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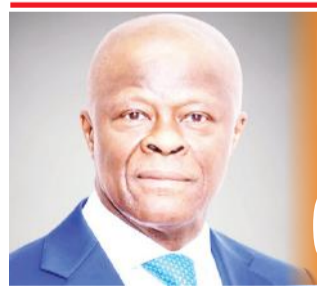


## 2027 PRESIDENCY

# MAKINDE, WIKE, MOHAMMED PLOT TO WEAKEN ATIKU'S CHANCES

- Stakeholders say PDP may implode as major actors not shifting grounds
- Count my principal out of race – Saraki's spokesman
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## FG's painful economic reforms stir public discontent as experts disagree with World Bank 22

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Akpabio's uncommon high-powered politics, intrigues, bickering in the senate



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I'm not worried about 2026 elections, I don't want to be distracted – Governor Oyebanji



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Nigerian man seeking financial breakthrough dies after herbalist buried him alive



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Police arrest woman for poisoning community well in alleged attempt to kill perceived foes 13

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Monday, October 14, 2024

Ondo 2024: Analysts predict two-horse race as 17 candidates wrestle for power



As engagements hot up ahead of the Ondo governorship elections, scheduled to hold on November 16, 2024, analysts have narrowed the election to a battle between two major contenders - the incumbent Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa of the All Progressives Congress and Agboola Ajayi of the opposition People's Democratic Party.

Tuesday October 15, 2024

Nigeria must sustain 15 years of reforms to ensure impact — World Bank



The World Bank has stated that Nigeria must maintain its ongoing economic reforms for the next 10 to 15 years to establish itself as a leading economic power, not only in sub-Saharan Africa but also on the global stage.

Wednesday October 16, 2024

PDP CRISIS: Governors broker truce, nullify suspensions



The People's Democratic Party Governors Forum has instructed feuding members of the party to revert to the status quo. The directive was given by the Chairman of the forum who is also Bauchi State Governor, Bala Mohammed, after a meeting of the governors which ended in the early hours of Tuesday.

Thursday October 17, 2024

Agbakoba writes NASS, says EFCC unlawful organisation



Legendary lawyer and a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Olisa Agbakoba, has written to both chambers of the National Assembly, pointing out that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission was "unconstitutionally established."

Friday October 18, 2024

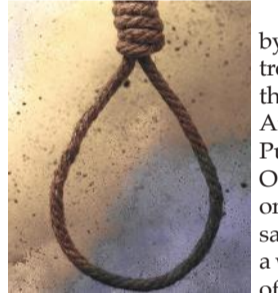
Aregbesola frustrated Oyetola's second term bid to stop Tinubu from becoming President – APC chieftain alleges



A chieftain of the All Progressives Congress in Osun State, Sunday Akere, has alleged that a former governor of the state, Rauf Aregbesola frustrated the second term governorship ambition of his successor, Gboyega Oyetola as a means of preventing President Bola Tinubu's victory in the 2023 presidential election.

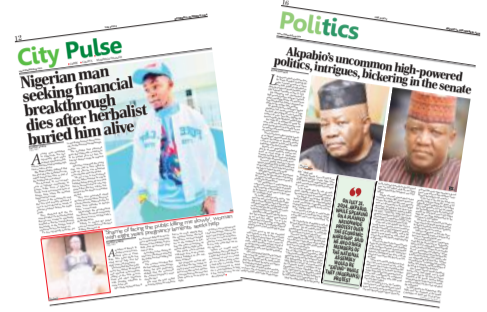
Saturday October 19, 2024

Man commits suicide in Ogun



A man, Dada Adesonye, has died by suicide after hanging himself to a tree in the Afami area of Imasayi, in the Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State. The state Police Public Relations Officer, Omolola Odutola, in a telephone conversation on Friday with our correspondent, said the victim's body was found by a worker in the area in the early hours of the day.

Top stories



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Sunday October 20, 2024

FG begins construction of dam in Benue to combat flooding



The Federal Government has announced that it has commenced work on the construction of a multi-purpose dam upstream of the River Dura in the Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State to contain the heavy water that flows from that axis.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



President Bola Tinubu returned to Abuja from the United Kingdom on Saturday after a two-week vacation. He was received at the Presidential Wing of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja by the Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Abubakar Bagudu (left); National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu; Coordinating Minister of the Economy and Minister of Finance, Wale Edun; Governor of Lagos State Babajide Sanwo-Olu; and the National Chairman of All Progressives Congress, Abdullahi Ganduje.

# CBN allocates N1.73trn for food imports in Q2 2024

FESTUS OKOROMADU

According to data from the Central Bank of Nigeria's quarterly statistics bulletin, the apex bank released \$547.7m (N823.19bn at the official exchange rate of N1, 503.3/\$1, as of June 30, 2024) to Nigerians for the importation of food items in the second quarter of 2024.

The amount is a reduction of \$142.48m or 20.6 per cent from \$689.88m recorded in the first three months of 2024 and N80.76bn or 8.93 per cent from N903.95bn recorded in Q1 when converted to naira.

This implies that the CBN released a total of N1.73trn for food items importation in six months.

An analysis of the reports at the weekend showed that Nigerians spent \$164.43m in January, \$303.91m in February, and \$221.54m in March.

The apex bank also allocated \$153.27m in April, \$197.21m in May, and \$197.22m in June.

This came as it was established that the Federal Government's plan to reduce the price of food commodities through the implementation of zero duty on selected basic food items is increasingly becoming difficult to achieve.

This challenge is underscored by the alarming increase in the average price of imported food items, which rose to 878.3 price point index in September 2024, reflecting broader economic pressures.

On July 8, 2024, the Federal Government announced a 150-day duty-free import window for food commodities to ensure a reduction in food inflation in Nigeria.

The food commodities include maize, husked brown rice, wheat, and cowpeas.

It said the programme was meant to help cushion the effects of various factors contributing to food scarcity and price hikes in the country.

The idea was to remove or significantly reduce import duties and value-added tax to encourage an inflow of food imports and drive down consumer prices.

But three months after the government announced the plans, the scheme has failed to take off, majorly due to government bureaucratic process and the failure of the Federal Ministry of Finance to publish a list of importers qualified to participate in the process as required by the guidelines earlier issued by the customs in August.

At a press briefing early this month, the Minister of Finance, Wale Edu, said the government had ordered maize and wheat imports to stabilise the food market.

While the government is yet to begin implementation of the policy, the price of imported food has continued to increase.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics monthly inflation report, the new figure indicated a rise of 30.6 price index or 3.61 per cent from 847.7 in August 2024.

Further analysis showed that the average price of imported food has surged by 72.3 percentage points or 8.97 per cent from the 806.0 average price index in July 2024 when the policy was announced and 878.3 in September.

On a year-to-date, this increase is a surge of 185.7 price index points or 26.81 growth from 692.6 in January 2024, indicating more resilience on foreign food products amidst food supply shortages in the country.

A month-by-month analysis showed that in January, Nigeria recorded an imported inflation rate of 26.29 per cent. This increased to 29.81 per cent in February, marking a notable jump of 3.52 per cent in the inflation rate



from January.

The trend continued in March, with the imported food inflation rate climbing to 32.89 per cent, an increase of 3.08 per cent from February.

In April, the inflation rate further increased to 34.01 per cent, growing by 1.12 per cent from March, showing a slight deceleration in the rate of increase.

May recorded an imported food inflation rate of 34.83 per cent, indicating a continued upward trend. The increase in the inflation rate is 0.82 percent from April.

The figure was 806.0 in June, 826.2 in July, 847.7 in August, and 878.3 in September.

FG plans 5% tax on telecoms services, others

In a related development, the Federal Government has proposed a five per cent excise duty on telecommunications services, gaming, and betting activities as part of a new bill to overhaul Nigeria's tax framework.

The bill, titled, "A Bill for an Act to Repeal Certain Acts on Taxation and Consolidate the Legal Frameworks relating to Taxation and Enact the Nigeria Tax Act to Provide for Taxation of Income, Transactions, and Instruments, and Related Matters," was dated October 4, 2024, and obtained from the National Assembly.

An analysis of the proposed legislation on Friday showed that it seeks to introduce excise duties on services such as telecoms, gaming, gambling, lotteries, and betting provided in Nigeria.

A section of the bill read, "The amount of an excisable transaction is the amount chargeable for the service by the service provider, both in money or money's worth.

"Services, including telecommunications, gaming, gambling, betting, and lotteries however described, provided in Nigeria shall be charged with duties of excise at the rates specified under the Tenth Schedule to this Act in a manner as may be prescribed by the Service."

A breakdown of the excise duty structure in the bill indicates that telecoms services, including postpaid and prepaid services regulated by the Nigerian Communications Commission, will attract a five per cent duty.

The same rate will apply to gaming, gambling, betting, and lottery services.

The bill also introduces guidelines on currency transactions, specifying that any difference between the prevailing Central Bank of Nigeria exchange rate and the actual transaction rate will be subject to excise duty.

The new tax regime forms part of the government's strategy to boost non-oil revenue amidst fiscal pressures.

With rapid growth in the telecoms and betting sectors, authorities are looking to widen the revenue base.

The bill also aims to ensure that currency exchanges align with official CBN rates, with any excess payable as excise duty under a self-assessment model. ●

## FaceOff

IT IS SAD THAT BARELY ONE MONTH TO THE HANDOVER, THE OUTGOING ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNOR GODWIN OBASEKI IS STILL ALLEGEDLY OBTAINING LOANS FROM BANKS AND OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS UNDER VERY SHADY HEADINGS.

— EDO STATE GOVERNOR-ELECT, MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

THE EDO STATE GOVERNMENT IS GIVING A 48-HOUR ULTIMATUM TO SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO TO PROVIDE VERIFIABLE PROOF THAT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE LOOTING AND VANDALISING ASSETS IN THE STATE.

— SPECIAL ADVISER TO EDO STATE GOVERNOR ON MEDIA PROJECTS, CRUSOE OSAGIE.

BRIGHT JACOB

Former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, has said that the country needs to do something urgently about the insecurity that has taken over some parts of the nation.

The call came as he narrated how he discovered that he was partially deaf when he was abroad.

Obasanjo stated this on Sunday in Bauchi where he commissioned road projects constructed by the administration of Governor Bala Mohammed.

He said he firmly believes that African countries were not created by God to be poor, saying their poverty resulted from bad leadership in the

# Nigeria must embrace community policing to address rising insecurity - Obasanjo

## POINT

The best form of security is community policing because everyone knows his/her neighbours within the community

in addressing the rising insecurity in the country.

He insisted that community policing, where members of communities know their neighbours, is crucial for easily identifying and addressing security threats within communities.

According to Obasanjo, the current state of insecurity in Nigeria needs immediate action to address the situation.

"The best form of security is community policing because everyone knows his/her neighbours

within the community. With that, it is very easy to identify the bad eggs.

"The situation of insecurity in Nigeria today is so bad, unlike during our terms in office when we prioritize the security of lives and properties across the country. We need to do something urgently about this."

He urged traditional rulers to encourage community policing in their communities to reduce the spate of crimes.

"During our service to the na-

tion, we did everything collectively, our decisions were taken together to have a uniform focus. My brother, Ahmed Adamu Mu'azu, is seated here, and he will bear me witness. Whatever we achieved then, was a collective effort.

"We need peace, unity, and collective support in this country if we must move forward. Things can be right and good again in the country, all we need to do is to get united and do things collectively," he noted.

The former President equally disclosed the donation of hearing aids to 2,000 people with hearing difficulties in Bauchi.

He explained that many people suffer deafness unknowingly until medical checks reveal to them their hearing capacity.

Obasanjo narrated how he discovered being partially deaf when he was abroad and couldn't hear clearly while someone was talking to him and insisted nothing was wrong with his ears when the man asked for his permission to check on his ears.

He stated that after the result came out, it was revealed that he was 25 per cent deaf.

"After my result came out, I had to ask the man to also check on my Chief Security Officer then but shockingly enough, he was deafer than I was," he said.

According to him, his experience informed the beginning of his Olusegun Obasanjo Foundation

where thousands of Nigerians had benefited from its ear treatments and provision of hearing aids.

He noted that he would be flagging off the distribution of hearing aids to over 10,000 indigent people in the North East, starting from Bauchi State where 2,000 people would benefit.

The former President, who acknowledged that the security situation in the country has gotten worse over the years, said all hands must be on the deck to tackle the security threats headlong.

On his part, the governor of Bauchi State, Bala Mohammed, stated that his blueprint, which includes the roads commissioned, was designed even before he was elected as governor of Bauchi State.

"I instructed them to develop a roadmap for the project that will serve our people regardless of the outcome of the election.

"I believe that leadership is not about personal ambition but about collective progress and well-being of our people.

"The project we are commissioning today is part of our larger ambition for the state."

The governor, who stated that his administration had prioritised the construction and rehabilitation of roads in the state, noted that roads are key to development.

"As of today, we have undertaken the construction of 116 road projects totaling 1482.25 km across Bauchi State. ●

## Adeleke tasks religious leaders to speak truth to power, says 'silence not an option'

TIMOTHY AGBOR  
OSOGBO

Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke has called on religious institutions to always speak truth to power, stressing the importance of constructive engagement with political leaders.

Adeleke who stated that "silence by the church and clerics generally is not an option," added that, "clerics must speak loud about free and fair elections, dignity of all human beings, superiority of public good over private interests, respect for the supremacy of the constitution, observance of the rule of law and equality of all citizens before the law."

The governor gave the urge while delivering a mini-lecture at the 7th memorial anniversary lecture in honour of the founder of Cherubim and Seraphim Church, St Moses Orimolade in Lagos State.

"As a sitting governor, I firmly believe the clerics should mount advocacy on what impedes good governance namely autocracy, dictatorship, arbitrariness, culture of impunity, self-perpetuation in office, suppression of opposition, corruption and failure to respond to aspirations of the people.

"Only a divinely guided leader can deliver on good governance, restore public faith in politics, avoid self-enrichment, resolve societal poverty, and observe the rule of law," a statement by the gover-

nor's spokesperson, Olawale Raheed on Sunday, affirmed in his presentation.

Meanwhile, the governor has described critics of his administration as jealous and envious of his superlative delivery and performance in the last 23 months, urging them to accept the new dawn of good governance in Osun state.

In an interview with newsmen after the programme, Governor Adeleke said his focus on delivering good governance serves

only public interest worries and confounds the opposition which had failed woefully when it was given the opportunity to govern the state.

According to the governor, his administration made it a point of duty to deliver on big and small service issues confronting the people of the state across the sectors, explaining that the approach combines thinking big and small at the same time in the best interest of the people.

"We are faithful to the people and our governance agenda, hence our deliveries on infrastructure, health, digital economy, agriculture, commerce and industry, climate change, education, sports and workers welfare among others. We got so much done by God and the people.

"To my critics, I empathize and sympathize with them. When somebody succeeds where you fail, you are likely to be envious and even bitter. ●



The Tincan Island Port Strategic Commander of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Mitchell Ofoyeju (right) while decorating the Nigeria Customs Service Comptroller, Tincan Island Port, Dera Nnadi, as a War Against Drug Abuse Ambassador, in Lagos at the weekend.

## APC sweeps 21 chairmanships, 239 councillorship seats In Kogi LG polls

The All Progressives Congress has won all 21 local government chairmanship positions in the just concluded council's elections in Kogi State on Saturday.

The ruling party was also declared the winner of all the 239 councillorship seats in the state.

The chairperson of the Kogi

State Independent Electoral Commission, Mamman Nda-Eri, announced the results, describing the LGA elections as "peaceful, free, and fair".

"APC performed excellently; it cleared all the chairmanship and councillors positions, leaving nothing to the other 18 political parties that took part in the election," The News Agency of Nigeria quoted Nda-Eri as saying.

"The results declared at the headquarters were earlier declared at the various collations centres by the respective returning officers," he added.

Nda-Eri expressed gratitude to election officials, security personnel, observers, and journalists, acknowledging their role in ensuring a successful electoral process.

He urged the winners of the election to be magnanimous in their victories to justify the Supreme Court judgement that gave the local government financial autonomy.

The KOSIEC boss also thanked everyone who has contributed positively for the successful conduct of the elections. ●

BRIGHT JACOB

Demonstrators marking the fourth anniversary of the #EndSARS protests against police brutality and extrajudicial killings at the Lekki Toll Gate have accused the police of brutalising them during the memorial procession on Sunday.

A handful of protesters had gathered at the Lekki Toll Gate, a spot now synonymous with anti-government rallies in Lagos State, to honour the memories of those who lost their lives during the October 2020 rallies but met stiff resistance from the police.

"We are protesters who wanted

## 'Police beat, brutalised us,' EndSARS memorial protesters narrate ordeal

to mark the anniversary of #EndSARS but were apprehended by a group of policemen under the leadership of the Commissioner of Police," one of the protesters said in a video posted on X by human rights lawyer, Inibehe Effiong.

"I am right here speaking to you from a Black Maria brutalised and beaten by the police, my glasses were taken away from my eyes by a police officer without any provocation.

"We are asking today when it has become illegal to protest in this

country."

"Comrade Hassan Taiwo Soweto and 17 other activists have been arrested at the Lekki Toll Gate. "They were brutalised and are currently being detained in State CID Panty by the police for commemorating the memorial of the Lekki Toll Gate Massacre," the protesters said.

However, the Lagos State Police Command said the protesters did not write to seek police clearance and permission before embarking on the rally.

"Constitutionally, they should write to me as the Commissioner of Police of their intention to do so, they did write to us and as such, any of such gathering is illegal and by extension, police will not allow it to happen," the State Police Commissioner, Olanrewaju Ishola, said.

He explained that the police authorities were not unmindful of citizens' constitutional rights but stressed that while exercising their rights, they must prioritise the laws of the land over other considerations.

Meanwhile, international rights group, Amnesty International, has condemned the arrest of protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate.

"Amnesty International condemns the Nigeria police for the violent attack on people who assembled at Lekki Toll Gate to honour peaceful protesters killed during the #EndSARS protests against police brutality in October 2020. The reckless use of tear gas and arrests are unacceptable," the group said on X. ●

## IGP condemns rise in jungle justice, orders probe of police officers' killing

TIMOTHY AGBOR

The Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, on Sunday, condemned the rising cases of jungle justice across the country.

This is as he has ordered the Deputy Inspector General of Police in charge of the Force Criminal Investigation Department to investigate these incidents and bring all persons found wanting to face the full wrath of the law.

Decrying the rise in the menace, the police, in a statement by the Force Spokesperson, Muyiwa Adejobi, highlighted the case in Edo State where a mob attacked a police station and burnt some suspects to death on October 13.

Adejobi said, "In view of the recent spate of jungle justice in some parts of the country, the Nigeria Police Force has condemned the dangerous and abhorrent trend and cautioned the general public on the consequences of such on our criminal justice administration, the rule of law and the global reputation of our dear country.

"In the same instance, the Police specifically condemn the act of arson which led to the death by burning of some suspects in police custody, and the subsequent setting ablaze of police barracks, patrol vans and the Divisional Police Station in Agenebode, Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State on Sunday, October 13, 2024.

"In the above case, members of the public alleged that the police were trying to pervert justice by taking into custody some suspected kidnappers and armed robbers who have been accused of terrorizing the people of the community in Edo State. The main suspect was arrested and almost lynched by the community members before he was rescued by the police.

"His arrest led the police to arrest three additional suspects. The rescue and detention of the suspects didn't go down well with the community members, who later mobilized in large

numbers and attacked the police station, killed the suspects by burning, and scorched down the station and properties therein.

"The erroneous perception of the community members that the police would set free the suspects was wrong and quite unfair, as the police never intended to pervert justice in the case, more so that they have through painstaking investigation arrested three other suspects fingered in the criminal act."

Another case cited by Adejobi happened in Agege, Lagos, where mobs on October 19 attacked a driver for accidentally knocking down a driver.

Adejobi added that one of the police officers who ran to rescue the driver was killed by the mob.

He said, "In another development, a police team trying to prevent the execution of jungle justice was gruesomely attacked, which led to the killing of a police officer, ASP Augustine Osupayi, attached to the Lagos State Command, by a group of violent mob on Saturday, 19th of October 2024, in Agege, Lagos State.

"The police team had raced down to the rescue of a driver who was alleged to have accidentally knocked down a motorcycle rider to death. The group of motorcycle riders pounced on the driver, who was eventually rescued by the police.

"The rescue didn't go down well with the riders who descended on the police team and unfortunately killed the ASP instantly. These are very few cases out of many incidents recorded across the country."

Adejobi noted that the Inspector General of Police while condoling the families of the victims, ordered the DIG FCID to fish out the criminals involved in the dastardly acts.

He said, "The Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, sympathizes with the families of the departed souls and directs the Deputy Inspector General of Police in charge of the FCID to investigate these incidents and bring all persons found wanting to face the full wrath of the law."

## Scores killed as traditional festival turns bloody in Anambra

TIMOTHY AGBOR

Tragedy struck in Nibo, Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State on Sunday as a brutal attack by masked gunmen claimed numerous lives during the Onwa Asaa festival, a traditional community celebration.

The assailants, reportedly driving a black Lexus SUV, stormed an eatery in the community and

### POINT

Witnesses described the scene as chaotic, with festival-goers fleeing for safety amidst the gunfire.

opened fire indiscriminately, leaving several people dead. At the time of reporting, at least 10 people had lost their lives in the

attack.

Witnesses described the scene as chaotic, with festival-goers fleeing for safety amidst the gunfire.

"It felt like a war zone. The gunmen just stormed the place and started shooting everywhere. People were running for their lives, screaming and crying. It was absolute chaos," one witness recounted.

The motive behind the attack remained unclear, but communi-

ty members were calling for swift action from the authorities to restore peace and ensure security.

"We urge the government to take immediate action. We cannot continue to live in fear. We need peace and security in our community. What was supposed to be a joyful celebration has been marred by violence and bloodshed," a local resident lamented.

The police command confirmed that investigations into the incident have commenced. ●



L-R: Vice President Kashim Shettima; Chairman, Nigerian Economic Summit Group, Olaniyi Yusuf, a security detail and Shell's Business Value Manager, Chidi Nkazi, at the exhibition booth of Shell during the Nigerian Economic Summit in Abuja...last week.

## Lagbaja not dead, says Army

BRIGHT JACOB

The Nigerian Army has debunked the rumour flying around on the purported death of the Chief of Army Staff, General Taoreed Lagbaja.

The rumour, which has since gone viral, started after a tweet from Jackson Ude, a former presidential aide and social media commentator.

"The Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Taoreed Lagbaja, has died. Lagbaja died in an undisclosed hospital overseas nearly 48hrs ago from a stage three Cancer, according to a senior Government official. The death of the Chief of Army staff has been kept secret because of intense

lobbying by some Generals who want to take the position. Lagbaja, born on February 28, 1968, in Ilobu, Osun State, was appointed by President Bola Tinubu in June 2023, as the 27th Chief of Army Staff," Ude had tweeted at exactly 12:49pm on Sunday.

But the Nigerian Army, which has consistently denied reports on the alleged ailment of the General, stamped Ude's tweet with FAKE NEWS on X.

On Saturday, Army spokesman, Onyema Nwachukwu, dismissed media reports suggesting that there is leadership vacuum following the absence of Lagbaja, saying he is on official leave, and necessary protocols had been put in place for

the Chief of Policy and Plans (Army), Major General Abdulsalami Ibrahim, to act on his behalf during his absence.

Nwachukwu, a Major General, emphasised that Lagbaja's absence is not affecting the operations of the service.

"There have even been insinuations that there is a leadership vacuum, with officers confused about what to do. Nothing could be further from the truth."

"To be very clear, the Nigerian Army is a highly structured establishment with well-laid-out procedures and processes for dealing with different circumstances. Before proceeding on leave, necessary protocols were put in place for the Chief of Policy and Plans (Army), Major

General Abdulsalami Bagudu Ibrahim, to act on behalf of the COAS while he was away.

"This is not peculiar to the NA, as there have been instances where unforeseen human frailty kept service chiefs away for about three months, and their Chiefs of Policy and Plans held sway in their absence. Claims of a leadership vacuum in the NA at present are therefore mere speculation, as all routine and scheduled activities of the service are on course."

The Army spokesman said all routine and scheduled activities of the service are on course, adding that the appropriate departmental chiefs are fully carrying out their responsibilities in line with the COAS directives. ●

## Clearing agents groan as NAFDAC strike disrupts port operations

FESTUS OKOROMADU

Clearing agents at Nigerian Ports have decried the ongoing strike by workers of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control.

The Senior Staff Association of Statutory Corporations and Government-Owned Companies, an affiliate of the Trade

Union Congress representing NAFDAC employees, declared an indefinite strike due to unresolved promotion controversies and welfare concerns.

Speaking on the implications of the strike on Sunday, one of the affected clearing agents, Olatoye Otubade, stated that it had disrupted operations across the sector, particularly for those handling shipments of regulated items such as drugs, cosmet-

ics, and chemicals.

He said, "Yes, it has significantly affected most of the clearing groups. There are certain procedures that specific items need to go through with NAFDAC. They are a crucial part of the maritime and clearing logistics sector in this economy."

Otubade further noted that inspections and examinations must be completed before clearance for goods under NAF-

DAC's purview.

He asserted that due to the strike, inspection processes have been halted, leaving many containers stranded at terminals and accumulating charges.

"Containers sitting at the terminal are incurring charges—daily shipping costs, terminal fees, and other expenses. It's frustrating because these charges continue to accrue, and no one is waiving them, even

though the delays are beyond our control. This, in turn, affects manufacturers and the overall economy. The situation is really putting pressure on us," he added.

Another agent, who gave his name as Seun, said, "Come to the ports. Their offices are all locked, so we cannot carry out any operations. Right now, we are not able to do anything. They should please resolve their

issues; the strike is a huge loss for us."

However, NAFDAC's Resident Media Consultant, Sayo Akintola, said efforts were ongoing to meet the striking workers' demands.

He said, "The matter has been taken up at the ministerial level. Their demands have been transferred to the Head of Service. It is not that we are not doing anything. ●

# 2027 PRESIDENCY

## Makinde, Wike, Mohammed plot to weaken Atiku's chances

- Stakeholders say PDP may implode as major actors not shifting grounds
- Count my principal out of race – Saraki's spokesman
- No comment, says Atiku's aide
- Fayose, Dele Momodu differ on ex-Vice President

BRIGHT JACOB

Prominent politicians in the opposition People's Democratic Party are already plotting to weaken the chances of its 2023 presidential flag bearer, Atiku Abubakar.

The February 20, 2027 general election across the country is exactly 821 days away, going by the timetable of the Independent National Electoral Commission.

Investigations by THE POINT revealed that the party is already factionalised and that the various factions are driven by the 2027 presidential election.

According to sources, the party is already divided into three groups. They are the Wike/ Seyi Makinde group, the Atiku-led faction, and the Bala Mohammed-led axis.

