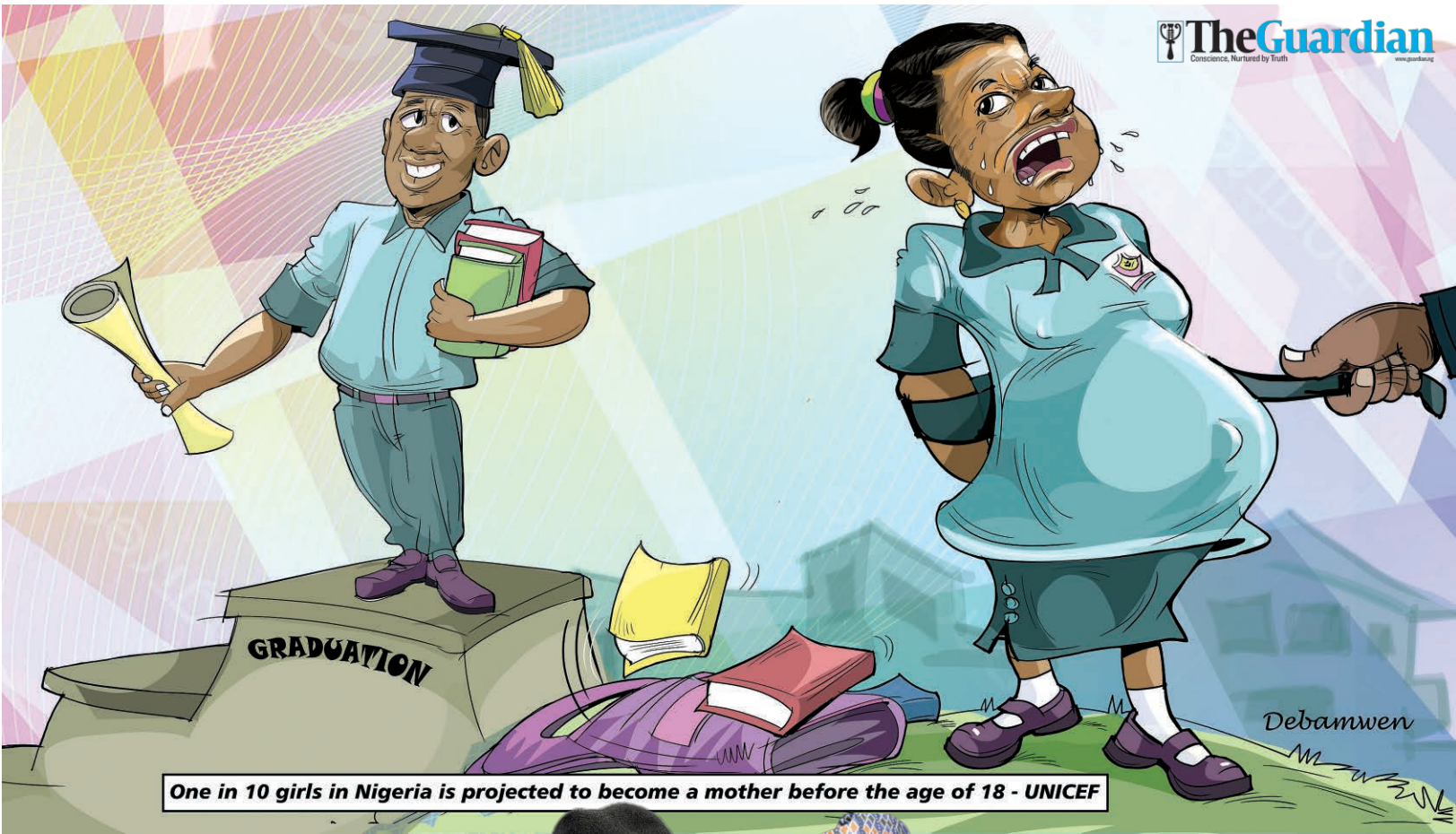




## National Health and Demography Survey: **BIG STORY PAGES 4 & 5**

# Spike in teenage pregnancy stirs dire public health, social concerns



**LP fumes, vows legal action as four lawmakers defect to APC**  
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**'Detained Okuama president died in military facility'**  
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**Politics, corruption bane of education in Nigeria, says TETFund boss**  
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**Akpabio counters Barau, insists tax bills on course despite opposition**  
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**Activists seek bail for Farotimi, fault police involvement**  
NEWS PAGE 28



Chief Executive Officer of Guardian Newspapers Limited, Mr Toke Alex-Ibru, and General Officer Commanding 82 Division Nigerian Army and Force Command Joint Task Force South-East, who represented the Chief of Army Staff, Maj Gen Hassan Dada, at the Fourth Quarter 2024 Media Chat, hosted by the Nigerian Army Civil-Military Cooperation, in Enugu, yesterday.

**Nigeria's budget under threat as OPEC extends production cut**  
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# Panorama

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## Bahamas rejects Trump's proposal to take in deported migrants

COUNTRIES across the Americas are bracing for U.S. president-elect's plan to carry out a mass deportation operation. The Bahamas yesterday rejected a proposal from the transition team of Donald Trump to take in migrants from other countries who may be deported by the incoming administration.

In a statement, the office of Bahamian Prime Minister, Philip Davis, said the scheme to have the Bahamas accept deportation flights "was re-

viewed and firmly rejected. The Bahamas simply does not have the resources to accommodate such a request," Davis's office said.

"Since the Prime Minister's rejection of this proposal, there has been no further engagement or discussions with the Trump team or any other entity regarding this matter. The Government of

The Bahamas remains committed in its position."

Trump, who won last month's U.S. presidential election and will take office on January 20, has promised to carry out the "largest deportation operation" in the country's history. The proposed effort has spurred condemnation from rights advocates and raised ques-

tions about the feasibility of removing millions of undocumented immigrants from the country.

The Department of Homeland Security estimates 11 million "unauthorised" people lived in the U.S. as of 2022. The Bahamas census for the same year shows the country has less than 400,000 people total.

## Farotimi's book ranks as bestseller on Amazon days after arrest

DELE Farotimi's book, 'Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System,' has become a bestseller on Amazon Books as the human rights advocate faces legal action over the publication.

The book is ranked 555 out of all books on the e-commerce website and is number one in elections. The book also topped Amazon's charts in general elections, political process, and political commentary & opinion.

Customer reviews rated the book 4.9 out of five stars. Published on July 2, Farotimi examined how affluent Nigerians allegedly manipulated the country's judicial system for their interests.

However, his description of the country's legal landscape has become a subject matter in a law court.

Farotimi's arrest on Tuesday on the orders of Chief Afe Babalola (SAN) fueled interest in the book. The 93-

year-old senior lawyer alleged being accused in the book of compromising Nigeria's judiciary.

## Musk's Starlink completes first satellite direct-to-cell connection for remote access

By Adeyemi Adepetun

SPACEX Starlinks has completed the first satellite direct-to-cell connection in boost for remote access

Founder of SpaceX, Elon Musk, announced yesterday that SpaceX has completed its first Starlink satellite direct-to-cell phone constellation, which will enable internet connectivity in remote areas without requiring cell towers.

He revealed this on X, tweeting, "The first Starlink satellite direct to cell phone constellation is now com-

plete. This will enable unmodified cell phones to have Internet connectivity in remote areas."

Musk noted, however, that the bandwidth per beam is only 10Mb but assured that future constellations will be much more capable. Musk's announcement follows SpaceX's Falcon 9 launch of 20 Starlink satellites from California's Vandenberg Space Force Base.

According to Starlink, Direct to Cell works with existing LTE phones wherever you can see the sky.

### TODAY IN HISTORY

• **2021 - Nigeria**  
Federal Government accused United Kingdom of unfair, punitive, indefensible and discriminatory behaviour over its decision to slam travel ban on Nigeria due to discovered cases of COVID-19 Omicron cases.

• **2019 - Nigeria**  
Eze Israel Kanu, father of the leader of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu, died.

• **2018 - Nigeria**  
A Global Terrorism Index report placed Nigeria third most terrorised nation in the world for the 4th year. The report blamed spate of terrorism on increase in violence by Fulani extremists.

• **2017 - USA**  
Donald Trump's administration officially announced recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

• **2014 - Nigeria**  
Gunmen stormed Tunga prison in Niger State and freed over 200 prisoners.

• **2011 - Nigeria**  
Court convicted man accused of being one of the several spokesmen for Boko Haram radical Muslim sect. Ali Umar Konduga. He was sentenced to three years in prison.

• **2006 - Congo**  
Congo inaugurated Joseph Kabila as its first elected president in over four decades.

### TODAY'S QUOTE



When a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw.

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.

WOLE SOYINKA

### RANDOM FACTS

- Canada is the most educated country in the world. More than half of its residents have college degrees.
- The inability to pronounce the letter 'r' is called rhotacism, making it impossible for the sufferers to pronounce their own affliction.
- People are generally more honest when physically tired. This is why people confess things during late night conversations.

... DAY 3875  
**OUR GIRLS STILL MISSING**

Tope Templer Olaiya,  
News Editor

@TopeTempler



# TheGuardian WEEKEND

Conscience, Nurtured by Truth

DECEMBER 7-8, 2024

### SPECIAL FEATURE



**How Poor Psychiatric Care Heightens Fear Of Mentally Challenged Country**

### WeekendBeats



40 Years On, **Angélique Kidjo** Still Raising The Bar

### IBRUCENTRE

It Is Not By Power, By **Pastor Lazarus Muoka**

God's Responses To Our Prayers (1), By **Prof. Yetunde Olumide**

How To Avoid Marrying A Bad Person From A Good Family, By **Bishop Charles Ighele**

### Newsfeature

**Tinubu: Strengthening Investment Ties With France Despite Sahel Africa Log Out**



### Showblast



Metsi, Dear Kaffy Add Flavour To **Lagos International Theatre Festival**



ARTS

Deepening Lagos Theatre Space With Fringe Festival

**Shodipo To Curate In the Act Of Becoming: An Ode To Self And Story**

### Interview

**Yusuf Mohammed Maccido: How Sokoto Governor Is Changing State's Water Supply Narrative**



**Emmanuel Okoroafor: Why Underdeveloped, Developing Countries Should Avoid Aligning Their Currencies To Major International Currencies**

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## 2027: Jonathan's campaign posters flood Kano

Sowunmi launches The Alternative as ADC, PRP consider merger

FORMER President Goodluck Jonathan's presidential posters for the 2027 elections appeared across major streets in Kano, yesterday, sparking speculations about his possible return to the political arena.

This was as The Alternative, a political movement aiming to secure political power in the 2027 general elections, was unveiled in Jos, Plateau State.

Also, the African Democratic Congress (ADC) and the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) opened discussions on a potential merger.

The posters, seen at strategic locations such as Gyadi-Gyadi/Zoo Road flyover, Kofar Nasarawa, and State Road, featured messages such as 'Team New Nigeria 2027; The Goodluck Nigeria Needs—Dr. Goodluck Jonathan'.

This development has intensified conversations about the 2027 presidential race, with prominent figures like Peter Obi, Atiku Abubakar and the incumbent President Bola Tinubu expected to contest.

Jonathan's spokesperson, Okechukwu Eze, has yet to comment on the matter.

However, the emergence of the posters echoes a similar incident before the 2023 elections when supporters purchased nomination forms for Jonathan under the All Progressives Congress (APC), a move he later distanced himself from the recent campaign posters are said to be spearheaded by a political movement known as Team New Nigeria, which has been promoting its activities across the country.

The aims and objectives of The Alternative were outlined by Segun Sowunmi, a former governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Ogun State. Speaking at the North Central Zone National Opposition Movement town hall meeting in Jos, Sowunmi said Nigerians were tired of the old order and were eager for an alternative platform to realise their future political aspirations.

According to him, the concept of an alternative platform is aimed at identifying and supporting quality candidates at the local level. This platform seeks to empower citizens to choose leaders who genuinely represent their interests, rather than relying on established political parties that may prioritise their own interests.

Sowunmi emphasized the necessity for a comprehensive review of Nigeria's political system, including government, opposition parties, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and the judiciary.

## PDP BoT condemns continued postponement of NEC meeting

From Azimazi Momoh Jimoh, Abuja

BOARD of Trustees (BoT) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has condemned the continued postponement of the party's National Executive Council (NEC) meeting. It asked the party leaders from the North Central to get a replacement for the former National Chairman, Iyorchia Ayu.

Also, the Acting National Chairman, Umar Damagun, and National Secretary, Samuel Anyanwu, have threatened to sue Deji Adeyanju, a lawyer and activist, over alleged defamation.

The BoT, which plans to have an urgent meeting with the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, Nyesom Wike, in search of peace and unity for the party, regretted that such endless shifting of the NEC meeting was destructive to efforts to find solutions to party's challenges.

Since April 2024, when the party's NEC held its 98th meeting, efforts to convene the 99th meeting have been futile, as the meeting suffered three different postponements.

At an emergency meeting of the BoT in Abuja, yesterday, the chairman, Sen Adolphus Wabara, remarked: "It is with a deep sense of disappointment that I express the board's dismay at the continued shifting by the National Working Committee (NWC)

- Asks N'Central to produce National Chairman
- Damagun, Anyanwu threaten to sue Adeyanju for defamation

of NEC meeting. This delay undermines the trust and confidence of our members." According to the former president of the Senate, further delays could exacerbate existing challenges and sow unnecessary discord within their ranks.

The board charged the NWC to rise to the occasion, and demonstrate leadership and responsibility by ensuring that the proposed February 2024 date to convene the NEC meeting is adhered to. Wabara noted that although challenges might arise dur-

ing governance and administration, "adherence to timelines and commitments is non-negotiable".

He stressed, "In as much as the BoT serves as the conscience of the party, we expect that the NWC would honour its word and convene the NEC meeting as scheduled. This is critical for resolving pressing issues and charting a clear path forward for the party."

Lamenting that adherence to democratic tenets in the party had been in abeyance, he added: "Let us remember that our strength lies in our unity

and adherence to democratic principles. The NEC serves as a vital platform for decision-making, consultation and collaboration among all levels of the party's leadership.

"The board will not relent in our efforts to ensure accountability and adherence to the party's constitution."

The board also lamented the prevailing economic hardship across the country and noted that "the skyrocketing cost of living, coupled with poorly implemented economic reforms, has pushed millions into deeper

poverty."

On the need to meet with Wike in search of peace in the party, Wabara charged PDP leaders, particularly governors, to improve their unity restoration efforts.

In a communique read by Wabara at the end of the emergency meeting, the BoT urged the party leaders from the zone to convene a meeting of stakeholders to nominate a replacement for Ayu.

According to the document, board members at the meeting thoroughly assessed the state of affairs in the party and the country and expressed deep worry over the state of affairs, particularly with regard to administration.



Coalition of military pensioners protesting against unpaid entitlements in front of the Ministry of Finance, Abuja...yesterday. PHOTO LUCY LADIDI ATEKO

## Gunmen attack Taraba gov's mother, sister

There's hunger among politicians, says Kefas' appointee

From Charles Akpeji Jalingo

GUNMEN suspected to be bandits have reportedly attacked the mother of Taraba State Governor, Jumai Kefas, and sister, Atsi Kefas.

Meanwhile, an appointee of Governor Agbu Kefas, Bobga Suntai, has said politicians, especially the yet-to-be-inaugurated appointees in Taraba, are hungry.

Yesterday's attacks on the first family occurred along Kente Road in Wukari Local Council of the state. Confirming the incident, the Chairman of Wukari Local Council, Dauda Agbu, described the attack as "deeply troubling".

He revealed that the governor's sister sustained a gunshot wound during the incident, adding: "She was initially treated at the Federal Teaching Hospital in Wukari, where her condition was stabilised, before being airlifted to Abuja for further medical attention."

The council chairman urged residents to remain calm, assuring them of efforts to apprehend those responsible for the attack.

Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), in Taraba, Usman Abdullahi, said the information reaching the command from the Wukari division said it was an armed robbery attack.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

## Politics, corruption bane of education in Nigeria, says TETFund boss

From Collins Osuji, Owerri

EXECUTIVE Secretary of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Sonny Echono, has advocated a process devoid of undue political interference and financial influence in the selection of university leadership for quality governance and educational progress in Nigeria.

This was as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) appealed to the Federal Government not to systematically phase out TETFund, which, he said, "transformed" tertiary educational institutions in the country in the last three decades.

The TETFund boss noted that despite the structural framework in appointing vice-chancellors, extraneous issues, including politics, corruption, lack of inclusiveness, and ethnic and religious biases often marred the selection process. Echono stated this, yesterday while delivering a lecture on 'Impact of Leadership Selection on Governance in Public Universities in Nigeria' at the 36th Convocation of the Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO) Owerri, Imo State.

He said, "Our universities have become increasingly lo-

cal with the majority of the academic and non-academic staff sponsored by local politicians and other leaders from the host communities. Political affiliation has also assumed overarching importance in the selection process of university leadership."

According to him, the involvement of university leaders by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the conduct of elections has become counter-productive, stressing that such encouraged politicians to sponsor candidates for the position of Vice Chancellor, "in anticipation of returning the favour either to them or their preferred candidates to various electoral offices."

He canvassed autonomy and adequate funding of public universities to minimise undue external influence, saying, "excessive interference lessens institutional flexibility," which is essential to improve efficiency and productivity.

The TETFund "Our universities should promote diversity in leadership by encouraging and supporting the represen-

tation of women, minorities and individuals from diverse backgrounds in university leadership positions. Employing a merit-based selection process will foster gender equality and social justice."

ASUU warned that suffocating the funding source of TETFund to run NELFUND would destroy public education in the country.

"The only source of funding is from TETFund; so, when you destroy it, you have destroyed public universities," ASUU President, Emmanuel Osodeke, said on Channels Television's *Sunrise Daily* breakfast programme, yesterday.

He alleged that some members of the ruling class "want to destroy public universities and ensure that the children of the poor remain slaves".

The ASUU president faulted some bills introduced by President Bola Tinubu's administration, saying that stakeholders within the educational sector were not consulted before the bills were sent to the National Assembly.

"TETFund is a product of ASUU. You can't make the tax laws without meeting with ASUU for inputs before proposing it before the National

Assembly.

"The Vice Chancellors were not consulted; Pro Chancellors were not consulted. The people sat down somewhere and said over the next five years let's scrap it, without consulting those who initiated this bill that has transformed Nigerian public universities. That's not how to work in a system. That's not how to run a country that is democratic," he said.

Osodeke said rather than systematically phase out TETFund, which derives its funding from consolidated revenue from company income tax, the government should bankroll the newly formed NELFUND from Value Added Tax (VAT).

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

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## National Health and Demography Survey:

## Spike in teenage pregnancy stirs dire

In 2022, the Federal Government paying scant attention to a health and social menace that has life-altering effects, directed the removal of sex education from the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC). The latest edition of the National Health and Demography Survey (NDHS) 2023-24, which shows that approximately 15 per cent of young Nigerian women aged 15-19 have experienced unwanted pregnancy, indicates that the move by the government is laden with more peril than a promise. ENO-ABASI SUNDAY writes that fears are rife that the absence of sex education in the BEC may widen the burgeoning pool of pregnant teenagers, with attendant risks ranging from maternal mortality, health complications including deaths, loss of educational opportunities, and increased poverty levels, among others. Comprehensive sexuality education and awareness of reproductive health rights, stakeholders say, is a panacea for adolescent childbearing.

SOMETIME last February, Suleiman Adefemi, in the company of a couple of friends, was within the fringes of Alhaji Abdul Razak Sanusi (Ogo-Oluwa) Central Mosque, 119 Isolo Road, Mushin, which is located along Isolo Road, by Palm Avenue Junction, in the Mushin area of Lagos State.

A teenager, who was suspected to be between 16 and 17 years old let out a shrill cry while clutching at her abdomen. In minutes she stooped, and shortly thereafter knelt. As a few came to her aid, she was helped to the pedestrian walkway where she sprawled out while still writhing in pain.

According to Adefemi: "Minutes later, she delivered on the walkway, a baby girl, who was stillbirth. Shocked as everyone was, she could only mutter to a few women who engaged her that she was returning from a hospital, where she was given an injection and thereafter asked to hurry home.

"It was one of the good Samaritans, who is knowledgeable with child delivery that helped took care of the afterbirths, while another donated a sheet of wrapper for the body of the baby to be wrapped up," Adefemi stated, adding that further interaction with the teenager revealed that the fellow responsible for the pregnancy denied responsibility.

She refused to admit whether the injection that she received earlier on at an unnamed hospital was meant to force the baby out.

The teenager is just one of the hundreds of girls that find themselves in the ever-expanding web of teenage or adolescent pregnancy.

From whatever prism she was looked at, Folashade Makinde was a good mix of beauty, brain, and brawn. Indeed, the future held a lot of promise for the heavily built black beauty, who, at 14, was almost the same height as her barely literate petty-trader mother.

A stormy petrel of some sort, many in the Ipaja area of Lagos State where she lived with her mother suspected that something might be wrong with the Senior Secondary II student when she began losing weight and being scruffy. It was not long before it became clear that Folashade, 15, had been impregnated by an apprentice auto mechanic, who was putting up with his master.

Peeved and disappointed by Folashade's action, her mother bundled her and her scanty belongings to the apprentice master's residence, who in turn asked the 22-year-old apprentice to return to his parents' home in Akure.

Months after Folashade relocated with her apprentice boyfriend to Akure, she communicated to her mother how tough life was with her in her "new home" and how she had also started trading. The situation with Folashade remained unchanged until her mother, a single mother, left the neighbourhood with her second daughter to a different location.

While Folashade is facing a bleak time, Mrs Katherine Mowah recalls suicidal thoughts searing through her mind the first time that she discovered that she was pregnant while still in secondary school.

According to Mowah: "After initially accepting ownership of the pregnancy that I was

carrying, the boy who impregnated me (who was eight years older) suddenly denied being the father of the baby that I was carrying. That period became the darkest part of my existence, and I was filled with suicidal thoughts. It was only the support of my mother and grandmother that sustained me."

She continued: "The baby that I delivered has started school now but with no input from her father. I was lucky to get married to my husband, who is also providing for her. If not for that pregnancy, my life would have been better than it is now, but I still thank God that I've been able to move on from the challenges imposed on me by teenage pregnancy, get married, and settle down. Many girls are not that lucky."

True to Mowah's assertion, many teenagers in different parts of the country, who are put in the family way, suddenly begin to see the life that they envisage begin to peter out gradually.

This partly explains why, for instance, the Challenged Parenthood Initiative (CPI), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), last month called for a sexual and reproductive health awareness campaign as it decried the spate of teenage pregnancy in Kogi.

The Director of the initiative, Eunice Agbogun, who spoke when her foundation settled the hospital bill of a teenager who gave birth out of wedlock, called for a massive sensitisation and awareness campaign on sexual and reproductive health in the state over the observed rise in teenage pregnancy.

Last June, the World Health Organisation (WHO) called on the Delta State government and other stakeholders to address the increasing cases of adolescent pregnancy among girls in the state to reduce the dangerous trend.

The WHO Coordinator in the state, Dr Faith Ireye, who made the observation said that pregnancy in adolescents, especially between the ages of 14 to 19 in Delta State, was worrisome, stressing that there is a need to address the menace because currently, four per cent of pregnancies in the state occur among adolescents.

Ireya stated that it was high time the government took a firmer decision to drastically reduce adolescent pregnancy, through rigorous education and alerting of the girl-child to the hazard of early and needless pregnancy because if they have information, and are well guarded with the information at their disposal, it will be possible to crash teenage pregnancy below four percent," she said.

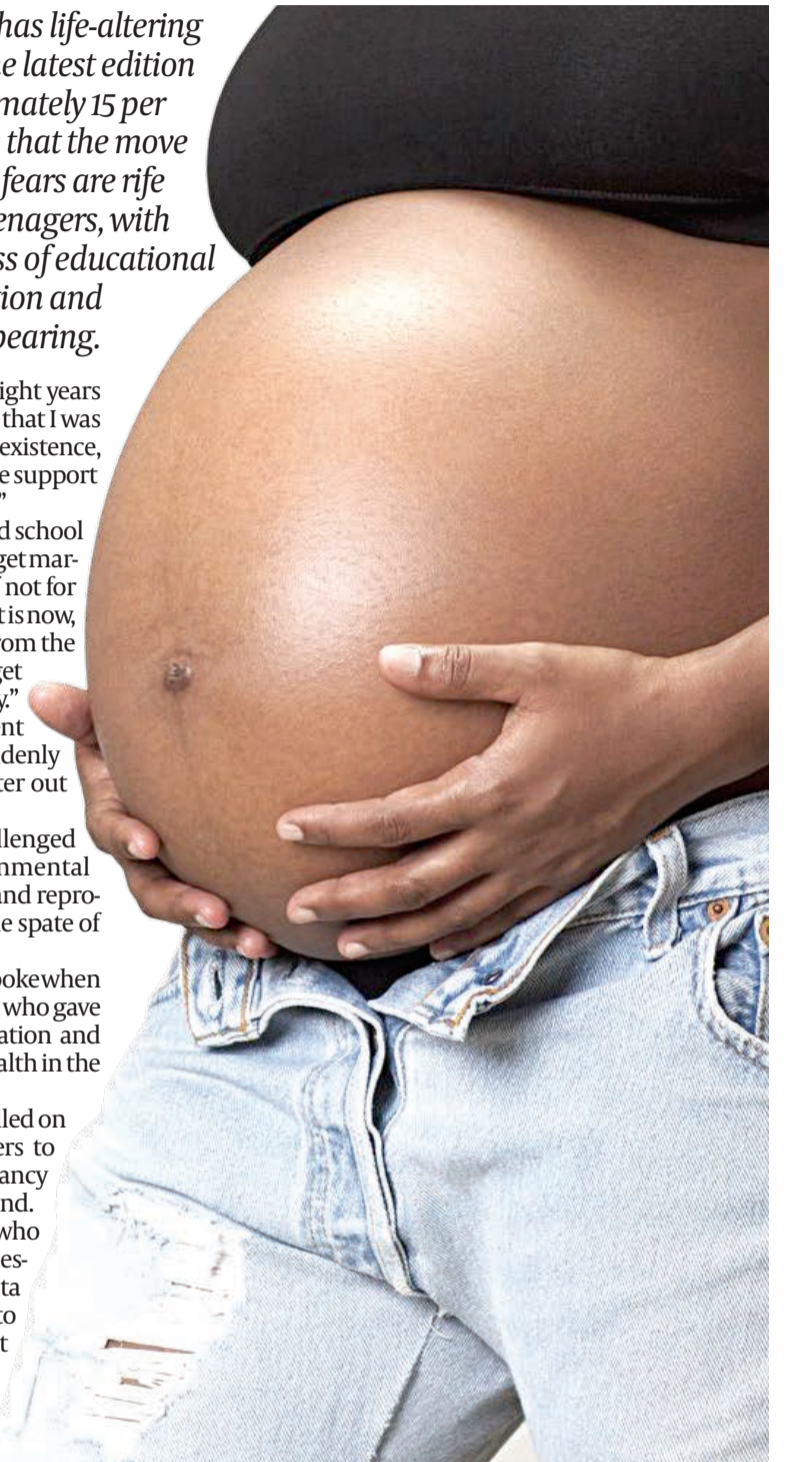
Teenage pregnancy has been gradually burrowing its way deep into society, but its magnitude was recently made clear by the latest Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2023-24, which indicated a 15 per cent rise in pregnancy involving Nigerian girls aged 15-19 across the country.

The report, which described the situation as a pressing national health issue that requires urgent intervention, added that

“

We are facing a massive crisis affecting our adolescent population. One in 10 girls in Nigeria is projected to become a mother before the age of 18, with a disproportionate impact in the North-Central and North-West regions, where 50 per cent of young girls, particularly in states like Bauchi and Gombe, are expected to have a child by the age of 18. Half of adolescent girls are unlikely to complete secondary school, and a staggering 43 per cent are already married. Of these, a significant portion has partners older than them, impacting their decision-making autonomy

”



the rates were significantly higher in rural areas, particularly in the North West and North East regions.

It further indicated that 11 per cent of these girls had already given birth, with four per cent currently pregnant and two per cent experiencing pregnancy loss, reflecting potential gaps in healthcare access and support.

In focusing attention on the socioeconomic and educational impacts, the report said that teenage pregnancy rates were notably higher among girls from lower wealth quintiles and with limited educational attainment. It further explained that explained that poverty and restricted opportunities contributed to the problem.

Barely one year ago, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which described teenage pregnancy as a "massive crisis," in Nigeria, called for immediate and comprehensive intervention by the governments at all levels, noting that it had "committed \$1 billion investment in Nigeria over the next five years."

The Chief of Health at UNICEF Nigeria, Eduardo Celades, speaking during the stakeholders forum on Adolescent and Youths Health Policies in Africa with the theme: "Fostering International Partnerships to Contribute to Adolescents' and Youths' Health in Nigeria, said: "We are facing a massive crisis affecting our adolescent population. One in 10 girls in Nigeria is projected to become a mother before the age of 18, with a disproportionate impact in the North-Central and North-West regions, where 50 per cent of young girls, particularly in states like Bauchi and Gombe, are expected to have a child by the age of 18.

"Half of adolescent girls are unlikely to complete secondary school, and a staggering 43 per cent are already married. Of these, a significant portion has partners older than them, impacting their decision-making autonomy."

According to the American Pregnancy Association, teenage

Ali Pate

# public health, social concerns

pregnancy is pregnancy that occurs in a woman that is under the age of 20. Although technically not a teenager, a young woman 12 or under, who is pregnant, falls into this definition of teenage pregnancy as well.

On its part, the WHO defines adolescent or teenage pregnancy as pregnancy in young women between the ages of 10 and 19 who become pregnant before completing their somatic development. Often unplanned and one of the most adverse outcomes of adolescent sexual activity, adolescent pregnancy is a growing global public health and social concern that afflicts both developing and developed nations.

Considered a major cause of newborn and maternal mortality, induced unsafe abortions, and increased sexually transmitted disease, among others, adolescent pregnancy negates the realisation of universal health coverage, a critical component of Sustainable Development Goal 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well being for all people of all ages.

As preventable as teenage pregnancy is, several factors have joined forces to ensure that it flourishes in society despite the avalanche of ills that it wrought upon its victims, their families, and the larger society.

But as part of efforts to curb teenage pregnancy, the Nigerian government introduced sex education into junior secondary schools in 2003 under the Family Life and HIV Education (FLHE) Curriculum. The decision to do so was influenced by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Conference, which prioritised gender, adolescent reproductive health, and reproductive health a priority.

The Nigerian National Reproductive Health Policy and Strategy of 2001 included goals such as reducing adolescent unwanted pregnancy by 50 per cent and increasing access to reproductive health information and services by 80 per cent.

Despite several research works, including *Assessing Factors Predisposing To Teenage Pregnancy And Preventive Strategies Among Secondary Schools Students In Lagos State* by Chinazaekpere Catherine Nzeocha, Joy Adeyanju, Mercy Omosefe Omozusi (PhD), and Mary Mojisola Obadimeji recommending that the teaching of sex and sexuality education should be made compulsory in all schools to help adolescents understand their physiological makeup, many were mortified when the President Muhammadu-Buhari-led government struck sex education off school's curriculum.

In striking out the subject, the Buhari government said that Nigeria is a deeply religious country, so sex education should be left in the hands of parents and religious leaders.

But some non-governmental organisations that countered the move noted that "a learner would have spent over 15,000 hours of their active time in school, after 12 years of education. The socialisation that takes place in school is critical because



of the number of time learners in formal education must spend there, which cannot be compared with the amount of time they have with their parents after school, or before school."

