

Buhari Urges European Nations, Others to Grant Africa Debt Relief

● Assures foreign investors of stable fiscal policies

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday urged European nations and international financial institutions to grant debt relief to African countries.

He also gave an assurance that Public-Private Partnership (PPP) will be fully explored to ensure more precision in development, cutting down waste and reducing chances of corruption.

In addition, Buhari urged investors to further explore vast opportunities of human and natural resources in Nigeria, while assuring them that fiscal policies will be more favourable, predictable and

measurably tilted towards creating a harmonious business environment.

The president, in his presentation at the Financing Africa Summit, held in Paris, with the theme: "External

Financing and Debt Treatment," called on European countries and global financial institutions to consider reducing the devastating effect of the Coronavirus pandemic on the African economies.

This, he said, could be done by restructuring debt portfolios, opting for complete relief, and releasing vaccines to the continent, which is still

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APC Governors Storm Calabar, Lobby Ayade to Defect... Page 5

THIS DAY

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Persistent Arson Threatens Future Elections, INEC Warns

● Two more offices set ablaze in Ebonyi ● Meets with security agencies May 24

Chuks Okocha in Abuja and Benjamin Nworie in Abakaliki

Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission

(INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, yesterday expressed concern about the spate of arson attack on its facilities, especially in the South-

east, warning that it might compromise the commission's ability to conduct hitch-free elections in future.

The commission has also

shifted a planned meeting with security agencies to brainstorm on protecting its assets, earlier scheduled for yesterday to Monday.

The number of INEC's facilities torched in recent months rose to 23 yesterday as hoodlums set ablaze two of the commission's offices

in Ebonyi State.

Yakubu, at a meeting yesterday in Abuja with

Continued on page 8

Govs Okay Full Deregulation of Petrol, N385 Pump Price

● Want three refineries privatised after rehabilitation

● Recommend purchase of buses to cushion effects of price increase

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Ahead of today's Federation Accounts Allocations Committee (FAAC) meeting, the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) yesterday at its virtual meeting considered the report of a committee headed by Kaduna State Governor, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, and accepted its recommendation that backs full deregulation of petrol, and suggests that the pump price of the product should hover around N385 per litre.

The committee also recommended that the federal government should buy 113 buses to cushion the effects of the price increase, a reliable source at the meeting told THISDAY.

el-Rufai's six-man committee was set up early this year

by the National Economic Council (NEC) headed by Vice President Yemi Osinbajo to look into the dwindling revenues of states and make recommendations to the council.

Apart from el-Rufai, Governors Godwin Obaseki of Edo State, Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State; and David Umahi of Ebonyi State are also members of the committee.

The other members of the committee are the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr. Godwin Emefiele, and the Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Mallam Mele Kyari.

The four governors, who are members of the committee,

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China Joins CBN, Bans Cryptocurrency Transactions... Page 5

OILY TALKS IN PARIS...

L-R: Chairman/CEO of Total, Mr. Patrick Pouyanne; President Muhammadu Buhari and Group Managing Director, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Mallam Mele Kyari, after a meeting with Total Group in Paris... yesterday

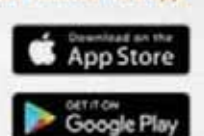
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more than banking

Lawan: No Predetermined Position on Constitution Review

● Senate suspends plenary

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

The President of the Senate, Dr. Ahmad Lawan, yesterday assured Nigerians that the National Assembly will not preclude any section of the 1999 Constitution as altered from being considered for amendment in the review process scheduled to take off next week in the six geopolitical zones.

He appealed to Nigerians dissatisfied with 1999 Constitution to present their observations and propositions at a two-day public hearing next week in their zones as the National Assembly has no predetermined stand on any issue that could demand its review.

He gave the assurance at plenary after reading a letter from the Chairman of the Senate Constitution Review Committee, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege, to announce the chairmanship composition to oversee the two-day public hearing on proposals to alter the provisions of the 1999 Constitution.

According to him, the review will avail Nigerians the opportunity to make submissions on any issue of interest, adding that the National Assembly on its part, will prioritise such issues to enhance the welfare

and security of citizens.

In an apparent move to douse tension generated by his opposition to Southern governors' demand for restructuring, Lawan said the National Assembly holds no predetermined position on any issue of interest to Nigerians ahead of moves to amend the 1999 Constitution.

He said: "This is a very important exercise for our country, and I'll take this opportunity to appeal to all Nigerians who have one issue or the other that they think the constitution review of the Senate should know and take note and address.

"It's an opportunity to go to the centre nearest to you. We are open, we are plain; we don't have any preconceived or predetermined position on anything.

"The numerous issues that Nigerians feel should be addressed to make Nigeria better, to make citizens secured, and enhance the welfare of our people are topmost in our consideration."

Lawan announced the suspension of Senate plenary next week, saying "because of this so important assignment, by this very important committee of the Senate, the Senate will

suspend plenary throughout next week.

"This is to enable not only the committee members but the rest of us who are not even members of the Constitution Review Committee to participate in the exercise.

"We wish our committee on the review of the constitution the best of outing, and Nigerians should take every possible opportunity to be there to present whatever they feel strongly about how this country could be better. [And] we are welcoming every suggestion and issue."

According to him, the zonal public hearing is scheduled to hold in two centres in each of the six geopolitical zones.

In the North-central, the Jos centre will cater for Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue States, and will be chaired by Senator Abdullahi Adamu. The Minna Centre will cover Niger, Kwara, Kogi and FCT with Senator Abdullahi Aliyu as chairman.

The North-east is split into Bauchi Centre (Bauchi, Yobe and Borno) and Gombe Centre (Gombe, Taraba and Adamawa) with Senators

Abubakar Kyari and Danjuma Goje respectively as chairmen.

In the North-west, the Kaduna Centre, which covers Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa and Katsina States, has as its Chairman, Senator Kabiru Gaya, while the Sokoto Centre covering Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States, will be chaired by Senator Muhammed Aliero.

Senator Orji Uzor Kalu is to chair the Owerri Centre which covers Imo and Abia States, while the second centre in Enugu to cover Enugu, Ebonyi and Anambra States, all in the South-east will be chaired

by Senator Ike Ekweremadu.

In the South-south, the Asaba Centre, which caters for Delta, Edo and Bayelsa States, has as its Chairman, Senator James Manager. The Port Harcourt Centre, covering Rivers, Cross River and Akwa Ibom States will be chaired by Senator Betty Apiafi.

The South-west zone has the Lagos Centre (to cover Lagos, Oyo and Ogun States), and the Akure Centre, which caters for Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States and will be chaired by Senators Oluremi Tinubu and Ajayi Boroffice respectively.

China Joins CBN, Bans Cryptocurrency Transactions

Obinna Chima

Three months after the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) banned banks and other key players in the financial sector from cryptocurrency transactions, China has followed suit as it restricted institutions and payment companies from providing services related to cryptocurrency transactions.

It also warned investors against speculative crypto trading.

The CBN, in February, had directed banks and other financial institutions to close any accounts dealing in cryptocurrency or facilitating payment for cryptocurrency exchange, with immediate effect.

The regulator had also directed banks to expose any individual and entity running such accounts, warning that failure to adhere to the directives would attract strict sanctions.

A Reuters report yesterday said the ban by China was its latest attempt to clamp down on what was a burgeoning digital trading market. Under the ban, such institutions, including banks and online payments channels, must not offer clients any service involving cryptocurrency, such as registration, trading, clearing and settlement, three industry bodies said in a joint statement.

"Recently, cryptocurrency prices have skyrocketed and plummeted, and speculative trading of cryptocurrency has rebounded, seriously infringing on the safety of people's property and disrupting the normal economic and financial order," China said in a statement.

The institutions must also not

provide saving, trust or pledging services of cryptocurrency, nor issue financial product related to cryptocurrency, the statement added.

The ban was not Beijing's first moves against the digital currency. In 2017, China had shut down its local cryptocurrency exchanges, smothering a speculative market that had accounted for 90 per cent of global bitcoin trading.

In June 2019, the People's Bank of China had issued a statement saying it would block access to all domestic and foreign cryptocurrency exchanges and Initial Coin Offering websites, aiming to clamp down on all cryptocurrency trading with a ban on foreign exchanges.

The statement also highlighted the risks of cryptocurrency trading, saying virtual currencies "are not supported by real value", their prices are easily manipulated, and trading contracts are not protected by Chinese law.

Meanwhile, following the ban by China, Bitcoin took investors on a wild ride yesterday, plunging as much as 31 per cent before cutting the drop in half in a bout of selling that drew attention across Wall Street and social media.

The extreme volatility in an asset known for its swings caused outages on major crypto exchanges and at one point brought Bitcoin's market value down \$500 billion from its peak last month, according to Bloomberg.

The tumult elicited a tweet from Elon Musk and signalled a "capitulation" on Cathie Wood's crypto monitors.



HOLDING THE FORT...

L-R: Chief of Staff to the President, Prof. Ibrahim Gambari; Minister of Water Resources, Mr. Suleiman Adamu; and Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami, at the Federal Executive Council meeting in Abuja...yesterday

GODWIN OMOIGUI

Judges, SANs, Others Bid Ohwovoriole Farewell

Iyobosa Uwugiaren in Ughelli

Judges, Body of Benchers, Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs) and other leading members of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) at a special court session, yesterday at Delta State High Court, Ughelli, bade farewell to late Chief Milton Ohwovoriole, SAN.

Leading 23 other judges, the Chief Judge of Delta State, Justice Marshal Umukoro, said Ohwovoriole's sojourn on earth was very impactful not only to his family members but to all those who came his way.

Describing the deceased as an ex-crack police detective, a legal advocate par excellence, a traditionalist, a socialite and a good family man, the chief judge said Ohwovoriole will be remembered for his immense contributions to legal practice and humanity.

Umukoro said: "I feel a sense of loss because no matter how old a loved one lived, his passage always evokes a sense of loss. The chaos and stormy torrents that the loved ones go through require grace and fortitude to bear.

"Although the death of a loved one creates a void that is difficult to fill, I, however, feel a sense of gratitude to God

Almighty because late Chief Milton Paul Ohwovoriole, SAN's sojourn on earth was impactful not only to his family members but to all those who came his way."

The Body of Benchers and Senior Advocates of Nigeria in a speech read on their behalf by Chief Albert Akpomudje (SAN) described Ohwovoriole as a philanthropist, who believed and invested in human and societal development, contributed immensely to the advancement of his community and for many decades, awarded scholarships and sponsored the educational pursuits of less privileged persons who are now pillars in diverse fields.

He added that his colleagues will remember him not only as an intellectual juggernaut but also for his invaluable contribution to law and humanity.

He said: "As a legal practitioner, his law chambers at Ikeja, Lagos was a full-service law firm - offering a vibrant practice and opportunities to a countless number of young lawyers who were fortunate to gain employment in his firm.

"Chief Ohwovoriole was an active member of the NBA. He led the Ikeja Branch of the Nigerian Bar Association

as the Chairman between 1985 and 1987 and he was later appointed Life Patron of the Branch in recognition of his huge contributions to the branch.

"At the national level, he was a member of the Council of Legal Education and the Body of Benchers. His conduct of several landmark cases, courtroom prowess as well as contributions to legal practice and jurisprudence, saw his rise to the pinnacle of the legal profession with his conferment of the prestigious rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in 1991."

Also speaking at the valedictory court session, Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Ughelli Branch, Mr. Eromosele Ayo-Okhira, stated that the outpouring of emotions across the country - since the news of Ohwovoriole's departure was made public, were strong indications on how much he was loved by all that came across him.

"From governments, to cooperate bodies, to the legal community, the tributes poured. There are people who die unmourned and unloved; not Chief Prince M. P Ohwovoriole, SAN. His passage has touched

the core of us all. He was a philanthropist.

"He believed and invested in human and societal development. He contributed immensely to the advancement of his community and for many decades, awarded scholarships and sponsored the educational pursuit of less privileged persons who are now pillars in diverse fields."

Holder of chieftaincy titles of the Akpohor and Akpile of Olomu Kingdom, Ohwovoriole was born on June 15, 1940, into the Ohwovoriole dynasty of Agbon-Olomu in present-day Delta State. A direct descendant of Alaka, the founder of Olomu Kingdom, his father, H.R.H. David Ohwovoriole was the Ohworode of Olomu Kingdom. While his mother, Ayoron is from Ovir-Olomu and also a descendant of the co-founder of Ovir-Olomu.

He is survived by brothers, sisters, wives, Mrs. Rosaline Ohwovoriole (Nee Arumala) and Mrs. Christiana Ohwovoriole (Nee Okoriko), many children including, five lawyers made up of a SAN, a Chief Magistrate, a President of District Customary Court, two others in vibrant private practice, grandchildren and a great grandson.

APC Govs Storm Calabar, Lobby Ayade to Defect

Chuks Okocha in Abuja and **Bassey Inyang** in Calabar

Four governors elected on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC)

yesterday stormed Calabar, Cross River State capital, to lobby Governor Ben Ayade to defect from the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the ruling APC,

THISDAY's investigation has revealed.

THISDAY gathered that the four governors are: Dr. Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State; Senator Hope Uzodimma of Imo State; Hon. Simon Lalong of Plateau State; and the Chairman of APC National Caretaker Committee and Yobe State Governor, Mr. Mai Mala Buni.

It was, however, gathered that Jigawa State Governor,

Mr. Abubakar Badaru, and his Kebbi State counterpart, Mr. Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, could not make it to Calabar as bad weather conditions did not allow their aircraft to land.

Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Mr. Timipre Sylva, was also said to be in the APC team.

A source at the Cross River State Government House told THISDAY last night that the delegation was led by Buni.

"They have held a meeting with the governor and they will address the press tomorrow (today)," he said.

He said he was not aware of the governor's response to their mission.

The Cross River State governor is having problems with the PDP over the conduct of the last state congress in the state where he lost control of the structures in the state.

He was absent at the last

PDP governors' meeting in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Following speculations that he might defect to the APC, the Chairman of PDP Governors' Forum and Sokoto State Governor, Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal; Governor

Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta and Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State recently visited him to persuade him not to leave the opposition party.

Sirika: New National Carrier Begins Operations Q1 2022

● Says COVID-19 affected project

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

A new national carrier to replace the liquidated Nigeria Airways will begin operations by the first quarter of 2022, Minister of Aviation, Senator Hadi Sirika, has said.

Sirika told reporters yesterday in Abuja at the end of a meeting of the Federal Executive Council (FEC), that the federal government was committed to providing a national carrier for the country.

He said the initial plan to establish a national carrier in 2021 was affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The minister stated that there is no going back on getting a national carrier for the country.

He said: "It is still in top gear; we are coming back to the council; hopefully in the next two weeks to present the memo on the national carrier. We went to council to approve the outline business case for the carrier; then, the council raised some questions and asked us to go and look at the memo again and bring it back.

"So, once it comes back and the outline business case is approved by the council, we will go to the full business case which is now going to the market and establishing the national carrier.

"It is our intention to have the national carrier running in 2021, which is this year; unfortunately, due to COVID-19, which took the greater part of last year, since March last year, activities have almost been impossible."

He said though the pandemic negatively affected preparations for the establishment of the national carrier, it made it a much better time to establish the carrier than before.

Sirika expressed optimism that when the national carrier begins operations, Nigeria will have fast access to equipment; deliveries of the aircraft will be faster and the rates might be cheaper.

According to him, Nigeria has a massive market and population to sustain an airline, adding that updates will be provided on the progress of the project after the next presentation to FEC.



CAMPAIGN FOR SOCIAL CHANGE...

L-R: Director-General, National Orientation Agency, Dr. Garba Abari; UNICEF Country Representative, Mr. Peter Hawkins; and Director-General, Nigeria Center for Disease Control, Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu; at the launch of the national social behaviour change campaign on Covid-19 in Abuja...yesterday

KINGSLEY ADEBOYE

Rewane Calls for Implementation of PEAC Recommendations

Emma Okonji and **Nosa Alekhuogie**

A member of the Presidential Economic Advisory Council (PEAC) Mr. Bismarck Rewane, has called for the quick implementation of the recommendations of the council, saying it would help address the poor economic state of Nigeria.

Rewane who is also the MD/CEO of Financial Derivatives Company Limited, said this yesterday on the Morning Show of ARISE NEWS Channel, the broadcast arm of THISDAY Newspapers, while reacting to the \$6.18 billion external loan President Muhammadu Buhari seeks to borrow to fund the deficit in the 2021 budget.

Rewane kicked against external borrowing, saying the government must ensure that borrowed monies are put into productive use in order to justify such borrowing.

He said: "Nigeria's economy is faced with structural challenges, with potential GDP drop to about eight per cent, an indication that Nigeria is facing a recessionary gap. The economy is currently growing at almost zero per cent, even though the country recently came out of negative rating, a development that has set confusion among Nigerian investors based on policy issues.

"There is little hope for Nigeria at the end of the tunnel and these are very difficult times, both for investors, consumers and

policymakers."

He, however, listed three ways to address the economic challenges of Nigeria to include: debt management, sustainable reforms and investments, which will boost employment and productivity.

Rewane said debt management should remain key to revamping the economy, adding that the country's total external debt, which was between \$10 and \$12 billion as at 2013, would further rise to \$38 billion if the new loan is added to it.

He said this would put the country's external debt per head on a high pedestal.

He, however, stated that creditors have conditions for loans that have compelled Nigeria to be discipline in debt management, compliance and repayment.

He added: "So as a country, Nigeria has to deal with the debt servicing challenge. Nigeria must ensure that what is being borrowed and invested in should be able to bring reforms that will increase productivity and output.

"There is, however, a number of economic recovery tools that can be used to address the economic situation of the country, which the Presidential Economic Advisory Council that I belong to, has presented to the government. The tools include fiscal tools, monetary tools, and security tools to deal with insecurity and economic disruptions.

"So, if the government implements the

recommendations of the council, and ensures proper coordination between fiscal monetary investments and trade policies, it will address the issues and Nigerians will enjoy the benefits.

"The Presidential Economic Advisory Council has made it clear that the economy is still fragile and needs clear and impactful stimulus that will come in a combination of ways like debts, investments and economic reforms, that will boost the economy again in the areas of productive outputs, employment generation and price stability."

Analysing the \$6.18 billion external loan being sought by Buhari, Rewane listed the three major components of external loan as the multinational debt from World Bank; export credit financing and international capital market funding, which is Eurobond.

Giving details of different forms of loans, Rewane said Nigeria had some commitment from World Bank in financing loans in support of palliatives for pandemic the ravaged situation, and some forbearance under the international debt arrangement and that Nigeria had been a recipient of major investments from the Chinese government, in terms of some infrastructural projects like railway and airport projects that the Chinese government was part of in Nigeria.

"Nigeria, just like other African countries, will be approaching the international market to float a Eurobond of

about \$3 billion. In January this year, Nigeria repaid \$500 million. So, looking at the situation of Nigeria, giving the record of her past borrowing, financial analysts are worried about the actual project that President Buhari wants to use the \$6.18 billion loan to fund, in terms of output and productivity.

"The fact that Nigeria's total factor productivity is currently at negative, Nigerians are afraid that the current move by President Buhari to borrow \$6.18 billion could further plunge Nigeria into serious debt. But if the money will be used to finance and complete the ongoing railway construction, then it will boost productivity in the transport sector, and once productivity and output are increased, then the income per capital will get better, and hopefully, the insecurity that has led to political misunderstanding and conflicts in the country, will be addressed," he said.

Rewane added that if there was increased investment in ICT in the area of broadband, Nigerians would benefit from the impact of the use of broadband for things like telemedicine, where patients could see their doctors even from remote locations without travelling to have physical contact with them.

"Again, Nigerians will benefit from e-commerce and online communication using internet data that are all driven by broadband. What government should be looking at when seeking external loans,

is the impact and productivity. The gains from the projects can be used to fund investments, finance education and healthcare, among others," he said.

On the state of the economy, Rewane expressed concern that Nigeria currently has a five-year average growth rate of less than one per cent but in the past 10 years, the country's average growth rate was about five per cent, which shows that the economy is performing sub-optimally and is fragile.

Giving details of the poverty reduction strategy of the PEAC, Rewane said the council once came out with a poverty reduction strategy for Nigeria, and three levels of poverty reduction was suggested.

He listed the three levels as removing people from poverty, preventing people from going into poverty and ensuring that those within the workforce, are productive.

He said: "In the area of investment in agriculture, for instance, only two per cent of the cultivatable land in Nigeria is irrigated and Nigeria has over 28 dams that are idle. Nigeria needs to invest in dams by using resources to reactivate idle dams so that people can become productive in the area of agriculture. When people are productively engaged, it will reduce the migration of people to urban areas and also reduce conflicts. Most of the investments will reduce the number of people in poverty."

Discussing the consequences of subsidy removal in the oil and gas sector, Rewane described subsidy as reversed taxes, adding that subsidy would continue to distort the allocation of resources.

"The figure presented to Nigerians is that Nigerians consume 93 million litres of petrol daily. I do not know how they arrived at that figure, but the reality is that even five years ago, when the economy was still booming, and Nigeria's had several cars registered to themselves that reached 200,000 registrations in one year, the petrol consumption then was about 30 million litres. Now that the economy is declining, and there is a contraction of economic activities, it is expected that the country's petrol consumption be less than what it is today, and what this means is that the consumption rate of petrol was able to reach 93 million litres per day today, because some people are smuggling petrol out of the country.

"So the removal of subsidy has become necessary, and when this is achieved, it will stop the distortion of the allocation resources and it will compel people to go into productive activities rather than unproductive activities. Removal of the subsidy must be strictly followed by efficient deployment of resources, such that the money will be used to finance projects that will have a direct impact on the economy and the people," Rewane stated.



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PAGE EIGHT

IG Launches ‘Operation Restore Peace’ in South-south

Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja

Barely 24 hours after the Acting Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Usman Alkali, launched ‘Operation Restore Peace’ in South-east, the IG yesterday launched the same special security action plan in the South-south.

Force Public Relations Officers (PRO), CP Frank Mba, said in a statement yesterday that the IG flagged off the special operation at the Sharks

Football Stadium, Port-Harcourt in Rivers State.

Mba quoted the IG as saying that the move was a continuation of the implementation process of the special operation in the country.

The IG further said the operation in the South-South region was also targeted at stemming the tide of violent attacks and breakdown of law and order.

According to the IG, the

launch of ‘Operation Restore Peace’ in the South-south will also help to contain the heightened threats to lives and property occasioned by the secessionists’ activities of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) and other criminal elements in the region.

Baba condemned the increased cases of kidnapping, armed robbery, cult-related

violence, economic sabotage and other threats to public safety bedevilling the region.

He further said these crimes were in addition to series of violent attacks on security personnel and formation in the region.

He, however, expressed utmost belief that the new special operation action plan will re-order and stabilise security in the South-South region.

He noted that the personnel

deployed for the operation have been charged to courageously and fiercely defend themselves and innocent citizens as well as critical national infrastructure against any arms-bearing criminal group or elements.

The IG enjoined citizens in the South-south region to give full support to security personnel throughout the period of the operation and beyond.

He re-affirmed that the operation would be people-driven, human-right focused but

ruthless on criminal elements.

He assured that the new special operation would provide an all-inclusive front to confront criminal elements, take the battle to their doorsteps and re-order the cherished national values of peace and unity in the region.

Mba also said the governor of Rivers State, Mr. Nyesom Wike, represented by his deputy, affirmed the zero tolerance of the state government to crimes and criminality in Rivers State.

GOVS OKAY FULL DEREGULATION OF PETROL, N385 PUMP PRICE

presented its report to their colleagues, who endorsed it.

The report is subject to final approval by NEC, which will also meet today.

However, in a communiqué released after the meeting last night, the governors disclosed that el-Rufai gave a briefing on the appropriate pricing of petrol in Nigeria, where he called for full deregulation.

According to the communiqué, the Kaduna State governor further revealed that between N70 billion and N210 Billion is spent monthly to subsidise the petrol price at N162 per litre.

The committee identified Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Rivers and Abuja as the top consumers of petrol.

Presenting the report to his

colleagues, el-Rufai reportedly said the increase in the price of petrol to N385 per litre would help stem the increasing smuggling of the product to neighbouring countries.

According to him, if petrol sells at N385 per litre, FAAC would gain between N1.3 trillion and N2. 2.3 trillion per annum.

The committee also

recommended that the federal government should sell the three refineries after rehabilitation.

The report revealed that Nigeria lost billions of dollars due to the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that there is already a cash crunch in the states.

NNPC had said that it would remit zero allocation

to FAAC due to the huge cost of subsidising petrol.

Some of the governors at the meeting opposed the recommendations, insisting that they will create more hardship for Nigerians.

Contributing to the report, a South-west governor said that it would be very difficult to convince Nigerians and labour to accept the report.

But other governors insisted that the earlier there is full deregulation, the better for the country as it remains an evil day postponed.

The committee recommended that the federal government should buy and distribute over 113 buses to states and major cities as a palliative to the proposed increase in the price of petrol.

BUHARI URGES EUROPEAN NATIONS, OTHERS TO GRANT AFRICA DEBT RELIEF

behind in protecting majority of its citizens.

According to him, fall in commodity prices as COVID-19 took a toll on the global economy has further slowed growth in some countries and strained health facilities.

He said: “It is in this vein that we solicit the support of the French government with its influence in the European Union to lend its voice to the efforts being made to mobilise additional resources for developing economies, most especially Africa in order to strengthen the quantum of investments to our economies. This financial support should also be extended to the private sector.”

The president said the European Union should encourage fair and equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines in less developed countries, and promote the establishment of manufacturing

facilities.

Buhari stated that many African countries are already experiencing debt distress and the Debt Service Suspension by France and G-20 does not go far enough.

He added that there was need for more sustainable and affordable financing solutions, including debt relief and further debt restructuring.

On the Paris Agreement for Climate Change, the president stated that African countries would need financial support for green energy investment and COP-26, adding that Nigeria will refocus on gas while adopting a Strategic Revenue Growth Initiative.

Buhari, while also speaking on the theme of “Africa Private Sector – Reforms – Infrastructure” said Public-Private Partnership (PPP) would be fully explored to ensure more precision in development, cutting down

waste and reducing chances of corruption.

He said: “The government intends to leverage on Public-Private Partnership to bolster its job creation, and anti-corruption drive. In terms of job creation, Nigeria has an abundant labour force since 30.5 per cent of its population is between the ages of 25 and 54.”

Buhari, at another occasion in Paris, urged investors to further explore vast opportunities of human and natural resources in Nigeria, while assuring them that fiscal policies will be more favourable, predictable and measurably tilted towards creating a harmonious business environment.

The president spoke when he hosted Chairman of Total, Patrick Pouyanne; Executive Vice President, Airbus, Silvere Delaunay; Chairman of the Board of a software company, Dausault Systems, Florence Verzellen;

Chairman/CEO of General Engineering and Marketing of Telecommunications Operator, Francois-Regis Teze and Chairman/CEO, Donaflex Automotive, Dr. Donatus Nwokoye.

At the meeting with the delegation from Total, Buhari said the outlook and potential for growth in the country remained steadily positive and affirmed the government’s commitment to scale up operating standards and policies that encourage mutual benefits.

He said: “We are very pleased with the evolving trends in technology, which is currently driving development across the world and Nigeria. Nigeria is more a gas country than a crude oil-producing country. In the 80’s we generated more from gas, than crude oil. In the ‘80s, we were earning more from gas for some years and had

put in place structures. We intend to further explore the gas sector. I am pleased with your consistency in staying in Nigeria.”

He urged investors to take advantage of the natural and human resources in Nigeria, saying that the demographics favour development, with more young people who are eager to be gainfully engaged and trained.

The president thanked Pouyanne for the company’s consistency and expansion in Nigeria since 1956, assuring him that the government will enhance fiscal stability to favour investors.

“We need to educate the youth and encourage more skills in technology. Technology has been most impactful in all sectors, including the oil and gas, which has witnessed a rapid transformation in exploration, processing and distribution,” Buhari added.

Also speaking, the Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Mr. Mele Kyari, said Total had confirmed long-term investments in Nigeria and had consistently exceeded targets in gas production.

According to him, the NNPC has designed solutions to some of the challenges in the oil and gas sector, particularly on tax.

Pouyanne told the president of the readiness of the company to stay in Nigeria, and to further expand interest in oil, gas, solar and other commodities that will directly impact the lives of citizens.

He said investors had been eagerly waiting for the passing of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) as it would send a strong signal of more predictability.

“Total is very committed to Nigeria. We have no intention of leaving Nigeria,” he said.

PERSISTENT ARSON THREATENS FUTURE ELECTIONS, INEC WARNS

the Resident Electoral Commissioners (REC) from the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), said event in the recent past like the burning of the offices and damage to the INEC property would endanger the conduct of elections in the country.

He said: “Unfortunately, some events in the recent past have challenged the commission and adversely affected our commitment to continue to improve the electoral process. The spate of arson and vandalism targeting the commission’s facilities and property has become profoundly worrisome.

“Unfortunately, this has been on the rise since the 2019 general election but has now developed into a crisis. In the last three weeks or so, three of our local government offices in Essien Udim in Akwa Ibom State, Ohafia in Abia State and Udeni in Enugu State have been set ablaze by unidentified persons.

“Last Sunday, 16th May 2021, our state office in Enugu suffered yet another arson and vandalism in which parts of the building were ransacked and several vehicles razed. And more of our facilities are being systematically targeted and attacked. Just last night, Tuesday 18th May 2021, two more offices in Ebonyi and

Ezza North Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State were burnt down.”

According to him, although no life was lost, the damage to the physical infrastructure and electoral materials was total.

“Nothing has been salvaged from ballot boxes and voting cubicles to generating sets and office furniture and equipment.

“Surely, these attacks are no longer freak events but appear to be quite orchestrated and targeted at INEC. Clearly, these are acts of unjustifiable aggression, which may undermine the commission’s capacity to organise elections and dent the nation’s electoral process,” he added.

Yakubu said the facilities of the commission were there to serve the local communities in exercising their franchise, adding that targeting such important national assets and repositories of electoral materials that took time and enormous resources to procure cannot be justified.

He said: “Replacing these facilities in the prevailing economic circumstances will indeed be a tall order, thereby adversely affecting electoral services in the same communities. These facilities are not only limited to voting but also used for other critical electoral activities such as voter registration, the coordination

of stakeholder engagements and voter education and sensitisation.”

According to him, the commission will work with the security agencies to deal with the perpetrators of these heinous crimes in accordance with the law.

Yakubu added that the meeting with RECs will take briefings from across the country on threats to INEC facilities and deliberate on how best to protect them.

“I believe that we can dig deep and draw from the commission’s longstanding partnership with communities in this regard, in addition to depending on the invaluable support of our security agencies.

“Consequently, the challenges posed by these threats notwithstanding, we are still positive that we can find lasting solutions to the spate of attacks on our facilities,” he stated.

He explained that this must be done quickly to forestall disruptions to upcoming electoral activities, particularly the continuous voter registration billed to hold in 2,673 centres nationwide for over one year.

However, he said that on the positive side, the commission conducted 28 out of 32 by-elections across the country since the 2019 general

election, in addition to four end-of tenure governorship elections in Bayelsa, Edo, Kogi and Ondo States.

According to him, the commission must reconcile itself with the fact that elections have become an all-year round undertaking in Nigeria.

In addition to the by-elections, he said INEC successfully concluded stakeholder engagements on the expansion of voter access to polling units.

He said: “I am glad to inform you that the option of converting existing voting points and voting point settlements into full-fledged polling units and situating them in the most agreeable locations to support increased voter access was overwhelmingly accepted by Nigerians. Consequently, the commission has, in the last three weeks, concluded the actual exercise as well as the verification of the newly established polling units.

“In the next few days, the commission will meet to finalise the compilation and coding of polling units and thereafter make the information public.

“As you are also aware, our current strategic plan covering the period 2016-2021 expires at the end of this year. Consequently, the committee

set up by the commission to develop the 2022-2026 strategic plan has concluded its work, the validation of which will commence this week.

He also said that INEC had completed preparations for the resumption of the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) commencing on June 28.

Yakubu stated that preparations for the Anambra State governorship election, to be held on November 6, and the FCT Area Council election scheduled for February 12, 2022, will be prioritised.

Similarly, he said INEC would continue the early preparations for 2023 general election.

According to him, the commission has already established an Election Project Plan (EPP) Committee to work on the 2023 election plan, with the aim of completing the plan early enough and ensuring that INEC is fully ready for the election.

Hoodlums Set Ablaze Two INEC Offices Burnt

Meanwhile, two offices of the commission in Ebonyi State have been set ablaze by hoodlums.

The two INEC offices are located at Ezza North and Ebonyi Local Government

Areas of State.

It was gathered that the hoodlums invaded the two separate offices in the early hours of yesterday and set them ablaze, resulting in the destruction of sensitive and non-sensitive documents.

