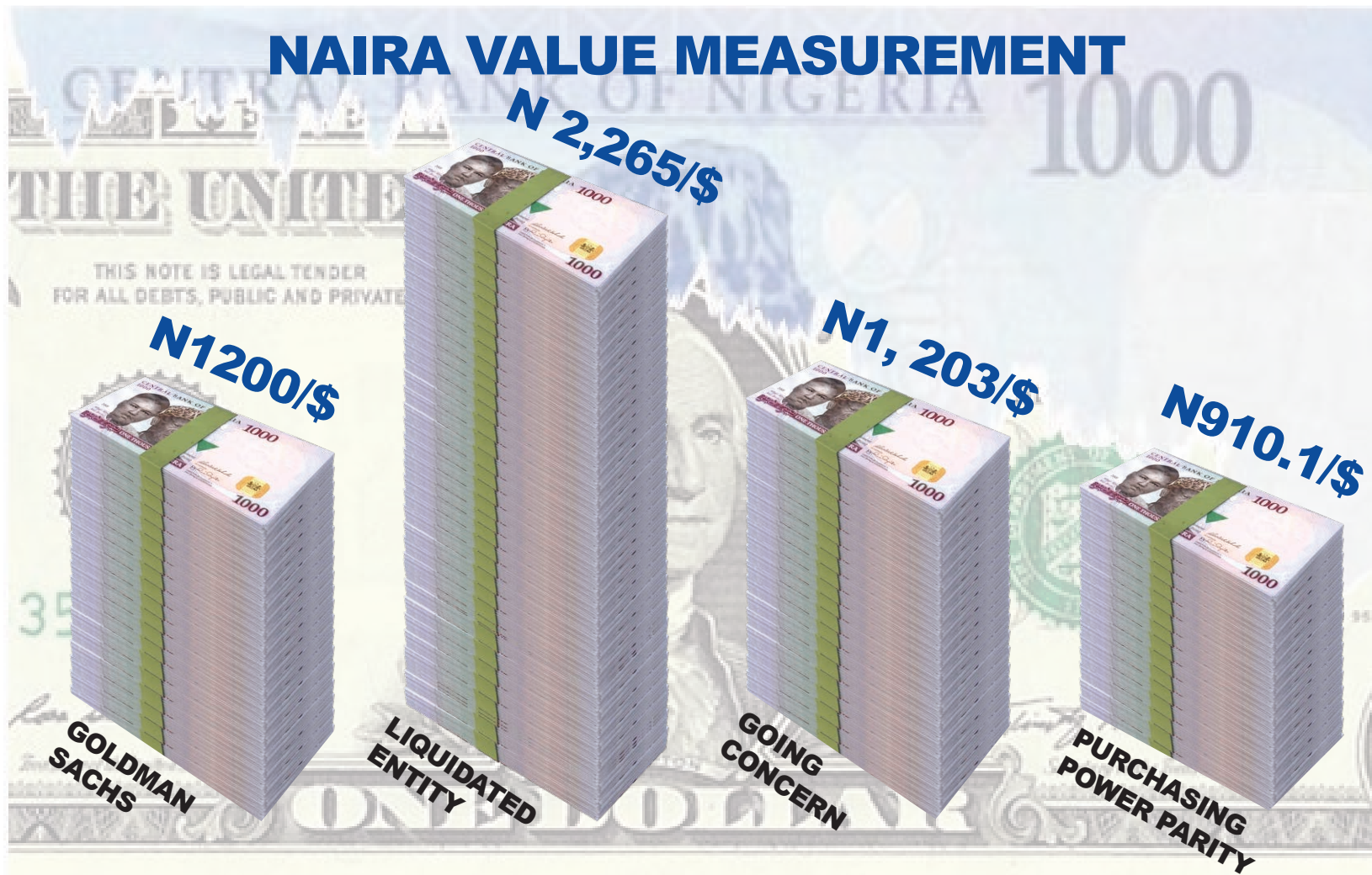




Estimators peg exchange rate at N1400/\$ as naira finds fair value **P 6**



Delays, uncertainties in student loan scheme compound woes
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SERAP asks NCC to restore blocked phone lines
NEWS PAGE 5

YARI ANNUAL RAMADAN FEEDING PROGRAM BENEFITS 250,000 HOUSEHOLDS

In line with a longstanding tradition of generosity, the Senator Representing Zamfara West Senatorial Zone has announced plans to distribute foodstuffs to 250,000 households during the holy month of Ramadan in 2024. This noble initiative is aimed to alleviate the burden of hunger and ensure that families across Zamfara state could observe the sacred month with some measure of comfort.

Under this program, spanning 13 Local Government Areas of Zamfara state, each local government received 17,500 bags of

essential food items including rice, millet, sugar, and maize. Additionally, the State capital, Gusau Local Government, benefitted from 22,500 bags of these essential food items.

In a special gesture towards vulnerable members of society, orphans and women received 10,000 bags of rice, millet, sugar, and maize, to enable them partake in the blessings of Ramadan without worry. Furthermore, male orphans were provided with Sallah clothes and additional token of 2,000 Naira for tailoring, while female

orphans received Atamfa with a token of 2,000 Naira for its crafting.

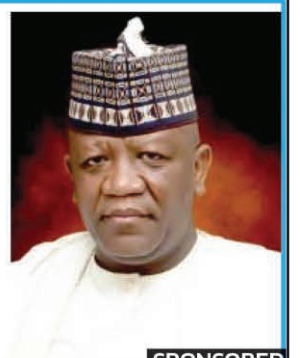
APC in Zamfara state of Senator Yari and Minister Matawalle camp have special provisions across the 14 Local Governments and 147 Wards in the state. Internally Displaced Persons numbering 2970 also benefitted.

This comprehensive effort underscore the commitment of the Senator to uplift the less privileged and foster a sense of unity and compassion within the community. It was a testimony of the spirit of Ramadan, which

encourages acts of charity, kindness, and solidarity.

As preparations for the distribution commenced, the Senator called upon all stakeholders to support this noble cause and extend a helping hand to those in need. Together, let us make this Ramadan a time of abundance, empathy, and goodwill for all.

— AL'MANSOOR GUSAU, ADVOCATE.
DG MEDIA TO SENATOR ABDUL'AZIZ YARI ABUBAKAR.



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SPOTLIGHT

Rotary President visits Nigeria, offers \$7m grant for disease prevention

THE Rotary International President, Gordon McInally will be on a three-day working visit to Nigeria from Friday with a fresh donation of \$7 million for eradication and disease prevention.

The latest grant is in addition to the \$14 million given by Rotary two months ago, through the World Health Organisation (WHO) to Nigeria, for technical assistance on polio surveillance.

Nigeria is also an awardee of Rotary's \$2 million U.S. dollar grant for the improvement of Maternal and Child Health.

There were indications that McInally may have audience with President Bola Tinubu on other areas of assistance on disease control, child and maternal health.

According to a statement by the Coordinator of the Local Organising Committee (LOC), Prof. Emmanuel

Dolapo Lufadeju, and the Coordinator, Dr. Goddy Nnadi, the visit will enhance the ties between the Federal Government and the Rotary International.

The statement said: "Rotary International is a Non-Gov-

ernmental foremost Humanitarian Organisation with over 1.5 million members worldwide. It enjoys diplomatic status and sits at the United Nations as observer since 1948. The organisation has been

instrumental to the eradication of polio in Nigeria.

"This visit is to cement the already existing bond between the Federal Government, WHO, United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and other stakeholders.

Woman jumps into river from moving boat in Lagos

A WOMAN who boarded a boat from Igando in Lagos State to Ogun has allegedly jumped into the river from the moving boat, the police have said.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Benjamin Hundeyin, who confirmed the incident to the *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* on Saturday evening, said that rescue teams were already searching for the woman.

Hundeyin said that one Rasaq reported the case to

the Igando Police Division on Sunday at about 8.00a.m.

According to Rasaq, at about 10.00p.m. on Saturday, one Folashade Nimotalahi, of yet be known address,

boarded a boat from their Isuti Jetty, Isuti Road, Igando in Lagos, going to Totowu in Ogun State.

"They were 12 passengers on board. Suddenly, the woman removed the life jacket she was wearing and jumped into the river.

"She left behind one nylon

bag containing a bottle of sniper, Alimosho General Hospital cards and some drugs," the spokesperson quoted Rasaq as saying in his report.

Hundeyin said that the scene of incident was visited immediately by detectives from the division.

He said a search party has been contacted to recover the corpse, while investigation was ongoing as they make efforts to contact the family.

Sultan announces sighting of crescent moon for Ramadan

THE national moon sighting committee last night said the crescent for Ramadan fasting has been sighted.

In a post on X, the committee said the sultanate had confirmed a single sighting claim and Muhammad Abubakar, Sultan of Sokoto,

who is the head of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) is expected to announce the beginning of Ramadan.

Earlier, Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE had been told to commence Ramadan today. In Saudi Arabia, birthplace of Prophet Muhammad, authorities announced that Ramadan will start on Monday after the crescent moon was sighted.

Following the announcement by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar also announced the commencement of Ramadan today.

Ramadan is one of the 12 Islamic months during which Muslims are expected to fast from dawn to dusk. It commences with the sighting of the crescent moon to indicate the end of the outgoing lunar month of Shaban and the commencement of the new month of Ramadan. The month can be 29 or 30 days.

From dusk to dawn during Ramadan, millions of faithful around the world would be expected to abstain from eating and drinking.

World Bank claims less than 20% of homes have computers in Nigeria

By Adeyemi Adepetun

THE World Bank has said that less than 20 per cent of households in Nigeria have a computer.

The World Bank revealed this in its 177-page report, titled: 'Digital Progress and Trends', where it shed light on the digital divide between low and high-income countries and its impact on the economy, business and income.

The report stated that the cost of broadband subscriptions across high and middle-income countries has been stable since 2020 but has risen significantly in low-income countries.

According to the global bank, in low-income countries, the median price of a fixed broadband plan was 50 per cent higher than in high-income countries as of 2022.

While expressing worries about the noticeable gap in the country's digital transformation, the report observed that the rising cost of smartphones is a huge barrier to bridging the digital divide across geographical populations and income groups.

Among the lowest income groups, the cheapest smartphones cost around 14 per cent of their yearly income for persons under \$2 per day. This results in 49 per cent of smartphone ownership in low-income countries compared to 95 per cent in high-income countries.

"In contrast, fewer than 20 per cent of households in the Kyrgyz Republic, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, and Nigeria owned a computer.

WEATHER REPORT

Sunny atmosphere expected over the Northern region. Patches of clouds anticipated over the North Central region in the morning. Later in the day, localized thunderstorms expected over parts of the Federal Capital Territory, Niger, Kwara and Kogi. Cloudy skies expected over the Inland of the South and the Coast in the morning with chances of localized thunderstorms over parts of Ekiti, Osun, Oyo, Ondo, Edo, Ebonyi, Enugu, Cross River and Delta in afternoon/evening hours.

Potential impact

i. Strong winds may precede the rains in areas where thunderstorms are likely to occur, public should take adequate precaution.
ii. Temperature values are still high especially in the North, please stay hydrated.

.... DAY 3605

OUR GIRLS
STILL
MISSING

Tope Templer Olaiya,
News Editor

@TopeTempler



CROSS WORD PUZZLE

• ACROSS

- Area in Ibadan, (6).
- Alcoholic drink, (3).
- Dangerous solitary animal, (5).
- Anambra State capital city, (4).
- Small songbird, (3).
- Place of significant event, (4).
- Ebony, (4).
- Yoruba ruler, (3).
- Get bigger, (4).
- Combined things, (5).
- Fasten with rope, (3).
- Historical weapon, (6).

© Olulana Olukayode

Check page 28 for solution to the puzzle

• DOWN

- Area of soggy ground, (6).
- Palm wine Drinkers' Club, (6).
- English manorial Court, (4).
- Cassava flour paste, (3).
- Club used in sports, (3).
- Inspector General, abbr., (2).
- Africa's largest city, (6).
- Freshwater bivalves, (6).
- Obstetrician, abbr., (2).
- Be financially in debt, (3).
- Elder sister in S. Asia, (4).
- Obtained, (3).

RANDOM FACTS

- France has become the first country in the world to put abortion rights in its constitution.
- Tokophobia (noun): the fear of getting pregnant.
- When a tattoo is removed, the ink particles are eventually broken down and excreted through the urine.
- Your eyes are "immune privileged," meaning the rest of the body's immune system has no knowledge of its existence. If the immune system were to suddenly become aware of the eyes, it may treat them as a threat and try to neutralize them, potentially leading to blindness.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Peace is not unity in similarity but unity in diversity, in the comparison and conciliation of differences.

We are all passengers aboard one ship, the Earth, and we must not allow it to be wrecked. There will be no second Noah's Ark.

MIKHAIL
GORBACHEV

The state is captive to vested interests.

Nigeria is not an oil rich country. We are an oil producing country.

SANUSI
LAMIDO
SANUSI

TODAY IN HISTORY

• 2023 - Burma

The Burmese military killed 30 villagers, including 3 Buddhist monks, during the Pinlaung massacre in Shan State, Myanmar.

• 2023 - Nigeria

Crisis over controversial naira redesign and cashless policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria worsened despite the Supreme Court extending validity of the old naira notes till December 31st. The silence of Pres. Muhammadu Buhari on the judgment fuelled rejection of the old N1,000 and N500 as legal tender. Governments of Kaduna, Zamfara and Kogi are planning to file a contempt charge against Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami and CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele over their refusal to implement the Supreme Court judgment on naira redesign.

• 2022 - Nigeria

Oba Lekan Balogun was handed the staff of office as the 42nd Olubadan of Ibadan by the Governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde.

• 2021 - USA

U.S. Pres. Joe Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan into law.

• 2020 - Worldwide

World Health Organization declared COVID-19 virus epidemic a pandemic.

• 2020 - Nigeria

Pres. Muhammadu Buhari denied having anything to do with the dethronement of Kano Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II, who was banished to Awe, Nasarawa State. United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, named the dethroned Emir of Kano and 16 others as Sustainable Development Goals Advocates. Also appointed were Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana and Ms Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway as co-chairmen of the committee.

• 2011 - Nigeria

An earthquake measuring 9.0 in magnitude struck 130km east of Sendai, Japan triggering a tsunami that killed thousands of people. It also triggered the second largest nuclear accident in history, and one of only two events to be classified as a Level 7 on the International Nuclear Event Scale.

• 2004 - Spain

Madrid train bombings: Simultaneous explosions on rush hour trains in Madrid, Spain killed 191 people.

• 2003 - Netherlands

The International Criminal Court held its inaugural session in The Hague.

• 1985 - USSR

Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, making him USSR's de facto, and last, head of state.



Tinubu



AbdulRazaq

FG, lawmakers fault budget padding claim, HURIWA urges probe

From **Bertram Nwannekanma** (Lagos), **Azimazi Momoh Jimoh** (Abuja) and **Ralph Aghana** (Lokoja)

FOLLOWING a claim by representative of Bauchi Central Senatorial District, Abdul Ningi, that the President Bola Tinubu administration is operating two versions of the 2024 budget, the presidency, yesterday, faulted the lawmaker. In a statement by Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, it stated: "We consider it appropriate to inform Nigerians that there is no truth whatsoever in the allegation."

"Acting under the banner of Northern Senators' Forum, Senator Ningi, falsely claimed in an interview he

granted BBC Hausa Service, that the National Assembly debated and passed N25 trillion as 2024 budget, and not the N28.7 trillion that is being implemented by the Federal Government.

"To begin with, President Tinubu, on November 29, 2023, presented a budget of N27.5 trillion to the joint session of the National Assembly, made up of N9.92 trillion recurrent expenditure, debt service of N8.25 trillion and capital expenditure N8.7 trillion. "This was widely reported. He did not present a budget of N25 trillion."

ALSO, three members of the forum, Senators Steve Karimi, Titus Zam and Kaka Sheu, have refuted the budget padding claim.

The trio warned against what

they described as antics of blackmailers, bent on creating an atmosphere of crisis in the upper legislative chamber.

They said no room should be allowed for division among legislators from the North and South by those "who may not want to accord priority to national unity and harmony."

In a joint statement, Karimi, who is from Kogi State, Zam (Benue) and (Borno), said they could not be used to blackmail the budget process, done in good faith.

MEANWHILE, Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has described as terrorism any proven case of unconstitutional and illegal act by the National Assembly hierarchy of 'budget padding'.

It, therefore, called for a thorough investigation of the allegation.

The group's national coordinator, Emmanuel Onwubiko, in a statement, yesterday, said from benefits of hindsight, the "criminal act of hiding unbudgeted items into the lawfully passed budget has generated a lot of economic haemorrhage and devastating economic paralysis all across Nigeria, which inevitably leads to the collapse of major socio-economic infrastructures."

He added: "We are of the considered position that the crime of padding up the budget by the National Assembly's hierarchy is not different from political terrorism."

Enugu seeks promotion of local products as ActionAid wants better deal for women

From **Lawrence Njoku** (Enugu) and **Joke Falaju** (Abuja)

ENUGU Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (ECCIMA) has advocated promotion of locally made goods at the global market to attract foreign exchange as a way of resolving the current economic crisis.

Its president, Odeiga Jideonwo, while announcing the 35th Enugu International Trade Fair, billed to open on April 5, noted that local production and promotion were important to restore the Naira and national economy.

He insisted that the current economic challenges in the country were due to dwindling revenue from the nation's mono foreign exchange earner - oil, stressing that the fair with the theme, "Promoting made in Nigeria products for global competitiveness" has been strategically re-engineered to have meaningful and positive effects on all stakeholders.

Jideonwo said Nigeria is blessed with so many resources to change the ugly

narrative.

He stated that the agricultural sector would receive attention at the event. IN a related development, ActionAid Nigeria has urged the Federal Government to review some of the policies foisting hardship on women.

It regretted that fuel subsidy removal and unification of the foreign exchange market, intended to spur economic growth, have inadvertently hampered Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and deepened gender inequality.

Deputy Country Director, Suweba Dakwanbo Mohammed, at a press conference in Abuja, stressed the need to address the pressing economic challenges facing the country.

She said despite gains made by development partners in empowering women across Nigeria, the economic downturn has led to setbacks, with many women-owned businesses shutting down due to financial difficulties, thus widening existing gender disparities and injustices.

OPS hails expatriate employment levy suspension, canvasses more consultation

By **Tobi Awodipe**

THE Organised Private Sector (OPS), including Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) and Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), has applauded the Federal Government for suspending implementation of the contentious Expatriate Employment Levy (EEL).

The associations said the decision followed a meeting with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment and the Minister of Interior in Abuja.

Present at the parley were National President of NACCIMA, Dele Oye; President of Petroleum Technology Association; President of Special Economic Zones Association; Director-General of Nigerian

Turkiye Business Council; European Union Trade delegation head, NACCIMA Chair of Digital Trade Group and representatives of National Association of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (NASME).

They submitted that the gesture was a demonstration of government's responsive, democratic and inclusive posture in governance.

Speaking on the outcome of the meeting, Oye stated that it was unanimously agreed that implementation of the levy should be paused to allow for further consultations with key stakeholders.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Centre for Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), Dr Muda Yusuf, hailed the government for listening to them, adding that responsiveness to the concerns of stakeholders remains a critical attribute of true democracy.

Governors unveil 'proactive steps' to address food crisis

From **Azimazi Momoh Jimoh**, Abuja

THE 36 state governors have unveiled what they called "strategic and proactive" steps towards combating the food and economic crises in the country.

Through their umbrella body, Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), the chief executives said temporary and long-term measures in the form of massive and aggressive agriculture investments are being undertaken to urgently address the prevailing food insecurity.

A report by the forum's acting Head of Media, Halimah Salihu Ahmed, drew attention to interventions by the governors to tackle high cost of living in their states.

It noted: "In Akwa Ibom State, the government is planning to establish an agency which will buy food items in bulk, and then sell them at cheaper prices to the residents."

"Towards this end, the Akwa Ibom State Governor, Umo Eno, has forwarded to the House of Assembly a bill for the establishment of the agency."

Quoting the governor's spokesman, Ekerete Udoh, the report said Eno appealed to residents to be patient, while promising to sign the bill into law when passed by the legislature.

Similarly, in Kano State, authorities have raided warehouses, where traders are suspected of hoarding sup-

plies.

The document continued: "In Yobe State, the government banned bulk purchases of grain from local markets to stop hoarding and exports across Nigeria's borders, saying it was to stem the tide of food scarcity and high cost of grains."

"In Niger State, Governor Mohammed Umar Bago announced a ban on mass purchase of foodstuffs from local markets. He ordered security forces to confiscate trucks carrying products in bulk and share them to the people."

"In Enugu State, Governor Peter Mbah said his administration will eradicate hunger and poverty, and un-

lock the rural economy through investment in agriculture and agro-industrialisation."

Also, the Ekiti State government said it has committed N1 billion to improve food production.

Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara State, last week, hosted the Swedish Ambassador to Nigeria, Annika Hahn-Englund, on how to grow the state economy and address the current hardship.

The report said the meeting was to promote collaboration in critical areas of the economy, build long-term relationships and implement transformative projects to benefit Zamfara and its people.

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Delays, uncertainties in student loan scheme compound woes

With four postponements in seven months, the student loan scheme of the Federal Government has morphed into a controversial subject. Many students and parents, who expect a lifeline through the initiative, are more distraught by its lack of coordination. They believe the government should make less propaganda and bureaucracy of pro-poor initiatives, OWEDE AGBAJILEKE reports.

KENI is a 300-level student of the University of Abuja. As the first of a five-child family to gain admission into the university, the Chemical Engineering undergraduate is on the verge of not registering for the current first semester except a miracle happens. This is because her reliance on the federal government's student loan to pay tuition fees, which the university authorities have increased by 75 per cent, may not see the light of the day.

"When we started the second semester in September last year and with the cheering news that the student loan would commence that same month, my joy knew no bounds," Keni said.

"I told everyone who cared to listen that the days of struggling to pay tuition fees were over, but that was not to be. My mom had to take yet another loan from her Cooperative Society to enable me to register then. Now, here we are, the (school registration) portal has closed but I am yet to register for the current session," Keni said.

Keni's friend at the University of Ibadan, Mustapha Mohammed, shared the same sentiment. The undergraduate of Business Administration expressed dismay over the continuous delay in the launch of the exercise.

According to him, "Amid the current economic downturn and despondency, the stu-

dent loan gave us and our parents a sigh of relief that something good could come out of this country. But shifting its launch four times is indicative of the lack of seriousness of the federal government. It has yet to put its house in order and this is a sad commentary; an anti-climax," he said.

Their stories highlight the anguish, distress and misery faced by Nigerian students in 125 public universities awaiting the launch of the Student loan scheme, which has suffered four postponements since its announcement, thereby leaving beneficiaries in limbo. The worst is the astronomical increase in tuition fees amid economic challenges in the country.

Signed into law by President Tinubu on June 12, 2023, the Access to Tertiary Education Act, also known as the Student Loan Act, is expected to provide easy access to higher education for poor students through interest-free loans.

The Act also establishes the Nigerian Education Loan Fund that will be responsible for managing student loans, making rules and guidelines concerning the loan application process, reviewing loan applications, approving and disbursing same, and recovering all loans, among other functions.

The Loan Fund is to be financed through education bonds; one per cent of all taxes, levies, and duties coming to the Federal Government from the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Nigerian Immigration Service and Nigerian Customs Service; one per cent of profits that government makes from oil and other minerals; donations; gifts; grants or any other form of revenue.

With Nigeria raking in N12.7 trillion from taxes and customs in 2022, one per cent is N127 billion. With another N210 billion from N21 trillion earned from the sale of crude oil in 2022, cumulatively, the country's education loan fund could potentially have N334 billion in the kitty.

Recall that while the National Assembly approved the sum of N10 billion for the take-off of the scheme in the 2023 supplementary budget, it earmarked another N50 billion in the 2024 budget for the implementation of the loan scheme.

Government officials and proponents of the initiative believed that it would help address school dropouts and suicidal tendencies among financially disadvantaged students.

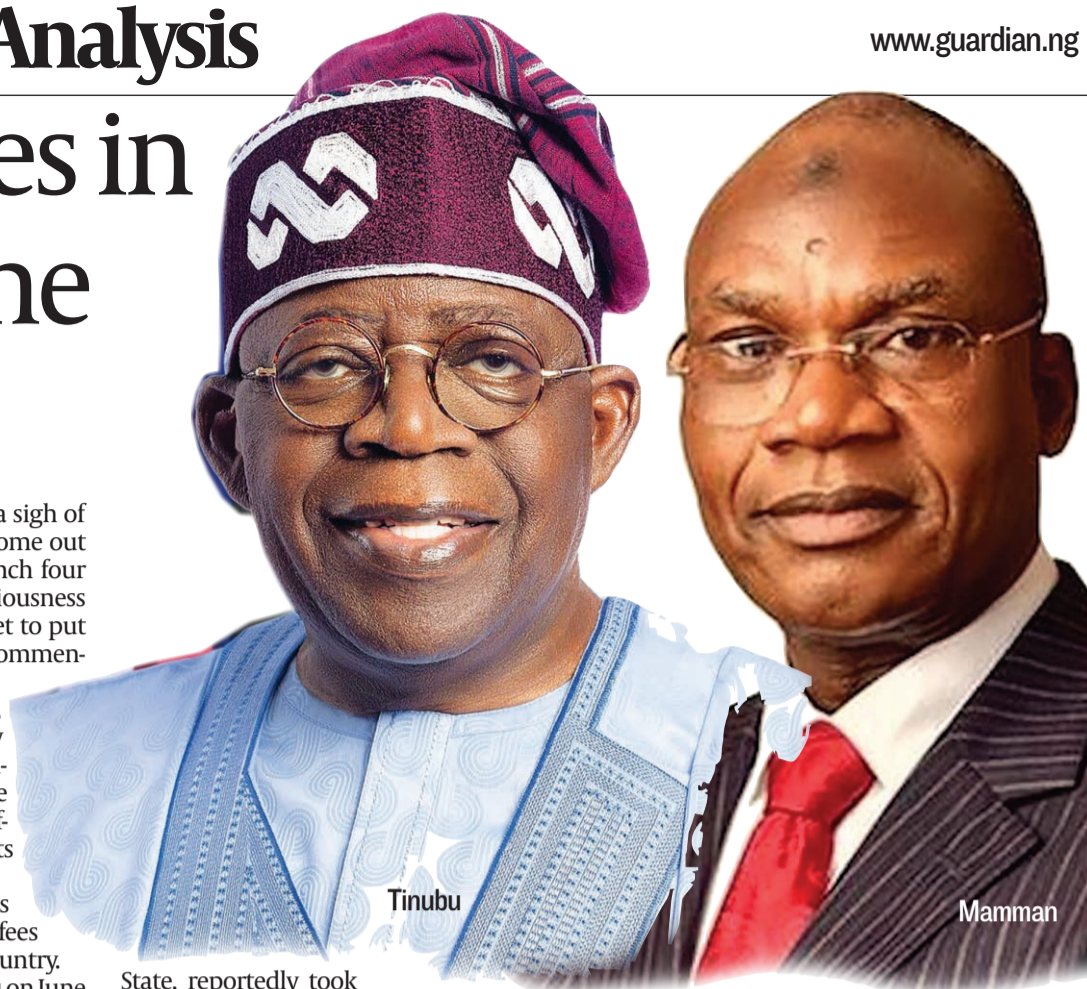
An EdTech firm, PressPayNg, estimated that about 18 per cent of students in Nigerian tertiary institutions drop out of school yearly for financial reasons.

Stakeholders in the education sector have expressed concern over the growing number of students and parents attempting or committing suicide over a hike in tuition fees.

For instance, a final-year student of the University of Abuja, Ada Amazu, reportedly attempted suicide last month over the hike in school fees. *The Guardian* gathered that the Veterinary Medicine undergraduate became suicidal after she was asked to repeat an academic session for failing to pay her fees, due to a recent increase from N71,000 to N196,000, before the closure of registration.