## Adolescent pregnancy as smouldering public health, social challenge

**T**HE World Health Organisation (WHO) notes that every year, an estimated 21 million girls aged 15-19 years become pregnant in developing regions, and approximately 12 million of them give birth.

Globally, the adolescent birth rate (ABR) for girls 10-14 years in 2023 was estimated at 1.5 per 1000 women with higher rates in sub-Saharan Africa. And of the 400,000 unplanned births that occur yearly in Nigeria, half of them involve teenage girls, who are largely unmarried, some of which are in school, while others are not.

Data further revealed that in 2021, the rate of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria was the highest rate in Africa with 106 adolescent births per 1,000 people recorded.

Another illustration of how teenage pregnancy is a major public health issue in Nigeria is the fact that over 23 per cent of teenagers aged 15-19 have started childbearing, while 32 per cent of teenagers in rural areas kick-start their childbearing process earlier compared to 10 per cent in urban areas.

To date, the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy are recorded in the North-West, North-East, and North-Central geopolitical zones.

## Contradictory laws, limited education, unsafe sexual practices as major drivers of adolescent pregnancy

**W**HILE socioeconomic inequality has played a massive role in nurturing the menace of teenage pregnancy, one of the major drivers of it remains contradictory laws. In clear breach of the Child Rights

Act, which in Section 277 stipulates that no one under the age of 18 is considered "capable of contracting a valid marriage," the menace of child marriage flourishes in the North hence the region is leading the pack in teenage pregnancy is concerned.

By the last count, less than 27 states had adopted the Child Rights Act. But beyond the non-adoption of the Act by some northern states, the endorsement by the Senate of Section 29(4)(b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, which legalises child marriage makes things rather difficult for teen brides. The amendment provides that "any woman who is married shall be deemed to be of full age."

## Early childbearing imperils adolescent girls' future, dampens their prospects

**A**CCORDING to UNICEF early childbearing, or pregnancy and delivery during adolescence, can derail girls' otherwise healthy development into adulthood and have negative impacts on their education, livelihoods, and health. Many girls who are pregnant are pressured or forced to drop out of school, which can impact their educational and employment prospects and opportunities.

Early pregnancy and childbearing, the United Nations' organ said can also have social consequences for girls, including stigmatisation and reduced status in the home and community. They can also lead to rejection and violence by family members, peers, and partners as well as early and forced marriage.

The Founder, of Beyond the Classroom Foundation, Raquel Kasham Daniel, agrees that the effect of teenage goes beyond the victim.

Said the social entrepreneur, educator, and author of several books including *FLOW: A Girl's Guide To Menstruation* "In my

work, I've seen first-hand that teenage pregnancy is a huge issue that affects more than just the girl involved, it impacts her education, her future, and even her community. As a first-generation graduate in my family, I can tell you this for free. When a young girl has to leave school because of pregnancy, she loses out on opportunities for a better life, independence, and the ability to support herself in the future. It's not just her loss; it's a loss for all of us because educated girls grow up to become empowered women who contribute to society in countless ways."

She continued: "In the bigger picture, when teenage pregnancies rise, we lose a generation of educated, skilled, and empowered individuals, who could have contributed meaningfully to the workforce and society. Instead, we're faced with a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities, which only perpetuates the challenges facing our country."

"A pregnant teenager is more likely to face health complications, drop out of school, and possibly even end up in an abusive relationship, and these are factors that contribute to high rates of maternal mortality, poverty, and economic stagnation."

## Parents, clerics ill-equipped to address adolescents' sexual, reproductive health concerns

**S**INCE the Muhammadu Buhari-led government advised when it expunged sex education from BEC, Mrs Mowah has been doing her best to explain to her kid daughter, what constitutes appropriate touches and what does not. But she is quick to point out that as far as sex education is concerned, a groundswell needs to be done especially in schools.

Said she: "Having fallen victim of teenage pregnancy myself, I have decided that I am going to guide my daughter to the best of my ability so that she does not make the kind of mistake that I made. As young as she is - six, she understands me, and I talk to her as my friend, just as we discuss what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate touches. But as a parent, there is an extent to what I can tell my daughter hence the need for the government to ensure comprehensive sex education is taught in schools, where teachers, who are trained for such assignments can do the task. Contrary to what the government wants, parents and religious leaders are not fully equipped to carry out comprehensive sex education."

Medical doctor and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Preggify, Ifunanya Igweze, agrees with Mowah. She said: "Many parents lack the skills

or comfort to discuss these issues openly, while some religious institutions approach the subject with silence or fear-driven messages.

Growing up, we had no sexual education in school and my parents never taught me either. Everything that I learned about sexuality education was from my peers. This unreliable source of knowledge can be misleading and may contribute significantly to the rise in unwanted pregnancies among teenagers. This creates a vacuum where misinformation, peer pressure, and experimentation thrive. A more balanced approach is needed - one that

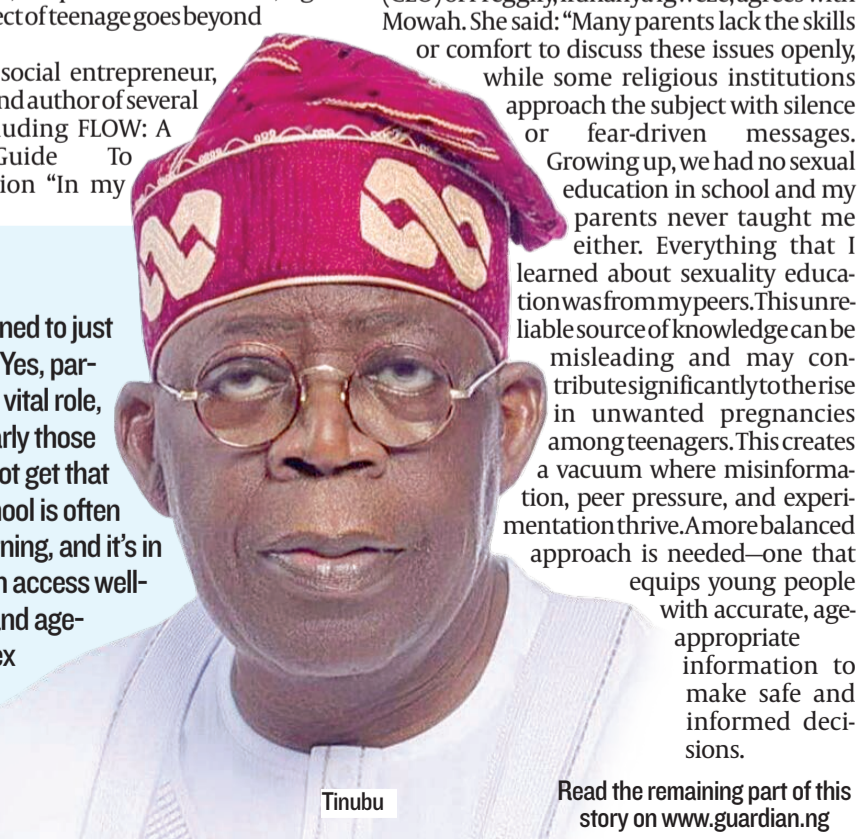
equips young people with accurate, age-appropriate information to make safe and informed decisions.



Alausa

Sex education shouldn't be confined to just one space, it needs to be holistic. Yes, parents, churches, and mosques play a vital role, but there are many children, particularly those from disadvantaged homes, who may not get that kind of guidance. For these children, school is often their only source of comprehensive learning, and it's in

the classroom where they can access well-rounded, fact-based, and age-appropriate sex education



Tinubu

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

# Akpabio counters Barau, insists tax bills on course despite opposition

From John Akubo (Abuja) and Rotimi Agboluaje (Ibadan)

THE unending twists and turns over the controversial Tax Reforms Bills continued yesterday when the Senate during its plenary contradicted itself over Wednesday proceedings on the matter.

While reaffirming its unwavering commitment to advancing the tax bills, the Red Chamber clarified that no part of the legislative process has been halted or withdrawn.

During Thursday's plenary, Senate President Godswill Akpabio emphasised the upper chamber's dedication to representing Nigerians' interests, declaring it will not succumb to external pressures.

Akpabio, while addressing a point of order raised by Sen-

- Akpabio rejigs panel to meet FG's team
- Lagos not major beneficiary of tax reform bill, says Sanwo-Olu
- Consult widely for bills to enjoy acceptance, Fayemi tells Tinubu
- Reps move to grant tax relief to companies recording losses

ate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele (APC, Ekiti Central), refuted media reports claiming that deliberations on the bills had been suspended. "The Senate cannot be bullied. Any reform that serves the interest of Nigerians will proceed," he stated.

Bamidele had countered the Deputy Senate President, Barau Jibrin (APC, Kano North), saying the Senate has not suspended debate on the tax reform bills. Barau, who presided over plenary on Wednesday, had announced that the Senate committee on finance chaired by Senator Sani Musa (APC, Niger East) was to "put on hold further

action on it (bills) – public hearing and other issues until we resolve these issues."

Akpabio assured that the Senate would approach the bills with due diligence. To ensure comprehensive scrutiny, the upper chamber formed a special committee representing Nigeria's six geopolitical zones to collaborate with the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), Lateef Fagbemi, on resolving contentious issues.

"Public hearings and consultations with stakeholders, including governors, religious leaders, and business leaders, are crucial to addressing uncertainties," Ak-

pabio said, adding, "if six weeks are insufficient, we will extend the time. We are committed to transparency and addressing all concerns."

The Senate leader disagreed with reports suggesting that actions on the controversial bills have been suspended. Bamidele issued a firm position that the tax reform bills remain active and under legislative consideration. He emphasised that the bills, being executive in nature, can only be withdrawn by the executive branch itself.

"The people understand our role in the Constitution. Any attempt from any quarter to intimidate the Parliament, will be undemocratic, and we will not allow ourselves to be distracted. But we will encourage consensus. We will encourage discussions and engagement at all levels," he said.

Barau, however, at yesterday's plenary said: "The Senate is known to be the stabiliser of every country. When there are difficulties and disagreements, the Senate of this country comes in with solutions through dialogue and consensus at all times to solve such problems. Because of this, we decided to put politics, ethnicity, and regionalism aside to sit among ourselves and find the way forward with respect to the issues surrounding the tax reform

bills. It is on this note that we extended our view to the executive arm of government and it was agreed that there should be a forum to sit down to look at the areas that are creating disagreements to resolve them so that the entire country will remain united."

Akpabio then went ahead to rejig senators delegated by the Senate on Wednesday to meet with the Federal Government's team to resolve concerns raised on the bills.

He said the Senate Chief Whip, Mohammed Tahir Monguno, has been removed from the committee and replaced with Senator Kaka Shehu Lawan, who represents Borno Central Senatorial District.

The outcome of the Senate leaders' meeting with the AGF on harmonising concerns raised over the bill is still being awaited as at press time last night.

MEANWHILE, Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has dismissed claims that the state will significantly gain from the Federal Government's proposed tax reform, stating that Lagos is in an "extremely comfortable" position.

He disclosed this to newsmen while attending the Africa Investment Forum, Market Days 2024, in Rabat, Morocco.

Sanwo-Olu acknowledged that while Lagos may experience some losses, it also stands to gain a greater opportunity to play a more substantial role. He underscored the importance of reforms, despite facing opposition from some groups.

"What those uncomfortable with the tax reform are not willing to accept is that there is no way of making an omelet without breaking an egg. You cannot make changes if the reforms are not set in. I have advised that people should take time to read the provisions of the reform very well and to fully understand what they're trying to do.

"I've seen comments around. Comments like Lagos is going to be the major beneficiary. It is not true. Lagos is actually going to be shaped off in some places, but on a larger scale basis, we see it as a global thing for a better governance structure. All of us will play better, and we'll be able to discipline ourselves more. One of the things that you will see is that you need to work harder for you to get the full benefit of the reform. So it's not just an easy kill," he said.

Former Ekiti State Governor, Kayode Fayemi, yesterday said for the controversial bills to see the light of the day, it has to enjoy political acceptability not only the technocratic influence.

Fayemi, who is a former minister under the All Progressives Congress (APC), urged the Bola Tinubu-led Federal Government to consult all the stakeholders.

Fayemi said though the government had done the right thing by initiating the bill, proper consultation must be made by involving the critical stakeholders to enjoy political acceptability.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)



Director General, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Zubaida Umar (left); UNICEF Country Representative, Cristian Munduate; Vice President, Kashim Shettima; Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu and Chairman, Senate Committee on Special Duties, Kaka Lawan, during the launch of Nigeria Hazard Risk Countrywide Analysis 2024 at Fraser Suite, Abuja ...yesterday. PHOTO:NAN

## LP fumes, vows legal action as four lawmakers defect to APC

From Azimazi Momoh Jimoh, Sodiq Omolayo, John Akubo (Abuja) and Rotimi Agboluaje (Ibadan)

THE Labour Party (LP) faced another setback yesterday, compounding its defeat in the 2023 presidential election and internal wrangling.

This was as four party members in the House of Representatives announced their defection to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

The defectors are Chinedu Okere (Owerri Municipal/Owerri North/Owerri West Constituency), Mathew Donatus (Kaura Federal Constituency, Kaduna), Akiba Basse (Calabar Municipal/Odukpani Constituency) and Eosa Iyawe (Oredo Federal Constituency, Edo State).

Outside the House, the Labour Party's Diaspora Chairman, Chike Amadichi, also resigned, citing personal reasons. Amadichi disclosed his intention to join the ruling APC.

In a related development, Erhriatake Ibori-Suenu, who represents Ethiope Federal Constituency in Delta State, resigned from the Peoples

- Decries 'betrayal, dishonour', demands reps vacate seats
- Diaspora LP chairman resigns, joins APC
- Ibori's daughter dumps PDP, moves to APC
- Minority Whip urges Speaker to declare defectors' seats vacant
- ADC raises alarm over weakened opposition
- Fayemi, Farounbi fault Nigeria's 'winner-takes-it-all' electoral system

Democratic Party (PDP) and defected to the APC. Ibori-Suenu is the daughter of former Delta State Governor and PDP leader, Chief James Onanefe Ibori.

Speaker of the House, Abbas Tajudeen, announced the defections during yesterday's plenary session.

However, the Labour Party condemned the defection, describing it as a betrayal of party values and the electorate's trust.

In a statement issued by the party's National Publicity Secretary, Obiora Ifoh, LP criticised the defections as unconstitutional, citing Section 68(g) of the 1999 Constitution, which requires lawmakers who defect without just cause, such as a division within their party, to vacate their seats.

"The Labour Party is at peace. There is no constitutional protection for these

lawmakers to abandon the party along with its mandate," the statement read. It stressed that the party is not facing any internal crisis that could justify the defections, noting that previous issues were resolved through internal and legal mechanisms.

The party also highlighted its achievements in the 2023 general elections, securing a governorship seat, eight Senate seats, and 35 House of Representatives seats. It attributed these successes to its grassroots approach and commitment to democratic ideals, accusing the defectors of abandoning the grassroots movement that brought them to power.

The Labour Party reserved special criticism for Donatus Mathew, a former commercial motorcyclist (okada rider) from Kaduna, who cited being the only

Labour Party member in the Northwest as his reason for defecting.

The party described his actions as a betrayal of the late Victoria Chintex, a Labour Party Women Leader in Kaduna who was assassinated while working to secure Mathew's victory.

"Mathew has dishonoured Chintex's memory and the thousands who sacrificed for his success," the statement declared.

The Labour Party announced its intention to take legal action to reclaim the seats of the defecting lawmakers and said it would petition the Speaker of the House of Representatives to declare their seats vacant in line with the law.

It also called on Nigerians to hold the defectors accountable and reject them in future elections. "These politicians lack

democratic integrity and have shown a dangerous tendency to prioritise personal gain over public service. It is essential to isolate them and end their mercenary political careers," the statement urged.

IN his defection letter read by the Speaker, Mathew Donatus explained that his political ideals were better aligned with those of the APC.

"This decision was not taken lightly; it followed deep personal reflection. I remain committed to working tirelessly to support the goals and objectives of the APC, and I am eager to contribute to its success," he wrote.

Basse cited two primary reasons for his decision to leave the Labour Party. He pointed to the severe and protracted crisis within the party, characterised by two rival factions at the national level vying for leadership.

According to him, the division has extended to state and local council levels, resulting in parallel executive committees engaged in litigation.

"This crisis has made the party ineffective in fostering unity or providing a stable platform for governance. It

has also created a toxic atmosphere where attending meetings called by one faction is perceived as disloyalty by the other, limiting my ability to effectively represent my constituency under the Labour Party," he explained.

He also highlighted the leadership qualities of Cross River State Governor Bassey Otu, describing the governor's performance as outstanding and noting the need for synergy.

"Moreover, the majority of my supporters from the 2023 elections, many of whom were formerly with the LP, SDP, or PDP, have since moved to the APC. Joining the APC will enable me to remain in sync with my supporters and contribute more effectively to the progress and development of my federal constituency, state, and the nation at large," he added.

Iyawe, another defector, cited the Labour Party's inability to resolve the question of "who should emerge as the legitimate caretaker committee from the national to state levels" as a key reason for his departure.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

# Ibru, Army chief advocate military, media partnership on security

From Lawrence Njoku, Enugu

**C**HIEF Executive Officer (CEO) of Guardian Newspapers Limited, Mr Toke Alex-Ibru, and the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, have declared that a strong partnership between the media and the Nigerian Army would pave the way for a secure and prosperous Nigeria.

Ibru made his declaration, yesterday, while delivering a speech at the fourth edition of the Nigerian Army Civil-Military Cooperation Media

Chat, held in Enugu.

According to him, the military and the media must partner and collaborate to secure the nation for the good of her people.

He spoke on the theme, "Media and Military Relationship: A Panacea for Enhanced National Security and Development".

Ibru, who was the Special Guest at the occasion, stressed that the military should seize every opportunity to better understand how the media functions, including its challenges and

pressures to enhance progress.

He recalled the role of the media in the promotion of peace and national security.

"At critical periods in our history, Nigerian media played pivotal roles. The Nigerian media was at the forefront of chasing out the colonialists and ushering in an independent Nigeria; the Nigerian media also came to the fore to chase out military dictatorship and usher in the current democratic dispensation in Nigeria. We will, therefore, rise to the occasion

to chase away the violent armed groups that seek to destroy our country," he said.

While further acknowledging the constitutional role of the Nigerian Army to secure the territorial integrity of Nigeria as and properties of law-abiding citizens, he stated that the media, as the fourth estate of the realm, also had its own responsibility to keep Nigerians informed and serve as watchdog on government policies and actions.

He said: "Is there a point of convergence between these

two roles or are they parallel lines that can never meet? The consensus all over the world is that when it comes to national security, the military and the media must partner and collaborate to the extent necessary to secure the nation.

"The first step in this direction is open communication. When we call, will you answer? When we seek clarification, will you respond? Even when you respond, will you tell us the truth or will you obfuscate? For us in the media, these are the great issues to be decided in our relationship with the military as partnership and collaboration can only be possible on the basis of trust and respect."

Ibru added that the need for continuous engagement between the media and the Nigerian Army, even as he called for more understanding in the workings of the media.

"Such interactions foster transparency, understanding and trust as our dear country navigates a plethora of diverse security threats across the country. Positive narratives and collaborative communication are crucial to shaping public perception, countering misinformation

and upholding the integrity of our national architecture.

"We are not unmindful that within the ranks of the media are people and even organisations with parochial agenda, who seek to achieve their aims unmindful of national security.

"The answers to such situation are more openness and accessibility so that the correct information will drive out misinformation. Indeed misinformation thrives where there is scarcity of correct information on the true situation. The military must make its higher leadership more accessible to the media so that its side of the story is better understood.

Majority of media practitioners are capable of showing understanding and would refrain from publishing things that are clearly inimical to national security."

In his remarks, the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, said the event highlighted the indispensable roles both the military and the media play in safeguarding the nation.

He acknowledged the critical role of the media in keeping the public informed while ensuring that national security was not compromised.



Members of Nigerian Bar Association, Ikeja branch, on a peaceful protest march to Governors' Office over the state of the nation, with the theme, 'Let the Poor Breathe' held in Lagos...yesterday. PHOTO: AYODELE ADENIRAN

## FG to inaugurate council to boost national security, others

From Terhamba Daka, Abuja

**F**EDERAL Government has hinted on the plan to inaugurate National Addressing System Council, to drive Nigeria's agenda on planning, economic/financial inclusion as well as effective national security, among others.

The council will be inaugurated next year, according to a statement issued by Vice President Kashim Shettima's office, yesterday, after a pre-meeting of the council which he chairs.

Underscoring the need for the immediate standardisation of Nigeria's addressing system, the Vice President described the move as essential for improving basic navigation, service delivery, enhancing urban planning,

### • Launches 2024 Hazard Risk Countrywide Analysis

and driving economic growth; thereby ending decades of infrastructural deficits and create a systematic approach to national address mapping.

He said: "We cannot solve the challenges of urban planning, service delivery or even basic navigation unless we establish a system that creates order. A robust addressing system is not just about convenience; it is about national development, security, and socio-economic progress.

"We live in cities where most houses are either haphazardly numbered or not numbered at all. This does more than complicate address mapping, it undermines trust in address verification, slows emergency responses,

and excludes millions from financial services."

Shettima stressed that a standardised addressing system would enhance logistics, strengthen e-commerce, and foster trust in financial services, adding that it would also enable accurate emergency response and disaster management, ensuring that no Nigerian was left behind.

"The challenge before us is not about delegating responsibilities, but about creating a synergy that cuts across federal, state, and local governments. Political will and technical expertise must work hand in hand to make this initiative a success," he added.

Two presentations from the National Identity Manage-

ment Commission (NIMC) and the Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST) were made at the meeting.

The overview of the National Addressing System by NIPOST highlighted the work done by the current management, emphasising the need for harmonising the address database in Nigeria.

**F**EDERAL Government, also, yesterday, launched the 2024 Hazard Risk Countrywide Analysis aimed at strengthening disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts across the country.

This came as Vice President Kashim Shettima called for enhanced collaboration among stakeholders to address Nigeria's vulnerabilities to disasters and climate change as well as build a safer and more resilient Nigeria.

## 63% Nigerians impacted by gender-based violence, report says

From Tina Abeku, Cornelius Essen, Ajuluchukwu Brown, Abuja.

**E**XECUTIVE Director, Invictus Africa, Bukky Shonibare, has said 63 per cent of Nigerians have experienced or know someone that has experienced Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

She stated this at the launch of the second Womanity Index Report by Invictus Africa, in partnership with Ford Foundation and BudgIT, in Abuja.

According to Shonibare, the yearly report is a survey that compares indices and data on GBV, tracking progress made at national and sub-national levels, thereby enabling stakeholders to create interventions in the fight against the scourge.

### • Lagos, Rivers, Ekiti rank high in response

The survey, she said, was necessitated by the need to have national data to assess the progress of subnational level governments, enabling them to gauge their efforts at GBV response.

"So in this year's Womanity Index, one of the things that data show in relation to those who have experienced gender based violence, is that 63 per cent of Nigerians say that they have either experienced gender-based violence or they know someone who has experienced gender-based violence and it's only 37 per cent that have not experienced gender-based violence or don't know anyone that experienced it. "When we say gender-based

violence, we are not just talking about sexual forms such as rape or sexual assault, but gender-based violence such as physical, emotional, economical, mental or psychological. The most prevalent form of GBV that Nigerians face is the domestic violence or intimate partner violence, followed by physical violence, thereafter mental or psychological" she said.

She listed Lagos, Rivers and Ekiti as the states with the highest response to GBV and harmful cultural practices against women and girls.

"This year, we have three states that are now blue states. Lagos State is still a blue state; River and Ekiti states are now

blue states. One of the things that Katsina did well is to pass their Violence Against Persons, Prohibition (VAPP). And with that, it upped their mark in the laws and policies index.

"We have more states that moved from red to amber this year, like Katsina State, which moved from red state last year, and they are now an amber state. They also established and launched their sexual assault referral centre, which they didn't have before, and so they were able to score a mark in that regard as well."

She said the report worked around five indexes: laws and policy; access to legal justice; support services for survivors, information and awareness, as well as budget and spending.

## Court okays N5.2b suit against Chinese

From Ameh Ochojila, Abuja

**H**IGH Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) has accepted to commence hearing on a N5.2 billion suit brought against a Chinese, Li Xing, accused of making false claims against his former employer.

Justice F. A Aliyu, sitting in Court 53 of the High Court of the FCT in Apo scheduled hearing for January 29 next year in the suit marked: CV/4554/2024 and filed for the claimant by his lawyer, Eloka Okoye, of the firm of Kehinde and Partners LP.

Xing, an ex-employee of Pure Biotech Company Ltd, is accused of making false claims of tax evasion, money laundering and forgery against a fellow Chinese, Mr Liu Yangxi, the Managing Director of Pure Biotech, who recently fired him for alleged misconduct.

Yangxi, in the statement of

claim, noted that Xing, without any justification, maliciously carried out a campaign of calumny against him by sending an email to the FIRS, accusing him of tax evasion, money laundering, among others.

He added that the defendant also published malicious falsehood against him, with the intention to tarnish his image and reputation in the minds of the companies he had relationship with.

Yangxi added that the defendant's letters to agencies, such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Weihai International Economic and Technical Corporation Co. Ltd in China, were malicious falsehood targeted at injuring his reputation and "as a vendetta for terminating his employment with Pure Biotech Company Ltd.

## Troops neutralise 8,034, stop thieves from stealing N57b worth of oil

From Odita Sunday, Abuja

**N**IGERIAN Army has disclosed that its operations since the beginning of the year have resulted in the killing of 8,034 terrorists, arrest of 11,623 and the rescue of 6,376 hostages.

The disclosure was made by the Director of Defence Media Operations (DMO), Major General Edward Buba, who disclosed that troops recovered 8,216 weapons, 211,459 ammunitions and denied oil thieves an estimated sum over N57 billion.

According to him, troops have been confronted by different threats in five active theatres of operations across the country, namely North-East, North-West, North-Central, South-South and South-East.

He hinted that troops

adopted a high level of alert and an increased state of readiness to protect the country from further terrorist aggression and insecurity.

"Troops' aggression across various theatres of operations since the beginning of the year culminated in 8,034 neutralised terrorists, 11,623 arrests and 6,376 rescued hostages. Furthermore, troops recovered 8,216 weapons, 211,459 ammunitions and denied oil theft of an estimated sum over N57 billion (N57,052,218,551.00).

"Overall, the military is keeping up the pressure through ongoing operations in the various theatres across the country. The military is, through these operations, increasingly creating conditions in which terrorist cannot carry out acts of terror or harm citizens."

# TheMetroSection

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## Court adjourns Evans' plea bargain hearing, Chidinma's murder trial to Feb 2025

By Ngozi Egenuka

JUSTICE Sherifat Sonaike of the Lagos High Court sitting in Tafawa Balewa Square (TBS), yesterday, adjourned hearing on the plea bargain agreement application of convicted kidnap kingpin, Chukwudumeme

Onwuamadike, popularly known as Evans, and three others to February 20, 2025.

The adjournment followed updates from counsels in the criminal case, marked LD/5960C/2017, who informed the court that the plea bargain agreement submitted by Evans and co-defendants—Joseph Emeka, Victor Aduba, and Okapara Linus—is still awaiting a response from the Lagos State Attorney General (AG).

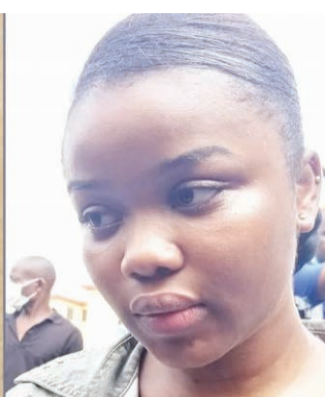
During proceedings, prosecuting counsel, M.F. Salau, confirmed that the



Evans



Ojukwu



Chidinma

application remained pending with the AG's office and that no response had been received. Salau also noted that the prosecution's witness was not present in court for the trial.

Mary Ibezue, counsel for the second defendant, Joseph Emeka, informed the court that she had submitted a letter to the AG seeking

withdrawal of the plea bargain for the first and second defendants. She further disclosed that a fresh application had been submitted exclusively for her client, Emeka.

Ibezue explained that she previously represented Evans but ceased to act for him upon his request. She added that the defence team

for the second defendant would "put their house in order" before the next hearing date.

Justice Sonaike, however, declined Ibezue's request to strike out the matter, emphasising that the court would continue adjourning the case if necessary.

Other defence counsels—A.C. Enueshike

(representing the third defendant) and Emmanuel Ochai (representing the fourth defendant)—concurred with the proposed adjournment.

The trial, now being heard de novo (afresh) by Justice Sonaike, had earlier been transferred from Justice Adedayo Akintoye, the initial trial judge.

In a separate case, the Lagos High Court also adjourned the ongoing murder trial of Chidinma Ojukwu, a former 300-level Mass Communication student at the University of Lagos, to February 20, 2025.

Ojukwu is standing trial for the alleged murder of Usifo Ataga, Chief Executive Officer of Super TV. She is also charged with stealing and forgery alongside two co-defendants, Adedapo Quadri and her sister, Chioma

Egbuchu.

At the resumed hearing, the second and third defendants, Quadri and Egbuchu, prayed the court to dismiss all charges against them. Their counsels, Babatunde Busari and M.I. Otuaka, respectively, argued that the prosecution had failed to provide sufficient evidence to warrant their clients entering a defence.

However, the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP), Y.A. Sule, opposed the no-case submissions, asserting that material evidence had been presented linking both defendants to the charges. Sule urged the court to dismiss the applications and compel the defendants to open their defence.

Justice Yetunde Adesanya adjourned the matter for continuation in the new year, following arguments from both parties.

## Early morning inferno rocks University of Ibadan hostel

From Rotimi Agboluaje, Ibadan

AN early morning fire yesterday gutted a section of Queen Elizabeth Hall, one of the students' hostels at the University of Ibadan (UI), Oyo State.

The Guardian learnt that the fire, which broke out in the early hours, affected the office of the Hall

Warden and the Secretary. The cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained at press time.

Queen Elizabeth Hall accommodates female undergraduates.

Firefighters from the University Fire Service were quickly deployed to the scene to contain the fire

and prevent further damage.

Confirming the incident, the institution's Director of Public Communications, Mrs Adejoke Akinpelu, said: "Yes, it is true. The office of the Warden and the office of the Secretary of the Warden were affected."



University of Ibadan

## NYSC lauds Kwara on action against assault

From Mansur Aramide, Ilorin

THE National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has commended the Kwara State government for its prompt action against a schoolteacher who assaulted a corps member serving in the state.

In a statement issued yesterday, the NYSC State Coordinator, Mr Onifade Olaoluwa, described the government's decision as a step that would deter future occurrences of such misconduct against corps members.

Onifade praised the state

government for its swift response, stating that the measures taken demonstrated equity and reinforced the government's commitment to the security and welfare of corps members. "The actionable measures by the state government will prevent future occurrences of such misdemeanours," he said.

The NYSC coordinator also appreciated Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq for his continuous support of the scheme. He assured the governor of the

scheme's dedication to fulfilling its mandate in the state and urged corps members to remain law-abiding while contributing meaningfully to the state's development.

The incident involved a teacher at Government Day Secondary School, Kulende, Ilorin, who allegedly assaulted a female corps member for not greeting the teachers properly. Reports indicate that the corps member was beaten, and her NYSC uniform was torn during the altercation.

## NIWA seeks coastal states' partnership to secure inland waterways

By Adaku Onyenucheya

THE Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), Mr Bola Oyebamiji, has urged Commissioners for Transportation in coastal states to partner with the agency in areas such as training, safety campaigns, infrastructure development, and financial empowerment.

