing our military assets, ensuring our vehicles are in optimal condition and ready for deployment at any time.

"For the graduates, this means access to reliable equipment, enhancing their operational capabilities. Moreover, this development represents a sustainable approach to reducing our reliance on foreign maintenance services and cultivating self-sufficiency.

"The workshop will play a vital role in ensuring our forces have the necessary mechanical support to maintain operational effectiveness, thereby bolstering our national security and independence. A few days ago, we witnessed the demonstration by the Maritime Security Unit in Lagos, where your colleagues showcased operational capabilities of the Special Mission Vessels, Fast Intervention Vessels, and the Special Mission Helicopters," he added.

According to him, this is a clear confirmation of the unit's capability and readiness to tackle various maritime security challenges.

"Furthermore, the DBP emphasises the importance of collaboration and partnership, involving various stakeholders such as the entire Nigerian Armed Forces, the Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy, with NIMASA serving as the lead facilitator, and the private sector.

Customs lists benefits of trade modernisation project

By **Uche Usim**

TRADE facilitation, revenue generation, job creation, tackling corruption and fortifying national security are top priorities of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) as it trudges on with its Trade Modernisation Project (TMP).

The project, a presidential initiative, powered by the federal government's economic rejuvenation and diversification agenda, leverages cutting-edge technologies to fully automate and streamline Customs operations and smoothen international trade.

The Federal Government seeks to generate \$250 billion in revenue over a 20-year concession window through the TMP, which is poised to have a profound, long-term impact on the country's social and economic development. Implemented through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP), detailed in a Concession Agreement (CA) signed on May 30, 2022, between the Federal Government of Nigeria and Trade Modernisation Project (TMP) Limited, the initiative delineates responsibilities and risk allocation. Ratified by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) on April 18, 2023, the agreement paves the way for the transformation of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) into an efficient organization equipped with the latest technology and facilities, facilitating streamlined services for businesses and government agencies. Under the agreement, the concessionaire commits to investing \$3.2 billion over the concession period, with 2,500 Customs officers slated for training by the first quarter of 2025 to drive the initiative.

The project, implemented in phases, sees Phase 1 already underway, with TMP having committed over \$400 million in investments by December 31, 2023. The concession expires on September 27, 2042.

The project is structured into three phases: Phase 1

– Year 1 to 3 (Initial Deployment): This phase focuses on implementing core project services, including: Unified Customs Management System (UCMS) comprising Revenue, Enforcement, and Office Automation Clusters; Trade Portal serving as a central hub for trading activities and integration with Other Government Agencies (OGA); Non-Intrusive Inspection System integrating 67 cargo scanners for enhanced cargo scanning and post-clearance audit; Risk Control Centre (RCC) for nationwide command and control activities; Electronic Cargo Tracking System (ECTS) for monitoring cargo transit; Cargo Release System facilitating automated cargo release. Geospatial Services utilizing GIS for enforcement and border management.

Telecommunication, Video Surveillance, and Connectivity backbone; Capacity Building programme focusing on knowledge and skills transfer within the NCS.

This comprehensive approach ensures the modernization and efficiency enhancement of the NCS operations across various fronts, contributing to streamlined Customs processes and enhanced trade facilitation.

Comptroller General of Customs, Mr. Wale Adeniyi, prioritises trade facilitation, emphasising simplification of processes. The project's three phases span deployment, management, and eventual handover to Customs officers.

General Manager of TMP Limited, Mr. Ahmed Ogunshola, highlighted ongoing collaboration with NCS to achieve outlined milestones, including the development and deployment of a new Customs management system.

Ogunshola said that the system's software, described as the Unified Customs Management System (UCMS), has seven layers of security designed to withstand cyber attacks.

He listed several key benefits of the TMP to include;

enhancing revenue by improving the accuracy and efficiency of Customs processes so it better captures and collects duties and taxes, leading to increased government revenue.

"Digital systems help to reduce human interaction, thereby minimizing opportunities for corrupt practices and increasing transparency in customs operations.

"Again, simplified and expedited Customs procedures facilitate smoother and faster cross-border trade, benefiting importers and exporters by reducing costs and delays.

"Modern technologies such as automated risk management systems and cargo tracking enhance the ability of the NCS to detect and prevent illegal activities, including smuggling and the importation of prohibited goods.

"The use of advanced data analytics and automated systems helps in better enforcement of trade regulations and compliance with international trade agreements.

"Improved trade facilitation and increased revenue collection contribute to overall economic growth by creating a more attractive environment for international trade and investment.

"The modernisation project often includes training and capacity building for Customs officers, improving their skills and competence in handling modern customs operations.

"Modernisation aligns Nigeria's customs practices with international standards, such as those set by the World Customs Organization (WCO), enhancing Nigeria's reputation in the global trade community.

"Automation and digital platforms improve the experience for traders and other stakeholders by providing more accessible and user-friendly services.

Overall, the NCS trade modernisation project supports Nigeria's goals of boosting trade efficiency, fostering economic development, and enhancing the overall integrity and effectiveness of its

Customs operations", he explained.

Chief Superintendent of Customs and National Public Relations Officer, Abdullahi Maiwada, at a recent interface with journalists, underscored the project's role in facilitating trade and revenue collection.

For capacity fortification, TMP has signed and is implementing nine technical agreements with its technical and financial partners. These partners are as follows: Access Bank Plc - Financial Partner; Huawei - Lead Technical Partner; CBXP Limited - Software Development; Nuctech Company Limited - Non-Intrusive Inspection (Cargo Scanners); Boya E-Project Limited - Independent Expert to NCS and TMP; Emi Solutions Limited - Quality Assurance Expert to NCS and TMP; Chert Solutions Limited - OEM representative for hardware and services; Sambus Global Nigeria Limited - Geospatial Services Sandhall Global Consulting and Services Limited - Facility Management and Site Improvement.

The project is structured into three phases: Phase 1 – Year 1 to 3 (Initial Deployment): This phase focuses on implementing core project services, including: Unified Customs Management System (UCMS) comprising Revenue, Enforcement, and Office Automation Clusters; Trade Portal serving as a central hub for trading activities and integration with Other Government Agencies (OGA); Non-Intrusive Inspection System integrating 67 cargo scanners for enhanced cargo scanning and post-clearance audit; Risk Control Centre (RCC) for nationwide command and control activities; Electronic Cargo Tracking System (ECTS) for monitoring cargo transit; Cargo Release System facilitating automated cargo release. Geospatial Services utilizing GIS for enforcement and border management.

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L-R: Group Head, Business Development and Strategy, 9 Payment Service Bank (9PSB), Akeem Salam; Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, 9 Payment Service Bank (9PSB), Branka Mracajac; Managing Director, InterMac Consulting, Adeyinka Adeyemi and Team Lead Marketing and Communications, 9PSB, Inemesit Ekong at the 2024 Digital Pay Expo held at Eko Hotel & Suites, Victoria Island Lagos, recently.

Farmers seek Gov's intervention over seizure of plantations by land-grabbers

Stories by **Chinyere Anyanwu**
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FARMERS in Ijebu-Igbo Oke-agbo area J1 Etemi Gerald Village in Ogun State have urged Governor Dapo Abiodun to come to their rescue as their homes and sources of livelihood are being threatened.

They expressed displeasure over the worsening insecurity in the state, stressing that they have been consistently attacked by hired thugs.

One of the injured farmers from a recent attack, Talabi Daniel, who suffered a machete wound to the head, fingered one Chief Abiodun Akinbowale, one of the village heads, as the perpetrator, alleging that he led thugs to attack his home for refusal to partake in oath-taking. Akinbowale, however, denied the allegation.

Recounting the ordeal, Daniel said, "the day they came to attack me at home, it was about 10pm. I was sitting in front of my compound. They lied that they were policemen and that I was under arrest. I was surprised because I hadn't committed any offence. So, I asked for their identification number and arrest warrant.

"They started beating me,

and as soon as I attempted to use my phone to record them. They hit my forehead with some weapons. They took away my phone. It was my screaming that alerted other villagers, who then came to my rescue. There were about nine of them. My only offence was refusal to be forced to take an oath. I have lost about six acres of cocoa plantation valued at N12 million."

Another farmer, 65-year-old Kehinde Akinolu, said his house was allegedly burnt by the hoodlums, adding that his family was chased out of a church last Sunday where they had sought refuge after losing their property in the arson.

He said: "They seized our motorcycles that we used to ride to the farm. This Baale refused to release them. He brought the caterpillar to the village. The people he sent to torment us were the ones who cut down our cocoa plantation – about three acres of plantation. When we heard what was happening, we rushed down to the farm. Before we returned to the village, another group of the same thugs had razed down our houses. There was nowhere to sleep.

"We decided then to move to a nearby church for the time being. These same

people stormed the church, threatening us to move out of it. They said our offence was because we refused to obey the Baale. How can he force us to take an oath when we have not done anything?"

"I have been living and farming in that village for over 20 years, even before he became the Baale in 2017. We started the farm as far back as 2004. Where do we go at our age? What I had on that farm was not less than N6 million in farm produce. They have sold all my plantations."

Oyewole Jamiu, another affected cocoa farmer narrated how he was attacked in his house by the same hoodlums who were suspected to have been led by the local chief.

"I was inside sleeping around 1pm, when I was attacked by some thugs who came with Chief Abiodun Akinbowale, who happens to be the Baale of the village. I was attacked with cutlass on different parts of my body and dragged from my room down to the Baale's house.

"I was brutalised in the process. When they noticed I wasn't moving anymore, they left me, thinking I was already dead."

Dismissing the accusations by the distraught farmers, Akinbowale stated that

he had no knowledge of the incident and would not comment on a matter he knew nothing about.

He also said the accusation of taking over the plantation was a matter between the farmers and the state government, which had instructed them to vacate the farm.

He said: "Before anything, you will have to go to the Ministry of Forestry Reserve in Abeokuta. It is the governor who puts the commissioner in charge. The governor announced it on the radio. I don't know about their farm. I don't know what they did to the Ministry of Forestry. They should go and settle whatever is between them. I'm not involved. I am the Baale of Gerald. I was at home, not on the farm. They fought me and even took me to court."

On the allegation of forcing residents to take an oath, the Baale said: "I am not involved. Go and ask the king and the commissioner. The governor is already aware of this matter. I don't know what is between them. I was only trying to settle the matter before they decided to fight me. I cannot talk about the oath-taking because I don't know what is between them and the king. It is the government that demolished their houses, not me."

... Urged to seek expert guidance in pesticides application

FARMERS have been urged to seek expert guidance in the application of pesticides to crops to avoid poisoning even as they were warned against the increasing sale of contaminated and adulterated food in the market.

The Acting Executive Vice Chairman of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC), Dr. Adamu Abdullahi, sounded the warning at a one-day sensitisation for traders, farmers, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and the public on forceful ripening of fruits, adulterated palm oil and contaminated meat and grains.

The acting executive vice chairman of the commission said that some traders

and farmers were engaging in various forms of adulteration without minding the health outcomes and implications on consumers.

Abdullahi said the move was to ensure a healthier society in line with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

He said the Act that established the commission gave them powers to evacuate fake and adulterated products from the markets to avoid purchase by consumers.

According to him, "we have to renew the hope of our people to be alive and healthy. We will go to the markets to sensitise traders, educate the public and sellers, that adulterated and

contaminated products are not allowed in the market and if they see any, they have somewhere to report them."

He added: "We are going to the markets in the states, at the grassroots, to find out sharp practices going on and to ensure we get a healthier society and we have to ensure that the goods in the market are fully in line with standard specifications."

The Vice President, North Central National Association of Nigeria Traders (NANTS), Dr. Edozie Ugwu, who also spoke at the event commended the FCCPC for the sensitisation efforts.

Dr. Ugwu said Nigerians had lost their vital organs to the adulterations of food,

adding that the market association would collaborate with the commission and other government agencies to ensure that the law penalises any trader indulging in the practice.

"What we intend doing is to take this back to sensitise our traders on the importance of avoiding these adulterated foods while pleading that this would extend to other key markets."

A stakeholder from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Femi Stephen, noted that adulteration had been linked to many health challenges such as abdominal pains, nausea, brain damage, stomach disorder, liver disease and breathing difficulty.

