

# Remain faithful to your constituents, First Lady counsels female NASS members

UKPONO UKPONG

The issue of accountability by public officers to those who elected them took center-stage yesterday during a visit by female lawmakers to the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

First Lady Senator Oluremi Tinubu, told her guests a home truth on the matter, counseling them to remain faithful to their constituents.

The group comprised Senators and members of the House of

Representatives.

The First Lady, while expressing delight at the visit especially as she had served in the Senate in the last 12 years, said: "You are the women here at the National Assembly for the masses and you should not

take this for granted.

"As a former lawmaker, I advise you to please work together, irrespective of party affiliation because the success of the nation depends on this."

The First Lady advised them

to be teachable and try new things as this would give them an advantage in the discharge of their responsibilities as lawmakers and women in particular.

Senator Tinubu said: "When

CONTINUES ON P2 →

# The Daily Times

THE NIGERIA DAILY NEWSPAPER OF RECORDS SINCE 1926

WWW.dailytimesng.com

Thursday, July 20, 2023 Vol. 4 No. 2015

www.dailytimesng.com

DailyTimesNGR

dailytimesnigeria

dailytimesngr

₦200

## Fuel price hike: Reps summon NNPC boss, marketers

● Suspend, probe airport concession nationwide ● House motion indicts Buhari government

TOM OKPE,  
ABUJA

House of Representatives has resolved to set up an Ad-hoc Committee to investigate yesterday's increase in the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), commonly known as petrol, by Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) from

N500 to N617 a litre.

The House also invited the NNPC Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Mele Kyari and Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) to brief the House on the hike.

These resolutions were sequel to the adoption of a motion of urgent public importance moved

by Rep. Ikenga Ugochinyere (PDP, Imo) at plenary yesterday.

Moving the motion, Ugochinyere recalled that on Tuesday, July, 18, petrol pump price was increased from N537 to N617 by marketers without conferring with the relevant agencies of government.

The lawmaker expressed worry that: "In view of the current socio-

economic challenges faced by Nigerians, a hike in the price of fuel will heap great suffering and hardship on Nigerians."

He prayed the House to set up an Ad-hoc Committee to investigate the circumstances leading to the increment in the price by NNPC and marketers and report back to the House within four weeks for further legislative

action.

Ruling on the motion, Deputy Speaker, Rep. Benjamin Kalu said the Ad-hoc Committee would be raised before the end of the sitting and its membership would cut across the country as the issue touched on all Nigerians.

Kalu charged the soon-to-be-constituted Committee to work

CONTINUES ON P2 →



4th from right, front row, Hon. (Dr) Abike Dabiri-Erewa, OON, Chairman/CEO, NIDCOM; flanked by (left), Mr Baba Onyoma, Vice Chairman, NIDOE, and (right) Mrs Susan Waya, Chairperson, NIDO UK South, with members of a delegation, after a press conference ahead of the National Diaspora Day in Abuja.

## Sales have reduced by 50%, reduce fuel price, save us -Marketers beg Tinubu

BY OUR REPORTER

The dire effects of Tuesday's hike in petrol price by the Federal Government are not being felt by ordinary Nigerians alone -curiously.

Owners of fuel dispensing outlets (filling stations) and their associates under the umbrella Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) have cried out to President Bola Tinubu that public patronage of the product is low, thus threatening to run them out of business.

CONTINUES ON P4 →

## 100 women to get political appointments in Niger before weekend - Gov

SAKA BOLAJI  
MINNA

In an unprecedented move in the state, Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago of Niger State has disclosed that 100 appointments will be given to women by his ad-

ministration between yesterday and the forthcoming weekend.

The Governor made the disclosure when he received the executives of International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), led by its Chairperson, Mrs. Bola Jibogun, at Government House, Minna.

Governor Bago said the ap-

pointments would be in fulfilment of his campaign promise to carry women along in the implementation of his policies and programmes.

He further disclosed that of the 100 appointments, FIDA will have one of its members who will be appointed to the position of a

Coordinator while two others will become Senior Special Assistants.

The Governor assured the body of working closely with it to address gender-related issues and maintained that his administration has several programmes and policies for women and children.

"FIDA is part of this govern-

ment, so let us join hands and work together to bring about the desired growth and development of the state.

"There are a lot of women initiatives; we are creating a lot of desks to address affirmative actions and also gender-related issues in this

CONTINUES ON P5 →

## Amotekun nabs 80-year-old, another elderly man for alleged vandalism P2



# Fuel price hike: Reps summon NNPC boss, marketers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

with the speed of light so that Nigerians will feel the impact of lawmakers' intervention.

Meanwhile, the House has taken steps to suspend the concessioning of airports in the country, and resolved to launch full investigation into the programme.

The decision followed adoption of a motion moved by Rep. Kama Nkemkanma at plenary yesterday.

Nkemkanma said the most viable airports in the country were commissioned to foreign firms through the former President Muhammadu Buhari-led Federal Executive Council resolutions that deviated from due process, public accountability, and established laws of the land.

He said the eventual outcome of the opaque concession exercise is the enrichment of a few unpatriotic Nigerians and their foreign cohorts at the detriment of Nigerians and the eventual enslavement of these public infrastructure to foreigners for many decades.

The motion stated: "Recalls that our major airports in Lagos, Abuja, and Kano have remained consistently subjects of controversies due to entrenched personal interests that have undermined laws of the land, irrespective of

occasional efforts of our anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission.

"Laments that the myopic personal interests of these economic vampires have relegated our so-called international airports to mere airstrip status after almost seven decades in the industry, and can never be compared with global renowned airports such as Heathrow, Dubai, Amsterdam, Tokyo, Qatar, Vancouver, and others.

"Disturbed that even on the African continent, where one out of every six Africans is a Nigerian population, the South African pairs of Tambo-Johannesburg and Cape Town, Cairo, Casablanca-Morocco and Houari Boumediene in Algeria, have all outpaced Nigeria and we also

lag behind South Africa, Kenya, and Ethiopian Airlines.

"Disturbed that Nigerian population dominates the African Continent, with South African cities outperforming Nigerian-owned, while Kenya and Ethiopian Airlines trail behind.

"Worried that the National public policy journey has led to embarrassment, corruption, and controversies in aviation and other sectors."

# Remain faithful to your constituents, First Lady counsels female NASS members

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

men are in the position of power, they do not see gender, so you as women should not fight a man who does not see gender when fighting for power."

She urged the women not to lose their femininity in the execution of their duties and prayed for victory for those who have pending court cases.

In her remarks, the representative of the female National Assembly members, Hon Kafilat Ogbara, representing Kosofe federal constituency, Lagos State, said the visit was to congratulate the First Lady on the success of the 2023 general elections that brought into office His Excellency President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima.

The female National Assembly members pledged their support and

cooperation to the course of nation-building, promising to lend a hand of fellowship whenever the need arises for the First Lady



Miss Ejikeme Mmesoma (2nd right) who allegedly doctored her JAMB score, wrote a letter of apology before the House of Representatives Ad hoc committee investigating the alleged manipulation of her UTME results... yesterday in Abuja.

# Reps confirm Service Chiefs

TOM OKPE,  
ABUJA

House of Representatives yesterday confirmed the appointment of Service Chiefs as requested by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

They are Major-Generals Christopher Musa, Chief of Defence Staff; Taoreed Lagbaja, Chief of Army Staff; Air Vice Marshal (AVM) Hassan Abubakar, Chief of Air Staff and Rear Admiral Emmanuel Ikechukwu Ogalla, Chief of Naval Staff.

This followed the consideration and adoption of the report of the Ad-hoc Committee on the Screening of Nominees for Appointment as Chief of Defence Staff and Service Chiefs of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The report, laid by Chairman of the Ad-hoc Committee, Rep. Babajimi Benson, was considered and approved by the Committee of the Whole, chaired by the Deputy Speaker, Rep. Benjamin Kalu.

All the recommendations of the Committee were approved. The recommendations read in part: "That Major-General Christopher Gwabin Musa, be Confirmed as the Chief of Defence Staff of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; having successfully undergone the screening process of this committee.

"That Major-General Taoreed Abiodun Lagbaja, be Confirmed as the Chief of Army Staff of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; having successfully undergone the screening process of this committee.

"That Rear Admiral Emmanuel Ikechukwu Ogalla, be Confirmed as the Chief of Naval Staff of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; having successfully undergone the screening process of this committee.

"That Air Vice Marshal Hassan Bala Abubakar, be Confirmed as the Chief of Air Staff of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; having successfully undergone the screening process of this committee."



# Amotekun nabs 80-year-old, another elderly man for alleged vandalism

AYODELE ADESANMI,  
ADO-EKITI

Operatives of the Western Security Network (Amotekun Corps), Ekiti State Command, have confirmed the arrest of an 80-year-old man, Pa Michael Fatokun, for allegedly vandalising equipment belonging to the State Water Corporation in Okemesi-Ekiti.

The corps also confirmed

the arrest of a 60-year-old man, Oladosun Eniola, an indigene of Ikoro-Ekiti, over alleged vandalisation of the corporation's equipment, also located in Okemesi-Ekiti.

Commandant of the corps, Brigadier Joe Komolafe (retd.), who paraded the duo, also paraded three other suspects nabbed by the operatives over alleged breaking into a residential building located at Tinuola

area of Ado-Ekiti, the state capital.

The three suspects, who are currently detained at the office of the command along the Old Iyin road, Ado-Ekiti, were identified as Rufai Isiaka (26), Buhari Ibrahim (30) and Moniru Yahaya (30).

They were apprehended by the residents of the area and later handed over to the operatives of the corps.

Speaking on the persons arrested by the operatives over alleged vandalism in Okemesi-Ekiti, the Amotekun Corps Commander said the victims were arrested in the ancient community, urging residents of the state not to hesitate in giving relevant information that would assist the corps in its intelligence and surveillance operations.

The commander reiterated the readiness of the corps in continuing to ensure the security and safeguarding of the lives and property of the people of the state.





# POWERING AFRICA INTO THE FUTURE



**THE FUTURE IS AITEO.**

**OIL & GAS | UTILITIES & POWER | INFRASTRUCTURE | AGRICULTURE**

Learn more online at [aiteogroup.com](http://aiteogroup.com)





## Sales have reduced by 50%, reduce fuel price, save us – Marketers beg Tinubu

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

According to them, purchase of their products has nose-dived by 50 per cent since the fuel subsidy removal, worsened by Tuesday's hike.

They pleaded with President Tinubu to reduce the price of petrol to save their businesses from imminent collapse.

Chairman of IPMAN in Enugu depot, Chinedu Anyaso, who took the position while speaking to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), blamed the reduction on the hike in the pump price of fuel.

He said marketers faced "an existential challenge" on account of this.

The IPMAN chairman pointed to loans they took from banks to run their businesses, which must be repaid, as well as operational costs, saying the

aftermath of the fuel price had put them in a fix.

NAN reports that Anyaso warned that should marketers shut down due to low patronage, the situation may lead to the collapse of the nation's downstream sector.

His words: "Marketers are facing an existential challenge due to low profits as a result of reduced sales affecting their abilities to meet their operational costs and obligations with banks."

"Marketers are worse affected by this policy of subsidy removal; profitability has reduced because average sales have reduced by about 50 per cent.

"We appeal to the Federal Government to save downstream operations from collapsing by working on reduction in pump prices."



Governor of Abia State, Alex Otti (right) and Group Managing Director/CEO of Zenith Bank, Mr. Ebenezer Onyeagwu, at the Government House, Umuahia...yesterday.

## FOLIO MEDIA/GROUP VACANCIES INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENTS NEEDED

Folio Communications Ltd publishes The Daily Times of Nigeria (DTN) which is the flagship newspaper group in Africa's most populous country.

In its drive to up the ante and become more competitive with a cutting edge, DTN seeks to engage international correspondents in major world capital cities which include:

- |                               |                                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) London, United Kingdom    | (10) Cairo, Egypt                |
| (2) Washington, United States | (11) Tel Aviv, Israel            |
| (3) Paris, France             | (12) Riyadh, Saudi Arabia        |
| (4) Moscow, Russia            | (13) New Delhi, India            |
| (5) Brasilia, Brazil          | (14) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia       |
| (6) Kingston, Jamaica         | (15) Accra, Ghana                |
| (7) Ottawa, Canada            | (16) Pretoria, South Africa      |
| (8) Beijing, China            | (17) Dubai, United Arab Emirates |
| (9) Tokyo, Japan              |                                  |

### REQUIREMENTS

Our international correspondents must be graduates of globally- recognized or certified tertiary institutions in the humanities with a wide range of knowledge of the geographical regions in which the cities and countries where the bureaus that they will run are located. The candidates must also have a minimum of seven years experience of working as a journalist. If you meet the aforementioned criteria, send your CV and other information that you believe are relevant to:

(1) fea@folioholdings.africa Closing date for applications is July 31st, 2023.

## Hijrah 1445AH: Makinde's ex-aide lauds gov on holiday declaration



STEPHEN GBADAMOSI,  
IBADAN

Former Special Assistant on Islamic Affairs to Oyo State Governor, Imam (Dr.) AbdulRasheed AbdulAzeez, has commended the state governor for declaring holiday to mark the Islamic year calendar.

Imam AbdulAzeez, in a statement he personally signed and made available to journalists yesterday, stated that the governor had fulfilled the promise he made since 2021 that a holiday would be declared to mark the day.

He expressed appreciation to the governor for recognizing the significance of the Islamic New Year, which marks the beginning of Muharram 1445AH, adding that the governor chose the exact date to mark the new Islamic year.

The former aide, who equally congratulated and wished the entire Muslim ummah a happy celebration of the new Islamic calendar, noted that the governor had always shown he was a staunch lover of Islam.

"In commemoration

of Hijrah 1445AH Islamic New Year for all Muslims, Oyo State governor, His Excellency 'Seyi Makinde, has done tremendously well in declaring today, Wednesday, as a public holiday throughout the state.

"I can remember that the governor, in 2021, during state's Mawlid Nabiy celebration, promised that there will be a holiday to celebrate the Hijrah annually. There is a unique thing about the date which governor chose for the holiday. It actually tallies with the divine day that Hijrah day should be observed.

"There are some states in the country that did not pick the exact date, but as a Pacesetter State, the governor has been picking the exact date since 2021 when the declaration was made, to be marking the new Islamic year.

"Another plus to the celebration in Oyo State is that there are different activities that characterize the day and make it colourful. We hold Hijrah luncheon where people will be given different gift items to commemorate the day every year.



## 100 women to get political appointments in Niger before weekend – Gov

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

government, and we hope the collaboration will meet the yearnings and aspirations of women," he said.

FIDA Secretary, Safura Abdulkareem, who spoke earlier, explained that as a non-partisan organization, they protect the rights of women and children as well as stand against any form of

gender-based violence.

She expressed the organization's readiness to support the present administration in the state to ensure success.

The FIDA scribe had earlier requested for inclusion and recognition of FIDA by the present government to further carry out their duties effectively.

## Fallout of fuel price hike: Union orders Colleges of Education lecturers to work twice weekly

UKPONO UKPONG

Amidst the difficulties posed by the recent fuel price hike, national leadership of Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) has directed its members nationwide to go to work only two days a week until the Federal Government yields to its demand of 200 per cent salary increase.

A statement signed by COEASU National President, Dr. Smart Olugbeko, said the decision was reached at the union's extraordinary meeting.

Olugbeko said that an emergency NEC meeting shall be convened to ratify the decision and decide on the specific days of the week members are to go to work.

The statement said: "The national leadership of our great Union in its extraordinary meeting held on Tuesday, 18th July 2023 had agreed to direct its members to go to work two days weekly until Federal Government yields to its demand of 200 per cent increase in salary amidst the difficulty of members to get to work as a result of hike in the price of petrol.

"The implementation of removal of fuel subsidy by the Federal Government two months ago raised the price of a litre of petrol by 250%. This worsened the inflationary rate on the cost of transportation, food and other essential commodities and impoverished the Nigerian people.

"Workers, including staff of Colleges of Education, kept faith with Government and chose to endure the untold hardship thinking it would be only for a while as Government promised to roll out palliative measures including significant increase in salaries. Alas!

"While our capabilities to sustain hope were already exhausted, the price of petrol rose further to N650 per litre.

"Now, the leadership of the Union has been inundated by members' complaints that they could no longer go to work as a result of hike in the price of petrol and resultant high cost of transportation.

"Against this backdrop, it has become inevitable for

the Union to direct members to go to work only two days weekly while an emergency NEC meeting shall be convened to ratify this decision and decide on the specific days of the week members are to go to work."

Noting that the present salary of its members can no longer take them to work, he called on Government to urgently do the needful because the inevitable action of the Union against this hardship will have devastating effects on students as it will lead to a prolonged academic calendar.

The Union said: "The present salary of staff of Colleges of Education was approved in the year 2010 - 13 years ago! This means we have been on same salary since 2010 while petrol price rose intermittently from N65/N70 in 2010 to N650 in 2023 (tenfold increase). Our salary structure which is subject to renegotiation at 3-year interval has remained static for 13 years, skipping four due renegotiations.

"It is ludicrous that Government has refused to return to the negotiation table on the welfare package for staff after the Union, prior to the removal of fuel subsidy, had proposed 200% increase in salary as against Government offer of a ridiculous 35% for Chief Lecturers and 23% for other cadres.

"We call on the FG to urgently do the needful because the inevitable action of the Union against this hardship will have devastating effects on the students as it will lead to a prolonged academic calendar - a semester of 16 weeks will become 32 weeks or more; while Teaching Practice exercise of 6 months will become 12 months.