Ebonyi State Governor, Chief David Umahi, who confirmed the incidents, said some of the security challenges in the state were politically motivated.

TSI THISDAY STOCK INDEX			
TOP GAINERS	NGN	NGN	%
MRSOIL	1.10	12.10	10
SEPLAT	62.00	682.00	10
STERLBANK	0.15	1.69	9.7
JAPAULGOLD	0.05	0.57	9.6
REGENCY	0.03	0.37	8.8
TOP LOSERS	NGN		%
C&I LEASING	0.50	4.50	10
AIRTEL	93.00	837.00	10
BOCGASES	1.22	11.03	9.9
ROYALEXCH	0.08	0.75	9.6
NNFM	0.55	5.60	8.9
HPE Nestle Nig Plc ₦1,420.00			
Volume:	153.643 million shares		
Value:	₦2,446 billion		
Deals:	3,494		
As at yesterday 19/5/2021			
See details on Page 35			

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NEWS

Nigeria will Not Disintegrate, Says Sultan

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III yesterday said Nigeria would not disintegrate, despite agitations from different quarters.

Abubakar, who spoke at the Second Quarterly Meeting of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) in Abuja, said he would always advocate for dialogue as a way to achieve peace no matter the situation.

"People have been talking about war; there will not be war in Nigeria; who is going to fight who? In families we have Christians and Muslims, you have ethnic nationalities in your country; you have inter-married.

"So, all this noise people are making is trying to draw attention to what they can get out of this country, and if you look at them, they are in the minority.

"In this country, there are excellent people that mean well for common man and humanity, and that is what God created us to do."

The Sultan who is also the Co-chairman of NIREC said he is a believer of dialogue which his religion taught him.

The religious leader who expressed sadness over the security situation in the country said: "So, let's continue to work together, let's continue to sit together, let's continue to dialogue, am a total believer in dialogue and nothing will change my mind because my religion teaches me to always dialogue and I believe no problem is too big enough not to be resolved when we sit down and talk because even wars are fought to bring peace but if you know you can bring peace without fighting a war, then why do you have to take up arms.

"Peace is the most important aspect of our lives because without peace we can't even worship. It is a very trying time for our country Nigeria for so many reasons, most notably insecurity which does not allow anybody to do what he or she wants and at the time and place he or she wants.

"That's why we are very worried about the way things are in our Great country at this time because things are really very stressful and there is no doubt about it, and you don't have to tell anybody things are bad, and I believe that the authorities know much better

than us".

On his part, the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Reverend Samson Ayokunle said insecurity has paralysed activities across the country.

Ayokunle who is also the Co-chairman of NIREC said

food security is being threatened as farmers are being killed by bandits in their farms.

He said: "Many things are not right with the nation, the most challenging one today is insecurity which has almost paralysed all human activities apart from the havoc the

restriction brought about by Covid-19 has done.

"To travel short distances today calls for serious prayers, and traveling with perhaps every security personnel because of kidnapping for ransom, ritual killing, armed robbery, insurgents attack, banditry and other forms

of violent attack.

"Farmers' lives are threatened on their farms while some have been killed while farming. The result of attacks on farmers is a scarcity of farm products which will lead to famine if care is not taken by those in authority quickly".



PROMOTING RELIGIOUS HARMONY...

L-R: Governor of Plateau State, Hon. Simon Lalong; President General, Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs/Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar; and President, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Rev. Samson Ayokunle, during the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) meeting in Abuja... yesterday

ENOCK REUBEN

NLC Suspends Kaduna Warning Strike after FG's Intervention

● *El-Rufai vows to deal with labour leaders*

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja and John Shiklam in Kaduna

Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has suspended its five-day warning strike in Kaduna State to honour an invitation by the federal government to broker truce in the ongoing industrial crisis in the state.

NLC President, Dr. Ayuba Wabba, told reporters in Kaduna that following the invitation by the Minister of Labour and Productivity, Dr. Chris Ngige, the union had decided that the warning strike, billed to terminate tomorrow would end yesterday.

He said: "As you are aware, we have said time without number that any time there is an opportunity to have a discussion over an industrial relation issue, particularly, like the one we have, we will always avail ourselves the opportunity to attend such meetings.

"This afternoon, an official letter was communicated to the NLC National Headquarters, signed by the Minister of Labour, Dr. Chris Ngige, and all of us must have seen the decision of the Federal Executive Council that intervention should be made and all parties should be brought to the negotiating table to look at the issue at stake with the aim of resolving them."

He said that having received the letter, the NLC, at its meeting, thought that it was important to honour the invitation.

He said: "The meeting is scheduled for tomorrow (Thursday) by 11 am in Abuja and we thought that it is important for us to honour the meeting. The leadership of the NLC alongside the leadership of NLC in Kaduna State will attend the meeting because this is an issue that pertains to workers in Kaduna."

Senate Tells FG Halt 5G Network Deployment in Nigeria

The Senate yesterday asked the federal government to suspend plans to deploy the 5G network technology in Nigeria till further notice.

The red chamber also directed the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), and the Mobile Network Operators to put the exercise on hold to enable the lawmakers to study the trend of 5G deployment across the world.

The Senate took the decision when it considered and passed the report of its Joint Committee

on Science and Technology, ICT, Cyber Crime, and Primary Health chaired by Senator Oluwemi Tinubu.

The upper chamber had on May 5, 2020 mandated the joint committee to conduct investigations into the status of the 5G network in Nigeria and its technological impact on Nigerian citizens."

The development followed a motion by Senator Uche Ekwunife.

The committee recommended that Nigeria should still observe the trend of 5G deployment around the globe and engage in

extensive sensitisation of the public through all channels before the commencement of commercial deployments in the country.

The Chairman of the joint committee, while presenting the report, said the overwhelming aggregate opinions from the majority of stakeholders was that it is appropriate for Nigeria to join the comity of nations that are engaged in the deployments of 5G for all its inherent gains

Tinubu said the joint panel was convinced that having witnessed

what has been achieved by its 'lesser ancestors' such as 3G and 4G, the technological impact of 5G will be such that will revolutionise Nigerians' way of life from education to agriculture, security to entertainment, and governance in general if the technology is deployed; Part of her report read, "The committee clarified that there was no 5G deployment in Nigeria at the moment and that no license has been issued to any Mobile Number Operator on commercial basis.

Kaduna Gives Condition to Meet with NLC

John Shiklam in Kaduna

The Kaduna State Government last night disclosed that it may not attend the meeting with the Minister, of Labour and Employment, Dr. Chris Ngige and the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) scheduled for today, saying it has not seen any evidence that the labour leaders have suspended what it described as "campaign of economic and social sabotage against the people of the state."

The statement issued by the

spokesman of Governor Nasir El-Rufai, Mr. Muiyiva Adekeye, after the NLC announced the suspension of its warning strike, said the state government will not participate in any negotiation when residents of the state were still being denied their right to electricity.

The statement said, "The Kaduna State Government is yet to see evidence that the NLC is backing off from its campaign of economic and social sabotage against the people of the State.

"Electric power is yet to be restored, after it was shutdown at dawn on Sunday, May 16, 2021, in brazen violation of the laws protecting essential services and infrastructure.

"That action removed any basis for state government officials to meet the NLC last Sunday"

Adekeye stated further that "Denying our people electricity about 18 hours to the advertised commencement of their organised sabotage was akin to putting a gun

on the government's head. "Government has a lawful duty not to indulge blackmail.

"Restoring electricity is vital to relieving some of the pain that needless acts of lawlessness have inflicted on our people. The unimpeded provision of essential services is vital to civilised order.

"Those who have disrupted it should promptly reverse themselves, not expect that it will be a matter for negotiation, much less being viewed as a precondition.

Lagos Loses 113 Residents, N24.69bn to Fire Outbreak

Segun James

The Lagos State Government has reported that 113 persons and property worth over N24.69 billion were lost to fire incidents in the state last year.

It also reported that the State Fire Services and other emergency agencies in the state saved property worth N138.54 billion from destruction within the same period.

These were disclosed by the Lagos State's Commissioner for Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Relations, Mr. Tayo Bamgbose-Martins, during the ongoing ministerial briefing to mark Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's second year in office.

Bamgbose-Martins stated that "in the last two years, the Lagos State Government had successfully saved an estimated

worth of properties amounting to N138.54 billion.

"A total number of 2,309 fire and other related emergency calls were also attended to in the last two years.

"Ten per cent out of the 1,899 fire outbreaks that occurred in the state were also reduced."

He further disclosed that "the State Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) in the last two years recorded landmark achievements, largely due to the tremendous support and encouragement received from the state government by Sanwo-Olu."

Also speaking during the briefing, the Director-General of Lagos State Safety Commission, Mr. Lanre Mojola, disclosed that the commission registered over 6,000 facilities before they commenced operations amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reinstate Sacked Workers, PDP Tells El-Rufai

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) yesterday charged the Kaduna State Governor, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, to immediately and unconditionally reinstate all the workers he sacked from the state public service.

The PDP expressed shock over alarming reports that the el-Rufai-led All Progressives Congress (APC) government

in the state had sacked about 70,000 workers since 2016, describing it "as wicked, insensitive and unacceptable, particularly under the current economic hardship foisted on our country by the APC administration."

In a statement signed by the National Publicity Secretary, Kola Ologbondiyan, said it is even more worrisome that in its 'arrogant insensitivity',

the state government dismissed many of the workers without recourse to laid down due disengagement processes and benefits as prescribed by the extant labour laws.

The PDP further upbraided El-Rufai for overstepping the law in declaring the President of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Ayuba Wabba, wanted as well as ordering the sack of health workers and lecturers for

joining in peaceful solidarity procession with the sacked workers.

The party said: "Our party insists that the right of citizens to peaceful protest is fully guaranteed in the 1999 Constitution (as amended) and charges El-Rufai to douse the tensed situation by coming down from his high horse, rescind his position and listen to the people.

FEC Okays N10.2bn Projects for Aviation, Water Resources, Presidency

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

The Federal Executive Council (FEC) yesterday approved N10.168 billion for the execution of various projects in two ministries namely Aviation, Water Resources, as well as two agencies under the Presidency.

Speaking to reporters after the weekly virtual meeting at the State

House, Abuja, Ministers of Water Resources, Suleiman Adamu; Aviation, Senator Hadi Sirika; and Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, gave breakdown of the various projects approved by FEC.

Water Resources Minister, Suleiman Adamu said Council approved augmentation for two irrigation contracts, which had

been affected by time and inflation.

He said: "The contracts, Bagwai Irrigation Project in Kano State and the Biu Water Supply Project in Borno State got an aggregate of N8.825 billion.

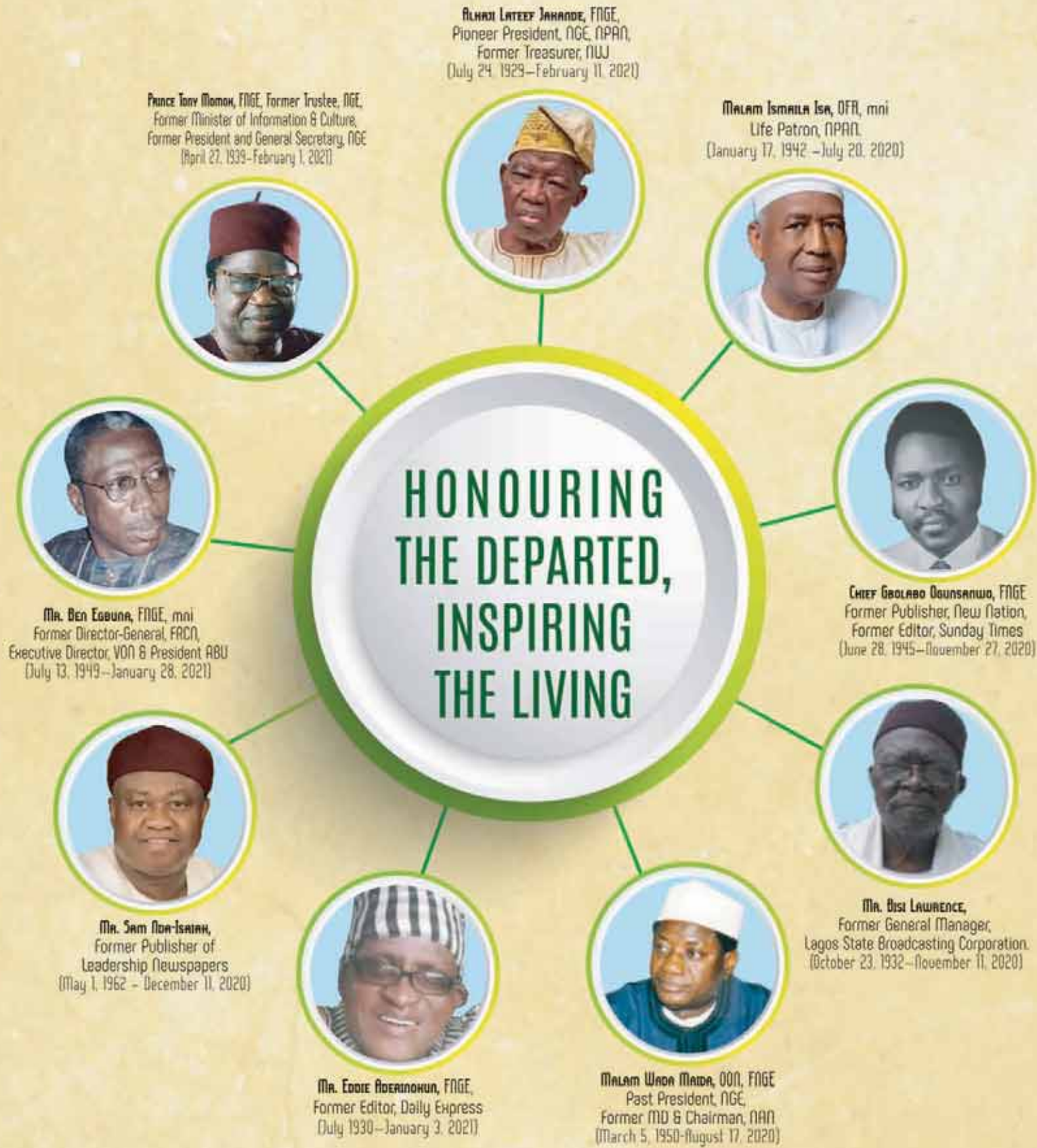
"The first one was for expansion and completion of Bagwai Irrigation Project on Watari Dan in Bagwai local government area of Kano

State. We have sought for an augmentation of N3.76 billion, which was approved. Therefore, Council was gracious to approve this augmentation with sum of N3.762 billion, bringing the new contract sum from N5.4 billion to N9.2 billion, inclusive of 75% VAT, with an additional completion period of 24 months plus another 12 months liability period.



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who passed on in the last year at
An Afternoon Of Tributes



Date: Friday, May 21, 2021 | Time: 11.00am
Venue: Muson Centre, Onikan, Lagos.
In Full Compliance With COVID Protocols

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, GCON, SAN
Vice President, Federal Republic of Nigeria

CHIEF HOST: MALAM HABIRU YUSUF, FNGE
President, Nigerian Press Organisation &
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JOB LOCATION: PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE.
SUPERVISION: Reporting line for all positions is to the Depot Manager, COO and/or MD/CEO respectively.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
JOB TITLE: Chief Operating Officer
CLASSIFICATION: Executive Management
REPORT TO: Managing Director/CEO
QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE:

Candidates should possess at least a Bachelor's (Second Class Honors) Degree in Mechanical or Electrical Engineering, Humanities, Social or Management Sciences etc. from a recognized University. Candidates should also possess professional qualifications in relevant fields. Applicants who possess an MBA and have attended advanced courses in Energy, Petroleum Refining/Trading and Marine Transportation or any other relevant course of study may have an advantage and would also be considered.

- Preferably aged between 45 -55 years, the candidate should have up to 16 years cognate experience in the Oil and Gas downstream sector, preferably in a tank farm environment, seven of which must have been at senior management level. We seek a complete downstream petroleum sector professional for this position.

ASSIGNMENT FOCUS

The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for managing all hands-on operational aspects of the company. She/He will assist the CEO in the aggressive and successful growth of the company. Also ensures the effectiveness of the company's strategic plan, linking it with her trading activities and day to day operations.

ROLE

Through a discerning, constructive and energetic style, guided by the objectives of company, the COO provides the leadership, management and vision necessary to ensure that the Company has the proper operational controls, administrative and reporting procedures and proper systems in place to effectively grow the organization and to ensure financial strength and operating efficiency
Primary Responsibilities:

1. Provide day to day leadership and management to a downstream organization that mirrors the adopted mission and core values of the company.
2. Responsible for driving the company to achieve and surpass sales, profitability, cash flow, business goals and objectives.
3. Responsible for the measurement and effectiveness of all processes internal and external. Providing timely, accurate and complete reports on the operating condition of the company.
4. Spearhead the development, communication and implementation of effective growth strategies and processes.
5. Collaborate with the management team to develop and implement plans for the operational infrastructure of systems, processes and personnel designed to accommodate the rapid growth objectives of our organization.
6. Motivate and lead a high performance management team; oversee the attraction, recruitment and retention of required members of the executive team not currently in place, mentoring as a cornerstone to the management career development program.
7. Act as lead client-care-officer through direct contact with every client and partner.
8. Assist as required in raising additional capital at appropriate valuations to enable the company to meet sales, growth and market share objectives.
9. Foster a success-oriented, accountable environment within the company.
10. Represent the firm with clients, investors, business stakeholders and Government Agencies.
11. Reviews operating results of the company, compares with set objectives, identifies root causes of weak performance and ensures appropriate measures are taken to correct unsatisfactory results.
12. Monitors market trends, competitor activities and consumer preferences as well as positioning the Company to exceed customer expectations.
13. Ensures compliance with industry, regulatory and company's policies and procedures.
14. Provides monthly management updates/reports for MD/CEO and the management team.
15. Performs other assigned duties as delegated by the MD/CEO from time to time and deputizes in his absence.

SKILLS & COMPETENCIES

1. Good communication.
2. Ability to multitask
3. Proactive and Innovative
4. Able to make the right decisions under pressure with little or no supervision.
5. Creative thinking and very good personal organization etc.
6. Good interpersonal relationship.
7. Team player.
8. Strong problem solving skills
9. Business Acumen

OTHER REQUIREMENTS: Special Knowledge & Experience

- Understanding of the transport industry and an ability to relate with shipping companies, maritime agencies and other associated industry managers. Experience in cost efficiency and productivity optimization through improved process optimization. Extensive understanding of modern terminal operations, Extensive knowledge of company operational procedures, Experience in finance related matters, setting budgets and reporting against financial objectives, Ability to provide leadership, obtain cooperation and assistance to meet objectives.

DEPOT MANAGER

DIRECT REPORTING LINE: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
INDIRECT REPORTING LINE: MANAGING DIRECTOR/CEO
SUPERVISES: Maintenance, Operations, Security, HSE, Logistics and Information Technology functions

JOB SUMMARY:

The Depot Manager is responsible for managing all operational activities in the depot. He manages all phases of terminal operations: tanker receiving, storing and delivery of petroleum products. He ensures that HSE standards are met by personnel and customers as well as ensuring the efficiency of entry, dispatch and logistics processes. He is the predominant authority in defining operational plans.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Enforcing and sustaining HSE Practices, Controlling and preventing product loss / stock management, Ensuring operating license and permits are renewed in time to avoid service interruption, Reviewing and optimizing standard operational procedure, Training of terminal personnel to increase professionalism in line with industrial tendencies, Ensuring terminal assets are maintained in accordance with preventive maintenance program, Participating in stakeholders meeting to improve on logistics and operations associated with activities of storage facilities in the neighborhood, Planning, scheduling, monitoring and supervision of all aspects of the daily depot operations to ensure safe depot operations at all times, sustainability, zero incidence and injury, Develop procedure manuals in line with industry practice for HSE, maintenance, Operations, Logistics, etc. to ensure smooth and seamless operations within the depot, Plan product supply in conjunction with trading department and monitor vessel loading/discharge activities, Ensure that truck loading operations and all other depot activities are conducted with adherence to safety and other applicable regulations, Oversees daily monitoring of stock in the storage tank to ensure no product loss, Provide periodic report to make recommendation to management on required upgrades and modification in the depot, Coordinate all depot activities with regards to government agencies – PPPRA, PPMC NPA, NIMASA, DPR etc., Ensures the security of the depot and machinery at all times.

SKILLS REQUIRED:

Good Communication skills, Personnel management, Analytical skills, Ability to work under pressure and with minimal supervision, Negotiation and conflict resolution skills.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS: Knowledge & Experience

Understanding of the transport industry and an ability to relate with shipping companies, maritime agencies and other associated industry managers, Experience in cost efficiency and productivity optimization through process optimization, Extensive understanding of modern terminal operations, Extensive knowledge of company operational procedures, Experience in finance related matters, setting budgets and reporting against financial objectives, Ability to provide leadership, obtain cooperation and assistance to meet objectives.

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE:

Candidates should possess at least a Bachelor's (Second Class Honours) Degree in Mechanical, Electrical, Petroleum Engineering etc. from a recognized University. Candidates should also possess professional qualifications in relevant engineering fields e.g. COREN or NSE registration. Applicants who have attended advanced courses in Energy, Petroleum Refining/Trading and Marine Transportation or any other relevant course of study may also be considered.

- Preferably aged between 40 -55 years, the candidate should have up to 13 years cognate experience in the Oil and Gas downstream sector, preferably in a tank farm environment, five of which must have been at senior management level.

MAINTENANCE MANAGER

JOB SUMMARY:

Manage a team of professionals ranging from Engineers to painters, artisans, craftsmen, contractors and vendors.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Generating facility maintenance plans for all company movable and immovable assets. Work procedures and strategies for all maintenance jobs.
2. Ensures that materials supplied to the company are of approved standards.
3. Assigns work to sectional supervisors and ensures jobs are done within shortest possible time frame to avoid downtime especially during loading operations.
4. Prepares annual maintenance budget and manage facility expenditure.
5. Coordinate all truck and equipment repairs in line with established company procedures.
6. Prepares cost estimates for new projects.
7. Liaise with contractors/vendors for maintenance back-up services.
8. Maintaining equipment service records by the use of operational data booklet and service card for all company equipment.
9. Manage stock of consumables to ensure efficiency and maintain minimum reorder quantity.
10. Constant reviewing and optimizing of maintenance SOP for the team.
11. Attends technical and HOD's meetings as may be scheduled
12. Always working with the HSE department to ensure all jobs are done in line with company Safety Standards.
13. Day to day checks of all unit panels for optimum production performance

SKILLS & OTHER REQUIREMENTS

1. Team Player, good motivational abilities and communication skills.
2. Very innovative and goal driven abilities.
3. Advise on new ways of doing the same thing to save cost and get better results.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE:

Candidates should possess at least a Bachelor's (Second Class Honors) Degree in Mechanical or Electrical Engineering from a recognized University. Candidates should also possess professional qualifications in relevant engineering fields e.g. COREN or NSE registration.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

1. Preferably aged between 38 -50 years, the candidate should have up to 11 years cognate experience in Oil and Gas trading, preferably in a tank farm environment and at least five of which must have been at senior management level.
2. Must possess strong verbal and written communications skills and willing to travel at short notices.
3. Strong negotiation skills, computer savvy, presentations skills, good organization and strong technical abilities.

LOGISTICS MANAGER

ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIP: REPORTS TO THE DEPOT MANAGER AND COO

DIRECTLY REPORTS TO: DEPOT MANAGER/COO

INDIRECTLY REPORTS TO: MD/CEO

JOB SUMMARY:

Manages and coordinates the activities of the Logistics and Transport department. Supervises other staff in the department to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. Engages in revenue drive and optimization through adequate utilization of the trucks in the fleet.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Supervises and Coordinates trucking of products in the depot.
2. Ensures loading Schedules are prepared and trucks are brought into the depot for loading on time.
3. Ensures that way bills and other documentations are properly done and trucks dispatched on time.
4. Liaises with relevant staff to decongest the truck park by ensuring prompt dispatch.
5. Drives the Transport/Haulage aspect of the company to ensure revenue and profit maximization.
6. Develop coherent strategies on how to market company's trucks.
7. Market intelligence to ensure that our transport fares remain Competitive in the market.
8. Liaises with maintenance department to ensure prompt repair and maintenance of our trucks.

9. Tracks the movements of our trucks to ensure that products and/or the vehicles are not diverted to unknown destinations.
10. Prepare daily truck report for circulation to the relevant departments and officers.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE:

Candidates should possess at least a Bachelor's (Second Class Honors) Degree in Transport Management, Business Administration, Economics or any other relevant discipline from a recognized University. Candidates should also possess professional qualifications in relevant logistics/fleet management fields. Applicants who have attended advanced courses in Energy, Petroleum Refining/ Trading and Marine Transportation or any other relevant course of study may also be considered.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- a) Preferably aged between 35 -45years, the candidate should have up to 11 years cognate experience in the Oil and Gas downstream sector, preferably in the Logistics function in a tank farm environment and at least five of which must have been at senior management level.
- b) Must possess strong verbal and written communications skills and willing to travel at short notices.
- c) Strong negotiation skills, computer savvy, presentations skills, good organization and strong business acumen.

CHIEF SECURITY OFFICER (CSO)

JOB DESCRIPTION/DUTIES

- Manage and provide effective leadership to the security team.
- Develop and implement strategic security protocols and procedures
- Ensure adequate professional training of all company security operatives.
- Act as liaison officer between the company, community, clients and other agencies on security related issues
- Overall supervision of security operatives to ensure stability in security operations.
- Carryout background vetting of operatives and any other staff from time to time.
- Secures premises and personnel by patrolling; monitoring surveillance equipment; inspecting buildings, equipment, and access points; permitting entry.
- Maintains organization's stability and reputation by complying with legal requirements.
- Ensure zero tolerance to security breach and failure, e.g. Theft and Burglary

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE:

A good Honors Degree in any discipline with at least Second Class (Upper Division) from a recognized University and not less than thirteen (13) years experience in the police or the Armed Forces/Security Services not below the rank of Superintendent of Police or its equivalent; Age between 45-55 years preferably.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- Intelligence gathering skills
- Security drill design, implementation & reporting abilities
- Shift scheduling skills
- Incident investigation & reporting skills
- Law Enforcement relations
- Computer Literacy

HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

DIRECT REPORTING LINE: Chief Operating Officer

INDIRECT REPORTING LINE: Managing Director/CEO

JOB SUMMARY

- Provides strategic direction and leadership of human resource management activities of the organization, to maximize the strategic use of human resources and maintain functions such as employee compensation, recruitment, personnel policies, and regulatory compliance.
- Responsibilities:
 - Plan, develop and implement strategy for HR management and development (including recruitment and selection policy/practices, discipline, grievance, counseling, pay and conditions, employment contracts, training and development, succession planning, motivation, culture and attitude development, performance appraisal and quality management issues)
 - Establish and Maintain appropriate systems for measuring necessary aspects of HR development.
 - Monitor, measure and report on HR issues, opportunities and development plans and achievement within agreed formats and timescales.
 - Manage and develop direct reporting staff.
 - Manage and control departmental expenditure with agreed budget.
 - Liaise with other functional/departmental head so as to understand all necessary aspects and needs of HR development, and to ensure they are fully informed of HR objectives, purpose and achievements.
 - Maintain awareness and knowledge of least HR development theory and methods and provide suitable interpretation to directors, managers and staff within the organization.
 - Contribute to the evaluation and development of HR strategy and performance in co-operation with the executive team.
 - Ensure activities meet with and integrate with organizational requirement for quality management, health and safety, environmental policies and general duty of care.
 - Audit and authenticate all documents related to salary statements and distribution, policies etc.
 - Develop and Maintain healthy relations with Govt. and Non Govt. Organizations, as well as the local community for better and fast functioning of organization.
 - Plan for employee's performance appraisal; development tools for appraisals, job evaluation and development.
 - Plan and Direct for the training of employee including senior Managers, maintain contact with outside organizations and their resources for the purpose of effective training of employees.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- First Degree in any social science/ humanities discipline and/or a second Degree in an HR related course.
- CIPM/SHRM/CIPD professional certification will be an added advantage.
- 8-10 years post-qualification requisite experience, 5 of which should be as a Human Resources Manager in a previous employment.
- Experienced in the downstream Oil & Gas Sector will be an advantage.
- Preferably aged between 40-50 years.

SKILLS REQUIRMENTS:

- Customer service
- Interpersonal skills
- Personnel/Welfare/Admin
- Presentation skills
- Strong analytical skills
- Computer skills
- Ability to multi-task
- Problem solving skills

METHOD OF APPLICATION

Interested and qualified candidates should forward their resume to **Justapplications42@gmail.com**

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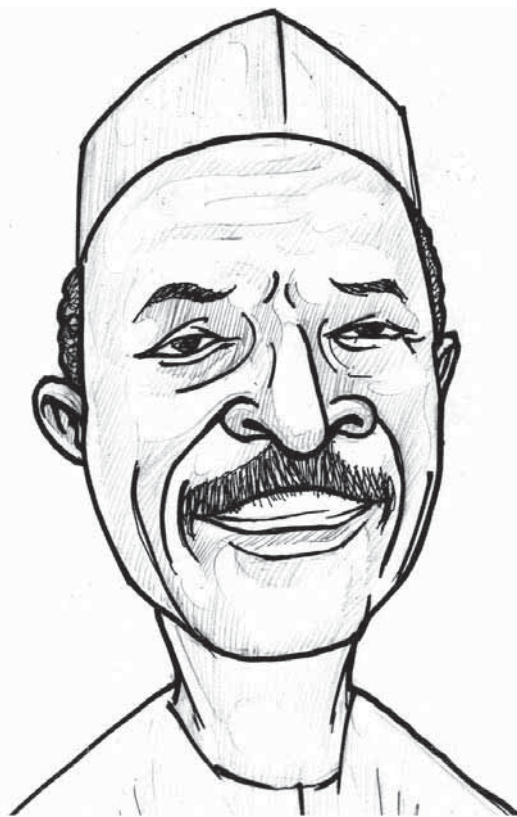
WHY OSINBAJO ATTENDED MUSEVENI'S INAUGURATION

Etim Etim writes that Osinbajo went to represent the President of Nigeria

Some commentators have expressed concern about the recent trip Vice President Yemi Osinbajo made to Kampala to attend the sixth-term inauguration of President Yoweri Museveni. They argue that since the Ugandan leader had been in office since 1986, first as a military leader who seized power through a bloody coup, and has been governing the country badly, Nigeria should have boycotted the event. A columnist with The Punch, Tunde Odesola, wrote that the VP “crash-landed like Humpty Dumpty under the weight of lawlessness” for attending the event. Mr Odesola went on to state that the VP applauded Museveni as “a democratically elected President”. Prof Osinbajo never made such a statement. Apart from the usual pleasantries and courtesies routinely extended to foreign dignitaries at such occasions, Yemi Osinbajo did not make any speech. I just wonder why Odesola had to make up that part of his article. For what purpose? Such illogical comments are the reason some Nigerian writers have lost their leverage, respect and influence in recent years. Many of our opinion writers these days do not exhibit deep knowledge of the matter they comment on; and in place of balanced, well-informed and deep commentaries and analyses that we read in foreign journals, some Nigerian writers routinely resort to name-calling and insults.

First of all, Professor Osinbajo did not go to Kampala on his personal capacity; neither did he attend the event as a friend or in-law to Museveni. The VP attended the inauguration as the head of the Nigerian delegation representing the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This means that for the few hours that he was in Uganda, Prof Osinbajo was representing President Buhari and the over 200 million people of this great country, with all the prestige and honour that go with our name. It is therefore a gratuitous insult to launch attacks at the person of the VP for carrying out a national duty. More so, I should note that the Nigerian government had never taken a decision to boycott the event or sever diplomatic relations with Uganda because of Museveni's bad behavior.

Let me be clear, Yoweri Museveni is a good example of what is wrong in Africa. After 35 years of leading a murderous and dictatorial régime, both as a junta military leader and a civilian despot, the man has nothing to offer his impoverished East African country. The election last year in which the young opposition leader, Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, widely known by his stage name of Bobi Wine, was locked up in house arrest and denied fair chance in the race, showed Museveni's unrelenting determination to sit tight in office. Together with Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Museveni represents the disappearing relics of ancient Africa; the Africa of Mobutu, Ghaddafi, Abacha, Idi Amin and Bokassa! But as we all know, diplomatic relationships among nations abhor undue interference of one country in the internal affairs of another. That is why no country has rolled in tanks into Myanmar despite the draconian crackdown of the new military government there. But where such meddling in the affairs of a country is desirable, it is done under the multi-lateral banner of the UN or the African Union. Remember



YEMI OSINBAJO DESERVES OUR COLLECTIVE RESPECT AND ADMIRATION FOR HIS SERVICE TO NIGERIA. HIS PERSONAL AND OFFICIAL CONDUCTS HAVE BEEN STELLAR

how the AU authorized Nigeria to interfere in The Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone to restore peace and order? So far, neither the UN Security Council nor the African Union has passed any resolution to punish Uganda or Museveni, its leader. That explains why the event was also attended by Presidents of several other African countries, including Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Guinea, South Sudan, Namibia, Ghana, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Tanzania and Ethiopia.

