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## The People's Mandate: Are Leaders Truly Delivering?

By Godwin Anyebe and Nathaniel Gumniba

In every democracy, leadership is built on the foundation of the people's mandate—an expression of trust, expectation, and the hope for a better future. Elections serve as the primary tool for citizens to choose their leaders, believing in their promises of

development, accountability, and progress. However, once in office, do these leaders truly deliver on their mandates, or do they fall short of expectations?

As Nigeria and many other democratic nations navigate the complexities of governance, the gap between campaign promises and real governance outcomes remains a crucial issue. Citizens

often find themselves questioning whether their votes translate into tangible development, improved welfare, and inclusive governance.

Leaders are elected to serve, but the reality of governance often presents challenges that test their commitment to the people. Economic instability, corruption, policy inconsistency,

and external pressures can hinder effective leadership. Yet, the measure of true leadership lies in the ability to overcome these challenges and still prioritize the people's needs.

In Nigeria, for instance, administrations at various levels have been scrutinized for their performance in key areas such as security, infrastructure, education, and

healthcare. While some leaders have introduced reforms and policies aimed at improving livelihoods, others have been criticized for neglecting the very people who entrusted them with power.

Broken Promises vs. Genuine Progress

The electoral process is often filled with grand promises—commitments to end

insecurity, boost economic growth, provide jobs, and improve social services. However, the post-election reality can be starkly different. Projects stall, policies lack implementation, and citizens are left wondering whether their voices truly matter.

Conversely, some leaders have made significant strides in governance, implement-

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Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwale (centre) flanked by global leaders and members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at the just concluded World Economic Forum (WEF) which held in Davos, Switzerland.



## Piracy Has Declined Significantly, Naval Boss

By Francis Sadhere, Warri

Piracy in Nigeria's maritime domain has significantly decreased, says Rear Admiral Chijioko

Onyemaobi, the outgoing Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) of the Nigerian Navy Logistics Command.

Onyemaobi made the statement during his farewell speech at a parade

held in his honor at the Command's headquarters in Oghara, Delta State, on Tuesday.

He attributed the reduction in piracy to the enhanced availability of naval ships, which have

allowed for more effective patrols in the country's waterways.

The increased operational presence has contributed to Nigeria's continued success in maintaining its delisted status

from the International Maritime Bureau's piracy watch list since 2022.

Reflecting on his tenure, Onyemaobi expressed pride in the collective achievements of the Logistics Command

under his leadership, citing an unprecedented increase in ship availability.

During his tenure, the Nigerian Navy's fleet

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**Farming Is Better:** Frustrated Fans Lash Out At Ex-Super Eagles Coach Finidi George As Title Hopes Fade

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**Economic Policies Under Fire:** Is the Nation Losing Its Way?

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Atiku Abubakar And El-Rufai Warn: Nigeria's Democracy At Risk

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**I Met My Ex-Husband At 14 Years, Married At 18, Divorced At 21- Blessing CEO**

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grew by over 30%, now comprising 27 ships, which has been crucial in supporting operations such as Operation Delta Sanity and Operation Calm Water.

"The growth in ship numbers and operational platforms has been key in discouraging maritime

crime and ensuring the safety of legitimate maritime operations," Onyemaobi said, noting that these improvements were made possible through the unwavering support of the Federal Government and Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla.

Onyemaobi, who will now assume the role of

Director of Marine Engineering at the Naval Headquarters in Abuja, also expressed confidence in his successor, Rear Admiral Oluwole Fadeyi, who formally took over as the new FOC.

Fadeyi pledged to build upon the successes of his predecessor, ensuring the continued safety and security of Nigeria's

maritime domain, which is vital for the nation's economy.

The ceremony, which included the traditional lowering and hoisting of the flag, was attended by a range of dignitaries, including officers from sister agencies, members of the Naval Officers' Wives Association, and the Ovie of Oghara King-

dom.

In his speech, Fadeyi outlined his vision for the Command, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding Nigeria's critical maritime assets, particularly crude oil, which plays a major role in the country's foreign earnings.

He said he is committed to ensuring that the

Logistics Command continues to be well-equipped and capable of fulfilling its operational mandate.

The farewell event marked the conclusion of Rear Admiral Onyemaobi's leadership and the beginning of a new chapter for the Logistics Command.

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ing transformative policies and infrastructural developments that have positively impacted communities. The challenge remains in differentiating genuine progress from political propaganda.

While leadership plays a crucial role in delivering the people's mandate, citizens also have a responsibility to demand accountability. A passive electorate enables poor governance, while an engaged and informed populace fosters transparency and development.

Through active civic participation, media scrutiny, and public discourse, citizens

can ensure that leaders remain answerable to their promises. Advocacy, legal actions, and constructive criticism must be encouraged to strengthen democracy and ensure that governance remains people-centered.

Speaking on this issue, Patricia Okpala, a leadership expert and governance analyst, believes that while some leaders attempt to fulfill their promises, the reality of governance often exposes systemic weaknesses that hinder meaningful progress.

"Leadership is not just about getting elected; it is about consistent delivery and responsiveness to the people's needs," Patricia

states. "In many cases, leaders come into office with ambitious promises, but the execution often falls short due to a lack of political will, weak institutions, corruption, and personal interests taking precedence over national development."

According to her the true test of leadership is not in rhetoric but in action. While some administrations have made commendable strides in infrastructure, economic reforms, and security, the overall impact on citizens remains uneven.

"Leadership must be measured not by the number of policies announced but by the tangible impact on the

lives of citizens. Are people feeling safer? Are jobs being created? Are social services improving? These are the real indicators of whether the people's mandate is being fulfilled," she argues. She also highlights the role of citizens in governance. He stresses that beyond elections, people must actively engage in the political process, hold leaders accountable, and demand transparency.

"Democracy does not end at the ballot box. A passive electorate allows inefficiency to thrive. Citizens must question policies, track progress, and use democratic mechanisms to ensure leaders remain answerable,"

she advises.

Ultimately, she asserts that while some leaders are striving to deliver, the gap between promise and performance remains significant. Bridging this gap requires strong political will, institutional reforms, and an electorate that refuses to be sidelined in governance.

"The people's mandate is sacred. Until leaders see it as a duty rather than an entitlement, and until citizens actively defend their rights, democracy will remain fragile," he concludes.

The question of whether leaders are truly delivering on the people's mandate remains a matter of percep-

tion and reality. While some leaders are making efforts to fulfill their promises, others continue to disappoint the electorate. The future of governance depends on both effective leadership and active civic engagement. Only when leaders prioritize the people's interests over political gains can democracy truly thrive.

As the next electoral cycles approach, voters must reflect on the past, assess present realities, and make informed choices that will shape a future where leadership truly delivers on the people's mandate.

# NBA Benin Condemns Prolong Detention Of A 10-Year Old Child By Edo Police Command

The Human Rights Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Benin Branch (Lion Bar), has expressed deep concern

over the continued detention of Master Bright Wana, a 10-year-old child by the Edo State Police Command since the 23rd of January 2025.

Despite interventions by the Chairman of NBA Benin and members of the Human Rights Committee, the minor remains in custody with-

out bail, and the police have yet to charge him before a competent court of law.

According to the body, this case underscores the

urgent need for adherence to constitutional safeguards protecting children's rights in law enforcement procedures. The detained child has

already given a statement to the police, denying involvement in the alleged offence, yet remains in detention with adult suspects on the directive of the Commissioner of Police.

"The Nigerian Constitution and other applicable laws provide clear guidelines on the rights of minors in conflict with the law, including the right to bail and timely arraignment. It is therefore imperative that the police, as enforcers of the law, uphold these legal standards.

"We call on the Edo State Police Command to either release the minor on bail or promptly charge him before a competent court in accordance with due process. We also urge all relevant stakeholders to intervene to ensure that justice is served in line with the rule of law.

"The NBA Benin Human Rights Committee will continue to monitor this matter closely and take all necessary legal steps to safeguard the child's rights while keeping the public informed of further developments", the group noted.

# Board Games: LASUBEB Partners National School Sports Federation

The Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board (LASUBEB) recently played host to the President of the National School Sport Federation, Mrs. Olabisi Joseph who was on a collaborative visit to the Board to discuss preparations for the upcoming National School Board Games particularly chess games scheduled for all schools in the Federation.

The visit aimed to strengthen cooperation between LASUBEB and the National School Sport Federation in promoting sports development at the grassroots level.

Mrs. Olabisi Joseph emphasised the importance of engaging young learners in sports, highlighting that such activities not only improve their physical and mental health but also foster values such as teamwork, discipline, and leadership.

"We are excited to collaborate with the Board in organising this year's National School Board

Games. The competition provides an excellent platform for pupils to showcase their talents, develop essential life skills, and represent their states in future sporting events," Mrs. Joseph stated during the meeting.

The Executive Chairman

of LASUBEB, Dr. Hakeem Shittu, had earlier warmly welcomed Mrs Joseph and her team, and expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership. He emphasised that sports play a crucial role in the holistic development of pupils, adding that the Board

has been committed to promoting sports alongside academics in public primary schools.

"We recognise that fostering a balance between intellectual and physical growth is essential for shaping well-rounded individu-

als. This collaboration with the National School Sport Federation will further strengthen our efforts in providing opportunities for our pupils to excel not just academically but also in sports," Dr. Shittu said.



L-R: Former Vice President, Prof Yemi Osinbanjo; former Vice President and Treasurer, World Bank and Director General, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Arunma Oteh and Emir of Kano, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi at Oteh's 60th birthday in London recently.





From left, Rear Adm Chijioke Onyemaobi, outgoing FOC handing over flag to incoming FOC, Rear Adm Oluwale Fadeyi recently.

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## Court Jails Man for N19.6m Fraud in Maiduguri

Justice Muhammad Maina of the Borno State High Court, Maiduguri on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, convicted and sentenced one Ahmed Saleh Mubi to one-year imprisonment for criminal misappropriation.

Mubi was arraigned on Thursday, September 19, 2024, by the Maiduguri Zonal Directorate of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission EFCC, on a one-count bordering on criminal misappropriation to the tune of N19,691,200.00 (Nineteen Million, Six Hundred and Ninety One Thousand, Two Hundred Naira).

The lone count reads: "That you Ahmed Saleh Mubi, between December, 2019 to March 2020 at Maiduguri, Borno State within the jurisdiction of this Honourable court offered to sell CFA 45,200.00 to one Abdulkarim Mohammed

Saleh, at the cost of N20,975,200.00 and you collected 14 Motorcycles valued at N324,000.00 from the said Abdulkarim Mohammed Saleh for you to sell and remit the proceed to him, did dishonestly misappropriated the sum of N19,691, 200.00 (Nineteen Million, Six Hundred and Ninety-One Thousand, Two Hundred Naira), only and thereby committed an offence contrary to Section 308 and punishable under Section 309 of the Penal Code Laws of Borno State Cap.102 Vol.3 of 1994 respectively."

The defendant pleaded not guilty to the charge when it was read to him, prompting the stage for trial. In the course of the trial, counsel to the prosecution, Mukhtar Ali Ahmed and Faruku Muhammad presented three witnesses and tendered several exhibits.

Delivering judgment, Jus-

tice Maina convicted and sentenced Mubi to one year imprisonment or an option of fine of N100,000 (One Hundred Thousand Naira only)

The convict's road to the Correctional Centre began when he collected the sum of

N19,691,200.00 from Abdulkarim Mohammed Saleh to exchange it for CFA 45,200.00 and collected 14 motorcycles valued at N324,000.00. He neither returned the money nor the motorcycles he collected from his victim.

