

MARKET DATA AS AT TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2023

BONDS					BILLS					CPS					OTC FX FUTURES			
DESCRIPTION	Price	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time	MATURITY	Dis-count	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time	MATURITY	Discount	Yield	Change (%)	Updated Time	CONTRACT TENOR (MONTH)	Contract	Current Rate (\$/N)	Updated Time
^14.20 14-MAR-2024	10.362.00	10.82	-0.01	January 6, 2023	NTB 26-Jan-23	3.01	3.01	-0.01	January 6, 2023	FDHP CP III 17-MAR-23	9.26	9.43	0.00	January 6, 2023	1	NGUS JAN 25 2023	469.87	January 6, 2023
^13.53 23-MAR-2025	10.459.00	11.11	-0.71	January 6, 2023	NTB 9-Feb-23	3.01	3.02	0.00	January 6, 2023	VHPL CP III 1-APR-23	14.15	14.64	0.00	January 6, 2023	2	NGUS FEB 22 2023	472.05	January 6, 2023
^12.50 22-JAN-2026	10.287.00	11.35	0.00	January 6, 2023	NTB 9-Mar-23	2.21	2.22	-1.71	January 6, 2023	MREP CP VI 11-APR-23	10.52	10.81	-0.01	January 6, 2023	3	NGUS MAR 29 2023	474.23	January 6, 2023
^16.2884 17-MAR-2027	11.168.00	12.60	0.00	January 6, 2023	NTB 27-Apr-23	3.20	3.23	0.00	January 6, 2023					4	NGUS APR 26 2023	476.42	January 6, 2023	
^13.98 23-FEB-2028	10.386.00	12.92	0.00	January 6, 2023	NTB 11-May-23	3.23	3.27	0.00	January 6, 2023					5	NGUS MAY 31 2023	478.60	January 6, 2023	

# SALIENT Times

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## TAJBank Becomes First Corporate to List Sukuk Bond on NGX... Page 8

### Buhari Hails Pate on Appointment as Gavi CEO

● Incoming chief executive pledges to support countries scale up critical routine immunisation programmes

**Deji Elumoye and Onyebuchi Ezigbo** in Abuja  
 President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday congratulated the incoming Chief Executive Officer of the Gavi Vaccine Alliance, Nigeria's Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate over his appointment. The president said he was looking forward to working closely with Pate to strengthen the nation's health system and on other global health issues. Buhari, in a statement issued yesterday, by his spokesperson, Mallam Garba Shehu, described Pate's rise across racial and other barriers to become the first black/African to lead Gavi as a very important historical moment not only for him personally but Nigeria and Africa as a whole. According to Buhari: "Our hope is that Dr. Pate will bring his knowledge, expertise and very rich experience in the administration of vaccines and immunisation in

Continued on page 9

## Presidency: FG, CBN to Take Position on Currency Swap after S'Court Determination Today

● Emefiele: politicians buying, storing new banknotes for elections ● Berates fuel stations over alleged extortion of customers  
 ● Courts diplomatic community on naira redesign, cashless policy ● Maintains currency hoarders, abusers will go to jail ● Governors mopping up new notes, CSOs allege

Continued on page 9



### LISTING OF N10 BILLION MUDARABAH SUKUK ISSUANCE SPONSORED BY TAJBANK...

L-R: Executive Director/ECO, TAJBank, Mr. Sherif Idi; Chief Digital Officer, Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX), Dr. Olufemi Oyeyunuga; Divisional Head, Capital Markets, Mr. Jude Chiemeka; Chairman, TAJBank, Alhaji Tanko Isiaaku Gwamna; Managing Director/CEO, Mr. Hamid Joda, and Managing Director, Greenwich Merchant Bank, Mr. Bayo Rotimi, during a closing gong ceremony in commemoration of the listing of the N10 billion Mudarabah Sukuk issuance sponsored by TAJBank Limited at NGX...yesterday

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# News



## FROM AMERICA WITH LOVE...

L-R: United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Ms. Mary Beth, Special Assistant, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Ms. Holly Mackey and President Muhammadu Buhari, during an audience at the State House Abuja... on Monday

PHOTO: SUNDAY AGHAEZE

# All Eyes on Supreme Court as Suit against Banning Old Naira Notes Resumes Today

- Ogun joins case as Abiodun reads riot act to banks
- Gbajabiamila says relief underway
- Armed policemen take over Ondo CBN office to prevent attack by angry bank customers
- Wike faults policy
- Ganduje threatens to sanction erring banks, business owners

**Alex Enumah, Udora Orizu** in Abuja, **Fidelis David** in Akure, **James Sowole** in Abeokuta, **Blessing Ibunge** in Port Harcourt and **Ibrahim Shuaibu** in Kano

All eyes would be focused on the apex court as hearing in the suit challenging the powers of the federal government and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to stop the use of the old N200, N500 and N1,000 begins today at the Supreme Court in Abuja.

This was just as Ogun State Government has filed an application at the Supreme Court seeking to join Kaduna, Kogi and Zamfara States in the suit.

Ogun joining the suit confirmed THISDAY's recent report that as part of efforts to deliberately stall the Supreme Court ruling, governors of some of the All Progressives Congress (APC) states have chosen to continue to file for joinder in the matter.

The suit which was originally filed by the three northern states has since been joined by Ondo, Kano, Ekiti and now Ogun states. Rivers had also indicated its preparedness to do same.

Sources at the Federal Ministry of Justice, had disclosed to THISDAY that the design of the state governors, who were joining the Supreme Court suit was to delay the judgement and have the old currency run till after the election.

One of the sources, who pleaded to remain anonymous had said, "It is the design of the governors, who are adding many joinder suits, to delay the judgement and try to keep the state of affairs whereby the old currency would continue to be in use, while they lobby Supreme Court justices so that they cannot reach a judgement, and to push the Supreme Court decision on this matter until after the presidential election."

"They want to use the cash for the presidential election. So, they are adding more joinder suits to delay the outcome of the judgement so that the two currencies can work together. So, what we see is that the vote-buyers are fighting back."

The Supreme Court being the final court in the country joined in the matter which had generated

intense controversy, when it last week halted the federal government from proceeding to stop the use of the old banknotes from February 10, 2023.

Justice John Okoro, who gave the restraining order against the federal government, held that the order would subsist until today, when it would hear the case of the aggrieved states.

The action of the apex court was sequel to an ex parte application brought before it on February 3, by the Attorneys-General of Kaduna, Kogi and Zamfara States.

Since its order on February 8, the apex court has come under heavy knocks by some critics of the administration for venturing into what they believed was the exclusive of the executive, although some others including senior lawyers saw nothing wrong in the action of the apex court since the order made was a temporary one.

When the matter comes up today, it would be expected that the issue of jurisdiction which is very crucial in any case must first be resolved.

More worrisome is the issue of enforceability of the said order, which has further thrown the nation into confusion as some commercial banks and businesses despite the order of the apex court and the pledge by the federal government to obey the order have continued to reject the old naira notes.

Also, lawyers and litigants are being prevented from filing court processes at the Lagos High Court, as officials insisted they would only accept new naira notes.

In the suit marked: SC/CV/162/2023 and filed on February 3, plaintiffs are seeking among other things, a declaration that the demonetisation policy of the federation being currently carried out by the CBN under the directive of the president was not in compliance with the extant provisions of the constitution and CBN Act, 2007 and actual laws on the subject.

Besides, plaintiffs wanted a declaration that the three-month notice given by the federal government through the CBN under the directive of the president, the expiration of which was expected to render the old banknotes inadmissible

as legal tender, was in gross violation of the provisions of Section 20(3) of the CBN Act 2007, which specifies that reasonable notice must be given before such a policy.

Although, Mr. Mahmood Magaji, SAN, the lawyer representing the AGF who was the sole respondent in the suit, was present during the hearing and subsequent grant of the ex parte application he however filed the government's objection to the suit.

The federal government in the Notice of Preliminary Objection dated February 8, claimed that the Supreme Court lacked the necessary jurisdiction to entertain the suit in the first place.

According to their argument, the

plaintiffs ought to have commenced the suit before a Federal High Court and not at the Supreme Court.

Besides, the respondent argued that "the plaintiffs have equally not shown reasonable cause of action" against it.

Besides the objection, the AGF, Abubakar Malami also stated that the federal government would take steps to vacate the order when the court resumes, on the grounds that the law allows the government to challenge any order that it is not pleased with and that the government will do so in this instant case by the instrumentality of the law.

Last weekend, governors of the 36 states of the federation rose from a meeting in Abuja with a resolution

to direct their Attorneys General to review the suit with a view to consolidating the legal reliefs pursued by the states.

### Ogun Joins Suit as Abiodun Reads Riot Act to Banks

Ogun State Government has filed an application at the Supreme Court of Nigeria, seeking to join Kaduna, Kogi and Zamfara States, in the suit.

The state, in a Motion of Notice filed by its counsel, Afe Babalola and Co, on February 13, sought to be joined as 4th plaintiff/applicant, in a suit number SC/CV/162/2023.

The applicant in the Notice further stated that it sought to be a co-plaintiff for the just and effective determination in the suit instituted

by the other three plaintiffs.

The plaintiff also notified the Supreme Court that it shall rely on all the processes already filed in this action in addition to the affidavit in support of the application.

Listing 13 grounds upon which the application was predicated, the plaintiff submitted among others, that the implementation of the federal government-sanctioned policy had thus far negatively affected the citizens all over the federation which includes Ogun State, and left several residents of the state stranded, cash strapped and frustrated leading to riots, grievous interruption of commercial activities,

Continued on page 12

## OPEC Confirms Nigeria's Oil Output Grew by Just 23,000 bpd in Jan

### Oil prices fall after US crude reserve release

**Emmanuel Addeh** in Abuja

The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) yesterday confirmed that Nigeria's oil output grew by a meagre 23,000 barrels per day in January, a significant decrease from the December 2022 production increase of about 55,000 bpd.

The international oil cartel which stated in its February Monthly Oil Market Report (MOMR), noted that Nigeria's drilled 1.235 bpd in the first month of the year, while it succeeded in raising production to 1.258 million bpd in January, according to self-reported data.

But it stated that if secondary sources were considered, production in Nigeria increased by 65,000 bpd in the month under reference, with 1.33 million bpd output compared to 1.27 million bpd the previous month.

OPEC gets its production figures mainly from two sources, either as reported directly by member countries or by information released by secondary energy intelligence platforms.

In general, crude oil production from all 13 OPEC members slid by

49,000 bpd in January from December as top producer Saudi Arabia slashed output by 156,000 bpd from the last month of last year to average 28.88 million bpd.

Saudi Arabia, the biggest producer and de facto leader of the cartel, pumped 10.319 million bpd in January, down by 156,000 bpd month on month, and more than 100,000 bpd below its quota of 10.478 million bpd.

This was despite the OPEC+ agreement, set out at the October meeting and valid from November 2022 through December 2023, or until OPEC+ decides otherwise.

A Bloomberg survey found earlier this month that OPEC's crude oil production fell in January due to cuts by Saudi Arabia which may have been steeper than the Kingdom's quota.

Saudi Arabia, however, self-reported to OPEC that its crude oil production averaged 10.453 million bpd in January, up by 17,000 bpd from December.

According to OPEC's secondary sources, Nigeria and Angola boosted their production the most, by 65,000 bpd and 47,000 bpd, respectively. But these producers were among

the biggest laggards in their OPEC+ targets as they continued to pump well below their quotas.

The 10 OPEC members that are part of the OPEC+ collective target production were estimated to have produced around 920,000 bpd below the January target, per a Reuters survey earlier.

But going forward, OPEC and OPEC+ do not plan to change the course in oil production targets after Russia announced last week a 500,000 bpd cut in its output for March.

On the Nigerian economy, OPEC stated that following a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 2.4 per cent y-o-y in 3Q22, 4Q22 data indicated that Nigeria's economy faced a sharp rise in inflation, accompanied by higher interest rates and slowing private-sector momentum, leading to a slowdown in household consumption.

"The inflation rate remained almost unchanged at 21.3 per cent y-o-y, after it had accelerated to its highest level in 17 years in December, reaching 21.5 per cent y-o-y. This has been driven by localised food and fuel shortages. The rate showed a constantly rising trend for most of the year," OPEC added.

Meanwhile, oil prices fell yesterday after the United States government said it would release more crude from its Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) as mandated by lawmakers, defying expectations from some traders that the release could be cancelled or delayed.

Brent crude futures, Nigeria's oil benchmark, fell by 70 cents, or 0.81 per cent, to \$85.91 per barrel at some point, while US crude futures fell by 93 cents, or 1.16 per cent, to \$79.21 per barrel.

The US Department of Energy (DOE) said after the previous session ended that it would sell 26 million barrels of oil from the SPR, a release that would likely push the reserve to its lowest level since 1983, Reuters reported.

The US had considered cancelling the fiscal year 2023 sale after President Joe Biden's administration last year sold a record 180 million barrels from the reserve. But that would have required Congress to act to change the mandate.

Supply concerns also eased after the Energy Information Administration (EIA) said it expected record March production from the seven biggest US shale basins.



**WE APPRECIATE YOU...**

L-R: Former Corps Marshal, Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Gen. Halidu Hananiya (rtd); former Chairman, Senate Services Committee, Sen. Abubakar Girei; President & Chairman, Governing Council, Chartered Institute of Forensics and Certified Fraud Investigators of Nigeria (CIFCFIN), Dr. Iliyasu Gashinbaki; Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustapha, and former Military Administrator of Plateau State, Gen. Aliyu Kama (rtd), during an appreciation cocktail organised by CIFCFIN in Abuja...recently

# Gunmen Kidnap 15 NYSC Members in Anambra

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Gunmen yesterday kidnapped 15 members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Anambra State.

The corps members were abducted by the hoodlums at a filling station in Ihiala, in the Ihiala Local Government Area of the Anambra State.

It was gathered that the corps members had just completed their three-week orientation programme in Imo State, and were travelling to Lagos when they were abducted.

They hijacked their vehicle and diverted it to Isseke, Ihiala-

Orlu expressway where the gunmen kept them hostage," a source said.

Reacting to the incident, the Anambra State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Tochukwu Ikenga, however said the corps members have been released, through the efforts of police operatives.

He said: "Anambra State Police Operatives, by 11:15 am today (Tuesday) 14/2/2023 responding to a distress call along Isseke, Ihiala road, rescued unhurt 15 abducted Corps members from NYSC Orientation Camp Eziam-Obaire, Nkwerre, LGA, Imo

State. "Information reveals that the Corps members finished their three weeks of orientation programmes today (Tuesday) and were en route to Lagos before their vehicle was

intercepted at total junction Ihiala by yet-to-be- unidentified armed men in unmarked white Toyota Hilux.

"Their (corps members') vehicle was diverted to Isseke, Ihiala-Orlu expressway where

the gunmen kept them hostage. The armed men noticed they are being followed by Police operatives abandoned the corps and zoomed off with the Toyota Hiace bus with Reg Nos: EPE 353 YE conveying

the corps." The PPRO said the corps members had been debriefed by police operatives and necessary arrangements had been perfected to convey them back to their destinations.

## Ikpako-Ajoki Road: Edo Gov to Treat Protesting Farmers as Criminals

Adibe Emenyonu in Benin City

The Edo State Government has declared that it would treat members of Evbuorokhuo community as criminals for preventing Raycon Construction Company (RCC) handling the Ikpako-Ajoki Road project from carrying out its duty.

On February 9, 2022, the state government, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPC), Sahara Group and other partners, flagged off the 16.7 kilometre Ikpako-Ajoki Road project that cut across Ovia North-East and Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Areas of the state.

The Edo State Governor,

Mr. Godwin Obaseki, said that the road project would open up the communities to economic development because of its proximity to the planned Benin Seaport in Gelegele.

Investigation, however, revealed that some farmers said to be from Evbuorokhuo village, in Ovia North-East LGA of the state, are preventing the construction company from carrying out its work over alleged encroachment and damage to their farm crops.

The action of the aggrieved farmers reportedly stopped the construction company from continuing its stone dressing work because of their demand for compensation for the alleged damage.

## 'Political Parties Manifestoes are not Gender Specific'

Ugo Aliogo

Ahead of the forthcoming general elections, the Country Director, Plan International Nigeria, Charles Usie, has stated that political party manifestoes are not reflective enough of gender specific or child development-focused issues.

According to him, their analysis of the parties manifestoes based on the four pillars of development; protection, survival and participation revealed this reality.

He also noted that a particular case in point was the rejection of the gender equality bills by the National Assembly which

drew global attention to Nigeria and gave rise to protests.

In a statement made available to THISDAY, the organisation frowned at the poor reflection of girls and women issues in the manifestoes of political parties ahead of the 2023 general elections.

"The results of a survey carried out by the organisation published in a position paper indicated that despite the fact that women constitute 49.47 per cent of the Nigerian population, and 47.50 per cent of registered voters, issues relating to them are completely absent in many parties' manifestoes and where they are mentioned. They appear as footnotes.

## Stakeholders Demand Amendment of PIA for Criminalising Host Communities

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

Stakeholders in the Niger Delta have called for the immediate amendment of the Petroleum Industry Act 2021, saying that the Act only criminalises host communities and see them as subjects of oil and gas infrastructure.

The stakeholders also regretted that gas flaring in the PIA is seen as economic loss and not a health

hazard, contributing to the air poisoning for 40 million inhabitants of the Niger Delta region.

The demand was made at a town hall meeting on 'The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021: Challenges of Environmental Pollution in Nigeria's Delta Communities' organised by Social Development Integrated Centre (Social Action) in Port Harcourt.

Speaking at the meeting, Executive Director of We The People, Mr. Ken Henshaw, wondered how unarmed members of host communities would be able to protect oil installations from armed criminals and vandals, whereas NSCDC, JTF and other armed security forces have failed for over 20 years.

He explained that the PIA is

only out to shortchange the Niger Delta people and wondered who determines the operating cost of an oil company.

Henshaw said: "There is no where the oil majors have pre-informed their host communities that they are divesting. The PIA criminalises oil communities, if we accept the PIA then we are saying that we are criminals."

## PDP: Attack on Our Leaders, Supporters in Lagos Continues

Segun James

The Lagos State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the JandorFunke Campaign Council have vowed to petition the Directorate of State Security (DSS) and other security agencies over the unabated attacks on their supporters by hoodlums in Lagos.

The party said it would not succumb to intimidation and harassment of its supporters, saying those found guilty would not go scot-free.

The Publicity Secretary of the PDP in Lagos state, Mr. Hakeem Amode, Director of Strategy of the JandorFunke Campaign Council, Hon. Niyi Adam, a former Deputy Chairman of the

party, Chief Ola Apena, among others said these in Lagos while briefing the press on the situation.

They disclosed that a video had emerged of some PDP supporters calling for help and appealing to the security agencies to come to their aid, saying their lives were being threatened for supporting the PDP on Lagos Island.

Following the attack, a team from the state working committee of the PDP and the campaign team of team of its candidate, Dr. Abdul-Azeez Olajide Adediran paid a solidarity visit to Oke-Popo area of Lagos Island to sympathise with the victims and assure them of their safety and security ahead of the forthcoming election.

## Katsina Withdraws N11bn Suit against Ex-Gov Shema, ALGON Chairman

Francis Sardauna in Katsina

The Katsina State Government has withdrawn N11 billion corruption suit it filed against the state's former Governor, Mr. Ibrahim Shehu Shema, and the former Chairman of the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON), Mr. Ibrahim Lawal Dankaba, before the State High

Court. The State Director of Public Prosecution, Mr. Abdulrahman Umar, disclosed to journalists on Monday night at the Government House that the suit against the two defendants has been withdrawn following a Nolle Prosequi filed by the state government before the court on Monday.

