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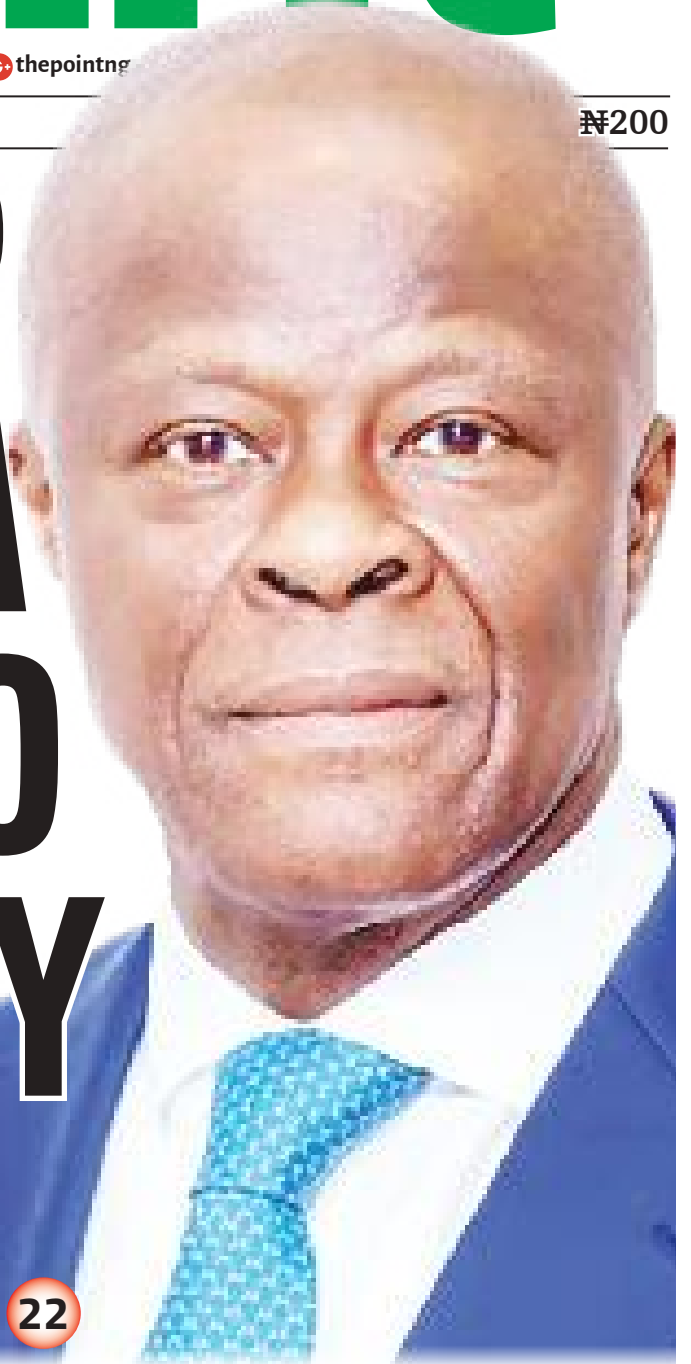
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₦200

DESPITE Q2 GDP GROWTH, NIGERIA NEEDS \$50BN TO BOOST ECONOMY - INVESTIGATION



- How FG missed target with well-intended economic reform policies - Analysts
- Excessive fiscal spending, massive budget deficit leave citizens struggling with stagflation - Experts
- Others blame government's 'bad decisions' for tension, economic hardship

Outrage over controversial deaths at LASUTH on alleged medical negligence, unprofessionalism

- Deaths need not cast our hospital in bad light - CMD

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Celestial Church prophet lands in prison for raping undergraduate girl during 'deliverance'



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States corrupt judges by intimidating them - Former AGF, Michael Aondoakaa



>> POLITICS 16

Wike swims against the tide, draws battle line with PDP, governors over Fubara



Also inside // How police coerced me into taking responsibility for church member's pregnancy - Pastor

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Monday, September 2, 2024**19 days to Edo governorship poll: PDP's chances appear slim - Analysts**

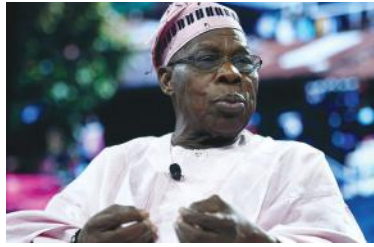
Exactly 19 days to the Edo State governorship election, major opposition political parties have boasted of victory, saying the alleged poor performance of incumbent Governor Godwin Obaseki in his almost eight years administration in the state will be the undoing of the candidate of the ruling People's Democratic Party, Asue Ighodalo.

Tuesday September 3, 2024**Alleged plot to overthrow Tinubu: Police place N20m bounty on Briton, Nigerian**

The Nigeria Police Force has placed an N20 million bounty on a British national, Andrew Wynne, also known as Andrew Povich, and a Nigerian, Lucky Obiyan. The police had declared the duo wanted for allegedly plotting to overthrow the democratically elected government in the country.

Wednesday September 4, 2024**Nigerians lament as NNPC raises petrol price to N897 per litre**

Anger, frustration, and despondency were the situation on Tuesday, as Nigerians woke up to yet another steep increase in the price of Premium Motor Spirit, otherwise known as petrol.

Thursday September 6, 2024**STATE OF THE NATION: Obasanjo calls for moral rearmament**

A former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, has expressed dissatisfaction with the nation's current state, arguing that there is no character in leadership.

Friday September 6, 2024**PDP governors move against Wike as Damagum shifts NWC meeting**

Members of the People's Democratic Party Governors' Forum are up in arms against the National Working Committee of the Party insisting that Governor Siminalayi Fubara should be recognized as the leader of the PDP in Rivers State.

Saturday September 7, 2024**Nigerians hail, knock Davido's 'King of Nigeria' comment**

Social media was abuzz after Nigerian singer and record producer, David Adeleke, also known as Davido, proclaimed himself as the King of Nigeria following a meeting with a young man who described himself as the Prince of Saudi Arabia in Paris.

Top stories

- **City Pulse:** Outrage over controversial deaths at LASUTH on alleged medical negligence, unprofessionalism..... **12**
- **Politics:** Rampaging Wike intensifies supremacy battle in Rivers **16**
- **Economy:** Despite Q2 GDP growth, Nigeria needs \$50bn to boost economy - INVESTIGATION..... **22**

Sunday September 8, 2024**NAFDAC investigating Pastor Jeremiah's miracle water, soap – DG**

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control has alerted Nigerians to the activities of a faith-based organisation, Christ Mercy Land Delivery Ministries, led by Prophet Jeremiah Fufeyin, using the agency's name to deceive the unsuspecting public.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

L-R: A former Governor of Ogun State, Senator Ibikunle Amosun; a former Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Prof. Attahiru Jega; a former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo; President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, Davidson Alaribe; and a former Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, at the maiden memorial lecture in honour of the doyen of accountancy profession in Nigeria, Akintola Williams, organized by ICAN in Lagos on Wednesday.

Nigeria's foreign reserves drop by 1.33% to \$36.31bn

BAMIDELE FAMOOFO

On the domestic front, Nigeria's foreign exchange reserves recorded a marginal dip of 1.33 percent month on month to close at \$36.31 billion from July's \$36.80 billion and were attributed to the CBN's involvement in the FX market to stabilise the Naira.

In the foreign exchange market, the naira traded in the mixed zone in reaction to the mixed dynamics impacting the demand and supply of liquidity by the apex bank into the market.

Thus, the naira edged the United States dollar by 0.64 percent month on month to close at N1,598.56/\$1 at the NAFEM window and then depreciated by 1.54 percent month on month to N1,620 from N1,595/\$1 at the parallel market.

In the review month, Nigeria's Bonny Light price movement was muted month-on-month, settling at \$84.28 per barrel, reflecting a slight decline from \$84.28 per barrel at the end of July 2024. This decrease was primarily driven by global economic conditions and key factors influencing the global oil market, including decisions made by OPEC.

A significant factor contributing to the price decline was the anticipation of further monetary policy changes by the U.S. Federal Reserve. In August, the Federal Reserve hinted at a potential rate cut by the end of the year, which introduced uncertainty into the market and caused fluctuations in the value of the U.S. dollar.

Additionally, a slight increase in global crude oil supplies exerted further downward pressure on prices. Although OPEC's decision to maintain production cuts provided some support to prices, market sentiment was largely overshadowed by concerns over slowing global demand, driven by economic uncertainties and geopolitical tensions.

In the Nigerian money market, liquidity constraints continued to weigh heavily by the end of the month, with system liquidity closing at N466.9 billion. This was impacted by primary market sales of N51.9 billion. As a result, money market rates such as the overnight (OVN) and open repo rate (OPR) contracted sharply by 549 basis points (bps) and 513 bps, respectively, from their levels at the end of July. However, liquidity in the financial system improved due to a significant FAAC inflow exceeding N600

billion. This led to a notable contraction in the overnight NIBOR rate by 5.71 percentage points, bringing it down to 20.25 percent.

NIBOR rates also declined across all tenors, and the Nigerian Inter-Bank Treasury Bill True Yield (NITTY) witnessed a broad-based decline from the previous month.

In the secondary treasury bills market, bullish sentiments dominated, causing average yields on secondary market treasury bills to drop by 260 bps, settling at 21.18 percent across the 91-day, 182-day, and 364-day maturities.

In the August primary market auctions, the Central Bank of Nigeria raised N626.1 billion, a 41 percent increase compared to the previous month's issuance. Strong investor interest resulted in total subscriptions reaching N1.51 trillion, particularly skewed towards longer maturities, as investors sought to lock in rates in anticipation of future yield declines.

Although the average stop rate for August rose by 52 bps month-on-month to 19.7 percent, the final auction of the month saw a significant drop in the stop rate by 60 bps to 19.4 percent, due to repricing at the longer end of the In the secondary bonds market, performance was similarly bullish, with the average yield decreasing by 0.7 percent month-on-month to 18.7 percent.

The short end of the yield curve experienced the largest gains, with average yields dipping by 94 bps to 20.0 percent, driven by increased buying interest in the MAR 2025 (-2.8 percentage points) and JAN 2026 (-0.6 percentage points) plain vanilla bonds.

The mid-and long-term segments also saw average yields decline by 49 bps and 70 bps, to 19.2 percent and 17.8 percent, respectively. At the latest monthly primary market auction held by the Debt Management Office (DMO), N190 billion worth of papers were issued (April 2029, February 2031, and May 2033 maturities).

Subscriptions at the auction reached N460 billion, though demand was relatively weak for the April 2029 and February 2031 papers, which garnered N24 billion and N61 billion in subscriptions, respectively.

In contrast, the May 2033 bond saw overwhelming demand, with subscriptions totaling N375 billion. Stop rates for these maturities were 20.30 percent, 20.90 percent, and 21.50 percent, respectively, compared to 19.89 percent, 21.00 percent, and 21.98 percent at the previous auction.●



IN THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET, THE NAIRA TRADED IN THE MIXED ZONE IN REACTION TO THE MIXED DYNAMICS IMPACTING THE DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF LIQUIDITY BY THE APEX BANK INTO THE MARKET.

FaceOff

WE ARE FILLED WITH A DEEP SENSE OF BETRAYAL AS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CLANDESTINELY INCREASES THE PUMP PRICE OF PMS.

— NIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS

ONCE AGAIN, WE'RE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE OFTEN REPEATED WRONG POSTULATIONS OF THE JOE AJAERO-LED NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND PERSON OF PRESIDENT BOLA TINUBU.

— THE DEMOCRATIC FRONT

Atiku slams FG, says VAT, fuel price hikes'll worsen Nigeria's cost-of-living crisis

FESTUS OKOROMADU

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar has slammed the plans by the Federal Government to increase the Value Added Tax.

Atiku said that the policy would deepen the domestic cost-of-living crisis and exacerbate Nigeria's already fragile economic growth.

In a statement on Sunday via his X handle, Atiku said the move could become a "blazing inferno that will consume the very essence of our people."

He noted that this move, coming on the heels of the increase in the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit, also known as fuel, by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited, is "destined to deepen the domestic cost-of-living crisis and exacerbate Nigeria's already fragile economic growth."

The People's Democratic Party's presidential candidate in the last election, who said one does not need to be an economist to understand the "implications of President Tinubu's ill-conceived policies for Nigeria's future," added that the President would be wise to redirect efforts towards crafting sustainable solutions to the systemic shocks afflicting the economy, rather than compounding the crisis with measures destined to ignite further turmoil.

He said, "The increase in VAT is set to become the blazing inferno that will consume the very essence of our people... Tinubu's actions reflect a profound insensitivity to the plight of the less fortunate as he indulges in the opulent renovation of villas and the acquisition of new jets and vehicles for himself and his family."

"President Bola Tinubu, along-

POINT

Atiku said that the policy would deepen the domestic cost-of-living crisis and exacerbate Nigeria's already fragile economic growth

his side c o - visers, has resolved to raise the VAT rate from 7.5 per cent to 10 per cent, even as the NNPC has announced a soaring PMS price increase at the pump.

"This move unveils a new era of regressive and punitive policies, and its impact is destined to deepen the domestic cost-of-living crisis and exacerbate Nigeria's already fragile economic growth."

"President Tinubu and his en-

tourage seem to be resorting to their familiar tactic: heaping burdens upon the impoverished while steadfastly ignoring their extravagant excesses.

"One does not need to be an economist to grasp the ominous implications of President Tinubu's ill-conceived policies for Nigeria's future. The relentless rise in taxes and interest rates has proven excessively onerous, debilitating businesses of all sizes and leading to job losses while intensifying the suffering of the poor."

Similarly, he said the manufacturing sector, in particular, has endured relentless strife since Tinubu's ascendancy, with its contribution to GDP diminishing by over 20 per cent since December 2023, as reported by the NBS.

"In early August, Tinubu turned his attention to agriculture. As is customary with this administration, a new policy was clandestinely formulated and announced, permitting duty-free importation of agricultural commodities such as wheat, maize, and paddy, despite vehement opposition from farmer groups nationwide.

"This policy poses a grave threat to Nigeria's food security ambitions, as local farmers, facing unfair competition from low-cost producers in Asia, Europe, and America, are compelled to reduce or entirely abandon their production efforts. It jeopardises job creation, wealth generation, and the sector's long-term prosperity, casting a shadow over Nigeria's sustainability and development."



Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Mudashiru Obasa (right), welcoming the 48th Commander of the 9 Brigade of the Nigerian Army, Brigadier General Olawale Matthew Oyekola, who visited the House of Assembly with his team, on Thursday.

INEC ready for Ondo governorship election, REC declares

TIMOTHY AGBOR

The Independent National Electoral Commission has disclosed it had recorded a total of 2,053,061 registered voters total ahead of the November 16 governorship election in Ondo State.

The commission also stated that it had embarked on massive voters' education across the state, educating and engaging citizens on their rights and responsibilities as voters.

The Resident Electoral Commissioner of the INEC in state, Mrs. Oluwatoyin Babalola, stated this at the state headquarters of commission in Akure, the state capital, on Friday at a meeting with members of all political parties in the state.

Babalola explained that the purpose of the meeting was to inform the stakeholders of all political parties in the state on the level of preparedness for the election and to listen to the concerns and ideas of the political parties for a successful election.

Giving the figures, the REC mentioned that at present, a total of 58,708 new voters were registered, 3,132 voters transferred their registration into Ondo State while 123 voters transferred their registration out of Ondo State leaving the harmonized total number of new registered voters with the old reg-

istered voters to 2,053,061.

She said, "As we approach this significant election, it is important to intimate you with our level of preparedness for the election to ensure a seamless electoral process. It is also of utmost importance to listen to political parties, know your concerns, deliberate and harmonized ideas for a successful election."

"Following the successful conclusion of the Continuous Voters Registration exercise, at the end of the exercise, 58,708 new voters were registered. In addition, 3,132 voters transferred their registration into Ondo State while 123 voters transferred their registration out of Ondo State. The harmonised total no. of new registered voters with the old registered voters is now 2,053,061."

"It is also pertinent to note that we have embarked on a massive voter education across the state, educating and engaging citizens on their rights and responsibilities as voters; we have engaged the youth, women, and persons with disability."

The INEC boss added that the commission is currently working towards the collection of Permanent Voters Cards of the registered voters in the state noting that the detailed arrangements will be made available soon. She urged all stakeholders to mobilise their registered supporters to collect their PVCs.

NDLEA intercepts UK, Europe-bound cocaine in female sanitary pads

TIMOTHY AGBOR

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency has intercepted consignments of cocaine and pharmaceutical opioids concealed in ladies' sanitary pads

and hair treatment cream containers heading to the United Kingdom, Ireland and Cyprus.

A statement signed by the Director, Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, said that in one of the logistics companies, not less than 30 parcels of cocaine weighing 1.1 kilograms concealed in hair cream containers were recovered by officers of the Directorate of Operations and General Investigation during examination of cargoes going to Ireland on Tuesday, September 3, 2024.

The statement added that another consignment of 24 parcels of cocaine weighing 862 grams also hidden in hair cream containers meant for delivery in UK was equally intercepted at the same company on Friday, September 6, while a total of 525 pills of tramadol 225mg and ecstasy (MDMA) concealed in ladies' sanitary pads going to Cyprus were seized at another courier firm in Lagos on Tuesday, September 3.

The NDLEA further said that a shipment of 200 ampoules of promethazine injection and pentazocine injection hidden in food items and herbs heading to London, UK, was also seized by operatives on Wednesday, September 4.

Reverse unlawful petrol price hike in 48 hours, probe NNPC, SERAP tells Tinubu

BRIGHT JACOB

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project has urged President Bola Tinubu to use his "leadership position and good offices to direct the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited to immediately reverse what it described as the "illegal and unconstitutional" increase in the pump price of premium motor spirit or petrol across its retail outlets.

In a statement by SERAP's Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare on Sunday, it also urged Tinubu to direct the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, and appro-

priate anti-corruption agencies, to probe the allegations of corruption and mismanagement in the NNPC, including the spending of the reported \$300 million 'bailout funds' collected from the Federal Government in August 2024, and the \$6 billion debt it owes suppliers.

SERAP said, "Suspected perpetrators of alleged corruption and mismanagement in the NNPC should face prosecution as appropriate, if there is sufficient admissible evidence, and any proceeds of corruption should be fully recovered."

"The increase in petrol price constitutes a fundamental breach of constitutional guarantees and the country's international human

rights obligations.

"Nigerians have for far too long been denied justice and the opportunity to get to the bottom of why they continue to pay the price for corruption in the oil sector."

"Rather than pursuing public policies to address the growing poverty and inequality in the country, and holding the NNPC to account for the alleged corruption and mismanagement in the oil sector, your government seems to be punishing the poor."

"The increase in petrol price has rendered already impoverished citizens incapable of satisfying their minimum needs for survival."

"The increase is not inevitable, as it stems from the persistent fail-

ure of successive governments to address allegations of corruption and mismanagement in the oil sector and the impunity of suspected perpetrators."

"Corruption in the oil sector and the lack of transparency and accountability in the use of public funds to support the operations of the NNPC have resulted in persistent and unlawful hikes in petrol prices."

"Holding the NNPC to account for alleged corruption and mismanagement in the oil sector would serve legitimate public interests."

"The increase is causing immense hardship to those less well-off. We are concerned that as the economic situation in Nigeria

deteriorates, the increase in petrol price is pushing people further into poverty."

"We would be grateful if the recommended measures are taken within 48 days of the receipt and/or publication of this letter. If we have not heard from you by then, SERAP shall consider appropriate legal actions to compel your government to comply with our request in the public interest."

"Increasing petrol prices at a time when millions of Nigerians continue to face worsening economic conditions is entirely inconsistent with your government constitutional and international obligations to ensure the minimum living conditions compatible with human dignity."

Suffering of Edo people has reached unprecedented level, Akpata knocks Obaseki

BRIGHT JACOB

The Labour Party governorship candidate in the upcoming election in Edo State, Olumide Akpata, has criticised the outgoing governor of the Godwin Obaseki, saying his administration had brought untold hardship to the people.

In a statement on Sunday, Akpata said the suffering of the Edo people had reached unprecedented levels under the Obaseki government, which began its tenure under the All Progressives Congress and concluded under the People's Democratic Party.

He said, "The current administration celebrates our 33rd anniversary with pomp and pageantry, brandishing statistics of its supposed achievements. Yet, as I have traversed the length and breadth of our state—from Benin City to Auchi to Uromi—I have witnessed a stark disconnect between these lofty claims and the harsh realities on the ground.

"This political somersault has brought no relief to the common man. Instead, it has only deepened the wounds of misgovernance and unfulfilled promises. The past eight years have been a master class in the politics of deception—a government that changed parties but maintained the same disregard for the welfare of its citizens.

"Our youths, once brimming with hope and vigour, now find themselves trapped in a cycle of unemployment and despair.

POINT
The past eight years have been a master class in the politics of deception

Our derly, w h o should be enjoying the fruits of their labour, are struggling. Our farmers, the backbone of our economy, grapple with inadequate support and crumbling infrastructure."

According to Akpata, the dreams of a prosperous Edo State, which burned bright 33 years ago, now flicker precariously in the winds of neglect and mismanagement.

"But even in these challenging times, I see reason for hope. In my journeys across the state, I have been inspired by the resilience of our people. I have met young people who, despite all odds, are creating innovative solutions to local problems. The stories of everyday courage and perseverance remind us of the true spirit of Edo State—a spirit that no amount of misgovernance can extinguish.

"It is this indomitable spirit that we must now channel into charting a new course for our state. In just 23 days, on September 21, 2024, we stand at a critical crossroads. In 13 days, we have the power to rewrite the story of our state to cast aside the failures of the past and vote for a future that truly reflects the greatness of our people. This election is more than a political contest; it is a battle for the soul of Edo State. It is a choice between continuing down the path of unfulfilled

promises and embarking on a journey of genuine transformation."

He said although the journey ahead will be challenging, the rewards are immeasurable.

"Together, we can transform Edo State into a land of opportunity, where every citizen has the chance to reach their full potential. We can create a state where our children no longer dream of

escaping abroad but aspire to build their futures right here at home. A state where innovation thrives, where small businesses flourish, and where our natural and human resources are leveraged to create sustainable wealth for all.

"Together, we can build an Edo State that will give us genuine reasons to celebrate in the years to come, a state where

progress is not measured by the wealth of a few but by the well-being of all. The task ahead is enormous, but so is our capacity to meet it. The history of Edo State is replete with stories of triumph over adversity, and I have no doubt that we will rise to this occasion once again."

His outburst comes as the Edo state governorship fast approaches.

Akpata had recently accused supporters of the PDP of destroying his campaign billboards.

This is as the Edo election is scheduled to be held on September 21, 2024.

A total of 184,438 voters have been registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission during the recently concluded continuous voter registration in Edo State. ●

Minister lauds \$1bn steel project in Kogi

FESTUS OKOROMADU

The Minister of Solid Minerals, Oladele Alake, has hailed the \$1 billion (N1.6 trillion) new iron ore to the steel project planned for Kogi State as a breakthrough in the Federal Government's push for local value addition in the sector.

The project, a collaboration between Nigeria's Chart and Capstone Integrated Limited and China's Sinomach-He, marks a pivotal step in the Federal Gov-

ernment's drive to prioritize local value addition over raw mineral exports.

Special Adviser to the Minister, Kehinde Bamigbetan, disclosed this in a statement on Sunday.

Speaking at a meeting in Beijing during President Bola Tinubu's recent visit to China, Alake praised the project as a breakthrough in the government's efforts to revamp the sector.

The statement partly read, "He said the Federal Government has reversed the pit to port policy un-

der which mining companies exported raw minerals to extraction with local value addition which is the best guarantee of jobs for the youths, skills transfer and better balance of trade between the country and her trading partners."

The new policy requires that applicants for mining licenses include plans for processing raw minerals locally; a move Alake said will enhance Nigeria's trade balance, particularly with China.

"The trade balance between Nigeria and China is over one billion

dollars in favour of China because the minerals imported from Nigeria are essentially in raw forms," Alake noted.

"Once Nigeria starts to export finished or semi-finished value-added mineral products, our balance of trade will be more favourable, and our foreign exchange earnings will improve.

"With aggressive local value addition and the revenue from it, the prospects of reducing our debt burden in the nearest future are possible," he said. ●

Zamfara denies releasing funds to bandits

BRIGHT JACOB

The Zamfara State government has disowned some documents claiming that it had released huge funds to some bandits' kingpins for dialogue in the state.

The Secretary to the State Government, Abubakar Nakwada,

said in Gusau, the state capital, on Sunday that the documents were fake and mischievous, misleading, malicious and false.

Nakwada said the documents with his signature and those of other top government officials were forged. He added that security agencies had been properly briefed and were on trial to track down the social media source.

He faulted the claims that money

was paid to some media promoters under the guise of "reconciliation efforts" from the state Security Trust Fund.