Atiku, a veteran of party primaries, has made no secret of his intention to run again in 2027 and has remained in the country, perhaps to avoid the usual criticism of abandoning the party after elections.

The former vice president recently wrote to the Senate Constitution Review Committee, recommending a single six-year presidential term with mandatory rotation among the six geopolitical zones.

He has said he will continue to vie for the number one office in the land as long as he is alive and healthy.

Atiku, while justifying the number of times he had contested without making headway, said even the former President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, contested seven times before his eventual victory.

His decision comes amidst speculations that he was working on a merger or alliance with Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party in the 2023 election, and other opposition leaders to oust the ruling All Progressives Congress in 2027.

However, sources said that Atiku's presidential ambitions are unsettling some PDP governors, who

have their interests.

The plan, going into 2027, sources within the party said, is to field Governor Seyi Makinde, the incumbent Oyo State governor as candidate of the PDP in 2027, in the understanding that he would not pose a serious threat to President Bola Tinubu's potential second term bid.

"Makinde will likely run in 2027 as the PDP candidate. He will be completing his tenure in 2027. The idea will be to make the 2027 election a contest between him and Tinubu, but he would already have been compromised such that when APC wins the election, there will be no challenge," said a source, who craved anonymity.

When *The Point* reached out to the spokespersons for the three politicians that come under the spotlight, they were not very forthcoming.

The spokespersons also indicated that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for them to be engaged in a discussion that centred on the future aspiration of their bosses.

The spokesperson for the former Senate President, Bukola Saraki, Yusuf Olaniyonu, when asked whether the former Senate President would be able to fill Atiku's shoes should the former Vice Pres-

**“THE PLAN, GOING INTO 2027, SOURCES WITHIN THE PARTY SAID, IS TO FIELD GOVERNOR SEYI MAKINDE, THE INCUMBENT OYO STATE GOVERNOR AS CANDIDATE OF THE PDP IN 2027, IN THE UNDERSTANDING THAT HE WOULD NOT POSE A SERIOUS THREAT TO PRESIDENT BOLA TINUBU'S POTENTIAL SECOND TERM BID.**

dent step down from the race, said he did not know anything about that.

"I don't know anything about that. I don't want to say anything about that.

"I am also not into that (kind of thing) and I don't think my principal is also into that," he told our *The Point*.

Atiku's spokesperson, Paul Ibe, was asked what he (Atiku) would bring to the table in the presidential race if he

were to be a contestant, but he replied, "No comment."

The attempt to contact Obi's spokesperson, Valentine Obiyanwu, by phone was not successful. The calls were not answered.

However, a political analyst, Moyo Jaji, said of Atiku quitting the 2027 race, "I don't think that will be possible because Atiku is known to be a 'perennial wannabe.' He will still want to be the presidential candidate of the PDP, or wherever he is for the 2027 election."

Concerning Saraki, Obi or Wike filling Atiku's shoes, Jaji said, "Saraki has been very, very silent since he left government and Obi is trying to play the opposition game, but in a very wrong direction.

"Obi is just making noise. He is not making sense. How can you be complaining about the President being outside Nigeria and his vice being outside, too?"

"That's not the issue for the time being. There must be a reason why the President is outside the country working on behalf of Nigeria and the same for his vice President, too.

"Wike is a perennial noisemaker. He has no base. Is he in control of his base in Rivers State? If you don't have a base, why should you be thinking of aspiring

to be a presidential candidate?"

"And the luggage he is carrying, are they that very clean? Wike is always involved in one wahala or the other. And those people whose path he has crossed, you think they will leave him alone? It's naturally not possible," Jaji concluded.

While assessing the PDP's chances in 2027, the convener of Reset Lagos PDP, Adetokunbo Pearse, said, "Political pundits who think the PDP has a leadership problem are mistaken. The leadership positions at all levels of the party are intact. Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar is the party's presidential candidate emeritus, Senator Wabara is the Board of Trustees (BoT) chairman, Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State is chairman of the PDP Governors Forum, and Ambassador Umar Iliya Damagum is acting national chairman of the party."

Pearse, a former member of the PDP National Presidential Campaign Council in 2023, said that contrary to popular opinion, the party did not zone its presidential ticket during the last general election since nobody from any zone was barred from participating in the primary.

He said the emergence of the national chairman determines the zone that would produce the presidential candidate.

From all indications, he said the national chairmanship position will continue in the North and that the presidential ticket will go to the South in the next general election.

Pearse said Makinde could emerge as the party's flag bearer in 2027 because of the support he enjoys among stakeholders within the party.

He said, "I think this perception is driven by Makinde's sterling performance as the Oyo State governor, especially his amiable character and commitment to democracy and the rule of law. He runs an inclusive administration."

Also, the PDP Deputy National Publicity Secretary, Ibrahim



Atiku

Mohammed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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Abdullahi, believes Makinde can be the PDP's political ace in the contest.

"Given the turn of events, zoning the 2027 presidency to the South West would be informed and strategic for the PDP with a formidable northern consensus in who becomes the running mate. This is to appease Southern sentiments on demographics of region and religion.

"Governor Makinde could be the PDP's joker in 2027. Ironically, however, the governor hasn't shown any interest yet, as he seems engrossed in delivering people-oriented and socio-economic infrastructure for his people in Oyo State. He is one of the best performers as a governor in this republic."

A highly placed source at the heart of the politics of Oyo State said, "Yes, anyone can win elections, but truth be told, in Oyo State then, Makinde swam against the tide; he fought a sitting government, two former governors (Ladoja and the late Adebayo Alao-Akala) who were both on different divides, a sitting minister. Before 2019, the party had zero representation at the national level. However, in the 2019 general election, the PDP, a party hitherto tagged as dead, secured the governorship seat, a senatorial seat and five seats at the House of Representatives."

Sources also said that the Bauchi State governor, Bala Muhammed, has never hidden his intention to run for the presidency. He lost the 2022 primary to Atiku and is believed to have the support of a sizable number of governors.

In recent months, he has openly challenged Wike while lending his support to Fubara. He has also called for the resignation of the acting national chairman and seems to be pulling the strings behind the scenes.

Shortly after the suspension and counter-suspension, Damagum approached Mohammed and invoked the North East card.

"You can see the chairmen of the North East PDP with me. They came here to support me and to reiterate their commitment that the North East, where they come from, is united. They also believe in the leadership of the Governors' Forum chairman," he said after the meeting.

However, stakeholders in the PDP expressed fears that the main opposition party would implode as the major actors in the strife are not shifting grounds.

#### I WILL PUSH MY AGENDA WHEN TIME COMES – MAKINDE

The Oyo State Governor lent credence to the speculation about his presidential ambition at the weekend when he declared that he is qualified to contest for the 2027 presidential election.

Speaking with reporters during a

visit to Fashola farm in Oyo town on Friday, Makinde stated that speculations about his political future were unnecessary and unsolicited.

The governor stated that he is old enough to speak for himself on any issue without fear or intimidation, adding that he would do so publicly if he had anything to say about his political future.

He said, "We didn't host the PDP reporters' retreat because somebody has a presidential ambition. No comment, nothing. But all I can say to you is, I'm old enough that if I want to do something, I will come out and say, this is what I want to do.

"So, no speculation, nobody can push my agenda. I will push my agenda when the time comes."

Makinde recalled that with the support of the people of Oyo State, he defied several odds, including two failed Senate attempts before his election as Governor.

He said, "Oyo State people took a decision in 2019. We did not have a godfather. Nobody sponsored me, and nobody gave me a dime for us to get in here, but the people of Oyo State decided we wanted to give this opportunity to an outsider.

"And before that, you will see videos saying, oh, Seyi, what has he done before? Has he been a councillor? No. Has he been to the House of Representatives? No. What about the Senate? I tried twice but was rejected.

"So, experience in politics – No experience in governance, but I've done well for myself in business, and they said we'll give you the opportunity. Before that time, the whole of the South West was APC, consisting of six states.

"But in Oyo State, we chose to be different. Because I had no experience, I wanted to convince the people.

"We produced a document, Road Map to accelerated development of Oyo State, 2019-2023, and I said to the people, this is it in black and white, hold me accountable, and they gave



Wike



Makinde



**I DON'T THINK THAT WILL BE POSSIBLE BECAUSE ATIKU IS KNOWN TO BE A 'PERENNIAL WANNABE.' HE WILL STILL WANT TO BE THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF THE PDP, OR WHEREVER HE IS FOR THE 2027 ELECTION.**

us the opportunity. Thank God it is being done."

The governor also cautioned Nigerians against allowing the country to slide into a one-party state.

He said, "Nigeria must not slide into a one-party state so that others will have the opportunity to showcase their talents."

#### WHY ATIKU SHOULD ABANDON 2027 PRESIDENTIAL BID — FAYOSE

Also, a former Governor of Ekiti State, Ayo Fayose, has urged Atiku to end his political ambition of running for the presidency in 2027 and future elections.

Fayose insisted that at a time when Nigerians are seeking younger leaders, political figures like Atiku should learn to leave the stage when the ovation is loudest.

He said, "I am sure, at this stage, with all due respect to him, he would rather step away from the politics of contesting elections again. By the time Asiwaju finishes his term, Atiku Abubakar will probably be 80 or 81. So, what will be the attraction?"

"We should leave the stage when the ovation is loudest. I respect him,

I think and Nigerians are craving for a younger generation now more than ever before. So, on what basis will Atiku come and contest again?"

#### NIGERIANS HAVE REJECTED YOU, WIKE SLAMS ATIKU

Similarly, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, has stated that Atiku has lost relevance in politics.

Atiku had commended the resilient people of Rivers State for their steadfastness in the face of adversity, courageously ensuring that the election unfolded with peace and integrity.

In a statement on his X account, Atiku also lauded the Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, for his unwavering commitment to the interests of the people, safeguarding the sanctity of the local government elections even amidst provocative challenges.

He had said, "With the conclusion of the local government election in Rivers State, the shadows of political intimidation and judicial chicanery have dissipated, paving the way for the noble pursuit of governance to commence in the state.

"From the bustling heart of Port Harcourt to the tranquil shores of Onne, the populace has spoken in harmonious unison, affirming that nothing is greater than democracy.

"As prophesied, it has now been revealed that the citizens of Rivers are astute and resolute, unwavering in their rejection of any form of political oppression, harassment, or the machinations of self-serving godfathers."

However, reacting to Atiku's statement during a luncheon in honour of the 10th Rivers State Assembly on Saturday, Wike claimed that Atiku had lost elections so many times.

The former Rivers governor asserted that Atiku had been rejected by Nigerians, having contested the

presidential elections in 2019 and 2023 and lost.

He said, "We never contested the local government elections. Did we contest? Did we pick forms? I

hear Atiku Abubakar say, 'Oh, they have rejected me in Rivers State.' Okay, assuming, though not conceding, that he has lost many times, Nigerians have also rejected him.

"If you say for an election we did not contest, never participated in, that it shows Nigerians have rejected us, fine. You contested and failed woefully, Nigerians have rejected you, so pack up and go home."

#### GOD WILL DETERMINE ATIKU'S DESTINY – DELE MOMODU

However, the publisher of Ovation magazine and a prominent figure in the PDP, Dele Momodu, has said that whether Atiku becomes Nigeria's president in 2027 will be determined by God and destiny.

Momodu addressed criticisms of Abubakar's presidential ambitions, particularly from former Ekiti State governor Ayodele Fayose, who recently urged the former vice president to step aside due to his age. Fayose argued that Nigerians are now seeking younger leaders.

Responding to Fayose's comments, Momodu stated that no one has the right to dictate how Atiku chooses to pursue his political career.

He questioned why critics seem threatened by the former vice president and pointed out that many of these critics failed to support younger candidates in the 2023 elections.

"Why are they afraid of him?" Momodu asked. He also dismissed age as a barrier, citing examples of older leaders like the U.S. President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, who have held office in their later years. "Age cannot be an automatic qualification or disqualification in politics," he added.

Momodu argued that leadership should be judged by performance rather than age, questioning what younger politicians have achieved with the resources available to them.

"If Atiku decides to run, good luck to him. If he doesn't, no problem. But no one should try to muzzle him," he said.

When asked if Atiku would be a threat to President Bola Tinubu in 2027, Momodu suggested that those criticizing Atiku believe so, noting that if the former vice president can form a strong political coalition, he could be a formidable contender.

"If the mood of the nation is overwhelmingly opposed to the current leader, Atiku stands a chance in 2027," he concluded. ●

# My principal agenda running for Anambra governorship is to restore confidence of people in government – George Moghalu

**Why did you join the Labour Party, a party in crisis?**

I don't really want to agree with you that the Labour party is in crisis compared to what we are seeing in every other party. Like I always say, political parties are human organisations, and like in any human organisation, issues like this will always come up because a lot of interests will clash, and ambitions will also clash. So in the course of this clash, there is certainly going to be some level of disagreement, but they are all resolvable because they are all part of human evolution. It is a human organisation. So for me, it is not a big issue. I also believe very strongly that the issues they have, just like in all other political parties, will be resolved. That is why we are all human beings.

**What will you tell those that feel the odds would have favoured you more if you had remained with the APC?**

My leaving the APC is not about me. Two critical indices in political contestation must be weighed before making final decisions. And those two indices are the person and the platform. These are two critical political components. For you as the person, it is about you making the decision. You will probably consult your family or those very close to you, your loved ones. It is understandable, but it is about you making the decision.

However, when it has to do with the platform, it involves not only you, this time around; it involves your political family. It involves your friends. It involves a lot of people, and a lot of issues are put into contestation and put into consideration before you can arrive at the decision.

For me, when I decided and made up my mind that I was going to run for election, the next thing was the platform. So, I decided to talk with both my campaign organisation, my friends, my followers, those who believe in me, in my ideology and my principles, and those who think they can work with me. After all considerations, the odds appeared to favour LP, and that is why I had to pitch my tent with the party.

**Will it be right to say that the driving force behind this movement is the governorship ticket of Anambra State?**

There is no doubt about the fact that I want to run for the governorship of Anambra State. I have made it abundantly clear. I have spoken about it in private and in public. That is not even a contention. I am going to run for the governorship of Anambra State God willing.

**But have you weighed it to know whether the odds favour you actualising your ambition through LP?**

I don't see anything odd, because it is a process. And what is the process, when you are in a political party and they throw a position open and you are desirous, you throw your heart in the ring, then the political party members will now decide if you are their best option, and if you are, they will support you. If you are not, they

George Moghalu is the immediate past Managing Director of National Inland Waterways. In this interview, he bares his mind on his governorship ambition in Anambra State, why he left the All Progressives Congress to join the Labour Party, among other national issues. Excerpts:

support whoever they consider as their best option.

And if you are lucky to be the person considered, you move to the next level, which is the general election. You will appear before the Anambra State electorate, the state I come from, to ask for their support. And even if you are lucky to get their support, to God be the glory.

**Have you considered the challenges ahead of you going into that election and what are your chances of winning in Anambra, a State with APGA stronghold?**

Yes, I have considered the challenges and I can tell you that my chances are very high. The realities are more than having a party like APGA as a tradition in the state. The situation is a case of people having a wrong assumption. Yes, APGA has been in power in Anambra for a long time now and that is a fact we must acknowledge, but the truth about it is, what is the situation on ground? Are the people happy with the government? I can tell you that the answer is no. You can do an independent investigation; you can talk to as many people as possible, that the feelings of APGA being on the ground may not be there anymore.

It is about who the people want. The Anambra state political elite are going to consider the persons involved, weigh them according to their merits and their demerits, check who will be better for Anambra State, and then give the person an opportunity. So, I am not bothered about what APGA has done there in the past. They have been there before, but an incumbent administration has been changed in this country. We are going to do lots of things when we come to power to change the narrative in the

state.

**Without stampeding you into unveiling your manifesto, what are those things that Governor Soludo is doing that you intend to do better?**

There are many of them. It is against my political principle and I find it difficult to criticise any administration without providing a viable alternative. I am going to soon unveil a comprehensive manifesto that will deal with all the issues about governance. But I can simply say, off the cuff, that the government of Soludo has failed in terms of infrastructural decay.

Anambra State has not had it this bad previously. There is total infrastructural decay. I repeat, Anambra State has not had it this bad before. There is total failure in many things, insecurity is at the maximum, and there is so much insecurity in the land. I wonder how somebody will be expecting any foreign or even local direct investment in a state that is insecure. No investor will come to any state if they feel it is insecure. We have challenges, insecurity is alarming in our state, and it's very disheartening. There are quite a lot of things they

have not done well, especially the economic policy, surprisingly, very surprisingly.

The economic policies are not having much impact on the lives of an average Anambrian. Their style of taxation is also not the best. There are many other things that Anambra State people will not like or have rejected and will not accept. We feel so disappointed.

**What is the level of acceptability by the Anambra people judging by your consultations so far?**

I wish you could ask an average Anambra man that question, but I can comfortably tell you that I have reasonable goodwill in the state that I can build on. My people know my competence and capacity.

**Will it be right to say that it is Peter Obi that motivated you to join LP?**

Not at all, but that is not to say that Peter Obi does not have an impact to make in the politics of Anambra State. Anybody who says that he does not have an impact is a joker. The truth about it is that he is a light in Anambra State; he served the state creditably well and left on a clean slate. So, he is a force you can't wish away. He is a credible Anambra son who can be trusted, and who has been trusted in the past because he has never betrayed the confidence Anambra people reposed in him.

As I keep telling people, my principal agenda in running for governorship of

Anambra State is to restore the confidence of the people in their government. The moment you lost the confidence of the people, just like we have now, you have lost it.

But, the moment you can gain people's confidence in their government, administering them becomes a lot easier. They will make every sacrifice and do everything to ensure you succeed. They will see the government as their own and that is talking about acceptability. I know the Anambra electorates are the deciding factor in the election.

**How much acceptability will you get from the Anambra billionaires who usually have a serious influence on the outcome of governorship elections?**

There is no doubt that Anambra billionaires have a lot of impact on the outcome of the state governorship elections. You cannot also wish the billionaires away, but the average Anambra man in the street has a major stake in this project.

**How true is the impression that Nigerian politicians are so insensitive to the plights of the masses?**

It is not true. It is not true. If counting the politicians includes me, then I can tell you that it is not a true assertion, because I know I feel the pains of the people. I know that the challenges are quite enormous. I know the people are not happy. I feel it, and I am sure the President and those in the positions of responsibility today are also feeling the same.

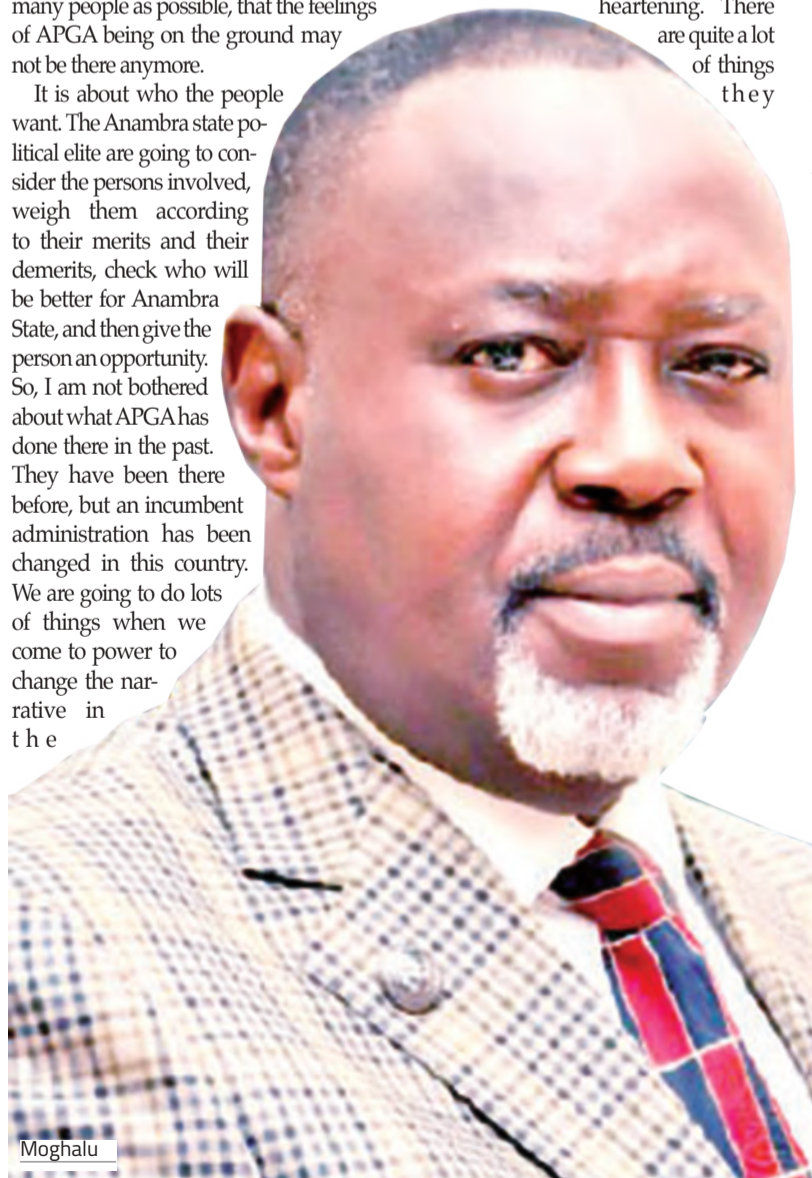
**If you sit down with President Tinubu, what will you tell him?**

I don't actually envy him. I know what he is facing. He is facing a lot of challenges. The challenges before him are quite enormous because things are not just going well. I am praying for him because my Bible tells me to pray for people in authority.

I pray for him every day and I ask God to give him the grace, and the strength that will help him and those in authority at all levels, up to counsellors, to have the feeling of the people and to have empathy, so that they can do their best.

I agree that the decay before this administration came into the office was also quite enormous. Even the administration before this one also had challenges they inherited. But the truth is that it is like getting a sickness cured, any form of sickness, which takes a little time.

So, my appeal is, let our people be a little more patient. And to answer your question directly, I will appeal to him to see what can be done to cushion the effect of the difficulties people are going through. As to whether the challenges are enormous, they are on both sides, on the side of the



Moghalu

**THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT ANAMBRA BILLIONAIRES HAVE A LOT OF IMPACT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTIONS. YOU CANNOT ALSO WISH THE BILLIONAIRES AWAY, BUT THE AVERAGE ANAMBRA MAN IN THE STREET HAS A MAJOR STAKE IN THIS PROJECT**





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# Views

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Chekwube Nzomiwu

Yet again, the insecurity in Anambra State claimed three precious lives in the penultimate week. The deceased who were members of the crew of SuperSport were killed when their vehicle ran into an ambush by gunmen at Iseke, a border town of Ihiala Local Government Area of Orlu, Imo State. Luckily, security operatives rescued six members of the crew, while one is yet to be accounted for, according to reports in the media. The dead were identified as a cameraman, police officer and driver.

They were on their way to Uyo, Akwa Ibom State to cover the AFCON qualifying match between the Super Eagles of Nigeria and their Libyan counterpart, when the gunmen struck. This incident occurred on October 8, 2024, about three days before the October 11 AFCON qualifier, which the Nigerian side won by a lone goal.

This latest attack once more brought to the front burner, the terrifying level of insecurity in Anambra State under the administration of Governor Charles Soludo. Four days before the Iseke incident involving the SuperSport crew, the police foiled an attempt to kidnap a foreign expatriate working for a construction company at Ogbunka, Orumba South LGA. The expatriate, a Syrian national, narrowly escaped abduction, but two of his police guards were shot by the gunmen. The police spokesman in Anambra State, Tochukwu Ikenga who confirmed this report in a statement, said the

## Anambra is under insecurity siege

injured policemen were in stable condition.

Two days prior to the Ogbunka incident, unidentified gunmen killed two policemen at Uruagu Nnewi community in Nnewi North LGA of the State.

According to media reports, the attackers hurled an impoverished explosive device at the police team and it exploded immediately, killing the two policemen instantly at the spot.

Between August and September, gunmen attacked three police stations in Anambra State, namely the Divisional Police Station Oba and Nnobi Police Station, both in Idemili South LGA and Nnewi Police Station. The attacks claimed the lives of policemen. Last year, nine members of a United Nations entourage, including policemen, were brutally murdered by gunmen at Ogbaru LG while on a visit to an erosion site in the area.

Besides the remote areas, the insecurity in Anambra State extended to Awka, the capital city and its adjoining communities, which have all become hotbeds for bloody clashes between rival cult groups.

In Awka in particular, people are lynched, maimed, butchered and killed in broad daylight. While the media reports some of these gory incidents, many go unreported.

Some people would argue though that insecurity is a national malady. However, the situation in the state has assumed a very dangerous dimension that some parts of the state are now being called

**SOLUDO APPEARS TO BE OBSESSED WITH HOW TO CONTROL THE ALLOCATION COMING TO THE 21 LGAS OF THE STATE FROM THE FEDERAL ACCOUNTS ALLOCATION COMMITTEE**

Sambisa, after the Sambisa Forest, the main base of the Boko Haram insurgents in the North East.

More worrisome is that the Soludo administration appears to have been overwhelmed by the insecurity, which is currently rocking the state like a volcanic eruption.

Rather than confront the seismic security situation bedeviling his domain, Governor Soludo, the Chief Security Officer of Anambra State who receives almost one N1 billion monthly as security vote, keeps looking for a scapegoat to blame for the insecurity in the state.

In February this year, he said that the fight against insecurity in the state has been hindered by the

infiltration of vigilante operatives by criminals.

To me, such an excuse, coming from a Governor who took an oath to strive to preserve the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, contained in Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), sounds ridiculous. Under the aforementioned chapter, Section 14 (2) (b) clearly states that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government."

Therefore, it is the duty of the government to safeguard lives and property in Anambra State and not the vigilante operatives who are not recognized by the Nigerian law.

If Professor Soludo has lost confidence in the vigilante operatives, the constitutionally recognised security apparatuses of the Nigerian State, such as the Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Services, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps and even the Military, are at his disposal.

The excuse that criminals infiltrated the vigilante operatives cannot be an alibi for the Governor's inability to secure the state. The vigilante operatives are meant to complement the efforts of the security agencies of the Nigerian State who are better trained and equipped in handling security matters. So, what's the fuss about the infiltration of the vigilante groups?

Soludo should please swallow his pride and learn from his nearby

counterparts, Peter Mba of Enugu State and Alex Otti of Abia State who have both exhibited the political will and capacity to confront the security challenges on ground when they assumed office.

In Enugu for instance, Mba has empowered the police and the military with the necessary equipment, including vehicles, operational and communication gadgets, drones and other advanced technology, needed to confront the insecurity in Enugu State. Surveillance cameras have been mounted all over the Enugu capital city, to monitor the movement of people and vehicles in the city.