Shema was arraigned before

late Justice Ibrahim Maikaita-Bako, at the State High Court 3 in 2016 for alleged offences of criminal breach of trust, forgery, abuse of office and conversion of public funds to the tune of over N11 billion while he was governor of the state.

Those joined in the suit were the former Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy

Affairs, Mr. Sani Hamisu Makana and former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Mr. Lawal Rufai.

But Shema, who served the state on the platform of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) between 2007 and 2015, pleaded not guilty to all the charges leveled against him by the Governor Aminu Bello Masari-led government.

## Amnesty: Ijaw Monarchs Task Ndiomu to Work with Critical Stakeholders

Sylvester Idowu in Warri

Ijaw traditional rulers have tasked the interim coordinator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) Major General Barry Ndiomu (rtd) to work with critical stakeholders towards achieving the objectives for which the programme was established.

Rising from an enlarged traditional rulers stakeholders meeting with the PAP coordinator in Warri, the royal fathers agreed that all differences between the PAP office and stakeholders be resolved amicably without resort to petitions and orchestrated blackmail.

According to a communique issued yesterday and signed by

His Majesty Dr. Joseph Timiyari, Torobobo I, the Ebinanawei of Ogulagha kingdom and chairman of Delta Ijaw traditional rulers forum and coordinator, His Majesty Obukowho Monday Whiskey, paramount ruler of Ijorhe kingdom, secretary of the forum, the royal fathers passed a vote of confidence on the PAP coordinator.

"Arising from an enlarged traditional rulers stakeholders meeting with the interim coordinator of the PAP, Major General Barry Ndiomu (rtd), it was agreed that all differences between PAP office and stakeholders be resolved amicably without resort to petitions and an orchestrated blackmail.

## Osun Gov Restates Commitment to Civil Servants' Welfare

Yinka Kolawole in Osogbo

The Governor of Osun State, Senator Ademola Adeleke, yesterday restated his commitment to the welfare and wellbeing of civil and public servants in Osun State.

Adeleke, who was represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Hon. Teslim Igbalaye, at the 2023 Valentine Day celebration, reaffirmed his solidarity and "the support of our administration for the wellbeing and welfare of our hardworking

civil servants.

He said: "Worldwide, today is marked in remembrance of sacrifice of love, brotherhood and fraternity among humanity. The symbolism of the day is the imperative of love, sharing, caring and supporting each other for

the collective good of the society.

"Today is, therefore, a call on leaders to be people-oriented and for the followers to be supportive of the leadership. Our gathering is in effect a reaffirmation of our joint resolution to act only in communal interest.



**FEELING THE PULSE OF THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY...**

Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria, Mr Godwin Emefiele (left) and Minister of State, Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Zubairu Dada, during the parley with members of the Diplomatic Community in Abuja ... yesterday

# Woman Flees with Children Over Circumscision, Ritual Rites

The families of Mrs Jikiemi Odunayomide Ayedun and that of her husband Jikiem Olaoluwa Olusola have been thrown into confusion following the sudden disappearance of the mother of three and her children over issues surrounding the circumcision of her daughters and performance of family ritual on her male child.

It was gathered that the Ogun State-based socialite had disagreement with her husband family when she visited them in Abeokuta recently over an issue bordering on the circumcision of her children, Jikiemi Favour Omowonuola, and Jikiemi Marvelous Kristi Tofunmi and the performance of ritual on her son, Jikiemi Rehoboth Olakanmi.

Sources said, Jikiemi Odunayomide Ayedun, who suffered untold trauma over same issue when she was 12, vowed that when she grows old, gets married, and had female children, none would undergo similar crude uncouth tradition called Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

A source from her hometown, said her parents and siblings, including extended family members are confused over her sudden disappearance, adding that none of her telephone lines are going through.

It was also learnt that a delegation sent to their Abeokuta home, at - No4, Olujide Somolu

street, off Onikoko Adigbe road, Ibara Abeokuta where she, her children and husband live, said those at the compound said Jikiemi Odunayomide Ayedun, and her family has vacated the premises to unknown destination.

This sudden disappearance, it was gathered, had been reported to the Ogun State Police Command as missing persons and the police are already working on leads that unravel their whereabouts.

"We are shocked that Jikiemi Odunayomide Ayedun, could just disappear like that with her children to an unknown destination without a clue as to where she is. That she can just go missing and all her lines switched off is frightening. We have sent messages to the family of her husband and they too are saying the same thing.

They even said they can't reach their own son. So, we have reported to the police to assist us. Were they kidnapped, have they been killed? We are confused," the source added.

However, the husband family source who pleaded for anonymity said when Jikiemi Odunayomide Ayedun, and her two daughters and one son visited the husband family in October during a traditional festival in the town, the mother-in-law, Abeni Jikiemi compelled that the issue of having her daughters

circumscised while her son, must also perform some rituals must be done as soon as possible, the situation generated a lot of disputes which has been established long time ago even before their annual traditional festival because she vehemently opposed it, adding that she may have fled Lagos State or even the country to evade the rite of circumscision which he claimed was sacrosanct in their family.

He said: We are as confused as her family because even our own son, we cannot reach him. We don't know where they are. Some of our in-laws came here to tell us that they cannot reach their daughter and we told them the same that we too cannot reach our son. Everybody is confused. But one thing keeps coming to my mind and that is, the misunderstanding we had when they all visited during our traditional festival; and that is the issue of circumscision.

You know, in our family and as a matter of fact, the entire community, circumscision of both males and females is a rite that must be performed on the children otherwise, terrible omen would befall us. The females, especially, must undergo such rites, while the males must perform some rituals which we call 'Oro Idile' otherwise they cannot be married out. In short, a female child is deemed

incomplete and cannot be referred to as such except she is circumscised, while a male child also must go through the ritual.

So, that is what we discussed with our wife when she visited with her children. I think one is born on 26th September, 2008, another one on 23rd March, 2011, while the last one was born on 7th August, 2014.

"But you see children of these days, because of too much education and learnings, they now call circumscision Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). To them our age-long tradition and culture of circumscision is crude and outdated".

"We cannot abandon what we inherited from our

forefathers. There are reasons why they circumscise female children. Apart from promiscuity, a circumscised girl child is deemed complete and fit for marriage, and would bring happiness both to her immediate.

So, I am thinking, I may be wrong; that Mrs Jikiemi Odunayomide Ayedun and her children and her husband, our son, have relocated from Lagos to another state and have changed their numbers because Mrs Jikiemi Odunayomide Ayedun doesn't want her two daughters and a son to pass through that rite.

Who knows, they may have even relocated out of the

country because of that singular issue of circumscision.

But to be on the safe side, we have reported their disappearance to the police while we keep on praying for them," he added. He added that before the ugly incident, our in-law compelled Jikiem Olaoluwa Olusola and the ultimatum given to him for the circumscision is between October 2022 and March 2023. Though the issue of FGM has being a great dispute between Jikiem Olaoluwa Olusola and his in-laws. We don't know what to do now because that ultimatum which he must do the FGM is between October 2022 and March, 2023.

## Court to Hear Final Forfeiture of Patience Jonathan's \$5.8m, N2.4bn On March 28

Wale Igbintade

High Court, in Lagos, yesterday fixed March 28, 2023, for the commencement of hearing on the final forfeiture application of the sum of \$5.8 million and N2, 421, 953, 522. 78 billion, allegedly belonging to former first lady, Dame Patience Jonathan.

The judge fixed the date, after ruling on the arguments canvassed by counsel to parties in the suit. On April 26, 2017, Justice

Mojisola Olatoregun, now retired, had granted an ex parte application for the interim forfeiture of the said sums filed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The judge also ordered that the said amount warehoused by the defunct Skye Bank (now Polaris) and Ecobank Nigeria Plc, be forfeited in the interim. However, the order was vigorously challenged up to

Supreme Court, but the apex court ordered that the lower court should continue with the hearing of the matter. Upon Justice Olatoregun's retirement, the suit was transferred to Justice (Professor) Chuka Obiozor.

But before Justice Obiozor could preside over the matter, he was transferred to another jurisdiction of the court, consequently, the matter was inherited by Justice Ringim.



## ONASANYA BAGS HONORARY DOCTORATE DEGREE...

L-R: Ex-footballer, Chief Segun Odegbami; Chairman, Body of Benchers, Chief Wole Olanipekun, and Chairman/CEO, The Address Homes, Dr. Olabisi Onasanya, at the 7th Convocation ceremony of the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) held at Oye-Ekiti...recently

# Military Moves to Secure Nation's Territory Ahead of Elections

● Army chief directs GOCs to ensure conducive, secure atmosphere ● Navy mounts surveillance in waterways

Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja

Military service chiefs, yesterday, began moves to maintain the territorial integrity of the country ahead of the February 25 and March 11 general election. In furtherance of this objective, Chief Army Staff, Lt Gen Faruk Yahaya, directed all General Officers Commanding (GOCs) and other formation commanders of the Nigerian Army (NA) to ensure conducive and secure atmosphere in their Areas of Responsibility (AOR) for the successful conduct of the coming 2023 elections.

Handing down similar orders, Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Awwal Gambo, charged navy commanders to embark on sustained surveillance of Nigerian waterways to forestall breakdown of law in the maritime environment before, during, and after elections.

The army chief issued the directive while formally flagging off Operation Safe Conduct in all Nigerian Army Divisions and formations across the country.

Yahaya reiterated the resolve of the Nigerian Army to strictly adhere to its constitutional role by supporting the Nigeria Police, which is the lead security agency in the 2023 elections security architecture.

He charged the commanders to identify and dominate flashpoints in their AORs, adding that troops must be alert, proactive and operate jointly with sister services and other security agencies during the elections.

The COAS directed the commanders to deploy requisite logistics to ensure security and safety of citizens during the elections. He urged them to be professional, apolitical and adhere strictly to extant code of conduct and Rules of Engagement guiding personnel throughout their operations.

Warning that any infraction on the provisions of the code of conduct would not be treated lightly, he maintained that all deployments must be joint and in support of the Nigeria Police. He observed that all eyes were on the security agencies, and that the

citizens expected nothing short of free and fair elections.

"You must, therefore, refrain from hobnobbing with political gladiators and maintain your apolitical stance," Yahaya stated.

The COAS had recently, in an effort to ensure that the laws of the land and personal liberties and rights of citizens were not compromised, approved the Code of Conduct and Rules of Engagement for Nigerian Army personnel during Operation Safe Conduct 2023.

The Nigerian Navy also began surveillance and intelligence-driven operations across the country's maritime environment and waterways.

Gambo, who charged navy commanders to embark on sustained surveillance, explained that the operations were to forestall the breakdown of law in the maritime environment before, during, and after elections.

He said facilities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as well as citizens in the maritime environment must be secured against attacks. He added that an intelligence brief

was given to the commanders to enable them effectively tackle the challenges ahead.

Yahaya stated, "The election scheduled to hold in 11 days' time, is staring at us. Therefore, adequate preparations are key

to the overall outcome of the election. We are all aware of the dynamics of the security of our political environment and, therefore, continual reappraisal and adjustment where necessary, particularly on strategies and tactics, notwithstanding, the intelligence brief received today."

In his own remarks, the naval boss said, "The brief should help us to speed up our efforts to the emerging challenges and spur us into action for a successful 2023

elections. "You are to ensure that personnel embark on intelligence-led operations before, during, and after elections so that law-abiding Nigerians would have the confidence to vote."

## FG at Advanced Stage of Repossessing Hundreds of Artefacts from UK, US

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

The federal government yesterday said it was at advanced stage to secure the repatriation of hundreds of looted antiquities to Nigeria from the United Kingdom and United States.

Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed disclosed this in Abuja, at the final session of the PMB Administration Scorecard Series 2015-2023.

He said Nigeria is currently in the forefront of global efforts on the repatriation of antiquities to

their countries of origin.

He said some of the artefacts to be restituted are with Pitt Rivers Museum of the University of Oxford, the Ashmolean Museum of the University of Oxford, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of the University of Cambridge, Glasgow City Council in Scotland, National Museums of Scotland, Hulls Museums and other institutions in the United Kingdom.

He noted that hordes of antiquities are also held in several institutions in the United States,

including Dartmouth University, Field Museum of Chicago and Natural History Museum in Washington, DC.

Mohammed said the move to repossess the remaining antiquities held in the UK and US followed the success by the country in the recovery of hundreds of looted artefacts, including the 1,130 Benin Bronzes that Germany had begun to return in December last year.

He said the federal government had also started the process of increasing the number of national monuments in the country currently

at 65, by declaring 111 historical sites as national monuments. He said the declaration was awaiting presidential assent.

Also the exhibition galleries in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Mausoleum, Bauchi, the National Museum of Colonial History, the National Museums in Lagos, Ibadan, Esie, Yola, Abeokuta, Maiduguri, Oyo, Minna, Damaturu, Asaba, Koko, Jalingo and also in the Old Residency Museum, Calabar restoration have been upgraded while conservation work has been done in the National Museums in Kaduna, Enugu and Ife.

The minister said the ministry had achieved its objective of launching the PMB Administration Scorecards Series (2015-2023), which was to massively showcase the achievements of the Buhari Administration.

He said his ministry would soon launch a series of multi-dimensional activities to further showcase the achievements of the administration. He expressed delight that the massive achievements showcased during the scorecard series had put a lie to the mischief of the political opposition that the Buhari Administration had achieved nothing.

"The refrain from the opposition, prior to the launch of this Scorecard Series, was that the APC and the Buhari Administration have nothing to campaign with in the run-up to the 2023 general elections. But we have proven them wrong. Not only do we have achievements to campaign with, we are spoilt for choice," Mohammed said.

## Protests against EFCC Chair Sponsored, Says Commission

Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), yesterday, raised the alarm that there was a sponsored campaign against its chairman, Abdulrasheed Bawa, by some people under investigation by the agency.

It said the unnamed individuals were behind the protests by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) calling for the sack of the chairman. The alarm came as protests for the removal and arrest of the EFCC boss from office entered day three on Monday.

At a media briefing in Abuja, spokesman of the anti-graft agency, Wilson Uwujaren, said the groups were sponsored by those under investigation by

EFCC. "The EFCC wishes to raise the alarm about the activities of an amorphous group of so-called civil society organisations, who have recently embarked on a campaign to discredit the person of the Chairman of the EFCC, Abdulrasheed Bawa and incite the public against the commission. "The group, through press conferences and staged street protests, have been calling for the sack of the EFCC Chairman for alleged disobedience of court orders. They claim they are motivated by the need to strengthen the fight against corruption," he said.

Uwujaren further noted that contrary to the claims, the EFCC said the group in question had no interest in the fight against

corruption, adding that their allusion to disobedience of court orders by the EFCC chairman was an alibi to manipulate facts around judicial pronouncements and processes to pitch the public against the commission. His words: "Information available to the commission indicates that the group is sponsored by persons under investigation by the commission and have been mobilised and mandated by their paymaster to embarrass the person of the chairman through choreographed street protests across the country, until he is removed from office. "It is significant that this group found its voice after the EFCC launched an investigation into the mindless looting of the treasury of one of the states. This same group

shouted that the commission lacked the power to investigate the theft of the state's resources. "Their latest dance in the market square came a few hours after family members of a sitting state governor were arraigned at an Abuja court for allegedly stealing the state's funds," he said.

The anti-graft agency therefore appealed to the "public to disregard the campaign by the groups as they do not represent the genuine interest of millions of Nigerians, who are desirous of seeing progress in the fight against corruption. "The spectre of rented crowd, rented CSOs, etcetera are blights in our social fabric and manifest demonstration of how deep-seated corruption has permeated every sector of our society."

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# News



## BUHARI RALLIES IMO FOR TINUBU...

Lagos State Governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu; President Muhammadu Buhari; APC Presidential Candidate, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu and the Party's National Chairman, Senator Abdulahi Adamu, during the APC presidential rally in Owerri, Imo State ... yesterday

# TAJBank Becomes First Corporate to List Sukuk Bond on NGX

**Kayode Tokede**

TAJBank Limited, Nigeria's fast-growing non-interest banking services provider, yesterday, on the trading floor of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) became the first corporate to list Sukuk Bond on the bourse.

The bank listed N10 billion Mudarabah Sukuk issuance after it successfully raised over N11.4 billion under its N100 Billion Sukuk Issuance Programme.

The first of its kind in Nigeria is an Additional Tier 1 Capital Mudarabah Sukuk with loss-absorbency features designed to help TAJ Bank strengthen its capital adequacy ratio and general corporate business activities.

The Issuance received interest from both Retail and Institutional Investors, resulting in a subscription of 113.6. The oversubscription of the issuance demonstrated that the investment culture in the country was still vibrant and that there was

sustained confidence in Nigeria's path to economic recovery and stability.

Speaking at the closing gong ceremony in commemoration of the listing of the Sukuk issuance on the floor of the Exchange, the Chairman, TAJBank, Alhaji Tanko Gwamna who was with top executives of the bank, reiterated that the listing was the first of its kind on the trading floor and it came with non-interest bearing.

He noted that the listing of the

corporate Sukuk was what the capital market needs to enhance liquidity and further grow Nigeria's economy.

The TAJBank boss disclosed that the financial institution was considering investing in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors with raised funds from the Sukuk.

"Manufacturing sector is the only sector that can take most of the youth out of the street and keep them engaged. Also, we are funding agriculture production and its value chain from start to finish. These two

sectors are where we wanted to fund the Sukuk issuance," he said.

"The listing on the Exchange is for investors to trade in the Sukuk and diversify their investment," he added.

According to him, "We are setting the trend and I'm sure a lot of corporates will come along. We are making more offerings because the market is in need of corporate Sukuk.

"It was a transparent exercise and people can trade with our Sukuk and it will offer more liquidity for economic growth.

He added that the financial institution very soon would be back in the capital market and raise more funds.

Speaking also, the Managing Director/CEO, TAJBank, Mr Hamid Joda said the aim of the Sukuk listing was to give Nigeria's investors alternative means of investment.

He noted that, "Millions of investors have been yearning for non-interest or Islamic instrument. We believe this is an opportunity for them to invest in such an instrument.

"The funds raised will be deployed into high-impact sectors that create jobs in Nigeria's economy and in that way, it will have high-impact opportunities for millions of Nigerians.

"I believe with this move, we

have inspired many other corporates in the financial space to come on board and issue Sukuk for greater development of our dear country."

Speaking at the ceremony, the Divisional Head, Capital Markets, NGX, Mr. Jude Chiemeka commended the efforts of TAJBank's leadership and the parties to the issue: Greenwich Merchant Bank, Lead Issuing House; 117 Capital & Buraq Capital, Joint Sharia Advisers; and United Capital, Brokers, on the transaction.

"NGX will continue to support issuers by providing a platform of choice for capital raising and linking them with a diverse pool of investors.

"The Exchange is also committed to the development of Islamic financing in the Nigerian capital market and continues to implement initiatives to deepen its offerings," he added.

Commonly referred to as Islamic Bonds, Sukuk - a non-interest-bearing bond - has helped government diversify its sources of funding while offering ethical investors an opportunity to invest in government-issued securities. The instrument has not only helped the government achieve a higher level of financial inclusion but has served as a reference for pricing Sukuk issued by other bodies, especially the private sector.

# Osinbajo Inaugurates 25-man Steering Committee for National Development Plan

**Deji Elumoye in Abuja**

The Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo has inaugurated the Steering Committee of the National Development Plan (2021 - 2025).