## 2027: OYC Caution Gov Nwifuru Over Drag of APC party leadership With Sen Umahi

...You Should Focus on Delivering Dividends of Democracy to Ebonyians

By Chijioke Njoku, Abakaliki

In light of the impending 2027 gubernatorial election, the Ohanaeze Youth Council (OYC), the apex socio-cultural youth organization of Igbo youths worldwide, counsels Governor Francis Nwifuru, the Executive Governor of Ebonyi State, to maintain focus on the continuation of infrastructural development in Ebonyi State, as begun by

former Governor David Umahi, instead of entangling himself in party leadership altercations with his predecessor.

At Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Comrade Igboayaka O. Igboayaka, National President of Ohanaeze Youth Council (OYC), remarked on January 29th 2025, that the administration of Gov. Francis Nwifuru has witnessed a decline in the pace of infrastructural development.

Comrade Igboayaka warned that the ongoing leadership dispute between Gov Francis Nwifuru and former Gov. David Umahi is hindering the overall economic growth of Ebonyi and the Ndigbo community at large.

Regrettably, Gov Francis Nwifuru's eagerness to secure the APC Guber ticket in 2027 has prompted him to engage in unwarranted political blackmails against Sen. David Umahi the current Minister of Works before the

presidency in a bid to gain the trust of Mr. President. His Excellency Bola Ahmed Tinubu

Unfortunately, Ndigbo are governed by transactional politicians in South East, who deem their re-election more vital than delivering governance to the people.

Gov Francis Nwifuru has prioritized All Progressive Congress (APC) party leadership in Ebonyi over addressing the security challenge in his State.



# 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.



#### THE ABUJA POST NEWSPAPERS LTD

+234 704 4115 035, +234 902 0076 746

info@theabujapost.com.ng

www.theabujapost.com.ng





The Executive Director of Project DESOPACEC Chief Dr Ebenezer Okorodudu (4th left) the Executive Chairman Warri South Local Government Council Hon. Weyinmi Agbateniro (5th left) the HPM of Warri South Council Mrs Roli Omatsuli (3rd left) and others during a visit recently.

## Why Tinubu Will Have No Rival In Niger Delta In 2027 - Youth Ccoalition

By Nathaniel Gubniba

A coalition of over twenty youth groups in the Niger Delta has said that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu will have no rivalry in 2027 with Dr. Samuel Ogbuku as the Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

The youths, who met in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, observed that the president was already gaining massive support from the region because of the outstanding performance of the NDDC's current leadership.

Over 20 youth groups in the Niger Delta, including the Crusaders for Niger Delta Community Development (CNDCD) and the Niger Delta Youth Coalition for Peace and Progress (NDYCPP) attended the meeting. They assessed the achievements of the commission under the current board.

The youths said they had toured most of the projects undertaken and completed by the current board, including ongoing and inherited projects, and were impressed with the board's performance.

In a communique issued at the end of the meeting, the youths commended Dr. Ogbuku and his team for the people-oriented projects they had implemented across the region, saying they had made life more meaningful for the people.

Amb jointly signed the communique. Jesse Ese, the National Coordinator of Crusaders for Niger Delta Community Development (CNDCD); Pastor Jude Teidor Olayinka, the National President of Niger Delta Youth Coalition for Peace and Progress (NDYCPP) and Tonbra Kingdom Yeri, Chairman, Council Of Organisational Leaders (COOL) among others.

Reading the

communique, Pastor Jude Olayinka of NDYCPP thanked President Tinubu for the appointment of the current leadership of the board, describing it as a round peg in a round hole.

The youths said for the first time since the formation of the NDDC, the commission was meeting the developmental and human capacity needs of the people of the region.

The communique said: "When you talk of transiting from transaction to transformation, it means that policy framework, programmes should be laid in such a way that it makes greater room for continuity and effective and efficient service delivery on the part of the institution that is driving it.

"If the institution has no solid foundation on the ground, it will create room for inefficiency, ineffectiveness, laxity, and all other vices, but the current NDDC board has laid a very good foundation, first of all for management, and then the workers – in line with internationally accepted standards and policies; setting the pace for regional prosperity, educational improvement and advancement, economic growth, health, infrastructure, and every other thing, and these are things everybody can see.

"Look at the scholarships in the educational sector, foreign scholarship. The processes to gain the scholarship are very fair, credible, and transparent encouraging healthy competition for people to thrive.

"Look at his programmes with the first lady. So, even in the primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, they are trying to touch lives, and don't forget that it is only recently the federal government is approving their budget."

"So, with this budget being released, you can see

that a good foundation has already been laid and development will now come in, so this is an A team, and everybody from the MD to the least are all seasoned technocrats."

"Look at the robust engagements with all stakeholders..., and it is not just engagement like a tea party affair, all the ideas and resolutions brought in by stakeholders are what the NDDC is using to work, and so the people now have a say on how they want their areas to be developed – these are the things endearing people to this Tinubu's government.

"Don't forget, people were thinking the NDDC would be run based on political party affiliation – where it is just a party thing and only members of the APC will benefit, but Ogbuku is carrying everybody along irrespective of their political parties.

"Look at their relationship with the state governors, even those who are not members of the APC, it is very robust, and everyone can see the healthy engagement that they have. You can see the humility of the current leaders of the commission.

"Also, look at the stakeholders, the ethnic nationalities – the Ogbuku-led NDDC is touching every facet of the society, none is left behind. Even the youths, none is left behind – all shades of the youth bodies are being carried along."

The communique added: "Now, look at it, the youth internship scheme is meant to train 10,000 youths, but you see a situation where over 3 million people are applying – meaning about 2,990,000 people will not be selected, and the process is very credible, so it's going to take time, and those that are not selected will be agitated, you know, but they should give the board more time.

"The bottom line is that

they are focused, and they have the ambition and political will to do it. And so far, everyone can see that the team has a very tall vision to translate the Renewed Hope Agenda of the president to every nook and cranny of the Niger Delta.

"This has caused massive regional love and support for the Tinubu-led government, because, the government they see is the one close to them which is the NDDC Board representing the Federal Government at the communities with palpable impact, and that is the way the government operates.

"The superb performance of the NDDC is towards giving democratic dividends to the good people of Niger Delta, and that is causing Niger Delta Youths, Elders, Women, and politicians (across party divide) to support the federal government.

"So, as long as the NDDC and the Niger Delta people are concerned, Tinubu is working very effectively, it means Tinubu is working very well in that sector, and for us in the Niger Delta, the only sector that is working is the NDDC.

"So, if you ask the average Niger Delta stakeholders and the common man who are benefiting from the programmes and projects of the NDDC, they will tell you President Tinubu is on the verge of making history in the Niger Delta and that is true."

"Because as the NDDC is engaging the people, it is Tinubu's government that is engaging the people, and they are engaging with their agenda, and that is what governance is all about, policies that have a direct bearing on the people. Things that the people see feel, and enjoy, and with that, they know that these people are working.

## Court Grants EFCC's Move to Amend Charges Against Agunloye Over The \$6b Fraud Allegations

Justice Jude Onwuegbuzie of the Federal High Court, FCT sitting in Apo, Abuja on Thursday, January 23, 2025 granted the prayers of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC to amend charges brought against a former Minister of Power, Olu Agunloye and make him take his plea.

Agunloye is standing trial by the EFCC on seven-count charges, bordering on official corruption and fraudulent award of Mambilla Power Project contract to the tune of \$6 billion (Six Billion United States Dollars).

Earlier on July 1 2024, Prosecution Counsel, Abba Mohammed, SAN, drew the attention of the court to the amended charge, urging the court to accept same and cause the defendant to take his plea, relying on the provision of Section 216 and 217 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015.

However, defense counsel, Adeola Adedipe, SAN objected to the plea arguing that the leave of the court must be formally sought and obtained before the EFCC can amend its charge.

Responding, the court

directed parties to furnish the court with authorities in support of the argument canvassed to which the EFCC made reference to the Court of Appeal's decision in *Bovoa v FRN & Anor* (2017)

During Thursday's ruling, the judge held that amendment was not intended to overreach the defendant and cause injustice to him and that a court may permit an alteration or amendment to a charge or framing of a new charge at any time before judgment is pronounced.

"In the court's final decision, the arguments of the learned counsel to the defendant are hereby discounted and therefore hold that the application is liable to succeed accordingly, I so hold, subsequently the application is hereby granted as prayed on the face of the motion paper and the defendant is hereby ordered to take his plea on the altered or amended charge, this is the ruling of the court".

Justice Onwuegbuzie adjourned the matter to February 3, 2025 for the defendant to take his plea.

## FCCPC Insists Telecom Tariff Increase Must Be Commiserate To Service Improvement

The Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) notes the announcement by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) approving a 50% adjustment in telecommunications tariffs. While the FCCPC acknowledges the economic pressures faced by telecom operators, including increasing operational costs, we unequivocally state that consumer interests remain paramount.

The FCCPC acknowledges the intense pressure faced by the NCC over the years to approve tariff increases due to the rising operational costs experienced by telecom operators, which became more pronounced in recent times. We commend the NCC for adopting a deliberate and measured approach by rationalising the tariff adjustment and linking it to commensurate improvements in service quality while implementing measures to mitigate the impact on consumers. The NCC's approval of a 50% adjustment, which is lower than the over 100% increase initially proposed by operators, demonstrates a thoughtful effort to balance

industry sustainability with consumer protection.

We are also pleased with the NCC's directive to operators to ensure that, henceforth, tariffs are clear, straightforward, and free of hidden charges or complexities. Operators are now required to disclose all key details upfront, including the cost, validity period, and the specific inclusions of a plan. Consumers can also expect a mandatory disclosure table from their service providers, enabling them to make informed decisions without worrying about unexpected charges or surprises.

Consumers have consistently expressed the desire for measurable improvements in the quality of service before any tariff increases are implemented. Issues such as network congestion, dropped calls, inconsistent internet speeds, unusual data depletion, and poor customer service have remained prevalent concerns. It is, therefore, crucial that tariff adjustments directly translate into demonstrable and tangible service enhancements for consumers.5



## Guinness Nigeria Plc Records N20.1 Billion Pre-Tax Profit For Q2 Ending December 31, 2024

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

This marks a significant turnaround from the pre-tax loss of N8.2 billion in the same quarter of the previous year and is the first quarterly profit since September 2023, when the company posted a profit of N3.8 billion.

The profit boost follows Tolaram Group's takeover of operations from Diageo in June 2024. Within six months, the company recorded its first quarterly operating profit. The second-quarter profit increased half-year pre-tax profits to about N4.1 billion, marking the first half-year profit since December 2022.

For FY 2024, the pre-tax profit stood at N4.1 billion, a substantial recovery from the loss of N4.4 billion in the previous half-year. The company reported revenue of N133.7 billion for the quarter, bringing the year-to-date figure to N259.6 billion, an 82.06% increase compared to FY 2023.