"We call on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to quickly address the issue of salary adjustment for staff of Colleges of Education. We believe in the capacity of the President to address this problem as he did when he was the Governor of Lagos State where he so generously increased the salaries of staff in the then Lagos State-owned Colleges of Education that they became the highest paid nationwide."



Governor of Nasarawa State, Abdullahi Sule received his predecessor, Sen. Tanko Almakura at the Nasarawa Governor's Lodge in Abuja...yesterday.

## At FUOYE lecture, don proffers solutions to Nigeria's 40-year debt burden

BY OUR REPORTER

A Professor of Finance of Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE), Professor Babatunde Afolabi, has proffered professional solutions to the debt burden incurred on Nigeria by successive governments which failed to address the recurrent economic hardship befalling the nation since the late 1970s.

Prof. Afolabi advocated a number of economic measures including immediate stoppage of application for loans, creation of wealth rather than alleviating poverty, and reduction of the cost of governance, among others.

The University don, who has had rich experience in the Nigerian banking sector before he joined the academia, made the recommendations during the 10th inaugural lecture of the University which he gave yesterday at the institution's Faculty of Science lecture theatre.

Entitled: 'Cut throat obligations: Quandary in Acres of Diamonds', a title he explained as a metaphor to capture an ironic situation of Nigeria which has been plunged into humongous debt in spite of being endowed with enormous human and materials resources because of poor management by leaders, the lecture went down memory lane to trace the historical development of the recklessness of leaders in obtaining loans which they also mismanage recklessly.

He said: "The Federal Government has been bitten by the bug of the recklessness of loan applications. The recent one being the pro-



curement of N22.7 trillion in May 2023, for which the government could not point to anything meaningful the funds were used for."

Afolabi observed that for over 40 years, Nigeria's leaders have been obtaining loans and mismanaging same or diverting them for other unproductive uses and thereby "further compounding the debt profile of our beloved country".

Observing further, the don said: "Reasonable borrowing to finance public and infrastructure development are the key to faster economic growth but excess borrowings without appropriate planning for investment may lead to heavy debt burden and cutthroat interest payments. The outcome will manifest in form of several undesirable effects on the economy and social well-being.

"Nigerians have been plunged into one hardship

impact untoward hardship on the masses.

He declared: "The continuing payments of subsidies on PMS has single-handedly been a serious drain on our revenue to the tune of trillions of Naira yearly. The most intriguing part of the story is that subsidy payments do not only fluctuate but the whole process is full of controversy and corruption-ridden...We are a blessed nation with rich human and material resources. We do not have to suffer if our resources are judiciously used.

"The stoppage of the fuel subsidy by the current administration is a step in the right direction as that would gradually heal our economy. However, you do not completely withdraw subsidy as doing that will make the masses to suffer. We must also work on wealth creation rather than poverty alleviation."

Prof. Afolabi sounded philosophical when he itemized ideas from Russel Cromwell's book entitled 'Acres of Diamonds' to further explain what Nigerian leaders need to do to take the nation out of the woods of debt burden.

He listed the six ideas as: "Each of us is right in the middle of our own 'acres of diamonds', if only we would realize it and develop the ground we are standing on before charging off in search of greener pastures; Opportunity does not just come along-it is there all the time-we just have to get it; In life, when we go searching for "something" we should know that what that "something" looks, smells and tastes like so that we can recognize it when we find it; The grass isn't always greener on the other side.

after another ranging from the devaluation of the Naira through Second Tier Foreign Exchange Market (SFEM) now Foreign Exchange Market (FEM) to the rising prices of commodities, inflation etc."


Prof. Afolabi disclosed that Nigeria has no business with borrowing loans if leaders had been prudent with managing our resources.

He listed the challenges of repayment of internal and external debt to include "high debt services costs, limited revenue generation, budgetary constraints, inefficient debt management, exchange rate fluctuations, weak economic growth, corruption and subsidy payment, among others."

While lauding the strong will exhibited by President Bola Tinubu to remove fuel subsidy, he cautioned that the government should not totally remove the subsidy, saying doing such would



**COMING SOON...**



# THE Nigerian GRAND BOOK

**NATIONAL SOUVENIR**

**T**he Nigerian Grand Book (National Souvenir) - Nigeria's *magnum opus* - is an impeccably researched compendium of events and nostalgic images that provide better appreciation of the dynamics of Nigeria's journey to greatness.

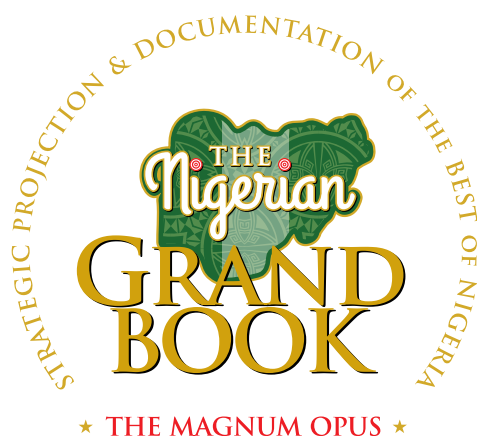
This bespoke publication is a befitting metaphor for Africa's biggest economy which will greatly accelerate investment opportunities.

The Nigerian Grand Book can only be acquired by special order. The first 100 (serially numbered) copies are available to the 100 partner-organisations, while subsequent copies shall be procured on order only.

For further enquiries and placement of order, please visit:  
[www.thegrandbook.com](http://www.thegrandbook.com)



The Nigerian Grand Book (National Souvenir) is supported by Nigerians In Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), Nigerian Content Development & Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC).





## Victor Umeh and the 10th Senate

EJIKE ANYADUBA

With the 10th Senate inaugurated, the hope of effective legislation hitherto lacking in the previous Senates, especially the 9th, has been renewed. But this hope may be improbable not because of the dearth of senators capable of discharging the office and holding the executive to account, but because of a surfeit of others averse to the common good and eternally opposed to popular legislation.

The 10th Senate as composed has no significant difference from the ones before it. What might have changed, if any, is the presence of new members and the change in the leadership structure. Other than that, it is the same 109 senatorial districts with the same number of senators, many of whom too conservative and too perfunctory in the discharge of their duties to legislate differently. It is still regrettable that the effort to yank many of them off the senatorial perch, especially the self-indulgent and the entitled, was not rewarded by the "treacherous" BVAS and iREV that malfunctioned at will.

Regardless, there are a few of the senators who would likely buck the trend, stick to the rules, and let the chips fall where they may. But for these few, the hope of a viable 10th senate may be well-nigh impossible. The manner of the emergence of its leadership is suggestive of a senate already hobbled and will be in constant struggle to extricate itself from the stran-

glehold of the executive. It will be a pleasant surprise if it turns out differently and the fear of reinventing the feckless 9th Senate is completely nipped off.

It is fairly right to argue that there is nothing as promising of success and doubtful of aridity as a senate with viable opposition. The 10th Senate has few opposition senators whose antecedents still communicate hope. These are Nigerians who would rather stick to principles than suck up to the executive in order to validate their office. It is expected that with these senators bills will be promptly debated and amended just as the power to conduct oversight functions, including holding hearings, issuing subpoenas, and requesting information from agencies and officials will be more responsibly exercised. One of the senators expected to inject new blood into the upper chamber of the National Assembly is Chief Victor Umeh. Though it will take the effort of more than a senator out of a beautiful span of over a hundred, to make an appreciable impact, it will surely keep the hope of Nigerians alive. The good thing about dissenting voice however low its decibel or drowned out by majority opinion, is that it still rings far into the future. It may be disapproved of – even rejected, but it hardly fails to accomplish the task of speaking the minds of the silent majority. It bears repeating here that the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) into the Nigerian electoral

system was not procured on account of majority votes. It was rejected in plenary. Fifty-two senators voted against it, twenty-eight absented while the remaining twenty-eight supported. It is not hard to see that the BVAS has been abused to purpose and is groaning, but its introduction was not the effort of a Senate majority decision. It came on public demand.

The return of Senator Victor Umeh as well as a few others inspires promise. He also inspires confidence. He is perhaps one of the few who scarcely talk about political correctness when confronted with consequential decisions. Umeh has the courage of his conviction and had on a number of occasions challenged the dead hand of oppression in order to effect justice. He is focused and does not miss the plenary as was often the case before now. He has no use for a cameo appearance and will double down on his previous performance.

His brief, but remarkable outing in the 8th Senate, still rings a note of approval in the ears of those who sent him. He is minded to bear their burden and keep their hope of a new Nigeria aglow. It is important to recall many of Umeh's bold interventions in the 8th Senate and how such interventions were able to check the excesses of the federal government. As a member of the 8th Senate, Umeh fought the lopsided board appointment into the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and had it redressed. But before the intervention,

the anti-corruption commission and many other federal boards were comfortable operating without the Southeast – a major stakeholder in the Nigerian project. Umeh equally engaged the drop-the-gun-order issued to the vigilantes by the former Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, and won. Without that intervention which came in the wake of the Fulani herders/farmers clash perhaps the latter would have been exposed to mindless rapine and death. None of these was achieved at the detriment of his core responsibilities as a senator. He sponsored bills, attracted constituency projects, and engaged in oversight functions. In fact, every aspect of the legislation was covered in his short time in the chambers.

However, it is his courage in speaking out against injustice that appeals to many who worked hard to thwart the conspiracy that nearly marred his return effort. Umeh's presence in the 10th senate is as important to his senatorial zone as it is to other Nigerians on the wrong side of the government's misrule. He has spoken out against the oppression of many Nigerians whose only crime is wanting to live free as guaranteed in the constitution. Nigeria is at crossroads and needs as many rational voices as she can muster to redirect her to the path of justice, fairness, and equity.

It can be argued that Umeh's journey to the 10th Senate was tortuous to the extent that human contrivance

nearly terminated it early. However, it is the fact of his representation, not the manner of his journey that is the thrust of this piece. While his contributions in the 8th Senate are still evident, what he will do in the 10th is anxiously awaited. The burden of leadership in Nigeria is much and requires synergy with a viable senate to bear. Many nationalities in Nigeria are currently facing an existential threat and have little use for yes-nodding-lackeys as their senators. It is well to remember that next to making laws and oversight functions, the most important thing is speaking out when the majority is silent. Legislation comes with responsibility and demands that it be entrusted to the care of responsible people. It's fortuitous that today, July 19, 2023, is the Senator's 61st birthday.

\*Ejike Anyaduba writes from Abatete.



Ejike Anyaduba

## The resignation of the Nigerian APC Chairman: A turning point for the party?

EMMANUEL SAMUEL  
MARIS

The All Progressives Congress (APC), Nigeria's ruling political party, has recently witnessed a significant development with the resignation of its chairman. This unexpected move has sent shockwaves through the political landscape, raising questions about the future direction of the party and its impact on the country's political landscape. In this article, we will delve into the reasons behind the resignation and explore the potential implications for the APC.

### The resignation

On Sunday night, 16th July, 2023, the chairman of the APC, Senator Abdullahi Adamu, announced his resignation from the position. This decision came as a surprise to many, as [name] had been at the helm of the party for several years, overseeing its growth and electoral successes. The resignation letter cited personal reasons

and the need to focus on other aspects of life as the primary motivations behind the move.

Reasons for resignation While the resignation letter may have provided a glimpse into the chairman's personal motivations, it is essential to consider the broader context that may have influenced this decision. One key factor is the internal power struggle within the APC. Factionalism and infighting have plagued the party in recent years, with different power blocs vying for control and influence. This internal strife has hindered the party's ability to effectively govern and deliver on its promises.

Another factor that may have contributed to the chairman's resignation is the declining popularity of the APC among Nigerians. The party, which came into power in 2015 with promises of change and progress, has faced criticism for its handling of various issues, including security challenges, economic downturns,

and social unrest. The chairman's departure could be seen as an acknowledgment of the party's waning public support and an attempt to revitalize its image.

### Implications for the APC

The resignation of the APC chairman has significant implications for the party's future. Firstly, it creates a leadership vacuum that needs to be filled promptly. The party will have to engage in a process of selecting a new chairman who can unite the various factions and steer the party towards a more cohesive and effective direction. This selection process will be crucial in determining the party's ability to regain public trust and maintain its position as a dominant political force.

Secondly, the resignation may serve as a wake-up call for the APC to address its internal challenges. The party must address the factionalism and infighting that have hindered its progress. This could involve a pro-

cess of introspection, internal reforms, and a renewed commitment to the party's founding principles. Only by addressing these issues can the APC hope to regain the confidence of the Nigerian people and secure electoral victories in the future.

Lastly, the resignation may have wider implications for Nigeria's political landscape. The APC has been the ruling party since 2015, and any internal turmoil within the party could have ripple effects on the country's governance. The opposition parties may see this as an opportunity to capitalize on the APC's weaknesses and gain ground in the political arena. The resignation, therefore, presents an opportunity for the opposition to reposition themselves and challenge the ruling party's dominance.

The resignation of the APC chairman marks a significant turning point for the party. It highlights the internal challenges and declining popularity that the APC must address to remain

a formidable force in Nigerian politics. The selection of a new chairman and subsequent internal reforms will be crucial in determining the party's future trajectory. Additionally, the resignation may have wider implications for Nigeria's political landscape, potentially reshaping the balance of power between the ruling party and the opposition. Only time will tell how the APC responds to this pivotal moment in its history.



Emmanuel Samuel



# States' non-remittance of contributions to PenCom

Recent reports indicate that many states in the federation are yet to remit the pension contributions of their respective workers under the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). Sadly, most of them are now battling to pay a backlog of pension arrears amounting to hundreds of billions of naira. While some of the affected states have enacted the pension law in their respective domains, a few have proposed pension laws which are going through the legislative process.

However, findings reveal that due to the inability to contribute both the employees' and employers' remittances into the Retirement Savings Accounts (RSAs) of workers, many of the states are now in dire need of over N400 billion to offset all pension arrears. The most offensive aspect of the situation is that some states already owe workers' pension arrears of between 1 to 13 years.

To address and eliminate the problems associated with such schemes in the country, the federal government enacted into law the Pension Reform Act No 2 of

2004. Under the Act (Contributory Pension Scheme), an employee compulsorily pays a fraction of his/her monthly salary into the scheme. On 1st July 2014, then President Goodluck Jonathan signed into law, the new Pension Reform Act 2014. It repealed the Pension Reform Act of 2004 and clearly states that any interests, profits, dividends, investments, and other income accruable to pension funds or assets are not taxable.

However, checks have revealed that the Pension Reforms Act (PRA) 2014, which originally applied to any employee in public service of the federation, Federal Capital Territory, states, local governments and the private sector when it was in the bill stage, was tampered with. Before being passed into law, state governors mobilised representatives of their states in both chambers of the National Assembly to remove employees of states and local governments from the bill before it was passed into law.

The above makes it difficult for the affected states to be charged for contravening the PRA 2014, which requires that employees should remit eight per cent of their monthly salaries as monthly pension contributions. Their employers were expected to add 10 per cent, thereby making 18 per cent joint monthly pension contributions that are expected to be remitted into the Retirement Savings Account (RSA) of the workers, not later than a week after their salaries have been paid. The non-remittance of workers' pension contributory deductions is worrisome as the future plans of workers are being subjected to uncertainty by some employers. This undoubtedly is impacting negatively on the growth of the employees' RSAs.

We call on the employers including states that have withdrawn the employees' contribution from their respective salaries, and have failed to remit the same into their RSAs, thereby shortchanging the workers, to promptly do so. Failure to do these contradicts the provisions of the PRA 2014 which state in Section 11 subsection 3(b) that "the employer shall not later than seven working days from the day the employee is paid his salary remit an amount comprising the employee's contribution under paragraph (a) of this subsection and the employer's contribution to the Pension Fund Custodian specified by the Pension Fund Administrator of the employee."

We urge the states that are yet to join the CPS to speed up the process of domesticating the PRA 2014 in their respective state laws for easy transition to the new scheme. We call on the Centre for Pension Right Advocacy (CPRA) and the unions in the public sector to rise to the plight of the workers by compelling the defaulting state governments to remit the monthly pension contributions of their employees promptly as non-remittance of pension funds is a crime against the rights and privileges of Nigerian labourers in all sectors.

We urge the federal government to emulate other countries like South Africa and Ghana where workers' pensions and gratuity are paid promptly within 15 days after retirement from service. This is unlike what obtains in Nigeria where retirees must wait for more than twelve months to access part of their pension.

We call on the National Assembly to amend the National Pension Act to allow retirees to access up to 80 per cent of their savings after retirement. The National Assembly Committee on Pension should be alive to its responsibilities in oversight functions to states in making sure that workers deductions are promptly paid to CPS.



**We urge the federal government to emulate other countries like South Africa and Ghana where workers' pensions and gratuity are paid promptly within 15 days after retirement from service. This is unlike what obtains in Nigeria where retirees must wait for more than twelve months to access part of their pension**



## Cartoons from our Archives



626-DTN-1989-04-01-006



## Words on Marble



**Aminu Kano**

: "The road to freedom is full of thorns and fire..."



**Chimamanda Adichie:**

Funmilayo Ransom-Kuti: "As for the charges against me, I am unconcerned. I am beyond their timid lying morality and so I am beyond caring."



**Kwame Nkrumah:**

"Action without thought is empty; Thought without action is blind" in food."



# Mmesoma apologises for her misconduct before House C'ttee

TOM OKPE,  
ABUJA

Controversial 19-year-old candidate in the 2023 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), Mmesoma Ejikeme, accused by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, (JAMB) of result forgery, has apologized to the examination body for her action.