Food basket

Items month	Current Price	Last Price
OYINGBO/OTTO MARKET		
Oloyin beans (50kg)	N140,000	N120,000
Bucket of Oloyin	N11,000	N9,000
Olo2 beans (100kg bag)	N280,000	N180,000
Bucket of Olo2	N10,000	N6,500
Rice (foreign - 50kg)	N77,000	N72,000
Local brands (50kg)	N68,000	N60,000
Yellow garri (50kg bag)	N47,000	N42,000
Bucket of yellow garri	N3,800	N3,500
White garri (50kg)	N47,000	N42,000
Bucket of white garri	N3,800	N3,500
Melon (egusi) (100kg bag)	N250,000	N250,000
Bucket of melon	N6,000	N6,200
Vegetable oil (20ltrs)	N55,000	N55,000
Vegetable oil (5ltrs)	N13,000	N12,000
Vegetable oil (1.5ltrs)	N2,500	N2,200
Red oil (20ltrs)	N28,000	N30,000
Red oil (5ltrs)	N8,800	N7,500
Red oil (1.5ltrs)	N2,300	N1,900
Tuber of yam	N6,000	N4,000

MILE 12 MARKET

Bag of onions	N80,000	N90,000
Basket of onions	N40,000	N45,000
Basket of tomatoes (large)	N150,000	N140,000
Bag of pepper (rodo)	N140,000	N120,000
Tuber of yam (Benue yam)	N6,000	N4,000

DALEKO MARKET

Oloyin beans (50kg)	N140,000	N120,000
Bucket of Oloyin	N11,000	N7,000
Olo2 beans (100kg bag)	N280,000	N180,000
Bucket of Olo2	N10,000	N8,500
White beans (110kg)	N100,000	N85,000
Bucket of white beans	N7,000	N6,000
Rice (foreign - 50kg)	N77,000	N72,000
Local brands (50kg)	N68,000	N60,000
Vegetable oil (20ltrs)	N55,000	N40,000
Vegetable oil (5ltrs)	N13,000	N12,000
Vegetable oil (1.5ltrs)	N2,500	N2,200
Red oil (20ltrs)	N30,000	N28,000
Red oil (5ltrs)	N7,500	N6,500
Red oil (1.5ltrs)	N2,200	N1,900
Yellow garri (50kg)	N45,500	N40,500
Bucket of yellow garri	N3,300	N2,800
White garri (100kg)	N90,000	N80,000
Bucket of white garri	N3,500	N3,000

30,000 farmers benefit from Ogun gov't's intervention programmes

THE Ogun State Commissioner for Agriculture, Mr. Bolu Owotomo, has disclosed that over 30,000 farmers have benefitted from various intervention programmes of the state government for farmers to boost their productivity and livelihood.

The Commissioner made the disclosure recently at the flag-off ceremony for distribution of agricultural inputs and services to benefiting farmers under the Ogun State Economic Transformation Project (OGSTEP) in Yewa Agricultural Zone.

Owotomo said the event organised in conjunction with the zone's Value Chain Development Firms, RBS-JDPC-ABEOCC-IMA Consortium and International Business for Agricultural Development (IBAD Limited) was to further affirm the state government's commitment to the agricultural sector.

He stated that over 20,000 farmers have been supported through OGSTEP with significant investments exceeding N600 million covering mechanization services, supply of fertilizer, seedlings and stems, agrochemicals, day-old chicks, fish feed, poultry feed, training and capacity building, among others.

The commissioner said the state government had also facilitated off-taker linkages for expected yields with an estimated 107,000 metric tonnes of produce anticipated from last season production.

"Today we gather not to merely distribute inputs but to sow seed of change and progress through these initiatives. We aim to empower our farmers with resources, knowledge and support to enhance productivity, improve livelihood and ensure food security," he said.

The OGSTEP Coordinator, Mrs. Mosunmola Owo-Odunsi, represented by the Programme Manager, OGSTEP Agric, Dr. Oluseyi Olugbire, in her welcome address, highlighted the various achievements of the programme, noting that the testimonies received have so far proved that the state government was indeed committed to the well-being of farmers.

For their part, the Managing Director, RBS Consortium, Mr. Akinremi Osijo, and his counterpart from IBAD Limited, Mr. Jamiu Adeyemi, said the event was to create visibility for the OGSTEP programme and its stakeholders' efforts in transforming the zone's agribusiness environment and its governance for collective wealth creation through strategic, futuristic thinking and commodity markets.

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Access Bank assures of deepening financial inclusion

Access Bank has restated that it remains committed to providing access to finance for entrepreneurs in the transportation, agriculture, and health sectors this year.

Its Deputy Managing Director, Chizoma Okoli, stated this whilst announcing the bank's partnership with Solina Centre for International Development and Research (SCIDaR) in Abuja recently.

Okoli noted that the bank had in 2022, launched a project with the goal of boosting the growth of financial inclusion in Nigeria via a number of initiatives and added that the bank has attained outstanding results so far.

She said, "As part of our ongoing mandate, we are committed to providing access to finance for entrepreneurs in the transportation, agriculture, and health sectors this year. In line with this commitment, we have collaborated with SCIDaR to drive inclusion specifically within the health space. This partnership emphasizes our unwavering commitment to fostering financial inclusion and sustainable development across Nigeria."

Reiterating Chizoma's comments, Njideka Esomeju, Group Head, Consumer Banking, Access Bank highlighted Access Bank's dedication to driving inclusion in the health sector stating that the bank stands ready to extend loans to health SMEs, empowering them to expand their businesses and efficiently serve rural communities across Nigeria.

According to her, this strategy not only promotes increased financial stability but also stimulates economic growth in the health industry.

For his part, the Chief Executive Officer, SCIDaR, Dr. Uchenna Igbokwe, explained that insufficient funding has strained Nigeria's health infrastructure, resulting in sub-par performance on health metrics.

Igbokwe noted that the partnership with Access Bank is timely as it aligns with the government's vision for the health sector and has the potential to strengthen health value chains and could contribute its own quota to the country's GDP.

He elaborated that SCIDaR's increased focus on access to finance and financial inclusion within the health sector, driven by the significant unmet needs and the pivotal role of finance in achieving universal health coverage in Nigeria.

Outlining SCIDaR's approach, Igbokwe pointed to research and iterative analysis, product development/adaptation, smart subsidies, financial literacy, technology integration, and sustainable partnerships as pillars that are aligned with sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, and 17, accelerating progress towards universal health coverage and economic development in Nigeria.

This collaboration, anchored by the Promoting Accreditation for Community Health Services (PACS) project, aims to bolster the supply chain, enhance productivity, and fortify the economic resilience of SMEs within the health sector, particularly Community Pharmacists (CPs) and Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors (PPMVs) across Nigeria.

Continued on [www.sunnewsonline.com](#)

9PSB CEO seeks more women inclusion in Fintech, SMEs

THE Chief Executive Officer, 9PSB, Nigeria's digital payment service banks, Branka Mracajac, has called for more inclusion of women in areas like financial technology as well as small medium Enterprises (SMEs) as this is crucial to improvement in the digital space in Nigeria.

Mracajac stated this during the just-concluded Digital Pay Expo and Exhibition themed 'Redefining Payment,' in Lagos. Speaking at the breakout session tagged "Women in Fintech: Inclusive Finance for SMEs, Mracajac, emphasized that women are making significant breakthroughs in the fintech sector and in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in recent years compared to what was obtainable in the past.

According to her, more inclusion of the women gender will have a crucial effect on the payment world and development of quick solutions that could increase the digital base in the Nigerian market.

She explained, "Although, women are still contending with their male counterparts for positions, it is evident that many women are assuming key executive positions in the finance and fintech sector, as well as other areas of human endeavours. The fintech industry is striving to improve the situations occasioned by gender disparity, inclusivity, and financial inclusion to ensure equal growth and opportunities.

Women are founding many business entities and SMEs, it is important to have the right mindset, work hard and put in more effort to educate yourselves, acquire the right expertise and skills, network and find someone who will inspire you and the opportunities would present itself. We need more prominent professional women leaders in fintech to inspire young girls. We did not have this in my time, but the dynamics have changed. Women should stay focused, connected, and look for opportunities to kick-start their careers."

Continued on [www.sunnewsonline.com](#)



L-R: Babafemi Aina, Technical Director/COO, Solina Centre for International Development and Research (SCIDaR); Dr. Uchenna Igbokwe, Executive Director/CEO, SCIDaR; Chizoma Okoli, Group Head, Financial Inclusion, Access Bank and Emise Nonso-Onwuanibe, Area Sales Manager, Abuja and Kogi, Access Bank at the partnership signing ceremony of Access Bank and SCIDaR to tackle financing challenges for health workers in Nigeria held in Abuja, recently.

Tackling inflation via multi-layered approach

Stories by **Chinwendu Obienyi**

THE economic situation in Nigeria, characterised by persistent inflation and increasing poverty, has been exacerbated by recent government reforms under President Bola Tinubu.

President Bola Tinubu initiated a number of reforms, scrapping a long-running subsidy on petrol and devaluing the currency twice and increasing the electricity tariff in a bid to rev up the economy.

The move, however, has stoked inflation and led to higher import costs and when combined with the food insecurity in the country, the citizens have been tossed into an economic tempest with its concomitant hardship.

To make it worse, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed that the country's headline inflation rose to 33.95 per cent for the month of May, representing a month-on-month (m/m) increase of 0.26 per cent in headline inflation of 33.69 per cent recorded in April 2024.

The report further revealed that urban inflation was high at about 36 per cent, as against 31 per cent in rural inflation, representing a huge gap of about 5 per cent. Even worse is that the food inflation rate in April stood at 40.53 per cent, increasing by 15.92 per cent compared to April 2023.

This scorecard performance of the economy is all shades of concern since the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)'s nuanced approach to combating inflationary pressures despite raising interest rates at the turn of the year.

Although the CBN Governor, Olayemi Cardoso, clearly emphasized that there was no "magic solution" to reduce the soaring inflation, he implored the Federal Government to prioritise food production and availability, stating that more needs to be done for food producing communities in terms of adequate security.

He stated that following an extensive look at past impacts of the apex bank's hikes, members of the MPC suggested further tightening to build on the success/impact of recent hikes, adding that balance of risk suggests further tightening of rates.

Cardoso said, "I think it is important to say that inflation is beginning to become an issue. However, there is light at the end of the tunnel because as we have seen an increase in inflation figures, looking at the specifics in terms of food, core and headline inflation, you will see that it is moderating and decelerating in increment. This is because for the first time since October, we have relatively significant moderation on those components.

I believe strongly that the tools employed by the CBN to tackle inflation are working. There is no magic wand and these things take time but I am confident that some relief will come in another couple of months and I know there will be positive outcomes."

However, economic experts have raised their concerns, questioning whether the reform measures adopted by the FG and CBN have been effective or remedial.

According to them, the government seems to be applying the wrong tools to the wrong ailment as the challenge requires a more effective multi-pronged strategy if it has to be addressed.

Speaking during a monitored programme, the Chief Executive Officer, Cowry Assets Management Limited, Johnson Chukwu, explained that Nigeria's battle with rising inflation requires a multi-pronged strategy that addresses the root cause of the issue.

He attributed the increase in inflation rate to the pressure on food prices which is as a result of low productivity, exchange rate depreciation and excess liquidity in the system while adding that Nigeria does not have a huge consumer credit system.

Chukwu said, "Core cause of this is food inflation which came at a print of over 40 per cent in the month of May while core was 27.01 per cent and so the greatest pressure we are getting is from food inflation. Then, the question is how do we fight food inflation? Because the inflationary pressure is not coming from excess liquidity injection by way of credit expansion (when banks are lending excessively, then you can tighten monetary policies to slow down credit expansion and therefore cut down on demand) but remember that Nigeria does not even have consumer credit and that approach is most likely appropriate when you have huge consumer credit lending in that economy.

So when you increase interest rates, people can no longer borrow to consume and therefore slow down on their consumption. That assumes that the productive capacity is strong so that when there is a deduction in consumption, there is also a reduction in demand and the producers will bring down their prices. Hence the current situation is driven by 3 factors; pressure on food prices because of low food production in major food belts of the country, exchange rate depreciation (Naira went as low as N1,000 in April whereas now, we are back to about N1,500/\$1), a major reversal of the gains we saw in exchange rate.

The FG through the DMO, CBN, have withdrawn within the month of January and last week a total of N15.74 trillion from the economy and so if the issue is excess liquidity, it has been pulled out of the economy and that is enough to have little or major reduction in inflation but we are not seeing that. The key thing is that we are fighting fire with the wrong tools. If you use certain things to fight different types of fires, you might end up inflaming the fire because you increase the combustible nature of the cause of the fire, so it is not that monetary policies are not effective but obviously from all in-

dications, we are applying the wrong tools to the wrong ailment. We need to address food production, stability in exchange rate and excessive liquidity which is being injected by the FG".

