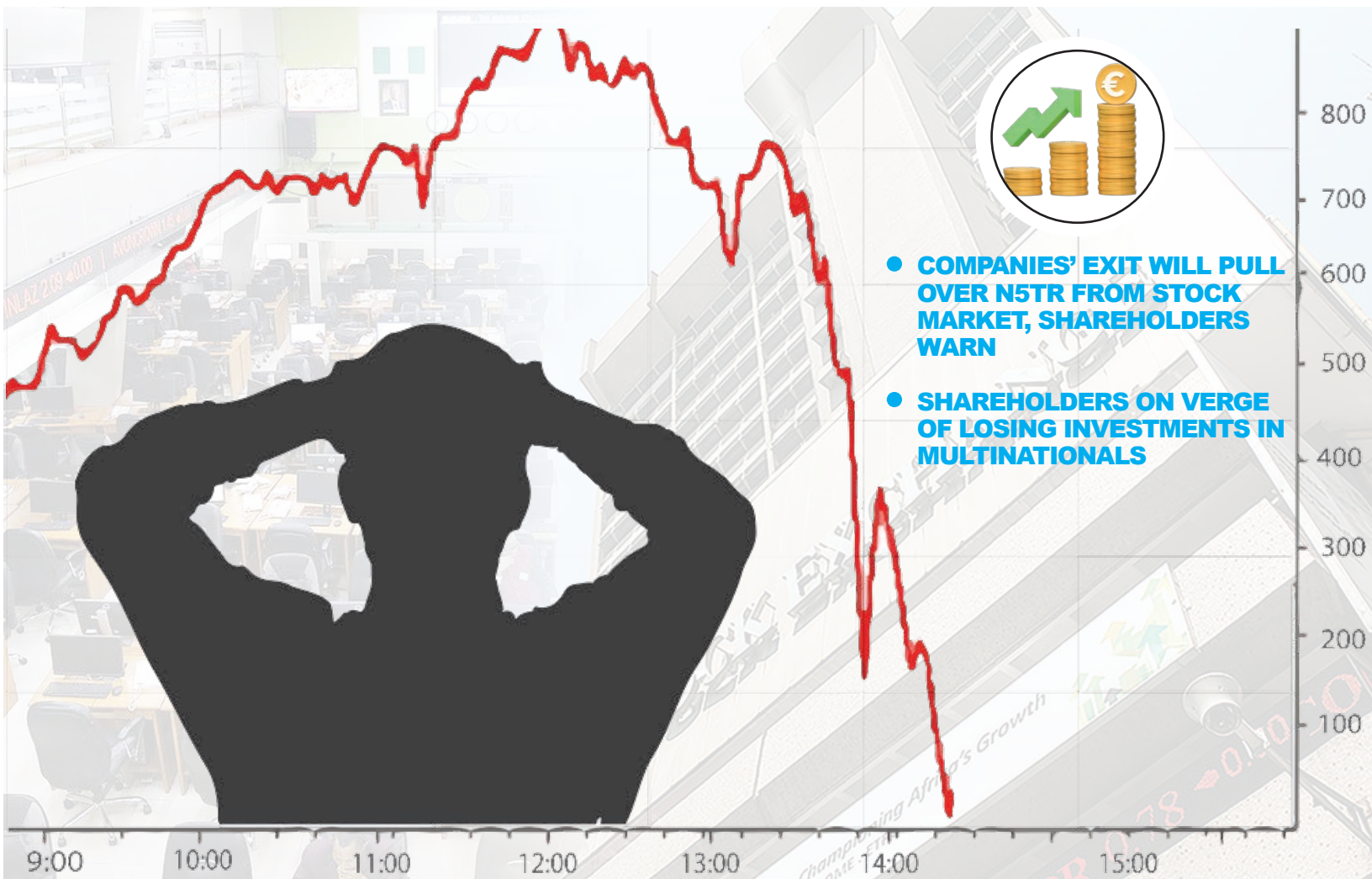


Investors may forfeit dividends as firms struggle to survive PAGE 6



Bandits storm Plateau market, kill seven, abduct Chinese in Kwara
NEWS PAGE 3

Tinubu promises to fix farmers, herders' crisis in three weeks
NEWS PAGE 3



Senators in for feisty session over Ningi's N3tr budget padding claim
NEWS PAGE 6

Open borders to address food crisis, Kano gov tells Tinubu
NEWS PAGE 5

Nigeria, others raise concerns about terrorism financing in West Africa
BUSINESS PAGE 15

Man nabbed for allegedly killing daughter for money ritual METRO PAGE 8

The Guardian Conscience, Nurtured by Truth

Get your ePaper, scan the code

Scan the code for a better reading experience. Get access to our independent, bias-free and exclusive news content. You can also subscribe here: epaper.guardian.ng

guardian.ng

SCAN QR CODE

Panorama

www.guardian.ng

Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

SPOTLIGHT

UK bans foreign health workers from bringing dependants

THE United Kingdom (UK) government has banned international health and care workers from bringing their dependants to the country on work visas.

Announcing this in a post on its X account on Monday, the UK Home Office said the move is "part of its plan to deliver the biggest ever cut in migration."

"From today, care workers entering the UK on Health and Care Worker visas can no longer bring dependants," the statement read.

A graphic banner accompanying the post read "Banned: Overseas care workers from bringing dependants".

The statement added that "120,000 people who arrived

last year would no longer be eligible under our new rules".

In December the UK Home Office announced the plan to reduce "unprecedented" and "unsustainable" levels of legal migration to the United Kingdom (UK).

James Cleverly, home secretary, said apart from the ban on bringing dependants, workers would need to earn at least £38,700 to obtain a visa, up from £26,200.

"We will stop overseas care workers from bringing family, dependants and we will require firms in England to

be regulated by the Health Care Quality Commission in order for them to sponsor visas," he said.

"Approximately, 120,000 dependants accompanied 100,000 care workers in the year ending September 2023, but only 25% of the dependants are estimated to be in work, meaning that a significant number are joining public services rather than helping to grow the economy."

"We recognize that healthcare workers do great work in our NHIS and health sector, but it's also important

that immigrants make a big enough financial contribution. Therefore, it will increase annual immigration healthcare charge by 66% from £624 to £1035 to raise, on average, £1.3 billion for the health services of the country every year."

The UK had recently restricted foreign students from bringing family members with them.

The UK Home Office said the development was necessary to stop people from using the student visa as a backdoor route to work in the UK.

NIDCOM congratulates Olatunji on Australian Auditor General appointment

THE Chairman/CEO, Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), Mrs. Abike Dabiri-Erewa has described as well-deserved and commendable the appointment of Mr. Bola Oyetunji as the Auditor-General of the New South Wales, Australia.

In a Congratulatory message, the NIDCOM boss said the news was heart-warming. Dabiri-Erewa urged Oyetunji to use his new position to inspire the younger generation, especially Nigerians, saying "anything is possible to achieve through honesty, integrity, passion and hard work."

In similar manner, the NIDCOM boss has said the book



Oyetunji

Omowale: One Man's Justice Journey, authored by Dr. Chris Brooks, an African-American, who has discovered his Nigerian ancestry and decided to relocate his family to Nigeria, is highly commendable and heart warming.



Abike Dabiri-Erewa (left) with Brooks

WEATHER REPORT

Sunny atmosphere anticipated over the Northern region with prospects of localized thunderstorms in parts of Taraba. Sunny atmosphere with few cloud patches expected over North Central region in the morning. Later in the day, localised thunderstorms envisaged in parts of Kwara, Kogi and Benue. Cloudy atmosphere with intervals of sunshine expected over the Southern region with prospects of isolated thunderstorms in parts of Abia, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Rivers in the morning. Later in the day, localised thunderstorms anticipated over parts of Enugu, Imo, Abia, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Oyo, Anambra, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Lagos and Rivers.

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 3606

OUR GIRLS STILL MISSING

Tope Templer Olaiya, News Editor

@TopeTempler



NFF warns firms against ambushing S'Eagles, other national teams

By Christian Okpara

THE Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has through its marketing outfit, Pamodzi Sports Marketing Company, warned some firms to desist from ambushing the rights it granted its partners and sponsors or face legal action. The NFF listed the rights as any promotional, advertising, marketing and other commercial exploitation rights and opportunities in relation to the football federation and the national football teams, including players' image rights.

Specifically, the NFF named such firms as sports betting company, Bet9ja and Aiteo,

an integrated energy company in Nigeria, as among organisations infringing on its products without legal authority.

Pamodzi, yesterday, said the "two companies, especially, and a few others have been trying to reap where they did not sow and have continued to associate their products and services with the Super Eagles, one of the properties of the NFF that its sponsors and partners have been granted exclusive rights to."

According to Pamodzi Sports Marketing Company's Chief Executive Officer, Mike Itemuagbor: "The Super Eagles' impressive outing and

the inherent potential showed at the 34th Africa Cup of Nations in Cote d'Ivoire of returning and even surpassing their best ever performance in the immediate future and leading to the 2025 AFCON and the 2026 FIFA World Cup have endeared them to Nigerians and corporate citizens have been identifying with the team."

Itemuagbor said Bet9ja's activities around Super Eagles' participation at the AFCON 2023 aimed at raising their brand awareness without the sponsorship rights are unethical and unlawful.

RANDOM FACTS

- Having a childlike sense of wonder promotes good health, slows down perception of the passage of time, and encourages collaboration.
- Spending more time outdoors decrease your chances of depression.
- The word 'chillax' and 'whatevs' are now actual words in the dictionary.
- We feel "hangry" because it's harder to control emotions when our brains are low on glucose.
- By trying to suppress a sneeze, you can rupture a blood vessel in your neck or head and die.
- Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the

TODAY IN HISTORY

- World Day Against Cyber Censorship
- 2019 - Italy
Cristiano Ronaldo scored a hat-trick as Juventus stormed back from a 2-0 first-leg deficit to beat Atletico Madrid 3-0 in the Champions League quarter-finals. With Atletico packing their defence, Ronaldo made the crucial breakthrough in the 27th minute when he rose to head in Bernardeschi's cross at the far post.
- 2018 - Nigeria
Pres. Buhari expressed shock during his visit that after two months, Inspector-General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, disobeyed his directives to stay in Benue until the blood-letting between farmers and herdsmen was resolved.
- 2016 - Nigeria
Felix Ovudoroye Ibru, architect, Senator and first governor of Delta State, died aged 80. Until his death he was President General of the Urhobo Progressive Union (UPU).
- 2015 - Liberia
World Health Organization estimated that Ebola outbreak killed over 10,000 people, mostly in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.
- 2014 - Nigeria
Pres. Goodluck Jonathan ordered a forensic audit by international firms into \$20 billion allegedly missing from petroleum sales, following weeks of outrage and demands by a Senate committee and the Central Bank governor, Lamido Sanusi.
- 2013 - Nigeria
Nigeria pardoned Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, former governor of Bayelsa State and former political benefactor of Pres. Goodluck Jonathan. He was convicted of stealing millions of dollars while serving as governor 1999-2005
- 2009 - USA
Bernard Madoff pleaded guilty in New York to charges he carried out an epic fraud that robbed investors around the world of \$18 billion, the largest in Wall Street's history. It turned the revered money man into an overnight global disgrace whose name became synonymous with the economic meltdown.
- 2008 - Rwanda
A UN tribunal extended the sentence of Rwandan Roman Catholic priest Athanase Serombawar to life in prison upholding his war crimes conviction for ordering militiamen to burn a church with 1,500 people inside during 1994 Rwandan genocide. He was originally sentenced to 15 years in prison

TODAY'S QUOTE

If you keep looking back particularly with anger, you can never make progress and you can never move forward.

FELIX IBRU

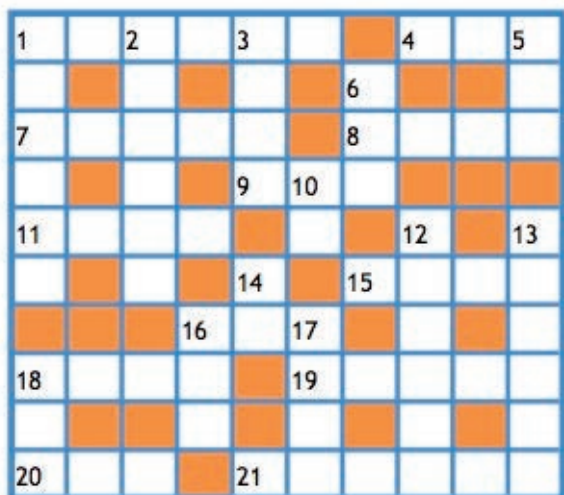
The one perfectly divine thing, the one glimpse of God's paradise given on earth, is to fight a losing battle - and not lose it.

JOHN STEINBECK

Independence is never given to a people, it has to be earned; and, once earned, must be defended.

CHAIM WEIZMANN

CROSS WORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

- 1. Senior Christian cleric, (6).
- 4. Personal consumption exp., abbr., (3).
- 7. Resist attack, (5).
- 8. State in the N. Central USA, (4).
- 9. Night-hunting prey bird, (3).
- 11. Covering for floors, (4).
- 15. Edible grains, (4).
- 16. Large container for liquid, (3).
- 18. Ex-governor of Kano State, (4).
- 19. GOFAMINT General Overseer, (5).
- 20. Pull sharply at, (3).
- 21. Use of wit to criticize behaviour, (6).

© Olulana Olukayode

DOWN

- 1. Scold vigorously, (6).
- 2. Niger Delta region Port, (6).
- 3. Capital city of Norway, (4).
- 5. Date that begins period, (3).
- 6. Thick greasy liquid, (3).
- 10. Western Australia, abbr., (2).
- 11. Town in Ogun state, (5).
- 12. Enyinba FC Head Coach, (6).
- 13. Possible source of danger, (6).
- 14. Egyptian Sun god, (2).
- 16. Exuberant vitality, (3).
- 17. 'Nine' in Hausa language, (4).
- 18. Decompose., (3).

Check page 31 for solution to the puzzle

Bandits storm Plateau market, kill seven, abduct Chinese in Kwara

From **Isa Abdusalami Ahovi** (Jos) and **Mansur Aramide** (Ilorin)

Allegedly demand N40tr ransom for 16 Kaduna captives

NO fewer than seven people have been reportedly shot dead, while several others sustained injuries after bandits invaded a market in Zurak Campani, Wase Local Council of Plateau State.

It was learnt that the incident occurred on market day when the community was bubbling with commercial activities.

A youth leader, Abdullahi Hussaini, who confirmed the development, told newsmen that the gunmen stormed the market around 2:00p.m. on Sunday and immediately opened fire on those transacting businesses.

He said: "The gunmen arrived at the market in their numbers on motorcycles. They started shooting sporadically, killing seven people instantly, while many others were injured. The gunmen successfully launched the attack and fled without any resistance because people were not expecting any security threat now.

"The gunmen fled into the bush, but police personnel have been deployed to the community to restore law and order. We are calling on more security deployment in the area because we don't know what may happen anytime soon."

Contacted for confirmation, spokesperson for the state

police command, DSP Alabo Alfred, did not respond to inquiries.

MEANWHILE, Governor Caleb Mutfwang has charged Muslim faithful to pray for peace and prosperity in the state.

The appeal, which was contained in his Ramadan message to the Muslim community, reads in part: "Ramadan is a season of love, care, supplication. I extend my heartfelt greetings and best wishes on behalf of the Government and the peace-loving people of Plateau State."

BESIDES, gunmen have abducted a Chinese in Ilorin, Kwara State.

The masked abductors shot their way into an isolated facility at the Eiyenkorin area of the state, where the foreign national had lodged for over two months.

According to a police source, three suspects have so far been arrested in connection to the abduction.

The incident happened at Cherish Guest on Sunday at about 8p.m., the source added.

On gaining entry, they opened sporadic fire to scare

away likely intruders.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, Ejire-Adeyemi Adetoun, confirmed that "six armed men had forcibly entered the guest house and abducted a Chinese national identified as Williams Zang."

According to her, Williams is a former employee of Erkang Quarry.

She added: "The assailants utilised the manager's vehicle, a black Toyota Venza, with registration number Lagos FST 701 HG to transport the victim.

"Subsequently, our tactical

teams combed the entire area and its neighborhoods. This led to the recovery of the aforementioned vehicle along Ilorin/Ogbomoso road at about 0030Hrs.

"It is suspected that the perpetrators employed a standby motorcycle to transport the victim further into the bush from the main road. At present, three suspects have been apprehended, and investigations are ongoing."

ALSO, kidnapers of the 16 Kaduna residents have allegedly demanded a N40 trillion ransom for release of the locals abducted from the Gonin Gora area of the state.

Addressing reporters yesterday, a community leader, John Yusuf, said the bandits, who contacted family members of the victims, also demanded 11 Hilux vans and 150 motorcycles.

This is the first time bandits would make such a huge demand since commencement of abduction for ransom in Nigeria.

On February 28, hoodlums killed two residents of Angwan Auta in Gonin Gora and abducted several others.

After the attack, residents

on February 29, blocked the Kaduna-Abuja highway for several hours to protest the killing and abduction.

Yusuf said the bandits attacked the community twice within the week.

He confirmed: "The bandits have contacted us. They are demanding N40 trillion, 11 Hilux vans and 150 motorcycles for the release of 16 people they are holding captive."

The community leader continued: "Where are we going to get this kind of money?

Even if we sell the entire community, we cannot raise N40 trillion. Even Nigeria, as a country, has never made a budget of N40 trillion.

"The abductions happened twice within a four-day interval. During the first attack, three people were kidnapped, while in the second attack, 13 people were abducted, bringing the total number of people being held captive to 16."

He explained that the communities in Birnin Gwari are surrounded by bushes that serve as hideouts for the bandits, adding that the establishment of a military base would tackle the criminal operations in the area.



Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu (left); Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari; President Bola Tinubu; Niger State Governor, Mohammed Bago and Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi, during the flag-off of agriculture mechanisation revolution for food security and commissioning of a new airport terminal in Minna, Niger State...yesterday.

Our investigation focused on Emezie's associates, ICPC witness informs court

From **Ameh Ochojila**, Abuja

A WITNESS to the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC), Michael Agboro, yesterday, told the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court, Abuja that the investigation report into alleged procurement fraud by former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emezie, focused solely on his family members and associates.

Agboro, who initially testified that Emezie leveraged his position for alleged personal gain in contract

- Says CBN ex-gov not signatory to firms in alleged procurement scam
- 'Buhari not aware of depletion of Nigeria's foreign reserves'

awards, later clarified during cross-examination by respondent's lawyer, Matthew Burkkar (SAN), that the defendant was not a signatory to the two companies implicated in the reported procurement scam.

The witness also during cross-examination said the exercise was an inter-agency investigation by the Department of State Services (DSS), ICPC; Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB).

He, however, stated that a copy of the report was not available in court during yesterday's proceedings.

When asked who headed the team that investigated the case by the defendant's legal representative, the ICPC investigator returned a negative answer.

Also, when asked if the alleged contracts were executed by the contractors, Agboro said he could not verify.

Led in evidence by lawyer to the Federal Government, Ro-

timi Oyedepo (SAN), the witness said the respondent's wife, Margret Omoile, allegedly utilised Architekun Nigeria Limited, where she held sway as director to secure contracts from the apex bank during her husband's tenure as CBN helmsman.

FORMER President Muhammadu Buhari was not aware of the "depletion of Nigeria's foreign reserves" under Emezie's watch, presidential spokesman, Ajuri Ngelale, has stated.

Tinubu promises to fix farmers, herders' crisis in three weeks

From **Bala Yahaya**, Minna

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu has indicated readiness to end the perennial farmers, herders' clashes in Nigeria.

He promised to draw up programmes that would end the problem within three weeks.

The President gave the assurance yesterday at the inauguration of a mechanised agricultural project in Minna, Niger State.

Urges govts to begin payment of wage awards

He said state governors should provide lands to facilitate his scheme. His words: "We must reorient our farming population, including livestock programmes.

"I don't see why Nigeria can't feed all our pupils with one pint of milk a day if the dairy system is well harnessed.

"I know what it means as an economic sabotage for cows

to eat up the crops and vegetation of our land.

"When we reorient the herders and make provisions for cattle rearing, governors must provide the land and I, as the President, is committed to giving you, in two to three weeks' time, a comprehensive programme that will solve this problem."

The President, who equally commissioned the remod-

elled domestic terminal at the Bola Ahmed Tinubu International Airport and laid foundation of the hajj terminal in Minna, lauded Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago for leading the way in the agricultural revolution and urged others to key into the policy.

He also disclosed that the Federal Government will soon commence the student loan and social security schemes for the elderly, vulnerable and weak.

Adebayo tasks Tinubu on security

A MONG growing insecurity, presidential candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the 2023 general elections, Adewole Adebayo, has reminded President Bola Tinubu that he has a constitutional duty to maintain law and order, as well as secure Nigerians and their property.

He said the Nigerian leader does not need to blow his trumpet if, indeed, he has lived up to expectations, as his performance would be open for everyone to see.

Adebayo noted that if the testimony of his performance is true in Gboko, Zaki-Elbiam, Biu, Sokoto Umuahia and everywhere, the manifestation would have been everywhere by now.

According to him, the government has a duty to properly be in charge and make things work well.

His words: "However tense the economic situation may be, they should be able to keep law and order if they really want to. However crazy the bandits in the forest

might be, they should be able to keep order on the streets. However mischievous and evil the kidnapers might be, it should be seen that there is government's presence. You don't need your opponent to criticise you or your friends to applaud you.

"If the President is working very hard, people will see it. Even your opponent will say I don't agree with him, but he's working hard. So, whether you like the All Progressives Congress (APC) or detest Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State, you will not ignore the red line (train) and say I am not going to take the train, or I can't see the train. It is very obvious; you will see that he is working."

He reiterated that bad governance makes insecurity and poverty fester, even as he advised Tinubu to return to Chapter Two of the 1999 Constitution, which according to him, is where all solutions to the country's problems lie.

TheGuardian
GUARDIAN PRINT
01 4489621-2
GUARDIAN COMMERCIAL
01 4489646
08136243622
GUARDIAN DIGITAL
0814 380 8843
GUARDIAN LIFE
0803 056 7059

For Advert Enquiry, Call:
0803 337 1431
ABUJA OFFICE
0809 594 5917
0808 583 5661

Cybercrime Act: A law enforcement bid or witch-hunt of journalists?

The intersection between the Cybercrime Act and journalists' rights to freely disseminate information is getting blurry, with the government allegedly leveraging the former to stifle rights to free speech of the latter. Recent arrests of journalists for cybercrimes have necessitated the need for proper demarcation between combating cybercrimes and rights of the Fourth Estate of the realm, AMEH OCHOJILA

THE balance between regulating online activities and safeguarding freedom of expression poses a serious challenge in Nigeria. The 'prosecution' of journalists under cyberbullying charges raises concerns about government overreach through the provisions of the Cybercrime Act, 2015. This legislation, akin to modern sedition laws, grants broad powers to monitor and control online content, which potentially stifles free speech.

For instance, the publisher of *Cross River Watch*, an online newspaper, Agba Jalingo, was arrested and charged with "conspiracy to cause unrest" after publishing a series of stories on financial accountability in Cross River. Another journalist, Olivia Fejiri, was arrested after publishing a story alleging corruption in Sterling Bank of Nigeria.

Also, a freelance journalist and broadcaster, Rotimi Jolayemi, was also detained for reciting a poem criticising former minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed.

These cases illustrate the dilemma of journalists, who are often caught between the Cybercrime Act and their constitutional rights to freedom of expression and information. While the government has the responsibility to prevent and punish cybercrimes such as fraud, hacking, identity theft, cyberstalking and online harassment, it also has the obligation to respect and protect the rights of journalists to report on matters of public interest without fear of intimidation or reprisal.

According to the International Press Centre (IPC), a media rights organisation, the Cybercrime Act contains vague and ambiguous provisions that could be used to criminalise legitimate journalistic activities or dissenting opinions. For example, Section 24 of the Act prohibits cyberstalking and cyberbullying, which are defined as sending messages or posting statements that are "false, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience danger, obstruction, insult, injury, criminal intimidation, enmity, hatred, ill will or needless anxiety to another". The IPC argues that this

section is too broad and subjective, and could be used to silence critics or whistleblowers, who expose corruption or misconduct by public officials.

The IPC also notes that Section 38 of the Act empowers law enforcement agencies to access and intercept data from any computer system or network without a court order, which could violate the privacy and confidentiality of journalists and their sources. The IPC calls for a review and amendment of the Cybercrime Act to ensure that it is consistent with international standards on freedom of expression and information, and that it does not infringe on the rights of journalists and other online users.

The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) also urges the government to respect the role of journalists as watchdogs of democracy and ensure their safety and security. The NUJ advises journalists to comply with the ethical standards of their profession and avoid publishing false or defamatory information that could harm the reputation or dignity of others. The NUJ also encourages journalists to seek legal advice and assistance when faced with charges or threats under the Cybercrime Act or any other law.

The trial of journalists under cybercrime charges is a reminder of the need to strike a balance between combating online crimes and respecting peoples' rights. The government should ensure that the Cybercrime Act is not used as a tool to suppress dissent or censor information that is in the public interest. The journalists should also ensure that they adhere to the principles of accuracy, fairness and accountability in their work. Only then can both parties contribute to a healthy and vibrant online space that fosters democracy and development in Nigeria.

Section 24(1) of the Cybercrime Act, 2015 reads: "A person who knowingly or intentionally sends a message or other matter by means of computer systems or network that is grossly offensive, pornographic or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character or causes any such message or matter to be sent, or he knows to be false, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, injury, criminal intimidation, enmity, hatred, ill will or needless anxiety to another or causes such a message to be sent, commits an offence under this Act and is liable on conviction to a fine of not more than N7million or imprisonment for a term, not more than three years or both."

Interestingly, section 39 of the 1999 Constitution provides that: "(1) every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference."

However, Section 45 of the 1999 Constitution provides: "(1) Nothing in sections 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41 of this Constitution, shall invalidate any law that

“While the government has the responsibility to prevent and punish cybercrimes such as fraud, hacking, identity theft, cyberstalking and online harassment, it also has the obligation to respect and protect the rights of journalists to report on matters of public interest without fear of intimidation or reprisal.”

reasonably justified in a democratic society in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health; or for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other persons.”

While the government argues for the necessity to maintain public order and safety, international bodies like the ECOWAS Court of Justice have deemed certain provisions incompatible with human rights standards. Calls for the repeal of the Cybercrime Act or its amendment reflect widespread concerns among legal experts, journalists and activists.

Presiding Justice of the ECOWAS court, Justice Keikura Bangura, in a recent judgment asserted that section 24 of the Cybercrime Act does not conform with Articles 9 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Both covenants promote free speech and Nigeria is signatory to them.

Globally, digital rights abuse remains one of the biggest issues facing journalists, activists, and political dissidents. They are more likely to be arrested and detained for alleged violation of digital and internet laws. They also face a high rate of digital harassment and cyberbullying, and are also primary targets of extra-legal cybersurveillance.

Critics argue that the Cybercrime Act contains subjective language and lack of clear definitions. According to them, it undermines constitutional protections of freedom of expression. The Act's enforcement, which is devoid of safeguards, risks arbitrary application and stifling of dissenting voices and undermining democratic principles.

According to Mr Tayo Oyetibo (SAN), the supremacy of the constitution over every other law is an immutable principle of Nigerian law derived from the provisions of section 1(3) of the constitution itself. In creating criminal offences, he noted that section 24(1) of the Cybercrimes Act uses words that are entirely subjective in meaning to describe the actus reus elements of the offences, despite the fact that the actus reus

of an offence ought to be objective and not subjective in definition.

"Worse still, the Cybercrimes Act makes no effort to give certainty to the meanings of any of the words used in its section 24(1) by defining them anywhere in the Act, which means that only judicial definitions can be given to those words in any case where a person is charged with an offence under section 24(1) of the Act.

"In the context of the constitutionally guaranteed right of citizens to freedom of speech under the Nigerian constitution, there is the pressing question of whether the Cybercrime Act is fit for purpose pursuant to which it was enacted, particularly in view of the provisions of its section 24(1).

"It would appear that the answer to this poser is in the negative, which means that it is imperative for deliberate steps to be taken to remedy the situation, particularly against the backdrop of widespread complaints against the deliberate misuse and abuse of the Cybercrimes Act against certain categories of persons in Nigeria," he pointed out.

He argued that it is not a matter in which long winding technical recommendations are necessary. The simple recommendation, he said, is that section 24(1) be entirely deleted from the Cybercrimes Act, due to its apparent irreconcilability with the provisions of section 36(12) and 39(1) of the constitution.

In light of these challenges, stakeholders argued that meaningful reform is imperative to strike a balance between combating cybercrime and upholding fundamental rights. As Nigeria navigates this delicate balance, ensuring that legal frameworks respect constitutionally guaranteed free speech is paramount to safeguarding democracy and fostering a vibrant media landscape.

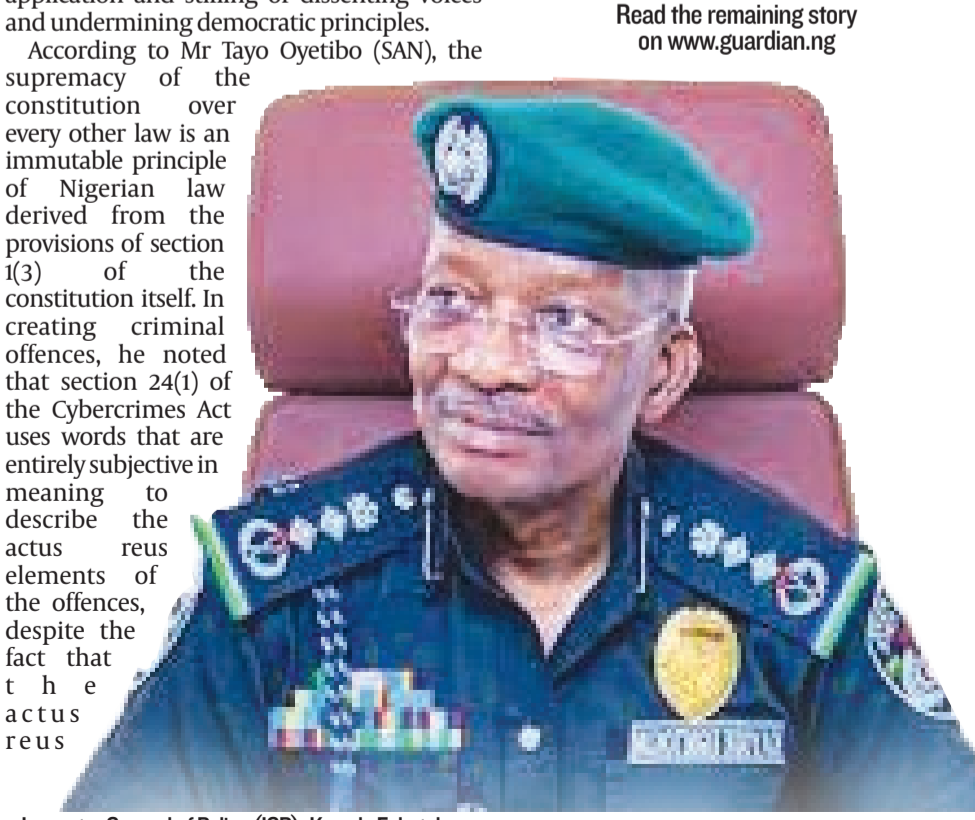
This no doubt brings to fore the need to enlighten journalists on responsible reporting, including ethical considerations, fact-checking, and respecting individuals' privacy and dignity. Striking a balance between these two aspects is essential for maintaining a free and responsible press in society.

However, the Administrator of the National Judiciary Institute (NJI), Justice Salisu Garba Abdullahi wants journalists to always be fair and balanced in reportage of all judicial proceedings and decisions to sustain the ethical standard of all judicial matters in the country.