Speaking yesterday at the inauguration of the 25-man committee at the State House, Abuja, the vice president said the Steering Committee was required to provide the necessary policy guidance and leadership for effective and successful implementation of the plan.

He said the aim of the committee was to lay a solid foundation for a strong base that would drive an effective implementation and produce a prosperous country.

According to him, the overall aim of establishing the National Steering Committee (NSC) and the Development Plan Implementation Unit (DPIU) was to lay the foundation for a strong institutional base, structures and systems that would drive and ensure efficient and effective implementation of the targets in the National Development Plan 2021 - 2025, towards building a prosperous country.

President Muhammadu Buhari had launched the National Development Plan on the 22nd of December, 2021.

The vice president added: "It is a testament to the determination and commitment of the government to provide the desired political will and leadership for effective implementation of the new national development plan."

He added that the Committee was a national assignment with institutional membership and outlives an administration.

"Indeed, this particular National Steering Committee will in a few months hand over to a new administration. This calls for dedication and hard work to lay a solid foundation in the relatively short time left," he added.

Osinbajo pointed out that, "going forward, the federal government is determined to make a paradigm shift by ensuring that agencies and institutions make necessary commitments and account for the level of implementation of programmes and projects within their respective sectors, especially those that were admitted into the National Development Plan, with a view to increasing and improving infrastructure stock in Nigeria.

"We may also recall that a pillar of this government's commitments is to reduce poverty by moving 100 million people out of poverty to the path of prosperity in 10 years, by the end of 2030. In this regard, NDP 2021 - 2025 was designed to lift 35 million people out of poverty and generate 21 million jobs by the end of 2025."

The vice president listed the specific objectives of the committee, of which he is Chairman, as follows to include:

To ensure efficient management of the implementation process of the Plan; To reduce bureaucratic processes in the governance process; to gradually

professionalise planning functions for capacity sustainability; to begin the process of institutionalisation of the plan implementation within the Ministry and other MDAs; to facilitate manpower development and adequate utilisation in the public service to drive the implementation of the plan, and to exercise cooperation and coordination towards effective implementation of national development plans by all MDAs.

Membership of the committee includes the vice president as Chairman;

Minister of State, Budget and National Planning is Vice Chairman; Permanent Secretary, Budget and National Planning to serve as Secretary; six State Governors (one Governor from each geopolitical zone); CEO of the Budget Office of the Federation; CEO of the National Bureau of Statistics; Minister of Works & Housing; Minister of Power; Minister of Industry, Trade & Investment; Minister of Transport and Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development.

# NEC Okays Nigeria Agenda 2050 with 165m Jobs in the Offing

**Initiative captures nation's future expectations, says Osinbajo**

**Deji Elumoye in Abuja**

The National Economic Council (NEC) rose from its emergency session and maiden meeting in 2023 yesterday and endorsed the "Nigeria Agenda 2050" designed to take the country through to Upper Middle-Income Country and subsequently to the status of High-Income nation.

At a meeting presided over by the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, at the State House, Abuja, the Agenda 2050 was presented by the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning to State Governors and other members of NEC, including Ministers.

Speaking after the presentation and discussion by Council members, Osinbajo, according to a statement issued by his media assistant, Laolu Akande, observed that the plan captures a lot of the expectations for Nigeria in the future and hopefully implementation which is key if effectively done.

Also commenting on the Agenda, the Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, Prince Clem Agha, said the federal government took unprecedented steps in ensuring the operationalisation of the plan, especially with the inauguration of the Steering Committee of the National Development Plan by the VP.

Highlights of the Nigeria Agenda 2050 as presented to NEC included: "Nigeria Agenda 2050 is formulated against the backdrop of several subsisting development challenges in the country. These challenges include low, fragile, and non-inclusive economic growth; high population growth rate; pervasive insecurity, limited diversification, macroeconomic and social instability, low productivity and high import dependence.

"Nigeria Agenda 2050 is a perspective plan designed to transform the country into an "Upper-Middle Income Country", with a significant improvement in per capita income. "The plan aims to fully engage

all resources, reduce poverty, achieve social and economic stability. It also targets developing a mechanism for achieving a sustainable environment consistent with global concerns about climate change.

"The plan therefore presents the road map for accelerated, sustained and broad-based growth and provides broad frameworks for reducing unemployment, poverty, inequality, and human deprivation."

According to the statement, Agenda 2050 was to help Nigeria attain her desire to successfully join the group of upper middle-income countries and subsequently to high-income group.

## News

# Fitch: Nigeria to Face Post-election Economic Policy Challenges

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Nigeria faces major economic challenges ahead of elections due on February 25, and policy choices by the incoming administration could have a significant impact on the country's credit profile, Fitch Ratings said yesterday.

It stated that the Nigerian Supreme Court's suspension of a February 10 deadline for exchanging old banknotes into new ones, at least temporarily, the risk of intensifying cash shortages.

However, the demonetisation drive, it said in a report, is still likely to be disruptive in the near term, with associated cash shortages likely to hit consumer spending and boost demand for foreign currency and aggravating foreign-exchange

shortages.

"It is not yet clear whether there will be offsetting longer-term economic benefits, such as greater use of the formal banking system or enhanced use of digital payment systems.

"The country faces numerous other challenges to its fiscal sustainability, external finances and economic outlook. We downgraded Nigeria's rating to 'B-' from 'B' in November 2022, with a Stable Outlook, reflecting continued deterioration in debt servicing costs and external liquidity," Fitch said.

The ratings agency stressed that base case assumes that the subsidy on petrol, a key drag on the public finances, will be reduced in 2023, but phased out more gradually than in the government's latest budget.

"We consider the next administration is likely to face pressure to continue it and concessions on this front could make consolidating the public finances more difficult," the firm said.

Fitch explained that it expects some improvement in crude oil production to help offset lower oil prices in 2023.

Output in 4Q22, it stated, was 15 per cent higher than in 3Q22, and rose further in January to 1.26 million bpd but was still well below Nigeria's budgeted 1.69 million bpd for 2023 and its Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quota of 1.8 million bpd.

"This partly reflects security issues that we believe will continue to hamper production," Fitch pointed out.

According to the organisation, Nigeria's fiscal profile will remain weak in the medium term while general government interest/revenue will be extremely high (47 per cent in 2022 by Fitch's estimate).

"We expect it will remain so given constraints on revenue mobilisation, increasing debt and high interest rates. Structurally low non-oil revenue, spending pressures and weak economic growth imply substantial fiscal financing needs.

"The government faces external debt amortisations of \$2.5 billion in both 2023 and 2024, an increase on recent years, although the majority is bilateral and multilateral debt service," Fitch noted.

It recalled stating in November that increased financing constraints

or signs of difficulty in meeting debt servicing costs could lead to negative rating action.

"The government last year confirmed that Nigeria did not intend to seek a debt restructuring. Fitch does not consider a restructuring or forced debt exchange likely in the near term, but there is a risk the next administration could take a different stance.

"In November, Fitch said that significant intensification of Nigeria's external liquidity pressures, illustrated by a rapid decline in international reserves, could lead to negative rating action.

"Our base case assumes that international reserves will edge down further and that foreign-exchange liquidity will remain

constrained. We assume that the official exchange rate will be permitted to depreciate modestly over 2023-2024, but that it will remain overvalued, hampering economic activity," it noted.

The prospects for exchange rate reform, Fitch added, will be influenced by the outcome of the presidential election, and could increase under a new central bank governor.

"The incumbent's term ends in 2024, but an incoming administration could push for earlier change.

"A more flexible exchange rate regime would likely be a long-term positive for Nigeria's credit profile, although the initial economic adjustment could present macro-fiscal risks," the ratings agency stressed.

## PRESIDENCY: FG, CBN TO TAKE POSITION ON CURRENCY SWAP AFTER S' COURT DETERMINATION TODAY

Deji Elumoye, James Emejo and Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The presidency yesterday disclosed that neither the federal government nor the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had taken a pre-emptive position on the legality of the old N200, N500 and N1,000 notes in view of the case pending before the Supreme Court, which comes up for hearing today.

In a statement by its spokesperson, Mallam Garba Shehu, the presidency said the federal government's position on the currency swap would be made public after the determination of the suit.

The statement said, "Following series of enquiries, we wish to state that it is not true that the federal government or the CBN has taken a pre-emptive action on the legality of currency as a legal tender in view of the pendency of the case before the Supreme Court.

"The position of the government and the CBN will be made known upon the determination of the suit coming up Wednesday."

The Supreme Court had in a ruling on February 8 suspended the CBN's February 10 deadline to stop the use of old currency notes. The bank had ordered citizens to swap out old N1,000, N500, and N200 banknotes for a redesigned currency by the deadline. But the apex court, ruling in an ex parte application by three states - Zamfara, Kogi and Kaduna - stopped the CBN from banning the old notes pending the hearing and determination of the case. It fixed February 15 for hearing,

Governor of CBN, Mr. Godwin Emeifele, yesterday, said the apex bank had noticed that some politicians were buying the new N200, N500 and N1,000 for political purposes.

That was as a coalition of 472 civil society organisations (CSOs) alleged yesterday at a press conference in Abuja that 10 state governors were mopping up the new naira notes in circulation in order to discredit the policy.

Addressing the diplomatic community in Abuja, the CBN governor craved the support and understanding of the foreign missions and Nigerians, in general, towards the implementation of the cashless policy and in achieving the overall objectives of the naira redesign programme.

"The CBN has also noticed that some politicians are buying the new notes and storing them for political purposes," he said.

Emeifele said the principal aim of the currency redesign initiative was to make monetary policy decisions more effective, adding that inflation has been trending downwards while the exchange rate has recorded some stability since the implementation of the policy.

He said the apex bank remained committed to ensuring a seamless, inclusive, and equitable implementation of the exercise for the overall benefit and growth of Nigerians, the financial system, and the economy as a whole.

He also said the programme sought to increase financial inclusion in the country by reducing the

number of the unbanked population.

Emeifele noted that there had been five reversals in the bank's attempt to go cashless and promote financial inclusion since 2014, when he was first appointed CBN governor. He explained that the reversals were born out of the need to deepen the country's payment infrastructure, adding that the payment system in Nigeria is now among the best six in the world.

He said, "So, we believe that we have put in place enough infrastructure that would help us attain or achieve a cashless policy that will be in line with global practices."

The CBN governor told his audience, "You are all foreign dignitaries representing your countries in Nigeria and you know and you would agree that the level at which people carry cash in Nigeria is unacceptable.

"In your countries, you do not carry cash anyhow. If you carry cash and you are seen, you are questioned and profiled continuously."

He added, "We want to look at your country and that is why we are saying that Nigeria, being the largest economy in Africa and with the largest population in Africa, really must go cashless. And we are delighted at the CBN that with the support of President Muhammadu Buhari, we would achieve this.

"We know that at these initial stages, Nigerians will go through what we call temporary pains and we call it transient because they would come with those kinds of shocks; indeed, I must describe this shock as unprecedented.

"And that is why I would

continue to appeal to everybody - Nigerians and those of you that constitute our diplomatic community - to give us all the needed support for us to achieve this objective. We want our country to look like your country and we will continue to seek your support for us to be like you."

The central bank governor further stressed that the cashless and currency redesign programme sought to support efforts of the security agencies in combating banditry and ransom-taking in Nigeria. He pointed out that through the redesign, "The military are making good progress in this important task."

Specifically, Emeifele said the naira redesign policy was expected to curb inflation in the market, as less cash holding reduces currency outside banks and retards money circulation.

He said the accompanying decline in money supply would slow the pace of inflation, adding, "We have started to see inflation trending downwards following general price stability in almost all genre of market, including for goods and financial products."

Emeifele also said the effective implementation of the policy could scrap four percentage points off the current level of inflation, which stood at 21.34 per cent, as it steadily slowed inflation rate to about 18 per cent by mid-2023.

He said, "This is quite achievable, as data from our market sources indicate that the prices of grains and key staples, around Suleja and Lambata markets, for instance, have generally been on the downward

trend since the beginning of the policy.

"The price for soya beans has dropped from N30,000 to N22,000. Maize from N18,000 to N16,000. The price of a bull fell from N400,000 to N330,000 and ram from N75,000 to N50,000."

He also said the policy had brought some stability to the exchange rate regime, and explained that prior to the announcement of the policy, the huge cash haul outside the banking system had exerted significant pressures on the exchange rate at all windows, but more so at the parallel market as it engendered asset substitution by speculators, and rent-seekers.

Emeifele said, "While the policy was initially estimated to lead to more speculations due to panic moves, as most people try to understand the policy action, it is expected to reduce speculation in the medium-to long-run.

Today, the limited circulation of the new naira notes has forced the hands of speculators and we are beginning to witness some stability. The initial pressure is projected to further moderate as the implementation of the policy takes-off and a wider understanding pervades the system."

Emeifele said the central bank was mindful of the challenges citizens faced and was currently addressing them.

He noted, "There have been reports of occasional failures in e-channel platforms. Our monitoring suggests that whilst there has been an expected surge in electronic transactions, these have not risen to unprecedented levels and the payment system is well equipped to handle even higher transaction volumes.

"Whilst transaction failures are bound to occasionally occur, the public is encouraged to have full confidence in Nigeria's globally recognised payment system infrastructure.

"Banks have also been instructed to ensure 24/7 service availability and promptly address any customer refunds arising from such service failures."

The CBN governor further acknowledged the widespread inconveniences due to the policy.

He said, "We have observed pervasive incidences of hoarding and predatory activities of some vendors and unscrupulous Nigerians. The principal causes of the hardship to the citizens following the redesign policy include hoarding.

"We have noticed that some members of the public are hoarding the new notes, thereby restricting their flow through the economy.

"Cash kept at home will not circulate but may fuel a perception of scarcity, which leads to higher demand for the currency, signalling to those who don't have an urgent or immediate need to store cash."

Emeifele pointed out that there had been tremendous tension and elevated agitation by leaders who should be calming frayed nerves among the citizens.

However, he said, "We believe

that a large proportion of these agitations are staged and sponsored propagandas or an exaggeration of the reality. No doubt that there are pockets of pressures in some areas, the CBN is working hard to shift resources to those areas in order to ease the tension.

"The situation is substantially calming down since the commencement of the Over-the-Counter payments to compliment ATM disbursements and the use of super agents."

On the panic queues at bank ATMs and banking halls, he said "Whilst some of these withdrawal requests are genuine, some are simply the reprehensible activities of miscreants who do not have the genuine intention of making a withdrawal but are seeking quick-earnings by queuing up just to sell their spaces to make money."

Emeifele alleged, "We have also noticed that some Nigerians are capitalising on the transition to charge exorbitant fees or demand cash payment on the false pretext that PoS don't work, especially at petrol stations. These selfish actions for personal monetary gain are creating hardship for Nigerians and may come at the expense of fellow citizens' lives and livelihood."

Emeifele reiterated the availability of an appropriate amount of the redesigned N200, N500, and N1,000 denominations and current N100, N50, N20, N10 and N5 denominations to support economic activities. He said the bank was collaborating with the entire financial ecosystem, including DMBs, OFBs, MNOs, Super Agents, MFBs Payment System Providers, and EFCC, ICPC and other law enforcement to ensure that Nigerians had a variety of options for financial transactions either through electronic channels or in exceptional circumstances, cash.

He stated, "We tried as much as possible to make this available in a way that it goes out to all Nigerians. But we found the unscrupulous activities by some people - and I will not be too direct - but, of course, when people who don't own bank accounts begin to go and stay in queues; they wake up 4 a.m. to go and stay in the queue for the ATM and then, when it gets to their turn, they sell their turn and go back and start queuing again.

"And in a day, they could do that four times and then earn between N8,000 to N10,000...PoS agents who are to help us deepen financial inclusion are getting involved in this kind of unscrupulous activities."

The CBN governor stressed, "We have told EFCC, ICPC working with our CBN monitoring team to arrest any PoS agent that charges any fee because we have made it clear that whatever is their fee which is not meant to be more than N200 for any amount you exchange, that we CBN we will pay as part of the cost to lessen the burden of this problem.

"And let me make it clear, we started to arrest them and we will prosecute them; they'll go to jail for getting involved in illegal activities and making our work difficult.

## BUHARI HAILS PATE ON APPOINTMENT AS GAVI CEO

Nigeria and many parts of Africa to increase access to vaccines to further reduce the disturbing levels of child mortality on the continent and all over the world as his job requires. Congratulations, Nigeria is proud of your achievements."

According to a report by Gavi New Media yesterday, Pate would be officially starting as CEO on August 3, 2023.

It described Pate as a proven global health leader with experience at the national and international levels. Pate would lead Gavi as it continues its work to support routine immunisation, outbreak response and COVID-19 vaccinations around the world.

Pate, who was selected following a year-long recruitment process personally overseen by the Chair of the Gavi Board, Prof. José Manuel Barroso, would bring a wealth of experience to the role.

A medical doctor trained in both internal medicine and infectious diseases, with an MBA from Duke University in the United States, Pate served as Nigeria's Minister of State for Health between 2011 and 2013.

In this role, he led a flagship initiative to revive routine vaccinations and primary health care, chaired a presidential taskforce to eradicate polio and introduced new vaccines into the country.

While serving as Global Director

for Health, Nutrition and Population of the World Bank and Director of the Global Financing Facility at the World Bank between 2019 and 2021, he led the Bank's \$18 billion COVID-19 global health response and represented the Bank on various boards, including those of Gavi, the Global Fund, CEPI and UNAIDS.

He is currently the Julio Frenk Professor of Public Health Leadership at Harvard Chan School of Public Health and has served on several health-focused boards and expert panels in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors during his career.

Commenting on the appointment, Barroso said: "Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate stood out in a field of world-class candidates. With his knowledge and experience of both national immunisation programming and international emergency response and global finance, I am confident that Gavi will continue to build on its vision and mission, as well as navigate the many challenges and opportunities we will face."

While accepting the offer, Pate, whose appointment was confirmed yesterday, at an extraordinary meeting of the Gavi Board said: "I'm deeply honoured to be joining Gavi as its incoming CEO. Gavi is one of the most impactful organisations in global health, a testament to the great work of the Alliance partners

and Secretariat staff.

"It will be my privilege to lead it, building on the work of Dr. Seth Berkley, and continue to support countries to scale up critical routine immunisation programmes, reach more zero-dose children, expand access to new vaccines, transform primary health care systems, and help fight outbreaks and future pandemics."

Sitting CEO, Berkley had led Gavi for more than half of its existence, making it a centrepiece within the global health landscape, including recently co-establishing COVAX to serve countries during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, having so far shipped nearly 1.9 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses to 146 countries.

Since Berkley took the helm in 2011, the Alliance has averted 11.8 million future deaths (compared to 4.5 million between 2000 and 2010); and has helped immunise more than 676 million children - more than double the 305 million children reached between 2000 and 2010.

Gavi also hailed Berkley's vision for health equity, which added a number of new vaccines to its portfolio during his tenure, including for HPV, polio, cholera and malaria, and in its current strategy cycle is focusing on reaching zero-dose children across marginalised communities.

## CAVEAT EMPTOR

### **SAMON PETROLEUM LIMITED (TRADING AS SAMON PETROLEUM FZE)**

**AGAIN**, our attention has been drawn to a publication made in **Thisday Newspapers of Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2023**, by **Tobenna Nnamani** who continues to hold himself out as the Receiver/Manager of Samon Petroleum Limited (Trading as Samon Petroleum FZE). In the publication, Mr. Nnamani states that he is entertaining bids for the sale of Samon Petroleum Limited's assets between 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2023.