The candidate yesterday read an apology letter during an investigative hearing by the House of Representatives Ad hoc Committee to probe the allegation. The Committee was headed by Rep. Sada Soli.

Present at the meeting was the JAMB Registrar, Professor Isiaka Oloyede.

Mmesoma, in company with her parents and lawyer, pleaded for leniency as she promised such would not happen again.

She said that she had never been involved in examination malpractice all her life, and promised to be a better person.

She begged that justice be tampered with mercy concerning the three-year ban imposed on her.

Her letter reads: "Permit

me to use this medium to tender this letter of apology with a heavy heart.

"I deeply and sincerely admit that I ignorantly got my JAMB result from another portal which was not JAMB portal.

"In the course of this, I lambasted JAMB solidly standing my ground that I obtained my result from JAMB portal. I apologize for all the apportioned blame and all the pain I have caused. "I want to emphasize that ignorance played a significant role in my misguided action. I learnt a clear understanding of the far-reaching consequences and the impact my actions would have.

"Words cannot adequately describe the depths of pain I feel for letting you down. This is the first time in my life in my academic studies that I would be accused of any form of misbehaviour, not to talk of forgery.

"It's not in my character and personality, therefore I plead for leniency and forgiveness for my misconduct. I want to emphasize my commitment to making amends."

Professor Oloyede said it was impossible to get into

JAMB's system as the exams body did not have any cloud storage.

He said the JAMB system has never been compromised since he assumed office six-and-a-half years ago emphasizing that JAMB could not be held responsible anytime people forge documents that have to do with the examination body.

"We do not apply cloud storage at all. Our results are not on any cloud storage. Our systems are fool-proof. Nobody has ever been able

to penetrate our systems. It takes a lot of experts and money to achieve this," he stated.

He revealed that JAMB had 19 pieces of evidence that proved that Mmesoma was lying about her result, saying that the girl's QR code was for a student who sat for the exam in 2021 in Osun State.

The Registrar also said she faked and superimposed her result on the result of the girl from Osun.

He also said she likely gave her password to

somebody else because her account was accessed from eight different Computer Based Test Centers in the country which, he said, are under investigation.

He added that the Centre where she registered had been suspended, disclosing that 109 persons committed similar offences across the country.

"In Akure, four persons have been remanded for similar offences by the Akure High Court and will be in custody till November when their matter will come up.

"JAMB was aware of an app to generate fake JAMB results and investigating it right now.

"There was an article in a newspaper which claimed it can help candidates increase their score.

It's possible she got in touch with the contact on the article which led to the unfortunate development of the forgery," he added.

The chairman of the Committee, Rep. Soli declared that further investigation on the candidate will be done in camera.



Ag. Inspector General of Police,

## Bauchi records 1,501 SGBV cases in six months

SAMUEL LUKA,  
BAUCHI

Bauchi state has recorded no less than 1,501 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) cases within the first half of this year.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Ahmed Garba, who is the Gender Officer of the State Police Command, made this known during a one-day training workshop on SGBV organized by the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Bauchi State chapter, and held at the NUJ Secretariat, Bauchi yesterday.

Earlier, in his remarks, Bauchi State Commissioner of Police (CP), Auwal Musa Muhammad assured of the readiness of the Command to actively collaborate with stakeholders to tackle the menace of SGBV in the state.

"Gender-based violence is a serious anomaly being perpetuated by some 'idiots' in the society," the CP said.

"As far as I am concerned, their mental faculties must be checked because they are behaving like animals," he remarked.

CP Muhammad assured that the Command was ready to explore all avenues to tackle SGBV in the state, adding that the police will, on its part, support the effort of the First Lady of Bauchi state, Hajija Aisha Bala Mohammed

in ensuring the prosecution of offenders.

"We will try as much as possible to sensitize and professionalize our men to do their work so that we get constituted," he further said.

The CP, who commended NAWOJ for organizing the training, described it as a good step in the right direction and urged journalists to use their platforms to sensitize women on SGBV.

In her welcome remark, the Chairperson, NAWOJ in the state, Mrs Rashida Yusuf Mohammed, appreciated the CP and other stakeholders for attending the training despite their tight schedules.

She stated that 25 journalists drawn from various media organizations in the state attended the training.

"We are here as women journalists to see how we can equip ourselves towards addressing cases of SGBV which have become rampant in our society," the chairperson said.

She urged participants to put to use all they learnt in the training to ensure that the state in particular and the country as a whole is rid of SGBV.

Also speaking, Mrs Esther Patrick, the Gender Officer of the State Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Development, said a dashboard had been introduced in the ministry for proper documentation of cases of SGBV.

## Six more suspected IPOB members nabbed in Delta

NOSA ÀKEŊZUA,  
ASABA

Palpable fear has heightened in some communities in Delta State, especially Asaba, the state capital, and Okpanam, where suspected members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) are said to reside.

The situation followed the alleged killing of two suspected IPOB members by combined troops of 63

Brigade Nigerian Army, Nigeria Police and operatives of Department of State Services (DSS) on Tuesday.

The troops after neutralizing both suspects, also arrested five suspected members of the group in Okpanam community.

But yesterday, reports spoke of the arrest of six others in the state.

It was gathered that though security operatives have been deployed all over the state, especially Asaba and its environs, fear of the

unknown has spread across the 25 Local Government Area of the State.

At nightfall, hundreds of residents of Asaba and environs now stay in the comfort and relative safety of their rooms till the following day before venturing out.

The Director, Army Public Relations, Brig General Onyema Nwachukwu had said, in a statement signed and made available to journalists that the "criminals" were killed in a fierce encounter that took place on Monday

at Fuji Junction general area, in the northern axis of Obodogwugwu community, Okpanam.

Meanwhile, Police Public Relations Officer in Delta State Police Command, Bright Edefe confirmed that six persons were in the early hours of yesterday arrested by the joint troops, adding that the suspects were currently being detained for further investigation.

According to him, the troops also recovered six Ak 47 rifles and cartridges.

## Edo govt talks tough, warns cultists, others

TITUS AKHIGBE,  
BENIN

Chief of Staff to Edo State Governor, Hon Osaigbovo Iyoha has said the Godwin Obaseki administration will flush out cultism and cult-related activities in all parts of the state.

To this end, he said, the government would not be blackmailed or intimidated by any group.

Reacting to a viral audio attack on him and the clampdown on suspected cultists in their hideouts, Iyoha said, with support from security agencies, cultism would become history in the state,

adding that the strategy being deployed would be extended to tertiary institutions in the state.

It was reliably gathered that Iyoha was instrumental to the recent raid on several hideouts of different cult groups in parts of Benin City, including Ekosodin, largely populated by students, where suspected cultists always run to hide after committing crime and a hotel in Oluku said to be owned by a popular politician and businessman, which was allegedly being used by a particular cult group.

The Chief of Staff told journalists: "Those attacking me

are the ones trying to hide and they are becoming tired of hiding because they can no longer be accommodated by their benefactors.

"We learnt that they killed somebody again last night but that will not deter us. We are going to flush them out this time; we are ready to confront them, I am personally involved in it. We already have a team that understands these cultists and they have also resolved that they are taking their hands off cultism."

Iyoha said those ready to quit cultism would be profiled along with their biometrics.

It would be recalled that

few days ago, the Secretary to State Government (SSG), Osarodion Ogie, in a statement, warned against violence and terror in the state.

Part of the statement read: "The State Government has taken actions to quell the violence and irresponsible acts even as suspects have been apprehended and taken into custody.

"We stress without equivocation that no matter the campaign of terror, resort to violence and evil ploy to blackmail and tarnish the image of government, the State will stop at nothing and spare no expense in fishing out any perpetrator of these criminal activities.



# Edo govt talks tough, warns cultists, others

TITUS AKHIGBE,  
Benin



Chief of Staff to Edo State Governor, Hon Osaigbovo Iyoha has said the Godwin Obaseki administra-

tion will flush out cultism and cult-related activities in all parts of the state.

To this end, he said, the government would not be blackmailed or intimidated by any group.

Reacting to a viral audio attack on him and the clampdown on suspected cultists in their hideouts, Iyoha said, with support from security agencies, cultism would become history in the state, adding that the strategy being deployed would be extended to tertiary institutions in the state.

It was reliably gathered that Iyoha was instrumental to

the recent raid on several hideouts of different cult groups in parts of Benin City, including Ekosodin, largely populated by students, where suspected cultists always run to hide after committing crime and a hotel in Oluku said to be owned by a popular politician and businessman, which was allegedly being used by a particular cult group.

The Chief of Staff told journalists: "Those attacking me are the ones trying to hide and they are becoming tired of hiding because they can no longer be accommodated by their benefactors.

"We learnt that they killed

somebody again last night but that will not deter us. We are going to flush them out this time; we are ready to confront them, I am personally involved in it. We already have a team that understands these cultists and they have also resolved that they are taking their hands off cultism."

Iyoha said those ready to quit cultism would be profiled along with their biometrics.

It would be recalled that few days ago, the Secretary to State Government (SSG), Osarodion Ogie, in a statement, warned against violence and terror in the state.

Part of the statement read:

"The State Government has taken actions to quell the violence and irresponsible acts even as suspects have been apprehended and taken into custody.

"We stress without equivocation that no matter the campaign of terror, resort to violence and evil ploy to blackmail and tarnish the image of government, the State will stop at nothing and spare no expense in fishing out any perpetrator of these criminal activities.

The State Government therefore advises parents and guardians to restrain their children and wards from engaging in actions that imperil the lives of others, which is intended to create a sense of insecurity in the State. No one will be spared, and we will ensure that the long arm of the law catches up with anyone found culpable in these dastardly acts."

## FCTA raids parking zones occupied by crime syndicates

Ukpono Ukpong

Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) yesterday raided and dislodged unapproved parking

zones harbouring the notorious 'one-chance' syndicates and beggars in the city.

The joint taskforce, comprising security agencies and officials of the Directorate of Road Traffic Services (DRTS), Abuja

Environmental Protection Board (AEPB), Social Development Secretariat (SDS) as well as other relevant agencies in the FCT, also confiscated vehicles from different locations within the

city centre- ranging from Bannex junction, Federal Secretariat and environs, for various traffic violations.

Similarly, the team also moved to address some environmental nuisances within the Bannex area, which were hitherto allegedly used by suspected miscreants as hideout to launch attacks on unsuspecting pedestrians traversing the area at night-time.

Speaking during the exercise, Secretary, Command and Control Centre, FCTA, Mr. Peter Olumuji, said following receipt of credible intelligence from relevant security and paramilitary agencies, the team dislodged the activities of 'one-chance' syndicates who, most times, use unpainted taxis and park in locations that are not earmarked for parking of vehicles in the city.

Olumuji noted that the raid was part of a holistic operation to ensure that residents of Abuja can move freely at every point in time as well as curb the menace of 'one-chance' and street begging.

According to him: "The enforcement team is all out to ensure that we raid any location that harbours indiscriminate parking, as we have been receiving reports about 'one-chance', and the security agencies with us have been giving us credible

intelligence on this issue. That's why we have to go round the city and dislodge these unapproved parking zones.

"And the aspect of the nuisance beggars do, they can also be used as a platform to gather information for criminal activities and they are also public nuisance within the city centre.

"We had started this operation for the past few weeks now, and we are sustaining it, because the feeders that we have been getting from members of the public show that they are appreciating the efforts of the FCT Administration in carrying out the operation, and we are not resting on it."

Similarly, Deputy Director, Operations, DRTS, Deborah Osho, disclosed that the team impounded no fewer than 15 vehicles from different locations within the city centre, for various traffic rule violations, including vehicles that are rickety and not supposed to be on the road.

She noted that most of the illegal parks constitute serious traffic obstructions in the city as the operators divide and occupy major road corridors including pedestrian ways, thereby forcing other motorists and road users to go slow in order to pass.

## Court awards N6m to columnist

Victory came for a bank customer, Azuka Onwuka, as a Federal High Court sitting in Lagos, presided over by Justice Yellim Bogoro, awarded him the sum of N3 million as damages against the United Bank for Africa (UBA) in a privacy rights case brought against the bank.

Not done, the court also awarded another N3 million against the bank as cost of litigation.

Onwuka is a columnist.

The plaintiff/applicant had sued the bank for unilateral opening of a current account number 1003293912 for and in the name of the applicant and purportedly operating same for him without his consent.

He claimed that the bank's action constituted violations of his data privacy -an aspect of the fundamental right to privacy enshrined and protected under Section 37 of

the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)

Delivering judgment, the court held that the opening of an account in Onwuka's name without his consent was a breach of the banker-customer relationship and his right to privacy.

Court processes filed before the court by Onwuka's lead counsel, Chijioko Okoli (SAN), showed that the plaintiff prayed the court to, among others:

"A DECLARATION that the Respondent's unilateral opening of a current account number 1003293912 for and in the name of the Applicant and purportedly operating same for him notwithstanding the absence of any consent, constitute violations of his data privacy which is an aspect of the fundamental right to privacy enshrined and protected under Section 37 of

the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

“Delivering judgment, the court held that the opening of an account in Onwuka's name without his consent was a breach of the banker-customer relationship and his right to privacy.”

”





# Sack DSS DG Bichi now, if you desire end to insecurity, Northern group urges Tinubu

BY TOM GARBA,  
Yola

A group, Concerned Northern Forum, has expressed growing concern over what it described as defiance of court order by the Department of State Services (DSS).

This is contained in a statement signed by the Chairman of the forum, Mohammed Danlami and made available to newsmen.

Danlami said the group is "genuinely worried and concerned" that a security agency as crucial and central to the nation's security and safety is refusing to obey to court orders.

He noted: "The ideal situation is to find that the DSS are a friend of the court and are working hand in hand to

maintain law and order, but the contrary is what is obtainable in this case.

"We have a leadership of the service that has refused to obey court orders. It has continued to keep people in detention even when the court says otherwise. Nnamdi Kanu, Godwin Emezie, Abdulrasheed Bawa, Aminu Yaro Dogara are a few examples of such. This is direct defiance of court order. This must not continue and cannot be tolerated

"The DSS is failing in providing synergy between the security agencies that's why the security situation in the country is going from bad to worse.

"The poor supply of intelligence has led to the failure of taming the various security challenges the country is bedeviled with. The DSS that is supposed to be better than even

ordinary Nigerians. The DSS has almost lost to be top on chain of intelligence supply has lost its credibility, value under Bichi and is acting as if it's not a secret service but regular Police. They use the social media than even ordinary Nigerians. The DSS has almost lost its asset of been secretive and it's now domesticated to the knowledge of the public. This has contributed to the deterioration of security.

"We fear and consequently caution President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to act now or face a security situation even worse than that of his predecessor. Frankly speaking, you cannot have as the head of your top security agency a man that cannot keep his family in check. Age is really clamping down on him and he needs to rest. The job is tedious, very hectic, rough and demanding, and therefore requires a

younger, more active, agile and vibrant fellow.

"With the way and manner, the DSS boss is determined to keep his job under this new administration, Nigerians will not be shocked if we wake up one day and read 'DSS arrests former President Buhari'.

"For a better Nigeria and to keep to the promise of renewed hope, we appeal to President Tinubu to sack the DG DSS, Yusuf Magaji Bichi, because DSS under him is nothing to write home about and advisably implement a total overhaul on the Department of State Services."



## Bauchi gov to set up mobile courts

SAMUEL LUKA,  
Bauchi

Disturbed by the criminal activities of Sara-suka thugs, an infamous band of social miscreants, Bauchi State Government, in collaboration with the state police command, has perfected plans to establish mobile courts to prosecute perpetrators of various crimes in the state.

The measure, Daily Times gathered, was part of the state Government's commitment to addressing the prevalence of youth restiveness especially thuggery which is more pronounced within Bauchi metropolis.

State Governor Bala Mohammed gave the hint while receiving the newly-posted State Commissioner of Police (CP), Musa Muhammad Auwal at Government House.

Mohammed told the CP that the activities of criminals were gradually resurfacing, hence the need to take effective action to keep the citizens safe.

The Governor said his administration would equally introduce empowerment

programmes that will engage unemployed youths in useful ventures.

Earlier speaking, the newly posted Police Commissioner, Auwal acknowledged the security challenges, adding that measures are being taken by the command to protect residents against the notorious activities of thugs and other criminally-minded persons.

The CP said he has since assumption of office, visited and solicited support from traditional leaders and heads of sister security agencies in a bid to strengthen partnership to fight criminality. Show quoted text



## Rector warns students against indecent conduct

ÑOSA ÀKEÑZUA,  
Asaba



Rector, Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe-Oghara, Professor Emmanuel Ufuophu-Biri, has warned students of the institution against prostitution, indecent dressing, hooliganism, behaviours suggestive of eroticism, consumption of hard drugs and substances, examination malpractice, deviance and criminality.

A statement signed personally by the Rector, stated that the management and staff of the Polytechnic "stand in parentis loco" for the students and would not tolerate any behaviour or action with capability or potential to interfere negatively with the well-being or future of the students as well as the image of the Polytechnic.

The Rector disclosed that a few students who engaged in shameful acts of public display of eroticism had been sanctioned and would face disciplinary action under the matriculation oath to which they subscribed.

Professor Ufuophu-Biri restated that the institution's policy on indecent dressing, indecent behaviour, prostitution, gangsterism and examination malpractice remained in force.

He added that management would not hesitate to sanction any erring student, adding that the authorities had banned the consumption of alcohol on campus.

The Rector pointed out: "Management is not unaware of the alarming and increasing rate of young people consuming addictive substances and hard drugs in society. However, students of the Polytechnic should not follow the crowd to engage in such acts damaging to their mental wellbeing and capable of ruining their academic journey in the Polytechnic."