Read the remaining story on www.guardian.ng



Senate President, Godswill Akpabio



Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun

SSANU threatens strike over unpaid salaries

From Collins Olayinka, Abuja

SENIOR Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) has accused suspected government cabals of frustrating the payment of its four months withheld salaries.

In a communique issued at the end of its 47th regular National Executive Council (NEC) meeting in Federal University of Technology (FUT) Akure, the association's President, Mohammed Haruna Ibrahim, also said while it was not averse to the settlement of withheld salaries of ASUU members, it however, viewed the action as a violation and breach of the post-strike agreement with government on non-victimisation of its members, who participated in the strike.

He added: "We strongly oppose this discriminatory practice, which we view as government's open invitation to industrial crisis. Credible information available to us has it that the directive of Mr President is for all university-based unions to be paid four months' salary."

Tinubu pledges 0.5% GDP to research, technology

From Sodiq Omolayo, Abuja

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu, yesterday, said the Federal Government would allocate 0.5 per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to research and innovation.

The President made the pledge, yesterday, while declaring open the 2024 Technology Expo tagged: "STI: Solution to National Economic Challenges" at Eagles Square, Abuja.

The President's pledge came three years after his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari, made similar promise to the nation.

Buhari had, while declaring open the Technology Expo in 2021, 2022 and 2023, said allocating 0.5 per cent of the nation's GDP to science, technology and innovation would spur development in the country. But the former President's statement in the three editions of the Technology Expo remained just a promise till date.

But President Tinubu, who was represented at the event by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Senator George Akume, said he was aware of his predecessor's vision, assuring that he (Tinubu) would actualise it.

Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Uche Nnaji, said over the years, Nigeria had shown promising signs of a bright future by using Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) as a driving force for its abundant natural and human resources.

Okorie alleges plot to blackmail Tinubu, Akpabio

By Onyedika Agbedo

PIONEER National Chairman of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Chekwas Okorie, has alleged plot to blackmail President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on the budget padding saga.

In a statement yesterday, titled: 'It is time to allow President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to govern Nigeria', Okorie alleged that those behind the plot were also targeting Senate President, Godwill Akpabio.

The former presidential candidate, who was reacting to the allegation by northern senators that the 2024 budget was padded with N3 trillion by the Presidency, expressed worries that while

President Tinubu was yet to complete one year in office,

a "few vocal political scavengers from a particular section of the North" had vowed to blackmail, intimidate and distract him until his administration was derailed.

He observed that the same political elite, who were 99 per cent responsible for the multi-dimensional backwardness in their own part of the North, were out to hide under the umbrella of the non-existent monolithic North to mobilise forces against the government in power.

While urging Nigerians to be vigilant and protect their hard earned democracy, Okorie noted that former President Muhammadu Buhari ruled the country for eight years and history will judge him.

"President Tinubu should be allowed and cooperated

with to govern Nigeria, and history will judge him afterward," he added.

The statement reads: "On Sunday, March 10, 2024, almost all Nigerian newspapers and social media platforms were awash with the highly inflammatory news of the alleged padding of the 2024 budget with a whopping N3 trillion. This weighty allegation was made by a group that called itself the Northern Senators Forum.

"The Chairman of the group, Senator Abdul Ningi, chose the British Broadcasting Service (BBC) Hausa to make this broadcast in which he made other weighty and inciting allegations that portray the North as being at the receiving end of the Tinubu administration. The Senate President, Godwill Akpabio,

was also portrayed as being complicit in shortchanging the North in the 2024 Appropriation Act.

"In the publications under reference, the Senate Committee Chairman on Media and Publicity, Senator Yemi Adaramodu, promptly debunked the allegations of his northern colleagues."

He said the allegation came not long after Senator Ali Ndume, another prominent member of the Northern Senators Forum, "came out firing from all cylinders, threatening political consequences if President Tinubu did not order the reversal of the administrative actions of the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Aviation Ministry to move some of their departments to Lagos for a more efficient and cost effective service delivery."



Chairperson, Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), FCT chapter, Ms Bassey Ikpong (left); President, Female Journalist Network Nigeria (FJNN), Ms Joy Asonye; Chairman of the event/former Director-General, Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Dr Dakuku Peterside; Keynote Speaker/Senior Special Assistant to the President on School Feeding, Dr Yetunde Adeniji; and the Guest Speaker/Chairperson, House of Representatives Press Corps, Ms Grace Ike, during the 2024 International Women's Day Conference, organised by FJNN and NAWOJ to commemorate the day in Abuja...yesterday.

PHOTO: NAN

Revoke licences of non-performing DisCos, FG orders NERC

FEDERAL Government, yesterday, directed the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), to withdraw licences of non-performing electricity distribution companies, Distribution Companies (DisCos).

The government accused the DisCos of not doing enough to improve supply despite the availability of power on the national grid.

The Minister of Power,

Adebayo Adedun, who stated this during a meeting with heads of agencies in Abuja, said the distribution segment remained the weakest link in the electricity supply value chain.

Adedun stressed that NERC must look for creative ways of getting the DisCos to improve supply including the imposition of stiff sanctions on utilities, which fail to pick their allocations and outright cancellation of

licences.

He insisted that the franchise areas covered by the DisCos were too large, adding the government would pursue a restructuring that would create smaller DisCos with companies restricted to one state each.

"Distribution is our weakest point and it is the closest to the consumers. If we don't get distribution right, to Nigerians, we're not doing anything. So, efforts

need to be put on this. In fact, we must intensify our efforts in ensuring that we address all issues relating to distribution," he said

The minister pointed out that willful refusal by any DisCo to take up available power "is a qualified basis for the revocation of licences too", adding that the distribution companies must be ready to pick up 90-99 per cent of load allocated to them.

Open borders to address food crisis, Kano governor tells Tinubu

From Murtala Adewale (Kano) and Matthew Ogune (Abuja)

GOVERNOR Abba Kabir Yusuf of Kano State has appealed to President Bola Tinubu to consider reopening of Nigeria's borders to ease food crisis.

Yusuf made the appeal when he received the Comptroller General of Nigerian Customs Service, Bashir Adeniyi, at Government House in Kano.

He lamented severe hunger in the country,

which he blamed on hike in prices of commodities.

According to the governor, an immediate intervention that can make food available and affordable is the reopening of borders to facilitate importation of commodities.

He added: "We wish to appreciate the President's intervention in the ongoing national food initiative, for considering Kano as the

host for the initiative to be launched, believing that the programme will cushion the effects of food scarcity if implemented"

At the meeting, Yusuf noted the hardship faced by Nigerians, particularly as the Ramadan commenced and underscored the need to open the borders to alleviate the suffering of the people.

He also applauded the ini-

tiative by Customs to commence distribution of food items to citizens of Kano amid prevailing hardships and hunger faced by many, urging the Service to ensure the gesture reaches most Nigerians.

In his remarks, Adewale reiterated the significance of fortifying the bond between the Service and Kano community, emphasising the Service's commitment to collaboration and mutual understanding.

Gavi to deliver HPV vaccines to 86 million girls by 2025

By Musa Adekunle

THE Vaccine Alliance, Gavi, has outlined a roadmap to ensure stable supply of HPV vaccine for adolescent girls in lower-income countries, saying with over 348,000 deaths in 2022, cervical cancer continues to kill women globally.

The plan, detailed in a new report, comes after proactive efforts by Gavi and manufacturers increased vaccine availability.

According to Gavi's projections, overall supply is expected to meet demand by 2025, but careful management is crucial throughout 2024.

The roadmap, developed in collaboration with key partners, emphasises collaboration between governments, manufacturers, and Gavi itself to establish a dependable supply chain for the next decade.

Chief Programme Officer at Gavi, Aurélie Nguyen, said: "For far too long, lower-income countries have lacked access to HPV vaccines.

"To reach our goal of protecting 86 million girls by 2025, we need meticulous management of existing doses and continued donor and manufacturer support."

PwC hinges gender parity on inclusion

By Waliat Musa

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS (PwC) has stressed the need for inclusion towards achieving gender parity in the work place.

A research, titled PwC's *Inclusion Matters*, shows that disparity in pay is a minus for women in the workplace, as only 39 per cent of women feel they are being fairly rewarded financially for their work.

The study highlights that greater inclusion presents clear benefits to employers with women, who feel more included more likely to recommend their employer as a good place to work and have 1.4 times lower turnover intentions than women with lower inclusion scores.

It also shows that having higher levels of inclusion leads women to be 1.4 times more likely to ask for a raise and 1.5 times more likely to ask for a promotion.

The research finds that women's turnover intentions increased (+8 points) this year with one in four women planning to change employers in the next 12 months, just slightly below the turnover intention rate for men at 27 per cent.

Investors may forfeit dividends as firms struggle to survive

By Helen Oji

As the crisis rocking Nigeria's economy continues, retail investors, who are currently grappling with years of downturn and asset losses in the stock market, may forfeit their dividends in the next few years as listed companies battle what appears like an existential battle.

With combined losses of over N540 billion incurred by six multinational firms in their 2023 financial year, the firms may battle for a long period for stability.

With the economy still very deep in the market, intelligence suggests most of the affected companies would post losses in the current operation year. Even if they record gains, the companies have huge holes in last year's operations to plug and may not bother about dividend payments until they fully recover from their losses.

The six firms including Nestle, MTN Nigeria, Nigerian Breweries (NB), Cadbury, Guinness and Dangote Sugar Refinery, an indigenous company, are among the most capitalised companies in the stock market. They were hitherto assumed to be immune from the vagaries of the overwhelming challenges.

The losses were due to foreign exchange loans they took from their parent company or international sources. These multinationals made sales in naira before converting to dollars to enable them to pay the interest on the loans and part of the principal. The more the Naira falls, the more Naira will be required to pay their dollar loans and due to the

- Companies' exit will pull over N5tr from stock market, shareholders warn
- Shareholders on verge of losing investments in multinationals
- Crisis raises fresh fear over delisting

persistent surge in exchange rate, dollar liabilities exceed its assets.

A good number of shareholders have invested huge amounts of money, even their life savings in the firms due to their perceived good corporate governance principles and proven track records of dividend payment over the years.

Unfortunately, the lingering foreign exchange crisis has crippled shareholders' investment in these firms, wiping out shareholders' funds and turning it into negative positions, thereby hampering their ability to pay dividends and overall potential growth.

Negative shareholders' funds mean that the company's shareholders no longer have equity on paper and could need a substantial injection of equity to remain in effective control.

Operators have described the development as a huge disincentive to investment as shareholders may need to embark on an endless wait for dividend payout until companies recover from the losses suffered from the floating of the naira.

For investors, dividends are an important source of income. They provide a steady stream of cash flow, which can be particularly attractive for those seeking income stability.

President of NewDimension Shareholders Association of Nigeria, Patrick Ajudua, said most of the shareholders may likely

move their investments to dividend-paying companies with potential for capital appreciation.

According to him, the losses have not only affected the financial viability of these firms but have threatened their going concern status resulting in liquidity and solvency problems.

He said investors currently have no assurance of the sustainability of their investment and therefore will move to other sectors.

Ajudua pointed out that with the current trend, shareholders are doubtful of the continuity of these firms in the Nigerian market.

"Only when these companies are still in operation in Nigeria can you talk about dividends as most of them are now under Intensive Care Unit (ICU). As shareholders, we are disappointed with this policy that has resulted in loss and erosion of investment.

"The losses and the impact have caused excruciating pain to the staff and shareholders of these firms. The FX policy has resulted in job losses, rightsizing and delisting of companies."

National coordinator of Progressive Shareholders Association, Boniface Okezie, said retail investors have lost huge amounts of money with dividend forfeiture because they invested a large chunk in these firms due to their policies of consistent dividend payout over the years.

He said the stock market

would witness massive sell-off from retail investors to recoup their investment in other companies for sustenance as some of these retail shareholders are presently in a state of panic, considering the huge losses they have incurred from their investments in equities in the past.

According to him, shareholders depend on dividends from these highly capitalised firms to cater to their financial needs.

Okezie said shareholders that have pressing needs may consider offloading some units of their holdings in these firms but added that the price may not be attractive because of the current low valuation of the stocks.

"Indeed, shareholders are in for hard times because, with the level of capital erosion, it will take courage and hard

work on parts of these companies to bounce back. Till then, shareholders will have to sell some of their holdings to recoup their investment and make ends meet, this is not the time to hold strongly whatever you have, this is to sell."

Nestle is the world's largest food and beverage company with operations in over 190 countries and currently 15th most valuable stock on the Nigerian exchange with a market capitalisation of N713 billion, about 1.32 per cent of the overall market capitalisation.

Analysts believe that the cost efficiency it enjoys on the back of economies of scale from its wide range of products underpinned by its route to market and local input sourcing strategy.

However, the company recorded a Loss Before Tax (LBT) of N104 billion in its 2023 full-year operations, against Profit Before Tax (PBT) of N71 billion achieved in the corresponding period in 2022 and incurred a for-

foreign exchange loss of N195 billion, which was the major reason for the loss position.

The forex losses also resulted in a wipeout of its shareholders' funds, which currently stands at a negative N78 billion from N30.2 billion a year earlier. This means that the company's liabilities now exceed its assets.

Similarly, MTN Nigeria Communications, currently the fifth most capitalised firm with N4.21 trillion capitalisation, representing 7.8 per cent of the equities market, recorded a loss after tax of N137 billion, its first loss since it was listed in 2019.

The company said the net loss for the year has resulted in the depletion of its retained earnings and shareholders' fund to negative N208.0 billion and N40.8 billion respectively.

Consequently, it stated that the directors have decided not to recommend a final dividend payment due to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25



Kwara State Governor, Abdulrahman AbdulRazaq (left); President Bola Ahmed Tinubu; Niger State Governor, Mohammed Bago and his Benue counterpart, Hyacinth Alia at the launch of the Agriculture mechanisation revolution for food security and commissioning of the new airport terminal in Niger State ...yesterday.

Senators in for feisty session over Ningi's N3tr budget padding claim

From Azimazi Momoh Jimoh, John Akubo (Abuja) and Saxone Akhaine (Kaduna)

- Ningi: I insist N3.7tr not linked to any project
- No wrong in 2024 budget, Northern senators disown Ningi
- Jimoh Ibrahim asks IGP to charge Ningi for misinformation
- Akpabio inaugurates panel to probe Buhari's N30tr Ways and Means, urges confidentiality
- CNPP, CSOs give Akpabio 14-day ultimatum to resign over allegation

AFORETASTE of the drama expected at today's Senate plenary ensued yesterday when the chairman, Northern Senators' Forum (NSF) and former Deputy Senate Leader, Senator Abdul Ningi (PDP, Bauchi Central) engaged in a heated argument with other Senators over his claim that N3.7 trillion was padded into the 2024 budget passed by the National Assembly.

The Senate is expectedly set for a potentially heated session today as lawmakers convene to address the allegations. Ningi made the claims during an interview aired by the BBC, Hausa Service, at the weekend, alleging that the budget passed by the National Assembly for the 2024 fiscal year was N25 trillion, while the one being implemented by the Presidency is N28.7 trillion.

Addressing journalists in

Abuja yesterday, Ningi said he was not afraid of suspension by the Senate as he was prepared to carry his cross. He reiterated his position in the BBC interview, that N3.7 trillion was not traced to any project in the 2024 budget.

According to Ningi, if he is suspended at the end of the day, he would see it as an honour against the backdrop that he believes in one God. He said power is transient, explaining that he spoke for himself and not on behalf of the Northern Senators' Forum, where he is chairman.

Ningi clarified that there was no time during the interview that he said the Federal Government was operating two budgets. He added that he only said that N25 trillion

was traced to projects, but that N3.7 trillion was not traced to any project.

"I said we have established beyond reasonable doubt that N25 trillion so far has a nexus in the budget. That means that there is money, there is a project, and then there is location. But we are yet to ascertain N3 trillion of that budget. We have established the N3 trillion of that budget, we have not established its location and place.

"However, I said going forward, the budget evaluation is ongoing. And I said lastly, the intention of the northern senators, as regards budgetary allocation, was to meet the Senate President with our findings and subsequently meet President Bola

Tinubu. If because I said what I would say, then I will be suspended, so be it. It will be an honour," he told newsmen.

Speaking to reporters after the panel's meeting, chairman of the budget committee, Solomon Adeola (APC - Ogun West), said the press conference earlier scheduled on Sunday to address the allegations was put on hold to allow the Senate to meet and deliberate on the allegations on Tuesday and thereafter make its position known.

"The Senate has its procedures and rules. Since the allegations did not come from an outsider but a serving Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Senate will meet and deliberate on them on Tuesday before briefing

the press," Adeola said.

The N3 trillion figure represents a significant portion of the proposed budget, raising serious concerns about transparency and accountability in the budgetary process. Ningi reportedly provided detailed documentation to support the claim, alleging that the padding involves inflated project costs, fictitious projects, and funds earmarked for nonexistent government agencies.

While the authenticity of the allegations remains unverified, they have already ignited a firestorm of debate.

The Senate session on Tuesday is expected to be a tense affair as lawmakers are likely to engage in heated debate over the allegations, with

calls for a transparent and impartial investigation likely to dominate the proceedings.

Already, there are threats of violence that may mar today's plenary just as Senators expressed divergent views on whether to suspend Ningi.

In a fresh twist, Senator Jimoh Ibrahim (APC - Ondo South) has asked the Inspector-General of Police to immediately charge Ningi for what he called criminal misinformation. Ibrahim said it was very embarrassing to say that the country is operating two budgets.

"We of the 10th Senate cannot fold our hands and be looking. This is not true, the Senate and the National Assembly approved only one Appropriation Act for 2024, we never approved two.

"What Ningi said about the Appropriation Act of 2024 is unacceptable, causing uncomfortable pain to our integrity, our children and our family. It is all over the world.

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

Oyo govt bans use of styrofoam for food packaging

OYO State Government has banned the use of styrofoam for packaging food.

The state's Commissioner for Health, Oluwaseyemi Ajetunmobi, announced the ban, yesterday, during the food safety stakeholders' forum held at the Conference Room of the Ministry of Health in Ibadan.

Ajetunmobi said the menace of food poisoning, indiscriminate use of chemical products for food production, processing, packaging, and other sharp practices being carried out by food business operators had become of great concern in the state.

Similarly, the state government has inaugurated a task force on food safety, which comprises members from the State Food Safety Management Committee, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Association of Table Water Producers (ATWAP), the Association of Canteen Workers and others.

Director of Food, Water and Laboratory Services in the Ministry of Health, Afusat Akande, said the basic requirements for the actors along the food chain to meet before they could be certified include routine medical fitness certificates from designated state government hos-

Court fixes April 15 to hear applications in Ibeto's case

By Yetunde Ayobami Ojo

JUSTICE Oyindamola Ogala of a Lagos High Court, Ikeja, has fixed April 15, 2024, for hearing the applications filed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) against a businessman, Cletus Ibeto, over N4.8 billion alleged fraud.

The judge fixed the date as agreed by all parties in the suit to enable her to go through the various applications submitted by all parties and stay abreast of the case.

Ogala also directed counsel to both parties to file and exchange their responses to the application filed by the office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) before the next date of adjournment.

She said: "I want to read the case file and understand it in full. As agreed by all, I want all of us to respond and be on the same lane."

At the resumed proceeding, the DPP, Dr Babajide Martins, announced his appearance on behalf of the Lagos State Attorney-General to take over the case.

The defence counsel, Ade Oshodi, informed the court of a notice of preliminary objection dated January 26, which has not been heard.

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

Ondo guber poll: Uproar as Aiyedatiwa's supporters adopt red berets as insignia

From Adewale Momoh, Akure

TENSION continues to build up in Ondo State ahead of the governorship election with various support groups strategising on how to ensure visibility in the state.

Among the support groups that devised means of getting noticed is Lucky Aiyedatiwa Campaign Organisation Foot Soldiers (LACO-FS), which adopted the wearing of red berets as their symbol.

Following the development, some people have attributed the insignia to cultism, which they said, must be frowned on, particularly that the state had been struggling with cult-related activities.

Aiyedatiwa, while inaugurating the group, was seen putting on the red beret as insignia, and some people stressed that such a move would further embolden cultists in their activities across the state.

- We're not cultists but only foot-soldiers, says gov's support group
- Ondo in deficit, needs restoration, says Oke

A public affairs analyst, Oluwagbenga Ajongbobo, who spoke on the issue, said: "What exactly are Lucky Aiyedatiwa and his supporters bringing into Ondo State with their berets? What's the idea and ideology behind donning red berets on the streets of Akure and Akoko? What's the socio-economic belief of a typical Aiyedatiwa supporter? What does Aiyedatiwa stand for?"

"If this is not about their economic and political beliefs, should we be scared that a set of people, led by the governor, have now adopted a style of clothing that has significant meaning and messages it is passing across? Are we safe in Ondo State?"

On his part, Niyi Arogbo said: "Now that Aiyedatiwa has adopted a red beret, let

Olusola Oke use a yellow beret, while Jimoh Ibrahim uses a blue beret, and Wale Akinterinwa chooses black. Make sure we systematise everything. Ondo 2024 will be so interesting."

In a reaction, the State Director of Information of LACO-FS, Kayode Fasua, distanced the group from cultism-related activities.

He said: "It is benuumbing to come across grave expressions on social media, especially through some Twitter handles (now rebranded as X), that our group is bringing cultism to Ondo State.

"While those bandying the insinuations of thuggery or cultism have bombarded the net with their tar brushes, they fail woefully to prove any instance of violence in our activities and find it hard

to produce any pictorial or camera evidence of where Aiyedatiwa supporters, under the aegis of LACO-FS, are armed with any weapon at all, much less a dangerous one."

MEANWHILE, a governorship aspirant on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Olusola Oke, yesterday, said the state had been facing deficits since its creation in 1976, hence the need to restore it to the status it deserved.

Oke said he would find solutions to the myriad of challenges confronting the state, going by his experience in politics and governance, as well as his knowledge of the districts of the state.

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



Director, Human Resources and Administration, Lagos State Environmental Sanitation Corps (LAGESC), Oshugbuyi Moses (left); Deputy Corps Marshal, Intelligence and Monitoring, Osifeso Oluwasegun; Corps Marshal, LAGESC, Major Olaniyi Cole (rt); Deputy Corps Marshal, Discipline and Welfare, Koyejo Oyenola and Deputy Corps Marshal, Admin, Apena Yisa, during a meeting on state of environmental compliance in Lagos.

PHOTO: ENIOLA DANIEL

Assembly urges Sanwo-Olu to employ more neighbourhood watch officers over kidnappings

By Shakirah Adunola

LAGOS State House of Assembly has urged Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu to increase the Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC) personnel to effectively assist other security agencies in curbing kidnappings.

The House also commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his favourable disposition to the issue of state police just as it praised the First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu, for raising a voice and advocating capital punishments for kidnappers.

The issue, which was dis-

Lauds Tinubu's wife for advocating capital punishment for kidnappers

cussed under 'Matter of Urgent Public Importance,' followed the recent kidnapping of over 280 children in Kaduna, 102 in Borno and 15 in Sokoto recently.

The Speaker, Mudashiru Obasa, said it was very important for every Nigerian to rise and speak against kidnapping just as he sympathised with affected states and families of victims.

Obasa said it was painful that while parents are struggling to send their children

to school to seek knowledge, evil people in the name of kidnappers are hell-bent on destroying the future of the children.

He commended the military for its effort but said more could be done even if it means relocating to areas where these attacks are frequent.

He recalled the situation that necessitated the enactment of the anti-kidnapping law of Lagos State some years ago, urging the National

Assembly to review existing laws relating to kidnapping and expedite action on state police.

The Deputy Majority Leader of the House, Adedamola Richard Kasunmu, said that governors and speakers of states should act fast regarding related legislation.

Tobun Abiodun and Nureni Akinsanya commended the Speaker for raising the issue, noting that Lagos State is gradually experiencing cases of kidnapping.

Oyo govt denies abandoning victims of Ibadan explosion

From Rotimi Agboluaje, Ibadan

OYO State Government, yesterday, debunked the insinuation that it had abandoned the welfare of victims of Bodija explosion in Ibadan.

In a statement by the state's Commissioner for Information, Dotun Oyelade, the government said the rumour was unfair and unnecessary.

He said that since the inci-

Says it has spent over N160 million on their accommodation, feeding, others

dent, the state had been spending between N15 million and N20 million weekly on accommodation and feeding of the victims in the past eight weeks.

"As we speak, the government has spent over N160 million on accommodation and feeding alone for the victims who were immediately accommodated at hotels.

Thirty-eight of them are still residing in various hotels.

"Also, the state government has picked up a medical bill of over N17 million while those still in hospitals are being actively catered for," the commissioner said.

Oyelade, who said that seven decent hotels were being used to accommodate victims of the unfortunate incident, also

said that N2 million was being spent weekly, amounting to N16 million in eight weeks, for security operatives to protect the property left behind by the victims.

The commissioner refuted the allegation that some of the victims were ejected from their hotels.

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

ICAO begins security audit of Lagos, Abuja airports

By Ngozi Egenuka

A TEAM of International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) auditors, yesterday, arrived in Nigeria to commence the 2024 ICAO Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP) through Continuous Monitoring Approach (CMA) for Lagos and Abuja airports.

The USAP CMA, which will run till March 22, 2024, will cover Inflight Security (IFS), Passenger and Baggage Security (PAX), Acts of Unlawful Interference (AUI), Facilitation (FAL), Legislation (LEG), Training (TRG), Quality Control Function (QCF), Operations (OPS) and Cargo, Mail and Catering (CGO).

Members of the four-man team are Callum Vine, James Mabala, Tebogo Mphela and Alagie Jeng.

In his remarks, Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, welcomed the auditors to Nigeria for the all-important mission.

According to the minister, the USAP represents a concerted effort to uphold the highest standards of security across all facets of Nigeria's aviation industry.

He said that through rigorous assessments, comprehensive evaluations, and collaborative partnerships, Nigeria would fortify her defences against evolving threats and vulnerabilities.

Keyamo, who was represented by the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Dr Emmanuel Meribole, commended the dedication and diligence of all stakeholders.

Falana's wife urges FG to rescue abducted Kaduna students, avoid repeat of Chibok girls' story

By Yetunde Ayobami Ojo

HUMAN rights activist, Funmi Falana has urged the Federal Government to immediately rescue the abducted Kaduna students and avoid a repeat of the Chibok girls' story.

She, therefore, implored the government to set machinery in force without delay and give all it takes to bring the school children back unconditionally.

Falana, who decried the abduction of the over 200 students, said it had become a kidnap too many, calling on the authorities to immediately rescue them.

The rights activist lamented and expressed the fears that if urgent action is not taken by the government to rescue the students, it might be a repeat of the Chibok girls' story.

In her address to mark 2024 International Women's Day (IWD) celebration organised by Women Empowerment and Legal Aid (WELA), Falana said that the insecurity pervading the nation had become worrisome and a shame to the nation.

TheMetroSection

www.guardian.ng

Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Man nabbed for allegedly killing daughter for money ritual

From Michael Egbejule, Benin City

OPERATIVES of the Edo State Security Network (ESSN) have arrested a middle-aged man for killing his daughter and burying her body in a shallow grave in Uteh community, Ikpoba-Okha Local Council of the state.

It was alleged that the suspect, Emmanuel Ovwarueso, killed the daughter for a money ritual.

Popularly known by his alias, Emma One, Ovwarueso has confessed the crime to the operatives who apprehended him at the Uteh area of Upper Mission Road Extension, a suburb where he resides with his family.

His wife, whose name could not be

ascertained at press time, was quoted as saying: "My husband's attitude changed recently. He kept saying I should not look at him like a poor man anymore. Even at his place of work, he was buying drinks for everyone, as if he was celebrating. His co-workers were surprised at his new spending style. He told them that his money was very near. We never knew he had such a dangerous plan."

A vigilante member, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "We saw him on Thursday night with a bag, walking so fast, like he was rushing to catch a flight. We stopped him, but he resisted. We asked what was in the bag. He said it was his

food. So, we searched the bag and found a human head in it.

"We interrogated him. From the way he talked, it was obvious he was hiding something. So, we took him to his house. We saw his wife tied up. We untied her and asked who tied her up. She said it was her husband. She told us that her husband tied her with a rope before killing their daughter. He took us to the place where he buried the little girl's body in a shallow grave. The body was exhumed immediately."

When contacted, the spokesperson for Edo State Police Command, SP Chidi Nwabuzor, said: "I am not aware. I will find out, and when I do, I will get back to you."



CP Olufemi Abaniwonda

Residents escape as overhead water tanks collapse in Anambra

From Lawrence Njoku, Enugu

SOME residents escaped unshurt as a scaffold holding four water (Geepee) tanks collapsed on Sunday night, destroying parts of a four-storey building at Oba, Anambra State.

The Guardian learnt that the incident happened at about 9:00 p.m., as some residents of the building prepared to go to bed.

It was gathered that the crash caused a loud noise, which shook the premises and sent frightened occupants of the building scampering for safety.

An eyewitness, Unuebho Israel, told The Guardian that the overhead tanks collapsed due to weight issues, adding that there were no casualties.

"The building was seriously damaged. The collapse sent shock waves down the spines of the occupants," he said.

Police arrest commercial motorcyclist for killing officer in Calabar

From Tina Agosi Todo, Calabar

THE police in Calabar have arrested a commercial motorcyclist for knocking down and killing an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Vivian Chinemerem Aworonye, attached to Zone 6 Police Headquarters, Calabar, the Cross River State capital. The Guardian learnt that the senior police officer, until her death, was deployed to Zone 6 Headquarters from Force Legal Department, Abuja.

According to a police source, she was yet to get accommodation in any of the police barracks, and decided to stay in one of the offices within Zone 6.

The source said the motorcyclist hit the officer, following which she fell and sustained a head injury.

The incident happened at about 6:30 p.m, last week, as she crossed from Zone 6 to the other side of a busy road. "She was rushed to Bakor Hospital, along Murtala Mohammad highway, located about 1.5 kilometres East of Zone 6 Command Headquarters. She was referred to the Psychiatric Hospital, considering the head injury, but was later taken to the Teaching Hospital where she died," the source said.



ACP Aworonye

Court sentences man to death by hanging for conspiracy, armed robbery

From Ayodele Afolabi, Ado-Ekiti

AN Ekiti State High Court sitting in Ado Ekiti has sentenced one Bello Abduquadril to death by hanging for conspiracy and armed robbery.

The 30-year-old convict was arraigned before Justice Olalekan Olatawura on March 8, on two-count charge bordering on conspiracy and armed robbery.

According to the charge, the offences are contrary to Sections 314 and 312 (2)(a) of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

To prove his case, the prosecutor, Adeola Johnson, called

three witnesses and tendered as exhibit, the defendant's statements, motorcycle particulars, receipts, and search warrant, among others.

The defendant, who spoke through his lawyer, E. K. Adetifa, pleaded with the court to temper justice with mercy and called no witness.

In his judgment, Justice Olalekan Olatawura said: "It can be rightly inferred, and I hold that there was a common intention and a meeting of minds between the defendant and his accomplice (at large) to commit armed robbery. I am there-

fore satisfied that the prosecution has proven beyond reasonable doubt that the defendant conspired with another person to commit the offence.

"Consequent upon the foregoing, the defendant is found guilty of the offences of conspiracy and armed robbery as charged. On conspiracy, the defendant is sentenced to seven years imprisonment. And in count two (armed robbery), the sentence of the count upon you is that you be hanged by the neck until you are dead. May God have mercy on your soul."

45-year-old woman found dead in Ondo

From Adewale Momoh, Akure

A WOMAN, 45, identified as Kudirat Bolarinwa, was found dead at the weekend after she was allegedly abused sexually by an unknown assailant in Ondo West Local Council of Ondo State.

