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N500

The Abuja Post To Honor Top Governors, Ministers, And Companies At Awards Ceremony

The Abuja Post is set to host its highly anticipated 2025 Awards Ceremony on Wednesday, January 31, 2025, at the esteemed Nicon Milton Hotel, Abuja. The event will

recognize and celebrate exceptional leaders who have demonstrated outstanding achievements in governance, innovation, and societal impact.

This year's honorees

include some of Nigeria's most dedicated and impactful governors, each celebrated for their unique contributions to their states and the nation at large. The recipients and their respec-

tive categories are:

His Excellency, Dr. Alex Otti, Governor of Abia State – Governor of the Year

His Excellency, Ahmadu Umoru Fintri, Governor of Adamawa State – Governor

in Security Management.

His Excellency, Pst. Umo Eno, Governor of Akwa Ibom State – Governor of the Year Award.

His Excellency, Babajide Sanwo Olu, Governor of Lagos State ---

Governor of the year in Ease of Doing Business. Prof. Charles Chukwuma Soludo, Governor of Anambra State – Governor in Infrastructure

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Who Holds The Power? Nigeria's Shifting Political Alliances

By Godwin Anyebe & Onehi Paul

As Nigeria's political stage heats up, the nation is witnessing a wave of shifting alliances that could redefine its power dynamics. In a landscape

where loyalty often bows to opportunity, political heavyweights and rising stars alike are recalibrating their positions ahead of pivotal elections. The question dominating conversations across the country is clear: who truly holds the power?

Recent defections, coalition talks, and behind-the-scenes negotiations suggest that Nigeria's political structure is in flux. Legislators from both the ruling and opposition camps have been crossing party lines, spurred by discontent, strategic posi-

tioning, or the search for greener pastures. For many, these movements are less about ideology and more about political survival in an unpredictable environment.

At the heart of this shifting landscape is the ruling party, which faces growing

internal rifts. High-profile disagreements over key policies such as subsidy removal, rising inflation, and the ongoing fuel crisis have exposed cracks in the party's unity. While it continues to maintain a legislative majority, murmurs of

discontent from party faithful and regional leaders hint at potential fractures that could impact its future.

Meanwhile, the opposition appears emboldened by public frustration with the

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Sometimes People Don't Take Me Serious Because I Am A Comedienne - Helen Paul

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Legal Battle Unfolds: Oba Otudeko, First Bank, And General Hydrocarbons In High-Stakes Dispute

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Abuja Post To Honor Top Governors, Ministers, And Companies At Awards Ceremony

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Development. His Excellency, Bala Mohammed, Governor of Bauchi State – Governor of the Year Award. His Excellency, Douye Diri, Governor of Bayelsa State – Governor in Healthcare Development. His Excellency, Hyacinth Alia, Governor of Benue State – Governor in Economic Growth. Prof. Babagana Zulum, Governor of Borno State – Governor in Security Management. His Excellency, Prince Bassey Edet Otu, Governor of Cross River State – Governor in Tourism Development, Hon. Elder

Sheriff F.O. Oberwori, Governor of Delta State – Governor in ICT Development, Hon. Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru, Governor of Ebonyi State – Governor of the Year Award

His Excellency, Monday Okpebholo, Governor of Edo State – Governor in Transparency. His Excellency, Abiodun Abayomi Oyebarji, Governor of Ekiti State – Governor in Solid Minerals Development.

Also, FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike: Man of the Year 2024. Senator Ali Ndume and Senator Irete Kingibe: Senators of the Year. Minister for Defence Bello Matawalle: Minister of

the Year. Arc Sunday Echono: Technocrat of the Year. Hon. Ugo Chinyere: House of Representatives member of the year.

For corporate organisations, nomination include; Real Estate Company of the Year,

Fintech Company of the Year, Marketing Company of the Year, Brand Activation Company of the year, Oil & Gas Company of the Year, Hospitality Company of the year

Businessman of the year, Airline of the Year

Insurance Company of the Year, ICT Company of the Year, Maritime Company Of the year, Automo-

bile Company of the Year, Energy Company of the year, Security Company of the Year, HMO Company of the year, Pension Company of the Year.

The organisers also pointed out that others include; Public Service Personality/Agencies of the year, Political Icon of the Year, Leadership in Public service Personality of the Year,

Industrialist of the Year, First Lady of the year, Female Political Leader of the Year,

Female Public Servant of the Year, Female Government Personality of the Year, and Female Business Per-

sonality of the Year.

Speaking on the significance of the event, the organisers of the awards stated, "These awards highlight the transformative leadership of Nigeria's governors who have shown exemplary dedication to the development of their states and the country. We are proud to honor these leaders who inspire progress and excellence."

According to the organisers, the award ceremony is scheduled for Wednesday, January 31, 2025, by 6:00 PM at Nicon Milton Hotel, Abuja.

The Abuja Post invites all stakeholders, partners, and members of the public to

join in this celebration of exemplary leadership.

For more information on sponsorships, partnerships, and attendance, please contact a c t : info@theabujapost.com.ng,

Phone numbers: +234 906 091 2116, +234 903 088 8871.

About The Abuja Post:

The Abuja Post is a premier platform committed to delivering news, analysis, and features that shape national discourse. Through its annual awards, the publication celebrates excellence and inspires impactful governance and innovation in Nigeria.

Who Holds The Power? Nigeria's Shifting Political Alliances

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current administration. However, unity remains a challenge. Efforts to forge a mega-coalition are underway, but deep-seated rivalries and competing ambitions have slowed progress. "The opposition has an opportunity to seize power, but only if it can present a united front," said political analyst Dr. Aisha Garba. "Right now, they are still working out the terms of their marriage of convenience."

Regional dynamics further complicate the picture. In the south, governors and political leaders are consolidating their influence, aiming to challenge northern dominance in national politics. In the north, traditional rulers and political stalwarts are leveraging their cultural and religious authority to maintain their hold on power. These regional power plays highlight Nigeria's enduring struggle to balance national unity with diverse local interests.

Amid these shifts, the electorate is growing restless. Many Nigerians view the ongoing realignments as a distraction from urgent national issues, including insecurity, unemployment, and worsening economic conditions. "The politicians are busy playing games while ordinary people are suffering," lamented a civil servant in Kaduna. "We need leaders who care about the people, not just their next election," said Abubakar Musa.

As the 2027 elections draw closer, the stakes are higher than ever. Both the ruling party and the opposition understand that their future hinges on these shifting alliances. The question remains: will these political maneuvers lead to meaningful change, or will they per-

petuate the cycle of self-interest that has defined Nigerian politics for decades?

For now, the chessboard is set, and the players are making their moves. Nigerians can only watch and hope that the eventual victors will wield their power in service of the nation, not just themselves.

Speaking on this development, a Political Analyst, John Atabo said; "with the 2027 general elections on the horizon, the question of who holds the power has never been more pertinent. In my analysis, what we are witnessing is not merely a series of defections, but a fundamental recalibration of Nigeria's political dynamics, where the lines between the ruling party, opposition, and regional interests are becoming increasingly blurred."

According to him, "most striking feature of Nigeria's political realignment is the intensifying fragmentation within the ruling party. Despite its hold on power, the ruling party faces a growing number of internal divisions, largely driven by dissatisfaction with the administration's handling of critical issues such as fuel subsidy removal, the state of the economy, and rising insecurity. These fractures are not just about policy disagreements; they reflect deeper tensions over the distribution of power, resources, and influence within the party itself. As the leadership struggles to maintain a united front, defections from within the party are inevitable. Several key figures, sensing the shifting winds, have begun to reposition themselves for the upcoming electoral cycle, either by distancing themselves from the administration or seeking new alliances with other political forces."

However, he continued, "the opposition, while opportunistic, faces its own set of challenges. Despite the growing discontent with the current government, the opposition has failed to present a cohesive and unified alternative. Instead, we see political fragmentation with competing factions vying for dominance. The recent efforts to form coalitions, aimed at challenging the ruling party in 2027, have been hampered by personal rivalries, divergent regional interests, and ideological differences. Unlike in past elections, where opposition parties were merely reactive, the current environment demands that they evolve into a credible, unified force capable of offering a clear policy agenda to the Nigerian electorate. Without that cohesion, the opposition risks being nothing more than a collection of disgruntled voices rather than a genuine challenger for power."

"The regional dynamics also cannot be ignored. In Nigeria, political power is often tied to geographical influence, and the shifting alliances we are witnessing are a reflection of this reality. Southern leaders, frustrated by the perceived marginalization of their region, are consolidating power to assert their political relevance, particularly with the 2027 elections in mind. Similarly, northern power brokers are holding firm, leveraging their entrenched influence in the nation's political and economic sectors. These regional power plays are shaping alliances and reshaping party affiliations in ways that are not easily predictable. As such, the role of traditional rulers, governors, and ethnic groups cannot be downplayed in the determination of who will ultimately hold the power."

He noted.

He pointed out that "to the average Nigerian, these shifting alliances raise legitimate concerns. There is growing frustration over the self-serving nature of political elites, with many feeling disconnected from the real issues affecting the country, such as insecurity, unemployment, and inflation. The political class, preoccupied with maneuvering for power, appears to have lost sight of the urgent need for governance that addresses the needs of the people. The electorate is increasingly cynical, yet hopeful that the right coalition of political forces will emerge to bring about meaningful change."

Also Speaking on this issue, a Public Affairs Commentator, Abubakar Musa disclosed that, "in Nigeria's ever-evolving political landscape, the question of who holds the power has become more fluid than ever before. As the country navigates a complex web of shifting alliances, defections, and recalibrations, it is clear that political power in Nigeria is no longer concentrated in the hands of a single party or a few power brokers. Instead, it is a dynamic and fragmented force, where allegiances are constantly being tested, and the true seat of power is anything but certain."

According to him, "at the heart of the current political shifts is the ruling party, which, despite holding the reins of governance, is increasingly experiencing fractures within its ranks. The discontent that has been brewing over the administration's handling of critical issues such as economic hardship, fuel scarcity, and the rising insecurity has now manifested in defections from key party members. What we are witnessing is not just a typical

case of political opportunism but an indication of a deeper dissatisfaction with the direction the party is headed. These defections, although framed as strategic moves, are a reflection of the growing disillusionment within the ruling party, especially as it becomes clear that the unity that once held it together is rapidly eroding."

"This internal crisis is significant because it exposes a critical weakness in the current government: the inability to consolidate its support base amid a challenging national landscape. It's not just about public criticism; it's about how political loyalty, once thought to be unshakable, is now malleable as individual interests take precedence over party loyalty. The ruling party's inability to bridge these internal divides means that the power dynamics within the party are shifting, with factions seeking to assert themselves as the true standard-bearers of the administration's legacy." He said.

Continuing, he stated that, "in the other side of the political spectrum, the opposition is eagerly eyeing these cracks in the ruling party's structure. However, they too face significant challenges. While the opposition is united in its critique of the ruling party, it remains deeply divided internally, with various factions jockeying for dominance. Efforts to build a formidable coalition have been repeatedly stymied by infighting and disagreements over leadership and policy direction. As much as the opposition sees an opportunity to capitalize on the ruling party's internal turmoil, it must first address its own fragmentation. The question, therefore, is not just whether the opposition can unite against a weakened ruling party, but whether it can offer a cohe-

sive and appealing vision for the future of Nigeria."

Also, he disclosed that, beyond party politics, regional dynamics are also playing a pivotal role in Nigeria's shifting alliances. In a country as diverse as Nigeria, regional interests often influence national politics in ways that cannot be ignored. We are seeing southern leaders rallying around the need for greater regional autonomy and economic opportunity, while northern political heavyweights continue to exercise their historical influence over key sectors of power. These regional interests complicate the already fractured political atmosphere, as leaders strive to ensure their regions are not left out of the decision-making process."

"The growing emphasis on regional power underscores the need for a more inclusive political process that reflects the diverse aspirations of Nigeria's many ethnic and cultural groups. Without this inclusivity, the shifting alliances and power struggles we are witnessing may deepen existing divides, making national cohesion more difficult to achieve." He added.

For the Nigerian electorate, these shifting alliances are both confusing and frustrating. Many Nigerians are left questioning whether their leaders are genuinely concerned with the welfare of the people, or simply engaged in a game of political maneuvering. The increasing sense of disillusionment among the populace cannot be ignored. Voters are weary of a political class that seems more interested in maintaining power than addressing the pressing issues of the day—economic hardship, unemployment, and security challenges.



From left: Adetola Odusote, Partner CMC Connect LLP; Mrs Comfort Nwankwo, Chairman Lagos NIPR; Ms Clara Okoro, Chairman BJAN; Damola Salvador, CEO, Digisplash; Victoria Uwadoka, Corporate Communications & Public Affairs Manager, Nestle Nigeria and Akonte Ekine, CEO Absolute PR. During the Brand Journalists Association of Nigeria (BJAN) 12th Annual Brands & Marketing Conference Theme: Rebuilding Consumer Confidence addressing Policy Impact & Market Realities in Lagos.

We Must Look Inward To Improve Intra-Africa Trade – Tinubu

By Nathaniel Gubniba

It is time for the African continent to look inward and improve intra-trade between countries, President Bola Tinubu has said.

The president said this during a meeting with Paul Kagame, his Rwandan counterpart at the sustainability summit in Abu Dhabi recently.

According to him, Africa has all it needs to develop itself and become a great continent.

He also said that the time for nations across the continent to act and improve themselves is now.

A post made via the president's official X handle said, "This evening, on the eve of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, I had meaningful con-

versations with Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

"Africa has what it takes to develop itself. We have the resources, the people, and the capacity," Tinubu said.

He added: "We must look inward to improve intra-African trade and collaboration to benefit the African people and the continent. The time for Africa is now."



Pres. Tinubu

Abuja-Kaduna-Kano Road Ready In 14 Months – FG

By Paul Onehi

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, has said that the Abuja-Kaduna-Kano dual carriageway will be ready for use in 14 months.

Idris made this known at the inauguration of the rehabilitation of section 1 of the road (Abuja to Kaduna) rigid pavement on Thursday.

While Section 1 of the road is from Abuja to Kaduna, Section 2 is from Kaduna to Zaria, and Section 3 is from Zaria to Kano.

The description and

scope of works include scarification and pulverization of existing bituminous surface as sub-base material and filling of embankments.

Others are the provision of approved crushed rock material (wet or dry) to 100mm thickness with three per cent stabilisation in shoulders and carriageway, reinforced concrete lined drains and other hydraulic structures where necessary.

Similarly, other descriptions and scope of works are the provision of median barriers and median drains where necessary, and the provision of CRCP 200mm

thick on the carriageway and shoulders.

Idris said that the Minister of Works, David Umahi, had explained extensively and put the politics of the road to rest.

"President Bola Tinubu is very committed and determined to ensure that this road from Abuja to Kano is completed in record time of 14 months.

"This is the reason the government cancelled the road contract with the former contractor who said it would complete the road in three years and the government refused and insisted on

14 months.

"That is also why it was broken into three segments for ease of construction. Nigerians, especially those plying this road, are anxious to see that the road is completed," he said.

He said that delay of any kind would not be accepted.

"The President has given a matching order, and the National Assembly is also given them the necessary cooperation and there will be no issues.

"Within 14 months, we are going to have a brand new road from Abuja end to Kano," Idris said.

Global Collaboration Critical To Sustainable development — Tinubu

President Bola Tinubu has emphasised the necessity of global cooperation in tackling climate change and fostering sustainable development.

Speaking recently at the 2025 Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, on the theme, "From Climate Imperatives into Economic Prosperity: Bridging Africa with the Global Energy Future," President Tinubu reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to working with the international community to build a resilient, equitable,

and sustainable future for all.

"No single nation can walk the road to sustainability alone," President Tinubu declared, stressing the importance of collective action, knowledge sharing, and mutual support in addressing the pressing challenges of our interconnected world.

The president framed the fight against climate change as more than an environmental obligation, it is a global economic opportunity to reshape Africa's trajectory and the broader energy land-

scape.

"As leaders, stakeholders, and citizens of our planet, we stand at a critical juncture in human history. To succeed, we must innovate, collaborate, and act decisively as one global community," he said.

President Tinubu outlined Nigeria's three-pillar strategy for sustainability: Energy Transition, Climate Resilience, and Sustainable Development.

He noted that his administration is advancing action-

able programs aligned with international expectations while addressing Nigeria's unique economic and political realities.

Nigeria is transitioning to cleaner energy sources, diversifying its energy mix, and reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

These efforts include developing infrastructure for the widespread use of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and electric vehicles while leveraging solid minerals to support the green energy transition.

We Don't Need Your Help For Tinubu's Economic Reforms, FG Replies Emir Sanusi

By Nathaniel Gubniba

The federal government has reacted to a recent remark by the Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II, who expressed his unwillingness to help the current administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on addressing the country's economic challenges.

The Emir, at a public event in Lagos recently, stated his resolve not to speak on solutions to the effects of some of the economic policies by the current administration.

But the federal government, in a statement on Thursday, signed by the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, said the Tinubu-led federal government doesn't need the stamp of approval of Emir Sanusi on its "laudable policies".

According to the statement, even though the Emir, like every other Nigerians, has the right to express their opinion in form of condemnation or criticism, the federal government expressed dismay "that a leader, more so one from an institution that ennobles forthrightness, fairness, and justice would publicly admit to shuffling off saying the truth because of personal interest hinged on imaginary antagonism."

"It is pertinent to state

that Nigeria is at a pivotal juncture where bold and decisive actions are necessary to tackle entrenched economic challenges. This administration has implemented transformative reforms not because they are easy, but because they are essential for securing Nigeria's long-term stability and growth, as Emir Sanusi had consistently advocated.

"The temporary pains currently experienced from these inevitable decisions, as Sanusi himself acknowledged, are "necessary consequence of decades of irresponsible economic management" more than anything else.

These reforms are already delivering measurable progress. The unification of exchange rates has bolstered investor confidence, which has contributed to increased foreign reserves and strengthened Nigeria's ability to shield itself from external economic shocks.

The removal of the fuel subsidy has freed up significant resources, allowing for greater investment in critical sectors such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare. Projections from respected institutions, including the World Bank, show an upward trajectory in Nigeria's GDP, signaling that our economy is firmly on the path to recovery.