Speaking at a one-day consultative forum on safety and insecurity in inland waterways, held in Ilorin, Kwara State, Oyebamiji emphasised the importance of collaboration between the federal agency and state governments to enhance the safety and security of water

transportation.

The forum, organised by the Nigeria Transportation Commissioners' Forum, was themed: "Prevalent Safety, Security Hazards and Practices in Inland Waterways: Passenger Transport Safety." It sought to address critical challenges facing the inland waterways sector.

Highlighting NIWA's efforts to improve safety, Oyebamiji mentioned the recent launch of a transportation code for public use and the commissioning of operational assets such as survey boats, gunboats, water ambulances, and a passenger ferry. He also

noted the agency's extensive safety campaigns targeting local communities in their native languages across all operational bases.

The NIWA boss praised the support from the National Assembly, including ongoing discussions on establishing coastal guards and the increased focus by the House Committee on Inland Waterways on safety and security issues.

While acknowledging the challenges confronting the sector, Oyebamiji expressed optimism that collective efforts and actionable outcomes from the forum would enhance the safety and security of inland waterways transportation.

## Isolo LCDA set to reconstruct Emzor Way after decade of neglect

By Eniola Daniel

THE Executive Chairman of Isolo Local Council Development Area (LCDA), Olasoju Adebayo, has announced plans to commence the reconstruction of the long-neglected Emzor Way, located off Oshodi-Apapa Expressway.

The announcement was made during a meeting with senior management staff of companies operating along the road corridor.

The road, which has been in a deplorable state for nearly a decade, is scheduled for reconstruction in the second week of December 2024.

Speaking at the meeting, Olasoju emphasised the importance of collaboration among stakeholders to ensure the smooth

execution of the project. He urged companies in the area to contribute their resources and expertise, stressing that their cooperation would expedite the construction process.

The council chairman assured attendees that the road would be constructed using High Performance Bedding (HPB) paving stones, similar to the durable Okota/Apple Junction road, which has withstood heavy traffic from trailers and articulated vehicles. He also revealed plans to build solid culverts at company entrances to enhance accessibility.

The Council Engineer, Gbolamiga Dawodu, affirmed the council's commitment to delivering a high-quality road that meets state and international

construction standards. He promised that the project would be completed within six months and assured stakeholders that the road would not be entirely closed during construction to minimise disruptions to businesses.

Representatives from 10 companies, including Emzor Pharmaceutical, CWAY Nigeria Limited, and Starlink Global, expressed their support for the initiative, commending the council for addressing the infrastructural challenge. Also present at the meeting were the Supervisor for Works and Infrastructure, Jamiu Omotayo, and the Chairman of the Community Development Committee, Adesegun Olatunde.

## Lagos battles rising emergencies: Over 1,500 cases responded to in 2024

By **Bertram Nwannekanma**

THE Lagos State Government, through its Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), has responded to 1,508 incidents in 2024.

Data released by the agency yesterday revealed that November recorded 141 incidents, equalling January's total. The highest monthly figures were in February (156), March (148), May (147), and October (147), while August had the fewest (121). Since June 1, 2019, LASEMA has handled 7,950 emergencies.

In November, the agency recorded 46 road accidents,

- Fire disasters, road accidents lead trend
- November sees 141 emergencies, matching January as busiest months

followed by 32 truck-related incidents, including 19



Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu

accidents, eight breakdowns, three fallen containers, and two fallen trucks. Other incidents included 24 fire outbreaks, 22 medical emergencies, three assaults, and one impending building collapse.

Local council analysis showed Alimosho recorded the highest number of incidents in November, with 21. Oshodi/Isolo, Ikeja, and Lagos Island councils followed with 14 incidents each, while Kosofe recorded 13. Conversely, Ifako-Ijaiye

reported no incidents. Across 2024, Alimosho recorded 241 incidents, Ikeja 163, and Eti-Osa 145, with Badagry having the lowest at four.

A breakdown of 2024 incidents shows the truck/tanker category ranked highest with 464 cases, including 316 accidents, 118 breakdowns, and 17 fallen trucks or tankers. Road accidents followed with 400 cases, comprising 380 vehicle crashes and 18 breakdowns. Fire disasters ranked third,

with 252 incidents, including 235 fire outbreaks and six tanker fires. Medical emergencies came fourth, with 230 cases, including seven dead bodies and three attempted suicides.

Other incidents included 31 building collapses (24 full collapses), eight explosions, six marine accidents, and five spillage cases. Alimosho, with its large population, recorded the highest overall incidents, reflecting its vulnerability.

From January to November 2024, 971 general emergencies and 537 medical emergencies were recorded. November had the highest medical emergencies (60), followed

by January and April (53 each), while August recorded the fewest (41). The monthly trend highlights the agency's efforts in handling varied emergencies across the state.

Since Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's administration began in June 2019, LASEMA has recorded significant activity: 513 incidents in 2019, 1,043 in 2020, 1,743 in 2021, 1,682 in 2022, and 1,461 in 2023. The 2024 figure of 1,508 incidents by November 30 reflects a rise in emergency response efforts. The peak year remains 2021, with 1,743 cases, but the steady decline in subsequent years suggests improved preventive measures.

## Cable vandals jailed as EKEDC vows tougher crackdown

By **Waliat Musa**

THREE alleged vandals, Fawas Eletu, Sunday Joseph, and Isah Haruna, have been sentenced to six months, two years, and three months in prison respectively for vandalising and stealing cables belonging to the Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC).

The *Guardian* learnt that Eletu was apprehended while attempting to steal three metres of 500mm cable in the Awoyaya area of Ibeju. Joseph was arrested in Onikan, Lagos Island, while Haruna was apprehended in Lekki, Lagos.

The General Manager of Corporate Communications at EKEDC, Babatunde Lasaki, disclosed this in a statement issued yesterday. He noted that the three individuals have been detained, arraigned, and sentenced, and are now in various Nigerian Correctional Service

(NCS) facilities for vandalism and theft of the company's equipment.

Lasaki called on the public to refrain from vandalising and stealing electricity cables and other critical infrastructure. He explained that such actions disrupt power supply to homes, businesses, and industries, resulting in widespread outages and financial losses for the company and its customers.

He commended the efforts of communities, law enforcement agencies, and residential associations in safeguarding public equipment and electricity infrastructure.

"Justice would not have been served without the intervention of our partners and critical stakeholders, who helped apprehend these individuals trying to deprive our customers of their right to power supply for personal gain. We will continue to collaborate with community

groups and other stakeholders to put an end to this menace," Lasaki stated.

He stressed that vandalism sets the organisation back in its efforts to provide safe, reliable, and uninterrupted power supply.

"Instead of investing in new equipment to expand our services, we are forced to replace stolen ones, which causes unnecessary outages for our customers. I hope this

serves as a deterrent to other would-be vandals, as we will ensure that offenders face the full extent of the law," he added.

Lasaki also highlighted the dangers of tampering with electrical infrastructure, warning that such activities can lead to electrocution or death. He encouraged the public to report suspected vandalism through EKEDC's social media platforms.



EKEDC



Emergency chart

## Poor sandcrete quality at heart of Nigeria's building collapse crisis, Guild warns

By **Michael Akinadewo**

THE Building Collapse Prevention Guild (BCPG) Ayobo-Ipaja Cell in Lagos State has called for the adoption of quality sandcrete blocks as a key preventive measure to address the recurring issue of building collapses in Nigeria.

The Guild recently convened a workshop titled "Maintaining the Quality of Sandcrete Blocks in an Environment of Volatile Production Costs," bringing together block manufacturers, industry regulators, and stakeholders to tackle the challenges of maintaining block quality amidst rising production costs.

Speaking at the event, the General Manager of the Lagos State Materials Testing Laboratory (LSMTL), Olayinka Abdul, stressed the importance of monitoring and enforcing quality standards. She highlighted that the LSMTL serves as a technical advisor to builders and producers, providing guidance on material selection and cost-effective manufacturing processes to uphold quality.

"This synergy is crucial to preventing building collapses at the early stages, which is far less expensive than managing crises," Abdul

said.

"The challenges in our industry reflect a critical juncture where we must reaffirm our commitment not only to quality but also to the safety and integrity of the structures we build.

Sandcrete blocks remain vital to our industry, and we must explore sustainable materials to enhance durability while maintaining affordability."

Director General of the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Dr Ifeanyi Chukwunonso Okeke, represented by Faith A. Oko-Ukoni, warned against compromising standards. "The building collapses we see today are a result of such compromises. We must make a conscious effort to produce blocks that meet the right standards," he said.

The workshop also highlighted enforcement challenges faced by regulators.

The National President of the National Association of Block Moulders of Nigeria (NABMON) noted that SON and LSMTL lack sufficient staff to effectively monitor block manufacturers.

To address these challenges, NABMON has established a global-standard website to register qualified members, complete with identity cards and QR codes.

## Evelyn Joshua leads SCOAN's celebration of resilience, growth

As global worshippers set to converge, honour TB Joshua's legacy

By **Zainab Hassan**

THE Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) will hold its third yearly thanksgiving service on Sunday, December 8, 2024, at its headquarters in Ikotun-Egbe, Lagos.

The event will feature soul-stirring songs and praises in gratitude to God for His faithfulness as the cornerstone of the church's foundation.

The celebration will not be limited to Lagos; it will extend to various countries and continents where SCOAN members and Emmanuel TV Partners will gather to rejoice in unison.

According to a statement by the church's media consultant, Dare Adejumo, the church has many reasons to celebrate.

"The church, like others in the country, was shut down for an extended period during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even when other churches reopened, SCOAN

remained closed due to the overwhelming influx of international visitors eager to visit Nigeria," Adejumo said.

He noted that the late founder of SCOAN, Prophet TB Joshua, opted to keep the church closed until he received divine direction. This decision, he explained, was made to avoid any health crisis, as the pandemic continued to claim lives worldwide.

"Prophet TB Joshua was a man of profound wisdom," Adejumo stated. "His decision prevented a potential global uproar, demonstrating his commitment to the well-being of humanity."

The passing of Prophet TB Joshua shortly after a symbolic prayer session at his prayer mountain was a significant blow to the church and its global followers. Adejumo described it as a "spiritual earthquake" that tested the resilience of SCOAN.

"Many believed the church's

end had come, but they underestimated the divine strength that underpins SCOAN," he said. "God's grace ensured the church not only survived but also thrived."

The mantle of leadership fell on Pastor Evelyn Joshua, whom Adejumo described as a woman of extraordinary virtues, spiritual strength, and unwavering dedication.

"Pastor Evelyn Joshua was divinely prepared for this role," he said. "Her leadership reflects the same grace and anointing that defined Prophet TB Joshua's ministry."

Adejumo highlighted Evelyn Joshua's impact since assuming leadership, praising her commitment to upholding her late husband's legacy and advancing the church's mission.

"Under her leadership, SCOAN has witnessed remarkable achievements. The Akure branch, which had been dormant, has been revitalised. Crusades and charity works have been



Pastor Evelyn

conducted in countries like Ghana, South Africa, Zambia, Spain, Kenya, and Argentina," he said.

The church has also introduced new initiatives such as the Women of Grace Conference, aimed at empowering women, and the International Youth Conference, which focuses on shaping a better future for young people.

"Evelyn Joshua's vision is rooted in spiritual growth and societal impact. Her programmes emphasise sound spiritual values and community development," Adejumo added.

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# Editorial

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## Russia-Africa military partnership and its implications

THE recent signing of agreements on anti-terrorism military-technical cooperation between Russia and 33 African countries portends a good omen for a continent ravaged by internecine wars and ethnic-religious conflicts. Africa surely needs all the help it can muster to bring sanity and normalcy in its geo-polity. But Africa must be cautious not to turn herself into a willing pawn in the international struggle for supremacy among leading world countries.

Ultimately, terrorism and other strife will persist in Africa until African leaders take full charge and responsibility for their affairs. No country or organisation is likely to make supreme sacrifices to rid Africa of conflicts and terror, unless such sacrifices are geared towards an ulterior motive of such countries, and with serious collateral compromise of African countries and the continent.

In a combined and renewed effort to tackle terrorism and other criminal activities in Africa, Russia and 33 African countries have recently signed agreements on military-technical cooperation. Given that terrorism poses a threat to global security and stability, these agreements focus on combating terrorism, providing training, sharing intelligence, and addressing regional security issues as a path to peace and stability in Africa and the world.

Russian President, Vladimir Putin, has offered what he described as “total support” for Africa, particularly in the struggle against terrorism and extremism. Hopefully, these efforts will assist in combating terrorism and criminal activities in African countries.

These collaborations are part of broader Russia-Africa initiatives aimed at strengthening ties in various sectors such as trade, education, and infrastructure development. Although the full list of the 33 countries that have signed military agreements with Russia

has not been publicly disclosed, countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Central African Republic are confirmed participants. This is due to their ongoing partnerships with Russia, particularly through military-technical cooperation and the presence of private military groups such as Wagner in their regions.

While Nigeria is not confirmed as a beneficiary of this agreement, she maintains diplomatic and trade relations with Russia, but has not pursued extensive military agreements like other African nations, such as Mali, the Central African Republic, or Sudan. Instead, Nigeria has historically established military cooperation with China and Western nations, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, receiving arms, training, and intelligence support.

As a leader within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria is understandably cautious about aligning with Russia, especially as countries like Mali and Burkina Faso, which are close to Russia, have clashed with ECOWAS policies.

The military-technical cooperation between Russia and the 33 African countries is commendable. Sharing military experience, information management, and joint action to prevent terrorist attacks and combat the financing of terrorism in Africa is a minimum that Africa needs, given the extensive damage that banditry and terrorism have inflicted on the continent.

However, African countries should not allow the military-technical cooperation to be tied to neo-colonialist conditions or used to exploit African nations or promote Russia's political and economic interests in Africa. Russia's growing military engagement in Africa is part of its broader strategy to reestablish influence on the continent, often as a counterbalance to Western powers like the United States, France, and the European Union. Military-technical cooperation should not be a ploy to counterbalance the influence of the United States, France, and the European Union in Africa, especially to the detriment of African nations.

These military agreements will enable African countries to access affordable arms and ammunition. Russia provides relatively low-cost military equipment, making advanced weaponry accessible to cash-strapped governments. Such military cooperation will enable African military forces to benefit from Russian training programmes, thereby improving their operational capabilities.

Military partnerships with Russia allow African countries to diversify their alliances, reducing over-reliance on Western nations. In conflict zones, Russian private military companies (PMCs) and advisors provide immediate security solutions, often helping governments maintain power.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), Russian support has been pivotal in propping up the government against rebel forces. Russian PMCs provide security for the regime while securing access to resources like diamonds. In Sudan and Chad, Russia's presence counterbalances Western-backed initiatives, potentially altering the regional balance of power. Russia has also provided military assistance to Mozambique in its fight against ISIS-linked insurgents in Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique. However, initial Russian efforts in Mozambique faced criticism for poor execution, leading the country to diversify its security partnerships.

While South Africa has been less directly involved in military agreements, its partnership with Russia through the BRICS alliance (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) has influenced its broader stance on global issues, including its non-alignment in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Russian PMCs have played a role in Libya's ongoing conflict, supporting factions like General Haftar's Libyan National Army. This exacerbates divisions but secures Russian influence in the oil-rich region.

Algeria, a key Russian arms customer, continues to benefit from advanced weaponry, solidifying its regional military dominance. Egypt has balanced its ties with the West and Russia, leveraging its agreements to strengthen its military and diversify its sources of arms. For Eritrea,

aligning with Russia offers an alternative to Western pressure, particularly regarding human rights.

In West Africa, the increasing alignment of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger with Russia is shifting the regional balance of power. This could impact Nigeria, particularly in its fight against Boko Haram and other insurgent groups. If these neighbouring countries adopt Russian-style military strategies or deploy Russian PMCs, Nigeria may need to adjust its security coordination mechanisms.

However, the long-term military cooperation between Russia and 33 African countries could create dependence on Russian military support, potentially undermining the sovereignty and autonomy of African nations. Such agreements might strain national budgets, especially in African countries already burdened by debt. These deals often prioritise Russian interests, such as securing resources, over the development needs of African nations. Resource extraction from these countries will bolster Russia's economy, granting access to valuable African resources such as gold, oil, and diamonds, which Russia could exploit to its advantage.

While Russian agreements aim to stabilise regimes, they often intensify competition between global powers, potentially exacerbating regional instability. All said, Nigeria should explore military agreements with Russia to diversify her defence partnerships, gaining access to Russian arms, technology, and training. Such collaboration could enhance Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts, especially in the northeast, where it faces long-standing insurgencies.

Although the agreements between Russia and 33 African countries may not directly involve Nigeria, they could significantly shape the region's security, political, and economic dynamics, potentially benefiting Nigeria.

Therefore, Nigeria should carefully navigate this evolving landscape, balancing its interests while protecting its sovereignty and regional leadership role.

### LETTER

#### ASUU strikes and the future of education in Nigeria

SIR: Education in Nigeria, particularly at the tertiary level, has endured numerous challenges, with prolonged strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), being one of the most contentious issues.

These strikes, often triggered by disputes over funding, salaries, and infrastructure, have disrupted academic calendars, leaving millions of students in limbo. As Nigeria attempts to rebuild its educational system post-strike, questions about the future of higher education remain pressing.

For decades, ASUU strikes have been a recurring feature of Nigeria's educational landscape. The most recent strike, which spanned over eight months in 2022, was one of the longest in the country's history. Students lost valuable academic time, parents bore additional financial burdens, and the reputation of Nigeria's universities suffered on the global stage.

At the heart of the ASUU-government standoff lies the issue of inadequate funding for universities. Many

Nigerian public universities operate with outdated infrastructure, insufficient classrooms, and inadequate learning materials.

Lecturers, tasked with educating the nation's youth, often complain of poor remuneration and working conditions, making it difficult to attract and retain talented educators. Despite numerous agreements between ASUU and successive governments, implementation has been inconsistent, fueling mistrust.

In addition to funding, the lack of autonomy in Nigerian universities has been a contentious issue. ASUU has repeatedly called for greater institutional independence, arguing that bureaucracy stifles innovation and growth. Conversely, government officials often cite budget constraints and competing national priorities as barriers to fulfilling ASUU's demands.

The frequent strikes have left an indelible mark on Nigeria's education system. Students have faced prolonged stays in universities, often extending courses meant to last four years into five or six years.

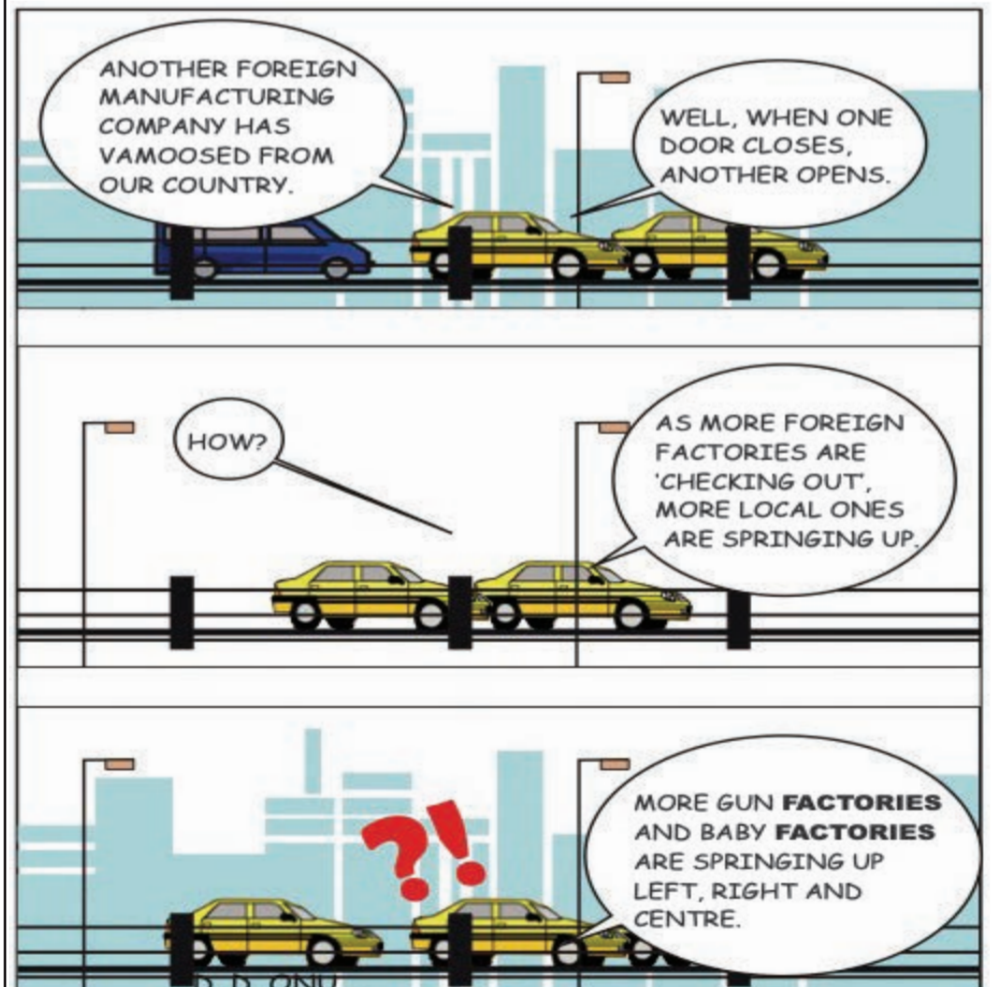
Many have become frustrated, leading to a rise in emigration among students seeking stable and uninterrupted education abroad.

For those unable to afford foreign education, strikes often lead to a loss of motivation, increased unemployment, and even involvement in social vices.

The credibility of Nigerian degrees has also taken a hit. Employers often question the competence of graduates from a system plagued by disruptions. In global rankings, Nigerian universities struggle to compete with their counterparts in other African countries like South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya, where academic calendars are stable.

Rebuilding trust between ASUU, the government, and stakeholders is essential for the future of education in Nigeria. One possible solution is the establishment of a legally binding framework for resolving disputes.

Read the remaining part of this letter on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)  
Cynthia Arewa is a 300 level Mass Communication student from the University of Maiduguri.



# Opinion

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## IBK and the columnist's dialogue on Peter Fregene

By Tony Afejuku

THE late Peter Fregene's funeral rites ended last weekend. What you are reading now is the dialogue that emanated from my piece of last Friday. It's a dialogue between a constant reader the one and only IBK and the columnist.

**IBK:** Prof TA, I read your nice, very fine, eulogy for, and obituary of, for Mr. Peter Fregene. As I read the essay, bits of (my child-ish) memory and Derridean sensibility crept up to me like, a wild cat preparing to pounce on a prey. First, I used to think in my childhood that sports men would forever be physically immortal. I grew up hearing that physical exercise was healthy, indeed a way to remain in top physical and mental form. Physical health experts and professionals are still pushing that narrative on YouTube, Tiktok, and other kinds of the social media.

Exercise in the form of footballing, gym sessions, running, walking and aerobic exuberance it is said would keep one away, far away, from physical, mental, or intellectual degeneration. So, when I read your column last Friday on the death of the highly acclaimed goal-keeper, I was, or became, alarmed for one reason, and one only—namely that a vigorously exercising man, a physically fit goal keeper, or is it Gatekeeper, could just die, die just like that.

Perhaps the great Fregene had stopped being a goal-keeper, had stopped physically exercising, or stopped being physically fit. The poor soul! But I had thought that once one was

physically fit and sportingly vigorous or was a gym fanatic would still be just that well into his 80s and 90s.

Now I know, after reading your column, dear Prof TA, that that's not the case. Yet for a strange reason, I felt a deep affinity with the deceased, the great goal-keeper, Mr. Peter Fregene. I felt that I had or I should have met him, that is, before he died. Someone who kept waves and waves of intentionally furiously flying balls, flying like Russian missiles, from hitting the net, from landing in the net, should live on just to be much older than normal.

So, may Fregene's memory linger through the ages. Nevertheless, dear Prof TA, I suspect that Fregene's death has given you the occasion, the opportunity, and the enthusiasm to write. Derrida would argue that we use language (speak or write) only in response to an/the event—the event of a death, a love, a friendship, or such.

That is, had Peter Fregene not died, you would not have or have had a reason to write (about him or his demise). Prof, you are beautifully garrulous with the Sign, you're also a technically linguistic terrorist but with a Derridean bent, namely you have or had turned Fregene into a metaphorical football: you balled and balled the flying Fregene into your own metaphoric event, the event of your Sausurian column.

Indeed, you killed Fregene semantically and hypostatically; you paid tribute to a man whose death allowed you, Prof, to (w)rite

(about) his passing, you Prof TA, to "pass" him onto the immortal real of the Signifier.

Mr. Peter Fregene has died in (actual) fact but he lives on in the nicely turbulent yet colourful synchronicity, in your ebullient cryptisation of a beautifully efficient goal-keeper who served his country, his club, and his sporting community.

May Mr. Fregene's memory, name, and Bust acquire an immortal presence in the Sports Hall of Fame, and especially now that Prof TA has obituarised the great sports man. To close my non-logocentric account of the Prof TA-Peter Fregene grammatical and dialectical poesis, I should applaud Prof TA's immortalisation of the figure of the memorable sporting persona, and one who now "lives" in two places—both in the physical grave and in Prof TA's Shuttle in the Trespass of the Sign. A Sign full of Hyperbolic Tricks, the tricks of language, imagery, and re-introduction.

IBK, I deployed my literary memory to bring to the fore for my readers the Nigerian international football personage Peter Fregene the flying cat of a goal-tender. And you have deployed your academic and scholarly intellection and locution to do him further football justice in support and appreciation of my flavourous imagination on his demise. What rapturous sensations of similar raptures from ends that join themselves at their joining points! Let's see how IBK's can enter the column for our readers' further delight even though we grieve for the one, the super "goal-

gate-keeper" of immense, immortal talent.

TA, your column on the man is a great tribute and obituary and eulogy rolled into one. Goal keepers are the game's Gatekeepers. Yet if they do their work very well, they make the game both boring and uneventful since the spectators want to see the ball securely behind the net once in a while. Your column also brought Fregene in a post-death way all the way to Kano, Sokoto, and Jigawa and the hot, dusty, arid spaces of 12 degrees longitude. Ha ha ha! (I wasn't talking about deserts!)

IBK, you were not talking about deserts! But Peter Fregene's glorious fame extended (and still extends) beyond the latitudes and longitudes of the deserts and savannahs. From the Delta coasts and rain forests of Southern Nigeria Peter Fregene lived (and still lives).

From Sapele, Warri, Benin, Port-Harcourt, Enugu, Owerri, Ibadan, Lagos, to the far North: Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto and Jigawa Fregene the un-boring magnificent goal protector will always exist in "a-post-death way". IBK the Ibrahim Bello-Kano, I am also delighted that Peter Fregene will ever exist in your reading in "a-post-death way".

IBK the Ibrahim Bello-Kano that is the Ibrahim Bello-Kano's talk on the immortal figure Peter Fregene has enriched the meaning of my literary memory and full range of my emotion and perception of the supreme keeper of goal for further photographers and their mass spectrum of our sports personages. *Afejuku can be reached via 08055213059.*

## A conversation about hunger

By Hope O'Rukevbe Eghagha

**UYI:** There's hunger in the land. *Ebi npa wa!* People can barely feed. Inflation is creating havoc on our salaries! People are dying like flies because of depression. Too many suicides are taking place. Those claim it was their turn to rule, let them now say that it is their turn to feed the nation. How much longer can this go on?

**Dedan:** Bloomberg says that two out of three Nigerian households are going hungry. Families skip meals as they cannot afford enough food. The report says that 'the number of households not having enough food to eat because of lack of money doubled to 62.4 per cent in 2023 from 37 per cent in 2019.

**Bisi:** I read the report too. It also says that '12.3 per cent reported that at least one person in the household went without eating for a whole', and that food inflation peaked at a near-three-decade high 41 per cent in June. About 21 per cent of households rely on help from friends or relatives. Yet the men and women in the corridors of power are having a field day with stolen and embezzled funds. The opulence in the National Assembly is an insult to all of us. God, how long will this continue?

**Dedan:** What about the states? Some of the governors live like emperors. Their word is law. They control both the judiciary and the legislature. Some of them spend money as if prudence has gone out of fashion.

**Obi:** How long? Until the deadly reforms are over, bear fruit or are stopped!

**Bisi:** We need a Moses to deliver us from Egypt! A Moses Lord, give us a Moses!

**Dedan:** Egypt, Moses, Pharaoh! There must be emancipation of the masses from the hands of our oppressors.

**UYI:** Who can stop the reforms? Who will stop the reforms?  
**Obi:** The people! The hungry people of the land. The ones who complain that there is no food for them and their children!

**UYI:** Which people? The cowards of Nigeria who run under the skirts of their parents at the sound of a gunshot! They may complain. But they have not been angry enough to act. They are taking refuge in religion and platitudes.

**Dedan:** Do not speak about the people in such disparaging terms. The long-suffering people of Nigeria have been too patient. Now, they need a real leader to mobilise them against the misrule in the land.

**Obi:** Tell me something else! Spin another story jor. Except we fight for our rights, the rulers of the land will continue to mess with our lives.

**Dedan:** That is true. But you are able to speak like this because you live outside the country. You have found a home in America, and you think all of us are cowards. Just move back and

stay in the country for one year. You will sing a new song.

**Obi:** Isn't that why I left? The hardship was unbearable. If you remember, I left in January 1983 when two blind generals seized power.

**Bisi:** I remember those horrible days when you could be jailed for publishing a true news report that embarrassed the junta!

**Orezi:** I am tired of this plenty of grammar. Let us focus on the price of garri, rice, palm oil, and fish. What can we do to let poor women like me to get food for my family. My husband has mortgaged his monthly salary to loans from the cooperative. I am virtually the bread winner of the family. How much do I earn? They promised a minimum wage of 70k per month. It exists only in the papers. Who should I cry to for help? Who? I have an aged mother in Warri who must feed and buy her medication. Who have I offended?

**Dedan:** You have brought us down to real issues. What have we done to deserve such punishment from the man whom we elected to rule? Why this wickedness?

**Bayo:** It is not wickedness my friends; it is not wickedness. It is one of the pains which we must bear to reform Nigeria. I feel the bite. I feel the pain. Do you know how many family members who ask for financial assistance these days? But what else could the government have done than to stop the subsidy regime?

**Dedan:** You have spoken well, Mr. Subsidy Remover! Thank you. The only thing you didn't say was how you expect the people to survive this harsh economy. Do you know how many people who forfeit their medication these days because of the high cost? Do you know how many children who go to bed these days without food in their stomachs? Look here, I am speaking about the reality on the ground. This is no theory.

**Bayo:** But the tough measures were necessary. Our economy was on the verge of a total breakdown. President Tinubu had to act. You can see that he kept the decision under wraps, because it was not included in the written speech on inauguration day. We must commend him for taking the bull by the horn.

**Dedan:** Check out governments all over the world which embark on reforms. They usually create shock absorbers for the people. Where is the succour? Even the military dictator IBB immediately announced palliatives when he removed subsidies. We could see that government trying very hard to pacify the people. President Jonathan did the same thing, though the current president took to the streets to insult and attack him. But in the case of current man in Aso Rock, there is no connection with the people

**Bisi:** He has appointed ten spokespersons to speak for him. Ten!

**Dedan:** What has happened to his mouth? Can't he address the people directly? Can't he visit the states and engage the

people?