The body of the deceased, which had machete cuts, was discovered in a bush at Lekere, in the Ayeyemi axis of the council, after she was said to have followed a man to a farm to buy produce.

According to sources, a man who disguised himself as a seller, had approached the woman, saying he wanted to sell kola nuts to her. Consequently, she followed him to the farm.

It was gathered that the deceased had been declared missing before her lifeless body was found on Saturday. The husband, who had led a

search, immediately approached the Enu-Owa Police Division in the area to report the incident.

Confirming the incident, police spokesperson in the state, Funmilayo Odunlami-Omisanya, said: "On March 8, at about 5:00 p.m., one Tajudeen Bolarinwa of Ago Road, Onipetesi village, reported that at about 4:30 p.m., his wife, Kudirat Bolarinwa, 45, who goes from one farm to the other to buy kola nuts, was murdered in the bush by an unknown person.

"At the scene of the incident, the deceased was left with only a pant, and the sides of her face, lower arm, and head were severely mutilated. Meanwhile, the remains of the deceased have been deposited at the mortuary in Ondo town, amid ongoing efforts to arrest the culprit."

Ogun seals firm after Ogijo gas explosion

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

OGUN State government has sealed up Phoenix Steel Mills Industries Limited in Ogijo, Sagamu Local Council, following a gas explosion that rocked the area on Sunday.

The state Commissioner for Environment, Ola Oresanya, announced the closure of the iron rod manufacturing industry after an on-the-spot assessment of the scene.

Oresanya said under the

rules of engagement with all industries operating in Ogun State, the government would, after the sealing, undertake a thorough investigation of the remote and immediate causes of the incident, with a view to preventing recurrence.

To avoid further industrial accidents, Oresanya said the state government would establish a safety desk, which will function like an agency under the Ministry of Environment.



Scene of the explosion yesterday



Whitney

Whitney: Chrisland School violated child protection policy, court told

By Yetunde Ayobami Ojo

JUSTICE Oyindamola Ogala of a Lagos High Court sitting in Ikeja, yesterday, heard that Chrisland School, Ikeja, violated the child protection policy of the state.

The prosecution witness, Jubril Yakubu, disclosed this during the ongoing trial of staff of Chrisland School, Ikeja, over alleged negligence, following the death of a student, Whitney Adeniran, during an inter-house sports competition at Agege Stadium, Lagos State.

Lagos State Government had filed criminal charges against Chrisland School Opebi and its principal, vice principal, and two others over the death of Whitney on March 31, 2023.

At the resumed hearing, Yakubu, the third prosecution witness and deputy director with the Ministry of Youth and Social Development in Lagos State, told the court that the ministry's findings showed that the school's preparedness for emergency during the competition was close to none. He explained that the

school had just a nurse, and there was no ambulance to convey any student to a hospital in the case of any emergency.

Led in evidence by the prosecuting counsel and Lagos State Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Babajide Martins, the witness further told court that the school did not have a designated Child Safeguarding Protection Policy personnel as required by the Safeguarding Executive Order of the state.

The matter was adjourned till March 13, for continuation of trial.

'269 minors, teenagers sexually molested in Ogun last year'

From **Azeez Olorunlomu,**
Abeokuta

ABOUT 269 minors and infants, aged one to 16 years, were reportedly defiled between January and December in Ogun State, last year.

According to data released by the Directorate of Women Affairs in the Ogun State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 52 of the victims were below eight years.

Director of Women Empowerment in the ministry, Wonuola Kazzim, explained that some of the victims were babies less than two months old, who were molested by men in their 50s and 60s.

Kazzim said 16 persons among suspects arrested have been prosecuted for alleged molestation and sentenced to seven years imprisonment.

She lamented that lack of forensic evidence to prove sexual assault in courts pose a great challenge to victims' ability to get justice.



Gov. Dapo Abiodun

According to her, this development discourages many victims from speaking out.

She, however, said the state government had embarked on a sensitisation campaign in public schools and markets to encourage parents, guardians and

victims to report cases of rape and defilement of minors to the government.

She also called on the state government to establish a special court to fast-track the prosecution of sex offenders, and get justice for victims.

"The likely punishment for offenders in the state should

be life jail term or 14 years imprisonment, but since most of the cases lack forensic evidence, the court is always constrained to give lesser sentences," she added.

Reacting, a medical expert at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Idi-Aba, Rotimi Akintunde, blamed the menace on undetected historical psychotic illnesses from molesters.

Akintunde described the molestation of a minor or teenager by an adult as a psychiatric disorder, saying no sane mind would have sexual arousal for a minor.

He said: "It is a psychiatric disorder. They must be having paedophilia. It is child abuse and must be severely dealt with. No matter how much we condemn or prosecute them for what they have done, we need to also rehabilitate them."

"It is not enough to get them arrested and charged to court; we need to refer them to psychiatric homes for proper rehabilitation. They are social deviants."

Man kills neighbour after argument on N200 electricity bill

From **Azeez Olorunlomu,**
Abeokuta

AMIDDLE-aged man, **Andubuisi Kalu**, has been arrested for allegedly killing his neighbour (name withheld) for refusing to make a N200 contribution for the payment of an electricity bill.

According to an eyewitness account, there had been several arguments between the victim and the accused over the monthly contribution.

The eyewitness, who pleaded anonymity, explained that on the fateful day, officials of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) had visited and threatened to disconnect supply from their premises.

The eyewitness said all tenants had agreed to pay N200 each to offset debt on the PHCN estimated bill. The victim, however, was said to have been in the habit of not paying sundry bills. This led to a hot argument between the deceased and other

tenants.

The eyewitness claimed that during the argument, the victim stabbed the accused with a knife on the thigh and arm. In the clash that followed, the victim reportedly fell to the ground and gave up the ghost before he could be rushed to a hospital.

The case was reported at the Sango Ota divisional police station.

According to the police, the suspect has been charged to court.



CP Abiodun Alamutu

Lagos begins removal of shanties, illegal structures in Ajah

By **Bertram Nwanneka**

LAGOS State government, **Lyesterday**, commenced the removal of shanties and structures littering the coastal road at Maiyegun Estate (by Jakande) in the Lekki area, even as it reiterated its commitment to urban regeneration.

Commissioner for Environment and Water Resources, **Tokunbo Wahab**, who was at the scene of the enforcement, alongside state officials, said other sites have also been identified and would be recovered.

He said the regeneration would be done in accordance with the Lagos State development plan, citing the ongoing demolition of shanties in **Ijora** Underbridge, and

Obalende Underbridge, and **Orile**.

The commissioner, who was represented by the Permanent Secretary, Office of Drainage Services and Water Resources, **Mahamood Adegbite**, said it is expedient that residents respect town planning laws and abide by their provisions.

"Anyone trying to alter the original urban development plan of the state will not be allowed. People cannot be allowed to do whatever they like, whenever, or wherever they like. Lagos must not become a jungle," he said.

He maintained that the government is resolute in its drive towards environmental regeneration, stressing that the demolition will send a strong message that all

spaces will be governed.

He said before commencement of the enforcement, the state government had carried out inventory of buildings that possess legal documents. He said these were numerically identified and would not be pulled down.

According to him, the government had been sensitising squatters and occupants of shanties on vacating the area since 2022. He said some of the buildings had become dilapidated, hence the need for their demolition.

He said most of the squatters had not been captured in the database of the Lagos State Resident Registration Agency (LASRRA). He described as worrisome, a situation where a government is not

able to account for residents or provide them with social amenities.

Wahab noted that shanties and illegal structures serve as hideouts for criminals.

He recalled that the state government recently issued a four-day relocation notice to all squatters occupying illegal shanties around the coastal road in **Mayegun, Lekki**, adding that allegations by the squatters to the contrary were baseless and untrue.

Earlier, the Special Adviser to the Governor on eGIS and Urban Development, **Olajide Babatunde**, who visited the site on Sunday, decried the level of distortion in the area. He advised the occupants to vacate them immediately, saying the government would not give any further notice.

Vigilantes apprehend robbery suspect in Delta

From **Monday Osayande,** Asaba

VIGILANTES have nabbed a 28-year-old butcher, **Ogochukwy Uzorka**, at the popular **Oko** market, in **Asaba** Delta State, for allegedly stealing rechargeable lamps.

The suspect, who hails from **Abala**, in **Ndokwa** East Local Council of the state, allegedly specialised in breaking into shops through the ceiling.

An eyewitness alleged that **Uzorka** broke into five shops but was disappointed when he discovered there was burglary proof under the ceilings of four. As a result, he could only steal the lamps at the fifth shop.

The *Guardian* learnt that before he was arrested, the suspect had confessed to stealing a **Tiger** electricity generator and selling it for **N15,000**. He pleaded for forgiveness and pledged never to return to crime if he is pardoned.

Speaking on the issue, head

of the vigilantes, **Francis Okolo**, commended the police for giving them the privilege to work jointly.

Nevertheless, he lamented lack of logistics and mobility, saying these have been a setback to successful policing of the area. He said since motorcycles belonging to the vigilantes were set ablaze by some hoodlums, mobility had become difficult.



a CP Olufemi Abaniwonda

Foundation holds memorial service for Regina Udo-Inyang

OBONG Denis Udo-Inyang Foundation will on Friday, March 15, hold a memorial service for the late **Dr. Regina Anthony Udo-Inyang (1957-2023)**, at **St. Denis Catholic Church, Ikot Abia, Mkpata Enin** Local Council of **Akwa Ibom** State, at **10.00a.m.**



Udo-Inyang

PUBLIC NOTICE

This public notice is to inform **Chief Omotayo O. Ojo of No2-8 Omotayo Street, Ikosi Ketu, Lagos** to provide a valid means of identification and the following documents:

- National Identification Number (NIN) in colour
- International passport or driver license in colour and
- Water bill and environment bill

This is to enable me apply for registration of power of attorney in respect to the transaction we had on 12th December, 2013.

Signed:

Ambassador Chinwe Eva Marcel Okegbe,
Block D House 13, SSQ Aina Estate,
Karu-Abuja

FOR URGENT LEASE

A strategically Located Warehouse with its HeadRoom High enough to accommodate Trailer Manoeuvring, ample Parking Space.

Size: 32,000ft2

Location: Eleganza Industries Limited Complex at Oregon.

Pls Contact:

08023220321 08064479144



Su-Kam®

the global leader in Inverter Technology

IS BACK!



**More Distributors
Wanted Nationwide**



Scan the QR Code to Register



For Enquiries:
 (+234)-8150972415, 7033544918
www.simsng.com/sukam

SIMS is the Sole Representative of the Su-Kam brand in Nigeria



■ Be a part of The New Equation

● Graduate opportunities 2024

Are you ready for the opportunity of a lifetime?

With a network of over 360,000 people across 151 countries, PwC provides a platform for our people to be themselves, grow as individuals, build lasting relationships and deliver impactful solutions.

Invest in your future and stay true to your passion by exploring an immersive and fulfilling career with one of the world's leading firms.

Graduate Qualification Criteria

- Five credits in one sitting, including English Language and Mathematics.
- Minimum of Second Class (Upper Division)/Upper Credit.
- Must have completed the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC).
- One year of relevant post-NYSC experience is an added advantage (in select cases).



Go to www.pwc.com/ng/en/careers.html and apply for a position before **18 March 2024** using the Graduate recruitment tab.



About PwC

At PwC, our purpose is to build trust in society and solve important problems. We're a network of firms in 151 countries with over 360,000 people who are committed to delivering quality in assurance, advisory and tax services. Find out more and tell us what matters to you by visiting us at www.pwc.com/ng

© 2024 PricewaterhouseCoopers Limited. All rights reserved. In this document, PwC refers to PricewaterhouseCoopers Limited (a Nigerian limited liability company), which is a member firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited, each member firm of which is a separate legal entity.

As the Supreme Court attains full bench

WITH the installation on February 26, 2024 of 11 new Justices recently appointed to the Supreme Court by President Bola Tinubu, the apex court has, for the first time in its history, attained its full complement of 21 justices, in consonance with section 230 (2) (b) of the 1999 Constitution, which stipulates that “The Supreme Court of Nigeria shall consist of such number of Justices not exceeding 21 as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.”

Now that the Supreme Court has broken the jinx and gained its full throttle, the Court should accelerate to its highest in order to attain its Olympian Height. First, the Supreme Court should quickly regain the waning public confidence in the judiciary as a whole. One way the court can achieve this feat is by making a tectonic shift in the social philosophy and jurisprudential outlook emerging from the court over the years.

With a full complement of 21 Justices, the Supreme Court docket can now be decongested by the court sitting in multiple panels. They can now sit in four panels in constitutional cases which require a bench of five Justices and seven Justices for constitutional cases which require a bench of seven Justices, thus clearing the backlog of multiple pending cases. It is sad that most cases filed at the Supreme Court drag on endlessly. For example, speaking at the investiture of 62 new Senior Advocates of Nigeria in Abuja on November 28, 2023, the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Olukayode Ariwoola stated that the Supreme Court was bogged down with 6,884 delayed cases. There is no doubt that

congestion of cases at the Supreme Court has undermined the justice delivery system in Nigeria. Therefore, it is high time the Supreme Court was decongested of law cases to pave the way for expeditious delivery of justice in Nigeria. It makes no sense that multiple cases pending at the Supreme Court are not heard. Justice delayed, it is said, is justice denied.

The Supreme Court should turn away from the bland legalism and legal positivism that have dominated the landscape of its judicial pronouncements and decisions and return the apex court to a court that pursues substantial justice over technicalities like the Supreme Court Nigerians knew a few decades ago. Justice is rooted in public confidence and public perception. This is why it is said that justice must not only be done but must also be manifestly seen to be done. The essence of the need for justice to be manifestly seen to be done was observed by the Master of the Rolls, Lord Denning, in *Metropolitan Properties Co (FGC) Ltd v Lannon* when he stated: “Justice must be rooted in confidence, and confidence is destroyed when right-minded people go away thinking: ‘The judge was biased.’”

The perspectives of the Supreme Court’s jurisprudence should be tailored to help Nigerians realise the overarching objectives of securing their hopes and aspirations; as well as let achieve the ideals of social justice, freedom, equality, and defence of the rule of law as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution. Let the Supreme Court be a Supreme Court for all Nigerians, not the court of the political elites.

Some previous political judgments delivered by the Supreme Court have immersed the court in scathing public criticisms. Some well-settled principles of

law have been made by the court to appear not so settled, thereby ridiculing the principle of stare decisis and lowering people’s confidence in the law. Therefore, the Supreme Court should retrace the path of excellence, honour, and integrity to enhance judicial efficacy and efficiency and to bolster public confidence in the Supreme Court.

As much as possible, the Supreme Court should stop descending into the public arena to join issues with its critics. At all times, it must maintain its equanimity and candor in the face of criticism. Dragging the Supreme Court into public controversy is undignified, unbecoming, and shameful. By their exalted position, Justices of the Supreme Court ought not to join issues with their critics in the public square. They should refrain from joining issues with their critics. Criticism of the conduct and judgments of judges in the media is not embarrassing because judicial proceedings are conducted in open court, in the full glare of the public, thus giving members of the public first-class information about the virtues and vices of the individual judges. Addressing the High Court Journalists Association on December 3, 1964, Lord Denning said, “Justice has no place in darkness and secrecy. When a judge sits on a case, he himself is on trial...if there is any misconduct on his part, any bias or prejudice, there is a reporter to keep an eye on him.” However, as Lord Hailsham once said while speaking at a banquet

in London, there should be some self-discipline in criticising judges. Let criticisms be well-informed, well-researched, and temperate.

The Supreme Court should transform itself into a court capable of expeditiously dispensing substantial justice for Nigerians of every stature. The Supreme Court is respectfully urged to exercise exceptional brilliance, a high sense of justice, and profound philosophical forensic legal enunciations in adjudicating the cases brought before it in accordance with substantial justice, following the sterling qualities and integrity of their predecessor-brother Justices such as Justices Kayode Eso, Chukwudifu Oputa, Andrews Obaseki, Augustine Nnamani, Anthony Aniagolu, George Adesola Oguntade, Muhammad Lawal Uwais, and Niki Tobi. Throughout their illustrious stint at the Supreme Court, the aforementioned justices distinguished themselves by their integrity and exceptional brilliance in expounding and expanding the law in accordance with substantial justice. Therefore, our current 21 Supreme Court Justices should emulate the shining examples of their aforementioned brother-Justices who had excelled at the Supreme Court.

Finally, the Supreme Court should be reserved for the best and brightest in character and learning, not for dead-woods, lazybones, or corrupt judges. The appointment and elevation of judges to the Supreme Court should be based on merit and high scholarship, not seniority or political patronage.

LETTER

Rising trend in the mockery of God

SIR: From Logos Olori’s ‘Jaye Slo’ to Asake’s newest release of, ‘Only Me’, it is no denial that the God we serve is too gentle and too merciful. The disrespect of God from artistes across the world and particularly, Nigerians is skyrocketing beyond imaginations. Ariana Grande had done that with ‘God is a woman’ which amassed millions of views and other international acts had done that - the mockery of God in the name of creativity.

The word ‘God’ is now a household name for deception, exploitation and money making. A video which had 150,000 views upon 5 hours of release has caused disturbance in the heart of Nigerian Christians and in this video, this young man was found desecrating what Catholics hold sacred, The Holy Mass. Sacred objects and pictures of the Blessed Sacrament that Catholics believe to be God were all over the place in a music video that has nothing to do with extolling God.

Terrorism is not only when fanatics come with bombs or

guns, terrorism is when you use any opportunity you have in the name of creativity to mock other religions, the channel through which people believe in their God. If this is done to garner lots of attention and to earn more money - then, it’s obvious that money and fame is their god. Not respecting the one God that people worship in different ways through religion is terrorism under the guise of creativity to earn more money and fame.

It’s evident that another artiste will still do the same thing even after this uproar but we should remember that the damage and consequences will be unbearable in the future. The culture of mockery, not just mockery, but the mockery of God is gradually seeping into our lifestyle. Some judgemental netizens said that the Catholic Church is not a true church of God and the artist should be left alone. Whether a religion is true or not, it is not for we who are just one out of the many human beings on earth to decide. Respect the religion and belief of a particular set of

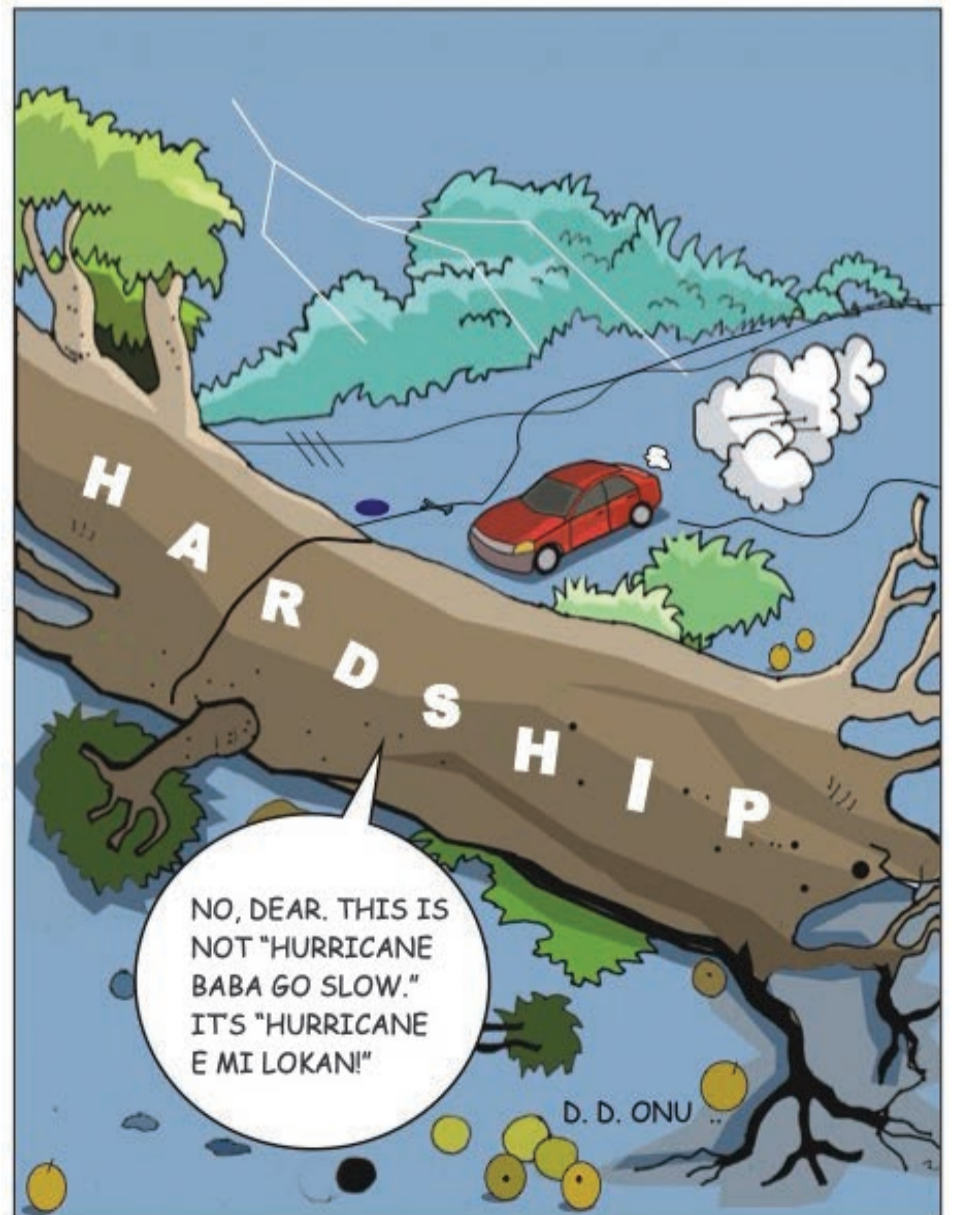
people. I love *moin-moin*, you like *akara*. Don’t insult my *moin-moin*, because you like *akara* and don’t love *moin-moin*.

Christians especially Catholics should not take this matter lightly. Creative freedom does not allow individuals to destroy the image or make fun of a religion. We, Catholics are not fighting for our God, we are protecting the beliefs that we hold sacred. Our God can fight his battle while we remain silent.

However, Catholics who are the victims have also victimised themselves in some way. We have allowed priests and individuals for whom money and fame are their god to tarnish our image and remove Christ who is the centre of our worship. If one is dressed as a criminal, won’t others address him as such? One online user had said that the hypocrisy of the Nigerian people could be why we are moving backward despite the natural blessings we have. “We worship God and yet insult him in our daily lives.”

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

Felicitas Offorjamah.



Opinion

www.guardian.ng

Guardian Nigeria f GuardianNigeria 08136370421 @Guardiannigeria

Nigeria: Finally, hot money is here

By Marcel Okeke

It is no longer news that the continued collapse of the naira in the foreign exchange (FX) market is already eliciting desperate and panicky measures from the monetary authorities. Unfortunately, the more such new initiatives are unleashed, the more unintended consequences are attained; thus, worsening the state of the economy.

In the effort to tame the consistently soaring inflation rate, for instance, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), during its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting (February 26-27, 2024), hiked the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) by an unprecedented 400 basis points—from 18.75 per cent to 22.75 per cent. Inflation rate stood at 29.90 per cent at end-January 2024.

By the huge quantum increase of the MPR, the apex bank is indicating a very tight monetary environment, which signals to the deposit money banks (DMBs) to similarly hike their (lending) interest rates. In furtherance of its liquidity 'mop-up' to tame the high inflation rate, the CBN promptly deployed its Open Market Operation (OMO) instrument to enable it 'suck away' much liquidity in the system.

Apparently, the apex bank believes that one of the reasons for the galloping inflationary trend in Nigeria is so much money (liquidity) being in circulation. And to deal with this in the money market, the CBN made an offer of N500 billion treasury bills (T-B) via OMO auction.

Unsurprisingly, the offer was overwhelmingly oversubscribed, as the apex bank sold N1.053 trillion worth of T-B, with 79 per cent of the total bid (or equivalent of \$530 million) coming from foreign investors. Nigerian or local investors accounted for only 21 per cent, according to a statement issued by the CBN.

This (OMO) auction was the first since the MPC meeting, which was also followed by a virtual meeting by the CBN Governor, Olayemi Cardoso, with foreign portfolio investors. The CBN said in a statement that the OMO auction was part of its liquidity management effort.

A significant development in this OMO auction is the very high level of foreign portfolio investor (FPI) participation: accounting for almost eighty per cent of the offer, and amounting to about US\$530 million. In celebrating this outcome, the CBN said in a statement by its Director of Corporate Communications, Mrs. Hakama Sidi Ali that "this development underscored the level of confidence the apex bank now enjoyed from investors", adding that the management of the CBN was optimistic that its monetary policy measures were beginning to yield positive results.

However, the import of this dominance of FPI (79 per cent) in the TB offer is 'massive inflow' of what is generally regarded as hot money. Thus, the US\$530 million paid by foreign portfolio investors via the OMO auction is all hot money. According to Investopedia, Hot Money signifies currency that quickly and regularly moves between financial markets; that ensures investors lock in the highest available short-term interest rates. Hot money continuously shifts from countries with low-interest rates to those with higher rates—as Nigeria is now!

The rapid movement of hot money across borders can lead to significant exchange rate volatility. As investors move their funds between countries, demand for different currencies can fluctuate, causing exchange rates to rise or fall. This volatility can create challenges for businesses engaged in international trade, as well as for central banks seeking to maintain stable exchange rates. And this is where the CBN is wittingly entering into a new miasma stacked with risks.

Apparently, yet in its desperation to attract dollar inflow, the CBN ensured that it offered its Treasury Bills (T-B) under attractive terms and conditions—including very high interest rate of about 20 per cent. But while these FPIs could be attracted (the hot money), local investor confidence remains low—reflecting the 20 per cent share of the T-B offer. Meanwhile the CBN has also through its latest MPR of 22.75 per cent, indicated to the DMBs to hike their own rates—likely beyond 30 per cent in the coming days.

This (lending rate) will certainly put loanable funds beyond the reach of most businesses.

Unfortunately, as the hot money is being wooed and attracted, the real money that drives production and productivity—Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)—is practically 'fleeing' Nigeria. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed a significant decline in the country's capital importation in the whole of 2023.

Amid grueling FX woes, the NBS said Nigeria only attracted a meagre \$3.91 billion in foreign capital inflow last year—the lowest since 2007 when the figure stood at a mere \$5.3 billion. Of the total 2023 inflow, FPI accounted for \$1.15 billion (or 30 per cent of the \$3.91 billion) while FDI was only \$377.4 million; and 'other investments' were \$2.38 billion.

The 2023 capital importation, according to NBS data, was a major drop from the 2022 figure of \$5.33 billion—which was also a decrease of over 20 per cent from the \$6.70 billion of 2021. By this trend of persistently declining capital importation (especially FDI), moves by the CBN to latch onto hot money could be ruinous. Rather than take this 'silo' strategy in pursuit of the solution to the lingering acute FX scarcity in Nigeria, the apex bank should factor other elements into its moves.

Without a doubt, a lot of developments on the fiscal side of Nigeria's public finance end up acting as counterpoise to most monetary policy initiatives. In this regard, has the CBN considered the role of improved FAAC-allocations to the states and local governments in recent months? There is a very high probability that most heads of the sub-national units after receiving the (huge) monthly allocations, somehow make their way into the FX market to change their trillion naira inflows into a more durable currency (the dollar).

Whether this is true or not, the reality is that the national currency (Naira) has since lost the critical function of money: the store of value. Today, hardly is there any economic agent (individuals, households and businesses) who want to keep their assets (liquid or otherwise) in Naira. This accounts for the rabid 'dollarization' of the Niger-

ian economy—where most goods and services are sold and paid for in dollars. This 'illegality' must be addressed expeditiously by the government of the day. The naira remains Nigeria's only legal tender, according to the extant law: CBN Act 2007.

As an integral part of the Federal Government, the CBN must collaborate with other agencies of the Government to ensure inflows from crude oil and non-oil exports are transparently and comprehensively captured/recorded. Today, crude oil still remains the mainstay of the Nigerian economy and as such, proceeds from its sales cannot continue to be shrouded in secrecy or opacity. The apex bank as banker to the Federal Government, as of right, should at all times have the minutest details of funds accruing from oil and all other sources.

For too long, the controversy over crude oil sales and proceeds therefrom, have occupied public discourse and created mutual suspicion between Government and the citizenry. What ordinarily should be treated as the nation's commonwealth is usually left to be frittered away into private pockets. The bizarre phenomenon of crude oil theft seems now to be providing 'a cover' for a few 'top brass' in our society to almost fully corner Nigeria's 'black gold' for themselves. It is now estimated that about eighty per cent of Nigeria's crude oil production is being lost to theft, according to Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria's former President.

In the circumstance, resort to attracting hot money into Nigeria apparently to deal with the biting FX challenge, is laden with a lot of dangers and risks. It could provide a very ephemeral breather, but could vaporize when needed most. Nigeria needs to put other fundamentals right to attract sustainable FPIs, FDIs and others. What the CBN has packaged to attract the patronage of foreign portfolio investors (79 per cent) is a very short-term gain, at best.

Okeke, a practising economist, business strategist, sustainability expert and ex-Chief Economist of Zenith Bank Plc. He can be reached via: obiorkoke2000@yahoo.com

UMA harps on youth economy

By Victor C. Ariole

UNIVERSITY of Lagos Muslim Alumni (UMA) organised its 29th Pre-Ramadan Lecture captioned "Economic Reforms for Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects for the Future". The Vice President of Nigeria ably represented by Dr. Hakeem Baba-Ahmed and, together with former Vice Chancellor Prof Rahamon Bello, the current Vice Chancellor represented by Prof Victoria (Aisha) Atseniwa, Senator Afolabi Shuaib, Prof Yusuf Olaolu Ali and the UMA president Prof Khalid Adekoya raised money on-the-spot for granting scholarship to intending Ph.D students, Masters' and undergraduate students at 700,000 naira per student, and expect well-to-do Nigerians to support their cause so as to arrest youth's helplessness and hopelessness that make some of them say: let Nigeria never happen to you.

The main lectures delivered by Niyi Yusuf, chairman Nigerian Economic Summit Group and Sheikh Dawud Alfa Nla Abdul Majeed were well discussed by Dr Jubril Salaudeen and Prof Jameelah Yaqub.

According to Prof Jameelah Yaqub Nigeria's population is 40 per cent youth, the type of population capable of occupying a mid-field in football parlance and goals could be scored against opponents galore; in this respect sustainable food production to secure food security for sustainable livelihood of both the attackers and the defenders, in effect for now and tomorrow Nigerians respectively.

However, Nigeria is yet to properly define the goals it wants to score hence directionless youth population, and the leadership keeps on setting reform paths that are meant to accomplish the goals of Nigeria's oppressors who get the leadership to continue borrowing to the detriment of its youth who are not carried along in knowing what the borrowing glee is supposed to achieve. Again it keeps on creating wider gaps of trust deficit between the led and the leaders.

For example, India had a policy of never depending on any country for the feeding of their over 1.4 billion people occupying a landspace of 3.287million Km² and sea space of 7,516 times UN allowable 370.4km seaward. And it cultivates wheat, maize, rice, pulses and millet, enough to take care of its population starting with 330million tonnes of grain production annually. So enormous compared to only 21million tonnes produced by Nigeria for 200 million people.

It is like for every Indian 0.2 tonne of grain is available, that is capable of satisfying 3000 calorie need of each Indian, against just 0.1 for every Nigeria; and a Nigerian's share of both space and sea shores is about twice that of an Indian, hence a case of not putting in good use what is available to Nigeria including its youth population.