Ohanaeze: "You've Committed Sacrilege Against Ikwere" – Rivers Group Tells Azuta-Mbata

By Peter Victor

The Ogbakor Ikwere Cultural Organisation Worldwide, the apex decision-making body of the Ikwere ethnic nationality in Rivers State, has announced the withdrawal of all honours, recognitions, and titles previously bestowed on Senator John Azuta-Mbata, the newly elected President General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide.

The group also barred Senator Azuta-Mbata, who represented Rivers East Senatorial District from 1999 to 2007, from participating in activities

in Ikwere land, including community meetings and political representation.

This decision extends to his hometown, Eneka Community in Aparok Kingdom.

The Ikwere leadership accused Azuta-Mbata of committing "sacrilege" against Ikwere land by accepting the leadership of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, a socio-cultural organization representing the Igbo people.

In their view, his decision signifies a renunciation of his Ikwere identity, rendering him "a total stranger" in the community.

In a statement jointly signed by the President General of Ogbakor Ikwere Cultural Organisation Worldwide, Eze Barr. Godspower Onuekwa, and Secretary General, Barr. Nyebuchi Philips, the group expressed strong disapproval of Azuta-Mbata's actions:

"By becoming the President-General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Senator John Azuta-Mbata has willingly and freely renounced his membership and identity as an Ikwere person (Iwhuruohna).



Azuta-Mbata

The Abuja Post

AWARDS 2025

RC 7678018

The Abuja Post Newspapers Limited is set to host its Award. The Award is meant to celebrate Leadership in Governance of some selected individuals and organization who have made impact in 2024 through their Leadership Experience in different Endeavors. The Award brings together Top Government functionary and High-ranking Government Officials in Nigeria. The Selection of the winner will be done by the Board of Editors of **The Abuja Post Newspapers Limited**.

NOMINATIONS ARE NOW BEING INVITED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE ABUJA POST NEWSPAPER IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

MAN OF THE YEAR

The individual who profoundly shaped the events and narratives that defined 2024. A symbol of influence, leadership, and impact in a year of transformation.

WOMAN OF THE YEAR

The woman whose remarkable influence and contributions shaped the defining moments of 2024. A beacon of inspiration and change in a transformative year.

BANK OF THE YEAR

The institution that has driven growth through innovation, technology, and financial inclusion, enhancing earnings and delivering exceptional value to shareholders.

BANKER OF THE YEAR

The visionary leader whose transformative impact and leadership redefined the banking landscape for lasting progress.

GLOBAL BANK OF THE YEAR

The institution with the greatest global influence on Nigeria's financial landscape.

BRAND OF THE YEAR

The brand that has left an indelible mark through its powerful impact and unforgettable experiences.

COMPANY OF THE YEAR

A highly respected company that has made the most significant impact on the lives of Nigerians.

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

A groundbreaking, life-changing product with a value proposition that surpasses all others in the marketplace.

MINISTER OF THE YEAR

The minister who stands out in the cabinet as a driving force of change, demonstrating exceptional leadership and impact in their field.

GOVERNOR OF THE YEAR

The governor who combines vision, passion, and dedication to the betterment of his state, with unwavering courage to improve the lives of his people.

SENATOR OF THE YEAR

The senator whose legislative contributions have had a profound impact, driving positive change for the greater good.

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR

The House member whose legislative efforts have made a significant impact, fostering positive change for the greater good.

GOVERNMENT AGENCY OF THE YEAR

The government agency whose leadership and initiatives have exemplified exceptional service to the people of Nigeria.

INVESTOR OF THE YEAR

The investor whose contributions have had the greatest impact on the lives of the people of Nigeria.

YOUNG GLOBAL LEADERS OF THE YEAR

Ambitious, driven, and daring leaders under 40 who are shaping the future of the world, as seen from Nigeria's perspective.

SPECIAL CATEGORIES:

- Technocrat of the year
- Innovation in Public Governance Personality
- Civic Service Personality

STATES AWARD CATEGORIES

- Fastest Growing State Economy
- Best State in Tourism Development
- Transparency in Governance State and Local Government
- Rural and Urban Infrastructure Development State
- Best State in Healthcare Development
- Best state in Security Management
- Best State in ICT Development
- Best State in Solid Minerals Development

PLS NOTE:

Nominations close on 27th of January 2025; Winners will emerge on 31st January 2025, Awards Ceremony in 31st of January, 2025 in the City of Abuja where global leaders and legends will gather to celebrate the best of Nigeria.



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Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborewori (up) directing the Commissioner for Works, Highways and Urban Roads, Comrade Izeze Reuben (left), and the Special Adviser on Project monitoring, Engr. Godnews Agbi to confirm size of the rods being used in the drain under construction by Ogbogonogo market during his inspection of the project in Asaba on Thursday.



Oborewori Inspects Ongoing Projects, Emphasizes Quality and Public Interest

By Francis Sadhere, Warri

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborewori, reaffirmed his commitment to delivering quality projects that add value to the lives of the people, stressing that his administration would prioritize public interest over personal relationships.

During an inspection of several key infrastructure projects in Asaba, the state capital, the governor highlighted his administration's M.O.R.E Agenda, focusing on competence, integrity, and value for money.

Among the inspected projects were the Ogebeosonwe, Ogebeilo Road, Ogbogonogo Market storm drainage project, and Ogebe-Ofu Road, as well as multiple roads including Amaechi Agusi Street, Dorah Allanah Street, and

Oluu Street.

Governor Oborewori made it clear that his administration would not tolerate substandard work, particularly from indigenous contractors. "I was elected to serve the people of Delta, not to please a select few. Friendship cannot and will not take precedence over the quality of projects we provide," he



Governor Sheriff Oborewori of Delta State

asserted.

He further emphasized that contractors delivering poor work would face blacklisting, and stressed that the public's interest would always come first.

The governor also addressed the concerns of some contractors who requested upward reviews of project costs due to rising

material prices.

He explained that the state would consider reviews for contracts awarded before his tenure, citing the sharp increase in exchange rates from N750 to N1600 per dollar. However, he assured that only quality work would be accepted, with contractors expected to meet the required standards.

Oborewori also took the opportunity to call on Asaba residents to maintain clean environments, directing the State Commissioner for Environment and the Chairman of the Waste Management Board to ensure compliance with cleanliness standards.

The Governor also reiterated his determination to remain steadfast in serving the public's interest, promising that no contractor would be spared if they failed to deliver satisfactory results.

Governor Umaru Bago To Complete The Sarkin Paws -Kaduna Road

TUNDE ADIGUN - MINNA

Niger State Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago has promised to complete the Sarkin Pawa-Kaduna road.

Governor Umaru Bago made the promise when he interacted with stakeholders of Munya local government area in Sarkin Pawa, after inspecting the ongoing 5 km road project in the local government headquarters, in continuation of his statewide projects monitoring.

He said the Sarkin Pawa-Kaduna road project would reduce the travel time from Niger to Kaduna State.

Speaking on the road project he inspected, the Governor expressed satisfaction with the quality of work being done.

He then tasked the Stakeholders of the local government to persuade the people, especially owners of properties affected by the road construction, to cooperate with the contractor to allow him to accelerate the completion project for their benefit, assuring them that compensation will soon be paid.

While noting the relative

peace the local government is enjoying, Governor Umaru Bago promised to continue do his best in ensuring the security of lives and property.

He promised to upgrade the Primary Healthcare projects his administration has initiated in the local government to include road construction, Fire Service station, upgrade of Primary Healthcare to Level 2 Primary Healthcare Centre.

The Governor then encouraged the people to make optimal use of the relative peace in the area to effectively engage in farming activities in line with the Agricultural revolution in the State.

Earlier, Senator representing Niger East Senatorial District, Sen. Mohammed Sani Musa, assured the people that the Bago-led administration will complete the road project in record time, adding that the former Governor has directed that solar-power streetlights should be fixed along the road to illuminate the environment.

He urged them to continue to support the present administration to ensure its success.

NGF Okays Revised VAT Sharing Formula To Promote Equity

Nathaniel Gubniba

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) has given nod to a revised Value Added Tax (VAT) sharing formula aimed at promoting equitable resource distribution among states.

The new formula assigns 50 percent based on equality, 30 percent based on derivation and 20 percent based on population.

This decision was arrived at at the end of the Subnational Consultations and Engagement Presidential Tax Reform Committee, according to a communique issued by chairman of the Forum and Governor of Kwara State, Abdul Rahman Abdul Razaq.

NGF also came to agreement on current VAT rates and exempt essential goods from VAT, ensuring economic stability while safeguarding citizens' welfare. The resolutions support ongoing legislative efforts to pass comprehensive tax reform bills in the National Assembly.

The communique read: "We, members of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) and presidential tax reform committee, convened on the 16th of January 2025 to deliberate on critical national

issues, including the reform of Nigeria's fiscal policies and tax system, and arrived at the following resolutions:

The Forum reiterated its strong support for the comprehensive reform of Nigeria's archaic tax laws. Members acknowledged the importance of modernizing the tax system to enhance fiscal stability and align with global best practices.

The Forum endorsed a revised Value Added Tax (VAT) sharing formula to ensure equitable distribution of resources: 50 percent based on equality, 30 percent based on derivation, and 20 percent based on population.

Members agreed that there should be no increase in the VAT rate or reduction in Corporate Income Tax (CIT) at this time, to maintain economic stability. The Forum advocated for the continued exemption of essential goods and agricultural produce from VAT to safeguard the welfare of citizens and promote agricultural productivity.

The meeting recommended that there should be no terminal clause for TETFund, NASENI, and NITDA in the sharing of development levies in the bills.

Construction Of Kuta , - Zumba road Is For Easy Eccess - Niger state government

TUNDE ADIGUN - MINNA

Niger State Government has promised to construct Kuta-Zumba road for easy accessibility and connectivity.

State Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago made the promise when he interacted with stakeholders in Kuta, the headquarters of Shiroro local government area, in continuation of his statewide visit and projects monitoring.

He said the road project will commence in no distant time to provide succour to those plying the road.

The Governor directed his Deputy who is from the local government to ensure that electricity is restored to

the people in the next 20 days.

While expressing his joy for the overwhelming support from the people of Shiroro local government, farmer Governor Umaru Bago reassured the people of his administration's unwavering determination to adequately address insecurity in the area.

He announced that the Senator representing Niger East Senatorial District, Senator Mohammed Sani Musa will renovate the Mosque in Kuta town, sponsor 200 students, one male and one female in each ward across the Senatorial District to study in Singapore and construct a mini stadium in Kuta town for sporting activities.

Deputy Governor, Comrade Yakubu Garba, has

appreciated the people of Kuta for their unalloyed support to the present administration in the State and assured them of continuous dividends of democracy to the community.

Niger East Senator, Sen. Mohammed Sani Musa expressed delight with the gathering and assured them that the government has evolved strategies aimed at addressing the insecurity bedeviling the people.

In their separate remarks, the Chairman of Shiroro local government area, Akilu Isyaku and Prof. Bashir Nuhu Tachi, an elder statesman in the local government commended the farmer Governor for the visit, for the good working relationship with his Deputy who is one of their own, the

relative peace being experienced in the local government area and the remarkable projects his administration is executing across the State.

They, however, appealed for more effort to beef up security in the local government area and the completion of the road project to Erena town which was abandoned due to insecurity, and promised their continued support to the administration to ensure its success.

The farmer Governor was honoured with the title of Amanan Shiroro by the entire people and stakeholders of Shiroro local government area for the positive things he has been doing for the people of the local government area.

Abia Economic Team Begins Review Of State's 30-Year Development Plan

Joy Isaac

An economic team set up by the Abia State government has begun the process of reviewing the state's 30-year development plan.

The review became necessary due to the economic headwinds prevalent in the country as typified by rising inflation among others. The outcome of the exercise will reflect the real position of the state's economy.

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kanu disclosed this Monday while briefing journalists in Government House Umuahia on the outcome of this week's State Executive Council meeting, first of the year, presided over by Governor Alex Otti.

State Goes Tough on Traffic Offenders

Similarly, in a bid to restore sanity in the transport system and avoid waste of human lives on the roads due to careless driving, the Abia State Government has given fresh mandate to its harmonized taskforce to ensure strict implementation of existing rules on traffic regulations and street trading in the state.

Prince Kanu regretted that driving against traffic in Abia state has become a menace, stressing that the government is poised to ensure that there is full compliance with the extant traffic rules in Aba and Umuahia.

According to Kanu "It has become a serious offence to drive against traffic, no matter the distance. A lot of people within the town drive against the traffic, especially, during the "rush hours" or for some other rea-

son or the other".

The commissioner used the forum to remind Abians and residents that the State's Free Tuition fee Education for Primary and Junior secondary Schools in the state has commenced.

He said a taskforce will continue to be on the roads every day to arrest any child seen on the streets during school hours. "Parents of such children would be identified, arrested and prosecuted".

Monthly Stipends to Traditional Rulers

Kanu equally said that in order to give further impetus to the traditional institution in the state as a beacon of cultural heritage, the state government has commenced the payment of monthly stipends that range between N250,000 to N350,000 to traditional rulers in the state.

He noted that in addition to that members of the council of the traditional rulers at the state level will get additional 100,000 monthly as sitting allowance, even as this would also be applied to the traditional rulers leadership at the LGA level, stressing that, "all these are being done to give a pride of place to our traditional rulers who are partners in progress with the state government."

Prince Kanu said that the state government is set to regulate the right of way for laying of telecommunications cables around the state.

He informed that, "The final document for the Right of Way regulation for laying of telecom cables around the state has been produced and this will come into effect very soon."

"That is made to regulate

how telecommunications cables are laid across the state," Kanu explained.

Contributing during the briefing, the commissioner for Science, Technology and Innovation, Mr. David Kalu said that the regulation would provide rules of laying cables, adding that the State government is domesticating a Start-Up Act aimed at helping science and technology start-ups.

Kalu said the programme would involve training and processes that would enhance businesses of start-ups, especially in areas such as online content, branding etc.

He disclosed that the first Science and Technology week will take place in Abia state between the 24th and 29th of March 2025.

Kalu explained that the plans have commenced in

that regard, just as Science and Technology companies and high technology experts would participate during the week. He equally said that a special programme tagged STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics), targeted at senior secondary school students is aimed at investing in the future of science students is ongoing in the state.

While answering a question, the Commissioner Transport, Dr. Chimezie Ukaegbu, said that a taskforce would soon be set up by his ministry to work with National Union of Road Transport workers to halt the hike in transport fares as well as rolling out some Mass transport Buses to cushion the high fares charged by private.

Court Grants First Bank's Request To Arrest, Detain Hydrocarbons' Crude Oil Cargo

Joy Isaac

The commercial transaction misunderstanding between First Bank Nigeria Limited and General Hydrocarbons Limited (GHL) has taken a new twist with the bank securing a court order to arrest a vessel bearing crude oil of GHL.

The bank had, in a press statement on Tuesday, accused Hydrocarbons of off-taking crude from the Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) vessel, which left it with no choice than to "approach the court for legal remedies, to preserve assets, recover the diverted proceeds, prevent reoccurrences and safeguard First Bank's interest."

Arising from a Motion Exparte by First Bank against GHL (1st Defendant), the cargo of crude oil on board FPSO Tamara Tokoni (2nd Defendant), owners/operators of FPSO Tamara Tokoni (3rd Defendant) and the Master, FPSO Tamara Tokoni (4th Defendant), the Federal High Court sitting in Port Harcourt has ordered "arresting and/or attaching and/or liening the entire cargo of crude oil on board the Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) vessels Tamara Tokoni presently located at Rivers State or wherever she may be found within the jurisdiction of this honourable court, pending the provision of a satisfactory guarantee from a first class Nigerian bank in the sum of \$19,752,304.84 plus interest and costs by the said Defendants to secure the Plaintiff's claim herein or until this Honourable Court otherwise orders."



L-R: Freelance Photojournalist, Mr. Akintunde Akinleye; Chairman, Guild of Photojournalists Nigeria (GPN), Mr. Abiodun Ajala; Awardee of GPN Most Outstanding State Energy Giant of the Decade Oil and Gas to NNPC and Most Outstanding Corporate Professional of the year in Oil and Gas to Head, Relationship and Stakeholder Management in NNPC Ltd, Dr. Oluwakemi Olumuyiwa; Keynote speaker, Petroleum expert and accountant, Comrade Bala Zakka and Executive Director, Foundation for Public Interest Law and Development, Barr. Yusuf Nurudeen, during the GPN 4th Annual Conference, Exhibition and Award Dinner 2024, at GRA Ikeja, Lagos

CREDICORP: 20,000 Armed Forces Personnel To Receive Consumer Credit, In Partnership With Fewchore Finance

By Godwin Anyebe

To mark Armed Forces Remembrance Day, Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation (CREDICORP) has kicked off a consumer credit Fund for personnel of the armed forces. This is in partnership with Fewchore Finance, one of its participating financial institutions (PFI) aims to benefit 20,000 armed forces personnel in its first phase.

This fund - kicking off with the Armed Forces Remembrance Day - advances President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's vision to extend consumer credit access to over 50% of working Nigerians by 2030 and

demonstrates a specific commitment to improving the welfare of Nigerian soldiers who protect and serve the nation.

Via affordable consumer credit, members of the Armed Forces can now acquire life-enhancing household assets and meet immediate financial challenges - and at even better terms for locally manufactured goods. The program aims to ease their financial burden, boost morale, and enhance the well-being of their families, most of whom they leave for the battlegrounds.

President Tinubu has long championed the welfare of uniformed personnel, and

this initiative reflects his commitment to creating meaningful support systems.

"This program shows Mr. President's commitment to supporting those who protect and serve our nation," said Uzoma Nwagba, Managing Director/CEO of CREDICORP. "By making credit accessible to armed forces personnel, we not only honor their service but also advance the President's goal of using consumer credit for much better lives."

Sunkanmi Balogun, Managing Director/CEO of Fewchore Finance, added, "We are proud to support the courageous men and women of the armed forces. At Fewchore Finance, we have a

long-standing relationship with the Armed Forces and remain committed to creating solutions that address real needs."