To attract both indigenous and foreign investors, security is very paramount. The efforts of Governor Peter Mba in the area of security have started yielding results with the influx of investors into Enugu State, to revamp moribund industries, such as the Sunrise Flour Mills Enugu and Enugu United Palm Products Limited, Ibite Olo, Ezeagu LGA.

Unfortunately, rather than pay attention to the insecurity plaguing Anambra State, which his government used as an excuse for delaying local government election, Soludo appears to be obsessed with how to control the allocation coming to the 21 LGAs of the state from the Federal Accounts Allocation Committee.

Having been obligated by the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court of Nigeria to conduct local government election, which he failed to do for over two and half years, he introduced a bill in

the Anambra State House of Assembly, to compel the 21 councils to remit a portion of their allocation to a consolidated account controlled by the State Government.

In spite of public outcry, the House of Assembly passed the bill, which is now awaiting the Governor's assent. This is ludicrous, considering the fact that the Supreme Court granted the councils financial autonomy.

Quoting former Senate President, Ahmad Lawan, "the lack of local government autonomy potentially inhibits solutions as well as efforts by the federal and state governments towards addressing the nation's security challenges."

I therefore expect Professor Soludo to live up to his billing as a distinguished Professor of Economics and a consummate public servant, having served at different times as the Chief Economic Adviser to the President, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, and the de facto Minister of National Planning. He should quickly re-order his priorities by making insecurity one of the focal points of his administration.

In conclusion, Soludo should allow the councils to enjoy the autonomy that they were granted by the Supreme Court, to enable them to perform optimally. A functional local government will help to end the alarming insecurity in Anambra State. ●

*Nzomiwu is a communication scholar, media consultant and political scientist.*

## Rivers crisis: A litmus test for LG autonomy

Ike Willie-Nwobu

Nigeria's fitful attempts to clean up its politics continue to suffer seismic setbacks in Rivers State where bitter politics of succession is combined with the desperation of politicians to pollute the environment.

The flames that licked up some local government secretariats in Rivers State only flared up on October 7, 2024. Still, their provenance lay in the past, in the bitter rivalry between Nyesom Wike, former governor of the state and current minister of the Federal Capital Territory, and Siminalayi Fubara, his successor and the incumbent governor of the state.

The recent judgment of the Supreme Court on autonomy for local government areas has turned local governments in the state into charged battlegrounds

for the former governors and their successors, with their supporters at each other's throats.

What is clear is that the fiery chaos in Rivers State is the handiwork of politicians who place personal interests above principles of state policy, and the public, defying and denying what may burn in the process.

This translates invariably to Nigeria's fragile commitment to the rule of law. They must be forced to leash their rabid dogs. It is as simple as that.

The Nigerian state cannot be forced to wait on them or for them to do the needful, as no state can afford to perform its statutory duties in fear and chaos.

Therefore, those responsible for the arson must be prosecuted and incarcerated. There should be no stone unturned to bring them to book. As for those young people who continue to allow them-

selves to be used as tools by desperate politicians, the time for common sense is now.

Why burn public buildings when it will only let thieving politicians dip even deeper into the public till? Why the descent into violence when the parties at loggerheads don't care about them? Folly has been bolstered by indifference in the country for many years, it is now proving fatal.

Politicians in the country must do more to clean up their politics and de-escalate the tension across the country. No one's grievance should become projectiles raining down on public buildings, or flames burning them down.

Unfortunately, the question arises. What is the governor doing conducting elections in defiance of valid court orders? As the chief law officer of the state, he should be seen complying with the law embodied in court decisions at all times rather than pulling out a bag

**THE UNFORTUNATE SITUATION IN RIVERS STATE OMINOUSLY FORESHADOWS WHAT IS TO COME IN MANY STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

of tricks and manoeuvres to undermine the rule of law. Shockingly, he also subverts his responsibility to uphold the same law.

At inauguration, every governor in Nigeria pledges allegiance to the constitution which is the same law that establishes courts. But like most Nigerian presidents, these

governors then go on to devise crafty ways to circumvent the constitution and all those who enforce it. As expected, this does incalculable harm to the rule of law in Nigeria.

Crucially, Nigeria must look for new ways to entrench the rule of law and embolden its presence across the landscape. This can only be achieved when it is enforced beyond what is on paper and the lips of extremely unreliable politicians.

The unfortunate situation in Rivers State ominously foreshadows what is to come in many states across the country.

For many years, local governments in Nigeria operated only at the whims of state governors with no form of autonomy, financial or otherwise. The state of many rural areas across the country exposes the neglect in those areas despite being in the jurisdiction of the closest tier of government.

The LGAs have failed to function properly for decades. Indeed, the Supreme Court judgment can change this unpalatable situation. However, it can only suffice if the forces holding Nigeria to ransom allow or are forced to relinquish their hold.

While Nigerians wait for the holy grail of political reforms, those in the rural areas must recognise the historic opportunity offered by the Supreme Court decision on financial autonomy for local governments. They must now play their part if the LGAs are to wriggle free from the suffocating grasp of state governors. ●

*Ike Willie-Nwobu, a public analyst and social critic writes from Lagos.*

**CAVEAT: Views and opinions expressed here are those of the writers and are not in any way those of The Point Newspaper - Editor**

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## POINT BLANK

# The national grid collapsed thrice in one week



# Our Point

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## Perennial oil tanker tragedies in Nigeria

Nigeria has been grappling with a recurring issue of fallen fuel tankers on its highways, resulting in devastating fires, loss of life, and damage to properties.

The frequency and severity of these incidents have raised concerns among citizens, policymakers, and stakeholders in the transportation sector.

The Nigeria Police stated at the weekend that the death toll from the Jigawa tanker explosion has risen to 170, with over 70 receiving intensive care at a hospital.

It was one of the country's worst such incidents in recent times.

Local authorities said the vehicle crashed late on Tuesday night after the driver lost control on the Kano-Hadejia expressway near the town of Majiya in Jigawa State. It then exploded while onlookers were scooping spilt fuel with cups and buckets.

According to the police, at about 11:30 p.m. on Tuesday in Majia Town, Taura local government area of Jigawa, the tanker driver lost control near Khadija University and it exploded.

The driver reportedly left Kano and was heading to Nguru in Yobe State when the accident happened.

The disaster, according to the police, was triggered by residents who had rushed to scoop spilled petrol after the tanker overturned.

Crashes involving tankers are common in Nigeria because road transport is the most popular form of conveying cargo across the country with inadequate rail infrastructure and a chain of underused airports.

According to the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, several hundred spills happen nationwide each year, even outside the hotspots of oil-producing areas in the Niger Delta.

Fuel has become a commodity coveted almost as much as food in poorer areas of Nigeria, where the economy is in its worst state in a generation.

Fuel prices have tripled since the start of last year, when the government removed a fuel subsidy, exacerbating a cost of living crisis.

Desperation rose further two weeks ago after the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited raised prices of the commodity for the second time in just over a month.

Despite the risks, increasing numbers of people are being drawn to the scene of tanker crashes to recover fuel that they either use at home or sell.

Many roads in Nigeria are poorly maintained and torn asunder with potholes, causing accidents that claim dozens of lives every year.

Last month, at least 48 people were killed in Niger State, North Central Nigeria, when a fuel tanker exploded after colliding with another truck carrying travellers and cattle, trapping other vehicles as well in the blaze.

The fuel tanker was also carrying cattle in the Agaie area and at least 50 of them were roasted alive.

With the absence of an efficient railway system to transport cargo, fatal truck accidents are common along most of the major roads in Nigeria, a country with more than 220 million residents.

According to experts, the main causes are reckless driving, poor road conditions and poorly maintained vehicles.

According to the Federal Road Safety Corps, there were 1,531 tanker crashes in 2020 alone, resulting in 535 fatalities and 1,142 injuries. The majority of these incidents occurred on highways, with Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt being the most affected areas. The data reveals a disturbing trend, with an average of four tanker crashes occurring daily.

The FRSC also revealed that there have been at least 390 tanker accidents in 2024 alone.

Many of those who die in such accidents are people trying to salvage fuel to store at home, a practice that has continued despite safety warnings.

One major cause of such accidents, and why they usually result in explosions, is that many petrol tankers are not designed according to international best practices.

Most tanker drivers are not properly trained on safety measures such as not overloading and adhering to speed limits, and that makes accidents so common.

Also, the agencies charged with enforcing safety regulations often fail to do so.

There are also not enough awareness campaigns, and people are not willfully compliant with safety measures when such accidents happen.

The latest incident in Jigawa State is one too many involving tragic petrol tanker explosions in the country.

Consequently, there is the need for a review of the protocol for the transportation of petroleum products in Nigeria.

The country must explore rail transportation and pipelines to move flammable products such as petrol and diesel across the country.

It is about time we explore other means, like rail, for transporting petroleum products around the country.

It is also pertinent to train drivers involved in the transportation of flammable products and review the protocol for the transportation of petroleum products and other inflammable products.

Another possibility is to limit the movement of tankers and heavy trucks to 12 a.m.- 4 a.m. daily as a measure to enhance safety on our roads and highways.

By restricting tanker movement to off-peak hours, it could minimise interactions between tankers and other vehicles, reducing the risk of accidents.

The nighttime hours provide better visibility for tanker drivers, reducing the likelihood of accidents caused by poor visibility.

With reduced traffic and improved visibility, the risk of fires resulting from tanker accidents would significantly decrease.

This restriction allows for more effective monitoring and enforcement of tanker movements by FRSC officials.

This measure aligns with global standards, where hazardous materials are often transported during designated hours to minimise risks.

By adopting global best practices, addressing gaps in current practices, and implementing remediation measures, Nigeria can reduce the frequency and impact of these incidents.

The FRSC, in collaboration with other stakeholders, must prioritise safety and take decisive action to protect lives, properties, and the environment. Only then can we ensure safer roads for all.

**MOST TANKER DRIVERS ARE NOT PROPERLY TRAINED ON SAFETY MEASURES SUCH AS NOT OVERLOADING AND ADHERING TO SPEED LIMITS, AND THAT MAKES ACCIDENTS SO COMMON.**

# City Pulse

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● CRIME ● COURTS MARRIAGE PALAVER

## Nigerian man seeking financial breakthrough dies after herbalist buried him alive

TIMOTHY AGBOR  
OSOGBO

A young man identified as Chikwado Eze has reportedly died while seeking spiritual fortifications and financial breakthrough from a native doctor.

*The Point* reliably gathered that Eze died after the herbalist he consulted buried him alive as part of the fortification procedures.

The deceased, 33, was an indigene of Ugbaiké community in Enugu Ezike town of Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State where the incident happened last week.

Sources in the community said that Eze had recently obtained a visa to travel abroad in search of greener pastures before his tragic death.

They disclosed that the deceased's father, Pa. Eze had insisted that his son would be spiritually fortified so that he would blossom financially in the foreign land in whatever he lays his hands on.

Pa. Eze reportedly took his son

to a herbalist home in the community for the financial breakthrough exercise.

The herbalist had informed them that Chikwado would have to be buried alive for him before his desires could be realised abroad.

After they consented, the young man was said to have failed to wake up after he was exhumed some minutes after the burial.

"He got a visa to travel abroad then his father insisted he will be fortified before going, he now took him to his native doctor who suggested that this boy will be buried first for his dream to manifest abroad.

"They now proceeded, along the line, he lost his life in the grave. The deceased is Chikwado Eze by name from Ugbaiké in Enugu Ezike," a source said.

Meanwhile, the development has thrown the entire community into shock as news of Chikwado's death filtered in.

Efforts to contact the police were not successful as at the time of filing this report. ●



Eze



Mrs. Dada

## 'Shame of facing the public killing me slowly', woman with eight years pregnancy laments, seeks help

TIMOTHY AGBOR  
OSOGBO

A resident of Ikirun, Ifelodun Local Government Area of Osun State, Mrs. Janet Dada has cried out for help over her eight years old pregnancy.

She lamented that her pregnancy has defied all medical and spiritual interventions, calling on the state government and other Nigerians with possible solutions to come to her aid.

Mrs. Dada explained how it

has become difficult for her to move about in the community because of her inability to give birth since she became pregnant in 2016.

According to her during an interview, the shame of facing the public has been killing her slowly.

The woman revealed that she had suffered a miscarriage during her first pregnancy, adding that she conceived the current pregnancy some months later.

She said she had visited several hospitals for solutions

but to no avail, adding that the spiritual homes she had visited have not been helpful too as she continues to harbour the pains of carrying an unborn child for eight years.

Mrs. Dada, who is married with kids, lives in an uncompleted building in the outskirts of Ikirun.

The pregnant woman disclosed that she has visited so many pastors and Imams, and that as a matter of fact, she has gone spiritual on the issue but there seems to be no hope in sight.

"In 2016, I was pregnant but I had miscarriage. After some time, I got pregnant again. After a year, we went to the hospital for a scan and they told us it is only water they see in my stomach.

"When we visited some spiritualists, they said there is a child there but that there is no amount of scan we would do, we will be seeing water. I need help. I want the Osun State Government to assist me. I want Nigerians to help, it has not been easy for me," she appealed. ●

# How bedbugs, mosquito, torture inside prison custody transformed me – Hungry man who stole yam narrates experiences after release

## ● Says 'I rather beg to survive than steal again'

TIMOTHY AGBOR  
OSOGBO

A 31-year-old man, Victor Sunday Emmanuel, who just got released from Ilesa Medium Correctional Centre in Osun State, has narrated how the discomfort and torture he received in the custody made him regretted his criminal actions.

Sharing his experiences with The Point on the day he regained his freedom at the premises of the correctional facility, Emmanuel swore never to return to crimes again, saying he would prefer begging to stealing for survival.

The father of one had been sentenced to six months imprisonment by an Ilesa Magistrate's Court for stealing about 30 tubers of yam in July, 2024 at a farm he was hired to work as a labourer in Ijebu-Ijesa.

Victor was arrested by the police after a brother of the owner of the farm caught him carrying the stolen tubers away from the farm.

The Police in the state dragged him before a Magistrate's Court sitting in Ilesa and he was jailed for six months with the sum of N25, 000 as option of fine for the theft.

The farmer, who had informed the court that hunger led him to steal the yam, was not able to raise the fine, hence his confinement at Ilesa Medium Correc-

tional Centre to serve his jail term.

After spending about two months in prison custody, Emmanuel was freed following intervention of a non-governmental organisation, Anchor Heritage Initiative.

It was gathered that the organisation got wind of his incarceration and decided to assist him regain his freedom by paying the fines.

On the day he was to be released, Emmanuel had joined other inmates in clearing the bushes surrounding the facility and was heard by The Point reporter telling one of his colleagues how he became a convict.

Eventually, when officials of the prison informed him that an NGO paid his fine and he was to leave the facility, Emmanuel couldn't hide his joy as he profusely thanked the organisation for coming to his rescue, assuring that he would never return to crime.

"I thank Anchor Heritage Initiative for paying my fine and releasing me from prison. I pray God to continue to strengthen the organisation. Like I confessed before the court, I did what I did because of hunger. But, I have learned my lessons now. I will never go back to crime. I prefer to beg or even sell pure water to survive rather than stealing," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the staff in

charge of the correctional centre, an official from the Welfare Section, Josephine Olelua, commended the NGO for always giving new lease of life to inmates and charged other organisations to emulate Anchor Heritage Initiative.

After Emmanuel left the custody, he told The Point that he hails from Uyo in Akwa Ibom and that his wife had left him to Libya to "hustle" while their daughter had been with his mother-in-law.

He gave more insight into his hardship and efforts to cater for his daughter led him to jail, saying, "I have been the only person catering for our baby, paying her school fees, feeding and clothing her. I get to sustain myself and my family through the farm work I am doing. From my farm work, anything that I get, I use it to take care of myself and my daughter.

"I stole 30 tubers of yam because things were not moving well for me and I needed to feed myself and my family. I committed the crime at the farm I was working at in Ijebu-Ijesa. I was caught on the road while taking the yam home by a brother to the owner of the farm. I stole the yams because of hunger and secondly because of my daughter's school fees. Since I didn't get to borrow money from my brother, and there is no other person

to assist me, so, I decided to steal the yams so that I can raise the sum of N10, 000 for my child's school fees and other needs and use the remaining one to feed," he explained.



Emmanuel

On his experiences in the custody, Emmanuel said bedbugs feasted on his loins each time he lies on an old bed given to him in the custody, noting that the bitter pain he got from the attack and torture by some other senior inmates in his cell made him regretted his criminal action.

"I have not been normal ever since I came inside this prison. Most times I cannot sleep because of bedbugs and I had to be praying to God to rescue me from the prison. I was also praying for my daughter. I have learnt great lessons staying in a prison facility. Whenever I lie down, bedbugs feast on my loins and mosquitos bite me all over my body. IG (the oldest inmate in his prison cell) always beat me for not doing one thing or the other.

"As I am out of the prison, I don't pray to ever return there. Even if I am hungry, I prefer begging people to stealing. I can do any work. I will look for monthly work. I didn't finish secondary school because my father didn't take care of me. I can even be selling pure water just to survive," he stated. ●

## Police arrest woman for poisoning community well in alleged attempt to kill perceived foes

TIMOTHY AGBOR  
OSOGBO

The Police in Osun State have arrested a housewife, Mrs. Niniola Romoke for allegedly pouring substances suspected to be poison in her community well.

It was gathered that people of Aganga community in Osogbo where Romoke resides drink from the well and use its water for other purposes.

However, sources said that Romoke was having a disagreement with some members of the community before she poisoned the well located within the house of one of her perceived foes.

Concerned residents who allegedly saw the suspect pouring some oil substance inside the well raised the alarm and invited the police to arrest the aggrieved woman.

When the matter was brought before an Osogbo Magistrate's Court recently, Police prosecutor, B. Omojola, explained that Romoke had threatened to kill one Adeniyi Oyelakin before fouling the well.

Omojola disclosed that the incident happened sometime in May 2024 at Aganga Area in Osogbo.

The three counts preferred against the 38-year-old defendant read, "That you Niniola Romoke, sometime in the month of May 2024, at Aganga area, Osogbo, Osun State in the Osogbo Magisterial District, did unlawfully corrupt or foul the

water of a drinking well by pouring oily substances into the said well which render it less fit for the purpose of drinking or it is ordinarily used for, and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under section 245 of the Criminal Code Cap 34 Vol. II Laws of Osun State of Nigeria, 2002.

"On the same date, time, place in the aforementioned Magisterial district, did conduct yourself in a manner likely to cause breach of peace by fouling a drinking well which the people of Aganga Community drinks from or used for other purposes, and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under section 249(d)

of the Criminal Code Cap 34 Vol. II Laws of Osun State of Nigeria, 2002.

"You did with intent to intimidate or annoy, threaten to kill one Adeniyi Oyelakin and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under section 86 of the Criminal Code Cap 34 Vol. II Laws of Osun State of Nigeria, 2002."

She pleaded not guilty to the allegations. She was not legally represented in court.

However, Magistrate A. O. Odeleye granted her bail in the sum of N100, 000 with two sureties in the same amount.

The matter was adjourned till November 7 for mention. ●



## NDLEA arrests businessmen, Canada-based nurse at Lagos airport for cocaine, loud trafficking

● intercepts over N7bn worth of opioids at Apapa, Onne seaports



BRIGHT JACOB

Two businessmen, Ihejirika Okechukwu Emmanuel and Iwuagwu Ikedi Victory as well as a Canada-based nurse, Usman Grace Khadijat Olami, have been arrested by operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Ikeja Lagos for attempting to import and export cocaine pellets and parcels of Loud, a synthetic strain of cannabis through the airport.

This was contained in a statement issued in Abuja on Sunday by the NDLEA spokesman, Femi Babafemi.

According to Babafemi, Ihejirika who frequents Thailand from where he claims to be importing fish into Nigeria was arrested on Tuesday, October 15, 2024 while attempting to board an Ethiopian Airlines flight to Thailand via Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He said when the suspect was taken for body scan, the result showed he ingested an illicit

drug which proved to be cocaine.

As a result, he said the suspect was placed under excretion observation during which he expelled five big egg size wraps of cocaine weighing 400grams.

In his statement, Babafemi explained that the 51-year-old suspect confessed that he was to be paid upon successful delivery of the drug consignment in Thailand.

He said he needed the money to boost his fish importation business.

In the same vein, Babafemi said that NDLEA operatives at the Lagos airport on Thursday, October 17, intercepted a 26-year-old businessman, Iwuagwu Ikedi Victory, coming from Brazil via Addis Ababa during the inward clearance of passengers on Ethiopian Airlines flight.

He said his body scans revealed ingestion of illicit drugs.

Babafemi noted that when the suspect was put under observation, he excreted a pellet of cocaine weighing 22 grams.

He, however, confessed that he ingested 30 wraps of the illicit drug in Brazil but excreted 29 pellets in Addis Ababa, where he handed them over to another person. The NDLEA spokesman explained that the suspect revealed that he was to be paid N2.5 million for trafficking the drug.

Meanwhile, Babafemi also disclosed that a Nigerian Canadian nurse, Usman Grace Khadijat Olami, was arrested on October 4, 2024 by

# New Minimum wage announced by governors won't make any significant change in workers' welfare – Analysts

TIMOTHY AGBOR  
OSOGBO

Analysts have said the new minimum wage announced by some governors in the country would not have any significant improvement in the welfare and well-being of Nigerian workers.

They claimed that the figures dished out by some state governors are not in conformity with economic realities, stressing that an intentional act to better the lives of workers is lacking on the part of the governors.

The Federal Government and the Labour Union had signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the N70,000 new minimum wage. The Committee on Consequential Adjustments in Salaries had reached an agreement to implement the new minimum wage on July 29, 2024.

However, as at the time of this report, federal workers are yet to start receiving the new salaries.

Last week, some state governors made public their preparedness to implement the new minimum wage and also disclosed various amounts that they would be paying as the least salary.

Rivers State had approved the payment of N85,000 as its minimum wage, Ogun State approved

payment of N77,000, Gombe State agreed to pay N71,451, Ondo State announced to pay N73,000, Kogi State agreed to pay N72,500, Adamawa State said it will pay N73,000, while Lagos State announced N85,000 as its mom wage.

The Oyo State Government said it will announce its minimum wage after the issue of Consequential Salary Adjustment is settled. Borno had talked about N70,000 while Osun and Benue States have expressed readiness to adopt the Federal Government's minimum wage but they are yet to make any pronouncement.

However, Jigawa, Zamfara, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa States are yet to announce their minimum wage.

Analysts have expressed concerns that the disclosed amounts by some governors would not in any significant way increase the purchasing power of the workers.

In their separate reactions, the analysts, Kanmi Ademiluyi, Ayo Ologun and Fatai Tijani said the prices of goods and services have experienced astronomical rise since the agreement was made in July, urging state governors to hike the payments if they actually want their workers to survive the harsh economy.

Ologun said, "One of our problems is that we have been so de-



ceived by figures and numbers that whenever these amounts are dished out, we think they are some big things. Someone like me who is in tune with the economic realities of the country will not be moved by these amounts announced by some governors as minimum wage.

"I find it very mean that governors had to wait till now before making their intentions known. This is just a few of them. Many of them are still confused about what to do. This shows that our governors don't have the welfare of their workers at

heart. This N70,000 agreement was entered into in July and this October, I don't need to start explaining to you the barrage of calamities that have befallen the economy in the last two months. So, I don't expect this N70,000 and N80,000 being brandished to be realistic."

He was disturbed that a State like Jigawa just started paying N30,000 minimum wage just about four months ago, experiencing pessimism in the state governor adopting the N70,000 minimum wage any time soon.

"The reason why these governors find it very hard to pay something realistic is that they don't care about the condition of their workers. They take issues of the people's welfare with levity, otherwise, they should not have even stayed this long before some of them started coming out."

Kanmi Ademiluyi identified sufficient wage for workers as a way of investing in the people, saying, "If we are going to develop as a people and pull millions out of poverty, because no nation will thrive in investment unless there is good pay to workers who will buy what they are producing, then, we need to move away from this N70,000 and N80,000 figures."

"Nigerian workers' situation has not improved and that is the truth. This minimum wage cannot attract the kind of investment to fill the manufacturing base of this country. We don't have a sustainable income. It is not about the population, it is about the amount of people who really have the purchasing power to buy things. We are stock in a mess. This minimum wage reveals one thing; there is no intention whatsoever to build an economy. It is a statement that this country is not interested in developing the economy and pulling people out of poverty," he contented. ●

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# Stakeholders decry recent LG elections across Nigeria, say collapse of local government administration imminent

TIMOTHY AGBOR  
OSOGBO

Stakeholders in Nigeria's politics and governance have bemoaned the ways in which many local government elections have been conducted in some states across the country since the Supreme Court's authorisation of financial autonomy for the third tier of government.

While describing processes employed by the State Independent Electoral Commissions in the polls as a show of shame and mockery of democracy, the concerned groups averred that the collapse of local government administration is at hand if nothing is done to change the narratives.

The stakeholders made this known while reviewing the local government elections held in the country recently at a stakeholders forum organised by a Non-Governmental Organisation of the Catholic Diocese of Osogbo, Justice, Development & Peace Makers' Centre, Osogbo ahead of the forthcoming 2025 Osun LG election.

The stakeholders including Independent National Electoral Commission, Osun State Independent Electoral Commission, security agencies, religious leaders, civil society organisations, youths, women in politics, Inter-Party Advisory Council, state government representatives, election management experts among others, concluded that there is more to be done by state governors and SIECs if democracy, good governance and financial autonomy would be entrenched at local government administration in the country.

For JDPMC, the local government polls witnessed in some states after the apex court judgment on financial autonomy were only conducted for the state governments to access the federal allocation accrued to local government areas and not for advancement of democracy and good governance.

The General Coordinator of the faith-based organization, Rev Fr Peter Akinkunmi, expressed concerns over the shabby and haphazard methods applied by SIECs at the recently held elections in some states across the country, urging Osun SIEC to right the wrongs and set good example in the conduct of council polls.

Dwelling on the theme for the high level stakeholders dialogue programme: "The Evolution of Election in Osun State: The Preparedness of OSIEC and All Stakeholders Towards a Credible and Transparent 2025 LGA Election in Osun State," Akinkunmi mentioned that most Nigerians don't have interest in politics and governance because of collapse of local government politics and administration.

He said local councils have not been working effectively as a result of "the past and likely continuous abuse of outrageous regulatory power that the constitution gave to the state government over the affairs of LGAs, adding that JDPMC gathered stakeholders to discuss what can be done to make things work despite obvious challenges.



Different faces at the event

"Today, when the majority of Nigerians reflect on, aggregate, and seek to invest their time and resources to reinforcing those factors that they think will impact positively on their real lives, politics or governance hardly make the list. One of the major reasons is simply because the collapse of local government politics and administration has molded governance into a mere mental intangible concept that touches nothing in our real-life experience as a people since return to democracy.