In effect, very weak cost-benefit analysis is seen in all government policy in Nigeria; that is winners-take all types of reform policy. For example, hiking fuel price is assumed to profit effectively the government with more money in its coffers and it is not expected to call for interest rate hike by the CBN as it makes government the winner in all, keeping weak and average Nigerians as the losers.

Even as the losers, the youth that occupy the middle field ought to be helped to find reason why they should be hopeful by seeing a compassionate government, not a government that keep on borrowing when it still remains the winner in its economic reform and as well supported by CBN that goes floating treasury bills with coupon rate of about 19 per cent indicating that the trust threshold of Nigeria is very much below 'B' rating.

Still the government is not encouraging social education that could allow the youth buy into any policy it plans to embark on. Imploring the youth to be responsible, Dr. Muiz Banire has this to say: Those who follow and obey their leaders blindly without question become 'yes-men'; and allow incompetent governance of their nation to take society down the drain, will be held accountable on the day of Resurrection, they will be punished and will regret it.

According to one of the lady organisers, Ramadan period is the time God closes the gate of Hell and expects faithfuls to see the light to the gate of heaven, hence both Nigeria's leadership and the followers should aim at doing good so as to merit getting through to the gate of heaven in coming period of Ramadan. It is like having both leaders and followers performing respectively for the expected gate of Heaven to be opened unto Nigerians in the current hardship.

Dr Jubril Salaudeen was more concerned about Nigerian leaders not emulating America that does not pay debts and only print dollars and export it to other climes. Hence, printing more naira

that must be exchanged to dollars so as to pay Nigeria's debt still makes government plying the infantile route or playing the ostrich as the populace go on suffering.

It brings to bear, the current Binance imbroglio in Nigeria in which no fewer than 10million Nigerians are reported to have subscribed to Binance business activities and operate there in dollars at the detriment of naira and the local production processes. Just like Buhari government printed or claimed to have been allowed to access N23 trillion naira that is not seen in local space as adding to productive process and could have been possibly exchanged into dollars to enter into Binance space.

It is as well as seeing Nigerian government exporting naira at a very great discount rate, not so much so different from offering trillions of naira treasury bill at a great discount of 19 per cent which could be further depreciated by hedge fund speculators to reach at the current interest rate in Nigeria of 29 per cent as CBN keep on mopping up presumed excess liquidity that makes no sense to the ordinary Nigerian that is expected to buy a bag of rice at about N75,000 when his expected minimum wage is N30,000 and government is not encouraging local production of grains as it is done in India.

Another aspect that Dr. Salaudeen expects to take shape is asking all transactions in Nigeria to be carried out in Naira like it is done in Egypt. There, again, corruption in both private and public domains could fight such policy unless Bureau de Change companies, Binance, and Nigerian Stock Exchange are made to be truly Nigerian, never to think of international competitors.

Youth economy expects Nigerian youths, 40 per cent of the population as expressed by Prof. Yaqub, to be seriously in production line, food security production minded, which is possible in the expansion of agro-industries, not in shady deals of the type of Binance or foreign exchange currency speculation.

Youths consume a lot of energy either by their feeding process or mobility process and if such mass, raw and potential energy in them, is ignited and enhanced in production sites as enabled by government and genuine agro-industry entrepreneurs, not by internet or cyber fraud 'Malpreneurs', this Ramadan period could really see the gate of Hell permanently closed for Nigerians to start breathing well on the way to Heaven gate.

Ariole, Ph.D, is of French and Francophone Studies, University of Lagos.

Opinion

www.guardian.ng

Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Mandatory currency devaluation ruins a nation

By Francis E. Ogbimi

ALL development programmes implemented by Nigeria since independence have always been conceived in Britain and America. Nigeria began with National Plans 1960-1985, then the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) 1986-now.

The programmes conceived in the West for Africa usually lack growth-promoting elements. They always promote unemployment, poverty and abstract and fruitless arguments. Nigeria would not have adopted the national plans and SAP had Nigerians the competence to assess a development programme.

The naira exchanged 194 units to one dollar in the official market up to the month of May 2015. It experienced more devaluation in the period 2015-2023, N460 to the dollar in May 2023. It almost exchanging N2000 to the dollar.

Is the devaluation of the naira the way forward for the Nigerian economy? No! Mandatory currency devaluation ruins a nation; it is not the way forward for any nation. The Nigerian Foreign Exchange Market was introduced to Nigeria as part of the SAPs introduced to indebted African nations by the World Bank and IMF in the early 1980s.

A mandatory devaluation is one forced on a nation under the pretext that the nation is under the pressure of scarcity of foreign currencies. Germany was the first nation to be forced to adopt the German SAP in the period 1919-1923. The World Bank and IMF did not exist then. Germany as the leader of the Axis powers lost World War I to the Western Allied powers.

The Allied demanded \$33 billion from Germany as war reparations. Germany could not pay. Consequently, the Allies forced Germany to sign the Versailles treaty, which contained the mandatory currency devaluation programme. That was the German SAP.

The German mark had exchanged 4.2 units to the dollar in 1918 at the end of the war. The German SAP started in 1919. One year into the German SAP, 1920, the German Mark ex-

changed for 63 units to the Dollar. In 1921, 200 Marks exchanged for one Dollar. In 1922, 2000 Marks exchanged for one Dollar. By 1923, the German Mark collapsed, 4.2 trillion Marks exchanged for one Dollar. The German economy was destroyed. Though Germany was a world power, the Germans and Germany were humiliated.

The Nigerian SAP which began in 1986 was forced on the nation because Nigeria was indebted to foreign creditors. The Nigerian experience 1986 to 2015 may be reported as follows: In 1985, the Naira was equivalent to 112.4 Cents. In 1986, one Naira exchanged for 49.5 Cents. In 1993, the Naira exchanged for 4.5 Cents. In 1998, one Naira exchanged for 1.2 Cents. In 2004 the Naira exchanged for 0.7 Cent. The Naira exchanged for 0.5 Cent in 2015 and the Naira is exchanging for about 0.05 Cent today.

Could the Allied powers have introduced German to the German SAP to strengthen the Germany economy and the German military at the end of the war? No! The humiliation of the Germans and the destruction of the German economy were evident immediately and at the end of the punitive programme in four years. It is the reason the first Woman Prime Minister of Britain, Baroness Margaret Thatcher, once said that when you want to destroy a nation, first, you destroy the currency. It is the reason Britain always defends the Pound Sterling.

The German experience is sufficiently instructive. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (PBAT), cannot claim that subjecting the Naira to disgraceful market forces joke is innovative. The Nigerian SAP is almost 38 years. It has always been an unnecessary attack on Nigerians and Nigeria. Our curiosity-driven research summarised in our book, "Understanding why privatisation is promoting unemployment and poverty and delaying industrialisation," showed that it lacked growth-promoting elements and promotes unemployment and poverty and de-industrialisation. It has been a waste of time. PBAT should stop the attack and face the real issues

of development - promoting sustainable economic growth, industrialisation and development, SEGID and solving the pressing problems of mass unemployment, low productivity, poverty and insecurity.

The German people rose, abandoned the German SAP and restored their honour. The Commissioner for National Currency, Hjalmer Greedy Schat promptly stopped printing the mark and issued a new currency (the Rent-mark) that was equal to one trillion old mark and restore the exchange rate of 4.2 Mark to the Dollar.

World War II (WWII) was probably caused by the German SAP. John Maynard Keynes had warned Britain to be ready for WW II if it signed the Versailles treaty. Why would the West subject African nations to SAP again? Was it for lack of a sense of history or wickedness?

Economists, accountants and bankers do not understand how the economy works. They lack a sense of history and do not understand the science of sustainable economic growth, industrialisation and development. They are only good at sustaining abstract and irrelevant arguments about the economy. Africa will stagnate as long as economists and related institutions like the World Bank and IMF continue to influence the planning in the continent.

Economists and related institutions claim that irresponsible devaluation will lead to market-determined exchange rate, make the naira a convertible currency and promote inflow of foreign investment into Nigeria. What became the market-determined exchange rate for the German Mark, the currency of a world power in the period 1919 to 1923?

The Nigerian SAP has sapped and disgraced Nigerian for 38 years. The Convertibility of a currency is not achieved through mandatory devaluation. A convertible currency is one owned by a productive nation. It is the currency of an economy which produces a non-negligible proportion of the total quantity of goods produced in the world in a year.

The American Dollar, the British Pound and

the Japanese Yen are convertible currencies because the United States, Britain and Japan, each produces a non-negligible proportion of the total quantity of the goods produced in the world in a year. Hence many nations which buy the goods need Dollar, Pound and Yen to pay for them.

So, what is now the way forward? Learning (education, training, employment and research) is the primary basis of achieving SEGID in a nation. Capital investments, including foreign investments do not promote SEGID. So, no wise nation destroys its currency to attract foreign investments. No one has been learning since the Nigerian SAP began in 1986. The apprenticeship system is dead in Nigeria.

Usually, the currency of a nation serves as a means of exchange. Mandatory devaluation destroys the production system of a nation by drastically increasing speculation in the nation and making the destroyed currency and foreign currencies tradable commodities. In Lagos and many other towns in Nigeria, you hear of dollar-pound, dollar-pound, like buy *guguru/epa, akamu* and *akara*. The youths are either *japaing*, selling imported articles in the streets or riding motor cycles to irk a living or idle.

Production has been dropping since 1986. So, unemployment has been increasing, true inflation, poverty and insecurity have been increasing. SAP was introduced to humiliate Nigeria and other African nations.

A nation with an agricultural economy is necessarily poor. To subject an artisan/agricultural nation to SAP is wickedness on the part of the World Bank and IMF.

The way forward is to abandon SAP, adopt a fixed exchange rate, mobilise all Nigerians for integrated learning (education, training, employment and research) and accelerated industrialisation. Japan mobilised her citizens for learning 1886-1905 and became industrialised. China did the same 1949-early 1980s and achieved rapid industrialisation.

Ogbimi can be reached via: fogbimi@yahoo.com

Making investment in women a top priority

By Victor Emejuwe

AS we celebrate the International Women's Day, there are needs to take practical steps to implement a robust agenda that would address the inequality gap and lack of inclusivity affecting women in Nigeria. This year's event should go beyond lip service or the ceremonious affinity associated with the event and concrete actions should be taken to fully invest in Women.

Investment in women should be made a top priority because no society can thrive in a scale of balance if a major population that makes up the society (such as women) is less empowered.

It is also common knowledge that the determination of functional societies with records of economic and social developments as recorded in advanced countries are found in domains with positive indicators of women empowerment. Currently, Nigerian women have been excluded in so many ways; most of which includes; poor enrollment level of females in schools.

Statistics shows that the number of female enrollments in most states especially in northern Nigeria compared to their male counterparts is abysmally low. Also, the governance indicators on political inclusion of women is unfavorably imbalanced. Despite the affirmative action to offer Women 35 per cent of political inclusion, a report published by premium times reveals that 10th assembly has only three women out of 109 senators and 17 women out of 390 House of Reps' members which is below five per cent for both chambers.

On the part of the executive, the women represented in the cabinet of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu represent just 18.75 per cent which is far less than the required 35 per cent affirmative action. Coupled with this fact is the health and well-being of Nigerian women, the maternal mortality rate of

pregnant and nursing mothers has remained at an all-time low, putting women at risk of child bearing.

Women in the informal sector have also suffered exclusion from government programmes and policies despite the economic hardship experienced in Nigeria, most women in Nigeria are compelled to struggle for daily survival to support the running of the home. The market women who sell vegetables, tomatoes and other household items have been totally excluded from any form of social security from the government, with major exclusion experienced in the health insurance sector.

The exclusion of women in the informal sector has led them to resort to alternative medical treatments that endangers their life and well-being. Having highlighted a few of the challenges, it is necessary that the government pay attention to the implementation of its policies on women inclusion. One of the major policies that addresses the above concern, which requires full implementation, is the National Gender Policy 2021-2026. Some key objectives of the policy aim to explore and fully harness women's human capital assets as a growth driver for national development through Women's economic empowerment.

Advance women's participation and representation in leadership and governance as well as support Women and Girl's education, lifelong health, survival and sustainable development.

Also, the ministerial agenda for women empowerment and societal transformation produced by the ministry of Women affairs was strategically designed to uplift communities through Women empowerment, education, and law enforcement. To address the prevalence of illiteracy and out-of-school children, the policy proposes to implement a comprehensive education initiative focused on skill acquisition and vocational education.

The implementation of this agenda is an investment prior-

ity that should benefit young Girls and women.

The agenda also plans to liaise with NGOs to organise existing women cooperative societies into women affinity groups and provision of essential processing machines and equipment to empower women in various sectors.

Budgetary allocations should prioritise this across sectors. Also, government monetary and fiscal policies should mainstream Women for financial inclusion. In addition, Women should have access to soft loans to enable them to upscale their business and continue to support their families. To reduce maternal mortality, Pregnant women should be accorded free health insurance as obtained in S.25 of the National Health Insurance Authority Act.

Efforts should be made to provide social security in the form of affordable and qualitative health insurance as a top priority for Women. To achieve this, women in the informal sector should be grouped in a formalised structure according to their line of occupation and registered to access health insurance. For instance, association of Women farmers can be registered under one health insurance umbrella, the same goes for market women association, small scale women etc. This would guarantee their productivity and increase their life expectancy. The plans contained in the various government policy agenda should be costed and implemented accordingly.

In conclusion, women should not be left out of the political space, governments at all levels must show strong commitment in the inclusion of women in all facets of governance by ensuring that the affirmative action on Women serves as a strong basis for future appointments and elective positions in the country.

Emejuiwe is a Monitoring and Evaluation/Strategic Communication Manager. He wrote from Center for Social Justice Abuja and can be reached via: 08068262366.

CRUDE OIL PRICE UPDATE

Brent crude: \$82.231 | WTI crude: \$77.91

FOREX MARKET UPDATE

I&E window: ₦1617.96

High OpEx sees Guinness, Int'l Breweries raise prices across product lines

By **Tobi Awodipe**

DESPITE the relative foreign exchange stability in the last two weeks, rising operating costs, skyrocketing prices of raw materials, high energy and transport costs amongst other issues have seen more local brewers increase the cost of goods.

Guinness Nigeria Plc will, from tomorrow, implement new prices across major product lines.

Earlier, International Breweries (ABInBev), increased all product lines while Nigerian Breweries had earlier reviewed its prices, citing the high cost of production.

In a memo to its partners, the acting Commercial Director for Guinness Nigeria, Olusanya Adesanya, blamed the increase on prevailing economic realities, which have impacted significantly on the costs of production materials and the cost of doing business.

Adding that the increase is on select SKUs in their beer and MSS categories, he said it takes effect immediately.

Under the beer category, affected drinks include stouts (Guinness and Guinness Smooth), malts (Malta Guinness and Dubic Malt) and ready-to-drink spir-

its (Smirnoff Ice and Orijin).

Under the mainstream spirits, affected drinks include Orijin Bitters and Herbal Gin, Gordon's Pink Berry, Sunset Orange and Moringa Citrus, Smirnoff X1 Smooth and Choco and Captain Morgan.

In a similar memo to distributors, bulk-breakers and retailers, District Manager for the West, ABInBev, Hans Darfour, said the company is forced to increase prices due to escalating costs of operations.

In a price check of some of the affected products, small stout that retailed for about

N500 now goes for between N800-900, an 80 per cent increase. Big Stout retails for N1000 from N700, a 43 per cent increase while Castle Lite retails for N800 from N500, showing a 60 per cent increase. Trophy is showing a 40 per cent increase, moving to N700 from N500 while Gulder retails for N1000 from N600, a 67 per cent increase. Malta Guinness can that retailed for N300 now goes for N400, a 34 per cent increase.

The increase is coming on the heels of industry experts warning that manufacturers were labouring under the burden of escalating produc-

tion costs, rising costs of raw materials, high transport and rising energy costs amongst other issues which are squeezing profit margins for brewers.

The third quarter of last year showed that brewers' income costs stood at almost 70 per cent of total revenue with all of them declaring loss-

es after tax. The firms which included international breweries, Guinness Nigeria, Champion Breweries and Nigerian Breweries recorded cumulative input costs of N441.56 billion after the third quarter of last year from N401.87 billion in the same period in 2022.

CPPE tasks FG on strengthening expatriate legal framework

By **Gloria Nwafor and Adaku Onyenucheya**

THE Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE) has tasked the Federal Government with strengthening already existing extant laws and regulations within the framework of the Nigeria Immigration Act and the Expatriate Quota Handbook that squarely addresses the outcomes contemplated in the Expatriate Employment Levy (EEL).

The CPPE stated this while commending President Bola Tinubu and his team for suspending the implementation of the contentious EEL.

The Chief Executive Officer, CPPE, Dr Muda Yusuf, said the handbook is robust and comprehensive and covers the critical issues of technology transfer, localisation of jobs, and restrictions of some categories of expatriates from entry into the country, based on current skill gaps.

He also pointed to the National Content Act and Presidential Executive Orders Three and Five that focus on localisation of procurement and service opportunities.

Muda said the FG should strengthen the institutional and regulatory effectiveness of the Ministry of Interior and the Immigration Service to ensure compliance and enforcement of the extant laws and regulations.

"We do not need a new policy, regulation or handbook on the employment of expatriates. A new regulation or policy will be superfluous. The current regulations or handbook could be tweaked

if necessary," he stated.

He stressed that other gaps need to be addressed such as the compromise of relevant institutions over the years.

The CPPE boss also noted the weakness in regulations, which have paved the way for expatriates operating in the retail sector in the open markets, thereby competing unfairly with local market women and men.

According to him, expatriates are taking up shops in the nation's traditional markets, thereby displacing the indigenous traders who cannot compete with them.

Muda said there are similar concerns expressed by indigenous retailers in the computer, electronics, textiles, fabrics, and fashion accessories, where expatriates are competing with them at the retail end of the market.

He said some of these companies, which include manufacturers, distributors and retailers, dominate the entire value chain.

The CPPE boss said, while Nigeria does not lack expertise in retail trading, these issues need to be addressed by the immigration service and the Ministry of Interior.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) has commended the Federal Government through the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment for putting on hold the implementation of the EEL.



Deputy Managing Director, African Guarantee Fund (AGF), Ms Sibi Lawson (left); Group Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, United Bank for Africa (UBA), Oliver Alawuba; Group CEO, African Guarantee Fund, Jules Ngankam; and Group Deputy Managing Director, UBA, Muyiwa Akinyemi, during the signing of partnership between UBA and AGF where the latter will guarantee \$50m of UBA's new \$100m Loans to SMEs operating across the 20 African countries, in Lagos.... yesterday.

FG insists on commercialisation of research works to create jobs

By **Adaku Onyenucheya**

THE federal government has called for commercialisation of research outcomes to boost job creation for the teeming population.

The Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Uche Geoffrey Nnaji, during a facility tour of the Federal

Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIIRO), said there is a need for more funding of research, development and technology institutions as well as commercialisation of research in the country.

The minister said many of the researched products such as cassava and plantain

flour, much of which is imported, could be produced locally to create more jobs and conserve the foreign exchange spent on importation of raw materials.

He said the country needs innovation, science and technology for economic development, noting that

more investment would ensure the researched products see the light of the day.

Nnaji also called on investors to patronise locally produced goods and equipment for the development of the country, adding that such an effort would create more job opportunities and boost revenue for the country.

Nigeria, others raise concerns about terrorism financing in West Africa

By **Joseph Chibueze, Abuja**

THE federal government has called on member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to forge a common front in the fight against terrorism financing in the sub-region.

Director/CEO of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), Hafsat Bakari, stated this yesterday at the opening of the Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop on Countering the

• Seek regional cooperation to stop trend

Financing of Terrorism (CFT) for ECOWAS Anglophone Member States under the ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Action Plan.

The workshop is organised by the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA).

Bakari, who is also the National Correspondent of GIABA, said the threat of terrorism remains a pressing

concern across the globe.

"The insidious nature of terrorism not only threatens the lives of innocent people but also undermines the very fabric of our societies and economies. One of the key pillars in our collective fight against terrorism is countering the financing that sustains these nefarious activities," she said.

She noted that blocking the channels, routes and tech-

niques used to move the funds within countries and across the borders requires cooperation not just at a national level but also at a regional level.

"This can only be achieved through a proper understanding and application of the role of the military, intelligence services, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and the judiciary in this collective endeavour," the NFIU boss said.

She said the training, which will equip stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to combat the financing of terrorism effectively is a step in the right direction.

"This ToT serves as a pivotal platform for us to enhance our understanding of the evolving tactics employed by terrorist organisations to fund their operations. Through collaborative efforts and the exchange of best practices, we aim to

strengthen our capacity to detect, disrupt, and dismantle the financial networks that enable terrorism to thrive," she said.

She expressed satisfaction with the level of Nigeria's participation in the training, adding that it reflected the multi-agency approach championed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and encapsulated in the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the National Counter-Terrorism Financing Strategy.

TOP PROFESSIONALS NEEDED IN ENGINEERING CONSTRUCTION

● SENIOR CIVIL/BUILDING ENGINEERS REF: SCBE

● SENIOR STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS REF: SSE

● SENIOR ARCHITECTS REF: SA

● SENIOR PROJECT MANAGERS REF: SPM

A multinational real estate Company desires to engage highly competent, result oriented professionals with proven track record in high-rise property construction, design and project management to fill the above listed vacant positions.

The positions offers very attractive and competitive remuneration packages as well as challenging prospects for the successful candidates.

QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

- Minimum of good Bachelor's degree in fields relevant to the positions: Architecture, Civil/ Building or Structural Engineering, from a reputable university. Post-graduate degree(s) will be added advantage.
- Proven expertise with a minimum of eight (10) years relevant experience Real Estate Industry
- Certification in Project Management is an added advantage
- Certification and Vast Experience in Project Management will be added advantages
- Ability to multitask including coordinating and managing several projects, with solid project and change management skills.
- Ability to align, inspire and influence

outsourced/external partners and teams for results.

- A can-do attitude, strong leadership, and organizational management skills.
- Good problem solving, innovation, analytical, presentation and interpersonal skills.
- Membership of professional bodies, like COREN, NSE, NIA, PMP, etc, essential.
- Applicants earning less than Twenty-five Million naira (N25m) need not apply.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Support and ensure the effective and efficient design of buildings and structures as may be required.
- Assess technical requirements and provide technical advice for project related inputs such as appropriate construction materials,

the computation of loads and stresses data as well as environmental impact assessment.

- Work with other project teams members (including colleagues and building contractors) both onsite and offsite to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of structural design specifications and in particular, required HSE guidelines.
- Work with statutory planning officials to secure required regulatory approvals for building and related projects.
- Handle multiple project coordination and construction- Finance, Procurement and Preoperational set-up.
- Maintain an updated project-monitoring log and provide timely communication to critical stakeholders on status and technical evaluation of projects.

METHOD OF APPLICATION

Candidates who meet the above requirements should forward a soft copy of their applications with a scanned copy of passport photograph and Curriculum Vitae to: projectdirectors2024@gmail.com within two weeks from the date of this advertisement. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted via email and/or by SMS to the telephone number provided.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN AN EXTERNAL WORKS & LANDSCAPING COMPANY JARDIN NIGERIA LTD.

jardin

Position: Lead Architect/ Landscape Architect

Location: Abuja, Nigeria

Responsibilities:

- Coordinate a multi-disciplinary team to produce detailed working drawings including conceptual, schematics, presentations, renders & 3D designs.
- Liaise with the site execution team through frequent site visits and evaluations.
- Any other additional tasks related to the role.

Requirements:

- University Degree in Architecture or Landscape Architecture.
- Minimum 5-years' experience in an Architectural or Landscaping design company.
- Proficient in design software (i.e. AutoCAD, ArchiCAD, SketchUp, Adobe Creative Suite, 3Dmax, Lumion, Revit).

Position: Site Supervisor

Location: Abuja, Nigeria

Responsibilities:

- Oversee the planning, coordination, and execution of projects.
- Coordinate with the design & project management teams.
- Ensure projects adhere to timelines, budgets, and quality standards.
- Any other additional tasks related to the role.

Requirements:

- University Degree in relevant sector- i.e. Engineering, Construction Management, etc. PMP Certification is a plus.
- Minimum 5-years' experience as a Site Supervisor.
- Knowledge of materials, techniques & equipment- able to interpret design plans into actionable tasks.

Position: Workshop Manager

Location: Abuja, Nigeria

Responsibilities:

- Oversee all maintenance & repair activities taking place in our machinery, vehicle & equipment workshop.
- Coordinate effectively with other departments to anticipate needs for ongoing & upcoming projects.
- Management of resources including coordination with suppliers for purchase and tracking of inventory & expenditure.
- Enforce cleanliness, quality assurance & adhesion to HSE measures.

Requirements:

- University Degree in Mechanical Engineering or similar sector.
- Minimum 5 years' experience as a Workshop Manager in a construction company.

Position: Farm & Ornamental Nursery Manager

Location: Abuja, Nigeria

Responsibilities:

- Manage all aspects of the agricultural & ornamental plants production- planting schedules, reports, quality & process control, and crop management.
- General maintenance & management of the existing facilities – irrigation, generators, roads, security, etc.
- Liaise with the design & operation teams to ensure seamless coordination between projects and nursery activities.
- Any other additional tasks related to the role.

Requirements:

- University Degree in Agronomy, Agriculture or Horticulture.
- Minimum 5 years' experience managing agricultural and/ or horticultural production.

Interested candidates are invited to submit their CVs and Portfolios to info@jardin.com. Please include "[Position Title] - [Your Name]" in the subject line.

General Compensation & Conditions:

- Competitive salary & benefits based on experience and contribution.
- All candidates should have University degrees or equivalent & 5 years' experience.
- All positions are based in Abuja.

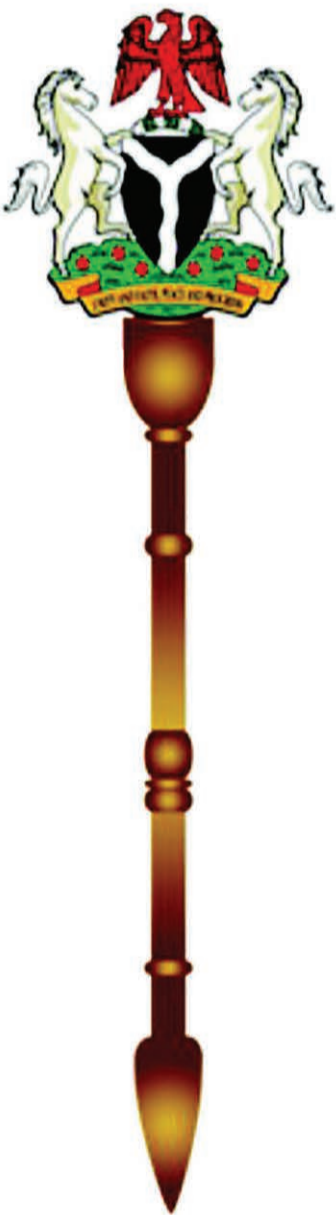




NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX
THREE ARMS ZONE, ABUJA, NIGERIA
COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION REVIEW

Call for Memoranda



In exercise of the powers conferred on the Legislature by Sections 4, 8 and 9 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as Amended) and Order 20, Rule 30 of the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives (11th Edition) and the Legislative Agenda of the 10th House of Representatives, the Deputy Speaker and Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Constitution Review, **Rt. Hon. Benjamin Okezie Kalu** is pleased to invite the Executive and Judicial bodies, State Governments, Women Groups, Academics, Civil Society Organizations, Labour Unions, Professional bodies, Ethnic Nationalities, Traditional Institutions, Student bodies, Nigerians in the Diaspora, Diplomats and the general public, to submit memoranda or proposals for further alteration(s) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) on the following thematic areas:

1. The Federal Structure and Power Devolution
2. Local Government/Local Government Autonomy
3. Public Revenue, Fiscal Federation and Revenue Allocation
4. Nigerian Police and Nigerian Security Architecture
5. Comprehensive Judicial Reforms
6. Electoral Reforms to strengthen INEC to deliver transparent, credible, free and fair elections
7. Socio-economic and cultural rights as contained in Chapter 2 of the Constitution
8. Traditional Institutions
9. Gender Related Matters
10. Strengthening the Independence of oversight institutions and agencies created by the Constitution or pursuant to an Act of the National Assembly
11. Residency and Indigene Provisions
12. Immunity
13. The National Assembly
14. Process of State creation
15. State access to mining
16. Any other matter that will promote good governance and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of Freedom, Equality and Justice.

Five (5) hard copies of all proposals and memoranda are to be submitted to the Secretariat of the Committee at **Room H331, House of Representatives White House, National Assembly Complex, Abuja**, not later than **10th April 2024**. **Soft copies** should also be sent electronically to the committee's email address – info@hccr.gov.ng

SIGNED

Rt. Hon Benjamin Okezie Kalu
Deputy Speaker and Chairman, House of Representatives
Committee on Constitution Review

With Support from:



Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

Index rises further by N404 billion amid gains in Transcorp Power, others

By Helen Oji

THE Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) extended gains, to reopen in an upbeat yesterday, as appreciation in Transcorp Power Plc and 33 stocks lifted market capitalisation by N404 billion.

The all-share index (ASI) gained 73.99 points, representing a gain of 0.70 per cent to close at 102,044.84 points. Also, market capitalisation rose by N404 billion to close at N57.697 trillion.

The upturn was driven by price appreciation in large and medium capitalised stocks amongst which are; Transcorp Power, Dangote Sugar Refinery, NASCON Allied Industries, Zenith Bank and United Bank for Africa (UBA).

Analysts at United Capital Plc said: "We expect mixed sentiments towards equities investments, with bearish sentiment persisting at the background, motivated by the elevated interest rate regime, and further indica-

tion of Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) tightening by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), in line with its inflation-targeting framework.

"However, we expect solid corporate actions and fundamentals to continue to spur bargain hunting among investors."

Also on what will shape the market in the next trading session, Vetiva Dealings and Brokerage said: "The week started off positive (ASI up 70bps). We are likely to see the major drivers (banking and consumer goods) support market performance tomorrow."

As measured by market breadth, market sentiment was positive, as 34 stocks gained relative to 16 losers. Honeywell Flour Mills and NEM Insurance emerged the highest price gainer of 10 per cent each to close at N3.74 kobo and N6.05 kobo respectively, while Dangote Sugar Refinery followed with a gain of 9.97 per cent to close at N61.20 kobo.

NASCON Allied Industries rose by 9.92 per cent to close at N57.60 kobo while Wema Bank appreciated by 9.79 per cent to close at N7.85 kobo. On the other side,

Prestige Assurance led others on the losers' chart with 10 per cent to close at 54 kobo per share.

LASACO Assurance followed with a decline of 9.83 per cent to close at N2.11, while UACN shed 9.68 per cent to close at N12.60 kobo. RT Briscoe went down by 8.16 per cent to close at 45 kobo, while International Energy Insurance depreciated by 7.74 per cent to close at N1.55 kobo.

The total volume of trade increased by 22 per cent to 436.897 million units, valued at N17.099 billion, and exchanged in 11,344 deals.

Transactions in the shares of Guaranty Trust Holding Company (GTCO) led the activity with 96.631 million shares worth N4.024 billion.

Transnational Corporation (Transcorp) followed with an account of 73.86 million shares valued at N1.231 billion, while Access Holdings traded 48.09 million shares valued at N988.35 million. UBA traded 21.581 million shares worth N497.306 million, while NASCON Allied Industries traded 19.575 million shares worth N1.126 billion.

Alake criticises desperate leaders, warns Africa against debt trap

From Ernest Nzor, Abuja

CHAIRMAN of the African Minerals Strategy Group and Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dr Oladele Alake, yesterday, called on African countries rich in minerals to consider using their proven mineral reserves as equity in joint ventures instead of taking loans that exacerbate their people's plight.