He stated that between May 2023 and May 2024, the three tiers of government had shared about N12.6 trillion, and added that of the N12.6 trillion, N4 trillion was exchange gain and a third of the amount shared was not backed by productive activities.

According to him, the exchange gain should have been moved into the reserve and passed on to the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA).

Offering solutions, the Cowry CEO who doubles as an economic analyst, stated that the battle is won on a strategy table where multiple approaches are examined meticulously while adding headline inflation can be reversible if the government takes more holistic approaches.

"We need to focus on improving food productivity, that is the best way to tackle inflation, particularly for an economy that is not mature. Remember that inflation is defined as when too much money is pursuing few goods and so if you keep the money in circulation at the same level and increase the quantity of goods and services produced, you reach a new equilibrium so that prices will come down because if you produce more food than the money that is pursuing it, you will see people who are producing the food begging people to buy from them and so we need to deal with the core cause of inflation which is the issue of productivity.

We also need to look out for crude oil production. I was happy when I saw the first quarter GDP report that revealed that oil production moved from 1.45mbpd in Q3 to 1.55mbpd in Q4 and 1.75mbpd in Q5, the focus should be that we need to quickly improve more on it so we can achieve exchange rate stability and reduce the pass-through effect of naira depreciation", Chukwu stated.

For his part, Business and economic analyst, Kenekwaku Aguolu, the Dangote refinery brings a slight glimmer of hope for the country's economic landscape, however, the FG needs to create an effective model to fast-track the diversification of the economy as it is essential to improve revenue sources, enhance the nation's balance of trade which will in turn stabilizes the value of the naira.

He further added, "Enhancing food production, stabilizing the exchange rate, managing liquidity effectively, and investing in infrastructure are all critical steps.

"Additionally, ensuring security in agricultural areas and adopting a tailored monetary policy will be essential for achieving sustainable economic stability and improving the standard of living for Nigerians."



L-R: Facilitator, Dr. Olugbenga Kehinde; Coordinator, National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism, (NIHOTOUR), Lagos, Mrs. Chinyere Uche-Ibeabuchi; Director of Special Duties, NIHOTOUR, Dr. Philip Maga, Managing Director, Excellence Consulting, Mr. Teniola Reuben and President, Association of Travel and Tourism Writers of Nigeria (ATTWON), Mr. Omololu Olumuyiwa during the Train the Trainer Programme organised by NIHOTOUR for the tourism journalists, hospitality and tourism stakeholders at Centre for Management Development, Shangisha, Lagos, yesterday.

Bleak Sallah as traders record low sales

By **Adeiwale Sanyaolu**

A BLEAK Sallah it was for muslims as the untamed and rising inflation marred celebrations across the country.

This was as traders in essential commodities which included; rice, semovita, drinks, tomatoes and pepper all recorded low sales.

The bleak celebration may not be unconnected with recent headline inflation figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics at the weekend which saw the May figures spiking for the fourth consecutive month to 33.95 per cent from 33.69 per cent recorded in April.

The sprial effect equally impacted on food inflation which rose to 40.66 per cent in May which was 15.84 percentage points higher compared to the rate recorded in May 2023 (24.82 per cent).

Some of the moslems who spoke to Daily Sun in separate interviews lamented that their purchasing power has dwindled over the months, hence reducing the volume of disposable income at their disposal.

A moslem leader, Alhaji Kareem Ambali, said he had to cut down on the number of rams he usually purchase from four to two.

He said an average seized

ram which usually cost around N150,000 now goes for N400,000 ditto for all other food stuffs which has hit roof top.

Another moslem, Mr. Sule Ajadi, said he and his fellow moslems had to collaborate to purchase a cow which cost about N800,000 shared among the four contributors.

Prior to now, he said the cow sold for about N500,000 which he alone can comfortably buy, saying the economic situation calls for prudence in spending.

On his part, Mrs. Bilikis Amuda, said he and his husband had to divide the cost for the Sallah celebration.

She said while she made provisions for food stuffs and others ingredients which cost her about N200,000 from her initial budget of N100,000, her husband bought a small sized ram at N250,000.

For traders, it was tales of woes across the various mar-

ket.

CEO, Yab's Store, a major dealer in food stuffs, alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks in Ogba, Lagos, Miss Iyabode Babatunde, lamented the low level of sales during this Sallah.

She said a carton of Malt containing 24 cans currently sells for N11,000 as against N6,500 while a pack of Chi Exotic juice now sells at N12,000 from N5,850

On the other hand, pack 12 cans of Coca-Cola now sells at N3,400 from N2,100.

For food stuffs, she said a bag of long grain rice currently sells at N85,000, 10kg Semovita now goes for N13,000 from N7,000.

At the popular Kara ram market in Ogun State, most of the ram sellers complained about low sales occasioned by low purchasing power of Nigerians

They lamented that the high cost of transporting the rams from the North to

South has negatively impacted on their profit margin.

They said the high cost of diesel which is now over N1,200 per litre was responsible for the high cost of ram.

A major ram dealer at the market, Alhaji Abubakar Aliyu, said the cheapest ram at the market sells between N380,000 to N400,000.

The situation was not different at the Ashade ram market as most buyers lamented the high cost rams.

The NBS said the rise in food inflation on a year-on-year basis was caused by increases in prices of semovita, oat flake, yam flour prepackage, garri, bean, etc (which are under bread and cereals class), Irish potatoes, yam, water yam, etc (under potatoes, yam and other tubers class), palm oil, vegetable oil, etc (under oil and fat), stockfish, mudfish, crayfish, etc (under fish class), beef head, chicken-live, pork head, bush meat, etc (under meat class).

Nigeria's airspace safe -NCAA

By **Chinelo Obogo**

THE Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has denied reports that the country's airspace is insecure due to lack of radar coverage.

The acting Director General of the Authority, Capt.

Chris Najomo, said in a statement on Monday, that he is constrained to respond to the reports which he described as false and baseless, in order to assure the public of the safety of the country's airspace. He said the Authority aligns with a previous statement made by

the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) on the Total Radar Coverage Of Nigeria (TRACON) which also confirmed the safety of the airspace.

He also said the Authority investigated two recent cases of violation of the prohibited flights zones - DNP4 - in Abuja and established that both violations comprised of controlled flights in a controlled airspace, but strayed into restricted airspace as a result of adverse weather.

"NCAA can also confirm that NAMA had complete radar footages of the two violations with full details of the identities of the aircraft and operators involved. This was only made possible due to functional Primary and Secondary Surveillance Radars in Abuja. Similar installations are in Lagos, Kano and Port-Harcourt.

"The Authority in keeping with its regulatory responsibilities issued an All Operators Letter (AOL DGCA/021/24) wherein the term 'unknown aircraft' was used as reported to NCAA which is the normal security terminology.

However, as explained above, investigations revealed NAMA had complete footages and details of the aircraft that entered the prohibited flight zone.

Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com

FG reduces Phase 2 of Lagos-Calabar coastal highway to 55km

From **Isaac Anumihe**, Abuja

THE Federal Government has reduced the entire corridor of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, from phase two, section two to 55 kilometers including the train tracks.

Minister of Works, Engineer Nweze Dave Umahi announced this in Lagos during a routine check on the ongoing construction of the project at the weekend.

In a statement, the Special Adviser (media) to the minister, Orji Uchenna Orji, did not give any particular reason for the reduction.

At Enugu he inspected the ongoing construction of a 23-span mega twin flyover bridge at Emene in Enugu State.

"This flyover bridge is de-

scribed as the best thing that has never happened to the people of Enugu and neighbouring states until the coming on board of the Renewed Hope administration of President Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu who saw the need to decongest the traffic-ridden axis of Enugu city to give way to stronger socio-economic competitiveness within the region" the statement noted.

Recall that the road which links to many suburbs within the state and the neighbouring states has for many years been a nightmare to vehicles, some of which ply the route through Benue State to far parts of northern Nigeria and to parts of South South through Cross River State.

"The administration of Mr. President thought it expedient, in keeping with his

agenda of robust economic revolution for a sustainable future of our country, to construct for Enugu State a mega twin flyover that will beat the elegance and utility of all flyovers ever built in South East. This flyover, when completed, will change the face of Enugu State, attract trade and investment to the state, reduce accident and insecurity, improve safety and increase patronage to the economic facilities, including airports in Enugu and Ebonyi states, and that of other neighbouring states. Mr. President means well for Nigeria and he's determined to revolutionise the economy through road infrastructure development. The minister has this as a task that must be accomplished. He knows the job. His passion to deliver is unequalled," Orji said.

\$10m earmarked for Customs, FIRS' technical assistance from \$750m W'Bank loan

THE Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) are set to receive \$10 million for technical assistance as part of the \$750 million Nigeria Accelerating Resource Mobilization Reforms (ARMOR) Program-for-Results (PforR) project. This project is part of the broader \$2.25 billion approved by the World Bank for Nigeria on June 13, 2024, to boost reforms in the country. The ARMOR project includes results-based financing of \$730 million and \$20 million in investment financing. The FIRS will receive \$5 million to enhance its operations and revenue collection capabilities, including developing a robust third-party data sharing platform, administrative control programs, a VAT lottery system, and an e-invoicing system. The NCS will receive \$5 million to enhance its administrative processes and improve compliance. The ARMOR program aims to implement tax and excise reforms, strengthen tax and customs administrations, and safeguard oil and gas revenues by increasing transparency and net revenue contribution.

The Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), and Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) experienced a 131% surge in their cost of revenue collection in Q1 2024, totaling N214.29 billion. This significant increase has led to calls for a review from state finance commissioners, who noted the disproportionate impact on revenue distribution to the states.

Afreximbank launches 2024 African Trade report, African Trade and Economic Outlook report a

AFRICAN Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) recently launched its African Trade Report 2024 and African Trade and Economic Outlook Report 2024 at the Afreximbank Annual Meetings (AAM) 2024 in Nassau, The Bahamas.

The latter report forecasts that African economies will grow on average by 3.8 per cent in 2024 - slightly ahead of predicted global growth of 3.2 per cent - prior to increasing by 4 per cent in 2025. The Report, titled 'A Resilient Africa: Delivering Growth in a Turbulent World', provides an analysis of the economic environment, trade patterns, debt scenarios, and future projections for African economies.

Dr. Yemi Kale, Afreximbank's Group Chief Economist and Managing Director of Research and International Cooperation, said ongoing global challenges undermined the performance of Africa's trade, which contracted by 6.3 per cent in 2023 after expanding by 15.9 per cent in 2022, while intra-African trade expanded by 3.2 per cent over the same period.

The Chief Economist said: "This performance is reflective of the resilience of the African economy and the potential impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area's (AfCFTA) single market for the continent as a tool to protect them from global shocks," adding, "Our analysis in the report also revealed large untapped potential in intra-African trade, especially with respect to machinery, electricity, motor vehicles, and food products."

The report also revealed that African economies face several downside risks, including increasing levels of sovereign debt and associated sustainability risks, excessive exposure to adverse terms-of-trade shocks, escalating geopolitical tensions in some cases, volatile domestic political environments in certain African countries, high commodity prices and inflationary pressures, and potential food insecurity.

The outlook for the African Continent in 2024 remains positive despite the challenging economic environment of 2023. Most macroeconomic indicators are expected to improve in 2024 and 2025.

Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com

Foundation, OPTS to empower directors in federal civil service

THE Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to transforming public service delivery in Africa, is collaborating with the Oil Producers Trade Section (OPTS), to equip Directors in the Federal Civil Service with essential leadership, project management and communication skills through a targeted training programme.

This initiative, which will be implemented by the Foundation in collaboration with the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) underscores the Foundation's unwavering commitment to strengthening public sector leadership and efficiency.

The OPTS is an industry group of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) representing about 30-member oil and gas companies that are registered in Nigeria and have an Oil Prospecting License or an Oil Mining License.

During a visit by the Director of Funding and Partnerships of the Foundation, Bukky Akinsemoyin, to the leadership of OPTS, which marked the official launch of the initiative, he said: "We are delighted by the partnership and support from the OPTS on this critical initiative," said Bukky Akinsemoyin, Director of Funding and Partnerships at the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation. "Equipping Directors in the Civil Service with the necessary skills will greatly enhance their ability to deliver essential services and drive national development. This initiative exemplifies the positive impact that can be achieved when the public and private sectors come together."