"Yet it is mainly through the LG politics and administration that governance directly involves the people and touches the lives of citizens at the primary or fundamental level right from their communities into the more complex structure of society.

"We must admit that some of the factors I have alluded to earlier and many more have weakened the interest of the majority of the stakeholders understandably to the exclusion of the political class. We need our LGAs to function democratically, transparently, and responsibly. The foundation of this lies in the leadership recruitment process," Akinkunmi said while addressing participants.

He lamented worsening apathy during LG polls, identifying leadership recruitment as a major challenge confronting service delivery at grassroots level.

"In some states, 40 days' notice was given before local government elections and within a week, they had an election and it was shabbily held. This is laughable. You will laugh and ask if it is the same Nigeria. It is a show of shame and we do not want a repetition of this in Osun State," he said.

He added, "As of 2023, less than 60% of LGAs have been found to be administered by elected LGCs. Even, the LGA elections which have increased in number in 2024 especially since the July 11 judgment of the Supreme Courts are mostly a display of mediocrity. Clearly, they are undertaken not in the interest of democratic governance and service delivery but most likely to meet up with the condition given that the existence of duly elected LGA councils as conditions for access to the LGA shares of the FAAC.

"The levels of recklessness observed in LGA elections do not in any way reflect the level of advancement in our election in Nigeria at the national level. We must admit also that this is partly because we the state and non-state actors have not committed as much to LGA elections as we have done with INEC.

"We do not desire a replication of the show of shame displayed at LG elections in other states here in Osun State at the February 2025 LG polls in Osun State. Even though it may not turn out perfect because of many limiting factors, if we are brave and patriotic, we conduct a very credible election worth being proud of."

Other speakers including the President of Network of NGOs in the state, Michael Ebofin and Chairman, National Youth Council of Nigeria, Osun State, Ajala Adetunji, accused OSIEC of not carrying stakeholders along enough, urging it to conduct free and fair elections in collaboration with stakeholders.

An election expert, Bukola Idowu, also condemned the different approaches adopted by SIEC in various states as regards conduct of council polls, saying they were short of minimum election management standards.

Idowu, the team lead of Kimpact Development Initiative, posited, "The elections so far are an embarrassment. It is clear that states are conducting LG elections because of the allocations they are going to lose if they didn't. Most SIECs don't have money and they went ahead to conduct elections. We have seen a situation where elections weren't held in some local governments and then a list of winners was announced. SIEC denied the use of BVAs in some states."

On alleged failure of Osun electoral commission to carry stakeholders and people of the state along, Idowu said, "By now, we expect a high level of voter sensitisation in Osun State. If stakeholders are saying they have not been carried along, it puts the credibility of the election in doubt. The change can happen in Osun. It will be disastrous that after one year of preparation and notice, we still have shabbily conducted elections."

In his remarks during the panel session, the Resident Electoral Commissioner in Osun, Mutiu Agboko, advised OSIEC to always carry stakeholders along in its plans and ensure that there is smooth and transparent collation of results from wards to the state headquarters.

The REC said, "The organiser (JDPMC) felt that there is a need for OSIEC to do more in terms of organisation, engagement and in terms of collaboration. For us to move ahead and gain more grounds in this local government election, they felt that all of us who are stakeholders have to come together and look at the issues, what

are the areas of weakness that we need to change and what are the areas of strength that we need to improve upon so that we can be able to change people's perception in terms of negativity that they have about various conducts of local government elections."

Advising OSIEC, Agboko stated, "We need to do more by ensuring that we let people know how the election is going to be conducted. We should let people know how the results of the election are going to be managed, we should let people know how the process of the result collation is going to be, we should let people know how

the eventual announcement of the results will be. So, if all this is in simple language explained and analysed in detail to the members of the public, I think the confidence will be restored and the willingness for more people to participate in the local government elections will be guaranteed."

Reacting, OSIEC Commissioner for Operations, Bunmi Ibiloye, said it has been engaging all key stakeholders, assuring that the Commission is poised towards delivering an acceptable election.

Meanwhile, the police assured the security of lives and property before, during and after the polls next year. ●

## NDLEA arrests businessmen, Canada-based nurse at Lagos airport for cocaine, loud trafficking

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NDLEA officers at the Lagos airport during the inward clearance of Air France passengers from Toronto, Canada via Paris. During a search of her luggage, a total of 70 parcels of Canadian Loud, weighing 35.70kg were recovered from her.

During her interview, she claimed she was in Nigeria to meet her boyfriend who instructed her to come with the large consignment of the highly sought-after synthetic cannabis.

At the seaports, Babafemi said while a total of 162,351 bottles of codeine based syrup were intercepted from two containers at the Apapa seaport in Lagos by NDLEA operatives during a joint examination of two containers with men of the Customs Service and other security agencies on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, not less than 7,200,000 pills of Royal 225mg Tapentadol and Carisoprodol worth N3.6 billion in street value were seized from a watch-listed container from India at Port Harcourt Port Complex, Onne, Rivers State.

In the same container, Babafemi said 780 cartons of chlorphenamine containing 15,600,000 pills of the opioid, were also recovered.

From two other watch-listed containers equally searched at the port in Onne, he said a total of 337,000 bottles of codeine-based syrup worth N2.359 billion were recovered from them on Tuesday 15 and Thursday October 17, 2024.

This brings the total value of the seized Tapentadol, Carisoprodol and Codeine consignments at the two seaports to N7, 095,457,000.

In Bauchi State, a suspect Sunday Jonathan Ogenyi, 33, was arrested along Bauchi-Jos road with 76,600 pills of tramadol concealed in false compartments of his Toyota Sienna vehicle marked Enugu JRV 341 ZY, while NDLEA operatives in Ondo state on Tuesday, October 15, 2024 arrested three suspects, Goddey Obizuo; Samuel Aniete; and Kuffrey Aniete at Afo village where 672kg cannabis sativa was seized from them.

Babafemi added that a raid at Ilushi forest in Esan South East LGA, Edo State led to the destruction of 10,590.36kg cannabis spread on 4.236144 hectares of farmland.

He named the suspects arrested during the operation to include Benson Upuoni, 65; and Sunday Nwaeboyi, 35.

In Lagos, he said NDLEA operatives on Tuesday, October 15, 2024 arrested Andrew Joseph Anoriode with 3kg methamphetamine and 1.90kg cannabis along Lagos - Ibadan expressway while 241kg of same substance was recovered at Gbaji, Badagry area of the state.

He said a suspected meth cook, Agbeiboh Oscar, was nabbed the same Tuesday at Abule Osun with 265grams of methamphetamine and different quantities of precursor chemicals for the manufacture of methamphetamine and others. ●



# Politics

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## Akpabio's uncommon high-powered politics, intrigues, bickering in the senate

ROTIMI DUROJAIYE

Like the proverbial cat with nine lives, the Senate President Godswill Akpabio, a former governor of Akwa Ibom State, defied all opposition to clinch the position of Senate President of the 10th National Assembly on June 13, 2023.

His emergence was characterised by high-powered politics, intrigues, and bickering, considering that he was said to have been President Bola Tinubu's preferred candidate for the number three position.

He defeated his lone challenger, Senator Abdulaziz Yari, former governor of Zamfara State, after polling 63 votes against the former's 46 votes. Since then, Akpabio has been navigating the legislative political ship.

But while he is admired by many because of the way he jocularly handles some issues during plenary, he is equally known for making controversial remarks over serious national issues.

Twenty-four hours after refuting reports of an alleged impeachment plot against Akpabio, the Senate on Thursday passed a vote of confidence in him and the entire leadership of the Red Chamber.

Reports of a purported impeachment plot by unnamed northern senators surfaced on social media on Wednesday morning, but both the Senate and Akpabio himself swiftly dismissed it as fake news.

However, during Thursday's plenary, Yahaya Abdullahi (PDP, Kebbi North) rose under Orders 10 and 42 of the Senate standing rules to address the issue again.

Abdullahi emphasised the importance of dispelling the false narrative and clearing the names of northern senators accused of plotting the impeachment.

"The publication is undermining the context of our democracy and is undermining the capacity of this institution to deliver in the presence of governors of this country," Abdullahi stated.

He further called for unity, saying, "We must rise and get united under the leadership to ensure that this kind of discourse is completely negated so that the kind of unity we have forged in the last 18 months can be sustained and fully accomplished."

Abdullahi vehemently rejected the notion that northern senators were involved in any such plot, adding, "For us to be characterised as promoting or supporting anybody to bring the leadership of this institution down is bad and should be disregarded."

"I have never in my life associated with anybody in order to bring or divide any institution along ethnic or traditional lines. I think this is the work of some enemies, which should be resisted, and all of us should stand united behind the Senate leadership to make sure that this institution is preserved."

Also, Abdul Ningi (PDP, Bauchi Central), who moved the motion for a vote of confidence in Akpabio and the Senate leadership, also dismissed the report as a fabrication targeting northern senators.

"I move that, on behalf of other senators, we pass a vote of confidence in your leadership and that of the entire Senate leader-



Akpabio



Yari

ship," Ningi said.

Similarly, Ismaila Kawu (NNPP, Kano South) and Minority Leader, Abba Moro (PDP, Benue South), supported the motion, which was unanimously affirmed when put to a voice vote.

In his remarks after the vote of confidence, Akpabio expressed his gratitude to the senators for their unwavering support.

"On behalf of my brother, the Deputy Senate President, and the entire leadership, I assure you that the cooperation and bond existing between us and the Senate will continue," Akpabio said.

"No amount of people, no social media will come here to break that bond. I thank you for this, and we are very humbled," he added.

He concluded by promising to uphold the trust placed in him and his leadership.

He said, "We are confident that, in the coming months and years, we will justify the confidence you have placed in us."

However, Tuesday, March 12, 2024 cannot be forgotten in a jiffy as all the items listed on the day's order paper, which include presentation, consideration of bills and motions were not attended to.

The only matter that came up was a motion of Urgent National Importance, titled "Urgent need to address the false allegations against the Senate and the Presidency on the 2024 Appropriation Act by Senator Abdul Ningi (Bauchi Central)" and sponsored by the Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Senator Olamilekan Adeola, APC, Ogun West on the allegations raised by Ningi of N3 trillion Budget Padding in the N28.7trillion 2024 Appropriation Act.

Ningi also alleged that the budget passed

“ON JULY 31, 2024, AKPABIO, WHILE SPEAKING ON A PLANNED NATIONWIDE PROTEST OVER THE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP, SAID HE AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WOULD BE “EATING” WHILE THEY (NIGERIANS) PROTEST

by the National Assembly for the 2024 fiscal year was N25 trillion while the one being implemented by the Presidency was N28.7 trillion.

Adeola, who read a transcribed version of Senator Ningi's BBC Hausa Service interview, had disclosed that some agencies were not documented in the 2024 budget document. According to him, these agencies include the Judiciary, National Assembly, INEC, TETFUND, North East Development Commission (NEDC), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Government Owned Enterprise (GOE).

At the end of the debates that led to a rowdy session, opening of can of worms especially on funds for Constituency projects, how the sum of N500 million were in the hands of some Senators, while others did not get close to that, thereby suggesting lack of uniformity.

When it was time for the former Deputy leader and the immediate past Chairman of the Northern Senators Forum, Senator Abdul Ningi to speak, he said, "I think Yari (Solomon Olamilekan) has done a fair job except on some issues that they do not understand.

"I have never said the budget was padded. I have never issued out any of these statements. This is a fake contribution that was forwarded; I do not know the author of this. In the budget Yari presented to you, I have facts, constituency by constituency, some 12bn, some 60bn, some 30bn some have less than 1 billion.

"As I am talking to you, Mr. President, I do not know your take-home pay. I don't know how much you are spending on your cars and other principal officers. I have tar-

gets just like every other member; I do not know your aides or their numbers. Everything in the budget is my concern."

At the end of the day, the Senate suspended Ningi for raising the alarm of N3 trillion Budget Padding in the N28.7trillion 2024 Appropriation Act and for claiming that the budget passed by the National Assembly for 2024 fiscal year is N25 trillion while the one being implemented by the Presidency is N28.7trillion.

The Senate also resolved that if Senator Ningi writes to apologise during the period, he shall be recalled to resume his legislative activities having shown remorse.

With his suspension on that day, Senator Ningi joined the league of Senators that have been suspended before now.

Prior to Senate Ali Ndume's suspension, recall that the Senate had on Wednesday, March 30, 2017 suspended former Majority Leader, Senator Ali Ndume, for six months for not "conducting due diligence" before filing a petition against Senate President Bukola Saraki and Senator Dino Melaye who was representing Kogi West then. Ndume was indicted for "for bringing Senator Dino Melaye, his colleague, and the institution of the Senate to unbearable disrepute."

Also, former Deputy Senate President, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege, was in April 2018 suspended for 181 days but former President of the Senate, Senator Bukola Saraki pleaded for 90 days and it was unanimously accepted, but the court squashed the suspension.

In 2004, Senator Isa Mohammed, PDP, Niger and Vice chairman of the Senate Committee on States and Local govern-

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ments, had slapped his Chairman, Senator Iyabo Anisulowo, PDP, Ogun State over alleged misappropriation of N1.2 million Senate Committee funds.

Senator Joseph Waku from Benue was also suspended by the senate in 2000 after he stirred a major controversy in the country. The Senator had suggested that a military coup would be preferable to allowing former President Olusegun Obasanjo to continue as a dictator. Waku criticised Obasanjo's administration, describing it as the worst in Nigeria's history.

His comments resulted in widespread condemnation and subsequent suspension by the Senate. In 2002, late Senator Arthur Nzeribe from Imo State was suspended indefinitely in November 2002 by then-Senate President Pius Anyim over allegations of N22 million fraud.

#### SENATE AND BANANA PEELS

But one striking thing that happened on that Tuesday was the revelation by the Senate Leader, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele, APC, Ekiti Central who took us down memory lane of banana peels in the Senate from the era of former President of the Senate, Senator Evan Enweren in 1999 to Past President Ken Nnamani in 2007, with former President of the Senate, Senator David Mark putting an end to Banana peels as he was the President of the Senate from 2007 to 2015.

Senator Mark finished successfully while Senator Bukola Saraki whose tenure was characterized by face-off between the executive and the legislature, rounded off in 2019 and Senator Ahmad Lawan did his four years from 2019 to 2023.

Senate leader Bamidele took everyone unawares when he described what happened as a civilian coup.

Bamidele, while reacting to the allegation had said, "I am speaking as Senator Opeyemi Bamidele representing Ekiti, not as a Senate leader to say that Ningi was only fuelling this budget padding allegation to push for a failed civilian coup in the Senate.

"Over 60 senators voted for Akpabio, and over 40 voted against him. That's the will of the majority. But a few have refused to let the electioneering activities pass them by. They still hold bile, and that is why it is always about Akpabio, never about the Senate, House of Representatives, DG, or Budget. All of us passed this budget, and it was never about Mr President who signed this budget.

"It is always about Akpabio. We have momentum; this is a defining moment for all of us to say if we are going to have a stable Senate.

"It is not about North and South. It is about our rules (the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). It is about our people who are hungry and deprived. Mr President (Akpabio), make no mistake, some people feel they are not going to give you more than one year to spend on this chair, they want to do everything possible before the 13th of June to remove you.

"I want Nigerians to know for history's sake that the last time the people of South-South had a chance to be Senate President was 40 years ago. The last time the South had a chance to be Senate President was during Obasanjo's administration when it went to the South East.

"Five people were elected because they were impeached in quick succession. But as soon as it left the South, we had peace because we (the South) will always cooperate. David Mark spent eight years. Ahmad Lawal spent four peaceful years. Even Saraki, with all he did, spent four peaceful years.

"It is about Akpabio; it is about the South; you can now understand why Senator Ningi will want to use the platform of the Northern Senators Forum to push an agenda even when they disagreed with him. Mr President, I plead with you that this is an

# 'As Akpabio weathers uncommon storms in the 10th senate'

**I SUSPECT THE SENATE PRESIDENT IS LIVING IN A WORLD THAT IS VERY DISCONNECTED FROM THE WORLD IN WHICH MILLIONS OF NIGERIANS ARE LIVING**

opportunity for us to let our rules prevail."

#### MANY 'SINS' OF AKPABIO

Recall that the removal of Senate Presidents always starts from accusations of Constituency funds or Committee funds and lack of uniformity in the sharing formula of constituency funds and composition of standing Committees, especially when some Senators are left out of juicy Committees.

Some Senators are still not happy with Akpabio based on his comment while rounding off a session of the Senate preparatory for a recess, when he mistakenly revealed that money had been sent to senators to "enjoy" their recess. Akpabio, who had forgotten that the proceeding was being streamed live, began to address his colleagues before the adjournment motion was moved at the end of the Senate's ministerial screening.

"In order to enable all of us to enjoy our holidays, a token has been sent to our various accounts by the Clerk of the National Assembly," he had said.

On July 31, 2024, Akpabio, while speaking on a planned nationwide protest over the economic hardship, said he and other members of the National Assembly would be "eating" while they (Nigerians) protest.

He spoke at the Niger Delta Ethnic Nationalities, Youths and Women Group Sensitisation conference in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The event, organised by the Niger Delta Development Commission, was broadcast live on a national television station.

During the event, the Managing Director of the NDDC, Samuel Ogbuku, said the Niger Delta region was not interested in a change of government in Nigeria.

In his remarks, Akpabio said, "Managing Director, I want to thank you for what you said. You said we are not interested in regime change; let us own this government. Those who want to protest can protest, but let us be here eating."

His remark sparked outrage as many felt the Senate president was mocking Nigerians.

On July 18, 2024, Akpabio told the senator representing Kogi-Central senatorial district, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, that the Senate chamber was not a night club; therefore, she must be recognised before speaking during plenary.

The senators were debating a bill for an Act to establish the National Road Transport Council, sponsored by the Deputy Senate Leader, Senator Oyelola Ashiru (APC Kwara South).



his "nightclub" comment, saying, "I will not intentionally denigrate any woman. I always pray that God will uplift women. Distinguished Senator Natasha, I want to apologise to you. The interest shown on social media shows that we have enemies. I felt I should tender a public apology to you."

On August 7, 2023, Senate President Godswill Akpabio goofed when he announced that funds had been disbursed to senators to enjoy their recess.

He was addressing his colleagues after the Senate had concluded the screening and confirmation of ministerial nominees and was about to adjourn the plenary to embark on their annual recess.

Akpabio said, "To enable all of us to enjoy our holiday, a token has been sent to our various bank accounts by the clerk of the National Assembly."

However, he was quickly informed by his colleagues that the proceeding was being transmitted live. Upon realising the gravity of his comment, Akpabio swiftly retreated, saying, "I withdraw that statement."

He then added, "To allow you to enjoy your holiday, the Senate president has sent prayers to your mailboxes to assist you to go on a safe journey and return."

The "holiday bonus" comment came weeks after the lawmakers were allocated funds to support their "working conditions" in an amended 2022 supplementary appropriation act.

Many Nigerians flayed the senate president, saying it was unfortunate that such a statement could be made by him at a time Nigerians were experiencing hardship.

The "Let the poor breathe" comment by Senator Akpabio amidst the prevailing hardship in the country was followed by condemnation also.

Akpabio made the statement during plenary when the Senate passed a resolution to halt an increase in electricity tariff by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission in an apparent move to stand with Nigerians.

The senate president said, "The prayer is that, let the poor breathe, and Senator Mustapha has seconded that the poor should breathe. Those who are in support of the additional prayer that the poor should be allowed to breathe, say 'aye' and those who are against say 'nay'."

The senators responded "aye", to which Akpabio said, "The ayes have it! The poor must be allowed to breathe."

But while the remarks generated controversy among Nigerians who viewed it as a mockery of poor Nigerians, Akpabio's media office in a statement defended him saying, "Let the poor breathe" remark "was to firmly reject any plan of increasing electricity tariff for Nigerians".

Also, Akpabio said the return to the old national anthem which President Bola Tinubu had championed was the 'best gift for the country and most profound'.

Akpabio had at a joint sitting of the National Assembly with President Tinubu in attendance, said, "Of all the significant things you have done, the most profound is to take us back to our genealogy — the genealogy of our birth — that though we may belong to different tribes, though we may have different tongues, in brotherhood we stand."

The hasty passage of the bill by the National Assembly to return Nigeria to the colonial national anthem, 'Nigeria We Hail Thee', was one of the issues that triggered

The bill titled, 'National Road Transportation Council (Establishment) Bill, 2024', was aimed at "regulating the road transport industry and the transport profession and other related matters in Nigeria."

But senators were divided during the debate. Opponents of the bill argued that creating the council would be a duplication of the functions of the Federal Road Safety Corps and Vehicles Inspection Office.

They argued that the bill shouldn't be passed at a time when the government was trying to implement the Oronsanye report by merging some of the agencies with similar functions. But other senators spoke in support of the bill.

When the senate president subjected the bill to a voice vote to determine its acceptance or rejection, many senators said 'aye' and many others said 'nay.' This happened twice.

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan, who had earlier contributed and suggested that the issue of water transportation should also be looked into, to relieve the roads of serious burden stood up again without Akpabio's permission.

The female Senator said, "Mr President, we don't want the bill to be killed, we just want a bit of clarification. We don't want the bill killed, but it should be slightly modified."

Responding, Akpabio said, "Distinguished Senator Natasha, in the chamber, you have to be recognised before you speak. We are not in a night club." Senator Natasha responded, saying, "Oh, pardon me."

Akpabio's statement was greeted with heavy bashing from many Nigerians, who felt it was derogatory.

And on July 23, Akpabio tendered an apology to Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan over

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# Caretaker Committee is a product of illegality, unknown to Labour Party constitution – Obiora Ifoh

The National Publicity Secretary of Labour Party, Obiora Ifoh, speaks on the crisis rocking the party, the alleged threat to sanction its 2023 presidential candidate, Peter Obi, and Governor Alex Otti over the contentious Nenadi Usman Caretaker Committee. He insists that the committee is a product of illegality, not recognised because it is not a product of the Nigerian Constitution and the electoral law. Excerpts:

## What's Labour Party's position on Peter Obi and Abia Governor Alex Otti's alleged betrayal following the inauguration of Nenadi Usman's caretaker committee?

The committee, as you are well aware, is a product of illegality. And we do not recognise it because it is not a product of the Nigerian Constitution and the electoral law. It is also not a product of the Labour Party Constitution. It is just an amalgamation of some members and leaders of the party who think that the party should surrender its authority to them. Their action was not backed by any law. Therefore, it is unrecognisable and unlawful and we don't reckon with that group or whatever name they call themselves.

## So, what's the fate of Obi and Otti?

They are the leaders of the party and we hold them in high esteem. We are sure they were misinformed before taking that decision. Very soon, they will retrace their steps and return to the main fold of the party.

## Are you ruling out sanctions?

No, there won't be any sanction on those leaders because, as I told you earlier, they were misinformed and that does not attract any punitive action. They are our leaders and stars. We think it is left for us to put them through, guide them and make them see reasons on why they should retrace their steps.

We need everyone in the party. We are not going to chase away anybody. That is why our doors are wide open for people who want to stay. The issue we have with the Labour Party is that the party has its programme and ideology. The ideology is for people to have the same like-mind; people who will think Nigeria and those at the lower cadre first. We are not a bourgeoisie party that is cult-like. It is a party that runs an open-door policy. That is why those leaders (Obi and Otti) are very important to us. We are not going to play with them or issue any sanction whatsoever.

## Julius Abure alleged betrayal from people they accommodated and gave tickets from another party. Is it an indication that they were behind the rift in your party?

What he tried saying was that we threw our doors open to people from other parties who came in not knowing that the party had a totally different constitution different from what they were used to. So, their arguments were based on what they had in the other political parties.

For instance, they talked about a convention that had to start from the ward,

local governments, state to national levels. But that is not what our constitution says. These are some of the problems. It was like having to indoctrinate them again to understand the party they now belonged to.

You will recall that nearly six months into this government, we were the first political party to shout that our legislators were not following the policies of the Labour Party. We told them not to even accept the jumbo pay or expensive cars that ran into millions of naira offered to National Assembly members.

That is not what the Labour Party stands for. After that, we expected them to take the money and put it into the grassroots, the people who suffered and worked for their victories. They were supposed to be servant leaders. But most of them turned themselves into lords, expecting the masses to worship them. These were not the ideals of the Labour Party when it was created. So, we tried to let them know that they should go back to the constitution of the party to study what the Labour Party is all about.

Many came in and tried to disrupt the flow of the party. So, that's why we are shouting now. Up to this moment, some of them have not been able to imbibe such a culture in the Labour Party. So, we will keep on talking. Some were given free tickets. The truth is that many of them contested elections in other political parties and lost before coming to the Labour Party. So, we gave them tickets, prepared, campaigned and supported them to win elections. We gave them waivers and stood by them all through the legal process. These are things that other political parties will charge millions. But we never did. So, that is why we are surprised by the insubordination.

## Many people are eager to know if the Lamidi Apapa faction is still in your camp. Has Abayomi Arabambi also replaced you as national publicity secretary of the party?

On the issue of the spokesman, I Obiora Ifoh, remains the only National Publicity Secretary of the Labour Party. I contested the election in the last convention and I won. And I have four years to serve. Nonetheless, you are aware that the crisis in the party is huge. There are many people claiming so many things.

I'm sure by now people know there are up to three purported national chairmen in the party, people claiming all sorts of things. But we are not going to fight that because we are opening our doors for every aggrieved person to come in to put our house in order. Title is not important to us. What is important is the possibility



**IT IS JUST AN AMALGAMATION OF SOME MEMBERS AND LEADERS OF THE PARTY WHO THINK THAT THE PARTY SHOULD SURRENDER ITS AUTHORITY TO THEM. THEIR ACTION WAS NOT BACKED BY ANY LAW**

of a new Nigeria and the need to put Nigeria first.

Nigeria is at a cross road, so no sensible Nigerian should be worried about the title now, we want to fix Nigeria first. Having said that, we have no problem with Lamidi Apapa and the rest of them, they left the party because they were misadvised. They have since realised their mistakes and they have fallen in line. They are now back to the party, as far as I know, they have not joined or declared for any other party.

Our doors are open to any errant member that decides to repent and come back. We will readmit them. We will also do the same to some of those people that attended that illegal meeting in Umuahia. They were misinformed and acted grossly under ignorance. But I am sure very soon, they will realize their mistakes and come back. They say the more, the merrier. In politics, numbers are the game.

Since this drama of the inauguration of a caretaker committee started, has Obi reached out to your NWC?

Well, I can tell you that we are not fight-

ing anyone. We are not in any way enmity with the leader or even the Governor of Abia State. We are not in any confrontation with them personally. It is all about interests. It's all about a misinformation created by an outsider, which we didn't handle properly. I can tell you, regrettably, that our leaders have not spoken with the National Working Committee as a group but they are talking to individuals.