Third, I should also note that attending the inauguration of a leader of a foreign country does not necessarily tantamount to an endorsement of certain inimical practices of such a foreign leader. It is even more beneficial to use diplomatic engagements to mollify a bad leader. Nigeria enjoys a longstanding relationship with Uganda that supersedes current political leaders in both countries and would certainly outlast their respective foibles. Uganda supported the emergence of Nigeria's Ngozi Okonji-Iweala as the WTO DG; Dr Akinwumi Adeshina as the AfDB President and Prof Benedict Oramah as the President of Cairo-based AFREXIM Bank. Nigeria will need a broad continental support in our quest for the membership of the UN Security Council and other leadership of other global organizations. Even managing our security challenges and other continental responsibilities like the recharging of Lake Chad, control of the flows of small arms and reversing of irregular migration across the Mediterranean, our country will always rely on the goodwill of African countries. It was therefore right for President Buhari to send the Vice President to Kampala. Our size, resources and prestige bestow on us a leadership role in the continent. Our country should be proud of its investments in Africa, ranging from our untold contributions to the freedoms of South Africa and the erstwhile frontline states to our contributions to peacekeeping under the banner of the UN. We spent billions of dollars and lost thousands of soldiers to restore peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. Within the ECOWAS sub region, our country is admired, adored and respected for its stabilizing roles in some troubled neighbours. But leadership entails a delicate balancing act. You embrace your friends openly, but whisper the need for them to change their bad habits privately. Nigeria therefore has a responsibility to privately reprimand some African leaders who are still steeped in the old traditions without jeopardizing the need for sustaining mutually beneficial friendships.

In conclusion, I want to say that Yemi Osinbajo deserves our collective respect and admiration for his service to Nigeria. His personal and official conducts have been stellar. His sterling contributions to the Buhari administration and deep loyalty to the President have been very impressive, especially in these trying times when supporters of the government, including some ministers and heads of government's agencies, have retracted from speaking for the government. I commend the VP for being the most visible face of the administration, come rain, come sunshine.

Etim, a journalist, wrote from in Abuja

PATENT WAIVER: BIDEN'S GENEROSITY OR TRADE WAR

Nigeria must hasten up and come to the rescue of Africa, writes **Victor C. Ariole**

Humanity is facing the challenge of an asymmetric war with virus as it brings to fore the Darwin's theory of survival of species and its neo-phase of the “weakest and create a greater disaster for all the chain if not strengthened. The biggest factory of vaccine production is in India and it was anticipated for it to serve the developing world but alas is not even in the mood to satisfy the over one billion population of Indians and, of course, part of the components of the vaccine production – over 40 components – comes from there; a threat to the strong chain of the production line. And who says that all the components could not be found in Africa deemed to be the weakest by mere conjecture of combined forces of the exploiters of Africa.

President Biden seems to be extending hands of fellowship to the so-called weakest as patent waiver is initiated for countries like Nigeria with its great human resource to wake up and take up the challenge to help the rest of Africa.

Building a vaccine factory could not be said to be a rocket science venture, and it must be seen as Schlumberger's type of oil and gas rig “turn-key” projects' installation which is done quite easily in Nigeria for the exploitation of oil and gas. It is estimated that between \$220 to \$650 million is what it takes for Schlumberger to plant oil rig in Nigeria and within months profits are declared

as government waives enormous tax for the exploiters – local or foreign.

President Biden expects such attitude to reign now as he waives patent right which is always waived when USA is in any emergency situation as witnessed in the second world war as well as during the period people like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs needed to propagate USA military inventions for greater use of the world as Technology patent hacking had to be deliberately allowed, and today the internet and computer are everywhere as against being hoarded. It is stated thus by O'Mara (2020, 163)...the USA economy to boost itself, in early 1976, Ford's Commerce Department released a study championing technical enterprises as powerful job creators, finding that young high-tech firms had job growth rates that were nearly 40 times that of mature companies.

Such waiver seems to be what humanity is seeing in Biden's proposal as danger of extinction lurks in the air against the entire humanity.

However, it must not be turned to trade war as China faces the USA in proposing the production of vaccines all over the world picking on Egypt first and looking forward to reaping in profit even when its own brand is 79% efficient as against USA's own at 94 or 97% efficient. Both USA and China had reached herd's immunization of their populations with no fewer than 257 million people and 1.28 billion people respectively. Europe expects to reach by July leaving the rest of over five billion human beings including Africa, India, South

America and South Asia to their fates.

Nigeria must hasten up to come to the rescue of Africa which is over one billion human beings. So, implanting factory or factories in Africa should be done the way oil and gas rigs are implanted in Africa for the exploitation of oil and gas. And, according to reliable sources the components of vaccine production are available in Africa, though they have been purchased in advance by either USA, Europe or China in anticipation of the current crisis, and possibly since 2012 at the time the World Bank veto countries appointed Jim Yong Kim to head the World Bank as physician and anthropologists, capable of knowing how best to develop vaccines as well as allowing his competitor Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala to head the Vaccines Alliance Group. In effect, they knew what challenges the world could be facing at the time. They are both Harvard trained.

They have planned to purchase in advance what it takes to prepare components like filters, bio-reactor bags, tubing, cell-culturing materials, disposable bags, cell sequencing items, serum production, etc; basically packaging and syringe components.

It does not mean that Nigeria's latent or regressive vaccine production knowledge cannot be re-awaken to take-up the challenge.

It was once said that cholera vaccine was developed in UNN by a Professor there. Reading Prof. Wole Soyinka's current book, 2020, he mentioned that Prof. Tam David West, then, in Ibadan, was

about attaining such feat but was abruptly stopped as his sponsors from USA came to his office and packed all his efforts and materials into a refrigerated container and asked him to choose between staying in Ibadan or following them to USA to continue his research; that was on vaccine for Lassa fever. And he rejected following them to USA as all parameters to continue his work were erased.

In effect, the know-how is there to take on President Biden's challenge and all it requires is cargoing a turn-key vaccine factory into Nigeria with 24 hours non-stop electricity, available to such site; and like EU claimed that one billion vaccines could be produced in one year with India's type of factory and it will as well be done in Nigeria; estimated cost of the factory being 12bn euro; and, of course, the raw materials could be found in Africa. However, let it not be trade war issues as profit tends to be the rule now in capitalist and communist – claimed countries. So between saving humanity and searching for profit, Africans ought to know who could be a better ally. Pretensions are hypocritical. Africa has so much given to the world that it could decide to make life difficult in the chain, if pushed to the wall.

Nigeria's policy makers and scientists are now set-up to perform by President Biden and they must not fail. New deal, the USA spirit, beckons. From Europe let it flow to Africa to contain the virus war.

Ariole is Professor of French and Francophone Studies, University of Lagos

EDITORIAL

AFRICA AND CLIMATE CHANGE

A green economy should be central to every policy made in Africa

Despite negligible industrial activities, Africa currently suffers the most devastating impact of climate change, including droughts, floods, and pest invasions. These dire consequences have been put into verifiable costs that could cause further distress for people on the continent. The grim data show, unmistakably, that climate change remains a threat to Africa, with the continent currently losing between \$7 billion and \$15 billion every year to the phenomenon, and the trend shows that it would rise to \$50 billion per year by 2040.

Scientists believe the risks of climate change on agricultural production, food security, water resources and ecosystem services will likely have increasingly severe consequences on lives and sustainable development prospects in Africa. Managing the risk requires an integration of mitigation and adaptation strategies in the management of ecosystem goods and services, and the agriculture production systems on the continent. In addition, it has been determined that solutions to global warming in Africa include effective land use planning to avoid forest degradation, developing renewable energy, and limiting the expansion of coal-fired power plants.

It is noteworthy that Africa is exploring home-grown solutions, but there are strong indications that the continent is likely to benefit from international efforts to reduce global temperature, particularly with the reentry of the United States into the Paris Climate Accord, including taking the leadership role. Environmentalists are of the opinion that raising of climate ambition by the United States and other rich countries should be a good thing for Africa, which could benefit over



time in terms of reduction in the scale and intensity of the negative impact of climate change. Most countries in Africa cannot carry out adaptation plans as stated in their ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution they submitted at the Paris Agreement for lack of funds, and the advent of COVID-19 has worsened the situation. However, Africa is likely to receive more funding from the U.S., which can also unlock financ  from other countries and private entities.

We are optimistic that the low funding arrangement can be improved upon, since the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, in recognition of the inadequate finance available for adaptation in developing countries, particularly those in Africa, called for 50% of all climate finance provided by developed countries and multilateral development banks to be allocated to adaptation and resilience in Africa and in other developing countries. The African Development Bank (AfDB) set the bar in 2019 by allocating over half of its climate financing to adaptation.

What is crucial now is for Africa to move in lockstep with the global community in reducing the impact of climate change. Individual countries on the continent should come to grips with the fact that global green transition has begun and that they must plan to be part of it or be left behind. A green economy should form the fulcrum of every policy made in Africa. This will take careful planning. African leaders need to heed the call, ahead of this year's UN Climate Change Conference COP26 in Glasgow in November, by the President of the conference, Mr. Alok Sharma, and the President of the UN Climate Change Conference COP25 in Madrid, Ms. Carolina Schmidt, on all countries to either follow through on commitments made under the Climate Ambition Alliance, or to join the efforts of the Alliance.

The Climate Ambition Alliance is beneficial to all countries, particularly Africa's, because it brings together countries, businesses, investors, cities, and regions which are working towards achieving net-zero CO2 emissions by 2050, as well as countries committed to updating their national climate action plans under the Paris Agreement - Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

SCIENTISTS BELIEVE THE RISKS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, FOOD SECURITY, WATER RESOURCES AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES WILL LIKELY HAVE INCREASINGLY SEVERE CONSEQUENCES ON LIVES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS IN AFRICA

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NIGERIA AND THE STANDING FAN METAPHOR

Continued from backpage

The main objectives were to determine the effectiveness of the subsidies in these sectors, examine the need or otherwise for continuity and finally, suggest a new framework for a gradual elimination of a patently corrupt and inefficient subsidy regime with the overall aim of improving the general welfare of Nigerians. I am going to be relying on that report (submitted shortly before Yar'Adua fell ill in 2009) very soon to engage why we need a change of approach in Nigeria before this proverbial standing fan stops working, including for those who can muscle their way to the front of the line.

Meanwhile, I have in recent weeks spoken and written about how we have instituted a system in which, having destroyed public utilities and social services, Nigerians have been conditioned to supply their own electricity for power supply, erect their own boreholes for water, pay for their own security and sundry other services that government should ordinarily provide. On top of that, we have built a social security system around the most financially secure person in a household. Yet, as the Yoruba adage teaches, 'Olowo kan, otoshi mefa; Otoshi ni gbogbo won' (a well-to-do individual among poor family members is just another poor person).

The security situation is worse. If you apply the law of the jungle when competing for scarce resources, exemplified by the desperation to stand in front of the standing fan, you should expect high levels of insecurity. Since the beginning of the year, the recurring news in our country is that of killings as criminals have overpowered the capacity of the state. Not only is the list of victims (including personnel of police, military, and other armed services) very long, but there are also thousands of others across the country who have been in prolonged captivity and whose ordeals are heart-wrenching for their families.

Unfortunately, members of the Nigerian political and business elite have been conditioned to believe they live separate lives without realizing that it is in shared prosperity that we progress as a nation. Hijacking a comfortable space for themselves and families in front of a lone standing fan without minding the structural social inequities may usher in temporary relief. But it cannot endure. If we don't improve the living conditions of the majority already condemned to suffer without ventilation and narrow the gaps between those with capacity to muscle their way to the front of the fan, we are courting trouble. In the fullness of time, forces within the majority could begin to push off the privileged, damage the fan and in the process, make efforts towards its repair impossible. Some may argue that we are already there!

I understand many Nigerians romanticize the fact that we are a master of brinksmanship. And there have been situations in the past when it would seem we would go under, yet survived. This much was attested to on 20th November 2006 by former Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku in a speech delivered in London. He said: "The foundations of a strong nation are never built overnight and never run a soft course. The great virtue is to recognise, accept and address the challenge, recognising that, in our fast-moving global setting, no nation can afford to be left behind and each must play to its best advantage. While there have been occasions when some feared that the unrelenting force of tyranny and ungovernable greed might wreck all that had been built over the decades, and the occasional moment of despair when it seemed that calculations or realpolitik staved the hands of those best placed to exercise healthy leverage, divine Providence came through for Nigeria thus enabling it to survive the scare."

While the standing fan is still working and everybody scrambles to position themselves in the direction of the blades, I hope we will not push our luck too far!

Olusegun Adeniyi, Abuja

ART FOR ARTS SAKE

A local newspaper had two articles yesterday that challenge the nature of art, a Lego Sculpture and a Computer portrait.

The first one, a Lego construction that sells for \$1500, seems childish in its use of a child's toy and is potentially dangerous as anyone who has stepped on a Lego block knows.

The second, a computer drawn portrait of Edmond de Belamy, seems derivative and rather blurry but sold for an astonishing \$432,500. This might be a defining example of the computer acronym GIGO - garbage in, garbage out.

A third overall concern is the cost of some art with Wikipedia listing almost 40 pieces sold for over \$100 million. Surely a better use of that money might be to build a few hospitals.

I know art is much broader in range than what I like as art works but at times it seems someone is playing a prank, a very expensive prank on the art world.

Turn the computer off, put the Lego blocks away and get out into the sun with some watercolour paints.

Dennis Fitzgerald, Melbourne, Australia



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‘Bullets Will Not Restore Security in S’East’

Abia State Commissioner for Information, Chief John Okiyi Kalu suggests the way out of the insecurity problem in the South-east and Nigeria, in general, in this chat with **Emmanuel Ugwu-Nwogo**

For years now Abia state has been relatively peaceful but the situation appears to be changing fast now with all these attacks on police stations. How is the state government responding to this frightening situation?

I must point out that, because security is relative at any point in time, Abia is still, relatively speaking, one of the safest states in Nigeria. The current situation we find in Nigeria is generalized insecurity. It's every where in Nigeria, whether in the North-east, North-west, South-west, South-east and South-south. And when you take all the variables together you'll find out that Abia is still one of the most peaceful states in Nigeria. We thank God for that and we'll continue to improve on that. Yes, we have witnessed some attacks against some institutions in the state by some individuals. Not all of them have been apprehended. We believe that the security architecture of this state that was put in place by Governor Okezie Ikpeazu since 2015 is still robust enough to take care of any criminality committed in our area. There's something we always say hear in Abia: You cannot kill, kidnap or rob an Abian and escape justice. We will certainly bring you to justice and we've been doing that. If you look back you'll also notice that not only have we been able to apprehend and bring criminals to justice, we also have one of the best information gathering and early warning system in the whole country. Before the recent events of the past few days this administration forewarned and informed the citizens based on intelligence gathered on the field. Because of that early warning system in place you find that there is a minimal civilian casualty in all these. And while we'll not be making such information public all the time, a lot of attacks have been thwarted, repelled and we'll continue to work hard. We're happy to collaborate with security agencies and we also have within our environment a well established community policing system, including our vigilante services, our homeland security outfit all of which would now be under the umbrella of Ebube Agu.

If you have a robust security system in place, as you said, how come that this pattern of attacks targeted at government institutions have continued with no arrests made, rather we keep hearing of unknown gun men?

It's not true that people have not been arrested. Yes, I know that there have been attacks within our environment involving security formations about five of them. The first was at Omoba divisional police station, then Abayi and then later on we saw the police station at Uzuakoli attacked, which again did not lead to any loss of live or weapons; the one at Abriba, which actually did not happen at the police station but at a check point. And we have the recent one at Ubani market, which did not lead to any loss of lives or weapons. You see, after the first attack we deployed adequately and during the second attack three of the assailants were killed right there. And when we had other attacks arrests were made and security agencies were able to get the information that they are using now from the interrogation of those arrested. During the issue of hidden bomb at a school we adequately gave out information on it. We are using that security architecture and that includes keeping from the public information that we deem highly sensitive because if we keep dishing out such information about who was arrested and the sources of such information that led to the rest, while the media would be happy to report that, it would probably compromise the security architecture of the state. For instance, when the Abia State University (ABASU) kidnap saga came up, rapidly we rescued the only student involved. The only difference is that we have not gone public to discuss details of the rescue. And it is not correct to say that we've not made some arrests. At this time we decided to leave the information at the public space where we left it because we are considering the overall good of the society. It is either you want to play to the gallery or you want to solve problems.

What we have done specially, I don't know if



Kalu

other states are doing it, is to manage security proactively. We have continuously been procuring vehicles for security agencies because we are always prepared for what will happen tomorrow. Without much fanfare, shortly after the EndSARS carnage that led to the loss of vehicles belonging to security agencies, we moved as a government to replace those vehicles. We procured 27 vehicles immediately and gave to the police. And to give further boost to their morale we immediately completed the brand new Zone 9 headquarters at Umuahia, delivered about eight housing units to police officers so that they can have better accommodation. Now that we have these issues of insecurity those things we always try to put in place before now including electronic tracking of criminals which goes beyond using trackers, would be put to effective use. It includes electronic information management system that is placed in strategic places.

All over Nigeria, North, South, East and West, everybody is crying out about insecurity. Does it mean that, in the words of Chinua Achebe, things have fallen apart and the centre can no longer hold?

It depends on if the centre is doing what it should do for it to hold. The situation in Nigeria right now is not irredeemable but can rapidly degenerate to irredeemable level if the right things are not done. And I can define what I mean by the right things. You see, where you have a conflict it is either you talk and stave off exacerbation of that conflict or you decide to talk after the conflict or even at the height of the conflict. We think, and I personally hold that view, that if the Federal Government moves to convoke some form of peace and reconciliation commission or national conference or even dust up the report of the 2014 national conference for implementation, the temperature would go

down. Nobody should deceive themselves or play the ostrich by assuming that there are no reasons why people are agitating. Injustice leads to agitation and agitation leads to violence and we have a very toxic mix currently in Nigeria. The cocktail that has economic crisis and insecurity is an explosive cocktail – bad economy in the bottle with insecurity. It is very explosive and it calls for urgent action by the powers that be and not for playing the ostrich or releasing press statements here and there. All you need to do to stop that bottle containing that toxic cocktail from exploding is to summon an urgent meeting between the people and their leaders. In a democratic setting, government exists at the pleasure of the people. So, government must not assume at any point in time that government is different from the people. This is a democracy. It is government of the people by the people and for the people. We must listen when our people cry out. It is the tendency to sweep things under the carpet that is leading us from redeemable to irredeemable situation.

Let me explain that: For many years, people have been complaining, particularly young people, about what they perceive as injustice in the Nigeria system, what they perceive as marginalization in the Nigeria system, what they perceive as unfairness to certain areas. They went and complained to their political leaders in their immediate communities and those political leaders apparently took those concerns to Abuja but nothing was done and it continued. We saw the first signs that they were frustrated by the fact that the elders could not help and the system could not help in October 2020 when they took matters into their hands via the EndSARS protests. It was a direct slap on the faces of their leaders and their government, saying to them, 'to hell with you'. But the government didn't read it correctly. Some of

them from the eastern part of the country cried out and said, how can you have service chiefs and there is no Igbo man there and you say that we belong to one country. They said, how can you have conceived a national railway network that you are borrowing money from outside the country and you didn't remember to include a rail line that would cut across the South-east region and will lead to North or South West, yet you remembered to do a rail line to Niger Republic which is another country. They asked: are we still part of this country, how come that you have an Abia child that must score above 200 to make unity school and you have a child from another state in Nigeria who have only to score two percent to make unity school. They said that when you look at government at the centre we don't see anybody we can identify with, we don't see an Igbo man as president, as vice-president, as Senate president, as Speaker of House of Representatives. That means this country is marginalizing us, not treating us as part of the citizens. And they said in 2015, 2019 make us feel as part of this country, give the presidency the same way you gave it to the South-west. Because in this country in 1998 we collectively came together and decided that the presidential candidates of the two major political parties must come from the South-west to assuage the anger over the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election. That was done.

And now these young persons said okay, it is time to make an Igbo man the president. They made that point in 2015, nobody listened; they made that point in 2019 and nobody listened. Therefore, they have concluded that their elders sold out, that their elders did not understand that deep feelings that they are not part of Nigeria. Today all that feelings have come together to haunt the nation. When they talk of presidency in 2023 you disdainfully tell them they are not together. Did you tell the West to have internal unity, did you tell the North they must have internal unity before they could have the presidency. Which part of this country has ever had unity before they got the presidency? So they see it that, well, they are not even ready for us to have the presidency in 2023. After examining everything and the seeming incapacity of their own leaders to address this issue they took the matter into their own hands and that is what we are seeing now.

But is the insecurity being witnessed in the South-east entirely a product of youth anger over perceived unjust Nigeria system?

We also understand there are some persons outside the South-east that are exploiting the situation, they are some persons that may have been sponsoring some of the violence we have been having and hide under the back of a particular group and claim that it is the group that is doing every bad thing we are having here. We also see the hand of Esau in some of the attacks. Unfortunately for us the group they are accusing led themselves to the accusation by their own actions. For us we now have an incendiary situation that can explode any moment and personally as John Okiyi Kalu, citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I want to call on the Federal Government to move quickly and call everybody to a round table so that these things don't go beyond the point where it is. We are at the tipping point. Still everybody is living in denial, may be because you're living in Lagos and you think it is the safest place, or in Abuja or wherever you are and you think you are safe there. Nobody is safe because the resources of law enforcement when they are diverted to one location, leaves the other location vulnerable. So, now we have that catastrophic problem that has been going on in the north – Boko Haram when they started this their insurgency some persons said oh attack on Boko Haram is an attack on the North, oh, don't touch them, they are our brothers and so they allowed it to fester. Today those who said that can no longer go home because the violence has festered.

NOTE: Interested readers should continue in the online edition on www.thisdaylive.com

Nobody should deceive themselves or play the ostrich by assuming that there are no reasons why people are agitating. Injustice leads to agitation and agitation leads to violence and we have a very toxic mix currently in Nigeria. The cocktail that has economic crisis and insecurity is an explosive cocktail – bad economy in the bottle with insecurity. It is very explosive and it calls for urgent action by the powers that be and not for playing the ostrich or releasing press statements here and there. All you need to do to stop that bottle containing that toxic cocktail from exploding is to summon an urgent meeting between the people and their leaders. In a democratic setting, government exists at the pleasure of the people. So, government must not assume at any point in time that government is different from the people

‘Nigeria’s Major Security Problems Are Internal’

The Korean Ambassador to Nigeria, Kim Young Chae, recently hosted some journalists, including **Olawale Ajimotokan**, to mark his 100 days in office as his country’s representative in Nigeria. The interview dwelt on insecurity, commerce, military collaboration and education

What is the level of trade between Nigeria and South Korea?

Last year our trade was \$1.2 billion but in 2017 it was \$2.6 billion. It is a pity we have seen several years of decrease in our bilateral trade. I guess, one of the reasons is the sharp fall in the prices of oil and gas. Korea, you may wish to know is a major importer of energy, we are number three importer of gas, we are number five in the world in terms of oil import. The price decrease of oil and gas has affected negatively our bilateral relations and trade volumes. You may also note that some Korean companies complain that when they ship in they have to wait on the sea for month to bring in their items into Nigeria. So when you export something in Nigeria to Korea, let say the shipping cost rise affects Nigeria’s product competitively in a negative way. This kind of thing also affects us negatively. Recently, I met the chairman of Nigeria Export Promotions Council and we discussed how to increase our bilateral trade. He said we have to make sure that export-import are done by private sector not government. We import a lot of Sesame seeds mainly from Ethiopia, but I know that Nigeria also produces Sesame seeds, so if Nigeria’s Sesame seeds have competitive advantage, why not import from Nigeria. We also import a lot of corn and why not Nigeria’s corn or other minerals if it has international competitiveness.

What is the level of cooperation on security between both countries?

On security issue, I see news everyday on Nigeria about kidnapping, banditry, Boko Haram and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and other diverse issues. It is a matter to be discussed among Nigerians mainly, I have to say. It is a different issue and an international issue if outside forces invade Nigeria. Each country has its own security problem; we have ours with North Korea. Nigeria’s major security problems are internal and of course, it has its immediate neighbours like Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin which affect its security directly. In diplomacy we have a saying that good neighbours make you a good person. But it is a little too early for me to open on what we are discussing with Nigerian defence authorities. We are also trying to increase training in military education. For example, we are inviting Nigerian Army officers to Korea each year on the sponsorship of Korean government for two years to have some training and education. Also on commercial basis we have some defence cooperation between Nigerian defence and some Korean private companies. You may know that we are one of major powers in terms of manufacturing and proficient in electronics, semi-conductors, ship building, petrochemicals, submarines, even airplanes.

Has the Nigerian government ever approached South Korea for the purchase of military hardware and other intelligence equipment to be used in tackling the security challenges in the country? Your predecessor left recently. While he was here, he made effort towards bringing Nigeria to appreciate intelligence. Now that you are what is your effort in that direction?

The first one, Hyundai and Kia are auto companies they are major car producers in the world competing with German, Japanese and American cars. Nowadays, Korean cars are well designed and their fuel consumption is very low. I want Nigerian officials to visit Korea and see the tanks, the artillery and small arms among others. They can also see the actual items and actual cost for them to know the capability of the Korean equipment and compare the prices with other countries. In that way we promote defence cooperation. Regarding military training in Korea, you may know that Korea is number six in the world in term



Chae

of military strength. We are also number six in the world in military spending and we are one of the most developed countries in terms of military education. We cannot secure any country without the military. So we have to use the military in a good way and make sure they are in good shape to protect the country. The Korean military is a good example in that area. We have a new defence attache since last year. He is building relationship with the Nigeria military. We want to expand our defence corporation in terms of information sharing among others. And in order to have that we need to sign some sort of documents between our Minister of Defence and Nigeria’s Defence Minister. Our defence attache is working on it and it needs to be discussed between them face to face. We are going to invite the Minister of Defence to Korea to Seoul so that he can meet the Korean Minister of Defence so that we can make progress.

What is the strategy to improve on Nigeria and South Korea’s collaboration in agriculture considering the present security challenges that are deterring farmers from their farms? And what are the major crops you are looking at for that collaboration?

The call for the breakup of Nigeria is not a good idea. We had the Korean War in 1950 and more than one million people were killed. We also had the Biafran war in Nigeria and more than one million lives were lost. To divide a country means cutting your body. Let us imagine we have a whole body and I want to make my own body into two, then we have to cut some portions. And in the process I have to bleed a lot, not to wonder the pains and loss of blood. Nigeria right now is internationally well-acclaimed. The Korean candidate was defeated by a Nigerian candidate, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala for the post of Director-General of World Trade Organisation, which indicates that Nigeria is very strong at the diplomatic level

one farmer taking care of huge area of land. And the productivity is very high. If you visit the Korean countryside almost every family has one car. Some families have more than two cars and their income levels is very high almost comparable to people in the city. So in that way we have succeeded in the strategy towards new village moment. So we are having our pilot project in Katsina State with the farmers in the area. We provide the technology and seeds so they use the technology and knowhow to produce rice there and then Dangote Group purchased the rice and sold it. It is very significant you have to think. Let us assume that as a farmer, I product rice but if I can’t sell the rice, it is useless. So rice farming itself is not farming only, it is closely related with commercial activities. We have to think in Nigeria as well in a holistic way from the beginning to the end. How farmers produce rice is important but at the same time how to sell the product in an efficient and profitable way is very important. We say we have to provide agricultural machineries to Kano State, but if they cannot sell those products what is the use for the farmers? I am told that some farmers are abandoning their lands because of fear of being kidnapped by terrorists. It is a terrible situation. So the production falls. Farmers are reacting to such situation arising from Nigeria’s internal security. We need to discuss how to resolve that. Law and order is the foundation of any country. Without law and order, we can’t succeed in any nation. Media people have a kind of responsibility as private citizens, you have to cultivate and criticize bad behavior and whoever is supporting it.

If you have access to President Buhari what will you tell him in this situation?

It is a huge challenge for any country. About 20 years ago the population of Nigeria was 120 million but now we have 200 million people. It is a huge figure for any country to feed, educate and employ. I think it is very difficult at the same time look at the climate change which is affecting the Sahara Region. So people have little water and food and they are moving to their neighbours, creating a chain effect and huge challenges. Of course we have change issues, I don’t know how to say it, but Nigeria is not fully developed in terms of nation building. I read former President Obasanjo’s autobiography. There he talked extensively about nation building- we have north, east, west, south, Islam, Christianity and traditional practices- all these things. He said a lot about nation building, which is a huge challenge because some scholars mention several levels of identities- religion which is of very high level of identity, lowest level is national and state identity. If I ask a Korean, what is his number one priority in form of identity, he immediately says national identity. Of course he has his religion, home town, tribal and regional identities but when we discuss about national it covers all of our country and so on. The kind of perception and identity we want is not automatically acquired, we have to build and cultivate it. We have to try every day and think of our national interest first. We have to build the mindset as Nigerians. People say that Nigeria is very diverse. For any person, building a nation state and having a national identity is a huge challenge, not only for President Buhari but also for President Obasanjo and President Goodluck Jonathan. It is easy to blame President Buhari, I am not defending him, I am just saying that it is not easy for any president to solve the problem. So we have to understand the situation and think about bringing realistic solution for the country.

NOTE: Interested readers should continue in the online edition on www.thisdaylive.com

Stemming the Tide of Human Trafficking, Irregular Migration

In a bid to stem the tide of human trafficking and irregular migration, **Adibe Emenyonu** reports that the Justice Development and Peace Commission in collaboration with the Catholic Sustainable Measure against Trafficking on Persons recently held an empowerment programme for 30 youths in Edo

The Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) is a ministry of service in the Catholic Church established to cater for all that is in need irrespective of religion, culture, race or gender. The vision of the commission overtime has been to promote justice and human dignity in such a way that people realise their full potentials in a just, safe and free environment.

With a mission to promote a holistic human development through conscientisation of people who are central to any sustainable and meaningful development, the commission over the years have promoted the Christian principle of love of God and love of neighbour in the society; promote human rights as entrenched in the United Nations (UN) Charter and the Banjul Declaration on Human rights.

It has also formed and animated groups to participate in their own development; make preferential option for the poor and marginalised as well as identify unjust structures and take corrective actions.

Not only that, the commission whose formation dates back in time, have promoted the culture of peace through sensitisation and training of the citizenry in civil peace concerns; Catholic social teaching; cooperation with International agencies, government and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) for integral development; research, documentation and publicised information on social issues.

Besides, its main focus has been the caring for inmates and ex-inmates of prisons and their families, the underserved, located mostly in the rural areas; people living with HIV and AIDS; women associations, farmers' groups, youths and the less privileged and of recently, victims of human trafficking and irregular migration.

It is in continuation of these core values with the dynamic professionals of various backgrounds that motivated the commission in further pursuant to bring about qualitative and quantitative change in the lives of their focus groups that it decided to recently empower 30 youths with start-up tools and funds in Benin City, Edo State after they were trained.

The beneficiaries were from six communities in Orhionmwon and Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Areas of the state.

The 30 youths were trained in five core vocations namely; fashion designing, hair dressing, make-up arts, electrical repairs and tiling. The training notwithstanding, the beneficiaries were also given starter parks and N60,000 each to start off their businesses.

Speaking at the event, the Catholic Arch Bishop of Benin Metropolitan See, Most Rev (Dr.) Augustine Obiora Akubeze, said he was pleased to witness the closing ceremony of the project which began in 2018 under the "Sustainable Measure Against Trafficking on Persons" (SMART-P).

He said the objective behind the project is to stem the ugly tide of human trafficking and irregular migration.

The Benin Catholic archbishop who was represented by Very Rev. Fr. Michael Oyanofoh, recalled the programme faced some major challenges like transportation as accessing the communities was a difficult task because of bad roads and unavailability of vehicles.

He also noted the lackadaisical attitude initially displayed by participants from the targeted communities as not encouraging, adding that "some of the communities withdrew from the project during the screening of beneficiaries."

Archbishop Akubeze however, noted that in spite of the initial hiccups, the aim and objective of the programme was still achieved, and advised the beneficiaries to take advantage of the programme to change their lives.

The ceremony also witnessed a bumper harvest for the beneficiaries as the Edo State



Most Rev. Dr. Augustine Obiora Akubeze, representative of Catholic Archbishop of Benin, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Oyanofoh



Cross section of beneficiaries at the Youth Empowerment Programme in Benin City

Deputy Governor, Mr. Philip Shaibu, who was the special guest of honour rewarded the beneficiaries with an additional 50,000 each as a support, and advised them to work hard in other to excel in their chosen fields.