**Bayo:** The man is unwell; we have to show some understanding.

**Dedan:** If you cannot stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen. A man who has serious health challenges should not aspire to national leadership. That is the reason in traditional African societies; a man who had any deformity was barred from being king.

**Bisi:** But he is trying. He is trying to repair the damage that was done in the last sixty years. Bubu did not have the gumption to implement the reforms. He left it to BAT to carry the can, and therefore a bad name.

**Dedan:** Bad name or good name, what we want is action. Reuters says that 33 million Nigerians may face hunger next year. Low wages, continued conflict, climate change, high food prices, and unemployment are the causes.

**Orezi:** Bubu did not have the heart to unleash more terror because he had killed the spirit of Nigeria. He was demystified when his policies failed woefully. Pure and simple!

**Dedan:** Let us begin to make suggestions on how to reduce hunger and poverty. Let there be subsidy on rice, garri, wheat, and amala. Let there be price control measures on basic food items. Let the government shore up domestic production for export. We need to shore up the naira. The devaluation shouldn't have taken place without a plan in place to strengthen the naira. Social safety net programmes such as cash transfers and food subsidies are important.

**Bayo:** But the government is doing cash transfers; about 25 million people have benefited from the scheme.

**Orezi:** That is what the government says. But how many people really benefit from it? Do you know anybody who has received the cash transfers? Has it not become another source of corruption? 25 million is a small figure. 100 million people should be brought into the scheme to make an impact.

**Bisi:** They should tell Mr. President to come to our aid. He is the father of the country. When children are hungry, they run to their parents. This is the time for the father of the nation to do something about the high cost of everything. I can't buy my medicines for diabetes and hypertension because suddenly the prices have gone beyond my salary.

**UYI:** This is the case with everybody. In my home state, we are hungry for a governor who can read simple sentences without stumbling. A man that cannot make correct sentences or can hardly read a speech, how can he provide a solution to our problems!

**Dedan:** You have come again o! We are talking about food, and you are talking about reading sentences. The one who could read very well, what did he do for your state?

*Eghagha is a professor of English Literature and Literary Analysis at the University of Lagos.*

# Opinion

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## America's presidential election and matters miscellaneous (2)

By **Steve Egbo**

*Continued from yesterday*

THE head scratching in the Democratic Party is naturally morphing into a blame game. And that's always the case. Nancy Pelosi said president Biden did not opt out of the race early enough to allow Kamala adequate time to showcase herself to America. Others said she did not distance herself from Mr Biden and therefore inherited Biden's incumbency baggage.

But would Biden's presidency be adjudged a failure? Many will disagree. And very seriously. This distancing from the incumbent is in itself a double edged sword. It could swing either way. Let the reader recall the 2000 election when Al Gore, made a clean cut from his principal, Bill Clinton, not wanting to be tainted by the grizzly Monica affair.

Al Gore lost the election and they blamed him for turning his back on Mr Clinton, who up to his last day in office, remained a darling of the American public, Monica or no Monica. Elections can be strange and it's outcome more so.

But let's get back to Mr Trump. The big question is, what will Donald Trump do with these vast powers he stands to inherit from January 20th, next year? Is it the power to recreate America in his image? Will he use these powers to build a kinder America and a more peaceful and gentler world, in line with the philosophy of George Bush, Sr. (the gentleman president).

Or will he make good his promise to go after his political enemies? Will he carry out his threat to arrest Nancy Pelosi and send assassins after Liz Cheney? Is it the power to implement the "Vision 2025", a document that reads very much like Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf"? Simply put, is it the power to denigrate or integrate? The world is holding its breath.

The victory of Donald Trump has caused ripples around the world. In Europe, Middle East Asia and the Pacific region, leaders are scrambling to unravel what lies ahead and to design a template on how to contain the fallouts that are bound to follow. Many questions are being asked, for which there are no answers yet.

What will be the future of NATO? What happens to the WTO and free trade? Is it the end of the road for globalisation? Is America going back to the era of protectionism and isolationism? Does making America great again entail the abandonment of power and America's leadership of the free world in pursuit of an America-first policy?

Will Donald Trump do to Ukraine what Nerville Chamberlain did to Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938? Will he give Israel the necessary backing to put a stop to Iran's destabilising antics, or will he exhibit the same timidity that boldens Iran. Will he stand up and push back the deluge of aggressive religious fundamentalism threatening to engulf the western hemisphere?

If Beijing decides to break the *status quo* arrangement which existed since 1949 and move against Taiwan, how will Washington respond? As the 21st Century gets underway, it has become apparent that China portends the greatest danger to America than any other country in the world. China is on a race to catch up with the U.S. and perhaps overtake it.

And China has enough discipline and control to go very far. China also has the resources and tenacity to sustain the struggle. China has an eye on Taiwan and sooner, rather than later, it will make its move. President Xi wants to see this done in his lifetime and he wants history to remember him for that accomplishment.

Other matters of urgent interest include America's disposition to the axis of tyranny and authoritarianism under president Trump. Mr Trump seems to love and admire the worst tyrants of the present age.

These include president Xi (China), president Putin (Russia) even Kim Jun Un of North Korea, and others.

During his first tenure, he tried to cuddle them, but nothing came out of it. In the years he was out of power, he continued to relate with Putin. How is he going to relate with them now and how would this relationship impact America's national interest and the rest of the world?

Personal relationship between leaders, irrespective of ideological leanings, are not unusual, because it could enhance co-operation and bring temperatures down. But in his book "Real Peace", Richard Nixon warned of the dangers of disillusionment when personal relationships are unable to transcend government to government relationships. And don't forget, Vladimir Putin is far smarter than Donald Trump.

These and many more are the issues the world is grappling with in the aftermath of Trump's massive victory on November 5.

But here in Africa, particularly Nigeria, we are only concerned with Trump's apparent religiosity, his love of Christian precepts and his promise to bring America and possibly the world back to Jesus Christ and solid Christian foundations.

This is laughable nonsense. It shows our small thinking and our backwardness. It brings to light the frivolities we dissipate our energies on while the world is dealing with serious matters.

Donald Trump is an agnostic but he will kneel down at an altar, or anywhere, feign religious piety and carry the Bible if it serves his political purposes. Trump will rage against LGBTs and pro-abortion groups and other outrageous excesses that cobwebs American life only if it will fetch him more votes. Otherwise, he just doesn't care.

Donald Trump never goes to church and he doesn't read the Bible. For those who may care to look at the records, or summon the strength to sort out the facts from innuendos and fake piety, those records will reveal

that Donald Trump is the most unChristian inhabitant of the White House since 1800.

The Christian right that support Trump in the U.S. base their faith on the well established notion of white masters against freed slaves - their slaves, who in their unstated opinions, remain under the bondage of slavery. It is slavery by other means.

The Massa mentality never died. It merely went through a metamorphosis. For them, the kingdoms of the world belong to the White man. And so does the kingdom of heaven. 'America first' translates to 'white first'. And 'Make America Great Again' translates to 'make America white again.' This is their mission. These facts are not often stated, but they are there.

Finally, I want to end this essay by reiterating the uniqueness and obstuseness of America. America is a very unusual country. Full of contradictions and contumacious. There is no other country like America. Like John Bolton said a few days ago, "the world will miss us when we're gone." But the truth is, America is not going any time soon.

Granted that no kingdom lasts for ever, but America will endure. Their enemies will tell how much America has declined, but America is still far ahead of it's rivals. So, only America will elect a man like Donald Trump into the most powerful office on earth.

America would not have allowed this to happen anywhere else. If another country had elected a convicted felon, a fraudster, a con-man, a racist, a misogynist, a rapist, a self acclaimed pussy grabber, a friend of Ku Klux Klan, a climate skeptic, election denier, and COVID-19 denier, a twice impeached white supremacist, a coup baiter and a tax dodger, as president, America would have imposed sanctions on that country...

But America has done it and the world will live with it.

*Concluded.*  
**Professor Egbo is a Resource Person @NILDS Abuja. He can be reached via: 08037910012. (WhatsApp only).**

## #HerMoneyHerPower: Hashtag that sparked national conversation

By **Blessing Omakwu**

WHEN I first came up with the idea for the #HerMoneyHerPower campaign, I knew it was an important conversation to have. Today, too many women and girls are still being taught that hypergamy is a strategy, and marriage is a financial plan. This, despite the fact that history has shown time and again that one unpredictable life circumstance—like the death of or divorce from a spouse—is all that stands between too many women and poverty. This, despite the examples all around us of women stuck in cycles of abuse because of their financial dependence.

For women, money is both a shield and a weapon. It can be the difference between oppression and freedom. And what both data and lived experiences continue to show is that when a woman has money—the benefits extend to her family, her community and indeed, her country. Women will not achieve gender equality without financial freedom, and Nigeria will not become prosperous until its women have economic power. It really is that simple.

What I didn't know though when I first began to work on #HerMoneyHerPower—a partnership between my organisation, The She Tank and Bella Naija—was that it would spark a national conversation in Nigeria.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of running many campaigns across different continents—most recently, at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation where I served as the Deputy Director of Global Content and Campaigns and the Head of Goalkeepers, the foundation's largest campaign, dedicated to accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Of all the campaigns I've worked on, this one has been unique. Our message? It's time for women to have not just

economic empowerment, but power. A woman may have money—but does she have a say in how that money is earned, saved or spent? A woman may have a job—but is she set up to fail due to the disproportionate burden of housework she carries at home or the gendered discrimination she faces in the workplace? A woman may start a business, but can she get business loans in the same way her male peers do?

These are examples of the differences between empowerment and power. When a woman has economic power, she not only has access to money and to the systems that create prosperity (like schools, jobs and capital)—but she has a voice and the ability to make choices within those systems.

What the #HerMoneyHerPower metrics show is that our message was heard. As I write this, the campaign has generated over 1 billion impressions, reaching over 333 million unique users on social media. The campaign has also generated over 250 media mentions and features across traditional and digital media—with an estimated \$3.32 million in earned media coverage. The day our task on *Big Brother* Nigeria aired, #HerMoneyHerPower was the #1 trending topic on X.

Our Ad, starring Funke Akindele, has played over 1,000 times on different TV stations. Our billboards, with our provocative messages, have been placed in eight cities and five languages across the nation. And our 60+ campaign champions—influencers and thought leaders with a collective reach of over 125 million followers—have spread our message from their perspectives on every imaginable platform: television shows, radio stations, newspapers, podcasts, magazines, Instagram, X, Youtube, Snapchat, LinkedIn and more. Many of their posts have gone viral.

What made this campaign truly special though, was hear-

ing back. Uche Pedro (Founder and CEO of Bella Naija) and I have listened closely to audiences throughout this campaign. We heard from thousands of Nigerians who shared their own stories and ideas using our hashtag. Women shared their stories of financial abuse and financial power on their feeds and in our DMs.

One woman began a 30-day #HerMoneyHerPower challenge on TikTok. A group of women in Enugu produced their own #HerMoneyHerPower TV segment, independent of the campaign. We heard from an NGO who took the #HerMoneyHerPower message to a secondary school, and we even heard of the campaign coming up in places of worship.

What's next? The conversations need to continue—and that starts with you. In partnership with NOI Polls, we surveyed over 3,000 Nigerians and hosted focus group discussions in select states across the country. What was clear from this work is that we still have a long way to go when it comes to mindsets and norms around women and money in Nigeria.

For example, norms around caregiving work in the home (like cooking, cleaning, caring for children and elders), haven't evolved much—despite the fact that women increasingly work outside the home and are even breadwinners in many homes.

Both men and women still have many negative perceptions—and fears—around women having their money. As our economies and the world continue to change, we need to have conversations about how we can both maintain family values and evolve our gender norms—as individuals, and as a nation.

**Omakwu is a Women's Equality Evangelist, Lawyer and Writer. She is the Founder and CEO of The She Tank.**

**CRUDE OIL PRICE UPDATE** Brent crude: \$73.10 | WTI crude: \$68.91

**FOREX MARKET UPDATE** I&E window: N1644.86

## Nigeria's budget under threat as OPEC extends production cut

From Kingsley Jeremiah, Abuja  
NIGERIA'S 2025 budget, which is pegged on an optimistic oil price and production of over two million barrels per day (bpd), may suffer a major threat given the decision by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to maintain production cut into 2026. The decision, analysts said, may freeze oil prices as Brent traded for about \$72 per barrel yesterday with the highest in the last month being about \$75 per barrel. Nigeria is proposing a budget of N47.9 trillion for 2025 while the Federal Government's revenue is pro-

**\*We support decision, says Lokpobiri**

jected at N34.82 trillion, a 34.6 increase from the 2024 Budget. The revenue target may only be realistic on the assumption of an oil price of \$75 per barrel and production of two million bpd.

Currently, Nigeria produces less than 15 million barrels per day while the country's OPEC quota for 2025 stands at 15 million barrels per day.

With existing production already committed to crude swap deals and asset-backed loans, realising government's revenue projections and addressing the foreign exchange crisis may be a mirage.

The oil ministers at the 38th session of OPEC emphasised the critical importance of full conformity with production levels and the implementation of a robust compensation mechanism to enhance transparency and preserve market equilibrium.

Nigeria's budgets, always benchmarked on oil prices, have underperformed with the last 10 years being the worst amidst huge budget deficits and rising debts.

Senior Research Analyst at Energy Intelligence, Amena Bakr, said OPEC and its supporting partners decided to extend the collective group

cut by one year until the end of 2026.

In recent months, OPEC had to readjust its oil demand output downward. Previously, OPEC planned to increase the production cuts from next month with an initial 180,000-bpd increase in production while gradually returning all the supply by the end of 2025. Combined with the cost of oil production per barrel, which the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited vowed three years ago to reduce to \$10, but currently stands at about \$48, Nigeria may borrow more to finance the 2025 budget.

In January, Nigeria's average daily oil production was 1.42

million, in February, it was 1.322 million barrels per day, in March, average daily production dropped to 1.23 million barrels, in April, it stood at 1.28 million barrels, in May, oil production fell to 1.25 million barrels, in June, 1.25 million, 1.5 million barrels per day in July, 1.57 million barrels per day in August, 1.54 million barrels per day in September and 1.43 million barrels per day in October. Rising from the 38th meeting of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee

(JMMC) of OPEC, Nigeria's Minister of State for Petroleum (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri, emphasised the critical role of collaborative efforts in ensuring a balanced and sustainable oil market. "This meeting reflects the unity and resolve of OPEC and its partners to maintain stability and ensure a balanced market. Nigeria remains steadfast in supporting these efforts while pursuing our national objectives within the global energy landscape," Lokpobiri stated.

## IEA projects major shift in global energy demand

**\*Says five per cent of Nigeria's households use air conditioners**

By Waliat Musa

THE International Energy Agency (IEA) has projected a shift in global energy consumption patterns, with electricity demand expected to grow six times faster than overall energy demand over the next ten years.

The projection was made by the Executive Director of IEA, Dr Fatih Birol, at the global conference on Energy and Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Thursday, which was monitored by The Guardian.

Birol mentioned that the largest driver of global electricity consumption is the increasing number of air conditioners around the world, highlighting that in Nigeria five per cent of households own an air conditioner while it is 90 per cent in the United States and Japan. He stated that increasing temperature is another driver, noting that electrification of the transportation sector, electric cars among others are another strong driver of electricity consumption in the next few years.

He added that data centers around the world are another driver of global electricity consumption, noting that the electricity consumption of a data center today is equal to the electricity consumption of 100,000 households equivalent, an average city in many parts of the world.

He, however, noted that the issue becomes more complex

as, while the global average of electricity consumption attributed to AI may not seem particularly impressive today, it is notably impactful in certain local contexts.

Birol emphasised that AI would have great potential to transform the electricity sector by making the batteries cheaper and better, transforming and optimise the energy infrastructure, especially the grids, to make them smarter and to make them more efficient and they can maximise the capacity of the lines, which is another area that we can see a major impact from the AI and the energy sector.

"And today, according to our numbers, we see that the AI sector is by far the largest corporate sector in terms of renewable consumption, major renewable consumption, plus there are already planned almost 10 gigawatts of small model reactors (SMRs), the AI companies have been announcing how much energy is needed for AI and how AI can change the energy sector. So in this context, as the International Energy Agency, we like to have or try to address complex issues, we have decided to make this issue a priority for our work. And most important one, we thought our contribution to the players, to technology companies, governments, energy companies, would be to put numbers on the table," he said.



Chairman, Lagos Advertising and Ideas Festival (LAIF) Management Board, Jay Chukwuemeka (left); Publicity Secretary, Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN), Funmibi Adeleye; President, AAAN, Lanre Adisa; Former President, Bunmi Oke; Vice President, Abiola Adekoyejo and Vice-Chairman, LAIF Management Board, Henry Akpede during the 2024 LAIF awards held in Lagos.

## UBA to open Saudi Arabia office in January

From Collins Olayinka, Abuja  
WITH offices in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France, the United Bank of Africa (UBA) is set to open an office in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in January 2025. The Group Managing Director of UBA Group, Oliver Alawuba, disclosed this in Abuja, yesterday, during a valedictory party in honour of four retired non-executive directors of the bank. Alawuba, who paid glowing tributes to the departed non-executive directors, also disclosed that the bank has

grown its staff strength to over 25,000 staff while rendering services to more than 45 million customers across 24 countries.

He assured the customers of the bank that it remains steadfast in its mission to build a sustainable institution.

"Our chairman was in Saudi Arabia recently and announced that UBA will establish its presence there next year. We will also launch additional African subsidiaries, ensuring that the bank grows from strength to strength," he added.

Alawuba attributed the success of the bank to the collective great spirit imbibed by the staff.

On his part, UBA Chairman, Tony Elumelu, lauded the retired directors and their families for their dedication and sacrifices.

"At UBA, we are more than just a bank; we are a family. These individuals have been selfless, ultra-dedicated and instrumental to the success we have achieved in Nigeria, Africa and globally. We owe a debt of gratitude to their families for the support they provided," Elumelu said.

The UBA chief has also stressed the need for Africa to leverage emerging technologies to develop unique solutions to the challenges confronting the country.

Speaking at a graduation lecture for participants of executive intelligence management course 17 of the National Institute for Security Studies, he submitted that by leveraging emerging technologies, Nigeria can harness its talent, and create a vibrant ecosystem of startups that develop solutions tailored to its unique challenges as a nation.

## AMCON's intervention returns Aero to profitability, says Alade

By Ekundayo Olasunkanmi  
ASSET Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON) has taken Aero Contractors back to profitability following its takeover of the management of the airline in 2016. The takeover led to the dissolution of its board and the subsequent appointment of a manager to run it in an interim capacity. Against the backdrop, the incumbent management

said the airline has achieved a significant financial turnaround, reducing its liabilities by 33 per cent and recording an 18 per cent profit margin in 2024, a sharp contrast to the 69 per cent loss recorded in 2022.

Reacting to the development, Managing Director of AMCON, Gbenga Alade, told media executives on Thursday in Lagos that the new management of the airline had been able to turn

around its fortune with two aircraft they got from the Cross River state government.

He said: "Right now, they have only two aircraft flying and yet they were able to make money from them and the two aircraft did not even belong to them. They were given to them to manage by the Cross River State Government. They do not even have an aircraft of their own. The ones they

have had problems, and they are trying to fix them.

"Now that they have started to make a profit, they are creating a pool of funds to refurbish their aircraft. They also have plans to bring five more 737, 500 series very soon on a dry lease arrangement."

He added that the same Cross River state government has given the airline an additional two aircraft. Alade told the editors to reflect on how the airline

would transform the market with almost 10 aircraft, remarking that it is an airline to watch out for.

"If they do not have their aircraft but leasing and hiring engines to fly and can make a profit, imagine what will happen if they have their own," Alade enthused.

He said that is a good example of an airline that is easy to transform and that is one of the success stories of AMCON.

He described the Managing Director of Aero Contractors, Ado Sanusi, as a pragmatic leader with deep knowledge of the market, business as well as a man with integrity.

The recent development, the AMCON boss said, makes a whole lot of difference, which is why the rebound of Aero, one of the airlines under the AMCON aviation portfolio, should be celebrated as one of the many AMCON success stories.

# Congratulations

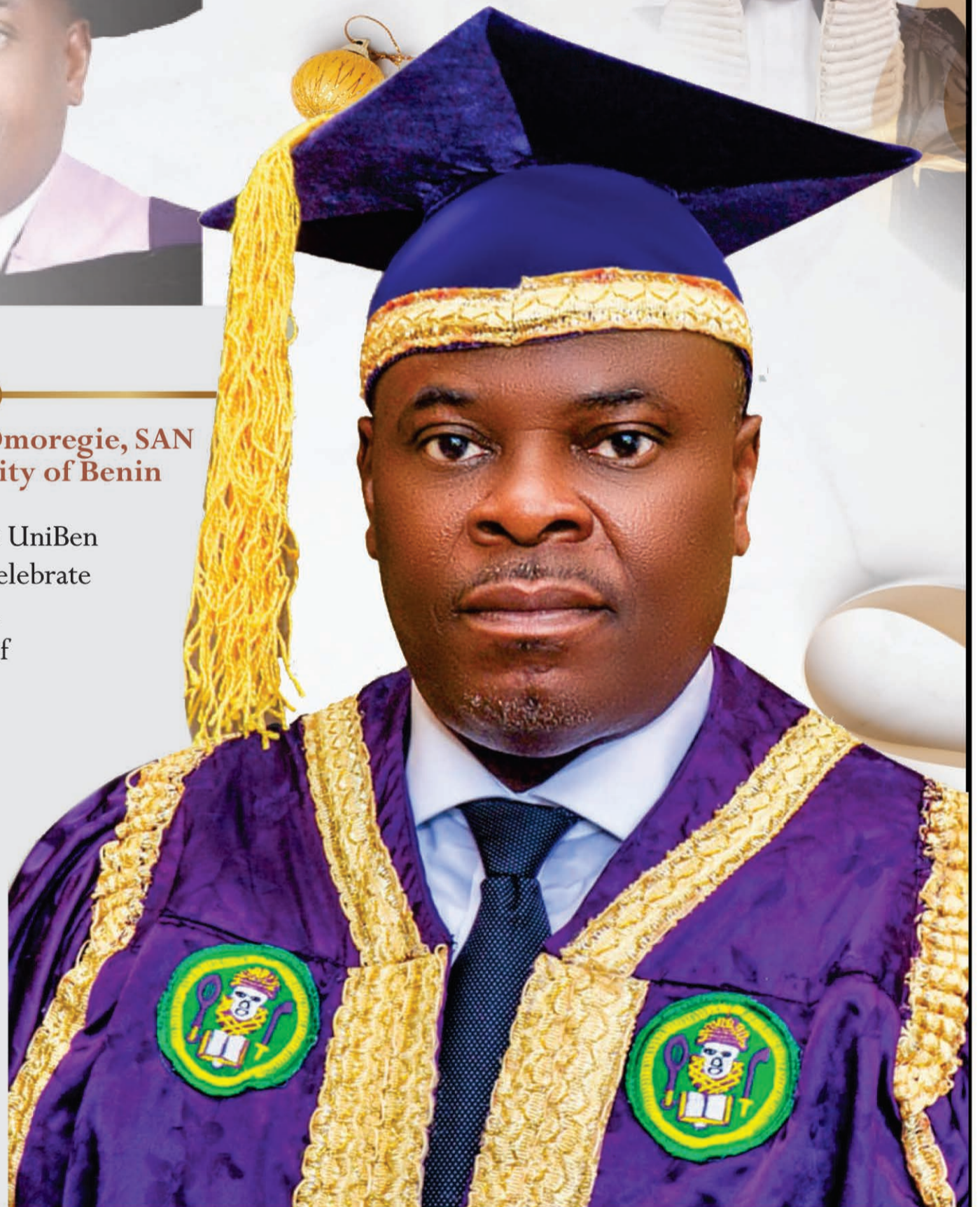
## Professor Edoba Bright Omoregie, SAN Vice-Chancellor, University of Benin

We, your classmates from the UniBen Law Class of 1991, proudly celebrate your inauguration as the 11th substantive Vice-Chancellor of our alma mater.

Your appointment reflects your dedication to excellence, a hallmark of our class.

We are confident in your transformative leadership and pledge our support and prayers as you guide the University of Benin to greater heights.

*Congratulations,  
Professor Omoregie.  
You have made us proud!*



## Professor Edoba Bright Omoregie, SAN

Vice-Chancellor, University of Benin

**Uniben Law Class of 1991**



# GOVERNMENT OF RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA

## COMMISSIONING OF RECONSTRUCTED GOVERNMENT GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL, AHOADA



**Date: Friday, December 6, 2024**  
**Time: 11 a.m**  
**Venue: Government Girls  
Secondary School, Ahoada Town,  
Ahoada East Local Govt. Area**

*Rivers State Government is taking deliberate steps to deliver people-centred projects*

*Signed:*  
**DR. TAMMY WENIKE DANAGOGO**  
Secretary to the State Government

**His Excellency**  
**Sir Siminalayi Fubara, GSSRS**  
**Governor of Rivers State**



# Investors' wealth dips by N36b amid selloff in 16 stocks

By Helen Oji

**S**ELLOFF continued on the Securities sector of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) yesterday, as investors' wealth depreciated further by N36 billion amid a selloff in Aradel Holdings Plc and 15 others.

The all-share index (ASI) declined by 60.88 points, representing a loss of 0.06 per cent to close at 98,114.11 points. Also, market capitalisation lost N36 billion to close at N59.476 trillion.

The downturn was driven by price depreciation in large and medium-capitalised stocks amongst which are Lafarge Africa, Zenith Bank, Red Star

Express and Access Holdings.

Analysts at Afrinvest said: "Investor sentiment as measured by market breadth, weakened to 0.25x (previously 0.33x) as 35 stocks advanced, 16 declined. Tomorrow, (today), we expect the bearish market performance to linger as the bourse remains short of positive catalysts."

However, the market breadth, which measures investor sentiment through the gainers/losers ratio increased. According to market data, 35 stocks appreciated, while 16 stocks depreciated.

Cornerstone Insurance and

University Press emerged as the highest price gainers of 10 per cent each to close at N3.30 kobo and N3.96 kobo respectively.

Sterling Financial Holdings Company and SUNU Assurance followed with a gain of 9.98 per cent each to close at N4.85 kobo and N4.63 kobo respectively, while Golden Guinea Breweries

appreciated by 9.84 per cent to close at N4.91 kobo.

On the other side, Red Star Express led the losers' chart with 10 per cent to close at N4.41. FTN Cocoa Processors followed with a decline of 5.61 per cent to close at N1.85 kobo while NPF Microfinance Bank shed 3.23 per cent to close at N1.50 kobo.

Neimeth International Pharmaceuticals went down by 2.78 per cent to close at N2.10 kobo, while Prestige Assurance depreciated by 2.5 per cent to close at 78 kobo kobo.

The total volume of trade rose by 39.8 per cent to 722.998 million units, valued at N12.840 billion, and exchanged in 8,495 deals.

Transactions in the shares of Champion Breweries led the activity with 300.934 million shares worth N1.204 billion.

Fidelity Bank followed with an account of 48.598 million shares valued at N782.996 million, while Guaranty Trust Holding Company (GTCO) traded 40.184 million shares valued at N2.119 billion.

## Ani-Mumuney bows out of FirstBank

**A**N important part of any good story is how it ends. Even a good joke is made by the punchline that comes at the end, which gets everyone laughing uncontrollably.

This is true of Folake Ani-Mumuney's (popularly known as FAM) tenure as the Global Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at FirstBank Group and FBN Holdings.

It has been a carefully-planned journey with a well-laid-out vision pursued through determination, hard work, integrity and resilience, enabling her to weather all storms and wade through different challenges that came with the job. Serving under three CEOs of FirstBank Group and at least four CEOs of FBN Holdings, FAM has so excellently discharged the duties and responsibilities of her office that the image of the institution and its CEOs has continued to be on the ascendency.

The FirstBank/FBN Holdings brand has continued to enjoy ever-increasing equity with FAM at the head of the team with the core function of managing the brand. The brand had never been better positioned at any other time in its recent history.

Humble, unassuming and playful with a deep sense of humor, FAM is an empathetic leader who shows deep consideration for others while keeping her focus on the big picture.

She rolls up her sleeve, working side by side with her people to deliver the many strate-

gic initiatives that have continued to position FirstBank/FBN Holdings as an iconic brand in Nigeria and Africa.

FAM has been most supportive and generous when it comes to reproducing herself in the people who work with her and developing their capacities. She has not held back anything critical to grooming the staff who have worked with her, ensuring that they are not just competent but also assimilate leadership skills.

Little wonder someone on LinkedIn recently credited her with birthing of the largest pool of CMOs (chief marketing officers) in Nigeria, as many of those who have worked with her before have gone on to head the marketing communications functions in the organisations they now work for.

With the end of the FirstBank/FBN Holdings chapter in her illustrious career journey, the question of where FAM moves next or what her next chapter will be may be major in the banking community. The only certainty about what is next is FAM's excitement and passion.



## CMA gets GCR, Data Pro, Agosto ratings

**C**ARDINALSTONE Asset Management Limited (CAM) has received high ratings from Agosto & Co., Data Pro and GCR ratings, reaffirming its position as a top player in Nigeria's asset management industry.

Agosto & Co. awarded CAM an 'A' rating, citing the firm's robust research capabilities, structured decision-making processes and effective risk management practices, while Data Pro assigned it a Long-Term Rating of A(IM) with a stable outlook, reflecting the company's strong financial health and low-risk profile.

Also, GCR Ratings gave CAM an initial Management

Quality Rating of MQ2 (NG) and a Nigerian Management Quality Rating of A(NG)(mq), highlighting confidence in the company's governance, operational efficiency and risk management framework.

The ratings agencies stated that these accolades underscore CAM's operational resilience, strategic excellence and dedication to delivering value to clients.

The firm's assets under management (AUM) grew by an impressive 46.2 per cent as of March 2024, compared to December 2023, placing it among the top 15 largest asset managers in Nigeria, according to Agosto & Co.



Head, Corporate Communications Department of Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON), Jude Chiedozie Nwauzor (left); Company Secretary, AMCON Mrs. Oyinlola Adebayo; Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer AMCON, Gbenga Alade and Executive Director Resolution/Enforcement, Adeshola Lamidi during an interactive session with the media in Lagos, yesterday.

## Talk360 unveils new platform to simplifying African e-Commerce payment

**J**OHANNESBURG and Amsterdam-based Talk360, an app for Africans abroad, has announced the spin-off of its payment platform into a separate entity named NjiaPay, which will be led by a team of fintech executives.

In 2022, Talk360 successfully raised \$7 million, attracting investments from African venture capitalists and fintech angels across Europe and South Africa, including executives from Adyen and Mollie and founders of Tyme Bank.

After the funding, Talk360 sought to not only expand

its user base among the African diaspora in the United Kingdom, the United States and South Africa but deriving from their own experiences, started to explore the potential of establishing a modern payment aggregator designed to streamline and optimise the payment experience across the fragmented African market.

"To continue Talk360's mission of connecting migrant communities globally, it is vital to capitalize on our strengths. By carving out our payment ambitions into NjiaPay,

we've sharpened our focus on what we do best—connecting people through our calling app—while paving the way for a new opportunity to improve payments in Africa," said co-founder and CEO of Talk360, Hans Osnabrugge.

"Over the past two years, we've grown from connecting 2.3 million consumers to 4 million last year, fulfilling our promise to bridge migrant communities with their families back home."

Co-founder and MD for Africa at Talk360, Dean Hiine, added: "The need for

a unified payment solution in Africa is as critical today as it was two years ago. Unlike regions with unified payment systems, Africa's 54 countries each have their currencies, local payment methods and distinct banking systems, creating a fragmented landscape with no single checkout solution or PSP for the continent.

