



Get ready, fuel prices will still go up...or down –NNPCL tells Nigerians

UKPONO UKPONG

Amid nationwide anger over the latest fuel price increase, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) has explained reason for the hike.

Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO), NNPC, Mele Kyari, blamed the recent increase in fuel price from N540/litre to N617/litre, on what he described as market forces.

Addressing State House correspondents after meeting with Vice

President Kashim Shettima at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, Kyari said the sudden increase of fuel pump prices was merely market forces at play.

Kyari explained that the fuel price increment was not as a result

of shortage of supply of products, but that rather the forces of demand and supply in the marketing value chain were working.

He told Nigerians to brace up as the price is bound to go up or down,

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Nigerians groan under fresh fuel price hike

ABIODUN TAIWO, ABEOKUTA, TONY AKHIGBE, BENIN CITY, TOM OKPE, ABUJA, STEPHEN GBADAMOSI, IBADAN; OWEN AKENZUA, ASABA; AMAKA OGBU, PORT HARCOURT;

- Rain curses on govt
- Queues return
- Trekking order of the day
- Transport fares shoot up
- Food, rent jump dramatically

Nigerians were, yesterday, encircled by growing pains as prices of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), popularly known as petrol,

shot sky-high from the relatively stable N500 or thereabouts a litre to a new high of over N700 a litre in parts of the country.

Instantly, transportation fares hit the roof in some cities, prices of foodstuff and services were also

jerked up, with queues returning in some filling stations across the country.

Of course, ordinary Nigerians, already groaning from the dire socio-economic effects of the removal of fuel subsidy by Pres-

ident Bola Tinubu, has on their lives, complained loudly about the fresh effects the new petrol price hike.

"They want to lead people to hell in this country," a visibly frustrated man told *Daily Times* in Abuja,

the nation's capital.

Rights group, Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) and some prominent Nigerians have condemned the latest increase.

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Reps to probe 150,000mts stolen crude oil, burnt vessel

TOM OKPE, ABUJA

House of Representatives has resolved to set up an Ad-hoc Committee to investigate what becomes of 150,000 metric tonnes of stolen crude oil laden in the recently burnt vessel, MTTURA, in Escravos River, near Warri, Delta State. The House, therefore, urged security agencies to desist from further setting ablaze vessels laden with stolen crude oil. This was sequel to the amendments and adoption of a motion sponsored by Rep. Thomas Ereyitomi (from Delta State) at plenary yesterday.

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24 hrs	
Shop	
Petrol	617.00
Diesel	640.00
Kerosene	340.00
Lubricant	



The new pump prices displayed at an outlet of Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) in Lagos, yesterday.

ECOWAS leaders now battle-ready to fight terrorism, funding no problem –Tinubu



UKPONO UKPONG

President Bola Tinubu, who is also Chairman of ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, has stated that the security challenges in the West Coast had been thoroughly

reviewed and a properly funded strategy would be instituted to tackle terrorism.

President Tinubu made the disclosure about a new approach by ECOWAS leaders to tackle security, with more measurable results, yesterday, after

a meeting with Presidents of the Republic of Benin, Patrice Talon; Guinea-Bissau, Umaru Sissoco Embaló; and Niger Republic, Mohamed Bazoum, at the State House, Abuja.

"We have no problems raising funds. We believe we have

the instruments to do that. We believe we are capable of raising necessary funds to combat terrorism in the sub-region," the President told newsmen.

President Tinubu noted that West African leaders had had extensive deliberations on sus-

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Again, NYSC warns 'corpors' against unauthorized trips

P.

Nigerians groan under fresh fuel price hike

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But Nigeria National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), which increased the price regime, called for understanding, saying prices will stabilize.

Daily Times reporters from different parts of the country, who went round to observe the situation on ground, report that the price hike is not well-received.

Ogun State

In Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital, motorists expressed shock as petroleum otherwise as fuel dealers jerked up the pump price from N500 to between N580 to N700 per liter. A check by our correspondent revealed that a liter of fuel was dispensed for N700 by independent marketers while major marketers, who have the product, dispensed at N580 per liter.

The sudden increase forced the inter-state transport fares to go up astronomically while intra-state transporters also charged more.

At one of the filling stations in Ake, opposite the Local Government Secretariat, motorists were seen in queues lamenting the non-availability of the product despite its high price.

A vulcanizer, Babatunde Adekunbi, who was at the filling station, said the timing for the increase was wrong and called on the Federal Government to look into the issue.

He said the government's promised palliatives may not have any impact on the masses, with the way prices were going up.

Due to the current situation, *Daily Times* noticed that very few vehicles were plying the streets in the capital city.

Consequently, taxi fares increased rose sharply from N100 to N200 and N240 per drop.

The situation was the subject of discussion by the persons who condemned government's action as "unfeeling."

Edo State

In Edo State, residents expressed alarm and shock at what they described as "the sudden increase" in the pump price of PMS to 617 per liter.

The NNPC filling station on Sapele Road, Benin City, the State capital, sold the product at N617 per liter yesterday as against other filling stations selling as high as N620 and above.

When *Daily Times* visited Zico Oil and Elilove, it was discovered that both filling stations were selling

at N620 as they have since adjusted their pump prices. A civil servant, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, rained curses on certain officials of the Federal Government, saying, among other invectives, that "it will not be well with them for punishing us unnecessarily."

FCT

In Abuja, the seat of power, filling stations adjusted their pump price to N617 per litre.

Daily Times investigations showed that the product, earlier sold for N537 per litre, has been increased even at NNPC filling Stations.

Consequent upon this, long queues were observed in several filling stations in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as many persons resorted to panic buying of petrol, obviously unsure if there will not be further immediate price increases. In Maitama, Jabi, Wuye, Nyanya and Karu, some filling stations were said to be selling at the old price of N537, which led to long queues.

Some marketers also adjusted their price to the new rate of N617 and some N620.

A manager of one the stations which was selling petrol at the old price, and who does not want his identity mentioned in print, said his station will soon adjust its pump to the new rate before the day runs out.

A motorist, David Uwakwe, who spoke with *Daily Times*, described the development as a crazy situation adding: "Is this the renewed hope we are promised? We were still battling with N537, see where they have brought us! What do they want us to do in this country? We were still battling with that new price and within two months now, they increased it again; this is not fair to the masses."

Oyo State

Residents of Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, woke up on yesterday to be confronted with the increase - a development that has caused complaints and further gnashing of teeth. Investigation conducted by *Daily Times* indicated that petrol price has jumped from a little over N500 per litre to N617 at NNPC outlets.

Lamenting the development, residents and motorists have been complaining bitterly over Federal Government's style of handling the petroleum sector, with many saying the development would bring more hardship on the people. Indeed, the adverse effect



R-L: Executive Secretary, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), Arch. Sunny Echono; Director, Executive Secretary's office, Arch. Uchendu Wogu; and Director, Research and Development, Dr. Saliyu Bakari, during an investigative hearing on the alleged missing money in TETFUND, at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja...yesterday. Photo: Balogun Temitope.

of the development has begun to be felt in the Ibadan metropolis.

A commercial cab operator said he had exhausted his vehicle petrol reserve on his way to an estate in Ologuneru, after which he took a five-litre jerrycan to get some fuel.

He said none of the filling stations, apart from Samalis Filling Station, along the stretch of Olounde-Ologuneru - Eleyele Road was open for business.

He added that even Samalis that opened, insisted on selling at N700 per litre, maintaining that he had to continue towards Eleyele - Sango Road before he got an outlet that sold at N600 per litre.

As a result of his experience, he said he had marginally increased his fare until he ends business before evening.

A commuter told journalists that "Nigerian's well-being and standard of living are being threatened," berating the Federal Government for not providing palliatives before removing the fuel subsidy.

As of the time of compiling this report, many petrol stations in Ibadan were locked, with some customers claiming that they had the stations had the product but were hoarding it to maximize profit.

"We bought fuel yesterday and even at the weekend. Why are they suddenly not selling now because they heard that NNPC has increased?", queried a commercial motorcyclist who simply identified himself as Ismail.

Delta State

In Asaba, the Delta State capital, our correspondent reports that hard times seemed to have overwhelmed residents of the State, especially in Asaba,

as prices of food items have shot up.

Motorists in Asaba, Ibusa, Okpanam, Ughelli and environs increased transport fare with reasons because of the pump price hike of petrol. Hitherto, it sold for N520 a litre, but now it is N670,00---a situation residents described as "too unbearable considering the high cost of living at present."

Due to the increase, presently a three-bedroom apartment in Asaba ranges between N2.5million and N3 million, while self-contained apartment, which used to be N80,000 to N120,000, is now N300,000, and a one-room apartment goes for N120,000 a year.

Further investigation revealed that the hellish situation, since the last fuel price hike, has also increased commercial sex workers' activities during nightfall to meet up their rent and other needs.

Yesterday, Asaba, and environs witnessed scarcity of fuel unlike when it was officially N520.

There were no long queues but the current pump price of N670 per litre has continued to create ripples among motorists, with some angrily raining curses on the All Progressives Congress (APC)-led Federal Government.

Some of the motorists spoke to our correspondent at the popular Oando filling station around Awai Road. One of them, Mr. Charles Urehe said: "Tinubu, Tinubu, why are we suffering again under you?" Manager of the filling station who gave his name as Nnamdi Ofon, said: "NNPC increased the pump price and we followed suit because we must also do the needful; though no long queues, but we will continue to sell at N670 until

otherwise."

At Rain Oil, around Summit Junction, Asaba, in Ughelli, Warri, Ogwashi Uku, Ibusa, Okpanam, among others, the situation was not different as some motorists were seen in tears over the new pump price of N670.

They, however, called on President Tinubu to ensure Nigerians are safe instead of the terrible hardship currently being faced with.

A lawyer, Barrister Friday Osakpanmwan Ogierakhi who spoke to journalists, said: "This is APC again causing unnecessary hardship after Buhari. It's a shame that Nigerians are back again in suffering with Tinubu who assured that he will move Nigeria forward. Now, where are we for a litre to sell for N670? It is preposterous; however, Nigerians, say no to this current situation of insecurity, hardship."

Residents have resorted to tricking long distances as a temporary solution to the current pump price increase.

Lamentations everywhere in Port Harcourt as fuel price skyrockets

Rivers State

In Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, petrol price yesterday was jerked up from N540 a litre to N680 in some filling stations and up to N710 in others.

Daily Times correspondent who monitored the price situation met angry faces at filling stations in Port Harcourt, most expressing shock over the development.

A consumer at a Conoil Filling Station along Aba Road, who gave his name simply as Chijioke, told *Daily Times* that he had been to two stations, but left because they were selling at "unimaginable prices" of between N710 and N730 per

litre, but bought at N680 per litre from Conoil.

He said: "The news of the price increase jolted me. We were still trying to adjust to N540 per litre, now this. I have been to three filling stations before discovering that Conoil was selling at a better price. This is just unfair to the suffering masses of this country who are going through hell to put body and soul together."

In his own response, another customer at one of the filling stations at Ikwere Road, Port Harcourt, described the situation as "extremely bad".

According to him: "I bought fuel now from this filling station at N710. Can you believe that N4, 000 fuel managed to take my fuel gauge out of the red line. This is bad, unbearable.

"At this rate, these people are pushing the masses to the wall. How can we survive in this country with this? How can anybody blame those young people running away from this chaotic situation to foreign lands?"

It was observed that most filling stations were virtually empty and customers seen around were making very little purchases.

In Akwa Ibom, price of petrol rose to N600 per litre yesterday, leaving motorists and commuters in distress.

Most filling stations had earlier sold the product for between N515 and N550 before the latest hike.

However, shortly after the NNPC announcement of price increase at about 1pm, motorists who tried to buy the product were shocked that the price per litre had gone up to N600. As of press time, several motorists were found parking their cars at roadside while pedestrians trekked long distances.

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adding that fuel importers are gradually gaining confidence in the system.

Kyari said: "I don't have the details this moment. But we have the marketing wing of our company. They adjust prices depending on the market realities.

"This is really what is happening; this is the meaning of making sure that market regulates itself so that prices will go up and sometimes they will come down. This is what we have seen, and in reality, this is how the market works.

"There is no supply issue completely. When you go to the market, you buy the product; you come to the market, and you sell it at the prevailing market prices. There is nothing to do with supply shortage. We don't have supply issues. There is a robust supply. We have over 32 days of supply in the country.

"Yes, what I know is that the market forces will regulate the market. Prices will go down sometimes; sometimes it will go up. But there will be stability of supply and I am also assuring Nigerians that this is the best way to go forward so that we can adjust prices when market forces come to play.

"I don't have the details this moment, but I know that our marketing wing acts just like every other company in this business. I know that a number of companies have imported petroleum products today. So, many of them are on line. I'm sure my colleague would confirm this. Market forces have started to play; people have started having confidence in the market. Private sector people are importing products, but there is no way they can recover their cost if they cannot take market-reflective cost".

Corroborating the NNPCL Chief Executive, Farouk Ahmed, CEO, Nigerian Mainstream and Downstream

Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) debunked insinuations that the new price adjustment was set by NNPCL.

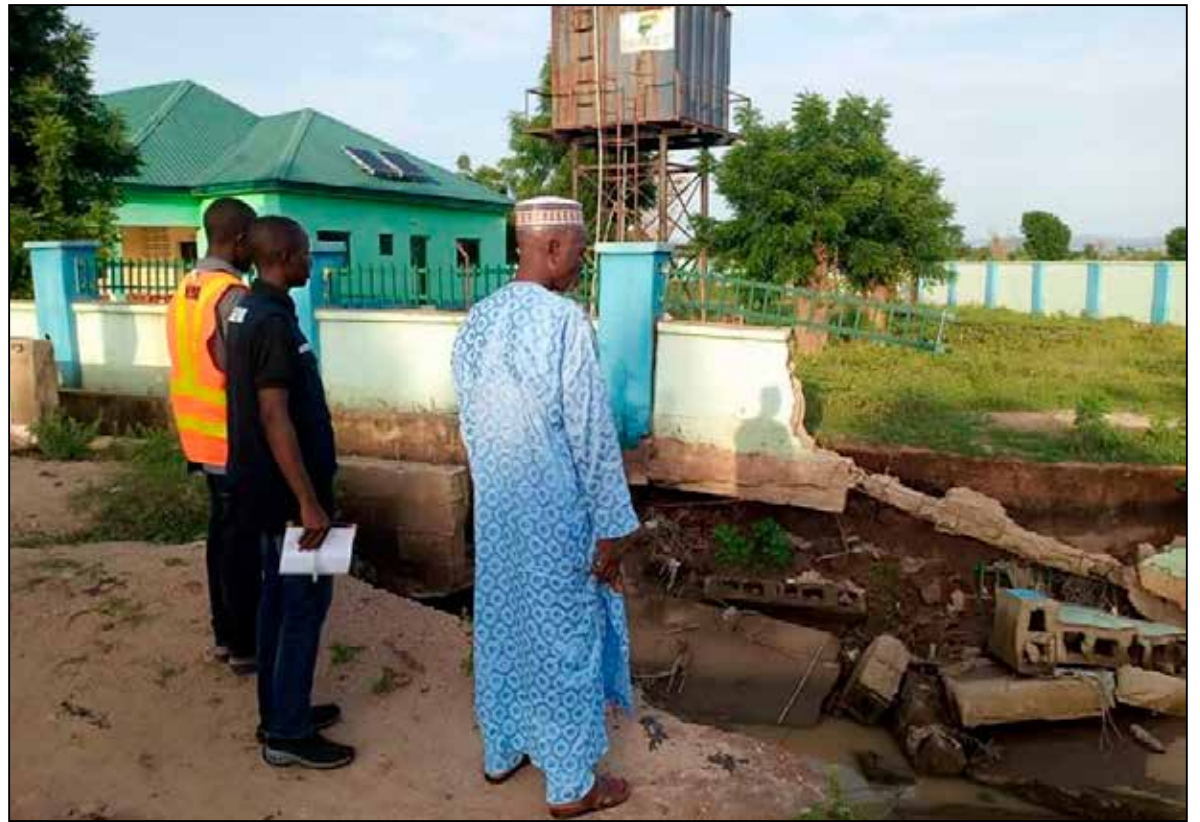
Ahmed declared: "As a regulator, I told you back in May that we are not going to be setting price. The market will determine itself and as you saw back in early June when prices came out, it was based on the cost of importation plus other logistics of distribution and, of course, the profit margin by the importer. This market is deregulated; it is open to all participants.

"As I mentioned yesterday when I was in Lagos, we have about 56 marketing companies that applied and obtained licenses to import. Out of those, 10 of them have indicated to supply within the third quarter, which is July, August, September.

"Already, we received some cargoes from these marketers: Prudent Energy, AYM Shafa and Emadeb. Emadeb Cargo is arriving tomorrow. So, this is just an encouragement to see that the market is liberated, and everyone is free to import so long as you are working within the framework, especially in terms of quality. But on pricing, as a regulator, we are not going to put a cap on the price because we are not part of those importing. We are not a marketing company; we are just a regulator.

"So, when you say market forces are working, basically what it is that you buy; you consider the price of crude going up. A couple of weeks ago, the price of crude was hovering around \$70/barrel.

"Now it's hovering around \$80/barrel. So, the crude price also drives the product price. You know, because the importers are importing, they are basing it on the cost of importation plus the freight and other cost elements in terms of local distribution".



NEMA Yola Operations Office in collaboration with Adamawa State Emergency Management Agency carried out on-the-spot assessment of flood disaster in some communities in Madagali LGA of Adamawa State.

Again, NYSC warns 'corpers' against unauthorized trips

UKPONO UKPONG

Members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) have, once again, been warned against unauthorized journeys or risky adventures that may expose them to danger during their service year.

Director General (DG), NYSC, Brig. Gen. Yusha'u Ahmed, gave the warning while addressing Corps members during his visit

to Jigawa State NYSC orientation camp in Fanisau Dutse.

He said that if, however, the journey was compulsory, they must obtain permission from the NYSC and also avoid night travel.