The initiative, starting with a first phase targeting 20,000 beneficiaries, will involve all branches of the armed forces. Phased implementation will ensure equitable access, coordinated with the respective Accounts and Budget departments of the forces. Launching this program on Armed Forces Remembrance Day carries deep symbolic meaning, showcasing the nation's gratitude and dedication to the brave men and women who protect its peace and security.

Suspends USSD For Nine Banks: Full List

By Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has approved telcos' decision to suspend USSD services for nine banks due to an accumulated debt of N160 billion since 2019.

The banks affected include Fidelity Bank Plc, First City Monument Bank, Jaiz Bank Plc, Polaris Bank Limited, Sterling Bank Limited, United Bank for Africa Plc, Unity Bank Plc, Wema Bank Plc, and Zenith Bank Plc.

The use of Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) platform has been crucial to the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) push for a cashless economy. USSD allows bank customers to access financial services on their phones without the need for the internet. However, this initiative is threatened due to ongoing disputes over outstanding debts between Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and Deposit Money Banks (DMBs).

Since 2019, nine banks have been unable to settle an accumulated debt of N160 billion. Initially, the list consisted of 18 banks before the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) announced that nine of these banks had paid, while another nine had yet to pay. The nine bank customers yet to pay now face being cut off from USSD services by Monday, January 27, 2025.

Neimeth Pharmaceuticals Shares Surge 32% Amid Profit Recovery

By Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Shares of Neimeth International Pharmaceuticals Plc have surged by over 32% in the third week of January 2025, boosting its month-to-date performance to more than 50%.

This impressive increase follows the company's earnings report for the period ending September 30, 2024, which was released in late October. The report revealed a pretax profit of N310 mil-

lion, a significant recovery from the previous year's loss of N575 million.

For the nine-month period, revenue hit N3 billion—a 104.8% increase from the N1.5 billion recorded in the previous year—driven mainly by pharmaceutical products, which accounted for 96.5% of the total turnover. Animal health contributed the remaining 3.5%.

Neimeth also boosted its profits with 'other income' totaling N134.5 million, with interest income making up

70.5% and lease rental income contributing 16%.

The recent surge in the company's share price is likely tied to the positive earnings report, alongside a series of director transactions that have taken place since November. As of January 16, the company's shares have soared by over 50% month-to-date, supported by a trading volume of 23 million shares.

In terms of market trends, Neimeth Pharmaceuticals started January 2024 with a share price

of N1.94, navigating a market volume of 55 million shares before closing the month at N1.90. The stock saw a period of stagnation during the first three quarters. However, in November, bullish momentum picked up, propelling the share price above the N2 threshold, where it closed at N2.18.

December continued this upward trend, with the stock leveraging a market volume of 13.9 million shares to reach N2.29, resulting in a year-to-date performance of 18% for 2024.

As January 2025 progresses, the bullish momentum has intensified, with the company surpassing the N3 barrier and surging over 50% month-to-date, backed by a market volume of 23.5 million shares.

Several factors have likely contributed to the recent increase in Neimeth Pharmaceuticals' share price.

The company reported a pretax profit of N310.4 million for the nine-month period ending September 30, 2024, reversing a pretax

loss of N575.1 million from the previous year, marking a 154.3% change. Sales also saw a significant rise, with turnover reaching N3 billion for the period, a year-over-year increase of 104.8%.

Pharmaceutical products accounted for 96.5% of this sales growth. After the earnings report was released in October 2024, the company's stock experienced a market volume of 19.4 million, surpassing the N2 threshold and closing at N2.29.

FG Plans To Raise N1.8tn From Bond Market In Q1 2025

By Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The Federal Government plans to raise N1.8 trillion from the bond market in the first quarter of 2025, as announced by the Debt Management Office. The newly released FGN Bond Issuance Calendar outlines a mix of re-opened and new bonds to be auctioned in January, February, and March 2025.

This initiative is part of the government's strategy to address a projected budget deficit of N13.08 trillion in 2025, which is 3.87% of the country's Gross Domestic Product. The bonds will be crucial for financing essential infrastructure and addressing fiscal gaps.

The bond calendar includes the re-opening of the 19.30% FGN APR 2029 bond, with a remaining tenor of four years and three months. The government plans to offer between N150 billion and N200 billion in each of the three auctions, making this bond a key component of the overall program.

Similarly, the 18.50% FGN FEB 2031 bond, with a tenor of six years and one month as of January 2025, will also be re-opened and

offered within the same range of N150 billion to N200 billion per auction.

Additionally, a new bond, the FGN JAN 2035, will be introduced to the market, targeting investors interested in longer-term instruments. This bond, with an original tenor of 10 years, will also be offered within the N150 billion to N200 billion range.

If the government reaches the upper limit of the offer range across all three auctions, it could raise up to N1.8 trillion by the end of the quarter. The auctions are scheduled for January 27, February 24, and March 24, 2025.

Although the calendar is subject to change, this structured approach demonstrates the government's commitment to transparency and predictability in meeting its financing needs.

In 2024, the Federal Government borrowed an estimated N5.84 trillion from the FGN bond market to bridge its 2024 budget deficit. This figure represents a 0.17% decline compared to the N5.85 trillion borrowed in 2023 through the Debt Management Office. Total subscription to FGN bonds was N7.09 trillion in 2024, despite a total offer of N5.72 trillion.



L-R: CEO of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), Dr. Tayo Aduloju; Assistant Director of Statistics and Head, National Accounts Division, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Dr. Baba Madu; Thematic Lead of the Manufacturing Thematic Group, NESG Manufacturing and Mining Policy Commission, Dr. Muda Yusuf; Statistician-General of the Federation and CEO of NBS, Prince Adeyemi Adeniran; Chairman of the NESG, Mr. Niyi Yusuf; Head, Prices Statistics Division, NBS, Dr. Ayo Andrew Anthony; Economist at the NESG, Dr. Faith Iyoha; and Director of Research/Chief Economist at Proshare Nigeria Limited, Teslim Shitta-Bey, at the NESG-NBS sensitisation workshop on GDP and CPI rebasing, held in Lagos on Thursday. (Photo Credit: NESG)

N12.3bn Fraud Case: CBN, First Bank Staff To Testify Against Otudeko

By Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Representatives from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and First Bank of Nigeria (FBN), along with other witnesses, are set to testify against Chief Oba Otudeko, Chairman of Honeywell Group, and Olabisi Onasanya, former Managing Director of First Bank, in a fraud case involving N12.3 billion.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has filed a 13-count charge against them, accusing them of fraudulently obtaining the funds from First Bank between 2013 and 2014.

The EFCC alleges that the defendants secured N6.2 billion in credit facilities from First Bank under false pretenses, claiming the loans were for Stallion Nigeria Limited. These actions are said to violate the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act 2006.

One charge states: "That you, CHIEF OBA OTUDEKO, STEPHEN OLABISI ONASANYA, SOJI AKINTAYO, AND ANCHORAGE LEISURE LIMITED, on or about the 26th day of November 2013 in Lagos, within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court, conspired amongst yourselves to use the total sum of N6,150,000,000 (Six Billion, One Hundred and

Fifty Million Naira Only), which you reasonably ought to have known forms part of proceeds of your unlawful activities, to wit: Obtaining by False Pretence. You thereby committed an offence contrary to Sections 18(a) and 15(2)(C) of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2011 (as amended), punishable under Section 15(3) of the same Act."

Another charge alleges: "That you, CHIEF OBA OTUDEKO, STEPHEN OLABISI ONASANYA, SOJI AKINTAYO, AND ANCHORAGE LEISURE LIMITED, on or about the 11th day of December 2013 in Lagos, within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court,

procured Honeywell Flour Mills Plc to retain the sum of N1,500,000,000 (One Billion, Five Hundred Million Naira Only), which sum you reasonably ought to have known forms part of proceeds of your unlawful activities, to wit: Obtaining by False Pretence. You thereby committed an offence contrary to Section 18(c) and 15(2)(d) of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2011 (as amended), punishable under Section 15(3) of the same Act."

Additionally, the EFCC claims that Otudeko had a personal interest in a N6.15 billion loan facility sought by V-Tech Dynamics Links Limited while serving as Chairman of First Bank, which he allegedly did not disclose to the bank, violating the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act 2004.

The prosecution plans to call witnesses from the EFCC, V-Tech Dynamics Links Limited, Stallion Nigeria Limited, First Bank, and the CBN to provide evidence. The defendants are scheduled to be arraigned on January 20 before Justice Chukwuekwu Aneke of the Federal High Court in Lagos.



Fola Adeola Sells N10.9bn In Aradel Holdings Shares

By Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The co-founder of Guaranty Trust Bank, Fola Adeola, has sold 18,250,000 units of shares in Aradel Holdings valued at N10.9bn.

In a notice filed on the

Nigeria Exchange Limited recently, the transaction, which took place on December 31, 2024, was executed at a price of N598.50 per share.

Aradel is an integrated energy company with operations spanning upstream, midstream, downstream, power, and renewables.

Adeola, a shareholder in Aradel Holdings, holds over five per cent of the company. The sale was conducted on the Nigerian Exchange Limited and marks a divestment from the company, reflecting a key financial move by the businessman.

Also, Aradel Holdings Plc

has entered into an agreement to acquire a 5.14 per cent equity interest in Chappal Energies Mauritius Limited, an energy company focusing on investments in deep value and brownfield upstream opportunities within Africa.



Fola Adeola



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A Call For Unity In A Time of Change

As Nigeria navigates a rapidly evolving socio-political and economic landscape, the need for unity has never been more urgent. The fractures of tribalism, religious intolerance, and political partisanship threaten the stability and progress of our nation. At a time when challenges demand collective action, we cannot afford to be divided by sentiments that weaken the core of our national identity.

The current economic reforms, while necessary for long-term growth, have exacerbated hardships for many. Inflation continues to erode the purchasing power of citizens, while unemployment rates remain a pressing concern. Amidst these struggles, the seeds of discontent and division have found fertile ground. However, it is in these trying times that our resilience as a people must shine brightest.

History has shown us that no nation can truly progress without fostering a sense of shared purpose among its citizens. From the rebuilding of Germany after World War II to

South Africa's transition from apartheid, unity was the foundation of their remarkable transformations. Nigeria must draw inspiration from these examples.

To bridge the divide, leaders must demonstrate inclusivity in governance. Policies must reflect fairness, ensuring that no ethnic or religious group feels marginalized. Education and public discourse should emphasize our shared history, culture, and aspirations, rather than highlighting our differences. Furthermore, the media and civil society must play their role in promoting narratives that unite rather than divide.

Unity is not the absence of differences but the ability to rise above them for the collective good. As we face this time of change, we must remember that our strength lies in our diversity, and our success depends on our unity. The future of Nigeria will not be determined by our challenges but by how we come together to overcome them. It is time to answer the call for unity and build the nation we all deserve.

As we face this time of change, we must remember that our strength lies in our diversity, and our success depends on our unity. The future of Nigeria will not be determined by our challenges but by how we come together to overcome them.



PDP Chieftain Advocates Increased Youths' Representation In Politics

By Victor Peter

Achieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Oyejide Adeniyi has advocated increased representation of youths in the decision-making process in the country. He made this known in an interview with the newsmen in Ibadan.

The call, according to him became imperative with the huge population of the youths. According to him, "Nigeria's youth population constitutes a significant majority, with over 60 per cent of Nigerians under the age of 30. Despite this demographic advantage, young people have historically faced barriers to meaningful political participation. How-

ever, there is a growing recognition of the need for their inclusion and representation in the decision-making processes. To drive home the agenda, Adeniyi submitted that efforts are being made to create platforms for youth voices to be heard and heeded. Youth-focused organizations, political parties, and civil society groups are mobilizing young individu-

als, encouraging their active involvement in political activities, and amplifying their concerns. He added that the shift towards inclusion acknowledges the invaluable contributions the youth can make to shaping Nigeria's political landscape. "To effectively engage in politics, young Nigerians must be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills,

and opportunities. Education and capacity-building initiatives are essential in empowering the youth and nurturing their leadership potential. Educational institutions and civil society organizations are taking steps to introduce political education programs, encouraging critical thinking, civic awareness, and a deeper understanding of democratic processes.

"By equipping young people with the tools to analyze political issues and engage in constructive dialogue, these initiatives are fostering a generation of politically conscious individuals. In addition, mentorship programs, leadership training, and internships are being provided to nurture young leaders and expose them to the complexities of governance.

Tinubu Mourns Former Lagos HoS, Sunny Ajose

By Peter Victor

President Bola Tinubu has extended his condolence to the Lagos State Government and the All Progressives Congress (APC) over the death of Chief Akinsanya Sunny Ajose, former head of service. Chief Ajose died early on Thursday, Jan. 16, at 78, Mr Bayo Onanuga, the President's spokesman, said in a statement. The President, who commiserated particularly with the people of Badagry, described the late Ajose as a statesman, party loyalist and committed APC leader in Badagry, and also a unifying force in Lagos State.

Recalling his relationship with Ajose as the head of service during his time as governor, President Tinubu underscored Ajose's commitment to reforming the service. "He was an astute administrator and dogged civil servant. When I appointed him the head of service, he became a rallying point. "He had a considerable influence on the workers. He was pivotal in getting the civil service behind our policies and initiatives. "Even after his tenure as head of service, we remained very close because of his leadership qualities and because he was an important partner in development," the President said.



L-R: Chairperson, Women Group, Lagos Chamber of Commercial and Industry (LCCI), Mrs Olufunmilayo Oduwaye; Deputy Manager, Lekki Free Trade Development Company (LFTDC), Mrs Bolaito Ajibade and Chairperson, Small Medium Enterprise (SME) Group, Mrs Bankole Anjela, during a Business visit in Lagos recently.

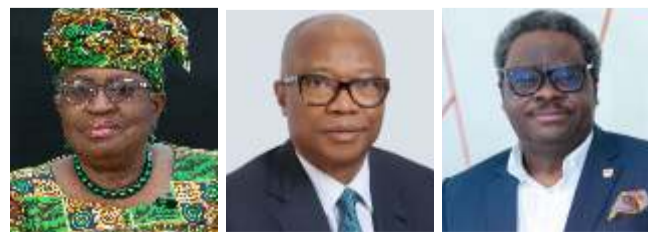


Sunny Ajose

Tinubu Congratulates Okonjo-Iweala, Adeola, Adesina For Bagging UNILAG's Honorary Doctorate

President Bola Tinubu has rejoiced with the Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; co-founder of Guaranty Trust Bank Plc, Mr Fola Adeola and Managing Director of Sahara Power Group, Mr Kola Adesina, on the well-deserved conferment of honorary doctoral degrees by the University of Lagos (UNILAG).

The university recognised Okonjo-Iweala for her trailblazing acts as the first African woman to lead the WTO and for introducing significant reforms in Nigeria's financial sector. It honoured Adeola for his pioneering role in the Nigerian banking sector and for founding the FATE Foundation, an NGO mentoring young Nigerian entrepreneurs through training and loans. Adesina, an alumnus of the university, was recognised for his innovative contributions to the energy industry. Adesina is the Group Managing Director (GMD) of Sahara Power Group, an energy and infrastructure organisation with operations in 42 countries.



Okonjo-Iweala Mr Fola Adeola Kola Adesina

2027: Coalition Condemns Commencement Of Campaigns

By Nathaniel Gumniba

The Coalition of Civil Society organisations in Nigeria, CCSON, has condemned what it described as the commencement of political activities and campaigns towards the 2027 general elections in many states in Nigeria. It noted that the act was not just premature but detrimental to effective governance in those states, urging the governors to focus more on the provision of dividends of democracy to the people. The National Coordi-

nator of CCSON, Otuekong Franklyn Isong, while addressing a press conference in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, on Thursday, urged those involved to halt further political campaigns until the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, lifts ban on political activities and campaigns towards the 2027 general elections. He said, "CCSON frowns at the apparent commencement of political activities and campaigns towards the 2027 general elections in many States of the federation to the detriment of effective

governance. "CCSON advises overly futuristic political gladiators and their sponsors to place the overall interest of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria and its people at heart." The Coalition also urged the Federal Government to dualise all federal highways in the South-South (Niger Delta) region, especially the Calabar-Itu Highway, Port Harcourt-Elementary Highway, and the 2027 general elections in many States of the federation to the detriment of effective

and governance in Akwa Ibom, the Coalition frowned at what it described as "ongoing sustained campaign of calumny against political leaders of the state, particularly the Governor, Pastor Umo Eno and his predecessor, Mr. Udom Emmanuel". The group urged the people to come up with constructive and objective criticism of government and not to engage in social media attacks that would end up creating unnecessary tension and heating up the polity in Akwa Ibom State. Speaking on politics

Guber Poll: APC Stakeholders Move Against Imposition, Insist On Candidate From Osun West

By Nathaniel Gumniba

Even as politicians gear up for the Osun State local government elections come February 22, 2025, what is uppermost on the minds of political gladiators is the 2026 gubernatorial contest. This is as some interest groups calling for the zoning of the guber ticket within the All Progressives Congress, APC, have started to trade tackle on the modus operandi to be adopted to achieve their goals. It was gathered that members of a group within

the Osun APC, under the aegis of Majiyagbe Progressives, are planning to split the party. Their grouse, it was gathered, is that Bola Oyebamiji, who is the current Managing Director of the National Inland Waterway Agency, NIWA, may be imposed on the party as the gubernatorial candidate for the 2026 election by a former governor, Chief Bisi Akande, and the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola. The group reportedly viewed the choice of Bola Oyebamiji, who is from Ikire

town in the Osun West Senatorial District, as an imposition from the party leaders and want to decide on their own candidate. Another group within the Osun APC, the Osun West Majiyagbe Ambassadors, TOWMA, has reacted to the claims by the splinter group that top figures within the party were attempting to impose a candidate from the district on them for the 2026 guber election. Speaking on behalf of the group, the Coordinator Moshood Mujeeb, dismissed the allegations as false and harmful to the party's demo-

cratic principles. He emphasised the APC's longstanding commitment to transparency and fair play, which has consistently allowed party members to participate in an open selection process. Mujeeb stated that the group's advocacy for zoning the APC gubernatorial ticket to the Osun West Senatorial District is grounded in fairness and equity. He noted that despite years of marginalisation, Osun West has consistently supported the party's candidates.