Nakwada said, "It is crucial that we address this matter with transparency and urgency.

"Ordinarily, we should have ignored this, like we have ignored many other fabricated lies aimed at distracting the administration of Governor Dauda Lawal from its

commitment to rescuing and rebuilding the state.

"But due to the sensitivity of the security, which remains one of the priorities of this administration, we are compelled to make some clarifications."

Nakwada said to set the records straight, the purported memo allegedly said to have originated from his office to Governor Lawal and was entirely fake and mischievous. ●

CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as OKEKA SHALLOM UCHECHI , now wish to be known and addressed as IDAHOZA SHALLOM UCHECHI . All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as OYEDARE DUPE FEYISHARA . Now wish to be known and addressed as OYEDARE MODUPE ELIZABETH . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	ADDITION OF NAME I, formerly ADEOYE OLUWAKEMI . Now to be known as ADEOYE OLUWAKEMI ABOLAJI . All former documents remain valid. KEYSTONE BANK, POLARIS BANK and the general public to please take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as MUSA WILLIAMS . Now wish to be known and addressed as MUSA WILLIAM . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I BRIGGSENIOLA ABOSEDE want my date of birth which was mistakenly written on my NIN as 13/11/1988 to be corrected to 13/11/1990 which is my correct date of birth	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known as AJAYI OLUWASEYI OLAJUMOKE . Now wish to be known as IBILORO OLUWASEYI OLAJUMOKE . Due to marriage. All former documents remain valid banks and general public should please take note.
CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as OYEDELE KABIRAT BOLAJI . Now wish to be known and addressed as GIWA BABALOLA KABIRAT ADEBOLA . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as DIALA GODSWILL NKENJIKAI . Now wish to be known and addressed as EMMANUEL GODSWILL NKENJIKAI . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I, formerly MISSYUSUF DHIKROH OPEYEMI . Now to be known and addressed as MRS. BUSARI DHIKROH OPEYEMI . All former documents remain valid. POLARIS BANK, ACCESS BANK and the general public to please take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as JOY. SHOLA . Now wish to be known and addressed as ADEBAYO JOY. OLAMIDE . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known as ABDULSSALAM ABIODUN KAFILAT or ABDULSSALAM KAFILAT ABIODUN . Now wish to be known as ABDULSALAM ABIODUN KAFILAT . All former documents remain valid banks and general public should please take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known as MISS NZEKWE GLORIA NWAKAEGO . Now wish to be known as MRS ANIEBONAM GLORIA NWAKAEGO . All former documents remain valid banks and general public should please take note.
CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as SHOBERU ORIYOMI ADEJUGBAGBE . Wrong Date of birth is 17/03/1977 . Now wish to be known and addressed as SHOBERU ORIYOMI ADE . Correct date of birth is 13/06/1977 . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note	CHANGE OF NAME That my name was wrongly written on BVN as ADEKUNLE KAUSARAT MOTUNRAYO . Wrong Date of birth is 09/09/1998 . My correct names on NIN is TAOFIQ KAUSARA ABENI with correct date of birth 09/09/1999 . All former documents remain valid. General Public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as OGUNJIMI ZAINAB . Now wish to be known and addressed as AHMED-EDU ZAINAB OLUWASHINDARA . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as MISS AREMU OMOWUNMI OLUWATOYIN . Now wish to be known and addressed as MRS HAMZAT OMOWUNMI OLUWATOYIN . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known as TOYIN RASHEEDAT . Now wish to be known as TAJUDEEN RASHEEDAT BIDE MI . All former documents remain valid banks and general public should please take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known as AJAYI OLUWASEYI OLAJUMOKE . Now wish to be known as IBILORO OLUWASEYI OLAJUMOKE . All former documents remain valid banks and general public should please take note.
CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as EKPE PATRICIA EKEMA . Now wish to be known and addressed as EKPE PATRICIA DAMION . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as OLADUNNI IBIRONKE BADMUS . Now wish to be known and addressed as OLADUNNI IBIRONKE AKINTOYE . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known and addressed as ADERIBIGBE OLUWAYEMISI OLUWATOSIN , wrong date of birth is 6/5/1989 . Correct date of birth is 6/5/1989 . All Former Document Remain Valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I, formerly known and addressed as Miss OWOYE OLUWATOYIN CHRISTIANAH , now wish to be known and addressed as Mrs. OBAH OLUWATOYIN CHRISTIANAH . All formal documents remain valid. General public take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known as IBISANMI MOTUNRAYO ELIZABETH , Wrong Date of birth is 8/05/1990 . Now wish to be known as OLESIN MOTUNRAYO ABOSEDE ELIZABETH , Correct date of birth is 8/05/1983 . All former documents remain valid banks and general public should please take note.	CHANGE OF NAME I formerly known as ADEGBIJI MOJISOLA ADEKEMI . Now wish to be known as ADEGBIJI MOJISOLA ADEKEMI . All former documents remain valid banks and general public should please take note.

Outrage over controversial deaths at LASUTH on alleged medical negligence, unprofessionalism

- Deaths need not cast our hospital in bad light - CMD
- Lagos government yet to disclose cause of Akwa Ibom CP's death at LASUTH
- I'm now afraid going to hospital, says mother of deceased boy with missing intestines

TIMOTHY AGBOR AND
BRIGHT JACOB

Ever since she lost her 12-year-old son, Adebola Akin-Bright to alleged medical negligence and unprofessionalism, Mrs. Deborah Abiodun has developed a phobia for healthcare services.

Being realistic with the fact that as a human being, she cannot do away with seeking medical treatment, Mrs. Abiodun has to go into intense prayer whenever she is about stepping her feet into health facilities.

Mrs. Abiodun's panic mode towards medical practice in Nigeria was activated in September 2023 after the tragic death of her son, Adebola following the alleged missing intestines of the boy after a surgery at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Ikeja.

Her case is one out of many Nigerians who have experienced the harsh consequences of alleged medical negligence and unprofessionalism at Nigerian hospitals, both public and private.

LASUTH, has however been pronounced among hospitals that have been rocked with questionable deaths of patients.

After spending about 28 days at LASUTH, small part of the intestines of Adebola Akin-Bright was allegedly missing and less than three weeks after Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State had promised to take the medical care of the boy, he died on September 19, 2023.

Disturbed by the public outcry that greeted Adebola's demise and circumstances surrounding it, the Lagos State Government had set up a coroner inquest into the boy's death.

However, The Point gathered that the findings of the coroner are yet to be made public.

A year after the death of Adebola, LASUTH has been in the news again following the controversial death of the Akwa Ibom State Commissioner of Police, Waheed Ayilara.

Ayilara was reported to have died in the early hours of Thursday, August 29, 2024 at LASUTH where he underwent prostate cancer surgery.

His death has, however, generated controversies as some alleged the hospital of mismanagement.

Again, the state government set up a panel of inquiry to probe the death of the Commissioner of Police



even as some family members point accusing fingers on some medical personnel who attended Ayilara.

I'VE LEFT ADEBOLA'S CASE FOR GOD TO JUDGE - MOTHER

Owing to the slow pace and tedious nature of the coroner inquest, Mrs. Deborah Abiodun said she has left the case for God to judge months after "nothing was heard from the coroner."

In an interview with The Point, she recalled how hearing into the matter commenced and stalled, saying, "I petitioned the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria in October last year and after some months, they called us in May this year and we went into hearing. I explained my side of the story and the private hospital and LASUTH also did the same. The MDCN indicted the private hospital for professional misconduct; the consultant at LASUTH was also indicted one way or the other but I have not heard anything about that."

Asked about the step LASUTH



THERE IS NOTHING I CAN DO TO BRING BACK DEBOLA, THE ONLY THING IS TO KEEP HIS MEMORY ALIVE AND THAT IS ALL I COULD DO. I HAVE SAT DOWN AND THOUGHT ABOUT IT, THAT IF I SAY I WANT TO CONTINUE TO FIGHT AND SEEK FOR JUSTICE, YOU KNOW THAT LASUTH IS A GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL, FIGHTING THEM IS SOMETHING AND I HAVE BEEN GOING FOR AN INQUEST AND ALL THAT AND THE WHOLE THING IS TIRING

management initially took after her son's death, Mrs. Abiodun stated, "Though, at the initial stage when we lost Debola, LASUTH was trying to pay the money we spent at their hospital but when they now discovered that I petitioned MDCN, I think they changed their mind. The first two surgeries were done at a private hospital. The whole process started from a private hospital. LASUTH was charged for professional misconduct

"When we discovered what happened, they (LASUTH management) told me I should go and ask the private hospital when they actually knew what happened; and they didn't come out fully to tell us what actually happened. After we had spent 28 days at the hospital, they just told me that I should go back to the private hospital doctor and that he should be able to tell me what happened."

On her impression about medical practice in the country generally and whether she still finds it convenient assessing medical care after the death of Adebola, she

said, "There are lots of improvements that must be done. There is no way I will not use the hospital. It is just unfortunate that Debola is one of the victims but notwithstanding, with God, we will keep pushing. That is just my slogan. I am just coming from the General Hospital where I took my daughter to, what I found there is better than what I saw last time. I think the government is trying to improve the public hospitals. I think more has to do with the personality and the nonchalant attitudes of some medical personnel.

According to her, medical personnel's alleged nonchalant attitudes to duties would continue if the law does not use someone as a scapegoat, adding, "Because nobody has been prosecuted or paid for anything, they don't know the extent of the havoc they are causing."

"Whenever I am visiting the hospital now, I am always scared. I will always go for a kind of prayer

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because what happened to Debola was just a minor thing that couldn't have caused his death. It is a scary thing for me going to the hospital but we are still alive and when there is need to go to the hospital, I will still go but I will have to do a vigil and pray over it that God should guide and lead me to a very good doctor because not everyone one of them is bad.

"When we were at LASUTH, there were doctors that were good. There is one particular doctor at LASUTH, he will take his time to explain what is happening to a patient and even when there is no hope, the man will always give us hope. So, it is not all of them that are bad. Like the private doctor, he has a whole lot of errors that he committed before it even got to LASUTH.

"If you go to Nigerian hospitals and you come back alive, know that God is still on your side. It is a scary situation," she bemoaned.

Revealing more reasons why she had to let go of the case and how she has been coping since the demise of her son, Mrs. Abiodun said, "There is nothing I can do to bring back Debola, the only thing is to keep his memory alive and that is all I could do. I have sat down and thought about it, that if I say I want to continue to fight and seek for justice, you know that LASUTH is a government hospital, fighting them is something and I have been going for an inquest and all that and the whole thing is tiring."

"I have also had my own health issues which I discovered during the course of this whole matter and of which I have to take care of. So, that is why I have to leave everything for God. Let God take them up. You know how Nigeria is; getting justice is a long process. I did not see it as a waste of time

Outrage over controversial deaths at LASUTH on alleged medical negligence, unprofessionalism

asking for justice for my boy but I just felt what the need is? Although, if I had the money, I would have done it but I just have to let some things go because of my health so that I can also be alive to take care of the remaining one," she added.

DEATHS NEED NOT CAST OUR HOSPITAL IN BAD LIGHT, SAYS LASUTH CMD

However, the Chief Medical Director of LASUTH, Prof. Adetokunbo Fabamwo, told The Point that the hospital needed not to be put in bad light in the midst of controversial deaths that have greeted it.

Fabamwo made this assertion even as the hospital is yet to make public the probe report on the death of Ayilara.

Recall that a high-powered panel of inquiry has been set up to look into the death of the Akwa Ibom State Commissioner of Police, Ayilara.

The state Commissioner of Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi, had directed the hospital to set up a fact-finding committee to investigate the controversies raised in the death of the late Commissioner of Police.

"We have a very good idea of why he died but we will release a guarded official statement after the panel submits its findings next week," Fabamwo was quoted as saying.

When The Point contacted the CMD on Friday to ask if the panel had submitted its report on the death of

Ayilara, Fabamwo said "the findings of the panel will be disclosed by the Commissioner for Health."

"No panel was set up by LASUTH. It was set up by the Ministry of Health and the findings of the panel will be disclosed by the Commissioner for Health," he stressed.

Asked whether LASUTH was not worried about its image and controversy for being in the news for the wrong reasons all the time, Fabamwo said, "It is very uncharitable to say LASUTH is always in the news for wrong reasons. A lot of good clinical work is going on in LASUTH and we receive many commendations."

On the hospital's assurance to the public of the confidence of its personnel and equipment, he stated, "We are committed to excellent care delivery. This case in point needs not cast our hospital in a bad light. There are many post-surgical events that may be lethal in the best of hospitals."

A public affairs analyst, Alex Nwadike, who said he once visited LASUTH for treatment, noted that the hospital is "a very important hospital" that should not be embroiled in controversy.

Nwadike also lamented that ordinary Nigerians do not have people who can speak up for them when they are unfairly treated in the hospital.

He said, "It is very unfortunate that the tragedies in question happened in the hospital. LASUTH is a very important hospital and should not be embroiled in controversy."

“NO PANEL WAS SET UP BY LASUTH. IT WAS SET UP BY THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND THE FINDINGS OF THE PANEL WILL BE DISCLOSED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR HEALTH. IT IS VERY UNCHARITABLE TO SAY LASUTH IS ALWAYS IN THE NEWS FOR WRONG REASONS. A LOT OF GOOD CLINICAL WORK IS GOING ON IN LASUTH AND WE RECEIVE MANY COMMENDATIONS

broiled in controversy. "The case of the CP that died in the hospital is probably gaining a lot of attention because of the calibre of the individual

involved. What about the instances when ordinary Nigerians have been treated unfairly in the hospital? Who speaks up for such people?

"I was in the hospital some years ago when I developed lupus vulgaris, that is tuberculosis ulcer, and I saw a lot of discouraging stuff there. Thank God that I came out of there with my life.

"You find nurses there who treat you like you are nothing. They act like your sickness is a burden to them. And they also speak rudely to patients."

Nwadike declared that the number of patients the hospital receives on a daily basis affects their work, stressing that the doctors and nurses are overstretched.

He also insisted that government hospitals do not give their 100% and are not concerned about their image and controversies.

"It is possible that the number of patients they receive every day in that teaching hospital contributes to the awful manner they take their work. They are overstretched in that place.

"Why the state government has not built any additional hospital in Ikeja baffles me. If they build one more teaching hospital right there in Ikeja, will it remove anything from them? We must learn to love ourselves in this country.

"And about the hospital not being worried about its image and the controversy about being in the news for the wrong reasons, well, if you think that government hospitals will give their 100% to save the lives coming into their facility, you are mistaken.

"Most of the people there don't give a damn about who dies. Many of the workers there believe that there won't be repercussions even if they are careless on the job."

Nwadike added, "The child whose intestines got missing in the hospital is another sorry case. Till this moment, I don't understand what went wrong. I don't also know whether the management of the hospital is ready to unravel whose carelessness led to the boy's death.

"They have set up a committee already over the police officer's death, but let us wait and see how far that one will go.

"Concerning how the hospital will assure the public about the competence of its personnel and equipment, I think that in this instance, actions should speak louder than words.

"Don't just come here to tell Lagosians and Nigerians that you are competent and up to the task. Instead, let your actions do the talking for you.

"Moreover, try not to cover any hospital staff who takes his or her work with levity. We must put a stop to the nonchalant attitude of staff in our healthcare facilities."



Prof. Fabamwo



Prof. Fabamwo

Customs'll not deliberately delay consignment at ports because we understand importance of trade facilitation – Adeiza Emmanuel

Chief Superintendent of Customs, Adeiza Emmanuel Ibrahim, is the Assistant Technical Supervisor, TinCan Island Port Area Command of the Nigeria Customs Service. He also works as one of the Special Assistants to Customs Area Controller, Dera Nnadi and a recent awardee of the Assistant Comptroller General of Customs/Zonal Coordinator Zone 'A', AGC Yusuf 'Commendation letter'. In this interview with **ZAINAB JUNAID**, he elucidates on allegations put against Nigeria Customs Officers over deliberate delay of cargo clearance at Sea Port and also revealed how TCIP has achieved over 65% of its year 2024 revenue target. Excerpts:

There are allegations against Customs Officers for deliberately delaying cargo clearance at seaports. What's your perception on this, being one of the officers dealing directly with agents on the field?

I think it's important that the stakeholders understand that we have other sister agencies that are involved in the trade cycle and we all play critical roles when it comes to cargo clearance. Customs will not deliberately delay consignment at the Ports because we understand the importance of trade facilitation. Boosting trade facilitation is our core function as Customs Officers and we know the advantage of releasing cargoes as and when due. We are not the reason behind cargo clearance delays at the Port.

In fact to buttress this statement, the Service has achieved 81.5% increase on the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Committee ranking, this year 2024. We jumped about 33 places to increase our ranking. We expect the stakeholders to understand Customs procedures, that we are just implementing government fiscal policies. Also, on the exchange rates, the majority of them believe it's Customs that fixes that, whereas it's just government policy being implemented through the Central Bank of Nigeria. The stakeholders are very important to us because they play a critical role in the trade cycle. We would not move to inconvenience them.

Being the Assistant Technical Supervisor, that deals directly with freight forwarders (agents), would you please narrate your ordeal with the stakeholders at TinCan Port?

As I've said earlier, the stakeholders take a very critical role in the trade cycle, and Customs administration sees their needs as a primary function. The World Customs Organization also highlighted their importance at International Customs day 2024 as it coined its theme titled 'Customs engaging traditional and new partners with purpose' in line with having mutual collaboration with them.

This depicts that Customs values the critical role played by stakeholders when it comes to international trade. Engaging with them at TinCan Command is a plethora of tasks we are pre-trained for. We've garnered the skills and knowledge prior before we are assigned for the task.

...Any measures put in place to ease business for these stakeholders?

Yes, the Service through Section 24 of the new NCS Act 2023 has given stakeholders the opportunity to request for information needed to ease their business.

Taking cognizance of the Advance Ruling concept, an innovation (trade tool) carved in line with Revised Kyoto Convention that gives room for stakeholders to provide prior information on their consignments. This information includes-issues on dispute, valuation, and classification on goods. Advance Ruling makes it possible for disputes to be resolved prior to the arrival of goods.

Also, Section 29 of this Act concentrates more on transparency and stakeholders' consultation. This section states that the Service shall institute and maintain formal consultation with traders and other interested persons to increase cooperation and compliance to facilitate trade as well as participation to establish effective administrative policy.

Procedures and methods of our workings commiserate with this act. Just as Nigeria Customs identified stakeholders as an important part of trade facilitation we have constantly engaged them with the introduction of trade facilitation tools in line with the policy thrust of the Comptroller General of Customs. Some of these tools are -

TRS- Time Release Study, which is simply about identifying bottlenecks in the supply chain and eliminating them to increase faster clearance time.

AEO- Authorised Economic Operator programme, a concept that identifies compliant traders and helps them in cargo clearance. However, they need to meet up with AEO requirements for them to have access to this.

PCA- Post Clearance Audit, it is a strategy to recover lost revenue. The management has also created a help desk at the Public Relations Section and there's constant engagement with the stakeholders on whatever issue that arises. All these are aimed at easing business for the stakeholders. If you can recall, the Area Controller of the Command, Comptroller Dera Nnadi, declared 2024 as the year of stakeholders, it's also to motivate and encourage them and also let them know that we are partners in progress.

The mutual collaboration maintained with the stakeholders has in turn boosted the Command's revenue because as at August 2024, we have generated more than 65% of

our 2024 revenue target.

Are there any challenges with the stakeholders on this new tool?

Most of them have no proper understanding of the new concept which really caused dispute sometimes back. They thought it's basically for Customs operations. The Comptroller General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi, in his wisdom, had to engage them virtually in a separate session, more of training, before they could get what the concept is all about.

The Area Controller, Nnadi also mandated the technical working group, that is the ad-hoc team in the Command alongside the national working technical group of TRS to continue to educate the stakeholders on the importance of the concept, which is basically to make them more compliance, make them understand the transparency of NCS.

Has TRS improved their level of compliance, making honest declarations?

With the introduction of TRS, the sincerity level of stakeholders has improved between 30 and 40%, considering the fact that the TRS is still under observation, but I'm sure when it's properly launched later in September, we will have a very good percentage.

You were recently awarded a commendation letter by the Zonal Coordinator of all Customs in Zone A, ACG Saidu Yusuf, what impact does this have on you sir? How have you been motivated with this development? Has it driven or inspired any new target for you?

Well, on behalf of myself and other 17 awardees, I would like to extend our profound gratitude to the CGC through the Zonal Coordinator Zone A, ACG Saidu Yusuf, for counting us worthy of this award. As you know, every commendation creates room for improvement. It calls for more hard work, commitment and dedication. I was highly honored to be awarded and with this encouragement, I will like to continue to key into the policy thrust of the CGC and also contribute vigorously in supporting the Service to achieve the set goals, especially the revenue target for the fiscal year 2024. The commendation letter is for dedication and commitment to service delivery for the Command, which all of us have vowed to achieve.

Prior to this commendation letter, has any or current Area Controller awarded you for an outstanding performance in your task?

Yes, The Customs Area Controller, Dera Nnadi gave me an award of excellence in May 2024 and I've also received NLNG's award for Service efficiency at Port Harcourt.

What is your perception about Area Controller Dera Nnadi?

Has he impacted positively in your activities since his assumption as the helmsman of the Command?

Well, I would like to categorically state that positively

has been in the air since the CAC took over the realms of this Command on September 14, 2023, a lot of Officers have understood the role they need to play when it comes to enhancing trade. This is because Comptroller Dera Nnadi constantly engaged the Officers, by motivating us with words of encouragement, diving into insightful contents to help actualize our goals.

He is a determined and liberal leader that carries his Officers along with respective ideas needed to discharge their duties. He is a leader that can be defined by results and great attributes. All his methods are in line with the policy thrust of the CGC- collaboration, consolidation and innovation. Comptroller Dera is unequivocally resilient, always flexes his influence while communicating the vision and always shows gratitude.

TCIP is known for successful anti-smuggling activities and unprecedented revenue generation from time being. With the presence of Area Controller Dera Nnadi, this feat has been sustained. And you are one of those behind the scene of the success story, what message do you have for both junior Officers of the Command and the stakeholders at large?

We all play major roles when it comes to national growth. For this reason, the existing mutual collaboration between us should be sustained between the stakeholders and Customs Officers and other sister agencies. I will implore the stakeholders to understand that all the tools introduced by Nigeria Customs Service are aimed at enhancing their activities, improving their turnover and practically facilitating trade.

Also at the forefront of the trade cycle, all other critical sister agencies cannot be taken for granted, because our work is closely interwoven and here in Customs we always ensure we maintain cordial relationship with other sister agencies to hasten clearance of goods at seaports and achieve the common goal of the President of Federal Republic of Nigeria.

To the Officers and Men in the Command, we've all understood our major roles in trade facilitation and we've played critical roles in making the Command achieve over 65% of its revenue target for the 2024 fiscal year. These roles cannot be over emphasized and the CAC is full of words of encouragement to motivate Officers, we should continue to be committed, as excellence is always its own reward. ●

BOOSTING TRADE FACILITATION IS OUR CORE FUNCTION AS CUSTOMS OFFICERS AND WE KNOW THE ADVANTAGE OF RELEASING CARGOES AS AND WHEN DUE. WE ARE NOT THE REASON BEHIND CARGO CLEARANCE DELAYS AT THE PORT



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Views

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Temple Onyeukwu

The #EndBadGovernance August protest has come and gone. It is now time to take stock and reflect on the protest by quantifying the gains and the losses it occasioned.

The greatest motivating factor for the strike may be linked to the alleged insensitivity, arrogance, flamboyance, unprecedented corruption and impunity among the ruling class while the majority of the citizens can barely afford one meal in a day.

Since the inception of this administration, President Bola Tinubu has made many overseas trips, all in a bid to convince foreign investors to come and invest in Nigeria.

Are these trips necessary when the multinational companies in Nigeria are folding up and relocating? How do you convince foreign investors that your environment is conducive to investment when it is crystal clear that the direct opposite is the case?

Some international oil companies have divested their assets. Crude oil theft is on the increase; our crude oil has been sold upfront by former President Muhammadu Buhari. The present administration is also toeing the same line of forward-selling crude that has not been produced.

Nigeria appears to have been living on borrowed time over the years with the government subsidising the cost of living of the citizens as a result of the fuel subsidy the previous administrations were paying.

On his inauguration, Tinubu

declared an end to fuel subsidies. This singular declaration, though well-intentioned, has brought about untold hardship for Nigerians. When this was closely followed by floating our currency, hell was let loose, inflation spiraled out of control.

Presently, we are heading to stagflation. The citizens expected the government to adequately address the unintended consequences of these twin economic policies.

Unfortunately, while the citizens were asked to tighten their belts, the government and its agencies became more profligate. Those in government are living large as if we are in normal times.

Expectedly before such far-reaching economic policies can be adopted in any economy, it is required that the economy will be a net exporter of manufactured/processed goods and not raw materials. This is not the case with Nigeria.