In conflict resolution, you don't cherry pick individuals to work with, no one is totally useless. The NWC was completely neglected and that is working against the peaceful resolution. Fortunately, the NWC is united in this battle. You don't cut someone's hair in his absence.

## Political analysts observed that failure to have a united front cost the Labour Party the governorship election in Edo State. Do you agree?

That is a misconception. The Edo election is something that the Labour Party has refused to comment on, at least officially. The party put in enough energy throughout the campaign. We made sure we went to all the wards twice and covered every nook and cranny. The candidate (Olumide Akpata) has a very big personality.

All these things put together are enough to give us victory. But the party believed that the votes were allocated, I call it allocation because that was not the figure the party got. It's something that is inconceivable. This is why the party is taking its time to look into the data, in-depth analysis of what happened, to find out why we got that abysmal number after all the efforts put in the campaign.

I can tell you that out of the three top parties that contested that election, the Labour Party was a lot more united than the other two political parties. I'm sure you remember that even the former presidential candidate and some other leaders of the party were there on a couple of occasions. For us to end up with that number of votes, it's something that we need to investigate and find out whether it was an awarded vote or earned vote. I think somebody somewhere played a fast one on us, but we'll dig deep and find out exactly what happened. Only then can the party make a formal statement afterwards.

## With the continued giant strides of the ruling APC amid allegations of state capture, don't you fear Nigeria may be heading towards a one-party system?

No, it won't be the first time we saw a

# Hot Seat

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## I'm not worried about 2026 elections, I don't want to be distracted – Governor Oyebanji

In this interview, the Governor of Ekiti State, Biodun Oyebanji speaks on his first two years in the saddle of governance and specific programmes he has been able to execute for the development of the state. He also speaks on the politics of 2026 and the projections for the rest of his tenure, among other issues. Excerpts:

**Mr. Governor, you have done much in two years with little resources coming to the state going by the federal allocation. We will like to know how much your administration has borrowed to finance these projects and the state of the Internally Generated Revenue.**

Since we came into office, we have not embarked on any major borrowing other than the monthly overdraft we usually take from banks to pay salaries before the federal allocation comes into our account.

We have not borrowed a dime from any financial institution to run the state in the last two years. Where are we getting the money? There has been an increment in the revenue allocation from the Federal Government, and also there has been a major increase in our IGR. We met our IGR at about N600 million per month, but I can tell you that as of today, we are doing N1.5 billion per month and it keeps increasing every month.

**You have made a declaration of paying N70, 000 new minimum wage for workers but there are fears this might affect the pace of development in the state, How are you going about this?**

Like I said earlier, I want to tell the truth all the time and I am not here to do things so that people will clap for me. The minimum wage is a law signed by the President and ratified by the National Assembly. It is a law and I swore an oath to uphold the law of this country; so, I don't have to make a formal statement in respect to that. That is the truth.

I don't want to play politics with the minimum wage. There is a committee we have put in place that is working with the labour leaders. They have gone far and I don't want to preempt what will be the outcome of the committee. The only thing I can tell our people is we need to be extremely patient and we should not follow the multitude.

If we are going to pay minimum wage in Ekiti, we must start with everybody, I don't want a situation whereby we pay state workers alone and neglect local government workers and teachers, I am not going to be part of that. My charge to the committee is that if they are starting tomorrow, all the workers in Ekiti State, including pensioners, must benefit from it.

I want a comprehensive report on this, but I can say I am paying the core civil servants and people will clap for me but others like the teachers and local government workers and the pensioners will have been left out.

On whether it is going to affect the infrastructure development in the state, we have to make a choice and like I said, next year's budget is on welfare, it is a priority for us. But you need to also consider the percentage of people that will benefit from this new minimum wage and the generality of Ekiti people, we must strike a balance. So, we will do it in such a manner that neither side will suffer- Workers will be happy and also we will develop the state and those not in the employment of the government will be happy too.

We must distribute the cake in a way and manner that both the public service employees, those in the informal sector, and our senior citizens are happy and the committee is working hard in this regard and closing their discussion. I don't want to join the multitude. I am driven by doing

the right thing at all times and like I told you, I am an apostle of soft power which is about compassion and empathy. I don't make reckless statements. I can assure Ekiti workers that they will be happy and they know that there is nothing I told them that I have not done. If we pay minimum wage, it is going to increase the purchasing power of the workers, these same workers will go to the market, pay rents, patronise the artisans and among others, the money will stay in the state and by the time we start paying, those people providing those services will be positively impacted.

That is why we must grow the informal sector so that the person selling will have enough money to stock their shops. We have put in place measures to ensure they benefit from our programmes and that is why we have not owed deductions

because those things, as small as they are, have a big impact on the economy.

**Before now Ekiti has always been in the news for bad reasons politically, but since you came in, these crises have vanished. How have you been able to achieve this in bringing major political tendencies and leaders together to be on the same page with you?**

As a servant leader, every leader has a choice of how he wants to lead the people. I am an apostle of what they call soft power and leadership. It means you know that you have the power but you are careful not to misuse it. It means empathy and compassion.

When God entrusted this office into my hands, I made up my mind that the

only thing I will do on this seat is to serve Ekiti people in a way and manner that will bring development into this state. One of the basic ingredients of development is peace and I promise myself that as long as it depends on me, I will be at peace with everyone.

I believe that politics ended after my swearing in as the governor of the state and that day I took an oath to protect the constitution of this country and to serve the people regardless of political affiliation.

As the governor, I see all of us as indigenes of Ekiti not belonging to party A, B or C. I also note that an average human being deserves to be respected and as a leader you need to humble yourself and respect your people; you must show compassion and it will be very easy for them to walk the path of development with you.

So, in the last two years, we have exhibited the highest sense of humility, compassion, empathy and transparency. I know that if they trust their government, it will be very easy to lead them and I try as much as possible to be truthful in anything I say. If something is within my power to do, I will do it and if I cannot do it, I will come back to explain to Ekiti people why I have not been able to do it. So, we have exhibited trust as an ingredient of our politics.

The people know that when their Governor makes a promise, it may be late, it will be done. To all leaders in the state, they are critical stakeholders and I need their help in one way or the other and I run to all of them for advice. Let me say that I don't go to them as a politician, I go to them as Governor of the state and that makes it easy for them to relate with me. That is what is responsible for the peace we have in this state.

As a leader, I have chosen the path of peaceful coexistence with everybody, irrespective of political affiliations. It is a choice I have made; it has its own consequences and sacrifices but as long as the strategy translates to the development of our people, it makes me happy.

**What are those consequences you faced with this decision as mentioned?**

The price of people not accustomed to this style. You see some of our people telling me that I am not using my power. Some elements within my political party are also not comfortable with this posture. There have been a lot of ripples within APC with the choices I have made, but



Oyebanji

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like I told them, it is in the interest of Ekiti people. We don't play politics with everything; there is time for politics and governance. So far, so good, I have the backing and support of critical leaders in the party and party members are getting used to this style. Don't forget it is a new style in our politics in Ekiti and some feathers might be ruffled, but I thank God that our people are getting used to it.

**There have been waves of endorsement for a second term by different categories of people in the state and beyond including political leaders across board. When will you respond to all these people calling for you to contest again in 2026?**

I am a highly spiritual person and the Bible says the race is neither for the swift nor the battle for the strong. My future is in the hands of God, but be that as it may, I am extremely grateful to those clamouring and wish we continue.

I see it as a vote of confidence in our administration. It also puts a lot of burden on us to do more, because apparently we must have done some things that make them say we should continue; so we must avoid a situation where people will wake up tomorrow and say they don't want us again. We are just at the midterm of this administration and it is nice to hear all those things but I don't want to be distracted and I will continue to do things that will make them say that. But our party has a process of electing who carries the flag of the party, the party will take a decision and whatever decision they take, it is okay by me. I thank God for this opportunity and my future is in the hands of God.

**But there are feelers that some prominent APC members claiming to be close to the Aso villa are gearing up to contest against you. Are you worried by this?**

People that know me will tell you that I don't get worried about things like that. The reason why I am not worried is that the seat of the governorship of Ekiti state is open to all Ekiti indigenes that are qualified to aspire. I am not worried at all. When the time for politics comes, we will play it but for now I don't want to be distracted.

**No doubt, you will be commissioning some projects during this second year anniversary; we will like to know the state of work as regards the Ekiti State Cargo airport.**

The Ekiti Airport is a work in progress. I think we are expecting the Ministry of Aviation and other regulatory agencies to give us the final certification. They have come here twice, and told us to do some adjustments which we have done and once the team comes here next month by the grace of God, and a clean bill from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria and other regulatory agencies is given, we are good to go.

The airport is ready and I am a perfectionist and when it comes to air travels, safety is key. I don't want to play politics with passengers, safety. And there are many airports operating in the country today that are not as good as the one we have here, that is the truth.

By the time the Ekiti airport begins operations, you will be proud of what we have done in that place; it is going to be one of the best in the country. Hopefully, if we get the necessary approvals, we have two airlines that we are talking to and they are ready to begin operations. We are also trying to resolve the issue of accommodation for members of staff from the regulatory agencies; they have

# 'Ekiti Airport is going to be one of the best in the country'

started posting workers here. Once that is sorted, everything will be in place and I have high hopes that the airport will begin operation before the end of the year because all the physical structures have been completed.

The control tower is there and of course the car park and the rest are almost done. Let me say that I am extremely grateful to our revered Aare Afe Babalola (SAN) for his support on the airport project because he has really assisted us beyond our expectation.

**What about the access road to the airport which is currently not in good shape?**

Don't forget the road you are talking about is a federal road and it has been awarded by the Federal Executive Council and as of the last count, I was told that the Bureau of Public Procurement is to issue a certificate of no objection to the contractor and once that is done, they will mobilize to site. I must thank the Federal Government for this because when the Minister of Works (Dave Umahi) came here, he made a promise and it has been awarded by the Federal Government.

**Your administration has invested in agriculture most importantly the 'Bring Back Our Youth to Agric Initiative. What are the plans of the government in ensuring these programmes are of huge benefit to Ekiti?**

It will shock you that those people that are coming to the state to park our yams and other produce are those that gave our farmers money to plant for them. When the Commissioner for Investment told me this, I wept because our farmers don't have access to capital. In the beginning of the farming season, those who have money will come to Ekiti and give our farmers money to plant and collect the proceeds later and just give them peanuts.

You can't tell someone who has invested in a business not to make profit and that is why I said we are looking for money for them through cooperative societies, take loans, plant and be in charge of prices when it is time for them to sell. But, we are turning that curve now by the grace of God, and by next year we will do more. Part of the problem also is that most of our farmers have not joined cooperatives and it takes a lot of advocacy to change that orientation.

The Bring Back Our Youth to Agriculture is one programme I am very proud of and I must commend the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security and the state investment promotion agency. When we started the programme, people thought it would not be possible; we asked our youths to register and we trained them in partnership with a private sector.

We started with 930 youths in six clusters across the state and cumulatively they have cultivated more than 2,000 hectares of all sorts of crops ranging from maize to cassava to yam to beans to soya, to vegetables among others. I took it upon myself to go and see those farms and what they have done, I was shocked. But there are still challenges we need to confront and as I speak to you, there are people who are ready to put down their money to off take but my issue is that I don't want those products to be taken outside Ekiti State.

Our plan is to off take, keep and release to the market next year when there is

shortage but there is a challenge of where we are going to store them. The Silos we could have used were vandalised during #EndSARS protest, we even engaged the person in charge of the place to see how we can work together to rebuild, the person said the manufacturers have to do it themselves and they have not done it and we are nearing harvest season.

The fear from those in government is that if we store up anywhere in town, they can be looted. Should we sell and let our farmers have the money but it will defeat the aim of the project because it is to crash prices of these items in Ekiti State. We have made up our mind that next year, we will continue to build warehouses and silos so that we can store our farm produce.

**Are you comfortable with the security situation in the state?**

Am I comfortable? No! Has there been improvement? Yes. Going forward, we will continue to improve but unfortunately, I can't discuss at length on this issue. I can assure you that there has been remarkable improvement except pockets of attacks on the soft targets like kidnappings, and herders' crisis with farmers.

We are in constant discussion with the security chiefs and if you observe lately the issue we faced in Ado-Ekiti over killings of people, including Point of Sale (PoS) agents some time ago, have been nipped in the bud. I must use this medium to commend the security chiefs in Ekiti, they are working together in unison. I hope the Ekiti example is what others will study because they are working together and sharing intelligence and this has really helped us in the state.

**What is your administration's plan for the people of the state on the issue of electricity which is important to the growth of the economy?**

We have done the electricity audit of the state, the way we are now, we are off the national grid; we get electricity from neighboring states and the Federal Government is trying to put in place two other sub-stations in Ilupeju-Ekiti and Ijesa Isu and they told me it is going to take two years to finish it.

The only one we have is the 33kva and there is a limit to how far it can radiate electricity. So, we take electricity from Kwara, Kogi, and Osun States. When these states experience a downturn, they switch us off. On a daily basis, the number of megawatt coming to Ekiti is less than eight, and that is why we came up with the idea of the Independent Power Plant to increase the quantity of electricity available to Ekiti people.

Since we got to office, the Federal Ministry of Power has commended Ekiti as one of the states, if not the best, that has opened up rural areas to electricity. We have connected more than 30 communities that have not had electricity for over 10 to 15 years. But, when you do that too, a community that has had no electricity for 10 years, once you energise their transformer, it blows off.

The solution is for us to start generating electricity for ourselves, that is the most sustainable solution and we are talking to about three vendors. But, before that is done, we manage the 33 KVA sub-station we have here and also put pressure on the Federal Government to complete those being built in Ilupeju-Ekiti and Ijesa-Isu communities.

We are also exploring the possibilities of renewable energy but this requires a lot of study and once it is done it is going to be the combination of renewable energy and the hydro we have in the state. What I can tell you is that electricity in the state has improved because of the new electricity law we have signed; it has bailed us out from the monopoly of the BEDC which has led to the increase in the number of hours we are having electricity and with that law, I believe by next year, we will witness appreciable improvement in power supply to our people.

**What will be the key priorities for your administration going forward?**

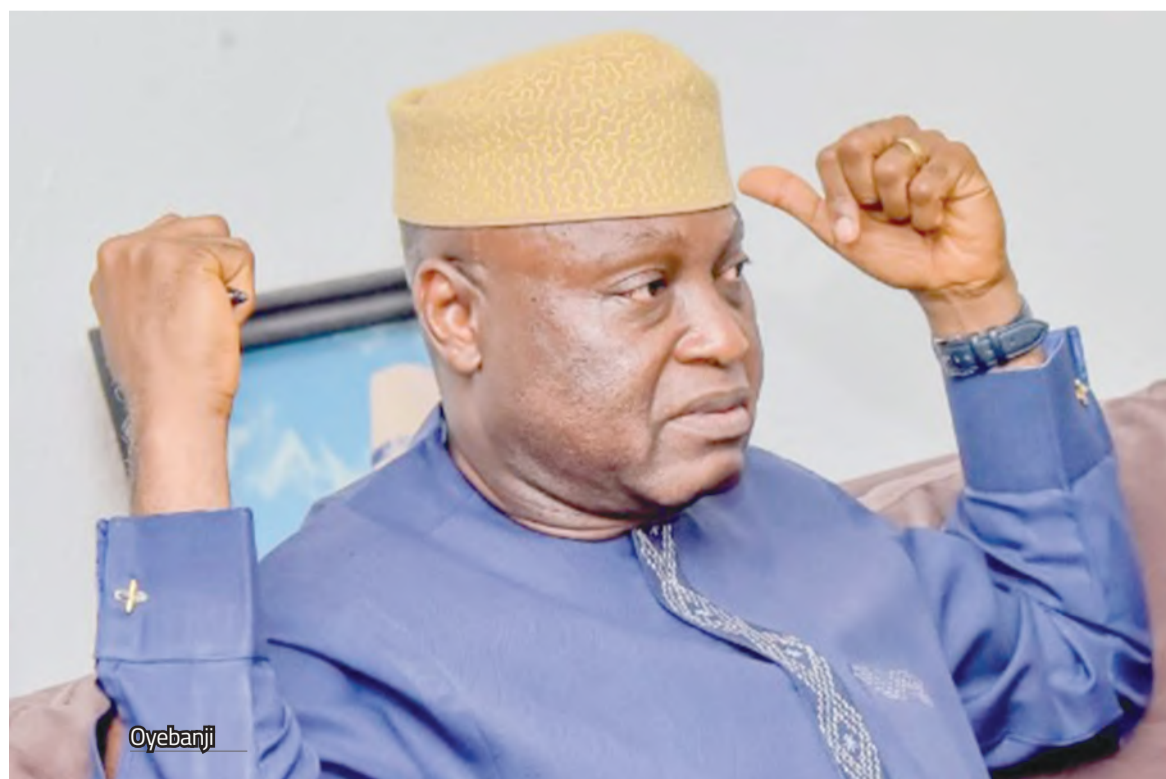
We have used the last two years to lay a very solid foundation for economic growth and development of this state. We campaigned on the mantra of shared prosperity but the people will not prosper if we don't put some things in place.

We have spent the last two years erecting the blocks for prosperity and the next year's budget is going to address the issue of food security and welfare in Ekiti State. We are going to be deliberate in our efforts on agriculture and cater for the informal sector of the economy and the Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises because those are the engines of growth. But you can't do these things if the state is not secured or without infrastructure or not accessible and that is why the airport is key because a road leads to the next town, an airport leads to the world, that is the difference between an airport and a road.

From here you can take off and go to the United States but when you leave Ado here by road you will be going to Ikere or the next town. We have to open up the state and that is what the airport does. So, once we are able to get the airport operational, investors will come into the state.

We will scale up our intervention on security though it has improved tremendously. The next two years are to ensure that we scale up our intervention in agriculture and also create platforms for SMEs to thrive. We must make our economy productive because productivity is the key to prosperity. ●

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Oyeibani

# Oyetola @70: How to celebrate a birthday

KOLA ODEPEJU

**B**irthdays are special days in the life of each and every individual. From time immemorial people have attached so much importance to it. This is because a person can only be born once. No matter what form its celebration takes; whether big or low key, birthdays don't ever go uncelebrated or unremembered.

Depending on an individual's pocket, state of wealth, social or political standing in the society, birthday boys and girls are always in a joyful and celebratory mood on their born days.

No matter the negative condition they might find themselves in on this day - whether they're poor, on sick bed or in prison - they still see reason/s for which they should thank the Creator. This is because as the saying goes "when there's life, there's hope".

It's only a dead person that has no hope again. Thus in the light of this reality birthday celebrators are often inclined to forget the past, look forward to the future with the belief that the best is yet to come to them.

For poor people, their birthdays are hardly known to others outside their immediate families since they lack the means to engage in elaborate celebrations. So for them it's usually "se bi o ti mo" (cut your coat according to your cloth) like the Yoruba do say. Much as many of them might love to celebrate their days in a grandiose way, they lack the financial wherewithal to do so.

For the wealthy ones and wielders of power in the society, however, their birthdays are usually a noisy day; a day to roll out the drums and get the heaven and earth informed. It needs mentioning that even if they are not interested in any elaborate celebration, their friends and associates and beneficiaries of their kind gestures in the past, who have now become big boys and girls in the society do take it upon themselves to foot the bills of big celebrations for the celebrant. They expand it and make enough noise on behalf of the celebrant.

It's instructive to mention that there are some certain numbers that people who have the means attach so much importance to; such that even if they don't celebrate other years in a big way, they cannot afford not to celebrate in grand style on certain numbers they consider more important than others in life.

These are age 25 (Silver), age 40 (ruby),

age 50 (Golden), age 60 (Diamond), age 70 (platinum). But it's also worth mentioning that some wealthy and powerful individuals with a simple outlook to life still prefer to engage in mild celebrations on their days irrespective of the pressure on them by their friends and associates. Some also prefer to use the occasion of their days to reach out to the underprivileged in the society.

These sets of people shun wasting money on throwing parties and engaging in frivolous spending in the name of doing birthdays. They prefer to touch lives in more positive and impactful ways through putting smiles on the faces of the vulnerable individuals in their societies. They identify with the downtrodden by showing compassion on them and by this; they engrain their names in the minds of these vulnerable people.

This writer is a staunch admirer of this category of people due to their kindness. For, making other people happy; especially the less privileged in the society is the only thing that's worth living for. When you make others happy, happiness gravitates towards you too and uses your mind and abode as its habitats. Thus in the words of Dalai Lama (1935); "When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace".

For this writer, the aforementioned category of wealthy people who use the occasions of their birthdays to embark on humanitarian deeds rather than following the multitude to engage in business as usual deserve not only to be commended but to be emulated.

It's therefore in the light of this that this writer like to give kudos to the immediate past governor of Osun State and current Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Alhaji Isiaq Adegboyega Oyetola who recently celebrated his 70th birthday in an impactful way by remembering the less privileged in Osun State through provision of free medical treatment and gifting food items to them.

Of course Oyetola's simple lifestyle and gravitas are the main reasons why he's highly revered by many.

To state here that he's a principled man and a man of integrity to the core is a statement of fact that even his arch-detractors cannot dispute; except one who wants to live in denial.

It's on record that his four years as the governor in Osun State was characterised by untainted integrity and credible per-



**TO STATE HERE THAT HE'S A PRINCIPLED MAN AND A MAN OF INTEGRITY TO THE CORE IS A STATEMENT OF FACT THAT EVEN HIS ARCH-DETRACTORS CANNOT DISPUTE; EXCEPT ONE WHO WANTS TO LIVE IN DENIAL**

formance.

Never would Oyetola compromise his integrity for anything. This singles him out as a leader that's worth following and emulating.

For Oyetola "the dignity of a man is an ideal that's worth pursuing and worth dying for" as late Chief Gani Fawehinmi of blessed memory once quipped.

In a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, the President Bola Tinubu hailed Oyetola, a long-term ally, for his consistent progressive stance and impres-

sive record of achievements, particularly in fiscal discipline and excellence.

Tinubu expressed confidence in Oyetola's leadership qualities, which earned him the role of pioneer head of the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy.

Under Oyetola's leadership, the ministry has recorded successes, including 92 per cent increase in revenue generation, with N242 Million earned in the first quarter of 2024.

"President Tinubu congratulates Alhaji Oyetola, former Osun State governor and Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, on his 70th birthday.

"President Tinubu applauds his long-term ally for being a consistent progressive with a proven record of accomplishment, including commitment to fiscal discipline and excellence.

"He recalls that during Oyetola's tenure as governor of Osun State, he recorded significant achievements in education, health care and infrastructure development.

"President Tinubu also recognises the Oyetola administration's contributions to impressive growth in the state's internally generated revenue, prioritisation of workers' and pensioners' welfare, and efforts to develop the mining sector to attract investors.

"The President expresses confidence in the former governor's leadership qualities, which earned him the opportunity to serve as the pioneer head of the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy.

"He said Oyetola's passion for development will continue to drive his contributions to the nation, filling the future with promise and hope.

"President Tinubu prays for continued strength and wisdom for the celebrator and wishes him many more years filled with opportunities for further growth and development," the statement said.

The Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, also congratulated the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy on his 70th birthday.

Sanwo-Olu described Oyetola, the immediate past governor of Osun State, as "a seasoned technocrat, visionary, passionate, and selfless leader."

In a congratulatory message issued by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Gboyega Akosile, Sanwo-Olu praised Oyetola's commitment and competence, noting, "He has proved his worth as a good manager of human and material resources."

The governor further lauded Oyetola's leadership across various roles, saying, "Oyetola has displayed pragmatic and exemplary leadership as both Chief of Staff and Governor of Osun State and now as the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy."

He added, "On behalf of my adorable wife, Ibijoke, family, and the good people and government of Lagos State, I join family, friends, and political associates to congratulate the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Alhaji Gboyega Oyetola, on his 70th birthday.

"Governor Oyetola is a seasoned technocrat, visionary leader, and gentleman who has used his wealth of experience in the private sector as a financial expert and technocrat to manage Osun State during his tenure as Chief of Staff and Governor of the State.

"He performed brilliantly in office, and his managerial skill and developmental strides were noticeable in different areas of endeavour in Osun State, particularly in the management of the lean resources of the state.

"He is also providing quality leadership as the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, contributing positively to the Renewed Hope agenda of President Bola Tinubu's government."

As this cerebral, compassionate and unassuming leader and brother climbs the septuagenarian ladder, it's the pleasure of this writer to identify with him on his platinum birthday as I wish him more productive, impactful and peaceful years on the shore of earth. May Almighty Allah spare your life and with good health and more upliftment so as to be able to serve humanity better than ever - Aameen. ●

*Odepeju, newspaper columnist and political activist, writes from Lagos.*

## 'As Akpabio weathers uncommon storms in the 10th senate'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

controversies and backlash in the country.

'Nigeria, We Hail Thee', composed by the Britons, was Nigeria's national anthem from independence in 1960 until 1978, when it was replaced by a new anthem, 'Arise, O Compatriots.' The bill to change the anthem, which was simultaneously introduced in the Senate and the House of Representatives, on May 23, received accelerated consideration and passage.

The speed at which both chambers of the

National Assembly considered and passed the bill at a time Nigerians were facing challenges of rising inflation and insecurity among others generated backlash.

Many Nigerians questioned the rationale behind the hasty passage of the bill, wondering why it was not subjected to a public hearing, during which various stakeholders would have made inputs.

Reacting, a political analyst, Jackson Lekan Ojo, described Akpabio's gaffes as provocative.

He said, "With the senate president's

statements, I can no longer recognise the parliament in Nigeria as the conscience of the public and the sanctuary of the common people, despite their statutory role as representatives of the people.

"It's becoming unbecoming. It demeaning the position of the number three citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"Women in another clime could protest because of what he said to Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan. This is the senate president who said 'let them be protesting, we will be here eating'. These statements are

provocative.

"If characters like this continue to lead this country, there is no hope. I don't know what the senators are doing about it. It's an insult to this country and the black race."

Similarly, a public policy analyst and International Director of Studies at the European Centre for Advanced Professional and International Studies, Lagos, Anthony Kila, had flayed Akpabio, during a breakfast television show monitored in Abuja, saying his statements were a product of shallow thinking.

Akila said, "I suspect the senate president is living in a world that is very disconnected from the world in which millions of Nigerians are living."

Also, the Special Adviser to President Tinubu on Senate Matters, Basheer Lado, in a statement on Wednesday, dismissed speculations about Akpabio's removal.