"For Talk360, as well as other companies, addressing this immense challenge is paramount to offering users their preferred payment methods, especially in key markets like South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria."

## WATRA to boost global submarine cable protection, connectivity

By Adeyemi Adepetun

**T**HE West Africa Telecommunications Regulators Assembly (WATRA) has been tipped to contribute to global submarine cable connectivity and usage for improved service delivery.

WATRA through its Executive Secretary, Aliyu Aboki, who has been appointed as a member of the International Advisory Body for Submarine Cable Resilience, will bring its expertise to bear in improving global connectivity and protection of the cable systems.

The International Advisory Body for Submarine Cable Resilience, established by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in collaboration with the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC), aimed to bolster the resilience of submarine

telecommunication cables that form the backbone of global digital connectivity. Submarine cables, which carry the majority of the world's Internet traffic, enable essential global services, including commerce, financial transactions, government operations, digital health, and education. Enhancing their resilience is critical for ensuring continuity in a digitally connected world.

Aboki's inclusion in the high-level International Advisory Body for Submarine Cable Resilience comes at a critical time when disruptions to digital connectivity in West Africa have highlighted the urgent need to safeguard vital telecommunication infrastructure.

As the Executive Secretary of WATRA, Aboki brings a wealth of experience and a distinctive regional perspective to the Advisory Body's

mission.

His appointment provides an opportunity for the region to contribute meaningfully to shaping global best practices for the deployment, maintenance, and protection of submarine cables, ensuring a stable and resilient digital ecosystem for millions across the continent.

Speaking on the contribution of WATRA and his appointment, Aboki stated: "The recent disruptions to telecommunications services across West Africa, caused by damage to vital submarine cables, underscore the fragility of our digital infrastructure. These incidents, which affected countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Liberia, resulted in significant connectivity issues and highlighted the urgent need for enhanced resilience in our submarine cable systems."

"As Executive Secretary of WATRA, I have witnessed firsthand the critical role that secure and reliable digital connectivity plays in driving economic development, supporting government operations, and enabling access to essential services across the region. This appointment to the International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience presents an opportunity to strengthen global collaboration and bring the perspectives of West Africa to the forefront of discussions on protecting these crucial infrastructures. "It is vital that we work together with other experts and stakeholders to develop strategies that ensure submarine cables are more resilient to disruptions, safeguarding the continuity of services that are fundamental to the global digital economy."



## REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (REOI)

**Subject:** Supply and Installation of Medical Equipment  
**Date of the REOI:** 06/12/2024  
**Closing Date for receipt of EOI:** 19/12/2024  
**Reference:** EOI/053/2024

### Background:

MSI Nigeria Reproductive Choices is a social enterprise established in Nigeria in 2009 and is a leading provider of family planning and a range of contraceptive options to women, girls, and families across the 36 states of Nigeria and the FCT. With a mission to ensure children by choice not chance, MSI Nigeria envisions a world where every birth is wanted. Through collaborations with government at the national, state, and community levels, MSI Nigeria offers accessible and comprehensive reproductive healthcare services using operational approaches, such as Marie Stopes Medical Centres, community outreach teams, public sector strengthening support, and a toll-free contact centre.

### Description of requirements:

MSI Nigeria is inviting Expression of Interest (EOIs) from authorized distributors of underlisted product:

SnO	Description	Quantity
1	<p><b>Ultrasound Machine</b>  Brand : Mindray  Model : Z60</p> <p><i>Other features: Transvaginal and curvilinear probes with trolley</i></p> <p><b>Delivery location: Abuja, Nigeria</b></p>	2

**Price quoted should include 5% Withholding Tax (WHT) and MSI Nigeria makes payment for completed transactions within 21 days.**

### Potential Suppliers:

This REOI is addressed to authorized distributors of this product in Nigeria. Applicable due diligence shall be conducted on successful vendor.

### Submission of EOI:

Quotation, Company Profile, Corporate Capability (copies of Certificate of Incorporation, CAC Form CO2 and CO7, Memorandum of Association), Status Report, Evidence of Tax Clearance for 2020-2022 should be submitted to: MSI Nigeria Reproductive Choices Nigeria, Plot 59 Anthony Enahoro Street, off Okonjo-Iweala Road, Utako District, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. All documentation should not exceed twenty pages.

**For all your family planning services and reproductive health questions, concerns, and referral services, call our toll-free numbers: 22252 or 08000022252 and WhatsApp/SMS 09099022252. Follow us on all social media platforms @msichoicesng.**

Signed:

For: MSI Nigeria Reproductive Choices  
Country Director



## REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (REOI)

**Subject:** ENGAGEMENT OF TAX CONSULTANCY FIRM  
**Date of the REOI:** 6/12/2024  
**Closing Date for receipt of EOI:** 20/12/2024  
**Reference:** EOI/052/2024

### Background:

Since 2009, MSI Nigeria Reproductive Choices has worked in Nigeria to increase access to high quality, accessible and affordable sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services for all people. MSI Nigeria provides maternal and child health services as well as different modern methods of contraception free from stigma, judgemental or discriminatory bias.

### Description of Requirements:

MSI Nigeria is inviting Expression of Interest (EOIs) for Engagement of a Tax Consultant firm for Comprehensive Tax Consultancy and Allied Services

### Scope of Work:

The consultancy firm shall provide the following services:

#### A. Federal Tax Services

- Compute taxes and process tax clearance certificates for MSI Nigeria annually or as required.
- Address all tax inquiries from the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and State Internal Revenue Services in the seven designated locations, as well as any additional states identified by the finance team. If travel is required and approved by management, the associated expenses will be reimbursed.
- Support the finance team on timely remittance of Withholding Taxes and other levies to appropriate tax authorities.
- File annual corporate tax returns with FIRS and manage correspondence arising from the submission.
- File annual returns with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and obtain the necessary compliance document.
- Provision of tax advisory service including tax planning as may be required by MSI Nigeria from time to time.

#### B. State-Level Tax Compliance and Management

- Support MSI Nigeria and its employees as needed to obtain Tax Identification Numbers (TIN) across states.
- Process and obtain tax clearance certificates for MSI Nigeria employees across seven locations of Abuja, Lagos, Kogi, Imo, Kano, Oyo, and Kaduna.
- Assist the finance and HR teams in processing and securing tax clearance certificates for employees located in states not directly served by the firm.
- Coordinate with MSI Nigeria's finance team to ensure timely payment of state taxes, avoiding penalties.
- Provide guidance on specific state tax laws, obligations, and compliance to ensure accurate, timely compliance with local requirements.
- Facilitate necessary tax certifications or exemptions for nonprofit operations in the designated states.

#### C. Audit Support and Documentation

- Support MSI Nigeria in federal and state tax audits, including preparing responses, and documentation, and representing MSI Nigeria during tax audits.
- Maintain complete records of all tax transactions, filings, and correspondence with tax authorities, ensuring a well-documented tax history for MSI Nigeria.

#### D. Tax Advisory and Risk Management

- Offer advisory services regarding federal and state tax regulations, including updates on policy changes affecting MSI Nigeria.
- Conduct periodic tax risk assessments to identify and mitigate compliance gaps or potential tax exposures.
- Provide advisory services on tax-efficient structuring and operational arrangements to minimize liabilities.
- Advise on strategic tax savings opportunities and regulatory changes relevant to the nonprofit sector.

#### 4. Deliverables

The consulting firm shall provide the following deliverables:

- Annual Tax Compliance:
- Yearly tax clearance certificates for MSI Nigeria and employees across the seven designated states.
- Receipts and evidence of tax remittances for withholding tax and other paid levies through the consulting firm.
- Reporting and Documentation:
- Quarterly and annual compliance reports, detailing completed filings, compliance status, pending items, and upcoming obligations.
- Comprehensive documentation of tax-related transactions, filings, and official communications for audit readiness.
- Advisory Briefings:
- Timely updates on federal and state tax policy changes and recommendations to optimize tax efficiency.

#### 5. Duration of Contract

The consultancy contract will be valid for a period of two years from the date of signing. There is an option for renewal based on performance and the ongoing compliance needs of MSI Nigeria.

#### Potential Consultant:

The ideal consultancy firm should meet the following qualifications:

- **Professional Certification:** Registered and licensed as a tax consultancy firm with relevant professional certifications (e.g., ICAN, CITN).
- **Experience:** Proven experience in managing federal and multi-state tax obligations for large organizations preferably nonprofits for at least seven years.
- **Expertise in Nonprofit Tax Compliance:** Comprehensive understanding of nonprofit tax regulations, including exemptions, and sector-specific requirements.
- **Multi-Jurisdictional Compliance Capability:** Demonstrated ability to handle multi-state tax filings, registrations, and compliance in Nigeria.
- **Audit Support Proficiency:** Experience in providing audit support for federal and state tax authorities.

#### Submission of EOI:

Technical Proposal: Copy of Certificates, Company Profile, Corporate Capability (copies of certificate of Incorporation, CAC Form CO2 and CO7) or Status Report, Evidence of tax clearance for 2021-2023 should be sealed envelope and labelled "Technical Proposal".

Financial Proposal: The cost for the service should be in a sealed envelope labelled "Financial Proposal"

The 2 envelopes should be in one sealed envelope labelled **EOI/052/2024 and ENGAGEMENT OF TAX CONSULTANCY FIRM**, submitted to MSI Nigeria Reproductive Choices Nigeria, Plot 59 Anthony Enahoro Street, off Okonjo-Iweala Road, Utako District, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. **All documentation should not exceed 20 pages.**

**For all your family planning services and reproductive health questions, concerns, and referral services, call our toll-free numbers: 22252 or 08000022252 and WhatsApp/SMS 09099022252. Follow us on all social media platforms @msichoicesng.**

Signed:

For MSI Nigeria Reproductive Choices  
Country Director

www.guardian.ng

# Transport & Tourism



MARITIME



AVIATION



HOSPITALITY & TOURISM



MOTORING



ROADS & RAILS

## ‘Why recertification of Lagos, Abuja airports matters for industry, growth’

*The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) recently recertified the Lagos and Abuja airports for local and international services. Stakeholders recorded the endorsement as a plus for the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) and the new found drive to overhaul the critical facilities, JOKE FALAJU reports.*

RECERTIFICATION of the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, and its sister facility, Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (NAIA), Abuja, came to many as a good news of great tidings.

The feat was obtained after the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) resolved all the outstanding Corrective Action Plan (CAP), comprising 136 items for Lagos Airport and 29 items for Abuja Airport.

Indeed, in the last four years after the expiration of the certification in 2020, Nigeria has been unable to meet up with the CAP details – a major set-back responsible for the revocation of the country’s Federal Aviation Administrator (FAA) Category One Status. Yet, it is one status that is crucial for international airlines’ patronage of Nigeria.

Specifically to regain its FAA Category One status, Nigeria must pass safety audits conducted by the FAA, which includes eight key elements such as primary aviation legislation, technical guidance, and certification obligations. Until then, the country will continue to face restrictions on its international flights, resulting in lost revenue and opportunities.

Already undoing the past errors, the recent recertification by the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), is a pointer to good preparation for the international validation.

Industry experts commended Nigeria for the feat after four years of waiting. The Acting Director-General of the NCAA, Capt. Chris Najomo, during the handing over of the certificate to the FAAN Managing Director (MD), Olunmi Kuku, had maintained that the re-certification was in line with International Civil Aviation Standard that required certification of aerodromes used for international operations.

Going down memory lane, he noted that the standard became applicable in 2003. While Nigeria initially complied with this provision by certifying two international airports in 2017, the three-year duration of those certificates lapsed in November 2020 in line with the Nigeria Civil Aviation Regulations in force then.

According to Najomo, NCAA and FAAN worked assiduously in ensuring closure of the critical certification findings as required by the regulations, maintaining that the renewal of

### Aviation workers rally behind Najomo

THE Joint Action Congress (JAC), an umbrella body of the various aviation unions, has rallied behind the confirmation of Capt. Chris Najomo as the substantive Director-General of the Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA).

The congress, representing unionists at the NCAA, rose from their recent extraordinary leadership meeting, expressing confidence in the leadership of the apex regulatory body for aviation, as currently led by Najomo, in acting capacity.

JAC, in a communiqué, stated that a new culture of dignity and value for the workforce birthed under the current management “totally fits into President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s Renewed Hope Agenda, and is now the driving force unlocking several milestone achievements across the entire Aviation Industry as guided by Honorable Minister of Aviation Festus Keyamo’s five-point agenda for the aviation sector.”

The workers commended several Principal Aviation Stakeholders, who have acknowledged the good work

done by Najomo to reposition Civil Aviation in Nigeria since he assumed office about 10 months ago.

JAC added that the evaluation and assessment of the performance of Najomo so far, in line with President Tinubu’s policy coordination and delivery for all Heads of Agencies of government, could best be achieved by relying on feedback from the aviation industry stakeholder’s majority of whom have express plaudits for the current leadership at NCAA.

They, however, reminded the federal government that aviation is a precision industry with no margin of error world-wide.

“Regulatory and oversight demands firm and professional leadership, which cannot be subjected to political whims and caprices.

“JAC believed that Nigeria having found a formula that works in its civil aviation regulatory leadership, should rationally embrace and build upon this formula in order to continue the repositioning of the industry into a hub of civil aviation in Africa, as led by the Minister of Aviation & Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo (SAN).”

the aerodrome certificates marks an important milestone towards achieving excellence in aviation safety and security.

He, however, added that the presentation of these certificates is not an indication that the airports are 100 per cent compliant with safety standards, but “a testament of their compliance with the minimum certification and operating requirements based on risk assessment and presentation of an acceptable Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for continuous implementation by the aerodrome operator.”

Najomo noted that the observed noncompliances have resulted into applicable restrictions and exemptions to reflect the true status of the aerodromes.

He assured that implementation of these CAPs would be monitored by their safety inspectors through post-certification surveillance activities. He appealed for continuous maintenance of high safety standards that prioritise the safety and comfort of passengers, airport users, staff and the public, “to further ensure that subsequent certification renewal processes are seamless in keeping with my mantra of ease-of-doing-business without compromise of standards.”

The FAAN MD on her part noted that Aerodrome certificates have not been active since 2020 and achieving this recertification is not just remarkable but a vital step in enhancing aviation infrastructure, which has long been overdue.

Kuku maintained that the ICAO Annexes, particularly Annex 14, provide the framework for ensuring that the airports are safe, efficient, and capable of meeting the demands of modern aviation, adding that the process involves rigorous assessments of airport facilities, including runway condi-

tions and airfield lighting systems, to ensure compliance with these global standards.

She specifically highlighted the ongoing assessments and improvements regarding the two primary runways in Lagos, and also focusing attention on the taxiways A, B, and C, which are vital connectors that facilitate the smooth movement of aircraft on the ground.

She stressed that the primary runway requires continued commitment to ensure it continues to meet ICAO standards, saying their goal is to enhance these facilities to provide a seamless travel experience for all passengers.

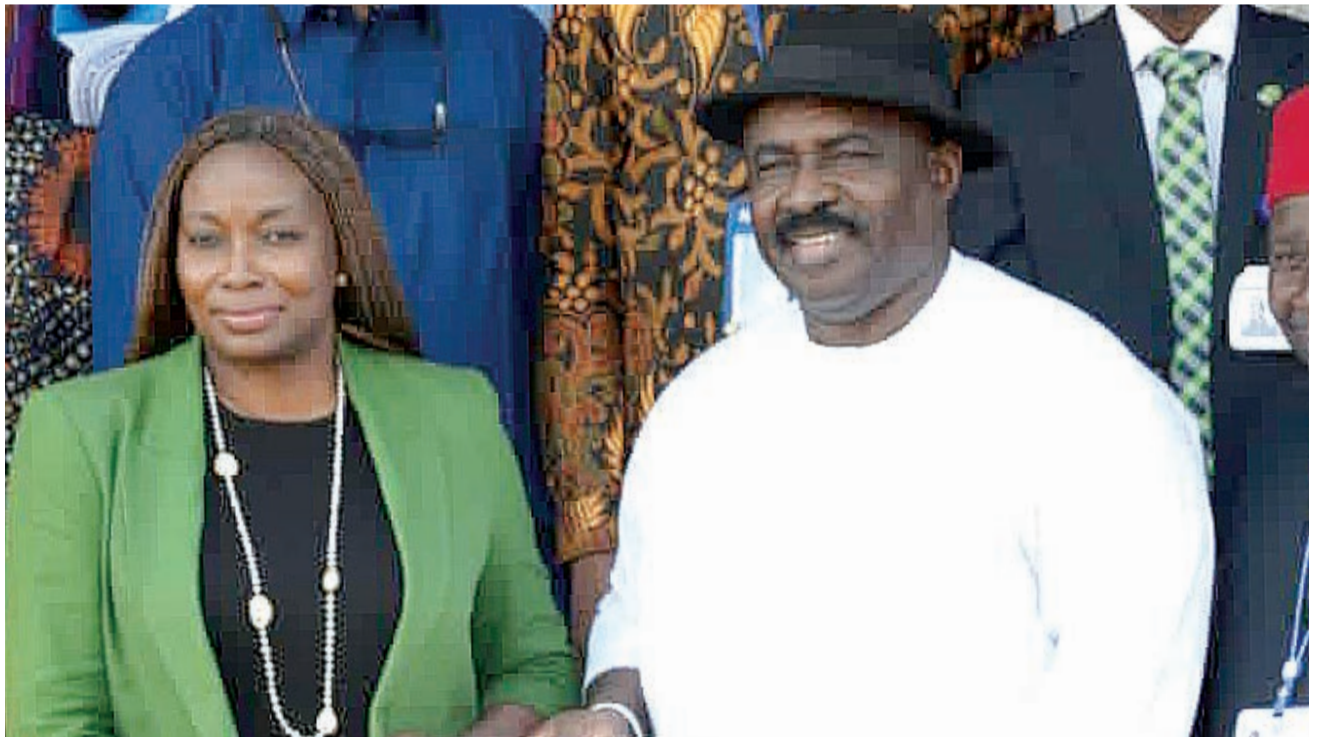
She said: “It is crucial that we continue to prioritise these improvements to enhance the safety and efficiency of our operations. We are committed to addressing these challenges head-on, and I assure you that we will allocate the necessary resources to expedite these improvements.”

Aviation expert, Mr Olumide Ohunayo, commended the hard work and diligence of the MD FAAN, “who does not talk much, neither is she out to impress people, but to face her work irrespective of the economy and the environment”.

Ohunayo pointed that Closing 136 gaps in the CAPS is not a small feat as Kuku’s coming into office and sustaining the zeal in ensuring the recertification of the aerodromes is commendable

He, however, stressed the need to sustain this feat given that it took five years to get the aerodromes certified, and then lose.

“Now that they have got it back it is important that they retain and even surpass expectations by ensuring that those gaps are closed and remain closed by continued monitoring and maintenance and when necessary certification and



Managing Director of Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Olunmi Kuku (left), and Acting Director-General of NCAA, Capt. Chris Najomo, during the presentation of certificates to FAAN.

### Boeing pledges support, trains Air Peace staff

AMERICAN aircraft manufacturer, The Boeing Company, has pledged support for Air Peace airlines and its scheduled operations.

Senior Organisational Consultant and Programme Manager, Boeing Global Learning Institute, Harry Magui, made the disclosure when a delegation from The Boeing Company and Cranfield University, a specialist postgraduate university in the UK, visited Air Peace to conduct a five-day in-person classroom training, to fortify safety culture and operational excellence at Air Peace Limited.

In a statement issued by Air Peace, Magui reckoned that

the airline has been phenomenal in advancing the local industry.

“So, we are here to support them to harness more opportunities in the future with the Advanced Leadership in Safety Excellence Training for all its top leadership within the organisation. We recognise your achievement and are proud of Air Peace,” Magui said.

He explained that all airlines know, even more so Air Peace, that safety is the number one metric within this industry.

“Without safety, there can be no business in aviation and also, it is a very important metric not just for the airline

but also for regulators, but also for the passengers.”

Magui assured that the leading global aerospace company would continue to collaborate with Air Peace in critical areas such as psychological safety, change management processes, safety leadership, crisis management and just culture.

Global Safety & Regulatory Affairs, The Boeing Company, Harrison Debrah, also acknowledged the giant stride Air Peace has made in a very short time.

He said that Air Peace would continue to be at the centre of Boeing Group’s vision for Nigeria and commended the Chairman/CEO

of Air Peace, Dr Allen Onyema for his resilience, tenacity and passion.

For Lecturer, Organisational Resilience and Change at Cranfield School of Management, Dr Fabian Steinmann, “We’re now here in Lagos, Nigeria together with Boeing delivering a course for Air Peace. Air Peace just celebrated their 10th Anniversary, so we are excited to engage in wisdom and learn more about their operation because at Cranfield, we really care about the safety of the system, making it robust but also making it flexible to adapt to the ever-changing environment.”

# Keyamo advocates capacity building in transport sector

Stories by Benjamin Alade

EFFECTIVE human resources and training are critical agents to the development of the transport sector, Minister of Aviation and Aerospace, Festus Keyamo, has said.

He stated this while speaking at a one-day women in transport conference recently held in Lagos on the theme 'Mindset plus skillset: Championing inclusive agenda for women in Nigeria transport industry'.

Keyamo, who was represented by Obiaghelli Ora, the Director of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), noted that given society's heterogeneous nature, the transport sector should be flexible to allow new women to participate.

The minister noted: "There is no doubt that human resources are one of the key drivers of transport management and administration. This makes the issue of training imperative to enable operators to acquire the right skills to

manage such a dynamic sector. This is even more important given the massive technological advancement experienced in the sector currently.

"There is a need for deliberate efforts to create an enabling environment to empower women and give them more opportunities to drive in the transport business. After all, it is said that women are better managers."

He added that the aviation sector was already championing that cause, saying, "Today in aviation, you have women occupying strategic positions at different levels, contributing to the general growth of the sub-sector."

Also, the Head of Strategic Partnerships and Investment, Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA), Kemi Williams, mentioned that the transport sector was a fundamental driver of the growth of any economy.

She declared: "Women in the transport industry is critical to address the urgent need of the inclusion of women on a large scale in the transport industry if we are to achieve the necessary balance. We have all been talking about the need to harness the full potential of the sector.

"Yet, despite its critical role, it has historically been a space

where women's contributions have been negligible and their potential underutilised."

She added that the imbalance was not solely a gender issue; it was a missed opportunity for innovation, equity, and sustainable progress.

"Today's theme invites us to focus on two pillars of empowerment, mindset and skillset, as essential tools to drive inclusiveness in the transport industry," Williams said.

On her part, the convener of the conference, Regina Robinson, said: "The event in its entirety will address challenges faced by women in transport and other male-dominated professions. It will promote gender inclusion and advocate for policies and practices that support the inclusion of women at all levels in the transport industry."

She highlighted the importance of equipping women with the leadership skills required to succeed in every male-dominated industry.

She also stressed the need to engage policymakers to influence the creation and implementation of gender-responsive policies that ensure equal opportunities for women in the transport industry.

## Lagos govt to upgrade Mazamaza Bridge for Blue Line Phase 2 project

THE Lagos State Government has announced plans to demolish the Mazamaza Bridge and build a new one as part of the ongoing construction of the Blue Line Rail Phase 2, a 14-kilometre extension from Mile 2 to Okokomaiko.

This disclosure was made by the Director of Rail Transport at the Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA), Olasunkanmi Okusaga, during an infrastructure progress report broadcast by Channels Television earlier this week.

Explaining the decision, Okusaga revealed that structural tests on the Mazamaza Bridge showed it lacked the strength to support the railway operations.

"The bridge behind me is the Mazamaza Bridge. We have done a test on it, and we find that the bridge is not strong enough in terms of

strength. So, we have to demolish it to construct another new bridge that will house the railway operation," he said.

He did not, however, reveal when the bridge would be demolished.

The new Mazamaza Bridge construction involves the installation of 66 piers, which serve as the foundational support for the structure.

Okusaga noted that currently 22 piers have been completed, representing approximately 33 per cent of the total saying the goal is to complete all the piers by the end of the year.

Designed to meet international structural standards, all three bridges being constructed in Phase 2 - including the Satellite Bridge and LASU Bridge - will have a lifespan of 75 years or more, ensuring durability and safety for rail operations.

## Chery shows innovation at Abuja Motor Fair

CARLOHA Nigeria, the authorized dealer and assembler of Chery vehicles in Nigeria stole the spotlight at the just-concluded Abuja Motor Fair with a spectacular display of Chery vehicles at the National Assembly Car Park, Abuja.

The event, which drew car enthusiasts, industry professionals, and government representatives, witnessed an impressive turnout at the Chery display, as visitors thronged to experience the innovation and excellence synonymous with the Chery brand.

With a lineup featuring cutting-edge models, Chery showcased its commitment to redefining the driving experience in Nigeria. Star attractions included the luxurious Tiggo 8 Pro, the stylish and versatile Tiggo 4 Pro, the fuel-efficient Tiggo 2, and the eco-friendly Arrizo 5 with CNG interface, were the highlights, reflecting Chery's commitment to innovation, quality, and sustainability.

Visitors were captivated by Chery's advanced technology, innovative designs, the exceptional comfort and

safety features integrated into every model. Guests were offered exclusive opportunities to interact with Chery's expert team, explore special financing options, and experience firsthand why Chery is the brand of choice for discerning car buyers.

The fair, officially declared open by the Director General of the National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDCC), Joseph Oluwemimo Osanipin, provided an exciting platform for automotive enthusiasts and industry stakeholders to connect.

In line with its mission to make vehicle ownership both easy and affordable, Chery, through its authorized dealer Carloha Nigeria, announced unmatched customer benefits, including six years of free service and warranty, ensuring peace of mind for buyers. Competitive pricing, making premium vehicles accessible to Nigerian families. And 24/7 nationwide parts and service support, reaffirming a commitment to after-sales excellence.



Head of Legal, CIG Motors, David Aloh (left); General Manager, Management Centre of Choice International Group, May Li; Executive Director, CIG Motors, Jubril Arogundade; National Head of Sales, Emmanuel Comla; Regional Head (Lagos), Omowunmi Kalejaiye and Group Head, Consumer Assets, Olajire Awofisibe, all of First City Monument Bank (FCMB) at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between CIG Motors and FCMB for an Auto Loan Scheme during the CIG Motors Grand Auto Fair in Lagos.

## NADDCC asks local auto assemblers to boost spare parts market

THE Director General of the National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDCC), Joseph Osanipin, has encouraged motor companies in Nigeria to ensure the local assembly of vehicles as this will boost the local spare parts market while creating jobs.

Osanipin said this at the Abuja motor fair where Coscharis Motors introduced Renault Taliant.

He commended Coscharis for introducing the Taliant to the Nigerian market.

### Coscharis introduces Renault Taliant

Osanipin encouraged the company to consider local assembly of the Taliant, stating: "Local assembly can reduce the car's price, making it more affordable while boosting the local spare parts industry and creating jobs. NADDCC is ready to partner with Coscharis to make this happen."

Meanwhile, the unveiling ceremony, held in the heart of the nation's capital, showcased Taliant's impressive features and reaffirmed Coscharis Motors' commitment

to delivering quality, efficiency, and innovation.

Speaking at the event, Branch Manager, Coscharis Motors Abuja, Leticia Onuzulike, highlighted the Taliant's unique features, including fuel efficiency, safety, comfort, ample storage capacity, high ground clearance, and a reliable suspension system.

Addressing the pressing concern of high fuel costs, Onuzulike said: "The major challenge amongst automobile enthusiasts in our mar-

ket right now is the high cost of fueling their cars. Taliant has come to address that with its 1.0-litre turbocharged engine. This means that Taliant consumes far less fuel per kilometre compared to other cars in its class, helping you save significantly on fuel expenses."

As part of the launch, Onuzulike announced an exclusive 10 per cent discount for customers purchasing the Taliant or any other Renault variant displayed during the fair.

## Skymit Motors unveils all-new Mercedes Benz E-Class

SKYMIT Motors Limited, an authorized Mercedes-Benz dealership in Nigeria recently unveiled the all-new Mercedes-Benz E-Class at Banana Island Estate's yearly Starlight Night.

Skymit, with close to 40 years

of operations in Nigeria, shares the mission of promoting the 'brand with the star' as well as providing Nigerians with exceptional service.

The residents of Banana Island Estate enjoyed a spe-

cial showcase of the all-new Mercedes-Benz E-Class, along with other vehicles from the Mercedes-Benz Top-End Vehicle (TEV) portfolio.

The all-new E-Class was the highlight for the night as the Skymit and Weststar team

put together an exclusive setting at the estate's entrance. Residents were also given an even more luxurious experience with a Mercedes-Benz Lounge that was located at the Starlight Night performance.

## NRC to operate special end-of-year train services

THE Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) will run end-of-the-year special train services on all its routes across the country.

The services are in line with the Federal Government's directive through the Federal Ministry of Transportation.

The NRC, in a statement by its Deputy Director, Public

Relations, Yakub Mahmood, said the modality for the special services would be released soon.

The Federal Government, last year, declared free train services for Christmas and New Year.

The statement read in part: "The management of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), in com-

pliance with the Federal Government's directive through the Federal Ministry of Transportation, hereby informs the general public that the NRC shall operate end of the year special train services in commemoration of Christmas and New Year celebrations.

"This end-of-the-year special train service on scheduled

passenger trains is part of the government's gesture towards an enjoyable end-of-the-year celebration.

"Dates and modalities of the end-of-the-year Special Train Service shall be communicated in due course. We wish all our esteemed customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in advance."

# Again, sector players seek action to end hunger crisis

By **Gbenga Akinfenwa**

FOR the umpteenth time, stakeholders in agricultural sector have made passionate appeal to the Federal Government and other key players to support actions, especially in the rural areas, to halt the deepening hunger crisis.

This call is coming on the heels of revelation by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), which projected that 33 million Nigerians would be food insecure in 2025, a sharp increase from the 25 million currently in need of assistance.

The WFP spokesperson for Nigeria, Chi Lael, attributed this to the record inflation, climate shocks and ongoing conflicts.

The Chief Executive Officer, Produce Export

Development Alliance (formerly AFGEAN), Adetiloye Aiyeola, who described the projection as a dire call to action, said the food crisis is not simply a result of inadequate food production, but a failure to translate harvested crops into meals on the table.

"Flooding, insecurity and inflation exacerbate these challenges, but the crux lies in our neglected post-harvest systems.

"Nigeria needs targeted investments in storage facilities, efficient logistics, agro-processing hubs and a robust distribution network to ensure that food produced is not wasted.

"Additionally, young people must be incentivised to participate in these critical segments of the food value chain. From innovative cold-chain solutions to high-impact agro-tech startups, opportunities abound,"

he said.

Aiyeola stressed the need for policies that safeguard small and medium-scale agribusinesses from economic shocks, noting that protecting the players will build resilience into the country's food systems, and ensuring sustainable solutions to hunger.

The Founder of Izanu Africa, Comfort Onyaga, said the current crisis in food sector is a systemic problem, and if not tackled holistically from that angle, it will continue to deepen.

She said: "The issue we are facing in the country is not an issue of production; it's rather an issue of negligence of other segments of the agricultural sector. And it's about time the country prioritise food production for the local people for local consumption, as against

export, it's about time. We can't continue to export food and expect that we'll not go hungry.

"There is no one size fit all solution to this problem, considering we are lagging on our zero hunger and the pillars of food security - availability, access, utilisation, and stability. Addressing severe hunger and food insecurity requires proactive steps with strict policy in place to checkmate the volume of food exported.