Alake expressed his concerns regarding the pressure faced by African governments from loan marketers, despite the global worry over their ability to repay their debts.

Speaking at the Ministerial Roundtable on Powering Africa in Washington DC recently, Alake deplored unwholesome pressure on African governments by lenders despite global concerns over the declining capacity of many countries to settle their debts.

Alake said: "It is an interesting paradox that despite their chronic indebtedness, African countries remain the target of institutional and private loan sharks marketing

short and long-term credit to ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).

"Indeed, in the first month after a minister is sworn into office, he is bombarded by these marketers promising above-the-table and under-the-table deals.

"In the mining sector, where the verified value of unextracted minerals can be the equity of the owner in joint ventures, is a better financial arrangement than the road to chronic indebtedness."

Recalling how he had taken issues with indiscriminate loan deals of African governments as a journalist, Alake said: "Only loans that can be liquidated by the returns on the projects should be taken to save the people from poverty.

"I have criticised the predilection of Nigerian governments to sign the dotted lines of loan agreements on the flimsiest excuse mostly with stiff conditions, which hurt the common people. Therefore, I believe African governments should exercise patriotic circumspection and due diligence before committing their sovereignty."

UBA to support African SMEs with \$100 million in new deal

THE African Guarantee Fund (AGF) and United Bank for Africa (UBA), yesterday, signed a partnership to enable UBA to provide \$100 million in new loans to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and business owners across the 20 African countries where the bank has a presence.

The AGF under this agreement will support and guarantee SMEs with \$50 million portfolio guarantee as well as facilitate extensive capacity development for the bank's teeming customers who run small businesses across the continent, paying special attention to women-led businesses and green finance projects.


UBA's Group Managing Director, Oliver Alawuba, who spoke during the partnership signing ceremony at UBA Head Office in Lagos, said as Africa's Global Bank, UBA remains committed to supporting SMEs in Africa, especially to women-founded and managed businesses, given its robust network, which is spread across the 20 countries in Africa and

major global financial capitals.

"This guarantee will catalyze the bank's intervention for SME business, women-led and environment-friendly businesses, enabling us to further extend our reach and impact. Additionally, the extensive capacity development initiatives planned for our SME customers across 20 African countries align with our vision to empower businesses, drive innovation, and foster sustainable growth.

"I am particularly excited about our focus on advancing the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) initiative, reaffirming UBA's \$6 billion commitment to SMEs across Africa. This initiative, announced in September last year, demonstrates our dedication to supporting the economic integration of our continent," he said.

Group CEO of African Guarantee Fund, Jules Ngankam, said the partnership would significantly drive economic growth across the continent.



This March, we started a conversation on Implementing Personalized Leadership Coaching & Mentoring. Last week, we discussed 5 Reasons Leaders Must Adopt A Coaching Leadership Style in 2024. This week, marks the second discussion in the series and we will be equipping leaders with insights to enable them develop other coaching leaders on their teams.

Implementing personalised leadership coaching and mentoring II

NINE Ways To Develop Coaching Leaders On Your Team

ANNUALLY, organisations around the world have admitted to incurring huge costs and expenses, worth millions and hundreds of millions on training and workshops for staff and management, with little or no positive yield.

As a matter of fact, 41% of business leaders, according to the Global Human Capital Trends 2019 report published by Deloitte, affirm that their organizations did fail to meet up with the needed leadership standards despite the investments made in that regard.

To accelerate leadership performance and build sustainable institutions, we must develop leaders who leverage a Coaching Leadership Style (CLS). As mentioned on The Peak Performer, coaching leadership style brings much value - fosters conducive learning space, enhances interactive skills of the leader, increase empathy quotient while also positioning your team for accelerated growth.

You can consider the following 9 strategies for adoption.

1. Launch a Coach Leadership Funnel

A funnel strategy grooms a few select people for the next level of management through special training, job experiences, and coaching. It is important to note that these candidates must have been made to go through a variety of tests in order to have been considered as potential coach leaders.

2. Design A Development Plan

A development plan is some-

what like a map to guide you and your team through specific and strategic milestones that have been set to be achieved. This development plan should contain segments that would cover areas of strength as well as weaknesses, how much your team members know and comprehend per time, their expertise level and so much more.

3. Provide Training Regularly

While training and workshops are great, not devising a plan that is concordant or customary will do more harm than good, giving room for inconsistency to hamper their growth and performance in the organization. Never discourage your team members from attending conferences and networking events when needed and necessary as this will hold back opportunities for their onward development as Coach Leaders.

4. Encourage Autonomy and Offer Coaching and Mentorship

When considering strategies for developing members on a team with the potential to becoming Coach Leaders, Mentoring and Coaching is key which is why it is necessary for leaders to constantly rally employees to be self-driven and purposeful in taking up initiatives which will greatly help in boosting their confidence and sharpening their leadership skills with the needed guidance and support of course.

5. Listen

As a leader, you can't effectively develop others if you haven't mastered the art of listening - which is the ability to comprehend the intention of a message as well as

the consciousness of attitude and feelings of the sender of the message. Having impressive listening skills directly affects engagement, commitment and working relationships with others in a negative or positive way.

6. Recognition and Feedback

Recognition as a means of feedback and reward for peak performance can help boost self-confidence and enthusiasm. Which is why providing constructive feedback as a leader is essential to helping team members improve on their performance in order to enable them achieve their goals. At the same time, regular feedback reinforces the behaviors you want to see more of, while recognition builds trust and creates a positive work environment.

7. Personal Development

Giving room for your team members to undergo the process of keeping up with up-to-date trends in order to stay relevant and effective while also using a strong personal network to learn from the ideas and experiences of others is what is referred to as personal development and it's another strong factor in developing coach leaders on your team.

8. Time Management

Leaders who are poor at managing their time well are bound to suffer inefficiency without ever having enough time to spare to develop their team members. This is why planning and controlling how you spend each hour in your day to accomplish your goals is a skill that both leaders and members on a team should imbibe in order to meet deadlines effectively

and efficiently.

9. Value Your Team

Having the foresight to not only recognize the potential within others, but also guide them to see that their diversity, capabilities, experiences, and contributions are integral for the team in more ways than they can imagine will make them feel valued, engaged and included while also helping them to thrive, both personally and professionally.

To further position your leaders for peak performance, you can download a free copy of the latest edition of The Peak Performer Magazine at www.thepeakperformer.africa. You can also enroll your Mid-level Leadership Team for the Made4More Accelerator Program <https://abiolachamp.com/m4m-accelerator> and your Senior Leadership Team for the Dr. Abiola Salami International Leadership Bootcamp MOMBASA 2024 <https://abiolachamp.com/international-bootcamp/>. We also have an upcoming training for leaders in public service www.abiolachamp.com/deps/

About Dr. Abiola Salami

Dr. Abiola Salami is the Convener of Dr Abiola Salami International Leadership Bootcamp and The Peak PerformerTM. He is the Principal Performance Strategist at CHAMP - a full scale professional services firm trusted by high performing business leaders for providing Executive Coaching, Workforce Development & Advisory Services to improve performance. You can reach his team on hello@abiolachamp.com and connect

Labour & Appointments

www.guardian.ng

Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Entrepreneurship as tool for job creation

By 2030, over 40 per cent of the global youth population will be African while the number of African youths is expected to reach 830 million by 2050. The growth trend is exciting, given the demographic dividend the country stands to gain. Unfortunately, Africa's youth bulge may not drive the economic growth and wealth creation that is expected because more than one in four young people in the continent are not in employment, education or training (NEET), reports GLORIA NWAFOR.

THE lack of productive, formal employment is increasingly pushing Africa's youth to start their businesses as entrepreneurs. Africa boasts the world's highest rates of entrepreneurship, with more than one in five working-age Africans starting a new business and more than three-quarters of the youth planning to start one within five years.

The challenge is that this entrepreneurship is mainly self-employment in the informal sector, which the International Labour Organisation (ILO) classifies as "vulnerable employment." According to the ILO, 95 per cent of Africa's working youth fall into this category, compared to less than 50 per cent in the Americas, Europe, and Asia. It said vulnerable employment is reflected in low productivity, low earnings, and difficult working conditions.

The Guardian gathered that whether in the informal or formal sector, entrepreneurship in Africa is often plagued with problems including but not limited to lack of access to appropriate funding instruments required to start, maintain and grow a business. Also, the high cost of operations due to inadequate infrastructure, poor macroeconomic conditions, and government policies are unsupportive to business. Coupling these issues with low levels of economic growth and poor social protection schemes, African economies are expected to experience even more youth employment challenges in the future.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) estimates that each year, up to 12 million youths in Africa enter a workforce that has only 3.1 million jobs available and consequently, 1.7 million new jobs need to be created each month to meet employment needs.

A Nigerian entrepreneur, founder and Managing Partner, Agrolay Ventures and the Nuli Juice Company, Ada Osakwe, shared how she experienced most of the hurdles in 2016 when she launched Nuli Foods, a medium-sized agribusiness that manufactures nutritious beverages with locally



Cross section of youths during an entrepreneurship programme.

grown fruits and vegetables.

According to her, Nuli has contributed to Nigeria's economic landscape by creating jobs for youth, reducing post-harvest losses, creating steady incomes for smallholder farmers and giving Nigerians access to better nutrition. However, she said that building the business has come with significant challenges, including difficulties securing financing from banks and public institutions, high operating costs, crippling inflation rates and instability in government policies.

The Guardian reports that despite the myriad challenges facing anyone trying to build a business in Africa, African youth continue to have a strong entrepreneurial spirit, leading to entrepreneurship being considered as the solution to Africa's job malaise.

This, The Guardian gathered, is partly fueled by the increasing influence of digital technologies that provide new opportunities for innovation across sectors.

Consequently, over the last decade, billions of dollars have been committed to developing Africa's entrepreneurs. However, most public and donor-funded youth projects are failing to adequately provide systemic support Africa's young entrepreneurs need. For example, a recent Voxdev report states that approximately \$1 billion is spent yearly on entrepreneurship training in developing countries.

The report also notes that the returns from these investments are not yielding economic and social impacts.

Stakeholders believe that by rethinking entrepreneur-led job creation in Africa, economies must begin to reconsider the models of entrepreneurship support that exist in Africa to ensure that young people are not being blinded by a false narrative of future wealth and stability.

Osakwe said academic institutions, governments, donors, and capital providers should be more intentional about promoting a more enabling environment for

entrepreneurship to thrive to create jobs on a massive scale in Africa.

To achieve this, she said an approach to consider was providing focused support to "SME Eagles."

She noted that micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) account for 80 per cent to 90 per cent of jobs on the continent, making them significant contributors to socio-economic development.

"Among these are enterprises that have demonstrated remarkable resilience because they have perfected their business models, created strong operational structures, grown revenues, and expanded their businesses, despite being faced with the Africa-specific challenges outlined above. These businesses can be referred to as SME Eagles. SME Eagles can provide stable, wage employment for millions of young people, serving as anchors that create and sustain jobs.

"An example is a 150-tons-per-day milk processing factory in northern Nigeria, owned by a 30-year-old entrepreneur. To meet the needs of the factory, this entrepreneur developed an effective "outgrow" model with milk collection centers where rural pastoralists, the majority of

whom are youths and women, deposit their milk daily in return for an income. Today, 18,000 farmers are part of this SME Eagle's network, after only one year of operation. That's 18,000 new, stable jobs, with the potential for thousands more as the factory expands production. Catalysing entrepreneur-led job creation with SME Eagles will require providing affordable capital through blended finance mechanisms," she said.

In her submission, Executive Director, FATE Foundation, Adenike Adeyemi, said accelerating productive MSMEs was the much-needed catalyst for Nigeria's socio-economic recovery.

She said that Nigeria's recent national growth plan and the Renewed Hope Agenda of the Bola Tinubu-led administration, highlighted the opportunities that MSMEs create for the achievement of development objectives. She said the support for MSMEs was critical for Nigeria to return to a path toward a prosperous, sustainable and equitable economy.

Noting that young people are the fastest-growing age segment and those between the ages of 15 to 29 account for 42 per cent of MSME entrepreneurs, according to the Fate Foundation.

Adeyemi said with high unemployment and underemployment rates being a challenge in Nigeria for that age category, it was encouraging to see more young people take on the opportunity to build their own economic pathways and create a job for themselves through entrepreneurship.

"With business growth being one of our strong indicators of entrepreneurial performance, Women entrepreneurs—who make up 43 per cent of MSME employees—showed better productivity output as they outperformed their male counterparts within that indicator level," she said.

She expressed the foundation's belief that Nigeria's MSMEs could become the main drivers of economic recovery and inclusive growth only if there is a strong emphasis on enabling productive enterprises in 2024.

According to her, "2023 was a challenging year for Nigeria's MSMEs. Despite the "green shoots" Nigeria experienced following the re-opening of the economy in 2021-22 after the pandemic, economic development in late 2022 and 2023 was negatively impacted by the flawed implementation of the naira redesign policy, the impact of fuel subsidy removal, which increased operational costs, and the slowdown of economic activity due to the national and state-level elections."

In the foundation's 2023 State of Entrepreneurship Report, Adeyemi, noted a deterioration in entrepreneurial performance with over 90 per cent of entrepreneurs surveyed indicating that the fuel subsidy removal had and continues to hurt their businesses. She said while they contribute over 90 per cent to entrepreneurial activity in Nigeria and make up 87.9 per cent of the country's labour force, she said over 90 per cent of MSMEs are micro-enterprises with suboptimal productivity and low growth.

"When we apply a youth and gender lens, however, we do see some very bright spots," she said. In charting the pathway for a better Nigeria in 2024, Adeyemi made the following key policy priorities to stimulate the entrepreneurial ecosystem and enable inclusive and broad-based growth for MSMEs.

According to her, changing measurement indicators for MSME investments to be age and gender disaggregated and reflect socio-economic impacts like decent jobs created, revenue growth, and ability to transition across segments (from micro to small or medium levels).

She called for the removal of regulatory bottlenecks and harmonising multiple taxations to galvanise business startup, growth and sustainability.

She said that digitising required regulatory processes and procedures as well as creating virtual and physical one-stop shops at Local Government levels (Nigeria has 774 LGAs) can enable it at scale.

The Fate Foundation chief mentioned the need to accelerate the dual transition of youth and women-led MSMEs (digital and green) to enhance their pathways to growth and improve their ability to attain entrepreneurial success.

Additionally, she said domesticating the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement was key to improving Nigeria's MSME competitiveness (currently at 47 per cent) and fast track its participation in regional and global trade. According to her, Nigeria's small and growing businesses need to be more productive to contribute effectively to the growth and development of the country.

“By rethinking entrepreneur-led job creation in Africa, economies must begin to reconsider the models of entrepreneurship support that exist in Africa to ensure that young people are not being blinded by a false narrative of future wealth and stability.”

ICC, NNEW advocate improved women's inclusion

By Gloria Nwafor

THE Lagos State government, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the Nigeria Employers Consultative Association (NECA) Network of Entrepreneurship Women (NNEW) have joined forces to call for greater inclusion of women in all areas of society. They submitted to this at this year's International Women's Day (IWD) event with the theme 'Inspire Inclusion', organised by ICC and NNEW in Lagos, where stakeholders highlighted the importance of empowering women and promoting their active participation in various fields. Lagos Commissioner for

Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade and Investment, Folashade Ambrose-Medebem, emphasised the significance of inspiring inclusion as a means to build a fair and just society. She stressed the importance of recognising and celebrating diversity while ensuring equal opportunities for women and girls.

Secretary-General of ICC Nigeria, Olubunmi Osuntuyi, urged both the government and society to create an enabling environment for women to excel.

She emphasised the need for gender balance and opportunities for women to occupy leadership positions without limitations or

barriers. President of NECA NNEW, Funmilayo Arowoogun, encouraged women to be confident, proactive and supportive of one another. She submitted that women possess the necessary skills and capabilities to lead

effectively and contribute significantly to the economy and society.

The event featured panel discussions with accomplished women from various fields, including legal advocacy, trade, and design, who shared their experiences

and insights on bridging the gender gap and empowering women professionally. As calls for greater women's inclusion continue to resonate, stakeholders are hopeful that concerted efforts and collaborations will lead to a more inclusive and equitable

society where women can thrive and excel in all endeavours.

During the programme focused on gender inclusion in the workplace, panelists from various fields discussed the challenges facing women in their respective industries.

Groups train women in financial literacy

By Ngozi Egenuka

WOMEN have been trained on the importance of financial literacy and its role in promoting independence and reducing poverty.

This was at a three-day training on financial literacy for Women Survivors of Domestic Violence in Lagos State, organised by the Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP) and Theresa Williams Foundation (TWF) under the SWARDA Project (Strengthening Women's Awareness and Recovery from Domestic Abuse). Executive Director, Bose Ironsi, said the primary objective of the SWARDA Project was to address the devastating impact of domestic violence against women by empowering them through financial literacy.

She said the training will equip women survivors of domestic violence with essential skills to regain

control of their financial lives and build a secure future.

"This initiative goes beyond financial literacy; it is about restoring dignity, confidence and self-sufficiency. By equipping survivors with practical tools, we empower them to break free from cycles of abuse and build brighter futures. It is also to celebrate International Women's Day 2024 with the theme "Inspire Inclusion," she said.

Participants were trained on budgeting and money management, why women's financial empowerment matters, understanding financial literacy basics, building financial skills, the power of saving, mental health and legal rights among others?

According to the Programme Manager, WRAHP, Francis Umoh, "Nigeria remains a patriarchal society with men exercising authority over females in different spheres of life such as politics, economics and sexuality."



TENDER OPPORTUNITY ADVERTISEMENT

The Delivery of CCTV, Access Control Systems, Walk Through Metal Detector Maintenance Services and Staff ID card production for the British Council Offices in Abuja, Kano, Lagos, and Port Harcourt.

British Council invites bidders who are interested and capable of delivery of consistent and excellent CCTV, Access Control Systems, Walk Through Metal Detector Maintenance Services and Staff ID card production across all British Council offices in Nigeria (Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt & Kano).

The details (tender instructions) are in the tender documents which can be accessed via the link: <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/britishcouncil/asp/Home>

(Bidders will be required to register freely before they are able to access tender documents).

1. <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/britishcouncil/asp/ProjectManage/3395>
(Link to this tender – Reference BC/03395).

The submission deadline is 27th March 2024.

Change of Name
Property
Guardian Jobs
SME's/Business Page
Guardian Jobs

Loss of document
Legal Notice
Education Page

Health
Automobile
Fashion
Agro

www.guardian.ng

ENQUIRIES:
LAGOS OFFICE:
08077657711
08028411767

VACANCY ! VACANCY !! VACANCY !!!

A LEADING INSURANCE COMPANY IN NIGERIA WITH SUBSIDIARIES OVERSEAS AND LOCALLY, REQUEST THE SERVICES OF RESULT ORIENTED, SELF MOTIVATED

MARKETING EXECUTIVES.

QUALIFICATION: B.SC. HND. OND & NCE. MARKETING EXPERIENCE NOT ESSENTIAL. AVAILABLE FOR APPLICANTS IN LAGOS.

CONTACT: 09049144424

Email: mooenterprise20@gmail.com.
Remuneration: Attractive And Negotiable

VACANCY! VACANCY!! VACANCY!!!

SEALERWOOD DESIGNER IS CURRENTLY RECRUITING FOR THE POSITION OF:

1. Furniture Makers	4. Factory Assistant
2. Auto card	5. Office Assistant
3. Accountant	6. Furniture Sprayer

Send CV to our email address: sealerwood@gmail.com or call: 08025879787, 08162051541

1-2 SEALERWOOD CLOSE OFF IFEDIORA STREET MAJEK BUSTOP, LEKKI EPE EXPRESS WAY, LAGOS

Walking in interview: Anybody interested in the above position can also come to the address with their updated cv.

NOTE: MAJEK FIRST GATE

A logistics company is looking to recruit diligent and goal-oriented individuals to fill the following roles.

- Business Development Manager (minimum of 2 years experience in similar role, resident in Ibadan)
- Despatch riders (must have riders permit and license, minimum of SSCE, resident in Ibadan)
- Driver (must have valid drivers license. Resident in Lagos or Ota, Ogun state)

Applicants are to forward their application to: rejoicelogisticsltd@gmail.com

APPOINTMENTS

1. ACCOUNT OFFICE
Qualification: Bsc. /HND. in Accounting (N100k)

2. FEMALE CUSTOMER SERVICE OFFICER
Qualification: Bsc. /HND. (N80k)

3. LAUNDRY ASSISTANT (50k)

4. PRESSER = 75K

EMAIL CV to:
Imageglobalnig@yahoo.com

VACANCY

HSE MANAGER

An ultra modern packaging company located at Ewekoro in Ogun State is in need of factory experienced HSE Manager for innovation and enforcement of her policy on health, safety and environment within the factory

Qualifications: Minimum of a degree with professional certifications of 6-8 years hand-on experience.

Remuneration: The ideal candidate will be well remunerated.

Method of application
All resumes should be forwarded using HSE as subject matter to:
dtemgt@gmail.com

VACANT

Scientists develop crop models to tackle climate change

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

WITH climate change disrupting weather patterns and jeopardising food security, scientists are equipping themselves with the knowledge and skills to leverage advanced crop models and climate data.

According to the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR), these models act as digital simulations, allowing researchers to assess potential climate impacts and develop tailored adaptation strategies for various scales from individual fields to entire landscapes.

To them, crop modeling is no longer just a research tool; it's now empowering farmers with timely, climate-smart information. It allows farmers receive personalised advisories on planting times, crop choices, and management strategies in response to changing weather patterns, considered as transformative promise of crop modeling in agricultural decision-making.

The scientists say the models are a game-changer and when well-adapted, can guide farmers in making crucial decisions about resource use efficiency (water and nutrient use management), agronomic operations (planting dates, weeding, harvesting), and even, anticipating potential pest and disease problems, ultimately helping us navigate the challenges of a changing climate.

Professor Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) said the application of crop models is still a developing field, but holds immense potential for empowering farmers. "By understanding the specific



A rice farmer inspecting his plantation

risks their crops face owing to climate change, farmers can make informed decisions about planting dates, crop choices, and water management, ultimately increasing their resilience and ensuring better yields."

He added that the recent advancements in crop modeling offer a transformative approach to address the ever-evolving challenges in agriculture, especially with looming climate uncertainties.

One of such groundbreaking initiatives is the GROWSMART advisory service, developed by the CGIAR Excellence in Agronomy Initiative, in collaboration with CGIAR Centres and partners in Southern Africa.

What sets GROWSMART apart is its robust framework, which integrates remote sensing, machine learning, and crop models. This amalgamation of cutting-edge technologies provides farmers with actionable insights, not just information, to navigate the challenges of a

changing climate.

Tailored for farmers and extension agents in English and Chinyanja (Bantu language spoken in parts of Malawi), GROWSMART utilises existing data to offer insightful agronomy support with a specific focus on El Niño (droughts, floods, crop failures etc).

This climatic phenomenon, reports say disrupts agricultural landscapes. This collaborative effort aims to empower farmers by disseminating vital El Niño information through diverse platforms, including tailored messages for various stakeholders.

Other collaborations include the Agricultural Model Intercomparison Project (AGMIP), which is a major global initiative linking the climate, crop, and economic modelling communities of practice to develop improved crop and economic models and the next generation of climate impact projections for the agricultural sector.

While acknowledging the complexities of downscal-

ing climate data and improving the inter-comparability of models, the practical impact resonates deeply with farmers, a beneficiary of the Agricultural Model Intercomparison Project, Mrs. Mkhize, who shared her experience, said: "The SMS alerts are crucial for my family and I to prepare for upcoming weather conditions. Recently, I received a warning about heavy rainfall, allowing me to store rainwater for future irrigation, as advised."

Her story underscores empowerment farmers enjoy through these agro-advisory tools.

Beyond technology, the scientists say the innovations have showcased the practical benefits of equipping farmers with reliable information from well-adapted models, adding that in regions where agriculture is the lifeblood, these innovations become lifelines, noting that the tailored messages serve as guideposts, navigating farmers through the complexities of climate change.

HortiNigeria deepens capacity of agro-dealers in Kaduna

From Murtala Adewale, Kano

BASED on its determination to strengthen the horticultural value chain in Nigeria, HortiNigeria has empowered no fewer than 36 agro-dealers with advance knowledge on best agribusiness management in Kaduna State.

The empowerment was carried out during a two-day capacity building held at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, essentially designed to broaden skills of the participants selected from Zaria, Sabon Gari, Soba, Kudan, Kubau and Ikara Council of the state.

Speaking at the opening of the training, Agribusiness Coordinator, HortiNigeria, Danjuma Makama, disclosed that building capacity of agro-dealers is also targeted at creating ripple effect on the entire agribusiness clusters being established across the nodes of value in the state.

Makama emphasised that with the upscaling of the dealers knowledge in business management, and general applications, HortiNigeria is strengthening the key players with basic requirements for agricultural productivity, sustainability and resilience in the country.

The Agribusiness Coordinator, represented by

the Project Business Support Service, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Abdul Wahab Abubakar, added that HortiNigeria is enabling veritable environment that ensure mass production of food and ensuring sustainable value chain of agro-chemicals, from production to the end users.

He said the initiative was part of the firm's commitment to support Nigeria's agricultural sector through capacity building and sustainable development practice.

"For any sustainable and successful agric production, agro-chemicals are pivotal. Now the right use and application of these chemicals are even more important. This is why the training of the dealers of these products is very important for themselves and the farmers, because after making sure they improve themselves in the proper handling of chemicals, they will also educated the farmers on best application practices on the farm.

"Agro dealers are the first contacts of the chemicals and the farmers on field, they have the responsibility to ensure safe exposure to the chemicals and transfer of property agronomy practice to farmers, basically on the proper method of application," he said.

Zulum seeks autonomy for NCAM to boost food security, employment

From Njadvara Musa, Maiduguri

THE Borno State governor, Babagana Zulum, has appealed to the Federal Government to grant autonomy to the National Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation (NCAM), to boost food security and job creation in the country.

According to him, the massive fabrication of agricultural machinery and other implements will assist in achieving President Bola Tinubu's mandate to reinvigorate the national economy.

Zulum, who made the call in Maiduguri, while briefing newsmen on how the Federal and state governments could resuscitate the agricultural and livestock

sectors, said: "I was in Ilorin last year to visit the NCAM; I have seen the institute fabricating various agricultural machinery."

He added the Centre would play crucial roles in boosting crop production and sustenance of agriculture.

The governor noted: "NCAM is the only government owned agricultural mechanisation outfit saddled with the responsibility of fabricating agricultural tools."

He, therefore, urged the Federal Government to reconsider its decisions critically, by situating the Centre under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology.

UK-PACT, FAO launch project to protect mangroves in Cross River

From Joke Falaju, Abuja

THE United Kingdom Partnership for Accelerated Climate Transition (UK-PACT) and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) have commenced a project to protect the mangrove ecosystem in Cross River State from pollution and deforestation.

The project - Integrated Management of Mangrove Ecosystem and Expansion of Social Protection for Fisheries and Forest Dependents in Cross River State, is aimed at strengthening enabling policies in mangrove management and the promotion of alternative livelihoods for the empowerment of the fisheries and forest dependent communities.

During the launch of the project in Abuja, the FAO Country Representative in Nigeria and ECOWAS, Koffy Dominique, underscored the

significance of mangroves in providing habitats for biodiversity, and as a fundamental resource for the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

He mentioned that the aim of the initiative is to strike a balance between conservation and sustainable use of the mangrove ecosystem, amid increasing threats from deforestation, firewood and timber collection, and the misuse of pesticides.

Dominique mentioned that the project is focused on communities reliant on fisheries and forest resources within the mangrove ecosystem and advocated for a holistic and integrated management approaches to ensure not only the preservation of the environment, but also the well-being of the population dependent on it.

He said: "The initiative seeks to empower

these communities, providing them with the means to sustain their livelihoods while contributing to the conservation of the mangrove ecosystem."

The Climate Change and Nature Team Lead for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), British High Commission, Abuja, Martine Sobey, revealed that they have been supporting the programme for the past six months, working with communities, the Cross Rivers State government, and the local council authorities as well.

She said: "For us, it is about protecting the loss of mangroves from pollution over harvesting for few woods, and helping communities who depend on those mangroves for fish, for their livelihoods and finding a sustainable way for communities to live and protect mangroves

in the long term."

The Director General, National Council on Climate Change (NCCC), Dr Salisu Dahiru, in his remarks said Nigeria has made significant progress since its signing and ratification of the Paris Agreement, as well as the declaration of its net zero commitment at COP 26 in Glasgow, Scotland.

He said the UK-PACT and FAO project aligns with one of the major mitigation options of the updated Nigeria's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and also sustainable development goals, contributes to climate adaptation and fosters community well-being.

Dahiru said the project would further help in deepening research, adaptive management practices and collaboration among stakeholders.

www.guardian.ng

Transport & Tourism



MARITIME



AVIATION



HOSPITALITY & TOURISM



MOTORING



ROADS & RAILS

Bad weather, poor infrastructure, unruly passengers as bane of flight delays

Stories by Wole Oyeade and Ngozi Egenuka

PQUED by the pushback from travellers and regulators, airline operators have again blamed multiple factors for incessant flight delays, among which are extraneous issues that are beyond the reach of airlines.

Vice chairman of the Airline Operators of Nigeria, Allen Onyema, said besides inclement weather that borders on safety, there are also issues of inadequate infrastructure and menace of unruly passengers that also cost the operators heavily.

The factsheet of the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) stated 53 per cent of total flights operated in Nigeria in 2023 were delayed and one per cent were cancelled.

Onyema, who is also the Chairman of Air Peace Limited, said that every flight delay is not only a discomfort for the customers but also a loss for the operators.

He said besides the vicissitude of weather and infrastructure constraints, passenger behaviour constitutes the major cause of flight delays and loss of about N15 billion yearly.

Onyema, quoting the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), said airlines contribute little to the cause of flight delays. But in Nigeria, besides the weather, VIP Movement and technical glitches, passenger behaviour is the major cause of delays and cancelled flights because Nigerian travellers have not embraced the culture of rescheduling when flights are cancelled.

He said the insistence of passengers, whose flights are cancelled, to be airlifted first the following day, had given rise to disruption of flights, which snowballed into weeks of delays and cancellations.

Onyema explained that airlines schedule the number of flights that must be operated by each aircraft but when a previous flight is cancelled, passengers' insistence that they must be airlifted first before the airline operates its normal schedule, disrupts flight operations.

United Nigeria rolls out plan for aircraft maintenance facility in Enugu

UNITED Nigeria Airlines (UNA) has disclosed plans to build a Maintenance, Repairs, and Overhaul (MRO) facility in Enugu State, once it gets the approval of the state government.

Chairman of the local airline, Prof. Obiora Okonkwo, stated this during a business meeting with Governor Peter Mbah in Enugu.

Okonkwo said it had always been the desire of the airline to stamp its presence in the state by building an MRO and a strategic head office.

He also said the company would expand its presence in Enugu with befitting staff quarters as soon as the state government gives a nod to its request for land.

Okonkwo said Enugu is already the host state of the airline, making it imperative that the vision of building an MRO, head office, and staff quarters gets the approval of the state government.

Joined at the meeting by the Airlines' Director of Administration, Linus Awute, Okonkwo also listed the numerous benefits of building an MRO and staff quarters in Enugu, adding that the infrastructure would expand the economy of the state and

add to the governor's vision to attract more investments to Enugu.

Governor Mbah congratulated Okonkwo on the third anniversary of his airline and pledged the support of the state government towards achieving its visions in the state.

Mbah said the airline's desire to build an MRO in the state alongside a head office and staff quarters aligns with the business orientation of the administration.

According to him, the state government is currently sanitising the business environment of Enugu to attract investors.