He explained that his administration placed top-most priority on the security and welfare of Corps members and NYSC officials and would continue to do everything possible to ensure their safety.

The DG advised that

while traveling and once it is 6pm, they should break their journey and pass the night in either military barracks, NYSC formations, police barracks or other safe places.

He advised Corps members to also take their personal security with seriousness and avoid associating with people of questionable characters.

"Be law-abiding, remain focused and always follow the rules and regulations in camp.

"You are from different socio-cultural backgrounds, learn from one another and make friends. You must tolerate one another because we expect high level of discipline from you.

"Avoid drugs, cultism, fraud and other social vices that may put you in trouble", he said.

General Ahmed also advised them to strive and study the felt needs of their host communities and execute projects to improve the locals' living standards.

First Lady renames Women Devt Centre after late Maryam Babangida

UKPONO UKPONG

First Lady Senator Oluremi Tinubu yesterday performed the official renaming of the National Women Development Center, Abuja.

Henceforth, the monument will be named Maryam Babangida National Center for Women Development.

In her address, the First lady noted the sterling contributions of the former First Lady, the late Dr. Maryam Babangida, to the lives of ordinary Nigerians, especially at the grassroots, through her pet program Better Life for rural dwellers.

Mrs. Tinubu described the late Maryam as an icon who redefined the scope of women's participation in national development through the National Center for Women Development (NCWD).

She expressed nostalgia at the fact that she was at the Ninth National Assembly when the bill for the renaming of the center was passed and assented into law and she is performing the actual renaming as the country's First Lady.

Mrs. Tinubu commended the Director General (DG) of the Center, Hajia Asabe Bashir and her management staff for taking the bold step towards the renaming of the center and also all the female National Assembly members who played leading roles in the legislative struggle for the renaming.

In his remarks at the event, the representatives of the Babangida family and sons of the late former First Lady, Mohammed Babangida, and his brother, Aminu, thanked the First Lady for the honor done their late mother.

Mohammed extended the appreciation to all the women who were contributory to the actualization of the renaming of the center.

The portrait of the First Lady Tinubu was also unveiled at the Hall of Fame.

She had earlier been inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2019 as the first female legislator to have been elected to the Senate for three consecutive terms.

Also with the First Lady was the wife of the Vice President, Hajia Nana Shetima and wives of State Governors, among others.



Reps to probe 150,000mts stolen crude oil, burnt vessel

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Moving the motion, Ereyitomi noted the recent reports of interception, arrest and subsequent destruction of vessels laden with stolen crude oil in the Niger Delta region, the most recent being MT TURA II on Friday, July 17 2023 in the escravos river in Warri South-West Local Government Area, Delta State.

He also noted that the vessel, an 800,000-tonne capacity one, was at the time of arrest and destruction, laden with about 150,000 metric tonnes of stolen crude oil.

The lawmaker said the vessel was set ablaze by a joint team of Nigeria security forces and representatives of the NNPC Ltd. on July 11, 2023, adding that in October 2022, a vessel named MT DEIMA which was laden with 1500 metric tonnes

of stolen crude oil, was also arrested and set ablaze in the Warri Escravos river.

Ereyitomi said the House was: "Also aware that setting ablaze stolen crude oil laden vessels will further destroy the well-endowed ecosystem of the Niger Delta region already ravaged by oil exploration.

"Worried that this act if allowed to continue, will further affect the livelihood and the overall well-being of the Niger Delta people who have fishing as their main occupation.

"Cognizance of the determination of the Federal Government to curb oil spill in the Niger Delta region and make the living condition of the people better."

Adopting the motion, the House mandated the Committees on Environment and Maritime (when constituted) to ensure compliance.



Former President Goodluck Jonathan (left) and President Bola Tinubu at the Presidential Villa in Abuja..yesterday.

ECOWAS leaders now battle-ready to fight terrorism, funding no problem –Tinubu

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taining democracy on the West Coast and fashioning out the framework for confronting security.

Earlier, during a question-and-answer session with journalists, President of the ECOWAS Commission, Omar Alieu Touray, reaffirmed the commitment of the leaders to fast-tracking the transition to democracy in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso.

He said ECOWAS would ensure that the transition in the three countries would be robust, credible, and inclusive, while more consideration would be given to specific models of peace and security, troops fighting terrorism, and adequate funding.

Touray said the commission would also welcome support from other partners in combating the insurgents.



Diri offers 2023 Time Magazine awardee, Ogoina, N40m research grant

AMOS OKIOMA,
YENAGOA.

Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa State has awarded a N40million research grant to Professor Dimie Ogoina, an indigene of the State who is also named among the Time Magazine 2023 100 Most Influential Persons in the World.

Diri made the pronouncement when Prof. Ogoina, accompanied by members of the central planning committee for celebrating the recipient, paid him a courtesy visit in Government House, Yenagoa, the State capital.

Governor Diri, who applauded Ogoina for his dedication to duty, noted that the Chief Medical Director (CMD) of Niger Delta University (NDU) Teaching Hospital, Okolobiri, in the State was instrumental to

the reduced number of deaths recorded in Bayelsa during the COVID-19 pandemic that ravaged the world in 2020.

While congratulating the infectious disease physician for his achievement, the Governor stated that he not only made Bayelsa State proud, but Nigeria and Africa.

He said: "The moment I assumed office (in February 2020), we had COVID-19 outbreak. Prof. Ogoina was up and doing. His work ethics were second to none.

"I am not surprised that he has been recognized. Part of why we didn't record several deaths in Bayelsa was as a result of the leadership he gave, working with the Ministry of Health.

"You have made our state proud. The state government hereby commits itself to a research grant for you to the tune of N40 million. We know you will bring

more honour to Bayelsa.

"Let me on behalf of the Prosperity Government and the good people of Bayelsa State congratulate you for this feat you achieved. It is not a mean feat to be so recognized internationally. You are a proud son of Bayelsa, Kolokuma/ Opokuma, of Nigeria, and indeed Africa.

"The story about Prof. Ogoina is well-known. All that have worked with him attest to the fact that he sticks to his work regardless of the environment he finds himself."

Earlier, the State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Pabara Igwele, described Ogoina as worth celebrating due to his achievements in healthcare administration, noting that the adoption of his advised protocol saved many Nigerians from death during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his remarks, Prof. Ogoina attributed the recognition and award to not just

his diligence but also the grace of God, saying his story was an inspiration to many as he singlehandedly carried out the research at Okolobiri in 2017.

Ogoina stated that his award-winning discovery was on the route of transmission of the monkey pox disease.

Also speaking, secretary of the Ogoina celebration committee, Dr. Aseima Namara, stated that the world was beginning to look at Bayelsa positively as a result of the recipient's achievements.

He said the NDUTH CMD was worth celebrating due to his hard work and dedication to duty.

He also commended the Diri administration for its achievements in the health sector and appealed for support for a one-week programme in honour of the awardee tagged: 'Festival of Grace and Hard Work'.

Oyo Assembly approves Makinde's request to appoint 20 special advisers

STEPHEN GBADAMOSI,
IBADAN

Oyo State House of Assembly, yesterday, approved the state governor, Engr. Seyi Makinde's request to appoint 20 special advisers.

The approval was sequel to a letter of request forwarded to the House by Governor Makinde, which was read on the floor of the House.

The letter read in part: "I wish to bring to the attention of the House that since the assumption of this administration, I have made only few appointments. However, there is a need to get other appointees on board to assist the Executive

Arm in the implementation of its policies.

"It is as a result of this that I seek the legislature's kind approval to appoint 20 special advisers to occupy strategic portfolios. It is pertinent to inform you that my request is in line with Section 196 Subsection 1 and 2 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)."

In their contributions, the lawmakers unanimously lauded the governor's decision to appoint the special advisers.

For instance, House Majority Leader, Hon. Sanjo Adedoyin and Hon. Olusola Owolabi (Ibadan North-East II) said it was imperative to grant the request to enable



more able hands join Gov. Makinde in his quest to deliver on his election campaign promises.

House Speaker, Hon. Adebo Ogundoyin, said

the approval was granted to give 'Omituntun 2.0', a catchphrase for the governor's second term expected more effective performance, stronger footing.

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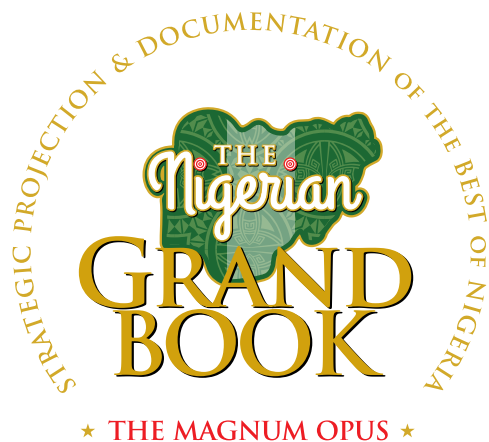
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Fuel Subsidy Removal: a Bumpy Road Ahead for Nigerians

BY SHALOM KASIM

As fuel prices continue to soar, the question of where Nigerians can travel to within their limited means looms large. The removal of fuel subsidy, though touted as a necessary step, has unleashed a chain reaction of hardship that is felt deeply by the citizens. The government's promises of relief, while offering a glimmer of hope, fail to provide immediate respite.

The Fallout

In a bold move that sent shockwaves throughout Nig-

eria, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, upon his inauguration on May 29th, announced the long-awaited removal of fuel subsidy. This decision, met with mixed reactions, has set in motion a series of events that have left Nigerians grappling with the harsh realities of escalating fuel prices and its far-reaching consequences.

Since the removal of fuel subsidy, the nation has witnessed a flurry of travel problems that have adversely affected the lives of ordinary Nigerians. The recent

announcement of yet another fuel price hike, with petrol now soaring to an astonishing N617 per litre, has only exacerbated the situation. The affordability of travel has become a distant dream, and Nigerians are left wondering where they can venture to, given their limited financial means.

The Domino Effect

The removal of fuel subsidy has caused a ripple effect across the nation, permeating various aspects of everyday life. As petrol prices skyrocket, the prices of goods and services have followed

suit. Basic necessities, such as food, have become increasingly unaffordable, burdening already struggling households. The cost of transportation has soared to new heights, making even short journeys a luxury many cannot afford.

Government Promises

In the face of mounting criticism and public outcry, President Tinubu's administration has promised relief to alleviate the hardships caused by the fuel subsidy removal. However, as Nigerians bear the brunt of this decision, the promised palliatives seem distant and intangible. The administration assures the public that the framework for these remedies is being worked out, but the lack of immediate relief only adds to the frustration and disillusionment felt by the people.

The Real Deal: Seeking Light at the End of the Tunnel

The removal of fuel subsidy has undoubtedly thrust Nigerians into an era of uncertainty and economic strain. While the government insists that this painful transition is a necessary rebirth for the nation, many are left



questioning the cost at which this rebirth comes. The hopes of a brighter future are clouded by the immediate challenges that seem insurmountable for those already struggling to make ends meet.

As fuel prices continue to soar, the question of where Nigerians can travel to within their limited means looms large. The removal of fuel subsidy, though touted as a necessary step, has unleashed a chain reaction of hardship that is felt deeply by the citizens. The government's promises of relief, while offering a glimmer of hope, fail to provide immediate respite. As Nigerians grapple with the harsh realities of their pockets being stretched beyond their means, they are left wondering when they will see light at the end of this bumpy road.

As NASS gets N70b, poor masses N12b palliatives, what about the NYSC corps members?

By Auwal Ahmed Ibrahim



various states to serve the country are suffocating in hunger as N33,000 monthly stipend cannot afford their transportation and feeding with the current inflation index.

While NASS is sharing the palliative money, nothing is being said of the welfare of Youth Corps members that dedicate their strength and vigor to serve the nation. 400,000 Youth Corps members are annually posted to various states outside their native areas to serve the people and the nation.

Therefore, as almost unemployed persons, they need succor at this time of economic hardship to survive, and their situation should be considered.

In a response to a question on the sharing formula of the N12 billion-for-the-masses palliative, the National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO) didn't mention Corps members among beneficiaries of the palliatives.

It is not only the Youth Corps members that face the hardship of the time, but the masses also do, as the present hunger hunts to kill Nigerians:

How painful could this be when a father is crowded by his wife and three children and the second child of three said to the father: "Daddy, I am hungry, I need food... I will die of hunger."

And the helpless father

burst into tears. Without uttering a word, he sluggishly went outside the room, staggering and weeping profusely like a baby. This is a true story.

For a bitter truth; Nigerians are living a hellish life presently. They helplessly watch their loved ones die of disease because of poverty and hunger occasioned by the fuel subsidy removal.

Many families, even children of tender age, now eat just once a day. Poverty has taken over the affairs of Nigerians as we surrendered to its wickedness.

Nothing is easy and cheaply accessible in Nigeria; life has become unbearable and very expensive.

Only few are exempt from the heat of the moment after the subsidy removal. Civil servants have become the true servants of hunger; marketers and traders are eating even their capital.

Almost all Nigerians are living a deficit life. Inflation is trending while schools have become expensive for students to bear. People now give collateral of their goods, items and working tools to collect food for their families.

Marriage has become flexible because of poverty and hunger among beloved couples.

Hunger has destroyed hope, ambitions have become empty and Nigerians' visions lie on survival. Poverty has become

the devil among the saints; while poverty gives birth to crimes and criminals, life is becoming tougher and suffocating. How can maximum security be achievable in this doom time of banditry, kidnapping and insurgency?

Subsidy removal, even though good for Nigeria but the effects are devastating because no pre-measures were taken to address its post-challenges.

While Nigerians are in abject poverty, with most unable to eat three meals a day, but the National Assembly members did not change to sacrifice anything for Nigeria's development amidst the fuel subsidy hardship.

In just less than two months, the 469 National Assembly members proposed 140% salary, N70 billion palliatives, proposed N40 billion for cars, N24 billion for accommodation, N110 billion allowances for wardrobe, newspapers, kitchen and travelling, domestic staff -all for themselves!

Even though NASS got N328.1 billion in the 2023

budget and routinely collect the highest salary than all government workers in Nigeria, yet they always seek and ask for more. While the 469 National Assembly members are voted to represent the voters, they argue most about their interests and represent themselves than the citizens.

But, if the National Assembly members and the President should prioritize the voters' interests and work accordingly, there will be no political thuggery, political dogs, political beggars, political warfare and zero venomous hunger in the land. Unfortunately, politicians can do anything to get power for unlimited favors.

With many suggestions from people on how the Government should share the palliative fund to ease the difficult experiences in the lives of Nigerians, the government should consider the three most important areas of human life: agriculture, education and health.

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Increasing cases of drug abuse among Nigerian youths

Despite the campaign against drug abuse by government at all levels, non-governmental organisations and individuals, and particularly the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigerian youths are getting neck deeper into the vice.

The devastating consequences of drug use know no geographic, economic, social, or ethnic boundaries. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people around the globe – rich, poor, educated, illiterate, male, female, and even young children die from drug abuse, and millions more are victims of addiction and drug-fueled violence.

Beyond the toll drugs take on health and welfare, substance use disorders undermine economic development, diminish social and political stability, and reduce security in countries and regions around the world.

It is no longer news that a greater percentage of youths in Nigeria today get themselves involved in one form of drug abuse or the other.

Amidst the widespread commendations over the ban of codeine and tramadol by the Federal Government, a new large-scale nationwide survey has revealed that drug use by people within the ages of 15 and 64 years in Nigeria is on the rise.

A survey on drug use in Nigeria not long ago revealed that the nation is breeding a wild generation of drug addicts. This gory state of affairs of substance abuse calls for the declaration of a state of emergency, considering the fact that the youth population is the fulcrum of national development.

The 2018 National Drug Use Survey, a joint research by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Centre for Research and Information on Substance Abuse (CRISA) with technical support from the UNODC, gave a damning account of rising drug use in Nigeria, noting that as of the time of the research, 14.3 million Nigerians aged between 15 and 64 years engaged in drug use.

Of this figure, the survey added that about three million were drug dependent and suffering from substance-induced disorders.

Another nationwide survey by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) funded by European Union (EU) in partnership with the Federal Government said no fewer than 10.6 million Nigerians abused cannabis in 2018, while 4.6 million abused opium.

The report said that 2.4 million youths and adults also abused cough syrups with 92,000 more using cocaine. Other drugs commonly abused during the period are tranquilizers and sedatives, solvent, inhalers, amphetamines and prescription stimulants.

This survey also reports that one of four drug users in Nigeria is a woman. Adding that the extent of drug use in Nigeria is comparatively high compared to previous global annual prevalence of any drug abuse use.

Basically, youths in the country inhale, inject and consume psychotic and narcotic substances and drugs at will, easily evading the scrutiny of a society distracted by economic malaise at the expense of their

future wellbeing.

Truth be told, the impact of drug abuse is lethal. Many families are contending with drug addicts; some of them have quit schooling and work; others are on the verge of lunacy or battling with acute diseases.

The number of drug users in Nigeria is estimated at 14.4 per cent or 14.3 million people aged between 15 and 64 years according to the results of the National Drug Use Survey. The data suggests that the prevalence of drug use in Nigeria is more than twice the global average of 5.6 per cent.

The extent of drug use in Nigeria is comparatively high when compared with the 2016 global annual prevalence of any drug use of 5.6 per cent among the adult population.

There is a gap in meeting the needs for treatment and care for people with drug use disorders. With close to three million Nigerians living with some level of drug dependence, the extremely limited availability of drug counselling and treatment services exacerbates this health crisis.

This is indeed striking and alarming and calls for concerted efforts to mitigate the negative consequences of this rising menace on the health, socio-economic and security of our nation.

Even though the Federal Government has over the years responded boldly to this global challenge with innovative, standard-setting drug demand reduction programmes, we are of the opinion that there is need to solve the problem.

Awareness programmes need to be developed to address the perception of stigma among the youth and their families over substance use and to remove barriers towards seeking care for these problems.

These programmes should also address the inability of the youth to perceive addictive behaviours as a health risk.

Parents and support persons' involvement and engagement in youth programmes should be strengthened further as it improves communication and better decision-making for youth health issues.