On his part, Executive Director, OPTS, Mr Gwueke Ajafia, in recognising the importance of a well-equipped Civil Service, noted that the section "enthusiastically supports this training programme. We at OPTS are firm believers in supporting initiatives that strengthen the Nigerian public sector."

Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com

Southern leaders urge Tinubu to ignore enemies after FCT minister

From Fred Itua, Abuja

SOME leaders from the southern part of the country have urged President Bola Tinubu to ignore enemies and other political distractors, who are bent on frustrating the efforts of the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike.

Addressing newsmen in Abuja, the leaders who are members of the Citizens Network for Peace and Development in Nigeria (CNPND), said the appointment of Wike by President Tinubu was one of the best decisions of the current administration, maintaining that within nine months, the FCT minister has achieved what some former ministers could not in eight years.

National coordinator of the movement, Chief Raphael

Okorie, also begged Nigerians to remain patient with Tinubu, as he tries to fix the economy, restore security, and provide the needed relief to everyone in the country.

“Wike has done a lot in just nine months. We know that there are people who want to distract him. But he has ignored them. He’s not even bothered about the crisis in Rivers State. He’s busy with developing Abuja.

“In nine months as FCT Minister, he has transformed the territory. We want to assure him that we’re with him and we stand behind him to succeed as minister. And we urge him to ignore those trying to distract him from replicating the wonders he performed in Rivers State.

“We have taken our time to assess the performance of the administration of President

Tinubu and Wike.

There is no doubt that they are set to deliver the dividends of the Renewed Hope Agenda expediently as promised.

“From rapid infrastructure development to a stabilising economy, there is no doubt that Nigeria is on the path to recovery. Here thereto, we micromanaged the value of the Naira against other currencies of the world, had a completely stunted infrastructural development, the international community couldn’t invest in Nigeria

because of inconsistent policies and over interference by the government in the affairs of the private sector.

“Today we have attained relative and realistic stability in the management of the Naira, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is growing by the day. The private sector is getting the required support to grow and produce what we consume. Local content is being seriously encouraged and the government has opened its doors to all Nigerians to build an all-inclusive

country, where no Nigerian is shortchanged by those that have invaded to destroy our dear nation.

“Our praises also go to Mr. Project, Ezenwo Nyesom Wike for proving Mr. President right in appointing him as the Minister of the nation’s capital, Abuja.

“Your performance is unprecedented, and we salute your courage, determination, and output in these nine months. Before the appointment of Wike as FCT Minister, insecurity was a major problem. In less than

six months, he addressed the issue head-on. Today, the entire territory is relatively safe. We are not there yet, but with Wike in charge, we are optimistic that FCT will be completely safe soon.

“There are people who want to distract Wike from delivering on the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Tinubu. We urge President Tinubu to ignore such people and continue to support Wike. We also call on residents of the FCT to join hands and support Wike to succeed.”

Capture more South South states, Gov Otu charges APC zonal exco

CROSS River state governor, Senator Bassey Otu, has challenged his party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) to grab more states in the South South in order for the region to align with the Federal Government.

He made the advocacy during the APC South-South Zonal Executives meeting in Calabar.

“It is important to muster more and more states to the ruling APC so that our zone would be politically warm within the APC family.

“It is about endearing the people to the powerful pedigree of the actualization of our hope through passionate empathy for changing livelihood and leveraging the environment for a better today and greater tomorrow,” Otu said.

The governor, who is also the coordinator of the APC in the South-South geopolitical zone, affirmed that Edo State cannot escape the onslaught with the winning strategy encapsulated in the ‘Renewed Hope’ agenda of the Tinubu-led administration, admitting that “if we did it in Imo state gubernatorial polls, we can replicate same in Edo state.”

He called on the APC to consider the South-South for critical appointments, as only this will strengthen the party in the region as well as reward deserving party faithful.

He commended Tinubu on the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, saying such development would strengthen socio-economic ties between South West and South-South regions.

At the Exco zonal meeting were the party National Vice Chairman, South South, Dr. Victor Gaidom, Minister of Aviation, Mr. Festus Keyamo, former Deputy Senate President, Omo Agege, Cross River State Deputy governor, Dr. Peter Odey, former Senate Majority Leader, Senator Ndoma Egba, APC National Publicity Secretary, Felix Morka, Cross River State APC Chairman, Barrister Alphonsus Eba, among others.

In his remarks, the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, thanked God for putting the South-South in

the political scheme of things in the present dispensation, adding that President Bola Tinubu holds the zone dearly in his administration, especially with the commencement of work on the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway Project.

He said the zonal meeting was an opportunity for the APC stakeholders in the South-South to congratulate themselves on their immense contribution to the emergence of the Tinubu-led administration, attributing the return of the Senate Presidency to the zone, 45 years after Joseph Ways, to commitment and conviction to turn things around for the nation.

“Forty-five years after Senator Joseph Ways, it has pleased God to have me, a South-southerner, to be Senate President. My being here should be an impetus for the region to further be linked to the centre,” he stated.

Akpabio also hailed Cross River governor, Senator Bassey Otu for his impactful leadership in his first year in office, and leading the charge for a new Cross River State, describing his strides as a show of direction in leadership.

He encouraged party faithful in the South-South to continue to trust the present administration, work hard to take over the entire zone, while expressing optimism that in no distant time, APC would have a second governor in the South-South - after the party’s imminent victory at the forthcoming Edo State gubernatorial election.

Akpabio also revealed that the federal government has granted approval for the commencement of work on the Calabar axis for the construction of the six lane Lagos-Calabar coastal highway, hinting that himself and the Minister of Works will be in Calabar to flag-off the project in a fortnight.

Dr. Giadom stated that the essence of the meeting was to mobilise leadership at various levels to support the federal government’s renewed hope agenda, as well as brainstorm ahead of the Edo State governorship election, and the APC’s eventual takeover of the entire zone.



Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi (middle) with Comptroller General of Customs, Wale Adeniyi (5th left) and others during the courtesy call on Ooni in Ile-Ife, Osun State, yesterday

New minimum wage: NANS faults Fayemi’s call for decentralisation of negotiation

From Laide Raheem, Abeokuta

THE National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) has condemned the call for decentralisation of minimum wage by the immediate past Governor of Ekiti State, Kayode Fayemi, advocating that states should be allowed to have separate negotiation with labour on new minimum wage.

The student body in a statement yesterday, in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital, by the National Clerk of the Senate of NANS, Abdul-Yekinn Oduwayo, described such a call as anti-workers.

The Federal Government and labour unions have been locked in

negotiations over a new minimum wage. While the labour insists on N250,000, the government is offering N62,000.

Fayemi, in an interview recently, advocated for a decentralised minimum wage negotiation, arguing that states should determine what they can pay considering their peculiarities.

But, NANS while reacting to Fayemi’s statement, called on the Federal Government to ignore the former governor, and rather, compel the state governors to implement the new minimum wage if signed into law.

Oduwayo described Fayemi’s statement as uncalled for, and capable of setting the governors

against the Federal Government.

“We want to urge the Federal Government to ignore former Governor Fayemi and his call for a decentralised minimum wage negotiation with the labour.

“In fact, we want the Federal Government to compel state governors to pay the new minimum wage if signed into law and mete out serious sanctions against any state governor that defaults in the payment of the new minimum wage.

“It is dangerous and unproductive to allow state governors to determine what they can pay as minimum wage. This can spell doom for Nigeria and set the governors against the Federal

government,” Oduwayo said in the statement.

Meanwhile, NANS, under the leadership of Pedro Obi, has backed the labour unions for demanding a better pay as minimum wage.

He reiterated that “Nigerian students will not relent in giving every necessary support and encouragement to President Tinubu-led administration, towards restoring the lost glory of our dear country, and providing conducive conditions for Nigerians, that would encourage them to live and work safely in the country.”

Obi stressed that the federal and state governments must prioritise workers’ welfare and implement policies that would improve the living conditions of Nigerians.

Kwankwaso hails as Kano gov lays foundation for 85km roads, bridge worth N21bn

KANO State Governor, Abba Kabir Yusuf, has ignited hope in rural communities with the groundbreaking ceremony of an 85-kilometre network of roads, and a bridge valued at over N21 billion.

A statement by the Governor’s spokesperson, Sanusi Bature, said the projects would redefine rural landscapes and enhance the livelihoods of the populace.

The initiative includes a 70-kilometre expanse from Bridge Madobi to Madobi town, spanning through Yako to Kafin Mai Yaki, and terminating in Kuru.

He said the second project featuring a 15-kilometre road and a 200-metre bridge from Madobi town to Kubarachi and Kura

showcases the governor’s profound dedication to catalysing progress across the semi-urban and rural areas.

In a ceremony attended by distinguished guests, including Senator Rabi’u Kwankwaso, Governor Yusuf assured that the project would be completed within 18 and 24 months respectively.

Governor Yusuf’s vision aims to bridge not only the urban-rural divides, but also to cultivate sustainable economic pathways, thus curbing rural-urban migration and fostering prosperity in hinterlands.

During the event, Kwankwaso endorsed Governor Yusuf’s governance, applauding the electorate for choosing wisely in the previous

elections.

He lauded the Governor for his outstanding performance in the first year of his stewardship in the state. He made the commendation during his Sallah homage to the Governor at the Government House, yesterday.

He commended the administration’s dedication to advancing education and women empowerment initiatives aimed at enhancing the lives of Kano State residents.

The former governor of Kano State, expressed delight at Yusuf’s commitment to empowering women with substantial support.

He said this was significant for rural entrepreneurship and emphasised the importance of

effective monitoring to ensure equitable distribution of empowerment grants.

Kwankwaso called for enhanced efforts in security, empowerment of the less privileged and advancement of developmental projects.

The NNPP leader assured the governor of his commitment as a stakeholder to provide valuable guidance and support to the government.

Responding, Yusuf thanked Kwankwaso for his mentorship and support for his administration.

He reiterated his administration’s dedication to upholding the principles of the Kwankwasiyaya movement for continued progress and development of the state.

Worsening economic crunch spikes cholera cases

From **Fred Ezeh**, Abuja

• Nigeria must prevent spread in schools - UNICEF

HEALTH experts have raised the alarm about a possible spike in cases of cholera and other water-borne diseases like diarrhoea, typhoid and dysentery, largely due to increased access to unclean sources of food and water for consumption and other household use by Nigerians.

Recent inflation has resulted in a sharp rise in the cost of potable water packaged in sachet, pet and dispenser bottles, among others, which a large percentage of Nigerians rely on. The high cost has pushed many to alternative sources of water for drinking and cooking. More households have also resorted to eating out in unhygienic places because

it is more cost effective than home cooking.

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), in a statement, last week, confirmed that cholera has hit 30 states, adding that more cases were being reported in different parts of the country as the rainy season peaks.

It noted that between January 1, and June 11, 1,141 suspected and 65 confirmed cases with 30 deaths were reported from 96 LGAs in the affected 30 states, noting that 10 states that contributed 90 percent to the burden of cholera include Bayelsa, Zamfara, Abia, Cross River, Bauchi, Delta, Katsina,

Imo, Nasarawa and Lagos states.

Chairman of the Association of Resident Doctors (ARD), FCT chapter, Dr. Roland Aigbove, predicted the recent outbreak of cholera, adding that there might be increased hospitalisation as a result of the development.

“Unarguably, Nigerians are resilient people and no matter what lies ahead, they always create an avenue to get going. Due to the present precarious economic crisis that has bedevilled our country with so much uncertainty and class widening, in terms of wealth and living standards, many people, especially the

downtrodden, have resorted to alternatives to meet their daily needs, hence, quality and safety are being compromised.

“The dangers of such practices will be sales and consumption of unwholesome products that would endanger the lives of citizens vis-a-vis their health. For instance, there are already reports of sales of water in polythene bags that are obviously packaged in an unhealthy environment, and without standards. This will, definitely, lead to increase in water-borne diseases and increased hospitalisation, thus resulting in loss of valuable manpower/work hours due to the poor

hygienic conditions of packaging and untreated water from any source.”

On his side, Dr. Ken Ozoilo, former president of Medical and Dental Consultants Association of Nigeria (MDCAN), described the situation as a catastrophic and pending public health challenge, considering the fact that potable water is central to the issue of public health management in Nigeria and beyond.

He said the campaign for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), which was championed by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), local and international donor partners, and other state governments, has been intensified for a long time with visible positive results being recorded.