"It is time for concerted efforts between the federal, state, and local councils, including the private sector and NGOs to prioritise investment in the production of diverse nutrient dense, healthy crops and vegetables by Nigerians for Nigerians.

"The recent \$134 million loan from the African Development Bank should not be invested into production only. There is too much emphasis on production while we are struggling with post-harvest losses in the face of hunger - neglecting the post-harvest segment and value addition will be detrimental, and the vicious circle will continue if the government does not diversify food production to ensure our indigenous food produced en masse beyond maize, wheat, and beans."



Market

## NASS, minister tasked on GMO safety

By **Gbenga Salau**

MEMBERS of the National Assembly and the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Abubakar Kyari, have been urged to engage in thorough scientific and evidence-based researches in certified laboratories to check the safety of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) foods in the country.

A brand manager and ambassador for the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), Micheal Nwabufu, made the appeal when he appeared before the House of Representatives over a video production on the danger of GMO foods.

He urged the National Assembly to act decisively to protect Nigerians and preserve the nation's sovereignty.

"I stand here today as a patriot and a servant of the people, committed to building a healthier and more self-reliant Nigeria. I believe in the resilience of this National Assembly to make decisions that prioritise the welfare of Nigerians. I am glad that the House of Representatives are standing by us to kick against GMO foods," Nwabufu said.

He urged Kyari to rescind his support for GMO foods in the country, noting that the minister cannot take decision of such magnitude that bothers on Nigerians wellbeing without recourse to the people and their representatives in the parliaments.

According to him, some farmers have been brainwashed in Nigeria about GMO seeds, he said such people and farmers in their defense of GMO seeds, were saying: "It is better to eat GMO foods and die than not to see food to eat."

Nwabufu said that a lot of Nigerians seemed to be in the dark when it comes to food security: "Whoever controls our food controls our life forget every other thing and focus, This danger is looming!"

"I believe NASS knows what to do with the information we have brought, I believe in your capacity to end this. I want to hit the nail on the head, I believe none us wants to die young.

"With the threat of GMOs, without any form of contradictions, Bill Gates and his foundation have invested heavily in our agriculture and healthcare sectors, introducing GMOs to Nigeria."

## NDDC pledges to sustain rice programme in N'Delta communities

From **Michael Egbejule**, Benin City

THE Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has assured local farmers in Edo State of its continued support to sustain the commission's agricultural programme, targeted at growing rice and cassava to boost food security and sufficiency across the Niger Delta states.

Speaking at the inaugural harvest of the NDDC Rice and Cassava farmers Empowerment Programme at Warrake, Owan East Local Council, Edo State, the Managing Director of NDDC, Samuel

Ogbuku, said the NDDC rice and cassava farmers empowerment programme is a celebration of her joint accomplishment and the harvest of rice from the first farm of the NDDC's empowerment programme.

Represented by the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries in NDDC, Dr. Winifred Madume, Ogbuku said the inaugural harvest is a significant day in the history of agricultural programmes in the region.

He said it is significant for the all-round success of the farm and the adoption of full mechanisation from land preparation to

harvest, as well as the adoption of good agronomy practice.

"We can also see that the season is not stopping the programme as work continues even into our short dry season. The lesson learnt from this inaugural farm and others currently at various stages will support our efforts in continuous improvement.

"During the onboarding programme in June, we assured everyone that this programme will be successful. Today, this harvest serves as a milestone in a journey that is far from complete, but has certainly taken off on a strong footing," Ogbuku said.

## Tinubu underscores need for more agric varsities

From **Gordi Udejah**, Umuahia

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu has underscored the establishment of specialised universities of agriculture, to make Nigeria not only self-sufficient in food production, but a path towards attaining food security.

Tinubu, who disclosed this at the weekend, in an address read by the Director of Extension Services, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Dr Deola-Tayo Lordbanjou, during the 12th Convocation ceremony of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU), Abia State, said Nigeria has excellent potentials for agricultural investments.

While noting that the establishment of more of such universities was a well thought out and planned policy to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production, the president

**. As MOUUAU graduates 5,026**

said Nigeria needs the solid support of her agricultural scientists and experts as strategic game changers to end hunger.

A total of 5,206 graduands, from various agriculture disciplines, were conferred with various degrees of the University during the Convocation ceremony.

From the breakdown of the 5,026 graduates, 4,781 received first degrees, 162 were awarded First Class, 49 Postgraduate Diplomas, 252 Masters and 164 Doctorates (Ph.Ds).

The president said considering the diversity of Nigerian soil, crops, livestock, climate and the large population, he is confident that the country can provide its needs for staple foods from local production.

He lauded the university for nurturing and

equipping the agriculture graduates with relevant knowledge and requisite skills to drive the nation's agriculture growth and development engine stressing that "agriculture remains a strategic sector for diversifying our economy, while as a nation, we are looking up to the universities to innovatively drive the transformation of our agricultural sector to achieve food security, diversify the economy and broaden the base for industrialisation."

The MOUUAU new Pro-Chancellor/Chairman, Governing Council, Comrade Fidelis Ede, who pleaded that more National Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) should be channeled to agriculture students, vowed that the Governing Council shall fully comply with the statutory policy of not to interfere in the daily administration of universities but strive to uphold accountability and demonstrable results in Council's affairs.

# Politics

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## Supreme Court ruling on APGA:

# Soludo has won party control, but not 2025 re-election, says Okorie

Founder of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), **Chekwas Okorie**, in this interview with **LAWRENCE NJOKU**, faults the latest Supreme Court's ruling, which has for the second time in 21 months, conferred leadership of the party on two major combatants, and tacitly returned its control to Governor Chukwuma Soludo.

Last week's judgment of the Supreme Court has removed the control of the APGA from Edozie Njoku, where you serve as the BoT Chairman. What does that mean for the party?

It was a very strange judgment that will continue to be queried by sound legal minds. While I disagree with it in all totality, I accepted it because the Supreme Court is the final court of the land. So, there is nothing anybody could do about it. But looking at that judgment, it defies all logic. This is a court that gave a judgment more than a year ago (24th March 2023) and made it clear in its rulings that Edozien Njoku, was the chairman of the party whose purported removal was not justiciable.

The person who read the lead judgment was Justice Lawal Garuba, who incidentally chaired this panel that gave this unexplainable judgment while the current Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, was the chairman of the panel at the time. In her contributory judgment, she was very definite that the convention of APGA was held at Owerri and that everything about APGA started at Owerri. She said that Chief Victor Oye, had nothing whatsoever to do in that convention. In the lead judgment, they were also definite that Oye had nothing to do with that convention. That it was Edozie Njoku.

Now, after that judgment, INEC refused to obey it and began to indulge Prof. Chukwuma Soludo. We saw that relationship going on and went to the trial court as provided by the constitution of the country for enforcement and that judgment was enforced. They were dissatisfied; they went to the Court of Appeal. Three justices of the Court of Appeal affirmed the judgment of the lower court and dismissed their appeal.

They now went to the Supreme Court. Now, the Supreme Court, in giving this last judgment, looked at the judgment they gave more than a year ago as not enforceable; that the federal high court had no jurisdiction in enforcing it. It even went further to say that the trial court misinterpreted their judgment and that the Court of Appeal made up of three justices also misinterpreted the judgment. The question an ordinary person will ask is how is a trained judge unable to understand the judgment of the Supreme Court?

The judgment was not written in Swahili. It was written in English. The question is: if the judgment the Supreme Court gave is unenforceable, who did the judgment benefit since they said Oye had nothing to do with the convention that brought up Edozie Njoku? So, how can the same court turn around a year after to say that their own judgment did not benefit anybody? Can the Supreme Court make an unambiguous judgment that no other person can understand except themselves? All these things are intertwined in that controversial judgment. But we will accept it because it is the final court of the land. We give up the struggle. Things like this have happened in this country before and it is not good for our system.

Some years ago, when former President Muhammadu Buhari had his election petition against former President Umaru Yar'Adua, we went to the Court of Appeal for the judgment. The lead judgment lasted for less than one hour but the minority judgment lasted for over four hours. We were wondering why, and information came that the minority judgment was intended to be the lead judgment, which led the Judge who was assigned to read it to go the extra mile for an extensive research to enable him give a judgment that will stand a test of time but overnight, it was now told that the judgment will be a minority judgment if he insisted on reading it. He insisted he must read it. We sat in court for over five hours. He refused to abridge that judgment and it became controversial at that time. When you read that minority judgment, you will know where the justice was.

Those who benefitted from the judgment rewarded the judges at the end of the day. All these things happened in this country. It is unfortunate that the last court of the land will act in a manner that is less than satisfactory and many Nigerians have responded to the shocking news of this judgment.

If Edozie Njoku had won all these cases from the High Court

to the Court of Appeal, and now the Supreme Court reversed itself to say that a judgment they gave a year after did not benefit anybody but this time around, it benefitted somebody, it is difficult for somebody to understand it.

The attitude of Chief Edozie Njoku and me is to be law abiding and stop further litigation in spite of our reservations. That is the way we have taken it. It is a pyrrhic victory for Prof. Soludo in that whatever he did to end this is only temporary. What he has achieved is perhaps to earn an automatic ticket to run for governorship election next year. The election is in November next year. Perhaps, this is what he wanted when he never accepted reconciliation. Now that he has succeeded, APGA is divided and if by 2025, he is not able to make it, would that have justified all the exposure of the resources of the government in fighting this gruesome battle for the control of the party? The real battle is in 2027 and APGA under Soludo's control can only have meaning if Soludo wins his re-election. He must win his election for this to be meaningful.

**You think this latest judgment of the Supreme Court was highly influenced?**

That is a question that will be answered in due course. Time on its own will provide a suitable answer to their action. What they did defied logic. For the Supreme Court's second judgment on a matter it had given an earlier judgment, a judgment that was gazetted to say that it was unenforceable is most unimaginable. If you have a judgment that you announced a beneficiary and later came back to say that the judgment was not enforceable, it is most strange. This is the first time I am hearing that a Supreme Court will give a judgment that is of no benefit to any of the parties.

The issue in contention was the convention of the party held in 2019. Victor Oye had a convention at Awka, and Edozie Njoku had his own at Owerri where he was elected the same day. That was on 31 May 2019 and the Supreme Court looked at the issue and said that Njoku was the authentic chairman. How can we now return to the same court a year after to annul its own judgment? That is what anybody who knows better should worry about. It means anybody can wake up one day to challenge an existing judgment of the Supreme Court and get it reviewed in his favour. We have accepted this judgment, not because it is justice but because it was given by the highest court in the land.

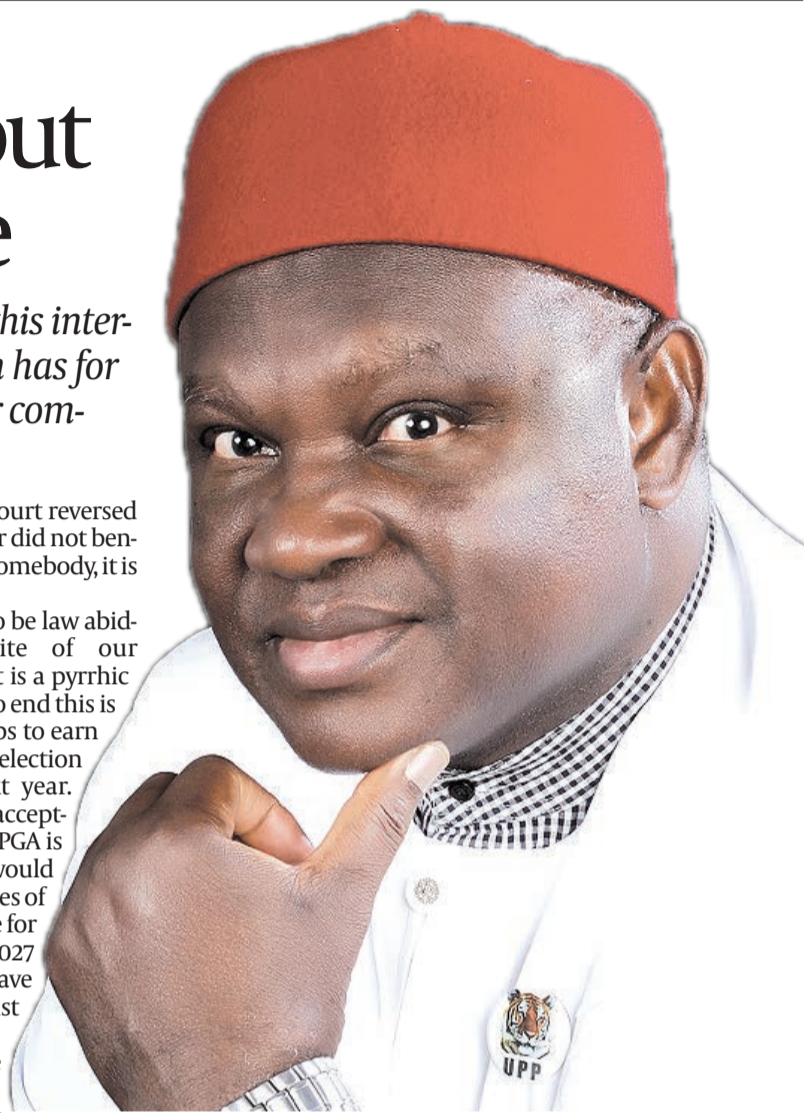
**This is the second time you have been pushed to the receiving end since you registered APGA several years ago. Are you going to quit the party like you did the other time?**

Let me start by saying that my search for APGA took me seven years of two attempts before we succeeded at the third attempt. There is nothing that will make me entirely abandon APGA or work against APGA because that is my place in history. There is no court that can review my founding of APGA and say I am no longer the founder of APGA. That one is permanent. It is a fact of our political history and APGA is the first political party that was founded by an Igbo man.

So, it gives me a special place in political history. Now, this has happened, there is nothing like a former founder. So, I remain the founder and will still have my eye on the party no matter where I am. Those who have remained loyal to me in spite of all my travails have called me since this thing broke out, and I have said to them that I must continue to provide direction. For as long as I am still strong and mentally alert, I will continue to serve. APGA was designed to promote all that a political party can promote.

We are restructuring. We have resource control; we have self-determination and ethnic nationalities, which are critical to the unity of this country. We have citizenship rights and all sorts of progressive underpinnings are enshrined in the party constitution. These are things I hold dear in my heart and continue to pursue wherever I find myself. There is no way anybody will retire me from politics while I am still alive. It is not possible.

I have never used any position that I had occupied to short-change my people. So, there is nothing that will make me feel disappointed. I only feel for Professor Soludo because he has



Okorie

*Can the Supreme Court make an unambiguous judgment that no other person can understand except themselves? All these things are intertwined in that controversial judgment. But we will accept it because it is the final court of the land*

created a huge challenge for himself. He has defied the reconciliation and deployed more energy and resources to do what he had done now. The challenge facing him is to win the Anambra election in November. I will not work against him. I will stand and watch and if God gives us life, we will rebuild APGA.

**Are you saying that even if Soludo invites you to work with him to rebuild APGA you will not go?**

No, it cannot be like that. The reason I left APGA the other time is because of this same thing that happened. Justice was then cornered and Victor Umeh, who was our Treasurer (that never went to any convention because a Treasurer was not in the line of succession of any organisation) was recognised by INEC as chairman of the party. So, I said I cannot sit here and accept Victor Umeh as my chairman. I moved and founded the UPP to pursue the same objective.

The same thing is repeating itself. I cannot accept the leadership that has been imposed on APGA. But I thank God that APGA is still alive. The truth is that despite all the machinations that have confined APGA in one state for 22 years, it is still the oldest surviving party in Nigeria. It is something to be grateful to God for.

I would like to see APGA outlive all of us and continue to make contributions. I will also like to see APGA go back to its original path and position. But as for bringing my support to the imposition, that is unacceptable to me, and will run against my principles. I will not do that. This is because there is nothing I did not do to get Soludo to the negotiating table. He said he would use everything available to him as governor to ensure that Edozie Njoku is not National Chairman.

Let us say he has succeeded but it is a pyrrhic victory because November next year will determine if his gamble has worked or not. If it works, he will be testing another four years, which is not too far and still the party will remain. He has fragmented APGA. The way he has cornered the judgment may not be the way he will corner the Anambra election. He will still leave the party and move on.



**IMPACT**  
Immunization Plus and Malaria Progress by Accelerating  
Coverage and Transforming Services



## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA KANO STATE

**Nigeria Improved Child Survival Program for Human Capital MPA (P167156)**

**Publication Issued Date: December 6, 2024**

### REQUEST FOR BIDS (RFB)

**Upgrading of 187 Selected Public Health Centers (PHCs) in Kano State of Nigeria**

#### INTRODUCTION:

The Federal Government of Nigeria, on behalf of the Kano State Government has received a Credit from the World Bank towards the cost of improving the utilization and quality of immunization plus and malaria services in selected states of the federation and intends to apply part of the proceeds towards the payments for the Upgrading of 187 Selected Public Health Centers (PHCs) in Kano State.

The Kano State Government, through the Project Implementation Unit now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the Upgrading of 187 Selected Public Health Centers (PHCs) in Kano State as detailed below.

Lots No.	Contract Description	Contract Number	Bid Security
1	Upgrading of 19 PHCs in Albasu, Garko, Sumaila, Takai & Wudil LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/A	Twenty-Five Million Naira (N25Million)
2	Upgrading of 19 PHCs Ajingi, Gaya, Warawa, Wudil & Dawakin Kudu LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/B	Twenty-Seven Million Naira (N27Million)
3	Upgrading of 19 PHCs in Bichi, Bagwai, Kunchi/Ghari, Shanono & Tsanyawa LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/C	Twenty-Seven Million Naira (N27Million)
4	Upgrading of 19 PHCs in Bichi, Dambatta, Makoda, Dawakin Tofa, Rimin Gado & Tofa LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/D	Twenty-Seven Million Naira (N27Million)
5	Upgrading of 19 PHCs in Bebeji, Doguwa, Kibiya, Rano, & Tudun Wada LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/E	Thirty-One Million Naira (N31Million)
6	Upgrading of 16 PHCs in Bebeji, Bunkure, Kura, Garun Mallam & Kumbotso LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/F	Twenty Million Naira (N20Million)
7	Upgrading of 19 PHCs in Gabasawa, Gezawa, Minjibir, Nassarawa & Ungogo LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/G	Twenty-Six Million Naira (N26Million)
8	Upgrading of 19 PHCs in Gwarzo, Kabo, Karaye, Kiru, & Rogo LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/H	Twenty-Seven Million Naira (N27Million)
9	Upgrading of 19 PHCs in Ungogo, Kano Municipal, Fagge, Dala & Dawakin Tofa LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/I	Thirteen Million Naira (N13Million)
10	Upgrading of 19 PHCs in Gwale, Kano Municipal, Tarauni, Kumbotso, Madobi & Kiru LGAs of Kano State	KN/IMPACT/W/001/10/2024/J	Twenty Million Naira (N20Million)

This is a single package but will be awarded on lot basis. Only 1 Lot will be awarded to a successful bidder.

#### BIDDING PROCEDURES:

Bidding will be conducted through the National Competitive Bidding (NCB) procedures as specified in the World Bank's Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers 2020 ("Procurement Regulation") and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulation. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 3.14 to 3.17 in the "Procurement Regulation" on the Conflict of Interest.

#### INVITATION:

Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information in writing from State Project Implementation Unit (SPIU), through the Program Manager (PM) or Email: [piukanoimpactproject@gmail.com](mailto:piukanoimpactproject@gmail.com) and may also inspect the bidding documents during office hours between 9.00 a.m – 4.00 p.m, Monday – Friday at the address given below.

#### PAYMENT FOR BIDDING DOCUMENTS:

A complete set of bidding documents in English Language may be purchased by interested eligible bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of One Hundred Thousand Naira (N100,000.00) for the package. The method of payment will be by Bank Draft issued in favor of Kano State Immunization Plus and Malaria Progress by Accelerating Coverage and Transforming Services (IMPACT) Project. A copy of the Bidding Document can be sent to the bidder upon a written request through a courier firm at the service cost to the bidder.

#### BIDS SUBMISSION AND OPENING:

Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before Friday, December 20, 2024 by 10:00a.m. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. LATE BIDS WILL BE REJECTED. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders' designated representatives and anyone who choose to attend at the address below by 10.00a.m. on Friday, December 20, 2024.

The address referred to above is:

The Project Manager,  
IMPACT Project,  
State Primary Health Care Management Board,  
Na'ibawa Zaria Road, Opposite Gidan Fiat, P.M.B 3295,  
Kano State, Nigeria.  
Telephone: +2348065581226, +2348035307255  
Email: [piukanoimpactproject@gmail.com](mailto:piukanoimpactproject@gmail.com)



## PUBLIC NOTICE

### PUBLIC DISPLAY OF APPLICATION DOSSIER FOR CONFINED FIELD TRIAL (CFT) OF GENE EDITED CASSAVA RESISTANT TO CASSAVA BACTERIAL BLIGHT (CBB)

In accordance with the National Biosafety Management Agency Act 2015 (as amended), which requires that before any permit is granted for intentional release of GMO's there must be a public display of the biosafety applications for comments and contributions.

The National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) hereby announces a twenty-one (21) day public notice of the display of an application dossier by National Root Crops Research Institute Umudike, Abia State for the Confined field trial of Genetically Modified Cassava resistant to Cassava Bacterial Blight. This display will take effect from Friday, 6th December 2024, to Friday, 27th December 2024, to enable the public to provide input that will facilitate informed decisions on the application.

#### 2. Description of the Proposed CFT:

The Confined Field Trial is for the purpose of evaluating the performance of edited cassava lines in confined field trial site to confirm its resistance to CBB, by targeting the MeSWEET10A gene, which serves as a susceptibility gene for the establishment of the disease in cassava.

#### 3. Display Centers are:

##### Physical Display Centers:

- Department of Biosafety Enforcement and Operations - **National Biosafety Management Agency, Plot 3, Kalahari Close, Off ICS Drive, Dakibiyu, Jabi, Abuja.**
- Office of the Executive Director- **Forest Research Institute of Nigeria, Ibadan, Oyo State**
- Office of the Executive Director- **Institute for Agricultural Research, Zaria, Kaduna State**
- Office of the Executive Director- **National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike, Abia State**

##### Online Display Centers

- Website of the National Biosafety Management Agency; [www.nbma.gov.ng](http://www.nbma.gov.ng)

#### 4. Display duration

Date: **Friday 6th December, 2024 to Friday 27th December, 2024**  
Time: **8:00am – 4:00pm**

**ALL COMMENTS SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO, NATIONAL BIOSAFETY MANAGEMENT AGENCY ON OR BEFORE 27TH DECEMBER 2024.**

E-mail: [nbma@nbma.gov.ng](mailto:nbma@nbma.gov.ng) [biosafetyng@gmail.com](mailto:biosafetyng@gmail.com)

**Signed:**

**Director-General/Chief Executive Officer NBMA**



## CHRISTOFFEL BLINDEN MISSION (CBM) INTERNATIONAL

### INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SUPPLY OF A TOYOTA LAND CRUISER PRADO.

**PRF NO: NG-0903-2024-CBM**

Christoffel Blinden Mission (CBM) is an international Christian development organization that works to improve the lives of persons with disabilities in the poorest parts of the world, and to prevent avoidable disability. Over the years, CBM International has been supporting the Nigerian government through various implementing partners in interventions, such as eye health, mental health, obstetric fistula and disability-inclusive development.

In line with achieving the major objective for this mission, CBM International is soliciting competitive, sealed bids from reputable companies to establish a contract for the supply and delivery of a Toyota Land Cruiser Prado 2024 Model with the specifications as detailed below:

S/N	ITEM	SPECIFICATION
1.	Engine	Turbocharged 2.4liter Four-Cylinder
2.	Transmission	8-speed automatic transmission
3.	Hybrid battery	1.87-kWh NiMH battery
4.	Drivetrain	Full-time 4x4 with a two -speed transfer case
5.	Power; Torque and Towing Capacity	326hp; 465 lbf and 6000lbs
6.	Wheelbase; overall length; overall width with mirrors; overall height; Ground Clearance and Running ground base.	112.2in; 193.7; 84.2inch; 73.2; 8.7in; 8.3in.
7.	Approach/Breakover/Departure angles	30.0/25/22 (degrees); 31.0/25/22 (degrees)
8.	Wheels	18-in. alloy; (20-in. optional on the Land Cruiser Grade)
9.	Tires	245/70R18; 265/70R18

Interested and suitably qualified dealers or suppliers should request complete Tender information (RFP) on or before Tuesday via email below:

Email: [Jobs.Nigeria@cbm.org](mailto:Jobs.Nigeria@cbm.org)

Phone: +234 90 1033 2661

The Request for Proposal (RFP) will provide further clarification and all relevant information in detail.

The bid submission documents will be submitted via email to:

[procurement.nigeria@cbm.org](mailto:procurement.nigeria@cbm.org)

Please quote BMZ N°: NG-0903-2024-CBM in all communication.

## Expert affirms malaria vaccine safety amid controversy

By Ijeoma Nwanosike

**A**MID controversy and public safety concerns surrounding the new malaria vaccine since its endorsement and approval by the World Health Organisation (WHO) last year, a vaccine research and development expert, Dr Simon Agwale has reaffirmed the safety and efficacy of the vaccine.

The President of Innovative Biotech, Dr Simon Agwale gave clarity to the malaria vaccine debate and affirmed the safety and efficacy of the malaria vaccine, which has undergone extensive clinical trials across several African countries.

Agwale told *The Guardian* that the vaccine, now licensed for global use, has proven to protect against malaria, particularly in children.

"This vaccine has been in development for years. Clinical trials were conducted in various African countries and showed that it is both safe and efficacious in children. Now, with its licensing, it can be used worldwide, so there is no basis for spreading misinformation about it," he said.

As Chair of the Vaccine Technology Working Group at the African Vaccine Manufacturing Initiative (AVMI), Agwale detailed the rigorous processes vaccines undergo before they reach the public.

He equally highlighted the step-by-step testing process, starting with toxicity studies in animals to ensure safety, followed by multi-phase clinical trials in humans. The expert explained that "each stage of vaccine development requires regulatory approval and upon completing phase three trials, the vaccine's ef-

fectiveness is calculated, determining its efficacy; often expressed as percentages like 70 per cent or 90 per cent. The vaccine is then licensed for mass production following the completion of all clinical trials.

"In phase one, a small group of 20 to 30 volunteers is used to confirm the vaccine's safety in humans after animal studies. If successful, this progresses to phase two, involving a larger group of 200 to 500 people, to evaluate immune response and protection. Phase three focuses on efficacy, testing the vaccine's ability to protect against the disease on a larger scale. At every step, regulatory approvals are required. Once these trials are completed, the vaccine's efficacy is calculated, leading to its licensing for public use," he explained.

Agwale also expressed concern about misinformation and hesitancy surrounding vaccine uptake, urging the public to rely on credible scientific sources. "It's unfortunate that resistance comes from those without any understanding of vaccine development. The drugs we take daily, such as Panadol, antibiotics, polio, and hepatitis B vaccines, all followed the same rigorous process," he remarked.

He questioned why vaccines are singled out when other widely used products, such as imported beverages and medications, could have been misused if there were malicious intentions.

He emphasised that vaccines, often administered just a few times in a lifetime, are an unlikely vehicle for such conspiracies compared to more frequently consumed

# New drug shows promise for severe asthma attacks

By Ijeoma Nwanosike

**R**ESearchers have found that an injection given during some asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) attacks reduces the need for further treatment by 30 per cent, which is more effective than the current treatment of steroid tablets.

The researchers from King's College London in a recent trial study published in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* showed that an already available drug, Benralizumab can be re-purposed in emergency settings to reduce the need for further treatment and hospitalisations during attacks.

Benralizumab is a monoclonal antibody currently used to treat severe asthma, targeting specific white blood cells, called eosinophils to reduce lung inflammation.

According to the researchers, while for over 50 years, steroid drugs have been the mainstay medication for asthma exacerbation; the trials have revealed that a single dose can be more effective when injected at the point of asthma exacerbation compared to steroid tablets.

They reported that the injection treats symptom flare-ups called 'eosinophilic exacerbations' and includes symptoms such as wheezing, coughing and chest tightness due to inflammation resulting from high

amounts of eosinophils (a type of white blood cell).

Eosinophilic exacerbations make up to 30 per cent of COPD flare-ups and almost 50 per cent of asthma attacks and can become more frequent as the disease progresses, leading to irreversible lung damage in some cases.

The report explained that steroids such as prednisolone can reduce inflammation in the lungs; however, they have severe side effects such as diabetes and osteoporosis.

They also noted that many

patients fail treatment and need repeated courses of steroids, re-hospitalisation or die within 90 days. For the study, the investigators randomised people at high risk of asthma or COPD attack into three groups, one receiving benralizumab injection and dummy tablets, one receiving standard of care including 30mg of prednisolone daily for five days along with a dummy injection and the third group receiving both benralizumab injections, as well as standard of care.

They found respiratory

symptoms of cough, wheezing, breathlessness and sputum to be better with benralizumab after 28 days and after ninety days, there were four times fewer people in the benralizumab group that failed treatment compared to standard of care using prednisolone.

A professor and the lead investigator of the trial, Mona Bafadhel said that asthma causes about 3.8 million deaths worldwide, but the new result could be a game-changer for people with asthma and COPD.



Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Abayomi Oyebanji (left) and Director General, National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), Dr Temitope Ilori during the DG NACA visit to the Governor on Eliminating mother to child transmission of HIV and Sustaining the HIV response in Ekiti State.

## Abia approves N500m for civil servants' health insurance scheme

From Gordii Udeajah, Umuahia

**A**BIA State government has approved N500 million as counterpart funding for the public servants' health insurance scheme.

The Information Commissioner, Okey Kanu, who announced this after the State's executive council meeting, urged all government workers in the state to enrol in the scheme.

He hinted that the state would provide 2.5 per cent of the five per cent required to register in the scheme for the first three months.

"Usually, workers are supposed to contribute five per cent from their basic salary every month but the governor has agreed to pay 2.5 per cent of that instead to encourage them to enrol in the scheme," he said.

The commissioner also announced that the state government has approved the comprehensive upgrade and remodelling of Abia State University Teaching

Hospital (ABSUTH), Aba in line with the governor's transformation agenda in the health sector.

He said the Abia State Specialist Hospital, Umuahia has regained the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria's accreditation status for the training of medical interns, adding that the accreditation came with an increase in the training quota from 24 to 36 interns.

He described the development as a major milestone in the health sector of the state.

The State's Health Commissioner, Prof Enoch Uche, said employees would start accessing the health insurance services in three months.

Under the scheme, Uche explained that government employees are entitled to four dependents in addition to their spouses, adding that modalities are being worked out to accommodate workers in the informal sector.

# Don urges FG to curb disparities in healthcare for vulnerable patients

By Ijeoma Nwanosike

**F**OLLOWING the rising prevalence of Human Immunodeficiency Virus-Associated Nephropathy (HIVAN) in Nigeria and the alarming financial strain it places on patients requiring dialysis, an expert has called on the Federal Government to subsidise dialysis costs and prioritise comprehensive care for individuals living with HIV.

HIVAN is a kidney disorder directly linked to HIV, which can lead to chronic kidney disease or even kidney failure if left untreated. These effects on the kidneys can be acute or chronic, potentially leading to kidney failure.

Chronic Kidney Diseases (CKD) such as HIVAN, are specific to HIV infection and while the prevalence varies geographically, reports show that Africa has the highest prevalence of CKD in people living with HIV infection.