It was also gathered that her situation was further compounded when she lost her scholarship, following the increase from N36,000 in 100 Level to N196,000 in the final year.

In August 2021, a 200-level student of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra



Tinubu

Mamman

State, reportedly took his life over a hike in school fees. The deceased, a native of the Isuikwuato Local Government Area of Abia State, was a student of Industrial Physics.

A civil society organisation, Education Rights Campaign, believes the onerous payment plan of the loan could subject beneficiaries to depression and suicide.

The National Mobilisation Officer of the Campaign, Adaramoye Michael Lenin, said the repayment plan was meant to subject beneficiaries to "miserable existence".

He said: "It is a fact that many graduates seldom get any job at all within the first two years after they leave school. Many can still be unemployed five years after the National Youth Service. So, how does the government expect unemployed beneficiaries to begin repayment? Meanwhile, according to the Act, if beneficiaries default on the loan, subsection (6) says they shall be 'liable on conviction to a fine of N500,000 or imprisonment for a term of two years or both'.

"This student loan is likely to plunge its beneficiaries into depression, misery and suicide as they have to constantly struggle to pay the loan either while being unemployed or while earning low pay. This is not the kind of bleak future Nigerian youths deserve."

Also, with four postponements within seven months and the controversy surrounding it, including the stiff opposition from the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), it has gained some notoriety as one of the most contentious policies of the present administration.

Although the federal government had through the immediate past Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education, Andrew Adejo, disclosed that it was working out modalities to kick-start the process between September and October 2023, this however, failed to happen as President Tinubu set a new date of January 2024.

Speaking at the 29th National Economic Summit in October last year, Mr President said the loan programme "must commence in January 2024", adding that there would be no more industrial actions in the tertiary institutions.

Other top government officials, who reiterated the botched January take-off at several public engagements, included the Chief of Staff to the President, Femi Gbajabiamila, Minister of Education Prof. Tahir Mamman and Minister of State for Education, Dr Yusuf Tanko Sununu.

But while the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Education Loan Fund, Dr Akintunde Sawyerr, fixed the new launch date for February 21, the CBN Governor, Olayemi Cardoso, gave February 26, both of which failed to materialise.

The development has left would-be benefi-

ciaries bewildered and disenchanted, especially those below the poverty line.

Again, stakeholders have questioned the rationale for domiciling the scheme in the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), whose core mandate is to issue legal tender currency in the country, maintain external reserves to safeguard the international value of the legal tender currency; promote a sound financial system in Nigeria and act as bankers' bank and provide economic and financial advice to the Federal Government.

They argued that an apex bank should restrict itself as a lender of last resort and adviser to the Federal Government rather than over-burden itself with responsibilities that should have been handled by other ministries and parastatals. They said there is no justification for domiciling the Fund with the apex bank, especially when it already has a lot to grapple with in taking Nigeria out of the current economic downturn.

On the delayed take-off, investigations by *The Guardian* showed that some of the factors responsible for the failure of the scheme to commence as promised include non-inclusion of representatives of students' body on the Student Loan Board and logistics challenges arising from domiciling the Loans Board at the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) rather than the Federal Ministry of Education.

Others are the decision by the Presidency to include persons who are not in formal school settings, leading to sourcing for additional funds to cater for the expansion and non-consultation with relevant stakeholders, specifically the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS).

The President of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Lucky Emonefe, disclosed that students in private universities may not benefit from the scheme.

He revealed that the Loan Fund was yet to consult formally with the students' body, a development, he insisted was akin to the success or otherwise of the programme.

He said: "I was with the Minister of State for Education with all the Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts. He said they were still in the process. They have not started anything. He said they are putting things out and that the launching will soon take place. But he didn't give any specific date.

"What we want is not just starting but starting well. I know the launch may not exceed a week from now but when they want to start, it should start well. Even we as students, there are questions we need to ask. Of course, there are sensitisations we need to do. These are the reasons I said that before they start a sensitive thing like this, we must be carried along."



It is a fact that many graduates seldom get any job at all within the first two years after they leave school. Many can still be unemployed five years after the National Youth Service. So, how does the government expect unemployed beneficiaries to begin repayment? Meanwhile, according to the Act, if beneficiaries default on the loan, subsection (6) says they shall be 'liable on conviction to a fine of N500,000 or imprisonment for a term of two years or both.



Apapa appeals judgment reinstating Abure as LP chairman

• Group asks court to deregister LP

From **Bridget Chiedu Onochie**, (Abuja) and **Azeez Olorunlomu**, (Abeokuta)

LAMIDI Apapa, has appealed a court ruling reinstating Julius Abure as the national chairman of the party.

Reacting to the appeal court ruling in Abuja, the fractional National Publicity Secretary of the party loyal to Lamidi Apapa, Dr Abayomi Arabambi, said the party had also obtained a stay of execution in respect of the judgment.

Recall that an appeal court

sitting in Abuja on March 6 reinstated Julius Abure as the national chairman of LP, saying the High Court erred to have restrained him from parading himself as the national chairman of LP.

Reading the unanimous judgment, Justice Harmman Barka said the high court lacked jurisdiction to have listened to the matter at the first instance, describing the matter as purely an internal party issue, thereafter dismissing it in its entirety and awarding a cost of N1m against Apapa.

Heirs Holdings launches new subsidiary

HEIRS Holdings, an African investment company, has announced the launch of its new subsidiary, Heirs Technologies Limited, with an ambition to boost Africa's digital transformation through innovative and locally tailored solutions.

Heirs Holdings' Group Chief Executive Officer, Emmanuel Nnorom, said: "We are embarking on a journey fueled by innovation and driven by purpose. Our mission isn't solely about creat-

ing products; it's about shaping the future of technology, one groundbreaking solution at a time."

"The launch of Heirs Technologies reaffirms Heirs Holdings' steadfast commitment to invest in sectors that provide long-term returns and can transform Africa's economy. Heirs Holdings has been a pivotal player in various sectors critical for Africa's development including financial services, energy, power, healthcare, real estate, and hospitality.

Group advises S'West govs on security

From **Seye Olumide**, Ibadan

SOUTH West Security Stakeholders Group (SSSG), yesterday, announced its commitment to defend Yoruba land in the face of rising insecurity and activities of kidnappers across the region.

The group also urged the six governors of the region to support any initiative aimed at addressing the insecurity in Yoruba land, while it vowed to join in the fight against insecurity in the region.

In a statement made available to the media shortly after the meeting with leadership of the 15 security out-

fits in Ikeja, Lagos, SSSG's publicity secretary, Ireti Adewole, said there was urgent need to restore peace and tranquility across the region.

"The meeting, held today, is part of ongoing efforts of the Southwest Security Stakeholders Group (SSSG) to ensure Yoruba land is safe.

"We are not resting on our oars. We are determined to rid Yoruba land of kidnappers and bandits. The crux of our meeting is to set the agenda for securing the Southwest region from those uncivilised elements that are ravaging Yoruba land and making life unbearable for our kinsmen.

UK wants more Nigerian women in tech

• Partners CyberSafe to train 70,000 females

By **Adeyemi Adepetun**

UNITED Kingdom has canvassed more roles for Nigerian women in technology, stressing that the potential is huge.

British Deputy High Commissioner to Nigeria, Jonny Baxter, who made the call, said the UK had been a leading partner in working with Nigerian people to close the digital gender divide in Nigeria.

Speaking during an event to honour some Nigerians empowering women and young girls with digital skills through the CyberHubs initiative in Lagos at the weekend, the envoy said UK had championed inclusion for

women and girls into the digital economy through projects such as Digi Girls, saying: "We know that data says inclusion leads to an increase in economic power."

Baxter, who urged the Nigerian government to ensure increased access to faster and affordable Internet to achieve growth in its current digital economy agenda, added: "We know that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by climate change, natural disasters and conflict because they exacerbate existing inequality and barriers in accessing services and support."

SERAP asks NCC to restore blocked phone lines

By **Silver Nwokoro**

SOCIO-ECONOMIC Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has urged the Chief Executive Officer of Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Dr Aminu Maida, to revoke, immediately, directive to network providers to bar phone lines of millions of Nigerians, who have not linked their SIM cards to their National Identification Numbers (NINs).

• Says it violates citizens' rights to freedom

SERAP also urged him to restore the phone lines of the affected Nigerians, and to urgently establish a mechanism for effective consultation to provide Nigerians, who are yet to link their SIM cards to their NINs with the appropriate support and infrastructure and adequate time and opportunity to do so.

Recall that the Commission recently ordered telecommu-

nications companies to bar phone lines of millions of citizens, including those who allegedly did not submit a good NIN or did not get a cleared or verified NIN by February 28.

In a letter at the weekend, signed by SERAP's Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare, the organisation described the directive to bar Nigerians as an appalling violation of citizens' rights to

freedom of expression, information and privacy.

SERAP noted that no agency had the right to strip citizens of their basic constitutional rights under the guise of failing to properly link their SIM cards with their NINs or failing to do so timeously.

According to the body, the blocking of phone lines of Nigerians must only be a last resort measure, and strictly in line with the Nigerian Constitution 1999 (as amended), international human rights and due process safeguards.

"The arbitrary barring of people's phone lines is never a proportionate measure as it imposes disastrous consequences and severely hinders the effective enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights.

"Blanket measures of barring phone lines of millions of Nigerians are inconsistent and incompatible with the Nigerian Constitution and human rights treaties to which the country is a state party.

"The arbitrary directive and the barring of the phone lines are extreme measures, which must meet the strict legal requirements of legality, necessity and proportionality," SERAP said.



Vice President Kashim Shettima (left); Kaduna State Deputy Governor, Hadiza Balarabe; Senior Special Assistant to the President on Agribusiness and Productivity Enhancement, Kingsley Uzoma, and others during the Kashim Shettima Foundation's distribution of tractors, seeds, fertilisers, herbicides and other agric inputs to beneficiaries across selected states for the 2024 Farming Season in Kaduna State...at the weekend.

PHOTO: NAN

IPPG hails Tinubu's policies in oil, gas industry

INDEPENDENT Petroleum Producers Group (IPPG) has endorsed recent Executive Orders signed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, aimed at revitalising investment in Nigeria's oil and gas sector and positioning the nation as Africa's premier investment destination within the energy sector.

President Tinubu's policy directives include the introduction of value-adding fiscal incentives for investments in upstream non-associated gas (NAG) developments, midstream infrastructure, and deepwater assets. The orders also streamline the industry's contracting process, and seek to reform local content practices.

According to the IPPG, all these measures are pivotal

to the future of the industry and have been recommended by the industry for many years.

"We are encouraged to see swift progress within a relatively short period of time. We believe these actions will directly result in reduced project cost; faster project execution timelines; reduction of waste, and multiple layers of middlemen in project contracting processes; increased number of gas projects reaching Final Investment Decision (FID); increased gas processing and gas distribution capacity, as gas infrastructure investments grow; and increased gas supply for domestic use (including power, cooking gas, etc.) and for export.

The IPPG stated that it is

ready to collaborate with the government and all stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of these directives. We believe these reforms will attract more investments into our sector, accelerate project completions, and ultimately, contribute to the prosperity of all Nigerians.

The global oil and gas industry continues to contend with limited availability of capital, and uncertainty as to the evolution of future demand. In the past, Nigeria often unintentionally compounded these challenges and delayed investment by inserting the government between willing private sector counter-parties. This is recently evident in the delayed approval of recent IOC divestments, the stalled

progress in taking FID in the outstanding upstream Deepwater projects as well as gas resource & infrastructural development projects.

"President Tinubu's policies suggest a new direction that prioritises Nigeria's strategic interests, ensures that we can harness our vast gas resources effectively and recognises the role of the private sector in driving growth.

"These Executive Orders are a credible impetus required to relaunch the growth of production and revenue from the oil and gas industry, and marks a significant milestone in our journey towards achieving our shared goal of energy security and economic stability for all Nigerians", the IPPG added.

PenCom denies lending government N10 trillion

DIRECTOR General of National Pension Commission (PenCom), Mrs Aisha Dahir-Umar, has described as "totally misleading" reports that the Commission gave a N10 trillion loan to the Federal Government.

She also responded to claims that PenCom owed Federal Government retirees arrears of pensions and insinuations that Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) were not fulfilling their obligations to retirees with regards to access to their retirement

savings.

Dahir-Umar, in a media interview at the weekend, said: "Investments by PFAs in the securities of the Federal Government of Nigeria are not loans as erroneously portrayed, but investments in securities, through bonds and treasury bills, as approved by relevant government agencies, in this case the Debt Management Office (DMO) and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

"Moreover, pension fund assets are not managed by PenCom. I have said it repeat-

edly that when we say pension assets have grown to N9.6 trillion, that does not mean PenCom has N9.6 trillion locked somewhere in its office or bank accounts. Pension fund assets are managed by the licensed PFAs and held in custody by the licensed Pension Fund Custodians (PFCs). The PFAs are responsible for investing pension fund assets in allowable asset classes, including FGN debt instruments. "The objectives are safety and fair returns. All these are in line with the provisions of the enabling law,

the Pension Reform Act 2014, and the rules issued by the Commission. It is obvious from the above that what is referred to 'loan to FGN' is just investment in FGN securities by the PFAs, as is done by other institutional investors such as banks, insurance companies, asset managers, etc."

Dahir-Umar added that it was an international best practice to invest in investible instruments issued or backed by the sovereign authority and that the FGN securities meet the objectives of safety and fair returns.

Estimators peg exchange rate at N1400/\$ as naira finds fair value

By Geoff Iyatse (Business Editor)

AFTER a riotous February, naira seems to be on a new price-discovery path even as multiple estimates agree the currency is currently trading below its "fair value", suggesting a significant appreciation that will raise the exchange rate to about N1400/\$ before the end of the year.

At the weekend, Goldman Sachs, a global leading investment bank, bet on the naira to rally to N1200/\$ in the next one year on the strength of return of positive real interest yields, capital inflows and shift to a more orthodox monetary policy framework.

"We think that Nigeria is turning the corner following its recent currency crisis. These developments have prompted us to shift to a constructive outlook for the Naira, which our FX strategists expect to appreciate to NGN 1200 vs the USD in 12 months. Nigeria is finally emerging from a period of monetary policy transition characterised by an absence of a credible policy anchor and deeply negative real interest rates," the United States-based institution said.

Goldman Sachs' forecast even understates the value of naira what Bismarck Rewane, a Nigerian leading economist, considered as the fair value of naira. Using the purchasing power parity (PPP) model, Rewane, during a breakfast session at the Lagos Business School, valued naira at N910/\$.

This suggests that the currency is currently 44 per cent on discount at the Nigerian

- **Goldman Sachs says currency will appreciate to N1200/\$**
- **Odior: Naira can regain N1000/\$ if govt deals with currency speculation**
- **Naira trades 40 per cent below fair value, says Rewane**
- **Outward-looking policies threaten local production, jobs**

Autonomous Foreign Exchange Market (NAFEM), the single market window platform of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

Last week, NAFEM, which has cancelled out the gap between the official and unofficial rate, closed at N1627.4 to a dollar. At the black market, which is trading at a discount compared to the official segment, naira exchanged at between N1550 and N1620 to a dollar at the weekend.

Treating naira as a liquidated entity, an extreme pessimist view of the outlook of the currency, Rewane put the value of the naira at N2,265/\$. The method assesses the value of the currency, using the total money base given the country's external reserve.

But as a going concern, he said, the value could be assessed using the relative strength of adjusted money supply against total exports. That would put the value of the current at the region of Goldman Sachs' near-term value - N1203/\$.

Dancing to the tune of neoliberal economists, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) at the Yemi Cardoso's (the CBN governor) inaugural meeting raised the anchor interest by 400 basis points to 22.75 per cent, a move that seems to align with the current administration's extraversion posturing.

The interest rate hike and re-

cent treasury bill auction had raised the interest yields to 27 per cent, leading to a positive real rate of interest. Until recently, real interest rates were in negative territory - a reason many foreign investors distanced themselves from the Nigerian market with downside risks to naira.

The increase in the benchmark interest has attracted investors to the country's debt instruments and led to an upsurge in Diaspora remittances, which rose by over three per cent month-on-month in February, from \$300 to \$1.3 billion.

The external reserves have been uptick, adding about \$1.1 trillion year-to-date (YTD) to hit \$34.1 billion - the highest value since last July. Strong reserves mean more confidence in the local econ-

omy, which further strengthens the country's reserves and currency.

Goldman Sachs' assessment has reactivated the old debate on the true value of naira and how it matters. All things being equal, an econometrician at the University of Lagos, Dr Ernest Odior, said the near-term future path of naira would depend on what the monetary authority and government do about the speculative activities. He admitted that the current exchange rate does not reflect the true value of the currency but noted that speculation is a key variable the government must necessarily isolate for a true price discovery.

"It is possible for the naira to appreciate to N1200/\$. But there are a lot of speculators who trade and hoard for-

eign currencies. We are an import-dependent country. But speculation is a major variable that needs to be controlled. If the government can keep the speculator in check, naira can even rally to N1000/\$ before the end of the year," the economist noted.

Beyond speculation, Odior said, there are no justifiable structural deficiencies to explain the sharp depreciation the currency witnessed in the past year. Without speculation and other manipulative tendencies, he said, naira would find its true value within a short time frame.

Another economist, Dr Chiwu Uba, argued that MPR is necessary but a sufficient condition to stabilise the local currency. He said interest rates would be more efficient if the country were a credit-driven economy.

"Most individuals do not transact based on credit they have accessed from banks. Every kobo most people spend is money they worked

for or what they steal, which is the reason rate increase has not had any impact on inflation," Uba noted.

To earn more FX and produce local substitutes for imported goods, Nigeria would also need to increase its local productive capacity. This was the argument that informed the now-rested RT200 Scheme. The interest rate hike, unfortunately, would have a negative consequence on the performance of the local firms.

According to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) 767 manufacturing companies shut down last year alone owing to the unbearable increasing cost of operations, which is fed by both inflation and FX crisis as well as other structural challenges.

The impacts of the structural challenges, experts have noted, have led to a significant divergence of the actual value of naira from its fair and long-term equilibrium

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25



Wife of former Vice President, Mrs Dolapo Osibajo (middle); Mandate Secretary, FCT Women Affairs Secretariat, Adedayo Benjamins-Laniyi (fourth left) and others during the celebration of the 2024 International Women's Day organised by the Women's Helping Hand Initiative in Abuja...yesterday. PHOTO: NAN

Security agencies mum as search for abducted Kuriga school pupils continues

From Odita Sunday, Tina Abeku and Sodiql Omolayo (Abuja)

SECURITY forces yesterday continued to search forests and set up roadblocks in the Northwest of the country in an attempt to find hundreds of kidnapped schoolchildren, as calls for an overhaul of the security hierarchy intensify.

More than 280 children aged between seven and 18 were kidnapped from a school in Kuriga, Kaduna State last Thursday in one of the biggest mass abductions in recent months and a further 15 children were taken in another raid on a school in Sokoto on Saturday. This is after more than 200 other people, mostly women and children displaced by conflict, were taken in a separate raid in the Northeastern state Borno last week.

As mass abductions fester across the country despite government's N5 trillion investment in armoured tanks in the fourth quarter of 2023,

- **Abductions fester despite govt's N5tr investment in armoured tanks in Q4 of 2023**
- **Intelligence operatives should infiltrate terrorists camps - ex-DIG Lakanu**
- **Sack Service Chiefs now - HURIWA**
- **Activate necessary political will to end insecurity, NRM tells Tinubu**

observers say combing the forest for the abducted school kids would take weeks.

No group has claimed responsibility for the school abductions. Children who had escaped the kidnappers in Kuriga described their ordeal after being taken from their school. At about 8am on Thursday, when the school's 1,000 students were about to settle into their classes, dozens of armed men in military uniforms rode on motorbikes into the school grounds.

Abubakar, 18, a secondary school pupil, was among the children herded into the forest as they were beaten with horsewhips, but he managed to escape. "We trekked for hours in the scorching heat until we were all exhausted," Abubakar told AFP. He said

the kidnappers separated girls from boys. "There were more girls than boys." Lawan Yaro, a villager, whose five grandchildren were among those abducted, said his hopes were fading. He said people were used to the region's insecurity, "but it has never been in this manner".

More than 3,500 people have been abducted across Nigeria in the last year, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project.

The gangs are "adapting their strategies and further entrenching themselves in the Northwest through extortion", said James Barnett, a researcher on West Africa at the U.S.-based Hudson Institute.

Terrorism has festered despite governments' humon-

gous investment in security equipment. The Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) at the weekend stated that N5 trillion worth of tanks and armoured fighting vehicles were imported into the country in the fourth quarter of 2023, majorly from Singapore.

Over 1,400 children have been reportedly abducted in Nigeria since 300 girls were taken from Chibok, Borno State, in 2014, sparking widespread international condemnation.

Since then, there has been series of mass school abductions such as Dapchi (Yobe State) in February 2018, Kankara (Katsina State) in December 2020, Kagara (Niger State) in February 2021, Jangebe (Zamfara State) in February 2021, Kaduna abduction in March 2021,

Birnin Gwari (Kaduna State) in March 2021, Greenfield University (Kaduna State) in April 2021, Tegna (Niger State) in May 2021, Kaduna abduction in July 2021, Yauri (Kebbi State) abduction in June 2021, Bethel Baptist High School in Damishi, Chikun LGA (Kaduna State) in September 2021, Federal University Gusau (Zamfara State) in September 2023, and Federal University Dutsin-ma (Katsina State) in October 2023.

Reacting to the resurgence of the abductions, former Deputy Inspector General of Police, Taiwo Lakanu (rtd) said: "In as much as buying equipment is in the right direction, modern warfare is more of kinetic rather than non-kinetic nature. The ability to locate and destroy enemies from far distances will aid a quick end to the warfare."

"I also concede that due to material support from external cell affiliation, such wars

are more complex. Location of schools in rural areas make close quartered monitoring difficult. Temporary merging of such schools with those in townships will reduce attacks considerably. It will be difficult for terrorists in long convoys to operate in populated areas.

"Infiltration of terrorist camps by intelligence units is another step in fighting terrorism and other violent crimes is no picnic or tea party. It's really an expensive venture."

National coordinator of Human Rights Writers Association (HURIWA), Emmanuel Onwubiko, noted that Defence spending is characterised by massive corruption and procurement heists, which Nigeria must checkmate to be able to buy appropriately.

"The country needs defence equipment audits to be in a position to know why we are not getting it right even with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

NAFDAC vows to curb narcotics diversion, tighten control to ensure medical access

By Musa Adekunle

THE National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has reiterated its commitment to ensure availability of narcotics and controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes while preventing diversion to illicit use.

This comes amid concerns raised by Provost of the Medical School, University of Lagos, Prof. David Adewale Anthonio Oke, about the addiction to drugs by some medical professionals, particularly surgeons and others involved in administering pain medication after surgery.

Director-General of NAFDAC, Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, who was represented by Director, Laboratory Services (Food), Dr Charles Nwachukwu, during the launch of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) yearly report, acknowledged the role of narcotic drugs in pain management and other medical conditions.

Adeyeye emphasised the necessity of balancing access with control due to their addictive potential, stressing that competent national authorities must intensify their activities and monitor online advertisements and sales of controlled substances to outpace traffickers.

I'm most qualified to succeed Akeredolu, lead Ondo, says Edema

- Step down, endorse Oke, cleric tells Aiyedatiwa
- Says Ondo needs experienced leader

From Adewale Momoh, Akure

AGOVERNORSHIP aspirant on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC) for the forthcoming election in Ondo State, Olugbenga Edema, has said that he is the most qualified aspirant to govern the state.

He vowed that he would succeed the late Governor Oluwarotimi Akeredolu and emerge victorious at the polls.

Edema, while featuring on a TVC programme, at the weekend, emphasised that based on his experience in governance and political positions, he is fully equipped to lead the state.

MEANWHILE, a popular cleric in Ondo State and the Senior Pastor of Awaiting the Second Coming of Christ Ministry, Adewale Giwa, has appealed to Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa to step down for Olusola Oke, an aspirant contesting under APC.

Giwa said that going by experience, Oke is the most suitable aspirant to lead the state from the current doldrums, hence the need for Aiyedatiwa to support his kinsman.

He said that the development of the state should come before anyone's political ambitions.

Lagos govt to adopt groin technology to protect coastal communities from erosion

By Gbenga Salau

Lagos State Government has planned to adopt groin technology used in other African countries to preserve and protect coastline communities in the state from going into extinction as a result of the impact of coastal erosion.

In a statement, yesterday, Commissioner for Waterfront Infrastructure Development, Yacoob Ekundayo Alebiosu, disclosed this while speaking on the impact of erosion on the Lagos coastline.

Some of the communities

already ravaged by coastal erosion include Idotun, Origanrigan, Olomowewe, Itoke and Asoroko in Ibeju-Lekki. The commissioner said that the state would aggressively be working to curb the ugly tide with the introduction of new and cheaper technology already used by some African countries.

Groin technology involves the engineering and construction of structures, taking into consideration wave action, sediment transport, and environmental impact. It is often part of coastal management and protection

efforts to maintain beaches and shorelines in the face of erosion caused by natural processes or human activities.

The structures are built perpendicular to the shoreline, often using rocks or concrete to prevent or reduce beach erosion. These structures are called groins, and they work by trapping sand that is carried along the shoreline by waves and currents. By trapping sand on one side of the groin, they can help build up or maintain a beach on that side, while also creating a more stable environment for

structures like piers or harbours.

Alebiosu, while speaking on what the state is doing to assist the communities along the coastline, said that erosion is an act of God and the most that could be done is to mitigate it.

He said the Netherlands Consular led some Dutch companies to the ministry some weeks ago to see how they could collaborate and that they are expecting some other people in a couple of weeks.

Read the remaining part of this story on www.guardian.ng



Co-Sponsor of the Parliamentary System Government Bill Group (PBSG), Wale Raji (left); Sponsor of the Bill, Kingsley Chinda; Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi and Spokesperson of PBSG, Abdussamad Dasuki, during a visit to the monarch in Abuja... at the weekend.

PHOTO: LUCY LADIDI ATEKO

FG rolls out presidential conditional grant scheme to empower Nano businesses in Nigeria

THE Federal Government has rolled out the Presidential Conditional Grant Scheme (PCGS) to empower Nano businesses as part of the presidential palliative programme.

The scheme, which began on March 9, 2024, offers financial grants, without repayment obligations, to eligible small business owners operating in various sectors, such as trading, food services, ICT, transportation, creative and artisans. The PCGS targets 70 per cent women and youths, 10 per cent people with disabilities, and five per cent senior citizens, with the remaining 15 per cent distributed to other demographics.

Besides, by focusing on the

often overlooked group of business owners, the programme seeks to unlock the potential of Nigeria's burgeoning entrepreneurial ecosystem and drive sustainable economic development at the grassroots level.

The N50,000 (Fifty thousand naira) grant per beneficiary paid directly to beneficiaries' accounts will reach one million small businesses in the 774 local government areas (LGAs) and the six council areas in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). With a target of 1,000,000 beneficiaries in every local government and the FCT, the programme has the potential to impact communities nationwide significantly.

Beneficiaries of the initia-

tive have been selected through a rigorous process that includes the verification of each business owner through their National Identification Number (NIN) and Bank Verification Number (BVN).

The successful applicants met specific criteria, including owning a small business with progressive economic potential, a willingness to grow and engage at least one additional member of staff when necessary. Applicants also provided proof of residential/business address and relevant personal and bank account information before the December 18, 2023 deadline.

The presidential conditional grant scheme underscores

the government's commitment to supporting small-scale entrepreneurs and driving inclusive economic growth. With a strong emphasis on inclusivity and empowerment, the PCGS is poised to make a tangible impact on the lives of small business owners and their communities across Nigeria. The initiative is implemented by the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment with the Bank of Industry (BoI) as the executing agency.

For more information about the presidential conditional grant scheme (PCGS), please visit the official website (<https://grant.fedgrantand-loan.gov.ng/>).