“Fortunately, many Nigerians have picked, and imbibed the message of hand washing for healthy living. But, the situation in Nigeria today is scary and could affect the gains achieved over the years. Public health challenge is looming if something urgent is not done to salvage the situation.

“We are currently battling with the outbreak of cholera as being reported from different states in Nigeria. Soon, other epidemics might follow. So, there’s a need to take precautionary measures to avoid additional public health issues

that could overwhelm our system and manpower.

“Sadly, governments prefer reactionary measures/interventions, which are more costly and often result in avoidable loss of lives, to proactive measures which are cheaper and affordable. But, that should change if we want to achieve the desired gains.”

Dr. Gabriel Adakole, public health expert based in Abuja, cautioned the public against cholera bacteria, which is passed through faeces (poop), shed back into the environment.

The public health expert said the primary route for cholera transmission is through the consumption of food or water contaminated with the faeces of an infected person.

“The bacteria can survive in the environment for extended periods, making it easier for the disease to spread in areas lacking proper sanitation and hygiene.

“When a person ingests contaminated water or food, the bacteria colonise the intestines, leading to the rapid onset of symptoms,” he said.

On the impact on underdeveloped states, Adakole said cholera would be more prevalent in underdeveloped states, where infrastructure for clean water and sewage disposal was insufficient.

• Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com



L-R: Governor of Abia State, Alex Otti, Mayor Elelenta Nwambuisi Elele of Isialangwa South and Commissioner for Power and Public Utilities, Ikechukwu Monday, at the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Umuikaa District Headquarters, Isialangwa South Local Government Area, where the governor observed the Sabbath worship at the weekend.

2027: Okigwe zone insists on producing Uzodimma’s successor

From **Stanley Uzoaru**, Owerri

LEADERS in Okigwe zone of Imo State have reiterated their resolve to produce Governor Hope Uzodimma’s successor in 2027.

Rising from a crucial meeting on Sunday at the palace of the chairman of Okigwe Traditional Rulers Council, Eze Oliver Ohanwe at Isiala Mbano, the leaders, comprising top politicians, traditional rulers, captains of industry, and academia among others, demanded that the charter of equity truncated in 2011 while Chief Ikedi Ohakim was seeking his second tenure, must be completed before power shifts to Owerri zone.

The meeting, which came amid raging controversy over certain promise said to have been made by the incumbent governor, Senator Hope Uzodimma, to handover to a contestant from Owerri zone at the end of his tenure in 2027, had generated a lot of interest from keen watchers of the Imo political terrain, who saw it as a potentially make or mar gathering.

Over the last couple of months, several individuals and groups from both Okigwe and Owerri zones, had advanced arguments and counter arguments over which of the

zones has the right claim to the office of the governor in 2027.

While Owerri zone hinges its claim on the fact that in the current fourth republic, Orlu and Owerri zones have, respectively, occupied the office for 24 years and four years, respectively, the longest Owerri zone has had it was the seven-month stint of Emeka Ihedioha, who was replaced by the incumbent governor, following the Supreme Court’s ruling on January 14, 2020.

On the other hand, Okigwe zone insisted that its mandate that began in 2007 after Orlu zone’s eight-year tenure was deliberately truncated just after four years in 2011 with the active collaboration of politicians from Owerri zone.

Therefore, to restore the Charter of Equity, which leaders of the zone insist collapsed in 2011 as a result, Okigwe must be allowed to complete eight years on the seat, after which it can then move to Owerri zone.

In furtherance to this argument, the Sunday meeting adopted a document which was presented a couple of months ago by the Okigwe Global League to the Imo State Council of Elders through its chairman, Eze Cletus Ilomuanya.

In the document, the

Okigwe leaders noted that while the zone commends the council for its efforts at restoring the Imo Charter of Equity, it was vehemently opposed to his decision on the modality for the implementation by which the office of the governor of Imo state is programmed to rotate from Orlu to Owerri zone in 2027.

The document further noted that “the people of Okigwe zone, hereby, request the council to use her good offices to review the implementation modality in the interest of equity and fairness, and accordingly uphold the right of Okigwe zone to produce the next governor of Imo state at the end of the second tenure of the incumbent governor in 2027.”

Apart from the truncation of its mandate in 2011, the Okigwe leaders gave details of other aspects of economic and social marginalisation suffered by the zone since 1999.

They argued thus: “Now that we are reviving the Charter of Equity, it is only logical, fair and just, to allow Okigwe zone to complete its rightful turn, which was viciously truncated in breach of the charter.”

The adoption of the document, entitled, “Imo State Charter of Equity: The Stand Of The People of Okigwe Zone,” followed a motion by

Professor Ossy Nwebo, former vice chancellor of the Imo State University, which was seconded by Professor Remi Uche.

Thereafter, other speakers that spoke supported the document. Among those who spoke in favour of its adoption were Chief Tony Chukwu, a font line politician from the zone, Senator Patrick Ndubueze, currently representing the zone (Imo North) in the Senate and Paul Emeziem, former Speaker of the Imo State House of Assembly, and currently representing Onuimo state constituency.

Others are Chief Peter Orji, E.E. Osuagwu, former member of the House of Representatives in the aborted Third Republic, and Eze Daniel Emeonye, Secretary-General of Okigwe zone of the council of traditional rulers.

In his speech, an obviously elated Chukwu noted among other things, that it has the hands of God, while Senator Ndubueze, added, “I support the Okigwe position 100 percent.”

Eze Emeonye went a step further to inform the gathering that the Okigwe zone of the traditional rulers was part of the drafting of the document that had just been unanimously adopted.

Igbo not going back on relocating businesses to S’East, IPOB replies Yoruba elders

From **Stanley Uzoaru**, Owerri

THE Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has urged Igbo living in Lagos State to reject a purported letter written by some stakeholders calling for dialogue between Igbo and Yoruba residents.

Spokesman of the group, Emma Powerful, in a statement, claimed that the dialogue was only meant to lure the Igbo traders in the state from changing their minds about relocating their investments to the South East.

Giving reasons for rejecting the dialogue, Powerful said Igbo have always been victims of any crisis in the state, and other parts of the country, hence their decision to relocate their businesses to their zone.

He said: “Ndigbo must not fall into any deception to continue investments in Lagos State, where their investments are not protected.

“As much as IPOB does not oppose any genuine dialogue between the Yoruba and Ndigbo in Lagos State, IPOB will object to any dialogue that is intended to lure Ndigbo to continue investing in the hostile environment of Lagos State.

“Ndigbo have done all they can to belong to Nigeria, but Nigeria keeps rejecting them with exclusivity and ethnic bigotry policies. Ndigbo have lost millions of investments and lives in the Northern and Western regions of Nigeria.

“In the North, Ndigbo are always the victims of any religious and political riots during which Northerners destroy, loot, and burn down businesses and property belonging to the Igbo.

“Recently, in the Western region, particularly in Lagos State, Biafran businesses and property have been targeted by the Lagos State Government, and we will no longer allow our people to continue investing in Yoruba land.

“Lagos State is not Igboland. Lagos State Government has demolished property and investment of Ndigbo. Many Igbo dominated markets in Lagos have either been demolished or burnt down and taken over by the Lagos State Government.

“On the basis of the aforementioned, any Igbo person investing in the Northern and Western regions of Nigeria needs DNA tests.

“IPOB calls on all Biafrans to stop investing in Yoruba land and Arewa land. All investments should be channelled to Biafran land. Our people who invested in Biafra land are doing well and are helping to create jobs for our youths.

“Biafrans have been an engine of growth in any society they find themselves in. In all parts of the world where Ndigbo reside, they directly or indirectly contribute to the development of that area. It’s in our DNA to build others

• Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com

Bill to mandate companies to remit 1% taxes to NITDA gets boost

From **Fred Itua**, Abuja

THE National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) established by the NITDA Act of 2007 to regulate standards, guidelines and frameworks for the development and standardisation of Information Technology practices in Nigeria, is also clamouring for the actualisation of the Bill at the National Assembly for the last five years (since 2021).

The NITDA Bill, first proposed in 2021, seeks to repeal the National Information Technology Development Act No. 28 of 2007, and enact the National Information Technology Development Agency Act.

The amendments in the proposal include provisions for new license categorisations, licensing fees, one percent profit-before-tax levies for companies with revenues higher than 100 million naira and prison sentences for defaulting parties.

In 2022, the Federal Executive Council (FEC) considered the Bill and moved a step further for its entry to the National Assembly. On December 23, 2022, at the National Assembly, a public hearing was held where stakeholders in Nigeria's technology ecosystem weighed in on the Bill.

Since its announcement that year, the Bill has generated a healthy amount of controversy surrounding its purpose and compatibility with other technology-related Bills, most notably the recently proposed Startup Bill.

Among the various submissions at the National Assembly are that Section 6(a) of the existing Act provides that NITDA is both a development and regulatory agency in the ICT sector.

However, stakeholders said the argument that NITDA is not a regulator is incorrect. A total of thirty-one (31) stakeholders made submissions and presentations on the Bill. But out of this number, seventeen (17) were in support of the Bill, while fourteen (14) were opposed to it.

Those in favour based their support on the fact that the Bill provided for the development of the measures that would adequately regulate digital infrastructure, fast-track Nigeria's transition into a leading digital economy, foster innovation and creativity, empower businesses in the country, improve the process of issuing and authenticating good character certificates and promote the use of technology in education and other sectors.

The Committee recommended to the Senate that the Bill be passed after considering the comments and opinions of stakeholders therein.

Citizens Watch Advocacy Initiative (CWAII), said "there was no time that the Bill was meant to usurp the powers of other regulators and make NITDA a super regulator in the ICT industry. A lot of stakeholders also said the Bill has the potential to reverse the gains delivered and made in the digital economy already. However, some stakeholders, on the other hand, agreed that the Bill has a lot of merit and that it would sanitize the

industry and bridge the knowledge gap between Nigeria and other developed nations in the digital economy.

CWAII said the Bill, if passed into law, has the enormous positive impact to the telecommunication and ICT industry in Nigeria, as it will ultimately lead to increase in the confidence of both local and international investors in the telecom and ICT sector of the Nigerian economy, thereby transforming the development agency to a regulator which will enhance the activities of other sectors concerned like the banking, financial services, insurance, healthcare, commerce education, agriculture, telecommunications, etc.

It noted that the "role of NITDA under the proposed

AfCFTA: Made in Aba goods for display in Rwanda

From **Ogbonnaya Ndukwe**, Aba

IN response to the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) ratified by Nigeria and 52 other nations in Africa, made in Aba products have formally started finding their way into foreign markets in Africa and beyond.

Already, some manufacturers of shoes, bags and belts (leather products) and garments have made inroads, visiting countries like, Central Africa Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of (DR Congo), Gabon, and Rwanda, among others, to test-run the acceptability and sale of their products, a result they said,

Kwankwaso accuses FG, APC of plot to create new breed of Boko Haram insurgents in Kano

THE National Leader and presidential candidate of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, has accused the All Progressive Congress (APC)-led Federal Government of attempting to create a new breed of Boko Haram terrorists and insurgents in Northern Nigeria.

He was reacting to the ongoing situation in Kano, where Federal security agencies, with constitutionally assigned responsibility for ensuring peace, law and order, have been allegedly backing the deposed Emir of Kano, Aminu Ado Bayero.

But he said people of Kano would resist any attempt to undermine the constituted authority in the state. "We have mass followership because people believe in us, we are pro-people and the NNPP administration is

Ganduje, Sanwo-Olu, others to launch APC's skills devt training programme

By **Bolaji Okunola**

THE All Progressives Congress (APC), through its youth wing, is set to host the inaugural Enterprise-Skills Development Training (EDET) programme, which will be launched by the party's national chairman, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, the Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, and others.

The intensive entrepreneurship skills training is designed to support both aspiring and existing business owners, and

Act, would have no direct conflicts with other regulators in the industry as being canvassed by naysayers. Accordingly, NITDA 2022 Bill will stabilize the regulatory environment in the telecom sector in Nigeria and attract the much needed foreign direct investments as well as domestic investments in the telecom and ICT sector in the country.

Executive Secretary of CWAII, Omoba Kenneth Aigbgebe, "asserted that from their investigation, the Bill seeks to enact an Act that will empower NITDA to provide for the administration, implementation and regulation of information technology systems and practice in Nigeria, which will automati-

cally transform NITDA from a mere development agency to a regulatory agency in the sector that needs all the support, cooperation of Nigerians and stakeholders.