We have no choice but to again inform the general public of the existence and pendency of **Suit No: FHC/CA/CS/167/2022 between BB Energy Holdings Mauritius Limited & Anor., v. Samuel Chuba Okeke & 2 Ors.** This suit was instituted by the Receiver/Manager and is well aware that the matter was adjourned to Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 for hearing. We also have pending before that Court, two (2) applications seeking:

- a. **An Order** setting aside the appointment of the said **Tobenna Nnamani** as the Receiver/Manager of Samon Petroleum Ltd;
- b. **An Order** dismissing the suit in its entirety;
- c. **An Order** setting aside the interim orders made against Samon Petroleum Ltd and its erstwhile directors; and
- d. **An Order** mandating **BB Energy** and **Tobenna Nnamani** to pay damages in the sums of **\$1,000,500.00** (One Million Five Hundred Dollars) and **N480,000,000.00** (Four Hundred and Eighty Million Naira), being damages for injury suffered as a result of the adverse steps taken by BB Energy in complete and utter disregard of the clear terms of the agreement.

These processes were served on the Receiver/Manager since 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2023, and he is therefore aware of the pendency of those applications. It is therefore disingenuous for Mr. Nnamani to continue to attempt to dissipate our assets even as his appointment as a Receiver has been challenged before a Court of competent jurisdiction. The publication of 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 by Mr. Nnamani is nothing but an attempt to usurp the authority of the Courts in determining the claims before it.

We had previously issued a Public Notice bringing all the above to the attention of the general public. We are therefore by this publication issuing a **CAVEAT EMPTOR** informing that the Receivership upon which Mr. Nnamani claims to act, is sub-judice and neither party is permitted to take any steps during the pendency of the suit. The publication of Mr. Tobenna Nnamani is therefore illegal and any party that chooses to engage with and/or undertake any transaction with Mr. Tobenna Nnamani, does so at their own risk.

# News



## SYMBOLIC CHEQUE PRESENTATION CEREMONY OF FGN SUKUK SERIES V...

L-R: Head, Investment Banking, Vetiva Capital, Olutade Olaegbe; Head, Debt Capital Markets, Stanbic IBTC Capital, Adetokunbo Aturamu; Chairman, Buraq Capital Limited, Alhaji Mohammed Bintube; Director General, Debt Management Office (DMO), Ms. Patience Oniha; Managing Director, Greenwich Merchant Bank, Bayo Rotimi; Head, Investment Banking, Greenwich Merchant Bank, Kenneth Ero; Vetiva Capital, Temitayo Ajayi; and Head, Advisory, Buraq Capital Limited, Sadiq Kurfi, at the recently concluded Symbolic Cheque Presentation ceremony of the N130bn FGN Sukuk Series V issuance in Abuja.... yesterday

# NEF to Buhari: Don't Allow IPOB Intimidate, Prevent Nigerians from Voting

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

The Northern Elders Forum (NEF) has called on President Muhammadu Buhari to assert his legitimate authority on any lawless group in any part of the country, especially the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and ensure that voters were not prevented or threatened during the general election.

Director of Publicity and Advocacy of the forum, Dr. Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, in a statement yesterday, decried a serious rise in groups that threaten the conduct of

the elections, particularly from violent groups in the south eastern states.

The group lamented the deafening silence from leaders, elders and politicians from the region and other parts of Nigeria over the dangerous threats was also deeply disturbing.

The forum stressed that Nigerians want credible elections and a peaceful transition to the next administration, saying no group should be allowed to plunge the nation into deeper crises by tolerating threats to the elections and peace in the country.

It said: "These threats are being

followed by actual attacks on government buildings and killings, including killing of policemen in the region. Without a robust challenge of these dangerous trends, those behind these lawless acts are likely to assume that they will succeed.

"Any attempt to interfere in the rights of Nigerians to participate in the election of their leaders is a serious assault on the sovereignty of Nigeria and an act that must be resisted."

The forum stressed that threat to the elections was a threat to the democratic system, and the very

foundations on which the nation, adding that if it succeeds, the threat would signal the start of other crises the country may not recover from.

"The Forum calls on the administration of President Buhari to assert its legitimate authority on any lawless group in any part of the country and ensure that voters are not prevented or threatened," it added.

The forum noted that leaders must openly condemn the outrageous threats and assure citizens who want to vote that they could do so.

It stated that politicians who want to lead must step out and

condemn the threats.

It said for the avoidance of doubt, threats from groups in the south-east were cowardly and childish, stressing that those behind them should know that they would be resisted.

The forum noted that it had been consistent with its position, in conjunction with other patriotic groups that the elections must hold throughout the length and breadth of Nigeria.

## ALL EYES ON SUPREME COURT AS SUIT AGAINST BANNING OLD NAIRA NOTES RESUMES TODAY

and a gradual economic downturn in the state.

"The implementation of the policy has totally paralyzed and brought to standstill the economic activities of Ogun State and also severely impaired the government's ability to deliver on its economic agenda to the people," it stated.

Also, Ogun State governor, Dapo Abiodun, yesterday read riot act to commercial banks, operating in the state, warning that the state government would shut down any bank operating in the state that refused to accept the old naira notes.

The warning was sequel to complaints received from the people by the state government that commercial banks and some filling stations were rejecting the old naira notes as legal tender.

The governor spoke yesterday, while addressing market men women at Itoku Kampala market in Abeokuta, as part of his reelection campaign to Abeokuta North Local Government Areas.

Abiodun, who frowned at the action of the banks, noted that since the new naira notes was not available, commercial banks must accept the old notes to ease the suffering of the people.

## Wike Faults Policy

Governor Nyesom Wike said implementation of the naira swap policy by the CBN was political, adding that it has worsened the living condition of the poor across the country.

The Rivers State governor said Nigerians were suffering as a result of the tactless implementation of the naira swap policy, and urged government to urgently ameliorate the condition of the people.

Wike made the remark yesterday, during the official presentation of letter of nomination on the "award of Independent Man of the Year 2022," on him by the management of Independent Newspapers, at the Government House, Port Harcourt.

The governor stressed that the essence of government and its agency such as CBN, was not to inflict hardship of the masses, but to cushion it.

"We are in a difficult situation now. It doesn't matter what anybody may say. The truth must be told at all times. Nigerians are suffering now and as a people we owe that responsibility to cushion the level of hardship that Nigerians are facing, we are not to worsen the situation," he added.

Wike said people were not necessarily opposed to the redesigning of the N1000, N500 and N200 notes, but were concerned about the implementation of the policy and the hardship it has inflicted on the masses.

## Gbajabiamila Says Relief Underway

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila, has expressed delight with the recent ruling of the Supreme Court on the matter.

Gbajabiamila, while speaking in Lagos, yesterday, during the launch of the second edition of Gbajabiamila community transportation initiative, said the House of Representatives under his leadership has been on the side of the people, working tirelessly to rescue them from economic saboteurs seeking to derail the successes of President Muhammadu Buhari and the APC administration.

He said he was glad that the judiciary also confirmed House's position on the implementation of the naira redesign policy of the central bank, and that relief was underway.

Ganduje Threatens to Sanction Erring Banks, Business Owners

Kano state government has warned that it would not hesitate to revoke operational licences of major business owners or take action against anyone who refuses to accept the old naira notes as a means of transaction.

Governor Abdullahi Ganduje, who handed down the warning in a statement issued by the commissioner for information and internal affairs, Malam Muhammad Garba and made available to THISDAY, yesterday, said the old naira notes were still legal tender.

# Court Extends Order Restraining PDP from Suspending, Expelling Wike to March 6

Alex Enumah in Abuja

Justice J. K. Omotosho of a Federal High Court, Abuja, yesterday, extended his order restraining the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) from suspending or expelling the Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike from the party pending the hearing and determination of the suit brought by Wike against the PDP.

Justice Omotosho made an order extending his February 2 order, shortly after fixing March 6, for hearing in all motions pertaining to the case.

In the Motion on Notice dated February 2, 2023, Wike is challenging alleged plans by his party, the PDP to either suspend or expel him from the party.

Pending the hearing of the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/139/2023, the Rivers State Governor brought an ex parte application praying the court for an order, "maintaining status quo and staying all actions in the matter relating to the threat to suspend or expel the applicant by the 1st to 5th respondents pending the hearing and determination of the Motion on Notice."

The judge had subsequently fixed February 14 for hearing in the main suit.

When the matter came up yesterday, Wike's lawyer, Dr. Joshua Musa, informed the court that parties have reached an agreement for hearing in the matter on a short date convenient for the court.

Mr. Jonathan Usman, lawyer who represented the PDP confirmed the agreement.

The request was sequel to a Notice of Preliminary Objection filed by the PDP.

In a short ruling Justice Omotosho held that the "Order of February 2, 2023 is hereby extended until the hearing of the interlocutory application.

The judge hinted that the court would take the preliminary objection, interlocutory application as well as originating summons on the next adjourned date.

Justice Omotosho had on

February 2, ordered parties in the suit not to do anything that may likely affect the outcome of the suit currently before the court.

A Certified True Copy (CTC) of the court's order seen by THISDAY, had listed the PDP, National Working Committee (NWC), National Executive Committee (NEC), National Chairman, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, National Secretary, Senator Samuel Anyanwu and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as 1st to 6th

respondents respectively.

Upon reading the affidavit in support of the motion ex parte deposed to by Precious Ikpe and after hearing Dr. J. Y. Musa, SAN for the applicant, it is hereby ordered that all parties maintain peace and shall not take any action or step or act that may make the outcome of the Motion on Notice dated February 2, nugatory and worthless."

Justice Omotosho further ordered that any of such action so taken shall be a nullity.

# Obasanjo, Duke, Emirs, Others to Attend FGCI's 50th Anniversary in Kwara

Hammed Shittu in Ilorin

The Kwara State Capital, Ilorin, would play host to dignitaries like former President Olusegun Obasanjo, former Cross Rivers state governor, Donald Duke, national stakeholders, as well as the host governor, Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, as the Federal Government College (FGCI), Ilorin, marks its 50th anniversary on Thursday.

Also expected are the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari, as well as other leaders in the country.

Speaking with journalists in Ilorin, yesterday, the national president of the FGCI Alumni Association, Rear Admiral Muazu Salami (Rtd), said among activities lined up for the celebration was the talk on importance of unity schools in the country.

FGCI was among 104 unity schools established by the military administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to foster national unity among future generations of Nigerians, especially, after the nation's civil war.

Speaking on the importance of the event, the retired military officer said, "we want to showcase the investment of the federal government on the unity schools in Nigeria as well as urge the government to do more. We are grateful to a country that invested in us.

"We want to celebrate our brotherhood and Nigerianess. Nigerians in the past produced Nigerians with patriotic fervour and we want that to continue."

Salami, who said Nigeria has the potential of being among the best countries of the world in spite of its



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# MIDWEEK POLITICS

## Ethical Governance and Awo's Legacy

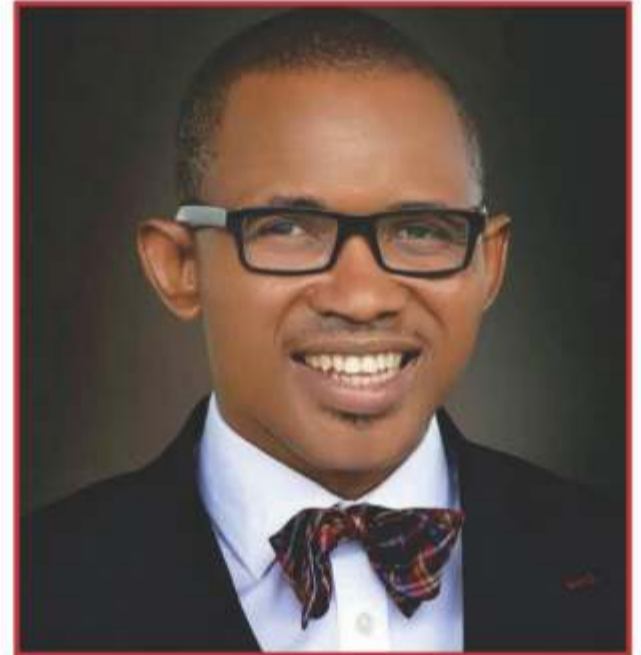
**Fidelis David** reports that as Nigerians clamour for solutions to numerous challenges, including the recent financial and fuel crisis in the country, Chairman of the Southern Governors' Forum and Ondo State Governor, Mr Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, as well as other stakeholders have argued that the only panacea and antidote to these quagmire is for electorates to vote leaders with characteristics and attributes like that of the late sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo.



Pa Awolowo



Akeredolu



Ajulo

**N**o doubt, Chief Obafemi Awolowo who died almost 36 years ago, was an exceptional role model to many Nigerians and could be described as another legendary patron-saint of the Nigerian race.

He was the pathfinder that founded a political party, the Action Group, to negotiate alliances with other leaders in persuading the British to grant Independence to Nigeria through peaceful and carefully planned constitutional and constructive processes.

Chief Awolowo served as Premier of the Region from 1952-1959 and had remarkable success during his tenure. His government had numerous achievements, including the implementation of free Universal Primary Education, the establishment of Africa's first TV station, the construction of West Africa's first skyscraper (Cocoa House) and first international stadium (Liberty Stadium), the establishment of a first rate civil service, the construction of Nigeria's first housing and industrial estates (Bodija and Ikeja), among others.

It is however worthy to say that, the most significant of his achievements is the Free Universal Primary Education.

In other words, the impact of Awo's policies remains indelible and this has been re-echoed by Ondo State Governor, Mr Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, who said people should vote leaders with characteristics and attributes of Awolowo, and should not celebrate money over good behaviour and character.

Akeredolu stated this recently in Akure, the Ondo State capital while speaking at a symposium, organized by a Socio-political Pro-democracy Advocacy Group, the 'Atunluse' Initiative, with the theme: "Let Our Votes Count".

The governor, represented by the state Deputy Governor, Mr Lucky Aiyedatiwa, went further to task Nigerians to shun vote buying, saying, it is the quality of followers that is affecting the quality of leaders.

His words: "We need to look for visionary leaders, like we had Chief Awolowo. So let us look at the char-

acters of those that were contesting whether they have the character of Chief Awolowo or not. You can see the way and manners how our governor is doing wonderful well in the state. You could see that Akeredolu has the same character with Awolowo and the development of this state is very paramount to him.

"Let communal life be our priority, let us look at the characters of our candidates to vote. Let us vote for the candidate that is ready to provide adequate security and move this country forward," the governor stressed.

The Guest Speaker and Rights Lawyer, Dr Kayode Ajulo, who spoke on the topic: "Ethical Governance; Awo's Legacy as a Case Study", explained that politicians who get votes from electorates have the ability to decide on measures, economic, social, security, and education policies that could impact on citizens, hence the need for Nigerians to choose the right leaders.

Ajulo who was represented by Mr Adeolu Ajayi, said leaders who will be elected in the 2023 general election must possess Awo's qualities such as courage, integrity, humility, focus,

co-operation and strategic planning. According to him, such leaders must be willing to take risk in the achievements of his goals and successes and must have truthfulness in him which is the core of integrity.

Another Guest Lecturer at the event, Prof. Akin Alao of the Obafemi Awolowo University, said many political parties had failed to develop programmes that would create wealth and positively impact the economy.

Alao said, this was, unlike Awo's Action Group, which attained its popularity through hard work, honesty and forthrightness.

"We need to look for visionary leaders like Chief Awolowo. So, let us look at the characters of those that are contesting, whether they have the character of Chief Awolowo or not. You can see that our governor is doing well in the state. You can see that Akeredolu has the same character with Awolowo and the development of this state is very paramount to him.

"Let communal life be our priority; let us look at the characters of the candidates before we vote. Let us vote for the candidate that is ready to provide adequate security and move this country forward," the university don added.

Earlier, the convener of 'Atunluse' initiative, Akin Akinbobola, in his welcome address said the vision of the initiative was to serve as a vital catalyst for social, economical, political equity and justice for the over all development of the society.

The former General Manager of Ondo State Football Agency (ODSFA),

said while the mission of their initiative was to inspire, empower and connect people within the society to proactively change their conditions and to build a society in which people live in harmony, full of hope, secure and have opportunity to achieve their fullest potential.

He noted that the organisation is in 36 states of the federation, sensitising Nigerians on how to make their votes count.

Speaking on the theme of the programme entitled, "Let our votes count", Akinbobola said the country was in a mess; that there was a wide gap between people living in affluence and poverty.

"Give us education that is affordable. When those living in luxury are sick, they travel abroad, while the poor go for herbal treatment because orthodox medicine is not affordable. Life has become unbearable for most Nigerians, why? It is because their votes don't count. All these must stop. They buy votes and people go for such.

"Power is in our hands. That vote is in your hand. That is why they beg you for it. But when you sell it, they will come back and make life unrealistic. But when you vote based on your conscience not by ethnicity or any affiliation, you will enjoy the country," he said.

Also speaking, Chairman of the occasion and Chief Imam of Akure kingdom, Abdulhakeem Yayi-Akorede, said truthfulness is the foundation quality of the trust that is necessary for the success of any politician who intend to follow Awo's pathway.

At the end, the take-away from the symposium was the conclusion drawn by the guest speakers and governor Akeredolu, that Nigeria remains underdeveloped due to the high magnitude of its social ills like harsh economy, illiteracy, corruption, unemployment, robbery, violence and terrorism. Thus, tackling the multifarious challenges facing Nigeria requires that, Nigerians allow their vote count and leaders who will be elected must possess Awo's qualities such as courage, integrity, humility, focus, co-operation and strategic planning.

**Nigeria remains underdeveloped due to the high magnitude of its social ills like harsh economy, illiteracy, corruption, unemployment, robbery, violence and terrorism. Thus, tackling the multifarious challenges facing Nigeria requires that, Nigerians allow their vote count and leaders who will be elected must possess Awo's qualities such as courage, integrity, humility, focus, co-operation and strategic planning**

## Folarin Steps Up Campaign to Unseat Makinde

**Kemi Olaitan** chronicles the campaign activities of the Oyo State gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator Teslim Folarin, towards dislodging Governor Seyi Makinde, from Agodi Government House

**W**ithin the last few months that the campaign activities for the 2023 elections started, the Oyo State governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator Teslim Folarin, has been in the news in the pace setter state, selling his candidacy to the electorates through rallies, town hall meetings as well as informal meetings.

With his emergence as the governorship candidate of APC, the first task that the three-term Senator representing Oyo Central senatorial district who is running for the Agodi Government House for the second term the first been in 2015 when he contested under the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), set for himself was reconciliation which saw him and his team transverse all the 33 local government areas of the state appealing to aggrieved members to join the fold and work for the victory of the party.

This effort by the Chairman, Senate Committee on Local Content, was to yield great results as it led to the dissolution of a major group within the party, the Unity Forum, under the leadership of the Chairman, National Lottery Regulatory Commission, Alhaji Fatai Ibikunle, which was popular in the Oke Ogun and Ibarapa areas of the state.

While setting the stage for rallies across the seven zones of the state, two events namely the unveiling of his running mate and inauguration of campaign council indeed showed what the people would expect from Folarin.

At the unveiling of his running mate, Dr. David Femi Okunlola, he revealed some of the key initiatives and innovations in his blueprint, stating that he was out to focus squarely on



Folarin

proffering solutions to the enormous downward trend standing in the way of the prosperity of the state as he was more than prepared to be elected as the governor.

His words, "I am delighted that the long-awaited season of electioneering has begun at full throttle. This window offers us the opportunity to traverse the state and lay bare our plans and agenda to empower the populace and build an all-inclusive better Oyo State, where all sectors would witness massive Growth and Development.