Key Highlights (2024 vs. 2023 FY): Revenue: N259.6 billion, +82.06% YoY Cost of Sales: N200.5 billion, +107.54% YoY Gross Profit: N59 billion, +28.45% YoY Other Income: N159 million, -93.67% YoY Marketing and Distribution Expenses: N31.6 billion, +33.00% YoY Operating Profit: N11.2 billion Finance Expenses: N71.1 billion, +197.75% YoY

Finance Income: N63.9 billion, +1993.90% YoY Pre-tax Profit: N4.1 billion Post-tax Loss: N302.7 million

Surge in Revenue Boosts Margins: Guinness Nigeria Plc reported revenue of N259.6 billion for FY 2024, representing an impressive increase of 82.06% compared to FY 2023. Domestic sales accounted for 98.5% of total revenue, while export sales contributed the remaining 1.5%. Despite strong revenue growth, the cost of sales surged by 107.54% year-on-year, rising from N96.6 billion in the previous year to N200.5 billion in 2024.

However, the company recorded a gross profit increase of 28.45% year-on-

year, reaching N59 billion, compared to N45.9 billion in FY 2023. Marketing and distribution expenses also increased significantly, rising by 33.00% to N31.6 billion from N23.7 billion in the prior year.

With rising operational expenses, operating profit declined to N11.2 billion, down from N16.3 billion reported in the previous year.

Analysts observed that the primary driver of Guinness Nigeria's profitability was a surge in topline revenue, which hit a record N133.7 billion this quarter—the highest ever recorded by the company. The revenue surge helped mitigate cost pressures,

delivering an operating profit of N18.1 billion.

Guinness reported an operating loss of N6.8 billion at the end of September 2024, its first quarter of the current financial year. Operating profit margins, however, rebounded to 13.2%—the highest since March 2022, when margins stood at around 18.5

Meanwhile, net finance charges, which had been a major driver of losses in recent years, swung to a net gain this quarter. Although finance expenses more than doubled to N59.5 billion in the quarter under review, this was offset by a surge in finance income totaling N63.9 billion.

This turnaround was pri-

marily driven by gains from the remeasurement of foreign currency balances, which accounted for 99.51% of the finance income. The swing in profitability is seen as a significant boost for the new owners of Guinness Nigeria Plc, as they work to revitalize one of Nigeria's largest brewers.

Tolaram Group, which acquired Guinness in June 2024, has reported its first operating profit for the company in less than six months under its management. It is understood that Guinness Nigeria is likely to be delisted from the Nigerian Exchange as the new owners move forward with a mandatory takeover of the company's shares from minority shareholders.

## Oando Secures Block KON 13 Operatorship In Angola

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Oando PLC has announced that its subsidiary, Oando Energy Resources (OER), has been appointed as the operator of Block KON 13, located in Angola's Onshore Kwanza Basin.

This achievement comes on the heels of Oando's successful \$783 million acquisition of the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) from Italian firm Eni, covering asset costs and reimbursements.

OER secured the operatorship of Block KON 13 after participating in a competitive bidding process organized by the Angolan National Agency for Petroleum, Gas, and Biofuels (ANPG).

The block, situated in the resource-rich Kwanza Onshore Basin, boasts significant pre-salt and post-salt formations, with an estimated potential of 770 to 1,100 million barrels of oil. It also features two exploration wells that have already been drilled to a depth of 3,000 meters, revealing the presence of oil and gas at various levels.

As the block's operator, OER will lead development efforts, holding a 45% stake, while Effimax and Sonangol will serve as co-venturers with 30% and 15% interests, respectively.

Wale Tinubu, Group Chief Executive of Oando PLC, expressed excitement about the acquisition and its significance for the company's expansion across Africa.

"This successful bid and award of Block KON 13 in Angola is a significant milestone. It reflects Oando's steadfast commitment to extending our reach across the continent and contributing to Africa's energy sufficiency objectives," Tinubu remarked.



L-R: Director, Maritime Safety and Security, Babatunde Bombata; Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Gboyega Oyetola and Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy, Oloruntola Olutemi, during the 2025 Budget Defence to the Joint Committee on Marine and Blue Economy in Abuja

## CBN Projects 4.1% Economic Growth in 2025

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has forecast a 4.1% economic growth for 2025, along with a decrease in inflation and an increase in foreign exchange inflow.

CBN Governor, Mr. Olayemi Cardoso, shared these projections during the launch of the Nigeria Economic Summit Group 2025 Macroeconomic Outlook. He noted that foreign exchange market reforms in 2025 resulted in \$6 billion in foreign capita

The Federal Government has defended its projection of a decline in the inflation rate to 15% this year, stating that the projection is based on reality and data. The NESG has recommended measures to achieve economic stability in 2025 and a 5.5% economic growth rate.

The World Bank has urged the Federal Govern-

ment to increase the number of beneficiaries of its social intervention programs to reduce the cost of reforms on the poor and vulnerable Nigerians.

Cardoso stated that key economic indicators suggest a positive outlook for 2025, with GDP growth projected to rise to 4.17% from 3.36% in 2024. This growth is anchored on sustained government reforms, stable crude oil prices, and improvements in domestic oil production. Increased refining capacity, driven by the Dangote refinery and the revitalization of the Port Harcourt and Warri refineries, will significantly enhance economic activity. A stable exchange rate will also play a crucial role in maintaining this positive trajectory.

Domestic inflation is projected to decline in 2025 as the impact of economic reforms begins to take hold. Achieving overall objectives requires effective collabora-

tion between monetary and fiscal authorities alongside private sector participation.

The current account surplus is expected to be sustained in 2025 due to strong export performance and steady diaspora remittances. Crude oil prices are expected to benefit from supply cuts by OPEC and residual geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, while increased domestic crude oil and gas production supported by major refineries will bolster the surplus.

External reserves are projected to rise steadily, propelled by increased crude oil production, which could reach 2.3 million barrels per day by mid-2025. Additionally, the expected rise in capital inflows and remittances and the reduced reliance on imported refined petroleum products due to domestic refining capacity could conserve foreign exchange, attract investment, and strengthen Nigeria's eco-

nomics resilience.

Expressing optimism about further increases in foreign exchange inflow, Cardoso said: "Our achievements with these reforms have been encouraging and will continue to materialize in the long term. Our efforts resulted in significant economic milestones in 2024, with over \$6 billion in foreign capital inflows into Nigeria and external reserves exceeding \$40 billion, signaling growing investor confidence. We emphasize reserves going up, not just in numbers, but in the quality of our reserves. As we progress through 2025, we aim to ensure that the reforms are market-oriented policies that will support a more competitive business environment. This development carries significant implications for businesses operating in Nigeria, requiring them to adapt to an evolving economic landscape."

## Stanbic IBTC Allocates Rights Issue Proceeds

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Stanbic IBTC Holdings Plc recently announced that it would allocate 96.3% of its N148.71 billion rights issue proceeds to its banking subsidiary.

The rights issue allows existing shareholders to subscribe to 2,944,772,083 ordinary shares of 50 kobo each at N50.50 per share, structured as five (5) new shares for every twenty-two (22) ordinary shares held as of October 29, 2024.

During the company's 'Facts Behind the Issue' presentation in Lagos, Acting CEO Kunle Adedeji revealed that 42% of the funds will be directed towards Corporate and Investment Banking (CIB) to boost lending to sectors such as manufacturing, power, agriculture, and telecommunications.

He emphasized that this allocation aligns with the Group's strategy to support industries critical to Nigeria's economic development.

Adedeji stated, "Our plan is to channel resources into sectors that have the capacity to catalyze sustainable growth in the Nigerian economy. The financial sector is a critical aspect of actualizing Nigeria's target of \$1 trillion economy."

Additionally, 27% of the proceeds will support Business and Commercial Banking (BCB), facilitating the growth of commercial enterprises and SMEs, particularly in the general commerce sector. "Personal and Private Banking (PPB) will account for 11% of the funds, enhancing credit accessibility for individual clients and improving their financial wellbeing," stated Adedeji.



# Experience Innovation Redefined: Redmi Note 14 Series Launch In Nigeria

By Paul Onehi

On Thursday, Xiaomi hosted the highly anticipated Redmi Note 14 Series launch event in Nigeria. The event introduced three iconic models: Redmi Note 14, Redmi Note 14 Pro, and Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G. Alongside these flagship smartphones, Xiaomi unveiled its latest ecosystem products, including

the Redmi Watch 5, Redmi Buds 6, and Redmi Buds 6 Pro. This launch was a testament to Xiaomi's commitment to innovation and delivering cutting-edge technology to its users.

The event was a resounding success, featuring breathtaking setups and elaborate decorations that left a lasting impression on attendees. The launch also drew a stellar lineup of prominent tech

influencers and macro-influencers, including Cee C, Real Sophy, Singh Nini, Groovy, Yvonne Godswill, Mistchy, Valor Review, Izzi Boye, and Shaun. Their attendance injected an extra dose of enthusiasm and excitement, further fueling the anticipation and hype surrounding the Redmi Note 14 Series launch.

One of the highlights of the event was the opportunity

for attendees to experience the Redmi Note 14 Series firsthand. Guests explored the capabilities of the new devices, testing their performance, camera systems, and overall user experience. Xiaomi's representatives were on hand to provide in-depth explanations and answer any questions, making it an interactive and engaging experience.

Xiaomi also introduced

exciting offers for early adopters of the Redmi Note 14 Series: Buy the Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G and get 5GB of free MTN data enabling them to explore the power of 5G connectivity. Buy the Redmi Note 14 or 14 Pro and enjoy a 100% data bonus for six months when you top up your data bundles.

Buy any Redmi Note 14 Series device before 28th February 2025 and receive

Redmi Buds 6 Play for free instantly, making it a perfect time for consumers to upgrade their tech. Each model in the Redmi Note 14 Series brings unique features and cutting-edge technology tailored to meet diverse user needs. Here is an overview of the models.

## Economic Disaster Hits Dry Season Farmers In Mokwa LGA Niger state

TUNDE ADIGUN - MINNA.

Dry season farmers around Mokwa local government area of Niger state and its environs are now counting their losses with the economic disaster that has taken over their farmlands.

This incident highlights the devastating impact of the water discharge from the Kainji and Jebba hydro power plants on the livelihoods of dry season farmers along the River Niger.

The sudden flooding has wiped out rice farms worth billions of naira, affecting both indigenous and visiting farmers in communities such as Rabba, Lafiyagi, and the Kede District of Mokwa Local Government Area.

Many of these farmers,

who have already faced challenges due to seasonal flooding, had resorted to dry season farming.

Unfortunately, the unexpected release of excess water has destroyed their crops, leaving them in dire financial straits, especially as many relied on loans to fund their farming activities.

The affected communities are urgently appealing to the Niger State Government, the management of Kainji and Jebba Hydro Power plants, and the Hydro Power Producing Areas Development Commission (HYPADDEC) for immediate intervention and support to recover from the disaster.

This is a critical moment where coordinated action is needed to prevent further economic loss and hardship for these farmers.



L-R: Commissioner of Police, Lagos State Command, CP Olanrewaju Ishola; Secretary to the State Government, Lagos State, Mrs. Abimbola Salu-Hundeyin; Representative of the Inspector-General of Police, IGP Kayode Adeolu Egbetokun/AIG Zone 2, AIG Adegoke Mustapha Fayoadé and Commandant, Police College Ikeja, Lagos, CP Omolara Ibidun Oloruntola during the Passing-Out Parade of the 2025 Police Constables at Police College Ikeja, Lagos recently.

# The Transformational Journey of GDM: A 15-Year Odyssey

Celebrating 15 transformative years of trailblazing innovation and impactful contributions to the marketing and technology landscape, GDM Group, Nigeria's premier marketing and media technology powerhouse, has redefined itself as a full-fledged marketing, management, and technology innovation firm. With an unwavering commitment to delivering cutting-edge solutions, GDM Group continues to push the envelope in marketing technology, big data management, and integrated marketing services, setting the benchmark for excellence across Nigeria and Africa. To improve offerings and diversify its client base, GDM Group is now focusing on offering project consulting services in the areas of marketing, technology, and management.