LBS seeks gender parity in financial services sector

By Victor Gbonegun

THE Lagos Business School (LBS) has begun a 'Co Impact' project that aims to foster gender equality in Nigeria's financial services sector.

The institution also called for gender parity in the nation's financial sector to improve inclusion and contribution of women to national development.

Project's Co-Lead for the institution, Yetunde Anibaba, made the call, at

the weekend, during an event to mark this year's International Women's Day.

According to Anibaba, the institution recently secured a \$300,000 grant from a global philanthropic collaborative focused on improving the lives of millions of people through just and inclusive systems-change.

The design phase grant is to provide the space, resources and expertise necessary for a partner to create a plan designed to

help the grantee (LBS) achieve its systems-change objectives.

She said the LBS is embarking on the project as its own research showed that women occupy 20 per cent of the executive management positions in the financial services sector despite making up 45 per cent of the total workforce.

Anibaba further said that this systemic inequality had continued to persist due to deeply rooted social norms

and implicit biases, as well as structures and processes that preclude inclusiveness in organisations.

She said: "In a recent study on 30 most capitalised companies in Nigeria done by the IFF, they found that about 33 per cent of the workforce are women and only 27 per cent hold senior management positions in these organisations."

Read the remaining part of this story on www.guardian.ng

Anchor borrowers scheme empowers 40,000 agripreneurs in Ogun, says Abiodun

OGUN State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, has said that the anchor borrowers' scheme in the state has nurtured over 40,000 agripreneurs.

The governor, who spoke in Abeokuta, at the weekend, during the 37th Lisabi Day celebration, reiterated his administration's dedication to supporting young farmers and investors in land clearing, preparation and mechanisation for agriculture.

Abiodun, represented by his deputy, Noimot Salako-Oyedele, emphasised that the theme of the celebration, "Encouraging Youth Entrepreneurship in Agric Business: Panacea for Solving Youth Unemployment in Egbaland," aligns with his commitment to empower youths for agricultural growth.

He, therefore, called for intensified efforts in agriculture and allied businesses, focusing on youth development, even as he highlighted the pivotal role of agriculture in the state's economic roadmap, contributing to food security, job creation, and industrialisation.

He said: "Ogun State remains a major global producer of cassava, with strengths in production, poultry farming, fish production, and animal husbandry."

Abiodun underscored the government's interest in boosting the agricultural value chain, encouraging private sector investment for sustained industrialisation, job creation, and food security.

Read the remaining part of this story on www.guardian.ng

RCCG youths embark on CSR projects to mark Adeboye's 82nd birthday

AS part of activities to mark the 82nd birthday of the General Overseer of The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Pastor E.A. Adeboye, RCCG LSC The Bridge in Ikeja, Lagos, under the vibrant leadership of Youth Province 1, has carried out some Christian Social Responsibility (CSR) projects in four locations.

The locations visited during the initiative included Heritage Homes Orphanage, Little Saints Orphanage Headquarters Administration and Donation Centre, Institute of Maternal and Child Health, and RCCG health centre in the Redemption City campground.

Lead Pastor of RCCG LSC The Bridge, Leke Adeboye, who spoke on the sideline of the event, at the weekend, said the CSR projects, which focused on addressing critical needs within the community, included healthcare support (newborn care packages and paying hospital bills of babies) born on March 2, 2024, as well as welfare support and visiting orphanages.

Police alert on ladies blackmailing men with nude pictures

By Eniola Daniel

THE Lagos State Police Command has warned residents of a new online scam being perpetrated by ladies.

The warning came after a man narrated how he was scammed by a lady he met online.

The man, whose identity was not revealed, narrated how he met a girl on TikTok and they began chatting. Later, she asked for his Whatsapp number and he obliged.

The spokesperson for Lagos State Police Command, Benjamin Hundeyin, said:

25-year-old man nabbed for stealing cables from Lagos building

"The lady went ahead to ask if he was interested in her sex life. He responded that he didn't understand. She put him on a video call. She was half naked, fumbling with her privies and breasts. She then asked to see his private part, which he showed to her. Little did he know that she was recording.

"She ended the call immediately. She sent him her account details, asking him to send her money. He refused. Fast forward to Saturday. She sent him a

video showing his nakedness, with a threat that she was going to upload it on all social media."

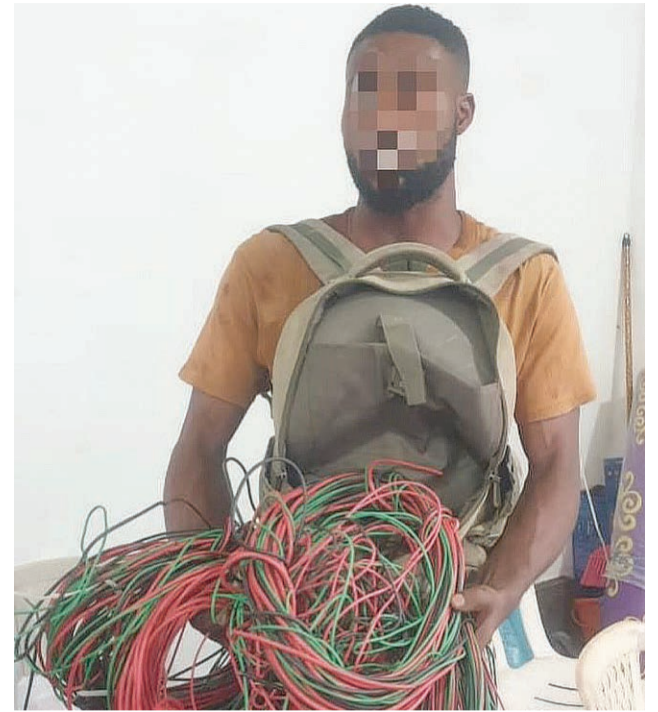
The lady was said to have written: "I will post your naked pictures on social media, just to let the whole world read an article about you, especially your loved ones. I'm not just posting it, I am sending copies to your area. I am very sure you don't want this kind of thing in your life. So, if you are ready, we can talk this out."

Hundeyin said: "If you

must send nudes, at least, do one-view or cover your face, or any other identification mark. And do not forget that video calls can be screenshot/recorded. For others, it is a clandestine recording of their intimate moments, of course, without consent.

"I have lost count of people, sometimes notable ones, approaching me about someone, somewhere blackmailing and extorting money from them with their nudes.

"Trust no one. Take adequate precaution. Trust your instincts too. And do not forget to reach the police, in the unfortunate event that you fall victim to this."



Ikoka

FRSC nabs 31 motorists over traffic offences in Delta

From Monday Osayande, Asaba

DELTA State Command of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has arrested 31 motorists for traffic violations and booked eight vehicles for not installing speed limiting devices.

The state Sector Commander, Bassy Eshiet,

disclosed this at the first Sector Commander's Special Intervention Patrol, along Asaba-Benin and Asaba-Onitsha highway.

According to him, the patrol was in compliance with the Corps Marshal's directives for commands to curb road accidents.

He said the 2024 patrol was in collaboration with

armed policemen from the Delta State Police Command.

He said: "A total of 31 traffic violators were arrested and booked for 42 offences, and eight vehicles were booked for not installing speed limiting devices to regulate their speed, which is one of the major causes of road traffic crashes in Delta.

Yari annual Ramadan feeding programme benefits 250,000 households



IN line with a longstanding tradition of generosity, the Senator Representing Zamfara West Senatorial Zone has announced plans to distribute foodstuffs to 250,000 households during the holy month of Ramadan in 2024. This noble initiative is aimed to alleviate the burden of hunger and ensure that families across Zamfara state could observe the sacred month with some measure of comfort.

Under this programme, spanning 13 Local Government Areas of Zamfara State, each local government received 17,500 bags of essential food items including rice, millet, sugar, and maize. Additionally, the State capital, Gusau Local Government, benefitted from 22,500 bags of these essential food items.

In a special gesture towards vulnerable members of society, orphans and women received 10,000 bags of rice, millet, sugar, and maize, to enable them partake in the blessings of Ramadan without worry. Furthermore, male orphans were provided with Sallah clothes and additional token of N2,000 for tailoring, while female orphans received Atamfa with a token of 2,000 Naira for its crafting.

APC in Zamfara State of Senator Yari and

Minister Matawalle camp have special provisions across the 14 Local Governments and 147 Wards in the state. Internally Displaced Persons numbering 2970 also benefitted.

This comprehensive effort underscore the commitment of the Senator to uplift the less privileged and foster a sense of unity and compassion within the community. It was a testimony of the spirit of Ramadan, which encourages acts of charity, kindness, and solidarity.

As preparations for the distribution commenced, the Senator called upon all stakeholders to support this noble cause and extend a helping hand to those in need. Together, let us make this Ramadan a time of abundance, empathy, and goodwill for all.



Flooding: Lagos begins enforcement of drainage, right-of-way in Apapa

By Bertram Nwannekanma

LAGOS State government will, today, commence enforcement in Apapa to re-establish the three-metre right-of-way for all its drainage channels.

The operation is aimed at tackling flooding within Apapa and environs.

Speaking with newsmen after an inspection tour to check the level of compliance, Commissioner for Environment and Water Resources, Tokunbo Wahab, said the enforcement was coming after the expiration of notices; after convening

stakeholders' meetings earlier in the year with property owners to voluntarily move fences that fall within the drainage setback.

He said for several years, the ministry was not able to access the eight major collectors for maintenance purposes, due to encroachment, which is a major contributor to flooding in the Apapa.

He said the state government was determined to find a lasting solution to flooding in Apapa and directed

enforcement officers to ensure that all contravening properties are removed from the drainage right-of-way.

He assured that the state would not cherry pick properties during the enforcement.

"We want to check the state of collectors in Apapa to evacuate and treat the collectors; the entire collectors in this area are blocked, and the right-of-way taken over by individuals who moved their fences to acquire extra land, thereby denying us access to the drains," he said.

Abuja residents groan over water scarcity, seek FCTA's intervention

RESIDENTS of Karu and Nyanya in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have lamented the water crisis bedevilling the area and appealed to the FCT Water Board to address the situation.

Some of the residents appealed to FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, urging him to wade into the matter, with a view to addressing it promptly.

A Nyanya resident, Amaka

Ibeh, said the development has led to her family spending more.

Ibeh, who is a civil servant, said she spent one-third of her salary on water every month. She said the family depended on pipe-borne water for drinking but has since switched to buying sachet water, which costs more.

Ibeh appealed to the FCT authority to find a lasting solution to the problem to

increase her food purchasing power for her family.

She said: "I am a single mother of three children and I spend a lot of money buying borehole water, just for household chores and bathing. I still buy sachet water for drinking. This has increased my spending on water alone, not to talk of the food we eat.

Land grab: Farm operator alleges injustice, assault, police deny involvement

By Eniola Daniel

THE manager of Ola Poultry Farms in the Ikotun area of Lagos, Bola Ola, has accused officers of Zone 2 Onikan police station of providing cover for land grabbers to invade his farm, located at 145, Abaranje Road, Ikotun, Lagos.

Ola alleged that the land grabbers numbering over 15, and supported by four uniformed police officers, barged into his poultry on Wednesday, February 14,

2024, brutalised him, and bundled him into their Hilux vehicle.

Ola alleged that he was first taken to Area M, Idimu police station, and later to Blue Sky Hospital, when they realised he was in a coma. Thereafter, they drove him to Zone 2, at Onikan, where he was asked to meet the Zonal Criminal Investigation Intelligence Department (ZCIID).

At the station, he alleged that officers gave a one-

sided judgment because he couldn't talk, on account of his health condition.



IGP, Kayode Egbetokun

NDLEA intercepts illicit drug consignment in commercial bus engine, arrests two grandpas

By Bertram Nwannekanma

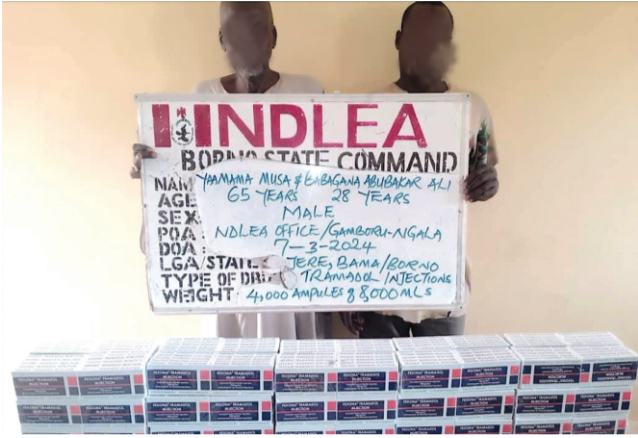
OPERATIVES of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have intercepted a consignment of illicit drugs concealed in the engine compartment of an interstate commercial bus.

Also, two grandfathers were taken into custody over drug trafficking, besides other arrests.

About 5.2kg of Cannabis sativa and opioids were discovered in the engine compartment of an interstate commercial bus, marked VDY 187 XA, on Thursday, March 7, 2024, along the Gbongan-Ibadan road, Osun State, during a stop-and-search operation.

The bus driver, Iorliam Sughnen Dominic, 35, who took responsibility for the consignment was taken into custody for further investigation.

Two skuchies factories busted in Osun, Lagos



Suspects

Spokesperson for the agency, Femi Babafemi, who confirmed this yesterday, said the previous day, Wednesday, March 6, a 26-year-old lady, Obasanmi Esther Iyanu, who produces and distributes *skuchies*, was arrested during a raid on her hideout in Osogbo, the Osun

State capital.

At least 16.5 litres of the illicit substance and different quantities of *molly* and cannabis were recovered during the raid.

In the same vein, NDLEA operatives in Borno State arrested a 70-year-old grandfather, Mai Gemu Adam



Suspects

and 65-year-old Yamama Musa for drug trafficking.

They were arrested on Saturday, March 9, along with 24-year-old Abubakar Ya'u and Babagana Abubakar Ali, 28, in Maiduguri and Gamboru-Ngala, respectively, while 32,000 ampoules of tramadol injection were recovered from them.

The same day, operatives at Geidam in Yobe State intercepted a Golf 3 saloon

car heading to Gagamari in Niger Republic, where the occupant, Mala Tijjani, 28, was to deliver 40 blocks of cannabis weighing 24.5kg to another dealer, while 42 cartons containing 8,400 bottles of codeine syrup weighing 1,260 kilogrammes were recovered from a driver, Mutari Ya'u, 29, at Katsina Road, Kaduna, on Tuesday, March 5.

In Kano State, Nura Yusuf, 35, was arrested with 62kg of cannabis at the Gadar Tamburawa area. Abubakar Sani, 40, was also nabbed with 244 bottles of codeine syrup, while Mohammad Alkali, 28, was found with 49,800 pills of tramadol, along Kano-Maiduguri road, on Thursday, March 7.

This was as NDLEA operatives in Lagos State on Wednesday, March 6, arrested one Aba Thomas at the Igbo Elerin area of the state where 84 litres of *skuchies*, 1.1 litres of codeine syrup, 4kg Cannabis sativa, and 800 tablets of tramadol 225mg were seized from him.

No fewer than eight suspects were arrested on Friday, March 8, when NDLEA officers

raided the notorious Karu abattoir drug joint in the FCT, Abuja. The officers recovered 51.3kg of cannabis. Those arrested are: Buhari Muhammadu; Jamilu Muhammed; Abubakar Wappa; Yahaya Tasiu; Ezekiel Mulanda; Abba Haruna; Habibu Umar and Shamsu Lawali.

In Plateau State, two suspects: Pam Thomas, 45, and Stephen Nyam, 38, were on Monday, March 4, arrested with cannabis weighing 611.428kg at Zawan, Jos South, while in Kogi State, NDLEA officers intercepted a commercial J5 bus coming from Onitsha, Anambra State to Zaria, Kaduna State, on Wednesday, March 6, along Okene-Lokoja-Abuja expressway. A total of 8,580 pills of tramadol and exol-5 were seized from a suspect, Yusuf Abdullahi, 40.

In Enugu, operatives, on Tuesday, March 5, raided some locked-up shops at the new market in Enugu metropolitan area, where 371.42kg of cannabis and 9.49grammes of methamphetamine were recovered.

Extortion: PSC suspends two police officers in Rivers

From Obinna Nwaoku, Port Harcourt

THE Police Service Commission (PSC) has suspended two officers from duty and stopped their salaries, following their alleged extortion of \$3,000 in Aba, in 2023.

The two are: Assistant Superintendents of Police (ASPs) Doubara Edonyabo and Talent Mungo.

Also, the Police Command announced the dismissal of a junior officer, Inspector Michael Odey, who was found guilty in a room trial conducted by the Assistant Inspector General of Police, Zone 16.

Spokesperson for Rivers State Police Command, Grace Iringe-Koko, who confirmed this in a statement yesterday, noted that the salaries of the implicated officers have been stopped, adding that they would face the Force Disciplinary Committee (FDC), which is responsible



CP Disu

for addressing disciplinary issues involving senior officers.

She said: "The Rivers State Police Command, hereby, issues an official update regarding a case involving three police officers who have been accused of engaging in acts of extortion.

"Today, we, hereby, inform the public that the Police Service Commission has officially authorised the suspension from duty of ASP

Doubara Edonyabo and ASP Talent Mungo, effective from February 29, 2024.

"As previously communicated during our press briefing on February 13, 2024, Inspector Michael Odey was found guilty and subsequently dismissed from duty, effective from February 7, 2024, following a thorough orderly room proceeding and a comprehensive review conducted by the Assistant Inspector General of Police, Zone 16.

She added: "Under the leadership of CP Olatunji Disu, the Rivers State Police Command remains steadfast in its dedication to maintaining discipline among its officers.

"We wholeheartedly encourage residents to promptly report any instances of unprofessional behaviour or misconduct displayed by our officers. Rest assured, all reports will be handled with the utmost confidentiality."

Building collapse: Lagos vows to remove structures without requisite permits

By Bertram Nwannekanma

LAGOS State government, through the Office of Urban Development and Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA), has vowed to remove structures that do not have requisite permits. The state has also finalised plans to synergise operations with the private sector in the built industry for better service delivery.

The synergy which is to be christened, 'Accredited Certifiers Programme', is aimed at strengthening the capacity of government officials in monitoring and enforcing building regulations in the state.

This was disclosed at the LASBCA headquarters in Ikeja by Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on Electronic Geographical Information System (e-GIS) and Urban Development, Olajide Babatunde.

He said recommendation of the Accredited Certifiers Programme emanated from a Government White Paper on the report of the Lagos State

tribunal on the building collapse on 44 (B, C, D), Gerrard Road, Ikoyi, Lagos.

The report calls for a more robust public private sector synergy that will help boost enforcement exercise, in terms of monitoring and inspection of all ongoing building constructions in the state.

According to him, the main reason for the partnership, which has been in the pipeline since 2021, was basically for zero tolerance towards building collapses in the state, through robust monitoring and inspection of all ongoing constructions.

He said: "The synergy with the private sector, as recommended by the White Paper report, will enhance better services delivery in some specific aspects, such as monitoring of the built environment, screening of drawings, and inspection of projects above six floors, and complementary roles for stage certification of projects above six floors, an initiative that will make the building process

seamless and more effective."

Babatunde noted that Lagos is blessed with large numbers of professionals in the built environment who are ready to bring in their expertise and capacity to ensure that buildings in the state are constructed to meet international standards.

He also emphasised that for seamless take-off of the Accredited Certifiers Programme to be achieved, various orientation workshops will be organised for successful consortium and individual professionals that meet the criteria of becoming Accredited Certifiers.

On his part, Permanent Secretary, Office of Urban Development, Shodeinde Nurudeen, said LASBCA is the sole enforcer of any form of building development in the state, and in order to reduce or eliminate the multiplicity of enforcement agents in the built industry, other state agencies and parastatals must interface with LASBCA.

IBEDC laments vandalism, theft of electricity infrastructure in franchise areas

By Hope Ibiba Tam-Talbot

THE Management of Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) has lamented vandalism and theft of electricity infrastructure in its franchise areas.

According to the distribution company (DisCo), that is one of the factors contributing to the current state of power supply within its franchise, resulting in disruptions and inconveniences for residents and businesses.

Disclosing this in a statement yesterday, IBEDC said an example was the

unfortunate vandalism of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) towers in Ogun State in May 2023, which resulted in over seven months of darkness for many of its valued customers.

It noted: "At IBEDC, we are particularly confronted with the escalating cases of vandalism, with over 40 incidents recorded in 2024 alone.

"The theft of valuable assets, such as transformer oil, cables and aluminium conductors pose a significant challenge to our operations,

as communities affected are thrown into extended periods of outage depending on the severity of the act.

"Energy theft through illegal connections, metre bypass and illicit metres are also major issues affecting adequate supply of power to customers, because they result in revenue losses and liquidity problems for the electricity value chain.

"We have also noticed an alarming upsurge, with over 1,450 identified cases of energy theft between January and February 2024."

The power distribution

company also identified low supply of gas to generating companies (GenCos), leading to a gradual decrease in available generation to the grid.

Despite these challenges, IBEDC expressed optimism that poor supply would soon become a thing of the past, saying Minister of Power, Adebayo Adelabu, has taken urgent steps to address the gas supply issue, while the firm is currently partnering with security agencies to reduce energy theft and vandalism.

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NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (NEDC)

NEDC to Introduce E-Vehicles in North East

Disturbed by the current hardship across the country, the management of the North East Development Commission (NEDC) has resolved to continue with intermittent food distribution intervention.

This decision, the management believe will compliment the efforts of both the federal and state governments in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to bring succour to the vulnerable and indigent in communities across the North East region of the country.

NEDC Managing Director, Alhaji Mohammed Alkali who disclosed this while unveiling the agencies agenda said over 300,000 bags of rice, 200,000 cartons of macaroni, spaghetti, vegetable oil, branded mats and blankets, make and female clothes as well as children has been embarked for distribution.

Recall that the NEDC had last year took over the responsibilities of routine food distribution to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in designated camps, host and liberated communities in Borno and Adamawa State from the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)

According to Alkali, the decision to takeover the routine food distribution and feeding in the IDPs camps would help eliminate duplication of efforts and allow for scares resources to be deployed in other areas to assist Nigerians in distress.

He described the new development as a positive beginning that has unfolded a new vista of partnership and collaboration between NEMA and NEDC for the benefits of Nigerians.

Aside the distribution of food and non-food items, the NEDC management has also informed the public of plans to introduce Electronic Vehicles to ease intra- and inter-state transportation challenges in the region

The chairman of the reconstituted governing board of NEDC, Paul Tarfa, made the announcement shortly after he met with board members in Abuja.

The meeting was the first after the board's inauguration by Vice-President Kashim Shettima in August 2023.

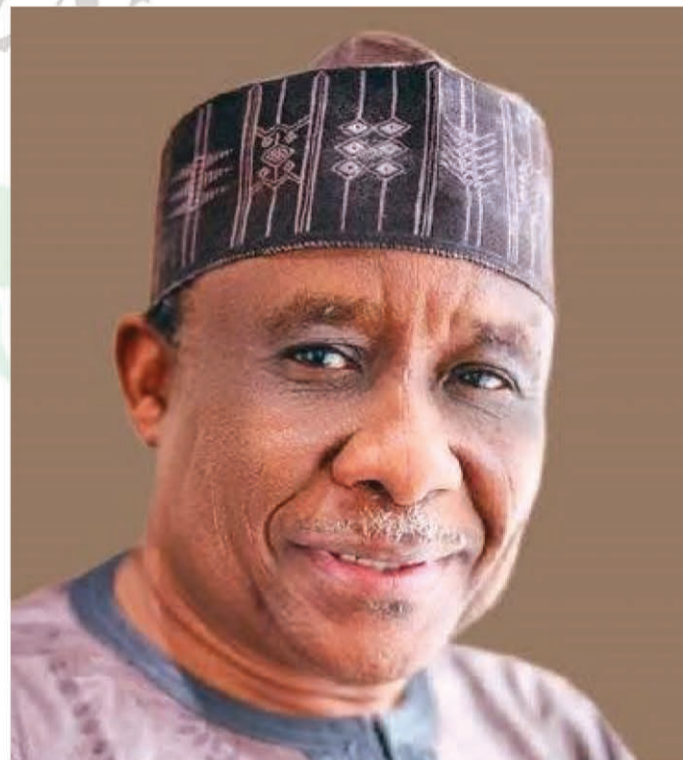
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Tarfa said the move to embark on the e-mobility projects was to address



**MAJOR GEN. PAUL TARFA (Rtd), min
NEDC Board Chairman**



**MAHAMMED G. ALKALI
MD/CEO
North East Development Commission**



NEDC Board Chairman, General Paul Tarfa, NEDC Managing Director, Alhaji Mohammed Alkali and board members of the North East Development Commission (NEDC) after their first board meeting in Abuja

transportation challenges faced by people in the region.

"We plan to embark on (e-mobility projects), that is, electronic vehicles, to ease the challenges of transportation faced by people in the North-East," Mr Tarfa said.

He also said the purpose of the meeting was to inform Nigerians about the giant

strides the commission has made so far.

Tarfa said, "Some of the key issues we discussed during the meeting were to ensure the completion of all the ongoing projects, especially the six major road projects that are ongoing across Taraba, Gombe, Bauchi, Adamawa, Yobe, and Borno States. We hope to complete them by December 2024.

Tarfa also informed the gathering of the board's commitment to implementing President Bola Tinubu's administration's renewed hope agenda in accordance with his desire for vulnerable Nigerians.

He, therefore, assured Nigerians of their determination to complete all the ongoing projects embarked upon by the commission.



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PUBLIC NOTICE

INTRODUCTION OF SELF-REGISTRATION MODULE ON TAXPRO-MAX

As a result of the ongoing reforms aimed at ease of doing business and matching our new customer-centric posture with tangible action, the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) wishes to inform taxpayers and general public of the following updates:

1. We have introduced Self-Registration Module on our Tax Administration Solution platform popularly called TaxPro-Max.
2. With this innovation, taxpayers can now complete all registration processes with FIRS independently at the comfort of their offices or homes, thus saving them time and resources.
3. Every newly registered corporate/business entity assigned a Tax Identification Number (TIN) automatically at the point of registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) can now complete their registration with FIRS on TaxPro-Max via www.taxpromax.firs.gov.ng and follow the prompt for self-registration.
4. We believe that this innovative approach to taxpayers' registration will contribute to a more efficient and transparent tax system, ultimately benefiting both taxpayers and the country as a whole.
5. FIRS, by this notice, advises taxpayers to take advantage of this new feature, while reiterating its commitment to continuous improvement in taxpayers' experience.
6. For more information and guidance on utilizing the self-registration feature on TaxPro-Max, please visit our website www.firs.gov.ng or contact our customer service team.

Further enquiries on any aspect of this notice should be directed to the office of:

Executive Chairman,
Federal Inland Revenue Service,
20, Sokode Crescent,
Wuse Zone 5, Abuja.

Signed:
Zacch Adedeji, PhD
Executive Chairman,
Federal Inland Revenue Service

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Conscience is an open wound; only truth can heal it. Uthman dan Fodio 1754-1816

Editorial

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To stem rising food prices and anger in the land

THE rising number of hungry and angry Nigerians is enough to worry any government. Measures by the government to assuage the pains of Nigerians appear to be slow in taking effect. The reason cannot be ignored; Nigeria is facing an unprecedented economic crisis. A financial and economic crisis marked by a free fall of the naira and an alarming surge in the cost of living. This dire situation is pushing more people into poverty, more than ever before. Though official records from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reveal a staggering 35.41 per cent food inflation rate, the grim reality suggests that the true food inflation rate is even higher, surpassing 50 per cent. To check rising discontent that may lead to lawlessness, the federal and state governments must intensify efforts to strengthen the naira, improve food production and distribution and clearly communicate plans and activities to the people promptly to enjoy their support and sympathy.

High and persistent inflation has continued to weigh significantly on consumer purchasing power, particularly in middle, poor and vulnerable households, pushing more Nigerians into poverty. The World Bank estimates more Nigerians have sunk into poverty, with even more people at risk of food insecurity. The tides of insecurity across the country, the slowdown in the reform momentum and policy uncertainty have continued to deter private investment, with fewer manufacturing entities announcing divestments and changes in business strategies.