It is expected that the infrastructure in the economy supports economic growth. It is expected that the productive population of the economy is gainfully engaged in productive ventures. Again we have more than 40 per cent youth unemployment rate.

Essentially, it is the environment that largely determines economic policies in any society and not the prescription of the World Bank and IMF. The Nigerian environment, which has been described as the poverty

“MANY GOVERNORS GOVERN THEIR STATES FROM ABUJA. SOME OF THEM HAVE BECOME PERSONAL ASSISTANTS TO THE PRESIDENT TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY ATTEND ALL THE FUNCTIONS AT THE PRESIDENCY WHETHER IN THE MORNING, AFTERNOON OR EVENING AND ONLY VISIT THEIR STATES ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS

capital of the world, does not support the economic policies of the present administration even though these policies require long gestation periods before positively impacting the population when the environment is right.

Nigeria is not working and cannot work as presently configured. We are not practising true federalism. The Federal Government must shed weight and devolve powers to the states

while concentrating on issues like immigration, foreign affairs, defence, customs and other essentials that bind the country together.

The states and/or zones must be allowed to exploit, manage and control their resources while paying taxes to the Federal Government.

Many governors govern their states from Abuja. Some of them have become personal assistants to the president to the extent that they attend all the functions at the presidency whether in the morning, afternoon or evening and only visit their states on special occasions.

There is no gainsaying that many present-day political office holders weren't employers of labour before coming into office. This accounts for why most of them are profligate with state resources and live flamboyant and arrogant lifestyles.

Do you know that Nigeria is said to have the highest cost of production of a barrel of crude oil among all OPEC member states? Nigeria produces one barrel of crude at a cost of about \$48. To get a sense of proportion, the cost of production of a barrel of crude, the world over, ranges between \$5 and \$20. Definitely, corruption is responsible for this high cost of production. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission should rather probe why Nigeria incurs a high cost in producing crude.

The August protest brought many issues to the fore. The lev-

el of insecurity in the country is worrying. Travellers, including corps members, are being kidnapped on the highway; farmers on their farms experience attacks, often resulting in death or abductions; villages are attacked and their inhabitants driven into IDP camps, while the government and security forces look the other way. No one would want to put his investment in such a clime.

The protest provoked the government to take some panic measures like suspending duties on the importation of grains and other food items for six months. The primary responsibility of the government is the protection of lives and property. This panic measure will affect the farmers negatively. The government should ensure farmers will be secure when they go to their farms all year round.

In terms of insecurity, state police are part of the solution. Nothing stops local governments from creating their own police to police their respective local governments. We know that palliatives don't work. Let the environment be conducive to productive engagements of the citizens. The leadership must show political will and exemplary reduction in the cost of governance.

The government must get its priorities right. This is not the time for a presidential yacht, presidential plane, and the renovation of the Vice President's house. This is not the time that members of the National Assembly, as speculated, should be taking N21m as monthly allowances. This is not

the time for a bloated entourage in the search for foreign investors. The government must be intentional in cutting the cost of governance. The eyes must now shift to the state governors.

The state governors, until the Supreme Court judgment that granted fiscal autonomy to the local governments, used to control the allocation for both the state and local governments. Despite the fact that some state governors have access to ecological funds, 13 percent derivation fund, internally generated revenues, massive borrowings continue. There are no visible developments in the states to justify that they receive 40 per cent of the available funds. The governors can stop the forthcoming protest by embarking on impactful projects.

No president can achieve anything under this convoluted fraudulent federal system. Until true federation is instituted in our country, no progress can be made. Instituting a true federal system through fundamental restructuring will be the greatest achievement of this administration.

The administration would have resolved more than 60 per cent of the problem bedeviling the country. Nigeria is not working, cannot work and will not work until we consciously and intentionally restructure the fraudulent federal system in place today. We must accept the truth for the country to make progress. ●

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Facts about the fuel subsidy puzzle

Chimaza Nonyerem-Okoronkwo

The removal of fuel subsidy has been a contentious issue in Nigeria, with proponents arguing that it will improve the economy, and opponents claiming that it will lead to increased poverty and social unrest. For me, both of them are right. To understand the implications of fuel subsidy removal, it is essential to define what subsidy is and its advantages and disadvantages.

Subsidies are financial aid provided by governments or public bodies to support industries, businesses, or individuals. Subsidy payments are a global practice; govern-

ments around the world use subsidies to support various sectors of their economies and individuals.

In Nigeria, fuel subsidy has been a contentious issue, particularly under former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration and that of President Bola Tinubu. Initially, Buhari supported the fuel subsidy to keep fuel prices low for Nigerians. However, it became a significant drain on government finances, costing billions of dollars annually and contributing to budget deficits.

In 2021, Buhari signed the Petroleum Industry Act, which aimed to reform the oil and gas sector and phase out the fuel subsidy. However, he delayed the removal of the subsidy, citing potential social unrest and economic consequences.

Upon taking office in May 2023, Tinubu announced the removal of the fuel subsidy as part of his broader economic reform agenda. The move led to immediate panic buying, long queues at petrol stations, and a sharp increase in fuel prices; affecting transportation costs and the prices of goods and services.

The controversy surrounding the fuel subsidy removal sparked the August protests tagged "EndBadGovernance" and criticism from labour unions and the public, who argued that the removal was abrupt and lacked adequate planning to mitigate its impact on the populace.

The economic justification for the removal has been met with public backlash, concerns about the immediate impact on living costs, and a lack of

“WHILE THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE HAD GOOD INTENTIONS IN REMOVING THE SUBSIDY, THE IMPLEMENTATION HAS BEEN POORLY HANDLED, AND THE CONSEQUENCES ARE BEING FELT BY ORDINARY NIGERIANS

transparency in how the saved funds after the removal would be utilised.

To address the current situation, the government needs to take urgent steps to address the concerns of Nigerians and provide support to those who are most affected by the removal of fuel subsidies. This could include measures such as increasing the minimum wage, providing subsidies for essential goods and services, and investing in social programmes that benefit the poor and vulnerable.

Ultimately, the removal of fuel subsidies is a complex issue that requires careful consideration and planning. While the government may have had good intentions in removing the subsidy, the implementation has been poorly handled, and the consequences are being felt

by ordinary Nigerians.

The government needs to listen to the concerns of its citizens and take steps to address the hardship and frustration that the removal of fuel subsidy has caused. This puzzle highlights the complex balance between economic reforms and social stability in Nigeria.

To move forward, it is essential to piece together the facts and forge a way ahead that addresses the concerns of all stakeholders and Nigerians as a whole. ●

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Mamman's 18-year-old proposed admission policy

The Federal Government has clarified that there is no age restriction for sitting for the National Examination Council and West African Examination Council examinations.

Contrary to recent reports suggesting a minimum age of 18 years, the government explained that it only restricted the age for sitting for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination and entry into the university to 18 years beginning from 2025.

Minister of State for Education, Tanko Sununu, made the clarification in Abuja on Friday while briefing journalists on activities to herald the 2024 World Literacy Day.

The Minister of Education, Prof. Tahir Mamman (SAN), recently announced the Federal Government's decision to ban students who are under 18 years from sitting for the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate examination and the National Examinations Council.

Both examinations are crucial for admission into tertiary institutions in the country. The Federal Government, according to Mamman, has instructed WAEC and NECO to enforce the directive that has stirred outrage across the country.

Mamman had earlier stated that the age limit for any candidate intending to write the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination organised by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board remained 18 years.

The Minister of Education has significant authority over the admission policies for tertiary institutions. This is not the first time a Minister of Education has fettered his discretion on education policy matters.

In 2018, a controversial admission policy was put forth, which mandated that all universities adhere to a specific cut-off mark for admissions.

This policy aimed to standardize admissions across the country but raised concerns about the flexibility and discretion of individual universities.

When the 2018 admission policy was announced, there was significant backlash from various stakeholders, including educators and students, who argued that the policy did not take into account the diversity of educational backgrounds and abilities across different regions.

Critics claimed that this rigid approach could lead to a situation where deserving candidates were denied admission solely based on a standardized score, thus fettering the discretion of universities to make holistic admissions decisions.

The Minister of Education's policy enforcing an 18-year minimum age for university entry may have several negative and positive implications.

On the negative side, students who complete secondary education earlier than 18 may face delays in furthering their education, which can extend their time before entering the workforce.

Schools may also feel pressured to adjust their curricula and teaching methods to ensure that students meet the age requirement, potentially compromising the quality of secondary education.

This policy could unduly affect students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not have access to educational resources or support, thereby widening the educational gap.

Talented students who are academically ready for university may also be hindered by age restrictions, thereby leading to frustration and disengagement from the education system.

Students who are unable to transition to university

due to age may equally lose motivation and drop out of the educational system entirely.

The policy may not take into account cultural differences in education paths, particularly in rural areas where students may mature and complete their education at different rates.

Restricting entry by age may hinder Nigeria's ability to compete internationally, as other countries often have more flexible entry requirements based on academic readiness rather than age.

Implementing and monitoring adherence to an age policy may require significant administrative resources, diverting attention from other critical educational issues.

Some students may be academically prepared for university before turning 18. This policy could prevent them from pursuing higher education in a timely manner.

Students who are ready to enter university but are held back by age restrictions may face delays in their careers, impacting their long-term economic prospects.

The policy may disproportionately affect students from different socio-economic backgrounds,

particularly those who may face barriers to accessing education.

The policy may not account for regional differences in educational attainment and maturity, potentially disadvantaging students in less developed areas.

On the positive side, establishing a uniform entry age could help standardize the education system and create a more predictable academic environment.

An 18-year entry age may ensure that students are more emotionally and socially mature, potentially leading to better academic performance and campus experiences.

Many countries have similar age requirements for university entry, which may help align Nigeria with international standards.

The Minister of Education should first create a conducive system in place, before attempting to implement the policy on 18 years old.

Hopefully, with the local government autonomy coming soon, the minister can work with the incoming local government chairmen to harmonise the policy.

Overall, while the intention behind the policy may be to standardize educational pathways, the implications could hinder access to higher education for many deserving students.

While the policy may have some benefits, its negative implications could outweigh these advantages, particularly given Nigeria's diverse educational landscape and socio-economic challenges.

A more flexible approach that considers both age and academic readiness might be more appropriate for fostering access to higher education in the country. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the policy would depend on its implementation and the context within which it operates.

While guidelines and policies are important for ensuring consistency and fairness, public officers must still retain the ability to exercise discretion in order to make fair and just decisions. Fettering discretion can lead to outcomes that are not in the best interest of justice or the public good.

The appropriateness of the Nigerian Minister of Education's policy on an 18-year minimum age for university entry can be re-evaluated and not carried out in a hurry. A future date for the commencement of the programme should be agreed by all the stakeholders and relevant structures should first be put in place. ●

“WHILE THE POLICY MAY HAVE SOME BENEFITS, ITS NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS COULD OUTWEIGH THESE ADVANTAGES, PARTICULARLY GIVEN NIGERIA'S DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES.”

City Pulse

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● CRIME ● COURTS MARRIAGE PALAVER

Celestial Church prophet lands in prison for raping undergraduate girl during 'deliverance'

TIMOTHY AGBOR
OSOGBO

An Ijebu-Ijesa High Court in Osun State has ordered the remand of a prophet in charge of Celestial Church of Christ in the state, Olukayode Omirin, for allegedly raping a lady who visited his church for deliverance.

Omirin, whose worship centre is located at Ona Iye Temple Cathedral, Olukayode Omirin Way, along Ijebu-Ijesa road, opposite Lobtik Guests House Ijebu-Ijesa, Oriade Local Government Area of the state, was initially arraigned at Ilesa Magistrate's Court but after the state Ministry of Justice took over the matter, he was dragged to the high court.

Prophet Omirin, also known as Dada, was arrested in January 2024 by the police for raping a 20-year-old lady who is a daughter to his neighbour in the area.

It was gathered that Omirin had deceitfully arranged a deliverance session to deliver the lady with the knowledge of her parents, before he allegedly forced her to bed inside the church.

The Point learnt that the family of the lady, said to be a student of the Osun State Polytechnic, Iree, has a cassava farm not far from the Celestial Church and on a certain day while they were on the farm, Omirin approached them and prayed for them after which he prophesied that their daughter would die on her next birthday because he saw in a vision that she is an "emere."

"Emere" is a Yoruba word that means a human being believed to be a spirit and more powerful than witches, and most often die on a particular day of joy.

For this, the cleric informed the parents that their daughter needed to be delivered to save her from dying on January 20, 2024 when she turned 20 years.

The prophet had arranged for fasting and prayers three nights preceding her birthday, saying they must be done in the church, for total deliverance and avoidance of premature death.

The suspect also had instructed the parents to prepare a celestial garment popularly known as "sultana" for their daughter and with-

draw from her any accessories like jewelry and telephone.

The mother of the victim had opted to perform the deliverance vigil

with her daughter but the prophet disapproved of it on the pretense

that it was against the spiritual instructions he received in his vision.

On January 4, which was the victim's 20th birthday and the last night of the fasting and prayer, Omirin allegedly took the victim to a room within the church where he ordered her to pull off her clothes and underwear and lay down on a piece of cloth on the floor.

The victim explained that while she lay on the floor, the pastor started rubbing the anointing oil on her body and eventually pinned her down, covered her mouth



Omirin

Security agencies recorded major successes in August 2024, says Customs NPRO

ZAINAB JUNAID

The National Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Customs Service, Chief Superintendent of Customs, Abdullahi Maiwada, says security agencies in Nigeria in August 2024, made significant strides in safeguarding the lives and properties of Nigerians.

During a joint press briefing held at the Nigeria Customs Headquarters in Abuja, Maiwada presented an overview of the efforts made by various agencies, including counter-terrorism, anti-smuggling operations, law enforcement, and financial crime prevention.

He noted that the Defence Headquarters had neutralised no fewer than 1,166 suspected terrorists, arrested 1,096 suspected criminals, and rescued 721 hostages during the month under review.

In addition, over 391 weapons were recovered, and several terrorist leaders were eliminated.

"The strategy of dismantling these terror groups by targeting their leadership, commanders, and collaborators is



Customs NPRO, CSC Abdullahi Maiwada

significantly diminishing their capacity to carry out major offensives. Additionally, the military recovered 391 weapons, over 15,000 rounds of ammunition, and disrupted oil theft activities worth over N5 billion," he highlighted further.

In the area of maritime security, he said that the Nigerian Navy dismantled

15 illegal refinery sites, while law enforcement agencies arrested 873 suspects linked to various criminal activities.

Maiwada stated "Notably, a massive refinery site with a capacity of 2 million litres per day was dismantled along the Ogoloma-Bakana waterways in Rivers State. These efforts have contributed to

and forcefully had sexual intercourse with her with the claim that it was the only way to break the bond between her and the claimed spirit

After the alleged act had been done, the lady said she ran out of the church with her blood-stained sultana as the prophet ran after her with a bottle containing an unknown substance which he intended to smear on her.

After the parents reported the incident at the Nigeria Police Divisional Headquarters, Ijebu-Ijesa, Omirin was arrested and later released on bail.

Omirin's case was later transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department in Osogbo for further investigation.

Before Justice Olamide Oloyede of the Ijebu-Ijesa High Court, the 47-year-old prophet was docked on three count-charges bordering on unlawful rape, offences that are contrary to and punishable under Section 2(2) of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Law of Osun State 2021, Section 32 of the Child's Rights Laws of Osun State 2007 and Section 360 of the Criminal Code Cap 34 Vol. II, Laws of Osun State of Nigeria 2002.

However, Omirin pleaded not guilty to the counts.

Attempts by his counsel, M. Williams to convince the court to grant his oral bail application failed as Justice Oloyede ordered that Omirin be remanded in Ilesa Correctional Centre.

The matter was adjourned till October 7. ●

Nigeria's crude oil production reaching 1.658 million barrels per day, reinforcing the Navy's role in safeguarding the nation's economic interests."

He also used the medium to commend the Nigeria Police Force for successfully foiling plots aimed at destabilising the government and apprehending multiple armed robbers, adding that "The Nigeria Police Force had, during the nationwide 'End Bad Governance in Nigeria' protest, arrested a total of 873 individuals across several states in connection with various criminal activities such as armed robbery, arson, and vandalism."

Highlighting the achievements of the Nigerian Customs Service, Maiwada disclosed that the agency generated revenue of N475.6 billion and seized contraband worth N975 million, adding that "the Nigerian Correctional Service made progress in reducing prison overcrowding by releasing 257 inmates."

According to him, other agencies, such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, also recorded significant advances in anti-corruption, drug enforcement, and human trafficking cases, with numerous arrests and recoveries. ●

How police coerced me into taking responsibility for church member's pregnancy – Pastor

TIMOTHY AGBOR
OSOIBO

But for a DNA test that revealed that he is not responsible for the pregnancy of one of his church members, a pastor of Baaki Baptist Church, Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Titus Ajibade Oladipupo, would have continued to take care of the pregnancy that he did not father and might have been possibly jailed.

Oladipupo, a 65-year-old cleric, was wrongly accused in 2022 by one of his female church members simply identified as Abigail of raping and impregnating her. The teenager's aunt, whom Abigail was staying with and attending the same Baptist

Church with, had discovered that the girl was pregnant.

When family members asked Abigail who was responsible for her pregnancy, she had claimed that Oladipupo forcefully made love with her in his office before putting her in the family way.

To this end, the clergyman was arrested by men of Owode Police Division in Ogbomosho and detained.

In an interview, Oladipupo said policemen at the station forced him into accepting responsibility for the teenage pregnancy and also committed himself into caring for it before they could release him from the cell after spending three days.

Oladipupo said he was eventually dragged to a Magistrate's Court and charged for rape.

According to him, it was after two series of DNA tests were conducted before it was discovered that he did not have sexual intercourse with the girl, let alone impregnate her.

"It happened in July 2022. The girl alleged that I impregnated her and she went to a Police station at Owode to report me. The girl is staying with her maternal aunt for about six years, the mother sweeps church premises once a week and she always comes to assist her aunt clean the church.

"I was at my office on July 7, 2022 when the woman she was staying with alleged that the girl informed her that I was responsible for her pregnancy. I denied it saying it can never happen. In fact, for her to believe, I swore with the Bible that day. After that

day, someone who called himself a pastor met them and asked them not to believe my defence. They gathered and took the girl to the Welfare Section of the State Ministry of Children and Women Affairs, they called me from Welfare Unit and the two lawyers agreed, when we got to court, they cooked up another allegation that I raped the girl.

"So, they took me to the police station at Owode, and they locked me up. I was very sad at that time and while in custody, I was only singing praises and people gathered to solidarise with me.

"The police said they were only going to release me that night on the condition that I accept responsibility for the girl's pregnancy and that I would be taking care of her forthwith. I refused. On the third day of my being in cell, a police officer came and was surprised that I was still in custody. He met with the other officers at the station, so I later accepted to be taking care of the girl. Later, I was released.

"After I was released, I was paying N25,000 monthly to the girl and other money for her hospital treatments. At the court, we were asked to do a DNA test. We then went to Ibadan Diagnostic Centre for a DNA test but after we returned, the Magistrate doubted the DNA report because we did it at a private centre. He then referred us to a public diagnostic centre in Lagos and we did it again. When they brought out the DNA results, the two of them indicated that the probability of me fathering the child is zero.

"The Magistrate was infuriated and said they wanted to send me to prison by force. The Magistrate discharged and acquitted me."

According to the cleric, "It was Abigail's mother and someone else that cooked up the allegation. It was something that made my heart bitter because it happened at a time I was rounding off my assignment in the church. I am almost 65 and by next year, I will retire. I thank God and my wife for trusting me." ●

Group decries rampant kidnaping, killings in Ekiti, warns sponsors of terror

TIMOTHY AGBOR
OSOIBO

A group, Opeyemi David Falegan Foundation has bemoaned what it termed worrisome security situation in Ekiti State, calling on the state government to facilitate military posts at boundaries of the state.

There had been pockets of assassination of innocent residents of the state in recent times.

In June this year alone, within 48 hours, four persons were gunned down in Ado-Ekiti by unidentified assailants. A union executive of commercial motorcyclists was killed by gunmen at Okesha area of Ado Ekiti in broad daylight.

Also, a Point of Sale operator identified as Alfa was shot around specialist Hospital, Ado Ekiti, while the assailants reportedly made away with an undisclosed amount of money.

Few hours later, another person was shot at Oja Bisi in Ado Ekiti. The deceased was a rice hawker who was shot on the head. Also, in the evening of that day, another POS operator was shot dead in Idemo.

It was observed that the same pattern the first bike fee collector was shot at Oke-Isa was the same way the other three deceased were killed. The perpetrators were said to be on motor bikes with their faces covered with black cloth.

While residents were still grappling with the tension the killings have generated, gunmen penultimate Saturday went on rampage and abducted three travellers in Emure.

The attackers also killed one late Mr. Taiwo Oluwole, the husband of one of the captives.

A source who pleaded anonymity, said the incident occurred in the evening along Emure-Supare Road in Emure.

Recall that some pupils of Apostolic Faith Children School were kidnapped at the same spot in January this year and the bus driver late Mr. Olugbaye



Gunmen

was killed.

Sources said Oluwole and his wife were returning to Akure after attending a family event in Emure when their vehicle, a Toyota Camry, was ambushed.

Oluwole was hit by a bullet and his wife, along with two other occupants of the car, was subsequently kidnapped.

Reacting, the founder of the foundation and a UK military man, Opeyemi David Falegan condemned killings and abduction of innocent people by unknown gunmen in the state.

He warned of dire consequences should the situation remain unchecked.

"Security is critical to development and the wellbeing of citizens. No society can achieve any meaningful progress in an atmosphere of continuous fear and intimidation. I believe the protection of life and property should naturally top the priority list of any government

"Unfortunately, our people have lived for an unusually long period, under this incessant attack and intimidation from hoodlums and kidnappers. But, we cannot continue to live in perpetual fear. Ekiti people have a right to the dividends of democracy, and provision of security should be the starting point," he said.

While warning sponsors of terror in the state to desist, the security expert advised the state governor to facilitate a military post at interstate boundaries of the state, urging the state government to empower and equip all the security agencies and machineries in the state. ●

Alleged N297m TETFUND contract scandal rocks Adeleke's government

TIMOTHY AGBOR
OSOIBO

Kazeem Akinleye, the Chief of Staff to Governor Ademola Adeleke, has been enmeshed in alleged breach of office and procurement laws over the N297 million contract of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund to the Osun State University.

The state chapter of the All Progressives Congress accused Akinleye of using his office and closeness to Governor Adeleke to fraudulently corner the N297m TETFUND contract at the state-owned university.

The opposition party in the state therefore called for the investigation and prosecution of the Chief of Staff.

In a statement issued by the party's Director of Media and Information, Kola Olabisi, APC argued that Akinleye's actions "did not conform to the highest standards of public morality and accountability" as he allegedly used his position to secure the contract for his company, AKINKAS INTERBIZ LIMITED.

Olabisi said Akinleye's justification that he resigned from the company as a director on September 1, 2022, shortly after he was appointed the Chief of Staff does not hold water, as the management of the company still revolves around the members of his immediate family.

The APC called on the Code of Conduct Bureau to "invite, investigate and

possibly prosecute" Akinleye, citing the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended).

"We appeal to all patriots within and outside the state to rise above political sentiments and speak vehemently against this clear abuse of powers and contravention of the procurement laws of the state," Olabisi said.

Reacting, Olawale Rasheed, the spokesperson to Governor Adeleke, described the allegation as malicious, falsehood and an attempt to cause public disorder.

Rasheed said the accusation is baseless as the Chief of Staff has not in any way violated any provisions of the Code of Conduct or any other extant laws for that matter.

"Our attention has been drawn to another ridiculous concoction by the All Progressive Congress accusing the Chief of Staff to Governor Ademola Adeleke, Kazeem Akinleye of breach of code of Conduct over an alleged TETFUND contract.

"We affirm again that the accusation is baseless as the Chief of Staff has not violated any provisions of the Code of Conduct or any other extant laws for that matter.

"As a public officer, the Chief of Staff has not deployed his office to, in whatever ways; favour himself especially as he is not a member of the governing board of Osun State University or a member of the board of directors of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND).

"Specifically too, Akinleye has ceased to be a director of the mentioned company long before his appointment as the Chief of Staff and so cannot in any way be held accountable for the business operations of the said company.

"The Chief of Staff has never sat at any meeting or board deliberation where such a contract was determined and is therefore by all accounts not in breach of any provisions of the Code of Conduct or any subsisting laws of the land.

"The defamatory publication is therefore a reflection of what we noted earlier that the state APC has run out of ideas to tackle the superlative delivery of service by the Adeleke government and is now resorting to cheap blackmail and outright fake news.

"We note with disdain the reprehensible desperation of the opposition to destroy the vibrant and world class Osun State University which is running its affairs in line with best practices and in compliance with its establishment laws.