The latest publication on

## • 'Patients spend N150,000 weekly on dialysis'

Medscape titled 'HIV-Associated Nephropathy and Other HIV-Related Renal Disorders' by Moro Salifu and others reported a 38 per cent prevalence of HIV-associated nephropathy in Nigeria.

According to the report, the prevalence of End-Stage Kidney Disease (ESKD) in the HIV-positive population continues to rise with about two-fold to 20-fold greater risk of ESRD compared with the general population as well as significant racial disparity in the burden up to six times higher risk borne by individuals of African origin.

The researchers noted that although HIV-associated nephropathy has become less common since the introduction of potent antiretroviral therapy, the incidence remains substantial, and the trend is toward more severe cases and increased mortality risk.

ESKD is a progressive disorder, also known as End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD), in the final or permanent stage of chronic kidney disease, where kidney function has declined to the point that the kidneys can no longer function on their own and may necessitate kidney transplantation or dialysis.

Despite the high prevalence of ESKD in Nigeria, reports have shown that only two per cent receive hemodialysis; the most widely available form of Renal Replacement Therapy (RRT) and this has been attributed to the prohibitive cost of dialysis treatment in Nigeria.

Statistics have shown that over 40 per cent of Nigerians live below the poverty line and while minimum wage remains paltry, the situation is worsened by the current economic uncertainties.

With limited access to af-

fordable healthcare and a lack of robust government support for chronic kidney disease management, thousands of Nigerians are left grappling with the dual burden of battling life-threatening illnesses and unaffordable treatment costs.

This meagre income implies that a large proportion of ESKD patients will either not subscribe to dialysis or exhaust their earnings or savings and still not be able to sustain the treatment optimally.

Also, a dialysis report by researchers at Delta State University, Abraka revealed that only 3,000 patients received hemodialysis nationwide, and 80 per cent of these patients did not sustain treatment beyond three months, resulting in repeated hospitalisation of ESKD patients, poor quality of life, high morbidity, and premature deaths.

## Education

# Minister unveils measures to boost STEM, vocational training

By Iyabo Lawal

**T**HE Minister of Education, Tunji Alausa, has outlined a new strategy focused on advancing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to enhance the overall quality of learning in the country.

Alausa, who stated this while declaring open the stakeholders' consultative dialogue on the Education Sector Renewal Initiative 2024-2027, said his strategic goals include reducing the number of out-of-school children, addressing learning poverty, and enhancing skills development and human

capital for the labour market.

The meeting had in attendance representatives from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the World Bank and the European Union among others.

Alausa emphasised the integration of out-of-school children and Almajiri into formal education, alongside initiatives such as conditional cash transfers, school feeding programmes as well as social and behavioural change communication for the education of girls and vulnerable population.

The minister also stressed the importance of strength-

ened governance and management in the sector, which involves organisational reforms of relevant institutions, enhanced oversight of programmes and subnational implementation, improved planning, resource allocation, tracking, research, and monitoring.

He also announced plans to build a robust data architecture and strengthen the education management information system to improve decision-making and accountability across the sector.

He said: "The education sector is filled with numerous challenges, including infrastructural decay, funding issues, unreliable data intake, poor capacity devel-

opment for teachers, and problems of out-of-school children."

He restated the ministry's commitment to providing qualitative education for all as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Earlier, the Minister of State for Education, Suwaiba Ahmad, acknowledged the challenges facing Nigeria's education system, assuring of the ministry's commitment to providing quality education in line with global standards and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), noting that achieving this requires collaboration with development partners, stakeholders, and the private sector.



Administrator, Grace Schools, Olatokunbo Edun (left); Executive Director, Greensprings Schools, Lai Koiki, Director, The Vale College, Funso Adegbola; Executive Director, The Learning Place, Bolanle Adewole, Executive Director, Covenant Child Academy, Dr. Delight Olise; Founder, Children's International School, Lagos, Adejoke Adebayo-Chukwuma; and Administrator, Vivian Fowler Memorial College for Girls, Olufunke Fowler-Amba at the event.

## Greensprings School, group train parents in online safety

By Divine Yusuf

**A**S part of its commitment to support parents as they navigate the landscape of parenting and family life, Greensprings School recently partnered with LagosMums, a non-governmental organisation, to present an online safety master class to parents.

The event outlined strategies that parents can use to protect their wards in an increasingly vulnerable digital landscape

During the session, Founder of LagosMums, Mrs Yetty

Williams, shared expert advice on key topics such as phishing, cyberbullying, and the dangers of fake news.

She stressed the importance of teaching children to recognise and avoid online risks like suspicious offers or unsolicited messages.

She noted that cybercriminals often use 'too good to be true' offers to trick users into clicking on harmful links.

"It is essential to help children understand the dangers of downloading

unknown apps or engaging with websites that ask for personal information," Williams stated.

The programme also explored the role of cyberpsychology, emphasising how parents' digital behaviours can shape their ward's online habits.

"As parents, we set the tone for our children's use of technology, whether we're aware of it or not. However, being mindful of our own media use and setting healthy boundaries could have a positive influence on our chil-

dren's digital well-being," she noted.

One of the most impactful segments of the session focused on cyberbullying, which she described as more harmful than traditional bullying due to its lasting emotional effects.

"Sometimes children don't recognise when they are being cyberbullied, or they don't know how to respond. It is crucial that as parents, we create a safe environment where they feel comfortable discussing online issues with us," she said.

## Firm supports early childhood education with book donation drive

By Abigail Ikhaghau

**A**S part of efforts to support early childhood education, UAC Nigeria Plc has donated books to students of Anglican Girls Seminary Primary School and Cathedral Primary School in Lagos Island.

This kicked off the launch of the brand's flagship corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, geared towards addressing critical challenges in early childhood education, especially in underserved communities.

The activities began with the launch of the book donation drive, designed to enhance literacy and provide quality educational resources to underprivileged children in the communities where UAC operates.

Over 120 students from both schools benefitted from the book donation, and were equipped with tools needed to learn.

The Chief Operating Officer of the firm, Queenette Durosinmi-Etti, reaffirmed their dedication to advancing early childhood education as a key pillar of their CSR strategy.

She stated, "At UAC, we believe that early childhood education is the cornerstone of sustainable development. This initiative represents our commitment to investing in the future of our children, providing them with the tools they need to reach their full potential. Through initiatives like these, we are helping to build a more equitable and literate society."

## Stakeholders canvass moral, value reorientation among youths

By Opeyemi Babalola

**S**TAKEHOLDERS in the education sector have emphasised the need for moral reorientation among youths, in order to shape the future and strengthen ethical standards.

Speaking at the 14th yearly conference of Association of Private Educators in Nigeria (APEN) themed: 'Ethical intelligence: Redefining educational values,' participants stressed the need to uphold values like integrity, respect, empathy, and accountability in the society.

In his keynote address, Prof. Lere Baale of Netherlands Business School, who spoke on 'Bring back the values: Building a generation of moral innovators,' said innovation must go hand-in-hand with a firm foundation of moral values.

He noted that education has always been a transformative force, shaping minds and creating pathways to knowledge, innovation, and personal growth.

He, however, lamented that as society became more technology-driven and fast-paced, values essential to character and ethical decision-making are becoming overshadowed.

"The need to build a generation of moral innovators in education is more crucial

than ever. These innovators are more than just skilled or knowledgeable individuals; ethical principles, empathy, and responsibility guide them. Their work is anchored in values, contributing positively to society and addressing current challenges with both insight and integrity."

Executive Director, CMC Connect, Mr Yomi Badejo-Okusanya, noted that educational innovations had significant implications for data privacy, equity, and accessibility.

According to him, evaluating educational innovations through ethical lens, can create a brighter future for youths and the society at large.

"Let us strive to be ethical stewards of education, using data and technology to improve teaching and learning, while upholding the highest standards of integrity. As a matter of fact, emerging trends such as the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to personalise learning experiences must adhere strictly to ethical considerations.

Similarly, Executive Director, Greensprings School, Lekki, Mrs Lai Koiki said although time and technological advancements are crucial, values are more important and would shape the future.

## Don hinges economic devt on job creation, innovation

By Iyabo Lawal

**A**PROFESSOR of Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management, University of Lagos (UNILAG), Sunday Adebisi, has posited that for Nigeria to recover from its current economic quagmire, it must prioritise aggressive job creation and investment in innovation.

Adebisi, who made the call while delivering the second Mike Adenuga (Jnr) Professorial Chair in Entrepreneurial studies lecture, proffered 14 solutions

to the myriads of problems confronting the country.

The erudite scholar, in his lecture titled: "Navigating the present stormy Nigerian economy: The new enterprise Nigeria as the anchor," said the storms of unemployment, poverty, high Human Development Index (HDI), inflation and other social challenges usually occur due to the inability of the government and society to create decent jobs.

As a way out of the logjam, the scholar canvassed a purposeful and intentional focus

on innovation and entrepreneurship, dedicated to value creations in all facets of life.

Adebisi, who is the first occupier of the Dr Mike Adenuga (Jnr) Professorial Chair in Entrepreneurship Studies, cited China, Singapore, and South Korea as examples of countries that boosted their economies by adopting aggressive job creation and intentional massive investment in entrepreneurship.

"The totality of China, Singapore, South Korea and Indonesia today is innova-

tion and entrepreneurship; it is their forte and culture of global competitive relevance and wealth creation."

The university teacher said there is no alternative to this, considering the fact that the previous social programmes by successive administrations have failed to rescue the country from its current challenges.

He lamented that in the past social investment programmes, no administration continued what the previous government had started.

Adebisi proposed a "New Enterprise Nigeria" (NEN) model, which is anchored on transparency, accountability and responsible behaviour among the political elites and the citizenry.

He identified the NEN model as a viable pathway to stabilise Nigeria's economy, while repositioning it for long-term growth and sustainable development.

Adebisi highlighted such steps to include a realistic diagnosis and accountability of the present situation, collective acceptability and

guilt for the present predicament, infrastructural projects, food security plan, stop the borrowing, and push for debt rescheduling, among others.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Folasade Ogunsola, called on Nigerians to invest in education and entrepreneurs, to address the prevailing economic challenges.

Ogunsola applauded the Entrepreneurial Studies Centre's role in bridging the gap between academic excellence and practical innovation, among the youths.

# Friday Worship

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By Taofiq Adesina Azeez

In the name of the Almighty, the Beneficent, the Merciful

“And We had certainly brought them a Book which We detailed by knowledge - as guidance and mercy to a people who believe.” Qur’an 27:77

OUR Khutbah today is a continuation of the decolonisation of the Muslim minds. In this Khutbah, we have made two major points as part of the introduction to the Curriculum and Syllabus of the Teachings of the Prophet, the Glorious Qur’an. The two points can be summarized as follows:

The Qur’an is guidance, proof of guidance, criterion for right or wrong knowledge and action and mercy to believers (Q2:186; 25:1; 27:77; 7:52; 41:3 etc). It is complete in its contents, detailing every subject without omitting a dot (Q6:38).

Any alternative to the Qur’an is, however, invitation to perdition as Allah warns in Qur’an 7:3 thus: “Follow, (O mankind), what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow other than Him any allies. Little do you remember.” Also, in Qur’an 6:155, Allah says: “And this (Qur’an) is a Book We have revealed (which is) blessed, so follow it and fear Allah that you may receive mercy.” Relevant to this discussion is the warning in Qur’an 6:116: “And if you obey most of those on the earth, they will mislead you far away from Allah’s path.”

Unfortunately, we have concocted all kinds of alternative forms of guidance for ourselves today and the results are becoming evident in healthcare manipulation, economic abracadabra, insecurity and the consequent global hardships. I ask Allah (SWT) to grant us the best understanding of the Qur’an.

The Qur’anic Coding and Epistemic System: A threat for whoever claims that the Qur’an is magic. Before the Qur’an was revealed, previous revelations had been subjected to satanic interpretation, manipulation and magical exploitation through Geomancy. When the Qur’an was revealed, it displays a wonderful distinction from the prevailing knowledge system by resisting satanic influence and

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

“Surely, the religion with Allah is ISLAM, complete submission”... Qur’an 3:19

## Holy Qur’an as guidance, mercy to mankind

teaching. The qualification to benefit from its miracles is, however, not just sound intelligence, but correct *Taqwah* (piety) which is simpler than intellectual prowess and superior to material knowledge. It is, for example, two digits above the familiar old and modern Geomantic 16 magical base (Ifa, Hisabi, Computer, Mathematics, Algorithm, magic and satanism of all shades). It is also two digits binary unlike the 01. It is *zaojain Ithnain* and while the 16 of magic merely produces 7 the 19 produces 10 and anything multiplied by 1 produces itself while a product of any figure (1-10) multiplied by 9 produces 9 (9x9=81 which produces 9 when you add 8 and 1). The Qur’anic configuration, therefore, smashed previous knowledge and pushed the unbelievers to regard it as magic beyond the contemporary art of or science of magic.

Allah explains the purpose of the 19 configuration in Qur’an 74:31 thus: “And We have not made the keepers of the Fire except angels. And We have not made their number except 1. as a TRIAL for those who disbelieve; 2. that those who were given the Scripture will be convinced; 3. those who have believed will increase in faith; 4. those who were given the Scripture and the believers will not doubt; 5. that those in whose hearts is disease (i.e., hypocrisy) and the disbelievers will say, ‘What does Allah intend by this as an example?’ Thus does Allah send astray whom He wills and guide whom He wills. And none knows the soldiers of your Lord except Him. And it (i.e., mention of the Fire) is not but a reminder to humanity.”

That is why the recitation of the Qur’an is largely incantatory and knowledge and miracle driving. It is not difficult to understand why scientists are now turning to the sci-

ences of the Qur’an for knowledge economy while Muslims bother themselves only with its memorisation and its correct recitation with Tajwid without paying attention to the lessons of faith and the harvest of its guidance and mercy.

While faith has little to do with learning the deep meaning and material knowledge of the Qur’an (Q3:7), it is the only means of acquiring the *Taqwah* which qualifies us for its GUIDANCE and MERCY. May Allah (SWT) grant us the right understanding.

**State of The Nation**  
WE should understand and be reminded of the permanent position of Allah and options each nation has: “And there is no city but that We will DESTROY it before the Day of Resurrection\* or \*PUNISH\* it with a severe punishment. That has ever been in the Register inscribed.” Al-Isra’ 17:58.

Insecurity is the cause of hunger and it does not only affect us a people, it also affects those in power in terms of reasons for unfriendly policies. It is, however, due to various *Dhulm* (wrongdoing) that we mix with our Imaan as our father, Prophet Ibrahim explained to his (Mushriqun) people: “Those who believe in the One God - and who do not mingle their faith with wrongdoing - it is these who shall have security from God’s judgment. For they are, indeed, guided.” Al-An’am 6:82.

Dua’ (supplication) is the key like Prophet Ibrahim did in Qur’an 14:35, “And (mention, O Muhammad), when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, make this city (i.e., Makkah) secure and keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols.’”

And to say *Istighfar* as Allah says: “But Allah would not punish them while you, (O Muhammad), are among them, and Allah

would not punish them while they seek forgiveness.” Al-Anfal 8:33.

Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, “Allah sent down to me two safe shelters for the benefit of my Ummah: ‘And Allah would not punish them while you are among them, nor will He punish them while they seek (Allah’s) forgiveness’. When I die, I will leave the seeking of forgiveness with them, until the Day of Resurrection.”

Abu Sa’id narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ says: “Allah sent down to me two safe shelters for the benefit of my Ummah. (And Allah would not punish them while you are among them, nor will He punish them while they seek (Allah’s) forgiveness. When I die, I will leave the seeking of forgiveness with them, until the Day of Resurrection.” (Shaytan said, ‘By Your might, O Lord! I will go on luring Your servants as long as their souls are still in their bodies.’ The Lord said, ‘By My might and majesty! I will keep forgiving them, as long as they keep invoking Me for forgiveness.

I ask Allah (SWT) to forgive our sins, big or small, previous and subsequent, apparent and hidden.

• Professor Taofiq Adesina Azeez is the Chief Imam, University of Abuja Muslim Community.

### Prioritise welfare, security of Nigerians, Ahmadiyya tells FG

• Celebrates 70 years of uninterrupted spiritual advancement

By Shakirah Adunola

THE Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at Nigeria has urged President Bola Ahmed Tinubu-led Federal Government to prioritise welfare and security of Nigerians just as the religious group commends the rehabilitation and operation of the Port Harcourt Refinery after 34 years, stating that the recent cheering news is reassuring.

National President (Amir), Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at of Nigeria, Alhaji (Barr) Alatoye Folorunso AbdulAzeez, during a press conference on the 70th Jalsa Salana, decried the economic hardship Nigerians are experiencing while the political elites are living in opulence and vagrant display of wealth.

“We have noticed that the President’s call for a reduction in the cost of governance by the Ministers and Governors has not been complied with. The citizens are daily harassed by long convoys of official vehicles on the highways. Multiple taxations are still the order of the day. The public power supply - electricity is inadequate despite the increase in tariffs and forced migration to Band A. In reality, the Nation is bleeding.”

He advised the Government to cut the cost of governance, calling on ministers and Governors to reduce the size of their convoys. “Corrupt officials must be tried, convicted and punished accordingly as a deterrent to others and state governors who are yet to implement the payment of the minimum wage should expedite actions on payments. Cost of food should be re-evaluated, made to work and address the sufferings of the poor.” Speaking on activities heralding the upcoming 70th Jalsa Salana, the Amir said this year 2024 platinum celebration will begin Friday, December 20, and end on Sunday, December 22 at Illaro, Ogun state.

He said that the theme of the 70th Jalsa Salana ‘And We Have Sent Thee (Muhammad) Not, But As a Mercy For All People’ (Q21:108) is a Qur’anic declaration which is very instructive, as the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is humanity’s noble specimen and perfect model in beauty and beneficence and leadership for personal and national reformation and development.

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

## NAHCON, tour operators plot efficient service delivery for pilgrims

LAST Wednesday, the Hajj and Umrah Tour Operators Association paid a courtesy visit to the Chairman/CEO of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), Alhaji Abdullahi Saleh, to congratulate and show solidarity with the new helmsman.

The visit was a fruit of a request channelled through the Commissioner of Operations, Alhaji Anofu Elegushi Olanrewaju as the association sought collaboration with the national agency in charge of hajj operation.

As an independent body ready to work with the mandate of the Commission for better service delivery to the Nigerian pilgrims, the group had requested for a familiarisation visit during which mandates of both parties could be clearly marshalled and well defined.

In his speech, the President of the Association, Alhaji Mohammed Auwal Sulaiman, informed the Commission about their legally registered association with the CAC, which makes them eligible for the recognition as part of the Hajj industry. “NAHCON being the body to rely on, the association’s board members decided to visit the Commission to inform them of their existence.” He pledged the group’s loyalty and support.

However, the Secretary of the Association, Alhaji Bemekun Rasheed Adekunle, stated how impressed he was with the refund NAHCON made to the Nigerian pilgrims, which is



Chairman/CEO of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), Alhaji Abdullahi Saleh (middle) flanked by members of management team and officials of Hajj and Umrah Tour Operators during the visit.

the first of its kind, and assured their solidarity to the Commission, to support and not to fight the Commission for better service delivery to the Nigerian pilgrims. The Association’s Legal Adviser, Hajiya Kehinde, stated that transparency, accountability, and honesty are the sole reasons for the existence of the body.

The Chairman/CEO, in his remarks, welcomed the association and assured that the

Commission is for all and ever ready to work with them, and he is fully in support of their resolve in serving the pilgrims and projecting a good image of the country. He further advised them to unite and boost their performance in delivering better service to their pilgrims. “The doors of the Commission are always open and ever ready to work with you as a body,” Professor Saleh stated.

## Makinde, CJ urge judges to discharge duties responsibly

We'll continue to make right decisions, says governor

From Rotimi Agboluaje, Ibadan

OYO State Governor, Seyi Makinde, and the state's Chief Judge (CJ), Iyabo Yerima, yesterday, charged judges in the state to discharge their duties with all sense of responsibility, saying that the judiciary would have a strong impact in interpreting the rule of law as enshrined in the state's 2023-2027 sustainable agenda.

They gave the charge during the swearing-in of eight new judges for the Oyo State High Court and two judges for the state's Customary Court of Appeal at the Executive Chambers of the Governor's Office, Agodi, Ibadan.

In his address, Makinde emphasised the importance of merit-based appointments in the judiciary, stating that the newly sworn-in judges were selected based on their qualifications and integrity, without external interference.

He reiterated his administration's commitment to providing a conducive environment for the state's judiciary to operate effectively without interference.

The CJ, who revealed that the Makinde-led administration had appointed 15 judges in the past five-and-a-half years, pledged that the state judiciary would continue to deliver its mandate and services for the benefit of the people.

Meanwhile, Makinde has assured of his administration's determination to keep making right decisions for the benefit of the public, civil servants and the state as a whole.

## CRIN advocates more funds to boost agricultural research

From Seye Olumide, Ibadan

THE Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN), yesterday, called on the Federal Government to dedicate more funds for research, especially in agriculture, to address the challenges of food security and others.

Executive Director of CRIN, Patrick Adebola, who stated this during a media parley to mark the 60th anniversary of the Institute in Ibadan, Oyo State capital, urged Nigerians and especially the National Assembly to consider voting more funds for agricultural research.

According to him, if the agriculture sector is developed to international standard, the issues of unemployment, poverty, terrorism and other vices confronting Nigeria would all subside automatically, adding that millions of people that somehow idle and available for crime and other untoward activities would be engaged.

He lamented that challenges of Nigeria are not about the dearth of experts, but the fact that majority of them do not have the necessary funds to work.

# Activists seek Farotimi's bail, fault police involvement

From Seye Olumide (Ibadan), Adamu Abuh (Abuja) and Adewale Momoh (Akure)

EXECUTIVE Director, Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER), Adewale Adeoye and Chairman, Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA), Lanre Suraj, yesterday, urged the Ekiti State Magistrate's Court to grant Dele Farotimi bail over his current trial on alleged defamation of Afe Babalola.

They also expressed concerns over the manner the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) got

- Reps LP caucus, Pyrates Confraternity condemn arrest, detention of lawyer
- Remanding activist for bailable offence unjustifiable, says Afenifere

itself involved in the arrest and hurried arraignment of the rights activist, Farotimi.

The duo, in separate interactions with *The Guardian*, said the NPF ought not to have allowed itself to be used by any influential Nigerian to carry out justice outside the legal principles and constitution.

Adeoye said that though nobody is above the law and that any Nigerian could be arrested if found wanting,

"the worrisome aspect of Farotimi's arrest was the procedure through which the police carried out his arrest."

Suraj, on his part, said that even though it is understandable that defamation is a serious offence against anyone, it is, however, a bailable offence.

Meanwhile, the National Association of Seadogs (Pirates Confraternity) has condemned the unjust arrest and subsequent detention of Farotimi over an alleged case

of defamation.

The group described the police and judiciary's actions as an abuse of the rule of law, saying such a posture is an aberration and brings to the fore the dark era of the military.

In a statement by Dr Joseph Oteri, the association said the invasion of his law firm and harassment of his members of staff is a clear abuse of their fundamental human rights as guaranteed in Nigeria's Constitution.

Relatedly, the Labour Party (LP) caucus in the House of Representatives has condemned the arrest and detention of the lawyer.

The caucus, led by Afam Ogene, called for judicial neutrality, impartiality and fair-hearing in the contentious defamation case brought against him by Babalola.

Also, the pan-Yoruba socio-cultural organisation, Afenifere, has described as unjustifiable the remand of Farotimi.

The Yoruba group, while calling for the immediate release of Farotimi, said that the offence for which the rights lawyer was arrested is bailable, hence the infringement on his right.



Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde (left); Ogun State Chief Judge, Justice Mosunmola Dipeolu, and Chairman Senate Committee on ICT and Cybersecurity, Shuaib Salisu, during the swearing-in of the newly appointed judges of Oyo State High Court and Customary Court of Appeal, at the Executive Chamber, Governor's Office, Secretariat, Ibadan... yesterday.

## Empowering youths: Demi Samande launches new book, 'In Her Hands'

AN award-winning entrepreneur and a pioneer in the luxury furniture sector and a supporter of sustainable development in Africa, Demi Samande, has planned to launch her book, "In Her Hands," on December 10, 2024.

According to her, the book is a guide to shaping the future of manufacturing in Africa. It is a story told from a woman's perspective and provides a toolkit for African entrepreneurs and investors to drive transformative growth and achieve sustainable business success.

She said: "As Africa is seen as the next largest economy to grow, concerns about exploitation from outside interests are growing. This book offers practical tools, inspiring stories, and expert insights based on real-world experiences as an entrepreneur and investor."

"The book, 'In Her Hands,' is a must-read for anyone interested in the future of manufacturing in Africa and the role of youths in shaping that future. The book provides a unique perspective on the opportunities and challenges African entrepreneurs and investors face. It

offers guidance on how to seize opportunities to transform the African economy for the benefit of all.

"The book will motivate emerging entrepreneurs to tackle business challenges and provide the guidelines they require to create successful businesses. It features interviews with renowned entrepreneurs, business executives and creative persons.

"I am thrilled to share this book with the world."

"It is a testament to the power and resilience of youths in manufacturing in Africa and a call to action for

all of us to support and empower them," she added.

Samande said that she would use part of the proceeds from the book to empower some Nigerian youths enrolled in her manufacturing academy, Majeurs Academy.

This project, tagged 'Buy a Book, Train a Student,' supports the academy's mission to foster technical and creative skills among students. "In Her Hands" is published by Routledge in London in paperback, hardback, and eBook formats.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

## Why Lagos must diversify key economic sectors, by experts

By Bertram Nwannekanma and Gbenga Salau

Lagos State Government has been called upon to accelerate the diversification of its key economic sectors to build resilience against internal and external shocks.

The advice was given at the second edition of the Lagos Economic Roundtable, themed, "Economic Outlook 2025 Discourse: Building resilience in times of global and domestic shocks," held at the Protea Hotel, Ikeja, Lagos.

President, Nigerian Economic Society (NES), Adeola Adenikinju, in his lead paper at the forum, emphasised the need for the government to strengthen the financial independence of the

- LASHMA reveals 1.2 million residents enrolled for health insurance scheme
- UK agency to commission biogas plant project at Ketu fruit market in Lagos

state.

He said that the state has the resources to ride on its current achievements in building a more resilient economy.

Also, Chief Executive of Economic Associates, Dr Ayo Teriba, harped on the need to create a pool of skilled population across the state as a means of bridging the skills gap between the formal and informal sectors of the state's economy.

In his address, the state's Commissioner for Economic Planning and Budget, Ope George, said Lagos remains the economic powerhouse of Nigeria and a symbol of

progress across Africa.

Meanwhile, Lagos State government has disclosed that over one million people have enrolled for the state's health insurance scheme.

Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Health Management Agency (LASHMA), Dr Emmanuella Zamba, revealed this, yesterday, during a media briefing to mark the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day themed, "Health: It's on the (house) Government."

IN another development, Lagos State Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, in conjunction

with C40 Cities, through the United Kingdom (UK) government-funded Urban Climate Action Programme (UCAP), will soon commission a new \$90,000 worth biogas plant at the Ikosi Fruit Market in Ketu, Lagos.

According to a statement, yesterday, the project, which comes on stream after months of planning, studies and community and government engagements, will convert organic food waste generated by the market to power a cold room and improved lighting.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

## UNIMED achieved feat in training medical professionals, says VC

• Our graduates constitute 90% of workforce in Ondo hospitals'

From Adewale Momoh, Akure

THE Vice-Chancellor of the University of Medical Sciences (UNIMED), Ondo State, Prof. Adesegun Fatusi, has disclosed that within the 10 years of its establishment, UNIMED had been able to break barriers and also achieved an unprecedented feat in the training of health professionals in the country.

According to Fatusi, the institution, as the first specialised medical and health sciences university in the country, had been able to train three sets of medical doctors, as well as four sets of nurses, compared to other higher institutions that had been unable to complete their programmes in record time.

The vice-chancellor, who spoke during a media briefing to herald the 10th-year anniversary celebration of the institution, said that graduates of UNIMED now constitute 90 per cent of the workforce in hospitals across the state.

The university don emphasised that the institution is not only focused on producing professionals but also poised to address critical healthcare needs in communities.

Fatusi, while maintaining that the university's Faculty of Medical Rehabilitation is the first in Nigeria and West Africa with five programmes, which include speech therapy and audiology, said that the university ventured into it given the growing demand for rehabilitation services for children with disabilities and the elderly.

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

## Glo presents Prado, gift items to winners

A CIVIL contractor, Ayobami Adejumo, yesterday, received the keys to a brand-new Toyota Prado at the Lagos prize presentation event in the on-going Globacom 'Festival of Joy' promo.

The event, held at Gloworld, Victoria Island, Lagos, also saw many going home with different other prizes, including Keke Napep, power generators, sewing machines and grinding machines.

Adejumo, an indigene of Osun State residing in Lagos State, who received the keys from the Special Guest of Honour, the Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Dr Obafemi Hamzat, said: "I still can't believe it. A call came from Globacom and the news was too good to believe. I doubted it. Could it be fraudsters? I will use the jeep personally; it will enhance my status and help me to get more jobs as a civil engineering contractor."

Read the remaining part of this story on [www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)

## Don advocates diversification of energy for sustainable devt

Urges less reliance on fossil fuel

By Victor Gbonegun

**A** PROFESSOR of process systems engineering, Funmilayo Osulale, yesterday, called on the government at all levels to become intentional about the diversification of the energy mix to tackle power challenges and engender sustainable development in the country. She also tasked the government to enact supportive policies, and regulatory frameworks that could incentivise investments in energy infrastructure and promotion of technology to fit Nigeria's local needs.

Osulale made the call at the 61st inaugural lecture themed, "Universal energy access for sustainable development: mirage or reality," which she presented at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Oyo State. She expressed concern that Nigeria loses about two per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to energy inefficiency, adding that with diversification, including exploitation of abundant renewable energy sources, gasification of biomass for energy generation and other alternatives, the menace of energy inefficiency can be tackled in the country.

## Udom-Emmanuel tasks women on family, national devt

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

**W**OMEN in the country have been urged to intensify efforts towards the growth and development of their families and the nation at large.

The wife of the former Governor of Akwa-Ibom State, Dr Martha Udom-Emmanuel, who disclosed this in Abeokuta, Ogun State, said this has become imperative because, over time, women have been a hallmark of distinction by making an impact in various spheres of human endeavour.

Udom-Emmanuel, who gave the charge while speaking on the theme, "The Woman And The Well," at the grand finale of the Annual Women Convention, organised by the Victory Women International (VWI), held at the Life Cathedral, Victory Life Bible Church Auditorium, Abeokuta.

According to her, women must always live up to their billings as special vessels of God, as much is expected of them. "As children of God, it's essential to distinguish ourselves in our workplaces, regardless of our position."

# 'Detained Okuama president died in military facility'

From Chido Okafor, Warri

**A**FTER three months of being detained in an unknown military facility by the Nigerian Army, the President General of Okuama Community in Ughelli South Local Council Area, Delta State, Pa James Achovwuko Oghoroko, has died in detention.

Oghoroko, who was one of the Okuama leaders arrested by the Nigerian military in August, following the killing of 17 military personnel in the community in March, allegedly died from torture.

His death was revealed yesterday by leaders of

Okuama during an emergency meeting in the community. He was arrested alongside Prof. Arthur Ekpekpoko, Belvis Adogbo, Dennis Okugbaye, Pa Anthony Ahwemuria and Rita Akata and detained in an unknown military facility.

The community also disclosed that Pa Dennis Okugbaye, another leader in military detention, is battling for his life in the undisclosed facility.

The community, through their counsel, Olorogun Albert Akpomudje, had sued the Nigerian Army in August after they ransacked

and destroyed the riverside community.