Beyond the raging food inflation, the unusual spike in the price of cement has reinforced the fact that the higher the price of cement, the less affordable for housing and the more people in need of shelter. The government's appeal to the cement market's oligopoly is not enough to check abuse in the production and distribution of the product. A product that sold for

N5,600 in January sold for double its price in less than a month. This astronomical rise in price has implications for the larger society. The construction industry is touted as the largest employer of labour, but with the skyrocketing price of cement, many construction sites that are cement-based may be closed or suffer setbacks in which case some workers-skilled and unskilled, will be thrown back into the labour market. Already, many construction firms are slowing down and re-pricing projects in line with market realities.

Indeed, the government meeting with operators provides a temporary relief but the long-term solution lies in the ability to raise the production capability of affordable commodities and liberalise the market for new investors. With the benefit of hindsight, Nigeria in the 70s had at least five functional cement plants. The companies, largely under the management of the government, were at Nkalagu, Ewekoro, Kalabaina, Calabar and Okpella. The combined output of these plants satisfied the level of infrastructural development at the time and at an affordable price. The price of a 50kg bag of cement at the time was 50 kobo! However, a clear-headed approach and consistency of government policy can still bring back the lush green era of yesteryears.

More so, it is time the country paid attention, especially through research and development, to emerging alternatives to some building materials like cement. For instance, age-long laterite is still as relevant as it was in the olden days, though in new fashions that make a modern design. Another is the bamboo tree, which is fast gaining a look-in as a possible substitute for iron rods. Container and wooden houses have shown that durable modern houses are possible without expensive bricks and mortar. All of these are innovations for people who are thinking. Research-based communities like the Nigerian Building Research Institute (NBRI) and building departments of universities should be tasked to do more and market their products as a justification

for their yearly budget.

While opening food banks and increasing access to grains might be commended, if indeed the reserves exist, the government should remember that access to food and water are the glue that holds society together. As Alfred Henry Lewis observed in 1906, 'There are only nine meals between (hu)mankind and anarchy.' The availability or scarcity of staple ingredients can mean the difference between a civilised society and a civil conflict. Food scarcity exacerbates social tensions such as inequality and poverty and acts as a threat multiplier. This is already playing out with the frequent reports of looting as witnessed in 2020 and a few weeks ago in Abuja and environs. Throwing money at problems solves nothing. Rather, money thrown at problems often exacerbates the problems. Many studies have shown this. The cobra effect has shown this clearly. When money is applied wrongly to a problem, in many instances, the problem gets worse. This is exactly what is happening to poverty in Nigeria because of palliatives and so-called empowerment. The government's unsustainable 'interventions' backed by nothing have brought the country to its present state, on bended knees. The CBN Governor, Yemi Cardoso affirmed that the over N10 trillion government interventions is creating even more problems for inflation management.

Sociologists believe that not everyone in society can be a productive entrepreneur. When you give non-

entrepreneurs money, they tend to shunt to consumption rather than to production. This is what has happened to much of the money showered on SMEs over the years. As seen in many cases, palliatives tend to induce a dependency syndrome which breeds the "entitlement mentality" in our society. It is apparent that government 'interventions and palliatives' have ended up achieving the opposite effect. Rather than eradicating poverty, it deepened instead to a point where a vast majority are considered multi-dimensionally poor. Palliatives have not eradicated poverty; instead, it has created a huge population that is waiting for government handouts. The removal of fuel subsidy last May had triggered widespread anger, accentuating the urgent need to review the concept of palliatives.

Nigeria is in a dire situation and must approach its economic survival with pragmatism. While the present solutions might offer some short-term respite, addressing the underlying causes of hunger, poverty, and unhappiness requires a comprehensive and long-term strategy. The government must promote openness, fight corruption, and make investments in a variety of economic areas. Leaders need to practise austerity measures in both word and deed if they want to restore the trust and hope of the populace. Nigeria may prepare its people for a better and more successful future by adopting a multipronged approach that places a high priority on infrastructure, employment development, education, and community empowerment. The time to act is now, to avoid chaos!

LETTER

Letter to Tinubu on cost of living

SIR: In my wide memo to the then newly President-elect on March 2023, published by print and online media titled, 'The task before the incoming administration,' I reminded Mr President on the need to have a team of competent people toward Renewed Hope and to roll out the administration's Economic blueprint.

Your Excellency, your administration inherited bankrupt country by the way: Buhari's administration badly managed the economy and left the country neck-deep in local and foreign debt. But in fairness to justice, current hardship experienced by citizens in the country is largely caused by your administration's petrol subsidy removal, Economic Liberalism, Market Forces and currency floating.

With all sense of respect to you and your office, there is difference between admitting of

the problems and bringing a lasting solution. Taking personal responsibility for the pains poor people are going through is courageous but offering lasting solution toward alleviating the problems is most needed. Several attempts made to cushion the effect of the removal of subsidy all went in vain.

In a national broadcast on July 31, the President announced first sets of palliatives, which include a N500 billion palliative plan that included N100 billion to acquire 3,000 units of 20-seater CNG-fuelled buses, N200 billion to boost agriculture production, N75 billion for manufacturers, and N125 billion for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the informal sector.

The administration also pledged to invest N50 billion each to cultivate 150,000

hectares of rice and maize. All announced palliatives to Nigerians by the administration have not yielded any impact as each passing day the suffering reaches unbearable point. Some weeks ago, the President ordered distribution of free grains from the Strategic Food Reserves but civil servants forgot to brief him that the reserves are empty.

With the removal of fuel subsidy, more monies are being shared by the federal, state and local governments and some of these monies are changed to dollars at the parallel market. *Business Day* has asked us to open our eyes from now on the price of dollars one week before FAAC allocation, check back the price after the allocation and you will see clearly the difference.

Read the remaining part of this article on www.guardian.ng
Abba Dukawa is a media practitioner.



Opinion

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Presidential monologue (9)

By **Sylvester Odion Akhaine**

TODAY, my focus is on the adoption of Steve Oronsaye Report on the restructuring and rationalisation of the federal bureaucracy comprising agencies, parastatals, and commissions by the Executive Council of the Federation on February 26.

Mr President, this effort is commendable even though seen by a segment of the public as diversionary from the economic crunch that your impulsive policy has dragged the country into.

This is not saying in absolute terms that your inchoate administration is responsible for all the problems of the country. Grant that some people are bound to feel so, but it is the right policy in the right direction.

It would be recalled that the Oronsaye Panel was empaneled in 2011 by the President Goodluck Jonathan administration and had called for rationalisation of several aspects of the federal bureaucracy through the consolidation, merger, or outright take out of redundant and inefficient government parastatals. Apart from issuing a white paper on the report, it was archived despite clamour by critical segments of society for the cutting of the cost of governance to reduce waste in public expenditure.

In what seemed a motion without move-

ment, the Buhari administration issued a second white paper on the report without implementation. Mr. President, you seemed to have broken the jinx in this respect. It is the reason why Idris Mohammed, your Minister of Information and National Orientation, noted that "In a very bold move today, this administration, under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, consistent again with his courage to take very far-reaching decisions in the interest of Nigerians, has taken a decision to implement the so-called Oronsaye Report..."

Indeed, the Oronsaye Report acknowledged 541 agencies, parastatals, and commissions and recommended a reduction to 362, the merger of 52 agencies, and the abolition of 38 others. This was more than a decade ago; the situation has since changed. Indeed, government bureaucratic agencies have risen to about 941.

The present action of the government and the change that has occurred has implications for the reform process and jobs. The former is the reason why Hon. Nkemkanma, a co-sponsor of the motion for a review of the Oronsaye Report in the House of Representatives, said the report was dated, and might not capture present realities due to the dynamism in society relations encompassing the economy, polity, technology, and all facets of our national life.

In his words, "Contrary to the assumption that the full implementation of the report would re-

duce the cost of governance, with the current realities, the full implementation of the report will not substantially reduce the cost of governance as it does not reflect the current situation in the Public Service of the Federation."

Peter Obi, the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party, usually sparring with government praises, gave Mr. President a pass mark, and were he to be president, he would take similar action because implementing the report would allow for efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and productivity. He supplied a caveat, "we must not rush to implement the Oronsaye Report just because those that will be directly affected are mostly civil servants. A very deep understanding of the workings of the Federal bureaucracy will be required to effectively implement the Report. Grasping the symmetries between the federal and the other tiers of government will be imperative as Federal agencies have branches and outreaches in all the 36 states."

Obi's take on the role of the opposition to the extent that "Being in opposition does not warrant blind and thoughtless criticism. Whenever the government takes the right decision, we should agree and if need be, propose related or even better ideas to move the nation forward" is noteworthy.

The working class is bothered about the loss of jobs that might occur in the implementation

process. It is precisely why the two labour centres have directed their members in the public sector to ensure none of its members loses his or her job. The workers have attributed the non-implementation of the Oronsaye Report to the fear of job losses, not sheer cowardice on the part of previous administrations.

Mr. President, your administration should not defend the indefensible; it would lead to downsizing the staff strength of the federal civil service unless the government wants to retain those staff watching Nollywood in the office waiting for 4:00 pm to exit the office every day, not to mention the incestuous recruitment and ghost workers that abound.

The Oronsaye Report quite recommended the elimination of redundancy and duplicity of role. However, the genius of the exercise, would include the deployment of the affected staff to new productive areas of the national economy.

As good as the new road taken is, it suffers a credibility problem. The step would be far-reaching if you would summon the courage and prune down your bloated cabinet of 45 ministers, many of whom are not so gifted and with itching palms. The National Assembly should be a partner in the amendment of relevant sections for the reform to come into effect. Mr. President, think ahead and think through your policy to retain credibility in the eyes of the citizenry.

1999 Constitution: Beyond amendments

By **Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa**

RECENTLY, the National Assembly set up two separate Committees to undertake a review of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended). Whilst the Senate has 45 members in its Committee led by the Deputy Senate President, the House of Representatives has 47 members in its own Committee led by the Deputy Speaker of the House.

These Committees are expected to look into provisions relating to the Nigeria Police and the Nigerian security system, State creation, devolution of powers, judicial reforms, socio-economic rights, electoral reforms, etc. Since the advent of our democratic administrations following the exit of the military in 1999, Nigeria has attempted constitutional amendments five times, mostly ending up as some kind of jamboree to find money for the boys.

The National Assembly under Senator Bukola Saraki made some efforts with some token alterations of the Constitution in very inconsequential ways. The current exercise should be a marked departure from previous experiences. To support the amendment of the Constitution, grants are secured from donor agencies abroad, in addition to votes of not less than one billion Naira on every occasion. According to the learned authors of Black's Law Dictionary, an amendment is 'a formal revision or addition proposed or made to a statute, constitution or other instrument'. In this regard, to amend is 'to make right, to correct or rectify'; it can also mean 'to change the wording of, to alter (a statute, constitution, etc.) formally by adding or deleting a provision or by modifying the wording'.

Under and by virtue of sections 4 (1) & (2) of the Constitution:

"The legislative powers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be vested in a National Assembly for the Federation which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The National Assembly shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Federation or any part thereof with respect to any matter included in the Exclusive Legislative List set out in Part I of the Second Schedule to this Constitution."

There have been concerns expressed over the nature and effect of this document on our nationhood. Thus, over the years, virtually every legislative arm has attempted to amend the Constitution as a way of placating the people of Nigeria whose input was not sought or obtained by the military before it was forced on them.

Section 9 of the said Constitution deals with the detailed procedure for the amendment of the Constitution. It is rather cumbersome and laborious. Let me dwell on the process of amendment of the Constitution a little more in detail as adopted from Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre.

Proposed amendment to the Constitution usually comes by way of Bills, which originate either from the Executive or a Member of the National Assembly as a Private Member Bill. While Executive Bills are initiated by the President, the Chief Justice of Nigeria or other Government officials, Private Member's Bills are initiated by interest groups and sponsored by members of either the Sen-

ate or the House of Representatives.

The National Assembly may organise a public hearing and other consultations on the bill.

The amendment proposals are presented as one Constitution Amendment Bill or as several Bills touching on different subject matters in a report to plenary. The 8th Assembly for instance, adopted a piecemeal approach where constitutional amendment proposals were brought as separate bills rather than a single Constitutional Amendment Bill. This was done to avoid the 7th Assembly's experience with presenting multiple proposals in a single amendment bill, which were all jettisoned when the President refused to sign the bill.

If the report and bill(s) as presented is adopted at this stage, it progresses to Third Reading. Before the Bill progresses to Third Reading, every member of the legislature votes either in support or against each specific item in the Bill. Here, the proposals to the Constitution are often presented in the form of a clause. A two-third majority of all the members of each House is needed for each clause to be deemed as passed except where the proposal borders on the creation of new states, boundary adjustments, new local government areas, fundamental rights and on the mode for altering the Constitution. In such cases, a four-fifth majority is needed.

The Votes are then collated and counted, usually after electronic voting. The reason for this is two fold. Firstly, it is to ensure that the total number of Senators or House of Representatives Members in attendance are not below the minimum number required to pass a proposed clause. Secondly, this is to ensure that any proposal that is passed meets the stipulated requirement of an approval by a two-third majority. Once two-thirds of the total number of Senators or Members voting in each chamber is achieved in any of the proposals of the Committee, the process moves to the next stage.

If an amendment comes at either of the Houses on the bill or each House passes the bill with differences, a Conference Committee will be set up to harmonise the differences. This is because the two chambers are required to pass every bill, including constitution amendment bills in identical format. If both Houses are not able to harmonise positions, the Bill will be returned to the respective chambers of the National Assembly for fresh voting.

Two-thirds of the numerical strength of each House will still be required to pass it at this stage. This would mean a minimum of seventy-two Senators and two hundred and forty Members of the House adopting an identical bill for transmission to the States. Where the bill is however adopted or passed in identical format by the two chambers i.e. without amendments, there would be no need for a conference or harmonisation as described above as it is deemed that they have passed a single uniform bill. The bill is then transmitted to the State Houses of Assembly by the Clerk of the National Assembly for their concurrence.

A simple majority vote of members in 24 States will be required for each amendment to be approved. This is usually in the form

of a Yes or No vote. Note: In practice, State Assemblies have been known to 'step down' or 'defer' a bill they are unable to decide on instead of voting 'No.' This still does not translate to a 'Yes' vote.

When two-thirds of the States approve each clause by simple majority, returns are then made to the National Assembly after which it is adopted (usually in a ceremony) by the National Assembly before its transmittal to the President for assent. The Clerk of the National Assembly is expected to attach the Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly and the State Houses of Assembly to show that the amendments meet the constitutional requirement for passage.

Note that some legislative experts argue that once the States approve the amendments, they should automatically come into effect as the Constitution does not expressly prescribe the requirement of the President's Assent for constitution amendment bills. Further, in a Federal system, when the States have ratified an amendment, it should be seen as the final and authoritative will of the people.

The end of the Assembly of every legislative house breaks the cycle of the amendment process. Therefore, the Constitution amendment process cannot go beyond the fixed period stipulated for any given Assembly nor deliberations on the amendments continue at the convening of a new Assembly.

Just exactly how does one go about amending a document such as the Nigerian Constitution, filled with manifest inconsistencies and fallacies, creating a supposed federation governed in unitary style? I generally believe that the issue is beyond mere amendments, given the nature of our peculiarities as a nation. But the tokenism of the current exercise may birth some optimism different from the previous ones principally because of the personalities involved, even though I am well aware of the fact that politicians have their ways.

Furthermore, one of the arrowheads of previous amendments is now at the seat of power, being the former Speaker of the House and now Chief of Staff to the President, who should facilitate the cooperation of the President and the Governors to achieve a successful exercise. The Committees should leverage on the drafts put together by their colleagues since 2003, hire lawyers who are experts in this area and collate judgments of the Supreme Court where various sections of the existing Constitution have been interpreted.

This should not be another jamboree created by the political class to douse the tension across the land generated by the economic hardships that have followed the policies of the present administration. In the same way that the Oronsaye Report has now been revisited for implementation, the Committees should dust the National Conference Report, the Nasir El-Rufai Committee Report and the Hon. Justice Uwais Panel Report as part of materials that would aid them in this national assignment.

As time is of the essence, given the seemingly rigid procedure for a successful amendment, the Committees should hit the ground running, perhaps at the end of the day, we may have a Constitution that is a document of 'we the people of Nigeria' and move beyond mere political amendments.

Opinion

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Can women #InspireInclusion in the insurance industry?

By Ekerete Ola Gam-Ikon

EVERY year, since 1910, we have been celebrating the International Women's Day and this year, the message is not different: Everybody should work to engender an environment where more women are given opportunity to be relevant and contribute towards socio-economic development in our communities.

In my community - the insurance industry in Nigeria and Africa - our women have since proven that they can be relied upon for excellence, continuous improvement and impact!

They sit as CEOs and C-level Executives in many leading insurance companies in Nigeria and across Africa, and extensively influence decisions that have seen many young people rise to take up challenges that were hitherto reserved for highly experienced professionals of the other gender.

Today, I see more women in the role of directing the general affairs of insurance

professionals and insurance companies (including brokerage firms) in Nigeria and Africa. Interestingly, they combine brains and beauty, so you just cannot ignore them.

A day as this is dedicated to them for the many wins they continue to record and the ones we need to help them do from where we are. It is therefore my contribution and response to this year's Call to Action by the organisers of the International Women's Day, that I seek for inclusion of women within the insurance community in Nigeria thus:

National Insurance Commission (NAICOM)- The regulatory body will do better with the appointment of a woman into its Executive Management Committee. Who knows, more women might decide to take up insurance policies if one of them is seen among the top echelon of NAICOM.

Board and Executive Management of Insurance Companies - More women should be appointed into key executive management roles in insurance companies especially the leading insurers in Nigeria. The industry will

perform differently and in the right direction going by what we've seen the Professional Insurance Ladies do. Nothing says an insurance company cannot have three or four of them on the Boards or in Executive Management besides injecting them as Company Secretaries and Legal Advisers.

Women-oriented Insurance Products - Are there insurance companies that have tailor-made products to address the specific needs of women? I haven't heard of any yet, and wonder what we are still waiting for given the high rate of maternity mortality during and after childbirth in our country. How many women even have insurance coverages? I am still working to get such data.

More regulation to ease the inclusion of women in insurance in Nigeria - I think this is the assignment I will call for most of our successful Professional Insurance Ladies to deliberately undertake. They can influence and encourage more women to get into the C-level through ongoing efforts to reset the insurance industry to respond better to the changing behaviours of existing

and potential insurance policyholders; and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - While it would seem easy to identify the nine goals that are insurance related, it is evident to me that our women will do a better job at connecting the insurance industry in Nigeria with those goals and vice versa.

For example, Health Insurance would respond to the goal that relates to healthcare for children and the rest of us, and I will argue that the women will do better here than the menfolk.

This day will pass but we should not allow the import of the theme, #InspireInclusion to wane off especially as we engage with the insurance industry in Nigeria and Africa.

Next time I am buying an insurance policy, I'll check the percentage of women among the board, management and staff of the insurance company to ensure they are promoting gender-balance, otherwise I'll move on. Do the same because you want to #InspireInclusion!

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International Women's Day and plight of Nigerian women

By Jerome-Mario Utomi

ON Friday March 8, 2024, women across the globe, including those in Nigeria, joined the United Nations in celebrating the International Women's Day under the theme: 'Invest In Women; Accelerate Progress.'

As the world marks this international women's day, it is obvious that the globe is facing many crises, ranging from geopolitical conflicts to soaring poverty levels and the escalating impacts of climate change. These challenges according to reports, can only be addressed by solutions that empower women. By investing in women, we can spark change and speed the transition towards a healthier, safer, and more equal world for all.

While experts are of the view that it will require about \$360 billion per year to achieve gender equality and calls on policymakers and governments to prioritise empowerment, stakeholders have argued that if current trends of neglect continue, more than 342 million women and girls could be living under extreme poverty by 2030.

Back here in Nigeria, there exists one particular sin we all commit against women in the name of culture. This sin cuts across ethnic/tribal diversities and religious inclinations. It predates the nation's independence and remains nourished till the present time. This particular sin in fact has to do with violations of women rights particularly that of the widows. It persists despite the existence of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP).

It is a common knowledge that President Goodluck Jonathan, signed into law the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) bill into law. This is after the Senate had on May 5, 2015, passed the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 into law. Among other provisions, the law prohibits female circumcision or genital mutilation, forceful ejection from home and harmful widowhood practices. It prohibits abandonment of spouse, children and other dependents without sustenance, battery and harmful traditional practices. The VAPP provides a legislative and legal framework for the prevention of all forms of violence against vulnerable persons, especially women and girls.

The law also prohibits economic abuse, forced isolation and separation from family and friends, substance attack, depriving persons of their liberty, incest, indecent exposure, among others. It also intends to eliminate violence in private and public life and provide maximum protection and effective remedies for victims of violence, and punishment of offenders.

Looking at these spiraling provisions, the question that is as important as the law itself is; How far have we fared as a nation in keeping to these laws and its provisions? Also, from the above accounts, it is obvious that the nation urgently needs a higher level of initiative and creativity to address the ethnicity challenges, confront brutal forces against human rights violations in the country and secure the

masses while revitalising the nation's economy.

The above revelation becomes more meaningful when one remembers that justice is more of external actions than interior emotions or passions; that it is rendering to each person what is properly his or hers; what is equal, fair and balanced in any relationship. And most importantly, we win justice quickest by rendering justice to the other person.

Regardless of what others may say, if this change of heart is adopted in our society, it will not only herald something new that will help curb this inhuman act against vulnerable people, but announce a civil society where justice and love shall reign supreme.

There is another thing quite closely related to this. The tendency to ignore this call is always high because while many will view it as a dangerous fiction without merit, others may see nothing wrong in those acts describing it as but mere cultural practices.

Ironically, from what sociologists are saying, culture is that realm of ends expressed in art, literature, religion, and morals for which at best we live.

This definition, no doubt puts denial of woman's rights to inheritance of late husband's property at a direct opposite of culture. Very instructive, one point most people who are hooked onto this act particularly the violations of widows rights fails to remember is that there is an amazing democracy about death. 'It is not aristocracy for some of the people, but a democracy for all of the people. Kings die and beggars die; rich men die and poor men die; old people and young people die; death comes to the innocent and it comes to the guilty- death is an irreducible common denominator of all men.'

Indeed, it is always easy to observe that something is seriously wrong with our social system, also very smooth to announce that this human tragedy is happening not by accident, but by a programme of planned inequality. But, very regrettably, it is difficult to admit that we are all involved in this alliance for injustice.

To explain this point, we have as a people at different times and places witnessed widows go through these social pangs and maintained silence.

Curiously, media practitioners have seen culture lately gone the wrong way but assumed it's the right thing, watched the traditional rulers redefine culture in the image of their actions, but viewed it as normal. The practitioners have overtly become more cautious than courageous in their reportage of wicked cultural practices.

This failure of the media to study the cultural failures and inform the masses has in recent years resulted in situations where traditional rulers persuaded their subjects to endorse and applaud cultural practices that were harmful to their lives and existence.

The Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and faith-based groups, formerly known for educating the masses, no longer see themselves as problem-solvers or watchdogs of

society. Rather, they now assume a high ground they do not understand, leaving the masses that initially depended on them confused.

Government has become the greatest culprit of these injustices against widows and other less privileged people by their inability to provide; good health care facilities, accessible and qualitative education, non-funding of social housing, non-availability of minimum wage protection for the widows, no welfare benefits for the poor and vulnerable people, no unemployment protection, no women shelters or adequate child care centres or laws that adequately defend the rights of widows. To reverse this trend, the most important instrument to achieve this lies in government willingness to fully domesticate and enforce 1995 Beijing Declaration.

The declaration among other things upholds the universal human rights and other international human right instruments, in particular, the convention on the elimination of forms of discriminations against women, the convention on the rights of the child, as well as the declaration on the elimination of violence against women and the declaration on the rights to development. It also ensures the full implementation of human rights of women and girl child as inalienable, integral and indivisible parts of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

It will also be rewarding if our school libraries are equipped with cultural materials, so that students can carry out research and get valuable information that will help promote, protect and preserve our culture objective for posterity.

While the media, the CSO's and faith-based groups are encouraged to speak against injustices, another urgent imperative for the government is to recognise that failure to take care of the widows, the orphans and other less privileged will lead to many children taking to the streets.

And as we know, the streets are reputed for breeding all sorts of criminals and other social misfits who constitute the real threats in forms of armed robbers, thugs, drug abusers, drunkards, prostitutes and all other social ills that give a bad name to society.

Very instructive, we should develop a 'war room' using our resolve and powers to fight the undemocratic and criminal tendencies in our consciences in order to usher in a truly egalitarian nation we all yearn for. This pivotal step must be taken.

To make this enduring as well as bear the expected fruit, let us commence first by restructuring ourselves as a people. No matter how beautiful a policy appears, no matter how strong an institution tends to be, we always have deconstructionists who can undermine it. Bearing this in mind, our primary concern should be to work out modalities for instituting a reorientation plan that will erase the unpatriotic tendencies in us as well as usher in a robust nation.

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Adesina: Nigeria needs access, not prescriptions, to transform its economy

Often described as the optimist general of Africa, the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Dr Akinwumi Adesina, holds a strong view on the prospect of the continent breaking into the global frontier to drive the next phase of growth. In an interview with GEOFF IYATSE and IJEOMA THOMAS-ODIA in Lagos where he was honoured with the prestigious Obafemi Awolowo Prize for Leadership Award, he spoke on the structural economic challenge Nigeria must undergo to emerge as a global economic powerhouse, why the country needs long-term concessional funding among other issues, warning, reference to economic reforms, that no doctor cuts the artery just to perform a surgery

In the face of the current crises, what is your recommendation on how to reset the Nigerian economy?

It is not easy to tackle some of the challenges that Nigeria is facing, and this is not unique to Nigeria, especially with rising global interest rates and debt levels as well as rising debt service levels that have been going up because of the rise in global interest rate. Secondly, because of the depreciation of many currencies including the naira, it means that the net debt exposure that you have and the cost of servicing it has gone up significantly, at a time in which concessional financing has been going down. Therefore, the only way in which countries like Nigeria and others can get more access to capital is to go to the Eurobond market, the global capital market, which again has become more expensive because the yield curves are very different.

So, there are probably three or four things that I will say that one needs to pay attention to. One, of course, is to expand the access or the availability of forex because when currencies weaken, essentially what you have is that you don't have enough forex to back your currency and therefore your currency depreciates. So, when you look at it, the approach that Nigeria has been following for decades has been allocating forex. It is an allocative approach in terms of a very restricted supply of forex and that is because we run an import substitution strategy, which we have constantly been doing for a very long time. Nobody wins by playing defence, you score on the other side and the way to score is for Nigeria to have, in my view, an export-oriented industrial manufacturing stance. Export-oriented industrial manufacturing stance is like a funnel, in which you bring in more forex because you are developing your value chains that are export-oriented and earning a lot of foreign exchange, as opposed to a redistributive model of a small amount of forex. That is a fundamental structural change. That means that the country has to build industrial value chains in which it has a huge competitive advantage. It can be in

- We need to turn rural economies to zones of prosperities
- Nigerians can still afford bread because of cassava bread policy
- Increasing nominal wages in high inflationary environment is self-defeating

agriculture or oil; it can be in gas, creative industry, digital industry or any kind of industry that allows you to have the platforms to be a manufacturing powerhouse. That is a long-term solution to the problem that you have today.

As a doctor, if you have a problem, and they say, go change your lifestyle. If you maintain the same lifestyle, you'll be back at the doctor's table. Secondly, there is a need to be a lot of support around Nigeria given the tight fiscal space and the lack of forex to make available a lot more concessional financing to the Nigerian economy. That is what we are doing at the African Development Bank (AfDB). This year, we have gone to our board of directors for approval; we plan to be able to do \$1.76 billion of financing to Nigeria in different sectors, including considering a potential policy-based operation of budget support to Nigeria. We are discussing with the Minister of Finance and that is part of a \$1 billion budget support operation that will go into two tranches. Again, I will say it has to be approved by the Board, but these are all the things that we are hoping to be able to do.