Lado said the presidency is committed to ensuring a mutual relationship and understanding between members of the National Assembly and the Federal Government. ●

**SERAP urges Tinubu to address Nigeria's economic hardship**  
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**Inflation pushes 129m Nigerians into poverty – World Bank report**  
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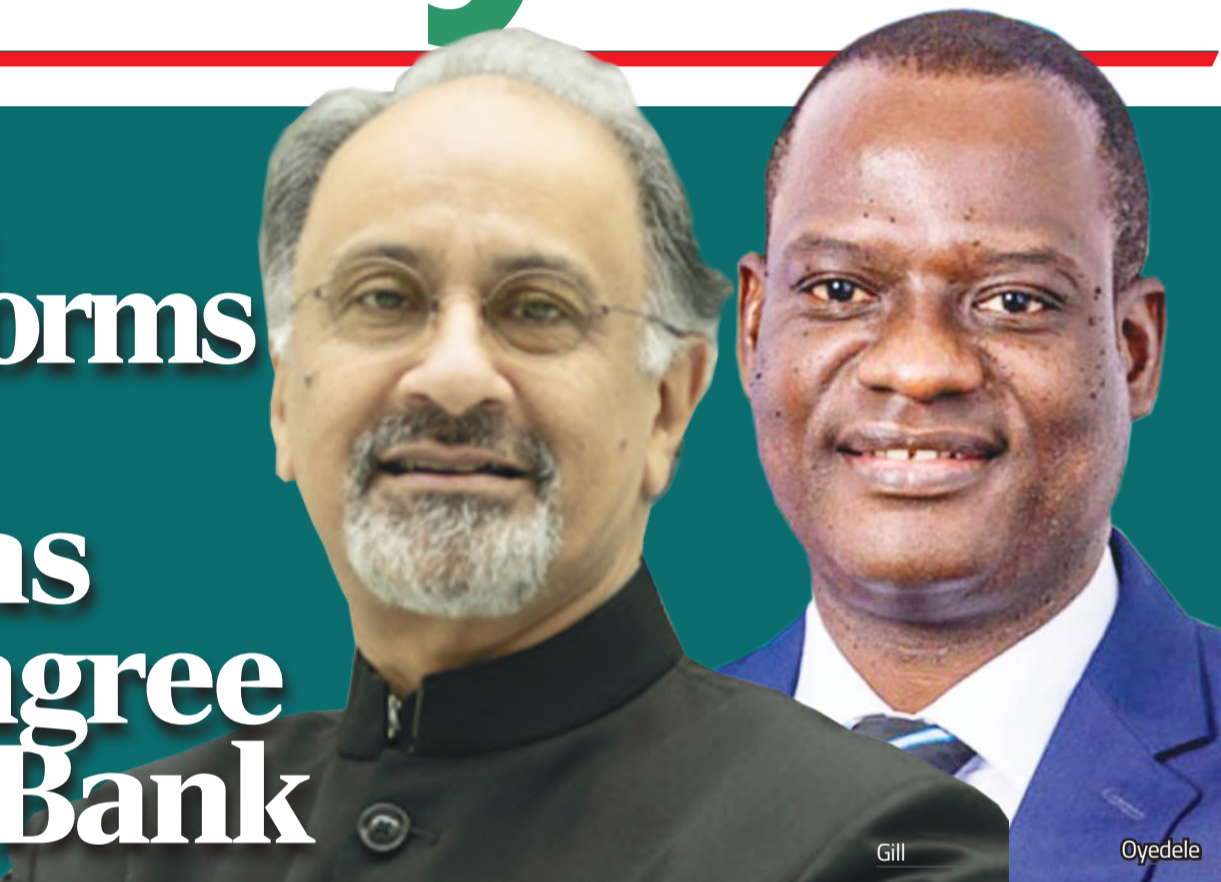


**Innovative startups: Cutting-edge business ideas gaining traction in Nigeria**  
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# Economy

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## FG's painful economic reforms stir public discontent as experts disagree with World Bank



Gill

Oyedele

While many Nigerians may not be comfortable with the President administration's economic reform policies, global financial institutions such as the World Bank think otherwise. In this report, **FESTUS OKOROMADU**, reviews one fiscal reform policy that may stand the test of time in favour of the administration if executed according to current proposals.

Although the concept of taxation dates back to the early civilization in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, of 3,500 BC and further authenticated by its practices in Athens and Rome by taxing sales of land and slaves and enforcing import duties, it remains a knotty issue in society.

While the poor in society see taxation as a tool of oppression, the rich think it takes undue advantage of the creative contribution to society through economic value creation which makes them rich and, in most cases, pay more in taxation.

However, whatever perception one has in a civilized society, payment of tax is regarded as a civic responsibility of citizens towards nation building.

As perfectly defined by experts, the main purpose of taxation is to raise resources to finance government expenditure in a way that is administratively feasible, equitable and efficient. Taxation also provides one of the principal lenses for measuring state capacity, state formation and power relations in a society.

Economists equally believe that taxation is used to encourage or discourage certain types of behaviour, to correct market imperfections, and to modify

the distribution of income or wealth.

### WORLD BANK APPROVES TINUBU'S REFORM INITIATIVES

Since assuming office on May 29, 2023 President Bola Tinubu seems to have committed himself to initiate economic reforms he believes are critical to the turnaround of the country's economic fortunes.

While these reforms appear to have some serious rebuff from the home front especially the masses that now see President Tinubu's economic policies as painful, the World Bank Group thinks otherwise.

This position was confirmed by the bank's Chief Economist, Indermit Gill, recently in Abuja when he stated that Nigeria, is at a critical crossroads, hence the need for reforms.

Speaking to the importance of the various reforms being carried out by the Tinubu's administration, Gill who represented the World Bank President, Ajay Banga, at the just concluded 30th Nigerian Economic Summit Group forum in Abuja, he noted that given its size and significance of Nigeria, the success of the reforms will give a big boost to countries across the continent.

"Because the whole world has a stake in Africa's future, the whole world needs to pay attention to what Nigeria is trying to do," he added.

While Gill did not focus on the tax re-

form initiatives of President Tinubu in his presentation, he was unequivocal on why the country must embark on a reformation.

On why Nigeria got its economic trajectory wrong, he said, "I will remind you that the problems that are being tackled today in

**"I WILL REMIND YOU THAT THE PROBLEMS THAT ARE BEING TACKLED TODAY IN THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY FIRST SURFACED MORE THAN 40 YEARS AGO, WHEN OIL PRICES BEGAN COLLAPSING IN THE EARLY 1980S AFTER THE BIG BOOM OF THE 1970S"**

the Nigerian economy first surfaced more than 40 years ago, when oil prices began collapsing in the early 1980s after the big boom of the 1970s. I will make a brief detour into history, because it is important to do so. The wise say that those who ignore the lessons of history eventually relearn them—in much more painful ways."

Gill obviously is in agreement with those who believe that Nigeria's discovery of oil was a doom rather than a boom, due primarily to institutional mismanagement of resources; hence the need for reforms even when it hurts especially the poor as failure could be catastrophic.

Addressing his audience, on the magnitude of the crisis at hand, Gill said, "As we gather here, there is suffering in all sections of Nigerian society, but especially among the poor and the young. They want good schools and colleges, affordable healthcare, decent jobs, and safe conditions which allow them to make full use of their potential. High inflation is hurting everyone, but it is hurting the poorest people the most."

In what could be interpreted as an encouragement for the poor in society to embrace President Tinubu's reform initiatives, he said, "Oil wealth that ought to be used for the welfare of all Nigerians has for too long been used to benefit the elites. The elites are also being hurt by the reforms that started last year, but they did well in the past and they have buffers. Ordinary Ni-

gerians are being hurt more by the reforms, they were also hurt by the policies of the past, and they have no buffers. Their welfare should be uppermost in our minds."

Explaining further on why the oil dependent economy failed Nigeria, he listed three crucial aspects of the commodity and the need for a transition, he said, "First, it is an exhaustible asset. Second, it is a fickle asset—its prices are among the most volatile of commodity prices. Third, it is a national asset. This means that—like Nigeria's forests and rivers and seas—its benefits should be shared across every segment of the society and across all generations.

"Over the last forty years, oil has come to dominate in the Nigerian economy. Nigeria's economic growth, exchange rate and stock market move with the oil price. This was not always the case: it happened because of poor fiscal and exchange-rate policies during the oil boom of the 1970s. Massive increases in oil prices brought massive increases in wealth. Yet Nigeria's fiscal deficit shot up to 7 to 10 percent of GDP. Current account deficits ballooned, along with external debt. In short, Nigeria's fiscal policy became highly procyclical, so the government's policies amplified oil price volatility instead of reducing it. Instead of insulating ordinary Nigerians from the vagaries of oil markets, the government made

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# FG's painful economic reforms stir public discontent as experts disagree with World Bank

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

them even more vulnerable.

"This was the first mistake," he stated.

## TINUBU'S TAX REFORM INITIATIVE

As noted by the World Bank's Chief Economist, one of the misgivings of the oil boom era was elites cornering the common good of all to build buffers for themselves at the detriment of the poor.

There are indications that the Tinubu's economic team, though not perfect and are part of the acclaimed elites, is determined to ensure that the reforms in the taxation system are holistic and all-encompassing.

In July 2023 President Tinubu approved the establishment of a Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax reforms and appointed Taiwo Oyedele, who until his appointment was the former Fiscal Policy Partner and Africa Tax Leader at PriceWaterhouseCoopers as the chairman of the committee comprising of representatives of various organs of society including student bodies.

Inaugurating the body on behalf of Mr. President in August 2023, the Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Services, Zaccheus Adedeji assured Nigerians that under Tinubu's leadership, the country will overcome its unpalatable revenue problem.

Adedeji who was then the Special Adviser to the President on revenue stated that Nigeria has huge potentials for revenue mobilisation that should be sufficient to cater for the people without resorting to excessive borrowing. Stressing that excessive borrowing by the government often crowds out the private sector and limits the ability to finance sustainable development, create jobs and prosperity.

He explained that the Committee will engage with various stakeholders to identify their pain points and critical concerns bothering tax and fiscal policies and to collectively develop the solutions necessary to address these challenges.

## LEGISLATIVE DRIVE TO BACK TAX REFORMS

Bearing in mind the legal implications of introducing reforms without a legislative backing especially in a federal system of government, President Tinubu, last month submitted four tax reform bills to the National Assembly for consideration, approval and passage into law.

The bill is designed to tackle the complicated and confusing tax system by bringing all tax laws together into one clear framework. It deals with the issue of multiplicity of taxes across the country and aims to create a fairer and more transparent tax process, promoting a better relationship between the government and taxpayers.

The bill also aims to promote ease of doing business, which has long been a hurdle in Nigeria's economic growth. By streamlining tax rules, the Nigeria Tax Bill 2024 simplifies compliance, enabling businesses to focus more on innovation and expansion rather than wading through bureaucratic red tape. In doing so, it creates a more conducive environment for entrepreneurship and investment.

## VARIED OPINION OVER TAX REFORM BILL

Tax experts and economists seem to have different views as to the perfection of the new bill and how it can help revamp the economy.

Commenting on the tax reform initiative of the present administration, a lecturer at

the University of Abuja, Olanrewaju Aladeitan, said while the move is a welcome development, there is the need for the National Assembly to pass the bill into law so as to allow for a review of what has been passed into law.

According to him, whatever is being said now are mere speculations as only the final document that is passed into law is authentic, and binding on the citizen.

He however, commended the president and the committee for their commitment to ensuring reforms in the sector.

"From what we are hearing, the proposed reforms are critical to the economic transformation of the nation.

"The Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policies and Tax Reforms chaired by a renowned tax expert, Taiwo Oyedele has done a noble job of overhauling the tax system, but we must wait for it to be passed into law before we can applaud them and the government.

"No doubt the idea of expanding the tax net and ensuring that those with higher income pay more is the way to go. That is what obtains in the developed society, but here the reverse is the case, the rich have a way of evading tax payment, and the few who pay tax are over taxed."

He however, expressed worries over the implementation of the proposed law.

On his part, a tax expert, Adebayo Olamide, is confident that the new tax bill will drastically overhaul the economy. He noted that the new bill is proposing a new sharing formula for tax revenue.

"The new tax bill proposes a drastic overhaul of the sharing formula distributable to Federal Government, States and Local Government Areas (LGAs) from the Federal Account Allocation Committee (FAAC).

"The Federal Government is proposing to take only 10% while states and LGAs take 90 percent.

"Provided that 60 percent of the amount standing to the credit of States and Local Governments shall be distributed among them on the basis of derivation," he stated.

"This is the concession the Federal Government has to make to eliminate all

manner of nuisance taxes and get states to buy into centralized and efficient collection of taxes.

"Secondly, this is a way of establishing fiscal federalism.

"It is left to be seen if the Federal Government will also be taking 10% of personal income tax accruable to every state," he stated.

According to him, the Federal Government has always "eyed" Personal income tax (PIT), adding that a national centralized PIT collection can easily generate N50 trillion yearly, that is N5 trillion for the Federal Government.

He stressed that the Federal Government will be relying on MDAs for most of

its revenue. He however expressed confidence that MDAs are already generating almost N1 trillion monthly for the Federal Government, with lots of loopholes and leakages to close.

"President Tinubu is doing the hardest work ever. He is using his head to make decisions hard enough for any politician in his position. People who will come after him will have easy jobs to complete. Times are hard, but it is for the survival of the nation," he said.

A political/social commentator who spoke with *The Point*, Imaga Andrew, wondered about the type of federal structure the new bill is designed for.

"Can it be said that we want to practice fiscal federalism with the proposed tax reform bill, when the Federal Government still collects money on behalf of the states and then shares it, though retaining a lesser percentage (according to the newly proposed bill)?

"My idea of a true fiscal federalism is to allow states to generate their money themselves using both human and natural resources in their respective states and then remit a percentage to the Federal Government.

"For emphasis's sake, they (the states) would be in control of all the resources in their respective states. Manage the resources themselves, and then remit a percentage to the Federal Government. Not that the Federal Government will collect all revenues due to the federation before sharing it with states as we currently do.

"The current practice makes a lot of states lazy and unproductive because they're waiting for allocation of money they didn't work for from the Federal Government at the end of every month.

"A true fiscal federalism would put each state on a constant hustle mode, not the current I-can't-kill-myself mode because of the monthly "free money" they collect."

Also commenting on the development, the chairman of Tekedia Capital, Ndubuisi Ekekwe, described the new tax policy as a good one, adding that he gives it an 'A' rating.

"The government is on the verge of

reshaping Nigeria's revenue collection system in a bold reform aimed at consolidating efforts and boosting government earnings. If passed, his new plan would bar over 60 revenue generating agencies from collecting revenues on behalf of the Federal Government. In their place, a single entity, the Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS), will take up the responsibility of tax and levy collection, drastically altering how revenue streams flow into national coffers."

He however emphasized that, "No private company or contractor should be engaged in the revenue collection.

He added that, "But on the merit of this call, I support it because it makes sense to centralize this process. This is an electronic age where people do not pay cash. So, it is doable.

"As always, Nigeria is extremely great on innovation on revenue collection. Where we struggle is how to help companies and people increase their revenue and income," he stated.

A former President, Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers, Olatunde Amolegbe, stated that "Managing the economy of a country such as Nigeria cannot be all about a balanced budget and nice sounding financials; it must have a human face. While the reforms we've seen might be considered necessary, it's clear that the bulk of the negative impacts are being borne by the most vulnerable within the society.

"If the reforms are not paced and efforts made to ameliorate the negative impact they might very well not achieve their intended purpose due to lack of public consensus."

A Public policy analyst, Clifford Egbo-meade, said, "The advice from the World Bank Vice President, Indermit Gill, that Nigeria must sustain the Tinubu administration's reforms for the next 10 to 15 years has sparked significant debate. On one hand, the reforms—including fuel subsidy removal and foreign exchange rate unification—are aimed at promoting long-term economic stability and growth. However, the hardship they have imposed on ordinary Nigerians, such as increased living costs and inflation, raises questions about their immediate feasibility and social impact. While Gill argues that reforms are necessary for Nigeria to break free from the legacy of oil dependency and elite capture, it is crucial to note that these same policies have exacerbated the burden on the most vulnerable.

"The World Bank has acknowledged that Nigeria's oil wealth has historically benefited the small elite, while the ordinary population suffers from structural inefficiencies in the economy. The removal of fuel subsidies, for example, has led to skyrocketing transportation and food costs, further straining already struggling households."

Similarly, in his response, an analyst and Executive Vice Chairman at Highcap Securities Limited, a Lagos-based investment firm, David Adonri, said, "Economic reforms always come with some pains. I do not think that the pain from the current market reform will last for more than two years because the economy will certainly adjust to the new price level. Current reform is targeting the demand side of the economy but there is no strong supply-side effort to close the supply gap, which is the bane of the economy. If the domestic factors of production are mobilized to create a self-sustainable economy, the gains from current reform will be too enormous to imagine because both demand and supply will come to equilibrium." ●



**PRESIDENT TINUBU IS DOING THE HARDEST WORK EVER. HE IS USING HIS HEAD TO MAKE DECISIONS HARD ENOUGH FOR ANY POLITICIAN IN HIS POSITION. PEOPLE WHO WILL COME AFTER HIM WILL HAVE EASY JOBS TO COMPLETE. TIMES ARE HARD, BUT IT IS FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE NATION**



Adedeji



Edun

# Inflation pushes 129m Nigerians into poverty - World Bank report

STORIES BY FESTUS OKORO-MADU

The World Bank has officially confirmed that the continuous hike in prices of goods and services in the country has resulted in over 129 million Nigerians now trapped in poverty.

This was stated by the Washington DC based financial institution in its latest Nigeria Development Update report released in Abuja last week.

According to the global financial body, the over 129 million Nigerians represented a sharp rise from 40.1 per cent in 2018 to 56 per cent in 2024.

The World Bank report read, "With growth proving too slow to outpace inflation, poverty has risen sharply. Since 2018, the share of Nigerians living below the na-

tional poverty line is estimated to have risen sharply from 40.1 per cent to 56.0 per cent.

"Combined with population growth, this means that some 129 million Nigerians are living in poverty. This stark increase partly reflects Nigeria's beleaguered growth record. Real GDP per capita has not recovered to the level it was at prior to the oil price-induced recession in 2016.

"The COVID-19 pandemic compounded this drop in economic activity. Moreover, growth is failing to outpace inflation: large increases in prices across almost all goods have diminished purchasing power."

It added, "Multiple shocks in a context of high economic insecurity have deepened and broadened poverty, with over 115 million Nigerians estimated to have been poor in 2023. Since 2018/19, an additional nearly 35 million people have fallen into poverty, so

that more than half of Nigerians (51.1 per cent of the population in 2023) are now estimated to live in poverty."

According to the report, there was an increase from 115 million in 2023 to 129 million in 2024, which means that 14 million Nigerians have become poorer this year.

The Washington-based bank attributed this surge to inflation, poor economic management, and external shocks.

"Several shocks have contributed to this major increase and changing profile of the poor: the COVID-19 recession, natural disasters such as flooding, growing insecurity, the high cost of the demonetization policy in Q1 2023, high inflation, and low economic growth.

"Previous domestic policy missteps compounded the effects of the shocks, particularly rising inflation, eroding the purchasing

power, especially of urban households, pushing many into poverty. The government is ramping up the cash transfer programs to support economically insecure households to help weather the crisis," the report noted.

It further revealed that while poverty remained a rural phenomenon, urban poverty had grown significantly, with 31.3 percent of urban dwellers now living in poverty, up from 18 per cent in 2018.

The new World Bank report also noted, "Being employed, however, is no guarantee of being able to escape poverty. Many jobs are not productive and therefore remunerative enough to afford a life beyond poverty."

It added, "Jobs hold the key to sharing the proceeds of growth. Since Nigeria has a young and growing population, the jobs that can harness the country's potential 'demographic dividend' are needed now."

## Only interest rate hikes can't tackle inflation - LCCI

The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry has stated that rate hikes alone will not curb inflation without first resolving the challenges in the real sector.

The President, LCCI, Gabriel Idahosa, made this known at its quarterly state of the economy news conference in Lagos.

Idahosa said the real sector had demonstrated the capacity to create more jobs, manufacture products for consumption and export, and form the economy's industrial base.

He noted that while high interest rates attracted Foreign Portfolio Investments, and local investors to treasury bills and bonds, the development was drying up funds away from the private sector to government treasuries.

He stated that the private sector, which served as the engine room of growth and employment generation in Nigeria, was currently plagued with increased borrowing costs and reduced investment incentives amongst others.

"Recent hikes in the Monetary Policy Rate have directly

translated to higher interest rates, making it more expensive for businesses to access credit for working capital, expansion, and sustainability.

"The latest uptick in inflation may sustain an upward trend in the coming months due to the current crises with petroleum pricing and an attendant burden that is unprecedented in Nigeria's economic history.

"Government must remain focused on boosting food production through ongoing policy reforms, targeted fiscal interventions, and better management of Nigeria's floating exchange rate regime.

"If government harmonises its fiscal and monetary instruments to tackle the cost of agricultural production, enhance food processing, and sustain the fight against insecurity, inflationary pressures may soon begin to abate," he said.

Idahosa also urged the government to be more vigorous regarding ongoing interventions such as removing some taxes, transition to Compressed Natural Gas mobility, Crude for Naira scheme, and suspension of some import duties.

President/Chairman of Council, Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria, Samuel Agbeluyi (left), receives Lagos State Government plaque from Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu during a courtesy visit by a delegation of CITN at the Lagos House, Ikeja, on Thursday.



## 5kg cooking gas price rose to N6, 699 in September - NBS

The National Bureau of Statistics says the average price of 5kg of cooking gas increased from N6,430.02 recorded in August to N6, 699.63 in September 2024.

The NBS revealed this in its newly published report on "Cooking Gas Price Watch" for September 2024, released on Friday in Abuja.

According to the report, the September price represented a 4.19 per cent increase, compared to what was obtained in August.

Average price of 5kg of cooking gas increased on a year-on-year basis by 59.90 per cent from N4,189.96 in September 2023 to N6,699.63 in September 2024.

The report showed that Rivers recorded the highest average price at N7,285.71, followed by Gombe at N7,271.88, and Borno at N7,089.72.

On the other hand, Kebbi recorded the lowest price at N5,950.00, followed by Kano and Benue at N6,133.33 and N6,143.52, respectively.

The North-East recorded the highest average retail price at N6,929.02 for 5 kg of cooking gas, followed by the South-East at N6,893.47.

"The North-West recorded the lowest average retail price at N6,382.30," the NBS said.

Also, according to the report, average retail price for refilling a 12.5kg cooking gas increased by 4.89 percent on a month-on-month basis from N15,552.56 in August 2024 to N16,313.43 in September.

Average retail price for 12.5kg cooking gas rose by 76.41 per cent on a year-on-year basis from N9,247.40 recorded in September 2023 to N16,313.43 in September 2024.

Rivers recorded the highest average retail price of N17,992.86, followed by Gombe at N17,942.86 and Zamfara at N17,475.00, while the lowest average price for 12.5kg of cooking gas was recorded in Adamawa at N13,983.33, followed by Nasarawa and Bauchi with N14,938.50 and N15,000.00, respectively.

Analysis by zone showed that the South-East recorded the highest average retail price of N16,957.29, followed by the South-West at N16,665.45.

The report said the North-East recorded the lowest price at N15,770.75.

Similarly, the NBS said the average retail price per litre of kerosene increased to N1,957.44 in September 2024 on a month-on-month basis.

The increase showed an increase of 5.97 per cent, compared to the N1,847.59 recorded in August 2024.

According to its National Kerosene Price Watch for September 2024 on a year-on-year basis, the average retail price per litre of kerosene rose by 50.68 per cent from N1,299.03 in September 2023.

On state profile analysis, the report showed that Abuja recorded the highest average price at N2,816.67 per litre of kerosene in August, followed by Kaduna at N2,437.50 and Akwa Ibom at N2,411.11.

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project has urged President Bola Tinubu to stop the "weaponisation" of the Department of State Services and other security agencies in the country, and instead focus on ways to reverse the national economic hardship.

SERAP noted that the free expression of fundamental human rights is significant and should not be suppressed, accusing the Tinubuled government of "threats of baseless lawsuits" against human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and other citizens.

In a statement dated October 19, 2024, signed by SERAP's deputy director, Kolawole Oluwadare, and obtained by journalists on Sunday, the organisation urged Tinubu to "direct the Department of State Services to immediately withdraw the baseless defamation lawsuit brought by their proxies against our organisation and management staff."

"It is critical for human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and other citizens to be able to organise and freely exercise their human rights without the threat of baseless lawsuits from your government or

## SERAP urges Tinubu to address Nigeria's economic hardship

its security agencies and/or their proxies.

"Weaponising the security agencies to intimidate, harass, and silence human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and other civil society actors will weaken representative democracy, deepen impunity, and undermine the rule of law."

On September 9, officials of the DSS reportedly took over SERAP's Abuja office barely 24 hours after the organisation urged Tinubu to leverage his leadership and authority to instruct the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited to promptly reverse the hike in the pump price of premium motor spirit, commonly known as petrol, at its retail outlets.

However, the security outfit clarified that its agents were detailed for a routine investigation, adding that the officers' actions had been misinterpreted as harassment and intimidation.

In its statement, SERAP stated, "We are seriously concerned that your government seems to be weaponising the DSS and misusing defamation laws as a tool of repression to target those who defend hu-

man rights.

"Rather than addressing the allegations of widespread corruption in the oil sector and the worsening economic situation in the country, and reducing the cost of governance, your government is targeting those who campaign for actions in these areas.

"We would be grateful if the recommended measures are immediately taken following the receipt and/or publication of this letter. If the lawsuit is not immediately withdrawn, we will be prepared to defend our organisation and management staff in court and to join your government and the DSS in the lawsuit. This may include calling witnesses to ensure justice, end impunity for rights abuses, and achieve legitimate public interests.

"We have pursued several public interest cases against the governments of former presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Goodluck Jonathan, and Muhammadu Buhari since 2004. This is the first time any government has weaponised the country's security agencies to intimidate and target our organisation.

"The defamation lawsuit is brought by two named DSS officials, but their names are unknown to our organisation. The lawsuit by these officials is instigated and sponsored by the DSS under your watch."

SERAP noted that using the security agencies to "intimidate, harass, and silence human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and other civil society actors will weaken representative democracy, deepen impunity, and undermine the rule of law.

"Rather than misusing the security agencies to crack down on human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and other civil society actors, your government ought to take steps to thoroughly, independently, impartially, transparently, and effectively investigate the allegations raised by SERAP.

"We are disappointed that your government has so far failed to respond to our recommendations calling on you to direct the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) to immediately reverse the illegal and unconstitutional increase in the pump price of petrol across its retail outlets.



# SMEWatch

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## Innovative startups: Cutting-edge business ideas gaining traction in Nigeria

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, has been experiencing a surge of entrepreneurial activity in recent years.

As the continent's largest economy, Nigeria has become a hub for innovative startups that are disrupting traditional industries and offering novel solutions to pressing challenges.

This article delves into the thriving ecosystem of Nigerian startups, highlighting some of the cutting-edge business ideas that are gaining significant traction and transforming the business landscape.