Family-based prevention programmes emphasising parenting skills, training or improving family functioning, communication and family rules regarding substance abuse needs to be introduced.

Also, teachers are a major source of information to young people. Hence, strengthening the role and performance of educational institutions, ensuring availability of counselling services, gender sensitivity issues, making life skills courses a part of curriculum are required for health and welfare of young people.

Most importantly, in all youth related programmes, young people should be involved and engaged to empower them to make informed decisions.

Planner Note:

Cartoons and words on marble section

Copy any cartoons and event photos from the archive section in past editions sent to you days ago. Ensure that the date the cartoon was published is included.

I'll send words on marble shortly for use October 12.

Cartoons from our Archives

626-STN-1980-07-06-024



626-STN-1980-03-30-009



Words on Marble



Olusegun Obasanjo

My gut feelings and my faith tell me that until God shuts a door, no human can shut it.



Nwankwo Kanu

Trophies are good, but saving somebody who could die, giving them hope of a life, that means a lot to me.



Martin Luther King

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

Tinubu sympathizes with parents of two-year old killed by stray bullet in Delta

UKPONO UKPONG

President Bola Tinubu yesterday expressed sadness over the death of two-year-old Ivan Omhonrina, killed by a stray bullet during an operation by officers of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency

(NDLEA) at Okpanam, Osimili North Local Government Area (LGA) of Delta State.

This was contained in a statement signed by the Special Adviser to the President on Special Duties, Communications and Strat-

egy, Dele Alake, in Abuja.

"I mourn the death of little Ivan Omhonrina and sympathize with his parents for the painful experience of losing an innocent child in a most tragic manner.

"Ivan did not deserve to die that way. We must ensure

the incident did not end like that and that what happened to Ivan does not happen to any other person again.

"I also pray for the quick recovery of Eronmonsele, who was reportedly injured in that unfortunate event.

"That incident is unac-

ceptable. We must unravel those who foisted agony on the Omhonrinas and ensure they are brought to justice," President Tinubu said.

Meanwhile, the President has directed the NDLEA management to speedily and thoroughly investigate

the incident with a view to punishing those found culpable.

The President charged security agents to be more professional and careful when conducting their operations to avoid risking the lives of innocent Nigerians.

Shettima assures of economic policies that'll drive investment, create jobs

UKPONO UKPONG

Vice President (VP) Kashim Shettima has assured Nigerians of the determination of the Tinubu administration to continue to develop economic policies and programmes that will drive investments and create more jobs, especially in agriculture and the digital sector.

The VP gave the assurance yesterday when the board and management of Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), led by the Chairman, Mr. Olaniyi Yusuf, paid him a courtesy visit at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

According to the Vice President, "the President is determined to redefine the meaning and concept of modern leadership; rest assured that we will continue to develop policies that will drive investment."

The VP explained that the Federal Government will, among other measures, enhance engagements and partnerships with the private sector, including the NESG, to achieve its objectives.

"I will suggest that we have a quarterly mini summit (between the NESG and NEC) so that we can digest the previous three months, cross-pollinate ideas and come up with robust solutions to our nation's challenges. It is absolutely essential because the world today is knowledge-driven. Nobody has the monopoly of ideas; that is why we have to constantly engage with you."

Speaking about harnessing Nigeria's population for economic development, VP Shettima noted that "the trajectory of global growth facing Africa and Nigeria

will make or mar that transition. The anticipated demographic bulge by 2050 where we are expected to be the 3rd most populous nation on earth is a major factor."

He added: "Nigeria is a unique nation; we have to make it work. Opportunities abound everywhere. By 2035, there will be over 65 million global talent deficits. USA, Russia and China will have 6 million talent deficits. We are at a unique position to take advantage and create jobs in the digital world.

"We have the capacity to turn the anticipated demographic bulge into demographic dividends or they will be the demographic disaster that will consume all of us.

"So, it is absolutely in our self-enlightened interest to salvage our country. Agriculture, digital education and energy transition, in terms of infrastructure, are some of the key areas that we will focus attention on."

Earlier, in his remarks, Mr. Yusuf said the visit was to congratulate the VP and offer the group's support for the Tinubu administration, especially in strategic areas of the economy.

"The NESG offers its support and is always willing to assist the new government in its strategic priorities and initiatives aimed at actualizing the mandate of the President Bola Tinubu administration," he said.

Yusuf stated that different sector experts from the NESG will always be available to provide technical and associated support for the National Economic Council (NEC) and other key interventions by the Federal Government.

Akwa State police avert mob action on two suspected thieves

ISAAC JOB,
UYO

Possible death awaited two suspected thieves who allegedly stole two bottles of Campari drink and an electricity generating set from different towns in Akwa Ibom State had the police not stepped into the matter and rescued them from irate mobs.

In a statement issued in Uyo, the State capital, yesterday, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Superintendent (SP) Odiko Mcdon, said one of the suspects, identified as Ubong Sunny Ossom, was caught allegedly stealing the drinks at a supermarket in Ekpene Ukim, Uruan Local Government Area (LGA).

Mcdon disclosed that the other suspect, whose name he gave as Christian Effiong, was caught allegedly stealing the generator from a church in Ikot Ambon, Ibesikpo Asutan LGA.

He said the two were rescued as angry crowds, which first held them, were on the verge of setting them ablaze.

"One Ubong Sunny Ossom, 'm' ,of Ikot Edebe village in Nsit Atai LGA who stole 2 bottles of Campari at Godslight Supermarket, Ekpene Ukim, in Uruan LGA and one Christian Effiong, 'm' ,of Nung Atai okobo village in Okobo LGA who stole a generator at Mount Zion Church, Ikot Ambon in Ibesikpo Asutan LGA, were both rescued at the verge

of being burnt after they were caught for stealing. This trend is becoming too frequent and alarming," the PPRO said.

Mcdon who decried the wave of jungle justice in the state, condemned mob action that sent alleged victims to their early graves.

"While the (state Police) Command condemns in

totality the act of stealing, which is a crime, subjecting the perpetrators to jungle justice is not in tandem with our legal system," he warned.

He said the state Commissioner of Police, Olatoye Durusinmi, has warned perpetrators of jungle justice to desist from such acts as they would be arrested and prosecuted.



Police officer who filed charges against Oduah not our staff, EFCC tells court

ANDREW OROLUA,
ABUJA.

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) yesterday denounced a police officer who filed an eight-count criminal charges against former Minister of Aviation, Senator Stella Oduah at the Federal High Court in Abuja, as an ex-staff.

EFCC lawyer H.A. Okonfua told the Federal High Court that the police officer, Ibrahim Mohammed, who filed the charge, was no longer a staff of the anti-graft agency. She said that EFCC had investigated the source and authenticity of the charge as directed by the court and found that the person who signed it (Ibrahim Mohammed) was redeployed to Police Forces Headquarters on November 4, 2022.

He signed the charge on June 22, 2023, as a staff of EFCC and is prosecuting the case himself seven months after his exit from the commission.

Okonfua further told the court that the detailed report of EFCC's investigation has been filed at the court registry.

Justice James Omotosho said that since the report is not yet in his file, he will adjourn the matter to October 4.

It is recalled that Tuesday last week, a prosecuting police officer had caused suspicion in court when he appeared as EFCC lawyer trying to arraign Oduah on the eight-count charge.

Trial court judge, Omotosho suspected foul play when he noticed that a police officer who claimed he has been redeployed from EFCC to Legal Department, Force Headquarters since November 4, 2022, was still appearing for EFCC in the matter.

A mild drama then ensued in the court room that culminated in Justice Omotosho ordering investigation of the said prosecution counsel (Ibrahim Mohammed) who filed the charge against Oduah.

The judge ruled that, "in view of the fact that Ibrahim Mohammed signed this charge on June 22, 2023 and having admitted himself to have left EFCC in Novem-

ber 2022, this court makes an order directing EFCC to investigate and report back. Counsel in company with police shall report to EFCC immediately."

Oyo fixes date for 2023 common entrance examinations

STEPHEN GBADAMOSI,
IBADAN

Oyo State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is set to conduct screening exercise for primary six pupils transiting into public junior secondary schools (JSS) in the coming academic session, on July 31.

This was contained in a circular released by the Registrar, Mr. Yekeen M. B., on behalf of the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Mr. Olusanjo Adeniyi, in Ibadan, the state capital.

The release indicated that the examination would be held across the state's public schools by 9:00 a.m.

The Permanent Secretary, therefore, called on all heads

of school, concerned teachers and students to strictly adhere to the screening/ placement examinations timetable.

The circular reads: "Concerned people are enjoined to pass the information to all relevant stakeholders to ensure everyone is well-informed and adequately prepared for the screening examination exercise.

"The Permanent Secretary also emphasized the importance of adhering to the designated timetable, encouraging students to prepare for the screening/examination.

"Head of schools, concerned parents and students are admonished to regularly check for updates as well as further instructions from the state Ministry of Education."



Tinubu to review N8000 palliative as NLC berates FG on 'deceit' of Nigerians

UKPONO UKPONG

President Bola Tinubu has ordered the immediate review of the proposed N8,000 cash transfer to help cushion the effect of the fuel subsidy removal.

According to a statement signed by the Special Adviser to the President on Special Duties, Communications and Strategy, Dele Alake, the order follows series of commentaries from Nigerians on the Federal Government's planned action.

Alake said that the President, being a listening leader who has vowed to always put Nigerians at the heart of his policy and programmes, has emplaced a broad spectrum of reliefs to bring help to Nigerians.

He assured Nigerians that the N500 billion approved by parliament to cushion the pain occasioned by the end of subsidy regime will be judiciously utilised.

Furthermore, he also promised that the beneficiaries of the reliefs shall be Nigerians, irrespective of their ethnic, religious or political affiliation.

The statement said: "You will agree with me that it has become part of the culture of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration to constantly dialogue with Nigerians who voted him into office.

"The President covenanted with Nigerians that their welfare and security will be topmost in the Renewed Hope Agenda of his government.

"In the last few days, the conventional and

new media platforms have become awash with stories of the government intending to embark on conditional cash transfer to vulnerable households mostly affected by the painful but necessary decision to remove subsidy from petrol.

"The story has been widely reported that the Federal Government is proposing to give 12 million households from the poorest of the poor N8,000 monthly for a period of six months as government palliative to reduce the discomfort being experienced by Nigerians consequent upon subsidy removal.

"A lot of ill-informed imputations have been read into the programme by not a few naysayers. The Administration believes in the maxim that 'when there is prohibition, there must be provision'. Since subsidy, the hydra-headed monster threatening to kill the economy, has been stopped, government has emplaced a broad spectrum of reliefs to bring help to Nigerians.

"While it should be noted that cash programme is not the only item in the whole gamut of relief package of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, as a listening leader who has vowed to always put Nigerians at the heart of his policy and programme, the President has directed as follows: That the N8,000 conditional cash transfer programmed envisaged to bring succour to most vulnerable households be reviewed immediately. This is in deference to



Mobil Filling Station, Agidingbi, Ogba, Lagos... yesterday.

the views expressed by Nigerians against it.

"That the whole gamut of palliative package of government be unveiled to Nigerians.

"Immediate release of fertilizers and grains to approximately 50 million farmers and households respectively in all the 36 states and the FCT.

"The President further assures Nigerians that the N500 billion approved by parliament to cushion the pain occasioned by the end of subsidy regime will be judiciously utilized. The beneficiaries of the reliefs shall be Nigerians irrespective of their ethnic, religious or political affiliation.

"President Bola Tinubu has promised to always prioritize the wellbeing of Nigerians and he is irrevocably committed to the vow. A number of decisions taken so far by this Administration have buttressed this stance.

"You will recall that the President took a similar decision after listening to complaints from the business community/stakeholders about burdensome taxes, particularly multiplicity of taxes they are made to experience. This warranted the signing of four (4) Executive Orders cancelling some classes of taxes, while suspending the implementation dates of others.

"In addition, the President has also set up a Tax Reform/Fiscal Policy Committee to bring up recommendations that will engender a wholesome fiscal environment for the country and remove anti-business barriers.

"I wish to assure Nigerians that President Tinubu will continue to be a listening leader whose

ears will not be dull to the views expressed by the citizenry. The President believes government exists to cater for the interest of the people and he has demonstrated this so clearly."

Meanwhile, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), yesterday condemned the Federal Government's plans to share N8,000 to 12 million poor households as palliative to cushion the effect of fuel subsidy removal.

In a statement, NLC President, Comrade Joe Ajaero, also kicked against the Federal Government's move to pay National Assembly members N70 billion and the Judiciary N36 billion, describing it as the most "insensitive, reckless and brazen diversion of our collective patrimony into the pockets of public officers whose sworn responsibility it is to protect our nation's treasury."

Ajaero, while describing the move as hush money and outright bribery of the other arms of government to acquiesce the aberration to spend N500 billion on palliatives, said NLC does not have confidence on how the data for the "never changing 12 million poorest households was generated, nor do we have confidence in the mechanisms being pursued for the distribution of the cash transfers."

The statement read: "It is on this basis that the NLC strongly condemns the decision of the Tinubu-led administration to seek the approval of the National Assembly to obtain another tranche of external loans worth N500 billion from the World Bank for the purposes of carrying out

a phantom palliative measure to cushion the effect of its poorly thought-out hike in the prices of Premium Motor Spirit. Remember that the US\$800 million which was already proposed before the devaluation of the Naira by this government was worth about N400 billion then but is now worth about N650 billion after devaluation. It is from this, it proposes to bring out N500 billion for distribution.

"The proposal to pay N8,000 to each of the so-called 12 million poorest Nigerian households for a period of six months insults our collective intelligence and makes a mockery of our patience and abiding faith in social dialogue which the government may have alluded to, albeit pretentiously.

"The further proposal to pay National Assembly members the sum of N70 billion and the Judiciary N36 billion is the most insensitive, reckless and brazen diversion of our collective patrimony into the pockets of public officers whose sworn responsibility it is to protect our nation's treasury. We believe that this may amount to hush money and outright bribery of the other arms of government to acquiesce the aberration.

"It is unconscionable that a government that has foisted so much hardship on the people within nearly two months of coming into office will make a proposal that clearly rewards the rich in public office to the detriment of the poor. What this means all this while is that the government is seeking ways of robbing the very poor Nigerians so that the rich can become richer.

"There is no other way to explain the proposal to pay a miserly sum of N8,000 to each of the mysterious poorest 12 million Households for six months which amounts to N48,000 and pay just 469 National Legislators N70 billion or about N149 million each while the Judiciary that has about 72 Appeal Court Judges, 33 National Industrial Court Judges, 75 Federal High Court Judges and 21 Supreme Court Judges and a total of about 201 Judges receives a total of N35 billion or N174 million each. If these other two arms are projected to receive this, what members of the Executive Council will receive is better left to the imagination of Nigerians perhaps, the balance N150 billion will go to them.

"These proposals are not just unacceptable to Nigerian workers but are also dictatorial thus undemocratic. It is not a product of social dialogue which would have produced collectively negotiated outcomes by critical national stakeholders. We had thought that this government, given the circumstances of its emergence, ought to have been a stickler to all the preachments of the fine tenets of democracy which would have shored up its image and begins to build legitimacy for itself; unfortunately, it seems to be in a hurry to abandon the remaining pretensions to democracy that the previous administration left behind."

The NLC said the actions of the government showed that it does not have trust and confidence in the very Presidential Committee



Abia Assembly suspends lawmaker

UGOCHUKWU UGOJI-EKE,
ABA

The member representing Obingwa East constituency in the Abia State House of Assembly, Hon. Solomon Akpulonu, has been suspended for 14 sitting days over alleged acts capable of disrupting the activities of the House.

Making the pronouncement on the floor of the House yesterday, the Speaker, Hon. Emmanuel Ihuoma Emeruwa, said the 8th Abia House of Assembly cannot tolerate acts of insubordination.

Emeruwa noted that for some days now, the suspended member has been acting at variance to the proper ways members of the House were supposed to.

He accused Hon. Akpulonu of inciting members of the House against the leadership of the 8th Assembly, a situation the Speaker described as inimical to the growth and progress of the House in particular and the state in general.

The Speaker pointed out that it was absolutely wrong for the lawmaker to be granting press interviews and revealing all that the House has been doing, without proper clearance from the leadership of the House, insisting that what is done in the House should remain in the House.

Emeruwa said: "Hon. Akpulonu has been causing chaos in the Assembly since its inauguration and we have been tolerating for too long. As lawmakers, it is normal to disagree as long as it is done with decorum within the confines of the law."

The Speaker said even as Hon. Akpulonu was not present during plenary, his suspension will be communicated to him immediately.

It is recalled that the 11 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) members in the 8th House of Assembly had staged several protests to the effect that the Majority Leader seat, among others, be given to the PDP, given they conceded the speakership and deputy speakership seats to Labour Party whose lawmakers are just 10 in the House.

However, the leadership of House went ahead to announce member for Arochuku, Hon. Okoro Uchenna as Majority Leader of the House, which further angered the PDP members.

The Speaker has also failed to read out the PDP letter nominating its members for majority leadership position—an action which also led to another peaceful protest and the subsequent rowdy session during their last plenary on July 11, 2023.

Reps order FAAN to install specialized medical equipment at airports

TOM OKPE,
ABUJA

● To avoid sudden deaths from high BP, diabetes, others

House of Representatives has called on the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) to put in place adequate medical facilities in the nations' airports to forestall sudden death from high blood pressure (HBP) and diabetes, among other ailments.

The House also urged the Ministries of Aviation and Health to collaborate with relevant healthcare professionals and organizations to establish and operate HBP and sugar levels check desks at airports and local clinics across the country.

It further asked that the desks be manned by trained healthcare personnel who can accurately measure blood pressure and sugar levels, provide basic counselling, and refer individuals to appropriate medical services, if necessary.

These resolutions were sequel to the amendment and adoption of a motion moved by Rep Kalejaiye Adebayo Paul (Lagos State) at plenary yesterday.