Now, the other challenge, of course, that you have is very high inflation. Inflation is almost 30 per cent. As a result of that, you will find that the purchasing power has been eroded significantly in Nigeria. But tackling inflation requires looking at some of the structural drivers. A big part of that inflation is food price inflation. If you look at the Consumer Price Index (CPI), probably 65 per cent of it, if not even 75 per cent, is the price of food. You don't necessarily deal with food price inflation through your standard macroeconomic policy of tightening monetary supply. You deal with it by producing the food because that is the thing that needs to be done. So, I think it is very important to be able to deal with that.

The third part of it, a lot of it is cost-push factors that are driving many of these things. If you look at structural challenges in terms of poor infrastructure, lack of electricity and, of course, insecurity, in many of the places that make it difficult for people to also produce food and transport. All those things add to it. So, I think it needs to be a structural solution.

We have seen people looting warehouses and food in

recent weeks, meaning there is hunger. As a former minister of agriculture, what can be done to tackle the crisis?

I am not used to complaining; I'm used to finding solutions. As I speak to you, we have approved \$134 million for Nigeria to implement an emergency food production plan. And that is not something we are planning to do, it is what we are already doing. Already, we have supported the cultivation of 118,000 hectares of wheat in Nigeria this season. We will do 150,000 hectares of maize production this month. By the rainy season in May and June, we will support Nigeria with 300,000 hectares of rice. We will also do 300,000 hectares of maize, 150,000 hectares of cassava and 50,000 hectares of soybeans. That means just in basic terms, that by the end of this March, Nigeria would get an additional one million metric tons of wheat. By November, we will have an additional four million metric tons of rice, cassava, maize and soybeans. I am saying that because we have to continue to push for more food supply.

But one thing that I would say is that the government needs to go back to the policy of the electronic wallet system. Remember that when I was a minister, we designed a programme to get seeds and fertilizers to farmers directly via their mobile phones with electronic vouchers. We were able to reach 15 million farmers in four years. The whole place was booming with food. So, it is like a patient that is sick, that you prescribe a drug for. But the pharmacy doesn't have the medicine; the person will always be sick or probably even die. So, at the end of the day, it is not your prescription, it is the access to what they need.

Access to high-performing yields, high-performing seeds, fertilizers and farm inputs is very critical otherwise you will not be able to do it. So, those are the things that we are doing in Nigeria. In addition to that, we have a programme that we have already implemented called the special agro-industrial processing zones. These are new economic zones we are supporting Nigeria to develop that are dedicated completely to food and agriculture so that they have power, water, roads, infrastructure and food processing facilities. We provide

provided \$520 million - AfDB, the Islamic Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. It is currently working in eight states and we expect that those things will start hitting the ground by June.

What they will do is they will change the entire rural economies from what I can call economic misery right now, to new zones of economic prosperity because you turn agriculture into a real business with value chains that can work and add value and create massive amounts of jobs. We are already planning to launch this year in 28 states a program for \$1 billion, ourselves and partners that will build 28 more special agro-industrial processing zones in 28 States.

The cost of bread has significantly risen. In the past, you advocated the adoption of cassava bread. Do you believe revisiting this option could contribute to curbing the current price surge?

You are already eating cassava bread; you just didn't know. If not because of the policy we did, and the fact that at the industry level, they have been incorporating cassava flour into bread, you will not be able to afford bread today in Nigeria. Buy any flour, and look at it, you have wheat flour and white flour and what is white flour?

It brought the weighted price of bread down. You are getting blended flour that is blending wheat and cassava flour. Today, that is a national policy in Cote d'Ivoire and many African countries. Look at the price of wheat because of the war between Russia and Ukraine. Look at what has happened to the price of wheat. Every nation must develop not with what it does not have but with what it has. Check your flour bag and see the composition, but it is a very good composite of flour and we have to continue to do more with that.

Considering the recent market-oriented reforms, particularly the petrol subsidy removal and the forex reforms, both of which profoundly affect every citizen, what measures could be implemented to alleviate the economic hardship?

When you look at the oil sector, there is no doubt that people are hurt in terms of the impact of the removal of the fuel subsidy. But at the same time, it was largely an inefficient subsidy. You may want to do surgery but don't cut the artery because there would be too much blood even though you needed to do the surgery. So, I think that everybody has to just support the government to make sure that the transition to that change is done in such a way as to reduce or minimise the negative consequences or the externalities of that decision. Because we are an import-dependent economy, the price of everything just shot up, even the price of transport went up, and the people that are collecting rent, everything has gone up.

You know, prices once they have gone up, they become sticky downwards. They don't come down again and just stay there. I think that managing that transition is the biggest issue. But you cannot manage that transition without addressing the forex question. There must be a way in which we get more forex into the country. That is why I will say that it is important that multilateral financial institutions like us and others can provide access to concessional financing, which is long-term money at a very low-interest rate. When we give loans, we talk about one to 1.5 per cent for 40 years. A 10-year moratorium is the kind of loan we are talking about. It allows you to be able to invest properly without indebting yourself quite a lot more.

On concessional financing, how much do you



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LOSS OF DOCUMENTS

This is to inform the general public of the **LOSS OF TITLE DOCUMENTS** for the Landed Property **A 2-Storey Commercial Building Situate, Lying and being at No. 85, (Plot No 220) Awolowo Road Ikoyi South West Lagos with Land Certificate Registered under Title No. LO 4883 dated 14th November 1968 Measuring an area of 600.34 Meters.**

That the said **TITLE DOCUMENTS** was **Misplaced at No. 9, Jalupon Close Surulere Lagos sometime in February, 2022.**

That all efforts made to locate the **DOCUMENTS** prove abortive.

Lagos State Lands Registry and the General Public should note.

Signed:

Mr. PETER SHODIPO COKER

IITA

Transforming African Agriculture

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR THE SUPPLY OF GOODS, WORKS AND SERVICES

Sector: Research

Expression of Interest: Supply of Goods, Works and Services

Reference ID: IITA/E01/03_24

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is a not-for-profit institution that generates agricultural innovations to meet Africa's most pressing challenges of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and natural resource degradation. Working with various partners across Sub-Saharan Africa, IITA improves livelihoods, enhances food and nutrition security, increases employment, and preserves natural resource integrity. IITA is a member of CGIAR, a global agriculture research partnership for a food-secure future. Please visit <http://www.iita.org/> for more information on IITA.

OBJECTIVE OF THE EXERCISE

The objective of this exercise is to attract competent organizations with the potential to create and deliver value to IITA in the exercise of the above mandates from the year 2024 and beyond.

IITA wishes to invite expressions of interest (EOI) from interested persons, small, medium and corporate businesses that are regulatory compliant, technically and financially eligible to participate in the prequalification and revalidation of existing registered suppliers exercise for the supply of goods works and services as listed below:

CATEGORY A – GOODS
CODES DESCRIPTION

IITA24-A01 Supply and Delivery of General Office Stationery Items
IITA24-A02 Supply and Delivery of Office Furniture, General Office Equipment and Furnishings
IITA24-A03 Supply and Delivery of General Electronic and Electrical Items
IITA24-A04 Supply of Energy (Diesel/Petrol/LPG) and Lubricant Oil Products
IITA24-A05 Supply of Computer Accessories and Hardware
IITA24-A06 Supply of Telecommunication Devices (Landline, Mobile phones, etc.)
IITA24-A07 Supply of Pharmaceuticals and Medical sundries
IITA24-A08 Supply and Delivery of Scientific and Laboratory Chemicals
IITA24-A09 Supply of Scientific and Laboratory Equipment and Consumables
IITA24-A10 Supply of Agro-Allied Chemicals and Products (Herbicides, Fertilizers etc.)
IITA24-A11 Supply of Liquid wash
IITA24-A12 Supply of Agricultural (Farm) Equipment
IITA24-A13 Supply of Kitchen Equipment
IITA24-A14 Supply of Tyres, Tubes and Batteries

IITA24-A15 Supply of Vehicle Spares and Service Parts
IITA24-A16 Supply of Safety wears
IITA24-A17 Supply of Building Materials (Granites, Paints, Rods, Planks, Steel etc)
IITA24-A18 Supply of Gym Equipment and Accessories
IITA24-A19 Water Engineering/Treatment (Water treatment chemicals and consumables)
IITA24-A20 General Supplies and Miscellaneous

CATEGORY B – SERVICES
CODES DESCRIPTION

IITA24-B01 Provision of Designs, Printing and Promotional Materials Services
IITA24-B02 Provision of Photocopier/Fax Machines Repairs and Maintenance Services
IITA24-B03 Provision of Event Management and Outdoor Catering Services
IITA24-B04 Provision of Fumigation, Pest Control and Sanitary Services
IITA24-B05 Provision of Waste Management and Disposal Services
IITA24-B06 Provision of Accommodation and Conference Facilities Services
IITA24-B07 Provision of Borehole Drilling and Irrigation Services
IITA24-B08 Provision of Dam Dredging Services
IITA24-B09 Provision of Corporate Work Wear (uniforms, sewing and general purpose clothing)
IITA24-B10 Provision of Repair and Servicing of Fuel Pumps

CATEGORY C – WORKS
CODES DESCRIPTION

IITA24-C01 Provision of Building and Construction Works
IITA24-C02 Provision of Plumbing and Carpentry Works
IITA24-C03 Provision of Fixture and Fitting Works
IITA24-C04 Provisions for Electrical Works
IITA24-C05 Fabricators of Agricultural Farm Equipment and related services

TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION

Companies/persons with interest in participating in the exercise are requested to submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) with the following;

1. MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

a) Company Profile to include company name, Postal and Physical location addresses, Phone number and email addresses, Name and title of contact person.

b) Company background and profile of the Board of Directors
c) Verifiable evidence of experience and reputation in the supply of relevant products and services with evidence of previous supplies, works and services (Not more than five (5) years)
d) Certificate of Incorporation or Registration
e) Proof of registration with Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) or Professional Regulatory Bodies where applicable
f) Letter of Creditworthiness indicating eligible amount from a bank or another reputable/accredited credit firm.
g) Audited Financial statement for the last three years (2021, 2022, and 2023)
h) VAT Registration certificate, where applicable
i) Valid Income Tax Clearance certificate for the last three years (2021, 2022, and 2023)
j) Minimum of Three (3) Reputable Organizations as Referees

2. PREFERRED CREDIT LIMIT TO THE INSTITUTE IN TERMS OF VALUE

Please signify your credit limit to the Institute in terms of monetary value.
Vendors must provide a credit limit of their choice and make a formal statement in their application on a separate page.

METHOD OF SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION

All expression of interest are to be submitted online via <https://www.iita.org/suppliers-registration/>

Please note that the above submission method is for potential vendors for fresh applications and existing vendors for revalidation.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: Friday, 19th April 2024 (4:30pm)

This Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) does not constitute a solicitation, therefore IITA reserves the right to change or cancel the requirements at any time during EOI and/or solicitation process. Your response to this EOI does not automatically guarantee that such a firm will be considered for receipt of the solicitation when issued. Only vendors deemed qualified upon completion of an objective evaluation of their submission of EOI will receive acknowledgement of being included in the supplier database of the Institute.



**Paediatric
Association of
Nigeria (PAN)**

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55TH PAEDIATRIC ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA ANNUAL GENERAL AND SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE (PANConf "Èkó Àkète 2024") 17th - 19th JANUARY 2024

COMMUNIQUE

The 55th Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference of the Paediatric Association of Nigeria (PAN) was tagged PANConf 2024 and themed "Èkó Àkète 2024". The main conference held between 17th and 19th of January 2024 at the Oriental Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos.

The theme of the conference was **Beyond Strategies and Goals: Reaching Every Child in Nigeria with Optimal Care**. The sub-themes were **Tackling Zero-dose in Nigerian Children; Addressing Addiction Pandemic among Adolescent Youths; and Safeguarding the Nigerian Child through Health Promotion, Prevention and Supportive Collaboration**.

The opening ceremony held on the 17th January 2024 under the Chairmanship of Chief Tunde Afolabi who was represented by Prof Oladapo Afolabi, CFR. The keynote address, also tagged the inaugural Bolaji Ajenifuja Annual Memorial Lecture, titled **Bringing Down the Elephant: Key to improving the Health Status of the Nigerian Child** was delivered by Dr Olufemi Mobolaji-Lawal, a past President of the Association (PAN).

There was also the Inaugural Professor Theodore Chukwunyeri Okeahialam NJP Hour Lecture titled "**Strategic Leadership through Evidence-based Advocacy in Child Health Policies and Interventions – Role of the Nigerian Journal of Paediatrics**" which was delivered by another past President of the PAN, Dr Dorothy Esangbedo.

A total of 692 international and local participants, and invited speakers attended PANConf 2024. The conference featured 10 plenary symposium sessions featuring topics which cut across various aspects of child health relevant to the Nigerian child. Over 200 abstracts of scientific papers were also presented during parallel scientific sessions.

During the Annual General Meeting, a new executive council led by Dr Ekanem Nsikak Ekure, a Professor of Paediatrics and Consultant Paediatric Cardiologist was elected into office. In addition, an eminent Paediatrician, Professor Obot Antia-Obong, was honoured with the 36th Dr. and Mrs. Bolaji Ajenifuja Distinguished Paediatrician Award for the year 2024.

The conference observed the following:

1. Nigeria is one of the 54 countries that are off track towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.
2. More than 850,000 Nigerian children die annually, accounting for 15.5% of global child deaths. Many of the deaths are related, directly or indirectly, to diseases like pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and malnutrition, all of which can be treated at the primary health care level.
3. Nigeria needs to speed up the rate of reduction of under-five mortality from the current 1.8% to the much desired 16.5% with simple child survival action plans such as optimal breast feeding, immunisation, treatment of pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria control amongst others, in order to achieve SDG by 2030.
4. Nigeria has an unacceptably low national immunization coverage and is home to approximately 2.3 million zero-dose children, accounting for 11% of the global burden of zero-dose children; this is the root cause of the ongoing diphtheria outbreaks in Nigeria.
5. Many Nigerian children spend considerable time on screens and online without significant parental supervision.
6. Child sexual abuse is common; about 90% occur online, 43% at home and 90% of these incidents are unreported.
7. PAN is inadequately involved in the mental health care and psycho-social support needs of Nigerian children.
8. The national screening programme for common childhood illnesses, including neurodevelopmental disorders, is weak or non-existent.
9. The needed health manpower proportionate to our burden of disease is eight times our current health manpower at all levels. The migration

of skilled and experienced health personnel is one major crisis afflicting the already thin health workforce.

10. Adolescence is the peak age of initiation into alcohol and substance use and the prevalence of illicit drug use and other addictions in Nigeria are embarrassingly high. As tools for reducing the menace of substance abuse, social resistance skills trainings are more effective than fear-arousing lectures or techniques.

11. A number of advocacy tools with great potentials have not been optimally utilised for the improvement of health of the Nigerian Child.

12. Collaboration between paediatricians, other professional groups and funding institutions such as the Bank of Industry (BOI) is underutilised.

The conference recommended as follows:

1. The Government should tackle inflation, insecurity, poor infrastructure, worsening poverty and food security as measures to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.
2. To achieve Universal Health Coverage, the health system especially the primary health care centers should be strengthened and made accessible by employing and retaining adequate health workforce.
3. Timely and life-saving interventions for newborns and non-formal training of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) should be strengthened in order to reduce childhood mortalities.
4. The Government should prioritise sustainable local production and distribution of vaccines with realistic timelines.
5. Parents should ensure no screen time for a child in the first two years of life and desist from leaving children and adolescents unsupervised on internet enabled devices. They should also learn the meaning of social media abbreviations commonly used by children and adolescents. This will curb the negative effect of social media on them.
6. The Government should scale up the arrest and prosecution of sexual offenders to discourage the act of child sexual abuse.
7. There is a need to scale up mental health screening of adolescents and provide psychosocial support and rehabilitation for affected children.
8. The Government should develop and ensure the implementation of national policies on screening programmes for common disorders such as sickle cell disease, visual and hearing impairments, and neurodevelopmental disorders.
9. The health care workers especially paediatricians should be encouraged by providing a conducive working environment with multifaceted incentives to discourage emigration. There should be regular self-development of medical personnel through on-the-job trainings to improve individual capacity to offer quality health care for Nigerian children.
10. With the collaboration of PAN, Government should scale-up competence-enhancement programmes and social resistance skills trainings to reduce the burden of substance abuse among adolescents.
11. PAN should also deploy all the necessary advocacy tools for strong advocacy towards the enhancement of evidence-based improvement in child health.
12. Partnership and collaboration between PAN, funding institutions and other professional groups, NGOs, CSOs, IT specialists, the mass media and social influencers should be encouraged to achieve an improved health status of the Nigerian child.

The PAN commends the PANConf "Èkó Àkète 2024" Local Organizing Committee for a well-organised Conference, the Government and good people of Lagos State for their warm hospitality and all our partners for their unflinching supports towards the success of the Conference.

Dr. Ekanem Ekure
PAN President

Dr. Chika Duru
PAN Secretary

Adesina: Nigeria needs access, not prescriptions, to transform its economy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE I5

think is needed for Nigeria to address the forex crisis? Should there be collaboration with other multilateral institutions to give long-term loans to Nigeria?

If you look at the current situation, you can borrow your way, but you have to be careful what you are borrowing. How are you borrowing and at what cost? It is like getting fat, that fat adds up all the time. So, the kind of debt and the pricing of the debt are very important as you deal with this kind of situation. We can work with other multilateral financial institutions to make available long-term, low-interest concessionary financing that brings down the cost of financing for the government at this time. And I will certainly help talk to others and convince something around that for Nigeria because that matters a lot in quickly dealing with this issue.

How much would we need?

I wouldn't know what that amount is. I think it is up to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to determine what level of liquidity they need. But all I can say is strong support from us at the AfDB, I just mentioned that we expect to do \$1.76 billion this year. I think that if we can agree with the government on macroeconomic policy issues and fiscal management issues and all of that, there is no reason why a few multilateral financial institutions that give low-interest long-term finance cannot rise to the occasion. I keep making that point, it is very important to rally around Nigeria. Certainly, from my side, we would be keen to see what we can help to make that happen.

Considering the current challenges, do you believe that our current economic position is sustainable?

No, because the slide of the naira that you see, is because people are losing confidence in the economy. That is what it is. That is why I was saying that the way to deal with that is to make sure that we can expand inflows of forex into the country. A few days ago, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in terms of raising the interest rate. I guess that would work probably for the portfolio investors, but again, there are other consequences you will have in terms of investment in the critical sectors that you need to grow to be able to produce more and have the kind of export-oriented industrial manufacturing stance that I said. So, it is a balance between short-term solutions and long-term structural things that need to be done. I do believe that we need to try and find a way to deal with the short-term, but keep our eyes on the long-term structural things that must be done.

So, I think that we need to take a very serious look at that question. Take the case of places like South Korea and the Netherlands. The Netherlands added a year or two ago, over \$90 billion a year from just the export of agricultural produce. How much land do they have? It is sitting on water and is a very small country. You take a look at South Korea, with earnings in exports of \$230 billion from machinery and electronics. We have top brains in this country and being competitive in the IT industry, and digital industry, of course, we are doing well in the creative industry and others. We need to build those platforms that allow us to have that export-oriented industrial manufacturing stance.

In the ongoing discussions regarding the potential review of public sector wages, there is a concern that the private sector, facing certain limitations, might not be able to adjust. That means the public sector wage increase could cause a price spiral and strain on private sector workers. What strategies or measures do you propose for addressing wage negotiations in light of this disparity?

As President of AfDB, I try not to get involved in domestic government policies because those are domestic things that governments have to worry about. But I can only say in general that simply increasing nominal wages in a high inflationary environment is self-defeating. That is because at the end of the day, what matters is the purchasing power, effective purchasing power. And so, you gotta keep your eye on keeping inflation down. And so, there are monetary policy issues that have to be taken, there are also a lot of other fiscal areas in terms of expanding access to forex, and getting the mix of financial instruments available to the government in terms of expensive commercial loans, which will also add to the problem versus quite a lot lower interest, long term concessionary financing, which I think is probably what Nigeria should be looking at. At the end of the day, nominal wage prices or wage increases in a high inflationary environment are just going to run away from you on all sides. You have to keep your eyes on just making sure inflation goes down. And for inflation to go down, a big part of what consumers are spending if you look at the consumer price index is just the price of food. So, produce a lot of it.

In expanding the productive base, there is the issue of power. What can be done to address this?

There is no reason why Nigeria has no power or why it has epileptic power because it simply adds to the cost of doing business. Even for domestic, if you're not able to produce enough domestically, you're not able to be competitive in the regional or global markets, because the cost of doing business goes up. Nigeria has a huge amount of potential for hydro and a huge amount of potential for solar all across the country.

Read the remaining part of this interview on www.guardian.ng



Customer Executive Education, Lagos Business School (LBS), Edward Idigo (left); Director Business Education Services Training (BEST), Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Dr. Taiwo Nolas-Alausa; Chief Marketing Officer, LBS, Nsima Ogedi-Alakwe; Dean, LBS, Professor Chris Ogbegie; Director General, Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Dr. Chinyere Almona and Director, Executive Education, LBS, Victor Banjo during the signing of MoU between the LCCI and LBS to provide select MBA and executive education programs in Lagos.

PHOTO: SUNDAY AKINLOLU

Financial stocks dominates, accounts for 41.7% of total turnover

By Helen Oji

THE financial services industry dominated in volume terms at the end of last week's transactions on the equities sector of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) with 899.5 million shares valued at N15.9 billion traded in 20,278 deals, thus contributing 41.70 per cent to the total equity turnover volume.

The conglomerate industry followed with 736.9 million units worth N12.9 billion in 4,996 deals. The utility industry ranked third with a turnover of 208.5 million shares worth N65.7 billion in 5,602 deals.

Consequently, a turnover of 2.2 billion shares worth N108.8 billion was recorded in 51,556 deals by investors on the floor of the exchange.

This volume of shares traded was, however, higher than 1.9 billion units, valued at N34.1 billion that changed hands in 48,464 deals on March 1, 2024.

Trading in the top three

equities namely Transnational Corporation Plc, Transcorp Power Plc and United Bank for Africa Plc (measured by volume) accounted for 1.1 billion shares worth N78.8 billion in 12,167 deals, contributing 48.9 per cent to the total equity turnover volume.

A total of 24,397 units of Exchange Traded Products (ETPs), valued at N8.9 million were traded in 136 deals compared to a total of 39,238 units valued at N11.5 million transacted last week in 187 deals.

Also, a total of 63,607 units of bonds, valued at N63.4 million were traded in 27 deals compared with a total of 102,812 units valued at N96.1 million transacted last week in 46 deals.

On the price movement chart, positive sentiments returned to the bourse, following bargain hunting in MTN Nigeria (+10.3 per cent), BUA Cement (+4.4 per cent), FBNH (+15.3 per cent) and increased demand for TRANSCORP (+10.0 per cent) with the Month To Date and

Year To Date returns increasing to +1.4 per cent and +35.5 per cent, respectively.

Precisely, the All-share index and market capitalisation appreciated by 2.61 per cent and 6.03 per cent closing the week at 101,330.85 and N57.293 trillion respectively.

Similarly, all other indices finished higher except NGX Banking, NGX insurance, NGX AFR Bank Value, NGX MERI Growth, NGX MERI Value, NGX Consumer

Goods and NGX Sovereign Bonds depreciated by 1.40 per cent, 5.22 per cent, 3.39 per cent, 1.8 per cent, 1.86 per cent, 1.21 per cent, and 3.06 per cent respectively.

Reaction on market performance, the Chief Research Officer of Investdata Consulting, Ambrose Omordion said: "The nation's economic reality continues to reflect on corporate and economic numbers in recent time as 2023 audited financials released so far remain mixed and weak, especially among manufacturing companies to reveal the

impact of government policies on the economy as headwinds persisted. "This arises from foreign exchange hiccups which are putting pressure on companies' operations and performance which have led to many reporting negative earnings and leaving zero reward for their shareholders.

"We expect a continuation of the mixed sentiments as investors and traders digest the latest developments at the fixed income market, with TB's yield at 21.5 per cent, just as more corporate earnings with dividends are expected to hit the market and investors taking advantage of low valuation to position and rebalancing portfolio.

"This is amid the volatility and pullbacks that add more strength to upside potential. As such, investors should take advantage of price correction. Also looking at the trends and events across the globe and domestically," he said.

BoI disburses \$6.02m to women-owned businesses, commits to financial inclusion

THE Bank of Industry (BoI) says in line with its support of gender equality and women financial inclusion, it has disbursed \$6.02 million out of its \$10 million investment commitment to Alitheia Fund.

Managing Director, BoI, Dr Olasupo Olusi, said this at the weekend during the BOI International Women's Day (IWD) 2024 event with the theme "Inspire Inclusion."

He was represented by Ms Mabel Ndagi, Executive Director of the Micro Enterprise Directorate, BOI.

Alitheia Fund is a pioneering \$100 million gender-lens fund that invests in women-owned, women-led or women-servicing companies across varying sectors.

Olusi said the 2024 IWD's theme resonated with BOI's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace as well as the bank's

clientele portfolio.

He added that the year's theme challenges everyone to move beyond the perceived norms and truly embody the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

On funding for women-owned businesses, the BoI Managing Director stated that the bank was also the local execution partner for the Islamic Development Bank's Business Resilience Assistance for Value-Adding Services (BRAVE) program in Nigeria.

"This is a \$14.27 million initiative that was designed to support women-owned businesses, particularly those living in economically disadvantaged areas arising from conflicts and social unrest.

"As of February 2024, the bank had disbursed the sum of N5.9 billion to 551 beneficiaries.

"We are currently working

with the African Development Bank (AfDB) on its AFAWA initiative, a pan-African initiative to bridge the \$42 billion financing gap women in Africa face," he said.

Olusi said that BoI had created special funding and business support for female entrepreneurs and made gender funding one of the Bank's six thematic critical areas of focus and support.

This, he stated, was in line with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's unwavering commitment to ensuring social inclusion, empowerment for women, and economic support for disadvantaged women and mothers.

"To this end, the results have started manifesting as currently, more girls are enrolled in schools and women now occupy record-breaking positions in government and corporate organisations.

"Businesses are increasingly acknowledging the significance of diversity and intentionally driving the gender inclusion/sensitivity agenda, particularly at the board level.

"To truly "Inspire Inclusion," we must act and it starts within our organizations by implementing policies that promote gender equality and creating an environment where women can thrive.

"As leaders, we have the responsibility to champion inclusivity by ensuring that our workplaces are free from discrimination and biases," he said.

He added that achieving full inclusion for women required a proactive and collaborative effort of the Federal Government and sub-nationals, organised private sector, civil societies, and individuals.

As economy wobbles, property owners convert offices to apartments

Investors in the real estate market are worried that transactions in the office segment are declining as existing facilities are empty or half-occupied; hence, developers and landlords are converting offices to residential housing and short-let apartments to recoup investments, writes VICTOR GBONEGUN.

Real Estate

MAJOR investors in the real estate sector, especially the commercial segment of the market have begun to seek new ways of recouping their investments, following the changing dynamics of work and macro-economic factors, which are increasing availability of unused or under-utilised office spaces in major city centres.

The trend has made investors convert unused space to mixed-use developments, such as residential housing, and short-let apartments. The reality is that many people are still not returning to the office or at least not nearly as often, a development that has profound implications not only for office owners, managers and brokers, but also for investors.

Most organisations are yet to recover from the poor economy as they continue with flexible work schedules, adopting Work-from-Home (WFH) and hybrid work models of COVID-19 era to stave off rising operation challenges like power and transportation cost for staff, thus, leaving many office buildings empty.

A report by Knight Frank ranked Lagos among the 12 top most expensive office markets globally, alongside other cities that include Singapore, London, Hong Kong, and even New York as of 2011. This was at a time the office market was at its peak.