He disclosed that any student suspected to have smoked cannabis or induced his/herself with hard drugs would be apprehended and subjected to medical examination and, if found guilty, would face disciplinary action.



# Army stresses value of constant training, research

SAKA BOLAJI  
Minna



Commander, Doctrine and Training Command of the Nigerian Army, Major General Kelvin O. Aligbe, has explained that continuous training and research by the Army are important tools in combating the prevailing security challenges besetting the country.

He stated that insecurity was brought about by the subversive activities of armed bandits, insurgents, and other criminal elements in the country.

Major General Aligbe emphasized that the success and survival of any organization, especially security outfits all over the world, lie in the training, research, and development of its personnel, especially in view of the prevailing security challenges bedeviling the country.

He made these declarations when he declared open the Combined Mid-Year Course

Appraisal, Curriculum Harmonization Workshop, and Research Development Conference 2023 of TRADOC in Minna, Niger State capital.

He said, "The theme for this year's workshop, 'Enhancing Research and Development Capacity Building in the Nigerian Army and Division Training Schools to Contain Prevailing Security Challenges', is well thought-out because the Nigerian Army is currently grappling with the very disturbing activities of terrorists across the country."

Aligbe, who was represented by the Chief of Training and Doctrine Command, Maj. Gen. Jamiu A. Jimoh, said the conference would bridge the gaps in the Nigerian Army's research and development drive and its curriculum, which, he said, needs to undergo regular harmonization.

The Army top brass

stressed, "To efficiently cope with the current security challenges, development in the field of training and research is a must," highlighting that the conference would provide an opportunity for participants to assess recent developments and gauge viable efforts in mitigating security challenges.

He pointed out that the training was meant to produce troops who were "pro-actively seeking out any adversaries, employing the offensive capability of a well-trained, highly motivated, and hard-hitting force to strike decisively with speed and enormous backup."

He charged the participants to show keen interest and take advantage of the opportunity to broaden their knowledge, enabling them to broaden the knowledge of the personnel through their various training establishments.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Chief of Research and Development, TRADOC, Maj. Gen. Shuaibu Ibrahim said research and development remain the driving force for the Nigerian Army.

He also commended the Commander for the opportunity to organize the conference and urged participants to listen attentively to derive maximum benefits from the training.

challenge by peacefully protesting on the streets of Nigerian cities and townships against these sets of harsh economic policies which offend a plethora of fundamental rights provisions enshrined in the Constitution of Nigeria.

"HURIWA is also accusing President Ahmed Bola Tinubu of violating Section 15 (5) which provides thus: "The State shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power". And 16 (2) which states that: "The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring: (a) the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development.

(b) that the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good.

(c) that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the

# Bago to resolve Doko land dispute

SAKA BOLAJI  
Minna

Niger State Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago has promised to find a lasting solution to the land dispute among the people of Doko community which has lingered for years and claimed several lives and property.

He made the promise when he received a delegation from the Public Claimants Commission (PCC), led by its Federal Commissioner, Barrister Bala Mohammed at Government House, Minna.

Governor Bago who noted with dismay, the havoc caused as a result of the farmland dispute, said his administration will nip it on the bud.

On the concerns raised about the activities of the State Transport Management Agency (NSTMA), the Governor urged the agency and relevant agencies under Ministry of Transport to avoid conflict as his government will not condone insubordination and indiscipline.

Speaking on the issue of giving waiver on government land, the Governor said the era of land waiver is gone as he will strengthen land administration in the state and use it for the common good of the people.

He commended the Judiciary and Nigeria Police for supporting the PCC in carrying out its national assignment.

The Governor assured that all the issues raised will be given quick and needed attention and that his administration will

ensure strong collaboration with all Federal establishments in the state.

Earlier, leader of the delegation and Federal Commissioner, PCC, Barrister Mohammed, had said that the visit was to congratulate the Governor on assumption of office and to identify with the administration on areas of collaboration.

The Federal Commissioner drew the Governor's attention to some disturbing issues such as the farmland dispute in Doko, high-handedness of staff of NSTMA, plight of pensioners, leadership tussle leading to unauthorized allocation of shops at the Kure Ultra-Modern Market, Minna, and the rehabilitation of link road to the market which, he said, the Commission has received many complaints on.

He said the Commission which serves as an ombudsman is willing to partner with the present administration for effective governance.

The Federal Commissioner said PCC now has a police detachment as its enforcement unit, explaining that the Judiciary has also allocated two courts to hear cases coming from the commission.

While commending the Governor for his effort towards supporting the National Examination Council (NECO), Barrister Mohammed requested the Governor to ensure deliberate synergy with all Federal Government establishments in the state for the benefit of the people of the state.

# HURIWA berates FG over fuel price hike

Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has condemned the latest fuel price hike, saying Nigerians will eat grass soon.

In a statement by its National Coordinator, Emmanuel Onwubiko, HURIWA described the hike as "outrageous", also "toxic, despicable and absolutely intolerable."

The body said: "The latest outrageous hike in the pump price of fuel has been condemned as toxic, despicable and absolutely intolerable, just as Civil Rights group, HURIWA predicted that Nigerians will start eating grass as edible due to economic hardship, if they do not publicly protest peacefully

and demand immediate halt to this heartless incessant hike in price of petrol.

"A visit by HURIWA to an NNPC filling station in the Central area of Abuja confirmed that the fuel price has now been adjusted from N539 to N617 per litre even as another customer who confirmed this development simply said, "It is true, I just bought at N617 per litre."

"HURIWA asserted that the immediate reason could not be ascertained but it is not unconnected to the recent projections by oil marketers that fuel price will hit N700 per litre soon.

"HURIWA stated that unless and until Nigerians become active citizens and embrace the constitutional

means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group;".

"HURIWA said: "The silence of Nigerians in the face of cocktails of toxic and elitist economic measures by the newly inaugurated President Ahmed Bola Tinubu will inevitably lead the masses to 'economic Golgotha' meaning that the next best meals Nigerians will resort to so as to survive the devastating and excruciating absolute poverty is to eat grass like goats or cows.

"HURIWA condemns the current administration for

continuously inflicting economic hardship on Nigerians through many thoughtless and anti-poor policies whereas the salaries of public office holders have been reviewed upwards and the National Assembly has just been allocated N110 billion as palliatives to cushion the effects of the withdrawal of fuel subsidy whereas over 130 million multidimensionally poor Nigerian households are abandoned to a cruel fate of constant upward reviews of the pump price of fuel which inevitably affects the cost of foodstuffs and leads to spiraling inflationary trends."





## Ukraine war: Russia strikes Ukraine grain after ending sea deal

Russian missile attacks on Ukraine's Black Sea coast have destroyed 60,000 tonnes of grain and damaged storage infrastructure, officials say.

Agriculture Minister Mykola Solskyi said a "considerable amount" of export infrastructure was out of operation.

Russia has pulled out of a deal guaranteeing safe passage for exports across the Black Sea.

Later on Wednesday Russia's President Putin accused the West of using the grain deal as "political blackmail".

He added he would consider rejoining the international agreement, in place since last summer, only "if all principles under which Russia agreed to participate in the deal are fully taken into account and fulfilled".

His comments came shortly after Russia's defence ministry declared that from midnight on Wednesday night (21:00 GMT), any ships heading to Ukrainian ports would be viewed as potential carriers of military cargo and party to the conflict.

Some north-western and south-eastern areas of the Black Sea would be temporarily dangerous for shipping, it added.

Russia began targeting Ukraine's ports in the early hours of Tuesday within hours of its withdrawal from the grain deal.

More strikes followed overnight into Wednesday, targeting grain terminals and port infrastructure in Odesa and further down the Black Sea coast in Chornomorsk, two of



the three ports that were included in the export deal.

At least 12 civilians, including a nine-year-old boy, were wounded during the attacks, which also caused damage to blocks of flats, military officials said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said each missile strike was a blow not just to Ukraine, but to "everyone in the world striving for a normal and safe life".

France and Germany also condemned the attack. Germany Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said that by covering Odesa with a hail of bombs, Russian President Vladimir Putin was robbing the world of any hope of Ukrainian grain and "hitting the world's poorest".

The infrastructure ministry published a series of photos showing damage to silos and other grain facilities. Officials said there had been damage to wharves and res-

ervoirs, but it was international and Ukrainian traders that had suffered the most.

Russian war commentators said the damage proved that Kyiv was unable to shoot down the majority of Russian missiles and drones.

Officials said the co-ordinated attack involved Kalibr cruise missiles, Onyx supersonic and Kh-22 anti-ship missiles as well as kamikaze drones, fired from the Black Sea, Crimea and southern Russia. Although 37 Russian missiles and drones were shot down, a number did penetrate Ukrainian defences, they said.

Russia had called its initial attack on Odesa a "mass revenge strike" for an attack on the Russian-built bridge over the Kerch strait linking occupied Crimea to Russia.

Seaborne drones were blamed for Monday's bridge strike that knocked out a section of bridge and killed a Russian couple.

## Four arrested over €1.6m Celtic coin theft



Four people have been arrested in Germany over the theft of a hoard of Celtic gold coins worth about €1.6m (£1.4m).

Hundreds of coins were taken from a museum in Manching, Bavaria, during a night raid in November.

Many of them dated from around the 1st Century BC.

The authorities say there is "overwhelming evidence" in the case and that investigations are continuing. More details are expected on Thursday.

That includes whether part of the horde of coins has been recovered.

The arrests were made on Tuesday during a search operation in the northern state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Bavaria's interior minister, Joachim Herrmann, said the suspects were "professional burglars".

"The mission continues," Ch Insp Ludwig Waldinger from the Bavarian police told the Bild newspaper.

"We are searching properties in several federal states."

Gold coins worth €1.6m stolen in nine-minute heist from German museum

The coins were unearthed during a 1999 archaeological dig

near Manching - considered to be the biggest discovery of Celtic gold in the 20th Century. They had been on display since 2006.

Police at the time of their theft suspected that those involved sabotaged the museum's alarm system. Just before the break-in, nearby internet cables were cut, causing widespread outages.

This meant the alarm system was not triggered when a door was pried open, although it was able to record when the robbery, which lasted less than 10 minutes, took place.

The authorities had been exploring whether the theft involved organised crime and was linked to previous raids.

In 2017, a hefty gold coin weighing 100kg was snatched from a Berlin museum. Two years later, thieves took 21 pieces of jewellery and other valuables in a dramatic diamond heist at Dresden's Green Vault museum that was caught on CCTV.

The loss of the coins devastated the museum and the wider community.

Rupert Gebhard, head of collections at the State Archaeological Collection in Munich, said it felt "like losing an old friend".

## Tobias Ellwood: Afghan women slate UK MP's video praising 'country transformed'

Afghan women have derided a British Conservative MP for being naïve after he referred to the country as peaceful and "transformed", but barely mentioned human rights following a recent visit.

In a widely criticised video, Tobias Ellwood urged the UK to re-engage with the country and reopen its embassy.

The Taliban welcomed his remarks - seen as a rare PR coup for their government, which no country recognises.

Since retaking power 2021, the Taliban have restricted many Afghans' rights.

There has been global condemnation of their mistreatment of women in particular.

On Wednesday Afghan women held a rare protest against the Taliban's decision to shut female beauty parlours and salons.

"The British politician says that he is optimistic and he's happy about the situation in Afghanistan... Today we went on the street to ask for our rights and they try to stop us and beat us. You have seen the videos," said one of the women taking part in the protest in Kabul.

Another woman asked if Mr Ellwood knew that people in the country were "hungry and unhappy".

"There's no suicide attacks any more, but poverty is at its peak, businesses are collapsing," she said.



Mr Ellwood, the chairman of Parliament's defence select committee, visited Afghanistan with the Halo Trust, a de-mining organisation.

Earlier this week, he tweeted and shared a video following his trip, which prompted some to compare it to a promotional video.

"It's about time you prepare to move in with your Taliban brothers. After all, it's safe and thriving," Afghan activist Nilofar Ayoubi said on Twitter.

In his video, Mr Ellwood said security in Afghanistan had "vastly improved" since the Taliban returned to power, and suggested the West encourage the uptake of women's rights "incrementally".

"After Nato's dramatic depar-

ture, should the West now engage with the Taliban? You quickly appreciate this war-weary nation is for the moment accepting a more authoritarian leadership in exchange for stability," he said.

The video contains one reference to women and girls at the end. The MP told the BBC "we need to engage more directly, more robustly" with the Taliban.

Interviewer Yalda Hakim, herself an Afghan, had asked him: "Do you think it sends a certain message when it comes to things like human rights, women's rights, if you just say, 'They've got solar panels now, they've got less violence and therefore we should open up our embassy and be back in the country?'"

## US soldier who crossed into North Korea has history of assault and detention

New details have emerged about a US soldier who crossed into North Korea on Tuesday - but his exact whereabouts remain a mystery since the secretive country hasn't said a word about the incident.

Court documents showed that Private Travis King, believed to be the first US soldier to cross into North Korea since 1982, had a history of assault, was facing disciplinary action over his conduct and was meant to go back to the US the day before the incident. An army official told CNN the private was set to be administratively separated from the US Army.

Details about how exactly King ended up on the North Korean side of the border remain unclear. King had been on a tour of a border area as a civilian when he crossed the demarcation line.

His motive is also a mystery. King's mother, Claudine Gates, told ABC she was "shocked" after being told by the US Army that her son had crossed into North Korea.

"I can't see Travis doing anything like that," Gates told ABC, adding that she heard from her son several days ago and he told

her that he'd be returning to his base in Fort Bliss.

The US has been actively reaching out to North Korea to resolve the situation, but it has not yet heard back, a defense official said Wednesday. It is typical of North Korea not to respond to US outreach, the defense official added.

Adm. John Aquilino, who is in charge of US Indo-Pacific Command, said Tuesday that the US has had "no contact at this point" with North Korea in regards to King. Speaking at the Aspen Security Forum on Tuesday, Aquilino said King "made a run across the demilitarized zone in the Joint Security Area, was picked up by the North Koreans, and we've had no contact at this point."

Aquilino added that he has "gotten no reports" that King was a North Korea sympathizer.

The US Army has identified King as a cavalry scout who joined the military in January 2021. US officials did not say how long King had been in South Korea, but at some point he faced disciplinary action for assault and spent about 50 days in a detention facility.



## NGX benchmark index relapses as market cap sheds N5.17bn



### MOTOLANI OSENI

The equities market of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) at the end of mid week trading activities relapsed as market capitalisation declined by N5.17billion.

Specifically, the domestic bourse slipped as the benchmark index closed 0.01 per cent weaker to settle at 63,757.23 points, while market capitalisation shed N5.17bn to close at N34.72trillion.

Gains in MTNN (+1.85%), GTCO (+0.87%) and NB (+4.47%) were offset by selloffs in ZENITHBANK (-1.68%), GEREGU (-10.00%) and ACCESSCORP (-0.60%) keeping the market in the negative terrain.

As a result, the year-to-date (YTD) return slipped to 24.40%, while analysis of yesterday's market activities showed trade turnover settled lower relative to the previous session, with the value of transactions down by 76.45 per cent.

A total of 473.49m shares valued at N10.08billion were exchanged in 7,403 deals. JAPAUFGOLD (-1.23%) led the volume chart with 77.98million units traded while GEREGU (-10.00%) led the value chart in deals worth N4.86billion.

Market breadth closed negative at a 1.22-to-1 ratio with declining issues outnumbering advancing ones. GEREGU (-10.00%) topped 21 others on the laggard's log, while HONYFLOUR (+10.00%) led 17 others on the leader's table.

## Why accident investigation regulation 2019 is being amended –NSIB DG

### CHUKWUEMEKE IWELUNMO

The Director General of Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB), Engr. Akin Olateru, has said the amendments the bureau is trying to implement will help ensure that its regulations is consistent with the Standard and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

In his speech to declare open the stakeholders' consultation on the proposed amendment of the Bureau's Civil Aviation (Investigation of Air Accidents and Incidents) Regulations, 2019 held in Abuja, Olateru said the ICAO Annex 13, which addresses aircraft accident investigation, the evolution of new technologies, and the changes in the industry.

According to him, the changes being proposed include "the provision of the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) establishment Act 2022, which allowed for the transition of the Accident Investigation Bureau Nigeria (AIB-N) to the NSIB, a multi-modal safety investigation agency.

"In view of this, we have made some new inclusions to the previously circulated version of the Bureau's draft regulation."

He pointed out that some of the new inclusions in the draft amended regulation include the provision of Family Assistance to accident victims and their families, Safety Data Collection and Processing System (SDCPS), Competent Authority, Mandatory Reporting System and Voluntary Reporting System.



He, however, recalled that a Notice dated 26 October 2021 was circulated by the Bureau inviting Aviation Stakeholders to make their respective comments and contributions on the Bureau's draft Regulation. This was done in accordance with Regulation 44 of the Bureau's Civil Aviation, 2019.

"Under the umbrella of the new NSIB, we would continue to work tirelessly to ensure the continuous safety of air transport in Nigeria

and replicate this safety standard in other modes of transportation, thereby, ensuring overall transportation safety in the country.

So, I, hereby, implore you the stakeholders, especially the airlines who are the biggest beneficiaries of safety to see this forum as an opportunity to make valuable contributions by making useful input to the amendment of the Bureau's Civil Aviation Regulation 2019," he said.