A Legacy of Innovation and Market Disruption

Since its inception, GDM Group has been synonymous with reshaping the future of marketing, pioneering industry-defining practices that blend strategic cre-

ativity with flawless execution. The company's journey from below-the-line field marketing to data-driven strategies exemplifies its ability to evolve and lead. Through its bespoke service offerings, GDM has emerged as a catalyst for transformative brand experiences, delivering measurable results and setting a new standard in marketing and media innovation.

"GDM Group's evolution into a comprehensive marketing, management, and technology firm represents a

pivotal moment in our journey," noted Victor Afolabi, Founder and Group CEO of Hazon Holdings, during the company's fifteenth-anniversary celebrations. "We are empowering brands to connect, serve, and grow their audiences with unparalleled efficiency, ensuring measurable returns on investment."

Elevating Brands Through Innovation and Strategy

GDM Group's transformation reflects its profound understanding of modern

client needs—strategic, innovative, and results-driven

tracking. By utilizing advanced marketing technologies and consumer data analytics, the company delivers actionable insights that fuel strategic decision-making. Each technological solution is bespoke, tailored to meet the specific needs of clients, ensuring seamless integration and impactful results.

Expanding Offerings with Full-fledged Consulting Services

In its quest to provide holistic solutions, GDM Group is expanding its offerings to include project consulting services in marketing, technology, and management. This strategic shift aims to empower businesses with expert guidance in navigating complex challenges, implementing cutting-edge technologies, and optimizing operational performance. With a deep understanding of industry dynamics, GDM's consulting services are designed to drive sustainable growth and operational excellence for clients across various sectors.

Management Excellence Driving Business Trans-

formation GDM Group's expertise extends beyond marketing into strategic management and operational excellence. By offering management consulting services, the company enables businesses to align their marketing strategies with corporate goals, optimize performance, and navigate complex challenges. From robust project management to innovative operations management frameworks, GDM ensures scalability, efficiency, and measurable impact.

Customized consulting engagements form the cornerstone of GDM's management offerings, unlocking long-term growth opportunities for clients while delivering strategic guidance and data-driven solutions. This multi-dimensional approach positions GDM as a trusted partner in driving organizational success.

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Our mission is to uphold the principles of professional journalism by providing accurate, fair, and unbiased news coverage. We aim to inform, educate and inspire our readers, ensuring they have access to information that enables them to make informed decisions and engage in meaningful public discourse.



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**Innovation:** We leverage cutting-edge technology to enhance the way news is delivered, ensuring accessibility for diverse audiences.

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THE ABUJA POST NEWSPAPERS LTD  
Office Address: Nicon Hilton, Abuja.  
+234-903-088-8871, +234-906-091-2116  
info@abujapostnewspaper.com.ng  
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# Economic Policies Under Fire: Is the Nation Losing Its Way?

In recent times, Nigeria's economic policies have come under intense scrutiny, with businesses, investors, and everyday citizens questioning whether the nation is on the right track. From inflationary pressures to rising unemployment, volatile exchange rates, and regulatory uncertainty, concerns about the country's economic direction are growing louder. While policymakers argue that reforms are necessary to stabilize and grow the economy, critics warn that missteps and inconsistencies are eroding confidence and pushing the nation toward deeper economic turmoil.

One of the most pressing issues is the persistent inflation, which continues to erode the purchasing power of Nigerians. The cost of living has skyrocketed, with food prices and transportation costs hitting record highs. The government's monetary policies, particularly those driven by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), have been criticized for their inability to curb inflation effectively. Interest rate hikes, intended to control inflation, have inadvertently stifled business growth, making credit more expensive for entrepreneurs and industrialists.

Additionally, the naira's instability in the foreign exchange market has left businesses struggling to plan for the future. Frequent policy changes—such as the controversial decision to float the naira, followed by interventions to stabilize it—have created uncertainty. Foreign investors, already wary of Nigeria's unpredictable business environment, have become even more cautious, leading to capital flight and reduced foreign direct investment (FDI).

Beyond monetary policies, the fiscal policies of the government have also raised concerns. The introduction of new taxes and levies, alongside the removal of fuel subsidies, has placed additional strain on businesses and households. While the government argues that these measures are necessary to boost revenue and reduce dependence on oil, many businesses believe the approach is counterproductive. Increased operational costs, coupled with power supply challenges and inadequate infrastructure, have forced many businesses to downsize or shut down altogether.

The manufacturing sector, which should be a key driver of economic growth, is particularly vulnerable. High import duties on essential raw materials, coupled with forex shortages, have stifled production. Instead of fos-

tering local manufacturing, the policies seem to be making it more difficult for Nigerian businesses to compete, both locally and internationally.

Economic hardship inevitably fuels social discontent. Rising unemployment and economic frustrations have led to growing unrest, with labor unions threatening strikes and protests becoming more frequent. Many young Nigerians, disillusioned with the economic prospects at home, are seeking opportunities abroad—a trend popularly referred to as the "Japa" wave. This brain drain further weakens the country's economic potential, as skilled professionals leave in search of better opportunities.

Politically, the government faces mounting pressure to adjust its economic strategy. Opposition voices argue that the administration's policies lack a clear direction and are failing to deliver tangible benefits to the people. While authorities maintain that reforms take time to yield results, the patience of the average Nigerian is wearing thin.

For Nigeria to regain economic stability and growth, a more pragmatic approach to policy-making is required. Transparency, consistency, and stakeholder engagement must be prioritized. Rather than imposing taxes and restrictive regulations without proper consultation, the government should work closely with businesses, financial experts, and labor groups to craft policies that promote sustainable growth.

Additionally, addressing structural issues such as power supply, transportation infrastructure, and insecurity will go a long way in improving the business climate. A shift from reliance on oil revenue to a more diversified economy—driven by agriculture, manufacturing, and technology—must be backed by supportive policies that encourage local production and innovation.

The current economic trajectory is unsustainable. If Nigeria continues on this path without significant policy adjustments, the consequences could be dire. The government must recognize that economic policies are not just about numbers and statistics; they have real-life implications for millions of Nigerians. A course correction is needed—one that prioritizes economic stability, encourages investment, and ensures that growth is inclusive. Otherwise, the fears of a nation losing its way may become a harsh reality.

*The current economic trajectory is unsustainable. If Nigeria continues on this path without significant policy adjustments, the consequences could be dire. The government must recognize that economic policies are not just about numbers and statistics; they have real-life implications for millions of Nigerians.*





# Atiku Abubakar And El-Rufai Warn: Nigeria's Democracy At Risk

By Paul Onehi

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and former Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai have raised alarm over what they described as a growing threat to Nigeria's democracy.

Speaking at a recent national conference on strengthening democracy in Abuja, the leaders warned that if urgent action was not taken, the country could lose its hard-fought democracy.

Abubakar highlighted the importance of democratic values, arguing that Nigeria was at a crossroad. He criticized the growing influence of the judiciary in determining electoral outcomes, stressing that the courts, not the people, decided candidates and winners.

"We really are at a crossroads in this democratic experiment. We either decide we want to be democratic or abandon it," he said.

Abubakar also expressed frustration with the National Assembly, calling for legislative reforms to empower political parties and ensure the people determine who governs them. He further accused the Federal Govern-

ment of undermining opposition parties through financial inducements, adding that some political party leaders were given N50 million each.

"I want to say it here publicly. I met with a political party leadership in the present opposition, and they told me flatly that this government gives them N50 million each.

"Where do we go from here? This means that if we are not careful, we are talking to some of you here, but you are recipients of the N50 million from the APC government.

Do we really want to fight for democracy? If we don't, we all go back to our homes. But if we do, I have been in this struggle for over 30 years, an attempt was made on my life, and I escaped. I went into exile, but I never gave up. My businesses were taken over, and I am still surviving. So, you need to make up your mind. I am not doing it for myself. For me, I have lived my life. I am doing it because of you," the former PDP presidential candidate noted.

On his part, El-Rufai explained that, he shared similar concerns with Atiku, describing the current situa-

tion in the country as a "national emergency." He warned that the opposition risks extinction unless it unites.

"The way and manner opposition political parties are being targeted for destruction and the style and quality of governance in this country today is a national emergency. It should concern everyone. And I think this is a problem for all of us to think about and play a role in changing it, as His Excel-

lency (Abubakar) said, we stand the risk of losing democracy itself," he said.

El-Rufai cited alarming voter apathy, referencing a poll that indicated 75 per cent of registered voters do not intend to participate in the 2027 elections.

He called on opposition parties to form a united platform to challenge the ruling party and save the nation's democracy.

"We know what it is, and we don't want a military rule,

but we also don't want civilians behaving like the military in their 'babarriga' and suits. So, this is a national emergency," he warned.

The former Kaduna state governor further claimed that there was a deliberate effort to destroy parties like the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Labour Party (LP).

He urged opposition leaders to prioritize internal democracy and adopt stricter standards for party

delegates and candidates.

"The problems are still there. However, I no longer believe that my party believes in confronting those problems. So, the distance between me and APC is widening, but I remain where I am because these problems remain the living problems of Nigerians and they have to be addressed. The only way to address them is through the instrumentality of the political parties," he added.



Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori (left) in a warm handshake with the Chairman, ThisDay and Arise News, Prince Nduka Obaigbena (right) during the 2024 ThisDay Awards in Lagos recently.

## PDP Governors Move To End Crisis, Endorse Ude-Okoye As National Secretary

By Nathaniel Gumniba

The Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Governors Forum rose from its first 2025 monthly meeting held in Asaba, Delta State capital, on Friday, with a resolution backing the judgment of the Court of Appeal, which pronounced the former National Youth Leader of the party, Hon. S.K.E Udeh-Okoye, as the authentic National Secretary of the PDP and advised the party's National Working Committee (NWC) to implement the court decision accordingly.

The Forum equally advised the NWC to reschedule to 13th March, 2025 the National Executive Council, NEC, meeting of the party earlier fixed for February.

This was even as the party rued the hardship in the land and called on the President Bola Tinubu-led All Progressives Congress, APC, Federal Government to revisit its macroeconomic policies to mitigate the sufferings of the Nigerian masses.

These were contained in a communique issued at the end of the meeting, which had in attendance the Chairman of the Forum and Governor of Bauchi State, Senator Bala Mohammed, Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State, Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State, Governor Sheriff Oborevwori of Delta State, Governor Umo Eno of Akwa Ibom State, Governor Diri Duoye of

Bayelsa State, Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri of Adamawa State, Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun State, Governor Muftwang of Plateau State, Governor Agbu kefas of Taraba State, Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara State, and the Deputy Governor of Oyo State, Barr. Bayo Lawal.

The communique rendered by the Forum's Chairman read, "The Forum employed the occasion to review the performance of member states in particular and the state of the nation in general, as well as developments in the party, as at the end of 2024.

"The Meeting noted that the macro-economic policies of the Federal Government had inflicted hardship and pain on the polity; therefore, the Forum calls on the Federal Government to either revisit or rejig its macro-economic policies to ameliorate and stop the hardship/pains that they have inflicted on Nigerians as no meaningful/impactful achievements in the states will be achieved until the harsh policies are addressed.

"The Forum noted with delight the ongoing efforts at resolving the crisis in the National Working Committee, NWC, on the position of the National Secretary, and has reaffirmed its support for the Court of Appeal judgment; consequently, the Forum advised the NWC to set up the machinery for the effective implementation of the court judgment.