"On the ballot with me, as my running mate, is the cerebral academic of repute and agricultural development expert, Dr. David Femi

Okunlola, from Saki West Local Government Area. This all-important decision was made, because of the need to bring together a team of talented individuals who, by dint of diligence and exceptional track records, are great managers of men and resources.

"Dr. Okunlola ticks all the right boxes: His outstanding leadership and administrative qualities gained over the years will complement our lofty vision for the state.

"Our campaign objective is not to engage in mudslinging or by invoking abrasive and petty sentiments, rather, our campaign will focus squarely on proffering solutions to the enormous downward trend standing in the way of our state's prosperity, in spite of our potential.

"Some of the key initiatives and innovations that we have highlighted in our Rescue Mission for Growth and Development Blueprint are, a Sincere and Holistic Agricultural Reforms, Strategic Urban Regeneration Drive, Employment and Entrepreneurial Opportunities with focus on Youth and Small Medium Enterprises (SME) through innovative ideas, First-Rate Healthcare Service delivery and High-Quality and Quantitative Education System. Ours is a government that shall be driven by Information Technology at all levels of governance.

"In this all-inclusive Project, I will continue to lead members of my party in interacting with the youths, students, civil and public servants, labour unions, pensioners, traders, artisans, people with special needs, traditional institutions, religious groups and all other critical stakeholders on ways to bring about the positive growth and development that we earnestly crave for in the pacesetter State."

Folarin during the inauguration of the Cam-

paign Council headed by the Deputy Executive Secretary (Services), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Dr. Isiaka Kolawole, and 3,332 other members, assured that his administration will not give flimsy excuses to justify failures if elected, stating unlike the incumbent administration in the state, the APC Government, under him, would transform education, health, agriculture, security, environment and other sectors of the state economy.

"I use this opportunity to allay the fears of Oke-Ogun people that our administration will not insult your sensibilities. We won't turn the agrarian zone of the state to a destitute and beggars' centre as captured in the manifesto of the present government in the state", he said.

The governorship candidate added that he would bring growth and development to the zone, noting that agriculture was the panacea for sustainable growth and development and promised to leverage on the agricultural potential to grow the state economy, address food insecurity and create massive employment opportunities for millions of unemployed youths.

"I want to restate that I am not seeking the mandate of Oyo State citizens and residents to rule, but to serve the state. Our mission is to move Oyo State forward for Growth and Development and to restore her dignity and pace-setting status", he said.

Kolawole, in his remarks, said he accepted the appointment because the party was fielding its best eleven as presidential, gubernatorial, senatorial, House of Representatives and House of Assembly candidates for the elections.

NOTE: Interested readers should continue in the online edition on [www.thisdaylive.com](http://www.thisdaylive.com)

## Four Candidates in Hot Race to Succeed El-Rufai

**John Shiklam** reports that four serious candidates are to slug it out during the March 11, 2023 poll to succeed Governor Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna state.



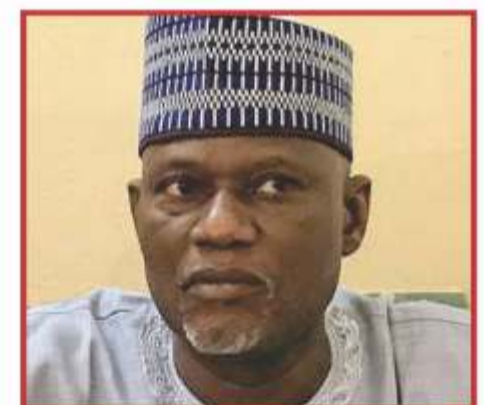
Sani



Ashiru



Asake



Hunkuyi

**I**n Kaduna state, the governorship election promises to be fierce and interesting.

There are 17 governorship candidates of the various political parties, but the major contenders are Senator Uba Sani of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC); Ashiru Isa of the Peoples Democratic (PDP), Jonathan Asake of Labour Party (LP) and Senator Suleiman Hunkuyi of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP).

They are not leaving anything to chance in their quest to win the election.

However observers are of the opinion that the contest would be a two horse race between Sani and Ashiru.

Sani, a serving senator, representing Kaduna Central Senatorial Zone, is the anointed candidate of the outgoing governor, El-Rufai.

He retained El-Rufai's Muslim-Muslim ticket introduced in 2019 by selecting the current deputy governor of the state, Dr. Hadiza Sabuwa, as his running mate.

Before his election as Senator in 2019, Sani had served as political adviser to El-Rufai in 2015.

His campaign jingles and programmes dominates virtually all local radio stations

in Kaduna.

He and his running mate have been criss crossing nooks and crannies of the state, promising to review and build on El-Rufai's achievements in the past seven and half years, though citizens of the state are not generally agreed on the governor's achievements, especially, Christians, who see him as a biased leader.

Besides, there is a general view, rightly or wrongly, that El-Rufai's development projects were not spread across the state and that many people lost their means of livelihood.

But last year, the governor begged the electorates in the state not to punish the APC governorship candidate for his mistakes (El-Rufai's),

maintaining that Sani was more generous than him and pleaded for forgiveness from those he might have offended.

Sani is indeed a politician loved by the masses.

Some people described him as generous and compassionate.

He promised to create jobs, tackle insecurity. His manifesto is based on a seven-point agenda which, according to him, is, aimed at improving the lives of the citizens. This include strengthen Safety and Security; Upgrade of Infrastructure, Strengthening institutions, enhance Trade and Investment.

Isah Ashiru, the PDP candidate, is contesting for the governorship race for the third time.

A two term former member of the state house of assembly and later two term member of House of Representatives, Ashiru crossed over to the APC in 2014 and contested with El-Rufai for the governorship ticket, but he lost.

He was the PDP candidate in 2019, again, he lost to El-Rufai. Ashiru is determined to defeat Sani in the election having garnered the good will of some people who are aggrieved with the APC administration in the state.

He has been promising to review the policies of the APC government in the state.

His five points agenda centred on security, education, health , agriculture as well as women and youth empowerment. He also

promised to review the issue of sacked workers in the state.

However, the alleged infighting among some prominent members of the PDP is not healthy for the party. Also, the usual bloc votes of the PDP in Southern Kaduna is no longer feasible as the votes would be shared with the LP and the APC who have made inroad to the area.

Suleiman Hunkuyi, a former senator who represented Kaduna North Senatorial district on the platform of the APC in 2015, is also not new to the contest. He is the candidate of the NNPP.

Hunkuyi is a grassroots mobiliser in his own right.

In 2015, he led the campaign that resulted in the election of El-Rufai before they eventually fell apart. But some people alleged that he is a spoiler. Besides, the NNPP in Kaduna state, has been embroiled in crisis. Late last year, the state chairman of the party resigned his position, accusing Hunkuyi of alleged dictatorial tendencies.

NOTE: Interested readers should continue in the online edition on [www.thisdaylive.com](http://www.thisdaylive.com)

## FEATURES

# Harnessing Science, Technology and Innovation Potential in Nigeria

Given the critical role of Science, Technology and Innovation in all facets of human endeavour as well as its importance to the transformation of the Nigerian economy from a resource-based to knowledge-based economy, **Precious Ugwuzor** reports on the recent drive by the Federal Institute of Industrial Research to adequately harness it and put the country among the top 20 economies of the world by 2030

The world is fast paced, and so also is the priority to offer timely innovations that will efficiently impact various segments of living, industry, and enterprises as solutions to personal, communal, and even societal needs of the people.

In a world where the growth of developed and developing economies are tied to efficiency in Science Technology and Innovation, STI, a mono-economy country like Nigeria must not be left behind in accelerating its technological development potentials to sustain its growth.

As oil price needs recede in importance and global alternatives being scaled up to replace fossil fuel in favour of green and safe energies, Nigeria has identified the need to diversify its economy from mono dependency on oil with bias to engineer a digital and science-propelled economy for industrial development. In this direction, policymakers have agreed that the principle of comparative advantage dictates that Nigeria cannot afford to neglect its agriculture sector but also the engineering sector for the purpose of easing utility, creating jobs and growing its industrial base.

As the population soars, so also is the exploration of natural resources becoming insufficient for wealth creation; as such, it has become imminent that Nigeria embraces measures for value addition to practices by employing science and technology with creative ideas to transform raw materials into valuable goods and services; economic development and improved quality of life.

Volume 1 of the National Development Plan, NDP, 2021 – 2025 was explicit in building a strong nexus among Science Technology and Innovation as three intertwined concepts that underpin the development of products, processes and systems to ensure human progress and wellbeing. However, despite the crucial role it plays in industrial development, Nigeria still ranks low in this although gradually embracing the STI innovation to change its industrial phase.

Available statistics indicate that the world average gross expenditure on research and development as GDP stands at 1.68 percent, while the figure for Nigeria is 0.13 percent in 2007 (we should have data that is more recent).

Minister of Science Technology and Innovation, Adeleke Mamora is however optimistic that Nigeria's STI potential, when adequately harnessed, can put the country among the top 20 economies of the world by 2030.

Mamora, at a stakeholders' meeting to inaugurate the planning committee of the STI 2023 Expo in Abuja, noted the critical role of STI in all facets of human endeavour as well as its importance to the transformation of the Nigerian economy from a resource-based to knowledge-based economy.

The Minister identified the role of STI which cuts across every sector of government with expected value addition to human and societal endeavours. "It spans through all the Ministries, Departments and agencies such as technology science, agriculture, aviation, industry, energy, health, space education, entrepreneurship, military amongst others," Mamora observed.

## Challenges Facing STI

Although much is desired to see speedy transformation of the STI, especially towards meeting the immediate and long-term development for economic and industrial revival of the country, experts have however identified that there are obstacles to surmount in the sector. Among them inadequate funding, lack of research, poor education and improper coordination have been identified as factors limiting deployment of STI in Nigeria.

Lookman Adahurse, a Lagos based IT expert, advocated massive public and private sector funding of research and development of the STI, saying: "For Nigeria to build a fundamental



Dr. Mamora



Dr. Jummai Adamu

innovation paradigm that will give it incredible economic growth, it has to pump more money in research and development. The investments in research and development by government and private sector players must be consistent and not faltering."

Political economist and former Presidential aspirant of the Young Progressive Party, Kingsley Moghalu, believes Nigeria is yet to have a truly innovation-led economy because there is still little or no policy and financial support for moving the products of innovation into the mainstream marketplace through mass production and marketing distribution.

Moghalu, in the same vein noted that investment by companies and government on Research and Development, R&D, are still relatively low even as Nigeria's current dire economic situation and foreign exchange crisis in particular provides it with an opportunity to scale up innovation. "It is only innovation that can break the Nigerian economy's structural dependency as an import- and consumer-driven one," he noted.

## FIRO to the Task

But all hope is not lost as the Federal Government, under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari has in the last five years invested no fewer than N924bn to revive the science, technology and innovation sector in the country.

The National Development Plan 2021-2022, Volume I, disclosed that the funds were devoted to priority projects in the sector, as well as others that are similarly crucial to its operations.

Recently, the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi, FIRO, at the 2023 Technology and Innovation Expo, showcased some of its technological inventions and research products as outstanding feats capable of attracting investors

to the sector.

Among the exceptional innovations displayed by FIRO at the Expo held in Abuja are mechanized processing technologies for cassava, ceramics, legumes, bread and confectionery baking technology. Others are roots processing technology, oil seed processing technologies, beverage drinks production and preservative technologies, livestock nutrition/poultry feed, among others.

The Technology and Innovation Expo which had as its theme: "Actualizing Effective Diversification of the Nigerian Economy through Science, Technology and Innovation," was organized to unveil the products to showcase the mileage that have been recorded so far as well as offering solutions on the way forward.

FIRO, an agency of the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, is the foremost centre for Science and Technology-based research and development for the industrialization and socio-economic advancement of the nation.

At the 2023 Expo, Dr Mamora who was impressed with the innovations however charged the research institute to engender the means through which these valuable products would find their way to the Nigerian market by improving on its research and marketing strategies. "The major challenge is how do you get this major research out to the market because it's like you are winking in the dark, and when you wink in the dark, nobody can see you. You should light up your candles so others can see it," the minister said.

The Director-General/CEO of FIRO, Dr (Mrs.) Jummai Adamu solicited the support of all stakeholders to invest in the cutting-edge products, goods and services of the Institute towards aiding the economic diversification of Nigeria's government.

Dr Adamu also solicited the collaboration of investors to support the nation in achieving its diversification agenda of moving from a consumption to a production economy through effective STI utilization in the shortest possible period.

She said the expo had presented itself as a clarion call for serious commitment by stakeholders and investors to move the economy from consumption to production for the purpose of stimulating economic growth, liberation and self-reliance for the nation and the Nigerians.

The FIRO boss noted that the mono-economic dependence on oil and gas, which is non-

renewable, has kept the nation far away from meaningful development that would have made her respected among comity of nations.

"This is attributed to our inability to properly utilize STI as the fulcrum for modern development. It is to be noted that all developed and developing countries all over the world are where they are today because they realized that it is only through Science, Technology and Innovation, that all our problems can be tackled.

"It is an established fact that Science, Technology and Innovation holds the key to the present and future development of any nation as it plays a fundamental role in wealth creation, improvement of quality of life and real economic growth and transformation in any society," she said.

Dr Adamu submitted that STI has impacted many economic areas, reducing poverty, promoting healthier and more productive lives, rapid improvement in agriculture, energy, environment and economic growth.

By bridging the technological power vacuum, she observed, more Nigerians can be adequately mobilized as needed human resources to tackle the challenges confronting the nation, especially towards arresting the menace of poverty, youth restiveness, terrorism, kidnapping and banditry currently ravaging the country.

"As you may be aware, one of the key components that aid economic diversification is technology transfer, which is the innovation capabilities of any organization that wants to thrive technologically.

"Increase in economic diversification will expose us to opportunities to utilize our technological prowess and become more capable to generate new technological solutions due to cross-fertilization of ideas among different knowledge areas of diversification, thus producing positive effects on our innovation performance," the FIRO boss said.

On the importance of the STI, she noted that a diversified economy has the capacity to support multiple businesses, increase sustainable circles of economic activity where businesses continually feed from one another and grow larger as the economy grows.

"Worldwide, it is an established fact that economic diversification brings about stability, improves standard of living, minimizes the use of potentially underutilized resources, creates jobs and generates wealth for the teeming youth, considering the depletion nature of the oil that we have been depending since time immemorial," she explained.

The representative of the organized private sector and business community, at the Expo, Victoria Akai urged FIRO to explore partnership opportunity with the Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry on business entrepreneurship, skills and technology to enhance productivity, especially among the youth and women.

She also lauded the institute for its various research outputs which have strengthened the technological innovation sector in the country. Her words: "The value of your achievement in the area of various commodities including motor, processed and bottled palm wine, cassava bread, fish feeds, ceramics, textile design product, pepper grinding machines and other related machines for small and medium enterprise agencies as well as entrepreneurship training and technology transfer cannot be overemphasized."

As Nigeria continues in this steady move to turn around its economy driven by science, technological and innovation, FIRO has sufficiently demonstrated its capacity to support, not just the diversification of the economy away from the overdependence on oil, but has also proven, that with required support by investors and adequate funding by government, the revitalization of the Nigeria's economy is nearer than before.

**It is an established fact that Science, Technology and Innovation holds the key to the present and future development of any nation as it plays a fundamental role in wealth creation, improvement of quality of life and real economic growth and transformation in any society**

# WACOL: Celebrating 25 Years of Promoting Human Rights, Women and Girls Empowerment

For a non-governmental organisation such as the Women Aide Collective, WACOL, to celebrate 25 years of impacting care and empowerment of the lives of women and girls calls for huge accolades, writes **Amby Uneze**

The start-up of any business or organisation takes a lot of work, time, planning and thoughts. It has not been an easy journey the world over to initiate an idea, plan, establish and nurture it to a point of meeting the world standard which the Women Aide Collective (WACOL) has attended in its 25 years of its existence.

While her contemporaries were waiting for 'manna' to fall from heaven, Joy Ngozi Ezeilo was busy reading, lecturing, molding minds, planning how best to assist the fortunes of helpless women and girls, especially in ensuring the eradication of widowhood practices in Igboland and beyond and stopping rapes among the girl child, etc. That in a nutshell was how the Women Aide Collective was founded in Enugu in 1997 precisely.

To her, it was a normal activity any focused, hardworking and serious-minded person needed to do in order to actualize a burning desire. That desire had no other objective than to create a positive impact in the society by making sure that the rights of the people especially women, girls and those who cannot voice out their predicaments caused by inhuman treatment by their fellow human beings are heard.

According to the founder, the idea behind the formation of WACOL was to have an organisation with a strong focus on access to justice for women and children in especially difficult circumstances. From my experiences belonging to membership organisations such as Women in Nigeria (WIN) and the International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA), I noticed the gap in unmet justice needs of this category, especially poor women and girls doubly disadvantaged and discriminated against because of their sex and gender.

The search for justice by this category of persons often ends in futility. Hence the need to provide information and necessary support that would enable those whose human rights have been violated to recognize and respond to such violations.

The myriads of challenges for those seeking to obtain redress from Nigeria's legal system are what WACOL exists to tackle. WACOL was established in 1997 as an independent, non-political, non-governmental and non-profit organization; registered as a company limited by guarantee, that is, as a charitable organization (RC: 388132).

WACOL's vision as enunciated by the founder is a democratic society free from violence and abuse, where human rights of all in particular women and young people are recognized in law and practice. Its mission is to assist in the education, social, economic and political development of women and young people through a wide range of services: training, research, advocacy, shelter, free legal and financial aid, intra-familial conflict resolution, and information and library services.

WACOL works throughout Nigeria and in the West African sub-region and its offices in Nigeria are located in eight states namely: Abuja (FCT), Enugu, Owerri, Cross River, Anambra, Ebonyi, and Edo States. WACOL in general works in four thematic areas namely: gender/human rights, peace advocacy/conflict resolution, democracy/good governance and reproductive health /rights.

Going memory lane on how WACOL started, Professor Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) and a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) noted with enthusiasm, "At the onset of WACOL, I had the privilege of winning the MacArthur Funds for Leadership Development in 1998 and that award then gives the individual winner \$75,000 for a period of three years to conduct research and develop whatever initiative they consider a priority in the field of reproductive health and rights.

"I did not use the money to buy a car for myself nor did I embark on jamborees to show the world that I had arrived. We hired an office to accommodate us and that helped me to realize my dream. In fact, it was in the year I introduced the course: women, children and law at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. We were the first university in Nigeria to start that course as the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) gave its approval and introduced it in the curriculum.

"I used my funds to carry out research on "Legal Constraints to Adolescents' Sexual and



Prof Ezeilo (middle) handing over food items to some widows

Reproductive Rights in Nigeria". It was the first of its kind looking at the law, the protection it offers young women and men, and gaps and challenges in mainstreaming sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The findings of that formative study revealed and reinforced the interconnectedness of rights and how gender impacts the enjoyment of human rights of women, including health decision-making. Furthermore, it demonstrated how the personal becomes political and women's body the site of struggle.

"In fact, the conceptualised dichotomy of public and private spheres, productive and reproductive exacerbates gender inequalities, discrimination as well as gender based violence against women and girls.

"The journey of WACOL started in 1997 and by 1998 WACOL was up and functioning in our first rented duplex accommodation with boys' quarters at New Haven. We immediately started the safe house in 1998 to shelter women and girls at the peak of crises who have suffered human rights violence and/or are victims of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). The MacArthur personal funds leadership I won at that time made it possible for me to financially support WACOL before it got other funding opportunities.