## AIIG unveiled to drive capital for prosperity, inclusion across Africa

### MOTOLANI OSENI

The Africa Impact Investing Group (AIIG) has recently announced its official launch, at the Africa Impact Summit held in Cape Town, South Africa, marking a significant milestone in mobilizing capital for transformative change and sustainable development across the African continent.

AIIG is an active and vibrant community of stakeholders, including policymakers, investors, entrepreneurs, and civil society, dedicated to driving capital to areas where it can generate the greatest impact while delivering financial returns.

As part of the broader effort to cultivate a robust impact investing ecosystem across Africa, AIIG brings together African National Advisory Boards (NABs) for Impact Investing and Taskforces. By fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange, AIIG aims to create a stronger foundation for impact investing initiatives throughout the region.

AIIG's objectives encompass not only the mobilization of capital but also the promotion of sustainable business models, the advancement of social and environmental causes, and the fostering of partnerships that empower local communities.

Through collaborative efforts, AIIG seeks to channel investments towards key sectors

such as healthcare, education, renewable energy, agriculture, and technology, creating a lasting positive influence on the lives of Africans.

Esteemed NAB leaders from Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia along with Taskforce leaders from Kenya, Senegal, Egypt, Burkina Faso, Mauritius and Cote D'Ivoire will support the creation of enabling policies and regulatory frameworks that enable impact investing to thrive in Africa, by engaging with governments, multilateral institutions, and other stakeholders.

The CEO of Impact Investors Foundation and Nigerian National Advisory Board of Impact Investing, Etemore Glover, in an action-taking joint statement called on stakeholders across the continent to join and support the Africa Impact Investing Group to build a prosperous future for Africa's people, by leveraging the transformative power of private capital for public good.

She said, "Join us in mobilizing various sources of capital from institutional investors, foundations, family offices, and high net worth individuals for impact-focused enterprises across Africa and to build a sustainable world for all."

"Africa offers investors credible investment opportunities," says Elias Masilela, Chairman of DNA Economics and Board Chair of Impact Investing South Africa.

## Agusto & Co. affirms Fidelity Bank's 'A' rating, with a Stable Outlook



### TEMITOPE ADEBAYO

Pan-African credit rating agency, Agusto & Co. has affirmed the 'A' rating assigned to Fidelity Bank Plc and assigned an ESG score of '2' in reflection of the agency's view that environmental, social and governance issues have minimal contribution to the bank's credit rating.

According to a note on the Agusto & Co. website, "The rating reflects Fidelity Bank's improved profitability, strong ability to refinance, adequate capitalisation and low level of impaired credits."

Fidelity Bank is a full-fledged commercial bank operating in Nigeria with over 7.5 million customers serviced across its 250 business offices and digital banking channels.

The bank was recognized as the Best Payment Solutions Provider, Nigeria, 2023 and Best SME Bank, Nigeria, 2022 by the Global Banking and Finance Awards.

The bank had previously also won awards for the "Fastest Growing Bank" and "MSME & Entrepreneurship Financing Bank of the Year" at the 2021 BusinessDay Banks and Other Financial Institutions (BAFI) Awards.



# Oil slumps on expected slowdown in US Demand

JOY OBAKEYE

Oil prices declined on Wednesday over forecasts of a limited draw in United States (US) crude stockpiles that fell short of market expectations, disappointing investors.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$79.53 per barrel, a 0.13 per cent loss from the closing price of \$79.63 a barrel in the previous trading session on Tuesday.

The American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at the same time at \$75.45 per barrel, down 0.28 per cent from the previous session's close of \$75.66 per barrel.

Late Tuesday, the American Petroleum Institute (API) announced an estimated decrease of 797,000 million barrels in US crude oil inventories, against the market expectation of a 2.25-million barrel draw.

The findings show that the country's crude oil demand recovery from pandemic-era lows is taking longer than expected, sending prices lower.

The US Energy Information Administration's (EIA) data on oil stocks will be announced later on Wednesday, and if the stock decline is confirmed to be lower than estimates, prices could fall further.



Daniel Hynes, a commodity strategist at Australia and New Zealand Banking Group, said 'Russia appears to be making good on its promise to reduce supply. Crude loadings are down sharply at three Russian western ports, averaging 1.78 million bpd (barrels per day) in the four weeks to 16 July, according to ship tracking data.'

His comments came after Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said last week that Russian oil companies will decide whether to reduce their oil output or exports in line with the country's planned cutback in oil exports in

August.

Novak reaffirmed on Monday that Moscow will cut oil exports by 2.1 million metric tons for the third quarter, which is roughly equivalent to the pledged cuts of 500,000 bpd.

He added that Russia would cut both pipeline and seaborne oil exports in August.

'This may be aided by Russian oil losing its appeal to price-sensitive buyers. Its crude is becoming more expensive, resulting in India now considering boosting purchases from traditional sources in the Middle East,' Hynes said.

## Akpabio, Abbas, Nweke, for public presentation of Omoniyi Ibieta's book on Cyber Politics

MOTOLANI OSENI

Hussaini Abdu.

The President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio; the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas; a former Minister of Information and Communication, Frank Nweke Jr, are among the dignitaries expected at the Tuesday, July 25 public presentation of a book written by Omoniyi Ibieta, the head of media relations at the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

While Mr Akpabio will serve as the special guest of honour at the event scheduled for the main auditorium of the Communications and Digital Economy Complex, Mboru District, Abuja, Mr Abbas will attend the ceremony as the guest of honour.

Mr Nweke, the Enugu State governorship candidate of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) in the last elections, will chair the event. The book's author was Mr Nweke's special assistant on media during his ministerial term.

Among several other dignitaries expected at the event are the immediate past Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Awwal Gambo (rtd); the Special Adviser to the President on Policy Coordination, Hadiza Bala Usman; the founder of Agora Policy Think Tank and former Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), Waziri Adio; the Executive Director, Centre for Democracy and Development, Idayat Hassan; the Chief Executive Officer, Premium Times Group, Dapo Olorunyomi; the Deputy Dean, School of Postgraduate School, Baze University, Prof Abiodun Adeniyi; and the Executive Director, CARE International, Dr

Published by Premium Times Books, the publishing arm of the Premium Times Group, the book, "Cyber Politics: Social Media, Social Demography and Voting Behaviour in Nigeria", has been described as a classic offering with significant implications for political communication scholarship and practice.

The book has been adjudged to have an interesting universe that uses the Nigerian election to determine how social media communication influences a cocktail of "five electoral totems: voting behaviour, the social and demographic correlation, comparative social media network with respect to the effectiveness of influences, motivation of social media influencers, and stimulus-response likely to enhance the quality of electoral democracy."

Umar Danbatta, a professor and executive vice chairman and chief executive officer of the Nigerian Communications Commission, where the author works, will present the book to the public. Azubuike Ishiekwene, renowned journalist, writer and editor-in-chief of Leadership Newspaper, will review the 460-page book, spread over 12 chapters.

The event will also feature a panel discussion to dissect the interface of politics and social technology, how they shaped the last two general elections in Nigeria, and the possible implications of cyber politics in future elections.

The book has been available in hardback and softback versions in bookstores across the country since 12 June 2023. The electronic copies of the book can also be purchased on online platforms, including Amazon.

## How bevnarables are exploiting the vnarables - FCCPC

GODWIN ANYEBE

The Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Agency (FCCPC) has said that one of the major cause of food crises in Nigeria is the fact that the Vunlarables are exploiting the Vunlarables simply because some market men and women are not considerate when it comes pricing.

Speaking during a multistakeholders workshop on fair food prices in Nigeria in collaboration with Consumers International recently in Lagos, the Executive Vice Chairman of FCCPC, Babatunde Irukera disclosed that, the topic is very important because even the president recently declared a state of emergency on food security.

According to him, while it's a known fact that, climate change and the war between Russia and Ukraine has caused serious problem to global food production, factors in the value chain are even a bigger issue.

For instance, he continued, farmers in Nigeria are poor, consumers in Nigeria are also poor, noting that, if the farmers and the end users are poor, then something is actually wrong and that's what's the regulators have to take a drastic action against.

The FCCPC Boss further disclosed that, they understand the position of the trade associations in Nigeria which is to promote commerce and not to destroy it, stressing that trade associations in Nigeria have formed a cartel where in most cases they fix price which they do not have the legal right to do.



He said the legislation instruments to checkmate this abnormally exist, but, why they have not been achieving results to that effect could be lack of strategy which the regulators with the support of the consumes must achieve.

On her part, Miss Davine Minayo, Project Specialist, Consumers International said;

"every four years Consumers International's Global Congress brings together the consumer movement and leading cross-sector influencers to tackle pressing issues impacting consumers worldwide."

According to her, fair food prices is a Consumers International project that's going on across the continents of the world with objective of knowing what government is doing to protect Consumers from exploration.

Also speaking at the event, representative of traders association of Nigeria, Ayo Abiola who is the Managing Director of Burke Frazier Consulting Firm LTD, said that, it's a shame that prices of goods are going down across the world while it's not the same in Nigeria.

Abiola who was a member of the panel discussion disagreed that traders are not responsible for food crises in Nigeria, adding that, miscreants on the roads, multiple taxations among other factors are responsible for the hike in prices of commodities in the country.

Explaining further, he said when traders move from the North to the South, they also come across miscreants and government agencies who ask them for money, and because traders are in business to make profit, they will transfer the burden to the final consumer.

## ASEA, ECA strengthen collaboration for Africa's financial market devt,

The African Securities Exchange Association (ASEA) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) proudly announce the signing of a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which aims at fostering closer collaboration and driving financial market development and integration on the African continent for sustainable development.

The MOU signed today marks a significant milestone in the efforts to develop Africa's capital markets, build market capacity, enhance investor confidence, facilitates peer-learning, and promote regional integration.

By leveraging their respective expertise, ASEA and ECA will jointly work on several key areas of cooperation as outlined by the MOU, including: Studies and research on financial market development and integration in Africa; Training and technical cooperation at national, sub-regional, and continental levels and policy dialogues and advocacy for African countries.

President of ASEA and CEO of Botswana Stock Exchange, Mr Thapelo Tsheole, who attended the signing ceremony in person in Addis Ababa, hailed the partnership between ASEA and ECA.

According to him, "This MOU represents a significant step forward in our collective efforts to develop robust and sustainable capital markets across Africa. By working together, we will create an enabling environment for businesses, foster investor confidence, and contribute to the overall economic growth and prosperity of the continent"...?

Officer-in-Charge, Private Sector Development and Finance Division, ECA, Mr Robert Lisinge, welcomed the ASEA delegation and noted that at the time of uncertainty and turbulence, "it's critical for development partners to speed up their efforts in helping African countries develop their domestic capital markets, to not only mobilize resources and attract investments but also build resilience with market depth".



# FG owes TETFUND N323b - Echono tells HoR Committee

**TOM OKPE,**  
Abuja

The Executive Secretary of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, (TETFUND), Sonny Echono, on Tuesday said the Federal Government is owing the Fund, a total sum of N323 billion.

The Executive Secretary made this revelation at a public hearing on the alleged missing N2.3 trillion in TETFUND organised by an Ad hoc Committee of the House of Representatives at its committee in Abuja.

The House of Representatives had last Tuesday set up the Committee, headed by Rep Oluwole Oke, to investigate alleged abuse of N2.3 trillion generated from the Tertiary Education Tax by the Fund from 2011 to 2023.

Echono, who appeared before the Ad hoc Committee on Tuesday, said the allegation was not true.

He however said the actual sum generated from education tax from 2011 to 2022 was N2.476 trillion out of which the Federal Inland Revenue Service, (FIRS) retained N99 billion as cost of collection.

He said the Federal Government since 2013 had borrowed N371.3 billion from the Fund out of which it has paid N48 billion so far.

We do have challenges but these challenges have nothing to do with fraud. They are basically issues of governance and I would start by explaining what the challenges are.

"First in absolute terms for us to clear picture of what we are talking about. From the year 2011 to 2022, total education tax collected by the FIRS as presented to

us in their documentations, as confirmed from the statements we received from the Central Bank of Nigeria, (CBN) which we have also attached for the Committee to peruse is N 2, 476, 733, 181, 679.75.

"Out of this amount, a total sum of 99 billion were retained by FIRS as cost of collection leaving a balance of 2.37 trillion. So the total fund that had hit the education pool account at the CBN is N2.3 trillion from 2011 to date

"However the FG over time in the course of governance and to meet pressing needs has borrowed funds from these accounts. The total borrowing is approximately N371.339 billion. These borrowings happened over time and most of the borrowings started in 2013.

"The FG acknowledges that it was borrowing and we have full documentation of this and all the correspondences that accompanied it.

"Other borrowings since then are being tabulated and given to you. We did secure presidential approval for the refund of this borrowing since 2015 and the FG has been refunding albeit in piecemeal.

"To date, total borrowing is over N371 billion. But total repayment to this date is about N48 billion. Last year N12.8 billion was given to us, this year another 12.89 billion was given to us.

They are just paying. God knows how long this will take to defray the principal amount."

He called on the Ad hoc Committee to assist the Fund in recovering the money.

He also said consultations are ongoing to suspend foreign scholarships as a result of the current exchange rate.

He noted that the tax accruable to the fund is generated by Federal Inland Revenue



Service, (FIRS) and the fund's account is domiciled in the Central Bank of Nigeria, (CBN).

Echono said that some of the tax comes in foreign currencies to CBN but when it is time to pay fees for scholars abroad, the apex bank insists on TETFUND source forex by itself.

"We operate a system where our forex is being sold on our behalf at an official rate and we apply like anybody else to get it, sometimes it leads to additional cost," he said.

He urged the committee to intervene and compel the CBN to allow TETFUND access to forex to pay fees as at when due.

"Currently as I speak, we are in consultations with all our stakeholders to suspend foreign training for a year or two. This is because of the recent exchange rate adjustments, we are unable to continue based on our disbursement guideline.

"The money we allocated in Naira cannot cover the Dollar requirement for training. Those who are currently there, we need more Naira to pay for the Dollar that is required for their annual fees. We are trying to put a hold."

He said they had earlier decided that only limited courses where they do not have capacity in Nigeria institutions will qualify for foreign sponsorship.

"Most of our training now will be done locally through our experienced, first-generation Universities and other specialized Universities based here. This way, we can retain our resources in-house and cope with the change of foreign exchange variation.

"Some of the scholars that has been sponsored, unpatriotically when they go, enjoy our scholarship, acquire higher degree and refuse to come back, it has become a major crisis.

"We are working with the staff unions for stringent and effective measures to be taken; currently before you are sponsored, you are made to sign a bond.

"The scholarship requires that you will come back. It is required that you have a guarantor and in many cases the guarantor has suffered undue hardship because when you disappear, we hold the guarantor to pay all the money expended on

your behalf but that has not been effective.

"We believe that a system where we work with our embassies and the institutions, we can enforce the repayment for those who insist they will not come back.

"If they don't, we will declare them 'persona non grata'. We will write to the embassies and they will make it available to those countries and they will not be able to get jobs. They will be seen as fugitives of law from their countries.

"We may have to take that hard stand because the numbers are alarming. We just checked about 40 institutions and over 137 absconders and the review is ongoing.

"It is a huge number that we cannot afford and so we will be seeking your support to strengthen some of the existing regulations to ensure that those who benefit from this programme must come back.

"We are not against people looking for greener pastures but do so on your own, not through our scholarship or through our sponsorship," he said.

# PDP leaders pay tribute to former Chairman, Ogbulafor

**TUNDE OPALANA,**  
Abuja

Stakeholders in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Wednesday gathered at the party's national secretariat to pay tribute to a former National Chairman, late Prince Vincent Ogbulafor, who recently passed on in Canada after illness.

Party chieftains spoke well of the good deeds of the late politician during a valedictory session held at the National Executive Committee Hall of the party headquarters.

The late Ogbulafor served at different times as National Secretary and later National Chairman.

Acting National chairman of PDP, Ambassador Umar Damagum said the event afforded party chieftains to pay their last

respect to Ogbulafor the nan who did so much for the growth of the party.

He said the late party leader has lived a fulfilled life going by his virtues extolled by all.

"His demise to the party was a great loss because he had left a mark in the development and growth of the party. He deserved to be immortalized and I and the party secretary will be put held together to do something in his memory," he said.

Former National Chairman, Prince Uche Secondus who served as National Organizing Secretary under Ogbulafor described the late chairman as an astute democrat who held the party together as a fearless leader.

"A man of honour, a man of humility and a detribalised Nigerian. He was manager of men and resources who conceived the yet to be com-

pleted 12 storey PDP National Secretariat in the heart of Abuja.

"Nigeria is at a cross road today because the nation lack leaders like late the Ogbulafor," he said

Secondus said the construction of the 10 lane dual carriage Abuja Airport road approved by late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was suggested by late Ogbulafor.

Dr. Bukola Saraki, former Senate President in his tribute said the late national chairman made great sacrifices for the party and country.

"A selfless, humble and honest person.

He kept the governor's, the party and the nation together as a leader of the party," he said Saraki prayed that Ogbulafor's children will enjoy the goodwill of their late father.

Alhaji Shuaib Oyedokun, former Deputy National Chair-

man (South) said Ogbulafor who was elected national chairman in 2001, was "an efficient administrator, a good listener who was prompt in action, he marketed the party PDP, an acknowledged record keeper and strict administrator.

"Deployed his marketing skills for the growth of PDP which he later led as National Chairman He helped signing MoU between PDP and the Communist Party of China in 2002."

According to him, Ogbulafor left a legacy of honour and integrity.

Abubakar Kawu Baraje who served as National Secretary when Ogbulafor was National Chairman described him as a true democrat who gave him a free hand to run the office as a Secretary

He said late Ogbulafor "never run dry of ideas that are

always apt, precise and provide solutions.