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4. Young Leaders Training Programme	2 Weeks	Lagos	N1,600,000.00	6 February
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6. Business Owners Leadership Development Programme.	4 Weeks	Lagos	N1,200,000.00	20 February
7. Strategic Board Leadership Development Programme.	6 Weeks	Lagos	N5,000,000.00	26 February
8. Entrepreneurship Intrapreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Markets	4 Weeks	Lagos	N1,600,000.00	5 March
9. Corporate Governance and Policy Management Development	6 Weeks	Lagos	N1,600,000.00	14 March
10. Strategic Marketing Management	6 Weeks	Lagos	N1,600,000.00	20 March
11. Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness	5 Weeks	Lagos	N1,600,000.00	27 March
12. Digital Transformation and Business Strategy Development for Emerging Business Leaders	6 Weeks	Lagos	N2,000,000.00	2 April
13. Board Dynamics and Executive Decision-Making	6 Weeks	Lagos	N2,000,000.00	10 April
14. Ethical Leadership and Corporate Governance	6 Weeks	Lagos	N2,000,000.00	15 April
15. Corporate Governance and Accountability	4 Weeks	Lagos	N3,000,000.00	25 April
16. Cross-Cultural Leadership and Diversity Management	6 Weeks	Lagos	N1,200,000.00	8 May
17. Strategic Leadership and Change Management for Business Leadership	6 Weeks	Lagos	N5,000,000.00	19 May
18. Advanced Leadership Development for Public Office Holders	6 Weeks	Abuja	N2,000,000.00	28 May
19. Advanced Leadership Development for Legislators and Parliamentarisms	6 Weeks	Abuja	N2,000,000.00	7 June

PAYMENT DETAILS:

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FCT's Move To collect Council Revenue Stirs Protests

By Nathaniel Gumniba

Centre for Reform and Public Advocacy has kicked against moves by the Federal Capital Territory Internal Revenue Service (FCT-IRS) to collect all revenues on behalf of the six area councils of the FCT in 2025.

The centre, in a statement, argued that the move was unconstitutional, illegal and unlawful. According to the statement released, recently, in Abuja by its Head, Legal Unit, Mr Kalu Agu Kalu, the FCT-IRS ACT, 2015 limits the powers of the service to collect such revenues for the Federal Capital Territory Administration.

"For the purposes of clarity and emphasis, the six area councils are not departments of Federal Capital Territory Administration, but a third tier of Government, constitutionally enshrined and established, and whose functions and powers are delineated by the same Constitution.

"While the Supreme Court had granted autonomy to area councils/local governments, it is laughable that the acting Chairman of the FCT-IRS, Mr Michael Ango, seeks to undermine the pronouncement of the Supreme Court by usurping the powers and functions of the area councils, with a total disregard to the Constitution and the law," the group said.

Ango had announced at the 2024 end of year media briefing in Abuja that FCT-IRS would be responsible for the collection of all revenues on behalf of the six area councils of the FCT in 2025.

He said the goal was to ease compliance by taxpayers in the FCT and improve transparency and accountability for all revenue collection. He said that a similar arrangement was being worked out with the various secretariats, departments

and agencies in the FCT Administration.

He explained that the decision was in compliance with the directive of the FCT Minister, Mr Nyesom Wike.

But while reacting to the announcement, the Advocacy Group said: "There is no provision in the FCT-IRS that empowers the FCT-IRS to collect revenues on behalf of the six area councils.

"Maybe Mr Michael Ango does not know that all the revenues he intends to collect on behalf of the six area councils on the 'directive' of the 'Almighty Wike' are functions of the provisions of the Fourth Schedule to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as altered), which were undoubtedly donated to the six area councils, but we must forgive him because he is ignorant.

"May we, at this juncture, draw the attention of the acting Executive Chairman of the FCT-IRS to Section 2 of the Taxes and Levies (approved list for collection) Act, LFN, 2004, which makes the collection of revenue by unauthorised persons as a criminal offence.

"The said Taxes and Levies Act clearly sets clear boundaries on revenues the Acting Executive Chairman of the FCT - IRS and his Almighty Wike should collect and should not in any guise dive into other revenue collection not donated to the Federal Capital Territory.

"Let us also use this medium to place it on record that the Centre for Reform and Public Advocacy had already filed a civil suit against the Federal Capital Territory Internal Revenue Service at the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, seeking injunctive reliefs against the FCT-IRS from collecting any revenue on behalf of the six area councils.

Wike To Honour FCT Athletes, Pledges Support For Sports

By Nathaniel Gumniba

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, has pledged to honour victorious athletes that recently represented the FCT in various sporting events.

Wike made the pledge in a statement from the FCT sports department recently in Abuja.

He said that a reception, scheduled for Thursday, is in recognition of athletes that represented the FCT at the 2022 National Sports Fes-

tival, the 7th and 8th National Youth Games.

According to him, the honour is to appreciate the athletes for their acts of sacrifice, patriotism and determination that have brought glory to the FCT.

"We are committed to the development of sports in the FCT, and we will continue to create the enabling environment for sports to thrive.

"This is in line with President Bola Tinubu's focus to engage youths to help discover their potentials and empower them to be better," he said.



L-R: CEO, Marketing Mix & Co. Lagos, Mr Akin Adeoya; CEO, Ladybird Advertising/Past President, Advertising Association in Nigeria (AAAN), Mrs Bunmi Oke, and Past President, AAAN, Funmi Onabolu, during the Iconic Brands and Legends of Marketing Communications Award held in Lagos.

Beggars, Others Sue Wike, Demands N500m Over Alleged Rights Violation

By Nathaniel Gumniba

Scavengers, beggars and other vulnerables in Abuja have sued the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, Nyesom Wike, and demanded N500 million in damages for alleged breaches of their fundamental rights.

The lawsuit, filed at the Federal High Court in Abuja, challenges the treatment of vulnerable citizens in the nation's capital, citing arbitrary arrests, illegal detentions, and extortion.

This followed Wike's ban on street begging in the city, which has sparked controversy and criticism from human rights advocates.

Besides the street beg-

ging ban, the Federal Capital Territory Administration had also banned scavenging in the city centre.

In the suit: FHC/ABJ/CS/1749/3024, the lawyer to the plaintiffs, Abba Hikima, on behalf of the vulnerable residents in the originating motion dated Nov. 19, 2024, but filed Nov. 20, 2024, said he was suing in the public interest for the protection of vulnerable Nigerians.

Listed as first to fourth respondents defendant in the originating motion are Wike; inspector-general of police; director-general, State Security Services; and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)

In the case filed before

Justice James Omotosho of the Federal High Court in Abuja, the lawyer also joined the attorney-general of the federation and the Federal Government of Nigeria as the fifth and sixth respondents, respectively.

The plaintiffs' lawyer is seeking a court order to compensate the affected citizens with N500 million in damages, citing the government's alleged infringement on their fundamental rights.

The lawyer argued that the way homeless people, scavengers, petty traders, beggars, and other vulnerable Nigerians in the FCT were being treated was a clear violation of their fundamental rights.

He claimed that arresting

them without a reason, detaining them without charges, and harassing them violated their rights.

He said their rights were guaranteed under Sections 34, 35, 41, and 42 of the Constitution of Nigeria 1999 (as altered).

Hikima, in his affidavit, said he witnessed a disturbing scene on November 12, 2024, around 11 pm, while he was passing through Ahmadu Bello Way in Abuja.

According to him, he saw a joint task force, made up of security operatives and enforcement officers, including military and police personnel, arresting a group of people who appeared to be homeless, scavengers, and beggars.

Govs Uzodimma, Diri, Speaker Abbas, 565 Others Lose Plots Of Land In Abuja

Nathaniel Gumniba

Imo State Governor Hope Uzodimma, his Bayelsa counterpart, Douye Diri, and Speaker of the House of Representatives Abbas Tajudeen are among the 568 Nigerians and firms whose plots of land in Abuja have been revoked on the fresh orders of the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike.

Also affected are the Deputy Chief of Staff to the President (Office of the Vice President), Ibrahim Hadejia; former governor of Cross River State, Ben Ayade; Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele; Senate Minority Leader, Abba Moro; Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Nkeiruka Onyejeocha; Minister of State for Industry Trade and Investment, John

Eno; Chairperson/Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), Abike Dabiri-Erewa; late Sports Minister Bala Kajoje, and Regina Akume, wife of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, George Akume.

Wike also ordered the revocation of plots belonging to some serving and former federal lawmakers. They include Shehu Sani, Magnus Abe, David Umaru, Lanre Tejuoso, Oluwole Oke, Lynda Ikpeazu, Orker Jev, Agom Jarigbe, Nicholas Mutu, Gilbert Nnaji, Francis Onyewuchi and Abubakar Fulata.

Two persons -Nkoyo Onnoghien and Usang- relations of a former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Walter Onnoghien, are also on the

list.

Some companies and agencies that lost their property include Abuja Enterprise Agency, Silver Proof Nigeria Limited, Sali-Tech Commercial Limited, Gimag Integrated Services Limited, and Earth Conscience Limited.

The 568 plots, according to a public notice issued by the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) recently, were revoked because the allottees failed to pay for their Certificates of Occupancy (C-of-O) before the 15 January deadline given to them.

The FCTA said in the publication, "Notice of Withdrawal of Rights of Occupancy in Maitama II, Abuja," that it acted pursuant to the provisions of the Land Use Act 1978.

It said, "The Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) wishes to inform the allottee (s) of land in Maitama II, Cadastral Zone A10, Abuja, who have failed to pay for their Certificate of Occupancy (C-of-O) bills after the expiration of grace period granted by the Honourable Minister, Federal Capital Territory that their Right of Occupancy to the land/property has been withdrawn, pursuant to the provisions of Section 28 of the Land Use Act of 1978 for contravention of the terms of grant which obligated the title/interest holders to settle all bills. The general public is, however, invited to note that allottees/title holders who have completed their payments on or before 15/01/25 are not affected by this publication."

Amudo Town Union: LG Boss Aide Clears Air On Alleged Leadership Imposition

By Chijioke Njoku, Abakaliki

The Senior Special Adviser to the Chairman of Ezza South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State Mr. Titus Awoke on Tuesday denied media report that the Chairman Mrs. Euphemia Nwali has continue to impose an unpopular person on Amudo

community as the President of the Community's town Union.

The report further stated that the Chairman also rejected the 7-man interim executive led by retired captain Tiger Njoku Aloysius as the authentic, generally recognized and accepted town Union leadership of Amudo Community.

We would have ignored

the said publication but for avoidance of doubt and to put the records straight for those whom might have been deceived by the publication we stated these.

The Chairman of Ezza South LGA is not aware of any 7-man interim executive led by retired captain Tiger Njoku but Mr. Emeka Iburu Ezeabata as Caretaker President of the Town Union.

If there will be any election of town union in any community the local government will supervise the election as no law said that communities have power to conduct an election without the authority of the local government.

The problem is one acclaim billionaire from the community Mr. Chibuike Orugu known as Baby Oku who want to single handedly

install the traditional ruler of the community after four attempts.

Baby Oku arrested those that tries to go against his wish including the Youth President Mr. Chinedu Uguta, his Deputy Mr. Paul Chukwu and his Personal Assistant Mr. Amechi Nweke.

Baby Oku even dissolved the town union executives in

which he has no such power without the knowledge of the Council Chairman.

The Local Government security Council comprising all the security agents in their last security meeting resolved that since there is still crisis in Amudo community which was created by Baby Oku no election should hold until normalcy returned to the community.



Chief Osita Chidoka, during a visit on Friday, January 17, to the Senate Committee on Health, chaired by Senator Ipalibo Harry Banigo, and the House of Representatives Committee on Special Healthcare, NCOP presented a robust advocacy plan to tackle Nigeria's cancer crisis during the committees' budget defence.

Ebonyi Deputy Speaker Loses PA As Others Sustain Severe Injuries

Chijioke Njoku, Abakaliki

The Personal assistant to Ebonyi state Deputy speaker, Hon Ifeanyichukwu Eze has been reportedly dead in motor accident along Abakaliki/Enugu Expressway

In a press release made available to journalist in Ebonyi by the secretary of the forum of Deputy speaker's legislative Aides, Comrade Nwede Martin's Chinonso who revealed that Eze Ifeanyichukwu was involved in a motor accident along Enugu/Abakaliki Expressway on 11th January 2025 alongside three other Legislative Aides and one other ardent Grace Speaks member in a vehicle while returning from a Christian Wake in solidarity for his friend who lost his mother.

Famous news gathered that all the federal roads built by the immediate pass Governor of Ebonyi state, Engr Davide Umahi is currently under going series of maintenance which has claimed lives of innocent Ebonyi citizens through road accidents including the personal assistant to Ebonyi state Deputy speaker, Rt. Hon Chinedu Onah yesterday.

According to Nwede, "The Grace Speaks Political Family, and the Forum of Deputy Speaker's Legislative Aides are grief-stricken and regret to announce the sud-

den and pathetic demise of our esteemed colleague and PA to the Deputy Speaker, EBHA Comr Eze Ifeanyichukwu (Mojo).

Comr Eze Ifeanyichukwu was involved in a motor accident along the Enugu/Abakaliki Expressway on 11th January 2025 alongside 3 Legislative Aides and 1 other ardent Grace Speaks member

in the vehicle while returning from a Christian Wake in solidarity for his friend whose mother's burial was today, 11th January 2025.

"Sadly, he couldn't survive it, as he gave up a ghost in the hospital while the 4 who had varying degrees of injuries were receiving treatment in the hospital.

"Comr Ifeanyichukwu Eze, until his unfortunate exit, was the Personal Assistant to the Deputy Speaker, EBHA Rt Hon Chinedu Ogbu Onah and FON Youth Movement Coordinator, Umuogudu Oshia Ward.

"As a way of nurturing the younger ones to prepare them to take over tomorrow and to support the down-trodden, the Deputy Speaker, Rt Hon Chinedu Ogbu Onah, upon his assumption of office, appointed him his Personal Assistant. Since then, he has been very loyal, supportive and dedicated to his responsibility. He was the most social and kindhearted Aide of the Deputy Speaker.

"He was a humble servant, a dogged fellow, hard-working and a promising youth with untapped potential.

"His death is one too many and too difficult to endure. We are deeply sad to hear this devastating news when we are preparing to celebrate his POP from NYSC and other milestones together, as a family.

"At a tender age, Ifeanyichukwu Eze lost his mother and couldn't enjoy his biological mother's care. As the only son, the father anchored his hope on him and was relieved seeing him becoming a man and opportunity to serve as PA to the 4th citizen of Ebonyi State through the benevolence of Rt Hon Chinedu Ogbu.

Ebonyi NUJ Fumes, Threatens Clampdown On Sahara Reporters Over Alleged Junk Journalism

By Chijioke Njoku, Abakaliki

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Ebonyi State Council has issued a strong condemnation of Sahara Reporters for their recent attacks on the Ebonyi State Government.

The Council expressed dismay over Sahara Reporters' disregard for ethical journalism by publishing falsehoods, fake news, and incomplete reports about Ebonyi State and its government, seemingly to serve the interests of undisclosed benefactors.

In a statement signed by the Ebonyi State NUJ Chairman, Comrade Nwafor Samson, the Council stated that it had carefully reviewed all the reports published by Sahara Reporters about Ebonyi State, and found them to be lacking in journalistic principles and integrity.

The Council firmly denounced Sahara Reporters' publications, labeling them as examples of "junk journalism" that should be unequivocally rejected. They criticized Sahara Reporters for spreading misinforma-

tion without having a resident reporter in Ebonyi State to provide accurate information or seek the government's perspective on the matters at hand.

The NUJ Ebonyi State Council highlighted Sahara Reporters' reputation for disseminating falsehoods and fake news to the public and urged the platform to stop engaging in unethical journalism practices that damage its credibility.

The Council distanced itself from Sahara Reporters and cautioned the public to exercise caution when consuming content from the platform. They praised journalists and media outlets in Ebonyi State for upholding the standards of the profession and called on Sahara Reporters to change their ways or risk being remembered as a source of falsehoods and half-baked reports.

The NUJ Ebonyi State Council reiterated its support for journalists and media organizations in the state, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the ethical code of journalism while fulfilling their roles in society. They pledged to stand by journalists who uphold the principles of ethical journalism in the discharge of their duties.

Anambra On Red Alert As Joint Security Forces Raid Unknown Gunmen Camp, Kill Five

Joint security forces comprising the Nigeria Police Force and the military successfully raided a camp of suspected armed individuals in Ufuma, Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State, neutralizing five gunmen.

The operation, carried out recently, followed reports of increased criminal activity in the area.

Tochukwu Ikenga, the police spokesperson for Anambra State, confirmed the development in a state-

ment on Wednesday, attributing the success to seamless collaboration and coordination among the security agencies.

"The team neutralized five members of the armed group, while some others escaped with various degrees of bullet wounds," Mr. Ikenga said.

He said during the raid, the joint security team dismantled the suspects' camp, setting it ablaze and recovering several dangerous items.

Among the seized weapons were four undetonated

improvised explosive devices (IEDs), two AK-47 rifles, a pump-action gun, and a 75-volt battery.

Mr. Ikenga stated that the operation was part of ongoing efforts to rid the state of criminal elements. He added that the security team is currently pursuing the fleeing suspects who sustained injuries during the confrontation.

Nnaghe Obono, the Commissioner of Police in Anambra State, has urged residents of Ufuma and its environs to collaborate with

security agencies in their fight against crime.

He emphasized that the success of such operations depends on the community's willingness to share timely and credible information.

While the police did not specify which group the gunmen were affiliated with, past incidents in the region have often been linked to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). However, IPOB has consistently denied involvement in attacks within the South-east

Yoruba Community In Bauchi Sympathizes With Governor Mohammed Over Stepmother's Passing

By Samuel Luka, Bauchi

Members of the Yoruba Community in Bauchi State have expressed their condolences to Governor Bala Mohammed of the state over the recent death of his stepmother, Hajiya Hauwa

Mohammed Duguri at the age of 120.