He added that patience, determination, perseverance, discipline and prayerfulness remained the ingredients that drive humans to uncommon successes.

Speaking further, he told the recipients that life is not a bed of roses and that no one cannot predict, pointing however, that with hard work, success is assured.

He told the beneficiaries how he began life as a security man to a Correctional Service Personnel but that today with perseverance, he is Edo State deputy governor to the glory of God and hard work.

According to him, he said as a young man, he vowed not to work for anybody, but at some point he changed his mind even as he became dissatisfied with the work and had to resign.

"After four years of my resignation, life was difficult for me but because of my earlier

resolution not work for people, I kept forging ahead. However, at some point I took a job as a night security guard to a high ranking officer with the prisons department and I particularly preferred the night duties so as to be able to study my books during the day because I was running correspondence courses", the Edo deputy governor stated.

He encouraged all the beneficiaries to be patience, discipline, hardworking and prayerfulness, adding that with honesty and prompt delivery of their services, jobs will begin to flow towards their direction which in turn would bring in wealth and turn them to employers of labours.

The Edo number two citizen, further advised recipients of the various hair-dressing machines, sewing machines, electrical tools, tiling box, trowels, tile cutters, box of mechanic tools, make-up boxes with accessories to pragmatically guard the equipment given to them so as to eke out a means of livelihood from the skills they have learnt during the training period, and admonished them to eschew jealousy because every human being is given different

gift from God.

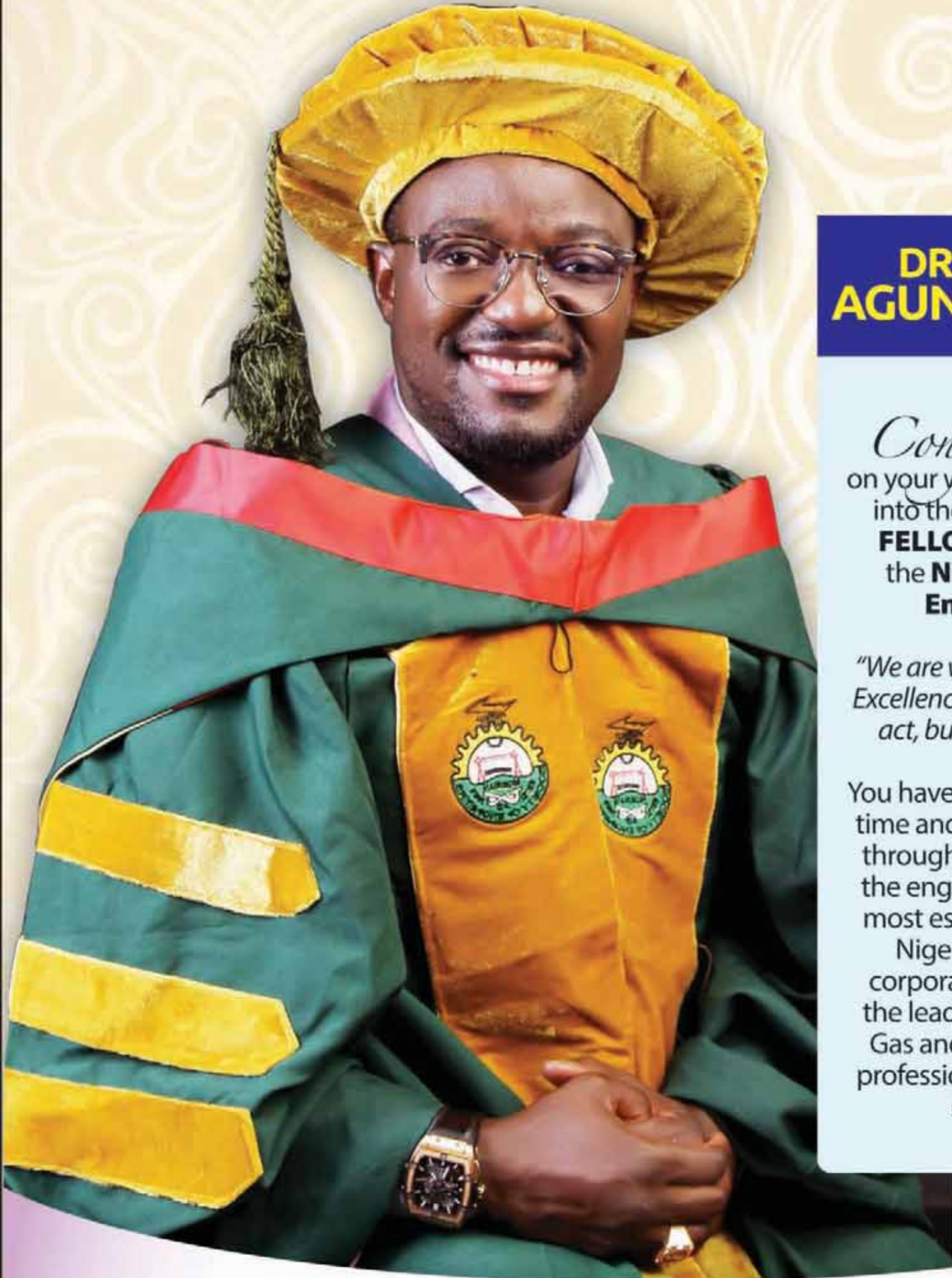
"Do not be jealous of anyone because God gave every human being different gift as no two persons have the same characteristics. Therefore, I encourage you to guard the various equipment and cash grants giving to you and be honest and sincere in your dealings with human beings", Shaibu told the beneficiaries.

In appreciation, one of the beneficiaries, Esther Peters (19), who was trained in fashion designing, thanked the Catholic Church for the training and the empowerment, and expressed happiness for being part of the programme. Her gratitude also went to the Deputy Governor Shaibu for his gesture to all of them (beneficiaries).

Also in his message of gratitude, Victor Amenaghanwon, 26, who was trained as an electrician, said he cannot hide his feelings for the Catholic Church for giving him such opportunity. He said in all his days as an apprentice, he never saw the kind of tools given to him, and pledged to work hard to earn a decent living for himself and be a better person to his immediate environment.

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Group Business Editor Obinna Chima
Email obinna.chima@thisdaylive.com
08152447875

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MONEY MARKET		REPO		S & P INDEX INDEX	S & P		EXCHANGE RATE
OBB	26.88 %	CALL	28 %	INDEX LEVEL	505.64 %	1/4 TO DATE	-9.51%
OVERNIGHT	28.88 %	1-MONTH	30 %	1-DAY	-0.03 %	YEAR TO DATE	-24.56 %
							N379/1US DOLLAR*
							*AS AT LAST FRIDAY



MEDIA BRIEFING

L-R: Marketing Director, Dangote Cement Plc, Funmi Sanni; Group Sales and Marketing Director, Rabiou Umar; and Group Chief Branding & Communications Officer, Dangote Industries Limited, Anthony Chiejina, during introduction of the new Group Sales and Marketing Director of Dangote Cement Plc to the media in Lagos...recently

‘Inadequate Infrastructure, RoW Charges Hindering Broadband Penetration’

Stories by Emma Okonji

TELECOMS

The Chief Operating Officer of MDXi Data Centre, a subsidiary of MainOne Broadband Company, Mr. Gbenga Adegbi, has said the low level of broadband infrastructure across the country, coupled with the indiscriminate charges on Right of Way (RoW) by state and local government agencies, will pose serious setback to the country’s broadband penetration plan. The federal government had projected 70 per cent broadband penetration by 2025 as contained in the Nigeria National Broadband Plan (2020-2025). The broadband plan promises to deliver data download speeds across Nigeria at a minimum of 25Mbps in urban areas, and 10Mbps in rural areas, with effective coverage available

to at least 90 per cent of the population and penetration rate of 70 per cent by 2025 at a price not more than N390 per 1GB of data. The broadband plan also targets the deployment of nationwide fibre coverage to reach all state capitals, and provision of a point of presence in at least 90 per cent of local government headquarters. It also targets tertiary educational institutions, major hospitals in each state and fibre connectivity at statutory rates of N145/ linear metre for Right of Way (RoW). Adegbi who commended the set targets, however said Nigeria still had a long way to go in broadband penetra-

tion across the country, even though the country was making some progress in broadband penetration. In 2001, broadband penetration stood at a paltry six per cent penetration, which rose to 41.18 per cent as at March 30, 2021. Despite the recorded progress in terms of growth in broadband penetration, Adegbi who spoke recently on ‘The Morning Show,’ a programme monitored on ARISE NEWS Channel, the broadcast arm of THISDAY Newspapers, said there were still inadequate broadband infrastructure in the country. According to him, “Nigeria has about five broadband companies that berthed their undersea cables at the shores of Lagos, so Nigeria has sufficient broadband capacities at

the shores of the country, but less than 10 per cent of that capacity has been distributed in the hinterland because the country lacks the national backbone infrastructure that will transmit broadband capacities from the shores of the country to the hinterlands, where we have people and institutions waiting to be connected to broadband.” He quoted the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), as saying that Nigeria has about 40 per cent of 4G penetration. Therefore, he deduced that the country still had about 60 per cent non-coverage areas, which he said was a lot ground to be covered. Adegbi also raised the

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Nigeria to Benefit from UK’s £22m Cyber Capacity Building Fund

ICT

The British Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, has announced £22 million of new investment to build cyber security resilience in developing countries and globally, particularly in Africa and the Indo-Pacific. In a speech delivered at the National Cyber Security Centre’s CyberUK conference recently, Raab announced that the UK would spend about £3 million of the £22 million funding to help Interpol set up a new team that will fight cybercrime in Africa. Nigeria was listed as part of the African countries to benefit from the fund. The new Interpol desk would work across Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda,

creating a regional strategy to support joint operations against cybercrime, and strengthen African states’ capability to combat the crime and those behind it. Since 2018 the UK has been actively partnering Nigeria to support the development of cyber security policies and strategies. Both countries share an ambition to create a safe and secure digital community that provides opportunities for Nigerian citizens and promotes peaceful engagement in cyberspace that enhances national prosperity. The launch in February this year by President Muhammadu

Buhari of the new Nigerian National Cyber Security Policy and Strategy (NCPS) 2021, followed well-targeted UK-funded technical assistance through the UK’s Digital Access Programme. That programme has also funded a project to up-skill Small Medium and Enterprises (SMEs) across Nigeria on cyber basics, which was delivered through the NGO CyberSafe Foundation. The UK Department of International Trade (UK DIT) recently also hosted a virtual event for Nigerian stakeholders interested in cyber security for the financial services sector. According to a statement released by UK’s Embassy in Nigeria, “The current

development is a part of the UKs ambition to build global cyber resilience. We see Nigeria and Africa as a whole as an important partner in this. “With some of the fastest growing economies in the world, Africa has become a target for opportune cybercriminals. By creating a central coordination desk within Interpol that law enforcement across Africa can use, the UK hopes to improve collaboration across borders to advance intelligence sharing, and ultimately stop the perpetrators of cybercrime in Nigeria and across Africa.” Speaking at the conference of security experts, the Foreign

Continued on page 24

Quick Takes

Twitter Adds Voice to Direct Messages

Twitter has added voice conversation to complement its existing Direct Messages (DMs) service. According to a statement, “Twitter is where you go to talk about what’s happening. We are constantly listening to what people who use Twitter want and testing new features to make it even easier for them to have conversations anywhere on our service, including Direct Messages (DMs). “To make chatting in DMs more convenient, we are bringing voice messages to DMs.” The experiment is rolling out in Turkey and Nigeria, and it is expected to give people more ways to express themselves clearly and quickly, whether they’re on the move, or there’s just too much to type.” For a hands-free experience, in a DM conversation, account holders can tap the new voice recording icon once to begin recording. Also, tap the stop icon when completed and people will have the option to listen to their recording before sending or deleting it. Alternatively, they can also quickly send by holding down the voice recording icon and swiping up to send immediately after they’re done talking. There is a limit of 140 seconds for each recording, Twitter said in a statement it released. The statement added that there remained a lot that could be left unsaid or uninterpreted using text, “so we hope voice features on Twitter will create a more human experience for listeners and storytellers alike.” “We want to encourage everyone to start private conversations about what matters to them using voice messages. We are looking forward to seeing how our feature is used in Turkey and Nigeria, and receiving the feedback on the experiment,” the statement further added.

Edniesal Consulting Holds Award Ceremony

Edniesal Consulting Limited, enterprise governance and corporate services firm, has announced plans to host the second edition of its Chief Information Officer (CIO) Awards on November 26th, 2021. Building on the successes of the maiden edition held in Lagos last year, this year’s awards will also recognise outstanding professionals and organisations, who have during the year under review, delivered business value to their organisation and the industry at large, through the innovative use of technology. Announcing it at a press conference in Lagos, the CEO of Edniesal Consulting and chief organiser of the event, Abiola Laseinde, said: “CIOs have overtime been responsible for delivering top-of-the-line innovation and business value within their organisations while also being at the forefront of decision-making and strategic change. This class of business leaders is hardly visible nor celebrated in most organisations, but now their role has increased in importance over time as they evolve from information to innovation and leading the digital transformation initiatives. In some companies, depending on the organisational culture, they are asked to wear multiple hats of business strategists and change leaders.” According to the organisers, pre-activities, and calls for nominations for the CIO of the Year 2021 in various categories will commence from May for the duration of three months. Part of the activities leading to the award includes the first capacity-building programme for the CIO Club members, which is scheduled to hold this month.

Bolt Supports Gender Inclusion in Africa

Bolt has introduced its Drive for Women in Tech (Drive4WITech) initiative to support women in building a career in technology. The initiative is an internship programme for young women who choose to start a career in technology regardless of their existing educational background. From the vast number of applicants across Africa, nine interns have been selected from Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya, for this year’s Bolt Drive4WITech initiative. The goal for Bolt is to equip the interns, with preliminary knowledge and hands-on tools required to expand their career paths into areas in technology. The interns chosen were made up of undergraduate and post-graduates across different interests with three lucky Nigerians - Onyekachukwu Orji, Miracle Nebo and Oluwakorede Oseni selected in the tightly contested programme. The journey into tech for women in Africa is an ongoing talking point of discussion, largely influenced by cultural norms to societal expectations in relation to gender. Bolt, an inclusive mobility company, recognises this and is fulfilling its commitments to include more women in tech.

TheQuote

“Nigeria still has a long way to go in broadband penetration, even though the country is making some progress in broadband connectivity. With five undersea cables in Nigeria, the country has sufficient broadband capacities at the shores, but less than 10 per cent of the capacities has been distributed to the hinterland”

Chief Operating Officer, MDXi Data Centre, Mr. Gbenga Adegbi



INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE, ROW CHARGES HINDERING BROADBAND PENETRATION'

challenge of RoW charges, whereby government agencies impose arbitrary fees on telecoms operations, said the development was slowing the pace of broadband infrastructure rollout across the country.

"Most state governments believe that RoW charges are source of income to boost their Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), but that is beginning to change, with the recent intervention of the federal government.

"The challenges has caused a lot of setbacks on broadband penetration in the country because several public institutions like schools and hospitals, including recreational centres, are not connected to the internet.

"Most state and local government facilities are not connected to the internet, which is an indication that Nigeria still has a long way to go in broadband penetration," Adegbiyi said.

NIGERIA TO BENEFIT FROM UK'S £22M CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING FUND

Secretary outlined that the UK wanted to act as a responsible cyber power, as well as working with other countries to shape cyberspace in line with UK's values. Raab said the UK was also making around £22 million of new investment available to support capacity building in cyber security for developing countries and globally.

Delivering the speech, Raab said: "We are working with like-minded partners to make sure that the international order that governs cyber activity is fit for purpose.

"Our aim should be to create a cyberspace that is free, open, peaceful and secure, which benefits all countries and all people.

"We want to see international law respected in cyberspace, just like anywhere else. And we need to show how the rules apply to these changes in technology, the changes in threats, and the systemic attempts to render the internet a lawless space."

THE BUSINESS TEAM

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Comms/e-Business Editor
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Kwara Revenue Agency Parleys EFCC to Tackle Tax Evasion

Hammed Shittu in Ilorin

The Kwara State Internal Revenue Service (KWIRS) has solicited the support of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in dealing with the increasing rate of tax evasion in the State.

The Executive Chairman, KWIRS, Mrs. Shade Omoniyi, made the call recently, when she led the management staff of the agency on a working visit to the new Zonal Head, Ilorin Office of the EFCC, Usman Muktar.

According to her, "we are here to seek your support in tackling the menace of tax evasion in the state. We need the support of relevant government agencies like EFCC to curb tax evasion in the public and private sectors within the state."

The KWIRS boss decried the rate of tax evasion within the state describing it as criminal.

She noted that government cannot properly provide the needed infrastructure when citizens and corporate organisations refuse to pay tax.

"We look forward to strengthen our relationship with EFCC in the area of gathering intelligence about tax payers

and enforcement of relevant laws," the KWIRS boss added.

In his remark, Muktar expressed appreciation over the visit, promising that the Commission is ever ready to lend support to any agency of government, including KWIRS

in achieving its mandate.

He used the occasion to inform his guest of the ongoing process by the Commission to have a Tax Fraud Desk created in the Zone.

He said, "when created, the Tax Fraud Desk in conjunction

with the Special Control Unit against Money Laundering, SCUML, would greatly help in dealing with issues of corruption, tax evasion, illicit financial flows and money laundering within the State.

The KWIRS boss was ac-

companied on the visit by Omolara Ojulari, Director Accounts & Finance; Olatunji Balogun, Director Administration & Operation; Shehu Abdullahi, Director Legal and Compliance and Titilayo Ogunwale, Head, corporate Affairs.



PRODUCT LAUNCH
L-R: Product Specialist, Ntisa Limited, Precious Amadi; Founder/Chief Strategist, Ifeanyi Amah, and Customer Support, Queen Nwadike, during the launch of ntisa, a retail management solution, in Lagos...recently

Huawei Seeks Collaboration to Restore Trust in Technology

Stories by Emma Okonji

Huawei, a global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices has called for global public-private sector collaboration in order to restore trust in technology.

Corporate Senior Vice President and BOD Member at Huawei, Catherine Chen, made the call, while addressing industry stakeholders at the 50th anniversary of this year's St. Gallen Symposium, an annual gathering of current and future leaders from across the globe.

At the event, 1,000 participants took part in the three-day cross-generational dialogue, joining from the University of St. Gallen campus, an international hub in Singapore, 10 Swiss Embassies around the world, and elsewhere online.

During her address, Chen, who believes that public trust in emerging technologies would require the joint efforts of policymakers, regulators, and the private sector, said the world must rally together to restore global trust in emerging technologies.

According to her, "As more

devices feature connectivity, more services go online, and more critical infrastructures rely on real-time data exchanges, so must governments worldwide ensure that everyone is protected by the highest security standards. Only a common set of rules can guarantee a level of security that creates trust in technology."

The event's participants agreed that trust remained inherently built on openness and transparency, and that it was time to take concrete, actionable steps to address the common challenges and risks

that have emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public trust in political and economic institutions, emerging technologies, and the media has recently been eroded, especially among the younger generations, and this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I urge them to continue developing the positive relationships between communities, individuals, and their environments. We must build strong trust in technology, enabled by a common set of rules, innovations, and progress. Only then can we commit to

the sustainable and trustworthy use of technology," Chen further said.

A member of the team of 35 students from the University of St. Gallen that organised this year's symposium, Simon Zulliger, said: "We, as members of the younger generation, are connected to a greater number of people through social media, but this does not correspond to a circle of people we can trust."

The team expressed their view that finding ways to preserve and strengthen trust, remained critical for a sustainable recovery.

'Local Software Developers Can Compete with Foreign Producers'

AppZone, a fintech company has disclosed that it is currently training talented software developers that can compete with their peers globally.

Co-founder/Chief Executive Officer, AppZone, Obi Emetarom, who said this during the launch of AppZone's headquarters in Lekki, Lagos, recently, said the firm was already working towards transforming the finTech sector in Nigeria and Africa by a software solution that

would enable easy payment system that would be reliable and scalable.

"At AppZone we develop all our solutions from scratch, using local content. We got our initial support from Nigerians and we maximised the support efficiently, by building capacities and training startups to own and grow equity.

"With our model, we promote only locally developed tech solutions that can compete favorably with foreign software, to reduce

the influx of foreign software in the Nigerian market," Emetarom said.

Stakeholders from Nigeria's banking and payments industry, who gathered to witness the launch, commended the fintech company for its ingenuity in addressing specific challenges in the financial services sector, using home-grown solutions.

AppZone Group, which plays prominently in sub Saharan Africa, launched its ultra-modern headquarters

in Lekki, Lagos, recently. The launch of the new AppZone office follows a decade of stealth operations, as the company has diligently congregated some of Africa's best and brightest talents to build the de facto operating system for the continent's banking and financial services industry.

The launch of the new headquarters exemplifies AppZone's understanding of the need to ensure that home-grown talents are genuinely

empowered and valued. The contemporary space, which sits on two floors with sprawling views of the upscale Admiralty Way in Lekki, boasts of features and facilities that rival the best tech offices found anywhere else around the world.

"The AppZone team has built a robust digital financial ecosystem that streamlines banking, payment, and commerce processes for some of Africa's highly respected banking and financial services institutions."

9mobile Reaffirms Support for Nigeria's Digital Transformation

9mobile has restated its commitment to drive the pace of digital transformation in Nigeria, through strategic investment in digital infrastructure.

The telecoms company gave the assurance in Lagos, during this year's global celebration of the 2021 World Telecommunication and Information

Society Day, with the theme: "Accelerating Digital Transformation in Challenging Times".

The telecoms company was of the view that in order to speed up Nigeria's economic development and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in particular, there would be need to accelerate the country's digital transformation. This, it

further said, could be achieved with the deployment of digital infrastructure across the country.

Executive Director, Regulatory and Corporate Affairs at 9mobile, Abdulrahman Ado, while speaking on this year's theme, noted that it was apt and timely going by the disruption that the pandemic brought

upon lives and businesses.

"Today, access remains a big challenge. Nigeria, like many other developing countries, remains below the required level of investment in IT infrastructure that is necessary to achieve improved efficiencies and enhanced information flow for economic growth and innovation. It is critical that we

intensify efforts in investing in the necessary infrastructure that promotes quality connectivity.

"At 9mobile we are constantly working towards bridging the connectivity gap as we work together with other stakeholders in the industry to provide innovative technology solutions that are life transforming," Ado said.

Afe: Technology Vital for Students' Learning

Managing Director, HP Nigeria, Ifeyinwa Afe, speaks on how best to utilise technology for students' education as the world deals with the new normal, following the outbreak of COVID-19 that ravaged economies and the school system. **Emma Okonji** presents the excerpts:

How will you describe the effect of COVID-19 on educational system and how can this be addressed to enable students be in constant study with little or no disruption like school closure?

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resultant closure of schools in early 2020, affected economies and students' education because schools were shut down globally. However, countries around the world needed to adapt quickly to ensure the school year was not lost. It became clear to all that now, more than ever, technology tools have become the most needed tools to support children's learning, even in the face of school closure like what the world experienced in 2020.

You are not in the educational sector, but you seem to have a passion for the growth of the Nigerian educational sector. Why is this, and how is this tied to your company, HP?

I am very passionate about the growth of Nigeria's education sector and even more excited about the potential of what it could become in the future. Being a part of a leading global ICT company like HP, where we make our laptops and software with the future of learning in mind, we like to ensure that learners are prepared for tomorrow's challenges. In Nigeria, education has not been what it used to be, and this is an area of concern for every citizen, especially parents. The closure of Nigerian schools last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the many challenges of educating the nation's youth. The education sector was already troubled prior to the pandemic, with 10.5 million children not attending school, mostly in the North. As in most countries the need to adapt quickly to ensure the school year was not lost, was high. It became very clear to all that now, more than ever, it is vital that we use technology to support children's learning.

Talking about the disruptions in the school calendar, mostly last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you rate the responses of both the government as well as companies like yours who are in one way or the other involved in the sector, in ensuring that not much school time is lost?

Educators, parents, learners, and students worldwide, have faced a major shift in learning over the past year. The rapid move to online, and then hybrid learning, has reinforced how important access to technology, and an understanding of how to use it, is for a child's successful ongoing educational development, and to their future. The pandemic pushed government and private institutions to come together to help the youth prepare for not only today but also for the future. That is why the Lagos State Ministry of Education released a schedule of radio and television broadcast lessons for students in public schools, and also put in place additional technology-driven interventions. The Federal Ministry of Education and the Universal Basic Education Commission also set up the Nigeria Education Sector COVID-19 Response Strategy (FMoE, 2020). At HP, our interventions included the launch of virtual learning platforms, and the provision of e-learning resources such as HP's Classroom of the Future, offering smart, education-focused hardware coupled with cutting-edge software to support new teaching methodologies and empower all the key stakeholders in the classroom. This is not where it ends, as we need to continue to build partnerships between private and public sectors to ensure that we are equipping the future of tomorrow with the skills and the tools to succeed tomorrow.



Afe

Has there been any assessment done to ascertain the effectiveness of school learning, following the interventions, both by government and companies like HP?

In 2020, the Education Partnership Centre (TEP Centre) released a Learning in a Pandemic Report, focused on the impact of COVID-19 on Nigerian youths' education, highlighting some interesting findings based on a survey conducted with 557 students across 31 states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital City (FCT). The survey showed that there is a need for education in Nigeria to innovate, especially as hybrid learning is becoming a norm. About 37 per cent of those surveyed reported that online learning was their main form of learning during the pandemic, 26 per cent used books as their main form of learning, and 23 per cent learned through WhatsApp. Interestingly only one per cent said mobile learning was their main form of learning, a further three per cent learned on mobile TV, five per cent from their parents and five per cent from home lessons. Reasons given for preferring online learning platforms included broad content such as core skills outside the school curriculum, flexibility and independence gained from self-study, and more learning

time, as well as the opportunity to practice independent learning, mental toughness, digital skill acquisition and the ability to access quality and experienced tutors.

When students rated the learning platforms, they identified several challenges such as network challenges, access to devices and other related infrastructure, such as electricity. When the respondents were questioned on what resources they needed to help their learning, the majority, 66 per cent, said they would need a laptop to learn from home, on their own terms.

For a country like ours, what do you think are the challenges that new age parents have to adapt to, especially learning from home? How do they overcome these challenges?

As a parent, I understand the challenges that we have had to face in this new normal. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, no one was prepared; we thought we had time. In Nigeria, we were faced with infrastructural challenges, such as data costs, and unstable electricity supply. But as parents we are determined to ensure our children's success. We have learned that the best way to equip and prepare our children during a pandemic, particularly in light of different

waves and variants coming; it is vital to provide them with the tools and access to technology — such as laptops and other devices at home — to enable a blended learning approach. This will prepare them and increase their exposure to resources focused on science, technology, and maths; and strengthen their foundational skills. As noted by the respondents in the Learning in a Pandemic Report, laptops enable a child's learning process. While many people might focus on a smart phone, the smaller screen size, limited battery life made shorter by running various e-learning apps, and the need for data to access learning portals mean it is a useful, but not ideal learning aid. A laptop is an investment in your child's future, and it can be overwhelming choosing the right one to enable a positive learning environment.

So, how can parents identify the perfect laptop for their children, and what should parents and guardians look out for in getting an educational PC for their children?

When it comes to choosing the right laptop, choose a laptop that is built for tomorrow's success, and not just today's needs. Make sure the processor is current generation, and don't be sold on older stock. Currently available 10th Generation Intel Core i3 Processors are a good choice, and are responsive and reliable.

Parents must make sure the hard drive can handle the workload. A 1TB hard disk drive, for instance, will help to comfortably store schoolwork and projects safely. Parents should bear in mind that students need to connect, and wireless connectivity such as Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, is a must. Whether the student must continue to learn at home, at school, or even at a coffee shop, because learning is continuous and they can learn from several things they see and encounter in their environments. Parents must also make sure the battery of the laptop or desktop computer, can last more than five hours and has fast-charge technology. This is true because one of the biggest challenges to online learning and studying in Nigeria is erratic electricity supply, so when parents are choosing laptop for their children, they must ensure that they pick the one that can power through the power cuts, so that the child can create and study all day. A good laptop shouldn't take more than 45 minutes to reach 50 per cent charge, and the battery should last as much as 7-12.5 hours. Parents must also ensure the laptop that they choose has a USB Type-C port, and must consider buying an external USB-C-based power bank for those times when parents will be away from home for extended periods. Parents should be able to choose a laptop with a high-definition camera with an integrated microphone, since remote learning means not only watching your teachers present to you, but turning the camera around and confidently showing yourself, and your work, to your teacher and class. A bigger screen makes things easier to read. So I will advise parents to choose a 14" or 15" screen that is easier to concentrate, and view presentations, and online applications and websites.

What will be your advice about durability factor when parents are choosing laptop for their children/wards?

Durability matters in the selection of laptop, whether they are studying from home, or carrying their laptop to school. Study laptop must be reliable, lightweight, and durable. This will enhance long use of laptop and uninterrupted flow of learning. Buying a durable laptop for children, will not only help them succeed at school, it will also empower them and prepare them for future challenges. Having a durable laptop can also help them to acquire critical skills necessary to thrive in today's digital era.

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, and the resultant closure of schools in early 2020, affected economies and students' education because schools were shut down globally. However, countries around the world needs to adapt quickly to ensure the school year is not lost. It became clear to all that now, more than ever, technology tools have become the most needed tools to support children's learning, even in the face of school closure like what the world experienced in 2020

Anambra Tech Firm among Winners of \$100m Facebook Grant

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

A start-up tech firm, Escrow-Lock, has emerged among winners of the \$100 million global business grant from the world’s largest social media company, Facebook Inc.

Facebook Inc. had late last year announced a \$100 million grant for 30,000 start-up tech companies globally to help them advance the use of technology in easing societal difficulties.

Director and Principal Partner of Escrowlock, Mr. Elochukwu Eze, disclosed this recently at Nanka, Anambra State, during a session held to induct trainees and affiliate members of the company.

Eze said: “May I disclose that Escrowlock has just been announced among the global winners of Facebook’s \$100million grant for start-up tech companies.

“I would like to use this avenue to express our deepest appreciation to Facebook for the support. We will use the grant to strengthen our systems in order to provide enhanced service to Nigerians both during and after COVID-19 period, where sales are mostly done online.”

Eze added that EscrowLock is Nigeria’s escrow platform which serves as a trusted

third-party that receives and ‘locks’ transaction payments from internet buyers, and only releases the payment to the intended seller when the buyer has delivered the goods or services and certifies them to be in agreed condition.

Eze said his application has helped lots of people who buy goods from internet shops from being scammed of their money.

“The middleman service we offer helps to protect both buyers and sellers from online fraud, thereby boosting e-Commerce activities and helping more people earn decent livelihood.

“If you are someone who wants to buy something online but aren’t so sure of the seller’s integrity, you should definitely use EscrowLock when paying the seller.

“That way, your money can be returned to you if the seller does anything shady. With us, you completely avoid the situation where a seller runs away with your money, as the seller cannot have access to the payment until they deliver the exact goods or services agreed with you.

“EscrowLock is a safe way for buyers to make payments to sellers found on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Jiji.ng, and other online and offline platforms.”

Firm Launches Retail Management Software Solution for SMEs

Emma Okonji

Ntisa Limited, a financial technology (fintech) company, has launched retail management software solution that will enable small scale business owners manage all aspects of their business from sales-point to payment.

The solution, also known as Ntisa, was launched recently in Lagos. The easy-to-use software application was locally developed with full local content and it comes as an affordable end-to-end retail management software application, with specific features such as inventory, dispatch, as well as business performance management. The product suite offers: Ntisa Point of Sales (POS), Ntisa Merchant App for administrative management, Ntisa e-commerce App for online transactions and Ntisa dispatch management system.

Speaking at the launch of the solution, which serves as a product and service for business record keeping, its Founder and Chief Strategist, Mr. Ifeanyi Amah, highlighted some of the value propositions of the solution, which enable customers to enjoy high business value at the lowest cost ever, since the solution runs on any smart mobile device.

According to him, “Ntisa is a disruptive software solution that can be used to track delivery of goods and services, and could be used both online real-time as well as offline in areas where there are no internet

connectivity.”

Having identified critical business challenges in Nigeria, which include the high cost of Information Technology (IT) systems for keeping business records, high time consumption in business management and the high skills required in using technology to run businesses, Amah said such challenges have impacted so much on businesses, including SME businesses, such that most business owners are unable to record and maintain the progress of financial transactions in their business, and merchants are unable to provide order status like tracking solutions to customers after payment has been received.