"He ensured staff of PDP secretariat worked under conducive environment. He was humble to a fault. He has a very deep and unquantifiable passion for PDP.

"He laid the foundation for "party supremacy", he ensure Ministers were made to report to the party. Governors adhere to the principle of "obey the party".

Responding on behalf of the family, one of the children, Uchenna Eze Ogbulafor appreciated the party, saying the family is proud of the PDP.

He said the prediction by his father that PDP will be in power for 60 years remains a fact because any party ruling this country today including the ruling APC evolved from the PDP.



# Senate wants employers of labour to relax age requirement

TUNDE OPALANA,  
Abuja

Employers of labour in the country have been called upon to relax age requirement as precondition for employment in Nigeria.

The Senate, therefore, on Wednesday urged the Federal Ministry of Labour, Employment and Productivity, other relevant agencies to restrict and discourage public and private employers from depriving millions of job seekers employment opportunities merely for not meeting age requirement.

Also the Federal ministry was urged to immediately draw up policies that relate to

equality of opportunity and treatment in access to employment at all levels.

These were consequent upon a motion titled "Age Requirement Precondition for Employment in Nigeria, Urgent Need for Intervention" sponsored by Senator Abba Moro (Benue South).

According to the lawmaker, age limit or precondition for employment violates Chapter 4, section 42(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), which guarantees every citizen the right to freedom from discrimination.

Moro also referred to the provision of the International

Labour Organisation which defines employment discrimination in economic terms, as a violation of human rights that entails a waste of human talents with detrimental effects on productivity and economic growth, and generates socioeconomic inequalities that undermines social cohesion and solidarity and act as a brake on the reduction of poverty.

He lamented that it is pathetic "that a graduate in Nigeria who could not get a job upon graduation and decided to back to school with the hope that a higher qualification, visa-vis a second or Masters Degree could give him a better

employment opportunity is thrown into a career paradox when upon completion of his Masters Degree he comes out to find that he is now above the age of employment and therefore not employable by the sole reason of his age".

The Senator stated further that it is "ironical that a graduate in this country can serve in the National Youth Service Corps program at age 30 but cannot be gainfully employed thereafter on the fact that he/she is now above 30 years, a situation that is a flagrant breach of his fundamental rights..

"The circumstances described in the foregoing

presents the predicament of the Nigerian youth who has the requisite qualification, knowledge, skills and is ready to work but disqualified or excluded on the sole and unjustifiable ground that he/ she is above the age limit by reason of his/her birth".

Moro argued that this sad situation has led many to commit age fraud by going all out to falsify their age to remain within the age limit of employability to the Nigerian Civil Service, and all other employer of labour in the country.

## NNPP gets LG caretaker c'tees in Ogun, drives for membership

STEPHEN GBADAMOSI,  
Ibadan

The Ogun State Chapter of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) has inaugurated its Caretaker Committees in the 20 local government areas of the state.

The party said it carried out the inauguration across the state local government areas between Monday, July 10, and Saturday, July 15.

Speaking with journalists, the state NNPP caretaker chairman, Prince Adekunle Ibrahim, said the tour and inauguration of the nine-member each Caretaker Committee to represent the 20 local government areas of the state was successful.

He said the purpose of the inauguration was to ensure that the party continued to grow and that it was part of the efforts to reposition the party for future elections, having been rescued from the hands of bad leadership.

"The exercise was fruitful and it is aimed at reshaping the NNPP, Ogun State Chapter, after it was rescued from the hands of the former bad leadership," he said.

He further said that the new excos inaugurated for the 20 local governments were informed by the best method of getting more members from their polling units up to the

wards and local governments.

He said the newly-inaugurated local government excos were all happy and thanked the state Caretaker Committee for its laudable ideals, adding that the local government excos appreciated the cash gifts from the governorship candidate of the party in the last elections, Ambassador Olufemi Ajadi Oguntoyinbo.

The chairmen and chairpersons of each local government, according to him are: Odogbolu, Mrs. Eniola Adekoya; Ijebu North, Honourable Asimi Idris; Ijebu Ode, Mr. Adekoya Adeleke; Ijebu Waterside, Alhaji Keku; Ijebu North-East, Mr. Gabriel Adekunle; Ijebu East, Mr. Ezenwa Ben; Remo North, Reverend (Dr.) Adesipe; Ikenne, Mr. Ibrahim Solarin; and Sagamu, Mr. Babatunde Ogunyemisi.

Others are Imeko Afon, Mr. Afolabi Fatial; Yewa North (Ayetoro), Alhaji Ijiola Haruna; Yewa South; Mr. Musbahudeen Odunbaku; Ipokia, Mr. Hassan Bidemi; Ado Odo Ota, Mr. Adeleke Saheed; Ifo, Mr. Alfred O.S.; Ewekoro, Mr. Adebajo Kazeem; Obafemi Owode, Mr. Alani Atobatele; and Odeda, Mr. Iyanda Olakunle.

The remaining are Abeokuta North, Mr. Jimoh Mutiu Adio; and Abeokuta South, Alhaji Musibau Adekunle.

## Adamawa cabinet'll be known soon-Fintiri

TOM GARBA,  
Yola

Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri assured the people of Adamawa of announcing his new set of commissioners that will help him pilot the affairs of the state soon.

The long-awaited list is set to be unveiled by the Governor has been a desire of many Adamawa citizens, especially politicians who may be one interest of the order.

Governor Fintiri made the revelation yesterday through his official Twitter handle verified by this medium and charged commissioner nominees to have the state as their number one priority.

Fintiri in his Twitter handle said: "We will soon be rolling out appointments for various political offices. The appointees are expected to prioritize serving Adamawa first and work towards advancing Nigeria a while avoiding nepotistic



tendencies of favoring friends, family, and relatives"

## Kwankwaso, Farounbi, Yusuf, others storm Ibadan, as Oyo correspondents honour Oguntoyinbo

STEPHEN GBADAMOSI,  
Ibadan

Presidential candidate of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, will lead other prominent Nigerians to Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, to an event where the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ)'s Correspondents' Chapel, Oyo State chapter, will honour a renowned businessman and governorship candidate of the NNPP in the 2023 governorship election in Ogun State, Ambassador Olufemi Ajadi Oguntoyinbo, as one of its Patrons.

The event, slated for Saturday, July 22, according to the leadership of the NUJ

Correspondents' Chapel, will feature a lecture/investiture of the NNPP governorship candidate in Ogun State "in recognition of his immense contributions to the development and growth of the pen profession."

The topic of the lecture is: "Contesting in Nigeria's 2023 General Elections: Ogun State Experience;" and it is to be delivered by Ambassador Oguntoyinbo himself.

The programme host is the chairman, Oyo State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ, Comrade Raji Adebayo, assisted by other members of the union, while the chief host is state chairman of the NUJ, Oyo State Council, Chief

Ademola Babalola.

The venue of the ceremony is Dapo Aderogba Hall, NUJ Secretariat, Iyaganku GRA, Ibadan, by 12 noon.

Among other top dignitaries expected at the event are Ambassador Yemi Farounbi and the Kano State governor, Abba Kabir Yusuf; and other eminent politicians and personalities.

Ambassador Oguntoyinbo, a journalist, successful businessman and philanthropist came into limelight when he contested the Ogun State governorship election in March against the incumbent Governor Dapo Abiodun and other candidates.







# CPC group wants Al-Makura to succeed Adamu as APC chairman

**TUNDE OPALANA,**  
Abuja

Following weekend resignation of Senator Abdullahi Adamu as National Secretary of the All Progressives Congress (APC), a group said he should be replaced by Senator Tanko Al-Makura, former governor of Nasarawa State.

The group, Forum for Former State Chairmen of Defunct Congress for Progressives Change (CPC), urged party leaders to consider Senator Tanko Al-Makura, as the next National Chairman of the ruling party (APC).

The group pointed out

that Senator Al-Makura's emergence would promote cohesion within the party.

National Coordinator, Kassim Mabo, National Secretary, Sulaiman Oyaremi and National Publicity Secretary, Com. Godwin Erhahon, in a statement described the former governor as a unifier and bridge builder.

The group said Al-Makura remains the only person that can fill the CPC bloc's vacuum in the present arrangement within the party, noting that he had over the years exemplified remarkable leadership roles needed to lead the governing party.

"Sequel to the recent

resignation of the immediate past National Chairman of All Progressives' Congress (APC) and the need to search for a capable, experienced and reliable personality to occupy the seat, the Forum for State Chairmen of the Defunct CPC is of the considered opinion that Senator Al-Makura is the best hand for the vacant seat.

"Apart from his sterling leadership qualities which is testified to by all party members, he is also one of the four contenders for the position during the last APC National Convention. Other three are the immediate past National Chairman H.E. Sen Abdullah Adamu who has voluntarily resigned, Senator

Soliu Mustapha, who has emerged as the current senator representing Kwara Central, and H.E. Senator George Akume, who has been appointed Secretary to the Government of the Federation.

"Aside the above-stated facts, Sen. Al-Makura remains the only person that can fill the CPC bloc's vacuum in the present arrangement in the All Progressives Congress considering the fact that the President and Vice President are respectively of ACN and ANPP extraction. Giving the position of the party's national chairman to such a strong personality from CPC will be a round peg in round hole

"We implore the party's leadership to look in this direction in order to promote

cohesion within party system", the statement reads," the statement read.



## Port Harcourt Ring Road: Give credit to Amaechi, APC chieftain tells Fubara

**AMAKA AGBU,**  
Port Harcourt

Chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and erstwhile National Publicity Secretary of the defunct New People's Democratic Party (nPDP), Chief Eze Chukwuemeka Eze, on Wednesday informed that the highly celebrated contract award of the Port Harcourt Ring Road was conceived, designed, and kick-started by former governor of Rivers State, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, around April of 2008.

Reacting to the assertions by the immediate past governor of the state, Barr. Nyesom Wike that his administration gave approval for the project at the last State Executive Council Meeting of his administration in May and that no Rivers governor could beat Sim

Fubara on projects, Chief Eze said the project remained the brainchild of Amaechi who conceived and designed same to ease the crippling traffic congestion, drive a seamless urban-rural transportation network, connect the people, attract investments, open up every part the state for development, and strengthen the economic competitiveness of Rivers State.

In a statement made available to the Daily Times in Port Harcourt, the APC chieftain said the state government under Amaechi signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Finance Corporation (AFC) to construct the road conceived to be the largest municipal highway in Africa, under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement.

Chief Eze said: "A critical feature of the Ring Road

project from its master plan would be the establishment of a new city north of the Port Harcourt International airport which is the Greater Port Harcourt City, another lofty idea of the Amaechi's administration, beautifully designed to compete with Abuja and Lagos.

He said the new city received serious attention under Amaechi with the building of the Adokiye Amiesimaka Stadium which was just a component of the games village, an International Bus Terminal, the New Rivers State University, a five-star Hospital, modern road networks, schools, hotels, central business district, and several other projects which had been left to rot, including the Port Harcourt monorail which had its destination in the new city.

Eze further said: "The project contracted to China

Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) originally spans through a distance of 88 kilometers at the cost of \$700 million which is barely a hundred billion of the Nigerian currency as at that time. Unfortunately, from available records and fact, the project distance seems to have been shortened by Governor Fubara and his overlord, Wike, to about 50 kilometers to exclude Igwuruta, Omagwa Isiokpo, and the rest of Ikwerre local government area including the Greater Port Harcourt City which extends into Etche, whereas the budget has jumped to over N200 billion, with a hike on the cost of each kilometer to an outrageous amount of around N4 billion.

"A breakdown from Alabo George-Kelly, State Commissioner for Works, a critical part of the project which was the Ikwerre axis

leading into the Greater Port Harcourt City has been cut off thus distorting the entire master plan and depriving the people of Rivers State the benefits of the project from the way Amaechi had originally designed it," he continued.

Chief Eze recalled that during the pendency of the Amaechi administration, the Ring Road project advanced into the Igwuruta axis of the Greater Port Harcourt City with the beams of the flyover already on ground awaiting to be launched on the columns, adding that all through the administration of Wike, the Greater Port Harcourt City flyover project and the Greater Port Harcourt City project itself remained stagnated. He, therefore, believed that "this would not have been the case had those projects been sited in Obio/Akpor."

The party chief said that Governor Wike's style of politics led to his reluctance in following the development patterns established by Amaechi.

Eze commended efforts by the current administration to complete the Ring Road project but expressed dismay over the distortions of the original master plan which had led to the exclusion of the Greater Port Harcourt City which was a key component of the project developed to support the ambition of making Port Harcourt a regional commercial hub.

He noted that a whopping N200b was exorbitant for a project that had been reduced to mere 50 kilometers and accused former Governor Wike of being the brain behind the alleged distortions and exclusions.

"The exclusion of the Greater Port Harcourt City which is a key component of the Ring Road project was orchestrated by Wike in order to continue to downplay the development of the new city and surrounding environment especially those communities in Ikwerre LGA.

While calling on the Rivers State Government to shun Wike and reintegrate the excluded sections of the Ring Road into the project in order that the project would not be haphazard, Chief Eze called for an urgent attention to the abandoned M10 40-kilometre Dual Carriage Freeway designed and commenced by the Amaechi administration to connect the Port Harcourt International Airport to the Onne Sea Port.

He stated that the first phase of the project was awarded to Lubrik Construction Company Ltd in March 2012, and connected the Prof. Tam David West Road to Ikwerre Road and opened up the Phase 1A Housing Development Area and the Central Business District in the new city (the Greater Port Harcourt City).

Eze described the Ring Road project as world's most expensive road contract to be awarded in the annal of public procurement and affirmed the alleged averment of the Network for the Actualisation of Social Growth and Viable Development (NEFGAD) that the State Government "should submit its 50.15-kilometre Port Harcourt Ring Road Contract, which was awarded for N195.3 billion, or about N4 billion per km to the Guinness Book of World Records for certification as the most expensive road on planet earth."

## Prioritize the welfare of your people - Kefas enjoins new commissioners

**OKERAFOR ATHANASIOS,**  
Jalingo

Governor Agbu Kefas of Taraba State has enjoined the newly sworn-in Commissioners to allow the needs of their people be their priority.

Kefas stated this while delivering a speech on the swearing-in ceremony of the newly appointed Commissioners in Jalingo, the State capital.

The Governor emphasized that his administration is fully committed to the principles of transparency, equity and justice pointing out that the new Commissioners must be guided by same.

While congratulating the Commissioners on their well deserved honour, the Governor added that their appointments were not merely symbolic but a call to service.

"I implore you to discharge your duties with utmost dedication, integrity and sense of purpose, you have been entrusted with the responsibilities of contributing to the betterment of our dear State and the lives of our people",

"I encourage you to prioritize to the welfare of our people, to listen to their concerns and to actively engage with them in certain policies that are truly based on their needs", said Kefas.

While calling on them

to liaise with one another for a sustainable development of the State, Kefas noted that they would face several challenges as they carry out their duties.

"As Commissioners, you will face challenges but I have confidence that with your diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences you will overcome any obstacle that comes your way",

Governor Agbu Kefas reiterated his resolve in an all inclusive leadership describing it as the reason why he appointed capable Youths and Women to help deliver dividends of democracy to the people of the State.

He however, lauded the efforts of the State Lawma-

ners who according to him promptly screened and confirmed the Nominees forwarded before them, hence the reason behind the day's Event.

Responding on behalf of his colleagues, the Commissioner, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Hon. Nicholas Oliver Namessan thanked Governor Kefas for finding them worthy to serve the people of the State.

He pledged not to betray the confidence reposed on them by the Governor and the people of the State.

Daily Times gathered that the swearing-in ceremony was performed by the Chief Judge of State, Justice Joel Filibus Agya.



## We are committed to Nigeria's quest to implement ISPS code- US Coast Guard

STORIES BY TEMI-TOPE ADEBAYO

The United States Coast Guard has said that it is committed to Nigeria's quest to implementing the International Ships and Ports Security (ISPS) Facility Code in line with acceptable global best practice.

Lt. Cdr. Jonna L. Clouse who is leading a team from the US Coast Guard in Nigeria for peer review, disclosed this while on a working visit to the headquarters of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, NIMASA.

She noted that engaging NIMASA on a constant basis is to ensure more Ports and Jetties in the country implement ISPS Code, thus enhancing safety of the entire Nigerian maritime domain.

"We are in Nigeria to assess the level of compliance with the International Ships and Ports Security (ISPS) Facility Code. Our desire is to enhance cooperation between the Nigerian maritime sector and the United States Coast Guard. We will also offer our expertise to NIMASA in closing identified gaps. We hope to work



with NIMASA and reduce or end the Conditions of Entry regime for Vessels from Nigeria to the United States", she said. Lt. Cdr. Clouse further commended the NIMASA Management for efforts made in cooperating with the USCG.

The Director General of NIMASA, Dr. Bashir Jamoh, OFR, noted that due to the dynamism of maritime threats and patterns, NIMASA has been fortunate to have peer review partners

that create avenues for developing capacities needed for effective ISPS Code implementation

His words, "It is worthy of note that despite efforts taken by NIMASA in improving Port Security and ISPS Code implementation in Nigeria, the issue of Condition of Entry (COE) still hovers over vessels from Nigeria calling at Ports in the United States. For vessels leaving Nigeria to undergo stringent port controls before being grant-

ed access to US ports, it has adverse effect on the aggregate shipping economies of Nigeria. The delays lead to additional costs that strain an already present high freight cost within the Gulf of Guinea. This is adversely affecting Shipping in Nigeria

"We have reviewed this decision taken by the USCG and proposed an action plan to enable the US Coastguard physically determine the compliance levels of these facilities in the Condition of Entry list. We at NIMASA are calling on the US Coast Guard to facilitate the removal of Nigeria from the Condition of Entry list".