The Federal High Court, on November 20, 2024, adjourned the bail application of the arrested leaders to December 9 for a hearing.

Akpomudje said the death of Oghoroko was a disturbing development, and that he would meet with his family members and his team to know the next line of action.

In August, irked by their unlawful arrest, the community, through their lawyers, filed suit No: FHC/WR/CS/84/2024 between James Oghoroko

and others versus the Nigerian Army and two others, demanding N100 million for their illegal detention.

Following the demolition and destruction of the Okuama Community after the killing of 17 soldiers, the Community through their lawyers led by Olorogun Albert Akpomudje and others had approached the Federal High Court, Warri, to seek redress.

The community, through their learned counsel, filed Suit No FHC/WR/CS/41/2024, FHC/WR/CS/42/2024, and FHC/WR/CS/42/2024, which are now being consolidated.



Commissioner of Police, Rivers State Command, Mustapha Bala (Middle), and other police officers addressing newsmen on an alleged cultist, Ikem ThankGod, at Ahaoda in Rivers State...yesterday.

## Court orders probe of funds allocated to Abia councils from 2019 to 2023

From Ameh Ochojila, Abuja

**A**FEDERAL Capital Territory (FCT) High Court has ordered a probe into how funds allocated to 17 local council areas of Abia State from 2019 to 2023 were expended.

The ruling that was delivered by Justice Bello Kawu further directed the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to deposit with its registry a Certified True Copy (CTC) of its investigation report or the detailed status of the

funds allocated to the councils within the four years.

More so, the court ordered the seizure of international travelling documents of three former officials of the state government.

They are the former Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters in the state, Christopher Enweremadu, a former aide to the immediate past governor of the state, Erundu Uchenna Erundu, and the Permanent

Secretary attached to the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters, Deaconess Joy Nwanju.

The trio were listed as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Defendants in the substantive suit marked: FCT/HC/CV/4961/2024, which was brought before the court by an activist, Mr Chidiebere Ojukwu, who identified himself as a citizen of Abia State and an advocate for transparency and accountability in the

management of public funds.

Justice Kawu made the orders on the strength of an ex-parte application that was filed before the court by the plaintiff.

The EFCC was cited as the 4th defendant in the matter. Meanwhile, the court, which approved the abridgement of time within which the matter would be heard, also listed some documents the 1st, 2nd and 3rd defendants should produce before it.

## Declare state of emergency on education, Amoo tells FG

From Owede Agbajileke, Abuja

**C**HIEF Executive Officer and Managing Director, Mania Petroleum Marketing Company Limited, Dr Shina Amoo, has urged the Federal Government, 36 governors and the Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to declare a state of emergency on education.

Amoo made the call on Wednesday shortly after he bagged a Ph.D. in Business Administration at the convocation ceremony of Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo

### USOSA advocates enhanced funding of sector

State. He also called for the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and adequate use of information communication technology in educational institutions.

He said it would help create strategies that would improve the quality of education in the country, thereby putting an end to strikes, threats of strikes, poor teaching environments and poor academic outcomes, among others.

He added: "The educational sector should be improved

upon. A state of emergency should be declared in the educational sector. If you look around, a lot of people are taking their wards and children abroad for learning, either secondary or tertiary education. We need to ensure the development of the educational sector in the country."

He called for the adoption of AI in such a way that it would not make pupils and students lazy and mentally redundant.

On his doctorate, he said it

had always been his aspiration to become an associate professor to impart his knowledge to students and help mould them to become useful citizens of the country.

**M**EANWHILE, as President Bola Tinubu prepares to present the 2025 budget, the Unity Schools Old Students Association (USOSA) is advocating for a significant boost in funding for the education sector.

USOSA President General (PG), Michael Magaji, gave the charge in an interview with *The Guardian*.

## FG opens probe panel as fire guts NSIPA warehouse, N-Power tools

From Tina Abeku, Abuja

**B**ILLIONS of naira have been declared lost following a fire that burnt down a warehouse belonging to the National Social Investment Programmes Agency (NSIPA), yesterday, in Abuja.

According to the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, the warehouse contains training tools and other items worth billions of naira meant for the N-Power Programmes.

In a statement, the Minister of State in the ministry, Dr Yusuf Sununu, who visited the scene of the incident said a panel has been set up to look into the cause of the fire and to submit its findings within two weeks.

He lamented that the fire resulted in the destruction of tools worth billions of naira, emphasising the need for protective measures for the remaining items in other warehouses and assured that training for beneficiaries will commence promptly despite the setback.

## NOA sensitises on get-rich-quick syndrome, tax reform bills

From Ann Godwin, Port Harcourt

**T**HE National Orientation Agency (NOA) has urged Nigerians to shun the get-rich-quick syndrome, which is fast eroding the moral fabric of the society.

The agency further urged Nigerians to reject shortcuts to wealth and embrace integrity, hard work, and the opportunities provided through government initiatives to make life better for the citizens.

Director General of NOA, Lanre Issa-Onilu, gave the advice, yesterday, in Port Harcourt as part of activities to mark the flag-off of nationwide sensitisation campaigns on World HIV Day, Security Awareness, Discouraging Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome, World Human Rights Day and the Tax Reform Bills.

Issa-Onilu said that the government recognises that economic hardship often drives individuals toward unethical practices, noting that in addressing this, the government has implemented youth empowerment programmes, including the National Social Investment Program (NSIP) and skill acquisition initiatives, supported small and medium enterprises through grants and loans to promote entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, amid the controversies surrounding the tax reform bills at the National Assembly, the NOA Director explained that the bills are meant to entrench fairness, equity and justice in the tax regime of the country.

## Iredia, others to speak at IPI Nigeria conference

**M**EDIA practitioner, Prof. Tonnie Iredia, is to deliver a keynote address on "Democracy, Media Freedom and the Imperative of Protecting Nigeria's Civic Space" at the 2024 conference of the Nigeria chapter of International Press Institute (IPI Nigeria).

A statement by the organisation's Secretary, Ahmed Shekarau, said the event would hold on December 11 in Abuja.

The organisation would also hold its annual general conference, elect new leadership, and host its members and supporters to a dinner on December 12.

A panel of seasoned journalists has also been lined up to discuss the paper. Busola Ajibola, a press freedom advocate and deputy director at the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development, would moderate the discussion, which would feature Waziri Adio (founder and executive director at Agora Policy); Garba Shehu (director at *Peoples Daily* newspaper and former presidential spokesperson, and Abigail Ogwezy-Ndisika (a professor of mass communication at the University of Lagos).

Adeola Oluwatosin Ajayi, the Director-General of State Security Service, would also make a presentation titled, "Dissecting the Frosty Relationship Between the Nigerian Media and Security Agencies."

## Benue lauds Dangote's pact with host community

From **Samson Kukwa-Yanor, Makurdi**

**T**HE Benue State government has hailed the resolve by the Dangote Cement's Gboko plant to scale up its corporate social responsibility to the host communities.

Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Aondowase Kunde, described the initiative as "laudable."

To formalise its resolve, the cement plant, had on Wednesday before community leaders, traditional rulers, elders and youth leaders, officially signed an agreement with six of its host communities to promote development and mutual cooperation.

Plant Director of Dangote Cement, Gboko, Louise Raj, in his address, sued for cooperation from the host communities to enthrone a peaceful and mutually beneficial company, and host relationship.

President of Yion Development Association, Orver Yongu, lauded the company for the initiative, noting the negative impact of its mining activities.

President-General of Jemgbagh Development Association, Yandev Amaabai, also praised the initiative, observing that the pact between was the first of its kind since the firm was established 44 years ago.



Members of the Concerned Citizens of Nigeria (CCN), protesting against the proposed Coastal Guard Bill, at the entrance to National Assembly Complex in Abuja...yesterday. PHOTO: NAN

## EFCC denies recovering huge sums, drugs in el-Rufai's residence

From **Mansur Aramide (Ilorin) and Saxone Akhaine (Kaduna)**

**T**HE Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has dismissed as false claims that it discovered \$800 million, N700 billion cash, and drugs worth N1 trillion at the residence of Bello el-Rufai, the eldest son of immediate past governor of Kaduna State, Nasir el-Rufai.

The commission made this known yesterday in a statement on its official Facebook account. The clarification follows speculations that the EFCC discovered the huge catchment, but

described the claims as a false narrative.

It urged Nigerians to disregard the reports.

BUT, its chairman, Ola Olukoyede, has hinted of building a Cyber Crime Research Centre to tame internet fraud.

This is, as a legal practitioner, John Baiyeshea (SAN), recommended serious legislation as punishment for people found stealing the nation's commonwealth.

He charged the legal system to apply appropriate sanctions against corrupt leaders.

Speaking at a town hall meeting, themed, 'Uniting the

Youths Against Corruption: Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity', organised by the Ilorin zonal directorate of the EFCC, marking this year's International Anti-Corruption Day in Ilorin, Olukoyede, through the zonal director, Harry Erin, said the agency initiated several measures to educate and engage young people against cybercrime.

The EFCC boss, who said there was a compelling need for young people to close ranks and confront corruption, advised them to see a better future, by opting for integrity. According to him, corruption affects every age group, biting

harder against the prospects and possibilities of youths.

He hinted that some of the routes that could be taken by youths to achieve unity in the fight against corruption were deliberate synergy against graft.

The keynote speaker and legal practitioner, John Baiyeshea (SAN), recommended serious legislation as punishment for people that appropriate Nigeria's commonwealth.

Baiyeshea also recommended death penalty for people found to have corruptly enriched themselves with the country's patrimony.

## Secure farmers to attain food security, CEO tells Federal Government

**C**HIEF Executive Officer of Integrated Estate Services Limited, Dr Kolawole Anunlopo, has urged the Federal Government to ensure security of farmers nationwide to boost food production in the country.

He spoke after bagging an honorary doctoral degree in Leadership and Strategic Management, alongside other prominent Nigerians, honoured in various disciplines from the University of Brazil Campinas.

With over 70 per cent of Nigerians working in the agri-

cultural sector, mainly at a subsistence level, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Anunlopo noted that violence between farmers and herders over access to water and land in several states had endangered food production, resulting in hunger.

His words: "The current hardship stems from unending security challenges between farmers and herders, reason government must address the issues as a matter of urgency. The whole

nation has been preoccupied for weeks now with debate over the tax reform bills without giving a thought about the millions others who are off the tax net, and have no means to eke out a living for themselves through farming."

He urged the Bola Tinubu's administration to do something urgently with a view to bringing down the current exchange rate that is impacting negatively on the cost of doing business in Nigeria.

In his nomination letter, the African representative of the

university, Dr Larry Ayodeji, remarked: "The award is in line with the vision of the university to recognise and reward accomplished and illustrious, corporate, religious and political figures, who have distinguished themselves in their respective endeavours."

The Guest Speaker, Dr Gabriel Sosanya, who spoke on the theme, 'Strengthening The Educational System To Achieve Sustainable Goals', enjoined the awardees not to relent in their leadership focus.

## Flight carrying Borno deputy gov, others makes emergency landing

From **Odita Sunday (Abuja) and Njadvara Musa (Maiduguri)**

**P**ASSENGERS aboard a Max Air flight, including the Deputy Governor of Borno State, Usman Kadafur, were in panic mode when one of its twin engine caught fire at the Muhammadu Buhari International Airport (MBIA), Maiduguri.

The pilot had to make an emergency landing 10 minutes into take-off, yesterday.

Confirming the emergency landing in Maiduguri, Zagazola Makama, a counter-

insurgency expert in the Lake region, stated: "The emergency landing occurred immediately after take-off,



Kadafur

carrying over 70 passengers, including Kadafur, from Maiduguri to Abuja."

He added that preliminary reports revealed that the wing of the aircraft struck a bird, which led to one of the engines to catch fire.

According to him, the pilot swiftly responded, by shutting down one of the engines mid-air.

Besides shutting off the engine, he added that the pilot safely manoeuvred the plane back to the airport.

Makama said all passengers and crew members were unharmed.

## 'Nomadism, insecurity hindering polio eradication in Nigeria'

From **Rauf Oyewole, Bauchi**

**T**HE United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has identified nomadism, insecurity and low routine immunisation coverage as factors hindering polio eradication in Nigeria.

Chief of Health, UNICEF Sokoto Field Office, Dr Shamina Sharmin, made the disclosure yesterday in Bauchi, while speaking during the Northern Traditional Leaders Committee meeting to review activities of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency.

## Group demands 14-year jail term for cross-dressers

Others urge FG to reject neo-colonial policies

From **Sodiq Omolayo (Abuja) and Silver Nwokoro (Lagos)**

**A**CHRISTIAN group, National Prayer Altar, has urged the National Assembly to enact legislation that would proscribe 14-year jail term for cross-dressers

While lamenting the increasing rate of 'sodomy' and sexual perversion in the country, the organisation also implored the Federal Government to strengthen legislation against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ).

It maintained that anyone, who publicly supports the practice, should be arrested and prosecuted.

Addressing journalists at a press conference, Coordinator of National Prayer Altar (NPA), Pastor Bosun Emmanuel, said the production of any material, be it film, video, or publication, that promotes LGBTQ, should be considered for prosecution under the proposed law.

**M**EANWHILE, the Foundation for Cultural Heritage (FACH) has called on the Federal Government to reject the neo-colonial policies, it described as a harmful deal for Nigeria.

The coalition urged government to halt the three major pacts - Samoa Agreement, surrogacy and pandemic treaty.

The groups argued that the agreement, signed by Nigeria and other African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries, contained provisions that contradict Nigeria's cultural values, laws, and sovereignty. The coalition includes Family Action Africa, Project for Human Development (PHD); Global Pro-life Alliance (GPA); Doctors Health Initiative and Happy Home Foundation.

At a press conference in Lagos, FACH urged government to either withdraw from the agreement or push for a reservation clause.

The clause, the groups said, would ensure that "nothing or no term in the agreement shall be construed as promoting LGBT, same-sex marriage, comprehensive sexuality education, abortion, and transgenderism in countries that have signed the agreement."

The gathering was attended by leader of the committee, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III, the host and Emir of Bauchi, Alhaji Rilwanu Suleiman Adamu, and other traditional leaders from the 19 northern states.

Speaking on polio eradication, the UNICEF Chief of Health clarified that traditional leaders have played important roles in the fight against the disease, stating: "I applaud our royal fathers for being a significant part of writing the unique story of Nigeria in the fight to eradicate the Wild Polio Virus."

## Govt reiterates interest in private sector driven sports industry

From Ernest Nzor, Abuja

THE Federal Government has reaffirmed its commitment to developing a private sector driven sports sector, which it said is a key strategy for building a sustainable sports economy in Nigeria.

The Director-General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Bukola Olopade, emphasised this vision during the 2024 Isimi Lagos Festival, held at the Isimi Lagos Wellness and Polo Country Estate.

Olopade reiterated the immense potential of private sector partnerships to revolutionise sports infrastructure, funding, and talent development nationwide.

He said: "We are leveraging opportunities to bring the corporate and private sectors to the forefront of sports development. With the right incen-

tives, the private sector can be a major driver of growth in sports, and this is part of the key focus of the new leadership of the NSC."

After witnessing the Kings Cup Polo championship at the event, Olopade underscored the importance of supporting diverse sports like polo in Nigeria.

He added: "It's pertinent to encourage and support other sports like polo in the country. That is why I am also here in Lagos to back this tournament at the newly built resort and as well support private-sector driven initiatives, which we crave in our sector."

Olopade commended Isimi Lagos as a remarkable edifice

with the potential to attract tourists to the country, just as he emphasised its significance as a budding sports tourism destination.

"We must tell our stories and position ourselves as a hub for sports tourism, an area that needs more support to harness its value in Nigeria," he added.

The festival attracted notable dignitaries, including the Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, and the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, among others.

## Commission extends bid deadline for raffle project

By Adeyemi Adepetun

THE Enugu State Gaming Commission (ESGC), in partnership with Rangers International Football Club, has announced an extension of the submission deadline for expression of interest in the Rangers Dream Big Raffle Project to December 20, 2024.

This extension, according to the Enugu State board, is in response to growing interest from investors and stakeholders eager to align with the initiative.

The Rangers Dream Big Raffle Project offers private sector partners a unique opportunity to participate in a pioneering venture that combines sports, gaming, and economic development in a structured and regulated environment.

According to the Public Relations Officer, Enugu State Gaming Commission, Nwanneka Ude, noted that the recent Supreme Court ruling affirming state governments' exclusive authority to regulate gaming activities in Nigeria has created a more predictable and stable investment environment.

Ude said for the first time, investors could engage with the gaming sector free from the jurisdictional uncertainties that previously hindered growth.

"Enugu State, known for its progressive gaming policies, is setting the standard for responsible and innovative gaming practices. This project reflects the state's commitment to leveraging its regulatory authority to foster partnerships that drive community development, enhance sports infrastructure, and deliver strong returns on investment," he stated.

On the importance of investing in the Rangers Dream Big Raffle Project, Ude said that the initiative is strategically designed to maximise impact and value for all stakeholders.

According to him, the project offers opportunity to leverage a renowned brand, saying Rangers International Football Club boasts a loyal and passionate fan base spanning Nigeria and beyond. He said the club's rich legacy and wide appeal provide an unparalleled platform for engagement and revenue generation.

He added that there is guaranteed market reach, saying that the raffle targets Rangers FC supporters and sports enthusiasts across Enugu State and beyond, ensuring broad-based participation and ticket sales.



Enugu State Gaming Board says the state's raffle project will deepen Rangers International Football Club's finances.

## Wema Bank retains Nigeria Bankers Games' title

By Kehinde Olatunji

WEMA Bank has won the Nigeria Bankers Game (NBG) for the third consecutive year, beaten all the other competitors with a total of 10 gold medals.

The bank was victorious across various events, including table tennis, volleyball, scrabble, video games, 100m and 200m women races, and the 4x100m women relay.

This year's event also celebrated individual brilliance, with Bukky Olorunmaye, one of Wema Bank's standout athletes, earning the title of NBG 2024 Female Athlete of the Year.

The NBG is a platform that fosters camaraderie, teamwork, and a spirit of healthy competition among Nigeria's leading banks.

Speaking on the team's victory, Managing Director/CEO of Wema Bank, Moruf Oseni, said: "Winning the NBG for the third time in a row is a remarkable accomplishment

that reflects the resilience, teamwork, and dedication of our staff.

"At Wema Bank, we are not just about financial innovation; we are enablers of dreams and champions of holistic development. This victory underscores our belief in empowering our people to excel in every aspect of life. Congratulations to all our athletes for their exceptional performance. We remain committed to fostering excellence in every endeavor."

Earlier, the Female Athlete of the Year, Olorunmaye said competing alongside other talented individuals and representing Wema Bank was a humbling and fulfilling experience.

"I am incredibly honored to receive this recognition. This award is not just mine—it belongs to my teammates and everyone who supported us. Together, we demonstrated the power of teamwork, and I am grateful to Wema Bank for giving us this platform to shine."

## Premier Int'l School to represent Nigeria at 2025 Britannia Cup

From Ernest Nzor, Abuja

PREMIER International School, Abuja, is set to return to the yearly Britannia International Cup Football Tournament in the United Kingdom (UK) as Nigeria's representative in the youth tournament in July 2025.

Under the guidance of their former coach, Koeola Benson, the school stunned teams worldwide by finishing second in the U-13 category, narrowly losing 2-1 in the final.

Now, the Abuja-based school is ready to fly Nigeria's flag once again at one of the UK's premier youth football tournaments.

Head of School, Charles Husseini, confirmed that the team is poised for a triumphant return, noting that Premier International School's decision to participate in the Britannia Cup 2025 is influenced by several key factors, including their rich experience, consistency, and organisational excellence in previous editions.

Proven success, quality of competition, and a strong tradition of excellence make the Britannia Cup an attractive platform for showcasing talent and building on past achievements, he said.

"Returning to a competition with a history of strong organisation and quality competition is appealing to us. It offers an established platform for showcasing talent and building on previous achievements.

These factors combined make the Britannia Cup an ideal competition for Premier International School, aligning with our commitment to quality, excellence, and the development of our students through meaningful and challenging competition."

## LSC tutors gym operators on safety standards

By Benjamin Alade

LAGOS State Safety Commission (LSC) has assured gym operators in the state that it would continue to put measures in place that would help in building a safety culture and protect the fitness space.

The agency, during a recent workshop for gym operators, said that the state government has an interest in the safety of gym users, operators and all stakeholders.

Speaking at the workshop with the theme, "Essentials of safety in the fitness industry," the Director General of the Safety Commission, Lanre Mojola, said that the engagement became imperative as more individuals were now embracing healthy lifestyle through physical exercise, which has given a boost to the fitness industry.

And this, he said, poses safety challenges to gyms and fitness centres, who are open to injury risks from improper use of equipment, overcrowding, increased risk of disease transmission and fire hazards, among others.

Mojola, who was represented by the Technical Adviser in the Commission, Seun Awojobi, reaffirmed the commitment of the state to the safety of its residents, stressing that the commission is working to ensure that all Gym operators in the state understand the principle and practice of safety toward fostering a safer, healthier, and more sustainable fitness industry in Lagos.

He said: "Specifically, our objectives include raising awareness about potential safety hazards in the fitness industry, promoting adherence to global best practices and basic safety standards, instilling a culture of safety consciousness among gym operators and users, as well as strengthening the capacity of operators to identify, manage and mitigate risks."



Former Super Eagles stars, Samson Siasia (left), Shehu Abdullahi and Ahmed Musa with NSC Chairman, Shehu Dikko (second right), during the novelty game in honour of the new NSC chairman in Abuja....on Wednesday.



**Govt reiterates interest in private sector driven sports industry** [31]

# We came prepared to reposition sports, says Dikko

From Ernest Nzor, Abuja

**CHAIRMAN** of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Shehu Dikko, has expressed his readiness and determination to drive the development and success of sports in Nigeria in alignment with global best practices.

He said that he came very prepared for the job.

Speaking in Abuja while addressing journalists after a novelty match played in his honour between Team Dikko and Team Nigeria at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Dikko emphasised that sports, beyond its recreational value, is now a significant business and pledged that the Commission is fully prepared to elevate it to an enviable global standard.

He said: "We came in very prepared for the job. We have been observing and analyzing the sector for a long time, so we understand the challenges and know what needs to be done to take sports in Nigeria to the next level."

He outlined that under his leadership, the Commission has a clear roadmap and strategy to align with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

Assuring that all stakeholders are on board to ensure the successful realisation of this vision, Dikko added: "Our plans and roadmap are already in place."

We are working as a team, aligning with the mandate of the President, and ensuring that sports in Nigeria reach its rightful position on the global stage."

The chairman,

who highlighted his administration's commitment to the maintenance and improvement of sports facilities across the nation, pledged to revamp the pitch of the Moshood Abiola National

Stadium's main bowl to meet international standards, ensuring it can host top-tier matches and events.

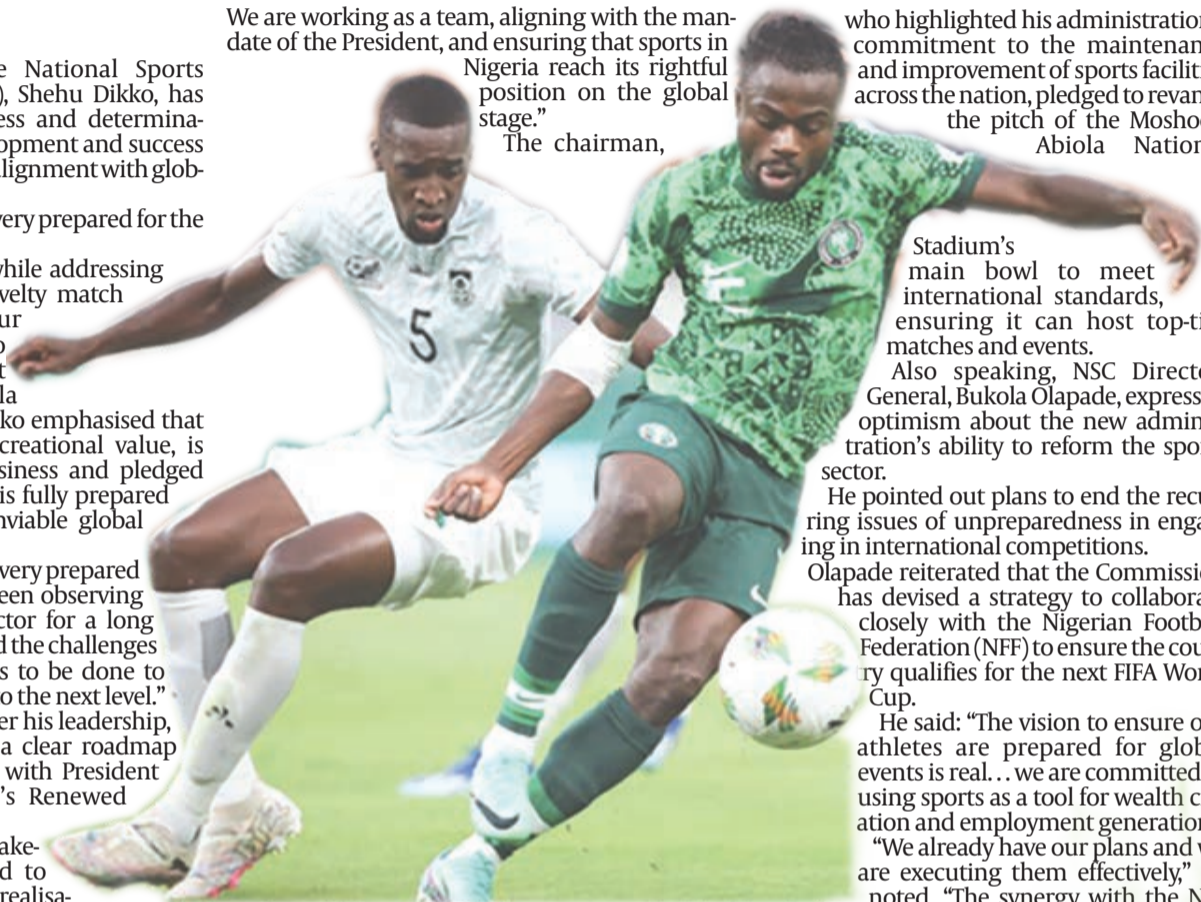
Also speaking, NSC Director-General, Bukola Olapade, expressed optimism about the new administration's ability to reform the sports sector.

He pointed out plans to end the recurring issues of unpreparedness in engaging in international competitions.

Olapade reiterated that the Commission has devised a strategy to collaborate closely with the Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) to ensure the country qualifies for the next FIFA World Cup.

He said: "The vision to ensure our athletes are prepared for global events is real... we are committed to using sports as a tool for wealth creation and employment generation."

"We already have our plans and we are executing them effectively," he noted. "The synergy with the NFF will be pivotal in achieving this important milestone for Nigerian football."



Super Eagles star, Simon Moses (right) trying to outwit a South African defender during a recent 2026 World Cup qualifier. New NSC chairman, Shehu Dikko, has promised to ensure that Nigeria qualifies for the global fiesta.

## Nigeria bags membership of World Wheelchair Rugby Federation

By Favour Azoani

**THE** Nigeria Wheelchair Rugby Association has been granted full membership of the World Wheelchair Rugby Federation, following its compliance with all statutory requirements of the international body.

This development was conveyed in a letter signed by Alison Bridge, Head of Administration of the WWR, to the Nigerian wheelchair Association on December 4, 2024.

According to the letter, the provisional approval was made on July 9, 2024 and would be confirmed at the forthcoming general assembly of the World Wheelchair Rugby Federation.

In a statement, an elated Secretary of the Nigeria Wheelchair Rugby, Fred Edoreh, said the approval follows about two years of efforts by president Nigeria Wheelchair Rugby, Suleiman Isah, who is also the secretary of the Nigerian Paralympic Committee, and members of the board to establish wheelchair rugby in Nigeria, and meet membership requirements of the international body, in the bid to expand opportunities for Para sports in Nigeria.

"Finally and happily, Nigeria has been granted full membership of the World Wheelchair Rugby Federation. It has been a long journey, and we must commend the President of Nigeria Wheelchair Rugby, Suleiman Isah, for pursuing the process to realisation."

"As former President of the Nigeria Amputee Football Federation, he worked to take the Nigeria Amputee Football team to the Amputee Football World Cup in 2018 in Mexico, for the first time ever, after they team had missed attending three previous editions due to lack of funds and faced the threat of international sanctions."

## Warri Wolves kickoff new NNL campaign against Crown FC

By Gown Akpodonor

**REJUVENATED** Warri Wolves FC will, tomorrow, begin another journey with a view to gaining promotion from the Nigerian National League (NNL) to the elite Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) at the end of the season.

Warri Wolves is one of the country's clubs with a large followership and tomorrow, the Seasideers will face Crown FC in a clash of former NPFL heavyweights at the Sapele Township Stadium.

It will be one of the most anticipated matches of the NNL fixtures this weekend.

Now under the care of one of the longest-serving coaches in Nigerian football, Napoleon Aluma, Warri Wolves FC is expected to use this clash with Crown FC to win back the hearts of its fans, especially in Sapele, a city that has been starved of top flight football action since the stadium was built by Delta State's former governor, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan.

Aluma, a respected football tactician, who was trained in Brazil, has traversed the nooks and crannies of the country rendering his services to clubs.

A former coach of Invincible Leopards FC of Warri, Aluma, who was also trained at the National Institute for Sports (NIS), Lagos, has participated in FIFA coaching clinics and also holds a CAF 'B' License.

He was part of the maiden FIFA Women U-19 Championship in Canada in 2002, and was at Olympique Marseille, France, for a two-week training in 2008.

He was appointed as the new coach of Warri Wolves FC a few weeks ago by Governor Sheriff Oborevwori.

## IOC streamlines events, lists 26 sports for 2026 Youth Olympics

By Christian Okpara

**THE** International Olympic Committee (IOC) has streamlined events to feature at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympics, selecting 26 disciplines for the Games.

On the second day of its executive board meetings on Wednesday, the IOC finalised the athlete quotas and event lineup for Dakar 2026 in a move many believe would shape the future of the Youth Games. The body also recommended Dolomiti Valtellina, Italy, as the host for the Winter YOG 2028.

According to insidethegames.biz, the programme represents a streamlined and tailored approach to meet the needs of the host country while maintaining the competitive spirit of the Games.

The IOC approved a total of 25 sports for Dakar 2026, each show-

ing one discipline, such as athletics, swimming, archery, breaking, skateboarding, and beach volleyball. "This structure aligns with the IOC's principle of creating an impactful event while simplifying logistics."

"Additionally, 10 sports, including surfing, sport climbing, and tennis, will feature in the engagement programme, offering interactive and digital activities to promote youth participation without full competition inclusion," the report said.

The Games will feature 151 medal events, 72 for men, 72 for women, and seven mixed-gender competitions, marking a historic milestone for the YOG.

For the first time in the event's history, full gender equality will be achieved across all

sports, disciplines, and events. The Games will host 2,700 athletes, providing a world-class competitive platform for young athletes from across the globe. This reduction in events from Buenos



Udodi Onwuzurike is a product of the Youth Games

Aires 2018's 241 reflects the IOC's commitment to delivering a more focused and efficient programme.

"Dakar 2026 represents a significant milestone for the Youth Olympic Games, as we embrace a tailored approach that reflects the local context while maintaining the highest standards of elite youth competition," said IOC Sports Director, Kit McConnell.

The Games will hold across three sites, Dakar, Diamniadio, and Saly, leveraging existing facilities and infrastructure to ensure sustainability and reduce costs.

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