The President - General of the Yoruba community in the state, Special Apostle Segun Awofadeji who made this known in a condolence message recently, described Hajiya Hauwa as a role model and beacon of hope

whose death is a great loss not only to the immediate family but to the State and Nigeria as a whole considering the number of leaders she was able to raise before her death.

He acknowledged the deceased's pivotal role in nurturing the Governor who he

described as "Distinguished Mr Project, workaholic and Indefatigable Governor", Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed into an exemplary leader.

Apostle Awofadeji extended the sympathies of the Yoruba community to the people and government

of Bauchi State.

According to him, "Death is inevitable, but the loss of a loved one is always painful, regardless of their age. We submit to the will of God that Mama's time has come. All we can do is accept it as His will".

Awofadeji then prayed

God to grant her soul rest in Aljannah Firdausi and the family the fortitude to bear and endure the irreparable and profound loss, saying that the entire Yoruba Community in the State is with the Governor at this moment of grief.



Gov Zulum visit to Barma community area overruns by B/Haram

Bauchi Gov rejigs Cabinet Swears-In 8 New Commissioners

By Samuel Luka, Bauchi

Bauchi state government has in a cabinet shake-up, sworn in eight Newly appointed Commissioners, days after sacking five others.

Speaking during the swearing in ceremony at the Executive Chambers of the government house recently, the Governor advised the new Commissioners to live above board in the discharge of their official duties.

Bala Mohammed who reiterated the determination of his Government towards re-branding Bauchi state to the greater heights, explained that it has been the policy of his Administration to occasionally reshuffle the State Cabinet to reinvigorate and reposition the machinery of the State Government for effective and efficient policy formulation and implementation.



Gov. Bala Mohammed

The Governor who recalled that five Commissioners were recently dropped, noted that five out of the eight newly appointed Commissioners would replace the dropped ones, while two others would replace the erstwhile Commissioner for Budget, Economic Planning & Multilateral Coordination, Alhaji Aminu Hammayo who has been appointed as Secretary to the State Government and the late Alhaji Ahmed Aliyu Jalam who was until his death, the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.

Bala Mohammed while stating that the remaining one new Commissioner would take charge of the newly created Ministry of Livestock Development also appreciated the five dropped for their immense contributions to the development of the State.

Governor Mohammed who tasked the new Commissioners on judicious use of government resources at their disposal, advised them to resist the temptation to divert public funds to their personal use.

The Governor informed the new Commissioners that their performances will be closely monitored to make sure they live up to the responsibilities of their various Ministries, warning that, no cabinet member will be spared if found wanting.

The new Commissioners the Governor said are Alh. Usman Usman Shehu (Ministry of Information & Communication), Dr. Iliyasu Aliyu Gital (Ministry of Agriculture), Dr. Bala Musa Lukshi (Ministry of Livestock Development) an Hon. Isa Babayo Tilde (Ministry of Local Government & Chieftaincy Affairs).

Other include Prof. Titus Saul Ketkukah (Ministry of Works and Transport), Alh. Adamu Babayo Gabarin (Ministry of Youth and Sports), Alh. Abdullahi Mohammed (Ministry of Lands and Survey) and Dr. Lawal Mohammed Rimin Zayam (Ministry of Education).

Foundation Launches HPV Campaign, Vaccinates 100 Girls In Bauchi

By Samuel Luka Bauchi

The Ibrahim Ali Usman Foundation has during its free Medical Outreach to Magama Gari Community, Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi state, vaccinated not fewer than 100 Girls between the ages of 9-14 against Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

Speaking during the free medical outreach recently, Executive Director of the Foundation, Comrade Yusuf Aliyu Fada said that the programme witnessed large turn out of beneficiaries whose parents and guardians made them available for the vaccination exercise.

Comrade Fada who is also the Chairman, Bauchi state Volunteer Health Workers, said during the outreach sensitization and awareness creation campaign on the dangers of Human Papilloma Virus on women was carried out.

According to him, under the Foundation, his team has been going into nooks and crannies of urban and rural areas creating awareness and sensitizing the people about the importance of HPV vaccine.

"We are in this community today with the purpose of creating awareness and to campaign on the dangers of HPV. We are here to educate

them about the virus and what should be done to avoid being infected", he said.

Comrade Fada who said that the community members were adequately informed about the virus and its negative effect on girl child, disclosed that many parents gladly brought their Girl Children who got vaccinated free of charge.

According to him, the awareness campaign was sponsored by Ibrahim Ali Usman, the founder of the Foundation which had the supports of Alheri Y.S foun-

ation and the Bauchi State Primary Healthcare Development Board.

"We were able to vaccinate not fewer than 100 girls, all the doses we brought finished. One dose of the vaccine costs N30,000 and it cannot be administered on a person until a test is carried out", he said.

Comrade Fada added that At the last paragraph added that, apart from the Free medical outreach, the foundation has drilled over 100 Boreholes in Bauchi South, offered scholarships

to youth and women, as well as donated over 100,000 exercise books to school children among others.

The Foundation, according to Comrade Fada is committed to reaching out to all 20 LGA's of Bauchi state with different interventions before the end of 2025.

In their remarks, some health officers working in Magama Gumau Maternity, Khadijat Abduljadir and Munirat Aliyu Jibrin, commended the foundation for the free medical outreach.

2025: Be Agents Of Positive Change, Christian Gov Zulum Appoints Bundi Senior Technical Assistant On Print, Digital Communications Group Urges Nigerians

By Achadu Gabriel



Gov. Babagana Zulum

Borno State Governor Babagana Umara Zulum has approved the appointment of Abdurrahman Ahmed Bundi as Senior Technical Assistant (STA) on Print and Digital Communications.

The appointment was announced recently by the Governor's spokesperson, Malam Dauda Iliya, in Maiduguri.

Bundi graduated from the University of Maiduguri in 2011 and later obtained his master's degree in Media Management from

Middlesex University, London, United Kingdom.

He is a member of several professional organisations, including the African Public Relations Association (APRA) and the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR).

Hon. Bundi is a Fellow and member of the Governing Council of the Nigerian Institute of Social Media Analysts (NISMA).

He previously served as Special Assistant on State and National Welfare Programs to the then-Governor, now Vice President Kashim Shettima, from June 2017 to

May 2019.

Governor Babagana Umara Zulum also appointed him as Special Assistant on New Media, a position he held from June 2019 to May 2023.

Before this latest appointment, Governor Zulum had in June 2023 appointed Bundi as his Senior Special Assistant on New Media.

The statement noted that Zulum congratulated the appointee and expressed his anticipation for Bundi's continued service in upholding Borno's image.

Delta State Government Suspended SSA Over Alleged Fraudulent Activities

By Francis Sadhere

The Delta State Government has suspended Ms. Favour Obakoro, also known as Vida Modelo, the Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the Governor on Morals and Diaspora Affairs, following allegations of fraudulent activities.

The suspension, announced through a statement signed by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Dr. Kingsley Eze Emu, is effective immediately. The decision is aimed at allowing security agencies to conduct a thorough investigation into the accusations against her.

Obakoro, who has come under intense scrutiny in recent days, is accused of exploiting her position to fraudulently secure funds from individuals seeking work permits to work abroad. It is reported that she collected over N100 million from several victims, prom-

ising them legitimate work permits that were never delivered.

The allegations were first brought to light by Nigerian activist and social media influencer, Martins Vincent Otse, also known as VeryDarkMan. In a viral video, Otse accused Obakoro of using her office to scam people, particularly from the Diaspora, into paying large sums for fake work permits. He claimed that the victims were promised legitimate services but received nothing in return after making payments.

Some victims have come forward with specific details of their transactions, revealing amounts ranging from 1.5 million naira to 10 million naira. One victim reported sending 5 million naira, while others claimed that they transferred a total of over N70 million to Obakoro's personal account. Despite the payments, the victims were left without the

promised documents, and when they attempted to demand either their money back or the work permits, Obakoro allegedly used her influence to avoid fulfilling her commitments.

Disturbingly, some of the victims have produced recordings of phone conversations with Obakoro, in which she allegedly assured them that their requests would be fulfilled, using her official position to gain their trust. The revelations have sparked public outrage, with



Ms. Favour Obakoro, aka as Vida Modelo,

many questioning the integrity of Obakoro's role within the government, especially given her association with Governor Sheriff Oborevwori, who has recently been recognized for his positive contributions to the state's infrastructure and governance.

The suspension of Obakoro comes as a response to these grave allegations, and the government has pledged to fully cooperate with security agencies to ensure a thorough investigation. It is expected that further details will emerge as the inquiry progresses. Meanwhile, the reputation of Governor Oborevwori, who has been praised for his leadership and development initiatives, may be at risk if the claims are substantiated.

As the investigation unfolds, the Delta State Government has assured the public that any individuals found guilty of corruption or misconduct will be held accountable.

Mr. Charles Aniagwu, Delta State Commissioner for Works, Rural Roads, and Public Information, (middle) flanked by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Sir Festus Ahon, (right) and Executive Assistant to the Governor on Public Enlightenment (Projects and Policies), Mr. Olisa Ifeajika, during a press conference in Asaba recently.



Eldest Son Of Nigeria's First Minister Of Finance Appeals To President Tinubu To Immortalize Father On Currency

By Francis Sadhere, Warri

The eldest son of Nigeria's first Minister of Finance, Chief Festus Samuel Okotie-Eboh, Prince John Edema Okotie-Eboh, has called on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to honor his late father by engraving his portrait on the Nigerian currency.

The appeal, made in Warri, Delta State, marks the anniversary of Chief Okotie-Eboh's death on January 15, 1966, during Nigeria's first military coup.

Prince John Okotie-Eboh emphasized that his father's groundbreaking contributions to Nigeria's financial system should not be overlooked.

He said Chief Okotie-Eboh was instrumental in the country's transition from colonial currency, and oversaw the introduction of the new currency and coins in 1959 that bore the title "Federation of Nigeria." He also spearheaded the creation of the Central Bank of Nigeria in 1958.



Chief Festus Samuel Okotie-Eboh

Speaking to our correspondent, Prince John Okotie-Eboh described his father as a trailblazer who not only pioneered the currency reforms but also played a pivotal role in Nigeria's financial and economic development.

"He was the one who changed the colonial currency system and introduced the new Nigerian currency," Prince John said. "He is also the father of the Central Bank of Nigeria, having initiated the Bill for its establishment."

Prince Okotie-Eboh added that his father's legacy extends beyond currency reform, noting his role in establishing the Nigeria Stock Exchange and securing Nigeria's membership in key international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (IBRD). Despite these monumental achievements, the elder Okotie-Eboh has not been immortalized in any way, a fact Prince John found deeply troubling.

"It is unfortunate that, despite all his significant contributions, there is no institution or building named after him, nor is his portrait engraved on any denomination of Nigeria's currency," he lamented.

"It seems there may be a conspiracy to deprive him of recognition because of his minority ethnic background. But there is no reason why a man of his stature should not be immortalized like his contemporaries."

Delta State Governor Vows To Sanction Contractors Over Shoddy Jobs

By Francis Sadhere, Warri

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, has issued a stern warning to contractors executing substandard projects in the state, pledging severe sanctions for those found guilty of delivering poor quality work.

The governor made the statement recently after inspecting the 6.5-kilometer Achalla-Ibusa Road, a project being executed by the state government.

During the inspection, Governor Oborevwori expressed disappointment over the poor quality of drainage work carried out by the contractor handling the road project.

He emphasized that his administration would not tolerate shoddy jobs and that contractors and

site engineers found complicit in approving substandard work would face serious consequences.

"My administration will not tolerate a situation where site engineers connive with contractors to deliver sub-standard projects," Oborevwori warned. He added that contractors who fail to meet expectations would be blacklisted, and their projects would be reassigned to others willing to deliver quality work.

The Governor's decision to personally inspect the project stemmed from unsatisfactory feedback from individuals he had previously sent to evaluate the site. He emphasized that his administration would prioritize road inspections in 2025 to ensure the quality of infrastructure across the state.

PDP, Ighodalo Express Confidence As Edo Election Tribunal Commences Hearing

The Justice Wilfred Kpochi-led three-man Edo State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal has commenced hearing on the seven petitions challenging the declaration of Governor Monday Okpebholo as the winner of the 2024 Edo State governorship election. Other political parties contesting the outcome of the election have also expressed optimism in the judiciary to reclaim their mandate.

According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Okpebholo polled 291,667 votes, defeating the Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) candidate, Dr. Asue

Ighodalo, who recorded 247,274 votes and other candidates in the election.

Not satisfied with INEC's declaration, the petitioners, Ighodalo, PDP, Accord Party (AP), Allied Peoples Movement (APM), Action Democratic Party (ADP), Zenith Labour Party (ZLP), and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), dragged INEC, Okpebholo and the All Progressives Congress (APC) before the court to challenge the declaration and conduct of the election.

The Edo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the state chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), yesterday, traded words over the

shooting incident that occurred at the venue of the Governorship Election Tribunal in Benin City.

Edo APC Chairman, Jarret Tenebe, in a statement made available to newsmen in Benin, accused the opposition PDP of disturbing the tribunal proceedings, saying that the act of violence is unacceptable.

Tenebe said: "Today's shooting incident at the venue of the Governorship Election Tribunal in Benin City, involving members of the opposition PDP, is deeply disturbing and unacceptable."

"The tribunal is a sacred space where justice is meant to be administered impar-

tially. Any act of violence within its walls undermines the very foundation of our legal system and threatens the safety of all involved."

He expressed concern over the need to resort to violence, saying: "Regardless of political affiliation, resorting to violence to resolve disputes is never justifiable. We must all condemn such actions in the strongest possible terms."

He noted that violence has no place in a civilised society, and those responsible for the heinous act must be brought to justice swiftly and without exception.

Gov Adeleke Reaffirms Commitment To Make Osun Food Basket Of Nigeria



Governor Ademola Adeleke

By Peter Victor

Governor Ademola Adeleke has given a nod to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's led FG in its ongoing commitment to boost the Agricultural sector of the country.

Governor Adeleke who applauded the reforms currently being embarked on by the FG in the sector with a Presidential Livestock Reforms Implementation Committee set up recently, described it as one initiative well intended that couldn't

have come at a better time than now.

According to statement from the Commissioner for Information and Public Enlightenment, Oluomo Kolapo Alimi, he noted the readiness of Gov Adeleke's administration to key into the initiative while granting audience to Professor Attahiru Jega led Presidential Livestock Reforms Initiative Committee in his office.

According to Alimi, the advocacy visit which took place at the Exco Chambers, Governor's Office, State Sec-

retariat, afforded the Osun helmsman the opportunity to reel out many of the reforms being currently put in place in Osun State with a view to making it one of the food baskets of Nigeria in terms of food security and abundance.

The Governor said, "My administration is irrevocably committed to any initiative by the FG that will put more foods on the tables of the people of Nigeria.

"While I welcome your team to my dear Osun, the State of the Living Spring, it

will interest you to hear that my administration is not leaving any stone unturned to buy this idea.

"One of the efforts of my administration in this regard, among others, was the recent procurement of 31 tractors given to the farmers in the state, aimed at boosting food sufficiency.

"In addition to this, seedlings and other incentives are being given to farmers at will by my administration using a well structured implementation drive being organized ceaselessly by the Ministry of

Agriculture and Food Security in my state.

My dear Professor Jega and your team, at the risk of sounding immodest, I want to tell you with all sense of responsibility, that my State, Osun is enormously endowed and blessed with arable lands and forests, which if fully harnessed in the best way, will ensure food security and create more job opportunities, not only for my people here in Osun but Nigeria as a whole.

LASTMA Kicks Lagos State School Safety Advocacy Campaign 2025

By Joy Isaac

On the 15th of January, 2025, the Lagos State School Traffic Safety Advocacy team kicked off the year 2025 School Safety Advocacy campaign at Adebola Baptist Junior High School Surulere, Lagos.

The team comprising Messrs Shina Loremikan, Femi Awoyemi, Deputy Comptroller Kayode Olotu, Assistant Comptroller Fausat Aluko, and Officers Olagunju Seyi, Awolesi Gbemisola, Oloko Oluwaseun.

Arriving the School pre-

mises at about 11:50AM, the team was received by the Principal, Mr. Babafemi who was delighted to have us. The children were immediately grouped together and the team went on to the business of the day.

The Children listened with great enthusiasm and were eager to know more, asking questions to show the depth of their understanding.

At the end of the session, the Students, Teachers and Principal appreciated the Team and the initiative of the Lagos State Government through LASTMA.



Barr. Abdul-Raheem Adebayo Lawal, Oyo State Deputy Governor, with Ajaero (right), Nigerian Labour Congress's president, and others at the launch of 10 CNG buses recently in Agodi, Ibadan.

Sanwo Olu Mourns GAC Member, APC Chieftain, Sunny Ajose

Olayemi Akinwunmi

The Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has mourned the passing of the former Head of Service and member of the Governance Advisory Council (GAC), Chief Akinsanya Sunny Ajose, a Chieftain of the All Progressive Congress, APC.

In a statement signed by Gboyega Akosile, Special Adviser on media and Publicity, The Governor described the death of the All Progressives Congress (APC) apex leader in Badagry as a great loss to Lagos State, particularly the ruling party, considering his unique position as a retired public servant and one of the great mobilisers in the ruling party.

The Governor who also commiserated with GAC members, leaders, and members of APC in Lagos State, particularly in Badagry Division, said the demise of Chief Ajose has created a vacuum in the ruling party.

Ajose, the Head of Service during President Bola Tinubu's tenure as Governor of Lagos State and former Deputy Chairman of the APC

in Lagos, died after a brief illness on Wednesday at 78 years.

Governor Sanwo-Olu, in a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mr. Gboyega Akosile, on Thursday, described Chief Ajose as a seasoned administrator, a passionate leader, and a respected politician who served his people in Badagry, the ruling party, and Lagos State meritoriously during his lifetime.

He said: "The passing of Chief Sunny Ajose is a great loss to Lagos State, especially our party, the All Progressives Congress, because of the critical role the deceased was playing in the party before his death, both as a GAC member and the apex party leader in Badagry.