Dr Jamoh also declared the readiness of NIMASA to cooperate with the US Coast Guard team to close all identified gaps before the full Audit in August.

It may be recalled that in 2013, NIMASA was appointed as the Designated Authority for the administration of the ISPS Code in Nigeria. The visit of the USCG is part of the assessment processes in monitoring compliance level, while enhancing cooperation and Peer Review exercise.

## Shippers Council's PSTT commended for restoring sanity on access roads

The Port Standing Task Team (PSTT) domiciled under the Nigerian Shippers Council has been commended by the Chairman of Apapa Local Government, Hon Idowu Adejumo Sebanjo for restoring sanity on the access roads leading in and out of the port city.

The Chairman gave this recommendation when the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Shippers Council, Hon Emmanuel Jime and his management team paid a courtesy visit to her office in Apapa recently.

This is even as the Shippers Council boss has signed a contract to ensure that drainages and debris are evacuated from Apapa and port environment as a sign of partnership with the host community.

Apapa Local Government Chairman, Hon Sebanjo (left) presenting a souvenir to Shippers Council Executive Secretary, Hon Emmanuel Jime after the courtesy visit by leadership of the Council to her office.

The Local Government Chairman, Hon Sebanjo particularly commended the National Coordinator of PSTT, Comrade Moses Fadipe for working tirelessly in ensuring that indiscriminate parking of trucks on port access roads is stopped.

She said that today, workers leave their houses and get to work on time, and they also leave the office back home seamlessly due to the free traffic on the outbound of the Tin Can Island Port.

She however noted that much work still needs to be done on the inbound of the Tin Can Port which has been taken over by trucks seeking entrance into the port to lift cargoes.

She said "We are more than happy to align with you in whatever you are doing, most especially in the clearance of access into the ports. "A lot of companies have lost confidence in Apapa, they are only coming back onboard now through the effort of the Shippers Council in clearing the access roads.

I want to give kudos to Mr Fadipe who worked tirelessly in clearing the access roads.

"Today, the traffic on the expressway is free, workers leave home so early in the morning and they want to go back home. Apapa is no longer as it used to be, you can now drive in and out at will. I thank Mr Fadipe for the work he has done, and we have always assisted him in whatever request he makes"

On the activities of hoodlums collecting money from truckdrivers on the port ac-

cess, Hon Sebanjo exonerated the Local Government, saying that she does not give permission for any collection of such monies.

"On our own part, we have ensures that we do not grant the 'good boys' permission to collect tolls on the streets of Apapa.

"If they were to be on the streets, the trailers would be more than what it is today.

We have played a major road in curtailing trailers from parking indiscriminately around Apapa" she said

Shippers Council and Apapa local government management staff in a group photograph

On his part, the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Shippers Council, Hon Emmanuel Jime commended the Apapa Local Government for haven collaborated in every material way to support the work of the PSTT and the implementation of the Nigerian Ports Process Manual (NPPM).

"The third leg of the NPPM manual is the clearance of the access roads into the port, it is a key component of the work of the PSTT.

This is where we need the buy-in of the Apapa Local Government Area, and their support, there is no way we can be effective without you.

"I want to make you a commitment that in my Corporate Social Responsibility, I will always make certain that if there is an intervention that you need for the good people of Apapa and you need my capacity to deliver, have no hesitation to approach me and I promise to work with you".

While addressing journalists on the sidelines of the visit, Hon Jime noted that Corporate Social Responsibility is an imperative for every agency that works in any community.

"As far as the Apapa Local Government is concerned, cleaning up the environment is a key component of how we can deliver on the health concerns of the residents of the community.

"I can confirm authoritatively that the Nigerian Shippers Council is in partnership with Apapa Local Government in debris evacuation. I actually signed off on it two weeks ago, I have been reminded by the Director of General Services Department of the Shippers Council that this is a major collaboration with the local government" he said

Speaking earlier, the Local Government Chairman, Hon Sebanjo said that 200 trucks of debris were evacuated from the Tin Can Island Port alone in 2022 during the outbreak of a cholera pandemic.

## Warri pilotage district: NPA pledges navigational safety for stakeholders

The Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) has assured navigational safety for all stakeholders operating legally in the Warri Pilotage District, despite the urgent need for breakwater reconstruction.

This is just as NPA pilots enabled the safe berthing of inbound vessels – MT Zonda and MT Stellar as well as outbound vessel MT Duke, MT Vardar and MT Igbinosa last week with six vessels at anchorage outbound and inbound for Bonny Island, Koko and Escravos.

NPA stated that although the Escravos breakwaters constructed to prevent the siltation of the Warri channels had collapsed decades ago, it has concluded the survey and mapping of the channel.

The authority also noted that it is at the conclusive stages of securing relevant approvals for the best financing option to fund its reconstruction and has put measures in place to ensure safe berthing of legally operating vessels in the spirit of trade facilitation.

The Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of NPA, Mohammed Bello-Koko, said the up-to-date local and international training as well as simulation and maneuverability competence building of the highly experienced pilots of



the NPA, have ensured zero incidences of vessels running aground. Bello-Koko said the authority had procured and installed adequate buoys for the Warri channel and realigned the entrance buoys as well as docked and reclassified vessels.

He said the authority has also stipulated frequent simulation training and re-training for all the pilotage crew to enable them to respond to the exigencies of the channel.

According to him, the occasionally reported incidents of vessels running

aground cannot impede the channel, as they are vessels operating illegally without NPA's marine pilot onboard.

He said the vessels ran aground because they veered off the channel and safety-marked areas due to incompetence.

Bello-Koko said to enhance domain awareness capability to detect and frontally keep illegal vessels at bay, the authority recently awarded consultancy for the installation of Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) across all its port locations with the first phase already completed.

It will be recalled that the NPA had recently acquired and deployed security patrol boats and intensified its collaborations with relevant security agencies to stem the activities of illegal vessels whose activities result in such breaches.

Assuring stakeholders of navigational safety in the Warri Pilotage district, Bello-Koko said the authority is working under the guidance of the Ministry of Transportation and Federal Government to address the challenges of all Delta ports sustainably and comprehensively.

He said measures have been put in place to ensure nothing impedes business continuity for all those operating within the safety and security rules.



## Non-oil export generates \$2.539b first half of 2023 - NEPC

STORIES BY JOY  
OBAKEYE

The Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) has said that non-oil exports in the first half of 2023 generated 2.539 billion dollars.

The Executive Director of NEPC, Dr Yakusak Ezra, said this in Abuja at the presentation of the first half-year progress report on the non-oil export performance for 2023.

Yakusak said that the sector recorded a dip in the value of export in the first half-year of 2023 due to the general elections and changes in global economic conditions.

According to him, the non-oil export returns from the various pre-shipment inspection agents indicated that 3,944,344.17 metric tonnes of products worth 2.539 billion dollars were exported between January and June 2023.

He said that the figure was against the sum of 2.593 billion dollars for the corresponding period of 2022.

"From these figures, it is apparent that a slight decrease of 0.09 per cent was recorded in the period under review.

"The reasons for this slight decrease could be attributed to but not limited to the general election that was held in February/March 2023 and subsequent transition in government which might have likely affected economic activities.

"Also changes in global economic conditions such



as a slowdown in global demand or decline in commodity prices which might have negatively impacted non-oil export performance," NEPC chief said.

He said that 224 different products were exported in the period under review ranging from manufactured, semi-processed, solid minerals to agricultural commodities.

According to him, of the top 15 products exported in the first half-year of 2023, urea, cocoa beans, cashew nut/kernels, sesame seed

and soya beans/meal were top on the list respectively.

He added that a total of 1,058,791.27 metric tonnes of products worth 175.476 million dollars which amounts to 6.91 per cent of the total export value were exported to 13 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries.

"A total number of 859 companies participated in the non-oil export trade in the period under review.

"It is worthy to note that Indorama-Elemental Fertiliser and Chemical Ltd took the

lead with 282,553,286.15 million dollars in value terms while Dangote Fertiliser Ltd recorded the second-highest value of 199,871,962.29 dollars respectively," he said.

Yakusak said that 30 banks participated in the issuance of the Nigeria Export Proceed Forms (NXPs) for the first half-year of 2023 with Zenith Bank PLC processing the highest NXPs value at 38.11 per cent.

He said that United Bank of Africa (UBA) and First Bank of Nigeria had 10.50 per cent and 9.87 per cent respectively.

Yakusak, however, expressed concern that the volume of inter-African trade was still very low.

"This is glaring because no African country made it to the top 15 importers of Nigerian products.

"164, 748.75 metric tonnes of products valued at 55.085 million dollars were exported to various African countries.

"This amounts to 2.17 per cent of the total export value recorded between January and June 2023.

"This is quite insignificant compared to products valued at 252,056,554.18 dollars imported by Vietnam alone, which constitute 9.93 per cent of the total export value recorded within the same period," he said.

The NEPC boss expressed optimism that the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its attendant benefits would increase the volume and value of trade among African countries.

## NEPC trains 50 onion producers on export procedures

The Nigerian Export Promotion Council, (NEPC), has trained 50 onion producers and marketers on export procedures, government incentives and other value chains to enhance their business.

NEPC Trade Adviser and Head of Sokoto zonal office, Mr Yahaya Ahmad-Sukaraiju, said the training was part of the agency's efforts to sensitise business owners on onion value chains.

Ahmad-Sukaraiju described export incentives as a catalyst for boosting non-oil export in Nigeria and urged business owners to enlist their items through the regulated modalities.

He reiterated that onion is selected in Sokoto state following the Initiative of "One State, One Product" programme adding that the activity was aimed at creating awareness for business owners on the incentives in NEPC to enable them to become beneficiaries.

In his presentation, Malam Aminu Lawal, an assistant director from NEPC headquarters, dwelled on the key functions of NEPC, its legal framework and

functions stressing that incentives were provided to make the Nigerian economy viable.

Lawal further explained that NEPC was conducting several free training across the nation to build the capacity of businesses through value addition for export, saying it would have multiplier effects on the economy of the country.

Other presentations were made by NEPC officials Mrs Adulugba Anne and Mr Abubakar Kolo on the ease of doing business and the prospect of onion products in the international market.

Speaking on behalf of the participants, Alhaji Aliyu Maitasamu, the chairman National Onion Producers and Merchants Association, thanked NEPC for their efforts in boosting the growth of the non-oil sector and encouraging export.

Maitasamu noted that his member's constraints remain the non-acceptability of traded money in denominations of African countries, where they faced difficulties in repatriating trade despite Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) platforms.

## ITDA projects GDP growth of \$50bn with digitalisation of MSMEs



The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has projected that the digitalisation of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) could increase Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by \$50 billion.

The Director-General, of NITDA, Mr Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, said this during his visit to the GIZ/Digital Transformation Centre, Nigeria office as a special guest at its Techmybiz pitch-a-thon event in Victoria Island, Lagos.

Abdullahi said that the digital transformation of MSMEs would help to grow the nation's economy.

He said that according to recent research, any MSME that transformed

digitally could increase its revenue by 26 per cent and reduce costs by 22 per cent.

"Statistical research in 2018 showed that digitally transformed enterprises contributed \$13.5 trillion to the global GDP, and it is projected that in 2023, it will reach \$53.3 trillion, which is more than 50 per cent of the global GDP.

"Therefore, if we in Nigeria can digitally transform our MSMEs, it could add 26 per cent to GDP or the revenue of the MSMEs.

"Today, MSMEs contribute 43 per cent to Nigeria's GDP which is about \$205 billion. Twenty-six per cent of this means digitisation of our MSMEs can increase our GDP by \$53 billion," the NITDA boss said.

## Nigeria should take advantage of AfCFTA to boost cassava products for forex - Aboloma

Chairman of the National Quality Council (NQC), Osita Aboloma, has said Nigeria should take advantage of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), to boost export potential in cassava products to earn more foreign exchange.

Chief of Staff to Aboloma, Bola Fashina, who made this known recently, urged the various stakeholders in the cassava value chain in the country to take optimum advantage of the various initiatives being promoted under the auspices of the African Union Commission (AUC), the Pan African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI) and the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO) given the vantage position Nigeria has in the production of Cassava within the Continent.

He stressed this while inaugurating the Local Organising Committee (LOC) for the hosting of the African Cassava Conference scheduled for Abuja, between Oc-

tober 15 and 17, 2023, which has as theme: "Stimulating Africa's Industrialisation Through Development of and Assuring Quality Along The Cassava Value Chain".

Aboloma posited that the African Continent, in general, stands to benefit immensely from initiatives such as the Cassava Value Chain project to promote intra-African Trade, enhance economic emancipation, and the welfare of Africans and position the Continent better in its trading relationship with the rest of the world.

He therefore, commended the efforts of the African Union Leadership, through the AUC and particularly the PAQI in promoting quality infrastructure on the continent, stressing that Nigeria through the NQC is following suit.

To this end, Aboloma charged the LOC members to ensure the full cooperation of their various organisations and institutions, as well as the effective mobilisation of Nigeria's public and

private sector stakeholders, to provide all necessary support for the success of the conference.

He assured the Committee members that the National Quality Council would do all within its means to ensure the successful hosting of the Africa Cassava Conference, as well as continue to collaborate with the Africa Union Commission through the PAQI and other Stakeholders and Development Partners in Nigeria and the entire African Continent on all initiatives relating to the promotion of Quality within and beyond Africa.

While charging them to work collectively and seamlessly to ensure a successful hosting by Nigeria in furtherance of the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement to the greater benefit of the Continent and its people, Aboloma also enjoined them individually and collectively, to bring their wealth of knowledge and experiences as well as patriotism to bear in the discharge of the assignments

relating to the successful hosting of the African Cassava Conference.

Members of the Local Organising Committee for the African Cassava Conference include representatives of the National Quality Council as Chair, Nigerian National Accreditation Service (NiNAS), Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Nigerian Agribusiness Group (NABG), HarvestPlus Nigeria, Marbles & Gardens, Ekap Achi Foundation and ABOMAX Group as Event Managers.

The African Cassava Conference is expected to attract participants from across the continent, including farmers, processors, importers, exporters, manufacturers, research institutions, agricultural financial institutions, development partners, Ministries, Departments and Agencies from Federal and State Governments involved in the Cassava and agricultural value chain as well as the mass media.



# Nigeria face Zambia, Kenya, Namibia in Paris 2024 Olympic rugby qualifiers



**N**igeria face Zambia, Kenya, Namibia in Paris 2024 Olympic rugby qualifiers.

The Nigerian senior men national team, Black Stallions have been drawn in Pool B of Africa Men's Rugby Sevens Olympic qualifiers.

The draw which was conducted Wednesday, sees Black Stallions of Nigeria take on the Shujaa of Kenya, Welwitschias of Namibia and Zambia for a place in the quarter final of the tournament.

The Nigeria Rugby Football Federation, NRFF who just returned to the international fold after having been banned by the World Rugby will have their hands full as the men's senior national team will try to punch above their weight after competing at the pre-Olympic Qualifiers in Mauritius.

The Black Stallions lost in the final to Algeria 24-5 having defeated Ghana 24-7 in the opening match before

beating Burundi 43-14 and in the last pool match blew apart Congo 43-0

The Coach Steve Lewis led lads thrashed Botswana 33-5 to qualify for semi final where they met a highly determined Cote D'Ivoire side who also fell to the fire power of the Stallions 20-12

Nigeria which has been placed in a dicey pool, will have to navigate their way out of the group that has two of the strongest rugby playing

nations in Africa.

The Kenya rugby Sevens team, fondly called Shujaa, a Swahili word meaning courage, confidence, bravery, or heroism; will be aiming for their third consecutive appearance at the Olympics while Namibia who finished fifth at the last qualifiers will hope to do better this time around just as Zambia, a sleeping giant in African Rugby, will hope to rise from their slumber in a bid to upturn the apple.

The Black Stallions of Nigeria will be aiming for the automatic ticket if they can get their best legs in Europe and America to be part of the team for the qualifiers in Zimbabwe.

The Olympic qualifiers will hold on September 16 and 17 at Harare Sports Club, Zimbabwe.

# Biggest women's World Cup set to get under way

**T**he waiting is almost over. The biggest FIFA Women's World Cup featuring European champions England and debutants the Republic of Ireland - will finally get under way on Thursday.

Australia and New Zealand are co-hosting the ninth edition, which for the first time will feature 32 nations including defending world champions the United States.

It is the first Women's World Cup with two co-hosts.

New Zealand launch the tournament against Norway at Eden Park (08:00 BST kick-off) before Australia play the Republic of Ireland at Stadium Australia, Sydney, on the same day (11:00 kick-off).

Organisers hope the opening two games will attract an aggregate crowd of 100,000 fans.

It is on course to be the most-watched Women's World Cup, with

more than 1.3 million tickets bought in advance for the 64 matches at 10 venues across nine cities.

Organisers are targeting a record two billion television viewers for the 2023 edition, a figure that would double the audience that watched the 2019 World Cup in France.

"The future is women. Thanks to the fans for supporting what will be the greatest FIFA Women's World Cup ever," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

As well as the Republic of Ireland, seven other nations are making their debuts at this World Cup Vietnam, Zambia, Haiti, Morocco, Panama, the Philippines and Portugal.

While the United States - who are chasing a fifth world title - are the number one side in the world, Zambia lie 77th and are the lowest ranked team at the tournament.