## 10 Zamfara Assembly Lawmakers Storm Abuja To Protest Their 'Illegal' Suspension

By Paul Onehi

Some suspended lawmakers Zamfara State House of Assembly have taken to the streets of Abuja to protest their suspension.

The lawmakers, 10 in number – while petitioning their National Assembly described their suspension as a threat to Nigeria's democracy.

Speaking on behalf of the embattled lawmakers, Ibrahim Tuku, read text jointly signed by all the sus-

pended Zamfara State House of Assembly members.

According to Tuku, most of the decisions, including passage of the state's 2025 Appropriation Bill, which was taken by 14 remaining lawmakers in the House against them were illegal, null and void.

Comprising six members of the Peoples Democratic Party and four from the All Progressives Congress, the lawmakers called the attention of the National Assembly to their ordeal.

They said they are optimistic their the lawmakers at the national level would intervene in resolving the challenge they were currently facing in Zamfara.

Tuku said, "We have been under undue and illegal suspension by the Assembly just because we have all along refused to dance to their tunes and serve as rubber stamps for the executive.

"We are hence calling for immediate rescinding of the purported declaration as vacant, the seat of the Minority Leader and member rep-

resenting Talata-Mafara South State Constituency, Hon. Aliyu Ango Kagara by the Zamfara State House of Assembly under the leadership of Hon. Bilyaminu Ismail Moriki.

"We sent a petition to the National Assembly, they called us and asked us that we should go back, they will invite us for further investigation but up to this moment, we did not hear from them. We are waiting for their response," the lawmakers added.

## Benue 2027: Tiv Community Moves Against Alia's Second Term Bid

By Paul Onehi

A political group under the aegis of the Movement for the Actualization of Kwande Governorial Ambition, MAKGA, has embarked on agitations to stop the second bid of Gov. Hyacinth Alia.

They are canvassing for the ceding of the 2027 governorship slot to their area to allow for the completion of the tenure of the late Aper Aku, which was cut short by the 1983 military coup.

The group, which comprises politicians drawn from various political parties, including the ruling APC and the main opposition PDP, made their agitations known

at a news briefing in Makurdi on Thursday.

They further reiterated that Kwande and Ushongo LGAs of the state deserve to produce the next governor in 2027 to complete the tenure of the first civilian governor of the state, the late Aper Aku.

The convener of the group, Leonard Ikyem, argued that the basis upon which the Kwande people canvassed for the highest elective position in the state—which, unfortunately, could not be realized in 2023—still remains valid.

According to him: "We, the offspring of the dynamic, patriotic, and progressive people of the Kwande Intermediate Area, comprising

Kwande and Ushongo LGAs, wish to inform the good people of Benue of our desire to renew the governorship ambition of the Kwande people in 2027.

"As we are all aware, the democratic process in Nigeria will open another chapter in 2027 with fresh opportunities, and we intend to mobilize our people to step forward and explore this new frontier.

"One such opportunity is that the Kwande Intermediate Area has established a tradition of selfless, committed, and dedicated service to the people of the state in all areas of life.

"We wish to assure the Benue people that if given

another opportunity, a Kwande indigene with the requisite qualifications, experience, and capacity (and many such individuals abound) will not only sustain that tradition but surpass the yet-to-be-matched milestones achieved by late Governor Apollon Aper Aku, the first civilian governor of the state.

"Please mark this—Kwande still has another big, pleasant surprise for the Benue people. We wish to stress that the Kwande governorship agenda, which is predicated on a solid desire to offer unequalled service delivery, predates and transcends individuals and groups.



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COURSES	DURATION	VENUE	FEE	STARTING DATES
1. Basic Leadership Development Training	4 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,600,000.00</b>	16 January
2. Certificate in Leadership Competence	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,600,000.00</b>	22 January
3. Transformational Leadership Training Masterclass	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,600,000.00</b>	31 January
4. Young Leaders Training Programme	2 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,600,000.00</b>	6 February
5. The CEO's Leadership Development Programme	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N3,000,000.00</b>	14 February
6. Business Owners Leadership Development Programme.	4 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,200,000.00</b>	20 February
7. Strategic Board Leadership Development Programme.	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N5,000,000.00</b>	26 February
8. Entrepreneurship Intrapreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Markets	4 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,600,000.00</b>	5 March
9. Corporate Governance and Policy Management Development	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,600,000.00</b>	14 March
10. Strategic Marketing Management	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,600,000.00</b>	20 March
11. Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness	5 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,600,000.00</b>	27 March
12. Digital Transformation and Business Strategy Development for Emerging Business Leaders	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N2,000,000.00</b>	2 April
13. Board Dynamics and Executive Decision-Making	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N2,000,000.00</b>	10 April
14. Ethical Leadership and Corporate Governance	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N2,000,000.00</b>	15 April
15. Corporate Governance and Accountability	4 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N3,000,000.00</b>	25 April
16. Cross-Cultural Leadership and Diversity Management	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N1,200,000.00</b>	8 May
17. Strategic Leadership and Change Management for Business Leadership	6 Weeks	Lagos	<b>N5,000,000.00</b>	19 May
18. Advanced Leadership Development for Public Office Holders	6 Weeks	Abuja	<b>N2,000,000.00</b>	28 May
19. Advanced Leadership Development for Legislators and Parliamentarisms	6 Weeks	Abuja	<b>N2,000,000.00</b>	7 June

### PAYMENT DETAILS:

THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP  
BUSINESS SCHOOLS  
UBA BANK: 1027359832

### CONTACT INFORMATION

+234 907 729 3128  
info@theafricanleaders.org  
www.theafricanleaders.org



## Police Nab 31 Suspects, Recover Items Worth N1bn In Abuja

By Nathaniel Gumniba

The Police Command in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) said it has arrested 31 suspects and recovered public items worth over N1 billion in Abuja.

The Commissioner of Police (CP) in charge of the FCT, Mr Olatunji Disu said this at a news conference on Friday in Abuja.

He said 16 of the suspects had been charged to court for criminal conspiracy and mischief by injury to public roads, navigable channels and electrical installation.

The CP said the offences were punishable by life imprisonment, a fine, or both, under section 332 of the Penal Code.

Disu said 115 units of manhole and drainage covers, five motorcycles, stripped parts of electrical transformers and industrial scaffoldings.

Others according to him are, bundles of armoured and insulated cables, copper wires and fibre optic cables were recovered from the suspects.

He said other items recovered were 29 industrial/solar batteries, solar panels, several stolen infrastructure materials, 75 bags

of cement, security doors, three pieces of 5kg cylinders and others.

Disu said the arrest and recovery of the items followed the launch of "Operation Sweep" Joint Task Force, consisting of the police and other security agencies in the FCT.

The commissioner said the operation was a decisive enforcement, targeting vandalism, destruction and illegal sales of critical infrastructure to "pantaker" operators and other illicit buyers.

He said that the ongoing intensive enforcement operation which commenced on Jan. 16, had been on a daily basis, both day and night.

He said it had led to the raid of several major "pantaker" markets in the territory, including Dei-Dei, Kabusa, Dei-Dei Outward Lane, Zuba, Mpape, Jabi and Nyanya.

Disu said the Abuja Markets Management Limited (AMML), under the directive of the FCT Minister, had mandated all partaker market operators to report for profiling and registration.

He said the idea was part of efforts to curb the menace of vandalism in the FCT, adding that the activities of scavengers in the FCT remained banned.

## FG, Others Commit \$834.6m To NG-CARES To Support Vulnerable Nigerians

By Nathaniel Gumniba

The federal government, 36 States including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), have committed \$834.6m in NG-CARES initiative. No fewer than 922 youths and women in Edo State have benefited from the first batch of the Nigeria Community Action for Resilience and Economic Stimulus (NG-CARES) grant.

The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, Dr. Emeka Vitalis Obi made the disclosure during a stakeholder meeting in Abuja recently.

According to him, the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have committed \$834.6 million in NG-CARES—30% more than the \$645.74 million reimbursed to them by the World Bank. He emphasized that this overinvestment reflects a strong commitment by sub-national governments to institutionalize social protection initiatives.

Since its inception in 2021, NG-CARES has impacted the lives and livelihoods of over 15 million poor and vulnerable Nigerians. The program, formerly

known as the COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus Programme, is a \$750 million World Bank-assisted initiative aimed at providing livelihood support, food security services, and grants to mitigate economic shocks.

The Federal Government recently extended the program, with World Bank approval, to conclude on May 31, 2025, allowing time to finalize the design of NG-CARES 2.0. Obi highlighted that the upcoming phase aims to create a robust shock-response system at the sub-national level to address poverty, marginalization, and economic inclusion for Nigeria's most vulnerable populations.

The Chairperson of the Federal Cares Technical Committee, Elizabeth Egharebva, commended the programme's effectiveness, noting its role in mitigating economic challenges for poor Nigerians. She also expressed optimism about the second phase, which is expected to deliver more impactful and sustainable interventions in social protection, basic services, and food security.



R-L: Roosevelt Ogbonna, Group Managing Director, Access Bank PLC; Tochi Wigwe, Daughter of Herbert Wigwe, former Group CEO, Access Holdings; Maame Saarah Buckman; Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, Chairman, Access Holdings PLC; Aigbovbioise Aig-Imoukhuede, Managing Director, Coronation Asset Management Limited, and Funke Aigbovbioise Aig-Imoukhuede, at the THISDAY Awards 2025 where Access Bank won Global Bank of the Year award and Aig-Imoukhuede was named Titan of the Year, in Lagos recently.

## Reps Applaud Wike Over Infrastructural Development In FCT

By Nathaniel Gumniba

The Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Rep. Aliyu Muktar Betara has eulogised the leadership virtues and dedication of the FCT Minister, Barr. Nyesom Wike to infrastructural development of the nation's capital city.

Hon. Betara, who represents Biu/Bayo/Shani and Kwaya Kusar Federal Constituency of Borno state, said this in a congratulatory message to Wike, who was conferred with the award of Best

Minister of the Year by THISDAY/AriseTV."

He said: "On behalf of the House of Representatives Committee on FCT, I wish to extend my warmest congratulations to the Honourable Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, His Excellency, Barrister Nyesom Wike (CON, GSSRS), on your well-deserved recognition as the Minister of the Year by THISDAY/AriseTV."

This prestigious honour is a testament to your visionary leadership, tireless dedication, and exceptional contributions to the infrastructural transforma-

tion of the Federal Capital Territory.

"Your unwavering commitment to service and your determination to improve the lives of residents and visitors alike to the FACT has been nothing short of exemplary.

"Through your bold initiatives and strategic policies, you have not only enhanced the aesthetics and functionality of Abuja but have also reaffirmed the FCT's position as a beacon of progress and modernity in Nigeria."

Betara said the recognition was a reflection of the positive impact of the Minis-

ter's and the admiration he has earned across various sectors.

"I celebrate this outstanding achievement with you and express my gratitude for your leadership and passion for development.

"May this milestone serve as an inspiration for even greater accomplishments as you continue to serve with integrity and purpose.

"Once again, congratulations on this remarkable feat. I wish you continued success in your endeavours," he noted.

## Court Adjourns Case Against Ex-Kogi Governor, Others

By Nathaniel Gumniba

A Federal Capital Territory High Court recently, adjourned hearing in the alleged money laundering case against former governor of Kogi, Yahaya Bello until April 3 and April 24.