It was gathered that a 500sqm office in Grade A and B-Grade buildings within locations like Ikoyi and Banana Island starts from \$526,000, and \$940,000 respectively. But the situation is different now and tends to favour the tenant because supply has grown and the economy has weakened.

The office segment of the real estate market is experiencing a difficult time as some buildings still record increases in vacancy rates fostered by rising inflation and high rent. Unoccupied office buildings are becoming candidates for reinvention by developers and owners amid struggle to recoup investments.

Since 2022, major office buildings in Idejo street, Adeola Odeku, Adetokunbo Ademola in Victoria Island recorded empty occupancy or not fully occupied while others have been converted to hotel and other uses. Up to 50 per cent of the office spaces were empty for upward of six years.

Findings revealed that in locations such as Victoria Island and Ikoyi that boast of many Grade A and Grade B office spaces constantly joining the pool of existing ones like the Wings Towers, Greystone Towers, Heritage Place, Pier Point, Nestoil Towers, Centre Point, amongst others, there are degrees of voids. The same situation applies to office buildings in Tinubu and Balogun axis of Lagos Island.

The Guardian learnt that one creative solution being deployed to such office buildings is just to turn them into apartments/mixed-use facilities.

The concept of office-to-residential and other use conversions is hugely attractive for building owners and investors, who might otherwise be stuck with defaults. Major properties in cities like Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Port-Harcourt, Ibadan, among others are trailing the blaze in this regard.

For instance, in Lagos Island, the 21-storey Unity House, an office complex located at 37 Marina, Lagos Island Central Business District owned by Wemabod Limited, one of Nigeria's leading Real Estate firms offering services in property development and property management is being repurposed.

The building, which had a total of 5430 square metres of lettable space and an internal parking space to accommodate about 50 to 60 cars, will see its redevelopment transformed into a mixed-use facility housing 81 tastefully finished one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments, offices, retail centres, and banks.

With the predominant business and commercial nature of the environment, the project seeks to unlock the latent demand for premium upscale residential

accommodation in the foremost business district by converting 50 to 70 per cent of the building into two- and single-bedroom apartments for executives and business travelers to the location.

Properties within its immediate vicinity, such as Stallion Plaza, Nigerian Stock Exchange Building, Central Bank of Nigeria Building (within 100m), Elder Dempster (ED) Building, Kingsway Building, First Bank Headquarters' Building, and UBA Building, among others are expected to benefit from the repurposing of the project.

Speaking on the development, a Professor of Estate Management at the University of Lagos, Austin Otegbulu, observed that in certain part of the Lagos Island, office rent is going down, while shopping plazas are not lucrative, while most of the buildings in the locations are not good for shopping plazas or offices.

He noted some investors now prefer to buy them and convert to mixed-use facilities. "In some of these locations, they are not a place you can walk when you finish from the office at night. Some of the owners now prefer to convert it to short-let apartments and other 'uses,' he said.

The Chairman, Research and Development Committee, Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers, 'Dotun Bamigbola, said a major reason for the lull in the office sector is not far-fetched, the office market was down after the COVID-19 pandemic experience.

According to him, most people still don't see the need for physical offices, while some oil majors like Shell Corporation are yet to fully resume for physical offices.

"They determine when they can be in the office for meetings and most of the other things, they do it virtually. The poor economic climate has also contributed to it as firms with foreign investments have left or are in the process of leaving the country because of microeconomic impact on them like the Foreign Exchange (FX) and inflation.

Most of the 'Grade A and B' offices are priced in dollars and huge investments are involved in some of these office buildings. FX has given them a reason to leave. More office establishments



Unity House... one of the buildings under reconstruction in Lagos Central District

Ministry, EFCC partner on housing fraud detection, platform monitoring

By Chinedum Uwaegbulam

THE Federal Ministry Housing and Urban Development has forged an alliance with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to ensure accountability in the real estate sector, protection of the rights and investments of Nigerians.

Under the alliance, the ministry will establish a platform to monitor and detect instances of housing fraud perpetrated by dubious developers. The proposed platform will provide a user-friendly online interface for Nigerians to report incidents of housing fraud.

Users submit complaints, provide evidence, and share relevant information about fraudulent practices anonymously or with their identi-

ty disclosed, depending on their preference.

The online platform will collect, analyse, and categorise reported cases of housing fraud. It will gather information such as location, developer details, type of fraud, and evidence provided by victims of housing fraud. This data will help identify patterns, trends, and hotspots of fraudulent activities in the real estate sector.

The platform will operate within the existing legal framework governing the real estate sector. It will support legal actions against fraudulent developers by providing evidence and support to law enforcement agencies and regulatory bodies.

By implementing the Housing Fraud Detection and Monitoring Platform,

the Ministry aims to curtail housing fraud, ensure there are legal consequences for fraudulent developers, promote transparency, and safeguard the interests of Nigerians in the real estate market.

"We aim to protect the rights and investments of Nigerians by creating a transparent and accountable system. Using the platform, we will empower Nigerians with a transparent tool to report dubious developers and work in collaboration with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to investigate reported cases of housing fraud," according to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Ahmed

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Umudike varsity partners Abia communities on forest conservation

• Plans ecotourism centre with 200-year-old relic forest

By Chinedum Uwaegbulam

TOWARDS fulfilling its memorandum of understanding with the Abia State Ministry of Environment and Urban Renewal to conserve the state's forest reserves, the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State has begun a partnership agreement with seven communities to protect biodiversity and imbibe Green Forest Farming (GFF).

The university has also prioritised the protection of the environment and its natural resources in all agricultural and development initiatives. It plans to make the 200-year-old relic forest an ecotourism centre.

The Vice Chancellor, Prof Maduebibisi Iwe, disclosed this during a workshop on 'Halting Biodiversity Loss and Enhancing Sustainable Livelihood through Green Forest Farming' organised by the College of Natural Resources and Environmental Management in collaboration with Queen Mary University of London. The event chaired by Prof Edem Eniang of the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State attracted communities and

other stakeholders.

He said the relic forest is the university's prized environmental assets that have been protected from human encroachments and the impact from natural hazards such as flood.

While assuring partners on its commitment to conserve and protect the integrity of the relic forest, he charged the college and Department of Forestry and Environmental Management to ensure the dream of making the forest reserve an ecotourism site becomes a reality.

Iwe, who lauded the communities - Amaoba, Olokor, Ngoro-Oboro, Ubani, Aro-Ajatakiri, Nkalunta and Lodu Emenyi for volunteering to learn the art GFF, said the project aligns with the pursuit of the university to ensure self-sufficiency in food produced locally and increase financial returns to farmers, while protecting biodiversity and the environment.

He expressed appreciation to Queen Mary University of London for approving the partnership through their institutional support grant and funding through the Official Development Assistance - International

Science Partnerships Funds (ODA-ISPF) and commended Dr Emmanuel Nwankwo for initiating the project as part of his postdoctoral fellowship.

The vice chancellor noted that over three decades, the university has been striving to be one of the leading higher institutions in agriculture by providing a knowledge base for achieving food security and revolutionising agriculture through training, extensive and quality research at all levels of learning.

Abia State Commissioner for Environment, Philemon Ogbonna, said urbanisation and other competing land uses have placed the onus on stakeholders to proffer agro forestry and other viable alternatives to the rising demand for land. According to him, the alternatives should be driven through advocacy to local councils and farmers.

Ogbonna, represented by the Director, Climate Change, Chris Ike, said the ministry plans to introduce clean cooking stoves to reduce gas emissions, reduce communal dependency on forests for fuel wood, increase carbon footprints and earn carbon credits for the state.

"We are also encouraging the use of solar, wind and other renewable energy sources as part of our energy transition plans. We are deliberate and scientifically intentional in the programme designs we drive as they are geared towards greening our environment and bequeathing a sustainable environment for our



Director, Academic Planning, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Prof A. Nlewadi (left); Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic, Prof Udo Herber; Vice Chancellor, Prof Maduebibisi Iwe; Principal Investigator from Queen Mary University, London, Dr Emmanuel Nwankwo; Chairman of the occasion, Prof Essien Eniang and Registrar, Dr (Mrs) N Mbanasor, during the workshop on 'Halting Biodiversity Loss and Enhancing Sustainable Livelihood through Green Forest Farming' organised by the university's College of Natural Resources and Environmental Management in Umuahia, Abia State

children," he added.

Speaking on 'Climate Change Adaptation and GFF,' Prof Emmanuel Nzewgule, disclosed that GFF is an ecosystem-based farming, which produces food sufficiently and allows forest and wildlife to be in harmony.

He said: "It is also regenerative farming approach that allows growing of our common arable crops with economic trees to yield more household income, con-

serve biodiversity, conserve soil and water, and produce other forest product,

"It is win-win farming that eliminates risk of total crop failure, reduces farm labour, fertiliser usage, conserves the soil and water resources, over sort of agricultural insurance, and preserves our farming heritage and culture."

Nwankwo stated that GFF supports the adoption and scaling of forest farming, an innovative and sustainable

land use system that enhances the productivity and resilience of forest ecosystems and the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

According to the principal investigator, forest farming cultivates high-value forest crops, generating income, supports food and nutritional security, as well as attracts health benefits for rural households, while conserving biodiversity, carbon, and water resources.

Govt plans housing fraud detection, platform monitoring

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Dangiwa.

"For those who collect money from beneficiaries and, at the end of the day, fail to deliver and dupe

ordinary Nigerians who simply want a decent place to call home, the law will soon catch up with you. Stop doing it because the days are over for such practices," he said.

He noted that Nigerians have been victims of unscrupulous elements in the built environment for far too long, stressing that such practices amount to financial crimes.

Tender for Provision of Interpretation and Translation Services



The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH; through its "Country Office in Nigeria", financed by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, invites qualified companies to express their interest to provide the below:

Framework agreement for the provision of Interpretation and Translation Services (English, French and Portuguese) to GIZ Nigeria/ECOWAS

Accordingly, GIZ invites interested and qualified companies to express their interest by furnishing GIZ Nigeria Country Office with the following:

- An official letter expressing interest on the Company Letterhead
- Company Profile stating number of staff in the last 3 years (minimum of 7 staff).
- Reference of previous similar projects (within the last 3 years), with values that add up to minimum of NGN 206,583,000 (with at least 3 projects within Africa).
- Evidence of Tax payment for 2020, 2021 and 2022 (or more recent) with a minimum average annual turnover of NGN 206,583,000

For consideration, all interested & qualified Companies should submit the aforementioned documents only as hard copy in a sealed envelope to GIZ Nigeria Office reception at No. 12 Charles de Gaulle Street, Asokoro, Abuja and kindly label as follows:

Project Title: GIZ Country Office Nigeria
Subject: Provision of Interpretation and Translation Services

Project No.: 91.9060.4-001.00

Cosoft No.: 83431806

Location: Nigeria

Interested companies should kindly send requested documents (hard copy only) not later than **5pm Friday 28th March 2024**.

Please do not send technical or price offer, or not requested documents. Kindly note that complete tender documents would be sent to qualified companies that express their interest

Implemented by:

giz

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



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PROPERTIES FOR SALE

- 1) 3,376 m2 parcel of land (fully sandfilled and ready for immediate development) at James George St, Ikoyi @ N850,000/m2.
- 2) 3,363sqm at Adeola Odeku Street, Victoria Island. Price: N3.7B
- 3) 2,500 m2 at Awolowo Rd, Ikoyi @ N1.2m/m2
- 4) 550m2 at Pinnock Beach Estate @ N500k/m
- 5) 3 plots at Lekki County @ N100m per plot
- 6) Newly completed Detached House (5-Bedroom) at Omole phase2. Price: N250m

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- 1) 4- Bedroom Terrace House with BQ at Parkview Estate, Ikoyi (Rent: N10m per annum)
- 2) 2 no.2-Bedroom Flats at Amodu Ojikutu St, V/I
- 3) 70,110 & 126 m2 office spaces at Amodu Ojikutu St, V/I
- 4) 2 no 4-Bedroom Flats with BQ at Apapa GRA
- 5) 2no.3-Bedroom Flats at Hakeem Agboola Crescent, Unity Estate, Amuwo

Contact

MULTI-DEV ESTATES LTD
Lindev Plaza 16, Amodu Ojikutu Street, V/Island, Lagos
07086683636. 0816 263 6426. 0805 168 2150
Email: multidevestatesltd@gmail.com

THIS SPACE IS FOR SALE

ADDITION OF NAME:

I formerly known as Nwanze Henry now wish to be addressed as Nwanze Henry Nduka. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME:

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Warehouse + Office Building on 10 Acres and 13.5acres respectively.

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FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

GOVERNMENT OF KOGI STATE

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
KOGI STATE ACReSAL PMU

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE
REQUEST FOR BIDS (RFB)

Country: Nigeria
Name of Project: Kogi State Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project
Contract Title: Supply and Installation of ICT Equipment with relevant Hardwares and licensed Softwares, Drones with Accessories and relevant Licenses for Kogi State ACReSAL Data Management Centre.
Loan No.: IDA 70150
RFB Reference No.: NG-KOGI STATE ACReSAL-377619-GO-RFB

- The Federal Government of Nigeria has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes project and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the bid for the Supply and Installation of ICT Equipment with relevant Hardwares and licensed Softwares, Drones with Accessories and relevant Licenses for Kogi State ACReSAL Data Management Centre.
- The Kogi State Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project Management Unit now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for:

Lot No	Item No.	Description of item.	Qty	Bid -Security (Bank Guarantee)	Delivery Period	Location(s)
1		Field Equipment: Personnel protective equipment		NGN0.2 M	60 days	KGACReSAL Office, Plot 247, Tunde Ogbeha Street, GRA, Lokoja, Kogi State
2		Drones with accessories: drone, accessories, subscription, license to fly the drone, etc		NGN1.5 M	60 days	
3		ICT Equipment: Laptops, Desktop, Printers, Cameras etc		NGN2.0 M	60 days	
4		Licensed Software and Licenses: Softwares and genuine licenses.		NGN1.0 M	60 days	

- Bidders may Bid for one or several contracts, as further defined in the request for bids document. Bidders wishing to offer discounts in case they are awarded more than one contract will be allowed to do so, provided those discounts are included in the Letter of Bid.
- Bidding will be conducted through national competitive procurement using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" September 2023 ("Procurement Regulations") and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.
- Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from Kogi State Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project Management Unit; email: **kogiacresal2022@gmail.com**, and inspect the bidding document during office hours 0900 to 1600 hours at the address given below.

Qualifications requirements include:
Audited Financial Statements for the last 5 years to demonstrate the financial capability of the Bidder in terms of Profitability and adequate working capital.
Have successfully completed at least Two (2) similar contracts within the last five (5) years prior to bid submission deadline, each with a value of at least: Lot 1- NGN 4.00 million each; Lot 2- NGN 90.00 million, Lot 3- NGN165.00 million and Lot 4 - NGN 40.0 million, that have been successfully and substantially completed as prime supplier or JV between January 1, 2019, and the submission deadline. The qualifying contracts must be similar in nature and complexity to the goods and related services under the contract.
Minimum **average annual turnover** in the last Five (5) years of at least: **Lot 1- NGN5.20 million, Lot 2 – NGN 120.00 million, Lot 3- NGN 210.00 million and Lot 4 – NGN52.00 million**

Have liquidity and/or evidence of access to or availability of unencumbered credit facilities of at least: Lot 1- NGN1.0 million, Lot 2 – NGN22.5 million and Lot 3 – NGN40.00 million and Lot 4 – NGN10.0 million.

Evidence of manufacturers authorization.
After Sales services facility Centre in Nigeria
A margin of preference for eligible national contractors **shall not be applied**.

- Evidence that bidder for Lot 2 has a valid license to fly drone in Nigeria and Ten (10) years 'experience in flying of drone.
- The bidding document in English language may be purchased by interested Bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **Sixty Thousand (60,000.00)** Naira. The method of payment will be Bank draft in favour of Kogi ACReSAL, pay directly into this bank account; **Kogi State ACReSAL, UBA, Account Number: 1024717893** and bring the payment evidence to the address below. The bidding document will be sent to the bidder by email or courier on request at the cost of the bidder.
 - Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 11.30 am, 12th April, 2024. Electronic Bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend at the address below on 11.30 am, 12th April, 2024.
 - All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of: **Lot 1- NGN0.2 Million, Lot 2- NGN1.5 Million, Lot 3 – NGN2.0 Million and Lot 4- NGN 1.0Million.**
 - Attention is drawn to the Procurement Regulations requiring the Borrower to disclose information on the successful bidder's beneficial ownership, as part of the Contract Award Notice, using the Beneficial Ownership Disclosure Form as included in the bidding document.
 - The address referred to above is:

Barr. Ladi Ahmed Jatto (OON)
The State Project Coordinator,
Kogi State Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project (KGACReSAL),
Plot 247, Tunde Ogbeha Street, GRA, Lokoja, Kogi State
Telephone: 08109467464
E mail: **kgacresal22@gmail.com**



TheEnvironment

Nigeria, Germany partner on battery, metal recycling

By Chinedum Uwaegbulam

THE Federal Government and the German government have forged an alliance to improve battery recycling in Nigeria, raise labour and environmental standards, and establish sustainable trade flows for raw materials.

The project known as Partnership for Responsible Battery and Metal Recycling is liaising closely with the Federal Ministry of Environment and the environmental enforcement agency, Nigeria Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NES-REA). Partners such as civil society, metal processing industry and solar industry are working together with the Oeko-Institut to develop a cooperative approach to the responsible recycling of lead-acid batteries.

Nigeria is home to one of the largest lead-acid battery recycling industries in Sub-Saharan Africa. At least ten facilities recycle batteries on an industrial scale, recovering raw materials such as lead, tin and antimony. These are mostly redeployed in battery production – either in Nigeria or abroad.

Lead-acid batteries are used in cars, off-grid solar applications and backup power systems. Environmentally sound and safe recycling is possible and can effectively recover up to 97 per cent of all contained raw materials. However, in many regions of the world, recycling takes place in substandard, highly

dangerous and unsafe conditions, exposing workers and neighbouring communities to toxic lead dust.

This lead exposure can have serious health effects, including irreversible nerve and brain damage particularly in children.

According to UNICEF, up to 800 million children in low- and middle-income countries have elevated blood lead levels. In addition to the dramatic impact on the lives of those affected, there is also long-term economic damage, which is estimated at four percent of the gross domestic product in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The aim of the joint project is to share experiences for the modernisation of the recycling sector in Nigeria. The partners are using a three-pronged approach: the Oeko-Institut and the industrial partners are providing knowledge on environmental protection and occupational safety for recycling plants and training plant managers to improve environmental performance and plant safety.

In addition, the partners are developing concepts for how Nigerian regulatory authorities might introduce and monitor binding standards for environmental protection and occupational health and safety and implement them together with local companies. The German and international metals industry is as well highly interested in responsible supply chains for secondary raw materials.

In view of the serious health and environmental risks posed by unsound recycling practices, the project supports industrial companies and regulatory authorities in Nigeria in introducing environmental, health and safety standards. The project is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

"As the largest economy and most populous country in Africa, Nigeria is also central to battery recycling. Nowhere else on the African continent is the volume of used batteries as high," emphasizes Frederick Adjei, researcher on Circular Economy and Recycling at the Oeko-Institut.

"At the same time, the expansion of decentralised solar power solutions is leading to an increase in demand for batteries, all of which will have to be recycled properly at some point."

"We have been monitoring the recycling of used batteries with great concern for many years and have already worked with the Nigerian government on a battery policy. We see this project as an important continuation and practical implementation of that work," according to the Executive Director, Sustainable Research and Action for Environmental Development (SRADev), Dr Leslie Adogame.

Experts urge reduction in transnational wildlife trafficking routes

From Cornelius Essen, Abuja

CONSERVATIONISTS have identified weak legislation, corruption in the government agencies, as factors responsible for illegal wildlife trade in West Africa Sub-region.

They also called for the reduction of environmental crimes in the African continent, transit, and export routes that serve as transnational routes to Asia and Europe.

West Africa Director, Wild Africa Fund, Mr Linus Unah, who spoke at the workshop on Reporting Transnational Organised Wildlife Crime in Abuja, said it has become increasingly difficult for countries to improve the investigative and prosecutorial capacity of law enforcement agencies to combat trafficking.

He regretted that East Africa is in a crisis as 97 per cent of vultures have been killed for rituals and other purposes, while in Kenya

the population of elephants and lions are increasing making the country a tourist destination in the region.

Another speaker, Justin Gosling of the United Kingdom-based Environmental Investigation Agency, explained that the Bill, when passed into law, will increase the livelihood of apprehension of environmental crimes offenders and serve as a deterrent to others.

Gosling stated that Nigeria lost elephants and pangolins unknowingly, noting, the impact of their campaigns will reduce its role as a transit and export routes in transnational wildlife trafficking across the West Africa Subregion and Central Africa.

Similarly, he argued that they are working to safeguard global marine ecosystems by addressing the threats posed by plastic pollution as well as avert climate

change catastrophe by strengthening and enforcing regional and international agreements.

"We will use our findings in hard-hitting reports to campaign for new legislation, improve governance and more effective enforcement. Our field experience will be used to provide guidance to agencies and form partnerships with local groups, supporting hands-on training."

On her part, Mary Rice cited the key export and destination hubs for elephant ivory and pangolin trafficking from West and Central Africa to Asia as Tanzania, Kenya, Togo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, Cameroon, Gabon, D.R Congo and others.

Rice said the investigation and research indicate that Vietnamese-led syndicates are active in African countries, leading to a massive decline in population of elephant, rhino and pangolin species to poaching and illegal wildlife trade.



EKITI STATE BUREAU OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT (Office of The Governor)

INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTERESTS (EOIs) AS CONSULTANTS FOR EKITI STATE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN

Ekiti State intends to attain set leadership targets in the global tourism market. Hence, it is desirous of embarking on the development and implementation of a holistic strategy as an assessment tool to be used in a coordinated execution of sustainable value proposition for tourism in the state.

Invitations are requested from qualified and experienced consultants for Expression of interests (EOIs) for the production of a Tourism Development Master Plan for Ekiti State.

The Master Plan is expected to encompass all aspects of effort by the state to achieve quick-wins and long-term service-driven agenda, such as tourism policy, frame work, legislation, regulation, investment promotion, private-public partnership (PPP), socio-cultural impact, landmarks, attraction, hospitality, enterprise, travel and tours, access, product development, infrastructure development, branding, growth , projects etc.

Scope of Work

The selected consultant will be responsible for:

1. Conducting a comprehensive assessment of the current tourism landscape in Ekiti State.
2. Developing a strategic Tourism Development Master Plan for Ekiti State, in alignment with the state's tourism goals and objectives.
3. Recommending actionable strategies and initiatives to promote sustainable tourism growth and development in Ekiti State.
4. Engaging stakeholders, communities, and relevant organizations to gather input and feedback for the master plan.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Demonstrated experience in developing tourism master plans, preferably in similar regions or contexts.
2. Expertise in conducting tourism market analysis, strategic planning, and stakeholders engagement.
3. Strong understanding of sustainable tourism practices and principles.
4. Availability to commit to the project timeline and deliverables.

Interested Consultants with relevant experience are expected to forward their detailed applications along with the following documents in three copies:

- 1) Evidence of payment of Ekiti State Development Levy for the past three years (2021, 2022, 2023)
- 2) Evidence of payments for registration of Business Premises in Ekiti State.
- 3) Evidence of tax clearance for the company for the past three years (2021, 2022, 2023).
- 4) Evidence of registration with the Ekiti State Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP).
- 5) Evidence of registration with the Ekiti State Bureau of Tourism Development.
- 6) Corporate profiling of the company including:
 - i. Evidence of registration with CAC
 - ii. Evidence of audited accounts of the company for the past three years
 - iii. Evidence of similar projects successfully executed with their locations (copies of letters of award and certificate of completion attached);
 - iv. Particulars of directors, shareholders and principal officers of the company
 - v. Technical qualification and experience of key personnel
 - vi. List of equipment and modern tools, techniques and technology available for deployment on assignments.
 - vii. Evidence of banking support and VAT registration.

All applicants should submit three copies each of their Expression of Interests (EOIs) in separate sealed envelopes with the project title clearly indicated on the top left corner of the envelopes and addressed to:

The Director General,
Ekiti State Bureau of Tourism Development,
2nd Floor, Cabinet Department Wing,
Governor's Office,
Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Not later than 4 weeks from the placement of this advert

For further enquiry contact: wojolanre@ekitistate.gov.ng, bot@ekitistate.gov.ng,
+234 803 349 0986

Signed:
Ambassador Wale Ojo Lanre ESQ,
Director General,
Ekiti State Bureau of Tourism Development

Making a new Nigeria: Welfarist policies and people-centred devt

By Akinwumi Adesina

YOUR Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen. My darling wife, Grace (Yemisi) and I are simply overwhelmed with emotion, overjoyed, and filled with very deep and sincere appreciation, for your being here on this occasion, and for all your heartfelt well wishes. I am greatly honoured and humbled by the very large and significant presence of leaders from my home country Nigeria, from Africa, and other parts of the world.

I wish to recognise H.E. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, ably represented by H.E. Kashim Shettima, GCON, Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; H.E. General Gowon, GCFR, former Head of State; H.E. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR; H.E. former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR, my boss and H.E. former Vice President Namadi Sambo, GCON.

I am enormously honoured and humbled that Excellencies Presidents and Heads of State of African countries have travelled to be here, specially, for this occasion.

I would like to specially appreciate and thank H.E. Samia Suluhu-Hassan, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and my dear sister and friend, who gladly agreed to be the Chairperson of this occasion.

I would like to immensely thank H.E. Azali Assoumani, President of the Republic of the Union of Comoros and former Chairperson of the African Union, my dear brother and friend; and H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, my dear big sister and friend; H.E. Faure Gnassingbe, President of the Republic of Togo, my dear brother and friend, represented by the Prime Minister H.E. Victoire Dogbe; and former President of the Republic of Ghana, H.E. John Dramani Mahama; for your taking time to all be here today.

What a great honour for Nigeria and Africa. I am also greatly honoured to have here at this event, your Excellencies, the President of the Senate of Nigeria, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Executive Governors, distinguished Senators, members of the House of Representatives, as well as Honourable Ministers from Nigeria and other African countries.

My special thanks go to H.E. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Governor of Lagos State, for your extraordinary hospitality in welcoming all of us to Lagos, Nigeria's economic capital and the centre of excellence. Thank you very much.

I wish to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to the Obafemi Awolowo Foundation for selecting me to receive this distinguished award.

My special thanks go to Ambassador Dosumu-Awolowo, Executive Director, Obafemi Awolowo Foundation; the Chair of the Obafemi Awolowo Foundation, former Head of State General H.E. Yakubu Gowon, as well as the Chairman of the Selection Committee, Obafemi Awolowo Prize for Leadership, and H.E. Chief

Emeka Anyaoku, former Secretary General of the Commonwealth, and members of the Technical Committee for the Prize.

My immense gratitude goes to H.E. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, GCFR, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who nominated me for the Prize. He was my boss as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and it was my greatest honour to serve Nigeria under him as Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

My immense appreciation also goes to several global leaders who supported my nomination, including the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon; Rt. Honourable Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, former United States Ambassador to Vietnam and President Emeritus of the World Food Prize Foundation; Professor Soji Adelaja, Distinguished Professor of Land Policy, Michigan State University, USA; and Professor Patrick Verkooijen, Chief Executive Officer, Global Center on Adaptation.

The conferment of this award today, March 6, 2024, coincides with what would have marked Chief Awolowo's 115th birthday, and 37 years since his passing.

May Chief Obafemi Awolowo's soul continue to rest in peace, even as we draw inspiring lessons from his life, policies and philosophy.

I have received several global awards, for which I am very grateful. Receiving the Awolowo Prize for Leadership is particularly very special.

That's because it brings back so many personal memories.