"We equally decry the failed attempt of the opposition to distract the state government of which Akinleye is a critical actor, from its much laudable delivery of good governance and democratic dividends.

"We assert with all evidence that Akinleye has not in any way abused his office as he mainly applied himself to discharging his mandated duties as the Chief of Staff to the Governor which does not include contract awards," he said. ●

TIMOTHY AGBOR
OSOGBO

Bad road network killing our dreams, Nigerian farmers lament

Some Nigerian farmers have called on state governments to prioritise road infrastructure, especially the ones that connect the rural communities where large farmlands are located, saying poor road network has been discouraging them and plunging them into losses.

According to them, one of the greatest problems confronting rural farmers and communities in Nigeria is the absence of critical infrastructure such as 'motorable' roads, saying that the situation has been hindering market access for farmers in such communities.

While farmers who work assiduously to eke out a living from farming and also feed the nation are lamenting difficulties in transporting their produce to markets, Nigerians who are the consumers have been suffering the consequences through hike in prices of food items and other consumables.

As the nation continues to suffer low levels of agricultural productivity due to infrastructural deficit across the country, many farmers have resorted to growing only what they can eat or the extra they can carry on their heads to nearby markets due to the deplorable state of roads.

Findings by The Point revealed that most times, the surplus gets rotten in storage in the villages or during transit as a result of many hours or days spent in transporting the foodstuffs to where they are needed due to bad roads.

"The roads are bad; it takes me two to three days to transport my yam produce from Benue to Lagos. I lost more than 300

tubers of yam on my last trip to Mile 12 Market in Lagos because the trailer got spoiled on the road and my yam produce was stolen since the trailer slept on the road for a night. We yam farmers had to come together and assemble our produce for the trailer to convey them to cities for us and most times, we run into loss after the vehicle is stuck on the road," a yam farmer in Benue State who identified himself as Stanley Arome said.

"There are times our yams get spoiled on the road; the sun will burn part of it even before we get to Lagos. This usually makes me sell cheaper than I was supposed to sell. If the roads were better, the goods would get to the market on time for me to sell without it getting spoiled," he added.

This is the challenge most farmers in the rural communities face. Before the produce is transported out of the farm lands to places they can access roads to the market, most of the crops are lost in the process, especially the perishable crops. It also affects their ability to make contributions into the micro credit scheme like ajo and esusu. If this micro scheme is not done, it can affect their contribution to their household income and ability to buy inputs for the next planting season.

A poultry owner in Ibokun town of Osun State, who simply identified himself as Kingsley, said when the road is bad, those who sell chicken feed either close business or sell at higher prices.



"Now, when you go to Osogbo, you will buy a kilogram of chicken feed for N900, but the moment you move to Ibokun, it becomes N1, 100 and N1, 200. There was a time I made inquiries and my customers told me that the vehicles that transport the goods always get stranded on the road and if the owners discharge their goods to another vehicle, they will inflate the prices and the ripple effect is what we in the rural areas are suffering. So, it is high time our governments, especially state and local governments do something about making our roads passable for vehicles," he said.

As this rainy season continues, many roads have become totally impassable after a few days of heavy rainfall cutting off some communities completely from being accessed. Even when commuters offer to pay higher fares, many commercial motorists refuse to go to such communities for fear that their vehicles would be trapped.

In an interview, an agricultural expert, Babajide Olagunju, described a good road network as a vital key to food production and movement chain, saying many hopes and dreams of farmers have been dashed as a result of bad roads.

He said, "If you go to our villages and communities in rural areas, many of them use motorcycles to move their produce to the markets. The sad reality is that some roads are so terrible that motorcycles cannot even pass and in the case where it can pass, farmers are being discouraged on the quantity of farm produce they want to bring to the market.

"If a farmer has to use a motorcycle to move his produce to the farm, for instance, three different times depending on the distance of the market to the farm, it will negatively affect his profit. Many commercial motorists don't even ply these communities with terrible roads. So, the few that struggle to stay in business among the farmers are not enjoying the difficulty.

"I must tell you that the urban dwellers are suffering this too and that is why they have to spend a large percentage of their income to buy food. This is because the food that gets to the cities is far more expensive than what the poor struggling farmers would have sold them. The high prices of these commodities are blamed on the middlemen, but they are also quick to point out that they incur huge costs transporting the food as a result of bad roads. So, our government needs to fix our rural roads." ●

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'We're not in war', indigenes say over reported boundary dispute between monarchs

TIMOTHY AGBOR
OSOGBO

Indigenes of Dada Estate Olorunsogo and Hallelujah areas of Osogbo, Egbedore Local Government Area of Osun State, have dismissed speculation of an alleged communal crisis brewing in the two neighbouring communities.

According to the residents, the speculations making the rounds on social media platforms by some people are lies from the pit of hell.

They said there is no iota of rift let alone land dispute between the residents of the two towns.

The residents were reacting to what they tagged "fabricated and unsubstantial" claims flying around on social media over the recent coronation of Ajeniju of Hallelujah town, Oba Yusuf Jelili Olaiya.

The inhabitants of the two communities expressed sadness and worry over the purported land dispute matter be-

tween Osogbo and Ede towns.

According to concerned dwellers of the towns, it was quite unfortunate that certain individuals are working devilishly to truncate the peace being enjoyed in the communities because of their selfish political interest.

The Ikolaba of Ajeniju town, Chief Kola-wole Alabi who is also a resident of Hallelujah town explained that the installation of Ajeniju of Hallelujah, Oba Yusuf Jelili Olaiya would only deepen the bond, harmony and existing peace between Osogbo and Hallelujah town, noting that there is no land dispute whatsoever between Osogbo and Ede.

He attributed the unfounded claims circulated online as the handiwork of some anti-progressive minded people who are too desperate to cause unrest and disharmony all in the name of poli-

tics.

He stressed that the legal and moral process that led to the installation of Ajeniju of Hallelujah are still intact, adding that never would his installation

cause embers of land dispute between Osogbo and Ede.

He cautioned the agents who are hired to be peddling rumours around to desist from the act of bringing Osun State Governor Ademola Adeleke into such matter, let alone the two frontline monarchs, the Ataoja of Osogbo Oba Abidemi Olanipekun and Timi of Ede land, Oba Munirudeen Adesola Lawal, who are involved in the case.

He held that the Adeleke-led administration has a zero tolerance for violence and never would Ataoja of Osogbo and Timi of Ede fold their arms and allow some politicians to use land related disputes to truncate the existing peace and brotherhood in their respective domains. ●



FESTUS OKORMADU

Tough economic realities such as fuel scarcity and a high inflation rate, await parents and students alike as schools resume for the 2024/2025 academic session across the nation on Monday (today).

On Tuesday, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited increased the petrol pump price from N580 per litre to N855.

The development triggered outrage in various sectors as the product is now sold for between N900 and N1, 200 per litre in many parts of the country.

Black marketers have also seized the opportunity to jerk up prices above N1000 per litre.

Coincidentally, the increase in price of Premium Motor Spirit clashed with the commencement of petrol refining by the Dangote Refinery, a development many had thought would lead to a drastic drop in prices of petrol, including those of goods and services.

However, Nigerians were dealt a major blow when oil marketers and the NNPC informed them to expect products at prevailing market prices.

Last week, President of the Petroleum Products Retail Outlets Owners Association of Nigeria, Billy Gilly-Harry urged Nigerians to prepare for a higher price of petrol in days to come, saying that prices would henceforth be sold at the current market prices.

Again, the NNPC on Saturday said there is no guarantee of lower prices as it is set to begin lifting petrol from the Dangote Refinery.

NNPC would reportedly commence lifting petrol from the refinery on September 15.

In a statement by its spokesman, Olufemi Soneye, the company said the pricing of petroleum products from any refinery, including the Dangote Refinery Ltd, is determined by global market forces.

Soneye, NNPC's Chief Corporate Communications Officer, said that there is no guarantee of lower prices associated with domestic refining of the products in

Tough economic realities await parents, students as schools resume for the 2024/2025 academic session Monday

the country.

"The pricing of petroleum products from any refinery, including the Dangote Refinery Ltd. (DRL), is determined by global market forces," he said.

Soneye's response comes amid rumours that the company is attempting to monopolise the off take of all products from the Dangote Refinery Ltd.

"The attention of the NNPC Ltd has been drawn to a press release by the Muslim Rights Concern, which claims that the Dangote Refinery Limited (DRL) is being undermined by actions of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited.

"Specifically, MURIC asserts that recent changes to the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit will prevent the Dangote Refinery from offering lower prices and that NNPC Ltd. has become the sole off taker of all products from the refinery," he stated.

As of Sunday morning, the queues which had piled as a result of several weeks of petrol scarcity are yet to subside, as few public transportation buses were seen plying the roads, while fares have skyrocketed across the country.

This puts into

question the difficulty the majority of students would face in securing means of transportation to their various schools, and the high transportation they are likely to pay.

The rising inflation rate at 33.40 per cent, and the high food inflation rate at over 40 per cent by the National Bureau of Statistics has also worsened the woes of parents who now struggle to put food on the table.

Recently, a former Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, Ibim Semenitari, asked President Bola Tinubu to address food inflation, lamenting that hungry Nigerians could no longer afford 'garri' to drink once a day.

"The first thing therefore was the issue of food security. If people can even eat," she said on a socio-political programme aired on television on Sunday.

Semenitari, a former Commissioner for Information in Rivers State, said "Nigeria needed recalibration," adding that somebody somewhere should see that things are going south and do something urgent about it.

She said the president should be introspective about the kind of legacy he wants to leave for Nigerians.

"The President should think in terms of legacy: 'When I'm done, what will I be remembered by?' And the truth is that his aides can't determine that because legacy is a personal thing. It is

not something that sycophants can give you.

"Nigerians are literally unable to eat. I'm not talking about three-square meals. We are not even talking about three-round meals; we are talking about one meal a day because the cost of garri, which is a staple, has gone up.

"People are paying N22, 000 for a basin of garri; they used to buy it at N6, 000. Garri was something that if you didn't have money for soup, you would give your children garri, and they would drink it without sugar. Now, they can't," she lamented.

The ex-commissioner said Tinubu should demonstrate leadership and not spend the country's scarce resources on a new private jet during the time of austerity.

The challenging economic situation has continued to call for caution as the Federal Government and the labour unions recently agreed to a new minimum wage of N70,000.

The new minimum wage, however, is yet to be implemented.

Only days ago, the Lagos State Government announced that it would allow workers in its employ to work from home at least two days a week, except those in critical sectors.

However, a teacher in one of the state-owned secondary schools in the state (names withheld), said teachers would not benefit from such a gesture.

Findings showed that private school owners have since increased school fees prices. Prices of textbooks and notebooks and stationeries have also increased astronomically by as high as 300 per cent.

While many schools are starting to cut down on the number of their teachers, others now opt for part-time appointments, especially in core subject areas such as English Language, Mathematics, and Sciences.

Many parents and guardians are struggling to get their children in nearby schools.

Some have also withdrawn their children to public schools; as prices of bus services provided by private schools have also increased.

Commenting on the development, the Nigeria Union of Teachers called for the payment of Hardship Allowance for teachers.

The Secretary General of the NUT, Dr. Mike Ene, said that because education is on the Concurrent List in the Constitution, the government providing buses to convey teachers to and from schools might not work.

He said, "Federal, state and local governments are employers of teachers at different levels and they have varied capacities. But, if a palliative measure of assisting them to cope with high transport fare is agreed, it could be monetised. It is going to be a sort of palliative measure. The agreed sum can now be paid to teachers whether at the primary or secondary school level.

"What is obvious is that the new wage structure is not enough to take teachers to school and back home.

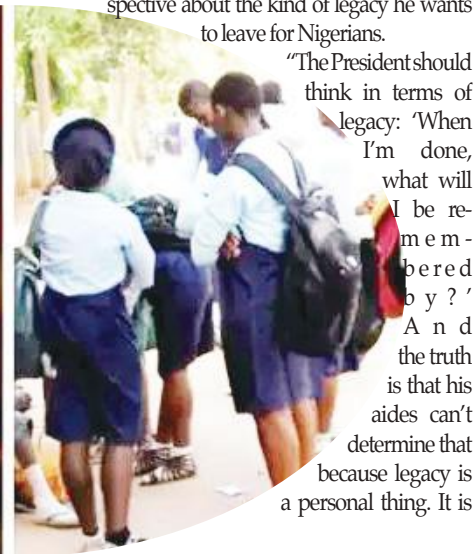
"Do you know that not all states implemented the N30,000 minimum wage before this new regime of N70,000?

"And some states are giving workers what I call human face holidays, asking them to go to office thrice weekly, but teachers are not going to benefit from that.

"They go to school five times a week. If they are lecturers in higher institutions they can find means of scheduling their lectures.

"As long as we are not serious with education, and we want hungry teachers to teach our children, they will teach hungrily.

"A happy teacher will also teach happily. It is a matter of garbage in, garbage out. I gathered that the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress is saying that they accepted the N70,000 minimum wage based on the understanding that the price of fuel won't be increased, but it has been jerked up more than once since then," Ene said. ●



Politics

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Wike swims against the tide, draws battle line with PDP, governors over Fubara

ROTIMI DUROJAIYE

Can the Minister of the FCT and immediate past governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Wike, continue to swim against the tide weighing all hurdles before him?

With the resolution of the governors elected on the platform of the People's Democratic Party to prevail on the party's national leadership to hand over the party's structure in Rivers State to Governor Siminalayi Fubara, Wike has intensified the battle to take control of the PDP structure as he warned the governors to steer clear of the politics of the state or risk crises in their states.

Many political analysts perceived the threat by Wike as the highest act of indiscipline and show of disrespect to any political party.

Since Wike lost the PDP presidential and vice-presidential tickets in the 2023 general election to former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and former Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta State, respectively, he has remained inconsolable, and has been working against his party.

Wike's latest outburst followed the resolution of the PDP governors to support his political rival and Governor of Rivers State, Siminalayi Fubara in the political battle between him and the governor.

The governors had in a communiqué issued after a recent meeting held in Jalingo, Taraba State capital, restated their support for Fubara, promising to "engage the National Working Committee of our great

party to revisit the congress to correct the anomaly and allow His Excellency, Governor Siminalayi Fubara to take his rightful leadership position of the party in the state."

The chairman of the PDP Governors' Forum and Governor of Bauchi State, Bala Mohammed, signed the communiqué.

But addressing the delegates of his faction of the PDP, who gathered recently to elect new executives at the party's secretariat in Port Harcourt, the state capital, an angry Wike boasted that nobody can take away the structure he constituted, insisting that he remained the leader of the party in the state.

He said, "And let me tell people – I heard some governors who said they will take away my structure and give it to somebody. I pity those governors because I will put fire in their states. When God has given you peace, you say you don't want peace, then whatever you see, you take."

Speaking further in a most disrespectful manner, Wike said, "I don't understand; simply because I hear they got some money from a signature bonus, and so, their heads are getting big, that you put a hand in my own state. "Prepare, prepare, because I have the capacity to also do the same thing in your own state," he threatened.

Obviously referring to the governor of Bauchi State, Wike said, "Whether you are from Bauchi, I don't give a damn. Which ever state you come from, as far as I know, if you are trying to put yourself in Rivers

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WIKE'S
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THE BOARD OF
TRUSTEES OF
PDP, SENATOR
ADOLPHUS
WABARA, AND
OTHER LEADERS
OF THE PARTY,
HAD FAILED
”

State, your hand will get burnt. And you will never sleep in your own state.

"You will not be governor again. You will see a political crisis as far as PDP is concerned.

"So, I have told them now that you have started; when I will start, don't say I'm the one that destroyed PDP. You are the one that is trying to destroy the PDP."

Wike's faction held a congress despite an order of the Rivers High Court sitting in Port Harcourt, which had barred the PDP from conducting its congress in the state in a suit number: PHC/2282/CS/2024, filed by David Chinedu Omereji, Solomon Eke, Isodoye Tobin, and others.

Wike's unguarded utterances showed that the peace efforts initiated by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of PDP, Senator Adolphus Wabara, and other leaders of the party, had failed.

While reacting in a strongly-worded and united response to Wike's latest utterances, the PDP governors upbraided the FCT minister in a fresh communiqué issued after a meeting in Jalingo.

In the communiqué also signed by the Governor of Bauchi State, the governors described Wike's threat as unbridled, reckless, and unacceptable.

The communiqué read by Director General of PDP Governors' Forum, Emmanuel Agbo, also called on the various security agencies to take note of Wike's threat.

"The statements and threats to peaceful coexistence made by Wike to 'put fire' in the PDP- controlled states are unbridled,

irresponsible and without ambiguity totally unacceptable, as it undermines efforts to build and maintain peace, cohesion, collaboration and mutual respect amongst leaders and members of the party," the communiqué said.

Restating its unwavering support for Fubara, the governors noted that, "The forum has always maintained 'a touch-one touch-all' philosophy and individually and collectively stand by and support each other, no matter the circumstances. A tradition Wike tremendously enjoyed in his days of travails as governor.

"Thus, we therefore maintain that our position on the affairs of the PDP in Rivers State, as unanimously resolved at our 2024, third and fourth meetings held in Enugu and Taraba States, respectively, are not subject to review by any individual no matter how highly placed," the communiqué added.

The governors vowed to work with the NWC of the PDP and ensure that Fubara is conferred with all the privileges he is entitled to as a PDP governor.

The forum called on the heads of the national security apparatuses to take note of threats by Wike to stoke violence at the sub-national levels, insisting that no one is above the laws of the land.

WIKE'S THREAT ACT OF TREASON, CAPABLE OF INCITING VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA – CLARK, NUF

In his reaction, a foremost Ijaw Leader,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

Chief Edwin Clark has petitioned the Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, to urgently arrest and prosecute the FCT minister.

Clark, in a letter to the IG, read on Thursday during a press briefing at his Asokoro residence, said that Wike's words showed a flagrant disrespect to the person of President Bola Tinubu, and represented an act of treason, capable of inciting violence in the country.

On its part, a group, the North East Unity Forum also condemned what it called the brazen political banditry displayed by Wike, and called for his sack as FCT minister.

The group said Wike's recent threat to unleash crises in the states demonstrated his dangerous disposition and orientation, which had no place in a civilised and democratic society.

NUF argued that Wike had lost touch with reality and had become a political outcast in the politics of Rivers State.

Speaking in Abuja, the Convener of NUF, Abubakar Kabir, said, "He, Wike, has become a political liability, embroiled in a crisis of relevance and identity, exposing him as a political scabbard devoid of a bayonet in his home state of Rivers."

It was also gathered that the PDP governors may move against the National Chairman, Umar Damagun, over his role in Rivers PDP where Wike has retained 100 per cent control of the party's structure via the latest congress to the exclusion of aggrieved Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

There has been no love lost between Wike and Fubara, his "hand-picked" successor over the control of the party's structure in Rivers.

When the going was good, Wike instructed his successor to remain in the state and not use "Rivers money to play Abuja politics."

In obedience to this "directive," Fubara kept his distance from the PDP Governor's Forum within his first few months as governor.

He neither attended their meetings nor sent a representative. However, this changed when the silent political feud between them blew open.

In an apparent show of strength, Wike allegedly exerted pressure on the Damagun-PDP National Working Committee to ensure that the Committee set up to conduct the Rivers State Congress was populated by party members loyal to him.

Fubara cried out and rejected the composition, insisting that he be accorded the rights and privileges given to his colleagues in other states. Unlike his colleagues, Fubara and his loyalists were left out of the committee.

The party's national leadership met ahead of its National Executive Council meeting in June, this year, and resolved to find a political solution to the crisis between the minister and his godson over the composition of the committee and other issues.

Subsequently, the NWC, the Caucus and BoT met, tried but their efforts failed to yield the desired results.

Wike and his loyalists conducted the state Congress which was largely boycotted by Fubara and his supporters, in Port-Harcourt, penultimate Saturday.

During the event, Wike announced to

all those who cared to listen, "Not when we are alive will we allow anybody to take away the party structure from us."

For effect, Wike threatened to destabilise PDP states should governors attempt to take the structure away from him and hand it over to Fubara.

Faced with the option of leaving the PDP or remaining in the party, Fubara has vowed to stay put.

On the surface, the recent congress should foreclose further debate as to who controls the soul of the PDP in Rivers State.

With the development, Fubara's political fate in PDP appears to be on

a cliffhanger, and Wike looks good to have won the year-long battle of his self-acclaimed political structure in the state.

A few days before the Congress, a delegation of the PDP's Board of Trustees, BoT, led by the Chairman, Senator Adolphus Wabara; former Chairman, Ahmed Makarfi; Elder statesman, Olabode George; and Senator Abdul Ningi visited Governor Fubara in Government House with the assurance that the BoT would resolve the lingering crisis in the party, constitutionally.

Many people described the BoT's visit as "a panic mission." This is so because the political space was abuzz with a story

of Fubara's rumored defection from the PDP to the Actions Peoples' Party. The panic also led to the bombing of the party's secretariat in Port Harcourt by a yet to be identified arsonist.

The BoT Chairman, Wabara, confirmed that fear when he said the party was scared of losing Rivers State to strong opposition members as this poses a serious problem to the future of the nation.

"We were scared Sir, when we heard or read speculations, perceptions or what have you, that the party, if we are not careful, might lose Rivers State. Of course, if we lose Rivers State, Nigeria has lost its future," he said.

The former Senate President went on to reminisce on what happened in 2015, and 2023 and vowed never to allow that to repeat itself.

"These men and women you see here are very neutral. As the conscience of the party, we must go by the rule of law. And anything you do, going by the rule of law can never be wrong. It may be delayed but it cannot be wrong," Wabara said.

He noted that the governor had demonstrated enormous care for the PDP, which is why he has been so patient with the inactivity of the party leadership amid the crisis.

"I don't want to describe it. Otherwise, as a governor, we have former governors here, I doubt if they would have taken as much as you have. So, on behalf of this party, once again, let me thank you for your resilience, your wisdom, and for the fact that you are still in this party," he added.

The BoT members left Port Harcourt

with a double assurance that Rivers State was still in the kitty of the PDP especially when Governor Fubara renewed his vow of membership of the party.

"So far, what is important this afternoon is that we are still members of the party, and the owners of the party have visited us.

"So, for those people outside who are carrying all sorts of rumour and propaganda, at least, this visit will put that propaganda to rest, and to tell the world that we are and we still remain members of the People's Democratic Party," he said.

PDP WORKING AGAINST ITSELF

Dealing with the matter constitutionally, according to the BoT chairman, Wabara, connotes that Governor Fubara should be allowed to operate as the leader of the PDP in Rivers State and not Wike. This is what obtains in other states. And that is what many Nigerians want to see.

However, the crisis in Rivers State has inadvertently exposed the PDP as a party working against itself. More than that, with just about one month to the scheduled October 5, 2024 local government election, if the crisis is not resolved urgently, Governor Fubara may likely not have his foot soldiers contesting the election on the platform of the PDP. This is so because signals from the party secretariat in Port Harcourt indicate that the state chairman, Chukwuemeka Aaron, would not give tickets to Fubara's candidates.

"PDP is not the only party that would contest in the election", said Dr. Emmah Oka, a legal practitioner and an ally of former President Atiku Abubakar.

"The election is going to be based on how popular you are", he said, adding that "Governor Fubara respects the rule of law. He is not leaving the PDP. What you saw on Saturday (congress) was a pyrrhic victory which will not last. You cannot put something on anything. The congress is a nullity in the eyes of the law."

The Rivers State commissioner for Information and Communication, Joe Johnson, said "The body language and actions of the governor do not show that he is leaving the PDP. Leave PDP for who? He assured the BoT members that he would not leave the party. Nothing has changed so far?

Speaking on the congress, Johnson described the exercise as "political rascality" which cannot be sustained. He was optimistic that at the appropriate time, the party leadership would do what was right and the party would move forward devoid of an individual's ego-tripping.

In a show of solidarity, a group, Ogoni Development Drive, has issued an ultimatum calling on the PDP NWC to urgently resolve the crisis in Rivers State.

"We give the national leadership of the PDP 14 days to resolve all grey areas in the Rivers State PDP to give Governor Fubara a breathing space failure which we will mobilize massively against the party in the state," the group said in a statement signed by its convener, Solomon Lenu. ●

Rampaging Wike intensifies supremacy battle in Rivers



Wabara



Clark

WITH THE DEVELOPMENT, FUBARA'S POLITICAL FATE IN PDP APPEARS TO BE ON A CLIFFHANGER, AND WIKE LOOKS GOOD TO HAVE WON THE YEAR-LONG BATTLE OF HIS SELF-ACCLAIMED POLITICAL STRUCTURE IN THE STATE

Will Oshiomhole ease Okpebholo into power in Edo State?