Justice Maryann Anenih adjourned the case for continuation of hearing after the first witness, Fabian Nworah, a property developer, was called to testify.

The Prosecution Counsel, Kemi Pinheiro, SAN, informed the court that he had five witnesses to call for the day.

Justice Anenih said she could only take one witness as she had other matters to attend to.

The court also announced that it would not be sitting on Thursday) as previously scheduled.

Counsel for the 1st and 2nd Defendants, Joseph Daudu, SAN, however, informed the court that the prosecution had not made

the statements on oath of the 2nd defendant available to the defence team.

He said he was aware that the first defendant had not made any statement.

Daudu also objected to the witness presented by the prosecution, arguing that the defendants had no prior knowledge of the witness and were only seeing him in court for the first time.

Citing authorities, he emphasised that legal proceedings should not be a "hide and seek" game, stating that the prosecution was required to provide the witness' statements on oath in advance so the defence could adequately prepare for cross-examination.

"The statements of the second defendant have not been served on us to be able to know if we will be able to represent him or not.

"So, it is a serious handicap on us. They need to serve us all the statements made by the defendants.

"I understand the first defendant has not made a

statement. Fortunately, we are still within the house keeping stage of the proceeding," he added.

Corroborating this, counsel for the 3rd Defendant, Abubakar Aliyu, SAN, said, "mine is not a comment but an observation my lord. My application is for the court to order the prosecution to provide us with the statements of the 2nd and 3rd defendants."

When the judge asked if he had requested for the statements, Aliyu SAN said, he discovered on Tuesday that the said statements were not part of the proof of evidence served on the defendants.

He said: "I am also applying that the court order the prosecution to provide us with copies of recovered digital device and the report or the extract therefrom mentioned on Page 14 of Volume 1 of the proof of evidence and the report of the forensic expert if any.

"I am following the procedure followed in Okoye

against the Commissioner of Police, which was adopted by the Supreme Court in Okemini Vs Comm of Police."

The prosecution witness, however, disagreed, saying the defendants were trying to delay speedy trial.

He insisted that the proof of evidence was served on the defendants on Nov. 27, 2024.

"The constitutional provisions, which they rely on, does not imply that the prosecution should provide all the documents which it relies on.

"The law only provides that the prosecution should oblige the defence with all the documents requested for," Pinheiro argued.

He noted that the issues would be addressed whenever they receive formal applications from the Defendants and urged the court to proceed on the business for the day.



## NUJ Lauds Nwifuru For Sponsoring 204 Students To Study Overseas

By Chijioke Njoku, Abakaliki

**N**igeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Ebonyi State Council, has lauded the scholarship scheme initiated by the administration of Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru through which 204 Ebonyi youths got scholarship for postgraduate studies abroad and 541 others enjoying same post graduate scholarship within the country.

The Union described the scholarship scheme as a laud-

... 541 others to study in Nigeria universities

able initiative that would positively impact on the overall growth and development of Ebonyi State.

It further commended the State government for reviving the State pipe production factory, and described it as a bold step towards the industrialization of the State, but urged the government to consider privatizing the factory for optimal utilization.

While commending the urban renewal initiative of

Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru's administration, the Union urged the government to open more street roads within the capital city.

These were contained in a communique issued at the end of Union's Congress held at its Secretariat, known as Dr Sam Egwu Press Centre, Abakaliki, on Wednesday, which was signed by the Chairman of the Council, Comrade Nwafor Samson and Secretary, Nnamdi Akpa.

"Congress commended the human capital development drive of Ebonyi State Government under His Excellency, Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru, through which 204 Ebonyi youths got scholarship for postgraduate studies abroad and 541 others enjoying same post graduate scholarship within the country. Congress described the scholarship scheme as a laudable initiative that would positively impact on the overall

growth and development of Ebonyi State.

"Congress also commended Ebonyi State government for constructing new roads and rehabilitating the existing ones within the Abakaliki capital city and urged the government to sustain the tempo, by further opening up the capital city, through construction of more new street roads.

"Congress lauded Ebonyi State government for reviving the State's pipe produc-

tion factory, describing it as a bold step towards the industrialization of the State, but urged the government to consider giving the factory to a private company to manage on Public-Private Partnership basis, because Congress believes that government is not a good manager of business," the Union said.

The Union also noted with concern the incessant cases of road accidents involving tankers and called on the State government and relevant authorities to initiate measures to save the State from such disaster.

Coordinator, National Association of Nigeria Students (NANS), South-East Zone, Comrade Charles Obinna Ijeomah and Secretary, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, Mr. Muhammad Hammajoda, at the Commission headquarters, when the students union paid a condolence visit to the EFCC's over the loss of one of its operatives, Aminu Sahabi Salisu recently.



## Ebonyi Govt Denies Award Of contract To SSA On Project Monitoring, Nwiboko

By Chijioke Njoku, Abakaliki

**E**bonyi state government led by governor Francis Nwifuru has denied award of any contract to the senior special assistant on project monitoring, Mr. Chukwuma Nwiboko as was rumoured and misrepresented on the social media platforms.

The state government in a statement signed by the special assistant to the governor on new media, Leo Oketa and made available to newsmen in Abakaliki, debunked reports making the rounds in the state that Nwiboko was detained for allegedly involved in N200m contract scam.

The statement reads in part: "The Senior Special Assistant to the Governor of Ebonyi State on Project Monitoring, Chukwuma Nwiboko was not arrested by any Law Enforcement Agency and he is neither in detention nor under investigation of any contract, as non was awarded to him.



Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru

"Some media platforms are brandishing the contrary, that the SSA to the Governor has been in detention for three days and is under investigation for an alleged N200m contract.

"Let me explicitly inform the general public, that this is false and misleading.

"Rather, the Governor of Ebonyi State, His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru is currently investigating the ongoing contract execution of the duplexes of traditional rulers in the State. The Governor is leaving no stone unturned in ensuring, that all contractors who are found wanting in the execution of the projects are made to face the Law.

"The SSA to the Governor on project monitoring, Chukwuma Nwiboko is one of those saddled with the responsibility of fishing out the derailing contractors, as it is part of his job to monitor ongoing projects and report progress to the Governor.

"He was not awarded any contract, not to imagine one of such magnitude being alleged. He was only at the police station for some moments, as witness for the police who are investigating some of the arrested contractors.

"Chukwuma is going about his normal duties as directed. His Excellency on his path, is consistently focused on delivering on the NEEDS of Ebonyi people without margin(s) for error" Leosaid.

## Ebonyi Governor's Aide Arrested, Detained Over Alleged #200m Contract Scam

By Chijioke Njoku, Abakaliki

**A** Senior Special Assistant to Governor Francis Nwifuru on Project Monitoring, Chukwuma Nwiboko has been reportedly arrested and detained by the state Police command over an alleged 200 million contract scams.

Nwiboko and other suspects were said to have been detained by the Crack Squad Unit of the command on the directives of the Governor.

A source disclosed that the embattled aides have

spent over three days in police detention before they were granted bails.

A source who spoke on condition of anonymity claimed that Nwiboko and other suspects were mobilized with several millions of naira to build government projects in various communities but they pocketed the monies and refused to do the jobs.

The source noted that Nwiboko may have diverted the funds which amounted to over ?200 million to enable him complete his gigantic private residence in

Abakaliki capital city.

According to the source: "this is not the first time Mr. Nwiboko is being detained over the contract scam. Governor Nwifuru was referring to Nwiboko in his Ojiji 2024 address when he stated that his kinsmen in his government were those creating problems for his administration".

"It is obvious that Nwiboko used the project fund to complete his gigantic private residence in Abakaliki capital city".

"Ebonyi people who were worried about the

attempts of close aides of the governor to frustrate most of the signature projects of the Ebonyi People's Charter of Needs administration said that they were looking forward to seeing Governor Nwifuru's decisive actions to stop his friends, associates and aides from their negative attitudes and thereby protect the interests of Ebonyi people whose collective mandate brought Nwifuru to power".

However, all efforts to get reactions from the governor's aide and the police proved abortive.

## 2027: OYC Caution Gov Nwifuru Over Drag of APC party leadership With Sen Umahi

By Chijioke Njoku, Abakaliki

**I**n light of the impending 2027 Gubernatorial election, the Ohanaeze Youth Council (OYC), the apex socio-cultural youth organization of Igbo youths worldwide, counsels Governor Francis Nwifuru, the Executive Governor of Ebonyi State, to maintain focus on the continuation of infrastructural development

in Ebonyi State, as begun by former Governor David Umahi, instead of entangling himself in party leadership altercations with his predecessor.

At Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Comrade Igboayaka O. Igboayaka, National President of Ohanaeze Youth Council (OYC), remarked on January 29th 2025, that the administration of Gov. Francis Nwifuru has witnessed a decline in the pace of

infrastructural development.

Comrade Igboayaka warned that the ongoing leadership dispute between Gov Francis Nwifuru and former Gov. David Umahi is hindering the overall economic growth of Ebonyi and the Ndigbo community at large.

Regrettably, Gov Francis Nwifuru's eagerness to secure the APC Guber ticket in 2027 has prompted him to

engage in unwarranted political blackmails against Sen. David Umahi the current Minister of Works before the presidency in a bid to gain the trust of Mr. President, His Excellency Bola Ahmed Tinubu

Unfortunately, Ndigbo are governed by transactional politicians in SouthEast, who deem their re-election more vital than delivering governance to the people.

Gov Francis Nwifuru has prioritized All Progressive Congress (APC) party leadership in Ebonyi over addressing the security challenge in his State.

As the SouthEast's food basket, Ebonyi State is facing economic struggles resulting from the insecure environment hindering farmers from producing agricultural goods.

Regrettably, the raping and killing of farmers by

Fulani herdsmen in Ebonyi have affected the agriculture sector, particularly the production of "Ebonyi Special Rice". Governor Francis Nwifuru's priorities seem misplaced as he engages in political blackmail against Sen. David Umahi, seeking to secure APC leadership in Ebonyi, rather than addressing the state's security challenges, which he should present before President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.



# UNICEF Appeals To Bauchi Govt, Philanthropists To Support Child Education Through NLP

By Samuel Luka, Bauchi

**B**auchi state government, philanthropists and other well-to-do in the society have been urged to support child education by leveraging on the availability of Digital Learning programme under the Nigeria Learning Passport initiative to improve Learning outcomes in the state.

The UNICEF Education Specialist, Bauchi Field Office, Abdulrahman Ado stated this on Thursday during a one-day media dialogue to Celebrate the 2024 Inter-

national Day of Education held in Toro local government area of Bauchi state.

The initiative which was launched in Bauchi in 2022, according to UNICEF, is aimed at Leveraging Digital Technology to improve Learning outcomes in Bauchi state.

Ado who called for proper monitoring of the programme to ensure its success, said that the schools need to be visited periodically to see the level of usage of the tabulates and other digital Learning gadgets provided to the schools.

The Education Specialist who enjoined the Government of Bauchi state to take ownership of the learning gadgets, also reminded the benefitting communities that those gadgets belongs to them and not the UNICEF.

"Sometimes the teachers think the Nigerian Learning Passport belongs to the UNICEF, but no, it belongs to Bauchi state government and it is the responsibility of the state Government to provide Education for all Learners", Ado pointed out.

The UNICEF Education Specialist who stressed the

need for developing local content to complement the existing one, urged the state government to establish the Nigeria Learning Passport studio and procure more of the tabulates and other gadgets required for the digital Learning.