He said most SMEs could not afford the invest in such ‘expensive’ IT systems, and that the challenges have made it difficult for financial institutions and government agencies to provide the necessary support to business when they want to borrow money.

He added that the challenges have contributed to their inability to analyse the performance of their business, which he said had led to poor planning and decision making, and the inability to attract new customers outside their business locality.

He, however, said Ntisa software solution would address all the identified challenges, since the solution is affordable, easy to use, and handles all business record keeping from ordering, through payment and to delivery

Eutelsat Partners Facebook on Wi-Fi Connectivity in Africa

Emma Okonji

Eutelsat Communications is expanding its use of the Express Wi-Fi platform in partnership with Facebook to provide broadband services via satellite across several regions in sub-Saharan Africa.

With Express Wi-Fi, Eutelsat aims to connect thousands of people in rural and underserved communities spanning Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Côte d’Ivoire, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Cameroon, Ghana and Zimbabwe.

Express Wi-Fi is a platform developed by Facebook Connectivity that enables partners to build, grow and monetize their Wi-Fi businesses in a scalable

way, while providing their customers with fast, affordable, and reliable internet access. Express Wi-Fi is currently used in more than 30 countries, including in multiple Asian, South American and African markets, helping millions of people connect over Wi-Fi.

Eutelsat and Facebook have previously conducted successful pilots in rural and underserved areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) enabling local businesses to offer affordable internet access to customers on a pre-paid basis. To date, Eutelsat’s use of the Express Wi-Fi platform has enabled access to affordable broadband for thousands of individuals across the DRC.

General Manager of Konnect

Africa, Philippe Baudrier, said: “We are delighted to partner with Facebook in this ambitious scheme, aimed at getting more people online in the most underserved areas of sub-Saharan Africa. The initiative is the perfect example of the power of satellite connectivity to bridge the digital divide, with unmatched economic and social benefits. We are proud once again to leverage the unparalleled coverage of Eutelsat Konnect to satisfy this growing demand.”

Head of Connectivity Policy for sub-Saharan Africa at Facebook, Fargani Tambeayuk, said: “At Facebook, we are committed to working with partners to help expand connectivity in Sub-Saharan Africa, which

continues to be the region with the highest coverage gap.

“Connectivity is essential to ensuring access to jobs, education, healthcare and more. We are proud to partner with Eutelsat to combine the power of the Express Wi-Fi platform and Eutelsat Konnect, with the goal of increasing satellite broadband coverage across rural and underserved areas of Sub-Saharan Africa.”

Eutelsat Communications is a global satellite operator, with a global fleet of satellites and associated ground infrastructure. Eutelsat enables clients across Video, Data, Government, Fixed and Mobile Broadband markets to communicate effectively to their customers, irrespective of their location.



BUSINESS EXPANSION

L-R: Co-founders/Executive Directors, Appzone, Wale Onawunmi and Emeka Emetarom; CEO, Airtel Nigeria, Segun Ogunsanya and Co-founder/Chief Executive Officer, Appzone, Obi Emetarom, during the launch of Appzone’s headquarters in Lagos...recently

TD Africa Celebrates 22 Years in Tech Distribution Ecosystem

Emma Okonji

The management of TD Africa has rolled out the drums to celebrate its 22 years of information communications technology (ICT) distribution in Africa, with a week-long discount sale tagged ‘Sellerbration’.

The promotion, which kicked off last week, witnessed the rollout of discounts on a variety of products from TD Africa’s wide-ranging bouquet including computing, printing/supplies, power, software and home appliances, among others.

The special offer, exclusive to partners of TD Africa, has

been identified as one of the measures through which the company is appreciating its customers for their support and unflinching loyalty to the TD Africa brand over the long years of its achievements-filled existence in the sector.

In addition, the company has commenced a series of activities geared towards making the anniversary celebration memorable.

For instance, last week, TD hosted a Tech Monday, with management and staff turning up to work across all of its locations across Nigeria and beyond, dressed

to represent one of the tech brands or Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) in the company’s portfolio. The colourful day saw an exciting clash of colours and brands as virtually all of the OEMs represented by TD Africa were present in the outfits donned by its staff.

It was followed by the celebration of employees of the company, who turned up in throwback fashion outfits, including foreign and native wear. Also spicing up the day’s fare was a Karaoke session featuring a nostalgic rendition of memorable songs from the

80s and 90s.

Most importantly, TD Africa’s 22nd anniversary celebration which reached a climax, has been set aside as Jersey Friday. All employees of the company will don the jersey of their favourite local or international sports team for the day’s event which will herald a smart 22nd anniversary party.

Coordinating Managing Director, TD Africa, Mrs. Chioma Chimere, said the 22nd anniversary celebration was targeted at expressing gratitude to the company’s partners which she described as the lifeblood of the business.

MTN Partners Bet

Raheem Akingbolu

Y’ello Digital Financial Services (YDFS), a subsidiary of MTN Nigeria, has announced its partnership with gaming operators, Betway, BetPawa and Betmojo through its flagship mobile money transfer service, MoMo Agent.

According to the partners, the development will enable customers to cash their winnings and fund wallets conveniently at any MoMo Agent outlet nationwide.

“Partnerships are the fuel for progress within our communities.

So, we are constantly exploring innovative relationships to help deliver cost-effective, fast, transparent, and reliable remittance services,” said Usoro Usoro, Chief Executive Officer, YDFS, about the announcement. “Our customers deserve simple solutions making it easier for them to access financial services, no matter where they are. Our partnership with gaming operators helps deliver that.”

Commenting on the partnership, Lere Awokoya, Betway’s Country Manager said, “We

are proud of our collaboration with MoMo. Our customers now have easier access to their Betway wallet guaranteed. Customers can also deposit and cash-out wins with their neighbourhood MoMo Agent.”

“We are committed to improving our customer’s experiences through a more personable, digital and sustainable approach. This partnership provides that. We look forward to a successful working arrangement that continually keeps the customer in focus,” added Segun Somefun,

CEO, Betpawa

Betmojo customers can also take advantage of the partnership through the ‘Pick 3’ game on the platform to cash out on their winnings with MoMo. With an agent base of over 300,000 across the country, MoMo Agent forms a major part of the Central Bank of Nigeria’s financial inclusion drive to ensure that 95 per cent of adults are financially included by 2024. The partnership allows customers to utilise MoMo’s widespread presence and reliable service to access funds.

Label Rebranding as Niche Strategy



Raheem Akingbolu

In a competitive market, where rival brands strive to win customers’ loyalty, rebranding has remained a constant tool for positioning. Among other benefits, refreshing its look and feel gives the brand fresh energy and affords brand owners the opportunity to attract new customers. It is believed that rebranding offers the stimulation brands need for growth in an ever-evolving market.

For the 20 years old La Casera brand, this is a usual part. At the beginning, the brand took the market with a storm as a pacesetter with an uncommon flavour and unusual but appealing package. Since the unwritten practice in any market is that ‘if your product is accepted in the market, emergence of rivals is inevitable’ the honeymoon was short-lived for the brand but it weathered the storm.

From RGB to PET...

Despite the existing challenging business environment, which had forced many manufacturers and competitors underground, La Casera entered in 2001 against all odds. After painstaking research and market surveys, the promoters of the brand hit the market with new innovations with quality service delivery that instantly arrested the interest of Nigerians driving them to accept the product.

As a niche strategy, the brand innovated around its packaging, introducing an on-the-go packaging also known as PET to rival Returnable glass bottle and it became the winning tool. With it, the promoters didn’t only give consumers a new feel, they democratised the carbonated drink market.

By attaining such a feat, La Casera thus redefined the CSD marketing space in Nigeria as the first carbonated soft drink to be in PET bottles. The irony of it all was that the company innovated against big multinationals in the country and against their comparative advantage. Then, the comparative advantage of the majority of big multinational CSD manufacturers in Nigeria was the returnable glass bottles.

According to findings in the company, it was discovered early that competing in the space with returnable glass bottles would be a tall dream, hence the need to come up with an innovation that would not involve a significant capital outlay. Through the approach, the manufacturers of the brand were able to tackle the challenges that usually come with the production cost of glass bottles, the logistics, stocking, product distribution, as well as the hygiene and the cumbersome nature of dealing with rubber crates and bottles.

Of course, the big players didn’t take them seriously at the beginning considering the fact that so many brands that came earlier into this market were eased off as glass capacity was amongst the major barriers to entry into the carbonated soft drinks business. By the time they (the existing brand owners) would wake up to the reality, the La Casera novel idea had been embraced in the market. The rest, as they say, is history.

Empowerment of trade partners

Perhaps the winner in all these is not the brand that has consistently sustained its brand equity but the trade partners and retailers, whose lives have been transformed for the better, over the years.

Speaking on the trade relationship approach of the company, the Group Marketing Director, JOTNA Nigeria Limited, a member of the JOTNA Group and The La Casera Company, Emmanuel Agu, said it has built an effective business relationship with its

trade partners, assisting them to make profits whilst also rewarding their efforts.

“Over the years, The La Casera company has held several editions of the dealers’ conference, through which the management rewards dealers with delivery vans, cars, overseas trips, while others have won prizes like laptops, computers, and motorcycles. In the area of Corporate Social Responsibility, which is part of our goals to connect with consumers and add value to the environment in which we operate, the company has been in the frontline of supporting innovations and developmental projects. The company has also utilized this platform to reach out to the less privileged and the needy in the society.

Meanwhile, in its concerted efforts to ensure that Nigerians enjoy the best of its product, the company has won for itself several awards such as, African Directing Marketing Award as Finest soft drink manufacturer of the year 2007; MAN award as first runner up for the “Best Kept Industrial Premises in Lagos in October 2011, second to Nigeria Breweries; NIS & SON product certification in 2008 & 2010; Appreciation from KRONES as “Best Asset Care & Efficiency” customer; Constant “Improvement rating” achieved every year since 2005 by International consultants for technical and quality process audit.

Setting the pace for other global brands...

After several attempts made to cow the brand through known marketing strategies failed, promoters of rival brands resorted to a brute marketing approach to demarket the brand. As part of the tactics to sway the public, it was rumoured that La Casera contained bleaching chemicals. Expectedly, this gave the handlers of the brand some sleepless nights, especially with the release of a certain video in which it was demonstrated that the drink could be applied to loosen screws. Before they could put their strategies together, competing brands had leveraged on the campaign to gain some patrons of La Casera.


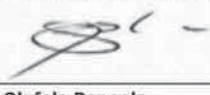
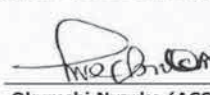
But the brand became the ultimate winner by subtle engagements of stakeholders and factory tours to let the public into their manufacturing process. Today, La Casera has not only won, it towers over detractors.

Left with no other option, both local and global players in the carbonated soft drink market quickly readjusted and followed the path created by the brand. This explains why almost all products in the market have now adopted PET bottles.

According to The Group Marketing Director “The brand is succeeding in the market place because the company is constantly speaking to what consumers want in very creative, innovative ways whilst never failing to deliver top quality Apple Refreshment for everyone to enjoy”.

With the refreshed label, which the promoters of the brand have just unveiled for its flagship brand, La Casera Apple Drink, the company has simply fulfilled a simple rebranding goal: to keep it current. Experts have established over the years that design trends play a major role in how potential or current customers perceive a company and all it has to offer. As always, La Casera continues to ensure that its look is ahead of the curve, which show its customers that it pays attention to the trends within the carbonated drinks industry.

Speaking on what informed the rebranding, Agu admitted that the exercise became necessary to extend the frontier of the brand. “The CSD category in Nigeria as in most countries of the world is very dynamic; to stay relevant to the young and vibrant target audience, brands must stay fresh, alive and innovative.”

EDC FUND MANAGEMENT LIMITED		
EDC Fund Management Limited Reports on Mutual Fund Audited Accounts		
December 31, 2020		
STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
FOR YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020		
EDC NIGERIA FIXED INCOME FUND	2020 N'000	2019 N'000
Interest income	56,570	56,044
Other income	-	72
Net operating income	56,570	53,116
Operating expenses	(11,465)	(8,469)
Profit for the year	54,105	47,647
Other comprehensive income, net of income tax		
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss	-	-
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:	-	-
Total comprehensive income	54,105	47,648
Gross income per unit	83.21	134.40
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020		
EDC NIGERIA FIXED INCOME FUND	2020 N'000	2019 N'000
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	376,905	97,044
Financial Assets – Amortised Cost	589,497	405,375
	966,402	502,419
Liabilities		
Other liabilities	5,539	4,555
Total liabilities	5,539	4,555
Unit holder's contribution and reserves		
Unitholders' Fund	960,863	497,864
Total unitholders' Fund	960,863	497,864
Total liabilities and unitholders' Fund	966,402	502,419
Net assets per unit	1,220	1,194
STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
FOR YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020		
EDC NIGERIA MONEY MARKET FUND-CLASS A	2020 N'000	2019 N'000
Interest income	795,346	1,036,416
Interest expense	(41)	(485)
Net interest income	795,305	1,035,931
Other Income	-	510
Net operating income	795,305	1,036,441
Operating expenses	(167,962)	(109,363)
Profit for the year	627,343	927,078
Other comprehensive income, net of income tax		
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss	-	-
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:	-	-
Total comprehensive income	627,343	927,078
Gross Income per unit	5.93	8.63
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020		
EDC NIGERIA MONEY MARKET FUND-CLASS A	2020 N'000	2019 N'000
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	10,416,581	5,088,132
Financial Assets - Amortised Cost	3,065,101	7,252,091
	13,481,682	12,340,223
Liabilities		
Other liabilities	46,001	38,142
Total liabilities	46,001	38,142
Unit holder's contribution and reserves		
Unitholders Fund	13,435,681	12,302,081
Total unitholders contribution	13,435,681	12,302,081
Total liabilities and unitholders contribution	13,481,682	12,340,223
Net Assets per unit	100.17	102.48
STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
FOR YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020		
EDC NIGERIA MONEY MARKET FUND-CLASS B	2020 N'000	2019 N'000
Interest income	34,519	77,840
Interest expense	(2)	(727)
Net interest income	34,517	77,113
Other Income	1,421	610
Net operating income	35,938	77,723
Operating expenses	(5,857)	(7,695)
Profit for the year	30,081	70,028
Other comprehensive income, net of income tax		
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss	-	-
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:	-	-
Total comprehensive income	30,081	70,028
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020		
EDC NIGERIA MONEY MARKET FUND-CLASS B	2020 N'000	2019 N'000
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	373,085	160,475
Financial Assets - Amortised Cost	116,040	529,061
	489,125	689,536
Liabilities		
Other liabilities	2,585	4,069
Total liabilities	2,585	4,069
Unit holder's contribution and reserves		
Unitholders' Fund	486,540	685,467
Total unitholders contribution	486,540	685,467
Total liabilities and unitholders contribution	489,125	689,536
Net Assets per unit	1,012	99.95
The Financial Statements were approved on 31 March 2021 and signed on its behalf by:		
 Adekunle Awojobi Trustees FRC/ICAN/2013/00000002442	 Olufela Popoola Fund Manager (Director) FRC/2016/IODN/00000015317	 Okwuchi Nyarko (ACCA) Chief Finance Officer FRC/2018/CIBN/00000018937
EDC Fund Management Limited 19A, Adeola Odeku Street, Victoria Island, Lagos. Tel: +23412265493 Email: mutualfundng@ecobank.com		

Who is after NPA Boss, Bala-Usman?

Damian Adekunle

It is no longer news that President Muhammadu Buhari recently suspended the Managing Director of the Nigerian Ports Authority, NPA, Ms. Hadiza Bala-Usman, and has equally ordered a probe into the alleged failure of the NPA to remit about N165.32 billion, being operating surplus, to the Consolidated Revenue Fund, CRF.

It is recalled that the Federal Ministry of Transportation had in a May 4, 2021 letter to President Buhari claimed that the NPA, under Bala-Usman's watch, failed to remit the above sum to the CRF from 2016 to 2020. It consequently called for an investigation and audit of the agency's financial accounts.

As is typical of such reports of alleged corruption, this has been celebrated in the media. Accusation of corruption is the easiest way to rubbish or pull down political office holders in this clime, for as far as an average Nigerian is concerned, such a fellow is guilty as charged until proven innocent.

N165 billion: The facts versus fables

However, on this NPA matter, the critical question is: Is there really any such thing as unremitted N165 billion?

The facts rendered by the suspended NPA boss in a May 5, 2021 letter to the Chief of Staff to the President, Prof. Ibrahim Gambari, referenced marked MD/17/MF/VOL. XX/541, speak for themselves.

In the expository letter titled "Re: Request for the Record of Remittance of Operating Surplus to the Consolidated Revenue Fund Account by the Nigerian Ports Authority", Ms. Bala-Usman wrote: "The attention of the Authority has been drawn to a letter conveying Mr. President's approval of the Federal Ministry of Transportation (FMOT) to conduct an audit of the accounts of the Authority and its remittances to the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF). This arose from correspondence between the Budget Office of the Federation (BOF) and the FMOT where the BOF conveyed to the FMOT the observed shortfall of the Authorities remittances to the CRF.

"We wish to state that the Authority's basis for arriving at the Operating Surplus due for remittance to the CRF is guided by the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2007 as amended and further based on the statutory mandate Part 1, Section 3 (1) (b) and (d) whereby the Fiscal Responsibility Commission issued a template for the computation of Operating Surplus for the purpose of calculating amount due for remittance to the CRF.

"Accordingly, the figure so provided by the Budget Office of the Federation as the Operating Surplus for the respective years on which basis they arrived at the shortfall are derived from submission of budgetary provision not the actual amounts derived following the statutory audit of the Authority's financial statements".

On the remittances between 2017 and 2018, Ms. Bala-Usman said: "Audited Financial Statements of the Authority for the period 2017 and 2018 (copies herewith attached) provides operating surpluses of N76.782 billion and N71.480 billion for 2017 and 2018, respectively, as contrary to the sums of N133.084 billion arrived at by your Office from the budgetary submission.

"In line with the template issued by the Fiscal Responsibility Commission, the accessible Operating Surplus of the Authority stands at N51.09 billion and N42.51 billion for 2017 and 2018, respectively. These amounts will give rise to a remittance due to the CRF in the sum N40.873 billion and N34.065 billion representing 80 per cent of the surpluses for the year 2017 and 2018. Accordingly, the Authority consequently made a remittance of N42.415 billion and N33.969 billion for the years 2017



Bala-Usman

and 2018, respectively, for full amount required as remittance for the period".

Defending the remittances for 2019 and 2020, the MD explained that "The Audit of the 2019 Financial Statement has been completed and awaiting consideration of the Authority's Board at which point the final figures for the 2019 operating surplus will be determined for consequent computation of the amount due for remittance to the CRF, but thus far, the Authority has made a remittance of N31.683 billion for the 2019 remittance, while the sum of N51.049 billion has also thus far been remitted for the 2019 remittance while awaiting the auditing of the Financial Statement to determine the final amount required for both 2019 and 2020 at which point the Authority will make the payment of the balance as required".

Based on the above, Bala-Usman clarified: "The Authority's compilation of its remittances to the CRF are concluded arising from numbers from the Audited Financial Statements using the template forwarded to the Fiscal Responsibility Commission as herewith attached and not budgetary provision.

"The Authority has remitted the full amount due it to CFR for the periods 2017 and 2018 arising from the Operating Surplus derived from the Audited Financial Statement for the period totaling N76.384 billion as evidenced in attached treasury receipts.

"The Authority has remitted a total of N82.687 billion for the period 2019 and 2020 pending the audit of the Financial Statement at which point the amount so computed arising from the value of the Operating Surplus in the audited Financial Statement will be remitted to the CRF.

"We wish to request that Chief of

Staff requests the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation, who are the statutory custodians of the status of payment to the CRF to provide clarification on the above as to establish the true position of the Authority's remittances to the CRF".

The 'politricks' of remittable sums

Beside the NPA position being self-explanatory, grapevine has it that the recourse to the Office of the Accountant-General for clearer positions of the law on expected remittances was sequel to the inability of the Director of Finance of NPA, Mr. Mohammed Koko, to furnish the MD with the requisite information. Highly informed sources in the agency alleged that Koko, who ironically is now the Acting MD, repeatedly feigned ignorance.

Many now ask: Did he not fail in his duties, as there is no evidence he was overruled? If NPA is being investigated over matters of finances, shouldn't the Finance Director be in the dock? How come he now superintends over NPA?

These circumstances fuel the allegation that Koko must have been part of the larger plot to get Ms. Bala-Usman out of the way for allegedly obstructing unwholesome, but some potent political interests, in the matters of juicy contracts at the NPA.

Twists and U-Turn

Those who hold this view currently point to the twists in the NPA saga. Whereas the Ministry of Transport's memo leading to Bala-Usman's suspension and NPA's probe alleges unremitted Operating Surpluses, the Minister of Transport, Rotimi Amaechi, while inaugurating the 11-man administrative probe panel, clearly stated that the investigation would focus on contracts.

The committee's terms of reference, he said, include examining and investigating the administrative policies and strategies adopted by Ms Bala-Usman from 2016 till date and confirming her compliance with relevant laws and rules.

He explained the panel is to: "Examine and investigate issues leading to the termination of other contracts of NPA and confirm compliance with the terms of the respective contracts, court ruling and presidential directives.

"Examine and investigate compliance with communication channel, as obtained in the public service.

"Examine and investigate the procurement of contracts from 2016 to date.

"Come up with suggestions and advice that would strengthen the operations of NPA and forestall such occurrences in future".

It will also look into "any other matter that may be necessary in the course of the assignment".

The U-turn has expectedly drawn harsh criticism. But to the critics Amaechi replied: "This is in the discharge of our responsibility as a Ministry and I don't see why anybody is complaining. What is wrong in looking at what is happening in NPA? As the Minister of Transport for four years, I hardly know what is happening and I want to know now.

"The president agrees with me that it is my responsibility as Minister to find out what is going on.

"It worries me that people are saying we should not ask questions. Nobody has been indicted".

Instructively, TheCable, an online newspaper, had prior to the panel's inauguration quoted a member of the panel as divulging that Bala-Usman would now be probed for "insubordination", no longer non-remittances.

"We are looking at two things. One, the suspended Managing Director was in the habit of communicating directly with the President and bypassing the Honourable Minister. This is gross indiscipline and a breach of public service communication line. That is enough to get her sacked.

"Two, the Minister directed her to restore all Intels' contracts that were suspended or terminated. What she didn't know was that the President was in the know of it. She failed to comply. This is insubordination and she is not above discipline."

On the allegation of non-remittance of N165 billion, a source at the Ministry of Transport told Thisday: "Available evidence shows that the allegation may not be true... it is a matter of reconciliation of what the Budget Office thought should be the remittances with what the actual remittances should be.

"Since audits have been done over the years, there is obviously nothing more to that. It is not as if NPA's monies are in private banks. Everything is with the CBN, so if there were no remittances, it is just about looking at NPA's accounts with the CBN".

On contracts, the source also said: "At NPA, any contract beyond N50 million for goods and services and N200 million for works are referred to the Ministerial Tenders Board (MTB), which is headed by the permanent secretary of the ministry," he said.

"If we go into probing contracts since 2016, we may end up probing the minister himself. About 70 per cent of the contracts for capital projects go to the MTB, after which the Minister presents them to the federal executive council (FEC), presided over by the president himself, for approval. We will check if all the procedures were followed, but I am personally not optimistic about that. The suspended MD, from indications, is a process person".

In view of all these, as Nigerians expect the outcome of the probe, many are already reasoning that there is more to Bala-Usman's ordeal than meets the eyes.

Since audits have been done over the years, there is obviously nothing more to that. It is not as if NPA's monies are in private banks. Everything is with the CBN, so if there were no remittances, it is just about looking at NPA's accounts with the CBN

IMAGES

Photo Editor Abiodun Ajala
Email abiodun.ajala@thisdaylive.com



L-R, Senator Sam Egwu, representing Ebonyi North, Senator Obinna Ogba representing Ebony South and Hon Igariwey Iduma during a press briefing by Law Makers from Ebonyi in the Senate and the House of Representatives in Abuja...recently JULIUS ATOI



L-R: Special Assistant to the Minister of State Science and Technology, Mr. Abdulhadi Abullahi; Permanent Secretary Federal Ministry of Science and Technology Mr. Edet Akpan; Minister of Science and Technology Dr. Ogonnaya Onu and President, Organization of Military Sports in Africa, Brigadier General Maikano Abdullahi, during the courtesy visit by the President to the Minister office in Abuja...recently



Veteran journalist and Towulade of Akinaale, Oba Olufemi Ogunleye receiving certificate of participation from Ogun State governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun at the formal launch of the State Civil Justice Transformation Strategy, at the Obas complex, Okemosan Abeokuta...recently



President Muhammadu Buhari and President Emmanuel Macron of France arriving the Grand Palais Éphémère for the Plenary Session of the African Finance Summit in Paris, Francerecently



L-R: National Secretary, Man O' War Nigeria, Adedamola Gbenga; Director General, Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre (CLTC), Jonah Bawa; HOD, Human Resources Management, (CLTC), Mrs Ada Edache-Uche and Director Training and Development, (CLTC), Ibrahim Mammsn Fika during the media briefing on their achievements, contributions to nation building and activities line-up for the 70th year anniversary of the Leadership Centre in Abuja...recently AYO AJAYI



L-R: Senior Pastor, Shepherd hill Baptist Church Obanikoro, Lagos, Rev(Dr). Isreal Kristilire, and his wife Mary during his 50th birthday celebration in Lagos...recently



L-R; Minister of Health for State Sen. Olorunimbe Mamora; Vice President Yemi Osinbajo SAN, and Corps Marshal Boboye Oyeyemi, during the launch of the United Nations Decade of Action on Road Safety #Love30 at the State House, Abuja...recently



L-R: Member, Road to Recovery Foundation (Medical Organisation for Rehabilitation), Dr. Benedict Arinse; Dr. Purity Obi; Regional Director, Dr. Prosper Orezimena; Dr. Adaeze Onuabuchi; and Assistant Head, Rehabilitation, Dr. Kenechukwu Igweremadu, during its 8weeks support rehabilitative program to save one million lives project at Ifako/Ijaye community in Lagos... recently ABAYOMIAKINYELE

Making an Informed Choice of Fibroid Treatment

Experts say that the choice of fibroid treatment method to be adopted by a patient should be informed by doctor's advice, fertility plans, size of fibroid, severity and diligent research. **Yinka Olatunbosun** reports

Arguably, fibroid constitutes one of the most under-estimated health conditions that many women of childbearing age and beyond often undergo. Many who live with fibroids are usually capable of performing daily tasks efficiently which makes it very easy for some to dismiss it as a condition that can be managed without serious health complications.

Fibroids are non-cancerous growths that develop in and around the uterus (womb). Made up of muscles, they usually vary in sizes and they grow bigger over time.

Fibroids in women do not always have similar symptoms. While most patients have complained of symptoms such as heavy bleeding during menstrual period, bloating, sharp needle-like pelvic pains, miscarriages, infertility and in rare cases, no symptoms.

For those with heavy bleeding, anemia had been largely reported as a complication. When fibroids are allowed to grow too large, they can impact on the quality of life in both physical and mental well-being. For some, it may become difficult to eat large portions of food; lead to urine incontinence, constipation, fatigue, and other symptoms.

Enlarged uterus due to fibroids can make a woman appear to be pregnant. Gynecologists say that the hormones released during pregnancy allows the stomach region to be elastic as the foetus grows. But in fibroid cases, the enlarged uterus makes the abdomen area very hard.

Most doctors cannot really ascertain the actual cause of fibroids in women. Some had linked it to heredity, early onset of puberty and excess level of estrogen. Nutritionists have also advised fibroid patients to embrace a vegetarian diet in order to minimise the growth of myomas.

Women who follow some of this dietary approach may experience some relief of symptoms but many still had to undergo surgery after depriving themselves of eating balanced diet. Fibroids exist as parasites in the host, feeding off nutrients with no benefits in return.

A Lagos-based gynecologist, Dr. Paul Nwango explained that fertility consideration is one of the reasons for the choice of fibroid treatment.

"Some women plan to have a family. In this case, myomectomy is recommended. But for someone who has finished having children and does not have any intention of having more, we can advise the removal of the uterus. With myomectomy, the fibroids may still grow back. But with hysterectomy, fibroids will not grow anymore," he said.

Myomectomy, which seems to be the most popular procedure in Nigeria, is an open surgery that requires a large incision to remove the fibroids. The incision can be a 'bikini cut' that is a small cut below the abdomen or a vertical incision, depending on the size of the fibroids. Complications associated with this procedure include bleeding, adhesion, infection, damage to other organs and more. With the aid of technology and advancement in medical practice, there are many other options today for the treatment of fibroids.

Dr. Nwango revealed that there are some medications that people believe to help in shrinking fibroids but many had not been proven to work for all cases of fibroids. Other treatments he highlighted include Uterine Artery Embolization (UAE), Hysteroscopy, Magnetic resonance imaging-guided ultrasound surgery and others depending on the size of the fibroids.

Dr. Nwango maintained that it is important for women who have been diagnosed with the condition to stay in touch with their doctor and report any symptom as soon as possible. Other minimally invasive methods of fibroids treatment include laparoscopy with involves the use of small incisions and camera to remove fibroid tumours. With this, recovery time is shorter and many patients are able to return home on the same day of surgery because there is



A view of a female's abdomen



Natural herbal samples for fibroid treatment



Dr Paul Nwango

less pain and reduced hemorrhaging with little or no chance of needing a blood transfusion.

Other patients who delayed their decision to undergo surgery say that is delicate for patients

to rely on layman's advice. Many women had been scammed by drug peddlers who claim to have herbal remedies for the fibroids. Sometimes, their marketers use catchy phrases like "Fibroid Finisher," or "Fibroid Destroyer," to woo their desperate customers.

For instance, a patient who preferred to remain anonymous revealed that she paid a sum of N200,000 for herbal preparations to treat her fibroids. Some of these contained alcoholic content which she had to take during office hours. The process which did not yield positive results was a very depressing episode for her. She eventually had a surgery at a facility based in Ikorodu with subsidised payment plan by a faith-based organisation.

In a May 2021 report published in a newsletter by Society for the Advancement of Patient Blood Management, a 36-year old patient presented an eight-year history of progressive abdominal swelling and weight loss. She had been diagnosed with uterine fibroids some six years earlier but for the fear of surgery, relied on herbal remedies which only worsened her situation.

Eventually, she was referred to a bloodless surgery specialist in Lagos and the 26kg fibroid was removed safely. Patient blood management protocols help doctors to minimise blood loss during surgery, avoid complications of blood transfusion and improve patient outcomes. This explains the growing popularity for bloodless surgeries.

While some of the publicised and over-hyped herbal remedies may help to shrink the fibroids, they may not eliminate them which means the fibroids will grow back. When fibroids grow larger, they may impact on nearby organs such as the spleen, stomach, lungs and kidneys or even become calcified, that is, having large deposit of calcium on fibroids that make them as hard as bones.

Before taking the decision to undergo surgery, one must ensure that due diligence is done. It may require looking beyond one's proximity. Sometimes, the experts with the requisite skills are invited from outside Nigeria. Despite the complications, safe fibroid surgeries are still possible in Nigeria.