Moving the motion, Paul said air travel can be physically demanding and stressful for many passengers and these factors, combined with the potential health risks associated with long flights and varying environmental condi-

tions, make it essential to prioritize the health of individuals passing through our airports.

He noted that: "By establishing free High Blood Pressure and Sugar Levels Check Desks at all airports, we can promote early de-

tection and preventive care for conditions such as hypertension and diabetes.

"Regular monitoring of these vital health parameters will enable travelers to seek medical intervention and prevent potential complications.

The provision of these check desks will demonstrate our commitment to public health promotion."

Adopting the motion, the House mandated its Committee on Aviation (when constituted) to ensure compliance.

Reps propose wearing of cameras by active-duty security personnel

TOM OKPE,
ABUJA

House of Representatives said it is important for active-duty personnel of security and law enforcement agencies to wear cameras to serve against extra-judicial killings and human rights abuse across the country.

Deputy Speaker of the House, Hon. Benjamin Kalu, made the call while contributing on a motion 'The alleged killing of Ivan Omhonrina' by personnel of the National Drug Law Enforce-

ment Agency, (NDLEA) in Asaba, Delta State capital.

Kalu, who presided over plenary yesterday, said one of the things the practice will help in achieving is to "make law enforcement more transparent," adding that it has worked in Lagos by LASTMA.

The House also urged the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to take over the investigation and prosecution of the officer(s) involved in the shooting and killing of Ivan Omhonrina, to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to book.

Moving the motion, the

sponsor, Rep Unyime Idem from Akwa Ibom,

noted that on July 13, 2023, a two-year-old Ivan Onose Omhonrina, who was returning from school tragically lost his life due to a stray bullet fired by NDLEA operatives in Asaba.

The lawmaker said the younger brother of the deceased, Eromosele Omhonrina was also shot in one of his eyes.

Adopting the motion, the House observed a minute's silence for Omhonrina and other victims, who tragically lost their lives in similar circumstances.

Drama at Abuja Markets Management Ltd as two feud over MD position

UKPONO UKPONG

There is palpable tension in Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) as the sacked Managing Director (MD), Abuja Markets Management Limited (AMML), Alhaji Abubakar Faruk, yesterday locked out his successor, Engr. Abbas Yakubu, from the office,

Trouble started at AMML, one of FCTA's revenue-generating agencies, when Faruk stormed his former office accompanied by some police officers to lock out the new acting Managing Director, Engr. Yakubu.

The embattled Faruk was allegedly suspended by the immediate past FCT Minister, Malam Muhammad Bello, but he obtained a restraining court order and has been allegedly scheming to retain his appointment with the help of some powerful Northerners.

It was gathered that his argument was predicated on the fact that his appointment was not tenured and, therefore, he cannot be removed from office ahead of his statutory exit date.

Notwithstanding these, Faruk's employment was terminated by Mr. Abubakar Maina on behalf of AMML's shareholders vide a letter dated July 17, 2023, and signed by him (Maina), as the Group Managing Director (GMD) of Abuja Investments Company Ltd (AICL), the supervising agency over AMML.

But fresh trouble erupted yesterday morning when the sacked Faruk stormed AMML's office, located in Gudu District of Abuja, with some police officers and locked the MD's office, insisting that nobody will access it and take possession of same.

It was learnt that following the chaos created by his action, the staff members have been apprehensive, not knowing what fate will befall them.

Staff members of AMML also complained that the cops that came with the sacked MD harassed and created serious psychological trauma for them.

While the FCTA authorities were yet to comment on the matter, the management staff of AMML was summoned to Durumi Police station, Abuja, so stem any acts likely to cause breach of public peace.

Confirming the incident, AMML's Public Relations Officer, Innocent Amechina said: "He locked his own office. Yesterday, the shareholders of AMML decided to relieve him of his job as the MD, and it was made known to everybody. Surprisingly, that resolution was supposed to take effect from today. He came with four policemen, locked his office and also changed the lock.

"As I speak to you now, we are at the Durumi Police station, with both the sacked and new acting Managing Director, Engr. Abbas Yakubu".

Bauchi monarch leads Muslim faithful to pray for rain

In a case of different strokes for different folks, while some parts of the country are groaning under heavy flooding, in Bauchi the existing drought has led the Emir, Alhaji Rilwani Sulaiman Adamu, and his subjects to resort to spiritual exercise exhorting heaven to send down rain.

Leading thousands of Muslim faithful in special prayer yesterday, the Emir besought Allah's intervention for abundant rain in the emirate and the state.

The prayer was held at the central Eid ground.

The special prayer kicked off at the Juma'a mosque in Gwallaga, Bauchi, by 8 am. It was also held simultaneously in every Izalah Eid ground in the state capital.

Among the JIBWIS sect, its leadership implored the Ummah (Muslim faithful) all over the state to take part in the prayers to enable the rains to come,

Leader of JIBWIS in the State, Garba Hassan, directed that every leader in the rural communities should organize members

for the prayers --and they should continue praying until heaven answers them.



Tinubu to review N8000 palliative as NLC berates FG on 'deceit' of Nigerians

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

that it set up to take a comprehensive look at the consequences of the petroleum product price hike and make recommendations on the way forward to ameliorate its negative impacts upon the citizenry.

It alleged that the government may not be interested in the work of the committee and may have used it as a window to pretend to Nigerians that it was taking steps towards dealing with the consequences of its policies.

According to the NLC, despite having shown its readiness to commence work in the Committees, the government, which convened the meetings, was yet to inaugurate the National Steering Committee, thus stalling the work of the proposed Committees.

It said if the government had wanted an expedited action, which Nigerians want more, the best approach would have been to quickly inaugurate the committees and allow them do their work, saying nothing has been done except the continuation of the borrowing spree and subsequent allocation to themselves.

The statement added: "Furthermore, the actions of the Federal Government shows that it does not have trust and confidence in the very Presidential Committee that it set up to take a comprehensive look at the consequences of the Petroleum Product price hike and make recommendations on the way forward to ameliorate its negative impacts upon the citizenry. What this means is that the government may actually not be interested in the work of the Committee and may have used it as a window to pretend to Nigerians that it is taking steps towards dealing with the consequences of its policies.

"We do not understand why the Federal Government would seek to undermine itself as its action suggests. Why not wait for the Committee to sit and come up with the needed recommendations which would then guide the government's fiscal and monetary policies? Seeking to borrow and going to the NASS for an approval means that it has already taken decisions on what it wants to do and has a

budget, thus is in need to borrow to fund these activities. Like they will tell you; it is a fait accompli.

"We reiterate that we do not have confidence in how the data for the never changing 12 million poorest households was generated nor do we have confidence in the mechanisms being pursued for the distribution of the cash transfers. The history of such transfers, especially the school feeding programmes even while the children were at home due to Covid-19 pandemic and the Trader Moni saga, fills Nigerians with trepidation reminding us of the continued heist of our collective resources by those in public office. We have continually demanded that this register be made public but, it seems to have become an instrument of the occult shrouded in mystery and wielded by the grandmasters whenever opportunities like this presents themselves.

"It is important to inform Nigerians that despite having shown our readiness to commence work in the Committees, the Federal Government, which convenes the meetings, is yet to inaugurate the National Steering Committee, thus stalling the work of the proposed Committees. If the government had wanted an expedited action, which Nigerians want more, the best approach would have been to quickly inaugurate the Committees and allow them do their work but as we write, nothing has been done except the continuation of the borrowing spree and subsequent allocation to themselves.

"NLC would not want to continue to be part of the usual charade of Committees with outcomes that are never implemented. We would not want to waste the time of Nigerians especially workers on Committees that have already been programmed to fail thus ignored. We do not want to provide a cover for the government to get away with the hardship it has imposed on the people. We do not want to legitimize impunity.

"As a result, if the government does not want to stop these fortuitous actions that it is pursuing in the name of palliatives, we will be forced to constructively review our engagement with the government on this vexatious issue and take matters in our own hands."



First Lady of Lagos State, Mrs. Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu (middle); Director, Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service, Mrs. Margaret Adeseye (left), with others during a sensitization session at Lagos House, Ikeja...yesterday.

Radda raises committee to recruit 2,400 volunteers over insecurity

BY OUR REPORTER

At least 2400 local security volunteer cadets will be recruited by the Katsina State Government to serve as official 'vigilantes' to beef up security all over the State.

Bandits and kidnapers have placed the North-West State under the cosh for years now, unleashing violence on a scale hitherto unknown in the State which prides itself as home of hospitality.

The cadets are to complement the efforts of regular, armed security agencies.

Governor Dikko Umaru Radda yesterday inaugurat-

ed an ad hoc committee for the recruitment.

The governor's Chief Press Secretary (CPS), Ibrahim Kaula Mohamed, who disclosed news of the committee inauguration, in a statement, said the committee, chaired by Maj. Gen. Junaidu Bindawa, a former General Officer Commanding (GOC), 7th Division, Nigerian Army, has eight weeks to submit its report to the State government.

Radda tasked the committee members to recruit the best from among youths in the State for the onerous assignment which seeks to boost security in eight Lo-

cal Governments of Batsari, Jibia, Safana, Danmusa, Kankara, Sabuwa, Faskari and Dandume, sorely impacted by relentless terrorism.

Gov. Radda handed the committee its terms of reference, saying it has "the mandate of advising the government on how to systematize the payment of allowances and the purchase of equipment for the volunteered officers and as well determine whether it is appropriate to include vigilantes men in the scheme or otherwise.

"Furthermore, the committee would also suggest how these new officers should be given special training to carry out their

duties properly in their respective communities.

"In addition, the committee would also advise on how to successfully kickstart the programme. It also has a free hand to bring in any community member whom they consider suitable for making the programme successful."

Deputy Director, Security, in the Governor's Office, Hamza Audi Kofar Bai, is to serve as the committee's secretary while members are retired Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Pollice, Mai Gari Dikko, retired Air Vice Marshal (AVM) Sadiq S. Kaita (rtd), and Maj. Garba Mohammed Rimi (rtd).

Tinubu, Obasanjo, Govs, Sultan headline list of dignitaries at Mbang's burial

ISAAC JOB,
UYO

President Bola Tinubu, former President Olusegun Obasanjo, State governors, the Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence Saadu Abubakar, and other leaders are expected to attend the burial of the late Prelate Emeritus of the Methodist Church of Nigeria (MCN), Sunday Mbang billed to hold in Akwa Ibom state next month.

Family of the deceased top cleric, at a press conference in Uyo, the Akwa State capita, yesterday, announced August 11, 2023 for the final obsequies of the patriarch, who died on May 16, 2023 at the age of 86.

Speaking on behalf of the family, the late Mbang's first son and chief mourner, Sir Ini Mbang, while listing activities for the funeral arrangements, mentioned names of political and religious leaders who are expected at the obsequies of his father.

He said, "First and foremost, Papa had his best

friend, former President Obasanjo who will be there. We also have confirmations of some Governors; even the incumbent President, Bola Tinubu will be there.

"We are going to have several distinguished Nigerians in attendance. And then we are going to have the president of World Methodist Council, Secretary-General of the World Methodist Council, National President, Christian Association of Nigeria and the President-General of the Islamic Council of Nigeria, which is the Sultan of Sokoto.

"You know Papa started the Inter-Religious Council with the former Sultan of Sokoto and he was in good relationship with other Sultans of Sokoto. So these eminent leaders will come and honour him."

Mbang also disclosed that there would be a special service on Wednesday, 19 July 2023 (today) by his alma mater, the Methodist Boys High School Old Boys, followed by a novelty football match between the Methodist Old Boys and



Hope Waddel Old Boys, at Shelter Afrique, Uyo.

"On Wednesday 26th July, 2023 a commendation service is slated to hold at the Methodist Church of the Trinity, Tinubu in Lagos by 10am.

"On Thursday 3rd August, 2023 there would be a special service to be conducted by the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, at the National Christian Centre, Abuja by 4pm," he added.

January 6 Probe: Trump says he expects indictment after target letter

Donald Trump has said he expects to be arrested by a federal inquiry into the US Capitol riot and efforts to challenge the 2020 election results.

The ex-president said in a social media post he had been informed by special counsel Jack Smith on Sunday night that he was a target of their investigation.

Mr Trump posted that he was told to report to a grand jury, "which almost always means an Arrest and Indictment".

The special counsel did not immediately respond to media inquiries.

Such an indictment would be Mr Trump's third for alleged criminal offences, including 37 counts brought by Mr Smith's team in June accusing the president of mishandling classified documents.

Mr Trump has also been charged in New York City with falsifying business records in 2016 hush money payments to adult film star Stormy Daniels.

He is due to stand trial in that case next March, while a date for the classified documents case is still being contested by the president's lawyers.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Mr Trump claimed that he had been sent a letter "stating that I am a TARGET of the January 6th Grand Jury investigation, and giving me a very short 4 days to report to the Grand Jury, which almost always means an Arrest and Indictment."



Mr Smith was appointed special counsel by US Attorney General Merrick Garland shortly after Mr Trump announced his presidential campaign last autumn.

His team was tasked with investigating Mr Trump's handling of classified documents after leaving the White House and of managing a sprawling federal investigation into the riot at the US Capitol and attempts by Mr Trump and his advisers to "interfere with the lawful transfer of power following the 2020 presidential election".

The special counsel's office has not discussed what specific criminal violations they are considering. It is not known if others have been told they are a target.

Last December, a House committee investigating the events of January 6 rec-

ommended four separate criminal charges be brought against the former president and his associates:

The Democratic-led committee - which included two Republicans - described the criminal referrals as a "roadmap to justice", but prosecutors do not have to follow a congressional committee's recommendations.

Mr Smith's own investigation has involved interviews with dozens of top Trump administration officials and advisers, including former Vice-President Mike Pence and Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani.

According to public comments by some who have testified before the grand jury, questions have focused on efforts by Mr Trump's team to organise slates of "fake electors" who would claim that the former pres-

ident had defeated Democrat Joe Biden in seven key battleground states.

State prosecutors in Atlanta, Georgia, are also investigating the former president on similar grounds, focusing on whether he illegally pressured state officials there to discard Mr Biden's victory. In a December 2020 phone call with Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, Mr Trump asked that Georgia officials "find 11,780 votes" that would flip the state to Mr Trump.

A decision by Georgia prosecutors on whether to indict Mr Trump is expected in August.

Media caption, When a mob stormed the US capitol

Mr Trump is currently the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, with double-digit polling leads over his nearest rival, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

Speaking to CNN's Jake Tapper on Tuesday, Gov DeSantis suggested Mr Trump "could've come out more forcefully" to stop the Capitol riots but said he hopes the former president "doesn't get charged".

"I don't think it'll be good for the country. But at the same time I've got to focus on looking forward, and that's what we're gonna do," said Gov DeSantis.

Mr Trump's lead over his Florida rival has grown over the course of the past four months, even as his first two indictments were announced.

Australia baffled as unidentified mystery object washes up on beach



Police have been baffled by a mysterious "unidentified" dome that washed up on a West Australian beach.

The giant metal object was found by locals at Green Head beach, about 250km (155 miles) north of Perth.

State and federal authorities are investigating the item, which is not currently believed to be from a commercial aircraft.

It is being treated as hazardous, and police have requested people keep a safe distance.

"We want to reassure the community that we are actively engaged in a collaborative effort with various State and Federal agencies to determine the object's origin and nature," police said in a statement.

These include the military and Australia's space agency.

Green Head beach residents said the cylinder was about 2.5m wide and between 2.5m and 3m long, Australia's public broadcaster reported.

Residents visited the site on Saturday night to see the cylinder, the ABC reported, with one local describing it as a "great social evening".

"It was a lovely, still night, the kids were digging sand castles around it," he told the ABC.

Aviation expert Geoffrey Thomas said the item was possibly a fuel tank from a rocket that had fallen into the Indian Ocean at some stage in the past 12 months.

The Australian Space Agency said it was possible the giant cylinder could have fallen from a "foreign space launch vehicle" and it would liaise with other international agencies.

If it is a fuel cylinder, experts believe it might be from an Indian rocket and could contain toxic materials.

It is hoped a serial or catalogue number will confirm whether or not this is the case.

There was some speculation the cylinder may have been a part of MH370 - a plane that went missing off the west Australian coast in 2014 with 239 passengers on board - but Mr Thomas said there was "no chance".

"It's not any part of a Boeing 777 and the fact it is MH370 was lost nine-and-a-half years ago so it would show a great deal more wear and tear on the debris," he said.

What happened to US citizens like Otto Warmbier detained in North Korea

Since the guns of the Korean War fell silent on 27 July 1953, tens of thousands of US troops have remained in South Korea to cast a wary eye across the 38th parallel to North Korea.

Together with their South Korean allies, US forces regularly conduct large-scale military drills on the peninsula, frequently drawing angry rebukes from Pyongyang's government.

But despite these tensions and a lack of formal diplomatic relations between the US and North Korea, a small but steady stream of Americans have visited the country on organised tours - sometimes with dangerous results.

"Do not travel to North Korea due to the continuing serious risk of arrest and long-term detention of US nationals," reads a sternly worded travel warning on the US State Department's website. "The US government is unable to provide emergency services to US citizens in North Korea."



US citizens have been detained in North Korea several times since 1996, including tourists, scholars and journalists.

In July 2017, the US government banned US citizens from visiting the country - a move that has since been extended until at least August this year.

Here are some of the most notable cases from the

last decade.

Otto Warmbier, a student at the University of Virginia, was arrested while visiting North Korea as part of a tour group in January 2016. The visit, organised by a China-based budget tour operator that specialises in off-the-beaten-track destinations, was a five-day trip to experience North Korea during the New Year's Eve

period. His father later told the Washington Post that he was "curious about their culture" and "wanted to meet the people of North Korea".

About two months after his detention on 2 January, a North Korean court sentenced Otto Warmbier to 15 years' imprisonment with hard labour on charges that he attempted to steal a propaganda poster.

Erosion: Senate raises the alarm, wants FG to address menace in Edo, Anambra

TUNDE OPALANA,
Abuja

Concerned about havoc wrecked by devastating erosion that is ravaging communities in Edo and Anambra states, the Senate, on Tuesday, charged the Federal Government to urgently address the live threatening menace.