Ado who observed that the number of tabulates, Projectors provided are not enough, considering the number of schools and learners in Bauchi, appealed to the state government to procure more tabulates and other gadgets to reach more learners.

While commending the

recent move by the Bauchi government to recruit additional teachers, Ado urged the government to use the Teacher Management Information System (TMIS) in the recruitment process.

He said going by the importance of digitalization of Education Management Information System (EMIS), there is the need to identify the people that will supply the platform with data among the teachers.

"We are calling on the government to please use the Teacher Management Information System (TMIS) in

recruiting these teachers that is been approved by the government", the Education Specialist requested.

He also called for strengthening of infrastructure in schools, including the provision of security and electricity to ensure the safety of the gadgets and effective utilization.

"We need to see government committed in terms of resources so that we can uptake users of the Nigeria Learning Passport, so that we can make use of the opportunity that is there", he said.



The Managing Director/CEO, Nigeria LNG, Dr. Philip Mshelbila (4th from right), along with General Managers Nnamdi Anowi (Production), Joseph Alagoa (Corporate Services), and Dr. Sophia Horsfall (External Relations & Sustainable Development, 4th from left).

## Employment Opportunity: Blind Nigerians seeks inclusivity

By Samuel Luka, Bauchi

**T**he Nigeria Association of Blind, Bauchi state Chapter has called for inclusivity in the process of employment opportunities in the state.

The Association which made the call in a press release on Wednesday, appealed to the Bauchi state government to prioritize the employment and inclusion of blind graduates in Bauchi State.

Titled: "Inclusive Employment For Blind Graduates In Bauchi state Chapter, the press release called on the National Assembly members from Bauchi, state government and stakeholders to prioritize the employment and inclusion of blind graduates in Bauchi State.

The release which emanated from the Office of the Youth Leader, Nigerian Association of the Blind, Bauchi State Chapter, lamented that despite their qualifications and capabilities, blind individuals face significant challenges in securing employment, thereby perpetuating social exclusion and stigma.

"As we move forward, we

urge those in electoral positions to consider persons with disabilities in their appointments, promoting equal access and opportunities", the Association said.

"This include, inclusive education, and employment opportunities. We request that the government and relevant stakeholders take immediate action to address the unemployment crisis facing blind graduates in Bauchi State", the press release added.

Signed by Shafi'u Usman, Secretary of the Association in Bauchi, the release opined that the request can be achieved through initiatives such as job training programs, mentorship schemes, and inclusive hiring practices.

"We believe that everyone deserves equal opportunities, regardless of their abilities. Let us work together to create a more inclusive society", the association said.

The Blind Association called on the government and private sector to implement inclusive hiring practices, providing equal opportunities for blind graduates

## Gov Zulum Emerges New Telegraph's Governor of the Year

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

**B**orno State Governor, Babagana Umara Zulum, has emerged as the New Telegraph's Governor of the Year for his outstanding achievements in 2024.

Zulum will be honoured alongside seven other governors who will receive awards in education, infrastructure, health, projects, good governance, rural development, and the economy.

The Awards Ceremony is slated for Friday, February

21, 2025, at the Grand Ballroom, Lagos Oriental Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos, according to released by his Media aide Abdurraman Bundi, yesterday.

Zulum's nomination was contained in a letter addressed to him which was signed by the Managing Director /Editor-in-Chief of Daily Telegraph Publishing Company Limited, Ayodele Aminu.

Mr Ayodele was quoted as saying "We have followed closely your activities since May 29, 2019, when you were sworn in as the Governor of Borno State and are of

the firm belief that your utterances, activities and actions in the service of your people have fully justified the confidence reposed in you by the people of Borno State."

"We recall that upon assumption of office, you inherited a state bogged down by insecurity, occasioned by the activities of Boko Haram. You took the great risk of visiting the war ravaged communities to ascertain the true state of their infrastructure.

"You also took a tour of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camps across the state to empathise with the

victims of the conflict, provide succour and renew their hopes of returning to

their ancestral communities as soon as possible."

"Today, you have not only rebuilt public infrastructure in the communities destroyed by Boko Haram insurgents, you have built complete new homes for the victims. As a result, the economic and social landscapes of Borno State have become positively transformed as the average citizen can now go about their normal business without any fear of intimidation."

## Encourage Investors To invest In Nigeria Through Positive Reportage - Diasporans Urges Newsmen

By Samuel Luka, Bauchi

**N**igerians in Diaspora Commission has appealed to the country's media practitioners to stop demarketing Nigeria in the eyes of the international community in order not to scare investors.

The Secretary of the commission, Engineer Dr. Sule Yakubu Bassi who made the appeal while speaking to newsmen at the Government House Bauchi on Tuesday, blamed the press for telling bad stories about Nigeria.

Engr. Dr. Bassi who was at the government house

Bauchi with his entourage on courtesy visit to Governor Bala Mohammed, pleaded with journalists to always portray Nigeria positively in their reportage in order to encourage investors to invest in the country's economy.

"The Press, I must address you because sometimes we are the ones that demarket our own country, so we have to be positive about Nigeria", he said.

Dr. Bassi further argued: "if you have one bad Nigerian doing one bad thing, I Dr. Bassi will give you one thousand Nigerians that are doing good things. So, the

press, good news should be good news, bad news should be discouraged, we shouldn't demarket Nigeria, that's part of the compact of this sensitization and advocacy programme".

"The investor is not investing in Lagos or Abuja, he is coming to invest in his state or his local government, that is where the natural resources are for him to put his investment and get returns", he said.

Engr Bassi said they were at the Bauchi government house on a courtesy visit to the governor following the hosting of the first Diaspora

sensitization and advocacy program for the Northeastern states of Nigeria by Bauchi state.

He said that the initiative was meant to advocate for Diasporans to invest in the development of the Northeast Region of the country that includes, Bauchi, Yobe, Borno, Gombe Taraba states.

Engr Bassi who explained that Nigeria has over 20 million of its citizens in the diaspora, consisting of the modern diaspora of over 18 million and the Historic African Diaspora who have the resources, said they have

in the past five years, brought to Nigeria's economy, over 90 billion dollars investment.

He said that the diasporan phenomena is a evolving one which should not be taken for granted, adding that, it is catalyzing development in Nigeria while contributing over six percent of the country's GDP.

The Secretary of the Diaspora Commission called for investment in Agriculture, Education, mineral resources, culture and tourism which he noted as one of the competitive edge advantage Nigeria has.

"If you go globally, today there is no party that takes place anywhere without Nigerian music and dance been played, jollof rice in London as city jollof, Masa is there as African Kitchen in California, Agege bread is there in Canada and the US, taken by our diaspora and they are multi millionaires in dollars as of today", he disclosed.

"All we are saying is that, while they are out there, they should come and invest at home and help to catalyze development and they should not forget home", Engineer Bassi stated.



# INEC Submits BVAS As Edo Tribunal Probes Over-Voting

By Victor Peter

The Edo State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal has admitted Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines submitted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as evidence in the ongoing legal challenge to the September 21, 2024 governorship election.

The submission follows a subpoena secured by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) after INEC initially declined to release the machines voluntarily. The BVAS data is expected to play a central role in the tribunal's review, particularly in verifying allegations of over-voting raised by the PDP.

According to prelimi-

nary findings, discrepancies appear to exist between the number of accredited voters recorded by BVAS and the final results declared by INEC in several polling units. PDP has argued that in multiple locations, the figures announced by the electoral commission exceeded the actual number of accredited voters, a claim that could have significant implications for the outcome of the petition.

During proceedings, a PDP collation agent from Akoko Edo Ward 9 testified under oath that while voting was conducted properly across the 13 polling units in the ward, the results collated at the ward level differed from those uploaded on INEC's Result Viewing Portal

(IREV). He stated that an alternative set of results was presented at the ward collation centre, which did not match polling unit records, prompting him to refuse to sign the collation result sheet.

A similar testimony was given by another PDP agent from Oredo Local Government, who, under oath, claimed that the final results declared by INEC in Ward 1 did not align with polling unit results or the data uploaded on IREV. The tribunal accepted certified true copies (CTCs) of exhibits submitted by the PDP, which allegedly highlight inconsistencies between official results and BVAS records.

Legal analysts believe the acceptance of BVAS data as evidence repre-

sents a major step in the petition. The Supreme Court has previously ruled that BVAS is the primary source of accreditation data, making it a crucial reference point for assessing the validity of election results. If the tribunal finds significant discrepancies, it could lend weight to the PDP's claims of electoral malpractice.

Meanwhile, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Governor Monday Okpebholo's legal team are expected to scrutinise the evidence closely as they prepare their defence. The tribunal's final ruling on the matter will determine whether the alleged irregularities were substantial enough to affect the election outcome.

## DESOPADEC Executive Director Advocates for Stronger Collaboration With Warri South LG

By Francis Sadhere, Warri

In a bid to enhance development in oil-producing communities, Chief Ebenezer Okorodudu, the Executive Director of Projects at the Delta State Oil Producing Area Development Commission (DESOPADEC), has called for a strengthened partnership with the Warri South Local Government Council.

This appeal was made during a courtesy visit to the council's Chairman, Hon. Weyinmi Agbateyiniro, at the Secretariat in Warri.

Accompanied by senior management staff of DESOPADEC, including Engr. Friday Money, Head of the Works Department, and Mr. Festus Ifowodo, Head of the Utility Department, Okorodudu emphasized the pivotal role Warri South plays in the Commission's developmental objectives, given its status as both a host to DESOPADEC's corporate office and an oil-producing community.

During the meeting, Okorodudu accentuates the necessity of forging a robust partnership with the local government to expedite the development of grassroots

communities.

"DESOPADEC was created to address the needs of oil-producing communities, and Warri South is one of the most critical areas," he stated.

He urged for collaborative efforts particularly focused on improving infrastructure and community services.

Expressing his commitment to open lines of communication, Okorodudu extended an invitation to the local government to engage with DESOPADEC on initiatives that would benefit the community.

In response, Hon. Agbateyiniro expressed gratitude for the visit and reaffirmed his commitment to fostering a collaborative environment aimed at driving growth in Warri South.

He lauded Okorodudu's leadership and assured him of his dedication to strengthening the partnership for the welfare of the community.

He added that the meeting reinforced the importance of cooperation between governmental bodies and developmental agencies to ensure sustainable growth in oil-producing areas of Delta State.

## Tompolo Hails President Tinubu for Historic Endorsement of Maritime University Act

By Francis Sadhere, Warri

The Chairman of Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited (TSSNL) and Ibe-Ebidouwei of Ijaw Nation, High Chief (Dr.) Government Owezide Ekpemupolo, popularly known as Tompolo, has expressed profound gratitude to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his historic signing of the 2025 Act establishing the Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko, Delta State.

In a heartfelt letter of appreciation, Tompolo commended President Tinubu for granting legal backing to the institution, which had faced operational challenges for nearly a decade due to the absence of an enabling Act.

The signing of the law, he said, would now enable the university to realize its full potential and contribute significantly to the development of the Niger Delta and Nigeria's maritime sector.

Tompolo praised the President for his visionary leadership, noting that the Nigeria Maritime University would help bridge the gap in maritime education in West Africa.

He also emphasized that the university's establishment would address youth restiveness in the region by creating much-needed employment opportunities and driving regional development, particularly in oil and gas communities.

Tompolo's letter emphasized the importance of the signing, pointing out that it marked the fulfillment of a promise made by President Tinubu during his visit to Oporoza, the ancestral headquarters of Gbaramatu Kingdom, in 2022. The President had pledged to ensure the signing of the Bill into law upon his election, a commitment now fulfilled.