### THE RISE OF NIGERIA'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

Nigeria's startup ecosystem has been gaining momentum, driven by a combination of factors. The country's large and youthful population, increasing access to technology, and a growing culture of entrepreneurship have all contributed to the proliferation of innovative startups. Additionally, the government's efforts to foster a conducive environment for entrepreneurship, through initiatives such as tech hubs and accelerator programs, have played a crucial role in nurturing the startup ecosystem.

### FINTECH INNOVATIONS TRANSFORMING THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

One of the most prominent sectors in Nigeria's startup ecosystem is fintech, where innovative companies are revolutionising the way financial services are delivered. These fintech startups are addressing the needs of the unbanked and underbanked populations, providing accessible and affordable solutions for payments, lending, insurance, and wealth management.

### FLUTTERWAVE: ENABLING SEAMLESS DIGITAL PAYMENTS

Flutterwave, a leading fintech startup in Nigeria, has gained significant attention for its robust digital payment platform. Founded in 2016, Flutterwave has established itself as a key player in facilitating cross-border payments, enabling businesses and individuals to make and receive payments seamlessly across Africa and globally. The startup's innovative solutions have garnered the attention of investors, leading to several rounds of funding and partnerships with major financial institutions.

### OPAY: REVOLUTIONISING MOBILE MONEY SERVICES

Another prominent fintech startup in Nigeria is OPay, which has emerged as a leading mobile money service provider. OPay's mobile app and network of agent

locations have made it easier for the unbanked population to access financial services, including digital payments, lending, and savings. The startup's focus on leveraging the ubiquity of mobile devices has enabled it to rapidly expand its user base and become a vital player in Nigeria's financial inclusion efforts.

### RETAIL AND E-COMMERCE INNOVATIONS

The rise of e-commerce in Nigeria has paved the way for innovative startups to disrupt traditional retail channels. These startups are leveraging technology to create seamless shopping experiences, enhance product distribution, and provide new avenues for entrepreneurs and small businesses to reach customers.

### JUMIA: NIGERIA'S LEADING E-COMMERCE PLATFORM

Jumia, often referred to as the "Amazon of Africa," has been a trailblazer in Nigeria's e-commerce landscape. Launched in 2012, Jumia has grown to become the largest e-commerce platform in the country, offering a wide range of products and services to consumers.

The startup's focus on logistics, digital payments, and leveraging the increasing smartphone and internet penetration in Nigeria has been instrumental in its success.

### KIDMIA: CONNECTING PARENTS WITH QUALITY CHILD CARE

Kidmia, a startup based in Lagos, is addressing the need for reliable and accessible child care services in Nigeria. The platform connects parents with vetted

and certified childcare providers, offering a range of services from daycare to after-school programs. Kidmia's use of technology to streamline the process of finding and booking child care has made it a popular choice for busy parents in Nigeria.

### AGRITECH INNOVATIONS: TRANSFORMING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

The agricultural sector in Nigeria has long been viewed as an area ripe for innovation, and a new generation of agritech startups is rising to the challenge. These startups are leveraging technology to improve productivity, enhance supply chain efficiency, and provide better access to markets for farmers.

### FARMCROWDY: DEMOCRATISING FARM INVESTMENTS

Farmcrowdy, a pioneering agritech startup in Nigeria, has disrupted the traditional agricultural investment model. The platform allows individuals to invest in small-scale farms, providing them with a share of the harvest returns. Farmcrowdy's innovative approach has not only empowered individuals to participate in agriculture but also supported smallholder farmers by providing them with the necessary resources and market access.

### RELEAF: REVOLUTIONISING CROP PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION

Releaf, another notable agritech startup in Nigeria, has focused on improving the efficiency of crop processing and distribution. The company has developed innovative technologies and logistical solutions to help smallholder farmers process their

crops more effectively and connect them with larger markets. Releaf's efforts have resulted in increased incomes for farmers and a more streamlined agricultural value chain.

### HEALTHTECH INNOVATIONS IMPROVING HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

The healthcare sector in Nigeria has long faced challenges, including limited access to quality medical services, especially in rural areas. However, a new wave of health tech startups is emerging, leveraging technology to address these challenges and improve healthcare delivery.

### HELIUM HEALTH: DIGITISING HEALTHCARE RECORDS AND FACILITATING TELEMEDICINE

Helium Health, a prominent health tech startup in Nigeria, has developed a comprehensive electronic medical records (EMR) system that digitises patient data and facilitates telemedicine consultations. By providing healthcare providers with a robust digital platform, Helium Health has enabled improved patient management, more efficient data storage, and increased access to medical services, especially in underserved communities.

### LIFEBANK: CONNECTING BLOOD BANKS AND IMPROVING BLOOD AVAILABILITY

LifeBank, another innovative health tech startup, is addressing the critical issue of blood shortages in Nigeria. The platform connects blood banks with healthcare facilities, streamlining the pro-

cess of blood procurement and distribution. LifeBank's use of data-driven logistics and a network of motorcycle couriers have helped to improve the availability of blood supplies, ultimately saving lives.

### EDUCATION TECH INNOVATIONS: REVOLUTIONISING LEARNING

The education sector in Nigeria has faced significant challenges, including limited access to quality educational resources, especially in rural areas. However, a growing number of edtech startups are leveraging technology to transform the educational landscape.

### PREPCLASS: PROVIDING ONLINE TUTORING AND TEST PREPARATION

Prepclass, a leading edtech startup in Nigeria, has emerged as a go-to platform for online tutoring and test preparation. The startup offers a wide range of courses and personalised learning experiences, catering to students from primary to tertiary levels. Prepclass's use of technology has made quality education more accessible, particularly for students in underserved communities.

### ULESSON: CREATING ENGAGING DIGITAL LEARNING CONTENT

uLesson, another prominent edtech startup in Nigeria, has developed a comprehensive digital learning platform that delivers engaging educational content to students. The startup's focus on creating high-quality video lessons, interactive exercises, and personalised learning paths has made it a popular choice for students and parents seeking to supplement their traditional classroom experiences.

### LOGISTICS AND SUPPLY CHAIN INNOVATIONS

The logistics and supply chain sector in Nigeria has long been plagued by inefficiencies, resulting in challenges in the timely and cost-effective delivery of goods. However, a new generation of startups is addressing these issues, leveraging technology to streamline logistics and improve supply chain management.

### KOBO360: TRANSFORMING TRUCK LOGISTICS AND FREIGHT DELIVERY

Kobo360, a leading logistics startup in Nigeria, has developed a digital platform that connects truck owners, drivers, and cargo owners, facilitating the efficient movement of goods across the country. The startup's use of data analytics, real-time tracking, and a network of partner carriers has helped to reduce delivery times, lower transportation costs, and improve supply chain visibility. ●

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# Capital Market

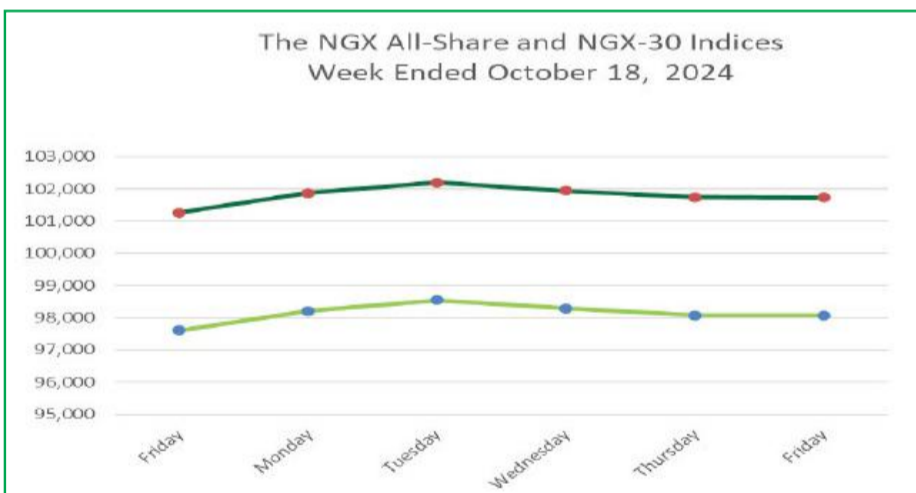
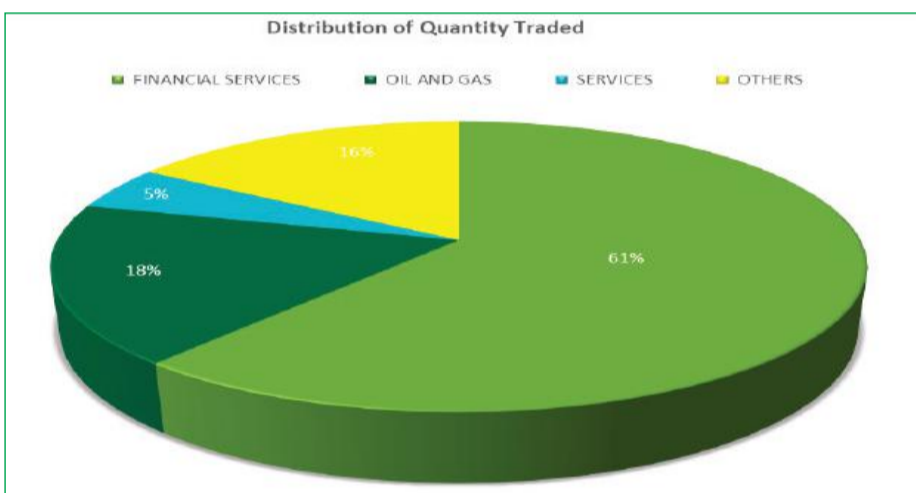
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WEEK ENDED OCTOBER 18, 2024

Company	Open	Close	Gain (N)	% Change
TRANSCORP POWER PLC	301.70	359.90	58.20	19.29
MECURE INDUSTRIES PLC	10.10	12.00	1.90	18.81
DANGOTE SUGAR REFINERY PLC	31.00	35.05	4.05	13.06
OANDO PLC	70.00	77.00	7.00	10.00
GOLDEN GUINEA BREW. PLC.	3.40	3.74	0.34	10.00
CHAMPION BREW. PLC.	3.11	3.42	0.31	9.97
THE INITIATES PLC	1.95	2.14	0.19	9.74
UNIVERSITY PRESS PLC.	2.55	2.79	0.24	9.41
ETERNA PLC.	24.70	26.70	2.00	8.10
CONSOLIDATED HALLMARK HOLDINGS PLC	1.39	1.50	0.11	7.91

Company	Open	Close	Loss (N)	% Change
REGENCY ASSURANCE PLC	0.72	0.61	-0.11	-15.28
TRIPPLE GEE AND COMPANY PLC.	2.01	1.71	-0.30	-14.93
ARADEL HOLDINGS PLC	702.70	625.40	-77.30	-11.00
CAVERTON OFFSHORE SUPPORT GRP PLC	2.60	2.36	-0.24	-9.23
VITAFOAM NIG PLC.	22.00	20.00	-2.00	-9.09
ASSOCIATED BUS COMPANY PLC	1.32	1.20	-0.12	-9.09
CUSTODIAN INVESTMENT PLC	12.80	11.65	-1.15	-8.98
INTERNATIONAL ENERGY INSURANCE PLC	1.57	1.45	-0.12	-7.64
R T BRISCOE PLC.	3.31	3.06	-0.25	-7.55
OKOMU OIL PALM PLC.	363.00	338.10	-24.90	-6.86



## CBN EXCHANGE RATE

Date	Currency	Buying(NGN)	Central(NGN)	Selling(NGN)
OCT./17/2024	US DOLLAR	1651.727	1652.227	1652.727
OCT./17/2024	EURO	1789.9765	1790.5184	1791.0602
OCT./17/2024	SWISS FRANC	1908.4079	1908.9856	1909.5633
OCT./17/2024	YEN	11.0159	11.0193	11.0226
OCT./17/2024	CFA	2.7255	2.7355	2.7455
OCT./17/2024	WAUA	2204.5711	2205.2384	2205.9058
OCT./17/2024	DANISH KRONA	239.8988	239.9714	240.044
OCT./17/2024	SDR	2204.7252	2205.3926	2206.06
OCT./17/2024	YUAN/RENMINBI	231.919	231.9892	232.0594
OCT./17/2024	SOUTH AFRICAN RAND	92.885	92.9131	92.9412

## Aradel Holding listing boosts NGX market cap by N3.35trn

FESTUS OKOROMADU  
ABUJA

New participant in the Nigerian Exchange Limited trading board, Aradel Holdings, is still struggling to retain its membership of the elite trillion Naira market capitalized stocks five days after getting listed.

The equity was listed on Monday, October 14, 2024 on the main board of the NGX at N702.69 per share but went ahead to close at N772.90 thereby boosting its market capitalization to close N3.358 trillion on the first day entering into the market.

The company's shares however could not enjoy investors' patronage throughout the week as sell-off pressure drove the price southward, at the close of trading on Friday, October 18, 2024 it has lost N147.50 or 23.59 percent of its market cap as the share value decline to N625.40 after within five trading days.

Notwithstanding, the stock remains a member of the exclusive club of equities with market capitalization above N1 trillion alongside ten others even as it replaced Oando on the list due sell-off pressure in recent time.

But in dollar terms, only nine out of the eleven companies hold a market capitalization above \$1bn (approximately N1.66trn).

Topping the list of companies with the highest market capitalization at the close of the week is Airtel Africa Plc having attained N8.268 trillion market value to overtake Dangote Cement Plc which had a total value of N8.159 trillion.

Other companies that remain in the niche club are BUA Foods Plc with a market cap of N7.108 trillion closely followed by MTN Nigeria Communications Plc, N4.010 trillion, BUA Cement Plc N3.752 trillion, SEPLAT Energy Plc N3.070 trillion; Geregu Power Plc N2.875 trillion, Transcorp Power Plc N2.699 trillion, GTCO Plc N1.471 trillion and Zenith Bank Plc N1.176 trillion.

Further analysis revealed that during the week, investors' interest in the shares of Transcorp Power and GTCO bolstered their performance as they appreciated by 19.29 percent and 2.04 percent respectively to enhance their capitalization and sustain them in the club.

In terms of sector, the Utilities sector dominated the list with three companies, followed by the Financial Services, ICT, and Industrial Goods sectors with two companies each, while Consumer Goods and Oil and Gas had one.

The following eight companies, half of which are banks, are on the watch list. They show promise of attaining the N1trn market capitalization mark. There are TRANSCO HOT, OANDO, FBNH, UBA, ACCESSCORP, NESTLE, STANBIC, INTBREW.

Analysts remain optimistic about the potential growth in the financial service sector, believing that more companies will join the N1trn gang soon. This promising outlook may inspire investors to take long-term equity positions.

The Nigerian Exchange maintained its positive momentum

during the week ended, October 18, 2024 despite macroeconomic headwinds, particularly the release of September's inflation data, which saw consumer price inflation rise to 32.70 percent.

The increase, largely driven by persistent hikes in the food index that makes up over 51 percent of Nigeria's inflation basket, did little to dampen market sentiment.

Meanwhile, market analysts say market sentiment is expected to remain positive in the new week as investors anticipate more Q3 earnings reports.

Commenting on the prospect of the market this week, researchers from Cowry Assets Management said, "The market has already reacted favourably to several impressive Q3 releases, providing insight into potential year-end performance. Despite the ongoing market corrections and pullbacks, investors are advised to reposition their portfolios strategically, focusing on sectors and companies with strong growth and earnings prospects."

Aradel is an integrated energy Company with operations spanning upstream, midstream, downstream, power and renewables.

Its offering comprises a robust portfolio of energy solutions, delivering reliable, clean and sustainable energy sources and driving innovation that traverses the entire value chain.

Its portfolio encompasses exploration, production, refining, and distribution, as it strives to deliver exceptional value and secure the energy needs of communities locally and globally.

The recent listing on NGX offers investors the opportunity to engage with one of Nigeria's most diversified energy companies, positioning it as a key entity on the Exchange.

As the global energy landscape rapidly evolves, Aradel recognises the importance of embracing the energy transition and is taking proactive steps toward a sustainable future.

One of the central elements of the energy transition is the accelerated deployment of renewable energy sources. Nigeria and several African countries possess abundant renewable energy resources, such as solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal.

Aradel acknowledges that renewable energy sources play a crucial role in achieving a low-carbon future, hence its commitment to investing in renewable energy projects that harness the power of solar, and other sustainable sources.

By diversifying its portfolio, Aradel aims to reduce its carbon footprint while creating opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

Over the past five year (2019 to 2023), the company revenue grew from the 2019 level of N45.958 billion to N221.142 billion in 2023.

Also, its profit before tax (PBT) has risen from N20.592 billion in 2019 to N112.163 billion in 2023, while Profit After Tax (PAT) increased from 2019 low of N19.497 billion to N53.737 billion in 2023.

Basic Earnings Per Share (EPS) which was 89.8kobo in 2019 grew to 247.4 kobo in 2023. ●

# Our Global Outlook



At Dangote, we are dedicated to delivering world-class brands and services, designed by a highly motivated workforce using state-of-the-art technology.

We are growing a global conglomerate with a mission to deliver consistently high quality brands.

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# 'Our target is to rescue Nigeria in 2027, we can't do it with a divided house'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

ruling party trying to muzzle some other contending parties. But we are aware that all the state actors are Nigerians who can see how things are getting even more difficult for their families and loved ones. They are aware that if they continue to support evil, it will eventually catch up with them someday. So, the attempt to muzzle democracy in Nigeria will be resisted by everyone, including people in the system.

I do not think this idea of a one-party system is proper; it may just be a hoax. You know the political class is just using it to ensure that the people in the system do the right thing. But the truth about it is that there is an attempt to emasculate the political system. But it will be resisted. Nigerians will no longer be taken for a ride. Nigerians will stand up and fight for democracy. Democracy has come to stay in the country and democracy does not favour a one-party system. Otherwise, we will be practicing autocracy and that is not what we want in Nigeria.

**With the Federal High Court judgment that affirmed Abure as national chairman, why are some leaders of the party and the LP caretaker committee still agitated?**

We have always maintained that our convention in Nnewi is valid, constitutional and in line with all legal rules and laws of the nation. People may not buy the outcome of the convention, but that does not nullify the convention. It is a pity that INEC played a role in stoking the controversies. But it is only a regulatory body. It does not confer legitimacy.

What the judgement has done is to confer legitimacy on the leadership of Julius Abure. And like the other 18 political parties, we will take our seat in the committee of political parties in Nigeria. We will now also begin to compete favourably in all electoral matters in Nigeria. That is on one side. We are also using this opportunity to let our members, particularly some of our leaders who were deceived earlier, to note that a political party is a corporate entity that has its own rules and regulations, which must be obeyed and abided.

No one, no single individual is higher than a political party. We are using this opportunity to ask them to retrace their steps. We know they were deceived into

taking the position, but we are asking them to have a repentant heart because we are ready to bring them on board and pretend as if nothing happened. And we will move on from there. Our target is to rescue Nigeria in 2027. We cannot do it with a divided house.

**Your former presidential candidate, Obi, alongside Governor Alex Oti and the caretaker committee announced they will appeal the judgment. What's your reaction?**

It would be unfortunate if they toe that line, because you can't appeal a judgment that you are not a party to. The Caretaker Committee is not a body known to the Labour Party constitution. It is not a body known to the electoral law or even to the constitution of Nigeria. So, they do not even have a locus. The body was not part of the suit. The suit was between the Labour Party and INEC. So, you cannot appeal what you are not involved in. There are so many instances in the Nigerian law that say if you are not a party to any suit, you cannot appeal. So, they have an alternative, maybe they can start a fresh suit.

But their name, as I told you, is not even recognised by the law. It is not even in the constitution. It is not even registered. So, how will they start? You don't just wake up one morning and put some names together and say who will listen to you. So, they don't have any locus. But that is not even important.

What is important is that the Labour Party has been in existence and we have our fair share of crises, which has been firmly resolved in the interest of the party. So if ab initio they were arguing that the

party is not recognised, and that is why they are pulling out and form the transition committee, now the court has said the party is recognised. So, what is the need for appeal? That means they already have intentions to grab power. When you say they have any intention, it is that INEC said that this leadership is not recognised. But the court has said no, that this leadership is recognised.

Why don't you just fall in line and let the party grow? What will be their objection or the reason for appeal? Is it that you don't like the leadership and want to bring your own leadership? So, that is the mentality of some of our politicians, which we are trying to change. If you don't like the leadership, you will have to wait until its term expires in four years. For now, the leadership of Julius Abure will expire in 2028. That is what the law has said.

**Since the news of the judgment went viral, has there been any reaction from INEC, in terms of communicating or relating with the NWC?**

No, INEC will only communicate with you when there is a need for that. But for now, there has not been any need because it is usually when they have quarterly meetings with political parties or when there is a correspondence to issue to political parties. It is not as if it is peculiar to the Labour Party. I know that INEC is a law-abiding institution. They will abide by the law because they too will not appeal. There won't be any need for them to appeal anyway unless they are partisan. But for now, everything is good.

**In the face of economic hardship, you claimed LP has the template to revamp the economy and restore investor's confidence. How do you plan to do it?**

Yes, we have said it several times because we are prepared for governance. We have done all our homework. We came up with a solid plan and strategy to move Nigeria into a nation that we all want to have. During the election campaign, we came out with so many blueprints on how we will turn around this nation. Those things are still there.

Things are bad but things including the economic crisis can also be resolved. The political challenges, constitutional matters and a lot of things that are going wrong under this government can be arrested

and put back into shape because we have the blueprints. All you need to do is go back, watch our tapes and what we said that we will do during the campaign. The greatest challenge Nigeria has is that we have a mono-economy system of government where we depend on petroleum. That is why we are having issues.

Any challenge in the petroleum sector will affect every other thing in Nigeria. In the last few days, they said the pump price went up. As a result, there is turbulence everywhere. Now, what happened to all our refineries? Sometime last year they said they had technically completed the refineries. That is over one year. So, why are they not producing? And if they are producing, what is the quantity of what they are producing? Who is buying and where is the market? So, there are a whole lot of things going on that nobody is telling us, which are hidden under the table.

That is what the Labour Party is set to change. We will come up with transparent leadership and government. And we will move away from the mono-economy that we have. We will diversify. Nigeria can feed the rest of Africa because we have the landmass and we have the human capacity. So why are we not doing it? The millions and billions of money invested in building roads that are not presently needed in Nigeria, if you channel that into agriculture, things in Nigeria will change. And funny enough, agriculture is a project that is dead for years. Within one year, we will start feeding the rest of Africa.

**Do you support the idea of the current administration seeking the help and experience of former President Goodluck Jonathan to stabilise our currency?**

It is not about seeking help. It is about the ideology of the party. The ideology is to bring hardship. The ideology is like what this current President said, to continue from where the previous President stopped. It is about the pain and penury they intend to inflict on Nigeria and they are succeeding. At this rate, I don't know where Nigeria will be in the next three years. At this rate, people can't pay their health bills and even eat. Every day, they are increasing taxes. And they are achieving what they want to achieve. You can see the rate of school dropouts. So, it is not about being stubborn. It is about the policy. ●

“  
**OUR TARGET IS TO RESCUE NIGERIA IN 2027. WE CANNOT DO IT WITH A DIVIDED HOUSE**”



Ifoh

## 'My principal agenda running for Anambra governorship is to restore confidence of people in government'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

governed and the side of the government.

**Do you share the impression that APC is sponsoring the crisis rocking most of the political parties in Nigeria?**

I don't want to share that impression. I don't want to believe that because those sponsored must be fools to accept to destroy the houses they built. If the APC is sponsoring you to destroy your house,

why allow them to do so? If sponsoring crises in other parties is what APC is doing every time, why can't others do the same in APC?

So why do you have to allow somebody from outside, whether APC or anywhere, to sponsor you to destroy your own party? It doesn't make sense to me and that is why I don't want to believe that.

**Who is your godfather as you go into the contest for Anambra State governorship**

**election?**

I don't have any godfather. God in Heaven is my father. I don't have any godfather. My godfather is the Anambra people on the street. They are my number one godfather. They are the ones to decide with their votes whether George Moghalu is fit enough to govern them, and once they do that, I am good to go.

**I ask you this question because of what is happening in the Rivers State, do you feel**

**the pain?**

It is very unfortunate and very sad. I really feel very depressed because this is the type of embarrassment that we suffer. These are things that happen among Nigerian politicians. This is absolute nonsense that shouldn't be. It shouldn't be.

My advice to the gladiators is to sheath their swords and put the Rivers State people on the front burner. The people of the state are the major issue. Any distraction of the governor, the people will suffer.

The state governor will not work until his tenure expires.

At the end of the day, it is the people that will bear the brunt. So, why didn't they all consider the people of Rivers State and be guided by empathy for them? Power is a sacred mandate given to leaders by God to use for the benefit of mankind. You will account for its failure to do that, if not here in the world, then thereafter, but it must be accounted for, because it is a secret mandate. ●

# Middle East crisis: Will Nigeria choose sides if World War 3 erupts?

BRIGHT JACOB

The dialogue of violence between Israel and the Iran-backed Axis of Resistance in the Middle East has been relentless for years and, so far, shows no sign of abating.

This Axis of Resistance, according to the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, comprises Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, Houthi rebels in Yemen, Palestinian terrorists in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), as well as Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq, respectively.

Referred to as the Axis of Evil by the West and Israel, the Axis of Resistance is a network of militias and political groups in the Middle East that want to reduce or even puncture Israeli and American influence in the region.

They equally resist the Israeli occupation of Palestine and constantly put their words into action by firing rockets and drones into the Jewish state to compel the creation of a Palestinian State.

This is why Israel battles conflict on seven fronts with no end in sight, and analysts fear that the crisis in the region could snowball into a World War that would leave Nigeria no choice but to pick sides in that eventuality.

As with earlier World Wars, major world powers like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, China and Russia, would naturally enter the fray. They have their vested interest in the crisis rocking the strife-ridden region, and the inevitable outcome of their involvement would be catastrophic.

Analysts have added that if diplomacy, as against military prowess or bravado, is not used to mediate a settlement that would be satisfactory to the warring parties in the region, the world might also find itself grappling with the prospect of Nuclear warfare and would not be prepared for a blast of such harsh reality.

The US and its European allies are Israel's biggest arms suppliers and continue, militarily and diplomatically, to protect the Jewish state that was formed in 1948 following a United Nations General Assembly resolution.

In the same way, Iran is ensuring that cash, guns and rockets in the Axis of Resistance's possession are not exhausted. And should there be an escalation in the crisis ravaging the region; Iran would look to Russia and China for support owing to the close tie between it and the two nuclear powers.

What began as a localised conflict between Israel and Hamas on October 7, 2023, when residents in some Israeli communities near the border with Gaza were attacked, raped and killed by marauding Hamas fighters who invaded their territory and took almost 250 Israelis as hostages

into Gaza, is responsible for driving the world to the brink of war and has led to the death of more than 40,000 Palestinians.