This was consequent upon deliberations by Senators during plenary on three separate motions which centred on erosion.

Senator Monday Okpebholo, (Edo Central) senatorial district, in his motion tagged "Urgent Need for Erosion Control in Edo Central Senatorial District to Save Lives and Properties", lamented that occasional flooding has subjected many communities to constant threat of devastating erosion which

has kept many roads impassable.

He said: "the Okene-Auchi-Benin expressway, a major road infrastructure in Nigeria began to fail at the Ekpoma axis owing to several gully erosions. The Ewu-Uromi-Agbor Road corridor has also experienced similar fate in Uromi axis. Nigerians in Irrua, Ekpoma, Uromi, Ewu and other communities have fled their homes or got their access roads damaged owing to the erosion problems.

"In June, two persons died after being swept away from their homes in Ujoelen, Ekpoma. A school girl died two years ago in Efandion, Uromi, on her way to school due to the uncontrollable flooding. It is difficult to construct roads to Udo community because of the wild erosion gullies. This trend is all over the area

"The highway road

projects in Edo central face the risk of being damaged even before they are completed, as a result of which the country may just be losing hundreds of millions of naira because of the natural disaster. The cost of interventions in erosion disaster is too weighty for local and state governments to bear.

"We urge for the collaboration of federal agencies, namely; the Federal Ministry of Environment, Ecological Fund Office and the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing towards tackling the menace of erosion devastation in Edo Central Senatorial District

"We also urge the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency, FERMA, and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to collaborate and carry out emergency works on Ekpoma (Uhiele, Ujoelen, Ukpenu, Borehole Road & Emuhi), Irrua (Uwesun and

Ikekato), Ewu (Eguare and Uzoghlo), Uromi (Efandion, Eguare & Uzegwa), Udo and Illushi."

Also, Senator Victor Umeh, (Anambra Central) senatorial district, in his motion, tagged "Urgent Need to Control the Erosion Ravaging Onitsha-Oba Section of the Onitsha-Owerri Federal Highway in Anambra State," said there is urgent need to address the issue to save life.

He said: "we note with dismay the devastating effects of ravaging gully erosion and landslide on Onitsha-Owerri Federal Road, between Electrical Parts Market and Metallurgical Training Institute, Obosi (Idemili North L.G.A) and Oba Junction near Rojenny Games Village in Idemili South L.G.A – along Onitsha-Owerri Federal Highway, all within Anambra Central Senatorial District of Anambra State.

"One lane of the

affected road has been cut off by the gully erosion at the Oba junction with z the second lane under serious threat of imminent collapse while buildings and factories within the vicinity are on the verge of collapsing into the gully.

"The erosion and landslide are creating traffic gridlock along the sections of the Onitsha-Owerri Highway.

"If the menace of gully erosion and landslide is not urgently controlled, those sections of the road will completely cave in, thus leading to total disconnection of the highway with attendant severe consequences and cutting off of vehicular movement to Imo, Abia, Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Cross River States.

"Onitsha-Owerri federal highway is a gateway to business activities and other relationships between the Western States and South East and South-South

States. The magnitude of the menace is beyond the control of the State Government.

"We urge the Federal Government to direct the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing to commence repairs and re-construction of the affected parts of the Onitsha-Owerri Federal road particularly, the sections between Upper Iweka Round about in Onitsha and Onitsha-Owerri in Idemili South L.G.A. of Anambra State which span about 6 Kilometers.

"We also urge the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing to ensure regular surveillance of Federal High ways to identify and nip erosion threats to Federal roads in the bud.

"We urge the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) to join the detection and prevention of erosion menace on highways."

Nigerian politicians advised to accept defeat in good fate

SAKA BOLAJI,
Minna

Nigerian politicians have been advised to adopt the Niger State model of accepting defeat in good fate in line with the spirit of togetherness and sportsmanship.

Special Adviser, Political and Strategy to the state governor, Mal. Muhammad Nma Kolo gave the advise when he interacted with newsmen in Minna.

Nma Kolo said that other states in the country should put into practice the spirit of love, oneness and collective responsibility usually demonstrated by politicians in Niger state who without regards to political differences always consider the state first above their personal interest.

According to him, this has been demonstrated during the last gubernatorial elections in Niger state when the Peoples Democratic Party PDP Gubernatorial candidate,

Isa Liman Kantigi congratulated the winner of the election, Mohammed Umar Bago of the All Progressives Congress APC even before results were announced by INEC.

This, according to him, is the modern politics we are talking about that is devoid of rancour and acrimony for the good of all.

Kolo further explained that Niger State is also among the few states in Nigeria that does not have any court case arising from the outcome of the just concluded governorship election.

He however pointed out that to all Nigerlites, politics is a game of number and a step towards entrenching credible candidates to pilot the affairs of the state for maximum benefit but not as a do or die affairs.

The special adviser also appealed to the people of Niger state to support the administration of governor Mohammed Umar Bago to succeed.

Bauchi Gov sacks LG Caretaker Chairmen

SAMUEL LUKA,
Bauchi

Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State has ordered the dissolution of 20 local government Caretaker Committee (CTC) chairmen in the state.

As contained in a press release signed by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Barrister Ibrahim Muhammad Kashim, the order takes

immediate effect.

"His Excellency, Sen. Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, CON, (Kauran Bauchi) the Executive Governor of Bauchi State has approved the dissolution of all the Local Government Caretaker Committee with immediate effect", the order said.

According to the press release dated 18th July, 2023, the dissolution order followed the expira-

tion of their tenure in office.

The dissolved LG Chairmen have been directed to hand over the affairs of the Local Governments to their respective Heads of Administration pending the appointment of substantive Caretaker Committees.

"Government wishes all the Local Government Caretaker Committees



members success in their future endeavours, please", the SSG said.

Students honour Ondo lawmaker Maxima

STEPHEN GBADAMOSI,
Ibadan

The executives of Ose Students' Association of Nigeria (OSAN), led by their General Secretary, Comrade Victor Omolehinju, have commended the performance of the lawmaker representing Ose State constituency in the Ondo State House of Assembly, Honourable Olatunji Oshati (a.k.a. Maxima).

The commendation was given on Tuesday when the student leaders paid Oshati at the Ondo

State House of Assembly complex.

According to a statement by the Maxima Media Team, the association commended the lawmaker for "the giant strides he has so far made within the short time in office, especially with the intervention made towards getting the deplorable roads in our local government fixed."

They noted that they were encouraged by Honourable Oshati's political antecedents with his youth-friendly dispositions.

The students then

presented an award of excellence to the lawmaker "for his exemplary leadership skills."

They also use the opportunity to intimate the lawmaker of an upcoming empowerment programme through skill acquisition for youths and students of the local government as well as a security summit in the pipeline.

Responding, Honourable Oshati expressed appreciation to the students' body for identifying with him so early. He gave assurance to the association that he would "keep

the flag flying," promising the students of his readiness to give them priority in the scheme of things, whenever opportunities provide themselves.

He lauded the students for coming up with such life-changing programmes, describing this as timely and in consonance with the youth development agenda he had for youths in the constituency.

Other representatives of the students' association on the visit are Comrades Ogunniyi Olúwaşun, Solomon Peter and Raji Timilehin.

Senate to investigate N6.5 billion NDDC ocean surge contract

HARUNA SALAMI,
Abuja

Senate on Tuesday unanimously voted to conduct an investigation into the N6.5 billion-shoreline protection contract awarded by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with a view to finding an alternative solution where necessary, to stem the incessant ravaging ocean surge in Ayetoro community in Ondo State.

This was sequel to a motion on "Urgent need for intervention to arrest the incessant Sea incursion ravaging Ayetoro community in Ondo state" sponsored by Senator Jimoh, Ibrahim (Ondo South).

He noted that the oil producing Ayetoro is a phenomenal historical and cultural settlement along the coastal stretch of Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State and is also a major

source of revenue for the nation.

"Ayetoro community and its environs account for 5.4% of the 60,000 barrel per day of Ondo State's crude oil production output amounting to about 3.7% of Nigeria's total oil production and this ranks Ondo State as the 5th among Nigeria's oil producing States, under the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Act," he said.

In presenting the motion, he complained bitterly that all is not well in Ayetoro as there are concerns of human insecurity, noting that the issue has caused several damages in the community.

"Ayetoro Community used to be one of the most prosperous riverine settlements in Nigeria due to its thriving trade in fish", Ibrahim added.

Stressing that the residents in the community are gradually losing hope, he worried that if nothing is

done urgently, the community will be at the verge of being completely lost to the sea.

"The devastating sea incursions and ocean surges have been the albatross of the Ayetoro Community for over two decades with hundreds of homes and properties being destroyed annually resulting to displacement of indigenes of the community and consequently in the disruption of oil exploration in the area", he said.

The surges have become an annual occurrence that successive governments have failed to attend to and serving a daily reminder to the indigenes of Ayetoro that the community is gradually slipping into the belly of the Atlantic Ocean."

He further said that, "The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as early as 2004, just four years after its creation made commendable attempt to stem the tide by awarding

the contract for the construction of a shoreline protective wall designed with a geotube technology in Ayetoro to Gallet Nigeria Limited at an original contract sum of N6.4 billion of which 25 per cent was reportedly paid.

The contract was revoked in 2009 for alleged lack of capacity and rewarded to Dredging Atlantic Limited at an undisclosed cost, however eleven years after the new contractor took over, and sixteen years after the contract was first awarded,

there is nothing on ground to show any intervention by the government, thereby creating the wrong impression of an unconcerned Federal Government."

In supporting the motion, Senator Abdul Ahmed Ningi (PDP, Bauchi Central) said it is a matter of urgency for the Senate to come to the aid of Ayetoro and come up with possible solutions.

Other senators who supported this motion are, Gbenga Daniel (APC, Ogun East) and Deputy Senate President, Barau Jibrin.

Therefore, the Senate resolved to: "Mandate the Committee on NDDC, Environment and Ecology (when constituted) to interface with relevant Ministries to work out modalities for

instant intervention in the disaster.

"Urge the various committees (when constituted) to investigate the contract award of 2006 and report back to the Senate and also, urge the national and international agencies to live up to their responsibilities while looking into the issue".

On Community Social Responsibility (CSR) of oil companies operating in the area Senator Ibrahim said they should "come up with what they have done for the area".

He suggested that a temporary Ayetoro town be established for people to move to while the reclamation of the sea side is going on and when the reclamation is over, the people can return to their homes.



AA chieftain challenges INEC over allegedly doctored NWC list

TUNDE OPALANA,
Abuja

National chairman of the Action Alliance (AA), Kenneth Udeze has condemned attempts by some staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to allegedly tamper with the list of the party's National Working Committee on the commission's website.

Udeze, in a letter to the INEC chairman, Yakubu Mahmood, by his counsel, Emeka Ozoani (SAN), alleged that some unscrupulous staff of the electoral body, allegedly replaced his name with that of Adegunle Omo-Aje, as the national chairman of the opposition party. And owed to explore all legal measures to bring all those involved to book, noting that illegality will not be allowed to stand.

The AA chairman, while urging party faithful to

remain calm, reiterated that all the candidates sponsored by the Party under his leadership remains on the ballot and ready to take over the governorship seats in Imo, Kogi and Bayelsa states.

According to Udeze, a judgment of a Federal Capital Territory (FCT), had in a judgment, which is still subsisting affirmed him as the authentic national chairman of the AA. He explained there are currently two appeals pending before

the Court of Appeal, which the INEC is a party to.

The party leader dismissed the purported Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) report on which INEC staff allegedly relied on to alter the list of the AA executive as fake.

The letter read in part: "We write to complain to you, sir against some clandestine and fraudulent moves by certain members of the Legal Department and the EPM Department of the Independent National

Electoral Commission (INEC) to give a skewed legal opinion or internal memo to the INEC Chairman and deceive him into announcing and recognizing Mr. Adegunle Rufai Omo-Aje as the National Chairman of Action Alliance and throw the Country and the party into political turmoil and crisis just for their personal and selfish gains.

"Sir, we do hereby inform you that there are two pending appeals at the Court of Appeal, Abuja on who is the rightful National Chairman of Action Alliance (AA) in ADEKUNLE RUFAI OMO-AJE & 2 ORS. vs. CHIEF UZEWURU NWACHUKWU & 3 ORS., APPEAL NO.: CA/CV/ABJ/955/2022, and also in CHIEF UZEWURU NWACHUKWU vs. KENNETH UDEZE & 2 ORS., APPEAL NO.: CA/ABJ/CV/526/2022 in each of these two appeals, INEC is a party and same have not been decided yet.

"The said Mr. Adegunle Rufai Omo-Aje has gone to the Court of Appeal, Abuja by way of appeal seeking to be declared the National Chairman of Action Alliance (AA) instead of Chief (Barr.) Kenneth Udeze and thus, must allow the Court of Appeal, Abuja to decide the case once and for all, rather than resorting to this unholy attempt to compromise some key staff of INEC and trying to bring INEC into the murky waters of partisan politics and rubbish the integrity of the INEC in furthering his

unquenchable, inordinate ambition to become party's national chairman."

He added: "We further wish to inform you sir, that prior to the above referred judgment of the F.C.T High Court, there were several other potent judgments of the Court which have recognized and continued to uphold our client, Chief (Barr.) Kenneth Udeze as the legitimate, authentic, rightful and duly elected National Chairman of ACTION ALLIANCE.

"We have it on good authority that some politicians are using him and sponsoring him to disorganize our client's party and we advise the INEC and its staff to desist from being used to achieve this illegal aim and avoiding throwing the Country and the Party into political turmoil and crisis.

"We unequivocally state here that our client shall use every legal means possible to defend his mandate and his party and will not want to wage a war with INEC as INEC occupies the position of an umpire and neutrality in the election and electoral system.

"In view of the above, our client makes this complaint against these key staff of INEC and urges you sir, to use your good offices to guard against this illegality and to call them to order or to resist same if brought to your table for approval, sir."

Makinde reappoints Esan OYACA chairman, returns others

STEPHEN GBADAMOSI,
Abuja

Oyo State governor, Engr. Seyi Makinde, has approved the reappointment of Justice Eni Esan (retd.) as chairman of the board of Oyo State Anti-Corruption Agency (OYACA).

Justice Esan, who was the first female President of the Oyo State Customary Court of Appeal, was appointed as the pioneer chairman of the anti-graft agency by Governor Makinde.

The governor also approved the reappointment of Mr. Ehindero Olafola Lawrence, a Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP); Mrs. Olopade Esther Afe, Prince Oyebade Oyedepo, Mr. Temidayo Adebayo Ayorinde and Mr. Ayobami Stephen Ashaolu as members.

Mr. Ibrahim Oyemola Tijani will still serve as Secretary to the Board of the agency.

According to a statement the Chief Press Secretary (CPS) to the governor, Pastor Sulaimon Olanrewaju, on Tuesday,

these were contained in a letter signed by the Chief of Staff (CoS) to the Governor, Otunba Segun Ogunwuyi.

According to the letter, the appointments are with immediate effect. Makinde, while congratulating the chairman and members of the board, urged them to see their appointment as a call to serve the people of Oyo State.

In another development, the governor declared today (Wednesday, July 19), as a public holiday in the state in commemoration of this

year's Hijrah 1445.

A statement by Olanrewaju noted that: "Wednesday, the first day of Muharram 1445AH, is the beginning of the Islamic New Year."

The CPS said the announcement was made in a circular signed by the Otunba Ogunwuyi, adding that while congratulating the Muslim faithful on the commencement of the New Year, the governor enjoined them to use the occasion to pray for the peace, unity and sustainability of the state in particular and the country in general.

Delta Gov tasks journalists on ethics, professionalism

NOSA ÀKEÑZUA,
Asaba

Governor Sheriff Oborevwori of Delta State has urged media practitioners to remain focused on fair and objective reporting for credibility as watchdogs of the society.

Oborevwori gave the charge on Tuesday, when he received on courtesy call, the State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), led by the State Chairman, Comrade Michael Ikeogwu at Government House, Asaba.

The governor thanked journalists in the State for their support before, during and after the general elections, assuring

that he would strive to fulfill his campaign promises to Deltans.

He said: "Let me thank the Delta State Council of the NUJ for their support before, during and after the election. Even with all the blackmail, NUJ still had confidence in me; I appreciate you for that."

"I want to sincerely appeal to you to be professional and abide by the ethics of your profession. Going forward, you need to remain united, promote peace, and love amongst yourselves."

On appointments, Governor Oborevwori, said he would appoint people with capacity to deliver, not necessarily on political patronage.

"I have made statements several times concerning the issue of appointments. I have stated that we are going to bring

in people with capacity.

"We will pick from the young ones, middle-aged and also experienced ones; the experienced ones will help teach the young ones. So be rest assured that we will do our best to bring people with capacity in order to deliver on our M.O.R.E agenda."

"I want to assure Deltans that as Governor, I want to be a Governor for all Deltans and you can see that all the appointments I have given out so far, my local government has not even gotten one."

"This is to show to people that I am a Governor for all Deltans. So please, I count on your support as we make progress. All the ethnic nationalities will be carried along and people with capacity will be given positions".

Earlier, Comrade Ikeogwu said the Union was at Government House to congratulate the Governor on his successful inauguration into office and to chart the way forward as partners in progress.

He commended the Governor for appointing a respected member of the Union, Sir Festus Ahon as his Chief Press Secretary.

The Union urged the Governor to appoint men and women with proven track records of performance, irrespective of political parties, ethnic background or religious inclination.

"Your Excellency, we urge you to embark on programmes and policies that will usher in massive investments for the industrialization of our State so as to engage our mass



unemployed youths.

"Create the enabling environment that will attract investors and invest in the abundant resources that abound in our dear State."

"Look critically in areas where we have comparative advantage in terms of natural resources and deploy strength and energy towards attracting the international community."

"As members of the pen profession, we wish to assure you of our unalloyed support for your administration and avowed commitment towards promoting your M.O.R.E. mantra," Ikeogwu added.