"Chief Ajose was an epitome of dedication and selflessness in public service. He contributed positively to the public service sector as Head of Service during the tenure of our leader, President Bola Tinubu, as the Governor of Lagos State. He also played an active role as a one time Special Adviser to the Governor (Governor's Office) in Lagos State.

Western Region Organization Urges National Assembly To Grant States VAT Collection Powers

Olayemi Akinwunmi

The Western Region Organization (WRO) on Friday, has called on the National Assembly to amend tax reform bills, allowing states to collect and spend Value Added Tax (VAT) within their domains. This move, according to the organization, would ensure fairness and equity in the country's tax system.

In a statement issued by

the Executive Director, Mr. Banji Ayiloge, the WRO emphasized that VAT collection should be the exclusive responsibility of states. This, they believe, would enable states to generate significant revenue for development purposes.

The organization criticized the current system, where the federal government collects VAT and redistributes it to states. They described this as "unbridled

state socialism" that rewards visionless leaders and creates an unequal distribution of resources.

Ayiloge argued that reverting VAT collection to states would be a significant step towards achieving equity and justice in the tax system. He recalled that VAT was initially introduced by a former Ogun State governor, Chief Bisi Onabanjo, during the Second Republic, but was later hijacked by the fed-

eral government.

The WRO urged the National Assembly to correct the "selfish acts" of past leaders who have resisted policies aimed at promoting equitable development. They emphasized the need for all regions to utilize their resources productively, citing the North's potential for mechanized farming as an example.

Ondo Gov Dissolves State Executive Council, Exempts AG, Finance Commissioner

By Olalekan Olaiya

The Governor of Ondo State, Hon. Lucky Aiyedatiwa has approved the dissolution of the State Executive Council, with immediate effect.

Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Prince Ebenezer Adeniyani disclosed this in a statement.

The governor however exempted Attorney General

and Commissioner for Justice, Dr Kayode Ajulo SAN and the Commissioner for Finance, Mrs. Omowunmi Isaac.

Aiyedatiwa said the AGF and finance commissioner were exempted due to the critical nature of their duties.

"All the affected cabinet members are to hand over all government properties in their care to the accounting officers of their respective

ministries," statement reads in part.

Aiyedatiwa thanked the EXCO members for their service and contributions to the development of Ondo State under his administration and wished them well in their future endeavours.

Aiyedatiwa is due to be inaugurated on February 23, 2025, after completing the tenure of his former principal, Rotimi Akeredolu.



Governor Hon. Aiyedatiwa



tanker explosion that claimed several lives in Dikko junction, around the Abuja-Kaduna expressway recently.

Kaduna: Man Revealed How Gov Uba Sani Rises To prominence

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna state has been described as one politician who rise to prominence through just governance and unique leadership style of empowerment and building of trust.

Victor Mathew Bobai, a contemporary politician working as Senior Special Assistance (SSA), to the Governor, made the revelation, under the purview of his office, in a scripted pieces he entitled: "Empowered Leadership: Governor Uba Sani and the Favor of God".

The pieces dated Tuesday 14th January 2025, made available to our correspondent also described Governor Sani as a shiny example of King Darius, a figure and pivotal character in the biblical narrative.

It reads: Throughout history, certain leaders have emerged not just from the crucible of political struggle but through a divine orchestration that highlights their purpose. One such figure is King Darius, a pivotal character in the biblical narrative. He rose to prominence, governed justly, and fostered an environment where his people could thrive amid adversity.

Today, Governor Uba Sani stands as a modern embodiment of similar divine favor, demonstrating how a leader dedicated to inclusivity and peaceful coexistence can positively impact a community.

Scripture reminds us that



Governor Uba Sani

those who seek righteousness receive blessings from the Almighty. Governor Sani is supported by countless men and women, along with clergy, who pray fervently for his leadership.

This collective supplication reflects the deep faith placed in his governance and vision for a brighter future. Just as King Darius earned respect for his principled rule, Uba Sani is gaining recognition for his commitment to building bridges among diverse communities.

The hallmark of a successful leader lies in their ability to nurture trust and unity. Governor Sani's commitment to inclusivity is evident in his policies and outreach initiatives. By amplifying marginalized voices and prioritizing dialogue, he has woven a tapestry of coexistence that resonates deeply with the citizens of our great state. This intentional effort to foster harmony has not gone unnoticed; it is a testament to his character and dedication to the common good.

As we observe Uba Sani's achievements unfold, it is important to recognize that progress is often met with skepticism. Some might have anticipated a governance style marked by division and strife, yet they are left astonished by the trajectory of this administration.

The transparency, accountability, and compassion exhibited under his leadership are signs of strength. The initiatives he champions—whether in educational reforms, healthcare improvements, or economic strategies—serve to strengthen the fabric of our society.

The Scriptures assure us that no evil shall prevail against those favored by God. Governor Uba Sani is undoubtedly shielded by divine providence. As he navigates the complexities of governance and societal challenges, we firmly believe that God has designed a path for him filled with purpose and promise. Great things await, and his journey is blessed.

Horror: Bird Flu Kill 32 Chickens In Kano -Dr. Raises Alarm ...warns against eating infected bird

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

Gwale Veterinary Hospital, Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Abdullahi Abubakar Gaya, has confirmed the death of 32 Chickens following an outbreak of bird flu in Gwale Local Government Area of Kano state.

Gaya who spoke to Journalists recently, cautioned residents against eating infected birds saying it has severe consequences on human health.

He confirmed that over 32 birds died of the outbreak in Kano recently, adding that investigations are still on to confirm whether more birds and humans have been affected.

Dr. Gaya narrated how a Chicken rearer brought the first case to the hospital arising from an infected guinea fowl he purchased at Janguza market without iso-

lation.

"Mixing of the infected Guinea fowl led to the death of over 32 other birds at the poultry with a population of over 50 birds. The poultry farmer reported the case to the hospital on December 7, 2024.

"After purchasing the Guinea fowl and mixing it with other birds, the Guinea fowl died; after which other chickens started dying one after the other" he stated.

Gaya warned that anybody who can consume affected birds that are slaughtered will develop health problems, pointing out that bird flu is a respiratory disease that is highly infectious.

"Those who consume the birds that were slaughtered can become infected. Currently this particular index case is the only case we have. His birds are 50, majority have died and he slaughtered some.

"We are still investigating. More information are underway. The general advise is that if you buy a bird, you need to isolate it.

"If you see a sign of sickness in a bird or any animal, report to the nearest veterinary hospital. If you see a dead bird, do not touch it, report to the nearest veterinary hospital. The disease is changing pattern. It is becoming serious," Dr. Gaya added.

Earlier, the Kano State Commissioner of Health, Dr. Abubakar Labaran Yusuf, said the Ministry has already taken charge of the situation, stopping the disease from spreading to other parts of the state.

"The bird flu virus was confirmed and the state Ministry of Agriculture took proactive measures to contain the spread.

"Immediately upon receipt of the result, the state Ministry of Agriculture pro-

actively sealed the place, depopulated the remaining chickens and decontaminated the compound" he said.

Dr. Labaran Yusuf assured residents that the situation is under control adding that, "it is not severe enough to be declared an outbreak."

"The ministry also decontaminated the premises where live birds are sold in the Janguza market and sensitized sellers on the effects of the bird flu.

"Surveillance will be intensified in every Local Government Area, especially among poultry and bird rearers, with daily reports sent to the committees" he stated.

"Symptoms of bird flu include fever, mucous, and redness of the eyes. Residents, especially poultry rearers, are urged to report any suspected cases to the authorities for timely action," he added

Idris Releases N925m Gratuity, Death Benefits To 367 Workers

By Paul Onehi

Gov. Nasir Idris of Kebbi, has approved the release of N925 million for the payment of gratuity and death benefits to 367 beneficiaries.

This is contained in statement signed by Rashid Muhammad-Bala, office of the Head of Service, issued to newsmen in Birnin Kebbi recently.

"The payments will cover beneficiaries from the state, contract staff, Local Government and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), between July 16 and September 15, 2024.

"The governor's gesture underscores his unwavering commitment to the welfare of both serving and retired civil servants in the state," the statement said.

Federal varsity Kachia Desire of Southern Kaduna people — Forum

Over 100 university dons under the aegis of the Forum of Southern Kaduna Professors (FOSKAP) have said the establishment of the Federal University of Applied Sciences Kachia in Kaduna is the desire of the Southern Kaduna people.

The professors were reacting to the Punch Editorial which saw the establishment of the university as a "Greek gift".

In a statement issued by the chairman of the forum, Professor John Gambo Laah, which was made available to newsmen in Kaduna on Monday, chastised the Punch Editorial of 7th January 2025 and said the forum of professors from the zone is in full support of the initiative.

The statement noted, "Ever since the desire to push for the establishment of a Federal University in Southern Kaduna began in 2018,

the Forum of Southern Kaduna Professors has consistently and considerably been reaching out to all stakeholders to express its overwhelming support for the university.

"The principle behind our total support for the Bill for the Establishment of Federal University of Applied Sciences, Kachia, is the fact that the bill was articulated based on the outcome of uncommon desire by the people and was eloquently pre-

sented by our Distinguished Senator Sunday Marshall Katung.

"We were spurred on by the realization that the President, His Excellency Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR, was more than ever before committed to the development of Nigeria. We will continue to reiterate firmly our resolve to always support the programmes of government to ensure progressive development of our country.

Indigenous People Of Middle Belt Of Nigeria Appoints New Officials

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

Middle Belt Forum (MBF), the umbrella body of the Indigenous people of Central Nigeria has announced some appointment into its National Working Committee (NWC).

The appointment of the new MWC officials was con-

tained in statement dated 15th January 2025, and signed by forum's Director of Admin, Lanre Obafemi and made available to newsmen in Kaduna.

President of the Forum, Dr. Pogu Bitrus, who announced the new appointment at a meeting of the NWC said Barrister Aba Ejembi from Benue State has been promoted to National

Secretary General, while Mr. Luka Binniyat, the Forum's chairman Kaduna State Chapter also announced as the National Public Relations Officer (PRO).

"The Middle Belt Forum (MBF), which is the overarching umbrella body of the people of the Middle Belt in central Nigeria, on Tuesday January 14, 2025, announced a minor tinker-

ing with its National Working Committee (NWC).

"The President of the Forum, Dr. Pogu Bitrus, announced at a meeting of its NWC that Barrister Aba Ejembi from Benue State has been promoted to National Secretary General while Mr. Luka Binniyat, Chairman of the Forum's Kaduna State Chapter was also confirmed as the

National Public Relations Officer (PRO).

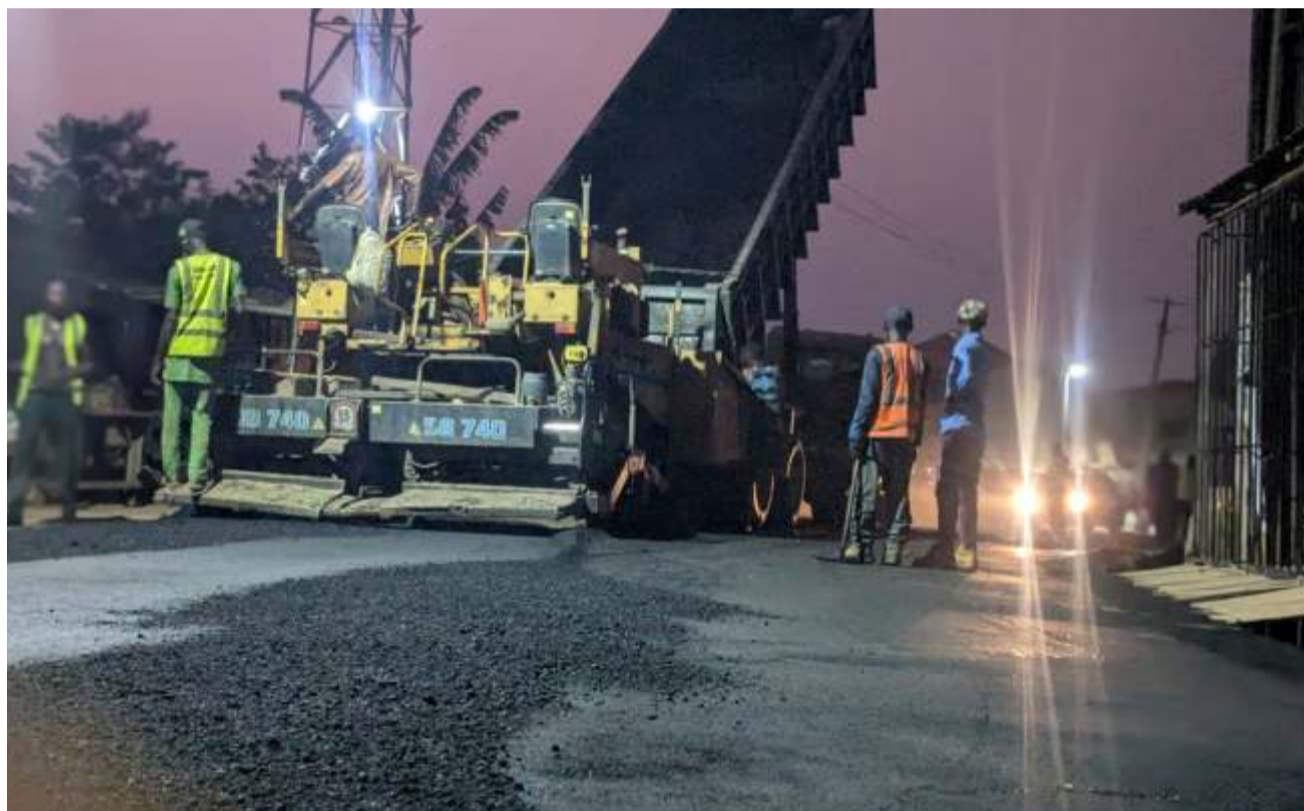
"Barrister Ejembi was the Deputy Secretary General of the MBF.

Binniyat was elected Chairman of the Kaduna Chapter of the MBF in July 2024.

"By this development, Binniyat, a veteran reporter and former National

Spokesman of the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union (SOKAPU) will henceforth be the national Spokesman of the Middle Belt Forum.

"Dr. Pogu calls on the Middle Belt family and the general public to take note of this changes and give the new officials all the cooperation they may need", it stated.



Oyo State Government has launched a major road rehabilitation project in Ibadan, aiming to enhance transportation infrastructure and mobility

Niger State Hosts Financial Management Training To Enhance health Sector efficiency

UNDE ADIGUN - MINNA.

Niger State Ministry of Primary Health Care, in collaboration with GAVI and UNICEF, have conducted a comprehensive training program focused on Financial Management and Segregation of Duties.

It was a significant effort to strengthen the health sector's financial management capabilities.

The training brought together four participants from each Local Government Area (LGA), including a Director, LIO, Health Educator, and Accountant.

It was conducted under the expert guidance of facilitators Adamu Abubakar Haruna, Maimuna Tsado, and HACT Consultant Ikechuku Vitus, the sessions were designed to be interactive and engaging.

Participants reviewed various approaches and

strategies for implementing the Programme for the Verification of Compliance (PVC) under GAVI and its intervention programs.

The agenda included discussions on retirement practices of LGAs, visitation protocols, and the importance of segregation of duties in enhancing accountability and transparency within the financial systems.

At the conclusion of the training, participants were encouraged to work in syn-

ergy, emphasizing the importance of a cohesive approach to implementing the lessons learned regarding effective retirement planning and overall financial management strategies.

This training marks a pivotal step towards improving operational efficiency and ensuring the effective use of resources in Niger State's health sector.

Gunmen Abduct Five Persons in Kwara Community, Rescue Operations Begin

By Paul Onehi

Gunmen suspected to be kidnappers have reportedly abducted five persons at Odo-Eku community in Isin Local Government Council Area of Kwara State.

Already, members of the vigilante, local hunters and other security agencies have been deployed into the bush in the community to rescue the victims.

Checks revealed that the incident happened in the midnight of Tuesday when the people of the community were supposed to be sleeping.

It was learnt that the bandits were said to have invaded the community, shooting sporadically which led the victims to rise up from their sleep but later kidnapped by the bandits.

Sources close to the community said in Ilorin that the victims were said to have been taken into bush by the bandits.

Sources said that the inci-

dent has thrown the entire committee into confusion as they have been moving from one place to another so as to ensure the rescue of the victims.

However, one of the High Chiefs in the community, Odofin of Odo-Eku, Elder Ogundeji, who spoke on the incident, said that the gunmen stormed the homes of their victims overnight, abducting five people.

He said: "The victims are Hausa farmers who live in Odo-Eku. Among them are a woman, her daughter, another woman who visited them, and two men."

Ogundeji said that police officers had visited the scene, adding that: "We showed them where it happened, and they assured us they would investigate and work to rescue the victims."

Though, the state Police Command is yet to issue official statement on the incident, a senior police officer who sought anonymity at the Divisional Police Station at Isin LGA yesterday confirmed the incident.

Niger Made N600b From Agric, Others In 2024

By Paul Onehi

Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago has disclosed that Niger State realised N600 billion from agriculture and other related businesses through the public and private sectors in 2024.

The farmer governor disclosed this recently when he received members of the Developing-8 (D-8) group, an intergovernmental organisation, at the Government House in Minna.

According to a statement signed by the governor's spokesperson, Bologi Ibrahim, the D-8 group came to present a partnership proposal to Niger State.

Ibrahim quoted Bago as saying that the only way to sustain food security, provide employment to the youth, and reduce insecurity and other social vices is to key into new techniques in crop

production, irrigation farming, animal husbandry, and livestock management.

Bago, who also spoke about the enormous advantage of the state's land mass with great potential for agriculture and livestock, said mechanised farming should be embraced by all in order to achieve the target of feeding the nation.

He also disclosed to members of the group that the state government, in collaboration with schools through the introduction of school farms, has enabled the inclusion of crop production into school syllabuses to enhance students' skill development for the future.

"Through collaboration with the D-8 group, Niger State can benefit a lot, especially in terms of renewable energy, which he described as essential for any agricultural development," Bago said.

Eight Persons Lost Their Lives In A Ghastly Auto Crash In Niger State

TUNDE ADIGUN - MINNA.

An auto crash have sent no fewer than 8 persons to their on timely grave in a ghastly motor accident that happened around Batati/Lanle to Kutigi in Lavun local government area of Niger state.