RCCG Names Biggest Intensive Healthcare Centre in Ondo After Akindayomi



Governor of Ondo State Arakurin Rotimi Akeredolu; National Overseer RCCG, Pastor Joseph Obayemi; Osemawe Of Ondo, His Royal Majesty Oba Dr. Victor Adesimbo Kiladejo JILO III, CFR; daughter of Pa. Josiah Akindayomi Founder of RCCG, Pastor (Mrs) Elizabeth Akindele and Intercontinental Overseer CSR RCCG, Pastor Idowu Iliyomade

Mary Nnah

Following its commitment to give people access to free healthcare services alongside religious engagements, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), has extended the gesture to the people of Ondo State. The charity arm of the church, His Love Foundation (HLF), inaugurated a new intensive care centre in Ondo as a support to the healthcare system in the state. According to the statement from HLF, the centre named Akintoye-Adeboye Intensive Care Centre, the biggest health intervention in Ondo and the foremost amongst several others previously commissioned by The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Lagos, Ogun and Plateau States was inaugurated on April 29 within the University of Medical Sciences Teaching Hospital Complex, Laje Road, Ondo State. The Intensive Health Care centre unlike others has four units; the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), the Kidney Dialysis Unit, the Cardiac Diagnostic Unit and an x-ray unit and a 30KVA generating set. It also noted that the facility was designed to honour the founder of the church, Pastor Akintoye as well as the current leader of the church, Pastor Adeboye. The event had in attendance the Governor of Ondo State, Arakurin Rotimi Akeredolu(SAN); the Deputy Governor, Mr. Lucky Aiyedatiwa; the Speaker Ondo State House of Assembly, Bamidele Oleyelogun; the SSG, Princess Catherine Oludunni Odu; the HOS, Pastor John Adeyemo; and the Chief of Staff, Chief Olugbenga Ale. Others include the Chief Medical Director(CMD) of the University of Medical Sciences, UNIMED Teaching

Hospital, Ondo, Dr Oluwale Ige; former Governor of Ondo State, Olusegun Mimiko; Osemawe of Ondo, His Royal Majesty Oba Dr Victor Adesimbo Kiladejo JILO III, CFR ; Deji Of Akure, Oba Aladetoyinbo and other Royal Fathers drawn from around Ondo kingdom. Speaking on the main vision of HLF, Pastor Idowu Iliyomade, the Assistant Continental Overseer and Intercontinental Overseer CSR noted that its mandate emanates from Matthew 25:36 which states “I was naked, you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison and you visited me”. He also added that “the church is committed to impact lives in all ramifications as a major core duty of God’s mandate as it’s our belief that with the commissioning of Akintoye - Adeboye Intensive Care Centre. “This is sequel to several another donations in the health sector like the donation of the first ICU attached to Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) Lagos in 2017, followed by the ICU in Jos Specialist Hospital, Plateau in 2018 and the Pastor Enoch and Pastor Folu Adeboye Intensive Care Center and kidney Dialysis Center in Redeemed Health Center, Mowe, Ogun State. “These are in addition to several other projects executed over the years in the areas of education, skills acquisition and feeding of over 60million people for free in the past one year, the church continues to live within its expectation as a church that truly understands its Christian social responsibilities; this he said is a confirmation of the broadness of mind of the General Overseer and the reach of the church”. According to the General Overseer, Pastor E. A Ade-

boye, who was represented by Pastor Joseph Obayemi, Continental Overseer Africa 1(North Africa) and National Overseer of RCCG, the request to upgrade the ICU centre at UNIMED came when he visited the paramount ruler of Ondo, The Osemawe of Ondo, His Royal Majesty Oba Dr Victor Adesimbo Kiladejo JILO III, CFR sometimes in December 2020. Commending the efforts of Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Ondo State Governor, Arakurin Rotimi Akeredolu thanked Pastor Adeboye in particular for heeding to the request of the Osemawe and always taking the church’s Christian Social Responsibilities beyond the walls of the church to different communities in the different countries where the church has its footprints thereby bringing succour to the people regardless of religious affiliation. The governor was delighted about the siting of this ultra-modern within the University of Medical Sciences Teaching Hospital Complex which is an existing teaching hospital as he believes that it will help to save more lives with the additional bed spaces and will also enhance medical teaching with the updated technology. While responding, the Osemawe said he was very delighted to see the ICU centre commissioned today as it came earlier than expected and believes the upgraded centre will be of immense benefits to the Ondo kingdom and environs. His Love Foundation, a charity arm of the church, has been supporting health-care delivery in the country from inception through interventions that guarantee quality health care through provisions of diagnostics centres, laboratories, pharmaceuticals, kidney dialysis and ambulance services.

FERTILITY

with **DR. KEMI AILOJE**
Info@lifelinkfertility.com;
Website: lifelinkfertility.com
08033083580



Sickle Cell Disease And Infertility (Part 4)



Last week we talked about Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) and attempting pregnancy. In concluding this topic, we will be addressing preventions of complications in a pregnant patient with SCD. Complications of sickle cell disease can be avoided by preventing red blood cells from becoming sickle cell shaped and staying around. Ways to help sickle cell stay round are:

- Drinking plenty water.
- Avoiding extremely hot or cold temperatures.
- Avoiding places or situations with low oxygen, such as high altitudes, military boot camp or strenuous athletic training.
- Getting plenty of rest and taking frequent breaks during exercise.

How does sickle cell affect pregnancy?

- With sickle cell disease, you will have a higher risk of certain pregnancy complications. Including miscarriage, preterm delivery and having baby with a low birth weight.
- High blood pressure and pre-eclampsia is a potentially dangerous pregnancy complication characterized by the sudden onset of high blood pressure. This is more common in women with sickle cell disease. As far as child birth is concerned, you are slightly more likely to have a C-section that is mostly due to the increased rate of pregnancy complication characterized by the sudden onset of high blood pressure.

The above however does not apply to all patients with SCD as some of them go through pregnancy with minimal complications while some may need special treatment and specialist care.

In Need of Special Treatment During Pregnancy?

Some women with sickle cell disease have too much iron stored in their blood even when they are anemic. If you fall in this category, your doctor may recommend a prenatal vitamin that has no iron.

- Some SCD patient may need to receive more blood transfusions at some point during pregnancy.
- A prenatal check-up more frequent than other women in order to ensure closer monitoring during routine prenatal check is recommended.
- Low dose Aspirin will increase blood flow to the womb and reduce the risk of pre-eclampsia. Women with SCD should be closely monitored for elevated blood pressure.
- Regular routine urinalysis is also crucial.
- They should also be offered a viability

scan at 7-9 weeks of gestation, routine first-trimester scan (11-14 weeks of gestation) and a detailed anomaly scan at 20 weeks. In addition, they should be mandated to have serial fetal biometry scans (growth scans) every 4 weeks from 24 weeks of gestation. A number of studies suggest that women with SCD are at risk of fetal growth restriction as well as pre-eclampsia. Serial growth scans allow early detection of fetal growth restriction and thus aid appropriate timing of delivery to reduce perinatal mortality and morbidity.

Treating Sickle Cell Crises /Pain.

Sickle cell crisis can be effectively managed through the following steps:

- Take a pain reliever only as recommended by your physician as certain medications are not safe till about 12-28 weeks of pregnancy, hence avoiding across the counter pain reliever usage is of immense importance to the survival of the pregnancy.
- Ensure to take plenty fluid to enhance proper hydration.
- Use a warm towel or a heated pad to gently massage the affected body part.

Treatments for Anaemia

- Anaemia (reduction in the healthy red cells in blood) often causes few symptoms and may not require specific treatment. However, dietary supplements such as folic acid (which help stimulates the production of red blood cells) are helpful.
- Anaemia caused by sickle cell disease is not the same as the more common iron deficiency anemia. Blood transfusion and administration of oxygen may be required in some cases.

Child Birth Options:

While safe vagina delivery is not contraindicated in sickle cell disease, best option for delivery remains induction of labour or elective Caesarean section. Adequate Hydration throughout pregnancy, during delivery and post-partum is very important. Also, prior to delivery provisions should have been made for blood transfusion. Women with sickle cell disease who intend getting pregnant should visit their physician who provides counselling and assessment. This enables him/her to identify medications the individual may be using that is needed before conception or those not suitable for and in pregnancy. In conclusion, it is important to note that despite the fact that women have this chronic life threatening condition of sickle cell disease in pregnancy, they can still enjoy safe motherhood if they are closely monitored by their physician before, during, after pregnancy and child birth.

I Bought My Grave, Did My Funeral after Lupus Diagnosis, Victim Recounts

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

Jacquie Achu, a victim of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, an inflammatory disease occasioned by the immune system attacking its own tissues, has revealed her horrible trauma from the ailment.

The UK-based Nigerian revealed that she actually did her own funeral and bought her grave in preparation for death following clinical pronouncement she had only three days to live after she was diagnosed with Lupus in 2003.

She shared this startling experience with the media during a walk against Lupus organised by Arise Monalisa Foundation and Everight Diagnostic Centre in Abuja as part of activities to mark World Lupus Day. Lupus is a silent killer which affects the joints, skin, kidneys, blood cells, brain, heart and lungs of its victims.

“When I mean pain, you have a pain that does not go away. So, I have lived with pains for 18 years. And it does not go away; it is 24/7,” Achu revealed.

Achu said she began to feel ill with boiling temperature, loss of weight, then spinning and exhaustion after she had her last child in 2003.

The trauma she was passing through, which defied medical explanation, coupled with the domestic violence she was subjected to, sent her weight crashing from size 14 to six.

The pain with enfeebling effect persisted before she was tested for Lupus in 2005 after she lost her ability to walk and was bedridden for two years.

“It persisted and they began to look for what was the cause. They tested for HIV, Sickle Cell Anaemia and every illness that



Jacquie Achu (c) and Monalisa Chinda-Coker (second left) at the Walk against Lupus Awareness Campaign in Abuja

is known to the black people because I actually lived in the UK.

“And it took two years and by that time the pain had become debilitating. I lost my movement and I was bedridden for two years.

“In 2005 I was given three days to live. I actually did my own funeral and bought my grave because in England you have to buy your own grave and all that.

“I came out of a coma and again I became crippled for two years again, I had to go on my bums, crawl on knees-up and down the stairs, raising my children. The ailment also affects the digestive system,” Achu said.

She said over the years she had developed mind over matter, dealing with a migraine that lasts for three months and being bedridden for two years before later switching to a wheelchair to enable her to

move around.

“In the last 18 years, I have learnt my symptoms and they are not the same. Some people have theirs differently. I take 36 tablets every day for everything from my head to my toe.

“We decided to bring it here because mine was hereditary and it’s predominantly among the Africans, the Caribbean and the Asian ethnic region and its 93 to 95 per cent among women age from 15-55.

“There are so many things that can trigger it. Mine was dormant but was triggered by domestic abuse. Harsh weather can trigger it as well as environmental factors like lifestyle and poverty.

“Harsh medication can trigger but those ones are circumstantial. But which is not circumstantial is when you have to live with it. We have to make it visible. We want to also show that there is strength in every weakness”.

Nollywood actress Monalisa Chinda-Coker, joined by another actor, Segun Arinze, led the walk. She said the foundation and Everight Diagnostic Centre, came together to bring this auto-immune ailment to the front burner in Nigeria for people to know what Lupus disease is all about.

“This is the time for us to begin to look after our body instead of doing self-medication. You might not know what you are going through, it might be Lupus, it might be your immune system needs boosting and that.

“I have people who have died too, friends, distant relatives who have passed on because of the immune disease and we did not know what it was because nobody knows what this sickness is all about.

“When COVID-19 came, it was the same way; when Malaria came people were running around like headless chickens looking for a solution,” Chinda said.

The Anguish of a Widow

Adibe Emenyonu captures the grief of Mrs. Florence Chidibem, a widow, whose son, 11-year-old Wonderful, is suffering from blood cancer and is presently hospitalised

Mrs. Florence Chidibem, 43, is a mother of five children—three girls and two boys. She is also a teacher at a private school in Benin City, Edo State, but life has never been the same for her.

The first shock of her life was when she lost her husband to the cold hands of death. As a widow whose husband passed on in 2009, she had been struggling to take care of her children without the needed assistance from anyone; taking all her troubles with equanimity, believing that one day some day, all her worried will minimise perhaps when the children grow up to fend for themselves and become self-reliant.

But nothing of such has happened as one of her son’s was struck by a deadly ailment which had consumed all her finances to the extent that feeding has become difficult for her and the children.

Lamenting her ordeal, the mother of five said tragedy visited them when her second son, Wonderful Chidibem, aged 11, took ill September last year when he complained of stomach pain and was taken to a nearby hospital.

Unfortunately, what the widow thought was going to be cured by taking antibiotics, was not to be as they were referred to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital where the 11 years old wonderful was diagnosed and was discovered to be suffering from Hodgkin’s lymphoma” which in lay parlance means blood cancer.

“Since then, I have been running from pillar to post looking for help so that my son can get well again to no avail. As it is now, only God can cure him as I have spent all I have including borrowing and help from relatives”, Mrs Chidibem sobbed.

According to the 43 year old widow, “since my son’s ailment started in September 2020, I have spent over N2 million on his treatment without positive result, except



Mrs. Florence Chidibem

with a medical advice that I needed to take the little boy to a hospital in Italy for further treatment.”

Attesting to the fact that she is in dire need of financial support to fund the treatment of her son, the woman, produced a medical report she was given by the authorities of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH).

The letter, titled, “Re-Chidubem Wonderful, M/11 Years”, which was endorsed by Dr. Y.T Israel-Aina, a Paediatric Oncologist and Professor C. Omuemu, Chairman, Medical Advisory Committee, MAC, and Director, Clinical Services and Training, both of UBTH, described Wonderful’s ailment as “Hodgkin’s lymphoma”.

The letter reads: “The above named is an 11-year-old boy who is managed for Hodgkin’s lymphoma. He presented six weeks ago with complaints of Hodgkin’s lymphoma, which is blood cancer”.

“The investigations done confirmed



The hospitalised 11-year-old Wonderful Chidibem

that he has the disease. He has been on chemotherapy and has had several blood transfusions and other supportive medications. Currently, he needs to continue chemotherapy and may need other treatment like radiotherapy for cure of his disease.

“The mother has spent a lot of money for his treatment so far. She requires further financial help to support his treatment as chemotherapy drugs are quite expensive and radiotherapy is even more expensive. The mother will like to use this medium to solicit for financial help for her child”, the letter added, and pleaded “kindly accord her the necessary help in raising funds for this child’s treatment”.

Lamenting her predicament, Mrs. Chidibem, who hails from Imo State, said: “I have five children of three girls and two boys. Wonderful is the last born. In September 2020, he complained of stomach ache and I first took him to a hospital that is close to the house and I was asked to

take him to UBTH.

“He has been in UBTH since January 2021 and I have spent more than two million Naira. I have sold off everything I have because his father, my husband, died in 2009. He is presently on oxygen at the hospital”.

To make matters worse, she further volunteered that the consultant in charge of Wonderful’s treatment had advised that the boy be taken to a hospital in Italy, “but they did not tell me how much the hospital in Italy will cost. But another parent who had been to the hospital in Italy said she spent N20million. I don’t have that kind of amount as I have sold off all that I have treating him. The consultant at UBTH told me that if I want my child alive, I should take him to Italy. I want my child to live and that is why I am appealing to good spirited Nigerians to come to my aid”.

Mrs. Chidibem nevertheless, confirmed that when the ailment started, Wonderful’s relations from his late father’s lineage could only raise N170, 000, which was not sufficient to buy even the required drugs.

“Three of my brother-in-laws gave me money. One gave me N100,000, another gave me N50,000 and the third one gave me N20,000. These were not even enough to buy drugs for one week. Chemo treatment is N350,000 every 14 days. Now, he is in a coma and the doctor said it is because he is not being given the right drugs and I don’t have the money for the right drugs”, she grieved.

In addition, the distraught mother and teacher in a private secondary school, Fluorite High School, Oluku, Benin City, who came to the Edo State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ), Secretariat in tears, reiterated that she had sold off all she had to finance the treatment of her son, Wonderful, the last of the five children of three girls and two boys.

A Mutual fund (Unit Trust) is an investment vehicle managed by a SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) registered Fund Manager. Investors with similar objectives buy units of the Fund so that the Fund Manager can buy securities that will generate their desired return.

An ETF (Exchange Traded Fund) is a type of fund which owns the assets (shares of stock, bonds, oil futures, gold bars, foreign currency, etc.) and divides ownership of those assets into shares. Investors can buy these ‘shares’ on the

floor of the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

A REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) is an investment vehicle that allows both small and large investors to part-own real estate ventures (eg. Offices, Houses, Hospitals) in proportion to their investments. The assets are divided into shares that are traded on the Nigerian Stock Exchange.


GUIDE TO DATA:
Date: All fund prices are quoted in Naira as at 18-May-2021, unless otherwise stated.

Offer price: The price at which units of a trust or ETF are bought by investors.

Bid Price: The price at which Investors redeem (sell) units of a trust or ETF.

Yield/Total Return: Denotes the total return an investor would have earned on his investment. Money Market Funds report Yield while others report Year- to-date Total Return.

NAV: Is value per share of the real estate assets held by a REIT on a specific date.



DAILY PRICE LIST FOR MUTUAL FUNDS, REITS and ETFs

MUTUAL FUNDS / UNIT TRUSTS			
AFRINVEST ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD			
aaml@afrinvest.com			
Web: www.afrinvest.com; Tel: +234 818 885 6757			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Afrinvest Equity Fund	153.31	154.82	5.24%
Afrinvest Plutus Fund	100.00	100.00	3.72%
Nigeria International Debt Fund	300.69	300.69	-24.29%
Afrinvest Dollar Fund	110.56	110.56	-1.36%
ALTERNATIVE CAPITAL PARTNERS LTD			
info@acapng.com			
Web: www.acapng.com, Tel: +234 1 291 2406, +234 1 291 2868			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
ACAP Canary Growth Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
ACAP Income Funds	N/A	N/A	N/A
AIICO CAPITAL LTD			
ammf@aiicocapital.com			
Web: www.aiicocapital.com, Tel: +234-1-2792974			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
AIICO Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	5.16%
AIICO Balanced Fund	3.29	3.34	-8.70%
ANCHORIA ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			
Web:www.anchoriam.com, Tel: 08166830267; 08036814510; 08028419180			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Anchoria Money Market	100.00	100.00	1.88%
Anchoria Equity Fund	127.61	129.04	-4.06%
Anchoria Fixed Income Fund	1.05	1.05	-21.15%
ARM INVESTMENT MANAGERS LTD			
enquiries@arminvestmentcenter.com			
Web: www.arm.com.ng; Tel: 0700 CALLARM (0700 225 5276)			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
ARM Aggressive Growth Fund	18.93	19.50	4.40%
ARM Discovery Balanced Fund	413.44	425.91	3.27%
ARM Ethical Fund	36.87	37.98	9.36%
ARM Eurobond Fund (\$)	1.08	1.09	-11.52%
ARM Fixed Income Fund	0.96	0.96	-14.44%
ARM Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	3.00%
AVA GLOBAL ASSET MANAGERS LIMITED			
info@avacapitalgroup.com			
Web: www.avacapitalgroup.com			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
AVA GAM Fixed Income Dollar Fund	104.16	104.16	2.41%
AXA MANSARD INVESTMENTS LIMITED			
investmentcare@axamansard.com			
Web: www.axamansard.com; Tel: +2341-4488482			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
AXA Mansard Equity Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
AXA Mansard Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
CAPITAL EXPRESS ASSET AND TRUST LIMITED			
info@capitalexpressassetandtrust.com			
Web: www.capitalexpressassetandtrust.com ; Tel: +234 803 307 5048			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
CEAT Fixed Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Capital Express Balanced Fund(Formerly: Union Trustees Mixed Fund)	N/A	N/A	N/A
CARDINALSTONE ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			
mutualfunds@cardinalstone.com			
Web: www.cardinalstoneassetmanagement.com ; Tel: +234 (1) 710 0433 4			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
CardinalStone Fixed Income Alpha Fund	1.01	1.01	0.95%
CHAPELHILL DENHAM MANAGEMENT LTD			
investmentmanagement@chapelhilldenham.com			
Web: www.chapelhilldenham.com, Tel: +234 461 0691			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Chapelhill Denham Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	3.32%
Paramount Equity Fund	15.80	16.09	-1.21%
Women's Investment Fund	131.49	132.87	-1.25%
CORDROS ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			
assetmgteam@cordros.com			
Web: www.cordros.com, Tel: 019036947			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Cordros Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	4.02%
Cordros Milestone Fund 2023	113.91	114.63	
Cordros Milestone Fund 2028	N/A	N/A	
Cordros Dollar Fund (\$)	106.45	106.45	
CORONATION ASSEST MANAGEMENT			
investment@coronationam.com			
Web:www.coronationam.com , Tel: 012366215			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Coronation Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	2.21%
Coronation Balanced Fund	1.16	1.17	-3.51%
Coronation Fixed Income Fund	1.35	1.35	-14.95%
EDC FUNDS MANAGEMENT LIMITED			
mutualfundng@ecobank.com			
Web: www.ecobank.com Tel: 012265281			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
EDC Nigeria Money Market Fund Class A	100.00	100.00	3.18%
EDC Nigeria Money Market Fund Class B	1,000,000.00	1,000,000.00	2.99%
EDC Nigeria Fixed Income Fund	1,157.03	1,163.94	-3.41%
FBNQUEST ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD			
invest@fbnquest.com			
Web: www.fbnquest.com/asset-management; Tel: +234-81 0082 0082			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
FBN Fixed Income Fund	1,366.85	1,366.85	9.43%
FBN Balanced Fund	184.51	185.66	-1.69%
FBN Halal Fund	109.36	109.36	4.42%
FBN Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	6.24%
FBN Nigeria Eurobond (USD) Fund - Retail	124.73	124.73	3.19%
FBN Smart Beta Equity Fund	152.46	154.59	0.85%
FCMB ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED			
fcmbamhelpdesk@fcmb.com			
Web: www.fcmbassetmanagement.com; Tel: +234 1 462 2596			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Legacy Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	2.67%
Legacy Debt Fund	3.94	3.94	1.73%
Legacy Equity Fund	1.56	1.59	2.19%
Legacy USD Bond Fund	1.16	1.16	1.88%
FSDH ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD			
coralfunds@fsdhgroup.com			
Web: www.fsdhaml.com; Tel: 01-270 4884-5; 01-280 9740-1			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Coral Growth Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Coral Income Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
FSDH Treasury Bills Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A

GREENWICH ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED		assetmanagement@gtlgroup.com	
Web: www.gtlgroup.com ; Tel: +234 1 4619261-2			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Greenwich Plus Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nigeria Entertainment Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED		assetmanagement@gdl.com.ng	
Web: www.gdl.com.ng ; Tel: +234 9055691122			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
GDL Money Market Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A
INVESTMENT ONE FUNDS MANAGEMENT LTD		enquiries@investment-one.com	
Web: www.investment-one.com; Tel: +234 812 992 1045,+234 1 448 8888			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Abacus Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	4.32%
Vantage Balanced Fund	2.77	2.83	20.55%
Vantage Guaranteed Income Fund	1.00	1.00	4.50%
Kedari Investment Fund (KIF)	148.47	148.90	-4.47%
Vantage Equity Income Fund (VEIF) - June Year End	1.22	1.26	28.90%
Vantage Dollar Fund (VDF) - June Year End	1.09	1.09	6.21%
LOTUS CAPITAL LTD		fincon@lotuscapitallimited.com	
Web: www.lotuscapitallimited.com; Tel: +234 1-291 4626 / +234 1-291 4624			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Lotus Halal Investment Fund	1.36	1.38	0.00%
Lotus Halal Fixed Income Fund	1,137.68	1,137.68	3.02%
MERISTEM WEALTH MANAGEMENT LTD		info@meristemwealth.com	
Web: http://www.meristemwealth.com/funds/ ; Tel: +234 1-4488260			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Meristem Equity Market Fund	10.64	10.71	1.71%
Meristem Money Market Fund	10.00	10.00	5.13%
PAC ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD		info@pacassetmanagement.com	
Web: www.pacassetmanagement.com/mutualfunds; Tel: +234 1 271 8632			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
PACAM Balanced Fund	1.63	1.66	7.29%
PACAM Fixed Income Fund	12.42	12.48	2.37%
PACAM Money Market Fund	10.00	10.00	2.60%
PACAM Equity Fund	1.58	1.59	-0.44%
PACAM EuroBond Fund	110.65	112.19	0.60%
SCM CAPITAL LIMITED		info@scmcapitalng.com	
Web: www.scmcapitalng.com; Tel: +234 1-280 2226,+234 1- 280 2227			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
SCM Capital Frontier Fund	130.12	132.35	6.86%
SFS CAPITAL NIGERIA LTD		investments@sfsnigeria.com	
Web: www.sfsnigeria.com, Tel: +234 (01) 2801400			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
SFS Fixed Income Fund	1.01	1.01	2.72%
STANBIC IBTC ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD		assetmanagement@stanbicibt.com	
Web: www.stanbicibtassetmanagement.com; Tel: +234 1 280 1266; 0700 MUTUALFUNDS			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Stanbic IBTC Balanced Fund	3,144.84	3,169.75	-2.21%
Stanbic IBTC Bond Fund	229.32	229.32	1.99%
Stanbic IBTC Ethical Fund	1.18	1.20	0.85%
Stanbic IBTC Guaranteed Investment Fund	300.59	300.59	2.01%
Stanbic IBTC Iman Fund	216.24	218.90	-1.05%
Stanbic IBTC Money Market Fund	100.00	100.00	5.79%
Stanbic IBTC Nigerian Equity Fund	10,154.48	10,280.71	-3.32%
Stanbic IBTC Dollar Fund (USD)	1.25	1.25	2.11%
Stanbic IBTC Shariah Fixed Income Fund	113.57	113.57	2.24%
Stanbic IBTC Enhanced Short-Term Fixed Income Fund	100.93	100.93	
UNITED CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD			
Web: www.unitedcapitalplcgroup.com; Tel: +234 803 306 2887			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
United Capital Balanced Fund	1.34	1.36	-1.94%
United Capital Bond Fund	1.94	1.94	2.38%
United Capital Equity Fund	0.89	0.91	2.54%
United Capital Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	6.49%
United Capital Eurobond Fund	120.38	120.38	2.81%
United Capital Wealth for Women Fund	1.08	1.10	-0.34%
United capital Sukuk Fund	1.04	1.04	4.33%
QUANTUM ZENITH ASSET MANAGEMENT & INVESTMENTS LTD		service@quantumzenithasset.com.ng	
Web: www.quantumzenith.com.ng; Tel: +234 1-2784219			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Zenith Equity Fund	12.09	12.20	1.90%
Zenith Ethical Fund	13.49	13.61	10.41%
Zenith Income Fund	24.06	24.06	0.35%
Zenith Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	3.21%
REITS			
Fund Name	NAV Per Share		Yield / T-Rtn
SFS REIT	123.20		2.04%
Union Homes REIT	51.42		-1.87%
EXCHANGE TRADED FUNDS			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Lotus Halal Equity Exchange Traded Fund	12.30	12.40	-6.88%
SIAML Pension ETF 40	123.28	123.28	1.26%
Stanbic IBTC ETF 30 Fund	96.16	97.90	-3.26%
VETIVA FUND MANAGERS LTD		funds@vetiva.com	
Web: www.vetiva.com; Tel: +234 1 453 0697			
Fund Name	Bid Price	Offer Price	Yield / T-Rtn
Vetiva Banking Exchange Traded Fund	3.77	3.81	-0.15%
Vetiva Consumer Goods Exchange Traded Fund	5.59	5.67	-1.78%
Vetiva Griffin 30 Exchange Traded Fund	16.76	16.86	2.54%
Vetiva Money Market Fund	1.00	1.00	2.58%
Vetiva Industrial Goods Exchange Traded Fund	18.60	18.80	-9.33%
Vetiva S&P Nigeria Sovereign Bond Exchange Traded Fund	159.42	161.42	-27.08%
INFRASTRUCTURE FUND			
Fund Name	NAV Per Share		Yield / T-Rtn
Chapel Hill Denham Nigeria Infrastructure Debt Fund	107.52		13.11%

The value of investments and the income from them may fall as well as rise. Past performance is a guide and not an indication of future returns. Fund prices published in this edition are also available on each fund manager’s website and FMAN’s website at www.fman.com.ng. Fund prices are supplied by the operator of the relevant fund and are published for information purposes only.

Suleiman: Lack of Trust Affecting Commodity Market's Growth

Nume Ekeghe

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sterling Bank Plc, Mr. Abubakar Suleiman, has identified lack of trust as the main problem affecting the growth and development of the Nigerian commodity market.

He disclosed this while delivering a welcome address during a webinar organised recently as part of measures to promote SABEX, a digital commodity exchange empowered by blockchain technology. The webinar held with the theme: 'Agro Commodities as a Viable Asset Class.'

SABEX, which was designed to facilitate the exchange of agro commodities, operates through an ecosystem of buyers, financiers, warehouse operators and other players in the agro commodity trading business across Nigeria.

On SABEX, traders - typically farmers - can pledge their warehoused agricultural goods as collateral to access instant loans to facilitate their business growth.

Suleiman, was quoted in a statement to have said the webinar had the objective of developing trust in the commodity market, saying there is currently no trust among players in the sub-sector, starting from farmers to micro players and exporters across the value chain.

He said there was a need to build trust in the payment, partnership, product, price and

delivery elements of the agro commodity trading business. He added: "We need to financialise commodities to the point that they are similar to digital assets."

The CEO said there was need to get to the point of higher productivity by scaling and bringing efficiency and quality inputs into the agricultural produce space, adding that there is also the need to change the nature of the asset and increase the liquidity of commodities. He said SABEX intends to deliver on trust. A Senior Fellow/Associate Professor and full-time member of the Lagos Business School, Dr. Adedoyin Salami, who delivered the keynote address, noted that agriculture is a major sector that represents one-quarter of the Nigerian economy.

He noted that the commodity market is made up of energy, metals, agriculture, livestock and cryptocurrency.

Salami, who is also an economist and consultant, noted that though the agricultural sector is declining, it still accounts for a significant proportion of jobs and has remained resilient over the years despite the ravaging effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw Nigeria's economy contract in two consecutive quarters of 2020. The keynote speaker, who is also a member of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) and Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) of the Federal Government, said

Nigerian commodities would compare favourably with all other asset classes, even though Nigeria is lagging behind other global players.

He said, from a global perspective, there was huge potential for investments in physical assets in Nigeria, especially investments in storage and irrigation because the country's agriculture is currently rain-fed and seasonal.

The university don explained that agriculture could also have a huge impact on the country through savings mobilisation, food security improvement, poverty reduction, increased financial inclusion, revenue diversification, and the complimentary role of regulators that would ensure transparency, capital adequacy, policy consistency, constant engagement with stakeholders, encouraging innovative products and revision of regulations to global best practice.

Also, the Vice President, Corporate and Government Relations of Olam International, Mr. Ade Adefeko, identified opaqueness, lack of trust, and transparency as some of the problems affecting the Nigerian commodity market.

He said going forward, there was a need for predictability, price stability and the need to work on the distorted agricultural space, adding that although opportunities abound, there was a need to structure the market so that the farmer can get value for his produce at the right price.



Suleiman

MARKET INDICATORS	
MONEY AND CREDIT STATISTICS (MILLION NAIRA)	
	JANUARY 2021
Money Supply (M3)	38,779,455.43
-- CBN Bills Held by Money Holding Sectors	1,039,129.55
Money Supply (M2)	37,740,325.88
-- Quasi Money	21,779,302.69
-- Narrow Money (M1)	15,961,023.19
---- Currency Outside Banks	2,364,871.13
---- Demand Deposits	13,596,152.06
Net Foreign Assets (NFA)	7,414,275.50
Net Domestic Assets(NDA)	31,365,179.93
-- Net Domestic Credit (NDC)	42,916,586.63
---- Credit to Government (Net)	12,304,773.44
---- Memo: Credit to Govt. (Net) less FMA	0.00
---- Memo: Fed. and Mirror Accounts (FMA)	0.00
--- Credit to Private Sector (CPS)	30,611,813.19
--Other Assets Net	3,892,112.74
Reserve Money(Base Money)	13,264,585.14
--Currency in Circulation	2,831,167.19
--Banks Reserves	10,433,417.96
--Special Intervention Reserves	317,234.17

• Source- CBN

Money Market Indicators (in Percentage)	
Month	March 2018
Inter-Bank Call Rate	15.16
Minimum Rediscount Rate (MRR)	
Monetary Policy Rate (MPR)	14.00
Treasury Bill Rate	11.84
Savings Deposit Rate	4.07
1 Month Deposit Rate	8.82
3 Months Deposit Rate	9.72
6 Months Deposit Rate	10.93
12 Months Deposit Rate	10.21
Prime Lending rate	17.35
Maximum Lending Rate	31.55

• Monetary Policy Rate - 13%

OPEC DAILY BASKET PRICE AS AT TUESDAY, 18 MAY 2021
The price of OPEC basket of thirteen crudes stood at \$68.39 a barrel on Tuesday, compared with \$67.52 the previous day, according to OPEC Secretariat calculations.. The OPEC Reference Basket of Crudes (ORB) is made up of the following: Saharan Blend (Algeria), Girassol (Angola), Djeno (Congo), Zafiro (Equatorial Guinea), Rabi Light (Gabon), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basra Light (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Merey (Venezuela).
SOURCE: OPEC headquarters, Vienna

Abbey Mortgage Bank Unfolds Business Growth Plan

Abbey Mortgage Bank Plc yesterday held its 29th Annual General Meeting with shareholders.

The meeting which took place in Lagos, brought together board members, regulators, shareholders, and other key stakeholders virtually and physically to review the bank's performance in the last financial year ended 2020.

Speaking on the bank's operating results, the Chairman, Board of Directors of the company, Mr. Emmanuel Kanu Ivi, revealed that the bank's gross earnings grew by 9.5 per cent to N1.52 billion, up from the N1.38 billion it made the previous year, while its operating income grew by 10.5 per cent to N0.98 billion, up from N0.88 billion in 2019.

This, according to a statement, was attributed to the bank's efficient liability generation and asset optimisation.

In addition, the business also grew in total assets by 51.1 per cent to close at N18.5 billion, up from N12.2 billion in 2019.