Aspirant counsels Obi to steer clear of party top shot

TITUS AKHIGBE,
Benin

Achieftain and notable governor-ship aspirant of crisis-ridden Labour Party in Edo State, Curtis Eghosa Ugbo has called on the 2023 presidential candidate, Peter Obi to stay away from the National chairman, Julius Abure based on his alleged suspension by a court of law.

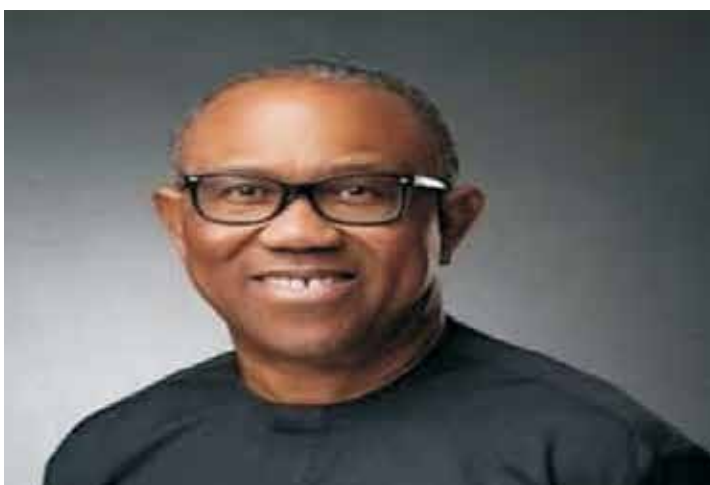
Ugbo, a prominent human rights activist in Edo, stated that it is in the best interest of Obi to recognize Alhaji Lamidi Bashiru Apapa as the party's acting National Chairman, noting that "Apapa is our National Chairman, not Abure.."

According to the governorship aspirant, "Peter Obi should stay clear from the suspended Acting National Chairman, Julius Abure based on the gravity of criminal allegations against him."

It is bad to romance him, instead of telling him (Abure) to go clear himself of the criminal cases against him and obey court order from the court of law in Abuja."

Continuing, Ugbo said: "We now see Obi as an accomplice with his further romance with Abure in public places. Now that Labour Party is now the new bride in Nigeria, it should not be seen to be encouraging criminalities like other political parties that ran aground Nigeria since 1999."

"All the allegations against Abure and Kelly Ogbaloi (Edo LP Chairman) should not be swept under the carpet because Edo State chapter of the party will continue to resist illegality, crime and corruption to enable us achieve good governance and better society for the masses of Edo State in particular and Nigeria in general."



Ebonyi Gov vows to eradicate poverty, create jobs

CHIJIJOKE NJOKU,
Abakaliki

Ebonyi State governor, Francis Nwifuru has vowed to alleviate poverty and sufferings of the citizens of the state through skill development.

Nwifuru who lamented over the rising social vices in Nigeria, however said he will liaise with the national directorate of employment, NDE, to enroll youths and women into various skill development in the state.

The governor made this known through the state commissioner for Skills and Job Creation, Mr. Elijah Oko-

Udu, during his visit at the NDE office located at the old federal secretariat at Nnorom street, Abakaliki, Ebonyi state capital.

According to him: "I seek the partnership of NDE to enable us alleviate poverty through skill development and job creation. His Excellency has determined to bridge the gap of unemployment as well as making the young Ebonyians a potential resources."

"The high rate of social vices is as a result of lack of engagement but if someone is engaged maybe in mechanic work, it's difficult to see the people engaged in cultism and stealing."

The governor noted further that his administration will do all within their powers

to realize the People's charter of needs, by providing an enabling environment for the youths and women, especially those in the rural areas to excel.

Earlier in a remark, the state coordinator of the National Directorate of Employment, NDE, Pastor Ebere Anaba applauded the governor for the visit, and vowed to cooperate with the state government, to ensure that poverty, unemployment is reduced to the lowest level.

The clergy, Anaba revealed that the agency which was established in 1986 has contributed adversely in human capital development.

Nigerian politicians advised to accept defeat in good fate

SAKA BOLAJI
Minna.

Nigerian Politicians have been advised to adopt the Niger state model of accepting defeat in good fate in line with the spirit of togetherness and sportsmanship.

Special Adviser, Political and Strategy to the Niger state Governor, Mal. Muhammad Nma Kolo gave the advise when he interacted with newsmen in Minna.

Nma Kolo said that other states in the country should put into practice the spirit of love, oneness and collective responsibility usually demon-

strated by politicians in Niger state who without regards to political differences always consider the state first above their personal interest.

According to him, this has been demonstrated during the last gubernatorial elections in Niger state when the Peoples Democratic Party PDP Gubernatorial candidate, Isa Liman Kantigi congratulated the winner of the election, Mohammed Umar Bago of the All Progressives Congress APC even before results were announced by INEC.

This, according to him, is the modern politics we are talking about that is devoid of rancour and acrimony for the

good of all.

Kolo further explained that Niger state is also among the few states in Nigeria that does not have any court case arising from the outcome of the just concluded governorship election.

He however pointed out that to all Nigerlites, politics is a game of number and a step towards entrenching credible candidates to pilot the affairs of the state for maximum benefit but not as a do or die affairs.

The special adviser also appealed to the people of Niger state to support the administration of Governor Mohammed Umar Bago to succeed.

Senator tasks security chiefs on ways to tackle terrorism

Amidst renewed terrorist attacks, insurgency and general insecurity in parts of the country, a serving senator has advised newly appointed security chiefs on tactics to confront security challenges.

Senator Muhammed Tahir Munguno.(Borno North) urged service chiefs to change tactics in tackling terrorism by adopting multifaceted approaches.

The Chief of defence staff, Major General Christopher Musa, the Chief of Army Staff, Major General Taoreed Abiodun Lagbaja, Chief of Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla and the Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice Marshal Hassan Bala Abubakar all scaled Senate's Scrutiny on Thursday the 13th of July 2023 when they were confirmed as the new hierarchy of the Nigerian Military.

Speaking on the need for them to act fast, he said no time is most appropriate than now for a change in Nigeria's

tactics against terrorism.

He said the peculiarities of the war against the Nigerian state is one that calls for Kinetic and non-kinetic strategies.

Terrorism is a social problem, it thrives where social control measures are weak, the people must get fully involved in intelligence gathering"

He asked rhetorically what has become of the local force, the Civilian joint military task force that provided the needed local support for the military especially in Borno state?

He urged the service chiefs to resuscitate it, as there is no two ways about it.

"Government at all levels must as a matter of adequate collaboration provide social safety nets particularly employment opportunities for the youth who are usually their targets so as to dissuade them from being lured into these clandestine activities.

"When terrorists are denied or starved of fertile ground for recruitment their



existence begins to fizzle out naturally, this can only happen when the citizens are catered for. The Kinetic and Non Kinetic approach must be deployed simultaneously, community involvement should be an integral part of this renewed war against insecurity, it has come to a point where the role of traditional and religious leaders must be reviewed and made more

effective."

He said on their part as Lawmakers, the National Assembly has carried out quite a number of interventions to rid Nigeria of the challenging security situation in the country. 'we have approved series of funds for security agencies since 2019 and in fact made individual sacrifices.

"I as a person have gone beyond my legislative

functions to provide succour to a number of families in my District and even beyond, at this juncture Nigeria can not afford to appear helpless against these elements, not any more.

"President Bola Tinubu has made good choices, the National Assembly will continue to engage with the Service Chiefs and ensure a synergistic impact in the fight against insecurity in the Country

Gov Fintiri honors late Tukur, renames Abuja Road after him

TOM GARBA
Yola

Governor of Adamawa State, Rt Hon Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri has renamed the popular Abuja road, one of the major roads in Yola Town, Yola South Local Government area of Adamawa State in honor of late Dr Mahmud Tukur.

The road which was officially renamed during the late Lamido of Adamawa, HRH Aliyu Mustapha days to Lamido Sanda Road from Abuja road is formally renamed in honour of Mahmud Tukur

Late Tukur was a scholar of high repute, a humanist, a Philanthropist, and a Disciplinarian, an elder statesman Man whose virtues Governor Fintiri remembered and immortalized in a Major road of Adamawa.

The former Minister of Commerce and Industry during the Military regime of former President Muhammadu Buhari died in 202, in his Abuja residence after a meritorious

service he has given to the state and the nation.

The town planner of the Adamawa state Urban and Regional Planning Development Board, Mrs. Alice Ambrose Gombe (Mnntp, Rtp, RP) Yola confirmed the road rename after the Bayero University Kano (BUK) Vice-Chancellor and said the Abuja road will now be called Dr Mahmud Tukur Road

According to her Late

Mahmud Tukur is one of Adamawa's Illustrious sons who has left a good legacy in the sands of time and immobilizing him will be one of the ways his legacies will never be forgotten.

She commended Governor Ahmadu Fintiri for remembering a Man of Mahmud type that such a decision is divine and his administration will remember for good.



She praised Governor Ahmadu on many of his urban renewal policies and the massive development is carrying out in the state.

"Mahmud Tukur is one of the Adamawa sons who is a national leader and immobil-

izing this way is the best that humanity can do for him because it will make people be remembering him in their daily prayers, and his good legacies remain fresh in the heart of people." Alice said.

Wafarinyi: Adamawa APC guber aspirant dumps party

TOM GARBA
Yola

Honorable Pharmacist Wafarinyi Theman Dallatu, a strong member of the All Progressives Congress, APC, who contested the governorship seat at primary levels has dumped the party.

Dallatu was the party state secretary submitted a letter of his resignation at his Shangui ward of Hong Local Government thanking the APC for all the party accorded him in the past.

Dallatu put in his resignation through the party

chairman of his Shangui ward quoting the party's constitution articles 9, 5, and 9i to officially tendered his cessation membership.

Dallatu however did not mention in the letter dated 12th June 2023 of which party is going to pitch his pilot tent but said he has no regret of leaving the ruling party is.

You will recall that the APC party in Adamawa has been embroiled in serious squabbles within the party before and after the governorship election that is still unresolved.

Stocks market sustains gaining streaks, up N448.3bn



MOTOLANI OSENI

The Nigerian equities on Tuesday sustained its gaining streaks for the second consecutive session, as the market capitalisation increased by N448.34billion to close at N34.72trillion.

Similar, the All-Share Index (ASI), gained 1.31 per cent to close at 63,766.72 points.

This is due to gains in DANGCEM (+6.67%), GTCO (+1.47%), and ACCESSCORP (+1.83%) outweighed

losses in ZENITHBANK (-3.39%), STANBIC (-6.86%) and UBA (-1.43%) keeping the market in the positive terrain.

Consequently, the ASI's year-to-date (YTD) return rose to 24.42 per cent, while analysis of yesterday's market activities showed trade turnover settled higher relative to the previous session, with the value of transactions up by 209.54 per cent.

However, a total of 868.80million shares valued at N42.81billion were

exchanged in 8,970 deals. FCMB (+3.33%) led the volume chart with 153.88million units traded while DANGCEM (+6.67%) led the value chart in deals worth N35.81billion.

Also, market breadth closed positive at a 2.79 to-1 ratio with advancing issues outnumbering declining ones.

It is worthy of note that HONYFLOUR (+10.00%) topped 38 others on the leader's table, while JAPAUFGOLD (-10.00%) led 13 others on the laggard's log.

Oil rebounds on China's fiscal stimulus

Oil prices posted limited increases on Tuesday over hopes that the Chinese government will unveil fiscal stimulus measures to jumpstart the sluggish economy, as the country faces multiple post-pandemic economic headwinds.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$78.56 per barrel, translating to a 0.07% gain from the closing price of \$78.50 a barrel in the previous trading session on Monday.

The American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at the same time at \$74.18 per barrel, up 0.13% from the previous session's close of \$74.08 per barrel.

The gross domestic product of China, the world's largest oil-importing country, fell short of expectations, declining by around 1.7% during the previous session due to disappointing economic data.

However, investors are now looking at the country's mitigation measures to stimulate its floundering economy.

Supporting the upward movement of dollar-indexed oil prices, the value of the US dollar showed a 0.17% decline against a basket of currencies, including the Japanese yen, British pound, Canadian dollar, Swedish krona and Swiss franc.

Investors are monitoring the data flow from major economies, including the US, ahead of the

Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting on July 25-26.

The American Petroleum Institute (API) will issue forecasts of the newest data on the country's crude oil stockpiles later on Tuesday, while the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) will reveal the actual data on Wednesday.

The decline in crude oil stocks indicates improved demand in the US, which should push prices higher, whereas expanding stockpiles tend to force prices down.

Oil prices fell on Monday as China's weaker-than-expected economic growth projected a sluggish economic revival in the world's top crude oil importer, raising concerns over its oil demand.

According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, the country's economy expanded by 6.3% in the second quarter from a year earlier, falling short of predictions of 6.9%.

Although China's gross domestic product surpassed the 4.5% rise in the first quarter, the data overshadowed hopes of recovering demand to put downward pressure on prices.

Oil prices posted a limited increase of 4% last week over fears of tight supply driven by Saudi output cuts, and hopes of increased demand in the world's largest oil consumer, the US.

Wema Bank lifts suspension on international transaction on naira cards



TEMITOPE ADEBAYO

Nigerian lender, Wema Bank, has lifted its suspension of international transactions on naira cards.

This means customers using the bank mastercard card now use their naira debit cards to pay for transactions originated in foreign currency.

The bank in a letter addressed to its customers announced the end of the suspension on international transactions conducted through naira cards.

This means customers using the bank mastercard can now use their naira debit cards to pay for transactions done in foreign currency.

In March 2022, the bank had joined other Nigerian banks to limit their monthly international spending limit on naira cards from \$100 to either \$20 or \$50.

Subsequently, in September, the banks said that naira cards would no longer be used for international

transactions, adding that the decision was due to market realities on foreign exchange.

Wema Bank went a step further to end cross-border payments with Naira cards in March.

The bank also had a \$500 monthly limit on international spending conducted through its naira cards.

"You can now use your Naira cards, including Mastercard, ALAT Mastercard, and Visa, for international spending. For your international transactions, you can enjoy up to \$500 per month," the bank said in a notice this week.

"Here's what you need to know: Expanded Possibilities: The Naira card allows you the freedom to make international purchases, explore international online stores, and buy from your favourite international brands. You know what? The world is now at your fingertips!

"Monthly Limit: To provide you

with enhanced security and control, there is a \$500 monthly spending limit for international transactions. This allows you to manage your expenses responsibly while enjoying the benefits of international spending.

"Effortless Convenience: Your Naira card gives you the convenience of making payments in foreign currencies, eliminating the need for currency conversion or carrying excess cash. It's a hassle-free and secure way to shop and transact abroad."

The new development comes against the backdrop of President Bola Tinubu's efforts to unify the nation's multiple exchange rates as part of measures to attract investors into the economy.

The Central Bank of Nigeria had on 14 June announced the unification of all segments of the Nigerian forex market, collapsing all windows into the Investors & Exporters (I&E) window.

Contaminated fuel: UNA boss calls for audit of aviation fuel suppliers

CHUKWUEMEKE IWELUNMO

In the light of recent incident of fuel contamination that led to the suspension of B737s fleet of Max Air, the Chairman of United Nigeria Airlines (UNA), Dr Obiora Okonkwo has urged the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) to conduct an audit of all aviation fuel suppliers in the country.

"I would expect that NCAA should do a more acceptable audit on the fuel suppliers. We have been calling for this audit before now."

"All those supplying fuel to airlines should be properly audited," he added in an interview with aviation journalists.

He commended NCAA's decision to take such action, stating that it can only take a vigilant regulator to identify such situation and take action appropriately.

He equally said Max Air had nothing to worry about since what happened could have happened to any airline. "It is expected of Max Air to give the answers to questions of NCAA."

On the federal government's intentions to provide cash palliatives to ameliorate effects of fuel subsidy removal, Obiora advised government that rather than give away cash handouts that may not solve the prevailing economic problems, government should invest in the aviation sector and strengthen the economy.

He said injecting capital in

form of palliatives into the aviation industry if given to those who may be qualified will create employment, increase revenue generation for airlines, bring about forex exchange and add to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Delivering his opening remarks at an all markets conference organized by Ndigboamaka Progressive Markets Association, Obiora said "there is more to gain from a United Nigeria, which incidentally is the name of the airline I established a few years ago. We must keep working to unite Nigerians with their visions, their aspirations, their neighbours and other societies for the good of our great country. Nigeria must be united; but Nigeria also must be a just and inclusive society."



NPA remits N55.7bn from N191.3bn raked in 6 months

TEMITOPE ADEBAYO

The Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) has generated N191.4 billion in revenue in the first half of 2023 and remitted N55.7 billion to the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF), its Managing Director, Mr Mohammed Bello-Koko, stated this in half year report on Tuesday in Lagos.

Bello-Koko said that given the existential economic headwinds both at the micro and macro levels, the operational statistics for the first six months were reassuring.

He said that the data catalysed the commendable remittances to the CRF of the Federal Government.

"Within the context of current global economic upheavals which have affected trade volumes in all climes, our current growth trajectory is encouraging. This gives us confidence to project a revenue growth of over N500 billion with a concomitant increase in remittance to the CRF by end-of-year 2023, given that shipping activities peak around the second half of the year.

"The smart policy thrust of the new administration which is already throwing up new vistas of growth further lends credence to the feasibility of our projections and gives fillip to our organisational initiatives," he said.

Bello-Koko said the operationalisation of Lekki Deep Seaport, expected restoration of the service boat management contract, digital-



isation and intensified tightening of collections mechanisms buoys their confidence to exceed the revenue projections.

"The authority has completed operations on a total number of 1851 vessels for the 1st half of 2023 with a combined Gross Registered Tonnage (GRT) of 57,870,083.

"Cargo throughput for the period under review stood at 33,895,784 metric tonnes, whilst container traffic was 707,985 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units).

"A key indicator of port efficiency which is the average turn-around-time (TAT) of vessels, stood at 5.16 days.