BRIGHT JACOB

As chieftain of the All Progressives Congress in Edo State, Adams Oshiomhole, 72, may be a certified kingmaker; however, for his party in the state's coming gubernatorial election will cement his legacy as the godfather of Edo politics.

Edo State will be going to the polls on September 21, 2024, to elect a new governor and the fight for the soul of the Edo State Government House, otherwise called the Osadebey House, will be between Oshiomhole's APC, the People's Democratic Party and the Labour Party.

Monday Okpebholo, Asuerinme Ighodalo and Olumide Akpata are the flag bearers of the APC, PDP and LP respectively, and Oshiomhole, a political powerhouse in the state, is expected to help ease Okpebholo into power.

Oshiomhole understands the contours of Nigeria's political terrain. He has seen and done it all, including leaving his mark in the world of Labour unionism.

The Iyamho, Auchu-born Senator, currently representing Edo North Senatorial District in the National Assembly, was the President of the Nigeria Labour Congress from 1999 to 2006 and became a household name because of his many dogged fights for the welfare of ordinary Nigerians.

And while Oshiomhole presided over what could arguably be Nigeria's golden era in Labour unionism, he led several campaigns against high oil prices in Nigeria, thereby giving the then administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo many sleepless nights.

Not wanting to rest on his oars, Oshiomhole rode on the momentum of his popularity as a celebrated Labour leader and ventured into politics where he hit a gold mine.

He joined the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria in 2006 after his resignation as NLC president and the following year, 2007, he contested for the right to be the governor of the Edo State.

Oshiomhole was controversially out-muscled by the candidate of the PDP, Oserheimen Osunbor, in the election. But the former Labour leader ran to the state's governorship election petitions tribunal, which sat in Benin City, to retrieve his "stolen" mandate.

Therefore, in March 2008, the tribunal kicked Osunbor out and installed Oshiomhole as the Governor of Edo State. It was a huge political victory for the ACN who, at the time, were controlling only Lagos State among the states in Nigeria.

In 2012, Oshiomhole won a second term in office. And the ACN, after its merger with other parties, became the APC in 2013 and Oshiomhole, unlike many other notable politicians in the country, remained loyal to the party.

Before Oshiomhole bowed out of office in 2016, he anointed current Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki - who was thought to be a reserved, almost taciturn candidate - as his successor.

Oshiomhole also tacitly became Obaseki's "mouthpiece" during the governorship campaigns. Moreover, he put his money where his mouth was to prove that his then protégé would be "unstoppable" at the polls.

Although the risk to anoint Obaseki as his successor in 2016 paid off, it was a misadventure Oshiomhole later said was a "mistake." And this was because of the differences that sprouted between them.

Obaseki later joined the PDP in 2020 af-



Oshiomhole



Okpebholo



Ighodalo



Akpata

ter he was allegedly denied a second-term ticket by an Oshiomhole-influenced National Working Committee of the APC, but this was not before Oshiomhole himself had been stripped of his chairmanship position in the APC after he was suspended from the party in 2020 by his local ward.

Intriguingly, almost eight years after Obaseki took office, he has been slammed by even members of the Edo State PDP who have been dealing with months of political wrangling over the choice of the party's flag bearer, Ighodalo, in the poll.

The opinion held by many is that despite being a liability to Ighodalo, Obaseki does not also have the marketing qualities of Oshiomhole and Anselm Ojezua, a former governorship aspirant shared his view about this with *The Point*.

"As at the time Obaseki was seeking office in the first instance, a lot of people thought that he could not talk. He was more or less dumb. Oshiomhole did all the marketing.

"Do you know that time, they kept on saying 'why won't Oshiomhole let Obaseki talk?'"

"And others will reply saying 'what do you want Obaseki to say? Oshiomhole has said everything. We will just introduce Obaseki and he will shout APC and everyone will reply and we move to the next campaign point.'

"When Obaseki became Governor, he

found his voice. Today, he is marketing somebody (Ighodalo) but I don't know whether he (Obaseki) enjoys the same popularity that Oshiomhole enjoyed when he brought him," Ojezua said.

The "popularity" Ojezua spoke about could do little to prevent Obaseki from defeating Osagie Ize-Iyamu, the candidate of the APC whom Oshiomhole supported in 2020. The defeat also tarnished Oshiomhole's impeccable political record, but all that might change with Okpebholo in 2024.

Like a field marshal, Oshiomhole is also speaking up for Okpebholo and wading off every "bullet" fired against him.

Just a few days ago, Obaseki's wife, Betsy, stirred a hornet's nest after she said that only the candidate of the PDP, Ighodalo, was married among the three main candidates.

Oshiomhole would have none of that and he lambasted Obaseki and Betsy, who he said are in their sixties, for being childless.

"I was shocked to hear Mrs. Obaseki say our candidate has no wife.

"She and her husband are childless and have not adopted. I don't blame anyone who does not have children, but those who care about children should adopt from motherless homes," Oshiomhole said.

There is still public outcry that has continued to trail the comments made by Osh-

iomhole. Some Edo women also threatened to curse him if he did not tender a public apology. So far, Oshiomhole seems unfazed by the entire rumpus.

The Edo State Commissioner for Digital Economy, Science and Technology, Ogbuide Ifaluyi-Isibor, also dug his displeasure into Oshiomhole.

On a Facebook post, the Commissioner said, "No decent man will come on TV to mock a woman for being without a child no matter what she said to provoke him.

"No decent person should defend what Adams Oshiomhole said under any guise.

"It is natural for some people not to be able to bear children of their own even if they wanted to.

"Some don't want to by choice and some just can't; whichever the case, no woman deserves to be shamed for not having a child.

"Shame on you if you're defending Adams Oshiomhole.

"Shame on you. You are not a decent person."

Despite all the brouhaha, Okpebholo, the APC governorship candidate, through his recent utterances, is indicating that Oshiomhole's legacy will continue in the state if his party wins the election.

He said, "If God makes me the governor, I will continue from where my leader, former governor Adams Oshiomhole, left off.



AND THEN LET US NOT ALSO FORGET THAT OSHIOMHOLE IS NOTED TO BE THE BEST GOVERNOR THAT CAME OUT OF EDO STATE. HE DID A LOT FOR THE STATE. I REMEMBER SOME OF THE PROJECTS HE UNDERTOOK IN THE STATE AND HOW HE WAS ALWAYS MOVING AROUND CORRECTING THINGS IN THE STATE

"I will also rectify all the wrong moves made by the current state government."

A political analyst, Eze Iwuji, told *The Point* the coming gubernatorial election in Edo State will say a lot about Oshiomhole's pedigree.

According to Iwuji, calling Oshiomhole a godfather would mean placing him "on the same pedestal" with the President of Nigeria, Bola Tinubu.

He however added that because of Oshiomhole's track record of performance in the Edo State, he merits being called a godfather.

"The September 21 governorship election will say a lot about Oshiomhole's pedigree.

"Calling him the godfather of Edo politics will be tricky. It will mean placing him on the same pedestal as our President, Bola Tinubu, who is the godfather of Lagos politics.

"But whether he deserves to be called godfather in the state if Ighodalo wins in the election, I would say why not? Oshiomhole is a legend. He has contributed to the growth of the APC in Edo State and deserves his flowers.

"He doesn't jump from one party to the other. And when he supports a candidate, he does so with his spirit, soul and body. I respect him for that.

"And then let us not also forget that Oshiomhole is noted to be the best governor that came out of Edo State. He did a lot for the state. I remember some of the projects he undertook in the state and how he was always moving around correcting things in the state.

"For all of that, I think he should be called the undisputed godfather of Edo politics whether his candidate wins on September 21 or not."

Another analyst, Benedict Njoku, said, "Okpebholo is so lucky to have Oshiomhole in his corner. Hopefully, if he becomes governor, he will not start to act like Obaseki.

"But come to think of it, even though Oshiomhole is a bona fide godfather, he resisted godfatherism in the state when he ran for office. That is why I prefer to call him kingmaker." ●

Hot Seat

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States corrupt judges by intimidating them – Former AGF, Michael Aondoakaa

Michael Kaase Aondoakaa, SAN, is Nigeria's former Justice Minister and Attorney General of the Federation from July 2007 to February 10, 2010. In this interview, he said states should allow judges to freely decide without intimidating them. He also said the Nigerian judiciary is grossly understaffed, not modernised. Aondoakaa bares his mind on the changes expected from the new CJN, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, and his ambition to contest the governorship position of Benue State in 2027. Excerpts:

During your tenure as the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, what were the most significant legal reforms you pursued and what challenges did you face in implementing them?

Why we vigorously pursued prison decongestion was because the prisons were completely overcrowded and that had to do with human rights violations. We felt it was important to decongest the prison, and we aggressively started by filing briefs to private lawyers to assist us. They go to defend accused persons to decongest the prisons. Also, we granted bail to those who could not meet the bail conditions, some as minor as N100, 000 but they couldn't meet the bail conditions.

Some were offered sentences with an option of fine and the fine was just like N20, 000. So, we paid them off because the cost of keeping them was not economical and the state was feeding them three times a day. If somebody is going to stay six months and you are to pay a fine of N20, 000 for offences that are not a danger to society, such offences as trespass, we pay the fine to let the people come out. That was one of the challenges.

The next issue was the compliance with judgment debts by the government. It was a very challenging issue. We discovered that a lot of contractors and people had judgments against the government for breach of contracts and most of them borrowed from banks, executed government contracts that the government couldn't pay, and at the end of the day, some of the banks went into liquidation and they had judgments, especially

Armed Forces people who got judgments against them, but they couldn't go near them for the execution.

So, we paid off such debts. We constituted a presidential committee, and I sought approval from the presidential committee headed by the Solicitor General with representatives from the Nigerian Bar Association, the police, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. We scrutinised those judgments and we paid. We also made sure that all decisions of the courts were contentiously complied with. We don't need to start looking at whether the judgment was good.

We brought in place a fact that once a court judgment was delivered; if you don't like it, file an appeal. It's not for you to stay in your house and say no. These were some of the major reforms because the wheel of government was driven by the rule of law, and the challenge we had when we said that government should be based on the rule of law was that people said we were protecting criminals.

How will you access the current state of judicial independence in Nigeria?

The people are quick to accuse the judges more on the side of corruption, but I don't think the corruption is on the side of the judges. The corruption is on the part of the state. When the state intimidates judges... for instance what happened when the DSS invaded the homes of Justices was unthinkable and that was the beginning of the kind of fear that crept into the judiciary, and nobody was held

responsible. That was most unfortunate.

You talk of judicial independence; you have a procedure for disciplining judicial officers. If you feel judicial officers have committed an infraction, you send the report as a state. The state can send a petition to the National Judicial Council that this judicial officer has done something wrong. After all, it is the state that appoints them. So, if you feel they are corrupt, then you initiate the process of removal by sending a request for their removal with the allegation to the NJC, and if they find out that the allegation is

true, the judge will be removed.

In the night, the Justices' homes were invaded. That has created fear and has affected the independence of the judiciary more than the corruption they are talking about because the judges now become worried that if they deliver a particular judgment, will they be free, will the DSS come after them? Will other security agencies like the EFCC or ICPC go after them? That's the main problem.

It's a bigger problem than any other problem; judicial intimidation. Once the intimidation of the judges is not there and they are allowed to interpret the law, corruption will be reduced. It is more serious than saying judges are corrupt. Corruption is not just the illegal taking of money. If it is about corruption, then it is the state organ that may be corrupting them by intimidating the judges.

You wake up as a judge in the night and you don't know whether security people are coming after you or not, although it has not happened in this present Tinubu government and it is commendable. I believe the present Attorney General of the Federation will not be a party to that because he is a real law professional just like I was so he won't condone that kind of aggression of the judges, but the intimidation of judges is supposed to be the main thing we should address. States should allow judges to freely decide without intimidating them.

Corruption has been a persistent issue in Nigeria. How effective do you believe the legal system has been in tackling corruption?

As I said earlier, intimidation of the judges is the main issue. You could see what happened before, you never knew the position of the state in a particular matter, two cases which I will not mention the name went up to the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court confirmed the judgments of their sentences, and six months after, they were given a full pardon. So, you can see, it is a subtle way of intimidating the judges.

The country recently experienced a nationwide hardship protest called the #EndBadGovernance, where some youths trooped out to protest the situation of the economy, and we saw security agencies arrest some of these protesters. What is the legal correctness or otherwise of the arrest of these protesters and the arrest of students from Poland during the protest?

I was not in the country. So, I will not comment on something I was not around to experience. Much that comes online, I am always careful about it because there are a lot of photo tricks, sometimes things happen here but they bring pictures of what is happening in other countries and interiors. So, I am always very cautious, and demonstrating is the right of every individual. I believe the government said yes, they can demonstrate but I think people who were arrested must have been people who went to the extreme, and the government was trying to balance the issue.

You must have seen what was hap-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

“CORRUPTION IS NOT JUST THE ILLEGAL TAKING OF MONEY. IF IT IS ABOUT CORRUPTION, THEN IT IS THE STATE ORGAN THAT MAY BE CORRUPTING THEM BY INTIMIDATING THE JUDGES”

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pening in Kano. It was no longer the demonstration guaranteed by the constitution. So, in such circumstances, unless I see the facts, the government has the right to stop it and I read about those who were vandalising people's homes, destroying people's property, the government must protect, and the fundamental principle ensures that the government's primary duty is to ensure the protection of lives and property where the right to demonstrate is exercised in such a way that it includes the rights and property of other individuals like the destruction that was going on in Kano, where people's supermarkets were vandalised, destroyed, people's homes and cars.

A non-violent demonstration is a right created in the constitution, but as an Attorney General, if I see people's supermarkets and other property being destroyed, I have the right also to order security agencies to go there and stop the destruction of lives and property.

What are your thoughts on the Ogun Free Trade Zone dispute with the Chinese company that led to the seizure of the presidential jets?

First and foremost, there have been two treaties, which are a bilateral trade agreement between the Chinese government and the Federal Government and a 2001 bilateral treaty that Nigeria signed during former President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration. It is still in force between Nigeria and China. Chinese nationals who invest here will be protected and their investment will not be arbitrarily seized by the government. It is the same way they say that Nigerians who invest in China will enjoy protection.

There's a particular Article 4 of the agreement that indicates that the government cannot just wake up one day and say I am seizing this company, I am terminating this agreement, and in the agreement, they have made provisions for arbitration that in case there is a dispute between the contracting party in this case, Ogun State and the Chinese investor, are to explore diplomatic channel first.

Ogun State cannot go to have diplomatic channels with the Chinese government. The punishment for corruption is the death sentence. I wouldn't know what Ogun State did but then, there's another procedure for arbitration if Ogun State felt that there was an infraction. There's another provision in the agreement that says they could go to court. So, Ogun State could have gone to court to terminate the transaction.

Luckily, it was a contractual relationship. So, Ogun State could have gone to the state High Court and said, 'Terminate this transaction.' I don't know whether Ogun State went or not. It was said that the governor terminated the agreement because there were criminal aspects unless those criminal aspects were proven. If they are not proven, then it is a difficult situation for us.

The problem I have with old governments in Nigeria is that when you wake up in an agreement and say that there is criminality, there is a court of law for you to go to because you are a contracting party, and the contracting party is laid by the governor of that state. So, if Ogun State wakes up today and says, 'I

'Quality of judges being appointed should be thoroughly vetted'

am terminating an agreement', it means that Ogun State is a judge in its case, but I don't have facts. I don't know what Ogun State did.

The agreement is wide and something we should try to avoid in the future. The agreement said there should be three arbitrators, the contracting parties should appoint one and the Chinese people would appoint one. The two appointed arbitrators would appoint the third arbitrator. That was done but unfortunately, the clause for arbitration did not put the seat of arbitration, did not put the place of arbitration. That means that the arbitrators were at liberty to sit wherever they wanted.

The judge has no power to order arrest or compel witnesses or production of documents. So, it is the local courts, and in this case, they chose London, so it is the local courts in London that the rules will apply. Even the rules to apply were not stated clearly in the arbitration. So, it became difficult. The arbitration sat in London and gave a final award against Nigeria for compensation.

So, I think that is an argument that is pending, and one of the planes was released because it was discovered that the execution was done on the wrong property. The property executed enjoys absolute immunity and Nigeria has a right there to seek to recover the presidential planes because presidential planes are not used for public commercial business.

What do you think should be done?

The bottom line however is this; when a government goes into contracts, it should check whether the foreign countries have a bilateral trade relationship. For instance, we have a bilateral trade relationship with the United Kingdom. So, if a company from the United Kingdom is investing here, we should be careful. You don't just wake up and say, 'I terminate the contract.'

First, you have to liaise with the Federal Government and the federal Attorney General to find out the extent of the prospect created by the bilateral treaty. Ogun State cannot just wake up and terminate a contract between them and a Chinese company knowing full well that the Chinese government has a bilateral treaty with Nigeria to protect the investments of their individuals and companies in Nigeria, the same thing with Nigeria.

When you file a motion or an application for recognition and enforcement in a foreign country, you must serve a Nigerian lawyer. So, when they served them and they saw that these were presidential planes, what did they do? The court will not just grant you an attachment. In this case, we are talking about crime.

So, what was our defence? The lawyers appointed by Ogun State might not have even said anything and that is why we are where we are. It is a sad situation but there's hope that our planes will come back because the Chinese investors were unfair by not telling the truth

that these were presidential planes.

The Nigerian criminal justice system has faced criticism for inefficiencies and delays. What reforms will you recommend to address these issues?

When we talk about the Nigerian criminal justice system, when you look at the American criminal justice system, there are delays. Go to Brazil, and sometimes it takes 10 years. Nigeria's criminal justice is not delayed in the manner that we are talking about. First, the judiciary is grossly understaffed, it is not modernised. Judges are still recording pro-

ceedings with their hands.

How would you expect a judge to have 20 cases on the cause list? He is a human being. How can he record all those 20 cases? Sometimes all he can take is three or four. These are proceedings that sometimes take 20 witnesses, and the judge is going to record everything, after that he is going to write judgment in other jurisdictions, recording is now done electronically.

As you are speaking it is recording automatically. I think one judge of the High Court bought his own. He records his proceedings electronically and you can't fault when he's done with proceedings. If you want he will play the recording for you to hear. He bought the equipment in Canada. Why don't we replicate that and do that for the whole of the judiciary so that we don't need to waste so much time?

The government should increase the number of judges and improve their welfare, but I have to say this government has been quite good. It extended the tenure of judges at the High Court, and the next thing now is to incorporate the magistrates as judicial officers because we are also talking of state police, and we cannot have state police when the Magistrates are civil servants.

What are the changes you would want

the new CJN, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun to bring to the judiciary?

She has always been there, and she knows what to do. She's one of the best brains. She has seen everything that is involved. The quality of judges being appointed should be thoroughly vetted.

What are the major ethical challenges facing the legal profession in Nigeria today and what steps should be taken to address these challenges?

We have a lot of it but the ethical issues in the legal practice are on the side of lawyers, but the Legal Practitioners Act has been doing quite a lot. We've seen a lot of lawyers being debarred, their names struck out either for two years or struck out for life. We have been most active in trying to instill discipline. The most crucial thing is discipline in the profession. The profession is not show business. You must abide by the rules and decorum of the profession.

How will you evaluate the state of human rights protection under the Nigerian law? Are there specific areas where you believe the legal framework needs strengthening to safeguard human rights?

No. The protection of human rights has always been a constitutional issue because we have constitutional protection under the fundamental human rights in our country. That is the beauty, and it is time for us to be proactive. Those who violate people's rights should be personally held accountable and I have seen judges do it. We should take the constitution very seriously, and the fundamental human rights provision in the constitution should be treated as sacrosanct because no country will have a constitution and treat the constitution as if it is a mere suggestion.

What happened to your ambition to contest the governorship position of Benue State? Are you still interested in running for that office ahead of 2027?

I have been very active in legal practice; my pursuit for governor was not for personal gain. I had my master, President (Umaru) Yar'Adua. He had a seven-point agenda and within a short period, he stayed in government for two years and seven months. You saw how the country was turning. That was my dream, to be one of the main apostles of driving the government of rule and law. I wanted to have the opportunity to pursue the seven-point agenda within the state and see how it would be because he did two and half years.

During President Yar'Adua's time, you cannot be detained, you will be arrested but you cannot be detained. There was sanity, no court would give judgment, and you would say you would not obey. Nobody, no contractor got a contract and was not paid because the minister of justice must be satisfied that the ministry that would award a contract had sufficient funds to ensure the contract was completed without litigation. ●

SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE, AND SHE KNOWS WHAT TO DO. SHE'S ONE OF THE BEST BRAINS. SHE HAS SEEN EVERYTHING THAT IS INVOLVED



Aondoakaa

We're worried, making positive impact to end banditry, criminalities in Zamfara – Governor Dauda Lawal

What are the reasons behind your agricultural revolution?

We just distributed fertilizer across the state, but we didn't flag off in the capital city of Gusau. This is supposed to go round all the farmers across the 14 local government areas up to the ward level. As you rightly know, Zamfara is an agrarian economy. We basically fed this nation in the past.

Yes, we are having the challenge of insecurity now, but that doesn't mean we should just sit down and do nothing. For me, being an agrarian state, there's a need to help these farmers, and part of which was what we did recently by distributing these fertilizers across the 14 local government areas.

What we did was to set up a committee which includes the honorable Commissioner for Agriculture, the sole administrators, the police, DSS, civil defence, and traditional rulers to make sure this fertilizer goes round to the needy farmers. And I have absolute confidence that this will be done. This is not the first time we did this. During the dry season, we usually gave fertilizers free, as well as other farming implements, including seedlings, insecticides, and modern technology that will increase productivity. And this is ongoing, and I believe it is a step forward to assist the needy farmers.

What is your production target?

Well, let me say this, we are looking at how to enhance productivity. That is number one. Number two, by making sure you give incentives to farmers it will help them in terms of the yields in a situation where they normally produce very minimal.

What we are trying to do right now is to optimize that production, and that will go a long way in helping the farmers, and we are on the right track. Let me make a categorical statement here that Zamfara is an agrarian economy prior to all these insecurity challenges. Zamfara used to feed the entire South West in terms of food production, not just food production, but also cash crops, including cotton and the rest of it. And that is what we are known for.

However, with the challenges in insecurity, it has slowed down the process, and what we are trying to do right now is we are trying to defy those challenges by making sure we encourage farmers to go back to their farmlands and produce more. We are also handling this registration in states to make sure they have the ability to farm in their farmland. And that is exactly what we are doing. And I believe by doing this, it will increase production of agricultural products, or rather, the productivity will be higher than before.

Remember, in those days, we were using the traditional method of farming, but now with modernity and technology, we are bringing new tools that will increase productivity in agriculture. And if we sustain this, I believe it is the right way, and I believe it will help the farmers a long way, and the yield will be higher than it used to be in the past.

We are trying to change the narrative now, from a state known for so much insecurity issues to a state where productivity will be the way forward, and that is why we are doing all these, including the dis-

In this interview, Governor of Zamfara State, Dauda Lawal speaks on his agricultural revolution, insecurity challenges and other issues bedeviling the state. Excerpts:



tribution of fertilizers and other farming implements so that we can help the needy farmers, and that is ongoing like you saw the other day.

As a banker, are you just helping the farmers in Zamfara State to be able to feed themselves? Are you not also thinking of getting the whole nation to feel the effect of the agricultural strides that you are making?

It is a combination of two factors. Number one, the ability of the farmers to produce food for sustenance. That is one; two, there is another group of farmers that are beyond just for sustenance, they are also doing that for commercial purposes.

What we are doing right now is the palliative, what we are giving is for the small farmers, in order for them to be able to produce what they can eat in the moment. However, the large scale farmers also will have a different approach in terms of how they enhance or how they increase them to grow beyond just sustenance, but it's also for commercial purposes.

For example, we scale them in different groups; the similar ones are the ones just for subsistence, while the other side is the ones for commercial activities. So the two go hand in hand, and that is exactly what we're doing. And I believe by doing that, with this entire crisis we're facing in the country, shortage of food here and there, it will reduce the effects.

You are a mining state, though Zamfara is not benefiting from it. But in terms of

well as other conventional security agencies, is to make sure people are able to harvest their farm outputs without any form of fear or attack. That would at least douse a lot of tension with respect to acute poverty that the state is facing, the lack of food and so on. Like you said, also it is a state that has a lot of potential.

In fact, I will confidently say that in terms of solid minerals, Zamfara has the highest mineral deposit in the country. And what we are doing right now is putting all the necessary structures in place in terms of getting investors who invest in the mining sector, and they will also go a long way in terms of elevating some of the major challenges we are facing in the state in terms of infrastructure, in the area of education, in the area of health, and so on.

For example, recently, you saw what we did in Kaura Namoda, one of the hospitals there was upgraded to make sure healthcare is given the necessary attention. And we are actually doing that in Arabic education; right now we have over 350 schools across the state that we are innovating, rebuilding, and we are also building capacity. So with all these changes taking place, it has considerably brought down the insecurity issue, and we are changing the narrative in the state.