He also gave updates on the developments in the board, explaining that "during the financial year, Mr. Nonso Okpala, Professor Marius Umego and Brig-General John Obasa (Rtd) joined the board as Non-Executive Directors, while Mr. Mobolaji Adewumi and Mr. Oladipupo Adeoye joined the board as Executive Directors".

Also, the Managing Director/CEO, Abbey Mortgage Bank, Mr. Madu Hamman, spoke on the future of the bank.

"Our strategic focus is to improve earnings capability, increase brand awareness/business realignment, continue investment in human capital and drive electronic/digital channels deployment and optimisation to

enhance internal capacity and improve service delivery to our customers," he added.

The discussions at the meeting buttressed the bank's new strategy to reposition itself for improved business growth in a digital world, "our strategic partnership with VFD Group, connects us to a diverse ecosystem of businesses that are leveraging technology & innovation for financial development.

"This enables us to deliver more value to our customers linking them to more economic opportunities and best-in-class digital solutions," Hamman added.

In Q1 2021, the bank recorded N76 million in profit, growing in deposit liability to N23.5billion from N14.6billion in 2020 through aggressive sales drive and increased brand visibility.

Wema Bank Unveils Essay Competition for Kids

Wema Bank Plc is hosting a creative essay competition for children.

The 2021 Royal Kiddies Essay Competition tagged: "Write & Win", will test the creative writing abilities of young school children in Nigeria aged 5 – 12.

It aims to develop writing skills, promote creativity, imagination capabilities, reward creativity, and drive them towards excellence in their learning process.

"Ten kids will emerge from a transparent, credible, and thorough screening process. The top three essays will each get Huawei tablets and Royal Kiddies branded T-shirts.

"The seven other finalists

will each get a N20,000 prepaid gift card for school supplies in addition to a branded T-shirt.

"The essay competition is open to children of parents/guardians who have opened and funded a Royal Kiddies Account for their children/wards. Eligible kids will develop a creative and imaginative essay reminiscent of the eventful year 2020," a statement explained.

According to the statement, "to get your kids to join the fun and get them rewarded for their creativity in the Wema Bank Royal Kiddies Essay Contest, follow the steps below:

"Send an essay written by your ward(s) with the topic:

"2020 A year to Remember" along with their royal kiddies account details to retail.products@wemabank.com.

"Essay submission entries close by May 24, 2021. Besides other terms and Conditions that apply, only Royal Kiddies Account holders with up to N20,000 in their account qualify to apply."

Wema Bank's Royal Kiddies Account gives kids an early start to financial freedom. It is for kids between ages one to 12. Other benefits of opening a Wema Bank Royal Kiddies account for your children are access to school fees advance, scholarships, life assurance to fund their education and many others.

MARKET NEWS

CSCS Shareholders Approve N5.8bn Dividend, Laud Performance

Goddy Egene

Shareholders of Central Securities Clearing System (CSCS) Plc have approved the N5.8 billion dividend recommended for the financial year ended December 31, 2020. The dividend, which translated to N1.17 per share was approved at the annual general meeting (AGM) held in Lagos recently.

Speaking on the performance of the company at the AGM, the

Chairman of CSCS Plc, Mr. Oscar Onyema, said despite the challenges in 2020, CSCS emerged stronger, delivering outstanding growth in top and bottom-lines, and executing far-reaching initiatives that would sustainably strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of the business.

“Growing profit by over 41 per cent in such a challenging year to deliver 20.3 per cent return on average equity, the board of directors is more than

ever upbeat on the value accretive prospects of CSCS. More importantly, we are enthusiastic on the progress made thus far in repositioning the business to efficiently play a more active and leading role in deepening the Nigerian capital market. With continuous investments in new technologies, talent, and work environment, we expect productivity to grow, as the Board continues to work with the Management to exceed

stakeholders’ expectations,” he added.

Also speaking, the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of the company, Mr. Haruna Jalo-Waziri said: “These impressive results reflect our enhanced collaboration with different stakeholders and their unflinching support and loyalty to CSCS, as the core infrastructure for the Nigerian capital market. Hence, my colleagues and I are excited

to dedicate this performance to our esteemed participants, regulator and the board of directors, whose support kept us stronger through the pandemic. We would continue to invest in our collective objective of deepening the capital market and broader financial system, even as we seek new and efficient ways of enhancing our partnerships for mutual prosperity.”

According to him, having laid a solid foundation over the past

three years, there are more than ever optimistic on the prospect of their business, especially as they diversify the business for enhanced resilience against macro and market volatilities.

“The years ahead look challenging, albeit more promising than ever, as we reinforce our commitment to leveraging best-in-class technologies and our continuous investments in human capital in delivering value to all stakeholders,” he said.

PRICES FOR SECURITIES TRADED AS OF 19/05/2021

MAIN BOARD	DEALS	MARKET PRICE	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE TRADED (N)
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N BANKING	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
1 ACCESS BANK PLC.	298,579.90	8.40	1.82 ⬆	174 7,713,574
2 UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC	251,365.75	7.35	-0.68 ⬇	130 4,357,890
3 ZENITH BANK PLC	722,119.36	23.00	-2.13 ⬇	314 9,638,615
BANKING				618 21,710,079
S/N OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
4 FBN HOLDINGS PLC	254,856.58	7.10	-0.70 ⬇	112 4,617,124
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS				112 4,617,124
FINANCIAL SERVICES				730 26,327,203
ICT				
S/N TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
5 MTN NIGERIA COMMUNICATIONS PLC	3,256,722.09	160.00	-	49 191,689
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES				49 191,689
ICT				49 191,689
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				
S/N BUILDING MATERIALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
6 DANGOTE CEMENT PLC	3,646,668.58	214.00	-0.47 ⬇	49 282,436
7 LAFARGE AFRICA PLC.	325,377.47	20.20	0.50 ⬆	97 5,557,999
BUILDING MATERIALS				146 5,840,435
INDUSTRIAL GOODS				146 5,840,435
OIL AND GAS				
S/N EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
8 SEPLAT PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT COMPANY PLC	401,319.19	682.00	10.00 ⬆	73 1,585,877
EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION				73 1,585,877
OIL AND GAS				73 1,585,877
CONGLOMERATES				
S/N DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
9 CHELLARAMS PLC.	1,619.35	2.24	-	0 0
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES				0 0
CONGLOMERATES				0 0
CONSUMER GOODS				
S/N FOOD PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
10 MCNICHOLS PLC	261.36	0.80	-	0 0
FOOD PRODUCTS				0 0
CONSUMER GOODS				0 0
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
11 LIVINGTRUST MORTGAGE BANK PLC	3,400.00	0.68	-	0 0
MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				0 0
FINANCIAL SERVICES				0 0
ICT				
S/N TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
12 BRICLINKS AFRICA PLC	62.50	6.25	-	0 0
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES				0 0
ICT				0 0
SERVICES				
S/N WASTE MANAGEMENT	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLU
13 THE INITIATES PLC	391.59	0.44	-	4 249,
WASTE MANAGEMENT				4 249,
SERVICES				4 249,
GROWTH BOARD TOTALS				4 249,

Price List (Equities)

PRICES FOR MAIN BOARD SECURITIES					
AGRICULTURE					
S/N CROP PRODUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLU
14 ELLAH LAKES PLC.	8,500.00	4.25	-	1	10,
15 FTN COCOA PROCESSORS PLC	924.00	0.42	-	4	135,
16 OKOMU OIL PALM PLC.	92,052.32	96.50	-	33	307,
17 PRESKO PLC	78,900.00	78.90	-	16	129,
CROP PRODUCTION				54	582,
S/N LIVESTOCK/ANIMAL SPECIALTIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLU
18 LIVESTOCK FEEDS PLC.	5,550.00	1.85	2.78 ⬆	18	520,
LIVESTOCK/ANIMAL SPECIALTIES				18	520,
AGRICULTURE				72	1,102,
CONGLOMERATES					
S/N DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLU
19 JOHN HOLT PLC.	229.60	0.59	-	3	7,
20 S C O A NIG. PLC.	1,267.16	1.95	-	3	3,
21 TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATION OF NIGERIA PLC	35,770.23	0.88	2.33 ⬆	51	8,707,
CONGLOMERATES					
S/N DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES				202	18,731,649
CONGLOMERATES				202	18,731,649
CONSTRUCTION/REAL ESTATE					
S/N BUILDING CONSTRUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
23 ARBICO PLC.	152.96	1.03	-	0	0
BUILDING CONSTRUCTION				0	0
S/N INFRASTRUCTURE/HEAVY CONSTRUCTION	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
24 JULIUS BERGER NIG. PLC.	33,264.00	21.00	-	15	89,722
25 ROADS NIG PLC.	165.00	6.90	-	0	0
INFRASTRUCTURE/HEAVY CONSTRUCTION				15	89,722
S/N REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
CONSTRUCTION/REAL ESTATE					
S/N REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUM
26 UACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY PLC	15,775.97	0.85	-	7	42,46
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT				7	42,46
CONSTRUCTION/REAL ESTATE				22	132,18
CONSUMER GOODS					
S/N AUTOMOBILES/AUTO PARTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUM
27 DN TYRE & RUBBER PLC	954.53	0.20	-	0	
AUTOMOBILES/AUTO PARTS				0	
S/N BEVERAGES-BREWERS/DISTILLERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUM
28 CHAMPION BREW. PLC.	16,598.53	2.12	8.16 ⬆	11	225,90
29 GOLDEN GUINEA BREW. PLC.	829.98	0.81	-	0	
30 GUINNESS NIG PLC	63,521.10	29.00	1.58 ⬆	53	1,410,89
31 INTERNATIONAL BREWERIES PLC.	151,770.69	5.65	-0.88 ⬇	40	1,964,67
32 NIGERIAN BREW. PLC.	438,230.23	54.80	-	38	129,02
BEVERAGES-BREWERS/DISTILLERS				142	3,730,50
S/N FOOD PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUM
33 DANGOTE SUGAR REFINERY PLC	207,711.62	17.10	-3.93 ⬇	94	1,844,43
34 FLOUR MILLS NIG. PLC.	120,961.20	29.50	-	55	444,80
35 HONEYWELL FLOUR MILL PLC	9,119.73	1.15	1.77 ⬆	34	686,15
36 MULTI-TREX INTEGRATED FOODS PLC	1,340.10	0.36	-	0	
37 N NIG. FLOUR MILLS PLC.	997.92	5.60	-8.94 ⬇	10	132,82
38 NASCON ALLIED INDUSTRIES PLC	39,211.69	14.80	-	8	24,20
39 UNION DICON SALT PLC.	2,708.05	9.90	-	1	20
FOOD PRODUCTS				202	3,132,63

MAIN BOARD	DEALS	MARKET PRICE	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE TRADED (N)
CONSUMER GOODS				
S/N FOOD PRODUCTS-DIVERSIFIED	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
40 CADBURY NIGERIA PLC.	15,401.26	8.20	-	20 82,304
41 NESTLE NIGERIA PLC.	1,125,571.88	1,420.00	-	40 28,401
FOOD PRODUCTS-DIVERSIFIED				60 116,705
S/N HOUSEHOLD DURABLES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
42 NIGERIAN ENAMELWARE PLC.	1,264.77	17.95	-	0 0
43 VITAFORM NIG PLC.	11,257.60	9.00	-	53 1,712,260
HOUSEHOLD DURABLES				53 1,712,260
S/N PERSONALHOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
44 P Z CUSSONS NIGERIA PLC.	21,440.58	5.40	1.89 ⬆	21 1,931,995
45 UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC.	72,387.07	12.60	-	21 234,491
PERSONALHOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS				42 2,166,486
CONSUMER GOODS				499 10,852,582
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
S/N BANKING	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
46 ECOBANK TRANSNATIONAL INCORPORATED	95,417.67	5.20	-3.70 ⬇	43 828,726
47 FIDELITY BANK PLC	66,352.29	2.29	-0.44 ⬇	88 8,745,224
48 GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC.	863,805.11	29.35	-0.51 ⬇	195 1,994,739
49 JAIZ BANK PLC	18,267.83	0.62	-	16 1,223,783
50 STERLING BANK PLC.	48,655.81	1.69	9.74 ⬆	56 4,810,407
BANKING				525 23,356,344
S/N INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES VOLUME
54 AFRICAN ALLIANCE INSURANCE PLC	4,117.00	0.20	-	1 30,000
55 AIICO INSURANCE PLC.	25,841.58	1.25	-3.10 ⬇	32 4,665,917
56 AXAMANSARD INSURANCE PLC	32,040.00	0.89	1.14 ⬆	30 1,824,770
57 CONSOLIDATED HALLMARK INSURANCE PLC	5,459.30	0.51	-	3 10,100
58 CORNERSTONE INSURANCE PLC	9,446.52	0.52	1.96 ⬆	9 774,903
59 CORONATION INSURANCE PLC	11,995.84	0.50	-5.66 ⬇	36 5,856,192
60 GOLDLINK INSURANCE PLC	909.99	0.20	-	0 0
61 GUINEA INSURANCE PLC.	1,228.00	0.20	-	0 0
62 INTERNATIONAL ENERGY INSURANCE PLC	487.95	0.38	-	0 0
63 LASACO ASSURANCE PLC.	2,860.39	1.55	-	23 675,339
64 LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	9,100.00	0.65	-	8 245,000
65 MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC.	4,804.28	0.43	7.50 ⬆	19 7,327,858
66 NEM INSURANCE PLC	20,065.81	2.00	-3.85 ⬇	19 554,784
67 NIGER INSURANCE PLC	1,547.90	0.20	-	5 522,500
68 PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC	6,096.18	0.45	6.98 ⬆	1 350,000
69 REGENCY ASSURANCE PLC	2,487.44	0.37	8.82 ⬆	18 3,302,700
70 SOVEREIGN TRUST INSURANCE PLC	2,954.76	0.26	-3.70 ⬇	10 2,650,000
71 STACO INSURANCE PLC	4,483.72	0.48	-	0 0
72 STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE PLC.	2,582.21	0.20	-	0 0

S/N	INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
73	SUNU ASSURANCES NIGERIA PLC.	3,021.62	0.52	4.00 ⬆	4	109,478
74	UNIC DIVERSIFIED HOLDINGS PLC.	516.46	0.20	-	0	0
75	UNIVERSAL INSURANCE PLC	3,200.00	0.20	-	3	520,000

FINANCIAL SERVICES					
S/N INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
76 VERITAS KAPITAL ASSURANCE PLC	2,773.33	0.20	-	7	1,599,800
INSURANCE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				228	31,219,341
S/N MICRO-FINANCE BANKS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
77 NPF MICROFINANCE BANK PLC	3,772.95	1.85	-4.07 ⬇	42	1,409,924
MICRO-FINANCE BANKS				42	1,409,924
S/N MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
78 ABBEY MORTGAGE BANK PLC	6,784.62	1.05	-	1	5,000
79 ASO SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC	7,370.87	0.50	-	0	0
80 INFINITY TRUST MORTGAGE BANK PLC	5,505.00	1.32	-	0	0
81 RESORT SAVINGS & LOANS PLC	2,265.95	0.20	-	0	0
82 UNION HOMES SAVINGS AND LOANS PLC.	2,949.22	3.02	-	0	0
MORTGAGE CARRIERS, BROKERS AND SERVICES				1	5,000
S/N OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
83 AFRICA PRUDENTIAL PLC	12,400.00	6.20	3.33 ⬆	44	758,545
84 CUSTODIAN INVESTMENT PLC	34,408.91	5.85	-2.50 ⬇	26	408,496
85 DEAP CAPITAL MANAGEMENT & TRUST PLC	300.00	0.20	-	0	0
86 FCMB GROUP PLC.	59,012.08	2.98	-0.67 ⬇	35	4,443,257
87 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLC.	3,859.03	0.75	-9.64 ⬇	21	946,736
88 STANBIC IBTC HOLDINGS PLC	503,101.69	45.30	-0.88 ⬇	57	1,212,585
89 UNITED CAPITAL PLC	36,900.00	6.15	-0.49 ⬇	95	2,545,773
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS				278	10,315,392
FINANCIAL SERVICES				1,074	66,106,601
HEALTHCARE					
S/N HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
90 EKOCORP PLC.	2,941.75	5.90	-	0	0
91 UNION DIAGNOSTIC & CLINICAL SERVICES PLC	994.88	0.28	-	0	0
HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS				0	0
S/N MEDICAL SUPPLIES	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
92 MORISON INDUSTRIES PLC.	929.81	0.94	-	0	0
MEDICAL SUPPLIES				0	0
S/N PHARMACEUTICALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
93 EVANS MEDICAL PLC.	366.17	0.50	-	0	0
94 FIDSON HEALTHCARE PLC	11,015.98	5.28	-	8	4,142
95 GLAXO SMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC.	7,534.02	6.30	-	10	99,706
96 MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC.	7,245.99	4.20	-	32	290,664
97 NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARMACEUTICALS PLC	3,247.58	1.71	-	14	263,434
98 NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC.	556.71	3.62	-	0	0
99 PHARMA-DEKO PLC.	290.54	1.34	-	0	0
PHARMACEUTICALS				64	657,946
HEALTHCARE				64	657,946
ICT					
S/N COMPUTER BASED SYSTEMS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME
100 COURTEVILLE BUSINESS SOLUTIONS PLC	745.92	0.21	5.00 ⬆	11	6,672,051
COMPUTER BASED SYSTEMS				11	6,672,051
S/N COMPUTERS AND PERIPHERALS	MARKET CAP(Nm)	PRICE	%CHANGE	TRADES	VOLUME

NEWSEXTRA

Bandits Kill Eight People in Kaduna, Abduct 18 Passengers in Zamafara

John Shiklam in Kaduna

Bandits have killed eight persons during an attack in Ungwan Gaida community, near Kurmin Kaso in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Gunmen suspected to be bandits have also abducted 18 travellers while on transit along the troubled Dansadai – Gusau Road in Zamafara State.

Kaduna State Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Mr. Samuel Aruwan, in a statement issued yesterday, identified the deceased as Samaila Gajere, Bawa Gajere, Bitrus Baba, Umaru Baba, Solomon Samaila, Sambo Kasuwa, Samuila Kasuwa and Gideon Bitrus.

Aruwan added that a building belonging to the Assemblies of God Church was razed by the bandits, along with several houses.

In another development, the commissioner said the Navy troops stationed in the Kujama general area neutralised three bandits and arrested two

accomplices after repelling an attack on Wakwodna community, near Kasso village, Chikun local government area.

Aruwan said: “According to operational feedback to the Kaduna State Government, the troops stationed at the Kujama checkpoint responded to reports of an attack on Wakwodna village, and swiftly deployed for intervention.

“The bandwits fled into surrounding bushes on sighting the troops, and abandoned some rustled cattle, which were rounded up and returned to their rightful owners.

“The troops engaged the bandits just before Kaso village, and in the gunfight, three bandits were neutralised.

“Two locals, who were injured in the exchange, were evacuated for medical attention.

“During the operation, the troops arrested a suspected bandits informant, Kapido Halilu, and a logistics supplier, Umar Maipashi. Food and medical supplies meant for the bandits were confiscated. The suspects were taken into custody

for further investigation.”

Meanwhile, bandits have abducted 18 travellers while on transit along the troubled Dansadai – Gusau Road.

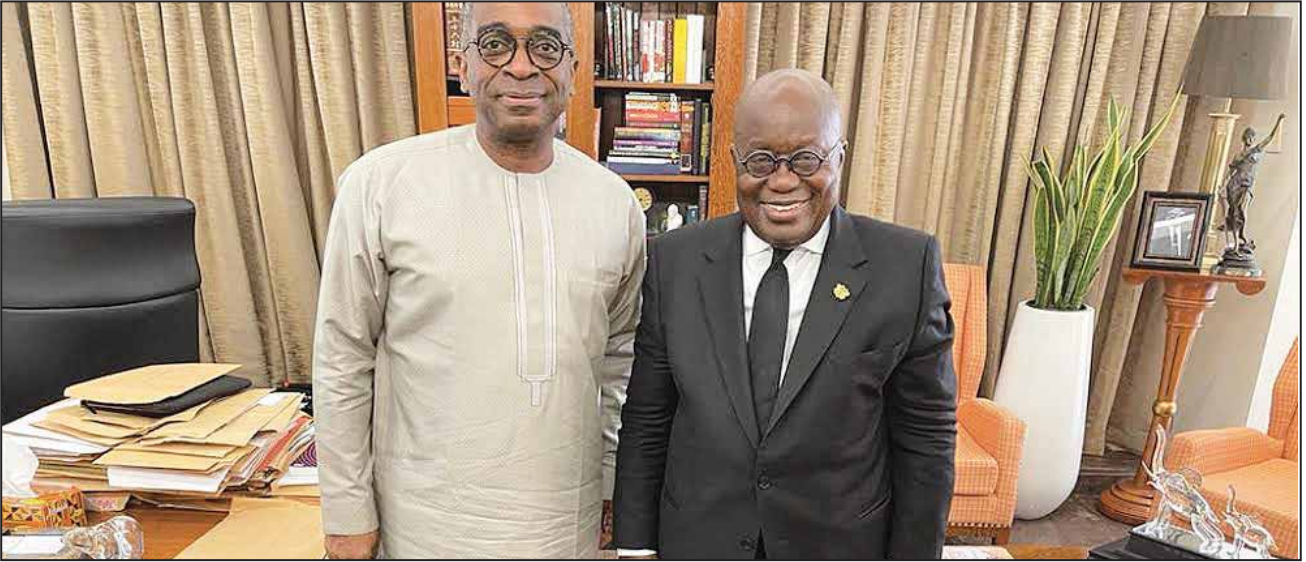
Police authorities in Zamfara State confirmed the abduction.

Spokesperson of the state police command, Shehu Mohammed, said the command

had dispatched a search and rescue team to ensure the rescue of the kidnapped victims

He said an unspecified number of cattle were rustled

by the criminals shortly after the heavily armed bandits stormed the Dansadai area with the intent to launch an attack on the locals.



STRENGTHENING TIES...

Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), Mr. Segun Awolowo (left), and President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana, after discussions aimed at forging strategic partnerships in promoting non-oil exports in the AfCFTA, at Jubilee House, Accra... recently

Two People Feared Killed in Tribal Clash in Kwara

Hammed Shittu in Ilorin

At least two persons were feared dead and several others sustained serious injuries yesterday in a bloody clash between Fulani and Nupe youths in Kpada village in the Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Sources close to the state police command told THISDAY last night that the bloody clash occurred at about 9p.m on Monday following an attack on a Fulani settlement in the area.

It was gathered that the clash was triggered by a report that some cows have eaten up and destroyed a rice farm belonging to a farmer in the village, which was said to have been lodged at the Police station in the area.

But the source added that while the police in the area were trying to mediate between the Fulani community and the

farmer, some youths went to attack the Fulani settlements, which allegedly recorded a casualty.

Chairman of the Gaa Allah Fulani Development Association of Nigeria (GAFDAN) in the state, Ali Mohammed-Jonwuro, identified the deceased as Sanda Watanko, adding that one of the persons who sustained serious injuries had been taken to the hospital for treatment.

It was further gathered that one of the Nupe youths was also killed in the clash while a police vehicle was vandalised, according to the source.

Public Relations officer in the state Police Command, SP Ajayi Okasanmi confirmed the clash but said that the matter has been resolved.

Okasanmi said that he could not confirm if there were casualties in the clash as the report available to him was sketchy.

We Didn't Generate N10bn from Sale of Forms, PDP Insists

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) yesterday said that it was not deterred from performing its duties as the leading opposition political party on account of the invitation of its officials by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

In a statement issued by the National Publicity Secretary, Mr. Kola Ologbondiyan, the PDP insisted that it did not raise the sum of N10 billion being frivolously bandied in some quarters as proceeds from the sale of nomination forms.

The party restated that every expenditure by the National Working Committee (NWC) had always been in line with the budget approved by the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) and in keeping with political parties' financial due

process.

“We further affirm that we have over the years submitted our audited accounts in line with statutory requirements and practice.

“As a responsible and public-spirited political party, we have honoured the invitation extended to our officials by the commission and we urge all party members, our teeming supporters across the nation and members of the public to remain calm.”

PDP assured that it would not succumb to any form of blackmail and political intimidation but would continue in its role of providing constructive opposition as well as being the national platform for all Nigerians in their rally to rescue and secure the nation from the misrule of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Senate Proposes Bill Prohibiting Payment of Ransom to Kidnappers

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

The Senate has passed for a second reading a bill that seeks to prohibit the payment and receipt of ransom for the release of any person kidnapped, imprisoned or wrongfully confined.

The Terrorism Prevention (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which scaled second reading during yesterday's plenary is sponsored by Senator Ezenwa Francis Onyewuchi.

In his lead debate of the bill, Onyewuchi said the piece of legislation seeks to amend the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2013 to outlaw the payment of ransom to abductors, kidnappers and terrorists for the release of any person who has been wrongfully confined, imprisoned or kidnapped.

According to him, the bill essentially seeks to substitute for section 14 of the Principal Act a new section to read: “Anyone

who transfers funds, makes payment or colludes with an abductor, kidnapper or terrorist to receive any ransom for the release of any person who has been wrongfully confined, imprisoned or kidnapped is guilty of a felony and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment of not less than 15 years.”

He raised the alarm that Kidnapping has become a fast and lucrative business, adding

that, “it has now remained the most virulent form of banditry in Nigeria and the most pervasive and intractable violent crime in the country.”

Attributing the spate of kidnappings in the country to factors such as corruption, unemployment, poverty and connivance of security agents, Onyewuchi lamented that the frequency at which persons are kidnapped daily puts most Nigerians at risk.

NDLEA Intercepts Five Million Tramadol Capsules at Onne Port

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have intercepted a container bearing about five million capsules of tramadol weighing 2,498.2 kilogrammes at the Onne Port in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The anti-drug law enforcement agency has also seized skunk of 218.6 kilogrammes in both Adamawa and Ondo states.

A statement issued yesterday by the NDLEA spokesman, Mr.

Femi Babafemi on Wednesday said: “Efforts by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to block access and availability of illicit substances have again led to the interception of a container bearing 4,996,200 capsules of tramadol weighing 2,498.2 kilogrammes at the Onne Port, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.”

He disclosed that the seizure of the illicit drug concealed in 1,387 cartons on Tuesday followed a joint examination by NDLEA operatives and Customs personnel on a container marked

MRKU 0764717, which had since been on the agency's watch list.

Babafemi also disclosed that in another clampdown, a 42-year-old Muntari Hamidu was arrested in Nyibango, Jimeta, Yola, Adamawa State with 13 sacks of cannabis sativa weighing 166 kilogrammes, while another person, 35-year-old Sani Musa was nabbed with 16.1 kilogrammes of skunk at Nguore, Yola South Local Government Area of the same state.

He said both men were

arrested on Sunday, May 16, 2021.

The NDLEA spokesman said the Ondo State Command also arrested one James Godspower with 36.5 kilogrammes of cannabis sativa in Faloye, Ogbese, Akure North LGA of Ondo State.

Meanwhile, the Chairman/Chief Executive of NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Buba Marwa (rtd) in his reaction, lauded the renewed synergy between the agency and other security agencies in its operations.

NECO Reschedules Examinations over Low Registration

Dipo Laleye in Minna

The National Examinations Council (NECO) yesterday announced the rescheduling of the National Common Entrance Examination into Federal Unity Colleges.

The council disclosed this in a statement by its Head, Information and Public Relations

Division, Mr. Azeez Sani.

The statement was titled “NECO reschedules 2021 National Common Entrance Examination.”

The statement read, “The National Examinations Council has rescheduled the 2021 National Common Entrance Examination into Federal Unity Colleges to Saturday, June 5,

2021, as approved by the Federal Ministry of Education.

“The examination which was initially scheduled for Saturday, May 29, 2021, was rescheduled to give states with low registration of candidates the opportunity to register their candidates for the examination.

All candidates, parents, guardians, and relevant

stakeholders are therefore enjoined to take note of the new date for the examination.

“The registration of candidates will continue till the new date of the examination.”

The council advised candidates, parents, and guardians to download the new examination timetable from its website.

Amaechi: Igbo, Yoruba Have Filial Bond

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

The First Republic's Aviation Minister, Chief Mbazulike Amaechi, has said that the Igbo and Yoruba nations have a filial bond, and as such could not attack each other.

Amaechi was reacting to allegations that Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) was planning to attack Lagos.

The 92-year-old statesman who spoke at a press conference

at his Ukpok country home in Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State, said the allegation was a malicious propaganda and that no sane Igbo man would ever think of attacking Lagos because of the filial bond shared by Igbo and Yoruba.

He said: “The relationship between the South-east and South-west is filial and bonding. Those behind the propaganda were only trying

to cause division.

“In 1966, the late Western Region Governor, Col. Adekunle Fajuyi, sacrificed his life for the sake of then Head of State, General Aguiyi Ironsi. There is also the intervention of then Eastern Region Premier, Dr. Michael Okpara during the travail of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo while in Calabar prison.

“Let me seize this opportunity to dispel the

rumour as cheap and blatant falsehood, which some ignoramus are spreading in the social media that IPOB and or some organisations and persons are planning to burn or do damage to some places or properties in Lagos.

“This is a cheap and idiotic falsehood. Igbo properties in Lagos are so many, so scattered and so high in value for any Igbo group or organisation to think of destroying.”

24 HOURS...

24 HOURS...

Malami Forecloses Return of £4.2m Recovered Loot to Delta

● *To challenge Lagos anti-graft law*

Emma Okonji

The Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami

(SAN) yesterday foreclosed the return of the £4.2million recovered from the associates of the former Governor of Delta State, Chief James Ibori, to the

state's coffers.

Malami had on Tuesday confirmed the receipt of the sum of £4,214,017.66 from the United Kingdom (UK).

Delta State Government and the people of the state have been clamouring that the funds be given to them since it was stolen from the state.

Alternatively, they requested that the recovered loot be expended on projects in the state that would be of benefit

to the people.

But speaking last night on a live TV programme, Malami argued that the federal government did not have the exclusive powers to revisit the agreement it signed with the United Kingdom.

He acknowledged receiving the request of the Delta State government but added that the recovery was based on a mutual agreement signed with the UK, which Nigeria cannot change.

Malami said the federal government cannot return the money to Delta without recourse to the UK.

"Agreement has been signed and sealed and it is difficult to bring a new consideration after the whole process has been consummated. It was a product of negotiation. Nigeria does not have the exclusive right to revisit the issue," he said.

When asked why the UK must be involved in the decision

involving money that belongs to Nigeria, he asked "why must a Nigerian consider the UK as a destination for looted asset? If the asset was not looted to UK, UK would not have had a say," he added.

Malami also promised to challenge the Lagos State anti-graft law.

The minister said that when state laws conflict with the constitution, the constitution will override such laws.

32 MDAs Failed to Remit N1.2tn, Says FRC

Udora Orizu in Abuja

The Fiscal Responsibility Commission (FRC) has accused about 32 government agencies of failing to remit their 80 per cent operating surplus to the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF), thereby hindering accurate determination of operating surplus liabilities, and diminishing accountability and transparency in handling government revenue.

The Commission said over N1.2 trillion in revenue was still being withheld by the defaulting agencies, keeping money away from government reach for funding of its budget.

Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Victor Muruako who spoke yesterday while briefing National Assembly correspondents, said the agencies failed to submit their audited account to the Commission to enable it calculate their operating surplus, which is supposed to be

paid into the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation.

Muruako said over 60 per cent of the agencies have always failed to associate their annual budget with the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, the template for which annual federal government budgets is prepared.

"The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Bank of Agriculture, Bank of Industry, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, National Broadcasting Commission, Standards Organisation of Nigeria, Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board, National Integrated Water Resources Management Commission, National Sports Commission, Administrative Staff College of Nigeria and National Business and Technical Examination Board."

Navy Blames NNPC over Theft of 200,000 Barrels of Crude Oil

Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja

The Nigerian Navy yesterday exonerated itself from the loss of 200,000 barrels of crude oil to pipeline vandalism and illegal refineries, even as it blamed the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) for the loss.

It said 577 illegal refineries were deactivated since 2020 across the Niger Delta region by it.

At a briefing to commence the 64th anniversary celebrations of the Nigerian Navy in Abuja, the Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), Vice Admiral Awwal Gambo, placed the situation on the doorstep of the NNPC, which he said bordered on procedural gaps within the national oil company.

Gambo, who was represented by the Chief of Policy and Plans of the navy, Rear Admiral Christian

Ezekobe, blamed the loss of such quantity of crude to the inactions of the NNPC.

Ezekobe, who was responding to a question on why Nigeria was still registering such losses, which was revealed at an earlier meeting with NNPC in spite of the navy's campaign against crude oil theft, said when illegal refineries were dismantled by the navy, NNPC failed to respond to calls to evacuate the products.