Growing up in the old Western Region of Nigeria in the 1960s, only one name was synonymous with people-centred development: Awolowo. We lived in the same community as the sage, in Okebola, Ibadan. As a young child, passing by the frontage of his house was a favourite pastime. I remember peering over its low walls, to see if I could just catch a glimpse of the man who transformed the lives of millions in the then Western region. My father was enamoured by Chief Awolowo: he devoured his books, writings and articles. The name 'Awolowo' was a constant guidepost for every discussion in our home.

So much was the admiration that when I was 19 years old and Chief Awolowo ran for President under the

Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) in 1979, myself and a close friend desperately wanted to simply catch a glimpse of him. When we arrived at Tafawa Balewa in Lagos, the stands and the grounds were packed to capacity. The gates were locked. But we were absolutely undeterred. We had travelled all the way from Ife

“
Given the high level of poverty in Africa, and Nigeria, what is needed are welfarist policies that exponentially expand opportunities for all, reduce inequalities, and improve the quality of life of people. These must be anchored on public-centric policies and private-sector wealth creation for all.
”

and would not be denied. So, we climbed the tall steel gates of the Square. An unbelievable height when I look at it today.

Once we scaled through, we ran up close to the stage where he was speaking from and proudly stood just one arm's length from him and his dear wife, Mama Hannah Dideolu Awolowo. Just a glimpse was enough. We listened with rapt attention to the exposition of his plans for Nigeria. We were mesmerised.

Like a fragrance his words took our breath away: we could smell hope in the air. Hope that Nigeria will be great. Hope that education will be free at all levels. Hope that there will be health for all. Hope that the remarkable transformation witnessed in the Western region of Nigeria, in education, agriculture, health, and infrastructure, undergirded by a highly professional and disciplined civil service, will soon take hold in Nigeria.

Like the refrains of an orchestra, the sounds of Awo, Awo, filled the air, as our hopes were raised. We could see a new Nigeria. Alas, this was not to be. Nigeria missed its best opportunity to be great under a 'President' Awolowo. Chief Emeka Ojukwu, said of him "the best President that Nigeria never had."

Let me say clearly: Chief Awolowo was bigger than Nigeria. He was the pacesetter and fore-runner for development in Africa. His intellectual capacity, vision, and pragmatic social welfarism, helped him accomplish what was seemingly unimaginable at the time.

He built the first skyscraper in Africa - the Cocoa House. He built the first television station in Africa, WNTV. He built the Liberty Stadium, the first of its kind in Africa. He implemented a blueprint for development that focused on building human capacity through massive programmes to educate the people, develop skills, lift people out of poverty, provide massive rural infrastructure, and develop institutions that turned farmers into wealthy entrepreneurs.

I dare say that Chief Awolowo implemented the sustainable development goals decades long before the phrase was coined. He was an inspiration for Africa, far beyond the shores of Nigeria. His philosophy "Awoism" was studied globally and helped shape programmes and policies in other countries.

Today, my lecture is titled: Making a New Nigeria: Welfarist Policies and People-Centered Development.

From my early days, I

was influenced by the same drive as Chief Awolowo. I promised myself then that if I ever got into any public position, I would run welfarist and people-centric policies.

My heartbeat has always been about people. Nothing more. Nothing less. My life is only as useful to the extent that it is used of God to do my utmost to transform the lives of people.

Awo inspired me. Decades ago, the perfume of building hope rubbed off on me. It's a fragrance that still lingers today. So, as I stand before you to receive the Obafemi Awolowo Prize for Leadership, I am humbled, inspired and motivated.

I feel a new sense of responsibility. I am reminded today of the words of Martin Luther King Jr, "History has thrust upon me a responsibility from which I cannot turn away."

Yes, I have a dream of a better and prosperous Nigeria.

Yes, I have a dream of a globally respected Africa.

Yes, I have a dream that Africa will not be condemned to the bottom rungs of the global economic ladder.

I refuse to accept poverty's imprint on Africa.

I still believe that Nigeria will rise again.

I still believe that Africa will shine and fulfill destiny.

I still believe that we shall be who we are meant to be.

Today, I accept this Prize as a trustee of hope for millions of our people. You bestow upon me this honour at a momentous period of great global challenges, from rising debt, climate change, fragilities and vulnerabilities.

Your honour is a call to do more amid these challenges. So, I celebrate with measure, as I know with all humility the work of making Nigeria great, and by implication making Africa great, is still in progress. It is my lifelong mission to do all I can to improve the lives of all Africans. The wind of challenges may sometimes shift us away from our destined path, albeit momentarily, but we shall overcome our challenges.

Nigeria must dream. Africa must dream. Yes, we may have challenges, yet all I see tells me we will get there. We must start by unleashing our full potential, while managing our challenges. We must make poverty history in Nigeria. We must make poverty history in Africa.

We must deliver a better Nigeria, and a better Africa, for this generation and generations to come.

Given the high level of poverty in Africa, and Nigeria, what is needed are welfarist policies that exponentially expand opportunities for all, reduce inequalities, and improve the quality of life of people. These must be anchored on public-centric policies and private-sector wealth creation for all.

I would like to focus on five areas. First, rural economic transformation and food security. Second, health care security for all. Third, education for all. Fourth, access to affordable housing for all. Fifth, government accountability and fiscal decentralisation for a true federalism.

First, Nigeria must completely transform its rural economies to ensure food security for all.

A better Africa must start with the transformation of rural economies. That is because some 70 per cent of the population live there. Rural poverty is extremely high. At the heart of transforming rural economies is agriculture, the main source of livelihoods.

When agriculture moves away from being a way of life to a business, everything changes. Higher incomes and wages from agribusinesses will support education and health, and spur even greater job creation for millions of youths.

To be continued.

Dr Adesina is the President of the African Development Bank Group. Being the speech he delivered as the recipient of the Obafemi Awolowo Prize for Leadership Award 2023, recently.



Adesina

Goldman Sachs says currency will appreciate to N1200/\$

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

path. The contributions of the structural deficiencies are not referenced in Goldman Sachs's report, which conditioned its projects on the CBN's commitment to sustaining its reforms. Outward-looking policies could cripple the real sector. First, it has raised the oppor-

tunity cost of consumption, which is important for a robust industrial sector, to high heavens. Also, funding investment in plant expansion, according to Rewane, will be unaffordable to many companies, which could increase the unemployment rate and further constrain consumption. These suggest that the des-

peration to prioritise external funds with attractive interest rates has an expensive trade-off for the local economy – poor-performing critical sectors. In the long run, perhaps, fewer goods will be produced locally while more FX would be needed to buy from abroad to feed the country, a possibility that will increase pressure on the lo-

cal currency the current policy intends to stabilise. Earlier, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is now sceptical about the Nigerian government's commitment to its economic reforms, had pegged naira value at N2,081/\$ while the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) projected N2,000 to a dollar. A 1400/\$ exchange

rate, an average of the most recent different estimates – from the most conservative Goldman Sachs monetary base approach to the most extreme liquidated naira modeling – is still 75 per cent or N600/\$ above the ex-

change rate benchmark of the 2024 budget, a document sources in government circle told The Guardian at the weekend would be necessarily reviewed in the coming weeks to reflect the current reality.

Abductions fester despite govt's N5tr investment in armoured tanks in Q4 of 2023

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

the humongous budgets we invest in defence spending." He added that the abductions of school children would stop when the armed forces are able to have the right calibre of Commanders in place as heads of the different segments of the armed forces. HURIWA said the increasing spate of attacks by terrorists have exposed the empty propaganda by spokesmen of the military regarding what they called breakthroughs in the war on terror. "They feed us with propaganda that they are eliminating top commanders of terrorist groups but yet we keep reading about attacks by terrorists. So, who are these terrorists that have continued to bombard parts of Nigeria including Katsina, Borno, Benue and Kaduna states?" National President, Association of Licensed Private Security Practitioners of Nigeria,

(ALPSPN), Mr. Chris Adigwu, called for more proactiveness and intelligence sharing on the part of security agencies to be able to nib in the board attempted terror attacks. He said "The security agencies should be proactive rather than reactive in addressing the growing issue of kidnapping, especially in areas where incidents are on the rise. "By tapping into the specialized skills, resources, and experience of private security firms, the government can better address security challenges and alleviate the burden on state actors. This collaboration can enhance intelligence gathering, surveillance capabilities, and response mechanisms, ultimately leading to a more robust and efficient security framework. "The current combination of insecurity and economic challenges poses a significant threat to society. It is essential for both the citizenry

and the government to work together with unity of purpose to overcome these challenges. By fostering co-operation, communication, and mutual support, we can weather the storm and strive towards a safer and more prosperous Nigeria." The National Rescue Movement (NRM) has called on President Bola Tinubu to activate the necessary political will to reverse the ugly trend of kidnapping across the country. While wondering whether the government is conscious of its primary responsibilities to the people of Nigeria, the party lamented that Kidnapping, particularly of innocent school children, was becoming a norm in the country. National Publicity Secretary, NRM, Sola Afuye, in a statement on Sunday, condemned the continued kidnapping of Nigerians and urged the Federal Government to stop at nothing to end insecurity in Nigeria. Arising from the party's state of the nation review

meeting, the statement said the Acting National Chairman, Chinedu Obi, said the recurrence of these sad situations is akin to a sign of a failed state, adding that the menace should be reversed immediately. "The National Rescue Movement is concerned about the psychological trauma confronting Nigerians by the slow pace in redesigning the nation's security architecture to meet the growing insecurity. More so, in the face of huge resources of taxpayers' money going down the drain by the day, all in the name of upgrading our security apparatus. "NRM is aware that Kaduna State is less than 150km from Federal Capital Territory and shares borders with the other four States of Nasarawa, Niger, Kano and Plateau. And concerned that since the early hours of Thursday and after days of these abductions no clue as to where this large number of children are kept and or fully rescued.

OLATOYE AKINBORO

KPMG Tower, Bishop Aboyade Cole Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

**COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT, 2020
CREDITORS' VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP NOTICE OF
APPOINTMENT OF LIQUIDATOR
OF
BD AGRICULTURE NIGERIA LIMITED (RC: 1322339)**


[Pursuant to section 636(1) of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020]

I, Olatoye Akinboro of KPMG Advisory Services, KPMG Tower, Bishop Aboyade Cole Street, Victoria Island, Lagos hereby give notice that I have been appointed Liquidator of BD Agriculture Nigeria Limited by virtue of a Special Resolution of the Company passed on the 29th day of February 2024.

Dated this 4th day of March 2024.



Olatoye Akinboro
Liquidator



BD Agriculture Nigeria Ltd.
4 Metal Box Road; off Acme Road
Ogba Industrial Scheme
Ikeja - Lagos - Nigeria

WRITTEN RESOLUTIONS OF THE SHAREHOLDERS OF BD AGRICULTURE NIGERIA LIMITED IN LIEU OF THE SHAREHOLDERS MEETING, PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 259, 620 AND 636 OF THE COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT, 2020

[Pursuant to Sections 259 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, we, the Shareholders of the above-named Company, hereby unanimously adopt the following resolutions:

Pursuant to Sections 259 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, we, the Shareholders of the above-named Company, hereby unanimously adopt the following resolutions:

- 1) An Ordinary Resolution to the effect that:

"The Shareholders' Meeting is deemed to have been duly called by the fourteen day notice pursuant to Section 241(2) of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020".

- 2) A Special Resolution to the effect that:

"The affairs of BD Agriculture Nigeria Limited be wound up voluntarily pursuant to Section 620 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2020".

- 3) A Special Resolution to the effect that:

"The books of account of BD Agriculture Nigeria Limited shall not be audited and an Auditor's report shall not be required for the purpose of liquidating the Company pursuant to Section 633(6)(ii) of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2020"


- 4) An Ordinary Resolution to the effect that:

"Olatoye Akinboro, be and is hereby appointed as liquidator for the purpose of winding up the affairs of the Company", and


- 5) An Ordinary Resolution to the effect that:

"The liquidator be and is hereby authorized to appoint such advisers as he deems necessary and to exercise such other incidental, consequential, supplemental and additional powers as are necessary to give effect to the winding up of the affairs of the Company".

DATED THIS 29TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2024



(Kai Wehmeyer) ppa. Jurgen Spille)
Big Dutchman Aktiengesellschaft




Jurgen Spille)
AB Agrartechnische Handelsgesellschaft GmbH

BD Agriculture Nigeria Limited
RC 1322339
nigeria@bigdutchman.com

Managing Directors
Ulf Meyer
Christian Blümlein

Zenith Bank PLC
Gbagada II Branch
BD Agriculture Nigeria Ltd.
Account: 1015991914
Sort code: 041150819

Access Bank Nigeria PLC
Ikpeju Branch
BD Agriculture Nigeria Ltd.
Account: 0715592531
Sort code: 044150835




BD Agriculture Nigeria Ltd.
4 Metal Box Road; off Acme Road
Ogba Industrial Scheme
Ikeja - Lagos - Nigeria

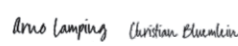
WRITTEN RESOLUTIONS OF THE CREDITORS OF BD AGRICULTURE NIGERIA LIMITED FOR THE VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP OF THE ENTITY, PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 259, 635 AND 636 OF THE COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT, 2020

1. That the affairs of BD Agriculture Nigeria Limited be wound up voluntarily pursuant to Sections 635 and 636 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2020.
2. That Olatoye Akinboro, be and is hereby appointed as liquidator for the purpose of winding up the affairs of the Company, and
3. That the liquidator be and is hereby authorized to appoint such advisers as he deems necessary and to exercise such other incidental, consequential, supplemental and additional powers as are necessary to give effect to the winding up of the affairs of the Company".

DATED THIS 29TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2024



Ulf Meyer, Christian Blümlein



Arno Lamping / Christian Blümlein

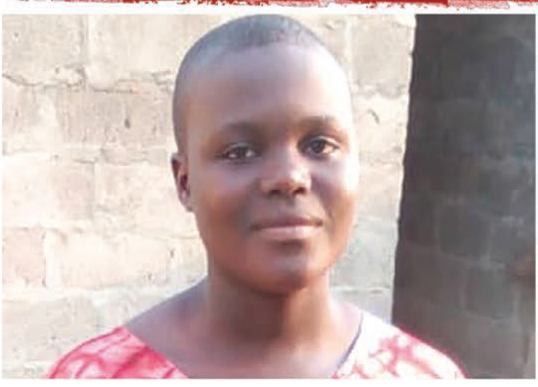
BD Agriculture Nigeria Limited
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MISSING PERSON



Timilehin Oguntuase (F)

This is to inform members of the public that one **Timilehin Oguntuase 'f'** who resides at Chikuri/Kapolu village in Chikun LGA, Kaduna state is missing.

She left her house in company of her father to visit a relation on 07/10/2023 at about 10 am but never returned since then. It is believed that she and her father were among those abducted from the village on the fateful day.

She is 17 year-old, fair in complexion, 5-fit tall, speaks yoruba and English languages fluently and has no tribal mark.

Anyone with useful information concerning her present location should kindly call:

+2349030504445, +2348039104636

Announcer: Family

Minister urges investments in gas, energy security

By Waliat Musa

MINISTER of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas), Ekperikpe Ekpo, has urged members to prioritise energy security and bolster investments in the gas sector.

The call came during the inauguration of the governing council of the Midstream and Downstream Gas Infrastructure Fund (MDGIF) to boost investments in the gas sector.

With energy security at the forefront, the minister emphasised the importance of strategic investments to meet growing energy demands and ensure stability in the sector.

Ekpo called on stakeholders, both domestic and international, to join hands with MDGIF to boost investments

in the sector.

The minister, who doubles as the Chairman of MDGIF, said that the fund's mandate, which is to support the midstream and downstream gas infrastructure, aligns with the aspirations of President Bola Tinubu-led administration.

According to him, the establishment of the MDGIF came at a critical juncture in Nigeria's energy landscape when the strive for economic diversification and sustainable development with gas as a major component was at its peak.

He, therefore, urged members to work towards surmounting the challenges of low investments/poor gas infrastructure in the midstream and downstream, as well as unemployment in the sector.

IWD: Experts identify strategies for inclusion of female entrepreneurs

TO foster the inclusion of female entrepreneurs in Nigeria, experts have identified the need for a concentrated effort on the dissemination of accurate information, more access to finance, creating a pool of women with similar businesses, breaking down of cultural barriers and more structured support from the government at all levels.

This was made known at the 2024 International Women's Day celebration organised by ImpactHER, a foremost non-profit organisation with a mandate for

empowering African female entrepreneurs by bridging the gender business financing gap to help them realise their full economic potential in partnership with the African Union, ToolUp, BRAVE Women, GIZ and Lotus Bank. The training had in attendance over 400 female entrepreneurs at the weekend.

In her remarks, Efe Ukala, Founder, ImpactHER, urged the women to forge a strong bond of unity, pool resources together and serve as a torch bearer in their various business enterprises.

NRCRI researchers preach change, equality

From Gordi Udejah, Umuahia

THE International Women's Day celebration in Umuahia presented researchers at the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike, an opportunity to rededicate themselves to be change agents, champions of equality and advocates of a more inclusive and equitable society.

The women, who X-rayed recent events across the world, announced their resolve to contribute to a future where every woman and girl/child would have the opportunity to thrive, contribute and lead with dignity and pride. Speaking at the event, the

Head, NRCRI Gender, Dr Mercy Ejechi, said women would continue to advocate for gender equality, challenge stereotypes and create a conducive environment where every individual, regardless of gender, feels valued, respected and empowered to reach her full potential.

The institute's Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer, Prof. Chiedozie Egesi, described this year's International Women's Day as an auspicious one for the NRCRI to celebrate the invaluable contributions of its great women scientists and farmers, who play crucial roles in driving sustainable food production in Nigeria and beyond.

'Indigenous languages risk extinction'

From Monday Osayande, Asaba

FORMER Governor of Delta State, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, Deputy Governor, Monday Onyeme, Chairman of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Chiedu Ebie, Group Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer (GMD/CEO) of Zenith Bank Plc, Dr. Ebenezer Onyeagwu, and others have committed over N100 million to resuscitate and preserve Ika language.

Okowa donated the sum of N30 million, Onyeme donated N30 million, Ebie N10 million, Onyeagwu N20 million and others towards the

N1 billion fundraising for Ika Language and Research Centre.

Speaking at the funds raising held at the weekend during the Second Founder's Day Celebration and Fund Raising for Ika Language and Cultural Research Centre of the University of Delta (UNIDEL), Agbor, Delta State, Governor Sheriff Oborevwori expressed fear that various Nigerian indigenous languages are facing threats of extinction, saying: "We may lose our mother tongues sooner than expected unless urgent steps are taken to preserve them."

Umahi pledges more jobs for local contractors

From Nnamdi Akpa (Abakaliki) and Cornelius Essen (Abuja)

THE Minister of Works, David Umahi, yesterday, said that the ministry would promote indigenous resources, skills, and capacities by creating more opportunities for local contractors in the construction industry, especially in the innovation of concrete technology being used in tough terrains nationwide.

Umahi stated this when he paid inspection visits to some flood sections along the East-West Road in Delta State, which are undergoing remedial work by an indigenous contractor, Messrs True Tech Nigeria Ltd.

He added that he was impressed by the quality of work done, noting that indigenous contractors would

get more jobs.

In a statement signed by the Special Adviser (Media) to the minister, Orji Uchenna Orji, which was made available to The Guardian in Abakaliki, Umahi said his ministry would do everything possible to ensure that there is value for money, creating wealth and jobs for indigenous professionals and technicians.

He said: "We have about 10 different washouts, which we are providing multiple culverts in place of a decompile, which would have been much more expensive. But our solution is very economical, and it will solve the engineering problems."

Similarly, the minister, during his inspection of the dualisation of Sapele-Agbor Road, route no. 3, in Delta

State, handled by CGC Nigeria Ltd, directed all controllers of works to ensure that all contractors use 70 per cent stone base aggregate with only 30 per cent dust base to form the base of the road construction.

He said: "I commend you for the one I have seen. It's good; so, we will do everything to assist you, but listen to our directive. Follow the existing asphalt, pulverise it and put a 20 cm stone base. Don't use dust."

ALSO, Umahi has issued a marching order to contractors handling Benin-Ekpoma-Auchi-Okpella-Oken e-Lokoja Road to justify the funds released to them by the Federal Government or risk termination of their contracts.

Umahi gave the directive

during his inspection visit to various project sites in Edo State, saying that they had released funds to the contractors handling federal projects for them to commence immediate rehabilitation works on them or be blacklisted.

While meeting with Edo State Governor, Goodwin Obaseki, the minister described as unacceptable the delay of contractors after being fully mobilised to site. On the recent protest along the Jattu axis of the Benin-Auchi highway by the residents of the area, which disrupted vehicular movements, Umahi said they have met with the governor to brainstorm on measures to tackle the issues affecting the progress of work in the area.



Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwori (left), Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri, and Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri during a civic reception in honour of the minister at the Ekeremor Community pavilion, in Ekeremor Local Council of Bayelsa State...at the weekend.

ICPC tasks CSOs, Niger Delta stakeholders to monitor resources

From Obinna Nwaoku, Port Harcourt

IN furtherance of the advocacy for transparency and accountability in the management of proceeds from natural resources, especially oil and gas, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has tasked Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and stakeholders in the Niger Delta to closely monitor projects and programmes of interventionist agencies and commissions in the region.

The anti-corruption agency said that stakeholders needed to keep track of funds accruing to the region, regretting that since the discovery of crude oil in Oloibiri, Bayelsa State, the region, which should ordinarily translate to prosperity and development for the citizens and inhabitants of the region, has unfortunately been underdeveloped.

Delivering the keynote address at a one-day multi-stakeholders development and accountability summit

with the theme, 'Building the Niger Delta Hope: Collaborating for Inclusive Development and Public Accountability', the Secretary of ICPC, Clifford Okwudiri Oparodu, expressed regrets that the intermittent unrest and agitation for equitable resource distribution and control that created palpable tension across the region was occasioned by years of neglect by the managers of the region's resources.

Oparodu said: "The concept for this summit states clearly

that the Niger Delta is the heartland of Nigeria's hydrocarbon wealth, and that the Niger Delta plays a pivotal role in the nation's economy as its primary oil-producing region.

"Instead, what we see is widespread poverty, pollution, severe environmental degradation, decline and threat to traditional livelihoods, decaying social infrastructure, short-changing of the people and communities in infrastructural projects design and implementation,

Non-affordability spikes patronage of traditional birth attendants in Calabar

From Solomon Azu, Calabar

THE hike in the prices of goods and services, especially healthcare, is taking its toll on pregnant women, who have resorted to patronising Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) in Calabar.

The TBAs are community-based healthcare providers during pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal. They are more affordable than the orthodox practitioners, but often risky because they rarely have formal training.

Findings revealed that there

is a surge in the practice and patronage, because of the high cost of accessing healthcare in private and government-owned hospitals and clinics in the state.

Speaking with a cross-session of some pregnant women in some TBA homes in Anantigha, Eserebo, and Jebes areas of Calabar South, they decried the high cost of antenatal care in both private and government-owned hospitals in the area. Beatrice Essien, 36, who is expecting her third baby, said that she had her first and sec-

ond babies in the general hospital, Calabar, when the cost of medicare was moderate. Now, the cost of antenatal care in the government and private hospitals has spiked beyond her reach.

Beyond this, she said that the cost of the too many laboratory tests required during antenatal visits is unbearable. "My second delivery in the general hospital was a very difficult one because I had to go through a Caesarean session, which cost over N120,000, excluding bed space and other

hospital consumables. As a civil servant with a salary below that amount, I had to borrow money to settle the bills."

Another expectant mother, Uduakobong Etim, said though it is not her wish to patronise traditional birth attendants, she had no other alternative because she could not afford the cost of antenatal in hospitals or clinics.

Many others, who spoke, also attributed this development mainly to the high cost of doctors' consultations, hospital bills, and drugs.

NUT scheme pays over N877m to retired teachers in Niger

From Bala Yahaya, Minna

NIGER State Teachers Social Security Scheme (alias Endwel) has paid entitlements to the tune of N877,626,727,000 to 12,782 retired, deceased (received by their next of kin) and transferred teachers from its inception over 20 years ago. Chairman, Niger NUT, Mohammed Akayago, disclosed that Endwel was established to fulfil one of the objectives of the constitutional provision of the union, having considered the plight of teachers after retirement.

Akayago noted that the NUT-nurtured scheme birthed various investments impacting positively on the lives of teachers and the general public.

According to him, the scheme has been faced with the challenges of non-deduction of subscription/loan repayment from secondary school subscribers as a result of the state government's directives for stoppage of third-party deductions, adding that funds of the scheme and some local councils' Endwel cooperatives were still withheld by the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB).

Fagbohun charts path to new Nigeria

By Iyabo Lawal

DESPITE the myriad challenges confronting the country, the immediate past Vice Chancellor of Lagos State University (LASU), Prof. Olanrewaju Fagbohun, has expressed optimism that a new Nigeria is possible with strong political will and national pride.

Fagbohun, who disclosed this at the 21st public lecture and luncheon of Obafemi Awolowo University Muslim Graduates' Association (UNIFEMGA), Lagos State chapter, said that with a strong belief, Nigerians could attain the high standards that nationals of other countries attain, and with a strong drive by all to make the nation better as a country, a new Nigeria will emerge.

He lamented that Nigeria, which was once ahead of countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Botswana, is progressively but steadily degenerating.

In his lecture, entitled: 'Harnessing Opportunities for a new Nigeria', Fagbohun said it was disheartening that many countries with less human and material endowment at one time or another, had also experienced similar or worse scenarios in their political and socio-economic encounters, but had been able to wriggle out of it.

He cited countries like Singapore, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), South Korea and China, which were once enmeshed in serious economic crises, but now ranked high in the global economy.

Indigenes urge Taraba gov to reclaim lands from bandits

From Charles Akpeji Jalingo

KUTEB indigenes in Takum Local Council of Taraba State have pleaded with Governor Agbu Kefas to reclaim their lands under bandit control.

They also appealed to him to prioritise the return of displaced members of the community to their lands.

Under the banner of Kuteb Peace Movement (KPM), the group, in a statement, yesterday, in Jalingo, detailed the areas allegedly seized by bandits, including Fawen, Bassang, Kpashi, Muji 1 and

Seek return of displaced kinsmen

2, Tati, Kpashimbe and Gamgum.

The statement signed by the Coordinator, Musa Rimande, emphasised the importance of peace and security in the region.

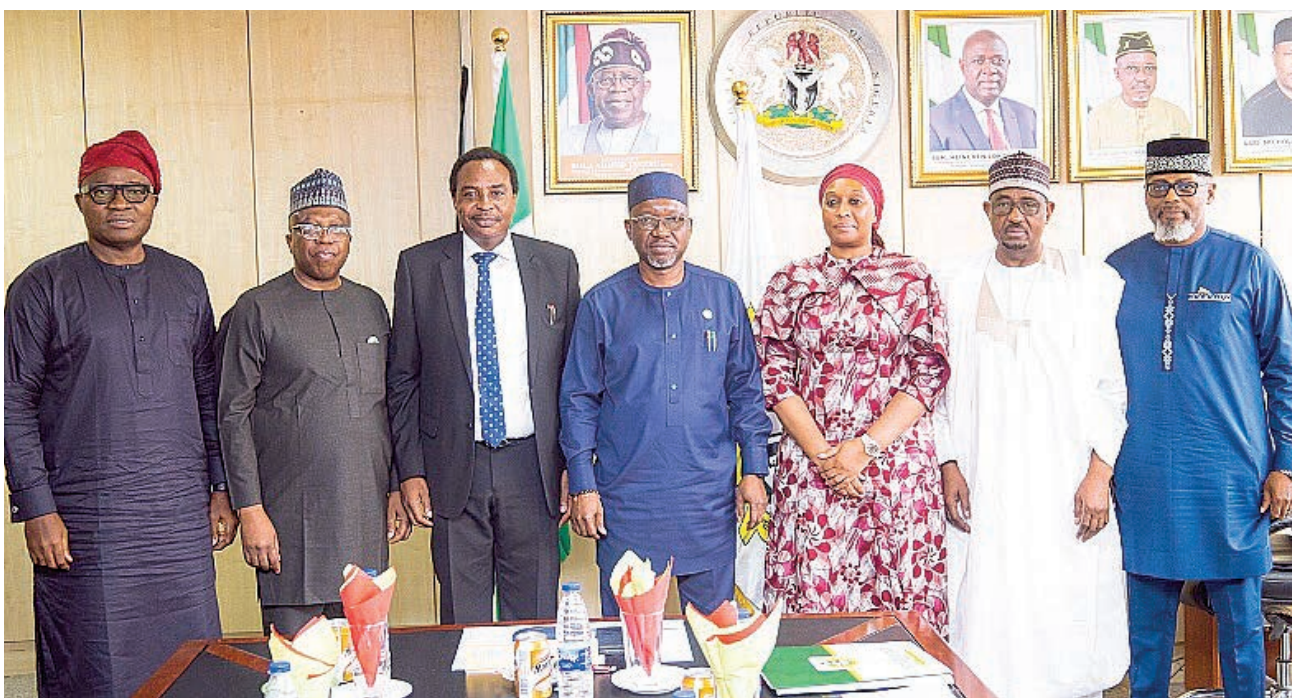
It also highlighted concerns over the ongoing dispute regarding the Ukwetakum stool, urging the government to instal a first-class traditional ruler for Takum without delay.