The final takes place at Stadium Australia on 20 August (11:00 kick-off).

# Manchester City agree £30m deal for Al-Ahli to sign Riyad Mahrez

**M**anchester City have agreed a £30m deal for Saudi Pro League side Al-Ahli to sign Algeria winger Riyad Mahrez.

The 32-year-old has been given permission not to travel on City's pre-season trip to Japan and South Korea.

That had already been agreed providing City received a bid that matched their valuation of Mahrez, who had two years left on his contract.

City paid £60m for Mahrez in 2018 and he scored 15 goals from 47 games in the Blues' Treble-winning season.

However, he was an unused substitute for both the FA Cup and Champions League finals and manager Pep Guardiola has opted to let him join the list of big-name recruits by the SPL this summer.

Liverpool have also agreed a £12m deal in principle worth £12m plus add-ons to sell England midfielder Jordan Henderson to Al-Ettifaq.

The likes of Karim Benzema, N'Golo Kante and Ruben Neves have already followed Cristiano Ronaldo to Saudi Arabia this summer, while Steven Gerrard has been named Al-Ettifaq

manager and Michael Emenalo has been appointed the SPL's director of football.

The country's Public Investment Fund (PIF) has also taken over four of the SPL's leading clubs, including Al-Ahli, as the league aims to become one of the top five in the world.

Mahrez is the only senior player to miss City's trip to Asia.

The futures of England defender Kyle Walker, Portugal midfielder Bernardo Silva and Spain defender Aymeric Laporte have all been the subject of speculation this summer.

However, all three are in Guardiola's travelling squad for the pre-season games.

Reports in Germany have suggested Bayern Munich have agreed a deal for Walker, but it is thought they are wide of the mark.

Portugal full-back Joao Cancelo is also part of the City squad after Bayern chose not to take up the option of turning last season's six-month loan into a permanent deal.

It is understood goalkeeper Zach Steffen is absent with a knee injury, although City are open to the idea of the USA international moving on this summer.

# Al-Ettifaq agree deal worth £12m plus add-ons for Liverpool's Henderson

**L**iverpool have agreed a deal in principle worth £12m plus add-ons to sell midfielder Jordan Henderson to Saudi Arabian club Al-Ettifaq.

Henderson travelled to Germany with Liverpool for their training camp but was not involved in their 4-2 friendly win over Karlsruher.

The England midfielder, 33, has two years left on his contract at Anfield.

Former Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard was recently appointed as manager of Al-Ettifaq.

The agreement for Henderson follows Liverpool receiving a £40m offer from Al-Ittihad for fellow midfielder Fabinho last Friday.

Unlike Henderson, the 29-year-old Brazil international did not travel to Germany while his future is resolved.

A number of high-profile players have moved to Saudi Arabia this summer, including former Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema and ex-Chelsea midfielder N'Golo Kante.

Former Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino joined Al-Ahli after his Anfield contract expired, and Manchester City winger Riyad Mahrez has also been linked with the club.

Henderson joined Liverpool from Sunderland in a deal worth £20m in June 2011.

Henderson made 43 appearances for the Reds

last season as they endured a disappointing campaign, finishing fifth in the Premier League and missing out on a place in the Champions League.

Overall, he has played 491 times for the Reds, scoring 33 goals and registering 58 assists.

Henderson was captain when Liverpool won the Champions League in 2019 before

going on to win the Uefa Super Cup and Fifa Club World Cup later that year.

He was also the Reds skipper when the club won the 2019-20 Premier League title to end a 30-year wait for the English top-flight title.

Henderson's other honours at Liverpool include winning the FA Cup in 2022 and League Cup in 2012 and 2022.





# Russians and Belarusians to compete as neutral athletes

Russian and Belarusians may compete again in events sanctioned by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) as neutrals, the FIG has decided.

The International Olympic Committee recommended such a move this March.

FIG president Morinari Watanabe then said in April that Russian and Belarusians not involved in

the war should be allowed to participate.

Athletes from both countries have been banned from many sports since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"The FIG is ensuring that the rights of all athletes are respected and is sending a message to the world that gymnastics is seeking peace," Watanabe said on Wednesday.

An FIG statement

said that its executive committee had decided to "authorise the participation of athletes and support personnel" of Russian and Belarusian nationality in FIG events as "individual neutral athletes".

However, they must be "without any involvement or association with the Russian Federation or the Republic of Belarus, their respective national federations or national Olympic committees".

The FIG added that it would "impose a strict requirement of neutrality with regard to the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus".

Those interested in being granted "individual neutral athlete" status must apply to the FIG, with those successful being eligible to participate in FIG events from 1 January 2024.

Those events "may include Olympic qualification events for Paris 2024" but gymnastics' global governing body did say that the IOC would decide whether Russian and Belarusian athletes would then be eligible for next year's Games.

The FIG stressed that it continues "to offer support to victims of the war" and "to respect the right of all athletes, regardless of their nationality, to be treated without discrimination".

It also reiterated "its firm condemnation of the senseless invasion of Ukraine by Russia and its commitment to impose severe punishments on anyone in the international gymnastics community who is involved in war or supports war".



## Mendy signs for Lorient days after been cleared of rape

Former Manchester City defender Benjamin Mendy has signed for Ligue 1 side Lorient five days after being cleared of rape.

The left-back, 29, whose City contract expired in the summer, has signed a two-year deal with the French club.

He was cleared at Chester Crown Court on Friday of raping a woman and attempting to rape another.

That followed a trial in January when Mendy was cleared of six counts of rape and one of sexual assault.

Mendy became the world's most expensive defender when City paid Monaco £52m to sign the France defender in 2017.

City's director of football Txiki Begiristain described him as "one of the world's best full-backs" when the highly rated defender joined the club.

He won the Premier League in his first season with City before being part of the France squad that claimed the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

However, he last played competitive football in August 2021, appearing for City at Tottenham Hotspur.

Mendy was arrested later that month and remanded in custody for five

months before going to trial for the first time last August.

Jurors failed to reach verdicts on two counts of rape and attempted rape, prompting the re-trial at which he was acquitted last week.

The portrait painted of him during the case led to his own legal team, led by Eleanor Laws KC, to state that "life, as he knew it, is over, in football in the UK".

After he was acquitted, several high-profile players including Netherlands forward Memphis Depay and Real Madrid forward Vinicius Jr showed their support for Mendy on social media.

Lorient, who finished 10th in Ligue 1 last season, announced Mendy's return to French football in a statement: "Benjamin Mendy, world champion 2018, quadruple winner of the Premier League under the colours of Manchester City and French champion of Ligue 1 with Monaco, comes to reinforce the Lorient workforce for this new season. Welcome Benjamin."

The French club play at Bournemouth in a pre-season friendly on 5 August and will begin their league campaign at champions Paris St-Germain on 13 August.

## Man Utd beats Lyon but Van de Beek unclear of future

Manchester United midfielder Donny van de Beek says he is unclear whether he has a future at the club.

The Dutchman, 26, has struggled to establish himself at Old Trafford since arriving for £35m in September 2020.

He had a loan spell at Everton in 2022 before returning to United, and missed the second half of last season with a serious knee injury.

"It is hard to say where my future is," Van de Beek said after capping his return from six months out with the winning goal in United's 1-0 victory over Lyon at Murrayfield in their second pre-season match.

"I am coming back from injury. I have trained for a few weeks now and I have played my first minutes today.

"I am fit but I still need to keep going and try to push as hard as possible. Let's see what happens. There is also the possibility that I move - everything is open."

Van de Beek's superbly taken right-foot volley early in the second half arriving in the box to caress Daniel Gore's right-wing cross past Lyon substitute keeper Remy Riou into the left corner was the highlight of a sunlit afternoon in the Scottish capital.

His roar of celebration hinted at his relief at ending a frustrating spell on the sidelines.

"For me personally it is a big moment," he said. "Of course it is nice if you score a goal, but people who have experienced such a big injury will know I have waited so long for this moment."

"I know it is only a friendly but it is a massive moment for me. You realise you enjoy football so much."

Van de Beek also welcomed the imminent arrival of his former Ajax team-mate Andre Onana, with United having agreed a £47.2m (55m euros) deal for the Inter Milan goalkeeper to replace the departed David de Gea.

"He is a great goalkeeper," the Dutchman added. "I played with him for many years and he is a great personality. He is good with his feet and good on the line."

"My expectations are high for Andre. He is a great person - I still speak with him sometimes - and a top-class goalkeeper."

While manager Erik ten Hag appears to have successfully landed one of his key summer targets, their afternoon outing in front of 48,484 fans in Edinburgh highlighted United's need for a new striker.

With Marcus Rashford and Anthony Martial not involved, the Red Devils started without a recognised frontman, Jadon Sancho taking up a central role, flanked by Antony and Amad Diallo in a front three.

The trio linked up well in the early stages but lacked a clinical edge as four chances went begging inside the first 10 minutes.

Antony saw a shot saved and Amad scuffed another effort wide, before the same player forced a fine save from Anthony Lopes with a stinging left-foot effort after Anthony's precise cross from the left.

Sancho might also have done better when he sprung through the middle but took too long to find the unattended Mason Mount in the box, the midfielder crowded out by the time the ball reached him.

Apart from goal-keeper Matej Kovar, Ten Hag changed his entire team for the second half, with Fred taking over the captain's armband from Raphael Varane and veteran centre-back Jonny Evans, signed on a short-term contract, making his second United debut.

The closest United came to adding to their lead came when Isak Hansen-Aaroen, an 18-year-old left-sided attacker, collected Fred's pass and cut on to his right foot but the Norwegian's curling effort was tipped round the far post.

The United squad will fly out later from Edinburgh to New York, where they begin their four-match US tour with a fixture against Arsenal in New Jersey on Saturday.

They have named a full-strength squad for the trip, with Harry Maguire included despite his future at the club being in doubt.

Cameroon goalkeeper Andre Onana is also due to join the squad when he has completed his move from Inter Milan.

Midfielder Fred will remain in the UK to deal with a personal issue and will link up with United at some point on their tour.



## Losing F1 seat at Alpha Tauri 'hurts' - De Vries

Nyck de Vries has said losing his seat at Alpha Tauri just 10 races into his Formula 1 care-er "hurts".

The 28-year-old Dutchman was dropped by team owners Red Bull last week and replaced by Daniel Ricciardo from this weekend's Hungarian Grand Prix.

"Of course it hurts that the F1 chance I dreamed of for so long ended prematurely," said De Vries.

But life is not a destination, it's a journey. Sometimes you have to take the hard road to get to where you want to."

De Vries, a former champion of the all-electric Formula E series, said he "would like to thank Red Bull and Scuderia Alpha Tauri for the opportunity to live my dream".

He added: "I am grateful for our privileged lives, proud of our journey and my family."

This is just another experience - we move on and look to the next chapter."

De Vries made his full F1 debut for Alpha Tauri this season after Red Bull motorsport adviser Helmut Marko was convinced to sign him when he scored two points for ninth place on his debut as a stand-in for Williams driver Alex Albon in last year's Italian Grand Prix.

De Vries was recruited in the expectation his wide experience of motorsport would enable him to perform strongly from the start of his career, but he has been outperformed by team-mate Yuki Tsunoda and made a

series of mistakes.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said this week the decision was taken because "there was a general feeling that Nyck wasn't quite hitting the mark. And then the question was: 'What are the options if we were to switch things around?'"

Ricciardo, who himself was dropped by McLaren at the end of last season when his contract was terminated a year early, had rejoined Red Bull as reserve driver this year. The 34-year-old Australian, an eight-time grand prix winner, earned his return with a test at Silverstone last week that impressed Red Bull.

According to Horner, Ricciardo has now set his sights on proving he deserves a return to Red Bull, for whom he won seven races in five years from 2014-18 before leaving because he believed it had become preoccupied with Max Verstappen.

Horner said Marko had called De Vries to tell him he was being dropped within a handful of laps of the start of Ricciardo's run.

"It all happened a little quicker than expected, bearing in mind we hadn't completed the test," said Horner.

"He [Marko] was the one who had recruited him and he was the one who spoke with Nyck on about lap 11 of the test, I think."





Al-Ettifaq agree deal worth £12m plus add-ons for Liverpool's ...

## Tinubu, Nigerians don't want the N8,000 cash transfer offer

ROTIMI FASAN

If there's one thing Nigerians seem to be clear on about the proposed measure to ease the immediate harsh effect of the fuel subsidy removal, it is that they are not interested in the conditional cash transfer scheme.

Under this plan, the Federal Government is to transfer N8,000 over a six-month period to poor Nigerians or low income-earning households, the so called poorest of the poor.

It is a palliative measure that comes directly from the passage of the bill that amended the 2022 supplementary budget after the Federal Government had secured a World Bank loan of \$800 million.

It is from this loan that the government would source the N500 billion that will constitute the pool from which poor Nigerians would have their accounts directly credited with N8,000. This, it is expected, would help them tide over the worsening effect of the removal of the subsidy on fuel on May 29, 2023.

As was the case with the removal of the subsidy on fuel, this latest proposal was not an original idea of the Bola Tinubu administration. The palliative measure was first proposed by the Muhammadu Buhari administration ahead of the planned removal of oil subsidy.

While the administration was able to push the bill through the lower house of the 9th National Assembly, in the eleventh hour of President Buhari's time as president, it didn't have enough time to get it through the Senate. Nigerians would remember their sense of outrage about the government's action then. They thought it was yet another attempt at drawing Nigeria further into the bind of debt peonage.

The feeling then was that the Buhari administration could leave such proposal to the next government that was due to take over from it in a short while. Even though the departing administration was very keen on pushing this bill through the National Assembly, a mere window dressing that saw it working up to a few hours before the inauguration of the Bola Tinubu administration, it was not eager to give effect to its proposed removal of the subsidy on fuel. That was the dirty job Tinubu was left to execute.

This took the bottom out of Garba Shehu's claim that his then principal, President Buhari, did Bola Tinubu a favour by not yanking off the subsidy on fuel when he had all the time in the world to do that. Otherwise, said Shehu, Tinubu would have lost the election that brought him into office.

### GUEST COLUMNIST

with

Rotimi Fasan



The whole point of this then is that the Tinubu administration is only following up on and executing an approved proposal of its predecessor that was obviously intended for the good of Nigerians. If not for anything else then, the fact that the World Bank loan was to ameliorate, in the immediate, the unsavoury outcome of subsidy removal, may be enough

“

**In its original conception, the Buhari government made arrangements for only 10 million Nigerians to benefit from the palliatives. And rather than N8,000 that the Tinubu administration intends to pay Nigerians, the Buhari administration made provision for just N5,000 per person or household.**

”

justification for Tinubu to want to see it through. Isn't this what Nigerians mean when they talk of government being a continuum? But we should still ask if Tinubu needs to swallow every bitter pill Buhari left for him including one as potentially counter-productive as the one on cash transfer?

Providing cash transfer as palliatives to Nigerians is a well-beaten path Nigerians are not treading for the first time. They have very unhappy tales to tell about this.

Thus, the present proposal comes across to them as a poisoned chalice in view of their past experience. As pointed out above, it was the Buhari administration that originated the idea of a World Bank loan that would be used to provide palliatives in the event of the removal of fuel subsidy. All the Tinubu administration has done is to tinker with the details of that plan.

In its original conception, the Buhari government made arrangements for only 10 million Nigerians to benefit from the palliatives. And rather than N8,000 that the Tinubu administration intends to pay Nigerians, the Buhari administration made provision for just N5,000 per person or household.

That administration's social empowerment programmes such as Market Moni, Trader Moni and Farmer Moni that were anchored by the Office of the former Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo, provided the template for the proposed cash transfers. The main difference between that and this is that funds given under the social investment programmes of Buhari were repayable loans whereas the present cash transfers in question are "gifts".

But the bitter experience of how a previous palliative regime was both poorly and criminally managed has taught Nigerians not to believe in schemes like this. Street wisdom tells us that experience is the best teacher. This is an advisory that is now part of everyday parlance. Are Nigerians now to disbelieve the evidence of their eyes?

They've been badly bitten once. Is there any crime in being shy a second time around? Those prone to periodic amnesia would be reminded that

about this time three years ago, Nigeria, like the rest of the world, was in the throes of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic when we were grounded by a medical lockdown. All economic and commercial activities came to a grinding halt. The effects were at once very immediate and severe in the extreme aside the morbid fear many nursed of contracting the rampaging pandemic.

It was under these circumstances that the Buhari administration came up with the idea of offering palliatives to the people to assuage their plight. Billions in taxpayers' money was expended on the so-called palliatives by both the Federal and State governments under the overall superintendence of Sadiya Umar Farooq, the Humanitarian Affairs Minister.

Corporate organizations, groups and individuals felt called upon to act and everyone gave from the generosity of their hearts. Alongside this, the Federal Government in Abuja went ahead with a so-called home feeding scheme for school children at a time they were all home. Registers were opened across neighbourhoods, towns and states. But for the most part, Nigerians only heard of these palliatives but saw nothing of them.

It wasn't until the #EndSARS protests of October 2020 by young Nigerians in reaction to the state's anti-people activities that the whole world got to know the sham that was the palliatives scheme.

They invaded and laid bare warehouses where foods and goods meant to be distributed to Nigerians were kept by criminal politicians and public servants. It's true that Nigerians can use some help right now, call it palliatives or whatever. But they would as likely as not only hear of these palliatives but never get to enjoy them. Beyond this, the idea seems not well thought through. It amounts to no more than subsidising consumption where the government should be investing in infrastructure.

For how long can an individual, much less a family, sustain themselves on N8,000 today?