"The question (at an earlier meeting with NNPC) was posed by us, and we said 200,000 barrels per day is like 27,000 metric tons. Now, if you can imagine a vessel of 27,000 metric tons, the size and quantum of such vessel, it becomes evident to you that these losses are not only occurring through pipeline vandalism and illegal refineries."

302,950 Pregnant Women Die Yearly in Nigeria, Says FG

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The federal government has stated that Nigeria records 830 daily fatalities among pregnant women during childbirth, totaling about 302,950 yearly.

It also estimated that Nigeria recorded 289,000 maternal deaths and maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of 210 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013.

The government also said that Nigeria accounted for 13 per cent of all maternal deaths in 2013, adding that the maternal mortality ratio for Nigeria was 814 per 100,000 live births in 2015.

These statistics were contained in a speech made by the Minister of Health, Dr.

Osagie Ehanire, at the regional workshop to disseminate results of research projects on maternal and child health within the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) region.

Ehanire, who was represented by the Director of Health Planning and Statistics, Ministry of Health, Dr. Ngozi Anazodo, said: "Nigeria constitutes just one percent of the world population, but accounts for 13 per cent of the world maternal and under-five mortality. Every day, approximately 830 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. For every woman who dies in childbirth, a lot more suffer injuries and other form of morbidities."



PROMOTING BUSINESS LAW...

L-R: Vice Chairman, Nigerian Bar Association-Section of Business Law (NBA-SBL), Dr. Adeoye Adefulu; Chief Executive Officer, RTC Advisory Services, Mr. Opeyemi Agbaje; Managing partner, Principles Law Partnership, Mrs. Miannaya Essien (SAN); Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), Mr. Akintunde Adelana; and Chairman of NBA-SBL, Mr. Ayuli Jemide, at the NBA-SBL/NCDMB Colloquium in Lagos... yesterday

ETOPUKJTT

PDP Govs Tackle APC on Security, Economy

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

State governors elected on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) yesterday challenged the All Progressives Congress (APC) Caretaker/ Extraordinary Convention Planning Committee to show evidence of improvement in the security and economy of Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari reign in the last six years.

The PDP governors also

berated the Secretary of the APC Extra Ordinary Caretaker Committee, Senator John Akpanudoedehe, for describing their comments on the state of the nation as ill-informed and a waste of time.

Akpanudoedehe was quoted as describing the PDP governors meeting as a mere "political jamboree and its outcome a waste of time with no substance."

He further claimed that Buhari's government has done

a visible job in upgrading the country's security architecture, governance, electoral reforms, and has addressed the perennial farmers and herders clashes.

But the PDP governors in a statement issued by the Director-General of the Forum, Hon. Cyril Maduabum, asked: "How has the country's security architecture been improved by President Buhari other than in the imagination of Akpanudoedehe? Is he

really serious that security has improved under Buhari?

"What concrete measures has APC government taken to curb herders/farmers clashes other than inciting and ridiculous statements regularly dished out from two presidential aides on behalf of the so called presidency?"

They stated that it is most disheartening that an officer of "an illegal, unelected and unlawful APC contraption is living in a fancy world."

Lagos Mobile Courts Convict 62,477 Traffic Offenders

Segun James

The Lagos State Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Moyosore Onigbanjo (SAN), has stated that the state Mobile Courts arrested, arraigned and convicted 62,477 traffic offenders in the state in one year.

Onigbanjo, while briefing journalists on the stewardship of his ministry, noted that during the period under review, 62,477 persons had faced the law over

various traffic offences such as the use of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lane, street trading, driving against traffic, willful obstruction as well as violation of the COVID-19 regulations.

According to him, "The Mobile Courts sit on Saturdays at different locations across the state and deals with cases of violators of COVID-19 regulations."

Onigbanjo said the Lagos State Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP) had also issued 954 legal advices during

the time frame.

"The DPP is currently prosecuting 1,860 cases at the High Courts and Magistrate Courts, including 10 offenders who have been so far charged over attacks on officials of the Lagos State Traffic Management Agency (LASTMA)."

"The Community Service Unit of the DPP, during the reviewed period (April 2020 - April 2021), also supervised 557 community service sentences."

"The community service

sentences were for street trading, loitering, fighting and environmental offences," he said.

The attorney-general also noted that the Directorate of Civil Litigation had obtained 18 rulings and 34 judgments in favour of the Lagos State Government.

He said the directorate had helped the state government to reduce contingent liabilities with suits worth N95 billion being dismissed by the courts.

Diette-Spiff Escapes Attack as Agip Export Terminal Host Community Protests Power Outage

Onungwe Obe in Yenagoa

The Amayanabo of Twon Brass in Bayelsa State and former Military Governor of Old Rivers State, King Alfred Diette-Spiff, reportedly escaped mob attack yesterday from members of his community who blocked the Agip Export Terminal in protest against power outage in the community.

Diette-Spiff was said to have tried to pacify them to go home

and await discussions between the company and representatives of the community when they reportedly hauled missiles at him.

The protesters alleged that Diette-Spiff was complicit in the several attempts by Agip to shortchange the community, so they no longer have confidence in him representing them in talks with Agip.

During the attack on him, Diette-Spiff was said to have

been whisked away to the neighbouring community of Okpoama.

The youths' President of Twon Brass, Mr. Edward Edison, said the timely intervention of the youths and armed security agencies deployed to the terminal saved the day.

But he said a 24-year-old youth was shot in the process. Though he did not say what the state of the gunshot victim was.

The protests by members of the Agip host community had disrupted activities at the oil firm's office premises located on Brass Island near the Atlantic coastline.

The community members, comprising women, youths and elders, had since May 14 occupied and blocked access to Agip's operational office, beating drums and singing solidarity songs, while demanding the immediate restoration of power.

House Investigates Alleged Negligence of Max Air, Aero Contractors to Safety Precautions

Udora Orizu in Abuja

The House of Representatives has mandated its Committee on Aviation to investigate the Max Air and Aero Contractors over alleged engine failure and bird strikes of the two flights that sought to depart Kano and Port Harcourt Airports respectively to Abuja yesterday.

The committee was also mandated to investigate safety precautionary measures that nearly led to air accidents in order to avoid further loss of lives and destruction of properties.

The resolution was sequel to the adoption of a motion of urgent public importance, which was sponsored by Hon. Bala Sank Umar, at the plenary yesterday.

Umar noted that on Tuesday, May 18, 2021, 140 air passengers that included the Emir of Kano and 90 others flying with both Max Air and Aero Contractors aircrafts respectively escaped fatal accidents and possible deaths as they separately departed Kano and Port Harcourt airports for Abuja. He said that the Max Air

plane with registration number VM1645, which was scheduled for takeoff by 1.30 p.m. had delayed for about 30 minutes before departing only to escape air crash.

Similarly, the Aero Contractors' Boeing 737-500 with the registration number 5N-BKR encountered bird strike 10 minutes

upon take-off and eventually returned back to base.

Umar expressed concerns that there are allegations of negligence on the part of the airliners in applying safety precautions leading to these accident threats.

He said: "Aware that in view of several issues of conflict between birds and aircrafts

causing accidents and deaths, best practices ensure the use of Bird Strike Avoidance Radars to avoid such unfortunate situations. Disturbed that bird strikes is increasingly becoming recurring incidents in our airports with reports suggesting more of these cases prevalent at the Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano."

Niger Begins Second Phase of COVID-19 Vaccination

Laleye Dipo in Minna

The second phase of the COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccination began in Niger State yesterday with the Governor Abubakar Sani Bello receiving his second jab of the vaccine.

The Deputy Governor of Niger Sste, Mr. Ahmed Mohammed Ketso, and some members of the State Executive Council also received their second jabs of the vaccine before the commencement of the weekly executive council meeting yesterday.

Bello and his commissioners received their first jab of the vaccine on March 9.

He observed that the turn out for the first phase of the vaccination was impressive and advised those that had been administered the initial dose to ensure that they received the second jab.

He also urged those yet to be vaccinated to endeavour

to do so saying because "the vaccine is safe.

"I encourage you to take it. It will keep you and your loved ones safe. The older ones especially should take it."

The Niger State Commissioner for Health and Hospital Services, Dr. Muhammad Makusidi, explained that the state has so far received 89,600 doses of the vaccine and assured that the state had enough doses for the second phase.

Makusidi assured that all eligible persons for the second dose would be administered with the vaccine. He said that the state currently have recorded 930 positive cases among them 66 health workers and 20 deaths.

The commissioner, however, disclosed that there has not been any positive case in the state in the last two months and pointed out that the state has continued to implement measures that would combat the spread of the disease in the state.



UNVEILING NEW PRODUCT...
L-R: President, Nutrition Society of Nigeria, Professor Afolabi Wasiu; Lagos State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Mrs. Ceicelia Dada; Chief Marketing Officer, Tolaram Group, Mr. Girish Sharma; and Marketing Manager, Kellogg's, Mr. Darlington Igabali, during the official unveiling of Kellogg's Cornflakes at the Factory in Lagos... yesterday

EFCC Lacks Constitutional Powers to Probe PDP's Funds, Says Group

Davidson Iriekpen

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) National Youths Frontier has slammed the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission for inviting Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) officials to explain how N10billion was allegedly diverted.

The National Coordinator of the group, Austin Okai, said in a statement yesterday that only the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had the legal right to probe a political party's finances.

The statement read in part, "It is the only INEC (the electoral umpire) and main supervisory organ of political parties in the country that can carry out any investigation into any party's financial

activities, not the EFCC."

The group said the federal government had devised a plan to clamp down on PDP members.

"This, as far as we are concerned, is the party's internal affair. The jurisdiction of the EFCC does not extend to investigating internal party wrangling. The EFCC is therefore acting outside its powers by inviting the above named persons," it said.

"One of the points raised by the EFCC is that they want to verify the proceeds from the sale of forms. It is unheard of and laughable that the EFCC seeks to turn itself into the de facto auditor of the PDP," the statement further read.

The group argued that it was obvious that the EFCC had lost focus.

FG, Donor Partners Begin COVID-19 Behavioural Change Campaign

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The federal government has launched a four-month awareness campaign on the need to sustain the observance of non-pharmaceutical protocols meant to check further spread of COVID-19 virus in the country.

The campaign, which was known as the "National Behaviour Change Campaign on COVID-19," was unveiled yesterday by the Director

General of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu.

Ihekweazu said that the aim is to explore ways of achieving positive behavioural change that would make the people to adhere to simple public health and social measures targeted at containing COVID-19 pandemic disease.

He stated that the campaign, which is being undertaken by federal government in

collaboration with the United Nations (UN), is funded by the European Union (EU).

The campaign, which is tagged "Powerful Hands," is aimed at stimulating collective action that would prevent further spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria. Two hotspots local government areas in six states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory FCT, Abuja, would be the focus of the awareness campaign.

The states are Lagos, Rivers, Kano and FCT are among the areas being targeted by the campaign.

Ihekweazu said that the objective is to increase the number of Nigerians who would practice preventive behaviours.

He said that the current global statistics showed that confirmed cases of COVID-19 have risen to 160 million while 3.3 million have died as a result.

Niger Gov Mourns as Senator Loses Father

Laleye Dipo in Minna

Governor Abubakar Sani Bello of Niger State has commiserated with the Emir of Minna, Alhaji Umar Farouq Bahago, and the entire Minna Emirate over the death of Iyan Minna, the late Alhaji Musa Tanko Bawa, father of Senator Mohammed Sani Musa, representing Niger East senatorial District.

Alhaji Musa Tanko Bawa died in Abuja yesterday at the age of 87 years.

His remains were interred at the Angwar Daji Muslim burial ground after a funeral prayer at the Emir of Minna's palace.

According to the statement signed on behalf of the Governor by his Chief Press Secretary, Mary Noel Berje, the

governor described the death of late Iyan Minna as a great loss to Minna Emirate and the state. He pointed out that his wise counsel and fatherly advice would be greatly missed.

According to the Governor "I want you to consider and accept the situation as the will of Allah, knowing that death is inevitable and all living souls will pass through it".

The Governor also enjoined the emirate, family members and close associates to take solace in the good, fulfilled and exemplary life the late Iyan Minna lived.

He prayed to Allah to forgive him his shortcomings here on earth, grant him Aljannah Firdausi and the family the courage to bear the irreparable loss.

Appeal Court Voids Conviction of Ex-NIMASA DG's Aide

The Lagos Division of the Court of Appeal, has voided the conviction of Mr. Alu Dismas, an aide to former Director General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency NIMASA, Dr. Patrick Akpobolokemi, in an alleged N136 million fraud case filed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Delivering its judgment, the justices of the court agreed with the appellant that the conviction was a nullity.

In the lead judgment delivered by Justice T. Awotoye, the court greed that the prosecution failed to prove the ingredients of money laundering against Dismas.

The EFCC had on April 12,

2016 arraigned Alu and Callistus Obi (a former Executive Director of NIMASA) on an eight-count charge before Justice Mojisola Olatoregun of the Federal High Court sitting in Lagos.

Also charged were two companies, Grand Pact Ltd and Global Seal Investment Ltd, as third and fourth defendants respectively.

The anti-graft agency had alleged that they conspired to convert money to the tune of N136million from NIMASA with knowledge that same were proceeds of crime, thus contravening the provisions of sections 15 and 18 (a) of the Money Laundering and Prohibitions (Amendment) Act, 2021.

Rachael Dada Alemeru-Nuhu Passes On

A woman leader from Odo Ape-Bunu, Kogi State, Mrs. Rachael Dada Alemeru-Nuhu, is dead. She was 79. Born on June 18, 1942, she was a trader who lived for her people. She is survived by six children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements would be announced later, according to a statement issued by her family.



Mrs. Rachael Dada Alemeru-Nuhu

Asaba Declaration: Group Condemns Attacks on Senate President

A group that identifies itself as Advocates of Garb (AOG) has condemned what it described as the growing attacks on the person of the President of the Senate, Dr. Ahmad Lawan ever since his caution against the resort to regionalism by governors from the Southern part of the country.

In a statement issued by the chairman of the group, Joshua

Thomas and Secretary, Musa Rabilu, the group noted that the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila also faulted the governors' position on national security.

The group quoted Gbajabiamila as saying that all must "imbibe the spirit of oneness, togetherness, unity

and love."

The group also noted that the Senate President was also explicit in his opposition to the resort to regionalism for an issue that should be nationally resolved.

"We should avoid regionalism. We are all leaders and we are in this together. The solutions to our challenges must come from us regardless of what level

of government we are, whether at the federal, state or the local government level."

I believe that Nigeria is going to come out of these challenges stronger," Lawan said

Another voice of reason of Senator Abdullahi Adamu, former Governor of Nasarawa State also supported the position of these leaders.

Nigeria to Play Mexico in Los Angeles on July 3

Duro Ikhazuagbe

Nigeria and Mexico have agreed terms for a friendly to be played at the famous Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in the State of California, United States of America on Saturday, 3rd July.

Nigeria Football Federation's Match Agent, Jairo Pachon of Eurodata Sport, who sealed the friendly for the three-time African champions announced the deal yesterday.

"We are happy to be able to announce this match, which is a

clash between two very big teams from two different continents. Mexico against Nigeria is a big match any day and the venue is class," he gushed over the mouth-watering fixture with the CONCACAF Gold Cup holders Mexico.

The two teams will announce their squads for the match sometime in June with the Super Eagles likely to be dominated by home-based players from the NPFL.

Most Nigerian foreign-based internationals are likely to be in their pre-season camps and may

not be released by their respective clubs in Europe.

Mexico will play three other games before the clash with Nigeria, as part of their MexTour series.

The match, which kicks off at 7.30pm LA time will be the sixth confrontation between the senior teams of both countries, four of which have ended in draws. The only win in the series has gone to Mexico, when they trumped a US Gold Cup encounter in Dallas (State of Texas) 2-1 on

24th June 1995.

Jonathan Akpoborie scored Nigeria's only goal. Close-fought confrontations include a 1-1 draw at the FIFA Intercontinental Tournament for the King Fahd Cup (now FIFA Confederations Cup) in Saudi Arabia on 13th January 1995 (Mexico prevailed 5-4 on penalties in the quarter final match), and 0-0 draws in friendly matches in Houston and Atlanta the previous decade. A friendly game in Mexico also ended 2-2.

The Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, simply known as the LA Coliseum, is a 77,500-capacity facility that has hosted major international championships of all all grades, including the 1996 Men's Olympics Football Tournament (won by Nigeria) and CONCACAF Gold Cup matches.

The COCACAF Gold Cup is that continent's equivalent of the Africa Cup of Nations finals, and determines the continental champion of North

America, Central America and the Caribbeans.

Mexico is the most successful team in the CONCACAF Gold Cup with eight titles and are the current Cup holders.

Nigeria have won the Africa Cup of Nations three times and qualified for six of the last seven FIFA World Cup finals, reaching the Round of 16 in 1994, 1998 and 2014. The Super Eagles finished as bronze medallists at the last AFCON in Egypt two years ago.

Okagbare Runs 22.59 Personal Season's Best in Ostrava, Heads to London for Diamond League

Nigeria's Olympics, World and Commonwealth Games medallist, Blessing Okagbare, yesterday raced to a new 22.59 seconds personal season's best to place second at the 60th Ostrava Golden Spike held at the Mestský Stadion in Ostrava, Czech Republic.

The time, into a -1.1mps headwind is the fastest the Nigerian has ran legally in the three 200m races she has competed in so far this term as she continues with her preparations for a return to a global track final since she finished in eighth place at the 100m event at the World Athletics Championships in Beijing, China in 2015.

Okagbare was however beaten to the first position by new sprint sensation, Sha'Carri Richardson who ran 22.35 seconds to defeat a near stacked field that also included Mujinga Kambundji of Switzerland (22.85) and the flying Dutch

woman, Dafne Schippers who came in fourth (22.91).

Richardson who is beginning to fulfil the awesome potential she showed when she ran 10.75 seconds to win the NCAA 100m final in 2019 is second on the World top list (22.11) behind Shaunae Miller-Uibo of the Bahamas (22.03) with Okagbare 12th with her 22.59 seconds return Wednesday evening in Ostrava.

The Nigerian is however top of the African list in the event ahead of Gambia's Gina Bass (22.62) and Favour Ofili (22.64).

Next stop for the reigning African record holder in the event (22.04) will be the Müller Grand Prix Wanda Diamond League meet at Gateshead, London where the Nigerian will be among the sprinters in the 100m event who have earned a staggering 41 global championship medals during their careers.



Blessing Okagbare...sets personal season best in Ostrava

Okpekpe 10km International Road Race to Return May 2022

The eighth edition of the Okpekpe international 10km road race will hold in May 2022 in Okpekpe, Edo State, the organiser, Pamodzi Sports Marketing has announced.

Okpekpe 10-km race, the first road race in Nigeria nay West Africa to be granted a label by World Athletics and designated as one of the leading road races around the world could not hold in 2020 and will not hold in 2021 due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which has continued to disrupt the international sporting calendar.

"We are happy to announce that the eighth edition of the silver-label Okpekpe international 10km road race

will be held in May 2022," said Mike Itemuagbor, CEO of Pamodzi Sports Marketing.

"The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic ensured that, like many other label races across the globe, our event could not hold in 2020 and will not hold this year. This is an international race that involves the invitation and participation of foreign athletes and their managers as well as the technical delegates from World Athletics and the government's Covid-19 protocols in terms of travel and other logistics have to be enforced including the lockdown rules introduced by the Nigerian government," he added.

He however revealed

there is light at the end of the dark tunnel of uncertainty the pandemic has caused particularly to sports.

"We are delighted about the rollout of vaccines which are a critical tool in the battle against Covid-19 that has claimed over 3.1million lives worldwide. We are confident the world will be a much safer place by next year when the majority would have been vaccinated and we can host the race that has become a festival of sort for road running in Nigeria," enthused the race promoter.

Itemuagbor thanked the Edo State government led by His Excellency, Godwin Obaseki, and his deputy, Comrade Phillip Shaibu, and

the race sponsors for their concern and support and assured all stakeholders that the race will return bigger.

"Our target is to make the race the first gold label road race in West Africa. The race made history in 2015 when it became the first road running event to be granted a bronze label. Two years later, it scored another first as the first silver label road race to hold anywhere in West Africa and our target still remains the gold," he recalled.

A press conference in conjunction with Edo State government will be held shortly at Government House in Benin where the plans for the eighth edition of the race will be unveiled.

Stop Appointing Sports Ministers Based on Politics, NBA Raptors' Ujiri Tells Nigeria

The President of NBA's Toronto Raptors basketball operations, Masai Ujiri, has insisted that Nigeria must stop anti-productive practice of appointing non-professional sports ministers based on political considerations.

According to Ujiri who is a Nigerian-Canadian professional basketball executive and former NBA player, if 'political correctness' is stopped in selecting a sports minister, this will "ensure that the country's largest and most productive population are not denied the quality leadership at the policy level that unleashes their great potentials."

Speaking alongside the President Muhammadu Buhari, at the launch of the Nigeria Exchange (NGX) Group, Masai said the nation must take its youths and sports very seriously for Nigeria to achieve its economic and political potentials as they remain the country's surest path to global success.

Describing the National Stadium in Lagos as an eyesore, Masai, who in 2003 founded "Giants of Africa" to discover basketball talent, and once served as director of the NBA's Basketball Without Borders Africa, wondered why such a great piece of real estate has not become income-generating like other sports complexes the world over.

He pointed to what has been achieved in the state-of-the-art 10, 000-seater Kigali indoor Arena in Rwanda which is currently playing host to the inaugural Basketball Africa League (BAL) which kicked off in the Rwandan capital Kigali on Sunday, featuring 12 teams from across Africa.

In delivering his remarks prior to sounding the closing gong and bringing the day's trading to a close, President Buhari stated, "it is my pleasure to join you all at this important event organised to amplify the positive narrative

1968 Olympic Gold Medalist and Activist, Lee Evans, Dies in Nigeria

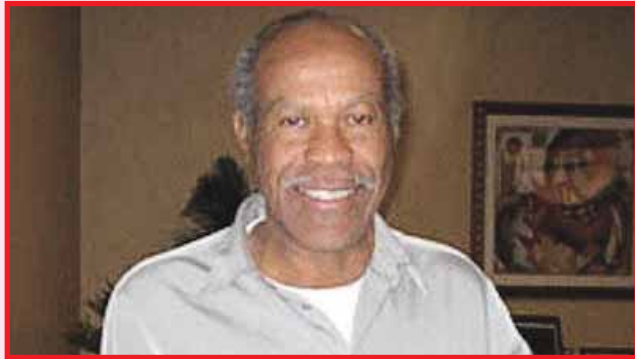
Lee Edward Evans, the record-setting quarter miler who wore a black beret in a sign of protest at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico, died on Wednesday in Nigeria. He was aged 74 years.

The world famous former record holder in the 400m was confirmed dead by USA Track and Field.

Just last week, former Nigerian international, Segun Odegbami, had raised the alarm over the deteriorating state of the America who suffered stroke some time ago.

Odegbami wanted the American Embassy officials in Nigeria to assist in moving the former 400m record holder to the USA for better treatment. However, it appears help came late.

Lee Evans was the first human to break the 44-seconds barrier



Lee Evans...dies in Nigeria

for the 400 metres event when he was just 21.

Thereafter, he broke 11 world records over different distances during his career as a sprint athlete. When he broke the World record in 400 metres for the last time it was at the 1968

Olympic Games where he won two gold medals. He won the 400m gold medal at the Mexico City Games in 43.86.

His victory came shortly after his teammates, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, were sent home from the Olympics for raising

their fists on the podium.

That record stood for 20 years and was only broken by Michael Johnson who had to cover the distance at an almost, humanly impossible even-pace unseen in athletics.

In later interviews, Evans said an official warned him not to do anything similar to the fist protest. He took a different approach, wearing a black beret to show support for the Black Panther Party and other civil rights organizations.

Like Smith and Carlos, Evans was a college star on the San Jose State "Speed City" teams.

He was also a high-profile member of the Olympic Project for Human Rights, which called attention to racial inequality and oppression and spearheaded the protests at the 1968 games.



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MISSILE
Nasir El-Rufai to Ayuba Wabba
"KDSG views the actions of the NLC as equivalent to the actions of the bandits kidnapping and menacing our citizens. Bandits illegally use arms, but the NLC is deploying mob action for exactly the same ends: trying to hold hostage the freedoms, economic interests, livelihoods and resources of the people of Kaduna State"
- Governor Nasir El-Rufai on the ongoing labour strike in Kaduna State .

COVID-19 CASE UPDATE
43 NEW CASES CONFIRMED
19th May, 2021

TOTAL CONFIRMED	165,852
DISCHARGED	156,456
DEATHS	2,067

NCDC Toll-free Number: **Dial 6232**
Twitter/Facebook: @NCDCCgov/COVID19NCDCCgov/NG

OLUSEGUN ADENIYI

THE VERDICT

olusegun.adeniyi@thisdaylive.com



Nigeria and the Standing Fan Metaphor

The irony of life is that sometimes we find wisdom in the most unlikely places. And often from the most unlikely persons. That precisely was the point of a tweet last week and two of the responses that followed. First, from @nzesylva: "Cab guy just dropped an epic proverb: 'This world na standing fan. If e blow you small. E go blow another person small.'" As profound as that may have sounded to the hearer, @ChrisVogue looked at it in a different context: "Nigerian fan can't relate. The rotation button don spoil, blowing the same thieves since independence." Apparently to validate that point and expand on the thesis, @izzo_1X added: "and instead of fixing the rotation button, everybody is struggling to stand in front of the fan."

I have reflected on those profound tweets in the past few days because they sum up the tragedy of Nigeria. While the cab driver spoke to the ideal, it is difficult to fault the argument that the preoccupation of most Nigerians is not how to fix the problem but rather how to position themselves to be at the helm of "sharing the national cake" at practically all levels of public engagement. Which then explains why, from the economy to governance and national security, Nigeria is today a country besieged. Rather than look for solutions, everybody is pointing fingers or positioning themselves and their families for a spot in front of the standing fan.

To understand our national dilemma, here are facts that should compel sobriety. As at April 1980 during the Second Republic (41 years ago), a barrel of oil was selling for \$37.24 and we were pumping 2.2 million barrels into the international market daily. The population of the country at that time was 73.44 million. Even with tell-tale signs that things were going awry, a prominent politician boasted that Nigerians had not started to 'eat from dustbin' in what has turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Today, the price of oil is about \$69 and we are pumping roughly 1.47 million barrels a day. Based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data, Nigeria's population as



Jonah Bawa, DG, Centre for Citizenship and Leadership Training

at yesterday was 211,400,708. The implication is that while our population has almost tripled, our earnings have not changed since we still rely on oil to run our economy. And we are not even managing that oil asset well.

In the same week last month that the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) wrote the Accountant General of the Federation about the financial implications of the subsidy regime we refuse to let go, Shell was raising dividends for its shareholders for a second time in six months. First-quarter earnings exceeded forecasts by a whopping sum of \$100 million—from \$3.1 billion to \$3.2 billion. The contrast between Shell and NNPC could not have been starker. But the real challenge is in the implication of the NNPC letter. According to year 2020 statistics on the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) receipts as a percentage share of their total revenue, more than 30 of the 36 states will simply crumble if there is

no oil money to share in Abuja at the end of every month. In fact, in nine states, 90 percent and above of their total earnings are FAAC allocations.

While agriculture has slowed down significantly in the country, especially in the past three years—essentially due to criminal activities by bandits, kidnappers, and insurgents—"nearly a quarter of the work force (in the country) was unemployed in 2018; and another 20 percent under-employed", according to the World Bank. "With 3.9 million net entrants into the labor force (now 90.5 million people) during 2018." The situation has since worsened. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Labour Force Survey for 2020, the unemployment rate in the country was four percentage points higher than the figures recorded in the third quarter of 2018.

Whichever direction you look, the prognosis is not good for Nigeria. As at last December, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), there were 2.1 million displaced Nigerians and 304,562 refugees. Not only is Nigeria reputed to have the largest population of out-of-school children in the world, but the

federal ministry of education also stated in March that within the last one year, more than three million children have been added to these shameful statistics.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the button on the standing fan has long stopped working. This results in ventilation reaching only a very few. The challenge, however, is that the blades are also getting weak with the possibility that the fan could pack up altogether. When some of us therefore talk about restructuring Nigeria, it is not about partitioning the country for ethnic entrepreneurs. Rather it is to make the system work for all citizens. That of course would require effort, time, patience, sacrifice and trust in whoever leads the charge. That there are no efforts in that direction beyond cold calculations and permutations about 2023 is the main concern for me.

Sometime in 2008, my late boss, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua commissioned a study on 'subsidies and tariffs in Nigeria' in five critical sectors: Electricity, Petroleum, Education, Health and Agriculture.

•NOTE: Piece concluded on page 15

Value of Human Life

He arrived Nigeria from his base in the United Arab Emirates to celebrate with the graduating students he sponsored through school. The ceremony over, the pastor in charge of the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) asked the philanthropist to kneel for prayers while he held lighted candles amid seven elders. Before invoking the name of God to bless their guest, the pastor decided to spray perfume on him, oblivious to the fact that the highly flammable liquid poses a serious fire risk if exposed to a flash source (in this case, sticks of candle). What followed was an explosion that resulted in the death of a philanthropist at the Imole Parish of the CCC in the Alagbado area of Lagos State.

Although the leadership of the CCC has issued a warning on the "incessant abuse of spiritual perfumes within the church" with instructions that henceforth it be "diluted with water", the tragedy speaks to the way death has become available on demand in

Nigeria today. On the same day the tragedy was reported, at least 28 persons died in a boat mishap in Niger State. The unfortunate backstory is that most of the victims died when their canoe hit the stump of a tree 50 metres to its destination while running away from bandits who had invaded their villages. On Eid el Fitr celebration day last week, terror was unleashed on Iseyin, Oyo state, when personnel of the Nigeria Customs Service who were in hot pursuit of some smugglers killed six innocent people within the community.

What these tragic incidents (including the bestial killings by bandits, kidnappers and insurgents that define this season) point to is the value we place on human lives in Nigeria. Yet the right to life remains the most basic and fundamental of all rights. Indeed, according to Pope John Paul II, "only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential goods of society, such as democracy and peace."

Man O' War @ 70

When you hear Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre (CLTC), it will probably not sound familiar until you hear Man O' War. But as the Centre celebrates its 70th anniversary today with the launch of its book in Abuja, it has a lot to roll out the drums for. Incidentally, my review of their book will be presented by a colleague because I am currently in Ilorin, Kwara State where I will be keynote speaker this morning at the Rotary Nigeria, District 9125 (comprising all the 19 Northern States, FCT as well as Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti States). The mix-up in dates was not my fault. But the CLTC Director General, Mr Jonah Bawa knows I support the centre whose training programmes have impacted millions of Nigerians either directly or indirectly.

The story of the CLTC, one of the few surviving pre-independence institutions, is quite interesting. What started out as a community development experiment in Southern Cameroon (while it was still part of Nigeria) quickly morphed into a full-blown centre for the training of personnel required by the Home Government (British Empire) to service the various governments and Institutions within the countries colonized by Britain. The term "Man O' War" was a Royal Navy expression used to describe a powerful warship or frigate from the 16th to the 19th century. The Man O' War Bay in Southern Cameroon was so called because it was the area where British ships were docked waiting to intercept criminal slave traffickers. Although it started with the name, 'Man O' War', it became the CLTC at independence in 1960 and a parastatal of the government, under the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Designed as a short but intensive training for a maximum of four to six weeks, not only was the CLTC instrumental to the drawing up of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)

curriculum at formation in 1973, but it has also continued to post its staff and Man O' War officers to NYSC Orientation Camps every year.

Core mandates of the centre include creating opportunities for character development and positive attitudinal change; providing avenues for young people to discover themselves in challenging surroundings so as to build their physical and mental fitness; inculcating in participants the positive values of self-reliance, self-discipline and selfless service through the acquisition of relevant skills in the vocations and communal services and promoting entrepreneurship and leadership skills among the youth. Some of the prominent products of the centre include President Muhammadu Buhari, General Yakubu Gowon, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar, former Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman, Prof Attahiru Jega, Director General, Budget Office of the Federation, Mr Ben Akabueze, Minister of Women Affairs, Mrs Paulen Talen, Niger Delta Minister, Mr Godswill Akpabio, Katsina State Governor, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari, former Chief of Defence Staff, General Abayomi Olanisakin, former Inspector General of Police, Mr Sunday Arase and several others.

The book being presented today documents the history of the Centre and its achievements. If you excuse its long title, '70 Years of Creating Good Citizens and Responsible Leaders: The Story of Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre (Nigeria's Foremost Outward Bound and Experimental Education Agency)', the publication is a resource material for those who seek to know the history of Man O' War in Nigeria. More significantly, at a period when we need to inculcate the values of responsible Nigerian citizenship, it is important to empower institutions like CLTC that have the knowledge and competencies for such assignment.