Expressing apprehension

over proposed changes to the traditional title and rotation of leadership among ethnic groups and the renaming of 'Ukwetakum' as 'Chief of Takum', the Kuteb community emphasised the need for dialogue and conflict resolution to prevent further unrest. Calling for the preservation of Kuteb cultural heritage and fair representation in political offices, the group stressed the importance of collaborative efforts to address longstanding tensions and ensure the welfare of all residents in Takum council and beyond.

The appeal followed escalating tension and growing threats of violence, with the Kuteb community adamantly stating their unwillingness to engage in another war.

The statement called for a focus on facilitating the return of Kuteb people to their ancestral lands, urging dialogue over conflict resolution rather than resorting to violence.



Member, Governing Council, Midstream and Downstream Gas Infrastructure Fund (MDGIF), Tajudeen Musa (left); Secretary, Joseph Tolorunshie; Executive Director, Oluwale Adama; Chairman/Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas), Ekperikpe Ekpo with other members, Amina Maina, Ahmed Farouk and Edet Ubong during the inauguration of the council by the minister at NNPC Towers, Abuja...at the weekend. PHOTO: NAN

Ramadan: Katsina government urges prayers against insecurity

From Danjuma Michael, Katsina

KATSINA State Governor, Dr Dikko Radda, has called on Nigerians to intensify prayers during the month of Ramadan, for a quick end to the security challenges bedeviling the country.

In a Ramadan message, yesterday, Radda said supplication to the Almighty "is one major way" to see to the speedy end of banditry, terrorism, and related criminality in the country.

The governor also called on traders to uphold the principle of fairness and compassion, as well as avoid hoarding essential food items.

State earmarks N10b to purchase grains, other food items

"During this sacred month, let us come together as a community to pray for peace and unity in our beloved state and nation. Let us earnestly supplicate for an end to banditry and other criminal activities that threaten the safety and well-being of our people."

"To our market men and women, I urge you to uphold the principles of fairness and compassion. Let us not succumb to greed or exploitation by hoarding or inflating the prices of essential food items and grains," he said, admonishing them to fear God in their dealings.

IN the same vein, the state government has promised to procure grains and food items worth N10 billion for free distribution to the less-privileged and the elderly, ahead of the Ramadan fast.

This is contained in a statement by the governor's spokesperson, Ibrahim Mohammed, at the weekend. According to the statement, the state government, in partnership with the 34 local councils, will purchase grains worth N7 billion for distribution to the less privileged. It added that another N3 billion would be used to procure food items, including 25-kilogramme bags of rice, to be distributed to the elderly, disabled and vulnerable members of society.

Radda reportedly confirmed these initiatives during the inauguration of committees at both state and local government levels to oversee the distribution process.

The statement added: "More than 33,000 vulnerable and elderly individuals across the 361 electoral wards within the state have been identified to receive free rice and stipends to support them in buying condiments."

Federal Govt to boost female participation in engineering

From Nkechi Onyedika-Ugoeze, Abuja

TO encourage more female participation in engineering, Presidential Implementation Committee on Technology Transfer and the National Agency for Science Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) have launched a 'Developing Engineering Leaders Through HER' initiative to fund innovative and commercially viable ideas in engineering and technology, proposed by women. (DELTA-HER).

The project aims to address the gender gap in Nigeria's

engineering sector.

At the launch of the project, at the weekend, in Abuja, the Executive Vice Chairman (EVC) of NASENI, Kahlil Halilu, said recent statistics revealed the dire need for deliberate actions to be targeted at the existing gender imbalance in the engineering sector, to inspire inclusion, while also expanding contribution channels to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

According to Halilu, the agency, through the initiative, intends to double the number of female engineers

in the country over the next five years by working extensively at the level of secondary education, which is where young girls make vital decisions regarding career choices.

Halilu observed that the global average for female representation in engineering is 28 per cent, which is only a little above one in four; but in Nigeria, only five per cent, showing that only one in 20 Nigerian engineers is a woman.

He said: "Interestingly, it was just in December 2023 that the Nigerian Society of Engi-

neers (NSE) elected the first female President in its history, Mrs Margaret Oguntala. She happens to be the 34th president of the NSE, which means all previous 33 presidents were men.

"This gives one an idea of the starkness of the gender imbalance in the sector. It is this imbalance that DELTA-HER seeks to correct, by focusing attention and funding on young women, and, very importantly, creating and cultivating public awareness around the need to train and mentor more women into the engineering profession."

Niger renames airport after Tinubu

To host him today

From Bala Yahaya, Minna

ALL necessary arrangements have been put in place to receive President Bola Tinubu in Niger State on his official visit to the state today.

The Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Binta Mamman, disclosed this to newsmen during a press briefing at the Government House Press Gallery, Minna, yesterday.

Before the visit, the state government had renamed the Dr Abubakar Imam International Airport Minna as the Bola Ahmed Tinubu International Airport ahead of its commissioning by the President today.

This was disclosed by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Governance and Reform, Dr Isah Adamu, while giving update on the visit.

During the visit, Mamman disclosed, Tinubu is expected to inaugurate some notable projects, including the remodelled and upgraded terminal at Minna International Airport, originally a Federal Government initiative, adding that the project had faced delays prompting Governor Bago's administration to take over the control of the project, to expedite completion after consultation with relevant authorities.

At 32, mortgage bank pledges engagement

ABBEY Mortgage Bank has pledged to remain committed to contributing significantly to the betterment of society as it marks its 32nd anniversary.

Some of the bank's notable initiatives include the Abbey Walk for the Environment 2022 and donations to address pressing medical challenges, exemplifying the bank's dedication to making a meaningful difference in the community.

It has also been a staunch supporter of the arts, recognising the power of culture and creativity in enriching communities. This includes student stage productions such as *Lipstick Fever* and *Duke of Shomolu*.

The bank has also achieved a remarkable decrease in Non-Performing Loans (NPL), from 70 per cent in 2020 to an impressive 7.35 per cent this year. This achievement reflects the bank's prudent risk management practices and dedication to maintaining a healthy loan portfolio.

Speaking on the journey so far, the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mobolaji Adewumi, said: "Through dedication and innovation, our workforce has been the driving force behind Abbey Mortgage Bank's transformative journey."

Nigerian Premier Football League

Sporting Lagos thrash Remo Stars as Lobi Stars hold Abia Warriors in Umuahia

By Christian Okpara

REMO Stars got their biggest defeat of the season, yesterday, at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Onikan, where Sporting Lagos dented their Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL) title ambitions with a 4-1 thrashing.

Remo Stars have been among the top three teams since the season began last year, but they got a rude shock at the Onikan waterfront, where Junior Lokosa opened scoring in the fifth minute.

After the early setback, Remo Stars tried to regroup, but they were soon further down in the 27th minute when Pascal Onyekachi Durugbor made the scores 2-0.

An Aliu Olasunkanmi Salaudeen's own goal halved the deficit in the 38th minute to end the first half 2-1 in Sporting Lagos' favour.

Determined to record a statement victory, Sporting Lagos took the fight to Remo Stars in the second half and got their reward in the 54th



Nigerian women's cricket team

minute through Philip Oduvia, who added the fourth goal in the 60 minute.

The loss dropped Remo Stars down to the fifth position on the log with 39 points, while Sporting Lagos moved to 12th with 31 points.

Defending champions, Enyimba of Aba, have climbed to the second position on 42 points following their 1-0 defeat of Doma United yesterday.

Chijioke Mbaoma scored the winning goal in the 89th minute of the game.

Lobi Stars are still on top of the table on 43 points despite their 1-1 draw with Abia Warriors in Umuahia yesterday.

Abia Warriors opened scores in the 70th minute from the penalty spot, while Lobi Stars equalised in the 95th minute

of the game marked the return of Abia Warriors to their home turf in Umuahia.

In other games played yesterday, Shooting Stars defeated Akwa United 3-0, Niger Tornadoes recorded their first away win by beating Bayelsa United 1-0 in Yenagoa, while Enugu Rangers were held to a goalless draw in Kwara United.

Thriller at Anfield as Liverpool, Man City battle to 1-1 draw

ALEXIS Mac Allister scored a second-half leveller from the penalty spot as Liverpool and title rivals, Manchester City, played out an absorbing draw at Anfield.

Mac Allister buried his penalty in the 50th minute after City keeper Ederson had fouled Reds' Darwin Nunez.

John Stones had given Manchester City the lead in the 23rd minute when he swept in Kevin de Bruyne's corner.

City's Phil Foden struck the bar and Jeremy Doku hit the post late on.

Gold rush as Nigeria dominates badminton, wrestling events

By Gowon Akpodonor

TEAM Nigeria waited till yesterday evening to begin its gold rush at the ongoing Ghana 2023 African Games, where the country's wrestlers and badminton stars have dominated the scene.

The gold rush started in the men's badminton, where African champion, Anuoluwapo Opeyori, defeated his compatriot, Godwin Olofua 2-1 (19-21, 21-17, 21-15) to give Team Nigeria the gold and silver medals.

Thereafter came the wrestlers, who showed how far Nigeria has gone on the mat with six finalists in the event.

Mercy Genesis won the country's first wrestling gold when she defeated Egypt's Mohamed Nada 7-0 to win the 50kg title. She was followed by Christiana Ogunsanya, who took the 53kg gold, before African champion, Odunayo Adekuoroye retained her 57kg title.

Japan 2020 Olympics silver medallist, Blessing Oborodudu, added to Team Nigeria's gold medal collection to make it five for the country overall.

Nigeria's five gold, four silver and two bronze medals have taken them to the second position behind Egypt, which has 23 medals, comprising 13 gold, four silver and six bronze.

Algeria with 15 medals comprising three gold, three silver and nine bronze medals is third, while Morocco with nine medals (two gold, four silver and three bronze medals) is fourth.

Ghana 2023 African Games

Nigeria's women cricket team qualifies for semifinals

Flying Eagles battle for survival

By Christian Okpara

THE national women's cricket team at the weekend defied all odds to berth into the semifinal of the event at the ongoing Ghana 2023 African Games.

Pitted against better-rated South Africa, Tanzania and Namibia, the Women Yellow-Greens rose above the rankings to finish second behind South Africa in Group A. They made the final four of the competition despite a four-wicket loss to South Africa in Achimota.

Nigeria had earlier on Friday caused an upset at the Games when they defeated Namibia, one of the highly rated women's cricket teams on the continent, with a 55-run victory and momentarily topped Group A. In the opening match, Nigeria had shared points with Tanzania in a rain-washed, inconclusive match on Thursday, which brought their tally to 3 points, before yesterday's encounter.

The match against South Africa at the Achimota Senior Secondary School B Field in Accra, was highly anticipated, as it held the fate of not only Nigeria, but also Tanzania, who needed more than a win over Namibia to make it to the semifinals. They also needed Nigeria to lose by a wide margin to wipe off their Net Run Rate, as their win will only tie them on points.

Nigeria's 74-run total in 18.4 wasn't commanding enough to sway South Africa, the best-ranked team in the event, and so the Yellow-Greens resorted to relying on their bowling prowess to limit the damage the Protea Women would have done to their NRR in defeat.

Ihiala's first golf course, Acropolis, for launch in April

By Christian Okpara

THE boisterous Ihiala City in Anambra State will on April 5 welcome its first world-class golf facility, which will be known as Acropolis Golf Course, the sponsors of the project have said.

Built by Nest Oil to cement its presence in the Southeast, and also boost tourism in Anambra State, the new facility is also expected to add to the visibility of the town located at the heart of the major highway linking Anambra State with Imo.

Speaking on the new golf course, Facility Manager, Nest Oil, Obioma Ogakwu, who manages the project, said it will complement his company's social investment in the Southeast and help expand options for internal tourists visiting Anambra.

"Golf is one sport that has been growing silently in the country, and this project hopes to accelerate it and help the state harness its potential for social and economic growth," he said.

Nigeria's former number one professional golfer, Mike Ubi, who has been working with the facility owners to bring some of its characters to international specifications, said the course would change the dynamics for the game.

"The standard that has been set with the Acropolis Golf Course tells of the passion of the owners, and their drive for excellence."

Confident Joshua offers to fight Fury in Gypsy Kings' garden

BUOYED by his display against Francis Ngannou, whom he knocked out in the second round of their world heavyweight boxing bout on Friday, Anthony Joshua has offered to fight WBC champion, Tyson Fury, even in his garden.

Joshua's defeat of Ngannou set up a bout with the winner of the undisputed clash between Oleksandr Usyk and Fury.

Joshua is chomping at the bit to get in there with 'The Gypsy King' after witnessing the all-British showdown fall apart on several occasions.

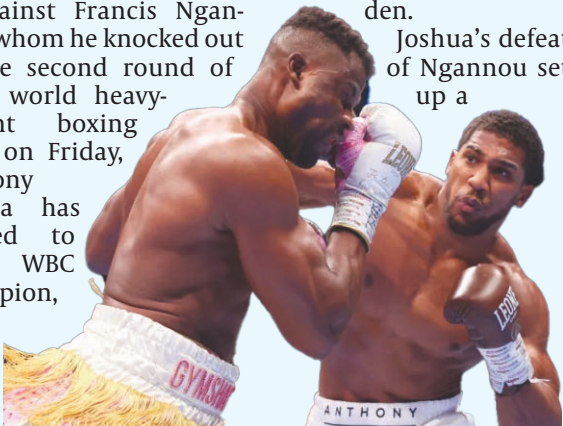
Following the most recent collapse in negotiations last year, Fury insisted he was 'done' with Joshua. But it now seems more than likely that they will face each other in the not-so-distant future due to Saudi Arabia's monetary involvement.

Joshua will have to wait until Usyk and Fury fulfil their two-fight agreement, of course, but he isn't keen on sitting around.

Speaking to Sky Sports at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on Saturday, Joshua called for a fight with Fury.

"I'll fight him in his back garden, it doesn't matter to me," said Joshua.

"I'm a fighting man, you know what I'm saying? Wherever, whenever, however - it doesn't matter. As long as we deliver for the fans, that's the main thing."



Anthony Joshua (right) knocked out Francis Ngannou in the second round of their heavyweight boxing challenge in Saudi Arabia...at the weekend.

SOLUTION

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Our Sincere Gratitude

We the family of Sir Emmanuel Itoya Ijewere, Ubiaja, Esan South-East LGA, Edo State wish to register our heartfelt and profound thanks to everyone who contributed in one way or the other, towards the successful and remarkable burial obsequies of our late husband, father, grandfather, brother and uncle, Sir Emmanuel Itoya Ijewere, who was laid to rest on the 2nd of February, 2024.

We specifically wish to place on record our immense gratitude to:

- 1.His Grace, Alfred Adewale Martins, (Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos)
- 2.His Eminence, Anthony Cardinal Okogie, (Emeritus Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos)
- 3.His Lordship, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, (Bishop of Sokoto Diocese)
- 4.Very Rev. Father Francis Ike, (Parish Priest, the Catholic Church of the Assumption, Ikoyi, Lagos)

Our appreciation also goes to:

- 5.His Excellency, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Governor of Lagos State;
- 6.His Excellency Mr. Godwin Obaseki, Governor of Edo State;
- 7.His Excellency Mr. Peter Obi, former Governor of Anambra State;
- 8.His Excellency Senator Ibukunle Amosun, former Governor of Ogun State; and
- 9.Her Excellency Senator (Mrs.) Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor, former Deputy Governor of Lagos State
- 10.Distinguished Senator Kolawole Bajomo

We would like to extend our deepest appreciation and gratitude to the following groups and professional bodies:

- 1.Church of the Assumption, Falomo
- 2.Rev. Fathers and Rev. Sisters
- 3.Knights & Ladies of Saint Mulumba
- 4.Association of Esan Professionals
- 5.South-South and South-East Professionals
- 6.The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria
- 7.Chartered Institute of Directors, Nigeria
- 8.Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria
- 9.Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria
- 10.Ijewere & Co.
- 11.Nigeria Red Cross Society
- 12.Nigeria AgriBusiness Group
- 13.The Buzus
- 14.Unuedo Renaissance
- 15.Professional Colleagues,
- 16.Friends and well-wishers.
- 17.The Ijewere Burial Advisory Committee, under the able leadership of Sir Emmanuel Ikazobor, for their individual and collective support which have been immensely helpful during this difficult time.

Once again, please accept our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude. It is our prayer that the good Lord gives us future opportunities to reciprocate your love, affection and support to us. God bless you all and keep you always in his eternal Grace – Amen.



SIR EMMANUEL ITOYA IJEWERE

KSM, FCA, DF.CIoD, FCTI
(October 30, 1946 – Dec. 28, 2023)

Signed:
Oyamhedan Ijewere for the family

Remembering Dr Herbert Wigwe: A Mentor, Leader, and Visionary

With heavy hearts, we reflect on the life of Dr. Herbert Wigwe who passed away alongside his beloved wife Chizoba Wigwe, their son Chizi Wigwe.

Dr. Herbert's impactful leadership in banking and finance as well as his touch on our personal journeys has left an enduring legacy. His support and vision paved the way for ventures like Flutterwave to flourish. We are forever grateful for his belief in our journey.

He will be greatly missed, but his spirit will always live on in our hearts. Our sincerest condolences to the Wigwe family, and to all who cherished them. May they find comfort and resilience in this trying time.

Signed by:

Olugbenga 'GB' Agboola, Co-Founder & CEO, Flutterwave

Adeleke Adekoya, Co-Founder, Flutterwave

Iyinoluwa Aboyeji, Co-Founder, Flutterwave





In loving memory of

**Dr. Herbert
WIGWE**

The Nestoil Group and Executive Management mourn the tragic loss of **Dr. Herbert Wigwe**, a true visionary and fearless leader, alongside his wife and son.

His innovative spirit and commitment to progress were qualities we deeply admired at **Nestoil**.

We had the pleasure of collaborating with **Dr. Wigwe** at various times on how to develop the energy sector, and his dedication to positive change was unforgettable.

His exemplary leadership was an inspiration to many. His innovative spirit transformed the banking landscape and other sectors he was involved with, notably Wigwe University where he wanted to produce future leaders for the global market. His leadership will be sorely missed. Our deepest condolences go out to his family, loved ones and colleagues.

*May their souls rest
in perfect peace Amen*

**Board &
Management,
Nestoil Group**



Alabi Williams

SMS only: 08116759790;
email: williams.alabi@guardian.ng



Nigeria's women cricket team qualifies for semifinals /28

Before another piecemeal amendment

THE National Assembly appears upbeat, as lawmakers begin another amendment of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Every budget year, the NASS sets aside close to N1 billion for the ritual and it's on record that N24.8 billion have been expended to correct the Constitution that was originally handed over by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, former military head of state in 1999.

As the military exited, they produced the 1999 Constitution to help the civilian administration deliver quality government to the people. So, despite other shortcomings, the Constitution was purported to be the guiding manual for democratic governance.

It outlined expectations in areas of security, the economy, wellbeing of citizens, duties of government, obligations on the part of citizens, public finance, the judiciary, regulation of political parties, elections etc.

Elected officials swear by the Constitution, pledging to conform to, observe and apply its provisions, the essence that distinguishes the civilian dispensation from military regimes, in form and content.

For instance, while citizens had no power to hold military regimes accountable, the 1999 Constitution provides in Chapter Two that sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria, from whom the government derives all powers and authority.

It goes on to state in Chapter Two Section 14 (1) (b) and (c) that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government; and the participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.

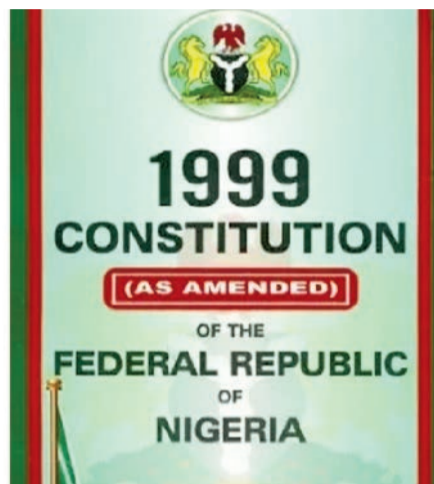
Twenty-four years after the proclamation of democratic rule, many of the promises contained in the Constitution are not in operation. Citizens are unable to fully participate in their government as prescribed; instead, less than 20 per cent of the population is manipulated to enthrone civilian rulers. The electoral process has been hijacked by politicians, with INEC degraded from role of regulator to mere observer at elections.

Citizens' security and welfare that are the primary duties of government have been abandoned by elected politicians. School children are picked from schools at will, with government playing catch-up every time, chasing after kidnappers and endangering innocent children. Farmers pay taxes to terrorists before they are allowed to cultivate their land.

Citizens' welfare indices have sunken to distress levels, with jobless persons outnumbering the few that earn incomes. Families are struggling to survive excruciating policies of a civilian government that swore to the Constitution to prioritise their wellbeing above every other consideration, including the asphyxiating recommendations of World Bank/IMF.

This same Constitution in Section 15(4) provides that; "the State shall foster a feeling of belonging and of involvement among the various peoples of the Federation, to the end that loyalty to the nation shall override sectional loyalties." Sadly, at no other time in the country's existence, is the polity more polarised than what obtains today.

Nepotism ranks high in government's list of malfeasance. But the Constitution at Section 14(3) states that the composition and conduct of affairs of government shall reflect federal character to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty. The idea is to ensure that no tribe



or region dominates others. Today, this section of the Constitution is flagrantly disregarded and when you dare to point it out, supporters and people in government blatantly retort that Buhari also did the same. Maybe Buhari is the constitution they operate. Sad.

Clearly, this Constitution of 1999 is lame, and each attempt by self-serving lawmakers to tamper with it renders it more otiose. Lawmakers go to areas where their interests are largely served. They run away from provisions that will make institutions stronger and governance more accountable.

For instance, as the Federal Government and states now earn triple revenues from imported petrol taxes, and they seem not to know what to do with the excess naira, this is the best chance to test the provisions of Chapter Two. The Constitution in Section 16(1) (a) (b) pronounces the economic objective that will guarantee national prosperity; to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity. In 16(2)(c), it promises that the economic system shall not allow concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of a few individuals or a group, but shall harness the natural resources to serve the common good.

The Constitution also provides that suitable shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled shall be provided for all citizens.

If only the citizens know what the present Constitution generously recommends for their wellbeing and they are served, they may not ask for another. If only the citizens become active participants in the affairs of the country and stop surrendering their powers to leeching politicians, they will first demand full justification of the 1999 Constitution, before conceding that more money is wasted on cosmetic amendments or for a new document.

The Constitution promised that the Nigerian State shall be based on the principles of democracy and social justice, not one powered by the

whims of a power-drunk governor or that of an imperial president. The Constitution does not envisage a body of lawmakers whose constituency project budgets empower them beyond their natural capacities.

These legislators have empowered themselves so much that when they go home, they flaunt excess wealth, they live larger than life, swelled by the resources that ought to go to the constituents via other legitimate and equitable means. They dominate the electoral space, neutralising all reasonable opposition, disorienting voters and commercializing elections. That nonsense must stop.

In Section 15(5), the Constitution says: "The State shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power." But there is abuse of power everywhere.

Because of the many lies the Constitution has told of itself, and the promises it has not delivered, some stakeholders have called for a new document to be forged, bearing in mind emerging realities of further polarisation, mutual distrust among ethnic nationalities and failure of successive government to deliver basic comfort to citizens since 1999.

Reacting to the promise by the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu, that a new constitution will be ready in 24 months, foremost advocates of a new people-owned constitution, the Nigerian Indigenous Nationalities Alliance for Self-determination (NINAS), insists that the National Assembly lacks the legitimacy to add to or subtract from the 1999 Constitution, the document NINAS says is a forgery and must be dismantled.

NINAS said: "Let it be known to all that the fraudulent imposition of the 1999 Constitution via Abdulsalami Abubakar's Decree 2 of 1999 was a treasonous act, tantamount to the hijack and confiscation of the sovereignty of the constituent peoples of Nigeria, to whom the authorship of the

atrocious constitution is falsely credited in the preamble to the Constitution.

"The suggestion that the National Assembly could somehow unilaterally manufacture a "new constitution" by virtue of some power that could be drawn from the 1999 Constitution, is most reprehensible and it would be tantamount to and a further compounding of the treason and fraud of 1999, should the National Assembly attempt to cobble and foist another illegitimate constitution on Nigeria, standing on the dubious authority of the so-called 1999 Constitution."

Despite the time and resources invested to update the Electoral Act, which yielded the 2022 version, the 2023 general elections became more discredited than previous ones. Some stakeholders are not impressed with these money-guzzling piece-meal efforts to enhance a constitution that is so unpopular.

Millions of citizens have no relationship with that document. The more it is amended, the more confused the polity becomes. Far-reaching and radical turn-around, such as implementing the Justice Uwais' recommendation on electoral reform, having a unicameral/part-time legislature, voting funds to activate the welfare provisions in Chapter Two, making Nigerians feel secure in their homes and farms and making it hard for kidnappers to invade schools and farms to capture citizens are basic amendments Nigerians need.

Not cosmetics!

SCOTUS prolongs America's democracy

FORMER President Donald Trump of the United States is not popular among millions of people in democratic settings across the globe, particularly in Europe. The Europeans hate his guts. Apart from what they consider to be the man's doubtful democratic credentials, they disdain his disregard for allies of the United States on peace-keeping concerns around the globe.

Trump is more disposed to NATO partners spending own defence budgets rather than wait on the U.S. At home and abroad, the man is loathed, but the harder detractors try to stop him, the more he soars in various polls and is close to becoming the Republican nominee for the presidential election, come November.

That possibility haunts his loathers. The man is embroiled in a couple of significant lawsuits and investigations, including his alleged role in the January 6, 2021 Capitol Hill riots, alleged mishandling of White House documents and several probes into his finances.

Trump haters now look up to his heavy case dockets for a trump card to frustrate his return as President of the United States. In December, two states, Maine and Colorado had challenged Trump's ballot status based on allegations of what he said and did before and during the January 6.

The matter had gone to the U.S. Supreme Court to decide whether states can bar candidates for federal elections. More states waited anxiously to delist Trump.

On March 4, 2024, the justices of the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS), ruled that states do not have the right to disqualify candidates based on the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment's Section 3. With that, they saved that country's democracy from what could have been an invitation to anarchy.

I see a lot of lessons in that for Nigeria. The justices of SCOTUS did not pander to popular opinion, which is to crucify Trump and endanger democracy. In Nigeria, the judiciary should consider what's best for the country, not for the politicians.

Section 14(3) states that the composition and conduct of affairs of government shall reflect federal character to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty. The idea is to ensure that no tribe or region dominates others.

Today, this section of the Constitution is flagrantly disregarded and when you dare to point it out, supporters and people in government blatantly retort that Buhari also did the same. Maybe Buhari is the constitution they operate. Sad.

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