The sad incident it was gathered occurred recently when a Toyota Corolla vehicle was trying to overtake then ran into an on coming tanker trailer going towards

Lagos for loading.

Our sources revealed that all the 8 victims are farmers who migrated from Niger Zone B due to insecurity to Dasu village in Lavun local government area of the state for their farming activities.

He added that they were all men of different age brackets while he expressed shock over the way the deceased were crushed by the trailer leading to their death.

Confirming the report, An Assistant Commander of

Road Transport Employee Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) Kutigi branch, Mohammed Sanusi said that it was a head on collision between the two vehicles leading to the casualties.

"I was shocked when I saw the way the bodies looked in the crushed vehicle, tears run down from my eyes uncontrollably, may God Almighty forgive them their shortcomings."

He stated that it was the efforts of the Road Safety Commission personnel, Red

Cross and the Road Transport Employee Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) who assisted to evacuate and retrieved the bodies that have all been buried in Dasu village on Tuesday.

No official statement have been issued by the state government, Niger state command of Nigerian Police Force and state commander of FRSC at the time of filing the report.

Sometimes People Don't Take Me Serious Because I Am A Comedienne - Helen Paul

Helen Paul is a multi talented artists that have paid her dues in the entertainment industry. A comedienne with a distinct voice, an actress, musician, script writer, and a teacher, she sits well in all facets of entertainment. Helen spoke with SAM ORJI on a number of issues pertaining to her career and family. Enjoy the interview

We have seen little of you in the stand-up comedy shows these days, what's happening?

I have been doing some shows, sometimes I travel to do many things but you have to understand time and season. When it's the Christmas or November season sometimes, I make myself available for shows because I am around. So everything has their time and season. I have been doing some comedy shows because I am even producing my own

Are you no longer permanently based in Nigerian again?

I will say most entertainers are people that are not permanently based just in one place. The world is a global space, so when you're invited to different places you go. It's not necessary the audience know your house and home address and the family where you live, you just keep working. It's a global space.

You do more of soap operas than movies, why?

I am still doing movies; once I am given scripts, I do. Maybe we have not seen much of the work I have been shooting. I was in Nigeria, I think two months ago to shoot an indigenous movie in Ibadan. So, I am working and I am still active and when people call you, give you the script; you read and if it's something that you like, you take it.

Because you're a comedienne, most of the roles they give you are comic roles. They seem to have stereotyped you.

There's nothing like stereotyped. I think when they are casting they will look at the whole script and say this person can play this role. I have done Jacobs Mansion, where I was not a comedienne but a bride to the rich man finally. I have done other movies where I played the role of a child. As an actor they will look at you and cast you where they know you fit in very well.

Unless if you are doing your own movies, you can now use it to tell people that you can do this or that. It's not stereotyped but they believe that such a role is what you can do very well. They're aware that you are not just a comedienne; you have other aspects of your life. We all see Whoopi Goldberg; they will not give her a girlfriend role because they know she is very firm, we know the movie where she acted as an instructor, where she is firm and strong will. It's not only just in our country, I think when they're doing their casting they just feel because when you see some people, you see they are all around, they act like king's even in real life. They know because I have done many things I didn't do anything comic.

Maybe because of public perception, the way the viewers have already placed you in their mind as a comic actor

We are there to satisfy the audience and if they feel like, why are they using Helen Paul for serious roles that means I have been able to do well. Remember acting is about keeping your viewers in suspense and disbelief and that suspense shows that you are still doing a



great job. They never see you as being serious. You are not serious but you are getting married, you are not serious but you are building houses, your children are growing and you are building houses. Then it's good to be serious,

I am always enjoying it because if you are the child and they are older than you, you will gain a lot. They buy things for you and I am enjoying it and I still want to believe that I am still a young girl, they're not embarrassing me. They are just being the senior and they should enjoy that space of a senior.

let's enjoy the suspense and the disbelief.

What happened to your music career?

For me, I just believe that you have lots of gift in you and everything must find expression not necessarily monitoring everything. I just like to record my songs and let people listen to it and get inspired. For me, singing is more of a hobby not a career. I am just expressing myself and I am that kind of person that believes that every gift of God in a man should find expression.

You are not pursuing it further

I am still singing, every of my songs are online. If you check Tiktok and YouTube because I am a full thespian and as a full thespian; you are a singer, dancer and writer. I have my books on Amazon. All my drama books are on Amazon published. It's not that one is not moving. I write, sing, produce and do many other things and that's why you will not see me posting the school where I am teaching because that's another part of me.

Has that your child-like distinct voice ever caused embarrassment for you or somebody

misrepresented you to be a child?

Luckily for me that was in the past, but of course, now the audience is aware that I am acting. They understand this and sometimes you still don't want to leave that space, she is acting even with all she has achieved; I am not sure she is 36. I like that, I don't see it as a embarrassment but that I am doing a good job; for me to put the people on suspense that means I am doing well and everyone believes they're older than Helen Paul. I am always enjoying it because if you are the child and they are older than you, you will gain a lot. They buy things for you and I am enjoying it and I still want to believe that I am still a young girl, they're not embarrassing me. They are just being the senior and they should enjoy that space of a senior.

Has that child-like voice affected the kind of jobs you get maybe from corporate organization?

For us to say corporate organization that means they're sound and educated and they're not working based on what they see on social media. They must

Continued on P.23

Legal Battle Unfolds: Oba Otudeko, First Bank, And General Hydrocarbons In High-Stakes Dispute

By Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

A high-stakes legal battle has emerged, drawing national attention as Oba Otudeko, Chairman of the Honeywell Group, First Bank of Nigeria (FBN), and General Hydrocarbons Limited (GHL) face off over allegations of fraud, contractual breaches, and financial mismanagement. At the heart of the dispute are claims involving billions of naira, raising questions about governance, transparency, and accountability in Nigeria's financial and business sectors.

The Allegations

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has filed multiple charges against Oba Otudeko and several other defendants, alleging that they fraudulently obtained N12.3 billion from First Bank between 2013 and 2014. The charges include securing N6.2 billion in credit facilities under false pretenses and allegations of money laundering.

One charge reads: "That you, CHIEF OBA OTUDEKO, STEPHEN OLABISI ONASANYA, SOJI AKINTAYO, AND ANCHORAGE LEISURE LIMITED, on or about the 26th day of November 2013 in Lagos, within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court, conspired amongst yourselves to use the total sum of N6,150,000,000 (Six Billion, One Hundred and Fifty Million Naira Only), which you reasonably ought to have known forms part of proceeds of your unlawful activities.

Another charge alleges: "That you, CHIEF OBA OTUDEKO, STEPHEN OLABISI ONASANYA, SOJI AKINTAYO, AND ANCHORAGE LEISURE LIMITED, on or about the 11th day of December 2013 in Lagos, within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court, procured Honeywell Flour Mills Plc to retain the sum of N1,500,000,000 (One Billion, Five Hundred Million Naira Only), which sum you reasonably ought to have known forms part of proceeds of your unlawful activities, to wit: Obtaining by False Pretense. You thereby committed an offence contrary to Section 18(c) and 15(2)(d) of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2011 (as amended), punishable under Section 15(3) of the same Act."

Additionally, the EFCC claims that Otudeko had a personal interest in a N6.15 billion loan facility sought by V-Tech Dynamics Links Limited while serving as Chairman of First Bank, which he allegedly did not disclose to the bank, violating the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act 2004.

Further accusations suggest that Otudeko failed to disclose a personal interest in a N6.15 billion loan facility sought by V-Tech Dynamics Links Limited while serving as Chairman of First Bank, allegedly violating the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act.



First Bank's Position

First Bank has aggressively defended its actions, stating that it initiated legal proceedings to protect its interests and recover loans extended to GHL. In a statement, the bank accused GHL of breaching loan agreements by diverting crude oil sale proceeds earmarked for loan repayment.

"FirstBank has diligently performed its obligations under the robust loan agreements executed with General Hydrocarbons Limited. Unfortunately, GHL rejected demands for accountability and transparency, which were aimed at safeguarding stakeholder interests," the bank noted.

The bank claimed further violations occurred when GHL requested additional funding without meeting prior obligations. To address these issues, First Bank proposed appointing an independent operator for better oversight, a move met with resistance from GHL.

FirstBank further clarified, "With regards to the reported claims, Dr. Oba Otudeko would like to clarify that he has never served in an executive capacity within FBN Holdings and its banking subsidiary, First Bank of Nigeria Limited and as such has had no operational responsibility in the organisation".

Additionally, Dr. Otudeko has not been summoned for questioning by any government agencies and would willingly cooperate if required.

Otudeko's Defense

In response, Oba Otudeko denied the allegations, asserting that he has never held an executive role at FBN Holdings or First Bank and thus had no operational responsibilities. In a statement issued by Honeywell Group's General Counsel, Olasumbo Abolaji, Otudeko emphasized his contributions to Nigeria's business land-

scape, adding that he remains confident the truth will prevail.

"He has built directly from scratch and has worked with others to build many of Nigeria's most successful companies. These include FBN Holdings, where he served as Chairman from 1997 to 2021, supporting its transformation into a pan-African financial services holding company," the statement read.

Legal Proceedings and Testimonies

The Federal High Court, Lagos, has issued Mareva injunctions freezing accounts and assets linked to GHL and other defendants, including media mogul Nduka

Obaigbena. These injunctions aim to prevent the dissipation of assets while legal proceedings continue.

Representatives from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and First Bank of Nigeria (FBN), along with other witnesses, have been listed to testify against Oba Otudeko and former FBN Managing Director, Olabisi Onasanya, in the alleged N12.3 billion fraud case.

The prosecution intends to call the following witnesses to testify and present evidence: Investigators from the EFCC

Representatives of V-Tech Dynamics Links Limited, Representatives of Stallion Nigeria Limited, Representatives of First Bank,

Representatives of the Central Bank of Nigeria (Directorate of Banking Supervision) to provide evidence on the measures taken to uncover the alleged fraud.

Channels Television reports that the defendants are scheduled to be arraigned on Monday, January 20, before Justice Chukwuejoku Aneke of the Federal High Court, Lagos.

A Federal High Court has issued a series of orders, including Mareva injunctions, to freeze assets and accounts linked to General Hydrocarbons Limited, its affiliates, and prominent individuals, including media mogul Nduka Obaigbena. The court's decision follows allegations of unpaid loans totaling \$225.8 million, owed to a financial institution. The injunctions were granted to prevent the defendants from transferring or dissipating assets while a legal dispute over unpaid loan facilities is resolved.

As the case progresses, testimonies from key witnesses—including representatives of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), First Bank, and other financial institutions—will be crucial. The EFCC has also lined up investigators and company representatives to substantiate its

claims.

The Stakes and Implications

This case represents more than a dispute over unpaid loans; it is a test of Nigeria's legal and financial systems in handling allegations of corporate malpractice. The court's decision will have significant ramifications for the banking sector, business transparency, and the individuals involved.

Also, FirstBank alleged that GHL diverted proceeds from crude oil sales that were meant to serve as repayment for the loans. To address these breaches, the bank proposed appointing an independent operator to ensure better oversight of the financed assets. However, this suggestion was met with resistance. The bank further claimed that GHL escalated the situation by demanding additional funding without fulfilling its prior obligations.

In response to the allegations, Dr. Oba Otudeko has firmly refuted the claims regarding his role in FBN Holdings. A statement signed by Olasumbo Abolaji, General Counsel at Honeywell Group, emphasized Dr. Otudeko's contributions to Nigeria's business landscape. The statement reads, "He has built directly from scratch and has worked with others to build many of Nigeria's most successful companies. This includes FBN Holdings, where he served as a director (then Chairman) from 1997 to 2021 and was instrumental in supporting the transformation of the bank from an old generation bank to its current leadership role as a pan-African financial services holding company".

The court directed all major commercial banks and financial institutions in Nigeria to block the defendants' accounts and restrict access to funds or assets up to the claim amount, pending further legal proceedings. The injunctions restrain banks like GTBank, Access Bank, Zenith Bank, First Bank, and fintech platforms such as Flutterwave, Paystack, and Piggyvest from releasing funds or handling assets linked to the defendants.

The legal dispute involving Oba Otudeko, FBN, and GHL is a complex and multifaceted case that has significant implications for all parties involved. Dr. Otudeko has expressed confidence that the truth will prevail and looks forward to addressing these claims in the appropriate forum. As the case progresses, testimonies from CBN and First Bank staff, along with the court's decisions, will play a crucial role in determining the outcome of this high-profile legal battle.

As Justice Chukwuejoku Aneke prepares to hear the case on January 20, the nation watches closely. Will this legal battle clarify the lines of accountability in corporate Nigeria, or will it raise further questions about governance and oversight in the country's financial institutions? Only time will tell.

Leadership In Nigeria: An Evaluation Of The Past 25 Years (1999-2024)

By Paul Onehi

When we think of Nigeria, one of the first things that may come to mind is its rich cultural heritage and diverse population. However, in recent years, this African country has also made headlines for its political landscape and leadership.

With a history of military rule and political instability, Nigeria has faced its fair share of challenges when it comes to effective leadership. But as we approach the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, it is important to evaluate the progress and development of leadership in the country over the past 25 years.

From 1999 to 2024, Nigeria has experienced various changes in political leadership, with different presidents at the helm of affairs. These leaders, Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua,

Goodluck Jonathan, Muhammadu Buhari, and the current president have had their own unique styles and approaches to governance. With each leader leaving their mark on the nation, it is imperative to analyze the successes and failures of their leadership and how it has shaped Nigeria today.

In the past 25 years, Nigeria has seen a significant transition from military rule to a democratic system of government, which has allowed for more inclusive and participatory leadership. The country has also experienced significant economic growth, becoming one of the top emerging economies in Africa. This can be attributed to the efforts of the past four leaders to implement policies that promote economic stability and attract foreign investment. Additionally, there have been efforts to combat corruption, a major issue that has plagued Nigeria for decades.

However, despite these achievements, there are also areas where leadership in Nigeria has fallen short. One of the biggest issues is the lack of proper infrastructure and basic amenities for the citizens. Despite being one of the largest oil-producing countries in the world, many Nigerians still lack access to clean water, electricity, high unemployment rates and adequate healthcare.

This can be attributed to a lack of proper planning and implementation of development projects by the government.

Another area of concern is the rise in insecurity and political unrest in the country. Nigeria has faced challenges such as Boko Haram insurgency in the north, militant attacks in the Niger Delta, and farmer-herder clashes in the middle belt. These issues have not only resulted in loss of lives and displacement of citizens but have also

created a negative perception of the country in the international community.

The tone of leadership in Nigeria over the past 25 years has been a mixture of hope, progress, and disappointment. While there have been notable achievements and

efforts to move the country forward, there is still much room for improvement. As we continue to look towards the future, it is crucial for Nigerian leaders to address the shortcomings of the past and strive for inclusive and effective governance.

In conclusion, Nigeria has come a long way in terms of leadership since its transition to democracy in 1999. The country has experienced both successes and failures, but the past 25 years have been a learning experience and an opportunity for growth. As we look towards the next 25 years and beyond, it is important for Nigerian leaders to learn from past mistakes and focus on creating a better future for the nation. With a united effort and a commitment to serving the people, Nigeria can continue on the path to progress and become a leader in the global community.

The country has experienced both successes and failures, but the past 25 years have been a learning experience and an opportunity for growth.

Democracy In Peril: The Urgent Need For Electoral Reform

By Godwin Anyebe

In every thriving democracy, elections are the cornerstone of legitimacy and governance. They offer the people an opportunity to shape their collective future and hold leaders accountable.

However, when the integrity of this process is compromised, democracy itself stands on shaky ground. In Nigeria, the promise of free and fair elections—a crucial pillar of democratic governance—remains under threat due to systemic flaws, corruption, and inadequate reforms.

Recent electoral cycles have been marred by irregularities, from ballot box snatching and voter intimidation to allegations of vote-buying and compromised electoral officials. These issues not only cast doubt on the outcomes of elections but also erode public trust in the

entire democratic process.

For a democracy to thrive, citizens must believe that their votes count and that elections reflect the will of the majority. Without this trust, voter apathy increases, disenfranchising large segments of the population.

The introduction of technology, such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and electronic transmission of results, was hailed as a game-changer for Nigeria's electoral process. While these innovations have shown promise, their implementation has been inconsistent, leaving room for manipulation and inefficiencies.

For instance, delays in transmitting results during the 2023 general elections raised concerns about the credibility of the process. Effective use of technology demands robust infrastructure, proper training of officials, and a

commitment to transparency.

At the heart of Nigeria's electoral challenges lies the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). While INEC has

Strengthening the independence and capacity of electoral institutions is non-negotiable. Adequate funding, strict penalties for misconduct, and a culture of accountability are essential for INEC to function as a truly impartial body.

made strides in improving the electoral process, it is not immune to political interference and systemic inefficiencies.

Strengthening the independence and capacity of electoral institutions is non-negotiable. Adequate funding, strict penalties for misconduct, and a culture of accountability are essential for INEC to function as a truly impartial body.

Electoral violence remains a significant threat to Nigeria's democracy. From pre-election skirmishes to post-election unrest, violence undermines the electoral process and discourages participation. Addressing this issue requires a multi-pronged approach, including deploying adequate security during elections, prosecuting perpetrators of violence, and fostering a culture of nonviolence through civic education.

Electoral reform cannot succeed without active citizen engagement. Civil society organizations, advocacy groups, and the media play a critical role in holding leaders accountable and educating voters about their rights. The electorate must demand transparency and fairness, while also participating actively in discussions about reform.

Democracy is not self-sustaining; it requires constant nurturing and adaptation. For Nigeria to realize the full potential of its democratic aspirations, the flaws in its electoral system must be addressed urgently and comprehensively. Electoral reform is not just a political necessity—it is a moral imperative for the future of the nation. Only by safeguarding the sanctity of the ballot can Nigeria build a democracy that truly serves its people.

The Rise of Digital Currencies and Global Economy

By Paul Onehi

The 21st century witnessed rapid advancement in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), with a strong knock effect on the financial system leading to innovative financial services and opening ways for state-of-the-art payment system, this have gained significant attention in recent years due to their potential impact on the global economy.