"It was the same year 1997 that I started teaching the course, women, children and Law at the University of Nigeria, Faculty of Law. I felt additionally energized after my LLM at the University of London in 1995 with a full Chevening Scholarship managed by the British Council to also engage in a scholarship that would advance social transformation. Thus, I worked to blend theory and practice manifested in my scholarship and activism.

"My mother's widowhood experiences helped to shape my passion in defending human rights and of course in studying and practicing law.

"WACOL is a dream come through and its vision has been translated into action and her mandate is being realized given the recorded milestones achieved in the last twenty-five years. Woah! I cannot believe it is a quarter of a century already.

"Indeed, time to begin a transitional phase of handing over the baton to the

next generation of female transformational leaders to continue the struggle we have started and build on the existing foundation and structure. The achievements are encouraging, especially assisting over sixty thousand women and children in need through our free legal aid programme."

On free legal aid, which has become the mainstay of WACOL because of the believe that without redress and accountability the impunity of human rights violation will continue, WACOL is considered as the number one legal aid service provider for women and girls in Nigeria for providing assistance to about 2,000 on an annual basis with over 4,000 drop-ins yearly.

"We register an average of 20 cases daily at our legal clinic. This is evidence based and well documented. From 1998 to date approximately 62,000 women and girls have accessed free legal aid and assistance services. We provide free legal services for women and young people in our offices across the country. We also run community law centers in Katsina, Ebonyi and Anambra States, including Mobile Legal Clinics in Bayelsa, Benue, Enugu and Rivers States."

The services available under the legal aid scheme include court representation, crisis intervention and counselling, information about victims' rights, shelter, home visits and other psycho-social support for victims, and referrals for other needs. These cases are on different human rights abuses, including denial of inheritance, assault/battery, child abuse/neglect, harassment/intimidation, sexual assault/rape, family maintenance and other forms of violence against women and young people.

Furthermore, the network of WACOL spans being a member of many coalitions, including foundation member of LACVAW, Gender Technical Unit (GTU), Gender and Constitutional Advocacy Network (GECORN), and the Network of Sexual Assault Referral Centres.

WACOL pioneered and still coordinate the following networks with its office serving secretariat to Victims Support Club (VISUC); Survivors Watch, Widows Economic Empowerment programme (WEEP); Nigerian NGO CEDAW Coalition, South East Women's Network; West African Women's Rights Coalition (WAWORC); Network for Women Living Under Religious and Customary Laws (NPWRIS); South East Human Rights Situation Room, Partners for Peace Advocacy and Good Governance; Media against Sexual Violence, Male champions for Women's Rights and Gender Equity Movement (GEM).

Professor Joy Ngozi Ezeilo is a distinguished Law Professor, the emeritus dean of law, UNN and former United Nations Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. She is a versatile legal scholar recognized as a leading

authority on the rights of women and children in Africa. She founded WACOL and Tamar SARC as well as pioneered the teaching of women, children and the law in 1997, including developing a curriculum for the teaching of human rights, health law and reproductive rights in Nigerian Universities and sexual harassment policy for education institutions and workplaces.

To mention a few, Prof. Ezeilo is the 2019 winner of the National Human Rights Award and was also honoured with the civil society award of excellence by the UN Development Programme (UNDP)/UN Women in collaboration with the Embassies of the US, Germany, France, EU Delegation and the British High Commission to mark the International Women's Day Awards Gala 2022 held at the US Consul General's Residence.

Eulogising the work of WACOL and its founder, Chairman of the occasion on the celebration of 25th anniversary of WACOL, Professor Ifeoma Enemuo (mni) of the Faculty of Law, UNN described Prof Joy Ezeilo as an international woman activist of repute. According to her, it is not easy to celebrate 25 years of quality service to humanity, adding "it is the Lords' doing and it is marvelous in our eyes."

"Joy Ezeilo is WACOL and vice versa. She is an international woman activist of great repute. She is our digital Professor in the faculty. We call her "Ada Eji Eje Mba" (A daughter her community is proud of). She made the list of the most 50 world international women. WACOL has expanded so much as one of the leading human rights organizations in the world. I congratulate the WACOL family for the outstanding work it had continued to do to better the society at large. I say Kudos!"

Goodwill messages were sent from funders and associates of WACOL. Such as representatives of States and Federal Government; WACOL Boards Director, Justice Nkem Izuako (rtd), UN Human Rights, UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, Action Aid Nigeria, Ford Foundation, John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation, J4A, DFID/British Council, WACOL Alumni, Ifeoma Anya Ogbologu; Traditional Rulers represented by Igwe Barr. Ralph Eze (Igwe 50-50); Representative of CSOs/NGOs/Women's Movement, Dr. Abiola Akiyode; CBO/Faith-based Organizations represented by Rev. Fr. Ambrose Ekeroku of Carmelite Prisoners' Interest Organization (CAPIO), and Justice G.C. Nnamani, President of Customary Court.

The highlight of the anniversary was the presentation of awards to those who have contributed significantly to the growth of WACOL over the past 25 years of defending human rights and promoting women and girls empowerment. They included: Professor Chinyere Stella Okurna (DVC Academics) Paul University, Awka, former Chief of Staff to Governor Peter Obi and First Female Professor of Mass Communication in Sub-Saharan Africa), Emeritus Professor Obioma Nwaorgu (Fellow, Academics of Science) and Executive Director, Global Health awareness Research Foundation (GHARF), Lolo Igwe Joy Ekeh, Mrs. Helen Eze, and Sir Amby Uneze, Senior Correspondent of THISDAY Newspapers, Owerri.

The wish of Professor Ezeilo is that "WACOL will continue to focus on transforming societies for greater recognition and respect for women's rights in law and practice. In doing so it will intensify social and legislative advocacy. It will engage in evidence-based research and data collation that will inform policy change and advocacy for law reforms, especially ones that will close the gender gaps.

"I will end by saying that today is better than yesterday and tomorrow holds our attainments of ideals of democracy and development that are engendered. Whilst acknowledging progress and milestones recorded, it is not yet Uhuru and we must continue to focus on dismantling structures and enablers of violence against women and girls, gender discrimination and inequalities."

She urged governments to fulfill her state responsibilities and effectively implement extant laws on human rights, women's rights, and children's rights, including for persons with disabilities, adding "WACOL would continue to raise the accountability stake until its vision is achieved."

**On free legal aid, which has become the mainstay of WACOL because of the believe that without redress and accountability, the impunity of human rights violation will continue, WACOL is considered as the number one legal aid service provider for women and girls in Nigeria for providing assistance to about 2,000 on an annual basis with over 4,000 drop-ins yearly**

# EDUCATION

## Lafarge Africa: Educating Cross River Youths for Greater Future

**Bassey Inyang** writes that in accordance with its corporate social responsibility, Lafarge Africa is making serious contributions to the education sector in Cross River



Students of West African People's Institute, Diamond Hill, Calabar that are beneficiaries of Lafarge Africa's Education Support Programme



Teachers and nurses quarters at Ekong Anaku Community, Akamkpa LGA

The importance of education to the overall development of the human person and society cannot be over-emphasised. For example, the late Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." In a similar breath, former US President Barack Obama said, "In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity - it is a prerequisite."

Mandela's and Obama's statements underscored the holistic essence of education. The late Chief Obafemi Awolowo knew that education was invaluable in total development. He introduced free education in the then-Old Western Region between 1954 and 1962 during his time as the premier, with enduring benefits. Successive local, state and federal governments have striven to copy that template. However, amidst competing budgetary demands, these efforts by governments are grossly inadequate.

Over the years, the federal and state governments have demonstrated their incapability, whether deliberately or otherwise, to adequately finance their respective education sectors by not setting aside at least 20 per cent of their annual budget for the sector as recommended by United Nations Education Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO).

Therefore, governments at all levels have solicited the support of the private sector in funding education. Long before the appeal, Lafarge Africa had ventured to contribute, even more than its quota, to the development of education in various parts of the country where it has stakes.

The company's massive contribution to the education sector abounds in its host communities in Cross River State, where the cement manufacturer has its factory in Mfamosing, Akamkpa council area.

Recently, the company's production manager at the Mfamosing Plant, Mrs Idara Uyak, disclosed that as part of its CSR, it had provided educational support to 130 scholars in secondary and tertiary institutions in the state.

GEDE Foundation is the education consultant to Lafarge Africa on implementing the company's educational support programmes in its host communities in Cross River.

A representative of the foundation, Mr John Bassey, told THISDAY about some aspects of the educational support programme.

"I work with GEDE Foundation as a volunteer. We facilitate the educational sector of Lafarge in terms of CSR in the communities. We handle the payment of fees for students in the schools in our host communities, and we also provide them with study materials like textbooks and exercise books," said Bassey. "I think Lafarge is doing very, very well. They have been able to train a lot of students. Like in the last WAEC, we have our scholarship student as one of the best with 5 As."

Bassey said GEDE ensures that the students

maintain a high standard of performance in their academics by doing regular checks and follow-ups on the general performances in their various schools.

Lafarge Africa scholarship scheme, otherwise tagged 'Educational Support', provides N100,000 with every session to each benefiting student across its 17 host communities, mostly in the Southern senatorial district of the state.

Aside from the cash paid directly to the beneficiaries, Lafarge Africa has renovated schools, built additional blocks, staff quarters, and modern toilet facilities, and provided boreholes as a source of clean water in most schools. It also supplied uniforms, sandals, books, and desks to the schools based on their demands without charge.

The Chairman of the Community Relations Committee (CRC) of Lafarge Host Communities, Ntufam Alphonsus Bassey, who hails from Mbobi Clan in Akamkpa LGA, said, "Every year, our children who are in secondary schools, about 10 of them, are given what we call educational support. Lafarge Africa pays their school fees, gives them uniforms, and buys books. They call the programme 'back-to-school'. They give educational support to our children who are schooling at the University of Calabar, Cross River State University, College of Education Akamkpa, and other tertiary institutions. At the moment, we have about four of them that they are supporting."

THISDAY visited some schools in Calabar and the rural communities to check the veracity of these claims.

At the West African Peoples Institute (WAPI), located in Calabar Municipality, Master Nisi Thomas Agida, a senior secondary three (SS3) student and one of the beneficiaries of the Lafarge Africa scholarship programme, told THISDAY, "It has been very interesting and Lafarge has really helped me in particular because my parents were having very serious problems in paying my school fees. So, I am thanking Lafarge for everything they have done for me. I promise Lafarge that I will be successful in my WAEC, NECO, and JAMB."

Miss Blessing Edet Bassey, who hails from Essien Town in Calabar Municipality, added, "I am in JS3. I was very happy the first day they came to pay my school fees. My parents were happy too. My father

is very happy that his child is among those that got a scholarship from Lafarge.

Blessing Eyamba Etim from the Akpabuyo community, a JS3 student of WAPI, also commended the company's initiatives.

At Government Secondary School, Akarsoko, Akpabuyo council area, some students in the school, Miss Racheal Elijah, Miss Happiness Victor Asuquo, Miss Idorenyin Emmanuel Cletus, Miss Happiness Etim Essien, Miss Esther Bassey Sunday, and Master Elkarah Manasseh Jonah, all beneficiaries of the Lafarge Africa educational support lauded the company's programme.

Elijah said, "I am in JSS 2. I am so happy to be on a scholarship because it is not easy for someone to send another person to school. I promise that I will try as much as possible to be intelligent and also grow into a responsible citizen to support others. I hope to study medicine. I thank Lafarge very much for giving me this opportunity."

Jonah, an SS2 male student said, "I thank Lafarge for all they have done for us because it is not easy to pay school fees, even if it is done in instalments every term. They have helped me and helped my mother in paying my fees. I am doing well in school now, more than before, because my mind is settled."

Government Secondary School, Akwa Ikot Effanga, bears a glaring testimony of Lafarge Africa's intervention with the complete renovation of the entire classroom blocks, thus providing the school with the necessary and conducive ambience for teaching and learning.

The Principal, Lady Asangusung Mediatrix Ujor, said aside from the renovation, the cement company built and equipped a new lodge for NYSC members who form a large chunk of the teachers' cadre in the school. She commended Lafarge Africa for supplying the school with plenty of desks, books, and uniforms and awarding scholarships to students.

However, she urged the company to ensure that school authorities are also consulted alongside the community in the selection of beneficiaries of the educational support initiative.

Umoh Edet Okon, an SS2 female student, and Joseph Okon Effiong of the same class said they are enjoying Lafarge Africa's scholarship.

"The scholarship has challenged me to study more. I know all of us under scholarship said we cannot disappoint Lafarge and our parents, and we cannot joke with our future, so we must build it now. We thank God that Lafarge is helping us to build our tomorrow," stated Umoh.

Realising the importance of early childhood education, and the essence of building their education on a solid foundation, Lafarge Africa also provided educational support to primary schools in its catchment areas. A typical example of the company's intervention at this critical stage of educational development is Government Primary School, Abiati, Akamkpa Local Government Area.

Head Teacher of the primary school, Mr Oyere Alfred Ujong, told THISDAY that the school had virtually collapsed and was going into extinction when Lafarge Africa got information about its sorry state and promptly responded.

He said the company intervened comprehensively and brought the school back to life.

"I came here some years ago and saw the school. It was almost buried. Thank God Lafarge came with their provision of textbooks, uniforms, sandals, and desks. Even this year, they have sent in National Youth Service Corps members," said Ujong.

Ujong added, "It is an old school established in 1993. It got dilapidated, but since Lafarge renovated it, it has encouraged parents to register their children. The cry was that teachers were leaving here. I didn't meet up to 20 children in this school, but by now, I can boast of 70 pupils because of the efforts of Lafarge."

In the school, Ezie Florence Oghogho, NYSC member and a Delta State Polytechnic graduate, said she was posted to the school at the instance of Lafarge Africa.

"Almost every day, parents bring in more children to be registered because there are more teachers to teach them and more classrooms that can accommodate the growing number of children coming," she said.

Lafarge Africa's support is wider than public schools as private schools and their students are accommodated, provided for, and catered for.

A good example is Immaculate Conception Secondary School, Mfamosing, Akamkpa LGA, a private academic institution.

The school's principal, Sir James N. Achu (KSM), told THISDAY about the support received from Lafarge Africa.

Achu said, "They have given us desks which have really helped in teaching and learning. They have equally given nine students scholarships. They have been supporting us by posting NYSC members to help the students in the teaching and learning process."

The principal said Lafarge has even gone a step further outside the classroom by providing mentorship to the students, especially the female students who are prone to vulnerabilities in rural settings.

"They come in for sensitisation, especially for female students, so that they can put more effort. They bring in female engineers to showcase them and mentor the students to really queue in and take their studies seriously; that what a man can do, a woman can do better if given the opportunity," Achu added. "The sensitisation is in the right direction, particularly in the rural areas, so that they will take their studies seriously and know that they can become professionals in future. So we commend Lafarge in that aspect. Lafarge also takes the students out of here to events in Calabar and other places just to expose them and give them more education."

Achu, however, requested more support from the benevolence of the giant cement manufacturing company.

## Morning Circle: Mystery to Excellent Early Childhood Education



Some early learners observing their morning circle

**Kuni Tyessi** writes that play, also formally known as morning circle in the early childhood education sphere, has been grossly underestimated in the Nigerian setting. Nonetheless, with documented research and empirical evidence, records have proven that play is a natural power that equips a child for better attentiveness, understanding and assimilation, among several benefits

The children between the ages of three-five were all seated on mats spread on the sand outside their classes, under trees that provided shades from the compulsory Vitamin D that normally surfaced in the early hours of the day. This was after holding their hands alongside their teachers in a cyclical style and jumping while joyfully singing the songs being taught them by the caregivers who are primarily their first teachers, after parents who have been active partners in the children's learning and development, a shared vision in the role of play in pre-primary programmes.

The teachers who had been trained by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and in collaboration with the European Union and the Sokoto State government had been taught that early

brain stimulation is the foundation of learning. This is not without nutrition which medical experts identified as core to a child's holistic growth.

Being equipped with such knowledge, they realised the importance of the morning circle and adopted it as a germane method in introducing lessons to be taught in class to the early learners through the power of play.

In furtherance to its crusade on ECE, UNICEF, at a two-day media dialogue in Sokoto, had spoken through the country director of Early Childhood Development Initiative, Nigeria, Dr Amy Panyi. She explained the play's importance for ECE and mentioned the five benefits of the underrated performance: critical thinking, innovation, executive function, all-round development and hands-on.

Plays have been exclusively

adopted into several schools as an ECE curriculum with the help of breakfast which is sometimes served to the pupils in a school to increase enrollment and participation. However, this hasn't been sustainable as supplies have been epileptic in Sokoto.

Globally speaking, UNICEF has revealed that less than one in three children aged three and four attend ECE. In Nigeria, over one in three children (36 per cent) attend, with at least 10 million children not enrolled. This is not forgetting that large inequalities persist, with only eight per cent of the poorest children versus 78 per cent of the richest children attending ECE. Although they were taught in the combination of English and Hausa languages at the Magaji Abdullahi Nursery School in the Shagari Local Government Area of the state, the children were enthusiastic about learning

courtesy of the setting and mode of teaching, particularly its introduction.

The early learners, when spoken to, could identify the names, objects, usefulness or otherwise of things shown to them in the subjects under focus, namely Mathematics, English, Hausa, Physical Health Education and Arabic. This is proof that there has been an improvement in the quality of education, an increase in school participation and graduation rates, and stronger economic and social development.

Furthermore, strengthening families understanding of the value of play in pre-primary settings and at home, as well as engaging families and communities in supporting a play-based approach to learning, does not only protect a child's ability to play safely but the ability to understand and to interpret.

## Nekede Poly Invents Electric Car, Drone As Rector Marks Four-Year Tenure

**Amby Uneze** in Owerri

The Rector of the Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri, Michael Arimanwa, says the institution has developed far-reaching inventions over the past four years of his tenure, including an electric car and a security drone.

He also promised that the institution would not victimise a student, Ogechi Okoroafor Sharon, whose controversial video went viral, as the polytechnic management continued to investigate her claim she graduated "with the help of God and her private part."

Addressing journalists, the rector said due process would be followed in handling her claims in the viral video and make their findings known to the public soon.

While reeling out a list of abridged achievements he re-

corded in his four-year tenure, the rector said TETFfund had assisted in meeting the set goals.

According to him, as the eighth substantive rector of the institution, he has provided transformational leadership consistent with 14 goals and 72 targets he set for himself before his emergence.

He had also redefined leadership with his disarming charisma, meekness, humility, brilliance and innovativeness, as his achievements are comprehensive, integrated and eclectic, embracing all the sectors of life at the foremost institution.

The rector, whose five-year tenure would end next year, stated that he had maintained the status of best-performing polytechnic in Nigeria, according to the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

## Seadogs Tasks FG on Quality Education for Nigerians

**Blessing Ibunge** in Port Harcourt

The National Association of Seadogs (NAS), Pyrates Confraternity, has urged the federal and state governments to renew their commitment to providing quality education for all Nigerians as a matter of rights and as a strategy of ensuring that every child reaches their full potential.

The Olympus Marino Deck, Rivers State Chapter 1 of NAS, made this call after donating training materials and books to primary schools in the Degema local government area to commemorate this year's International Day of Education.

Speaking at the event, Mr Iche Wordu, Capoon, the Olympus Marino Deck, advised the government to invest in infrastructure, teacher training, and provision of educational materials, as well as addressing cultural attitudes and systemic barriers to education.