"As it is the first of its kind in the annals of history that will bridge the digital knowledge base of the country and impact the growth of the sector holistically in all spheres. The statement further added that the essence and purpose of the Bill is to create an effective, impartial and independent regulatory framework for the development of the Nigerian information technology sector and digital economy.

• **Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com**

came out positive thinking, paving way for formal setting up of showrooms for display of Aba made goods.

The leader of Aba Shoes, Bags and Other Leather Products Manufacturers Association, Ken Anyanwu, said the urge to expose more of their products to the outside world made him and his colleagues to embark on trade visits to some African countries, whose traders have been coming to buy from them here in Nigeria.

Anyanwu said preparations were at an advanced stage by his group to open showrooms in some countries beginning with Kigali, Rwanda, next month.

determined to serve them anywhere they voted for it. We will not fold our arms and watch enemies of the state destroying the peaceful co-existence of our dear state, as we shall do everything possible to support the governor to succeed. I am happy that he is not distracted and is focused on achieving his goals.

"There are people from Kano, enemies of the state, who also suffer mental illness and are the ones advising the Federal Government on how to take over Kano through a State of Emergency. This is madness of the highest order that the good, peace loving and committed people Kano will resist."

He also stated that "in the build ups to 2027, some desperate politicians are already on a mission of disruption, but we will rather prefer the two of

us to loose than to allow them crush us unnecessarily. We dare anybody, who thinks he can victimise us politically, to go and be rest assured that we are ready for the fight.

"We are not afraid to be out of power because we will remain politicians in or out of government, we cannot run away from our destiny, we are humans, we know what is good for us and we will pursue it vigorously."

He claimed the Federal Government was listening to some unpatriotic politicians from Kano, who will only contribute to its failure because the people of Kano will resist any attempt to undermine the constitutional responsibility of the Governor by any individual or group.

• **Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com**

is scheduled for between July 8 and 12, 2024, as part of its four-year strategic plan to drive youth self-sufficiency and promote social justice among young people.

According to a statement from the APC's national youth leader, Dr. Dayo Israel, the first progressive enterprise-skills development training programme would host over 1,000 live participants, and more than 3,000 virtual participants from across Nigeria over the five-day period.

The programme includes lectures, case studies, team exercises, and coaching from experienced entrepreneurs. Participants will engage in case discussions, experience sharing, and teamwork to develop a comprehensive understanding of what is required to build and sustain new businesses and drive successful innovations, whether within established firms or new SME ventures.

• **Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com**

Politics of Tinubu re-echoes at a book launch in Lagos

THE politics of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu reechoed at the weekend in Lagos as the book, at the unveiling of 'The Wittiest Politician in Africa' written by Chinedu J. Nwagwu.

Many politicians, members of the academia, traders and security agents present at the launch, praised the President Tinubu for his benevolence and mentorship of young and upcoming politicians in the country, particularly Lagos state.

According to Alhaji Auwal T. Maude, leader Northern Nigerian Youth Organisation, who represented Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Southwest Zone, President Tinubu is at present the most successful politician in the country, adding that he attained that position because he contested against the Leader of his party, and all the northern politicians who were interested in the position and came out clean.

He urged upcoming politicians to learn from him and understand his politics, adding that he will do anything within his capacity to understand the

Soul makers ministry begins 'Heart's Day' celebration

By **Zika Bobby**

THE Soul Makers Ministry worldwide is celebrating this year's Heart's Day. A statement by the ministry's spiritual leader, Chief Owolabi Salis, noted that the celebration which is determined by the lunar calendar and sighting of the moon, will be celebrated between Sunday, June 16, and Wednesday next week.

"It is called Odun Okan in Yoruba or Odun Ibori, Odun Ori, Odun Ori Ire or Odun Alafia Ara. Different cultures have different names for it."

Salis enjoined individuals to earmark that festival for special prayers to their creator. "During the festival or celebration, you will offer prayers to the soul maker, the lord almighty, to bless your hearts and other organs of your body and for a good head. You should also offer thanksgiving to the soul maker, the creator of the universe, for physical and spiritual guidance and stability," he said.

Salis said the ministry abhors genuflecting before stone, woods, idols or man, noting that doing so could make one's soul a victim of what he or she

Tinubu for Ramaphosa's inauguration in South Africa

From **Juliana Taiwo-Obalonye**, Abuja

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu is set to depart Lagos for Pretoria, South Africa, today, June 18, 2024, to attend the inauguration of President Cyril Ramaphosa, who has been re-elected for a second term.

South Africa's parliament re-elected Ramaphosa as President after a historic coalition deal between the African National Congress (ANC) and opposition parties. The new government includes the ANC, the Democratic Alliance

politics of the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Similarly, the President of Mbaise Traders Association Anselm O. Ezenwa urged Nigerian to support the President Bola Tinubu, especially as he has ascended the throne as the president of Nigeria

Also the former President General of Alaba int'l market, Lagos Mr. Mbonu Geoffrey also said he had been in Lagos for a very long time and can tell that the President Tinubu does not discriminate.

Speaking earlier the author of the book, Mr. Chinedu J Nwagwu said the idea to write this book came as an inner inspiration to him, adding that The Wittiest Politician in Africa is targeted at unveiling some of the discovered strategies employed, utilized and mastered by one of Africa's best Politicians of all time – President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The book x-rays seven powerful strategies that have been working wonders for President Tinubu in politics over the years, as it also portrays these

• **Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com**

worships.

According to him, one of its cardinal objectives is to replenish the earth through love and power of regeneration, which is enshrined in the soul maker alone.

"This is our planet earth. Everything on this planet grows. For a tree to bear fruits, you have to water the roots. If you need spiritual wisdom, you need to water your roots, and you do so by paying obeisance to your roots. Whoever disregards his roots will hardly develop," he added.

Salis said the ministry does not join other sects to address the creator of the universe as 'God or Lord' as common in other religious sects, but rather, the 'Creator or Soul Maker,' which is believed to be reflective and ubiquitous in every tribe and culture globally.

He stressed that the ministry subscribes to three key basis of one's soul, one's parents and one's ancestors, which it likens to first, second and third roots respectively, urging every worshipper to pay obeisance to them.

The celebration is meant for all living beings that have a soul and a heart to appreciate their Creator.

(DA), and smaller parties. The ANC lost its majority in the recent election, securing only 159 out of 400 seats in the national assembly.

According to a statement from the State House signed by Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Ajuri Ngelale, President Tinubu will leave Nigeria to participate in the ceremony, which marks the beginning of President Ramaphosa's new term. After the inauguration, the Nigerian President will return to Nigeria.

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• Marc Brys

2026 WCQ:

NFF eyes embattled Cameroon coach to replace Finidi

By Rasqa Oboiren

Belgian sports news wire source Het Nieuwsblad has published a report suggesting that the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) is considering appointing Marc Brys as the foreign technical adviser for the Super Eagles.

After a poor start to World Cup qualification, and mount-

ing pressure, Finidi George late last week announced his resignation via an email he sent to the Secretary General of the country's apex football body.

The former Enyimba of Aba coach took the job after Jose Peseiro left in March but has struggled to get the side firing as they are currently looking set to miss out on the 2026 World Cup that will

be co-hosted by the United States of America, Canada and Mexico.

Brys has been embroiled in a controversial situation in Cameroon, where the sports ministry appointed him but the country's Football Association denied that he was the head coach. He and head of the FA Samuel Eto'o had a public disagreement but in the end

Brys has been able to work as the side's national coach. His Cameroonian side is currently leading their World Cup qualification group.

Former OH Leuven head coach Brys has not denied the interest from Nigeria, but has said he is feeling happy at Cameroon despite the controversy surrounding his appointment.

Arsenal to make mammoth bid for Osimhen within 24 hours

Arsenal will make a push to sign Napoli striker, Victor Osimhen "in the next few days", with reports from Italy revealing details of the upcoming bid as well as the Nigerian's stance on joining the Gunners.

Arsenal remains intent on signing an elite-level centre-forward to potentially add the finishing touches to a squad on the cusp of winning top honours.

The Gunners initially sought to sign Benjamin Sesko of RB Leipzig. However, the Slovenian ace has committed his future to Leipzig for one more year at least.

A transfer is now off the table until 2025, at which point a 'gentleman's agreement' between club and player will see sizeable offers considered.

A 12-month delay is of no use to Arsenal, however, who with one or two blockbuster signings could finally topple Manchester City and end their 20-year wait for a Premier League title.

To that end, Arsenal is understood to have turned its gaze elsewhere and Girona's Artem Dovbyk is on their radar.

Dovbyk was the top scorer in LaLiga with 24 goals last season, though news from Italy suggests a

far higher profile signing is in the works.

According to journalist Ciro Venerato, Arsenal intends to launch a significant bid for Napoli's Victor Osimhen "in the next few days".

"Arsenal will make an attempt with Napoli in the next few days after many rumours," stated the reporter. "The Gunners wanted

Sesko, who instead decided to stay at Leipzig."

Osimhen has made no secret of his desire to seek a new challenge and the Nigerian dreams of playing in the Premier League.

Arsenal is very much a team trending in the right direction and is one of two heavyweight sides from England showing interest.

Chelsea is the other Pre-

mier League team hovering, while PSG has also been linked with signing Osimhen to replace Kylian Mbappe who has joined Real Madrid.

Napoli can be removed from the equation if a buying side trigger's Osimhen's release clause. According to Fabrizio Romano, the clause is worth an eye-watering €130m/£110m.

Ban Osimhen from Eagles, Peterside tells NFF

By JOE APU

Erstwhile Super Eagles goalkeeper and media officer to the team, Idah Peterside has called on the leadership of the Nigeria Football Federation, NFF to ban Napoli of Italy striker Victor Osimhen from the team to serve as a deterrent

to other players for his viral video rant on Coach Finidi George.

Idah, who played for several years in the Nigeria domestic league for Sharks of Port Harcourt, Rangers International of Enugu, BCC Lions of Gboko before heading out to South Africa where he manned the sticks for Temba Classic and Moraka Swallows in a video made available to Daily Sun Sports stated that Osimhen's insult on Finidi

is an insult to all ex-stars of the Super Eagles noting that the Eagles coach is a legend of Nigerian football.

"Osimhen's rant against Finidi is uncalled for. No English player will insult an England legend in the likes of Allan Shearer, Michael Owen the way Osimhen did.

"It's quite shocking that a player of his calibre does not have control and as a superstar, a whole lot of people are looking up to him. My caution is not just to Victor Osimhen but also to other younger players who think that playing for Nigeria is forever. Every star today will come and go like others before them. We have seen stars and mega stars - the great Christian Chukwu, Emmanuel Okala, Henry Nwosu, Okocha,

Amokachi, Odion Ighalo. People have sacrificed and given their lives for the country. So, this insult must stop.

"Osimhen's action is very irresponsible and he needs to come out and apologize publicly because what he did is an insult to all of us. Finidi George is a legend. Victor need not pour insults on him like that because he too has served the country meritoriously. If he had issues with the Coach, he should pick up the phone and call him and not go the way he did. The national team is sacred."

Peterside, who was a regular analyst with Super Sports argued that failure of the NFF taking action against Osimhen will encourage indiscipline in the team.

Fury falls below Joshua in latest WBC rankings

The sanctioning bodies rate Anthony Joshua ahead of Tyson Fury following the "Gypsy King's" split-decision loss to Oleksandr Usyk on May 18.

The WBC's June heavyweight rankings have Joshua as the number one contender, with their former champion Fury second. Agit Kabayel, meanwhile, only retains his position at third despite beating Frank Sanchez - previously second - on the undercard of Fury-Usyk-Fury.

The WBA, who like the WBO and IBF didn't previously rate Fury because he held the WBC title, have installed the 35-year-old at number four, which means they rate Martin Bakole - the mandatory contender whose best wins are over Tony Yoka and Carlos Takam - Joshua, second, and Daniel Dubois, fourth, as more deserving challengers than Fury.

The IBF have Dubois as their interim champion after he defeated Filip Hrgovic just a fortnight after Usyk and Fury fought for all four titles. The organization rates Fury at six, with Jared Anderson fifth, Kabayel fourth and Joshua, third, all preferred. As for Bakole, he is all the way down at 14th. The top two positions in their rankings are vacant.

Other high riders include Cuba's cruiserweight contender Mike Perez, who is ranked sixth by the WBA despite not fighting at heavyweight since 2015. The WBO are due to publish their latest rankings.

Adesanya announces return at UFC 305 against Plessis

Israel Adesanya has confirmed his return at UFC 305 against Dricus du Plessis, while UFC president Dana White appears to have accidentally revealed a few more names in the card.