"This is an improvement and we have put measures in place to surpass in the second half of 2023," he said. Bello-Koko said that the authority was poised to transform its projections to actualities.

He said the NPA would focus on finalising financing arrangements for port rehabilitation drive, the conclusion of all digitalisation geared toward improvement of efficiency during the second half of the year.

He said the authority would collaborate with landlocked neighbouring countries such as Niger and Chad for transshipment of their cargoes.

CASIO receives commendation for innovative contribution to devt of education in Lagos

MOTOLANI OSENI

CASIO Middle East and Africa FZE, an education technology company, has received special recognition at the Lagos State Educational Conference 2023 for its outstanding contribution to the development of education in Lagos State.

The recognition follows CASIO's successful implementation of the CASIO Model School Project, a groundbreaking study in collaboration with the Lagos State Ministry of Education, which featured six secondary schools and two distinct groups of students: an experimental and control group.

The findings from the Model School Project underscored the crucial role of scientific calculators in mathematics education and demonstrated that by incorporating these tools into mathematics lessons, students experience a reduction in computational errors and an increase in conceptual understanding, ultimately leading to improved procedural fluency in mathematics.

Speaking on the Lagos State Ministry of Education's collaboration with CASIO, the commissioner, Mrs. Folasade Adefisayo, said, "The partnership has been fruitful for us because our WAEC results went up almost three times over the period we are talking about. More students are passing mathematics, and we attribute some of that to the quality of training the teachers received because it's not just training on the use of calcula-

tors but training on making the classroom an engaging environment."

CASIO also received plaudits for the establishment of the CASIO Lab, a cutting-edge Mathematics and Science Training Centre, fully equipped with cameras, projectors, calculators, tablets, and computers. CASIO Lab serves as a training center for teachers as well as a resource center for the Ministry of Education to create live video sessions on different subjects for subsequent broadcasting to teachers and students.

To date, over 2000 teachers have been trained in the CASIO Lab. The interactive sessions and workshops provided valuable insights into incorporating scientific calculators into math lessons, leading to improved student performance and a deeper conceptual understanding of mathematics.

"CASIO's groundbreaking initiatives stem from the company's core philosophy of fostering creativity, curiosity, and positive societal impact," said CASIO Managing Director, Takashi Seimiya.

"These comprehensive programs not only equip teachers across Nigeria with the necessary skills to effectively integrate CASIO technology into their classroom instruction but also make learning easier and enjoyable for their students."

CASIO, which is a regional subsidiary of CASIO Computer Co. Ltd, remains committed to nurturing academic excellence and empowering students to unlock their full potential.

Delta jerks up full year EPS to \$7, reiterates \$3bn FCF



CHUKWUEMEKE IWELUNMO

Delta Air Lines has increased its 2023 Earnings Per Share (EPS) to \$6 and \$7, reiterating the carrier's recently updated outlook for \$3 billion of Free Cash Flow (FCF).

EPS is calculated as a company's profit divided by the outstanding shares of its common stock. The resulting number serves as an indicator of a company's profitability.

The increment was contained in reported financial results for the June quarter, where the company also provided its outlook for the September quarter 2023.

Commending their performances within the period, Delta's Chief Executive Officersaid Ed Bastian who gave the hint in the report said "thanks to the incredible work of our entire team, Delta is delivering for our customers by providing strong

operational performance and best in class service during this busy summer period. With this performance, we generated record revenue and profitability in the June quarter.

"Our people are the best professionals in the industry, and I'm proud to recognize their achievements with \$667 million in the first half toward next year's profit-sharing payment," said Ed Bastian, Delta's Chief Executive Officer.

"Consumer demand for air travel remains robust. Against this constructive backdrop, we are increasing our 2023 earnings guidance to \$6 to \$7 per share and reiterating our recently updated outlook for \$3 billion of free cash flow," Bastian added.

According to the report, the company in June quarter 2023 GAAP Financial Result recorded operating revenue of \$15.6 billion,

operating income of \$2.5 billion with an operating margin of 16.0 percent while Pre-tax income of \$2.3 billion with a pre-tax margin of 14.9 percent was realised.

"Earnings per share of \$2.84Operating cash flow of \$2.6 billionPayments on debt and finance lease obligations of \$1.8 billionTotal debt and finance lease obligations of \$20.2 billion at quarter end"

For June quarter 2023 adjusted financial result, the company stated that it reverted "operating revenue of \$14.6 billion, 19 percent higher than the June quarter 2022, operating income of \$2.5 billion with an operating margin of 17.1 percent-Pre-tax income of \$2.2 billion with a pre-tax margin of 15.2 percent with earnings per share of \$2.68.

Others are operating cash flow of \$2.6 billion, free cash flow of \$1.1 billion and an adjusted net debt of \$19.8 billion.

Market development: NGX Group woos FG, targets foreign investment inflows

Amid bullish sentiments seen in Nigeria's stock market recently, the Board and Management of Nigerian Exchange Group Plc (NGX Group) have said that they are open to working with the Federal government, as well as stakeholders towards improving the country's credit profile and creating a favorable environment for both domestic and foreign.

This was disclosed by the Group Chairman, NGX Group, Alhaji Umaru Kwairanga, during the Group's 62nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) which took place in Lagos on Friday.

Addressing shareholders at the meeting, Kwairanga, lauded president Tinubu-led administration for the various reforms that have resulted in the impressive performance of the market.

"The capital market community is excited by the new government and the steps it has so far taken with respect to the economy as reflected in the tremendous growth in our market indicators. As a group, we are committed to working with the government to stimulate further growth in the economy, address higher capital costs, as this will go a long way to enhance Nigeria's credit profile, and create a favourable environment for both

domestic and foreign investors," he said.

Kwairanga further noted that the Federal government needs to eke out more friendly market policies that will engender growth as consistent and faithful implementation of market policies will help businesses to thrive. He added that the group is hopeful that the planned Initial Public Offer (IPO) of the NNPC Limited will be fast-tracked by the Tinubu-led administration.

Speaking on the performance of the group, Kwairanga noted that NGX Group demonstrated resilience in 2022, achieving a 10.3 per cent increase in gross earnings to N7.5 billion, despite a challenging economic environment. The Group's total revenue grew primarily due to a 6.8 per cent increase in revenue to N6.2 billion, and a 30.1 per cent increase in other income to N1.3 billion.

The growth in its revenue was further bolstered by a 51.2 per cent increase in treasury investment income and a 9.0 per cent increase in transaction fees. However, its total expenses rose by 35.5 per cent to N8.8 billion, primarily due to interest costs on borrowed funds used for strategic acquisitions.

Court clears coast for prosecution of suspended Adamawa REC

ANDREW OROLUA,
ABUJA.

The Federal High Court sitting in Abuja yesterday cleared the coast for prosecution of Adamawa state suspended Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Hudu Yunusa Ari.

Justice Donatus Okorowo declined to extend his earlier order of July 10 that had barred, temporarily, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Inspector General of Police (IGP) and the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) from prosecuting Adamawa state Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Hudu Yunusa Ari.

The court had issued the interim order stopping the prosecution of the suspended Ari pending the hearing and determination of a motion filed by Senator Aishatu Dahiru, also known as Binani.

INEC is seeking the prosecution of the suspended REC for usurpation of the function of Returning Officer by declaring the governorship candidate of the All-Progressives Congress (APC), Senator Binani, as winner of the Adamawa state governorship election on April 15, 2023, when the collation of results was not completed.

When the matter came up yesterday, INEC's counsel, Mr. Rotimi Jacobs (SAN) told the court that the applicant had not served the defendants with the July 10 order of the court. Jacobs also told the court that the defendants have not been served with the originating



summons filed by Binani. He told the court that the life span of the interim order elapsed on July 18, but counsel to Binani, Michael Aondoaka (SAN) argued that the interim order has not elapsed as the defendants have not shown cause as directed by the court.

According to Aondoaka, counsel to INEC cannot say he was not served with the processes of the court as he had joined issues in the matter.

Justice Okorowo, however, adjourned till Monday, July 24 for hearing in the originating summons served on the defendants in court yesterday.

The court refused to extend the interim order stopping the prosecution of the suspended Adamawa state REC.

In the suit marked, ABJ/

CS/935/2023, the applicant is seeking the interpretation of Section 144 of the Electoral Act 2022 by the court and a preservative order seeking the maintenance of status quo in the matter pending the determination of the suit.

Aondoaka, in the application, drew the attention of the court to the fact that the matter is before a tribunal and it is time-bound, whereas the star witness to his client, Hudu Yunusa Ari, is being harassed and prevented from giving evidence before the tribunal which, if continued, would jeopardize the case of his client at the tribunal.

He therefore, urged the court to halt the harassment of the star witness in the petition before a governorship election petition tribunal challenging INEC's

declaration of the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate and governor of the state, Ahmadu Fintiri as winner on Sunday, April 16, 2023.

The lawyer told the court that according to the relevant laws, since the applicants have been declared by the INEC, the declaration can only be legally and authentically reversed if the need be by a court of competent jurisdiction or a tribunal.

Senator Binani had earlier, through her counsel, Mohammed Sheriff filed a suit before a sister court presided over by Justice Inyang Ekwo which was however, dismissed following a notice of discontinuance filed by the applicant.

The Adamawa state governorship supplementary election was conducted on April 15 following the declaration of the March 18 poll as inconclusive over alleged irregularities.

After voting ended, the collation of results began at the state collation centre, but the exercise was suspended after results from 10 LGAs were announced.

However, Hudu Yunusa-Ari, the state's Resident Electoral Commissioner, declared Senator Binani winner before the collation resumed on April 16.

Yunusa-Ari made the declaration when outstanding results were yet to be announced. INEC subsequently described his action as illegal, saying it is null and void, suspended him and got set to prosecute him for electoral malpractice.

Court okays Ododo as APC guber candidate in Kogi

ANDREW OROLUA,
ABUJA.

Justice Obiora Ekwuatu of a Federal High Court in Abuja yesterday held that Mr Ahmed Ododo is legally qualified as flag bearer of the All-Progressives Congress (APC) in the forthcoming governorship election in Kogi State.

Justice Ekwuatu made the decision while delivering judgment in a suit seeking his disqualification over alleged breach of the electoral laws.

Ododo had won the APC primary election of April 14, 2023, which some of the contestants disputed and claimed that he was not qualified to have contested the primary in the first place.

Dissatisfied over his emergence, an aspirant of the APC, Mr Abubakar Achimugu, had approached the Federal High Court, Abuja, asking that Ododo be disqualified from contesting the November 11 governorship election on grounds that he did not resign his employment with the Kogi State public service 30 days before con-

testing the governorship primary.

Delivering judgment in the suit yesterday, Justice Ekwuatu held that contrary to Achimugu's claim, evidence showed that Ododo resigned his appointment more than 30 days before participating in the APC primary.

According to Justice Ekwuatu, exhibits tendered by the defendants showed that while Ododo's resignation letter was received by the Office of the Kogi State Governor on March 8, 2023, that of the 3rd defendant, Mr Salami Deedat, was received on March 9.

The court, while noting that an employee or appointee's resignation letter comes into effect the moment the notice is received, held that the employee would not be held responsible if the employer neglected to act on it either by continuing with the payment of salary.

"Satisfied that they resigned their appointment on March 8 and 9, more than 30 days before the April 14 primary...the suit is bereft of any merit and accordingly dismissed," the court held.

Oyabanji pleads for patience with Tinubu over rising fuel prices

HARUNA SALAMI,
ABUJA

Governor Abiodun Oyebanji of Ekiti State has advised Nigerians to be patient with President Bola Tinubu over the rising fuel price.

Speaking with journalists at the National Assembly, Abuja, yesterday, Oyebanji said Nigerians should be patient with the President because "you cannot eat an omelet without breaking an egg", adding "there is no microwave solution to our problem, you must confront these challenges head-on."

He said Nigerians must thank the president for having the courage to take the bull by the horns.

"If we are going to get out of this wood, we must take very hard decisions.

"I just plead with Nigerians to be patient; very soon they will know that the President meant well," the governor remarked.

Oyebanji appreciated the leadership of his party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), the President and the entire Senate for the choice of Sen. Michael Opeyemi Bamidele, from Ekiti State, as the Senate Leader.

To him, Bamidele is the best choice anybody can

make.

"Bamidele is a worthy representative from Ekiti state, we are proud of him; he is my brother, he is my collaborator, and he has the capacity and the ability to assist the leadership of the Senate to ensure a smooth implementation of the President's agenda at the Senate.

"In Ekiti State, he has contributed immensely to political developments in the State. You can see us together today, we just met with all the members of the National Assembly from Ekiti, both in the Senate and in the House of Representatives, on the need to align our priorities in the interest of our people", he said.



Body of commercial motorcyclist found in forest, private parts severed

NOSA AKEÑZUA,
ASABA

The lifeless body of a 42-year-old commercial motorcycle ('Okada') operator (names withheld) in Ogwashi Uku town, near Asaba, Delta State, was found on Monday evening with his private parts severed from his body.

Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) for Delta State, Deputy Superintendent (DSP) Bright Edafe confirmed that the corpse was recovered somewhere in a forest in Azagba, Ogwashi Uku community where the killers abandoned his remains.

He said: "Those who killed him also made away with his motorcycle and severed his private parts, The killers may not be motorcycle snatchers. But we suspect they are ritualists



for the fact that his private parts were severed."

Edafe said that the police have intensified efforts to ensure that the hoodlums or suspected

ritualists were brought to book.

A community leader however, said that the development was strange, describing the

act as not only barbaric, but wicked, and called on security operatives to collaborate with local vigilantes to save the lives of the people of the area.

Stakeholders want relocation of aviation agencies back to Lagos



L-R Mr Ikechi Uko Coordinator, Aviacargo Committee, Mr Kabir Mohammed Yusuf, managing director Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria and Mr Richard Adewumi, Director laboratory services, Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) during a fact finding tour of the factory at Ogba, Ikeja

CHUKWUEMEKE IWELUNMO

The Federal government has been called upon to reverse the relocation of aviation agencies to Lagos in the interest of the industry and the country's economy.

The general Secretary of Association of Nigeria Aviation Professionals (ANAP), Comrade Abdurasaq Saidu, who made this call in an exclusive interview with Daily Times aviation revealed, that agencies relocation to Abuja has done the aviation industry no good.

Saidu explained, that since the movement, the security apparatus of agencies in Lagos especially at the MMIA has collapsed adding, that the security system has been distabilised.

He said, it was a wrong policy of the former administration and urged president Bola Tinubu to order agencies back to Lagos as it was not in the act establishing these agencies neither in the laws of

the country.

"The movement of all aviation agencies to Abuja weakened, distabilised the security, efficiency and effectiveness at the gateway airport (MMIA) to the country".

He also noted that experienced staff, operational vehicles and other operational requirements were distabilised.

Saidu explained, that loss of revenue in the sector has remained as one of the dangers of the relocation due to what he termed as conspiracy within and outside the service providers and the airlines in terms of payment of required revenue adding that the Federal government was losing heavily from expected revenue.

On the runway lightings theft, comrade Saidu said it might have been as a result of the closure of the runway to give room for repairs that was not done as scheduled and accelerated as miscreant found their way there.

Saidu said workers within the system were being frustrated as a result of the economic crunch without approved conclusion of service for workers as all their entitlement were not paid as at when due.

He blamed the obnoxious policy of the former administration, saying that the policy was uncalled for as it was used to perpetuate evil in terms of employment, contracts and exhorting money from parastatals for overseas trips.

He called for appointment of experienced general manager that have served for almost 15 years in aviation agencies to become directors than bring people without knowledge to head directorates saying it will ensure efficiency.

Saidu called on all directors appointed from outside the aviation industry to resign their appointments and allow the new managing directors to work especially that of FAAN.

NCAA admits flaw in data on delays, cancellations, others

The Director General, Nigeria Civil Aviation (NCAA), Captain Musa Nuhu says there were flaws in the released data on delays, cancellations, baggage losses and other passenger and traffic figures of domestic airlines

Just as he declared that reasons for delays will be categorized to help airlines improve.

Airline Operators have accused the NCAA on irregularities on recently released figures on delays and cancellations at the Aviation Safety Round Table Initiative (ASRTI) Brunch Business Meeting held in Lagos

AON said it was unfair to blame airlines for poor performances because the CAA only provided data without breakdowns.

They described it as unfair

and said there were other multiple factors beyond airlines that cause cancellations which should be highlighted instead of making it look like the airlines' fault entirely.

Captain Nuhu who agreed with this position while speaking to reporters via zoom said, there were many other factors that caused delays and highlighting them is also a means of strengthening the industry to do a better job at improving on delays.

He said, "When you say delays and there are many reasons for delays it is only fair and proper for everybody to give reasons for delays. What percentage of delays was caused by infrastructure? What amount of delay was caused by weather? What delays were caused by the airlines themselves, I think this is fair enough.

CSR: Dana air to absorb, train over 50 corp members, interns

As part of its broad Corporate Social Responsibility, Dana Air has announced its plan to absorb and train over 50 corp members and interns

The airline said the training will be across various areas which includes: Human Resources, IT, Ticketing, Customer Service, Quality Assurance, Commercial, Marketing and others

Speaking on the CSR drive, the Chief Operating Officer of Dana Air, Ememobong Ettete said, "Dana Air's CSR initiative is broad-base and inclusive.

"Since inception, we have trained a lot of corps members and interns who ended up becoming

Cabin crew, Ticketing officers, customer Service agents, HR Officers and even Accountants."

"The list is endless and this is because we believe that we can create a career path for these young Nigerians and give them a clear direction as most of them are actually very passionate about aviation but have not got the opportunity to explore or venture, but we have been creating that window for them and the impact has been huge."

"Yes it is happening at a peculiar time but CSR is a commitment and everything doesn't have to be rosy for you to be driven to implement it

"We also have those who are currently doing their OJT (On the job training) with us and they are doing incredibly well also, " he added.

Dana Air is one of Nigeria's leading airlines with a mixed fleet of Boeing aircraft and daily flights from Lagos to Abuja, Port Harcourt, Owerri and Enugu.