Mbah said the issue of insecurity in Enugu had abated, and the state had put measures in place to make insecurity a history.

He said that his government is ready to welcome and support any investment to thrive and flourish in Enugu, adding that he had laid out a comprehensive plan for the economic development of the state.

To further demonstrate his readiness to partner with the private sector for the economic growth of the state, Mbah nominated his Commissioner for Transport, Dr Obi Ozor, as a liaison between the airline and the government.

* Stakeholders insist on better deal for consumers

He said: "When the weather is the cause of the delay or leads to cancellation at the end of the day, it is not the business of the airline to fly the passenger whose flight was cancelled first thing the next morning, no."

"Aviation is the same worldwide. The convention is that the passenger is expected to reschedule to the next available date. That is how it is done. In Nigeria, you want to fly, and you have a three-hour delay because of the weather. And by the time the weather clears, you want to go in, and there is airport closure because most of the airports don't run at night. And the passenger will tell you, even though you put us in a hotel, we will be the first ones to fly in the morning. It is not done like that, you reschedule to the next available date, because it is called scheduled flight operations," Onyema said.

He said further that each aircraft does about six to eight flights a day. So, it is not only one disruption; you are about eight flights disrupted for that day.

"I will give you an example, the other day we were flying into Warri, we could not land because of the weather. The pilot hovered for about 15 minutes, but for safety, he diverted to Enugu because Benin was also covered by bad weather."

"They stayed on the ground in Enugu for about an hour or

two, then the weather cleared. The aircraft was fueled. The weather cleared for them to take off to Warri but the Warri airport was closed because it is a sunset airport."

"The pilot announced the closure of the airport because it is a sunset airport and said that the flight would return to base, which is Abuja. With that announcement, there was pandemonium everywhere, as the passengers started protesting against that decision."

"They brought the aircraft down and the captain was almost crying. They kept that aircraft on the ground in Enugu for four hours. They said we should put them in a hotel in Enugu. Why should I put you in a hotel in Enugu? Did I create the weather? Did I create the airport? That was a force majeure," Onyema said.

The complexity of scheduled operations notwithstanding, stakeholders said that the airlines have a responsibility to customers in the face of delays or cancellations.

Senator representing Katsina Central senatorial district, Abdullaziz Yar'Adua, said the aviation ministry should ensure that airlines prioritise passengers' welfare, especially by opening channels for complaints and redress.

A footballer, Sixtus Omokhagbor, said airlines should be held accountable for delayed and cancelled flights and passengers should be adequately compensated.



MMIA new terminal

Airlines record 16 per cent traffic surge, strong start in 2024

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has released data for January 2024 global passenger demand, indicating a strong start for the year.

Total demand, measured in revenue passenger kilometres (RPKs), was up 16.6 per cent; total capacity, measured in available seat kilometres (ASK), was up 14.1 per cent; and the load factor was 79.9 per cent (+1.7pt).

International demand rose 20.8 per cent; capacity was up 20.9 per cent and the load factor remained at 79.7 per cent (+0.0pt). Domestic demand rose 10.4 per cent; capacity was up 4.6 per cent and the load factor was 80.2 per cent (+4.2pt)

IATA's Director General, Willie Walsh, said it was pleasing that 2024 was off to a strong start despite economic and geopolitical

uncertainties.

Walsh said as governments look to build prosperity in their economies in the busiest election year ever, they must see aviation as a catalyst for growth.

"Increased taxes and onerous regulation are a counterweight to prosperity. We will be looking to governments for policies that help aviation to reduce costs, improve efficiency and make progress towards net zero CO2 emissions by 2050," he said.

In the regional performance section, African airlines' saw 18.5 per cent traffic increase in January 2024 versus a year ago. January capacity was up 19.2 per cent causing load factor to decline 0.4 percentage points to 73.3 per cent, the lowest among the regions.

Asia-Pacific airlines saw 45.4 per cent increase in January

2024 traffic compared to January 2023, continuing the region's rapid recovery after the lifting of pandemic restrictions. Capacity climbed 48.1 per cent and the load factor fell by 1.5 percentage points to 82.6 per cent.

The exceptionally strong growth rate is largely attributable to China which was in the early stages of lifting COVID-19 travel restrictions in January 2023. The recovery in major international routes to/from Asia-Pacific is still lagging, but routes such as Asia-Middle East have exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

European carriers' January 2024 traffic rose 10.8 per cent versus January 2023. Capacity increased 10.7 per cent, and the load factor edged up 0.1 percentage points to 77.3 per cent. Routes between Europe and

North America have rebounded particularly strongly from the pandemic and stand 6.5 per cent higher than in January 2020.

Middle Eastern airlines posted a 16.2 per cent rise in January 2024 traffic compared to a year ago. Capacity rose 15.7 per cent and load factor climbed 0.4 percentage points to 79.9 per cent.

North American carriers had a 12.3 per cent traffic rise in January 2024 versus the 2023 period. Capacity also increased 13.7 per cent, and load factor fell 1.0 percentage point to 79.4 per cent.

Latin American airlines' traffic rose 17.9 per cent compared to the same month in 2023. January capacity climbed 13.2 per cent, pushing the load factor up 3.4 percentage points to 86 per cent, the highest among the regions.



How hospitals shun law on treatment of gunshot victims, abandon Hippocratic Oath

To allay the fears of police victimisation and ensure that gunshot victims receive prompt treatment, a law was enacted by the National Assembly. SILVER NWOKORO reports that despite the existence of this law, hospitals and their staff insist on seeing police reports before the commencement of treatment to victims, thereby abandoning the Hippocratic Oath to save lives.

DESPITE the existence of the Compulsory Treatment and Care for Victims of Gunshot Act, 2017, hospitals in Nigeria have continued to abandon emergency patients in contravention of the extant law.

Section 11 of the Act clearly states: "Any person or authority including any police officer, other security agent or hospital who stands by and fails to perform his duty under this Act which results in the unnecessary death of any person with gunshot wounds commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N500, 000 or imprisonment for a term of five years or both."

The law is a clear attempt to address the hiatus in existing legislations, which the police and hospital officials capitalise on to deny gunshot victims the needed medical attention.

However - and quite sadly - six years after the law was enacted, police officers and medical personnel observe this law in breach.

To accommodate the concern of the police, Section 4 of the Act states that "it shall be the duty of any hospital that receives or accepts any person with a gunshot wound to report the fact to the nearest Police station within two hours of the commencement of treatment.

"The Police may not receive any person with gunshot wounds from the hospital for the purposes of investigation unless and until the Chief Medical Director of the hospital certifies him fit and no longer in dire need of medical care. This new law is in line with emergency medicine protocol worldwide."

The Act also mandates security agents to assist persons with gunshot wounds by ensuring the victim is taken to the nearest hospital for immediate treatment, as contained in Section 2 of the Act.

Despite the clear provisions of this law, a few Nigerians have lost their lives as a result of hospitals refusing to attend to them.

On July 11, 2021, a 34-year-old furniture maker, Emmanuel Samuel was shot by a policeman at Emperor Gardens Bar in Abuja where he went to watch a match with his fiancée.

He was rushed to a general hospital in Abuja where he was refused treatment on grounds that there was no police report. Consequently, Samuel gave up the ghost.

Also, Ebenezer Ayeni, a resident of Ibadan was shot by some unidentified hoodlums on July 10, 2021.

He was rushed to the state university college hospital but was rejected for lack of a police report. He was rushed to a private hospital J-Rapha hospital where he was also denied treatment. On getting to Oyemesi hospital, he was confirmed dead.

On December 25, 2022 in the Ajah area of Lagos State, a lawyer, Bolanle Raheem was shot by now convicted Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Drambi Vandi. Doctors reportedly refused to attend to her until she finally died of the injury.

Recently, Greatness Olorunfemi, a one-chance robbery victim and member of the Yali Network in Abuja, died following the alleged refusal of Maitama General Hospital, Abuja to attend to her because she did not present a police report.

Obviously disturbed by these unsavoury developments, the Inspector-General of Police (IGP),

Since the law backs the treatment of gunshot victims, anybody that decides not to treat does so at his own risk. If the patient dies, even if he is an armed robber, the law can catch up with such a person, because the doctor has gone against the dictates of the law.

Kayode Egbetokun in a letter signed by CP Olatunji Disu on October 28, 2023, ordered full enforcement of the Compulsory Treatment and Care for Victims of Gunshot Act 2017 by all police formations to forestall future recurrence.

A security expert, Mr. Christopher Oji, said: "The law on the treatment of victims of gunshot wounds has been in existence for a very long time, because successive IGPs have always emphasised on the law, but health workers have always reneged, because of the behaviours of some unscrupulous policemen, who disobey the IGP's directives and still move against hospitals that treat gunshot victims without Police reports.

"The law says that while treating the victim, the management of the hospital should contact the police. However, some hospitals vehemently refuse to treat victims because of police extortion as some unscrupulous policemen still extort the hospitals."

He noted that the implication had been the death of innocent victims either shot by hoodlums or stray bullets before a police report was obtained.

"The police response time, bureaucracy, transportation system, communication system and bad roads can affect a victim who wants treatment and he or she may give up the ghost before a police report would arrive.

"The police management team should carry out an enlightenment campaign by visiting hospitals or medical associations across the country to educate them on the need to commence treatment first before contacting the Force.

"The police should direct Commissioners of Police, Heads of Departments, Teams, Squads, Area Commanders, Divisional Police Officers, Police Public Relations Officers etc to carry out enlightenment campaigns in their various jurisdictions. However, it is not enough for the IGP to give directives without following up with punitive measures."

Meanwhile, the National Coordinator of Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA), Comrade Emmanuel Onwubiko said there is no other justification for the continuation of the violation of the law other than the fact that most heads of governmental and non-governmental

bodies often overlook their

obligations to ensure that their staff and personnel are in the best frame of minds to operate in public space.

"There is a dearth of capacity-building activities and mechanisms in a lot of public and private organisations that constitute a serious cause for concern.

"So, I think the heads of hospitals, the commissioners of police and non-governmental institutions need to brace up and work on an effective and efficient training system that will enlighten their workers on their responsibilities to the members of the public vis-a-vis the need for the staff to imbibe, internalise and be thoroughly informed and educated about legal templates, frameworks and statutory provisions that govern their work environment.

"This is because legislations are constantly churned out and if care isn't taken, a lot of those workers who ought to be abreast of the workings of these pieces of legislation and laws may actually be left behind.

"Although ignorance of the law is not a valid excuse that obliterates someone from any legal obligations, by and large, the government, especially the federal Ministries of Health and Information must jointly work on a regular programme of public enlightenment for their staff and operators in the private sector, especially those working in general hospitals, private hospitals and other tertiary health institutions with regards to modern legal trends affecting their operations," he advised.

According to him, the legislation that permits hospitals to treat gunshots or accident victims must be used as an effective educational and informational material for the constant training of hospital staff and the police.

He lamented that despite the existence of the Act, there have been cases where police commands, particularly those outside Abuja have announced in the media that persons with gunshot wounds shouldn't be treated because they are suspected criminals.

Onwubiko stressed that such adverse public notice has the effect of creating confusion in the minds of frontline hospital staffers who often play the safe card of not getting involved in treating victims of gunshots.

He called on officials in both government and non-governmental organisations to wake up to their responsibility to the members of the public.

Onwubiko urged the Attorney-General of the Federation to also print out the law in hundreds of thousands of copies and share with members of the public as a way of equipping them with the necessary information regarding its clear provisions.

For the Convener of Access to Justice (A2J), Joseph Otteh, the ingrained fears of harassment by law enforcement and security operatives are at the core of the disobedience to the law.

According to him, some might feel they would rather avoid the harassment than to put up a fight after the fact.

"They would rather play safe, even if at the expense of human life, painful as that may sound.

"Medical associations have a huge role to play here. There needs to be robust awareness-building actions to broaden public and professional information of the provisions of the Act, coupled with policy initiatives and interventions that aim to enforce the rights of gun-shot victims to medical treatment - alongside the duty of medical professionals to provide such treatment.

"Furthermore, medical associations should use their disciplinary procedures to hold medical professionals who refuse to render such services without justification, to account," he suggested.

Ezebube Chinwike, a lawyer, lamented that the culture of disobedience to laws is endemic and involves everyone, including the three arms of government.

"Why does the executive arm of the government disobey laws and court orders? Also, how many laws are obeyed in Nigeria, especially by the executive?"

Read the remaining story on www.guardian.ng



Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun

National Coordinator of Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA), Emmanuel Onwubiko

Election petitions should end before swearing in, Okutepa says

From Bridget Chiedu Onochie, Abuja

A SENIOR Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Jibril Okutepa, has canvassed a situation where every post-electoral legal matter is concluded before Nigerian political office holders are sworn in.

His reason is based on the perception that swearing them into office while legal actions against them persist allows them to use public funds to obtain victory at the expense of their opponents.

Okutepa, who was relaying his ugly experience during the post-election litigations emanating from 2023 general elections, insisted that the aspect of the country's law should be tinkered with immediately so that no person should be allowed to assume office in Nigeria until

Accuses incumbents of spending state funds for personal litigation

the election petitions are decided.

According to him, the moment a governor or President assumes power, and given that the judiciary has been reduced to a weeping houseboy in the hands of the executive and the legislator, there are tendencies for judgments to remain subject of controversy and criticism.

"If we are serious, then, we should decide election petitions and regulate transparency. How many of those who are declared winners have hired lawyers from their pockets? It is only the "losers" that have been put in political and electoral penury, that are made to face the unhygienic grounds in

filing and fighting electoral petitions," he stressed.

Okutepa also faulted his colleagues who are used in carrying out unethical practices, warning that they should be careful not to destroy their common legacy.

Answering questions on the role of senior lawyers in the perceived judicial corruption, he said: "I don't know what their roles are because like I said and have

written, the legal profession, comprising the bar and the bench, senior and junior lawyers, should be careful not to destroy itself by itself.

"When you go to a tribunal and see some processes filed by senior lawyers, even installment processes filed to defeat viable petitions, you will begin to wonder whether those senior lawyers who claim to be doing their jobs are actually doing so.

"When you look at what goes on in other climes where lawyers adhere to the ethics of the profession, and are seen as the leaders of the society, you will be worried about the Nigerian situation.

"Some processes filed by senior lawyers in some cases in our courts would have led to an automatic withdrawal of licenses of those lawyers. But who will bell the cat in Nigeria? Here, wrongful conduct appears to be the licence."

He hinted that there are

some senior lawyers, who specialised in stalling proceedings and people who have cases look for them for that purpose.

"Look at what happened to Donald Trump's lawyers in America, will that happen in Nigeria? If Trump was a Nigerian President, he would have won his second term in office, but have you ever seen any President of Nigeria right from the time we started democracy in 1979 till 1999 being removed from office?" He queried.

Fed Govt approves legislative drafting textbook for universities

By Ngozi Egenuka

TERTIARY Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) has approved the printing and distribution of 2,000 copies of a legislative drafting textbook to all Nigerian Universities.

The book titled "A Workbook on Legislative Drafting in Nigeria" is authored by Dr. Tonye Clinton Jaja, who is Nigeria's leading legal scholar in the field of legislative drafting.

Dr. Jaja is recorded as the first Nigerian lawyer to be awarded a PhD in law (legislative drafting) degree by the University of London.

Since the year 2012, he has served as Editor-In-Chief of

the International Journal of Legislative Drafting and Law Reform, indexed by the British Library in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Jaja is Secretary of the Association of Legislative Drafting and Advocacy Practitioners (ALDRAP), a non-governmental organisation that was recently awarded funding assistance to host the first ever AftCA, themed legislative drafting moot court competition for African law students.

The TETFUND support is aimed at mainstream legislative drafting in the curriculum of Nigerian Universities.

Ogbankwa asks Edo Attorney General to recuse self from suit

From Ameh Ochojila, Abuja

AN Edo-based lawyer, Douglas Ogbankwa has called on the Edo state Attorney General to recuse himself from the suit filed against him which bothers on conspiracy to commit a felony, citing concerns of political bias and prejudicial actions.

Ogbankwa, while raising alarm claimed that the charges against him are trumped-up and orchestrated by the Edo State Government.

The lawyer highlighted a series of irregularities, alleging that the charges against him were leaked to the media before being formally served, indicating a coordinated effort to tarnish his reputation.

He said that the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and other officials of the Ministry of Justice were making prejudicial statements, signaling a predetermined stance on his guilt.

He said former

Commissioner of Transport, Orobosa Omo-Ojo, published the charges in the Midwest Herald, further fueling concerns of political interference.

Ogbankwa asserts that the distribution of those materials across social media platforms, coupled with biased remarks from government officials, undermine his right to a fair trial.

He, therefore, called on the AG to hand over the case file to the police, while the DPP and all implicated government officials, recused themselves from the matter.

He argued that their actions have left him without hope of a fair trial.

In the charge marked B/CD/60C/2024, the state accused the lawyer of conspiring, "to commit a felony punishable under Section 412 of the Criminal Law of Edo State, 2022" and "forcible entry punishable under Section 56 (1) of the Criminal Law of Edo State, 2022", among others.

Court fines NYSC N5m for violating corps member's rights

By Silver Nwokoro

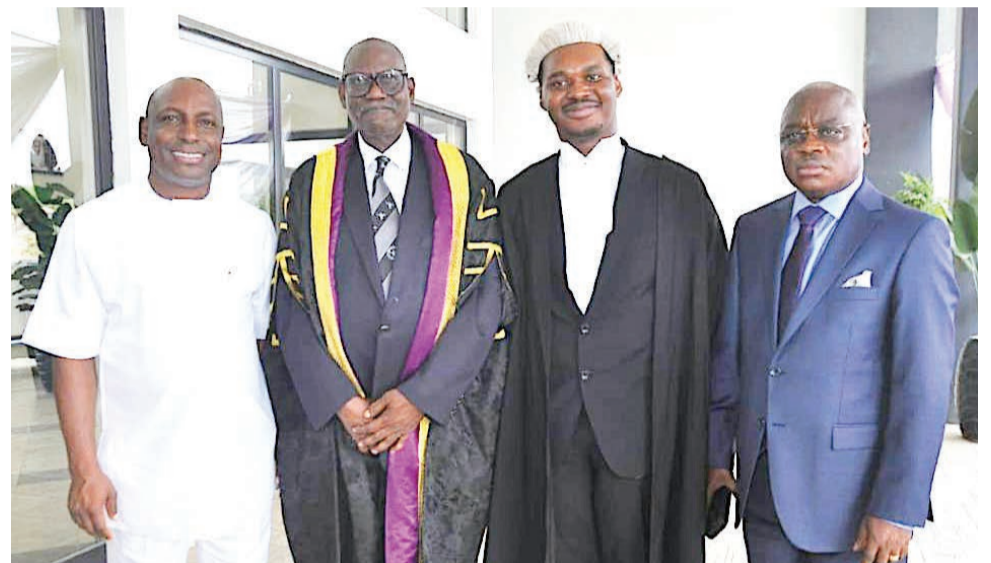
THE Federal High Court in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State has awarded N15million damages against the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) for infringement and violation of the fundamental human rights of a corps member, Ufumaka Glory Ukpanken.

Ukpanken had sued the NYSC, its Director, Brigadier General Yusha'u Ahmed and State Co-ordinator for not allowing her to wear a skirt as part of its uniform which breaches her fundamental right to religious belief.

But NYSC through its counsel, J.N. Oruna-Nwankwo urged the court to dismiss the suit with a heavy cost for lacking in merit.

Delivering judgment on the matter, Justice H. A. Nganjiwa held that NYSC, the Director and the State coordinator should not force female corps members to wear trousers.

The judge also held that the use of skirt by the applicant (Ukpanken) as official dressing, uniform/kit forms part of her fundamental rights to the freedom of religion and freedom to manifest same in practice



Immediate past Secretary to the Abia State Government, Chris Ezem (left); Life Bencher, Mr R A Lawal-Rabana; new wig, Mr David Chikemka Nwobike and his father, Dr Joseph Nwobike during David's call to Bar ceremony in Abuja.

Bars it from forcing female corporers to wear trousers

and observance as contained, guaranteed and protected in section 38 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as altered).

Justice Nganjiwa further held that the harassment, embarrassment, humiliation and instituted proceedings to discipline the applicant to which she is currently subjected to in the hands of the agents of the NYSC is a clear infringement on her fundamental rights

to freedom of religion, right to dignity of human person and form degrading treatment.

The judge restrained the respondents, their servants, agents, privies from further abducting, arresting, detaining and subjecting the applicant or any female member of the NYSC from further harassment, embarrassment, humiliation and instituted proceedings to discipline

her on account of her use of skirt as part of her official NYSC dressing or purported enforcement of the NYSC Bye laws 1999 or any amended version in this regard.

He also ordered the NYSC to allow the applicant to complete her NYSC as required by law.

The judge ordered that the applicant upon completion of the said mandatory NYSC service be issued her certificate of national service immediately.

Alleged disbandment of NBA-SPIDEL false, lawyer says

By Silver Nwokoro

APORT Harcourt based lawyer, Dr. Promise Wobo Iwezor has debunked the rumour that the Nigerian Bar Association Section on Public Interest and Development Law (NBA-SPIDEL) has been disbanded.

Recall that NBA National Executive Council (NEC) ordered the immediate removal of the Executive Committee of the Section.

The NEC accused the NBA-SPIDEL chairman, John Aikpoko-Martins, of engaging in activities that undermined the authority of the NBA President, Yakubu Maikyau (SAN), and the council.

NBA-SPIDEL under the leadership of Aikpoko-Martins had been challenging the decisions of government institutions

and individuals in court.

Iwezor explained that the executive committee of the Section was suspended and not disbanded.

"The NBA President needs to be on notice of anything happening in those sections. It is not as if the president took a selfish decision against them, NBA-SPIDEL is an arm of the Bar. He only suspended them; he never disbanded them. He also set up a caretaker committee to make sure that the body is in order.

"NBA-SPIDEL is under the NBA. The decision of the NBA President is the decision for all. He made a pronouncement and it was supported, so it is not that he came out to make a decision on his own, NEC gave him the support.

"There is no crisis in the NBA because the president remains the president of the

bar and any other forum is subject to him, and all the forums may take a decision but still have to wait for the presidential approval," he explained.

Dr Iwezor, who hails from Mgbuesilaru town in Okpoko in Evo kingdom of Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State, was the Financial Secretary, Okpo Club of Nigeria (Association of lawyers from Ikwerre Ethnic Nationality) from 2006 - 2010; Publicity Secretary, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Isiokpo Branch, 2010 - 2012; Secretary, NBA, Isiokpo Branch, 2012 - 2014; Member, NBA Natural Resources Committee, 2012 - 2014 and Chairman, NBA, Isiokpo Branch 2014 - 2016.

He was also the treasurer and Member, Governing Council of Eastern Bar Forum (EBF) between 2014 -

2016; Chairman, NBA-AGC Transport Committee, Port Harcourt 2015 - 2017; Member, NBA Anti-Corruption Committee; Member of NBA NEC representing NBA, Isiokpo Branch, among other positions held.

According to him, these positions he had occupied in the Bar showed his dedication and services to the Association.

Dr. Iwezor, a Justice of Peace of Rivers State, is also a Notary Public of Nigeria. He recently became a member, Chartered Institute of Arbitration of Nigeria, a Qualified Mediator and a Chartered Management Consultant.

He is also a member of Port Harcourt Host Community Development Trust and Chairman Logistic Base Host Community Development Trust.

URGENT VACANCIES

Our client, a leading educational institution in mainland, Lagos State, has the following positions:

1. HEAD OF BURSARY

Applicants must possess the following qualifications:

- Minimum of BSc (Second Class) or HND (Upper Credit), in Accounting.
- MBA or professional qualification would be an advantage.
- Analytical thinker and problem solver, with at least 5 years' cognate experience.
- Competent IT skills, particularly proficiency with spreadsheet software.
- Excellent communication skills, and high level of accuracy.
- Proficiency in the use of contemporary accounting software. Candidate should be using them in current employment or have used them previously.
- Ability to work with minimum supervision, and not more than forty years of age.

1. HEAD OF AUDIT

Applicants must possess the following qualifications:

- Minimum of BSc (Second Class) or HND (Upper Credit), in Accounting.
- MBA or professional qualification would be an advantage.
- Analytical thinker and problem solver, with at least 5 years' cognate experience.
- Competent IT skills, particularly proficiency with spreadsheet software.
- Excellent communication skills, and high level of accuracy.
- Proficiency in the use of contemporary accounting software. Candidate should be using them in current employment or have used them previously.
- Ability to work with minimum supervision, and not more than forty years of age.

3. ACCOUNTING ASSISTANTS

Applicants must possess the following qualifications:

- Minimum of National Diploma (ND) in Accounting or ICAN Accounting Technicians certificate, or NABTEB Advanced National Business Certificate.
- Must be knowledgeable in IT skills, with minimum of three years' relevant experience, and not more than thirty (30) years of age.

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND METHODS OF APPLICATION

1. Excellent conditions of service.
2. Applications and CV's should be forwarded to collegevacancy02@gmail.com, not later than two weeks from the date of this publication.

VACANCY

Our company is into manufacturing, supply & servicing based in Lagos Mainland require the need for a manager assistant. The requirement are as follows:

1. Must be a Female
2. Can speak & read & write Chinese, especially read and write
3. Be patient, cautious and hard working
4. Ability to use office software proficiently, EXCEL/WORD/POWERPOINT etc.

JOB CONTENT:

1. Complete daily data register-work in the financial system.
2. Complete other tasks assigned by the manager.
3. Industrious, creative, resourcefulness, can do a lot with a little.
4. Obsessive Excellence. High standards. Expects personal and team performance to be nothing short of excellent, multi tasking.
5. Step On The Gas. Move fast, make decisions, get shit done.
6. Focus on the highest leverage priorities, don't get distracted.
7. We Win. Team-focused, generous with time and energy, thrives on feedback, supports others to do and be their best.

Qualification: Bsc/HND in Accounting or related field. 3 to 5 years experience in similar position.

Salary range: 200k-250k in three months probation 250k-400k to be our regular staff (base on working performance)

Interested applicant can forward their resume/CV to: badaolalekan2099@gmail.com

REQUIRED: PROFESSIONALS IN DOWNSTREAM OIL & GAS

- | | |
|---|---|
| • SENIOR ACCOUNTANTS (MIN. 20 YEARS) | • ENGINEERS (MIN 10 YEARS) |
| • SENIOR INTERNAL AUDITORS (MIN 15 YEARS) | • SENIOR ESTATE MANAGERS (MIN 20 YEARS) |
| • SENIOR ENGINEERS (MIN 20 YEARS) | • SENIOR LEGAL OFFICERS (MIN 15 YEARS) |

As one of the flagship companies in Nigeria's downstream petroleum industry, we require vibrant, resourceful and innovative professionals to fill strategic openings in our conglomerate. Very attractive and competitive remuneration packages with benefits await successful candidates!

SENIOR ACCOUNTANTS REF: SAA QUALIFICATIONS, SKILL & EXPERIENCE

- Minimum of Bachelor's degree in Accounting, Business Administration, Social Sciences, Engineering or any other related field.
- Must be a Chartered Accountant (ACA/ACCA), with a minimum of 20 years post-qualification experience in accounts/finance/audit in a multi-national company.
- High degree of integrity, confidentiality, confidence and ability to contribute to new culture.
- Proficient in Finance / Accounting / Tax Matters or related work
- Ability to handle the pressure of working in a dynamic and result oriented environment.
- Working knowledge of Oracle ERP and accounting management tools
- Excellent knowledge of Oil and Gas Industry dynamics

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Analyse general ledger accounts on a defined and regular basis
- Prepare monthly bank reconciliations
- Maintain inventory records and adhere to

specific controls on inventories

- Prepare Financial Statements and render relevant reports to management as well as statutory and regulatory authorities
- Prepare reports and advise on ways of improvement vis-à-vis compliance, methodologies and best practice to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness.
- Monitoring instituted controls and laid down procedures.
- Review, coordinate and implement audit plans.
- Conduct independent appraisal to review the company's accounting, financial and other operations.

SENIOR INTERNAL AUDITORS REF: SIA QUALIFICATIONS, SKILL & EXPERIENCE

- B.Sc. Accounting or related field
- Professional Qualification: ACA / ACCA
- CISA Certificate would be an added advantage
- Post qualification years of experience: minimum of fifteen (15) years cognate work experience and must have worked in an Audit (practicing) firm for a minimum of seven (7) years with minimal supervision
- Excellent written and verbal communications skills
- High degree of integrity, confidentiality, confidence and ability to contribute to team culture
- Working knowledge of Oracle ERP and audit management tools
- Excellent knowledge of Oil and Gas Industry dynamics

- Readiness to work in any part of the country
- Perform other activities as may be assigned from time to time by the Company Internal Audit

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide independent assessment on the achievement of the business objectives of the region and the adequacies of its systems and controls.
- Prepare high level reports for the Company's Group Head, Internal Audit and advice on ways of improvement viz-a-viz compliance, methodologies and best practice to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness
- Manage audit functions (internal control and business risk) in the business region by monitoring instituted controls and laid down procedures
- Determine, review, coordinate and implement audit plans for the business region
- Conduct risk assessment reviews, from time to time, to determine key audit areas
- Conduct independent appraisal to review the company's accounting, financial and other operations.
- Conduct and report on specific investigations relating to complaints, allegations, etc in the business region
- Liaise, from time to time, with Business Heads of the Areas within the region to get profitability report, budget of the area etc for review
- Monthly review of depot operational activities within the region
- Compliance with the Internal Audit

methodology and IIA Standard Accuracy of Audit findings and reports

SENIOR ENGINEERS REF: SEN

QUALIFICATIONS

- Good university degree in Civil Engineering / Building Engineering or any related discipline.
- Other postgraduate qualifications and certificates will be an added advantage.

EXPERIENCE

- Minimum of 20 years cognate experience preferably in Downstream Oil & Gas or FMCG industry with at least 10 years at managerial level.
- Good knowledge of MIS office applications.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Project Management
- Coordinate, monitor and supervise engineering projects

COMPETENCIES & ATTRIBUTES

- Strong understanding of Bill of Quantities for maintenance works / work scope.
- Proven track records in leading project management and coordination
- Good Communication and interpersonal skills

ENGINEERS REF: EN

QUALIFICATIONS

- Good university degree in Civil Engineering / Building Engineering or any related discipline.
- Other postgraduate qualifications and certificates will be an added advantage.

EXPERIENCE

- Minimum of 10 years cognate experience
- Good knowledge of MIS office applications.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Round-the-clock maintenance of Company's assets at Fuel Stations / Depots and Terminals for efficient service delivery.
- Monitor and supervise engineering projects
- Conceive and prepare Bill of Quantities for maintenance works / work scope.
- Good understanding of Industry standards and codes.

SENIOR ESTATE MANAGERS REF: SEM QUALIFICATIONS

- Good university degree in Quantity Surveyor / Estate Management / Economics or any related discipline.
- Other postgraduate qualifications and

EXPERIENCE

- At least 20 years in related job experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manage Real Estate Assets
- Negotiate and manage leases and rents

SENIOR LEGAL OFFICERS REF: SLO QUALIFICATIONS

- LLB (minimum of Second Class Upper)
- BL
- LLM is an added advantage.

EXPERIENCE

- Post qualification year of experience: 15 years cognate experience in legal practice and in the downstream Oil and Gas Industry.
- Sound / excellent knowledge in Litigation matters
- Drafting & review of Contracts / Agreements and Security Instruments
- Admiralty / Maritime Law
- Corporate Governance & Compliance
- Debt recovery and general Legal Advisory.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- To provide sound, reliable and effective legal services to the business units and support departments of the company in their drive towards achieving set targets.
- To render timely statutory returns and trading results to all regulatory authorities.
- To handle statutory meetings handled by the Company's Secretariat, such as Board Audit Committee, Board Committees, Extra Ordinary General and Annual General Meetings of the Company and keep minutes thereof.
- To monitor and manage the Company's litigation matters and real estate.