Wordu stressed that through

cross-sectoral synergies and increased policy emphasis, Nigeria could build a future in which every Nigerian has access to education opportunities.

He noted that the government had sustained a low budget for the sector amidst strikes by teachers and other workers, inadequate and dilapidated infrastructures, insufficient research, shortage of skilled workforce, insecurity, and brain drain, among other challenges bedeviling the sector. According to the NAS leader in Port Harcourt, the dearth of education at the lower level continues, although the first nine years of education in Nigeria are compulsory and free by Nigeria's UBE Act.

He listed the several policy inefficiencies responsible for Nigeria's education outcomes, including access to education, inadequate infrastructure, low quality of education, funding shortages and limited opportunities for girls.

## Sanwo-Olu Appoints Lafiaji-Okunneye as LASUED VC

**Funmi Ogundare**

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has approved the appointment of Prof Bidemi Bilkis Lafiaji-Okunneye as the substantive Vice-Chancellor of the Lagos State University of Education (LASUED), Ijanikin and Epe Campuses.

In a letter, the Head of Service, Mr Hakeem Muri-Okunola, said the appointment of Lafiaji-Okunneye, which will take effect from March 1, 2022, is for a single term of five years.

"I am happy to convey the approval of Mr Babajide Olu-sola Sanwo-Olu, the Governor of Lagos State of your appointment as Vice-Chancellor, Lagos State University of Education

(LASUED) for a single term of five years with effect from March 1, 2022," the letter stated.

It added, "In approving your appointment, the state government expects you to continue to demonstrate a high level of dedication, diligence and selflessness in the discharge of your duties to justify the confidence and trust reposed in you by Mr Governor."

Muri-Okunola congratulated the new VC and urged her to continue demonstrating a high level of dedication, diligence and selflessness to justify the confidence reposed in her by the state government, fast-tracking the growth of the new university to achieve set goals and accelerated development.

## Babcock Student Wins NiWARD 'Farmer of the Year' Award

**Funmi Ogundare**

A 500-level Agriculture and Industrial Technology student, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo in Ogun, Heman Gabriel Zakaria, has emerged winner of the '2022 Farmer of the Year' award, following his outstanding performance at the national contest of the Nigeria Women in Agricultural Research for Development award (NiWARD).

Zakaria, who shared the limelight with his supervisor and Head of Department, Dr Bukola Osuntade, stood out for his performance and abstract presentation on the FILAI method of preservation,

a simple and inexpensive way of keeping vegetables fresh without electricity.

The initiative aims to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of zero hunger in Nigeria by encouraging innovative research in agriculture.

Nine finalists emerged from the three categories online at the NiWARD annual general conference comprising: intermediate (undergraduate or graduates), advanced (postgraduates, early to late career researcher) and stakeholder (agricultural practitioner).

Apart from these, a fourth category of the winner, the

people's choice, could be from any of the three top contestants.

Zakaria emerged as the top winner and the people's choice, for which he clinched a cash prize of N100,000, a plaque and the NiWARD farmer of the year award (NFA).

NiWARD is the Nigerian chapter of the prestigious African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) which organised the contest during the maiden edition of its Farm to Mouth Agro-contest from August 1 to November 30, 2022.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof Ademola Tayo, expressed de-

light about the breakthrough, saying that if implemented, the research innovation will help drive the much talked about food and agricultural revolution the country is yearning for.

In another development, a 400-level student of Mass Communication, Oluwatoyin Ajewole, clinched the second place trophy of the Advertisers Association of Nigeria's Future Leader of Marketing award.

An elated Ajewole said, "This award has opened many opportunities for me already, and I plan to do and achieve more things in the marketing space."

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# TRIBUTE

## My Brother, Timothy Oluwakayode Oluwasesan Ogunnubi @60

Tola Ogunnubi

**M**y mother once told me by quoting Williams Shakespeare that "Ingratitude is worse than a traitor's arm". This has been my life's driving principle growing up while watching my brother since I enrolled under his tutelage. Emi Tola mo one. Words fail me to pay a deserving tribute to perhaps the greatest brother that ever trod the face of planet earth. Exactly 6 decades today, a fine, intelligent, extremely humble, quintessential gentleman was born into the Pa Isaac Ayorinde Ogunnubi clan in Ijeh-Obalende (now Dolphin Estate) area of Lagos State of Nigeria. He is the 1st son and 1st child, I am the 1st son and 1st child from the rear of our parents. We have a lot of things in common. But above all, he is such a rare gem. An enigma with immense outstanding personality. A very admirable gentle fine man with distinguished character. He had a most precocious growth and excelled in academics, life's school and character.

I am a living testimony of your magnanimity, your direct benevolence of a good heart speaks volumes in my life. I benefitted and got spoiled by you. I chop your money no be small (smiles). From the Lagos State Model College, Kankon, Badagry to UNILAG, he ensured I had a good academic wellbeing devoid of worries or distractions. He went out of his ways for me, and he taught me and my other siblings, the gizmo of spartan discipline, the ethos of hygienic living, the greatness of erudition, the obligation of goodness, the merits of integrity and the love of kindness. A brother who always has the answers to your problems. Whilst you see the problem, he sees the prospect and the possibility. He will go out of his way to give you the best support possible. Brother, thank you for giving me the best of the opportunities available.

Christened Oluwakayode Timothy Oluwasesan, he began a family anchored on the principled ideals of morality, resilience, good heritage, stability, forthrightness and uprightness.

As a young lad, I found an instant model and worthy mentor in my brother, in whom I could trust, emulate and fashion my life after. Kayode as he is fondly called, epitomises grace and character, extremely neat and fashionable, brilliant and reserved. Entrepreneur



From L-R Tola Ogunnubi and the celebrant Oluwakayode Ogunnubi

extraordinaire, Prolific Land administrator, successful Estate Valuer, and distinguished Family Man.

Kayode, the primogenitor of many firsts that lends irrevocable credence to how much commitment he invests in his personal endeavour. He made sure we never lacked as his younger ones even after the death of our parents. The responsibilities were much and tasking but with an ever understanding and supportive wife, there

were no issues. A core hard worker, a complete homely husband, a reliable and responsible brother, an urbane technocrat and a chronic motivator. Supportive to a fault, defender to the end, his corrective eyes speak a million words till date.

He was clearly a shining light in those days at CMS Grammar School, Bariga Lagos. After his A levels, he went to the prestigious Yaba College of Technology and equally went to the

University of Nigeria (UNN) where he was the best graduating student in his time. I am deeply proud of him. He came back to Lagos and enrolled in the University of Lagos, Akoka Yaba for both his MSc and MBA.

Married to a beautiful woman with a beautiful heart, Patience Olamide Ogunnubi they are blessed with 2 lovely children.

Timothy Ogunnubi introduced and put in place the process of applying and being issued Certificates of Occupancy within 90 days of payment. This made the Governor sign a backlog of 2500 certificates in a day, the first in the country.

As a pacesetter, he was able to set in motion and reposition the Lands Bureau in Lagos state to aid it in providing more professionalized services.

Because of his professionalism and dedication to work, he was elevated to the position of a Permanent Secretary in the Lagos State Civil Service.

I will never forget his resounding advice whenever I go- 'Don't ever forget the child of whom you are. Remember you have the glorious name of this family to protect'. This ensures I never stray away no matter what. As the first child of the family from the rear, I make bold to say that I am a direct beneficiary of your large-heartedness, cerebral gratification, good name, largesse and uncommon wit.

On this occasion of your birthday celebration and retirement from the public service of Lagos State today, I wish you more successes, long life, a bountiful harvest of your worthy and deserving investment on career and family, sound health, peace of mind, a speedy accomplishment of your yet elusive dreams and above all, all you wish yourself. I celebrate you and I want you to know that we may not always agree on so many things maybe because I have my looks after you because we both took it from our father or because you are now getting old (smiles) as a younger version of you, I want you to know today that you are a rare gem and I love you. You are a good great man.

Friends and family, may I humbly request that you wish my brother and role model a happy birthday for me, thank you all.

Tola Ogunnubi FILRMN, ANIPR  
Deputy Head, Corporate Affairs, Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation, NAK, Abuja

## Obaseki Urges Use of Technology to Reduce Delays, Enhance Transparency in Procurement Process

Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has advocated the use of technology to reduce delays and promote accountability and transparency in the state's procurement procedures.

A statement quoted Obaseki to have made the call at a one-day procurement workshop with the theme: "Public Procurement: Complying with the Law, Eliminating Delays," held in Benin City.

He said, "We are trying to ensure that we deliver services promptly to our citizens, and when we delay, we increase the cost significantly for the government."

"There is a need for us to take the process of procurement very seriously. We are improving value retention with better quality work being done in all spheres, including roads and buildings, among others, and showing that something is going on right in our procurement process

but the bad habit of the past is still present with some of us."

Obaseki continued: "Hence, this workshop is to remind us that the process of procurement is very important for us as it is about obtaining value for the money put under our care, and remind us of the expectations and behaviours expected of us which if we don't abide by, the system suffers."

"We fail to realise that we are holding public trust. Taxpayers' revenues are appropriated and put under our care to procure goods and services. Is that process of procuring using money under our care for the generality of our people being done right or abused?"

"We are one of the first states to have adopted e-procurement and promulgated a law to support the process."

According to him, "When you go against the provisions of the procure-

ment act, you're doing something criminal and it's justiciable. So, if you have not read the procurement laws of 2020, please do so to avoid being easy targets for prosecution as ignorance is not an excuse."

"We have now passed that stage where you can just do it and get away with it. There are legal repercussions. Commissioners and Permanent Secretaries procuring in their agencies without a procurement planning committee can be charged and put in prison. A few senior public officials are being investigated now and unfortunately, they are going to be tried for things like this and that is going to be the way going forward."

"When you look at the procurement law against a cashless society, it becomes easy to just see and explain how things have happened."

The governor further added, "Things are changing. It has become

easy to analyse huge amounts of data through technology. Also, people talk and it is very difficult to undertake a crime alone. There is so much information available today that it is increasingly difficult today to keep secrets. So, it's important to do things properly. The e-government platform is also there to help us deliver services properly to our citizens."

"We have one of the strongest

procurement agencies in the country and today, states come to understudy our procurement process. We know what to do so we must do what we need to do."

On his part, the Managing Director, Edo State Public Procurement Agency, Mr. Henry Idogun, noted that the hallmark of proficient public procurement are fairness, reliability, economy, efficiency, transparency,

competitiveness, accountability, and ethical standards.

"There should be broad participation by various firms and contractors bidding for a contract rather than limiting it to just a few as the process will open. That way, we will be getting the best. We must be ethical in our procedures as you use public funds for what they are meant for," he added.

## US Restates Confidence in Nigeria's Electoral Process

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

The United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Molly Phee, has expressed confidence

in the ongoing electoral process in Nigeria.

Phee, who has been in Nigeria for a week-long engaging with civil society organisations, youths, the private sector, religious leaders, election officials, political party leaders and government representatives, gave the pass mark during a roundtable with journalists at the US Embassy in Abuja, yesterday.

Phee, in her comments on the pockets of violence to the build-up to the election, the scarcity of naira notes and the call for an interim government in some quarters, said: "We hope there would be no violence before, during and after the general elections."

"You have a good history from 1999 that you get stronger after each election and we are very proud of that. The US has a strong confidence

in the election."

She revealed that her country has so much interest in Nigeria because of the critical position the country occupies in the sub-region, Africa and the world at large.

She noted that Nigeria has a very robust electoral system that would ensure free, fair and credible general elections.

The US official while commending the peace accord signed by political actors which was geared towards ensuring a peaceful exercise, called on all Nigerians to shun actions that would undermine the democratic processes.

She challenged all Nigerians to show interest in the ongoing electoral process by fully getting involved. She said: "INEC has assured that it is prepared to hold the election. That's why Nigerians should take ownership of the election."

## At Imo Rally, Sanwo-Olu Drums Support for Tinubu

Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, yesterday, urged the people of Imo State to vote for the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu at the Saturday February 25 presidential poll.

He said the Ndigbo in Lagos State were already with Tinubu for his victory in the presidential election, and therefore urged all Ndigbo, particularly the people of Imo State and Nigerians at large to bring out renewed hope by coming out en

masse to vote for Tinubu in next week's presidential election, as well as all the APC candidates contesting in the forthcoming general election.

Sanwo-Olu, who spoke at the APC presidential rally in Owerri, said, "I bring you greetings from the Centre of Excellence to the state of great hope to show that there is a handshake across the Niger, where all your people are. They want me to come here to tell you that even the Ndigbo in Lagos are with Asiwaju. So, we have come here to show

you that we are the same. That is why I have come down here to show solidarity with the great hope in Imo State and the hope that is renewed for Nigeria under the able leadership of our presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu."

"We want to thank you, Mr. President, for keeping to your word that you will join us on the campaign train in all of the regional states in the country. We want to thank you, sir, for coming down here to show everyone that indeed

you are a President for all.

"We want to thank you for the great Igbo community and I bring you greetings from all of us in Lagos that we stand with you across the Niger. We stand with you believing that the renewed hope is here and the great hope of Imo is also here."

"Let us go out next week Saturday and do the right thing; do the rightful thing and bring about a renewed hope under the hope of Imo into the Presidency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. God bless you all."

News



**NIKKAH CEREMONY BETWEEN ABDULWARITH MOBOLAJI AND SARAT TEMITAYO...**

L-R: Father of the Bride, Bayo Alabidun; Former chairman of Punch Nigeria Limited, Chief Ajibola Ogunshola; the Groom Abdulwarith Mobolaji, the bride, Sarat Temitayo; Father of the Groom, Dauda Olawale, and Admin Judge Lagos, Oyekan Abdullai At the Nikkah ceremony between Abdulwarith Mobolaji and Sarat Temitayo held in Lagos... recently

# Buhari to South East Leaders: It's Better We Carry On Together

●Says he'll continue to showcase Tinubu as APC candidate ●Presents him to Imo traditional council, urges national cohesion ●I want to be, I deserve to be president, ex-Lagos gov declares

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Muhammadu Buhari, yesterday, to the people of the South East region of the country that, having been through thick and thin, it was better they carried on together as country.

Speaking in Owerri, the Imo State capital, at a meeting with members of the state's Traditional Council, Buhari reiterated his readiness to continue to showcase Bola Tinubu as the presidential standard bearer of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

The President said he had already followed Tinubu to some states, including Nasarawa, Katsina and Sokoto and was prepared to showcase the candidate in more places, adding also that, he had come to present him (Tinubu) to the traditional council and indigenes of the state.

The Council at the meeting honoured Buhari with a traditional title, 'Nwanne Dnamba', A Brother in Diaspora.

The President thanked Eze Imo, His Royal Majesty, Eze Dr Emmanuel Chukwuaguna Okeke, for the recognition, assuring him that he would continue to demonstrate his love for the South East and citizens.

"I thank you so much for this honour that I will continue to remember for the rest of my life. Thank you for getting all the senior citizens to receive us. We have

experienced difficult times as a country and discovered that it is better to carry on together," he said.

President Buhari noted the value of shared national vision that enhances cohesion, urging more harmony across state and national levels as "good neighbours."

The President urged Nigerians to remain good neighbours and show themselves as one, saying, "God has brought us here, and the party also brought us to you."

In his remarks, Tinubu thanked the Imo Traditional Council for the recognition on Valentine's Day, saying, "I pay respect to all the traditional rulers that have received us at the palace. I present myself as the most capable and competent person to step into the shoes of the man you have just honoured."

"I want to be, and deserve to be the President and I will follow the footsteps of President Buhari, when elected, not if elected. I will consolidate on our unity, development and camaraderie. It is only in peace that we can develop."

"You mentioned upgrading of educational institutions. Education is the greatest weapon we can deploy against poverty. We are here today because of the benefit of education," the presidential candidate said.

Governor Hope Uzodinma of Imo State, said the honour was well deserved, considering the historical impact of President Buhari's administration on infrastructure in

the state, with upgrade of higher institutions, road constructions and appointments in key positions.

According to him, the inauguration of the MCC road in the central city by the President further revealed the penchant for approving projects that would improve the livelihood of the people.

"Words are not enough to show

our appreciation to the president," the governor said, noting that crude oil theft in the state had been halted by creation of a naval base by the president, and more security structures had been put in place for the wellbeing of the people.

His words: "To further show love by our people on Valentine's Day, our people have agreed to support

our presidential candidate and other APC candidates in the polls.

"Traditional rulers are not partisan, and they have told me in confidence that they will support our party, because of love for President Buhari," the governor hinted.

Chairman of the Imo State Traditional Council, Eze Imo, His Royal Majesty, Eze Dr Emmanuel

Chukwuaguna Okeke, on his part, appreciated the Nigerian leader for love shown to the South East, and sustained legacy of promoting peace and harmony in the country.

He said giving the president the friendship title on Valentine's Day reflected a new level of relationship inspired by t Buhari's integrity, magnanimity and charity.

## Atiku: PDP Will Form the Next Government

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja and Gideon Arinze in Enugu

Presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, has boasted that the the main opposition party would form the next government after the February 25 presidential bout.

Atiku, who stated this yesterday during the presidential campaign of the party in Enugu State, reiterated that he was going to be the stepping stone for Igbo presidency.

The former vice-president said, "When I came here a few months ago to attend a zonal conference of the South East, I said to the Igbos I am going to be the stepping stone to the Igbo presidency. And I mean it. Whether an Igbo man is from the South East or South South, it is the same race and today, my running mate is an Igbo man. It is a universal

ethnic group, it is a universal race.

"So, my fellow brothers and sisters, the people of Enugu State, I want you to continue believing and I want you to continue supporting the PDP because PDP is Enugu and Enugu is PDP. I want to let you know that this country is geared towards electing a PDP government. Do not be an exception and do not be a minority. The next government is going to be formed by the PDP."

"Therefore, as you have always been, be in the mainstream of Nigerian politics because that is the only way that can bring about the prosperity, economic development, the peace and the security you are looking for in this part of the country and the country in general."

National Chairman of the party, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, said voting the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) would not solve the problem

of Nigeria, and therefore, urged the people of Enugu to vote the main opposition party.

He said, "In the next eleven days Atiku Abubakar will emerge as your next president with Ifeanyi Okowa as his vice-presidential candidate. I

want to assure you that immediately after that, the next governor will be Mr. Peter Mbah. I don't have much to come here and campaign to you because it's like already talking to the converted. You are all believers in PDP."

## Rotary Club Donates Mobility Aids to MMIA

Rotary Club, Lagos, District 9110, with support from the United States (Crutches for Africa) has donated mobility aids to assist passengers at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), who have mobility challenge.

The mobility aids include 10 wheelchairs, five crutches, five walking sticks and five walkers.

The president, Rotary Club, Lagos, Rotarian Joseph Akhigbe, who disclosed this during the presentation of the mobility aids to the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), at the new international airport terminal, in Lagos, was quoted in a statement to have said the donation was a humanitarian service to assist passengers especially those living with disability.

"The reason for choosing the airport as beneficiary of the mobility aids was because the distance from the car park to the departure room is always very far, making it difficult for people living with disability to navigate the area.

"We are making this donation to FAAN for the benefit

of passengers, especially those that have mobility challenge like people with disabilities, the aged, pregnant women and any passengers who need mobility assistance at the airport. We are giving them 10 wheelchairs, five crutches and five walking sticks among others," he said.

Speaking on the next step, Akhigbe said Rotary Club would be donating mobility aids to communities and Primary Health Care Centres in Lagos and Ogun states, who would benefit maximally from the humanitarian service.