We are the least in terms of infrastructure, and we're doing so much now to make sure we have adequate roads, clean water supply and so many other things. So it's an ongoing process. We are just barely one year in office, but I'm telling you, the narratives are changing for the better, and I'm hoping that this will continue, so that people will enjoy the dividends of democracy in Zamfara State as well as Nigeria at large.

Some people don't believe your tactics, how are you taking on some of these multi-pronged issues related to security?

Let me make a categorical statement here. I did not appoint Bashir Hadejia as a Special Adviser. If you look at the letter with the dates, you know something is fishy somewhere, and we issued a statement that we have nothing to do with that, that was a forged letter. And all my advisers... whenever I appoint Advisers, I inform the media that I appointed X, Y, Z in different positions.

And I challenge anybody to show me where we made that kind of statement. We are very transparent in everything we do. There was never anywhere we mentioned that we appointed Hadejia as an Adviser. But check every other Adviser that was appointed in Zamfara, the news is out there in the media. So that is something political. And we made a categorical statement that we have nothing to do with it, and we stand by it.

Now coming back to the issue of the security, we are making conscious efforts, and there is a kind of collaboration now between the state government and the Office of National Security Adviser as well as Ministry of Defence, working together to make sure we achieve the kind of our desired objective for the state in terms of insecurity. And this is all that we have been saying in the past. Let there be collaboration between the Fed-

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“WE UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEM. WE KNOW WHERE THE ISSUES ARE, AND I'M HAPPY NOW THAT THERE'S A SYNERGY BETWEEN US AND IS MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT IN TERMS OF REDUCING INSECURITY IN THE STATE, AND I HOPE IT WILL CONTINUE SO THAT BANDITRY AND ALL THE CRIMINALITIES WILL BE A MATTER OF HISTORY”

agricultural produce, what produce will you actually want to be noted for?

It is a combination of maize, sodium, rice, cotton, beans and so on. Basically, we grow everything in Zamfara State. There is nothing that we don't grow in Zamfara. So, like I said, we're doing this in two stages. One is for subsistence farming, for food production, which is just for consumption, and then the other one is for the commercial quantity. And the two go hand in hand.

What is the security situation and how are you helping farmers go back to their farmlands?

What we are trying to do right now is to change the narrative. Yes, whenever you hear about Zamfara, it's about insecurity or negative things, in education, poverty and so on. But what we are trying to do right now is to change that negative perception to a positive one.

Now, the issue of insecurity is something that we inherited for over a decade, and it is not something that I will say, we are going to solve overnight. However, we are making conscious efforts to make sure we face these security challenges head on, and it's part of the reason why last year, we set up the Community Protection Guard which are working hand in hand with the conventional security personnel in terms of combating this banditry and other criminal activities that are taking place in the state. And I will say that it has gone down drastically.

Quite a number of people now are able to go to their farms. And what we are doing right now, in conjunction with the CPG as



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Economy

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Despite Q2 GDP growth, Nigeria needs \$50bn to boost economy – Investigation

- How FG missed target with well-intended economic reform policies – Analysts
- Excessive fiscal spending, massive budget deficit leave citizens struggling with stagflation – Experts
- Others blame government's 'bad decisions' for tension, economic hardship

BAMIDELE FAMOOFO

The Federal Government of Nigeria needs to urgently sell down to at least 49 percent of its interest in the 74 Licensed Concession Assets in a bid to raise \$50 billion to improve government finances, restructure and recapitalize NNPC balance sheet, an investigation by *The Point* has revealed.

It must also consolidate all of NNPC oil forward contracts into a structured debt instrument for ease of management, better rates, transparency and accountability.

With this in place and other bottlenecks removed, experts said that Nigeria can restore investments into the Oil and Gas industry, which has declined from the highs of \$22 billion in 2009 and 2014 to less than \$3 billion in 2024.

They argued that this is in a bid to ramp up production to 2.5mbpd for revenue sustainability and FX availability.

Oil & gas has continued to be the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. Alone, it accounts for 10 percent of the country's GDP, 70 percent of budget revenues, and 95 percent of foreign exchange earnings. Nigeria's dependence on petroleum is much greater than that of many other major producing countries.

According to financial experts, "excessive fiscal spending, massive budget deficit and failure of the social intervention programmes of government have left Nigerian citizens and business despondent with an economy struggling with stagflation.

They said it is time to hit the reset button, learn from past mistakes and reshuffle the present cabinet.

"Government must plot a new course because time is running out," they argued.

The CFG Advisory Group in a report titled: "2024 Year End Outlook: The Reform Fatigue Quagmire," warned that the state of the economy and the recent strike and

protests should serve as a big wake up call to the government.

"As we approach year end 2024, the only way out is seeing through and being steadfast with the reform programme, which is now suffering from fatigue and in a state of quagmire," the report noted.

The Chief Executive Officer of CFG Group, Adetilewa Adebajo, said the nation's total debt burden of N121 trillion remains a challenge, as the 2024 budget debt service of N8.27 trillion exceeds both recurrent and capital expenditure.

He noted that the supplementary budget will also increase the deficit from N10.4 trillion to N19.4 trillion.

lion to N19.4 trillion.

He argued that a sell-down of oil assets to raise \$50 billion to ease the debt burden and refinance NNPC for sustained revenue is long overdue.

The investment banker and economist further argued that the Tinubu's All Progressives Congress administration missed the target with its well-intended economic reform policies, noting that the government plans were hurriedly implemented, leading to a state of fatigue and quagmire.

"It is now evident that the cart was put before the horse, as reforms were implemented too quickly, devoid of adequate planning and resources, leading to unintended consequences. The credibility of the reform programme is now in question and a state of quagmire. The Federal Government needs to urgently

reset, communicate the benefits of the reform to the stakeholders and deliver tangible results by year-end," he said.

Speaking further, Adebajo warned,

"The early August two-day strike and protest that shut down the nation is a wake-up call for the government. The inability to implement social intervention programmes to cushion the impact of the reforms, corruption allegations against the minister in charge and fiscal indiscipline have led to disenchantment among the populace."

Also speaking on the rising cost of living and the resultant hardship on the citizens of the country, the Chief Executive Officer of Financial Derivatives Company Limited, Bismarck Rewane, said the hardship protests in August were fueled by inflation and profligacy.

"The news that headline inflation slowed to 33.4% for the first time in 19 months sounded like music to the ears of the Nigerian government.

ernment. The Nigerian leadership has been grappling with a disaffected citizenry struggling with high inflation, epileptic power, a weak Naira, and chaotic bureaucracy in their everyday lives. Inflation, especially food inflation, has reached a record high of 40%. That is why the invitation and threat of the "End Bad Governance protest" resonated with the masses," Rewane noted.

He blamed bad decisions on the part of the government as the bane of the economy and hardship in the land.

"The government had mistakenly believed that the use of discredited traditional rulers and compromised union leaders could diffuse the tension and forestall the protests. In the end, the protests took place, and the country learned the hard way that economic misery cannot be disguised or wished away. The people have not only criticized the government for the inefficient management of the palliatives but also for the prophylactic (lavish) lifestyles at a time of widespread misery," he said.

Rewane added that the transmission time lags between policy decisions and impact are taking much longer than anticipated.

GDP GROWTH FALLS SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS

Nigeria's macroeconomic situation has declined over the last seven years with a loss of \$180-200 billion in GDP currently at \$253 billion.

As a result, Nigeria now ranked

“NIGERIA'S MACROECONOMIC SITUATION HAS DECLINED OVER THE LAST 7 YEARS WITH A LOSS OF US\$180-200BILLION IN GDP CURRENTLY AT \$253BILLION. AS A RESULT, NIGERIA NOW RANKS 4TH LARGEST ECONOMY IN AFRICA BEHIND EGYPT, SOUTH AFRICA AND ALGERIA



Adebajo

Rewane

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Despite Q2 GDP growth, Nigeria needs \$50bn to boost economy – Investigation

“THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA NEEDS TO URGENTLY SELL DOWN TO AT LEAST 49 PERCENT OF ITS INTEREST IN THE 74 LICENSED CONCESSION ASSETS IN A BID TO RAISE \$50 BILLION TO IMPROVE GOVERNMENT FINANCES, RESTRUCTURE AND RECAPITALISE NNPC BALANCE SHEET

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

4th largest economy in Africa behind Egypt, South Africa and Algeria.

Experts argued that the latest inflation report from the National Bureau of Statistics shows a trend reversal in the headline inflation to 33.40 percent year on year in July 2024, slowing from a 28-year high of 34.19 percent in June 2024, on the back of high base effect and the impact of the CBN's interest rate hike by the CBN.

They said that the deceleration signals a drop by 0.8 percentage points compared to June 2024.

However, they pointed out that the rate was higher by 9.32 percent compared to the 24.08 percent reported in July 2023.

While unraveling the mystery behind the drop, the Group Managing Director of Cowry Asset Management Limited, Johnson Chukwu, explained that the moderation in the headline index after 29 months of unabated acceleration since January 2022 (15.60%), reflected the impact of the inflation targeting model adopted by the CBN through its policy tightening initiative by raising interest rates to 26.75 percent at its last MPC meeting, as well as efforts by the Federal Government to ease the high pressure which comes from rising food prices, increase in PMS prices due to subsidy removal and further depreciation of the naira.

But Adebajo argued that GDP growth of 3 percent is not sustainable for the nation's population of 200 million.

He said Nigeria requires a growth of 8-10 percent GDP growth for sustainability.

According to the GFC Chief Executive, 135 million Nigerians are in the poverty trap with 40 percent unemployment with very low job creation and industrial productivity.

Adebajo however acknowledged that Nigeria has significant growth potential, given the size of its economy and population but noted that it remains largely a monolithic economy divided into the oil and non-oil sectors.

In 2024, the oil sector accounted for 7.24 percent while the non-oil sectors accounted



Cardoso

for 92.76 percent of the country's GDP.

The nation's agricultural sector has consistently contributed the largest to the country's GDP. The sector has thus proven to be resilient and resistant to economic and oil price shocks that adversely affect most industries in the Nigerian economy.

ECONOMY EXPANDS

Contrary to experts' arguments, the Performance Managers' Index of the CBN for August 2024 showed that the economy expanded. This, however, is happening for the first time in 13 consecutive months of contraction.

The sectoral breakdown shows that the Services Sector recorded expansion for the third consecutive month, while the Agricultural Sector registered expansion for the first month.

The report released by the Central Bank of Nigeria on Wednesday showed that the Industry Sector, though contracted, regis-

tered a slower contraction when compared to the level recorded in the previous month.

Among the 36 subsectors reviewed across the Industry, Services and Agriculture Sectors, 17 subsectors reported growth with Primary Metal reporting the highest growth during the review month, while the remaining 19 subsectors registered a decline with Forestry reporting the highest decline.

Output, New Orders and Stock of Raw Materials at 50.8, 50.5 and 51.3 points, respectively indicated growth. Suppliers' Delivery Time is Stationary at 50.0 points, while Employment at 48.7 points registered a decline in August 2024.

The Composite Output Index stood at 50.8 points in August 2024, indicating growth in production level for the second consecutive month. Of the 36 sub sectors reviewed, 19 subsectors reported growth in production during the review month, with Primary Metal recording the highest expansion, while 14 subsectors registered a decline with Nonmetallic Mineral Products report-



Chukwu

ing the highest decline. The Fabricated Metal Products; Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply; and Utilities sub sectors remained stationary.

In August 2024, the composite Level of New Orders index at 50.5 points indicated expansion in the volume of incoming businesses/orders. Of the 36 sub sectors reviewed, 15 sub sectors reported growth in Levels of New Orders with Primary Metals recording the highest growth. Plastics & Rubber Products and Transportation Equipment subsectors were stationary, while the remaining 19 sub sectors reported lower Levels of New Orders in the review month.

The composite Employment index, at 48.7 index points in August 2024, indicated contraction in employment level for the eighth consecutive month. This index, when compared to the level in July 2024, remained unchanged, indicating no significant change in employment during the period. Nineteen sub sectors reported

contraction in Employment level, with Transportation Equipment and Forestry subsectors recording the highest decline in the review month. Six sub sectors remained unchanged, while the remaining 11 sub sectors reported increased Employment Levels with the Electrical Equipment subsector having the highest Employment index.

CHALLENGES

Experts lamented that Foreign Direct Investment into Nigeria remains at all-time lows of under \$1 billion with power transmission and distribution infrastructure still very poor impacting industry and economic growth. They are also worried that insecurity and violence in the country, especially in the North and South East Nigeria remains a major threat to the flow of FDI.

According to the CFG, "Business outlook and FDI confidence is at an all-time low, exacerbated by the recent rejection by the regulator of the Shell \$1.5 billion divestment of its onshore assets.

"This puts into question the ability to increase oil production from a low point of 1.3mbpd, as challenges remain with the Dangote Refinery now on stream."

GROWTH OUTLOOK

The World Bank forecasts Nigeria to be the third most populous country in the world by 2050 with an annual population growth rate of 2.6 percent over the next ten years.

The growing population is estimated at 212 million with a middle class (accounting for 23.5 percent of the population) whose current combined buying power stands in excess of \$28 billion.

The CFG Advisory also expects Nigeria's growth rate for 2024 at 3.0 percent on the back of a bountiful harvest, reducing inflation and increasing oil prices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Financial experts are of the opinion that the fundamentals of the Nigerian economy are sound, but regret that poor economic leadership has failed to realize the potential and grow the economy.

They said that with a new and highly-rated economic team in place, the expectations are high.

The CFG's report noted that the leadership of the country will determine the success or failure of the economy, depending on their commitment and sincerity to implement their well-laid-out policies.

The experts noted that the goal is to drive the economy out of stagflation and meet the sustainable GDP growth targets.

"For any meaningful impact on economic recovery and macro headlines, oil production must be restored to 2mbpd and gas restored to 6 NLNG trains currently operating at 50 percent capacity. The lack of investment in the oil and gas sector and the drying up of FX reserves is reflected in negative GDP growth rates in the last three years. (-19%) growth in 2022 with expected (-7%) growth in 2023.

"In 2023 only three sectors of the economy experienced double-digit growth. Mining and Quarrying recorded 26.16 percent, Water and Waste recorded 11.93 percent and Financial Services got 28.21 percent. Manufacturing was a paltry 1.45 percent reflecting the lack of productivity in the Nigerian Economy. Policy implementation to enhance productivity is critical to reviving all the other sectors of the Nigerian economy for recovery from stagflation and sustainable growth," Adebajo emphasised. ●

Nigeria Headline Economic Forecast 2024							
GDP Growth	Population	Trade Balance	Foreign Reserves	Total Debt	Unemployment Rate	Inflation Rate	Monetary Policy OMO Rates
3.25%	200mn	US\$ (3.2) bn	US\$ 25bn	US\$ 100bn	50.5%	25.5%	26.5%

Source: CBN, NBS, DMO, Oxford Economics

Real GDP Growth 2021-2024				
Sector	2021	2022	2023	2024
Agriculture	2.13	1.88	1.30	1.41
Mining & Quarrying	26.10	16.58	26.16	7.79
Manufacturing	3.35	2.45	1.45	1.28
Electricity	27.57	(2.21)	1.91	5.96
Water & Waste Mgt	18.34	13.62	11.93	8.2
Construction	3.09	4.54	3.89	1.05
Trade	8.62	5.13	1.53	0.7
Information & Comm	6.55	9.76	6.99	4.44
Financial & Insurance	10.07	16.36	28.21	28.80
Real Estate	2.26	3.95	1.90	0.75
Education	(0.75)	1.35	1.45	1.92
Oil & Gas	(8.30)	(19.22)	(6.16)	10.2
Other Services	(0.16)	1.07	0.63	(12.7)
Transport & Storage	16.25	15.20	(35.85)	(13.5)

Source: CFG Group Advisory

FG must sustain power reforms to grow industries – LCCI

STORIES: FESTUS OKOROMADU

The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry has called on the Federal Government to maintain power sector reforms and initiatives to boost electricity supply to industries.

The Director-General of the LCCI, Chinyere Almona, called for increased efforts in developing the power sector, noting that as of July, there was a registered unmetered population of about 13.1 million.

Almona, in a statement from the chamber, commended the progress in the power sector

including an increase in the provision of electricity meters to consumers by 3.3 per cent, on a month-on-month basis, from 5.9 million recorded in June to 6.1 million in July 2024.

Whereas the LCCI acknowledged Nigeria's industrial sector's 3.53 per cent growth in the second quarter of 2024, the chamber recommended that the Federal Government should sustain the momentum through targeted interventions.

Along with the power sector, the LCCI Director General encouraged further government efforts in agriculture, oil and gas, trade and services

She said Nigeria's agricul-

ture sector needs import waivers for agricultural inputs and improved security around crop production sites, with enhanced rural infrastructure to reduce post-harvest losses and improve market access is crucial.

The LCCI noted that while the oil sector's year-on-year growth is commendable, its quarter-on-quarter decline showed that the sector was vulnerable and needed stronger regulatory measures to address divestments, crude supply to local refineries, oil theft, and pipeline vandalism.

"The implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act is essential to resolving these regulatory challenges," Almona added.

The LCCI noted the trade sector needs further boosts despite its positive performance of a 0.7 per cent year-on-year growth in Q2 2024 as it called for more investment in port infrastructure.

Further, the chamber called for strengthened regulatory frameworks to promote fair competition and consumer protection as crucial for sustaining growth in the services sector.

"The services sector remains the backbone of Nigeria's GDP, particularly Information and Communication and Financial Services. Continued support for digital transformation, financial inclusion, and fintech innovations will be vital," Almona said. ●



L-R: Director, Search and Rescue, National Emergency Management Agency, Air Commodore Kennedy Mataluwo; Special Assistant to the Director General, Idris Mohammed; Director Disaster Risk Reduction, Daniel Obot; Director General, Mrs. Zubaida Umar; Vice Chancellor, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Professor Sa'adatu Hassan Liman; Director, Planning, Research and Forecasting, Onimode Abdullahi Bandele; Director Finance and Accounts, Sani Ahmed Jiba and Director, Special Duties, Fatima Suleiman Kassim, during the visit of the Vice Chancellor and management team to NEMA Headquarters in Abuja on Wednesday.

NPID expresses concern over Nigeria's economy, seeks restructuring of NNPC's debts

Nigerians in the diaspora, represented by the Nigerian Professionals in Diaspora, are calling for an urgent review of the country's monetary policies in response to the recent increase in fuel prices.

In a statement signed by NPID President, Obiora Okereke, and Secretary, Bukola Shonekan, the group expressed concern over the current state of Nigeria's economy, particularly the recent spike in fuel prices, which has exacerbated the already challenging economic conditions for millions of Nigerians.

The group blamed the economic managers of President Bola Tinubu's administration for failing to support the President's vision with competent and effective policies, citing the poorly implemented floating of the Naira as a glaring example.

NPID noted that instead of

stabilising the currency and attracting foreign investment, the policy has resulted in further depreciation of the Naira, leading to an unstable exchange rate that has driven up the cost of goods and services across the board.

The group also called for the restructuring of the Nigerian

National Petroleum Company Limited debts, reportedly exceeding \$6 billion, which has put the nation in a precarious position regarding fuel supply.

"We believe that President Tinubu's vision for Nigeria is clear, but the implementation of his economic policies by his advisers and managers is lack-

ing in strategic foresight and execution," NPID said.

The group called on the President to take swift action to tackle the country's economic challenges by reassessing monetary policies, restructuring NNPC's debts and holding economic managers accountable for their decisions.

The Central Bank of Nigeria has authorized the sale of dollars to Bureau de Change operators at a rate of N1, 580 per dollar in a bid to improve liquidity in the foreign exchange market.

This decision was announced in a circular signed by W.J. Kanya, Acting Director of the Trade and Exchange Department.

Under this new directive, each eligible BDC is allowed to purchase foreign exchange amounting to \$20,000, a move aimed at meeting the rising demand for invisible transactions

CBN sells dollar to BDCs at N1, 580 to strengthen economic stability

such as travel allowances and tuition fees.

The CBN emphasised that this initiative is crucial for bolstering liquidity in the market.

The apex bank stipulated that BDCs can sell FX to eligible end-users with a margin not exceeding 1 percent above the purchase rate, ensuring affordability for consumers.

Interested BDCs are required

to make naira payments to specified CBN deposit accounts and submit the necessary documentation for disbursement at designated branches in Abuja, Awka, Kano, and Lagos.

This latest directive follows a previous decision made on July 18, where the CBN had authorized the sale of FX to BDC operators at N1, 450 per dollar.

The ongoing efforts by the

FG targets 30GW power supply by 2030

The Federal Government said it's committed to achieving universal energy access by 2060, with a short-term target of attaining 30 gigawatts of grid energy supply by 2030.

Minister of Power, Adebayo Adelabu, disclosed this in a statement posted on the power ministry's media platform.

Speaking at the China-Nigeria Economic Cooperation and Trade Conference in Beijing, China, Adelabu said, "In Nigeria, we are committed to achieving universal energy access by 2060, with a short-term target under our Vision 30:30:30 to attain 30GW of grid energy supply with a 30 per cent renewable energy mix by 2030, and a long-term goal of universal energy access."

Adelabu emphasised that these targets present an opportunity for further partnership between the Chinese investment community and the Federal Republic of Nigeria to increase the penetration of cleaner and more sustainable energy solutions.

"To achieve this objective, the Federal Government of Nigeria has implemented a multi-pronged approach designed to tackle issues across the Nigeria Electricity Supply Industry value chain and set the sector on a path to recovery and prosperity," he said.

The minister outlined measures put in place to achieve these targets, including streamlining legislative and policy processes, leveraging public and private funds, embracing technology and innovation, and fostering strategic partnerships.

Adelabu added, "I believe this Nigeria-China Economic Forum presents a great opportunity for us to firm up our existing areas of collaboration and explore additional opportunities for shared prosperity."

In another development, data obtained from the ministry shows that between January and August 2024, vandals destroyed 63 power transmission towers across the country with the greater damage taking place in the northern regions.

The destruction included the complete collapse of 17 towers, while components such as conductors, underground cables, and braces from the remaining towers were stolen. This extensive damage has significantly impacted the electricity supply in the affected areas, as noted by officials from the Transmission Company of Nigeria, which manages the nation's power grid.

Among the notable incidents, Tower 388 on the 132kV Jos-Bauchi line in Bauchi/Yelwa and Gwalameji collapsed, as were Towers 377 and 378 on the 330kV Gombe-Damaturu line along Bauchi/Gombe and Damaturu. Additional collapses were reported on the 330kV Damaturu-Maiduguri line, including Towers 125, 126, 193, 194, and 195.

In the Bauchi-Gombe area, 450, 452, 453, and 455 on the 132kV line were vandalised, and Tower 70 on the 330kV Gwalalada-Katampe line in Abuja saw four of its footings destroyed. Other targeted areas included Port Harcourt, Enugu, Kaduna, Kano, and Benin, with multiple towers damaged or destroyed in these regions. ●

FBNH divests 100% interest in merchant bank subsidiary

FBN Holdings has disclosed that it is divesting its 100 percent equity stake in its wholly owned subsidiary, FBNQuest Merchant Bank Limited.

The sale is in alignment with

Holdco's strategy to optimize its portfolio within the Group.

According to a statement from the Company released on the Nigerian Exchange Limited, "Following a competitive bid process, EverQuest Acquisition LLP (comprising Custodian Investments Plc, Aion Investments and Evercorp Industries) was selected as the preferred bidder.

The Acting Company Secretary, Adewale Arogundade, said the completion of the sale is subject to approvals from the relevant regulatory authorities.

FBNQuest Merchant Bank (formerly known as Kakawa Discount House) licensed by the Central Bank of Nigeria is a leading corporate and investment banking house, delivering high-end financial products and services to clients in targeted sectors of the economy. ●

SMEWatch

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Have you ever imagined a world where you can convert your unique skills into a rewarding income stream without leaving your home?

In the exciting and rapidly evolving world of freelancing, this dream can be a reality.

As one of Africa's largest economies with a booming digital landscape, Nigeria offers a wealth of opportunities for freelancers. However, the key to unlocking these opportunities lies in knowing where to find them.

The question is, which are the best freelancing websites in Nigeria to kick-start or scale your freelancing career?

Thanks to Nairarush, your search ends here. This comprehensive guide brings to you the top 15 freelance platforms in Nigeria, tailored to help you navigate the thriving digital marketplace with ease.

Whether you're a writer, designer, programmer, or marketer, these freelancing sites in Nigeria hold the potential to transform your career trajectory.

So, ready to step into a world where flexibility, passion, and profit align.

TOP 15 FREELANCING WEBSITES IN NIGERIA

The best freelancing websites in Nigeria in 2023 are:

1. FIVERR

Fiverr is an international platform with a significant presence among the best freelance sites in Nigeria. It offers a wide range of categories, from creative writing to digital marketing, programming, and design. Setting up on Fiverr is quite straightforward.