In an unsurprisingly dramatic announcement, "The Last Stylebender" let everybody know that he is making his return to face his nemesis, Du Plessis at UFC 305. In a post on X, Adesanya wrote a compelling note to announce his UFC comeback.

"The SUN of Africa is the same sun that lights up our planet. The SUN will set and will rise again until you walk into it. The SUN, enjoy while it shines. Darkness falls when it's gone," Adesanya wrote.

Prior to Izzy's post, White had already accidentally confirmed Adesanya's announcement while providing an update on UFC 303. Based on a screenshot from the original clip, a list of names from the UFC's matchmaking board could be seen in White's background.

In it, Adesanya appears to be the main event while Song Yadong is set for the co-main event bout. Other names on the list included Jack Della Maddalena, Steve Erceg and Drakkar Klose, among others. The matches are believed to be under the UFC 305 event which will take place in Perth, Australia on August 17 as Izzy declared on his post.

Lazio to complete €7m Fisayo Dele-Bashiru deal

Turkish journalist Yağız Sabuncuoğlu has confirmed that Italian Serie A side Lazio reached an agreement with Hatayspor for the transfer of Super Eagles attacking midfielder Fisayo Dele-Bashiru.

The Nigerian who also holds an English passport made 33 appearances in the latest Turkish league season, scoring 8 goals (9 including the national cup) and providing 5 assists.

Dele-Bashiru came through the youth ranks at Manchester City but never made a first-team appearance, leaving in 2020 to join Sheffield Wednesday. After 8 Championship substitute appearances in his first season, he became a regular in League One (English third tier) over the next two years with 57 outings and 5 goals. In summer 2023, he moved to Hatayspor in Turkey where he enjoyed his best season yet. His older brother Tom, also a former Manchester City academy graduate, is currently a midfielder at Watford where he featured 35 times last season.

A powerful and dynamic player who excels at making runs off the ball, Dele-Bashiru can also play as a winger on either flank. In terms of characteristics and position, his potential arrival would fill the void left by the departures of Luis Alberto and Kamada, or even that of Felipe Anderson in the attack. To complete the deal, for which a final agreement with the player is still pending, Lazio would pay Hatayspor €7million plus bonuses.

SPORTS



•Tobi Amusan

Amusan wins fourth Nigerian Olympic Trials in Benin

By Rasaq Oboirien

Queen of tracks Tobi Amusan on Monday won the Nigerian Women's 100m Hurdles title for the fourth time at the ongoing 2024 Nigerian Olympic Trials in Benin City, Edo State.

According to Making

of Champions, the Commonwealth gold medalist in Birmingham, powered through to the finish, clocking a time of 12.78s (0.0) ahead of Adaobi Tabugbo who finished 2nd in 13.33s.

In the other events at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Chukwuebuka Enekwechi won his fourth consecutive Shot Put Na-

tional title, and he needed just three attempts to clinch the win.

Despite Sunday's rains which led to poor throwing conditions, Enekwechi had to stop halfway after securing the win with a mark of 21.37m.

Alex Chukwukelu is the National Men's champion after he clocked a time of

13.92s (-0.1), beating Wisdom Great Musa who came through in 14.44s for 2nd.

In the men's Long Jump final, Charles Godfred exploded to a massive 8.12m. That was his third time surpassing 8 metres as he is the National Leader with 8.14m and a windy 8.19m in the US where he competed for University of Minnesota.

Nigeria Olympic Trials: I'm still hungry for more - Ofili

Favour Ofili has said she is still hungry for more after she triumphantly blazed to a striking time of 11.06s to grab her maiden women's 100m title on Day 1 of the Nigerian Olympic Trials in Benin, BSNSports.com.ng

reports.

Ofili automatically qualified for the Paris Olympics over the event taking place at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin.

She urged Nigerians to continue praying for her

adding that she will go all out in the Paris Olympics to make the nation proud.

"I feel great and I am still hungry for more. The secret is being patient. I didn't leave 400, my coach observed and did what a coach

ought to do. That's why I am still there.

"I will go there and do what I am supposed to do. More importantly, stay healthy. You all should pray for me to be healthy because if I am healthy, you

Club owner charges Nigeria players on discipline, humility

From RomanusUgwu, Abuja

A football player agent and President Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Water FC of Abuja, Nureni Makanjuola, has charged Nigerian players to make discipline and humility their watchword of they want to achieve success in their career.

Makanjuola gave the advice on the sideline after a friendly game between his team (Water FC) and City FC both Abuja-based to mark this year's Father's Day and Sallah celebrations.

He stressed that a player or sports person who makes effective use of discipline, determination and dedication in his career will not only

have a successful one but also make impact even after his sporting days.

The international football agent further noted that the football friendly match was also used mark the 70th birthday anniversary of Gboyega Fatimilehin as well as promoting community engagement among Abuja residents and its environs in the spirit of Sallah.

His words; "Discipline is the bedrock of whatever you want to achieve in life. As a father, you have to be responsible, disciplined and focused even as a player or sports man or woman. Some players engage in all sorts of negative things but they should not go with the

crowd, they have to be distinct and let people know them for who they are.

"So, I am imploring them (the players) to embrace the three Ds; Discipline, Determination and Dedication. If they do, they will go a long way in their careers and will be successful.

"We are using the tournament to celebrate Father's Day and Ileya (Sallah) Day, most especially our father, Gboyega Fatimilehin, who clocks 70. This is all about our community and to make our people go together in love and harmony," he said.

Though his team lost to their visitors City FC by 0-3, Makanjuola promised to continue to expose his players to

Alavés show interest in unwanted Super Eagles ace

Deportivo Alavés is keen on signing Super Eagles Umar Sadiq as Real Sociedad are considering the possibility of selling the Nigerian striker this summer.

La Real are expected to make changes to their squad in the coming weeks but a lack of UEFA Champions League football in San Sebastian, will impact their ability to sign new players.

The Basque giants are expecting transfer offers for their major players with Atletico Madrid tracking Robin Le Normand and Arsenal chasing Martin Zubimendi.

As per the latest update from Diario AS, the club are open to all options on the Nigerian international, with injuries dominating his time at the club.

Since joining from Almeria back in 2022, the 27-year-old has endured periods of injury frustration, and that could be a pivotal factor in the decision to keep him.

Neighbours Alaves have reportedly registered an interest in signing him but La Real will want to recoup as much of the €20m they paid for him less than two years ago.

Sevilla signs Super Eagles Chidera Ejuke

Sevilla has captured Super Eagles winger Chidera Ejuke in a three-year deal that will run till 2027.

The 26-year-old Nigerian winger arrives on a free transfer from CSKA Moscow, having spent last season on loan at Royal Antwerp scoring five goals and registering six assists for the Dutch club.

Sevilla announced on Monday, our first summer signing has arrived, in the form of Nigerian international Chidera Ejuke. Born in Zaria, Ejuke is right-footed and most recently has been deployed on the left wing, but has played in all attacking positions throughout his career in Europe, which began in 2017 with Valerenga.

Arriving in Norway as a 19-year-old, he made 59 appearances across two seasons, scoring 15 goals and registering six assists, before moving to the Netherlands to sign for Heerenveen. In his only season at the club, he racked up 10 goals and another six assists in his only season, before catching the attention of CSKA Moscow.

With the Russian side, he added another 10 goals and eight assists to his career tally, as well as making his debut in European competition, with five appearances in the UEFA Europa League. For the last two seasons, he has enjoyed loan spells, firstly at Hertha Berlin during the 2022/23 season, where he shared a dressing room with Dodi Lukebakio, and then Royal Antwerp, where he made four appearances in the UEFA Champions League this season for Mark van Bommel's side.

At international level, Ejuke made his debut for the Nigerian national team in 2020 after representing the Super Eagles at various youth levels, and has since earned eight caps during qualifying campaigns for the World Cup and Africa Cup of Nations.

Boniface models new Leverkusen shirt

Super Eagles ace, Victor Boniface has joined the list of Bayer Leverkusen stars to model the Bundesliga champions new shirt for the 2024/05 season.

The Nigerian who was named winner of the 2023/24 Bundesliga Rookie of The Season for his instant impact in his debut season in the German topflight, posed with the new shirt. The new red(-trunked) Castore release features tonal graphics including crosses formed from the battlement on the city of Leverkusen's coat of arms, diamonds referring to the city's iconic water tower and city map detailing.

The stylised sleeves are in black, the crest is converted to white and red, partner/sponsor logos are in white and the kit will be completed with black shorts and complementing socks.

Akinyoola terminates Zamalek contract

Benin international striker Samson Akinyoola has unilaterally terminated his contract with Zamalek over unpaid wages.

The 24-year-old informed Zamalek he won't return to Cairo following the end of the international break, urging the club to mutually terminate his contract in order to find new suitors this summer.

On the other hand, it has been revealed that Zamalek has informed the player to return back to mutually terminate his contract and resolve the financial dispute.

Joining Zamalek from Venezuelan side Caracas FC in September 2022 for a fee of €1.2 million, Samson has scored just four goals in 31 games and struggled to break into the starting XI.

SPORTS

3x3 Basketball Paris 2024 Olympic Games schedule announced

The official schedule for the highly anticipated 3x3 Basketball Olympic Games is now available. 3x3 will return for the second time to the Games for the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic Games from 30 July to 5 August 2024.

The world's top 3x3 players will compete across eight men's and eight women's teams during seven days of thrilling competition. Held at the iconic Place de la Concorde in the heart of Paris,

3x3 players will showcase their talents against a backdrop of some of Paris' most iconic landmarks including the Grand Palais, Champs-Élysées, and The Louvre.

While COVID-19 restrictions prevented fans attending the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, spectators in Paris will be able to fully experience the excitement of 3x3 Basketball at the Games and play a central role in creating an unforgettable festival atmosphere.

All eight teams play each other in a single pool over the first three and a half days. On day four, a play-in will be introduced for teams that finish 3rd to 6th.

The top two teams advance directly to the Semi Finals, while teams placing 7th and 8th will be eliminated. The remaining six teams compete in the play-in, with the Semi Finals and medal games all taking place on the last day of competition, on 5 August.

Olympics: Mbappe, Sabalenka out of Paris Games

Kylian Mbappe confirmed on Sunday he will not play for France's Olympic team at the Paris Games as his new club Real Madrid are against the idea just as World number three Aryna Sabalenka says she will not compete at this summer's Olympic Games in Paris in order to prioritise her health.

The 25-year-old Mbappe said in March that he was keen on playing at his home Games but since the Olympic soccer tournament is not on FIFA's calendar clubs are not obliged to release their players.

Mbappe was not included in a 25-man preliminary squad for the Olympics earlier this month, though head coach Thierry Henry left the door open.

"My club's position was very clear, so from that moment on, I think I (knew) I won't be taking part in the Games," Mbappe told reporters ahead of Monday's Group D match against Austria at Euro 2024.

"That's just the way it is, and I understand that too. I'm joining a new team in September, so it's not the best way to start an adventure.

"I'm going to wish this French team all the best. I'm going to watch every game. I hope they'll win the gold medal."

The men's Olympic football competition begins on July 24, 10 days after the European Championships final, and ends on Aug. 9.

26-year-old Sabalenka who retained her Australian Open title in January but lost to Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva in the French Open quarter-finals.

That was the first time the Belarusian had lost before the semi-finals of a major since the 2022 French Open.

The tennis competition at the Games takes place on the clay courts at Roland Garros from 27 July to 4 August, with the US Open beginning 22 days later.

The US Open - where

Sabalenka was runner-up last year - takes place on hard courts.

"I prefer to have a little rest to make sure physically and health-wise I'm ready for the hard courts," said Sabalenka.

"Especially with all the struggles I've been struggling with the last months, I feel I have to take care of my health.

"It's too much for the scheduling and I made the decision to take care of my health."

Athletes from Russia and Belarus who qualify for the Games can only compete as neutrals in Paris, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Russian men's world number four Daniil Medvedev is among the players who intend to compete at the Olympics as a neutral athlete.

Sabalenka is set to play in Berlin as part of her Wimbledon preparations, having reached the semi-finals last year. Wimbledon takes place from 1-14 July.

NPFL: Bayelsa United Fined N3m for Assault on Shooting Stars Goalkeeper

Bayelsa Utd has been charged N3m for breaching NPFL Framework & Rules in their Matchday 37 game vs 3SC on Sunday, June 16, 2024.

The Yenagoa club also failed to restrict access by unauthorized persons to all restricted areas, resulting in the assault of 3SC goalkeeper Okiemute Odah.