After the October attacks, the Federal Government of Nigeria called for a "ceasefire" and a "peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Middle East through dialogue," but some Nigerians, however, took umbrage at the government's pacifist approach and questioned why Hamas was not condemned outright.

Observers say the government likely decided to choose its words in the matter carefully because the Israel-Hamas conflict had polarised

Nigerians along religious lines – most Muslims in the country support the Palestinians while Christians mainly lend their voice to support the Israeli cause.

Nigeria will, therefore, be between the devil and the deep blue sea if there is a wider war in West Asia that may try to make the Federal Government choose between Palestine and Israel. Although it is unthinkable, it seems the world is ominously marching in this direction.

In their attempt to bring peace to the region, the Israel Defence Forces in conjunction with Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, elimi-

nated Hezbollah and Hamas leaders using airstrikes and some other unorthodox means.

The IDF, in April 2024, killed Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a senior commander in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, in Syria, and since then, the floodgate of brutal assassinations have been opened.

Iran retaliated by firing nearly 300 drones and rockets at Israel but most of them were intercepted by Israel's missile defence systems in collaboration with US and other allies' fighter jets and warships in the region.

Following Zahedi's death, Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas was assassinated in July in Tehran, the Iranian capital by an apparent Israeli attack after he attended the inauguration ceremony for Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian.

The Israeli Air Force again flexed the country's military might by eliminating Hezbollah's Secretary-General and one of the founding members of the group, Hassan Nasrallah, in an airstrike in Lebanon, a country Israel has invaded and said it launched "limited, localised and targeted raids" against Hezbollah.

Nasrallah and Haniyeh's deaths then galvanized Iran to fire a barrage of at least 180 ballistic missiles at Israel. Most of the missiles were intercepted but a handful landed in Israel, causing minimal damage, according to the IDF.

Israel has vowed a response to the missile barrage. The country's Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant, said it would be "precise and deadly." The US has, however, urged Israel not to hit Iran's nuclear facilities as that would escalate the crisis.

Iran is defiant though. It says it will respond "decisively" if Israel attacks any of its infrastructures.

Israel says it will soon retaliate against the barrage of missiles Iran fired at them. And to prevent more ballistic missiles from flying into Israel after they do, the US has deployed

a Terminal High Altitude Area Defence, or THAAD missile defence system, plus a hundred troops, in Israel to bolster Israel's defences.

Now, the world waits anxiously to know whether the back-and-forth between Israel and Iran will unleash Armageddon in the world.

Meanwhile, the IDF eliminated another Hamas leader, Yahya Sinwar, last week in Gaza, and Netanyahu, the Israel PM reacted to the killing by saying that the war in Gaza would end immediately and the over 100 hostages still held by Hamas were released.

A current affairs analyst, Obiora Agu, told *The Point*, "What is happening in the Middle East between Israel and the Palestinians is difficult to resolve.

"Within the disputed land, the territories belonging to the Palestinians, that is, Gaza and the occupied West Bank are separated from each other and it will be difficult to bring them together.

"Nigeria should not pick sides in the conflict at all. At the United Nations, we must always do the right thing and vote according to our conscience for any UN resolution to take effect.

"The Palestinians are suffering. The Israelis are suffering, too. And land matters are always tricky to resolve, even in Nigeria here. So, if it were possible for the Palestinians and Israelis to live together in the land, with equal rights and privileges that would be fantastic.

"That, in my opinion, is what Nigeria should be supporting. We have had enough bloodbaths in the region, and I think a permanent solution should be what is paramount in the minds of Nigerians, not hate or division."

Reacting to the involvement of Nigeria in a probable World War caused by the Middle East crisis, a Chartered Accountant, Ifeoma Ogbonna, said the crisis in the region was "tied to religion."

She added that because Nigeria is a highly religious country, its Government should "maintain a neutral posture" in the crisis.

"The way I see the crisis in the land of Palestine or Israel, whichever side of the divide you are on, the crisis there is tied to religion.

"I think there is even a spiritual dimension to it. This is why the world needs divine intervention for the way forward.

"And remember that religion is a very volatile topic in Nigeria. That is why I would suggest Nigeria maintained a neutral posture over the crisis in that region.

"The United Nations does not seem to have control over the crisis; our representatives can abstain from voting on new resolutions, to show impartiality."



Netanyahu



Tuggar

**“WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH BLOODBATHS IN THE REGION, AND I THINK A PERMANENT SOLUTION SHOULD BE WHAT IS PARAMOUNT IN THE MINDS OF NIGERIANS, NOT HATE OR DIVISION”**

# Sports

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## Ndidi hits Leicester milestone!

Wilfred Ndidi celebrated a landmark at the weekend following his inclusion in Leicester City's starting lineup against Southampton at the St Mary's Stadium.

The Nigeria international hit a milestone of 200 appearances in the English Premier League and there are not many Foxes players who achieved the feat in the famous blue jersey.

Only Jamie Vardy (315), Kasper Schmeichel (276), Marc Albrighton (224) and Muzzy Izzet (222) have registered more Premier League appearances than

Ndidi.

When it comes to Nigerian players, Ndidi has played fewer Premier League games than only Shola Ameobi, Nwankwo Kanu, Alex Iwobi, Yakubu Aiyegbeni, Obi Mikel, Joseph Yobo, Victor Moses, and Victor Anichebe.

Barring injury and loss of form, Ndidi has a chance of becoming Leicester City's third-highest appearance maker in the Premier League before the end of the 2024-2025 season, with 30 games yet to be played.

The Nath Boys product has logged 16,578 minutes in 200 matches, register-

ing 20 goal involvements (7 goals, 13 assists).

Signed from Racing Genk in January 2017, Ndidi made his Premier League debut against Chelsea on January 14, 2017 and netted his first goal in the top flight against Stoke City in April 2017, after bagging his first assist in Leicester's 3-2 win at West Ham United.

It was a double celebration also for Ndidi on Saturday as Leicester City came from behind to beat Southampton 3-2, courtesy of Jordan Ayew's game-winning goal in the eighth minute of stoppage time. ●

## FIFA U17 WWC: Nigeria's Flamingos advance after flying over Ecuador

ANDREW EKEJIUBA

Nigeria confidently flew past Ecuador with a resounding 4-0 win against Ecuador at the ongoing FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup to collect their second victory, remaining at the top of Group A.

The African side asserted their authority and broke the deadlock when Shakirat Moshood converted after a foul in the Ecuador area.

Nigeria's skill and pace really came to the fore in the second stanza as Harmony Chidi scored her first goal of the tournament with a powerful right-footed strike.

A goalkeeper error allowed Peace Effiong to slot home into an open net before Moshood capped the festivities with her second of the day in stoppage time.

Speaking after the game, Nigeria striker Harmony Chidi said on scoring her first World Cup goal: "I'm very happy. I don't know how to express this. It's joy for me right now because in the last game, when the goal didn't come, my coach calmed me down.

"He believes in me so much that I can do it, even when it's not coming, so I appreciate him for that and bless God for it." ●



## Osimhen tips wonder-goal for Puskas Award

Victor Osimhen has backed his goal for Galatasaray in the 3-0 win over Antalyaspor in the Süper Lig fixture played at the weekend for the FIFA Puskás Award.

The Puskás Award is given to a player adjudged to have scored the most beautiful goal in a calendar year and is named after late Real Madrid striker and legend Ferenc Puskás, regarded as one of the most prolific forwards ever in the round leather game.

Galatasaray defeated Antalyaspor 3-0 on Saturday night, with Osimhen scoring a spectacular bicycle kick goal.

Osimhen's injury kept him out of action for a little while, and this week he started training again after missing out of the Super Eagles game against Libya.

However, manager Okan Buruk listed the Nigerian international as one of the replacements.

In the first half, Mauro Icardi scored twice for Galatasaray.

The Argentine was substituted in the 78th minute by Osimhen.

The third goal of the game for the visitors was subsequently scored in stoppage time by the 25-year-old.

In his four league games this season for the Yellow

and Reds, the strong striker has already netted three goals.

Speaking at the post-match, Osimhen was quoted as saying by Galatasaray official website: "The goal was an incredible one. We got 3 points from here, I am very happy for that. I dedicate this goal to our coach, today is his birthday.

"When we look at the first half, we were not that good, we took the lead thanks to the goals scored by Mauro and we were able to play much better in the second half.

"We had a 4-day holiday and as a result we rested well, now we will continue in the same way.

"The first goal was normal, but it was not normal for the second goal not to count. These things are part of football. What is important here is for us to get three points as a team and to progress well."

Asked whether his goal deserved a Puskás nomination, the reigning African Men's Player of the Year didn't hide his feelings.

"Of course it could be. It was an incredible goal. It's a classy goal, why not, it could be," he stated.

The Napoli loanee was a Ballon d'Or nominee last year and could become the first Nigerian to be nominated for the Puskás Award. ●



## Bayer Leverkusen provide update on Boniface accident

Leverkusen have provided an update on the condition of Super Eagles star forward Victor Boniface who was involved in a car accident recently.

It has been an eventful week for the Nigerian striker, who was part of the squad that got maltreated by the Libyan authorities ahead of the Super Eagles clash with the Mediterranean Knights last Tuesday.

Off the back of that incident, the Nigerian striker shared videos and pictures of his involvement in an accident on Sunday morning which raised concern about his well-being.

Boniface was said to be on his way to the airport to pick up his friends when the accident happened but wasn't driving the car as it could be seen from the video he shared that he was looking into the mirror and enjoying some music.

From the pictures he shared, the car was badly damaged and the video of his hand being soiled in blood was evidence of how fatal the accident was.

The 23-year-old, Bayer Leverkusen star performer revealed that he was fine and only sustained an injury to his hands.

"He is fine. Boniface only had two minor injuries to his hand," Bayer Leverkusen stated.

After missing a penalty in the Black and Reds 2-1 win over Eintracht Frankfurt at the weekend, he went on to score the winning goal to hand them their fourth win in the Bundesliga this term. ●

# CAF Executive Committee meets Monday at Addis Ababa

The Confédération Africaine de Football ("CAF") will hold its Executive Committee ("EXCO") meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on Monday, 21 October 2024.

The Executive Committee meeting, is to be chaired by CAF President Dr Patrice Motsepe, and will start at 10h30 local time (07h30 GMT).

The meeting will be held ahead of the 46th Ordinary General Assembly which will also take place in the Ethiopian capital on Tuesday, 22 October 2024 at 10h00 local time (07h00 GMT).

Meanwhile, the official draw of the CAF Women's Champions League Morocco 2024 was officially conducted at the Complex Mohamed VI in Salé, Morocco on Friday, 18 October.

The fourth edition of Africa's premier women's club competition will be hosted in Morocco between 09 - 23 November 2024 where eight (8) clubs consisting of champions of CAF's Six Zones joining hosts AS FAR as well as defending champions, Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa to contest the coveted title.

# Messi's hat-trick helps Inter Miami break MLS record

Lionel Messi scored a stunning 11-minute hat-trick to help Inter Miami break the Major League Soccer record for most points in a single season, after defeating the New England Revolution 6-2 at the weekend at Chase Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Miami concluded the MLS regular season with 74 points in 34 games and a 22-4-8 (W-L-D) record, narrowly beating the Revolution's 2021 mark of 73 points.

Luis Suarez propelled Inter Miami to rally from two goals down after 34 minutes, scoring twice in under four minutes to keep alive the chase for the points record.

But it was captain Messi who fittingly cemented Inter Miami's name in league history. Just one minute after coming on he helped set up Benjamin Cremaschi to put Miami ahead for the first time in the 58th minute.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner then took center stage himself, starting in the 78th minute, to score his first hat-trick for Miami and in the process become the club's all-time leading scorer with 33 goals.

Miami also became the first team in MLS history to have multiple players score at least 20 goals in a season.

With 20 goals apiece, Messi and Suárez are set to finish second in the Golden Boot race to D.C. United's Christian Benteke (23 goals). Messi, though, leads the league in total goal contributions with a combined 36 goals and assists in only 19 games.



# SPECIAL FEATURE: The rise and rise of NPFL!

ANDREW EKEJIUBA

The Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) is on the rise and has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, largely thanks to the unwavering commitment of strategic partners to the NPFL, GTI Group. By laying down robust structures for transparency and accountability, GTI Group has significantly helped to improve the integrity and reputation of the elite league, ensuring that every dime from sponsors and investors of The Nigeria Football Fund (TNFF) are meticulously utilised and accounted for.

GTI's initiative to enhance transparency in the NPFL goes beyond mere intentions; it involves concrete actions that laid the groundwork for accountability. This commitment not only bolsters the league's financial health but also promotes confidence among stakeholders, including fans, sponsors and players.

One of the critical challenges that faced the NPFL before the coming of GTI Group in the 2022/2023 season was crowd violence. However, the financial investment firm and the NPFL Board led by Hon. Gbenga Elegbeleye have worked harmoniously and tackled this issue head-on by implementing measures to curb this menace at match venues.

The placement of trained security personnel, implementation of zero tolerance to crowd violence and the issuance of fines against erring clubs cum their fans have fostered a safer environment for lovers of the beautiful game in the country. As a result, match at-

tendance has astronomically increased, allowing for a more vibrant and supportive atmosphere.

The enhanced transparency in match operations by NPFL has also sparked renewed hope and a sense of friendly competition among clubs. With the increase in fair play and adherence to regulations, fans and players alike are experiencing a new wave of excitement. This was exemplified on Match Day 3 of the ongoing 2024/2025 season, where the league witnessed an impressive display of five-star performance: five away wins, three draws, and two home wins. This feat has never happened in the history of the elite league and reflects the blossoming football economy of Africa's most populous nation.

GTI Group and NPFL's relentless effort has laid the foundation for a prosperous league that attracts local and international talents from neighbouring countries in the round-leather game. By focusing on transparency, infrastructural development and security, GTI and NPFL are not just transforming the league; they are creating a sustainable environment where football can thrive.

As we celebrate these positive changes, it is essential to acknowledge the role of every stakeholder in this journey. The NPFL is no longer just a platform for entertainment; it is a thriving business-oriented industry with the potential to inspire generations to come. The transformation of the NPFL, championed by GTI Group, reflects a brighter future for Nigerian football. With the ongoing commitment and collaboration, the NPFL will continue to flourish, bringing glory to clubs and excitement to fans across the world.

## FEDERAL CO-OPERATIVE COLLEGE ELEYELE, IBADAN, OYO STATE

### INVITATION FOR THE PRE-QUALIFICATION/EXPRESSION OF INTEREST UNDER THE CAPITAL PROJECT/CONSTITUENCY PROJECT FOR YEAR 2024 AMMENDMENT BUDGET PROJECTS

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Federal Co-operative College (FCC), Eleyele, Ibadan a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and food security, in keeping its mandate and in compliance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act, 2007, intends to implement the College's 2024 Capital Projects. The College hereby invites interested competent and reputable contractors/suppliers/consultancy firms, with relevant experience and good track records of related projects and services for the procurement of under listed.

#### 2. SCOPE OF SERVICE/WORKS/SUPPLIES AND TRAINING

##### CATEGORY A: WORKS (PREQUALIFICATION)

Table with 4 columns: LOT No., TITLE OF PROJECTS, LOT No., and DESCRIPTION. Lists various construction projects across different states like Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, etc.

##### CATEGORY B: GOODS

Table with 4 columns: LOT No., TITLE OF PROJECTS, LOT No., and DESCRIPTION. Lists procurement of various goods like food, tractors, and medical equipment.

##### CATEGORY C: CONSULTANCY SERVICES (TRAINING)

Table with 4 columns: LOT No., TITLE OF PROJECTS, LOT No., and DESCRIPTION. Lists training and consultancy services for various constituencies.

#### 3. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- a. Evidence of Certificate of Incorporation issued by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) including Form CAC1.1 or CAC2 and CAC7.
b. Evidence of Company's Income Tax Clearance Certificate (or Personal Income Tax Clearance Certificate of all the Partners in case of Business Name) for the last three (3) years valid till 31st December, 2024, with minimum average annual turnover of N500 million for Works, N250 million for Goods and N100 million for Services;
c. Evidence of Pension Clearance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024 (this requirement is only applicable to bidders whose number of staff is 15 and above);
d. Evidence of Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Compliance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024 (this requirement is only applicable to bidders whose number of staff is 5 and above or the bidder's annual turnover is N50m and above);
e. Evidence of Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) Clearance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024;
f. Evidence of Registration on the National Database of Federal Contractors, Consultants and Service Providers by submission of Interim Registration Report (IRR) expiring on 31st December, 2024 or valid Certificate issued by BPP;
g. Sworn Affidavit:
- disclosing whether or not any officer of the relevant committees of the Federal Co-operative College, Eleyele, Ibadan or the Bureau of Public Procurement is a former or present Director, shareholder or has any pecuniary interest in the bidder and to confirm that all information presented in its bid are true and correct in all particulars;
- that no Director has been convicted in any Country for any criminal offence relating to fraud or financial impropriety or criminal misrepresentation or falsification of facts relating to any matter;
- that the Company is not in receivership, the subject of any form of insolvency or bankruptcy proceedings or the subject of any form of winding up petition or proceedings;
h. Company's Audited Accounts for the last three (3) years - 2021, 2022 & 2023;
i. Reference Letter from a reputable commercial bank in Nigeria, indicating willingness to provide credit facility for the execution of the project when needed;
j. Company's Profile with the Curriculum Vitae of Key Staff to be deployed for the project, including copies of their Academic/Professional qualifications such as COREN, ARCON, CORBON, QSRBN, SURCON etc. with current practice licence valid till Dec. 2024;
k. Verifiable documentary evidence of at least three (3) similar jobs executed in the last five (5) years including Letters of Awards, Valuation Certificates, Job Completion Certificates and Photographs of the projects together with evidence of commissioning of the project.
l. Only Companies included in the National Automotive Design and Development Council's approved list of local manufacturers of Vehicles or their authorised representatives should bid for the vehicles
m. For Joint Venture/Partnership, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be provided indicating among others the Lead Partner (CAC, Tax Clearance Certificate, Pension Clearance Certificate, ITF Compliance Certificate, NSITF Clearance Certificate, IRR & Sworn Affidavit are compulsory for each JV partner);

Note: All documents for submission must be transmitted with a Covering/Forwarding letter under the Company/Firm's Letter Head Paper bearing amongst others, the Registration Number (RC) as issued by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), Contact Address, Telephone Number (preferably GSM No.), and e-mail address. The Letterhead Paper must bear the Names and Nationalities of the Directors of the Company at the bottom of the page, duly signed by the authorised officer of the firm.

#### 4. SUBMISSION OF EOI AND PRE-QUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS

Interested firms are to submit three (3) bound of Expression of Interest (EOI) and Pre-qualification documents in Hard copy and one soft copy as applicable, separated by dividers and arranged as indicated above. The documents should be submitted in a sealed envelope and addressed as indicated above, and clearly marked with (the name of the project and Lot number). Furthermore, the reverse of each sealed envelope should bear the name and address of the bidder and drop it in the designated Tender Box at the office of The Provost office not later than 12:00 noon Monday, 16th September, 2024.

#### 5. OPENING OF EOI AND PRE-QUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS

The EOI and Pre-qualification documents will be opened immediately after the deadline for submission at 12:00 noon Monday, 16th September, 2024, at The Conference Room, Provost Office'

#### 6. GENERAL INFORMATION

- i. The Bidders are expected to adhere strictly to ALL instruction as non-compliance will constitute a ground for disqualification.
ii. EOI's/Bids must be in English language and signed by an official authorised by the bidders.
iii. The EOI's/bids will be opened in the presence of CSOs and professional bodies and covered by video recording; invitation link will be sent to bidders who choose to join the opening online.
iv. Invitation for Pre-qualification: Only pre-qualified bidders at technical evaluation will be invited at a later date for collection of tender documents;
v. Expression of Interest (Services): Only shortlisted Consultants will be invited at a later date for collection of Request for Proposals;
vi. Tenders with false document is an offence, which will lead to disqualification and prosecution.
vii. All cost will be borne by the bidder.
viii. The Federal Co-operative College, Eleyele Ibadan is not bound to pre-qualify/shortlist any bidder and reserves the right to annul the procurement process at any time without incurring any liabilities in accordance with Section 28 of the Public Procurement Act, 2007.

Signed THE PROVOST FEDERAL COOPERATIVE COLLEGE, ELEYELE IBADAN

Inflation pushes 129m Nigerians into poverty – World Bank report

Bayer Leverkusen provide update on Boniface accident

# Requiem for division of labour



**OIKONOMIA**  
with **Lekan Sote**

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The economic management team of President Bola Tinubu that wants to create jobs for unemployed youths pounding the streets of Nigeria's urban centres must know that jobs that were easily available to those above age 50 almost no longer exist.

Online Meta AI and Google searches have almost displaced hardcopy dictionaries and reference books, as robotics, or programmable machines, are taking over some jobs earlier performed by human beings. Of the top 10 Standard and Poor's companies in 1990, only IBM was a digital company, the others were brick-and-mortar companies.

By the end of September 2024, only one brick-and-mortar company, Tesla that is even considered to be a digital company, is in the top 10. The other nine are digital companies, Apple, Nvidia, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta and Broadcom.

While Gilbert Houngbo, Director General of International Labour Organisation, observes that "Artificial Intelligence has the potential to transform the world of work," he warns that "it is crucial to protect workers from the negative impacts of the digital revolution."

Apart from causing job losses, the disruptive technology has turned many boom towns that prospered with the old technology into burst towns. Titusville, Pennsylvania, where the petroleum industry started, is no more.

Rich textile manufacturing hubs,

like Bradford, England, have now become poor and desolate, with unemployed kids, who lack appropriate skills to function in the new technological milieu, have become drug addicts and criminals.

After the industrial Revolution yielded to the information age, that is even now in its fourth stage of evolution, specialist professionals, who worked as standalones for most of the 20th century, cannot fit into the work model of the new economy.

The new economy's ICT-enabled business model accelerated globalization and business networking, and shifted work experience from brawn to knowledge. It emphasizes the service industry over the manufacturing, and drives work among organisations and individuals through digital connectivity.

Corporate meetings, enabled by satellite technology, are held virtually by Zoom or WhatsApp calls that link attendees in far-flung places like the Arctic and the Antarctic, Sahara Desert and the Swiss Alps, the moon and the earth, and between Eskimos and the Masai.

Nationalists, including former American President Donald Trump, with his fetish of shutting America's borders against immigrants, and Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally of France, must acknowledge the futility in preventing globalisation. The world is "flat!"

Key experiences that the new economy promises are E-Commerce; the presence of digital media with a convergence of telecommunications, computer and broadcasting technologies, biotechnology, financial technology—or fintech, big data, and renewable energy.

There is a reason why former American President Barack Obama averred that there are more resources between your ears than the soil full of mineral and agricultural resources. If you can work with the new technology, the higher your income will likely be.

Some fundamental changes enabled by the digital technology are, increased productivity, improved efficiency, new jobs, ability of workers

to work from home and emphasis on knowledge-based companies.

The new technology however, caused greater income inequality, massive job displacement, foundational structural changes in the workplace, greater cybersecurity risks, data privacy concerns and obvious environmental changes.

It collapsed the specialization model of the Industrial Revolution workplace that Adam Smith recommended for faster and higher productivity, and replaced it with the multitasking generalist workman who merges many schedules into one omnibus task.

In the past, a television reporter must cover an out-of-studio event with a crew of cameramen, lights men, and a driver to drive an Outside-Broadcasting-Van (or OB-VAN). That's at least four individuals in one story.

Not so these days. Only one reporter can cover the event, with his android telephone. He takes the footage, edits it for sound and picture quality, writes the story and reads it with the teleprompter app on his phone.

He sends the story online. And those in the studio can run it immediately without anyone guessing that only one "generalist" did the reporting. One individual can actually do the job of eight individuals with a do-hickey gadget.

In fact, those who know it insist that the engineering and computing capability within an android telephone is far beyond that of Apollo 11, the first spaceship that landed astronaut Neil Armstrong and his colleagues on the moon in 1969.

The Internet of Things is essentially a network of devices embedded with sensors that have the ability to monitor the environment, communicate with each other and take the actions that human beings could have taken.

Some experts say the ability of the IoT, to "see" anywhere, may soon make the security guards that watch over your homes unnecessary, just as driverless cars will soon make it unnecessary to hire those chauffeurs who eavesdrop on your private conversations.

American intelligence agencies used the satellite technology to ferret



Tijani

**DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY HAS REDEFINED THE WORK EXPERIENCE, AND TODAY'S PROFESSIONALS WORK MORE WITH THEIR HEADS THAN THEIR HANDS, USE MORE GADGETS AS WORK ENABLERS AND PERFORM EVEN MORE TASKS THAN AN ARMY OF ANALOGUE WORKERS.**

out terrorist Osama bin Laden, hiding in highbrow Abbottabad, Pakistan, through an innocuous phone call in the boondocks, before getting US Navy SEALs on Operation Neptune Spear to eliminate him.

In the early 1980s, America's security agencies were able to sight and bomb the private home of Libyan strongman, Col. Muammar Gaddafi, and killed his adopted infant daughter. No one in this 'flat' world has a place to hide.

Worse still, is the "monster" called Artificial Intelligence that can perform a lot of the routine capabilities and tasks that the human being can per-

form. The repetitive job of the accountant and the diagnostic techniques of a medical doctor can be easily performed by AI devices.

But then, AI falls flat on its face in the aspects of emotional intelligence, creative thinking, adapting to new circumstances and complex decision-making—unless the human being intervenes. AI will not sense that an invalid needs to be hugged, nor would it think out of the box.

It can only function according to the way it is programmed. American standup comedian, Chris Duffy, recently told a Ted Talk audience, how he claimed to be CEO of LinkedIn to LinkedIn, on LinkedIn, and LinkedIn congratulated him, and informed his contacts on the same platform.

Another revolution that can upstage disruptions in the workplace is block chain crypto currency that substitutes virtual money for physical currency and coins. When fully operational, not only will employment in the old-fashioned printing and minting works be phased out, those who cannot use the technology won't be able to access their own money. They would virtually be poor, even if they were billionaires.

To access money in what is called "wallets" may require, and pay, techies who have the requisite expertise. How about that, for the end of your privacy and your arrival at the totalitarian state of the Big Brother of George Orwell's 1984? The One World Order is nigh.

Anyway, digital technology has redefined the work experience, and today's professionals work more with their heads than their hands, use more gadgets as work enablers and perform even more tasks than an army of analogue workers.

Nigerians must begin to find a space in all this. Luddites won't have a chance to halt the March of Times. Bosun Tijani, Minister of Communication, Innovation and Digital Economy recently disclosed that Nigeria's 3MTT, or 3 Million Tech Talents, is the world's largest tech training programme in the world.

So, embrace the multitasking generalists as the nemesis of specialists, with a requiem to division of labour! ●