Director of Rotary Foundation, UK Eke, said the Club interconnect people and advance the course of humanity, even as he disclosed that the airport creates the means for people to travel from one place to another, and as such it is not a surprise that the club has picked the Airport as one of the beneficiaries of the donation of mobility aids.

"As we travel across airports, we see facilities that are available to passengers that aid their mobility, of which, most of them are not available at the Nigerian airport.

## Amnesty International Tasks FG on Violence-free Elections

Global watchdog, Amnesty International, has again tasked the federal government to ensure that the presidential and National Assembly elections fixed for February 25 are free from violence and intimidation.

It also urged the government to ensure that effective measures are put in place to protect all participants and prevent human rights violations.

In a statement issued last night and signed by its Media Manager, Isa Sanusi, the global rights group called on political parties, politicians, security forces and interest groups to refrain from condoning, or engaging in, violence or incitement that could deprive people of their human rights.

Sanusi quoted the Director of Amnesty International Nigeria, Osai Ojigbo, as saying: "The desperation

of political actors during election campaigns, expressed recently through cases of incitement, as well as attacks on campaign convoys and individuals in some states, is unacceptable. The failure of the authorities to bring to justice those responsible for deadly violence during previous elections has created an atmosphere of impunity and emboldened others.

"There is a pattern of gender-based violence, like threatening women and girls with rape designed to intimidate or prevent them voting, that must cease. Nigerian authorities must uphold their human rights obligations under international law and the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 (as amended) by making sure that advocacy of hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimina-

tion, hostility or violence has no place in the country."

Recounting how the leader of the Labour Party in the Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Victoria Chimtex, was killed on November 28, 2022; Olumo Abolaji of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Kwara State was killed after she was kidnapped in March 2022, a bus carrying journalists in the campaign convoy of Bola Tinubu, the governing APC presidential candidate in Lagos, was attacked on 19 June 2022 and others, Ojigbo called on security agencies to constantly be at alert to tackle insecurity during the elections.

She also noted that security situation in the South-east has deteriorated as the election approaches.

# News



## INAUGURATION OF MOBILE CALIBRATION VEHICLES AND MEASUREMENT EQUIPMENT...

L-R: Immediate past president, Nigeria Institute of Builders, Kunle Awobodu; Director General, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Mr. Segun Ajayi-Kadri; DG/Chief Executive, SON, Mallam Farouk Salim; Director National Metrology Institute, SON, Engr. Bede Obayi; and Director, Training Services SON, Engr. Timothy Abner at the Inauguration of Mobile Calibration Vehicles and Measurement Equipment by Standard organization of Nigeria held in Lagos... yesterday

PHOTO: SUNDAY ADIGUN

# DSS Reinvites Fani-Kayode, Warns Parties, Media against Unguarded Utterances

● *He should apologise to Atiku, military, says ex-vp's aide*

Kingsley Nwezeh and Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

Ten days to the general election, the Department of State Security (DSS), yesterday, reinvited a former Minister of Aviation, Femi Fani-Kayode, over his comments on alleged coup plot, even as it warned political parties and their media managers against unguarded utterances capable of

heating up the polity. It said political parties should apply restraint in their utterances and public communication engagements prior to and after the general election. This is as the Special Assistant on Public Communication to the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, Mr. Phrank Shaibu, has called on Fani-Kayode to tender an

unreserved public apology to Atiku and the military. Fani-Kayode is billed to face the DSS again today, a statement issued by the Spokesman of DSS, Dr Peter Afunanya, stated. "Political parties and their media managers are advised to apply restraint in their utterances and public communication engagements prior to and after the general election.

This is to avoid heating up the polity and evoking tendencies that could lead to violent reactions as well as undermine peace and order", it said. On the second invitation extended to the former minister and one of the media managers of the presidential campaign of the APC, the agency said he is expected to appear before investigators today. "The Department of State Services

(DSS) hereby informs the public that it invited Chief Femi Fani-Kayode to its National Headquarters, Abuja on 13th February, 2023. The invitation was in respect of an investigation of some of his allegations and insinuations relating to issues relevant to national security. Chief Fani-Kayode faced a panel, which interviewed him on the subject matter. Afterwards, the service granted him administrative bail and directed that he makes routine returns to the office with effect from Wednesday, 15th February, 2023 till otherwise. The investigation, however, continues," it said.

Meanwhile, in a statement, yesterday, Shaibu said Fani-Kayode's "regret" was not enough without a public apology issued to Atiku and the military. "To ensure that he is truly remorseful of his self-confessed lie that the presidential candidate of the PDP, Atiku Abubakar, met with army

## Afenifere Reiterates Opposition to Interim Govt, Calls for End to Cash, Fuel Scarcity

Deji Elumoye and Udora Orizu in Abuja

A pan-Yoruba socio-political organisation, Afenifere, has called on the President Muhammadu Buhari-led government to assist any temptation or pressure to foist on Nigeria any form of change of government that was not a product of democratic practice.

Afenifere, which made the call in a press release by its National Publicity Secretary, Comrade Jare Ajayi, yesterday, also sought an end to the cash and fuel scarcity currently plaguing the country.

According to group, the latest call was necessitated by a disclosure by the Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, that some elements within the presidency were scheming to have the president foist an Interim Government on Nigerians.

Afenifere said its call was not necessarily in support of the Kaduna State governor or because of its interest in any particular candidate.

The organisation went further to say while it was not always in agreement with the position of Governor El-Rufai on some national issues, however, on this particular one, it was in agreement with the governor and all those who insisted that elections must hold on February 25 and March 11, 2023 as scheduled.

Afenifere then warned that those who might be thinking along this line should perish the thought as such portended grave dangers.

"Rather, we are making this call because of the sacrifices we, along with many other Nigerians, dead and alive, have made to ensure that we have civil rule. We are happy that we have had about 24 years of civil rule and six transitions between one civilian administrations to another

since 1999. "There is no doubt that we can have better administrations and that we are desirous of having a change. But that change must be through democratic means as enshrined in our constitution. It is in this respect anything that could prompt the change of government through any other means is unacceptable."

Speaking on currency swap, Afenifere while lamenting sufferings of Nigerians, urged President Buhari to compel the CBN governor, Godwin Emeziele, to reconsider his stand, and at the same time, called on Buhari to also compel the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to flood the market with needed fuel at very affordable prices.

"Reports from every part of the country are disturbingly revealing in terms of the agonies people are going through because of the difficulties they are having in obtaining cash. Lives have been lost while properties running into millions of Naira have been destroyed by those who were protesting out of frustration.

"Many men and women have resorted to antics that are degrading such as exposing their bodies in bank premises to demonstrate how desperate they were. Fuel stations, court registries, shopping malls and even banks have been reported to refuse receiving the outgoing currency notes thus putting millions of people in jeopardy. Yet, Mr Emeziele said that the situation is 'calming down!'"

"Emeziele was reported to have dismissed the idea of any re-consideration of the February 10 deadline on Tuesday, February 14th when he visited the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Abuja to discuss the monetary and currency

redesign policy of the apex bank. "The position of the CBN boss in this regard became more disturbing because it was in flagrant defiance of the order given by the Supreme

Court that both the old and the new Naira be continued to be regarded as legal tender pending the determination of the main suit brought by three state governments.

### PRESIDENCY: FG, CBN TO TAKE POSITION ON CURRENCY SWAP AFTER S' COURT DETERMINATION TODAY

"We are trying to make things good for our country, we cannot allow even some of our countrymen who want to get involved in illegal and illicit kind of businesses to truncate our efforts in making the country a good place. They will be arrested.

"We have seen videos of people who are also stamping money on people in parties and we have said that it is illegal; it is there in our law that it is illegal to stamp money and those who have been caught - they will go to jail because we need to do things right as a country. They have to go to jail so that can set example that we must be law abiding citizens in our country.

"We should not take advantage of situations to create pain for people who generally want to conduct economic activity in the country."

### Governors Mopping Up New Notes, CSOs Allege

A coalition of 472 civil society organisations (CSOs) alleged that 10 governors were mopping up the new naira notes in circulation in order to discredit the policy. National Convener of the Coalition under the aegis of Council of Civil Society Organisations, Obed Okwukwe, stated this at a world press conference.

Okwukwe alleged that the state chief executives he described as "G-10 Governors," were determined to undermine all constitutional means of achieving the policy aimed at

sanitising the economy. He said the group had uncovered a plot by the 10 governors to make Nigeria ungovernable if the policy was not reversed.

Okwukwe said, "These governors are mopping up the money and stopping it from circulation. The CBN had announced that it deployed N300 billion in cash as the first tranche of cash it disbursed.

"We all can agree that the money was hijacked and did not trickle down to the people and the people who took hold of it from the commercial banks have not brought it out to circulate.

"They are withholding the money using various means, including deploying agents, who use multiple ATM cards to withdraw the money, colluding with their banker agents to continue to trap the moneys in the banks and buying off cash from business places that ordinarily make huge cash transactions, like petrol stations, supermarkets and departmental stores.

"This has made some of these businesses insist on only cash payment as the profit they make from the sales of the naira covers for the loss of business from those who do not have the cash to pay."

He alleged that the governors who approached the Supreme Court against the currency redesign policy did so without the love of their people.

Part of the text of the speech Okwukwe delivered read, "Since the implementation of the new

naira policy, Nigerians and, indeed, the system have started seeing the gains.

"Except for the hitches of the unavailability of cash, particularly for small businesses, which is caused by sabotage from those who do not want the policy so they can continue with their illicit trade, other major indicators show that the impact of the policy on our economy is quite positive.

"Also on security, the impact is being felt, as kidnappers now know that there is no cash to pay for ransom. On our electoral process, it is now obvious to Nigerians that it is only the vote buyers that are complaining.

"This policy is facing a syndicated attack from a group of governors who we have termed the G10 Governors. These governors have vowed that this policy will not see the light of day.

He added, "They are willing to go the extra mile, including making our country ungovernable and undermining constitutional governance and bring the entire country to a halt, all for their own reasons, which are selfish.

"Money moves in cycles. Banks pay out money and money is paid into banks. That is how cash circulates in an economy. So do we not wonder why banks pay out money and the money is not paid back into the bank?"

Okwukwe further said, "We have uncovered a grand plot, I repeat, we have uncovered a grand plot

by 10 governors who have resolved to make Nigeria ungovernable for President Muhammadu Buhari if he refuses to reverse the new naira policy.

"It is amazing to note that the governors behind this plot were the same governors a couple of years ago who took advantage of every opportunity to praise President Muhammadu Buhari to high heavens.

"However, obviously, because the second tenure is coming to an end, these governors now believe that the president is not deserving of their respect.

"That is quite hypocritical. It means all they were showing the president was sycophantic solidarity, hence, we must, therefore, remind them at this point in time that President Muhammadu Buhari is and still remains the President and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria until the 29th May, 2023 and not one day before."

Meanwhile, supporters of the new currency policy, who embarked on a peaceful street protest yesterday in Abuja came under heavy attack by thugs and street urchins.

The Civil Society Organisations Central Coordinating Council, which is the apex organ of all civil society organisations in the country, briefed the press before embarking on their march. They had set out to march to the office of the Attorney General of the Federation before they were attacked.



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## NFF Confirms MKO Abiola Stadium to Host S'Eagles/Guinea Bissau Clash on March 24

Following the approval of only two venues for Nigeria by the Confederation of African Football (CAF), the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) yesterday picked the MKO Abiola Stadium in Abuja to host the Super Eagles home tie against the Wild Dogs of Guinea Bissau.

The encounter is Match-day 3 of the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations

### AFCON 2023 QUALIFIER

THURSDAY reported last week that CAF had approved 24 out of 42 stadiums across the continent to stage the remaining qualifying matches out of which MKO Stadium and Nest of Champions in Uyo

are the only approved venues for Nigeria.

NFF confirmed yesterday that the Abuja stadium is to host the Super Eagles match on Friday, 24th March while the Federação de Futebol da Guiné-Bissau is

yet to pick a date for the second match, which could be either 27th or 28th March in the Moroccan city of Marrakech. Guinea Bissau does not have a CAF-approved playing turf in the country of slightly over two million people.

On the first day of the qualifying series, the Super Eagles fought back from a ferocious start to the game,

and an 11th minute goal by Jonathan Morsay, to defeat the Leone Stars of Sierra Leone 2-1 in Abuja, after Alex Iwobi and Victor Osimhen hit back hard at the visitors.

On Day 2, away in the Moroccan city of Agadir and in only the second competitive match for Coach José Santos Peseiro, the Super Eagles set a new international win-record,

defeating Sao Tome and Principe 10-0 with four of the goals by Osimhen, Terem Moffi (with a brace), Moses Simon, Oghenekaro Etebo, Ademola Lookman and Emmanuel Dennis completed the carnage.

Victory in both matches against the Wild Dogs will certainly pave the Eagles' path to Cote d'Ivoire 2023 now moved to January next year.

## UCL: Coman Repeats 2020 Heroics to Give Bayern Edge at PSG

Kingsley Coman repeated his 2020 Champions League final heroics as Bayern Munich beat Paris St-Germain in their last-16 first-leg tie.

The Frenchman volleyed home the winner early in the second half in Paris.

Coman also scored the only goal when Bayern overcame his former club PSG to win the trophy three years ago.

Substitute Kylian Mbappe, back after injury, looked to have rescued a draw for the hosts, but his late effort was ruled out for offside in the build-up.

Ligue 1 champions PSG have now lost their last three matches in all competitions.

In contrast, Bayern are unbeaten in all competitions since 17 September and now favourites to reach the quarter-finals, despite having defender Benjamin Pavard sent off for a second booking in injury time.

PSG were boosted beforehand with Lionel Messi fit enough to start up front after recovering from a hamstring injury, while Mbappe

was on the bench.

There was also a start in midfield for Warren Zaire-Emery who, at 16 years and 343 days, became the youngest player ever to start a Champions League knockout stage game.

The Frenchman was born in 2006, the same year in which Messi, 35, won his first Champions League title.

Elsewhere, AC Milan defeated Tottenham Hotspur 1-0 to gain a slim home advantage in their Last 16 clash last night.

Brahim Diaz's snatched the lone goal winner for Milan at the San Siro.

Tottenham will have seen enough to believe they can overturn it back in London in a fortnight.

RESULTS
PSG 0-1 Bayern Munich
AC Milan 1-0 Tottenham
TODAY
Dortmund v Chelsea
Club Brugge v Benfica



Bayern Munich's French forward, Kingsley Coman in muted celebration of his lone goal defeat of PSG...last night.

## Saudi Arabia to Host 2023 FIFA Club World Cup

Saudi Arabia has been chosen to host the FIFA Club World Cup for the first time, from 12 to 22 December.

The announcement comes three days after Real Madrid lifted the trophy in Morocco, following a thrilling 5-3 win over Al-Hilal, the first Saudi club to reach the final of the tournament.

Saudi will be only the sixth host since the competition's inception in 2000.

The country's sports minister said hosting the tournament signalled "our desire to be a force for good".

Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in sporting events in recent years, but has been accused of using events to 'sportswash' its reputation.

The country has been criticised for its human rights record by organisations including Amnesty International and Reprieve.

Earlier this month, co-hosts Australia and New Zealand asked FIFA to "urgently clarify" reports that Saudi Arabia's tourism authority is to be named as an official sponsor of the 2023 Women's World Cup.

A deal with Visit Saudi, which is set to be announced, has been criticised by human rights groups.

Amnesty said in a statement on Tuesday: "FIFA has yet again disregarded Saudi Arabia's atrocious human rights record."

"Hard on the heels of awarding the Visit Saudi tourism site as a sponsor of the Women's World Cup, it has announced the kingdom as host of the Club World Cup without any consideration of freedom of expression, discrimination or workers' rights."

HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal previously told BBC Sport that he believes the country will always face global criticism.

On the announcement of the Club World Cup, he said: "We are honoured and extremely excited to be given the opportunity to welcome

the world's leading football clubs and their fans to Saudi Arabia."

"Many fans will have recently witnessed our ability as a nation to compete at the highest possible level on the pitch. Now we have the chance to prove we are also world-class hosts off it."



### HONOUR FOR SANWO-OLU...

L-R: Former Super Eagles player, Waidi Akanni; Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu; former Super Eagles Captains, Daniel Amokachi and Peter Rufai presenting the official match ball of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar to the Lagos State Governor after a tournament organised in his honour at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena in Onikan, Lagos... on Monday

## Zenith Bank Basketball League to Bounce Back after Elections, Says NBBF

The Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) has promised to resuscitate the women's basketball league sponsored by Zenith Bank PLC after the forthcoming 2023 general elections.

The women's basketball league, which hitherto had been suspended for the last two years, had left the players uncertain about the future of the league.

NBBF Vice President, Babatunde Ogunade, has however cleared uncertainty surrounding the resumption of the league. According to him, the federation has put everything in place to ensure the revival of the female league.

"The female league is going to come up very soon, we are worried about the timing because of the election since there are home and away games and they are playing the games in different centres all over Nigeria."

"We are mindful of putting the girls in harm's way because of elections, we have to be very careful also. Yes, they have to play the league but we are worried about security. We have a sponsor anyway," he said.

Group Managing Director of Zenith Bank, Ebenezer Onyeagwu, also stated that the outfit was ready for the 2023 edition of the women's basketball league.

"We are always ready for this every year but one issue or the

other affected the plans. First it was COVID and later it was the crisis in the federation, we are happy all is good now. We tried to stage it late last year but it was a little late."

"It is always our pleasure to contribute to development of sports especially the growth of women which has helped Nigeria to be champions of the Women Afrobasket back-to-back-to-back," Onyeagwu said.

Also, speaking with NBBF Queens Coach, Mrs. Ochuko Owolabi, expressed eagerness over the return of the female league, saying that the girls have been starved for years.

## Sports Minister to Flag off National Cross Country Race in Jos

Minister of Sport, Chief Sunday Dare, will flag off the National Cross Country race on Friday in Jos, Plateau State.

Disclosing this in Lagos on Tuesday, the Race Coordinator, Tony Oshoku, said the Sports Minister is a fitting choice to flag off the historic race not only because of his position as the leader of the sports family in Nigeria but also because he is the first Sports Minister in almost 40 years who has shown genuine concerns about developing distance running in Nigeria. "There

was no hesitation over the choice of Chief Dare," said Oshoku who assured all arrangements for a very successful event have been concluded.

"Chief Dare has heard the cries of Nigerian distance runners who have been craving the attention they are getting now for almost four decades. He is the first to organize a training camp for them last year in Jos and now, he is the brain behind the first National Cross Country race in about 40 years" Oshoku says the right step is

finally being taken to ensure a proper development plan is put in place and believes Nigerian distance runners will, in no distant future feature in international events to earn money and win medals for Nigeria.

"Just as you cannot make omelette without breaking eggs, I also know you cannot develop top quality distance runners without the cross country. What the National Cross Country race is going to achieve is to create the awareness for the athletes of the

need to include cross country training as part of their training regime."

"The best distance running nations in the world don't joke with cross country training and competitions. This helps greatly in building the physical and mental stamina of athletes. Most of the best distance runners in the world, past and present ran and still run cross country regularly," added Oshoku who made his mark as an athlete in the middle distance.

"I think all lovers of distance

running in Nigeria should be grateful to chief Dare who is making Saturday's race in Jos possible."

Meanwhile, Oshoku says the choice of Saturday February 18 date for the event is symbolic.

"The World Cross Country Championships will be holding in Bathurst, Australia the same day as the Jos race. We agreed to the date in order to draw attention to the fact that the future of distance running in Nigeria depends on Cross Country training."