There was also encroachment onto the pitch at Bayelsa Utd's Samson Siasia Stadium home ground leading to the assault of the 3SC goalkeeper.

Bayelsa Utd failed to provide adequate security and effective crowd control, which resulted in the assault of an opposing player.

Bayelsa Utd have been fined N1m each for failure to provide adequate security and ef-

fective crowd control, failure to restrict access by unauthorized persons to all restricted areas and encroachment unto the pitch resulting to the assault of Odah (total N3m).

Bayelsa Utd are also to pay Odah a compensation of N250,000 & also identify & prosecute the culprit of the assault within 48 hours of receiving the notice of sanctions. Failure by Bayelsa Utd to identify, prosecute & provide evidence of prosecuting the culprit may result in additional sanctions.

The culprit, pending identification & prosecution, is banned from all NPFL match venues for a year.

Bayelsa United have 48 hours from the date of notice to appeal the sanctions.

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<p>OMEJE: I, formerly known as OMEJE CHIDIEBERE RITA, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS UGWOKE CHIDIEBERE RITA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>ONYEMMA: I, formerly known as ONYEMMA AMARACHI MARY-JANE, now wish to be known and addressed as ASIEGBU AMARACHI MARY-JANE. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>The correct spelling of my name is NWORGU CHINAECHEREM JOSEPH, it was wrongly captured as NWAORGU CHINECHEREM JOSEPH. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>
<p>INOH: This is to confirm that my correct name is INOH ANTHONY PATRICK, and not Inoh Patrick Anthony, as wrongly inscribed on my international passport. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed with my proper name. The public, especially the Nigeria Immigration Service, should take note.</p>	<p>This is to confirm that Nwanosike Amarachi and Okpuler Amarachi refer to one and same person now wish to be known and addressed as MRS OKPULOR AMARACHI and my date of birth is 7/9/1996. Access Bank and general public please take note.</p>	<p>I wish to state that my name was wrongly spelt as Ijalawa Ezekiel Olaolu, my correct name is IJALANA EZEKIEL OLAOLU. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>
<p>OKOYE: I, formerly known as O K O Y E J E N N I F E R MMADUARUNAM, now wish to be known and addressed as OKPALA JENNIFER MMADUARUNAM. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>UFIEM: I, formerly known as UFIEM ZEREUWA UDE, now wish to be known and addressed as UFIEM ONYEBUCHI UDE. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>KALU: I, formerly known as KALU NKECHI KALU NKECHINYERE UKOH, now wish to be known and addressed as OKOWU CHINYERE KALU. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>
<p>IMA: I, formerly known as IMA AKPAN, now wish to be known and addressed as IMA DANIEL SILAS. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>SUNDAY: I, formerly known as SUNDAY UDUMA, now wish to be known and addressed as SUNDAY UDUMA EHA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>OZUMBA: I, formerly known as OZUMBA SOMTOCHUKWU EMMANUEL, now wish to be known and addressed as OBIWURU SOMTOCHUKWU EMMANUEL. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>
<p>This is to certify that my correct Names are Marshal Onyenwe Alozia and not Marshal Onyenwe ALOZIA as wrongly captured in my International Passport No A10795908. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>AMAECHE: I, formerly known as AMAECHE STANLEY IZUCHUKWU, now wish to be known and addressed as PETER STANLEY IZUCHUKWU, my correct date of birth is 01/01/1992. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>IKE: I, formerly known as IKE CASMIR OKORONNAYA, now wish to be known and addressed as IKEH CASMIR OKORONNAYA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>
<p>ENE: I, formerly known as ENE MATTER NKECHI, now wish to be known and addressed as ENEH NKECHI MARTHA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>UKENNA: I, formerly known as DICKSON SUNDAY UKENNA, now wish to be known and addressed as DICKSON SUNDAY OKWUKWE, my correct date of birth is 14th APRIL 1982. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>KEVIN: I, formerly known as KEVIN JENNIFER CHINEMEREM, now wish to be known and addressed as AGWULONU JENNIFER CHINEMEREM. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>
<p>TONY-CYRIL: I, formerly known as TONY-CYRIL NKECHI JANETH, now wish to be known and addressed as CYRIL NKECHI JANETH. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>ADESOMO: I, formerly known as ADESOMO OSA-IDAHOSA, now wish to be known and addressed as FRANCES ADESOMO ENAHORO. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>OKPARANMA: I, formerly known as UCHENNA WILL OKPARANMA, now wish to be known and addressed as UCHENNA NWANKWO. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.</p>
<p>IBE: I, formerly known as IBE ADAKU CYNTHIA, now wish to be known and addressed as NDUKA ADAKU CYNTHIA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>OGBONNA: I, formerly known as OGBONNA WILLIAMS JOHN, now wish to be known and addressed as JOHN WILLIAM UGWU. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.</p>	<p>This is to certify that my name was wrongly written as Okonkwo Christopher instead of Okonkwo Christopher Ogbonna, now wish to be known and addressed as OKONKWO CHRISTOPHER OGBONNA. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.</p>
<p>CARTER: I, formerly known as OKORO JIMMY CARTER, now wish to be known and addressed as SENATOR OKORO OBINNA. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.</p>	<p>Nwosu: I, formerly known as Miss Nwosu Ihuoma Magdaline and Ebenezer Ihuoma Magdaline, now wish to be known and addressed as Mrs OKORIE IHUOMA MAGDALINE. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>ILODIBE: I, formerly known as JUDE CHUKWUEMELLE CHUKWUDINKA ILODIBE, now wish to be known and addressed as JUDE CHUKWUEMELLE ILODIBE. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>
<p>KALU: I, formerly known as MISS KALU CHIDINMA UBI, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS AGWA CHIDINMA GLORY. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>UCHE: I, formerly known as UCHE CHINASA, now wish to be known and addressed as IKECHUKWU CHINASA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>This is to certify that my correct name is UZOR GORDIAN UCHECHUKWU and not UZOR GORDIAN UCHE. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as UZOR GORDIAN UCHECHUKWU. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>
<p>EGENAONU: I, formerly known as EGENAONU CALISTER CHIDINMA, now wish to be known and addressed as IBEH CALISTER CHIDINMA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>	<p>This is to certify that my correct name is Merenini Darlington Okechukwu and not Merenini Darlington O. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as MERENINI DARLINGTON OKECHUKWU. All former documents remain valid. Banks and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>NWALISI: I, formerly known as NWALISI IFEOMA ANGELA, now wish to be known and addressed as EGBENNADI IFEOMA ANGELA. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.</p>



JEROME-MARIO UTOMI Public Forum

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIST'S LIBERAL THOUGHTS ON STATE OF THE NATION

THIS piece was inspired by a recent conversation with Onyibe Magnus, former commissioner in the Delta State government, an entrepreneur, public policy analyst, author, development strategist and alumnus of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, Massachusetts, United States of America (USA).

Aside from having to his credit this relevant knowledge necessary for nation-building, Onyibe, all through the conversation in his Lagos home, communicated facts with boldness and objectively x-rayed the state of the nation before and under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's federal government.

Beginning with Tinubu's first year in office, he responded metaphorically, using the third Mainland Bridge experience:

He said, when the third Mainland Bridge in Lagos was shut down for repairs in 2023, November or thereabouts, everybody was crying. It was inconvenient for motorists, for people, it was terrible. But it was inconvenient that was worth it at the end of the day. When they finished and opened six months after, many people described it as an Eldorado.

So, there is no paen without pain. We have to make sacrifices. What Tinubu has done in the last one year is to lay the foundation. Tinubu spent the last one year planting.

I used the metaphor 'planting' and I illustrated it with farming; when a farmer goes to farm, he will till the soil and plant the crops. It will take some time for the crop to sprout. After it has sprouted, it will grow stems. It will create branches and begin to yield fruits. In the case of Tinubu's administration, it has a four-year gestation period. That's what the Constitution allows. So, we gave him a mandate and he has four years to mature. People are judging him based on the first year out of four, which is like 25% out of a 100%. Will you go to school and be judged with 25% course work?

No. Let's be reasonable. He has planted all he needs to plant and we're waiting for the gestation period. Bureaucracy is not like human beings. People were complaining that he gave an order that forty three thousand or forty three million metric tonnes of grain should be distributed, and it wasn't distributed till after some time. That's bureaucracy for you. There are checks and balances. It doesn't happen immediately. It takes a long time for things to happen. Like you and I now, I asked you to come and you are here. But if it were to



be government policy, it would take a longer time to happen.

I am a practical person. Nigerians are giving him this opportunity to say you are planting the policies and in XYZ period of time, we'll begin to ask you for the fruits. In two years' time, you can come and ask me about his legacy projects and, if there's none,



Tinubu is not charming his way. Tinubu came through thunder and fire and he set up more thunder and fire himself. He could have said, Since I came through thunder and fire, subsidy should remain, do this and do that, until when things settle down. But no, he started from day one, telling them, We must brace up for change."

I will be asking you even before you ask me. You can go and look at the trend of the things that I do and whatever.

As bad as people thought Buhari was when he was coming, I wasn't one of those who proposed that he should come. But when he came, I had to begin to encourage him and open his eyes to things that I think he should do for him to be able to grow. And I gave him that time. When it got past that time, I held his feet to the fire. So, that's how it should be. You must give people the opportunity.

Asked if Mr. President was on the right track, he captured it this way: absolutely. You see, there's something about leadership. There's no dictator that starts from day one being a dictator. He charms the people. People like him before he grows in power. You know, when you are climbing a ladder, people hold the ladder for you. When you get to the top, you are now backing the people because you are looking at the sky and elsewhere.

So, a dictator always charms his way. Tinubu is not charming his way. Tinubu came through thunder and fire and he set up more thunder and fire himself. He could have said, Since I came through thunder and fire, subsidy should remain, do this and do that, until when things settle down; he should now show them whatever. But no, he started from day one, telling them, We must brace up for change. Change is going to come with sacrifice. Make these sacrifices. And people are saying, No, we don't want to. We want to go back to the days of Buhari and this and that.

The truth is that subsidy has not been removed fully but a substantial amount of it has been removed. So, now, people are saying he lied to us that he removed the subsidy. Are you saying he should remove it so we'd all die? The man has been a listening person that he comes out to say, No, if we put these overdose, we'd all die. Let us manage it halfway. They should be commending him for it. I'm commending him for bringing in a bit of human face. He attenuated it. There are things that you do that you don't make public to everybody. These are nuanced things.

I'll give you an example. The United States of America has a law that insists the American government cannot give arms and ammunition to governments that are not democratic so that they will not use those arms and ammunition to oppress the citizens of their country. That's part of why they didn't give Jonathan arms and ammunition to fight Boko Haram, because people present to America

that Boko Haram members are not terrorists.

So, it became difficult. That was why Jonathan put money in the plane and decided to go to South Africa to buy arms and ammunition from the black market. But this same law permits America to give arms and ammunition to Egypt. They're giving arms and ammunition to Israel. We all know what Israel is doing with it. There are things that even when it is your policy, when you make an exception, you don't make it public.

So, back to the point, if President Tinubu says the subsidy is gone, then everybody starts clamouring, No, return subsidy. Then, he goes back and says subsidy is back. You can imagine what will happen. Is that not what they did in Kenya? The Kenyan President removed the subsidy and when he was under pressure, he returned the subsidy.

The truth is that we all agreed, you, me, the whole candidates that ran for presidency in 2023, that subsidy is a terrible monster. It is an ogre. They didn't want it there but how to implement it was different! But people are saying why did Tinubu make that pronouncement without doing his homework?

Let me tell you, there was Strongman Abacha, Strongman Buhari, Strongman IBB, I'm talking about soldiers, who couldn't remove subsidies. If these people, an autocratic government, couldn't remove subsidies, you can see what a civilian, a democratic government, has done. Tinubu has the experience. He knows that if he gets into government and creates a timetable to remove subsidies, what happened to the others will happen again.

If he had taken office before he made this pronouncement, people who are benefitting from subsidies would have people they are paying, directly and indirectly. Some of them that they are using don't even know they're using them. They would have given advice. They would have said, "Sir! Don't remove it. If you remove it, this country would burn". Even in an interview when he went to Paris, he mentioned that his team advised him not to do it. That's why it's not in the speech.

President Tinubu identified the fact that that is one of the biggest problems we have that has held this country down so that we haven't grown, and he decided to do it. Now, the good thing about it and what people are saying is a problem for him is that he makes

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