N.B: Locations for Engineering positions is Pan-Nigeria

METHOD OF APPLICATION

Qualified candidates should e-mail their resume with a scanned passport sized photograph, stating the above reference as the subject of the e-mail, within 14 days of this publication to: oilandgasjobs24@gmail.com Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

Expert charges journalists to scale up digital skills

From Obinna Nwaoku, Port Harcourt

An expert, Paul Chimodo, has urged journalists, especially veterans, to scale up their digital skills, as this will enable them improve their career prospects and earning potential.

Chimodo who noted that ego has prevented some veteran journalists from upscaling their digital skills, said many are stuck in old fashion media practice, staving them off from reaching their full potential and becoming visible in the present new media era.

The advice was given at a one-day capacity building workshop on 'Maximising New Media Platforms' organised by Step-up for Women In Journalism Initiative (SWIJ), with support from Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ) and the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Rivers State Chapter, held in Port Harcourt, recently.

"Most journalists do not know how to maximise the new media platforms yet. Ego and pride is not allowing them to learn digital tools from the young generation. This is the major reason they are where they are and it's not helping to build and improve professional competence in this new media era," Chimodo stated.

Chimodo, who highlighted the importance of digital tools in today's journalism practice, emphasised the need for training and retraining to meet up with current demands of the



Participants at the workshop

job.

He posited that most challenges faced by journalists are self-inflicted as they have failed to update themselves on current digital tools. He emphasised the need for journalists to identify the social media tools that align with their line of job and build presence on it so as to gain from opportunities that abound from such tools.

He also pointed out that social media has made it easier for journalists to collaborate on

stories with other journalists, photographers, and videographers. He said collaborations could help journalists reach a wider audience, tell more complex stories, and provide a more comprehensive perspective on events.

Chimodo listed some ways journalists could utilise digital tools to include: Live streaming, Facebook/Instagram stories, Twitter threads and Podcasts.

Earlier in her address, Team Lead for SWIJ, Ann Godwin, said the training is targeted at

scaling up the digital skills of journalists, especially female reporters, to enable them grow their professional competence and match with their international counterparts.

She said the era where journalists rely on their years of practise, experience and unnecessary competition for successful practice is gone.

"The workshop is targeted to improve our skills. We are now in an intelligence generation. Considering the dynamic nature of the media industry today, you can agree with me that a lot is changing. It is no longer the way it used to be 10, 20 years back. There are a lot of new things happening and you need to scale up.

"We need to step up, to align and to flow and grow our career because if you are not upping your ante you will be left out," she said.

Highpoint of the workshop was training on entrepreneurial skills by Dr. Ijeoma Tubosia, a broadcast journalist and an entrepreneur.

Tubosia, who trained participants on Turban hat making, emphasised the need for women journalists to learn skills and have multiple sources of income in order to meet up with the economic demands in the country.

On her part, Constance Mega, a broadcast journalist with Nig Info, Port Harcourt, who took the participants on Enhancing Speaking Skills, said constant rehearsals, practicing will improve their speaking skills.

Akingbulu advocates inclusive review of regulatory code

By Sunday Aikulola

EXECUTIVE Director, Centre for Media and Society (Cemeso), Akin Akingbulu, has called on regulatory agencies in the media space to prioritise citizen participation in legal and regulatory reforms.

Emphasis on inclusivity aims to foster better understanding, and build mutual trust among stakeholders in the media industry.

Akingbulu made the remarks during a courtesy visit to the Director General National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Charles Ebuebu, and follow-up meeting on the amendment of the NBC Act in Abuja recently.

Advocating comprehensive legal reforms, Akingbulu highlighted the need for enhanced independence, adequate funding for the NBC and full implementation of the Digital Switch Over (DSO) project to modernise Nigeria's broadcasting industry.

He further urged the NBC to address outdated laws that hinder modern journalistic practices.

Responding, Ebuebu pledged the commission's commitment to establishing a more transparent, inclusive, and effective regulatory framework that serves the interests of all stakeholders.

He emphasised the move is

necessary to rebuild stakeholder confidence and outlined commitment to conducting thorough review of the NBC's code and processes, appeal court judgments that restrict the commission's ability to sanction broadcasters and uphold transparency and fairness in interactions with stakeholders.

Ebuebu further highlighted efforts to equip NBC staff with necessary tools and update their skills to navigate the digital age.

The meeting marks a significant contribution by Cemeso under Phase II of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance (EU-SDGN) initiative.

Cemeso engages House Committee on media law reforms

EXECUTIVE Director of the Centre for Media and Society (Cemeso), Dr. Akin Akingbulu, has called on lawmakers to prioritise legislative reforms in the media and information sector, emphasizing the need to address pressing national and global issues affecting the media landscape.

Akingbulu made this call in Abuja during a courtesy visit and follow-up meeting to the Chairman, House Committee on Information National Orientation in the House of representatives on issues

relating to media law reform and the amendment of the NBC Act.

This visit marked a significant intervention by Cemeso under Phase II of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance (EU-SDGN) initiative.

Cemeso Executive Director stressed importance of reforms that deepen democracy, enhance media freedom and promote pluralism of expression.

Akingbulu highlighted the fundamental role of citizen participation in the legislative process, describing it as crucial for a functioning democracy and essential for creating acceptable laws.

Provost faults gov't plan to regulate social media

By Sunday Aikulola

PROVOST of the Nigerian Institute of Journalism, Lagos, Gbenga Adefaye, has expressed concern over plans in some quarters to regulate the social media space.

Fielding questions from journalists at the institution's 21st matriculation held in Lagos recently, he said, "I'm wary of government seizing public space in public communications. The best regulation is to get professionals take over the public space. There's also need for training on fact checking."

In his address to the matriculating students, he noted the media and mass communications business is as dynamic as they come. With fake news as an epidemic on social media hounding the big and small, thereby threatening social equilibrium, he insisted mass communicators must rise to the occasion.

To him, "the moderators of mass communication education are conscious of these and more. That is why they keep updating the curriculum and have also disaggregated the courses both at the university and polytechnic levels."



Gbenga Adefaye

EMCOAN elects new executives, appoints Jibeh Ologeh as BOT member

THE Electronic Media Content Owners Association of Nigeria (EMCOAN) has elected new executives, who are expected to bring in new leadership for the content creation organisation.

The election held on Thursday March 7, 2023

Prior to the election, the outgoing president of the association, Mrs Jibe Ologeh, expressed her appreciation for the support she and her team received from members of the organisation in the past two years. She stated that recognition of EMCOAN as a sectoral body of the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) was the high point of her administration's achievements.



Omirin

She also stated that the establishment of the first electronic media content market in Nigerian - NEMCEA, which is in the third season, this year, also stands the association out as a force to reckon with in the motion picture industry.

She urged the association to accord even greater support to the incoming executives so

as to take the association to higher level.

Mr Adeniji Omirin emerged the unopposed president of the association. Other executives elected were: First Vice President, Chinedu Ugwu; Second Vice President, Patrick Doyle; Steve Alayande was returned as the General Secretary, Mrs Anita Aggarrey-Oke and Mr Longe Omolaja were returned as financial secretary and welfare secretary respectively.

Immediately after the inauguration of the new executives, who he new President, Mr Omirin called for the elevation of Mrs Jibeh Ologeh to membership of Board of Trustees of EMCOAN to fill vacuum created by the demise of former members.

Editors celebrate Sunshine Week to highlight freedom of information

By Sunday Aikulola

FROM March 10 to 16, 2024 news organisations across the US are celebrating Sunshine Week to highlight the Freedom of Information Act's important role in protecting democracy and citizens' right to know through public records and open meetings.

Started in 2005 by the American Society of News Editors, the name Sunshine Week is a play on a century-old quote from former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, who said, "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants."

That notion still rings true today, and is a founding principle of the work journalists do every day. The Hagadone Media Montana Group of Newspapers, including the Daily Inter Lake, frequently

turns to public records requests to help shine a light on public proceedings. In the last year alone, this newspaper has filed public document requests regarding Flathead County, Bigfork School District, the City of Kalispell, the Flathead National Forest and the Department of Interior.

In some cases, the information gleaned from those requests became the basis for a story that revealed agency workings, while other times it simply helped a reporter confirm that what an official said matched their internal correspondence. In all instances, it aided this newspaper in telling a more complete story about how your government works.

Politics

www.guardian.ng

Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Making a new Nigeria: Welfarist policies and people-centred devt (2)

By Akinwumi Adesina

Continued from yesterday.

As a young student who attended high school in the village, I witnessed the high correlation of agricultural performance with education.

Several of my classmates were children of farmers. I noticed then that when the agricultural season was good, they stayed in school and performed well, but when the season was poor, several dropped out or attended intermittently.

The decision by Chief Awolowo to start with the transformation of the rural economy was a very sound policy. The establishment of farm estates, and the expansion of rural roads, supported by professionally run marketing boards helped stabilise the prices of farm produce. It is worth noting that the prudent fiscal management of the cocoa revenues powered the economies of the states that then constituted the Western Region. These revenues allowed the government to embark on an unprecedented idea - free education and free basic health care services. It was common then to hear the phrase "Agbe lo ba" (farmers are kings), uttered with great pride.

We must give new life to our rural areas. If Chief Awolowo could do this in the 1960s, there is no reason why rural economies today should be immersed in extreme poverty. Clearly, rural economies have been abandoned, by politicians, planning and policies. Today, they have become zones of economic misery. The pauperisation of rural economies is what is causing the implosion of many countries across Africa. When rural economies (the fulcrum of the African society) falter, nations falter. This leads to the spread of anarchy, banditry, and terrorism. This troika of social disruption takes advantage of the economic misery to entrench themselves.

The transformation of rural economies must therefore be structural, systemic, strategic and comprehensive. Doing so, means agriculture must be turned into a wealth creating sector.

I aggressively pursued this philosophy when I served as minister of agriculture and rural development of Nigeria from 2011 to 2015. Many call this period the "farm revolution" years, as Nigeria witnessed an impressive transformation of its agricultural sector.

With farmer-centric policies, we delivered improved seeds and fertilisers for 15 million farmers. We delivered millions of cocoa seedlings across southern Nigeria. We delivered a cotton transformation across the north. We provided millions of oil palm seedlings to farm estates, including small farmers and large farm estates, across the East, South and West. We accelerated the delivery of improved rice seeds across Nigeria and sparked a rice revolution that transformed several regions across Nigeria.

Sound public policies transform the lives of people. I

fondly remember one of my farm trips in the company of the then Governor of Kebbi State, H.E. Usman Dakingari. Amazed by the revolution happening, I recall him saying, "Minister, thank you, we no longer measure our rice yields in hectares of land, but in kilometers."

Rural economies boomed. Local well packaged rice took over the market. The price of rice at the time was N6,000 per bag, which helped to stem food price inflation. Unfortunately, today, that same bag of rice, just nine years later, is N77,000 per bag. That 12-fold price increase unfortunately puts rice, a basic staple, beyond the reach of millions of people.

In several parts of Africa today, farm revolutions are happening at scale, with the support of the African Development Bank. Over the last seven years, we have invested over \$8.5 billion in agriculture, which has impacted 250 million people.

At the core of the Africa-wide strategy to revamp rural economies and turn them into zones of economic prosperity is the development of special agro-industrial processing zones across the continent.

These zones are being provided with critical supportive infrastructure, including water, roads, processing infrastructure and logistics. The African Development Bank and its partners are providing \$1.4 billion for the development of 25 of Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones in eleven countries.

Right here in Nigeria, we are developing these zones in 8 states with \$518 million. The second phase of the programme in Nigeria, which will cover 23 more states, will be financed with \$1 billion. The Bank and partners recently launched a \$3 billion Alliance for Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones. Feeding Africa is serious business.

To ensure that the continent can feed itself and achieve food sovereignty, we organised the Feed Africa Summit in January of 2023, which had 34 African Heads of State and the President of Ireland in attendance, as well as global leaders. In what is a remarkable global development, we were able to secure \$72 billion in financial commitments towards the delivery of national food compacts.

Second, Nigeria needs health care for all. Smart governments provide universal basic health coverage for their citizens. Africa loses \$2.6 trillion annually in productivity, due to sicknesses and diseases. Just as every nation has a national defense system to protect its citizens against all forms of aggression, the same is true for health care systems. A nation without a sound health care system is a nation that is defenseless against the invasion of all forms of disease or epidemics.

Covid-19 exposed the weakness of Africa's health systems.

While developed economies spent \$19 trillion in fiscal stimulus programmes, approximately 19 per cent of the world's GDP, Africa spent only \$89 billion. Africa's urgent need for basic vaccines was pushed to the bottom of global vaccines supply chains. At a time when Africa was unable to provide one basic shot of vaccine, developed countries were providing second, third and more booster shots. It was alarming watching an unprotected Africa grapple with this insidious virus. Some even projected that as many as 3 million Africans would die from the pandemic.

Africa had just two testing centers, no medical gloves, no face masks, no medications, and no vaccines. The African Development Bank immediately put in place a \$10 billion facility to support African countries in their fight against the pandemic.

What is not acceptable or sustainable is an Africa that imports 70-80 per cent of its medicines and produces just 1 per cent of its vaccines. The health security of Africa's 1.4 billion people cannot be subjugated to global supply chains or the generosity of others.

That's why the African Development Bank also launched a \$3 billion programme to revamp Africa's pharmaceutical industries and why it established the African Pharmaceutical Technology Foundation to support access to proprietary technologies from global pharmaceutical companies.

The bank also launched another \$3 billion programme to develop quality health infrastructure across the continent, with special emphasis on primary health care systems, which if well fixed can assure basic health care for hundreds of millions of people.

We will continue to invest heavily in Nigeria to support its pharmaceutical industry and develop better health infrastructure.

It is imperative that Nigeria secures the health of all its population. This will require ensuring that no citizen travels more than a few kilometers to find a health care center. The widespread use of mobile health centers, e-health facilities, the digitalisation of health systems, especially in all primary health care centers, health insurance policies for all, including innovative micro-health insurance pay-as-you-go systems, will capture the bulk of the population that is in the informal sector.

Third, Nigeria needs education for all. Nigeria accounts for 15 per cent of the total population of out-of-school children, according to UNICEF, with over 10.2 million at the primary school level, and 8.1 million at the Junior Secondary School. This is not a gold medal Nigeria should be proud of.

The problem is both acute and alarming in Northern Nigeria. Urgent public policies, coupled with community sensitisation and incentives for schooling are needed, if this trend is to be reversed. Public incentives such as free and compulsory primary and secondary education should be put in place, along with massive investments in training and better salaries for teachers, building quality and safe

classrooms, and school feeding programmes.

A well-educated citizenry is critical for technological growth and development, and for fostering creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and global competitiveness. We do not have a choice. A highly educated Nigeria is not an option. It is an imperative.

With only 1 per cent of the population enrolled, Nigeria is currently not educating enough of its people at the university level. The poor funding of universities, a lack of basic infrastructure, poor incentives for faculty and staff, and incessant strikes due to wage disputes, have almost crippled the university system.

As a result, there is a mass exodus out of Nigerian universities, with 128,770 Nigerian students "Japa-ing" (moving) to study in UK Universities alone, between 2015 and 2022, according to the Higher Education Agency of the United Kingdom.

The mass exodus of students pales when compared to those of skilled professionals. From doctors to engineers, architects, lawyers, IT specialists, bankers, and medical technicians, Nigeria is witnessing a massive depletion of its human capital. This human capital hemorrhage will slow down economic growth, performance and overall development and competitiveness of the economy.

While one might argue that a growing diaspora is good as they send home some \$ billions which is higher than the oil export earnings, this clearly is not the way to develop sustainably.

Nations that develop do all they can to keep their best human capital at home, and additionally source skills from elsewhere with flexible immigration and labour policies. We must make Nigeria a viable place for people to stay, and not a place to run away from. The same applies for other countries.

I refuse to believe that the future of Nigeria's and Africa's youth lie in Europe, North America, Asia or anywhere else.

I firmly believe that their future lies in a rapidly developing Nigeria, and Africa, that is able to generate quality jobs with competitive wages and a decent quality of life for millions of youths. That is why the African Development Bank Group and partners have provided \$614 million to Nigeria for the i-DICE programme to support the development of digital and creative enterprises, which are expected to create 6.3 million jobs and add an estimated \$6.4 billion to the Nigerian economy.

To support the businesses of young Nigerians, the African Development Bank Group is also planning to establish a Youth Entrepreneurship Investment Bank in Nigeria which will provide financial instruments to create youth-based wealth.

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

“Rural economies boomed. Local well packaged rice took over the market. The price of rice at the time was N6,000 per bag, which helped to stem food price inflation. Unfortunately, today, that same bag of rice, just nine years later, is N77,000 per bag. That 12-fold price increase unfortunately puts rice, a basic staple, beyond the reach of millions of people.”

HEARTLAND ALLIANCE
LTD/GTE (HALG)
...Towards Excellence and Impact

House 4, Road 11, Off 1st/3rd Avenue, Gwarinpa Estate,
Abuja, Nigeria | Tel: +234. (0) 9087338160

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RFP TITLE: BUILDING OF INFRASTRUCTURE AS A SERVICE (IaaS)
RFP No: HALG/ACE/MARCH/2024/160
RFP ADVERT DAY: MARCH 12TH, 2024.
RFP CLOSING DATE: MARCH 20TH, 2024.

Scope of Work CENTRAL LAMISPLUS DATABASE

1. BACKGROUND

Heartland Alliance LTD/GTE (HALG) ACE Consortium for Cluster 6 is working closely with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS and achieve epidemic control and ending AIDS in Nigeria. This is carried out by employing a client-centred approach that integrates contextual health systems strengthening (HSS) with comprehensive HIV care, including critical services like gender mainstreaming, mental health, and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions, and COVID-19 prevention integration services. ACE-6 implementation currently covers three states – Bayelsa, Edo, and Lagos.

The ACE-6 project increases Access and Provision of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Treatment Services within Primary Health Care Interventions by expanding and extending HIV/TB case finding in communities and work setting through innovative models, risk stratification, age layered artificial intelligence to improve testing yield and linkages for Men, Women, paediatrics, and adolescents, strength and optimize integrated EMR systems to reduce client waiting time, improve quality of care strategies, including index client testing, facilitate active linkage to treatment, adherence support, rapid identification and contact of defaulters, and relinking to treatment. Strengthen and optimize decentralized community ART using innovative DSD models.

As lead of this consortium, Heartland Alliance LTD/GTE's is charged with the sole responsibility of establishing a robust data management system to support Health Management Information System (HMIS) to collect different types of health information from service delivery points to be used as evidence for decision making aimed at improving health care delivery.

There is need to ensure that accurate and correct data is collected and reported with minimal tampering and alteration at all retrieval points, hence the need to implement a system where patient level data (NOT SUMMARIZED/HIGH LEVEL DATA) is continuously pulled from all managed reporting facilities to a central database with managed public access and where reporting and analysis activities would be carried out. However, there is no endpoint to host this database and hence the need to setup an appropriate and well managed infrastructure to house this data. After a painstaking review on the pros and cons of in-house versus cloud hosting, we have decided to adopt the later so as to free ourselves from the complexities and shenanigans of network, power and component management. This configuration would enable us focus more on just deploying and managing hosted custom data applications that address specific organizational data needs and leave infrastructure management to the IaaS (Infrastructure as a service) provider. This would additionally enable the implementation of central data quality checks and expedite the process of reporting to the LAMISPLUS central server. This scope of work details minimum service specifications and work standards.

Virtual Instance

2. Network Speed and Bandwidth – High speed connections for increased performance, minimal latency, and a consistent performance experience during peak usage.
3. Uptime SLA – Maximum service availability with very minimal service disruption
4. Scalability and Flexibility – We want to be able to easily and transparently scale resources when workload increases, multiple operating systems/environments from which to pick from would enable seamless integration and efficient application management.
5. Security and Compliance – Strict access control standards, secure data centres, surveillance systems, data encryption standards like AES-256 and encryption at REST. Compliance certifications
6. Pricing and Cost Efficiency – Transparent pricing models with very easy to understand pricing structures and no hidden fees or unexpected charges, flexible billing charges (like hourly or usage-based billing) and a less cumbersome cancellation/exit strategy that makes it difficult switching to another provider.
7. 24/7 technical support availability.
8. **Virtual Machine must be domiciled in a data-centre (virtual or physical) located within the country.**
9. **VIRTUAL MACHINE SPECIFICATION:**
 - i. 4vCPU
 - ii. 128GB RAM
 - iii. 2T storage space
 - iv. 100Mbps bandwidth
10. **REQUIRED COMPETENCIES**
Organizations and firms that will be considered for this service must demonstrate requisite expertise with no less than ten years of experience in cloud services delivery and IaaS management. Portfolios of recent work must be showcased alongside evidence of existing client base satisfaction with services rendered.
Provide contact person, position, email address, phone number, and dates of service for reference check.
11. **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT.**
Kindly send in your proposal to bids.ace6@heartlandalliancenerigeria.org quoting "HALG/ACE/MARCH/2024/160 – Building of IaaS" as the subject title of your submission email and include the following in your submission.
 - a. **Registration documents.**
Include the below documents in your submission:
 - i. A copy of CAC Certificate
 - ii. A copy of CAC Forms C02 & C07
 - iii. A copy of TIN Certificate
 - iv. Company Profile – Not more than two(2) pages.
 - b. **Proposal cost:** Proposal cost must be submitted in NGN.
 - c. **Delivery Timeline:** State the duration/completion time within which you are expected to deliver the project.
12. **Please note that.**
 - i. Following the requirement of the Federal Government of Nigeria, Heartland Alliance Ltd/Gte will deduct 10% withholding tax (WHT) from the total contractual sum.
 - ii. Heartland Alliance Ltd/Gte is a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) and is VAT exempted.
 - iii. Heartland Alliance Ltd/Gte reserves the right to reject any or all proposals if sent to a **wrong email address, without appropriate e-mail subject title, fails to meet the aforementioned scope of work or submitted after the submission deadline.**
 - iv. Only successful bidder shall be notified and will be asked to sign an Independent Contractor Agreement with Heartland Alliance Ltd/Gte
 - v. *Any enquiries should be sent to halg_procurement@heartlandalliancenerigeria.org*

Companies' exit will pull over N5tr from stock market, shareholders warn

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

the substantial currency devaluation and its repercussions on retained earnings for the period.

Nigerian Breweries, which is currently the 20th most valuable stock with a N334 billion market cap, constituting about 0.6 per cent of the stock market posted a net loss of N106 billion, after absorbing a foreign exchange

(forex) loss of about N153 billion.

The company's gross profit declined from N213.33 billion to N212.61 billion, even as operating profit slowed down from N51.76 billion to N43.96 billion.

Net finance cost, however, jumped from N34.42 billion to N189.19 billion, due largely to forex depreciation. This wiped off the group's net

profit of N13.19 billion in 2022 with a net loss of N106.31 billion in 2023.

Also, Cadbury Nigeria, 53rd most capitalised stock with N35.7 billion capitalisation reported a loss of N27.6 billion, representing a decline of 2,228 per cent from N1.30 billion pre-tax profit recorded in the previous year.

The company's operating profit was wiped out on the back of realised and unrealised foreign exchange loss of N36.93 billion incurred during the period.

Guinness Nigeria with N112 billion market capitalisation posted a full-year loss of N18.2 billion, representing a 216 percent decline when compared to N15.651 billion profit achieved in 2022.

Its loss before tax was N22.138 billion as against profit before tax of N23.674 billion in 2022. Consequently, the loss erased N33.6 billion of the company's shareholders' funds, which fell from almost N90 billion to N56.4 billion.

A source close to *The Guardian* disclosed that some of the multinationals are contemplating closing their businesses, paying off shareholders and relocating to a more favourable environment.

He pointed out that the capital erosion suffered by the firms is so massive that it will take several years for them to bounce back and resume payment of dividends.

Already, the stock market had lost about N130 billion from the exit of about four firms within eight months in 2023.

Should the five multinationals toe the same path, the stock market stands a risk of losing over N5 trillion from its overall market capitalisation.

The Guardian also learnt that most companies, especially in the manufacturing sector may be forced to raise capital from the market through debt instruments or equity to shore up their working capital given the volume of losses reported.

However, while an equity option will largely depend on the interest and liquidity position of its shareholders, the debt option would compel companies to raise capital at rates much higher than the risk-free rate which would put pressure on the profitability of these companies due to the high interest rate environment.

Head Research, FSL Securities, Victor Chiazor said companies that require foreign exchange to operate will have to immediately introduce a hedging contract on their dollar borrowing and obligations to avoid such losses in the future.

URGENT VACANCIES

EXPERIENCED AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS FISHERIES/CROP GROWING

We are an indigenous manufacturing group of companies based in Lagos. Due to expansion and the culture to diversify into farming, we urgently require the services of experienced, matured and qualified agriculturists to work in Ibeju-Lekki axis of Lagos.

CROP GROWING

The ideal candidates must be highly skilled, knowledgeable expert with strong background in agricultural practices, crop management and sustainable farming techniques. He/She will provide expert advice and guidance to farmers and agricultural businesses on crop selection, soil management, pest control, irrigation and drainage.

PISCICULTURE/FISHERIES TECHNICIAN

The ideal candidates will over see the day to day work activities at a fishery. Ensuring fishes are well-fed, taking responsibility for general maintenance around the facility, preparing diets for fish, sorting and spawning fish, cleaning aquaculture equipment.

He/She must have practical training in catfish inbreeding techniques, construction and maintenance of articularatory aquaculture.

Aquaculture engineering and pond layout feed formulation and aquaculture nutrition brood-stock conditioning as well as high production of mono-sex tilapia fingerlings, responsible for record keeping of input and output.

QUALIFICATION

B.Sc Agriculture-45 years & above with 5 years work experience Interested and qualified candidate should send their CV to the email address below:

Email: eiclvacancy23@gmail.com

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

VACANCIES

Our clients have the following vacancies to be filled urgently.

REF. I. SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGER

For an agro-process company based in one of the South East State. Will be primarily responsible for initiating, organizing and managing an elaborate out-grower scheme for commercial farming for agricultural products to serve as raw materials for the process plant. A good degree in an Agricultural discipline, with strong background and experience in Agronomy, Farming Cooperatives and Extension Services, will be required.

REF. II. LUBRICANTS SALES ENGINEER

For a Port Harcourt based Lubricants company. A degree in Chemical Engineering or related technical discipline and at least 2 years experience in lubricants sales will be preferred.

REF. III. SALES EXECUTIVE

For a Port Harcourt based Chemical company. A degree in any discipline with 2 years FMCG sales experience, preferably in Cleaning Products & Soaps, will be required.

Applications, clearly referencing the positions of interest, should be forwarded to

hrlag24@gmail.com

not later than 2 weeks from the date of this publication.

Uzodimma disowns commissioner nominees' list

From Charles Ogunbaju, Owerri

GOVERNOR Hope Uzodimma of Imo State has urged the public to ignore a fake seven-man commissioner nominees' list in circulation, blaming his detractors for the action.

A statement issued, yesterday, by the Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Oguike Nwachukwu, noted that the names on the purported list said to be second batch, and sent to the Imo State House of Assembly for screening and confirmation this week, are fake.

The statement reads: "The attention of the Office of the Chief Press Secretary and Media Adviser to the Governor has been drawn to a fake list of seven names purportedly sent to the House of Assembly by Uzodimma for screening and confirmation as 'second batch' this week. No such list exists to the best of my knowledge.

"Unfortunately, those behind this latest fake list, like they did last week using the New and Electronic Media desk, tagging it 'second batch,' put my name on the poorly written press statement they escalated on social media to make it look authentic before the unsuspecting reading public."

Imo govt lauds FG over 3MTT project

By Innocent Anoruo

IMO State Governor, Hope Uzodimma, has commended the Federal Government for the Three Million Technical Talent (3MTT), an ambitious plan to empower youths with digital skills.

The Commissioner for Digital Economy and E-Government, Dr Chimezie Amadi, disclosed this to *The Guardian* yesterday.

According to the commissioner, the governor expressed delight at the giant stride towards actualisation of the country's digital economy plan and strategy.

Also, the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy have announced plans to train Imo youths through the 3MTT programme.

The programme, a critical part of the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu's administration, is aimed at building the country's technical talent backbone, positioning it as a net talent exporter.

Amadi elucidated that the 3MTT goals align with the SkillUpImo project, the human capacity development initiative of Uzodimma designed to equip 300,000 Imolites with 4IR (Fourth Industrial Revolution) skillset, connecting 60 per cent of them to job opportunities, while empowering 40 per cent to become tech-preneurs.



Minister of State for Environment, Dr. Iziq Salako (left); Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology, Mrs. Esuabana Asanye; Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Uche Nnaji, and other dignitaries during the opening of the 8th Technology and Innovation Expo 2024 in Abuja. PHOTO: NAN

PDP flays Akpabio's political jibe at Wigwe's funeral

From Obinna Nwaoku and Ann Godwin (Port Harcourt)

THE Rivers State Chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has berated the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, who picked on Fubara for charging politicians to desist from bickering and meaningless struggles for power that can't impact the society.

The party, in a statement yesterday, threatened to bar the Senate President from visiting Rivers State should he continue on the path of dishonour by making negative utterances against the governor.

The party's reaction followed comments by Akpabio in response to a

Wike's GDI lieutenants dump movement, join Fubara

statement by Fubara during the burial of the late Herbert Wigwe, wife, and son at Isiokpo, in Ikwerre Council of Rivers State, at the weekend.

Recall that the governor, during his speech at the funeral, challenged the political class to reflect on the essence of the struggle for power when it is not actually deployed in impacting society positively, urging them to reflect on the essence of life.

However, while speaking, Akpabio asked the governor to desist from the struggles if there's nothing in it. "If there's nothing in the struggle, don't struggle," Akpabio stated.

MEANWHILE, there seems to be a renaissance of the political order in Rivers State as loyalists of the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and former Governor of the state, Nyesom Wike, are crossing over to the camp of the incumbent Governor, Siminalayi Fubara.

The *Guardian* had reported a seeming crack among the pro Wike lawmakers over an alleged bulletproof car gift to the Speaker of the State House Assembly by Wike, but was denied by a source from their camp, insisting that they are united.

Following the political tussle between Wike and his successor, Fubara, over the control of the state's political structure, there had been alignments and realignments of politicians.

The latest is that a group of 12 men, who were Local Council coordinators of the Grassroots Development Initiative (GDI), a political pressure group that was instrumental to the massive mobilisation at the grassroots for Wike ahead of his 2015 governorship election, have joined the Fubara camp.

This development came barely a week after the Councillor, representing Rumuepirikom and Elioparanwo ward 9 at the Obio-Akpor Legislative Assembly, AchorNna, resigned his position to join Fubara's camp.

Use Onne port to improve S'East investments, IPOB tells importers, exporters

THE Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has urged South East importers and exporters to prioritise the use of Onne Seaport in Rivers State.

IPOB said that state-imposed technical and operational barriers should not be allowed to outweigh the economic benefits to importers.

The spokesman of IPOB, Emma Powerful, lamented that economic and political strangulation policies by the Nigerian Government are affecting investments in the region.

A statement by Powerful reads in part: "IPOB, led by

Nnamdi Kanu, calls on Ndigbo businessmen and women to start patronizing Onne Seaports at Igweocha, Rivers State, for importation and exportation of their goods.

"IPOB expresses concern over the political and economic strangulation policies by the Nigeria State that have frustrated investment and development of the region since 1999.

"Among such economic policies is the shutting down of functional seaports in South East territory, which includes Onne, Warri and Calabar, leaving the ones in Lagos as

the only functional ports.