Aviation college graduates 4 more pilots

The International Aviation College, Ilorin, has graduated four students who completed their various courses of study.

While one of the graduands obtained Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL), Instrument Rating and Multi-Engine, the remaining three bagged Private Pilot Licence (PPL).

This was coming about a month after five newly graduated pilots were decorated by the college, increasing the number of pilots produced from March 2022 till date to 31.

Kwara State Governor, Abdulrahman Abdurasaq at the graduation ceremony reiterated his commitment to the continued funding and support for the college to contribute its quota to manpower development in the aviation industry.

Represented by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tertiary Education, Hajia Habeeba Saidu, the government commended the college management and staff for their dedication.

He charged them to maintain momentum in churning out more students to reduce the backlog inherited by the management.

The governor also advised the new pilots to exemplary Ambassadors of the college and apply their training and skills in uplifting the aviation industry.

Acting Rector of the college, Capt. Yakubu Okatahi commended the state governor for his support and urged the graduands to unleash their skills and potentials in contributing to the growth of aviation industry.

"The industry is waiting for their contribution," he said, urging them not to disappoint. The Rector attributed the successes recorded by the management in reducing the backlog of students to team work.

One of the graduands,

Ezema Chindera who described his graduation as the fulfillment of a long dream commended the state government for its support which has kept the college going.

In a related development, the state Deputy Governor, Mr. Kayode Alabi has directed the TIC Chairmen of all the 16 local governments in the state to sponsor indigenes of their respective Local Governments for Standard Pilot and Flight Dispatchers' Courses at International Aviation College, Ilorin.

The Deputy Governor stated this during a meeting held in his office between the Management of IAC and all the TIC Chairmen.

He advised the TIC Chairmen to take the advantage of the presence of the Aviation College in the State by sponsoring their respective local government indigenes for aviation courses being run in the College.

Alabi said local governments that cannot afford the fee for the standard pilot course for now can sponsor at least three (3) indigenes from their various Local Governments for flight dispatchers' course which is equally a lucrative aviation related course.

The Deputy Governor therefore directed the College, particularly the Business Development Unit of the College to liaise with the Chairman of Kwara State ALGON who is equally the TIC Chairman of Irepodun Local Government with a view to ensuring that the plan sees the light of the day without further delay.

Members of the College Team in attendance at the meeting are: Captain Yakubu Okatahi (Ag. Rector); Mohammed Jimada Jibril (Registrar); Sanni Shamsudeen (Bursar); Kehinde Adetutu Ajayi (Business Development Officer); Babatunde B. Magagi (FOO Coordinator) and Yetunde Humukhair (Librarian).

Brighton reject £70m Chelsea bid for Caicedo



Brighton have rejected a second Chelsea bid, believed to be about £70m, for midfielder Moises Caicedo.

The Ecuador international asked to leave Brighton in January amid interest from Arsenal.

Brighton refused and Caicedo subsequently

signed a new contract in March that runs to 2027.

However, he remains of huge interest to a number of Premier League clubs, with Chelsea most keen to sign the 21-year-old.

Chelsea are scheduled to meet Brighton in the opening game of the Premier League's six-team pre-sea-

son tournament in Philadelphia on Saturday.

Caicedo will travel to the US direct from Ecuador having been given extra time off, while Brighton's squad will fly out on Tuesday.

He joined Brighton from Ecuadorian side Independiente del Valle for a reported £4.5m in February 2021 but

did not play that season.

Caicedo spent the first half of the 2021-22 season on loan with Beerschot in Belgium before Brighton recalled him in January 2022.

He made his Premier League debut in April 2022 and has played 53 times for Brighton, scoring twice.

Edwin van der Sar out of intensive care



Former Netherlands goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar has been moved out of intensive care following a bleed on the brain.

The ex-Manchester United and Ajax player, 52, was taken to hospital while on holiday in Croatia before being transferred to a Dutch hospital.

"I'm happy to share that I'm no longer in the intensive care unit," Van der Sar said in a statement on his Twitter.

"However, I'm still in hospital. I hope to go home next week and take the next step in my recovery."

There was an outpouring of goodwill messages to Van der Sar after news of his condition broke on 7 July and he expressed his gratitude in the latest update.

"We want to thank everyone for all the great and supportive messages," he added.

Van der Sar, who won 130 caps for his country, resigned from his role as Ajax chief executive in May after the side finished third in the Dutch league and failed to qualify for the Champions League for the first time since 2009.

He retired from playing after leaving United in 2011 before joining the Ajax board in 2012, and becoming the club's chief executive in 2016.

Van der Sar made 266 appearances for the Red Devils and helped them to win four Premier League titles and the 2008 Champions League. He also played for Fulham and Juventus.

Manchester United agree deal for Inter Milan goalkeeper Onana

Manchester United have agreed a £47.2m (£55m euros) deal for Inter Milan goalkeeper Andre Onana.

The Old Trafford club will pay £43.8m up front for the Cameroon player, with an additional £3.4m in add-ons.

United hope he will be able to join them on their upcoming tour of the United States - although they have to arrange a visa for the 27-year-old.

Manager Erik ten Hag moved for the keeper at the end of the season after previously working with him at Ajax.

He will join on a five-year contract, with the option for a sixth.

Ten Hag feels Onana can be a significant addition to United's squad and his pursuit of a new goalkeeper prompted David de Gea to turn down a new contract offer.

De Gea was United's first-choice keeper for the past 12 years, making 545 appearances after joining the club under Sir Alex Ferguson.

The Spaniard's 190 clean sheets are a club record for a goalkeeper.

Onana spent seven and a half years at Ajax before moving to Inter in July 2022 on a free transfer.

He kept eight clean sheets in 24 Serie A games as Inter finished third and no team scored past him in 13 of their matches in the Champions League last sea-



son - the most of any goalkeeper in the competition.

He played against Manchester City in the Champions League final in June as Inter lost 1-0.

The keeper retired from international football in December after falling out with Cameroon boss Rigobert Song at the World Cup.

Onana will be United's second signing of the summer, after the arrival of midfielder Mason Mount from Chelsea for an initial £55m, and attention now turns to their third recruitment priority, a central striker.

United received no encouragement during initial discussions around signing

Tottenham's Harry Kane and Atalanta's Denmark striker Rasmus Hojlund is high on their list of alternatives.

Hojlund joined Atalanta in August 2022 and scored 10 goals in 34 appearances last season. He made his international debut in September 2022 and has six goals in six games all in qualifying for Euro 2024.

However, while personal terms are not expected to be a problem in completing a deal, there has been no agreement with the Serie A club over a fee. Atalanta are understood to want 70m euros (£60.2m) for the 20-year-old.

Having committed more than £100m on their two signings so far, and having been fined by Uefa for breaking Financial Fair Play rules last week, United want to stick to their budget.

It means other options, including Eintracht Frankfurt's highly-rated France striker Randal Kolo Muani, 24, are coming into play.

Kolo Muani has attracted the interest of Paris St-Germain amid ongoing uncertainty over the future of Kylian Mbappe whilst Bayern Munich may turn to the 24-year-old if they also fail in their attempt to lure Kane to Germany.

Rashford signs new contract with Man Utd until 2028

England forward Marcus Rashford has signed a new deal to stay at Manchester United until 2028 worth £325,000-a-week

The 25-year-old had been in talks with United for a considerable period, with his previous contract due to expire in 2024.

The striker enjoyed a resurgence under new manager Erik ten Hag last season, scoring 30 goals in 56 games.

Since his debut in 2016 against Midtjylland, Rashford has hit 123 goals in 359 games for his boyhood club.

Rashford said: "I joined Manchester United as a seven-year-old boy with a dream. That same passion, pride, and determination to succeed still drives me every time I have the honour of wearing the shirt."

"I've already had some amazing experiences at this incredible club, but there is still a lot more to achieve and I remain relentlessly

determined to win more trophies in the years ahead."

Rashford is believed to have dismissed more lucrative offers from within the Premier League and abroad to stay at Old Trafford, committing through to 30 June 2028 and backing Ten Hag to deliver more success.

He said: "I can assure you that I will give everything to help the team reach the level we are capable of, and I can feel the same determination around the dressing room. I couldn't be more excited for the future under this manager."

Rashford was one of three England players to suffer racist abuse after missing a penalty in the Euro 2020 final defeat by Italy.

He had shoulder surgery in August 2021, saying he must "listen to his body", before struggling for form and scoring only five times during a campaign that saw Ole Gunnar Solskjaer succeeded by interim boss Ralf Rangnick.

Delta to host 7th NYG in September



NOSA ÀKENZUA,
ASABA

The Chairman, Delta State Sports Commission, Chief Tonobok Okowa, who doubles as the President of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria AFN, has disclosed that plans have been concluded for the hosting of the 7th National Youth Games in the state.

In his opening speech at the joint technical meeting of delegates from across the country, he assured the directors of sports of an hitch free Competition.

He said that the state was fully prepared to host the championship.

The sport administrator said preparations were on top gear for the games scheduled to take place in Asaba soon.

The event billed for September 7 through 17, will feature about 30 sports with the aim of discovering and nurturing talented athletes for future stardom.

The sports lined up for the under 15s tournament include; Athletics, Boxing, basketball, beach volleyball, canoeing, football, handball, hockey, table tennis, karate

and wrestling.

Others include, para athletics, chess, squash, scrabble, swimming, judo, weightlifting, golf, rugby and tennis.

Propose venues to be used are the government house squash court, Ibori golf course, Westend Secondary School, Asaba, the Cynotaph, mainbowl, indoor halls, swimming pool and other facilities in the Stephen Keshi Stadium, Asaba.

Other venues are the hockey pitch at Okpanam, Admiralty University, Ibusa and Lander brothers Anchorage, Asaba.

The national youth games has served as a platform for identifying young athletes since its inception.

The maiden edition took place in Abuja and Kwara State has hosted the last five editions.

However, for the 7th edition, the federal ministry of youths and sports decided to award the hosting rights to Delta State.

The last edition of the games featured a total of 37 sport events, with Delta emerging overall champion amassing a total of 104 medals comprising of 60 gold, 26 silver and 28 bronze.

Edo RFC wins maiden National Women's Rugby Sevens



Edo State RFC have won the maiden National Women's Rugby Sevens Tournament in Asaba hosted by the Delta State Government after defeating Gosar Rugby Club of Lagos 17 - 0 in the nail biting final match amidst heavy downpours.

Edo RFC Center; Becky Okitikpi opened the scoring in the second minute when she received an offload from playmaker Augusta Mene to score under the post while the conversion was missed by Augusta.

The ladies from Benin City dominated the breakdown and pinned Gosar in their half for most part of the first half as it ended 5-0 in extremely wet conditions as the heavy rain continued to pour.

The second half kicked

off with Edo on the front foot and it wasn't long before their prop; Precious Ukwuoma picked up a loose ball and dived over the whitewash for their second try.

Gosar attempted several comeback efforts through their winger; Godfirst Samson and playmaker Rukayat Salami but were prevented by a well coordinated Edo RFC defence line whilst the Edo playmaker; Augusta controlled the pace of the game.

Winger, Chinaza Abbah broke the Gosar defence line to score the third and final try to seal the victory for team Edo converted this time by Augusta. 17-0 it ended as Edo RFC held on to possession to see off their sweet victory.

2026 Commonwealth Games in doubt after Victoria cancels hosting plans

The 2026 Commonwealth Games are in doubt after the Australian state of Victoria cancelled its plans to host due to budget blowouts.

The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) struggled to find a host before Victoria volunteered in April 2022.

But the premier said the projected cost had now tripled and become "well and truly too much" for the state to bear.

The CGF called the decision "hugely disappointing" and said it is "committed to finding a solution".

The Commonwealth Games are a multi-sport tournament that take place every four years. They have only ever been cancelled during World War Two.

To be eligible to participate in the games, competitors must be from one of the Commonwealth's 56 members. Most of the countries in the Commonwealth were once part of the British Empire.

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews said on Tuesday that his state had been



"happy to help out" when approached to host last year, but "not at any price".

Downing Street said the cancellation was "disappointing" for fans and athletes.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman said the UK government hoped "a viable solution" could be found by the Australian authorities and the CGF.

He rejected a claim the move was a sign of the decline of the Commonwealth as a whole, suggesting the King's coronation showed

"the strength of the Commonwealth and commitment of countries to it".

Organisers had originally estimated the event - hosting across cities including Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat - would cost A\$2.6bn (£1.4bn; \$1.8bn) and the state government had billed it as a boost for the regions.

But now the 12-day tournament was expected to cost more than A\$6 billion (£3.13bn; \$4.09bn), Mr Andrews said, adding that the new figure was "more

than twice the estimated economic benefit" it would bring to Victoria.

"I've made a lot of difficult calls, a lot of very difficult decisions in this job. This is not one of them," he told a press conference.

"That is all cost and no benefit."

The government will still complete the stadium upgrades it had promised ahead of the games, while using the money it is now saving on housing and tourism initiatives.

Abia denies sacking Finidi as Enyimba manager



UGOCHUKWU UGOJI-EKE,
ABA

The Abia State Government has denied the reports making the rounds that the newly appointed Chairman of Enyimba football club of Aba, Kanu Nwankwo has sacked Coach Finidi George and the entire management team.

The denial was contained in statement signed by the Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Kazie Ukoh, saying that the public should disregard the mischievous statement that is circulating online.

Uko said that the former Super Eagles and Arsenal player never authored or directed such letter to be

written, stressing that no one was asked to reapply for his position in the Enyimba football club.

The release reads, "Abia State Government wishes to call on the general public to disregard the fake story making the rounds that the technical bench of Nigeria's premier league champions, Enyimba International Football Club, Aba, has been sacked.

There is no iota of truth in that fable as no directive has been issued in that regard by either the state government or the club's management.

Mr. Finidi George, manager of Enyimba and Nigeria's former international, remains the manager of the club, likewise all other officers".



Fuel subsidy removal: Making a case for existing modular refineries

By Victor Ikem

The removal of fuel subsidy seems to have become a settled matter following years of contemplations. The president, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, said during his inauguration speech that 'fuel subsidy is gone'.

That statement ended an age long subsidy regime which many believed was a scam and a heist of unquantifiable dimension. The crime perpetuated in the name of fuel subsidy created a quagmire in the oil & gas industry where more than half of the purportedly imported and subsidized petroleum products were stolen by corrupt industry players who cared less about the mostly poor and vulnerable citizens for whom subsidy was necessary and had impact.

While we are in the midst of the seeming confusion created by the removal, it is regrettable, however, that not a single culprit has been named, charged or punished owing to the corruption and stealing, the criminal malfeasance, by those in places of authority with the mandate to regulate the sector. Many of them, out of negligence or collusion, allowed the level of mismanagement that greeted the subsidy regime thereby throwing the entire country into avoidable crisis.

With a new era now upon us, what has become a matter of concern is supply and availability of petrol at price that will not be excruciating. The price of premium motor spirit (pms) has reached an all-time high in recent days since the announcement of removal of subsidy. This price change arising from the removal brought with it unprecedented hardship and pains on the ordinary people. Unfortunately, prior to this time, not the previous administration or the current administration demonstrated any concrete plans showing how the

STAND POINT

with
VICTOR IKEM



government intended to ameliorate the impact of the removal. The planned palliatives and cash transfer of 8,000 naira to 12 million to poor household, which seem as an afterthought, has attracted a barrage of criticisms and skepticism. The reasons for such skepticisms are not farfetched given previous similar experiences in the past where government went to town to 'share money' with no evidence of impact on the lives of ordinary people or not enough proof that those who should benefit actually benefited.

From the stand point of ongoing debates, and beyond the questions of palliative, my very most sincere concern as with most Nigerians, is how the government can guarantee steady availability of pms and gradually reduce importation of same with the expected positive implications being the freeing up of the scare foreign exchange earning being used to import finished petrol products. The crude oil refineries owners association, CORAN, an association comprising businesses that have operating licenses for modular refineries have made the case that government can enable them to function better. They have made the point that, with their combined installed refining capacity, they can contribute to ensuring that petrol is readily available and can be accessed at even lower price in country.

There are 40 modular

refinery licenses issued, but as at this moment, only about four or five of such refineries are functional at very minimal scale. The general complain by the owners of these modular refineries is that the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) has refused to provide them with enough crude oil to meet production demand. This calls for serious concern as I wonder the kind of a nation that we have. The Crude Oil Refineries Owner's association have in their recent public communications made the argument that refining crude oil in the modular refineries will be more cost-effective than exporting the crude abroad for refining and then shipping it back for sale as finished refined petroleum products with the attendant impact on foreign exchange and even on the landing cost with transportation taking a chunk of the pump price.

Also, they have made the point that local refining through the modular refineries will reduce incidences of oil theft and vandalism of pipelines as has been the case for several years because most of the modular refineries are located close to wellhead for crude.

With the conventional refineries almost moribund and the Dangote refinery yet to come on stream fully, it will be sensible options for the government to quickly empower the modular refineries with the support that will enable them begin refining. This will entail giving

them access to enough crude oil to refine. This will also encourage them to acquire the needed technical support such as the reformer that s need to refine pms. It makes no sense for government to issue licenses for modular refineries and yet make it impossible for these refineries to function optimally.

It is the duty of government to ensure that Nigerians have a better and improved life. One of the ways to fulfill this obligation is to address the problems that have made it impossible for the modular refineries to perform. The operators have made the case that government should allow them to buy crude oil in naira instead of dollars since there is no basis to buy commodities with foreign currencies when the final product will be retailed in Nigeria and in naira. This is also very important taking into consideration the current scarcity of dollars due largely to dwindling government foreign exchange receipts. Other issues that have been put forward are levies placed on modular refineries with resultant increase in the cost of refined products.

All said, it has become imperative for the federal government, through the relevant agencies, to take urgent steps to support all the operational and installed modular refineries. There is no justification for a country that produces crude to discourage local refining of same. The attendant benefits to the economy will be enormous when the modular refineries are supported to operate optimally. The expected coming on stream of the Dangote refinery should not hinder needed investment in already built and installed modular refineries.