As a freelancer, you create a "Gig," which is a service you offer for a specific price. Remember to optimize your Gig description with relevant keywords and present your skills professionally to attract potential buyers.

2. UPWORK

Upwork stands out among the freelancing platforms in Nigeria for its rigorous vetting system.

This platform suits freelancers who are more advanced in their careers, as the stringent vetting process ensures only high-quality, professional services are offered.

After creating a profile and passing the Upwork readiness test, you can apply to job postings that match your skills. Make sure to write compelling proposals and keep your profile updated to increase your success rate on Upwork.

3. ASUQU

As a Nigerian freelancing website, Asuqu provides a platform for various freelancers, including programmers, writers, photographers, and branding experts.

Freelancers can sign up, set up a profile showcasing their services, and start receiving job offers. Remember to keep your profile engaging and professional, highlighting your unique selling proposition.

4. FINDWORKA

Findworka is a leading site for freelance jobs in Nigeria, particularly for tech-related work. After signing up and creating a profile, freelancers can search and apply for jobs that match their skills.

Findworka also offers PRO status for freelancers who demonstrate excellent per-

15 best freelancing websites in Nigeria

for-

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and reliability, thereby providing increased visibility and trust.

5. SOURCEGIG

SourceGig offers a variety of short-term gigs, primarily in the IT, digital marketing, and creative arts sectors.

To use SourceGig effectively, sign up, create a detailed profile, and start bidding on available gigs.

Remember to regularly check the platform for new opportunities and respond quickly to potential employers.

6. FREELANCER

Among the global freelancing platforms, Freelancer is one of the most significant, with a wide range of job categories. After creating a profile, freelancers can start bidding on projects right away on this platform.

One unique feature of Freelancer is its contest feature, where freelancers submit entries for a particular job, and the client chooses the best one.

Therefore, whether you're new on the platform you have the same opportunity as the existing freelancers there.

7. JOLANCER

Specifically tailored for Nigerian freelancers, Jolancer provides an easy-to-use platform. Just like every other freelance websites in Nigeria, once you sign up and create a profile, you can apply to jobs posted on the site.

8. TOPTAL

Just like Freelancer, Toptal is a global freelancing marketplace known for its exclusivity. It admits only the top 3% of freelancers into its network, meaning you need to be the best at what you do to get a job here.

Once you pass the Toptal screening process, you gain access to a variety of high-paying jobs from top clients. Toptal is ideal for experienced freelancers looking for high-quality clients.

While the requirement may sound daunting, the reward is great, as you can get hired by top companies like Shopify, Facebook, and more.

9. JUSTFROM5K

Justfrom5k allows freelancers to bid for jobs, making it an excellent platform for entry-level (newbie) freelancers in Nigeria.

To make use of this platform, create a profile, browse through the jobs, and place your bid. It's crucial to be competitive with your bidding but also value your work appropriately.

Like Asuqu, Justfrom5K is a Nigerian based freelance website. That means getting your money after a successfully completed project is swift.

10. GIGS NIGERIA

As the name implies, Gigs Nigeria is a freelancing marketplace that connects businesses with freelancers for short-term projects or "gigs". From writing and graphics designing, to digital marketing freelancers can get jobs in various categories on this platform.

As easy as that may sound, ensure you write compelling proposals to increase your chances of getting hired. Unlike Fiverr and Upwork, the competition here is low.

After creating your profile, stay active and regularly check for job postings that match your skills.

11. YOKEBAY

Yokebay is a freelancing platform in Nigeria that specializes in digital marketing services. To get started on this platform, create your profile, highlight your digital marketing skills, and apply for jobs.

Given the platform's focus, ensure your digital marketing skills are well-highlighted in your profile and proposals.

12. ALANCE

Alance is a growing freelance website in Nigeria to get work from home jobs. After registration, create a comprehensive profile and start bidding on projects.

Given the platform's growth, it's crucial to check back regularly for new job postings.

13. GIGBUCKS

Gigbucks offers a unique structure where freelancers can post services or "gigs" from \$5 to \$50.

It supports a wide range of categories. To get started, sign up, post a gig, ensure its well-described, and wait for orders to start coming in.

14. TERAWORK

TERAWORK is a leading freelance website in Nigeria, offering a diverse range of services.

To get started, create a profile that stands out, showcasing your skills and past work, then apply for suitable jobs.

15. TRUELANCER

Last but certainly not least on our list of the best freelancing sites in Nigeria is Truelancer, a global freelancing platform that offers a secure payment system.

This platform can be placed in the same category as Fiverr, Upwork and Freelancer, as you can get jobs not only in Nigeria but all over the world.

To get started, all you need to do is sign up, create a compelling profile, and start

applying for jobs. Regularly update your profile and stay active on the platform to maximize your chances of getting hired.

COMPARISON OF THE BEST FREELANCE MARKETPLACE IN NIGERIA

Although these freelance websites in Nigeria offer varying benefits, choosing the right platform depends on your skills, career goals, and desired working structure.

Tips for success include creating an impressive profile, showcasing your portfolio, setting competitive rates, and continually updating your skills.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST FREELANCE SITE IN NIGERIA

Freelancing in Nigeria has seen a tremendous surge in recent years. It offers several advantages, such as flexibility, the ability to choose projects, and the potential for higher income.

Fields such as writing, graphic design, programming, and digital marketing are among the most popular freelance domains. It is vital to understand these trends when navigating through various freelancing sites in Nigeria.

The choice of a freelancing website plays a crucial role in your freelancing journey.

Factors to consider include the types of jobs available, the payment structure, platform credibility, and opportunities for growth and learning.

Despite the potential challenges, finding the right platform can significantly boost your freelancing career.

CONCLUSION

Navigating the world of freelancing can be challenging, but choosing the right platform is a significant first step.

This guide to the best freelancing websites in Nigeria offers an extensive overview to help you start your freelancing journey. ●

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Capital Market

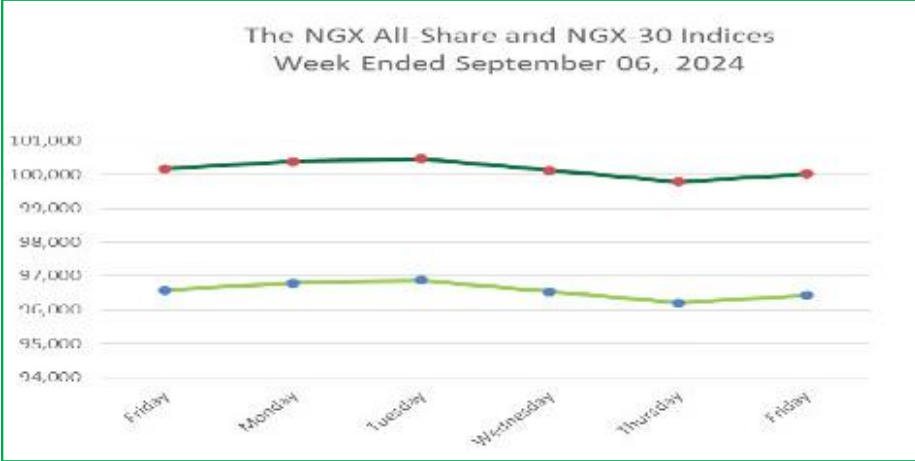
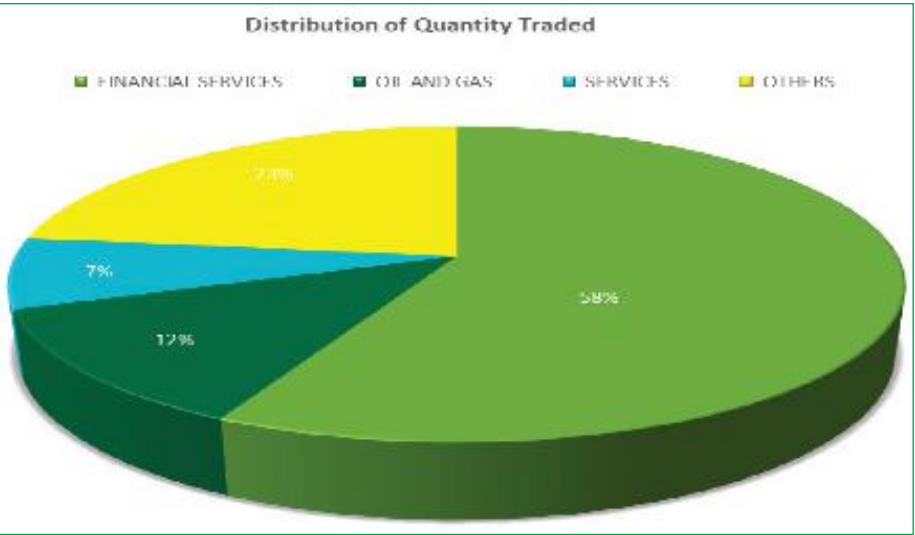
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WEEK ENDED SEPTEMBER 6, 2024

Top 10 Price Gainers					
Company	Open	Close	Gain (N)	% Change	
INDUSTRIAL & MEDICAL GASES NIGERIA PLC	26.40	35.00	8.60	32.58	▲
BERGER PAINTS PLC	14.30	18.75	4.45	31.12	▲
E-TRANZACT INTERNATIONAL PLC	5.10	6.15	1.05	20.59	▲
U A C N PLC.	17.45	20.90	3.45	19.77	▲
C & I LEASING PLC.	3.50	4.15	0.65	18.57	▲
UNIVERSITY PRESS PLC.	2.30	2.67	0.37	16.09	▲
CAVERTON OFFSHORE SUPPORT GRP PLC	1.40	1.59	0.19	13.57	▲
GUINEA INSURANCE PLC.	0.46	0.52	0.06	13.04	▲
MEYER PLC.	5.30	5.83	0.53	10.00	▲
SFS REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUST	134.90	148.35	13.45	9.97	▲

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SFS REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUST	134.90	148.35	13.45	9.97	▲



CBN EXCHANGE RATE

Date	Currency	Buying(NGN)	Central(NGN)	Selling(NGN)
SEPT./6/2024	US DOLLAR	1628.645	1629.145	1629.645
SEPT./6/2024	POUNDS STERLING	2143.2968	2143.9548	2144.6128
SEPT./6/2024	EURO	1803.8872	1804.441	1804.9948
SEPT./6/2024	SWISS FRANC	1921.9318	1922.5218	1923.1119
SEPT./6/2024	YEN	11.325	11.3285	11.3319
SEPT./6/2024	CFA	2.7215	2.7315	2.7415
SEPT./6/2024	WAUA	2183.3012	2183.9715	2184.6418
SEPT./6/2024	RIYAL	433.8541	433.9873	434.1205
SEPT./6/2024	DANISH KRONA	241.7212	241.7954	241.8696
SEPT./6/2024	SDR	2195.5763	2196.2504	2196.9244

Investors splash N51 bn on stocks in one week

●Financial stocks lead with N20bn

BAMIDELE FAMOOFO

A total turnover of 2.141 billion shares worth N51.217 billion in 55,603 deals was traded last week by investors on the floor of the Exchange, in contrast to a total of 2.821 billion shares valued at N53.048 billion that exchanged hands previous week in 50,488 deals.

The Financial Services Industry (measured by volume) led the activity chart with 1.229 billion shares valued at N19.976 billion traded in 20,701 deals; thus contributing 57.40 percent and 39.00 percent to the total equity turnover volume and value respectively.

The Oil and Gas Industry followed with 262.484 million shares worth N17.996 billion in 14,275 deals.

The third place was the Services Industry, with a turnover of 155.587 million shares worth N532.941 million in 3,558 deals.

Trading in the top three equities namely Access Holdings Plc, Oando Plc and Zenith Bank Plc (measured by volume) accounted for 517.336 million shares worth N24.454 billion in 15,502 deals, contributing 24.16% and 47.75% to the total equity turnover volume and value respectively.

In the Exchange Traded Product segment, a total of 23,881 units valued at N8.240 million were traded this week in 136 deals compared with a total of 37,329 units valued at N8.385 million transacted last week in 212 deals.

The NGX All-Share Index and Market Capitalization depreciated by 0.15 percent to close the week at 96,433.53 and N55.394 trillion respectively.

Similarly, all other indices finished lower with the exception of NGX Oil and Gas, which appreciated 1.52%, while the NGX ASeM and NGX Sovereign Bond indices closed flat.

Thirty-six (36) equities appreciated in price during the week lower than fifty-six (56) equities in the previous week.

Forty-six (46) equities depreciated in price higher than twenty-six (26) in the previous week, while sixty-nine (69) equities remained unchanged, same as sixty-nine (69) recorded in the previous week.

In the review week, Chapel Hill Denham Nigeria Infrastructure Debt Fund listed 901,761 Units of Chapel Hill Denham Nigeria Infrastructure Debt Fund.

“Trading License Holders are hereby notified that additional 901,761 units of Chapel Hill Denham Nigeria Infrastructure Debt Fund (NIDF or the Fund) were on Monday, 2 September 2024, listed on the Daily Official List of Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX),” a statement by the NGX

disclosed.

The additional units listed on NGX arose from the NIDF’s Scrip Dividend issued from January 2023 to April 2024. With the listing of the additional 901,761 units, the total unit of the Fund has now increased from 960,044,759 to 960,946,520 units.

Nigerian Breweries Plc also announced its plan to raise about N600 billion fresh capital to boost its business on the week. The company made the disclosure to the Nigerian Exchange Limited and other stock market stakeholders on Tuesday. The venture will be achieved through a rights issue and 22,607,491,232 Ordinary Shares of N0.50 each at N26.50 per share will be sold to shareholders of the company.

“The company has obtained the approval of the Securities and Exchange Commission to commence the Company’s Rights Issue of 22,607,491,232 Ordinary Shares of N0.50 each at N26.50 per share. This is being offered to existing shareholders on the basis of 11 new Ordinary Shares for every 5 Ordinary Shares held as at 12th July 2024, being the qualifying date,” a statement issued by NB Plc disclosed.

It further noted that the Rights Circular will be sent to all shareholders recorded in the register of members as at that date. The Offer opened on Monday, 2nd September 2024, and closed on Friday, 11th October 2024.

Meanwhile, sentiments across equities markets globally turned sour in the review week as a poor US manufacturing reading rekindled worries about a US recession, amid selloffs in global tech stocks and a firmer yen.

Nevertheless, signs of continued economic cooling, as indicated by the recently released August report, have increased expectations for a more significant rate cut by the Federal Reserve at the next policy meeting. Accordingly, US equities (DJIA: -1.9%; S&P 500: -2.6%) are on track for a weekly decline, with widespread selloffs in tech stocks and growing concerns over economic health overshadowing the prospects of interest rate cuts.

Similarly, European equities (STOXX Europe: -2.9%; FTSE 100: -2.0%) are poised to close lower this week, fueled by fears of a US economic slowdown and heightened global market uncertainties.

Asian markets (Nikkei 225: -5.8%; SSE: -2.7%) also experienced sharp declines due to (1) a slump in technology stocks following the global tech rout, (2) sell pressures on export-driven stocks amid a surge in the Japanese yen, and (3) weak corporate earnings amid slower growth in China. The Emerging (MSCI EM: -2.0%) and Frontier (MSCI FM: -0.4%) market indices posted losses, driven by declines in China (-2.7%) and Vietnam (-0.8%). ●

Our Global Outlook



At Dangote, we are dedicated to delivering world-class brands and services, designed by a highly motivated workforce using state-of-the-art technology.

We are growing a global conglomerate with a mission to deliver consistently high quality brands.

Dangote... *Providing your basic needs*

Nigerian youths still engrossed by Big Brother Naija despite lewd content

BRIGHT JACOB

Now in its ninth season in Nigeria, popular reality show, Big Brother Naija, has been airing on pay television and viewers, who are up for it, are glued to the TV, watching the proceedings with bated breath.

Big Brother was first aired in the Netherlands and is now shown in over 60 countries. The show got its name, Big Brother, from the mysterious character in George Orwell's novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In Orwell's book, Big Brother was the all-seeing leader of a totalitarian nation. His government kept citizens under constant surveillance.

In a typical Big Brother show, there are contestants that are referred to as "housemates." And they are kept in a secluded but lavishly furnished "Big Brother house" where they compete to perform tasks and "play the game" by employing different strategies that help them to avoid eviction from the house.

The mysterious voice of the ever-faceless Big Brother is also a talking point of the show and adds a riveting angle to the show. Since Big Brother is out of view, he watches the housemates and listens to every conversation in the house 24/7 via cameras and microphones that are installed in practically every area of his mansion.

The housemates, on their part, are oblivious to happenings in the outside world and cannot communicate with family and friends as their phones and other electronic devices have been confiscated and would only be handed back to them after their eviction from the show.

The winner of the show usually emerges through a voting process. The general public determines which housemate goes home with the mouthwatering cash prize that is up for grabs – which runs into several millions of naira in BBNaija – together with other additional prizes.

The current season, themed "No Loose Guard," premiered on July 28, 2024, and died hard fans of the show who had waited days on end for the start of "the biggest reality show in Africa" knew they were up for the usual dose of unpredictable twists and turns the controversial show is known for.

Ebuka Obi-Uchendu, alumni of the show who participated in its inaugural season in 2006, returned as the host for the eighth consecutive time and many fans, who are always enamoured of his fashion sense, will once again be captivated by the vast array of tasty clothing he will wear throughout the duration of the show.

The current BBN show will run for 71 days. Some of the previous seasons lasted up to 90 days and had fans on the edge of their seats. The current season's finale will air on October 6, 2024.

Interestingly, unlike other seasons in which housemates stepped into the Big Brother house alone, this year's edition saw housemates entering the house in pairs.

The names of the pairs that came into the house are Wanni x Handi, Double Kay, Mbadiwe twins, Zinwe, Aces, Radicals, Nelita, Chekas, Ndi Nne, Tami, Shatoria, Streeze, Flouruush and Beta.

So far, Tami, Ndi Nne, Streeze, Flouruush and Radicals have been evicted from the house. And in a recent twist, Big Brother unexpectedly separated the remaining duo in the house, thus making it an individual game.

Nevertheless, the usual controversies associated with the show have not been in short supply.

Some housemates have had misunderstandings that quickly led to the feuding housemates using the F-word and other vile languages for settling scores and for tongue-lashing rivals – actions that affect the mental health of many of their viewers.

Nigerians have also been outraged at the level of nudity exhibited by housemates as well as the sexcapade in the house. This is why some prominent Nigerians and groups had called beforehand for an outright ban of the Big Brother show.

For instance, in 2021, the Arewa Youths Advisory Forum described the reality TV show as a "calamity" and called on the Federal Government to ban it.

The National President of the forum, Yerima Shettima said, "It is a calamity for me. I never believed in BBNaija and I don't think it's fair because the show is an act of immorality. Such a spectacle should not be encouraged."

"I have often said that this show encourages immorality and that the Nigerian government should ban it. It should not be allowed to be broadcast in our country."

"A lot of people are watching to see acts of immorality, these housemates flaunt their nudity, and they make it look like a 'blue film', so that

is to be discouraged.

"I urge true lovers of the country to join hands and draw the government's attention to the implication of this programme which should be discouraged."

In 2022, the then Director General of the National Council for Arts and Culture, Segun Runsewe, asked the House of Representatives to give his council powers to yank BBNaija off the airwaves over nudity concerns and BBNaija's uncultured content.

Runsewe also said he reported the show to the National Broadcasting Commission even as he urged the NASS to empower his

office to act against BBNaija.

"I am the first person who took BBNaija to NBC to report them because they were having nudity. They should not bring it to Nigeria because our culture is rich and it respects the integrity of our country," Runsewe said.

He added, "This honourable House just needs to empower us with just a legal framework and that nonsense will stop."

Analysts have argued that sparks fly when young adults of the opposite sex are compelled to cohabit in the same restricted space like what obtains in the BBNaija house.

They also say that even though the housemates compete for sponsored tasks and plan for their wager tasks, their minds are, for the better part of the show, idle.

Some of the housemates themselves, such as one half of the already evicted Zinwe duo, Zion, had narrated his

sexual shenanigans in the house with his partner cum girlfriend, Chinwe, to another evicted housemate, Fairme Davids of the Radicals.

Despite such brazen activities in the house, the organisers of the show have often defended the show by reminding Nigerians that BBNaija is rated 18 and some activities therein may not be suitable for viewers of all ages.

They have also counselled parents to activate the parental control features of their decoders.

An ardent viewer of the show, Amara Ugorji told *The Point*, "There is indeed what some people might call 'adult content' in the show. But am I not an adult? What are we even saying here?"

"I only have a problem with the show when underage kids watch it. Parents must therefore realise that they have a duty to protect their children from the negative aspects of BBNaija."

"And I don't think it should be banned. It has elevated ordinary boys and girls to celebrity status in the country and the recalcitrant behaviour of a few housemates should not destroy the main aim of the show."

"And if at all possible, the organisers of the show should begin to spare us the distasteful scenes in the show. That will make many of us comfortable while watching the show."

A public affairs commentator, Kizito Opara, said, "It is really surprising that the government has not been able to ban the show. I understand that many Nigerians went to the courts to do so but have not had their prayers answered."

"More importantly, we all know that our culture does not permit immorality and nudity. Anything contrary to this is alien to our way of life. This is where I think that the government should not fold its hands."

"The NBC has been vested with the responsibility by our laws to regulate all broadcastings within Nigeria. So, they must ensure that they always keep the BBNaija show under the spotlight and mete out sanctions whenever and wherever necessary."

I URGE TRUE LOVERS OF THE COUNTRY TO JOIN HANDS AND DRAW THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTENTION TO THE IMPLICATION OF THIS PROGRAMME WHICH SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED



Wanni and Handi



Double Kay



Tami

'August nationwide protest was to put leaders in check'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

eral Government and the state government. We live here. We understand the system. We know where the issues are, and I'm happy now that there's a synergy between us and is making a positive impact in terms of reducing insecurity in the state, and I hope it will continue so that banditry and all the criminalities will be a matter of history.

Has the political dynamics to the insecurity in Zamfara been flushed out, or are they still there?

Despite all the challenges we are facing from the opposition; let me also make a categorical statement that the security in

the state has improved drastically. People now are going about their businesses. In fact, your crew is here, they can testify to the fact that things have improved in terms of insecurity.

Are you under pressure following the August nationwide protest? We understand that you are working to show the people that you are really in for a good deal?

I'm not under any pressure right now. All I'm doing is, doing the right thing, bringing governance to people, and that is why we are making conscious efforts to make sure we take care of security issues. We are taking it very seriously in the area

of education, where we are seriously disadvantaged. We are also making a conscious effort to make sure that our students go to school. And from the recent happening in terms of the gifted students, you agree with me that we in Zamfara became number two after Anambra State. That is to show you that we are making significant progress in Arabic education and so other sectors. And that is exactly what we are also doing in the area of agriculture by helping the farmers in a little way, reducing waste and increasing productivity in the area of agriculture.

The same thing in the health sector, if you go around the state now, we can comfortably say that we have about five hospi-

tals that have been upgraded to standard hospitals. So, that is something. For the local governments, yes there may be issues here and there, but we are all in it together, and all we are doing is to make sure we have the best for our people, and we will continue to do that.

What lessons have you learnt from the August nationwide protests?

The lesson for me here is, it is always good for people to express themselves so that leaders will be in check. Now, the experience about the protest shows concern, and I mean, as a responsible government, we look at the issues and try to find solutions to some of these problems. Because if

you don't hear from the people, it means something is fishy somehow, but it's always good for people to express themselves.

I can also say that in Zamfara, it was very peaceful, especially the first week. There wasn't any issue. It's okay, we are handling the situation but people should always speak. Yes, it is allowed. At least that will also make some of us to be in our right position to remember that we have responsibility as leaders, and we are expected to deliver good governance. I can tell you also in Zamfara, we are very transparent in everything we do. We are concerned about the people, and we will continue to deliver democracy dividends to them. ●

At last, Dangote Refinery berths

BAMIDELE FAMOOFO

The coming onboard of Dangote Refinery with the full array of its products is expected to change Nigeria's business narrative as products from the 650,000 barrels per day petrochemical plant will boost the nation's productivity through the manufacturing sector.

HISTORY & STRATEGY

Dangote Industries Limited is a diversified and fully integrated conglomerate with an annual group turnover in excess of \$4 billion (2016) with vibrant operations in Nigeria and Africa across a wide range of sectors including cement, sugar, salt, condiments, packaging, energy, port operations, fertilizer, and petrochemicals.

Its core business focus is to provide local, value-added products and services that meet the 'basic needs' of the populace through the construction and operation of large scale manufacturing facilities in Nigeria and across Africa. Its focus is on building local manufacturing capacity to generate employment, reduce capital flight and increase local value addition.

The Dangote Group corporate strategy has evolved as its businesses have grown, matured, and diversified into new sectors and regions over the last four decades.