This advancement led to the emergence of digital currencies, programmable money which comprise any structure of payment that is available purely in electronic form without tangible apparatuses like coins, cheques, or notes.

The rise of digital currencies has the potential to disrupt traditional financial systems and reshape the global economy in several ways. One of the key advan-

tages of digital currencies is their ability to facilitate fast and low-cost cross-border transactions. This can help reduce the reliance on expensive and slow international payment systems, such as SWIFT,

As the digital currency landscape continues to evolve, policymakers, regulators, and industry stakeholders must work together to ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to integrating digital currencies into the global economy.

and make it easier for individuals and businesses to conduct transactions across borders.

Furthermore, digital currencies have the potential to increase financial inclusion by providing access to banking services for the unbanked and underbanked populations. By using digital wallets and mobile phones, individuals in developing countries can access financial services and participate in the global economy without the need for a traditional bank account.

However, the widespread adoption of digital currencies also poses challenges and risks to the global economy. One of the main concerns is the potential for digital currencies to be used for illicit activities, such as money laundering and terrorist financing, due to their pseudonymous nature and lack of regulation. Governments and regulatory bodies are grappling with

how to regulate digital currencies to prevent these risks while still fostering innovation and growth in the sector.

The technology also has the following characteristic, all transaction, once executed no room for corrections after confirmation, a transaction cannot be reversed, there is no safety net. Neither transactions nor accounts are connected to reveal world identities, everything is digitalized with access by means of the internet.

Since they happen in a global network of computers, they are completely indifferent of your physical location. There are no third parties involved in the verification or validation, meaning that authentication is eliminated.

In addition, the volatility of digital currencies, such as Bitcoin, can pose risks to investors and financial stability. The value of digital currencies can fluctuate significantly

in a short period, leading to potential losses for investors and instability in financial markets. Central banks and financial regulators are exploring ways to mitigate these risks, such as developing central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) that are backed by fiat currencies and have stable value.

Overall, digital currencies have the potential to revolutionize the global economy by increasing financial inclusion, reducing transaction costs, and fostering innovation. However, careful regulation and oversight are needed to address the risks and challenges associated with their widespread adoption. As the digital currency landscape continues to evolve, policymakers, regulators, and industry stakeholders must work together to ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to integrating digital currencies into the global economy.



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Excitement As The Intrigues In Cheta M Season 2, Gets Hotter

The epic journey of Cheta M continues with its highly anticipated second season, now streaming exclusively on Showmax. New episodes are released weekly on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Picking up at Adanna and Nwoye's wedding, the joyous occasion quickly spirals into chaos with a series of shocking events. From the arrival of emissaries from Ajaani, Mgberi's rival kingdom, to the ominous death of Chidalu, tensions are at an all-time high.

Amid the turmoil, Urenna, a warrior secretly in love with Nnanna, boldly claims to be his betrothed during an introduction with

the village head. Is this a strategic move to calm suspicions, or is it driven by jealousy over the lingering glances between Nnanna and Adanna?

Meanwhile, Mmadiya, the manipulative first wife of the village head, shows her true colours. Intent on protecting her son from Chidalu's "threat" and ensuring his engagement to Princess Ahunna of Ajaani, she's willing to risk everything - even her unborn grandchild and the unity of Mgberi.

The dark priest Ojigijaga also faces his reckoning as he encounters Nnanna, the man who exposed his evil deeds in Season 1. Using the mystical Tree of Memories,

Ojigijaga erased the villagers' memories of Nnanna, but with Nnanna's return, the priest's sinister secrets threaten to unravel.

This epic drama boasts a remarkable ensemble of rising stars and Nollywood legends. Oluchi Amajuoyi and Kingsley Nwachukwu shine as Adanna and Nnanna, while Ruby Okezie plays Mmesomma. Kalu Ikeagwu takes on the role of Jidefor, and Nonso Odogwu is Ezeugo.

Stream now exclusively on Showmax, with three new episodes released weekly on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.



How I Received A Dirty Slap – Lady Reprimanded By Ngozi Ezeonu Cries Out

One of the ladies called out by veteran actress Ngozi Ezeonu, for attending an audition braless has cried out about how she received a dirty slap from her father after the incident. She noted that her father was angered by the torrents of negative comments on the social media about her action.

The lady who was crying

as she narrated her experience said since the incident happened, some of the people that have been on her case on the social media went as far as insinuating that she was also pantless. Noting that it's unfair for people to judge and condemn her outrightly without hearing her own side of the story.

The lady explained that she had gone to the restaur-

ant with her friend on a casual wear to eat, only for them to run into the audition and they decided to utilise the opportunity to audition for a role. Adding that on a normal day, she would not have attended any audition in such outfit.

Recall that a video went online where popular Nollywood actress, Ngozi Ezeonu, was seen reprim-

anding two ladies who attended an audition with a top that bare their back indicating that they were not wearing brazier.

She said: "Who are you trying to impress? That's why people see us as unserious. I'm a serious-minded actor; you can't catch me dressed like this, even when I was your age," she emphasized.

Whizkid Tops Africa's Highest Earner On Sportify

Music statistics monitoring platform Chart Masters has crowned Nigerian singer, Ayodeji Balogun, popularly known as Wizkid, as Africa's biggest earner on Spotify.

Music statistics monitoring platform, recently revealed the world's artists' monthly earnings on Spotify and Wizkid emerged as Africa's biggest earner with \$1 million.

The list of Africa's top ten earners is dominated by Nigerians, except for South Africa's Tyla.

Full list:

1. Wizkid – \$1 million

- 2. Burna Boy – \$782,148
- 3. Tems – \$660,210
- 4. Tyla – \$607,804
- 5. Davido – \$458,615
- 6. Asake – \$451,553
- 7. Omah Lay – \$421,123
- 8. Ayra Starr – \$400,972
- 9. Rema – \$367,973

Canadian rapper Drake and American singer, Taylor Swift are the world's biggest earners on Spotify with \$7,717,904 and \$7,713,106, respectively.



Season 3 of The Real Housewives of Lagos breaks first-day streaming record on Showmax

Episode 1 of The Real Housewives of Lagos (RHOLagos) Season 3 has set a new Showmax

record for the most first-day views in Nigeria and Ghana, breaking its own record set in Season 2.

The Africa Magic Original premiered as a fast-follow release on Monday, 13 January on Showmax. The

reality series was the third most streamed title on Showmax across Africa on its first day of release. Social media conversations on the reality TV show also saw the hashtag #RHOLagos peak at number one on the X trends list in Nigeria.

"This reaffirms our audience's love for local content and authentic representation!", said Dr Busola Tejumola, Executive Head, Content and West Africa Channels at MultiChoice Nigeria.

Tejumola added: "The Real Housewives of Lagos continues to drive meaning-

ful engagement in Nigeria and across Africa due to its relatable storytelling, rich cultural display and engaging cast. We are absolutely thrilled to present this third season and look forward to an exciting run."

This season promises to be the most extravagant yet, showcasing Lagos' vibrant culture and dazzling lifestyle. Fan favourites Laura Ikeji Kanu, Mariam Timmer, and Carolyn Hutchings are back with their dynamic personalities and dramatic twists /, alongside three bold new additions: beauty queen and entrepreneur Dabota Law-

son, beauty mogul and influencer Adeola "Diadem" Adeyemi, and media personality Sophia Momodu.

The Real Housewives franchise is distributed internationally by NBC Universal Formats, which is part of Universal International Studios, a division of Universal Studio Group. All the episodes of The Real Housewives of Lagos S1-2 are available to binge on Showmax, including the dramatic reunions, while the new episodes of Season 3 land every Monday as a fast-follow from Africa Magic.





'Sometimes People Don't Take Me Serious Because I Am A Comedienne'

have investigated and research on you. I have not had such experience with any corporate organization and I have been doing great work for them. I do a lot of corporate events, conferences, award ceremonies, staff appreciation services and do many corporate events. I have not had such issues with them.

Do you think the movie industry has done well to attract the likes of Amazon, Netflix and others to invest in Nigeria motion picture industry?

What I like about them is that they are not sentimental, they are business people and for them to tap into Nollywood that means there's more we have that's doing well. Yes, I will say we're improving for them to keep coming to us. We are improving in our storytelling techniques from the camera angle, editing, directing style, presentation by actors and I think the movie industry is doing well, showcasing the country and improving in every aspect. We will keep improving; I am not saying that we are now perfect.

You travelled abroad and seen how movies are produced. Compare it with what is happening here, where are we getting it wrong?

For me I have not seen any shortcomings but I think that we are now collaborating more between Nigerian and many other countries. The world is a global space, so everyone is seeing what each other is doing and they know where each other's weaknesses are and they can pick it up and adjust. I don't see weaknesses; I see more of collaboration which I see as the main business. For them to tap into the movie and entertainment industry in Nigeria that means the country is doing well in terms of entertainment.

You are among the old brigade of female comedians but it seems you don't have young female comedians who want to take over from you guys. What's

happening?

I don't feel that someone will just come and take over like that. It's also the same with you as a writer and I have known you for years as a writer. Can we ask, why are the young writers not taking over from you? There's nothing like taking over because everyone is growing and don't forget that now the young and the old are now collaborating. There are young people coming up, doing great works, it's just to see how we celebrate them more. There are many people; we have lots of other ladies.

They might not use the same style or technique. They might not just be stand-up comedy, there are still other means they crack jokes and they are doing very well and we add different elements to these things. We are using the same elements but speaking in different ways. I will not agree that we have old people, how old I am that you will say I am old. I am not old. We started long time ago but I am still very young and the other ladies are still doing well.

The coming of skits seems to have reduced the impact of stand-up comedy. Do you agree?

I don't agree with you because stand-up comedy is still very viable and it's still a sort after event. Those ones are doing the motion picture part which we can have on the mobile phones, but the stand-up comedy is more like a stage performance. You can't say one has killed the other because they are not in the same level. You cannot watch live stand-up comedy from the comfort of your room. You go to the theatre to see the show, except if they are streaming it live which is what a lot of them are doing now.

We have comedians doing their shows and they are streaming it live through the social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and some even go through TV stations where they will be streaming live and

you watch. They're different but the main goal is to make people laugh, entertain, educate and inform.

An older comedian said the young ones are just picking and refining their jokes. Most of them just climb the stage to insult people in the name of jokes. Have you observed that too?

I think that's his own personal opinion and the shows he has attended. I carefully select where I go and the people I relate with, we don't have that issue. Maybe that's what he encountered the place he has been to. I have not gone to that kind of show and I don't understand what he means by picking their jokes because you have the right to call the person and talk to them or maybe look for a way to sort the issue out.

For me, I just know that people are observing the society and whatever they observe they re-enact on stage using storytelling techniques and the skit to tell it and using their none verbal communication to communicate. I

They should help the country to be better. Invest more in education we are just reenacting what's happening in the society. From education, Agriculture, Health care facilities so that we can project good face of our country. The government should help us, they should make things easy, the safety of the society is paramount.

have not experienced that neither can I generalize and say oh the younger ones but I can say that you have right to your opinion. Maybe that's what he has experienced

You are among the old breed comedian's, how are you realigning with the current style.

I think the same thing is applicable to you the journalist, how are you realigning to the new order. Everything is still the same it's just the same way we are both relating sir.

Take us back to some of your stage performances

I have done a lot shows luckily we are in an era where nothing is hidden because everything is all online. If you Google Helen Paul they are there.

How are you juggling your role as a mother, wife, your teaching job and entertainment career?

To the glory of God, it's about having the right people around me and this has really helped me and family has been really helpful. The school; I don't have to go all the time because most times I do my teaching online. The school is more of a online school than physical. For the entertainment, it's not Monday to Saturday that you are working back to back. There are times we have nothing to do and there are times you have things to do back to back and you do it and you make a time table. It's more about understanding your time because there's no time to waste or I have to go for this or that, if it's not necessary, it's not necessary.

Having the right people can really be helpful. Writing my books and after writing, I dropped it for a good editor and he brings it back and it's coming back beautiful, so it's more of a collaboration. When we work together, everybody looks like a genius.

Sometimes you have someone organize a show and you are a performer; you go there and perform, by the time its coming out everything is beautiful, you as an actor, producer, the stage manager, the sound engineers, the DJ and usher etc. everything is collaboration. That's what I think that's has been really helpful, which is having the right people and understanding what to do with your time. Understanding how you make things work.

You high and low point as an entertainer

I am yet to tap into the high point of my career. I am still up and coming, I am still learning. For the low point is that things are really expensive now in the country, there's economic meltdown everywhere in the world.

Do people see you as comedian in everything?

I have experience such but I don't feel bad about it. All you need to do is to use that comic style to communicate your message. You just have to change your style of communication. What works for you is what you will do.

Where do you think government need to make in put in the entertainment industry to help it grow more?

They should help the country to be better. Invest more in education we are just reenacting what's happening in the society. From education, Agriculture, Health care facilities so that we can project good face of our country. The government should help us, they should make things easy, the safety of the society is paramount.

Tell us about your professorship

I worked with a school and it was time for promotion and they did. It's a promotion not that I went to write exam.

Kenneth Omeruo Back Chelle To Make Impact With Super Eagles



Stories by Paul Onehi

Nigerian international and Kasimpasa defender Kenneth Omeruo has expressed optimism about the appointment of Eric Sekou Chelle as the new head coach of the Super Eagles.

Chelle, who was formally introduced recently at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium in Abuja, becomes the 37th coach to helm the national team.

According to Omeruo, Chelle's arrival presents a fresh opportunity for players, particularly those who have not been regular starters, to demonstrate their capabilities and stake a claim for a spot in the team.

In an interview with Brila FM, Omeruo hails Chelle's tactical organization and strategy. He referenced Mali's strong performances in the Africa Cup of Nations,

(AFCON) as evidence of Chelle's capabilities.

"We're at a critical juncture where every player must be at their best,' Omeruo stressed. 'For those of us not playing regularly, it's an opportunity to prove ourselves. We must demonstrate to the manager that we deserve a place in the team.'" He added.

Omeruo praised Chelle's tactical acumen, citing Mali's disciplined displays at AFCON as evidence of the coach's ability to implement a cohesive game plan.

"I think he has something to give to the team. With the level of talent in the Super Eagles, he wouldn't have any problem to make us play the way he wants us to play." He noted.

Super Eagles defender Kenneth Omeruo also expressed his confidence in the team's potential, attributing the squad's renewed sense of self-assurance to the guidance of former interim coach Austin Eguavoen.

Kudos to Eguavoen for those games (AFCON qualifiers), "When he took over, our confidence was low, but he helped us get it back. Now, when we are at our best, no country can stand against the Super Eagles," he said."

Despite Omeruo's bullish outlook, the Super Eagles face an uphill battle in their AFCON qualifying campaign. With a mere three points from four matches, the team languishes in fifth place in their group.

The road ahead is daunting, with a daunting trip to Rwanda on March 17, followed by a must-win home clash against Zimbabwe in Uyo on March 24. As the Super Eagles gear up for these pivotal encounters, the players will be eager to make a positive impression on Chelle and generate momentum under his stewardship.

"I Can't Go Back' - Super Eagles Star Rules Out NPFL Return

Super Eagles defender Kenneth Omeruo has stated he has no plans to return to play in the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL). Instead, he expressed a strong interest in scouting and developing new talent within the league.

Omeruo disclosed his decision during a live X handle (formerly Twitter) Space session, co-hosted with fellow Nigerian internationals Wilfred Ndidi and Asisat Oshoala, along with several Nigerian journalists.

Explaining his reasons for not returning to the NPFL, Omeruo cited the absence of a top-flight club in his hometown of Abuja.

He said, "I don't see myself going back to the Nigerian league to play, but I'm passionate about scouting good players," Omeruo noted.

However, Omeruo's passion for Nige-

rian football remains strong, particularly when it comes to identifying and nurturing young talent.

He recalled a time when an NPFL streaming app allowed him to share game footage with his agent and others, highlighting the quality within the league.

"There was a time when the league had an app where we could stream games from everywhere and back then I shared it (the link) with my agent and other people because I knew the quality we had in that league," he explained.

The former Chelsea player ruled out playing in Nigeria's League but the presence of prominent Nigerian internationals like Ahmed Musa, Shehu Abdullahi and Brown Ideye in the NPFL could still inspire other stars to follow suit.



Elon Musk's Father Reveals Liverpool FC Interest



Elon Musk's father, Errol Musk, has revealed that his billionaire son is interested in buying Liverpool FC. The Premier League club is currently owned by Fenway Sports Group (FSG), which has not indicated any plans to sell. In an interview with Times Radio, Errol Musk said, "Oh yes, but that doesn't mean he's buying it."

He would like to, yes, obviously, anybody would want to. So would I."

However, an FSG spokesperson dismissed the rumors, stating, "There is no truth to these rumors." In September 2023, FSG sold a minority stake to U.S. investment firm Dynasty Equity, but has shown no intention of selling a majority stake. FSG president Mike Gordon said, "Our long-term commitment to Liverpool remains as strong as ever."

We have always said that if there is an investment partner that is right for Liverpool, then we would pursue the opportunity to help ensure the club's long-term financial resiliency and future growth."

Under FSG's ownership, Liverpool FC has regained its status as one of Europe's top clubs. The team won its first English league title in 30 years in 2020, one season after winning the Champions League.

Musk explores Liverpool FC interest

Errol Musk also mentioned personal connections to Liverpool, hinting at family ties and even a historical connection with The Beatles. If Elon Musk were to acquire Liverpool FC, it could lead to significant changes at the club. As one of the world's wealthiest individuals, Musk would have the financial resources to make major investments in the team.

However, any fundamental changes to the club's traditions or operations would likely face scrutiny from loyal supporters. Liverpool fans have a deep-seated loyalty and have been vocal about their expectations from the owners. The speculation surrounding Musk's potential ownership has generated a mix of excitement and apprehension among the fanbase.

While some fans are intrigued by the possibility of new investments and changes, others are concerned about the impact on the club's legacy and traditions. As the rumors continue to circulate, the football world will be watching closely to see how these developments unfold and what impact they may have on one of the most storied clubs in the sport's history.