"The consequences of such greedy and selfish policies have created a population surge, nightmare and uncontrollable human and vehicular traffic in Lagos. The ugly situation in Lagos and the ports has forced the Federal Government to revive the Onne port.

"Currently, Onne port is partially functional, though with some operational and management hitches that will be solved soon.

"Be that as it may, IPOB calls on Igbo importers and exporters to route their imports and exports

through the Onne port. We advise our people to ignore the state-imposed operational hitches, but to push through to break the state-imposed barriers by patronising the Onne port.

"Ndigbo are freedom fighters in every aspect, including business. With time, those imposed barriers will be eliminated by our consistency in importing and exporting through Onne port. No Igbo importer should think that they'll shut down Lagos ports or make the operations of Onne port very effective and efficient, like Lagos ports."

APC, Sylva lose bid to stop Bayelsa election tribunal

From Ameh Ochojila, Abuja

THE Bayelsa State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal, yesterday, dismissed a fresh motion filed by the All Progressives Congress (APC) and its governorship candidate, Timipre Sylva, seeking the disqualification of members of the panel from proceeding with their petition challenging the election of Governor Douye Diri.

Chairman of the tribunal, Justice Adekunle Adeleye, dis-

missed the motion after he took arguments from Sylva's counsel, Tunde Falola, that of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Charles Edosanwan, the governor's counsel, Chris Uche, that of the Deputy Governor, Chukwuma Machukwu Ume, and for the peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Tayo Oyetibo.

Justice Adekeye, in a brief ruling, held that a letter from the President of the Court of Appeal (PCA) on March 5 man-

dated the tribunal to proceed with hearing of the petition, irrespective of any application by the parties.

He, therefore, said the PCA's letter had overtaken the request by the petitioners for the disbandment of the tribunal.

Sylva's lawyer, Falola, had argued that his clients filed the fresh application against the tribunal on the ground that the two petitioners are convinced beyond reasonable doubt that they cannot get jus-

tice from members of the panel.

The two petitioners further stated that the tribunal had exhibited strange circumstances that made them believe that they would be denied fair hearing.

He, therefore, asked the tribunal to, in the interest of justice, step aside from the petition and allow other members to be constituted by the PCA to determine their petition within the little time remaining for the expiration of case hearing.

Panelists rally women against gender bias

GENDER bias and how to deal with it topped the agenda when a panel of accomplished women joined *Nigeria Info 99.3 Lagos FM* for its 2024 Women in Leadership Conference.

Nigeria Info presenter, Maryann Okon, anchored the virtual conference in commemoration of the International Women's Week.

The Lagos branch Chairperson of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, Chinwe Efobi, challenged women to fight against bias, which she said, arose from cultural and social norms.

Efobi said: "Most women lack confidence; they don't want to come out to grasp what is meant for them, because we are in a man's world.

"We need to encourage one another, especially the younger ones so that they won't be discouraged.

"A woman came out to run for the post of chairman in one of the branches of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) that has up to 2,000 members, and she got just four votes.

"Without having self-confidence, women cannot go far. Nigeria is a patriarchal society that feels women are supposed to be in the kitchen and the other room."

SMEs need business-friendly loans, says NICA

NIGERIA'S statutory body for the control, supervision and regulation of credit management profession, the National Institute of Credit Administration (NICA), has said that availability of loans at low interest rates and flexible repayment terms would boost profitability of small and medium enterprises in the country.

In a statement issued by the Chief Executive Officer of NICA, Prof. Chris Onalo, the institute said a business-friendly loan would encourage intending and existing business owners to borrow to start new businesses, while expanding existing ones.

According to the institute, businesses in advanced countries are well positioned to compete better, adding that even in other countries, businesses expand because of access to low interest rate loans, which are usually lower single digits.

The statement read: "It is difficult for businesses to break even with high interest rate loans, because the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have other high operating costs, which will make repayment a challenge to them.

"To be better competitors and be empowered to expand their trades, businesses should have access to single digit interest rate loans with flexible repayment options."

Kano gov empowers 1,028 women across 44 LGs

GOVERNOR Abba Yusuf has launched an empowerment programme for 1,028 women across the 44 local councils of the state.

According to a statement issued to journalists by the Spokesperson to the Governor, Sanusi Tofa, yesterday, the initiative aims to empower women economically and foster self-reliance, in the spirit of International Women's Day (IWD), celebrated globally on March 8.

While launching the programme at Government House, Yusuf emphasised that the financial support

was specifically designed to uplift women across Kano and enable women to stand on their feet.

"We want our women to thrive economically and be self-reliant. By providing this grant, we encourage them to invest wisely and contribute to their families and communities," the governor said, assuring that the programme would be regular monthly.

The governor's commitment to women's uplift underscores the importance of fostering a society where every individual can thrive.

Buhari hails Tinubu, says Nigeria complex to govern

FORMER President Muhammadu Buhari has said President Bola Tinubu has done well, despite the complexity of managing the country.

Buhari made the commendation when he received the Comptroller-General of Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and members of the management team in Daura, Katsina State, on Sunday.

According to Buhari, governing Nigeria is a tough job for anyone, adding that there is not much anybody can do to help the country.

He asserted that Tinubu performed well since getting into office, while asking Nigerians to endure the economic hardship in the coun-

try and support the policies and programmes of the Federal Government.

Buhari told the Customs team: "I thank you very much for coming. I very much appreciate it. I think Tinubu has done very well. Nigeria is so complex. Really, there isn't much anybody can do."

The country was experiencing economic growth throughout Buhari's regime, even as he left office on May 29, 2023. But, on his inauguration as President, Tinubu declared that his administration would no longer pay subsidy for petrol. That pronouncement instantly shot the price of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) from N185 to over N600.

SON releases 80 CNG standards for road vehicles, others

From Anthony Otaru, Abuja

STANDARDS Organisation of Nigeria (SON) has released 80 approved standards for Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) for road vehicles and related appliances to the Presidential Compressed Natural Gas Initiative (PCNG) led by its Programme Director and Chief Executive, Michael Oluwogbemi.

The 80 standards encompass a wide range of technical specifications and requirements, including CNG Conversion kit, Standards for electrical connections and vehicle safe-

ty, Standards for CNG storage vessels, Standards for CNG refuelling Stations and Guidelines for installation of specific components to support the use of CNG.

This development marks the beginning of the journey towards safer, more reliable, cheaper, environmentally-sustainable alternative fuel utilisation.

PCNG is a component of President Bola Tinubu administration's palliative and one of the many steps taken to ensure Nigerians enjoy his Renewed Hope Agenda.

Aduku dies at 80 as Sule mourns Sodangi

From Abel Abogonye, Lafia

FORMER Chairman of Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Chief Gabriel Aduku, has passed on at 80 years of age.

In a related development, Governor Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa State has expressed deep pain over the demise of All Progressives Congress (APC) chieftain, Sen Abubakar Sodangi.

Aduku reportedly died on Sunday in the United States of America (U.S.A.) while battling an undisclosed illness.

According to a source close to the family, the former Minister of State for Health

under Umaru Yar'Adua's regime left Nigeria before his 80th birthday, which he celebrated on February 3, 2024, with some members of the family in America.

A traditional title holder of *Amana Ogohi Atta Igala*, Aduku, regarded as a great leader that meant well for his people, had also made indelible marks on the national and international scenes, professionally and politically; notably, he designed the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) logo.

He was President of the Nigeria Institute of Architects (NIA), Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) as well as Chairman, Board of Trustees.

Terrorists kill two Katsina security operatives, injure others

From Saxone Akhaine (Kaduna) and Danjuma Michael (Katsina)

TERRORISTS have killed two members of the Katsina State Community Watch Corps and injured others on Sunday afternoon.

The incident happened at Yasore village, Batsari Local Council about 1.00pm when the members of the security outfit were reportedly carrying out patrol and surveillance activities.

According to reports, the ter-

Troops tighten noose on abductors of 287 Kaduna pupils

rorists had laid ambush for the security men, which they fell into, and the situation led to gun duel.

The two victims were simply identified as Aminu and Ibrahim.

The Guardian, however, learnt that some of the terrorists also lost their lives during the exchange of gunfire and others fled the scene with gunshot injuries.

The two victims have since been buried according to Islamic rites.

Late last month, terrorists had killed a member of the security outfit, Sanusi Hassan, who was commanding the Kankara council area.

Hassan and some security operatives, including police personnel, had tried to dislodge a group of terrorists operating around

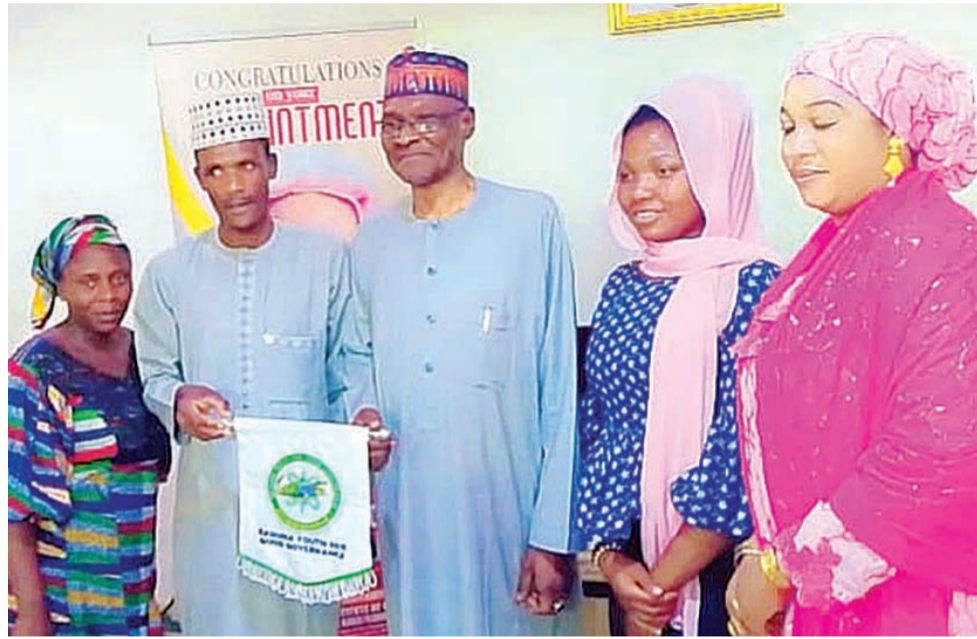
Malumfashi when the incident occurred.

The 1,500-strong security outfit was inaugurated by Governor Dikko Radda in October 2023, to complement efforts of security agencies in combating criminality. They were deployed to council areas with a high record of security challenges, including Safana, Kankara, Faskari, Sabuwa, Faskari, Batsari and Jibia.

Approached for comment, yesterday, Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), ASP Abubakar Aliyu, and spokesperson for the security outfit, Ibrahim Abdulkadir, did not immediately respond to inquiry on the attack.

MEANWHILE, troops are now closing in on the terrorists that abducted the 287 primary and secondary school students in Kurga, Chikun Local Council of Kaduna State.

With the aid of advanced military technology, the Minister of Defence, Mohammed Abubakar, had earlier pledged at a Ramadan lecture, last week, that the government would deploy technology to locate bandits anywhere they were, to end terrorism in the country.



Director, Contact and Mobilisation, Kaduna Youth for Good Governance (KYGG), Justina Bulus (left); the Chairman, Mohammed Modibbo; Chief Judge (CJ) of Kaduna State, Mohammed Tukur; Assistant Director, ICT, Blessing Dauda and Vice Chairman, Naimatu Shuaibu during KYGG's visit to the CJ...yesterday. PHOTO: NAN

Ramadan: ACF, Fayemi, Sheba urge prayers for Nigeria, Ododo preaches love, sacrifice

From Saxone Akhaine (Kaduna), Kehinde Olatunji (Lagos) and Ibrahim Obansa (Lokoja)

AS Muslims begin the holy month of Ramadan, former Governor of Ekiti State, Dr Kayode Fayemi, has extended his best wishes and greetings to Nigerian Muslims, encouraging them to use the fast as an opportunity for self-reflection, prayer and to deepen community spirit.

The former Chairman of Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF) noted that this year's Ramadan coinciding with the Christian Lent held profound significance and illustrated a shared commitment to spiritual devotion and self-

discipline by the two faiths.

According to him, Ramadan is not merely about abstaining from food and drinks from dawn until sunset, but a time for spiritual growth, self-discipline and empathy.

ALSO, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governorship hopeful in Ondo State, Abayomi Sheba, has admonished the adherents of Islam to imbibe the lifestyle of Prophet Muhammad, by remaining steadfast during the period and committing the nation into the hands of God.

Sheba stated, yesterday, that as devoted followers of Islam, the 30-day exercise offered them the opportunity to

intercede for the nation in the challenges facing it.

Sheba, who represented Irele/Okitipupa Constituency of Ondo in the House of Representatives between 1999 and 2003, said Nigerians must not be tired of approaching God to restore the nation to its former glory.

AREWA Consultative Forum (ACF) have also called on Muslims to use the Ramadan to pray for the return of security, peace and economic prosperity to Nigeria.

The northern elders urged the Muslim Ummah to engage in prayers for God to touch the hearts of Nigerian

leaders to govern with compassion under the prevailing economic hardship, and turn the minds of terrorists and bandits in the country, for the return of peace and tranquility.

Spokesman of the Northern Socio-cultural group, Prof. Tukur Muhammed-Baba, said: "ACF is not unmindful of the economic and security challenges bedeviling the nation and its people, especially in the Northern states. However, this is also a time to look forward to a brighter future, as the holy month is a most auspicious one for remaining upbeat, as nothing is impossible for God to grant his servants."

Oronsaye report will save Nigeria over N2tr yearly, says group

From Adamu Abuh, Abuja

INDEPENDENT Media and Policy Initiative (IMPI) says implementing Stephen Oronsaye's report on public sector reforms will reduce cost of governance by at least N2 trillion every year.

IMPI applauded the Federal Government's decision to allocate more funds to capital projects than recurrent expenditure in the budget for the first time in the Fourth Republic.

In a statement by its Chairman, Niya Akinsiju, the group described the decision to buck a 24-year trend with the 2024 budget as a reflection of government's sincerity to drive real economic growth.

According to the policy think-tank, there are a lot of positives to derive from a N28.7 trillion spending plan that seeks to correct years of budget imbalance between capital and recurrent expenditures.

It noted that even as the Federal Government is set to increase minimum wage, the challenge ahead lies in ensuring a better budget implementation in a country with a record of poor budget performance.

Expressing optimism that cost-cutting measures approved by President Bola Tinubu would ensure that more funds are freed for capital projects, it added: "We, however, feel sanguine

over the prospect of attaining 100 per cent implementation of the capital expenditure aspect of the 2024 budget premised on freed revenue from the civil service reforms to be channelled into funding capital projects for the good of the larger percentage of Nigerians. "From an analytical point of view, a budget with higher capital expenditure than recurrent is not only a driver of economic growth; it also impacts individual citizen's quality and way of life."

The group concurred with the 2019 submission of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) that the only way to bring about a meaningful

influence on the economy is to monitor and evaluate funds specially intended for capital expenditure and capital projects.

"It would, however, appear that the disequilibrium between capital and recurrent expenditures has been eventually corrected. For the first time in the present democratic dispensation, the 2024 budget, which is the first in the tenure of Tinubu, has more funds allocated to capital expenditure than recurrent. The budget of N28.77 trillion for the 2024 fiscal year has a recurrent expenditure of N8.73 trillion with N9.92 trillion allocated to capital expenditure."

CAF Confederation Cup

Rivers United to know quarterfinals opponent today

By Christian Okpara

NIGERIA'S sole surviving club in CAF inter-club competitions, Rivers United, will know their quarterfinals opponent as the draw for the last eight of the Confederation Cup holds today in Cairo, Egypt.

Rivers United defeated Ghana's Dreams FC 2-1 in Uyo a fortnight ago to qualify for the quarterfinals of the competition behind the Ghanaians in Group A of the championship.

The teams remaining in the championship are USM Alger (Algeria), Zamalek (Egypt), Dreams FC (Ghana), RS Berkane (Morocco), Modern Future (Egypt), Abu Salem (Libya), Rivers United (Nigeria) and StadeMalien

(Mali).

According to CAF, the four group winners will be seeded for the draw, while the runners up will not be among the seeds.

"The seeded teams will be drawn against the unseeded teams, with the seeded teams hosting the second leg. Teams from the same group could not be drawn against each other, while teams from the same association could be drawn against each other," CAF said.

The seeded teams are USM Alger of Algeria, Zamalek (Egypt), Dreams FC of Ghana and RS Berkane (Morocco).

Modern Future of Egypt, Libya's Abu Salim, Rivers United and Mali's StadeMalien make up the unseeded teams.

UEFA Champions League

Arsenal must beat Porto to prove its status as elite club, says Saliba

WILLIAM Saliba has warned Arsenal they must overcome Porto in today's Champions League last-16 clash if they are to prove they belong among Europe's elite, reports 90min.com.

The Gunners ended the weekend top of the Premier League after Liverpool and Manchester City played out a 1-1 draw, but their immense domestic form has not followed them across the continent as Arsenal face elimination from the Champions League.

A 1-0 defeat in the first leg away from home saw Arsenal put on one of their ugliest displays in recent months and led to some frosty criticism of Porto's tactics from Mikel Arteta, but Saliba insists the Gunners have learned from that defeat and are ready to rise to the chal-

lenge in front of him.

Asked whether Arsenal need to win to cement their place as a European powerhouse, Saliba confessed: "Yes, of course."

"We have to win on Tuesday and we will give everything, we can't wait to play on Tuesday. We were focused on the game (with Brentford) and now we prepare for Porto at home and we will be ready."

"I think we were horrible [to play against in] the last seven or eight games and now we have to keep going like this, because it is very tough to beat us at home and we will give everything."

Porto boss, Sergio Conceicao, laughed off Arteta's claims that his tactics were too negative, warning the Spaniard that high possession numbers are not a requirement of a good team.



Rivers United

Falcons to host Banyana Banyana in Paris 2024 cracker April 5

AFRICA'S top-ranked team, Nigeria, will host reigning African champions, South Africa, in the first leg of their women's Olympic football tournament final qualifying fixture at the MKO Abiola National Stadium, Abuja, on April 5.

According to the fixture, the encounter will kick off by 4.00 p.m. with Algeria's Ghada Mehat as centre referee.

Mehat's compatriots, Asma Ferial Ouahab and Lamia Atman, will serve as assistant referee one and fourth official respectively, while Mariem Cheddad from Mauritania will serve as

assistant referee two.

Senegalese Fadouma Dia, a former FIFA referee, will be referee assessor, while Ghana's Christine Ziga will serve as match commissioner.

For the return leg scheduled for South Africa (venue to be decided) on April 9, CAF has appointed Tunisian official, Dorsaf Ganouati, as referee. She will be assisted by compatriots Houda Afine (assistant referee one) and Emna Ajbouni (fourth official), with Egypt's Yara Atef Abdelfattah as assistant referee two.

Agar Mezing from Cameroon will be the refer-

ee assessor, while Cindy Dluclu from eSwatini will be commissioner.

The Super Falcons beat Cameroon's Indomitable Lionesses in the penultimate round of the race, with a single goal over the two legs scored by Esther Okoronkwo at the MKO Abiola National Stadium, while Banyana Banyana trounced Tanzania 4-0 over two legs in Dar es Salaam and Nelspruit.

The winner over two legs in early April will join 15 other senior teams from across the world for the women's Olympic football tournament in Paris from July 16.

AFN at 80: Okowa urges athletes to do Nigeria proud at African Games

By Gowon Akpodonor

PRESIDENT of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Tonobok Okowa, yesterday, urged track and field stars to go for gold at the ongoing 13th African Games in Ghana as the federation celebrates its 80th-year anniversary.

Okowa's message came, just

as the last batch of Nigeria's contingent to the African Games departed for Ghana, yesterday.

The last batch is made up of home-based athletes, who have been in camp in Abuja training for the Games.

Speaking with The Guardian on phone, Okowa said it would be befitting if track and field stars contribute to Team Nigeria's success in Ghana by winning more gold medals than their previous outing in Rabat, Morocco.

He said: "Our last batch of athletes are leaving for Accra today and we hope to organise a small party to celebrate AFN's 80 years celebration over there to appreciate the vision and good work of our fathers, who were the founding fathers of athletics."

The AFN was founded on March 11, 1944 as Amateur Athletics Association of Nigeria (AAN).

According to Sports Village Square, the AFN anniversary has always passed unmarked

or uncelebrated, even when such were milestones.

The athletics body was founded in Lagos at an historic meeting attended by five Nigerians and 10 British expatriates. The Nigerians were T. E. Achibong, James Harding Ekperigin, Luke Emejulu, S. O. Jolaoso and S.M Oduba, while the expatriates were F. K. Butler, P. W. Price, A. H. Clift, N. S. Clouston, L. J. Lewis and T. B. Welch. The others were E. A. Miller, G. Wilson, R. G. Henderson and Capt. Donald Henry Holley.

Cameroon suspends AFCON star, 61 others over age fraud

THE Cameroonian Football Federation (FECAFOOT) has suspended 62 players for age fraud, including the youngest member of their squad for January's African Cup of Nations, reports daily-mail.co.uk.

The official list was released by FECAFOOT this weekend, and includes 17-year-old Wilfried Nathan Douala, who was a surprise inclusion in Rigobert Song's squad for the tournament in Cote d'Ivoire.

According to FECAFOOT, the Victoria United skipper lied about his age, and that, therefore, have disqualified the player from appearing in the Elite League's play-off games.

Amusan leads 4x100m relay team as AFN releases final African Games' list

By Gowon Akpodonor

WORLD 100m hurdles record holder, Tobi Amusan, has been included in Team Nigeria's relay squad for the ongoing 13th African Games holding in Ghana.

In the final list of athletes released by the AFN, yesterday, Amusan is expected to compete in four events at the Games.

Apart from her usual 100m hurdles, she is listed in the 100m, 200m and 4x100m relay.

Amusan will be seeking to become the second Nigerian woman to successfully defend an African Games title in the same event twice after Vivian Chukwuemeka, who won the Shot Put title thrice at Johannesburg '99 in South Africa, the 2003 COJA Games in Nigeria and 2007 in Algeria.

Capello describes Osimhen as irreplaceable

FORMER England manager, Fabio Capello, thinks Napoli would have trouble replacing their talisman, Victor Osimhen, if they allow him to join Chelsea this summer.

Osimhen has been heavily linked with a move to Chelsea, with it being claimed that the striker wants to link up with Mauricio Pochettino's side.

Speaking to Il Mattino, Capello fears that Napoli will not be able to replace Osimhen if they sell him to the Blues or another club at the end of the season.



Representatives of Treasure Citadel Montessori School, Oke-Afa, Isolo, Lagos, displaying their trophies at the end of the school's maiden inter-house.

SOLUTION

B	I	S	H	O	P		P	C	E
E		A		S		O			R
R	E	P	E	L		I	O	W	A
A		E		O	W	L			
T	I	L	E		A		F		M
E		E		R		R	I	C	E
				V	A	T		N	N
R	I	M	I		A	B	I	N	A
O			M		R		D		C
T	U	G		S	A	T	I	R	E

Ray Ekpu

e-mail: nimitobe@gmail.com;
Tel: (SMS only 08079221179)



Rivers United to know quarterfinals opponent today /31



Coup contagion

THE Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa, is appropriately worried that some faceless people on the social media are calling for a coup in the country. He said recently: "Whoever is making that call does not love Nigeria. We want to make it very clear that the Armed Forces of Nigeria are here to protect democracy. We all want democracy and we do better under democracy."

"We will continue to support democracy and any of those ones who are calling for anything other than democracy are evil people and I think they don't mean well for Nigeria. They should be careful because the law will come after them."

He went further: "we can see that with democracy a lot of things are happening in Nigeria. Yes, we are going through trying periods. I mean in life nothing is one hundred per cent. Everybody goes through difficulties and come out better. You will really appreciate what it is to build a nation. We are going through our trying period but I can assure Nigerians that it will get better."

During President Muhammadu Buhari's eight-year rule, there were such coup rumours once or twice during those periods that he went abroad on medical pilgrimage. On one of those occasions, about May 2017, the Nigerian Army Spokesman, Brigadier Sani Usman, issued a statement on behalf of the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai.

He said: "This is to inform the general public that the Chief of Army Staff has received information that some individuals have been approaching some officers and individuals for undisclosed political reasons. On the basis of that he has warned such persons to desist from these acts."

In a country where there is hunger, comprehensive hunger and where the prices of food, fuel and drugs are high, roof-top high, it is no surprise that there are people who think, without proof, that a military government may have the magic wand for rapid results in the transformation of our economy. This is happening at a time that there are some people who are still disgruntled about the results of the last election. So, hunger mixed with politics can be a devastating concoction.

Our economy is weak right now because of several factors which include weak currency, low electricity and high prices of diesel, raw materials and low patronage of goods and services. This weakness in the economy leads to low living standards and lack of opportunities for growing numbers of young people.

This has led to increasing anger and protests and the demand for fabulous salaries and the scramble to go abroad by our highly qualified personnel. This *japaism* is contributing to the dislocation of families, loss of family values and disconnectedness within families.

Nigeria has had not less than 10 coups since January 15, 1966. We have lost many lives in these coups which have affected Nigeria's unity and stability.

A coup is not a joke. It is a serious matter planned in absolute secrecy by a small group of like-minded people and the planning must exclude people who will not share in the core values of the core coup planners or people who



do not keep their mouths shut. It is a life-and-death matter.

If it succeeds, they become kings and kingmakers and folk heroes. If it fails, they are rounded up and hastily tried and shot as villains. So, it is not a matter that is often publicly discussed. It is one that is spoken about in murmurs and low tones so that words about it do not leak and filter into the wrong ears, since walls have ears.

The 1999 Constitution forbids it. It says in chapter one section 2: "The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the government of Nigeria or any part thereof except in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution."

On the occasions that coup plotters have taken power in Nigeria from elected governments they always made sure they suspended the constitution immediately and only decided to rule by decrees, decrees that were often backdated. Nigerians have gone through this horror of military rule, epitomised by authoritarianism, illegalities, freezing of people's freedoms and rights and absolute arbitrariness.

That is why for many years before 1999, Nigerians from all walks of life fought fierce battles for the military to return to the barracks and leave the stage for elected civilians. They, too, fought to stay on, closing down newspapers and magazines, throwing journalists and other activists into detention and ensuring that some activists actually disappeared. My colleagues in *Newswatch* and I were thrown into jail and our magazine shut down for publishing a document that was to encourage the Ibrahim Babangida government to start work on the return to civil rule.

And when Gen. Sani Abacha overthrew Chief Ernest Shonekan, who was the Interim Administrator, we interviewed David Mark, one of the officers who helped Abacha to get to the throne. Mark told our magazine that Abacha

was planning to stay in power beyond the period they agreed on.

Abacha got Dan Agbese, Yakubu Mohammed and I arrested and tried for mutiny, yes mutiny for publishing a harmless interview. It is purely by God's benevolence that the three of us are still alive today. In his later days in office, Abacha was terror personified. Phones were tapped and speech was monitored and people, lots of people, considered to be enemies of the government and friends of democracy were eliminated.

Even his Deputy, Lt Gen. Oladipo Diya, as well as Major General Abdulkareem Adisa and Major General Tajudeen Olanrewaju, were accused of coup plotting. They were tried in a military tribunal and sentenced to death. This was in April 1998. By God's benevolence they were saved when Abacha died mysteriously on June 8, 1998.

This coup contagion is a potent indication that democracy has been weak in these countries and has not delivered the dividends that the politicians promised them. But as we had seen in Nigeria, soldiers are not magicians. They do not have any magic wand, or any magic talisman for delivering wonders and miracles. There are not many developmental problems that can melt away with the use of a swagger stick or an AK47.

This coup conversation in Nigeria is coming at a time that several coups have taken place in various parts of Africa. In the last few years, there have been successful coups in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Sudan and Gabon. There have also been unsuccessful coups in Guinea Bissau and Central African Republic.

This coup contagion is a potent indication that democracy has been weak in these countries and has not delivered the dividends that the politicians promised them. But as we had seen in Nigeria, soldiers are not magicians. They do not have any magic wand, or any magic talisman for delivering wonders and miracles. There are not many developmental problems that can melt away with the use of a swagger stick or an AK47.

The world's economy is in a quandry. That is why hunger is growing around the world. That is also why there are protests in various countries, including the developed ones based on the decrease in earning power, the rise in prices of essential commodities and the fall in the standard of living.

Nigeria is not alone in this trauma. Those who think a coup is the answer have probably not lived long in Nigeria. If they had they would have known that we had many years of military rule and our problems did not disappear. Instead, the problems got multiplied.

The military boys disfigured the state structure which General Yakubu Gowon created. They created local governments in a manner that caused dislocations and boundary disputes. They were not the messiahs that some people thought they were. They gave us a unitary constitution in a federation that needed a federal constitution.

They piled more functions on the plate of the Federal Government, instead of giving states the power to exploit the resources in their territories as was done fruitfully in the 50s. Today, states are simply idle. Every month they carry a bowl to Abuja for the collection of money with which they use in paying salaries.

I know of no country in the world that this happens, not a developed country, not a developing country, not any of the twenty something federations in the world. That is what the military did to our country, a policy that has retarded the progress of the country.

Now we are trying to review the constitution because all right-thinking persons are convinced that the constitution needs to be amended if we want to move into the path that will take us to the First world.

Certainly, President Bola Tinubu's policies are hurting millions of Nigerians. That is why there is tension in the country and protests here and there. But I believe that the President is hearing the cry of distressed Nigerians and will do something to severely ameliorate the situation.

He cannot achieve much overnight because the economy he inherited had been amputated in the last one decade. And the economy cannot be successfully rebuilt within a short time. While the government appeals to us for patience there is also need to put in place short term measures that can reduce the pain we feel, not the terror of a coup. No, a coup is not the answer.

Published by The Guardian Group, Rutam House, Isolo, Lagos Tel: 01-4489600
Abuja Office: Plot 415 Olu Awotesu Street, Off Idris Ibrahim Crescent, Off Obafemi Awolowo Way,
Jabi District, Abuja. Tel: 08163413350, 09055922776
Advert Hotlines: 01-4489619, 08033371431, advert@guardian.ng; Circulation Hotline: 07038746449
All correspondence to Guardian Newspapers Limited, P.M.B. 1217, Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria.
E-mail: Letters@guardian.ng; www.guardian.ng

Editor:
OLUWAFEMI F. ADEKOYA

ABC (ISSN NO 0189-5125)

What The Guardian stands for

Conscience, Nurtured by Truth

- The Guardian is an independent newspaper, established for the purpose of presenting balanced coverage of events, and of promoting the best interests of Nigeria. It owes allegiance to no political party, ethnic, community, religious or other interest groups. Its primary commitment is to the integrity and sovereignty of the Federation of Nigeria, and beyond that, to the unity and sovereignty of Africa.
- The Guardian will at all times uphold the need for justice, probity in public life, equal access to the nation's resources and equal protection under the law of Nigeria for all citizens.

- The Guardian journalist must whole-heartedly subscribe to the 1979 Code of Conduct for Nigerian journalists as amended in 1998.
- The Guardian believes, therefore, that it is the moral duty of every journalist to have respect for the truth and to publish or prepare for publication only the truth and to the best of his knowledge.
- It is the duty of The Guardian journalist to resist and refrain from earning other than his just salary or allowances from his employers: not to demand, and to refuse any reward if offered in cash or kind for publishing news or comments.
- The motto of The Guardian is Conscience Nurtured by Truth.

Please report any of our erring journalists to these dedicated telephone numbers: 014489600, 07098147948, 07098147951 Or our e-mail: Complaints@guardian.ng