Starting out as a bulk commodity trading concern in the 1970s encouraged by the liberalized commodity import regime of the then Government of Nigeria, by the late 1990s its strategy had transformed to a focus on manufacturing for import substitution.

The early 2000s saw the Group's approach further adjust to strategic asset acquisition in line with the then Government's privatization policies. This set the stage for the next phase in our strategic plan for the next decade; expansion and backward integration.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

The leadership team of Dangote Industries Limited, parent company of Dangote Refinery, comprises 10 members, led by Aliko Dangote, President/Chief Executive.

Aliko Dangote is the founder and president/chief executive of the Dangote Group, the largest conglomerate in West Africa.

The Group currently has a presence in 17 African countries and is a market leader in cement on the continent. One of the Group's subsidiaries, Dangote Cement Plc, is the largest listed company in West Africa and the first Nigerian company to join the Forbes Global 2000 Companies list.

Internationally, Dangote sits on the board of the Corporate Council on Africa and is a member of the Steering Committee of the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative, the Clinton Global Initiative, the McKinsey Advisory Council, and the International Business Council of the World Economic Forum.



KEY FACTS ABOUT DANGOTE REFINERY	
*It is located in Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos, covering a land area of approximately 2,635 hectares.	
*The refinery is the world's largest single train with a capacity of 650,000 barrels per day with a 900 KTPA Polypropylene plant.	
*The refinery is powered by a 435-megawatt (MW) power plant.	
*At full capacity, it can meet 100% of the Nigerian requirement of all refined products and also have a surplus for exports.	
*Designed for 100% Nigerian crude with the flexibility to process other crudes.	
*Self-sufficient marine facility with the ability for freight optimization. Largest single order of 5 single-point mooring (SPMs) anywhere in the world.	
*Diesel and gasoline from the refinery will conform to Euro V specifications.	
*The refinery design complies with World Bank, US EPA, European emission norms and Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) emission/effluent norms.	
*Designed to process a large variety of crudes, including many of the African crudes, some of the Middle Eastern crudes and the US Light Tight Oil.	
*Developed a port and constructed two quays with a load-bearing capacity of 25 tons/square meter to bring over dimensional cargoes close to the site directly.	
*Constructed two more quays in the port with a capacity to handle up to Panamax vessels to export, and two quays to handle liquid cargoes. The port will have six quays, including a roll-on/roll-off quay.	
*In the course of the civil works, 700 piles were drilled on some days, with total number of piles up to 250,000.	
*It has 177 tanks of up to 4.742 billion litres capacity.	
*Dangote is one of the few companies in the world executing a Petroleum refinery and a Petrochemical complex directly as an Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contractor.	

Source: Dangote Refinery

ness Council of the World Economic Forum.

He was named Co-chair of the US-Africa Business Center, in September 2016, by the US Chamber of

Commerce. In April 2017, he joined the Board of Directors of the Clinton Health Access Initiative, which is helping countries build the systems necessary to provide health services to their

IT IS ENVISAGED THAT THE REFINERY WILL SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE FUEL IMPORTS, SAVE FOREIGN EXCHANGE, AND WILL CONTRIBUTE TO STABILISING THE NAIRA, LOWERING INFLATION, AND REDUCING THE COST OF LIVING AMONG OTHERS

people.

A dedicated philanthropist, Dangote made an initial endowment of \$1.25 billion to the Dangote Foundation in March 2014, enabling it to scale up its work in health, education and economic empowerment. In addition, he is collaborating with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to fight polio. He is also on the Board of ONE, the anti-poverty group, co-founded by Bono.

A graduate of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, Dangote began his business career in 1978, trading in rice, sugar and cement, before he ventured into full-scale manufacturing. In 2013, Forbes listed him as the 'Most Powerful Man in Africa.' In April 2014, TIME Magazine listed him among its 100 'Most Influential People in the World.' He also made the list of CNBC's 'Top 25 Businessmen in the World' that changed and shaped the century.

THE NEW INCLUSION

The new subsidiary of the Group is the petrol chemical plant sited in the Lekki Free-Zone in Lagos, Nigeria.

The petrochemical plant comprises Fertilizer plant, Oil refinery and a power generating plant. The oil refinery is 650,000 barrels per day (BPD) integrated refinery project which is currently Africa's biggest oil refinery and the world's biggest single-train facility.

The Pipeline Infrastructure at the Dangote Petroleum Refinery is the largest anywhere in the world, with 1,100 kilometers to handle 3 Billion Standard Cubic Foot of gas per day. The Refinery alone has a 435MW Power Plant that is able to meet the total power requirement of Ibadan DisCo.

The Refinery will meet 100 percent of the Nigerian requirement of all refined products and also have a surplus of each of these products for export. It

is a multi-billion dollar project that will create a market for \$21 billion per annum of Nigerian crude. It is designed to process Nigerian crude with the ability to also process other crudes.

Dangote Fertiliser Plant is Africa's largest Granulated Urea Fertiliser complex. The plant occupies 500 hectares of land in Lekki Free Trade Zone, Lagos Nigeria. It was built at a cost of \$2.5 billion.

With Nigeria estimated to need about 5 to 7 million metric tonnes per annum of fertiliser and with the current level of fertiliser consumption in the country which is 1.5 million metric tonnes, Dangote Fertiliser complex was established to produce 3 million metric tonnes per annum of urea fertiliser in phase 1.

Dangote Fertiliser works with Farmer Associations, Corporate Farms, NPK Blenders, NGO/development partners and State Governments all over Nigeria, as well as governments across Africa and beyond who are looking for a sustainable approach to improve soil and farm yields. The coming on stream of Dangote Fertilizer would surely make Africa self-sufficient in food production and a net exporter of food to the world.

IMPACT ON ECONOMY

It is envisaged that the refinery will significantly reduce fuel imports, save foreign exchange, and will contribute to stabilising the naira, lowering inflation, and reducing the cost of living among others. The refinery would lead to the protection of forex revenue of around \$20bn a year at current market prices and saving of \$14bn a year through domestic supplies of petroleum products.

It would also create a minimum of 100,000 indirect employment through retail outlets and ease availability of petroleum products in the country.

Beyond its role in petroleum refining, the Dangote Refinery also represents a significant boost to Nigeria's industrial and manufacturing sectors.

It will produce crucial petrochemicals such as polypropylene, polyethylene, base oil, and linear alkylbenzenes that will grow in many sectors, including the agricultural sector.

Previously, some players in the packaging industry had to shut down due to the difficulty in accessing foreign exchange to import polypropylene.

This issue is expected to become a thing of the past as Dangote proudly declared, "We are committed to ensuring that starting in October, there will be no need to import polypropylene. Our petrochemical plant will be fully capable of meeting all local demands."

The availability of these raw materials is set to revive related sectors and industries that had nearly vanished due to the prohibitive costs of importation.

While importation provides immediate, short-term gains, it rarely supports sustainable growth. In contrast, industrialisation fosters long-term economic development by creating jobs, boosting productivity, driving innovation, and improving infrastructure. ●

Sports

www.thepointng.com



Why I never gave up on EPL dream despite Liverpool setbacks – Awoniyi

Super Eagles striker Taiwo Awoniyi has revealed that he did not give up on playing in the English Premier League despite his struggles at Liverpool.

The Reds snapped him up from Imperial Academy, co-owned by former Nigeria international Seyi Olofinjana, in 2015, but he was unable to make any appearance for the English giants as he was unable to secure a work permit.

He spent loan terms with FSV Frankfurt, NEC, Mouscron, KAA Gent, Mainz 05 and Union Berlin who signed him up upon his exit from Liverpool permanently in 2021.

The 2013 Fifa U17 World Cup winner impressed with Union Berlin and was able to secure a return to England in 2022 when he joined Nottingham Forest.

He eventually made his Premier League debut against Newcastle on August 6, 2022, and got his first goal in the following game against West Ham United.

Speaking to reporters, Awoniyi revealed that he never gave up on his ambition to play in the English Premier League despite failing to do so for Liverpool.

"I think for me in all honesty, that is one thing that I never take off my mind. I never for one day in all those difficulty and never for one day have it off my mind that it will not happen.

"And with the help of my family, my brother, my sister, my mum, my dad, this same person I called my coach Abdul Razaq Olojo, Mr Seyi Olofinjana, Mr Bankole, I think they are the people that also kept the belief in me."

"Because you know this year you are in Holland, this year you are in Belgium, you are asking yourself what is happening, but in all honesty, the belief was always there. So I never for one day think it is not going to happen for me in the Premier League."

The 27-year-old has made 50 appearances in the English top flight, notching 16 goals and four assists, all of which he has registered while playing for Nottingham Forest. ●

AFCON Qualifiers: Super Eagles back to winning ways, set to battle Rwanda

After four previous competitive matches without a win, the Super Eagles regained their winning mentality after a 3-0 defeat of Benin Republic in their opening 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying series at the weekend.

The win also put the Super Eagles at the top of the Group D after both Libya and Rwanda played

1-1 draw last Thursday.

It is also the biggest win by the Super Eagles since their 2023 6-0 win over Sao Tome & Principe last year September.

Red-hot Ademola Lookman, scored two goals to straighten the possibility of him emerging as 2024 African Footballer of the Year.

The current title holder, Victor Osimhen also

proved his mettle coming off the bench in the second half to double Nigeria's lead after Lookman's late first half goal.

The Super Eagles will now honour their next fixture against Rwanda on Tuesday with the hope of consolidating their lead.

Benin Republic with no points and a deficit of three goals are rooted at the bottom of the log. ●



Ilechukwu thumbs up Eguavoen following Super Eagles 5-star show against Benin Rep

Interim assistant coach of the Super Eagles, Fidelis Ilechukwu, has hailed Austin Eguavoen after Nigeria defeated Benin Republic in their opening game of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers at the weekend.

Eguavoen was asked to take charge of the West African giants when the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) failed to get a substantive coach to replace Finidi George who resigned from his position after the 2026 Fifa World Cup qualifiers in June.

The NFF had planned on replacing George with Bruno Labbadia and had

announced his appointment, but a U-turn was made when the Nigerian football governing body stated that they hadn't reached an agreement with the German tactician.

With imminent games to play against Benin and Rwanda, Eguavoen was asked to occupy the position temporarily and began his assignment with a comfortable 3-0 victory over the Cheetahs.

Speaking after the match, Ilechukwu praised the NFF Technical Director for helping the Super Eagles get off to a flying start with a victory over Benin.

"We will make sure we support Austin

Eguavoen because he is very open. He is a coach who carries everybody along," Ilechukwu said.

"He is a coach we love, the tactics, the technical approach and to me Eguavoen is one of the best things to happen to Nigeria now within that short period of time and we want to achieve with our little support."

Eguavoen's next assignment comes up on Tuesday when he will be hoping to make it back-to-back victories against Rwanda in the second matchday in Group D of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers. ●

Benin don't have big players, Rohr admits ...says Eagles were super!

Two stunning goals from 2024 Ballon d'Or nominee Ademola Lookman and Victor Osimhen's acrobatic effort inspired the Super Eagles 3-0 rout of neighbors Republic of Benin in a 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying match at the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium in Uyo on

Saturday evening.

The victory came eighty-nine days after a Nigeria side coached by Finidi George were humiliated in Abidjan, losing 2-1 to the Cheetahs in a 2026 World Cup qualifier.

Of the eleven players that started the World Cup qualifier on June 10, seven were picked in the starting lineup on Sat-

urday, namely Stanley Nwabali, Calvin Bassey, Semi Ajayi, Wilfred Ndidi, Ademola Lookman, Alex Iwobi and Samuel Chukwueze.

Influential defenders Ola Aina and William Troost-Ekong, Bruno Onyemaechi and Victor Boniface came into the side for the Afcon qualifier.

Benin's Cheetahs manager Gernot

Rohr has highlighted that the Super Eagles fielded a stronger side compared to the team they beat in Ivory Coast.

The German also pointed out that he could not count on the services of some key players like Mohamed Tijani who was unavailable for selection due to an injury he sustained while on club duties in Switzerland. ●

FIFA U20 WWC: Danjuma commends fantastic Falconets

Chris Danjuma, the head coach of the Falconets, commended his team after they defeated Venezuela on Saturday night. Nigeria defeated the South Americans 4-0 to secure their spot in the second round of the 2024

FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup. Throughout the game, the Falconets' Aminat Bello, Chiamaka Okwuchukwu, Flourish Sabastine, and Joe Igboke were all on target. At the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup, the West Africans have advanced

to the knockout stage eleven times. "It's a fantastic feeling, and we don't want to just win but also to play good football," Danjuma told FIFA.com. "We have a lot of talents that we want the world to see and this is an

opportunity to see those talents because 90% of them are from the local league, they are not professionals coming from anywhere in Europe." The Falconets will play either Japan or Austria in the Round of 16 after placing second in Group D. ●



U20 WWC: Falconets make bold statement with big win against Venezuela

Nigeria at the weekend, made a bold statement by thrashing Venezuela 4-0 in their last group game of the ongoing Fifa U20 Women's World Cup in Colombia. The Falconets' win was secured with goals from Amina Bello, Chiamaka Okwuchukwu, Flourish Sabastine, and Joy Igboke. Bello opened the scoring in the 16th minute, followed by Chiamaka Okwuchukwu doubling the lead twelve minutes later. Flourish Sabastine added the third goal just before halftime, and Joy Igboke sealed the victory with a fourth goal in the 94th minute. This decisive win ensures Nigeria progressed to the knockout stages of the tournament. It could be observed that Chiamaka Okwuchukwu demonstrated her prowess by scoring once and assisting another goal. The 19-year-old forward has now netted two goals and provided two assists in the tournament. Despite her impressive performance, Okwuchukwu had several chances that she could have converted, suggesting improving her finishing could help further develop her game. Goalkeeper Faith Omilana delivered a solid performance, making crucial saves despite limited opportunities to be tested. Her two important stops in the first half played a key role in preserving Nigeria's lead and keeping the Venezuelan attack at bay.

Venezuela struggled with Falconets' physicality and found it challenging to cope with Nigeria's physical attributes. The Falconets used their physical advantage to dominate possession and maintain control of the game, which was evident throughout the match as Venezuela struggled to match their intensity. Also, Nigeria's passing accuracy and team cohesion saw significant improvement against Venezuela. After struggling in previous matches, the Falconets completed 80% of their passes against Venezuela, reflecting better

coordination and effective ball movement. This enhanced passing success rate contributed to their overall dominance in the game. Venezuelan coach Pamela Conti made two key substitutions in the first half as a response to Nigeria's dominance. Nazly Sanchez and Claudia Perez. were replaced by Hernandez and Vásquez respectively. These changes aimed to address Nigeria's relentless pressure and regain control, though they ultimately had little impact on the outcome. ●



Return to glorious days: Heartland unveil newly signed players as Amuneke exudes confidence

Heartland Football Club of Owerri has formally presented 30 newly signed players for the 2024/2025 soccer season to the soccer-loving public in Imo State and Nigerians at large. The colourful unveiling ceremony which took place at the renovated Dan Anyiam Stadium, Owerri attracted football fans, enthusiasts, ex-soccer stars, top government officials and residents of the state who were on ground to welcome the new players. Technical Adviser/Manager of Heartland FC, Emmanuel Amuneke who presented the new team gave names of the new players as Elvis Ori (Bayelsa United), Kelvin Ogunga (Bayelsa United), Udochukwu Anumudu (Abia Warriors), Louis Umoh Anthony (Heartland Feeders), Alex Godwin (Niger Tornadoes), Julius Namitanie (Giant Brillars), Offor Emmanuel

Chibueze (Giant Brillars), Adoh Chuks Frank (De First Atlanta FA) and Ebuka Nwokochea (Diamond FA). Others include; Olanrewaju Molade (Giant Brillars), Chukwudi Agor (Giant Brillars), Ikvwu Ejike (Rangers International FC), Osinachi Wilson (Eagle Eye), Nnaemeka Christian Nkwo (Giant Brillars), Ezra David (Superstars FA), Uchenna David (Foster FA) Bobo Chubuike (Dynamic Shuttle), Onuwa Temple Chigozirim (Er7), Chikamso Obasi (De Gideons FA), Nkemakolam Chigozie Godwin (Umuakuma FA) and Chukwuma Chinedu (Taiye Academy). Also in the list are; Kelvin Onah (Legacy Stars) Samuel Wisdom (Giant Brillars), Emmanuel Charles (Rangers International FC), Joshua Odo (Rangers International FC), Suraju Lawal (Giant Brillars), Chukwuma Agoha (Brighter Tomorrow FC), Obinna Okere (Brighter Tomorrow), Benjamin Victor (Brighter Tomorrow) and Chukwuma Agor (Brighter Tomorrow). Amuneke in his brief remark, expressed confidence in the new players pointing out that they are young, fit, energetic and a product of prudent and strenuous screening process with the vision of restoring the glory of the state-owned team. Performing the unveiling ceremony, Governor Hope Uzodinma of Imo State disclosed that hiring of the new players was necessitated by the commitment of his administration to reposition Heartland FC to return to the winning ways again. Uzodinma who was represented by his Chief of Staff, Barr. Nnamdi Anyaehie, recalled with dismay that the state club had not won the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) for many years but declared that the new team has come to change the ugly narrative. ●



Oshoala on target as Bay FC stun Racing Louisville FC

Super Falcons forward Asisat Oshoala scored the winning goal as Bay FC defeated Racing Louisville FC 1-0 at PayPal Park at the weekend. Oshoala recorded the game-winning goal in the 75th minute, tallying her team-leading fourth goal of the season to help Bay FC secure the win. Oshoala registered her team-leading fourth goal of the season. Three of her four goals this campaign have been game-winning goals for the club.

Notably, all three of her game-winners have come in 1-0 victories. Hocking provided the assist on the winner, notching her first goal contribution for Bay FC on her club debut as a substitute. Hocking is the 11th player to record an assist for Bay FC this season. Notably, it was Hocking's second straight game with an assist as she also registered an assist for the Chicago Red Stars against Louisville on Aug. 24. Bay FC (8-11-0, 24pts) moved

up to seventh in the NWSL standings with their victory – the team's highest position in the league table since Week 4. Bay FC will finish Week 18 in a playoff position regardless of Sunday's results. Bay FC could finish the weekend in seventh or eighth place, pending the result of the Chicago Red Stars vs. Orlando Pride match. With the win, Bay FC trail Portland (27pts) in sixth place by just three points and are only four points behind the North Carolina Courage (28pts) in fifth place. ●

FG must sustain power reforms to grow industries – LCCI

AFCON Qualifiers: Super Eagles back to winning ways, set to battle Rwanda

High cost of starving to death



OIKONOMIA
with Lekan Sote

X:@lekansote1

After delivering a devastating report on the cost of the healthy diet of the average Nigerian, the National Bureau of Statistics added that average Nigerians would be spending 54.9 per cent of their income on food in the next six months. They can't even consider big budget items like automobiles, houses and home appliances.

Bismarck Rewane, Managing Director of Financial Derivatives Company Limited, notes that despite claims that Nigeria's tax-to-Gross Domestic Product rose from four per cent to nine per cent, there are no noticeable improvements in the well-being of Nigerians, "well-being," the state of comfort or improvement in the life of Nigerians.

If the NBS is correct in stating that CoHD, which measures physical and economic access to healthy diets, excluding costs of transportation, energy and all else necessary for cooking, is the least expensive combination of locally available food items that meet globally consistent food-based dietary guidelines, it means Nigerians "ti wo gau," Nigerians are in serious trouble.

The NBS reported that the average daily cost of a healthy meal in Nigeria rose from N858 in January 2024, by roughly nearly 50 per cent, to N1,265 in July 2024; though the report added that general food inflation, which is about 50 per cent of headline inflation, dropped, by a grudging 1.34 per cent, from 40.87 per cent to 39.53 per cent. Headline

inflation too dropped from 34.19 per cent in June to 33.40 per cent.

The report further indicated that when weighted by geopolitical zones, South West Nigeria led the dismal pack with N1,581 average daily cost of healthy diet, followed by South South Nigeria, with N1,487. North West Nigeria had the lowest, N956.

The report went into the details of the daily average cost of food categories, stating that body-building animal proteins accounted for 36 per cent of the costs, followed by fruits and vegetables that are highly recommended by nutritionists, accounting for seven per cent. Oil and fats accounted for six per cent, while fibres, made up of legumes, nuts and seeds, accounted for five per cent.

The reduction of access to foods through the recent price hikes also compromised the campaign by doctors who advocate that patients reduce or eliminate meat and dairy food, and concentrate on vegetables and high nutrient plants to achieve inexpensive reversal of diseases.

If you consider 'affordability of essential medicines in Nigeria,' a report compiled by BMC Services Research, that states that more than 60 per cent of Nigerians have begun to opt for alternative medicine because they cannot afford essential medicines, you will get the idea of where things are going. Out-of-pocket expenses of the average family rose between 35 and 40 per cent.

The World Bank Report, "Healthcare Cost in Nigeria: Trends and Impact" did not also help matters. Its revelation that the cost of essential drugs rose by 50 per cent between 2020 and 2023, the COVID-19 pandemic years, will make you appreciate the level of danger that the average Nigerian has gotten into.

The price of antibiotics, like Amoxicillin, rose by 60 per cent, drugs for hypertension rose by as much as 70 per cent, insulin, used by

POOR FEEDING AND INADEQUATE MEDICATION CAUSED BY HIGH PRICES WILL NATURALLY LEAD TO AN UNHEALTHY LABOUR FORCE THAT WILL BE WEIGHED DOWN WITH A HIGH RATE OF ABSENTEEISM, LOW PRODUCTIVITY AND EVEN LOW-QUALITY PRODUCTION AT WORK.



dialysis patients, oscillated, like a seesaw gone out of control, by a range of 30 per cent to 80 per cent. Regular anti-malarial drugs rose by more than 50 per cent.

The problem caused by expensive drugs is compounded by inadequate, ill-equipped and understaffed healthcare facilities that former military Head of State Muhammadu Buhari once derisively described as "mere consulting clinics."

If Nigerians cannot feed on healthy meals per day and cannot afford to buy their drugs, one is justified to ask if Nigerians will not

all become extinct very soon, even though population figures reveal that more than 70 per cent of Nigeria's population is below age 30, the period considered by experts to be the healthiest years in the life of a human being.

But this below-30 demography will become the most vulnerable when it lacks, or has little access to, food and medication. When you think of the concept of "child poverty" and those kids, strewn all over Nigeria, without homes, assurances of nutritious meals and no thought of medicines, you get a good idea of the level of vulnerability of the youngest Nigerians.

No one is sure how Tunji Bello, Executive Vice Chairman of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, intends to remedy this pricing problem and compel traders to crash the prices of consumer goods and services. But if he is able to achieve that, it should improve the well-being of Nigerians.

At a meeting he held with stakeholders, whose nature of trades was not exactly disclosed, he read the riot act of sorts, that "under Section 155 (possibly of the Act setting up FCC-CPA)) violators, whether individuals or corporate entities, face severe penalties, including substantial fines and imprisonment, if found guilty... (of such illicit activities."

He cited the case of a brand of fruit blender that sells for roughly N140,000 in a shop in America's state of Texas, but sells for N944,000, or nearly N1 million, at a supermarket in Victoria Island, Lagos. One would have thought he should be talking about foodstuffs and medicines that affect the well-being of all Nigerians, instead of a luxury item used by only the overpaid and underworked elite.

But some of the stakeholders at the engagement argue that the cost of transportation, caused by the government's removal of fuel subsidy;

insecurity, caused by the government's failure to provide security; multiple taxation, also caused by the government that leaves its revenue cash-cow petroleum resources in the hands of "bunkers," led to high prices of goods and services. They left out the policy that allows the naira to free-fall in the name of finding its own level.

The Director of Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprises, and a former Director General of Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr Muda Yusuf, has just reminded Tunji Bello that the FCCPC is not a price control agency, and that he should focus on the FCCPC mandate of protecting consumers' rights.

He points Mr Bello back to the "fiscal and monetary authorities" (of the government that Bello serves) as being responsible for (the) macroeconomic policies (that are used to run the economy) and are better placed to deal with the challenge of high prices."

So that Bello does not become a carpenter doing a plumber's job, he needs to revisit the price control mechanism that monitored prices, and the National Supply Company that supplied "essential commodities," basic processed foodstuffs and toiletries, to Nigerian citizens under the government of Buhari.

Poor feeding and inadequate medication caused by high prices will naturally lead to an unhealthy labour force that will be weighed down with a high rate of absenteeism, low productivity and even low-quality production at work.

In "Unsafe at Any Speed," a scathing critique of America's automobile industry, Ralph Nader narrates how irresponsibly inebriated workers who have a problem concentrating on their jobs produce automobiles that are disasters waiting to happen when their ultimate buyers begin to drive them.

It is better left to your imagination the level of production danger that starving and sick workers can put themselves, their companies and the national economy into, as they fumble on the factory floors of Nigeria Inc. ●

Benbestic