In his message, Tompolo reiterated the significance of the act for the people of the Niger Delta, stating that the signing of the Bill was a testament to President Tinubu's dedication to the growth and development of the South-South region.

He also assured the President of the unwavering support of the people of the Niger Delta and urged them to continue fostering peace and unity to attract further development.



The Managing Director/CEO, Nigeria LNG, Dr. Philip Mshelbila (right) and Authority Chief Executive (ACE) of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Engr. Farouk Ahmed, after a high-level engagement between representatives of both organisations, recently.

## Police Raid Brothels, Arrest Six Female Suspected Illicit Drug Traffickers In Akwa Ibom

The Akwa Ibom State Police Command said its operatives have raided strategic black spots in some local government areas of the state such as brothels, hotels compounds and arrested six female suspected drug dealers.

In a media briefing at the command headquarters, Ikot Akpan-Abia, Uyo, the Police Public Relations Officer in the state, DSP Timfon John identified the suspects as Happiness Malachi George, Queen Sambo Umoren, Joy Chima, Inyene-Obong Patrick

Michael, Rose Anietie Bassey and Sarah Iniobong Sunday. She said the suspects have confessed to the crime and substances suspected to be Indian hemp, ice and a jackknife were recovered from them.

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Ikot Akpan-Abia, Uyo, the Police Public Relations Officer in the state, DSP Timfon John identified the suspects as Happiness Malachi George, Queen Sambo Umoren, Joy Chima, Inyene-Obong Patrick Michael, Rose Anietie Bassey and Sarah Iniobong Sunday.

She said, "On 20th January 2025, at about 04:00hrs, based on credible information by a complainant that his apartment was burgled and valuable items were stolen. Operatives of the Command arrested two suspects, One Moses Godwin Ndong

and Abraham Godwill Eshiet, both males from Apostolic Road in Eket LGA. The suspects were found with burglary tools, including cutters and pliers. Upon interrogation, the suspects confessed to the crime and provided useful information which led to the recovery of the stolen items."

The Police Spokesperson while pledging CP Baba Mohammed Azare's determination to rid the state of crimes and criminality, urged the public to always provide credible information to the police.



# Sanwo-Olu Opens Four Newly Upgraded Roads In Amuwo -Odofin

The wave of projects' commissioning in Lagos State continued on Tuesday, as Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu inaugurated four newly completed road projects in Oriade town of Amuwo Odofin.

The Governor inaugurated the reconstructed Old Ojo Road, opening a faster alternative route for commuters travelling on Lagos-Badagry.

Sanwo-Olu also commissioned the newly rehabilitated and upgraded Mumuni Adio (formerly Buba Marwa) Road, Irede Road and Navy Town Road — all in Oriade axis of Amuwo Odofin.

The projects were part of the 36 road infrastructure completed across the three senatorial districts by the Sanwo-Olu administration.

The 7.65 kilometre-long Old Ojo Road, which extends from Irede to Maza Maza, was split into two construction phases. The completed first phase, which spans 4km from Irede Road to Oluti Bus Stop, was commissioned among the four projects inaugurated.

The second phase, Sanwo-Olu pledged, would be signed off in the coming quarters.

The Governor said the 2.2 km-long Irede Road was a single carriageway before it was expanded and dualised

with Continuously Reinforced Concrete Pavement (CRCP). The infrastructure, Sanwo-Olu said, will serve commuters connecting Lagos-Badagry Expressway at Trade Fair Bus Stop.

The Irede Road also serves as the gateway to Irede Jetty — a vital link for water transportation to several riverine communities, including Ibaso, Ibeshe, Ilesha and Imoore.

Sanwo-Olu said: "Today, we are commissioning yet another network of roads on the ever-growing list of life-changing public infrastructure that we have delivered to our people. Before now, one of the most critical challenges constantly experienced by

residents and road users along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway and environs, is the perennial gridlock, translating into travel inconvenience, loss of productive time, frustration and stress.

"Inauguration of these critical infrastructure projects is a testament to the fact that we are not unmindful of the pains of the people in this area. Our primary objective has been to provide lasting transport infrastructure and a strategic traffic management solution aimed at easing traffic congestion. It is also worth pointing out that we have gone the extra mile with these four roads, ensuring their upgrade from traditional asphalt into what is

called Continuously Reinforced Concrete Pavement."

The Governor said he was particularly elated to end the pain hitherto experienced by road users on Mumuni Adio Road, noting that the conditions of the 3.2km infrastructure deteriorated due to the heavy axle loads from articulated vehicles transporting petroleum products and goods.

The new concrete rigid pavement will offer road users a durable experience, as the newly rehabilitated carriageway would serve as a crucial artery in the Ijegun Egba area, providing vital access to several tank farms, Ijegun Egba Jetty and industrial establishments.

Sanwo-Olu reiterated that his administration would not relent in its infrastructure renewal efforts, disclosing that more projects inauguration would be held in Alimosho, Eti Osa and other areas in the coming days.

Appealing to all users to protect the infrastructure, the Governor said: "I urge all stakeholders including residents, drivers, traders, commuters, transport unions, and shop owners to do everything in your power to safeguard these projects, and ensure that there is zero tolerance for vandalism and abuse."

## Ondo Election Tribunal Commences Sitting

Olalekan Olaiya

The Legal Battle Over the conduct of the November 16, 2024, governorship election in Ondo State commenced on Friday as the Election Petition Tribunal held its inaugural sitting in Akure, the state capital.

Thousands of supporters of the All Progressives Congress (APC), the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and other political parties gathered at the court premises to witness the proceedings.

In his brief inaugural address, the Tribunal Chairman, Justice Benson Ogbu, called for the cooperation of all counsels, assuring all parties involved in the petition of a fair hearing and appropriate justice.

He urged all parties to provide the necessary support to enable the Tribunal to carry out its assignment effectively.

Justice Ogbu emphasized that the Tribunal's decisions would be based strictly on constitutional provisions. He advised counsels not to preempt the Tribunal's rulings and to refrain from addressing the press prematurely, urging them to wait for the final verdict.

He further stated that the use of phones or any record-

ing devices to capture the Tribunal's proceedings or the faces of the justices would not be allowed. However, he encouraged anyone seeking clarification to approach the Tribunal's secretariat.

Meanwhile, the parties involved in the case, including the PDP, APC, and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), are set to present 149 witnesses before the Election Petition Tribunal regarding the November 16 governorship election.

The opposition PDP announced that it would call 43 witnesses, INEC 19, Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa 32, while the APC and his running mate, Olaiyide Adelami, would present 20 and 35 witnesses, respectively.

The PDP and its governorship candidate, Hon. Agboola Ajayi, through their counsel, Ishaka Dikko, had filed a petition challenging the election that declared Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of the APC as the winner.

The petitioners were represented by Ishaka Dikko and Bankole Joy Akomolafe (Senior Advocate of Nigeria, SAN), while the respondents, including INEC, APC, Aiyedatiwa, and Adelami, were represented by Charles Edosan, Bode Olanipekun, H.O. Afolabi, and Tayo Oyetibo (SAN).



A cross section of the newly officers of Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN), Western Zone during their swearing in ceremony, at the Annual General Meeting/Elections 2025 of IPMAN, in Ibadan

## Gov Abiodun Gifts OOU's Overall best Student N3m, Others N500,000 each

By Olalekan Olaiya

Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun has awarded the overall best graduating student of the Olabisi Onabanjo University in the 2023/2024 session, Miss Dauda Aishat Anuoluwapo a sum of N3m as well as 14 others who performed excellently in different faculties 500,000 each.

He noted that beyond Ogun being the education capital of Nigeria, his vision is to make the state the capital of academy excellence and

innovation.

Governor Abiodun made this known in his address at the 34th Convocation ceremonies for the conferment of Honorary Degrees, Award of Higher Degrees and Diplomas, and the presentation of prizes alongside Admissions into First Degrees Programs of the University.

The Governor who was represented by his Deputy, Noimot Salako-Oyedele, said his administration has organised a series of capacity-building programs and

policies that will enable its citizenry access to quality education in the state.

He stressed that OOU plays a vital role in this nation particularly in capacity building through fostering research which culminates in academy excellence as well as community service, saying his government would ensure that the university continues to enjoy technological advancement and cutting edge resources to enhance these researches, alongside teaching and learning within its campuses.

He said, "Let me assure you that our Government remains fully committed to its continued development, this includes the construction of a modern lecture hall, state-of-the-art laboratories, student accommodation and recreational facilities.

"We are committed to expanding E-learning infrastructure and digital resources to equip our students with the necessary tools to compete in an increasingly globalised

world".

The state's helmsman hinted that the NELFUND initiated under the renewed hope agenda of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has significantly supported students across tertiary institutions, thereby enabling them to acquire the education needed for a secured future, while also appreciating the contributions of TETFUND at repositioning the state tertiary institutions through their various interventions.

He said the establishment of the state Education Trust Fund in 2020 for infrastructural development in state owned tertiary institutions not covered by TETFUND interventions, was to further enhance Governments investment in tertiary institutions, revealing that plans are underway to expand the funds to primary and secondary institutions, as a way of demonstrating a strong commitment to providing qualitative and accessible education at all levels.

## PDP Press Corps Condoles With Gov. Makinde Over Loss Of Brother

By Victor Peter

Journalists covering the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Thursday, extended condolence wishes to the governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde who lost his elder brother Engr. Sunday Makinde recently.

In a condolence statement signed by Press Corps Chairman, Samuel Ogidan,

the Corps, they described the death of Sunday as a huge loss to the Makinde family and asked them to take solace in the fact that every creature will on an appointed return back to his maker.

According to the statement, "Engr. Sunday Makinde was not just a brother, but a pillar of support and a committed patriot, who dedicated his life to the progress of Oyo State

and Nigeria. His exceptional brilliance, humility, and vision were widely recognised and will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

"Therefore, his demise is no doubt a huge loss to you, the entire Makinde family, the people of Oyo and Nigeria as a whole. We wish to offer our heartfelt sympathy during this difficult time.

"We understand the immense grief you are cur-

rently experiencing and want you to know that our thoughts and prayers are with you, your family, and the people of Oyo State.

"We encourage you to take solace in the numerous testimonies about his fulfilled life and legacy, above all believing that he has gone to rest in the bosom of the Almighty God".





L-R: Deputy Speaker, Niger State House of Assembly, Mrs Afiniki Eunice-Dauda; Chairman, Gurara LGA, Niger State, Mr. Abdulim Abubakar; Director-General, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Hajiya Zubaida Umar; Head of Operations, NEMA Niger/Kwara, Mr. Hassan Isah and other dignitaries, during the visit of NEMA DG to families of the Diko Petrol Tanker explosion at Gurara LGA, Niger State

## Tragedy In Kadunai As Prominent Zazzau Emirate Slumps, Dies At Public Event

By Achadu Gabriel

Tragedy struck in Kaduna State on Thursday, January 30, 2025 as the Sarkin Yakin Zazzau, Alhaji Rilwan Yahaya Pate, suddenly slumped and died while attending an event alongside the Emir of Zazzau, Ahmed Nuhu Bamalli.

Eyewitnesses say Pate, a senior council member of the Zazzau Emirate and Councilor in charge of Health Related Matters, collapsed unexpectedly and was rushed to Gambo Sawaba

General Hospital, Kofar Gayan Zaria, where he was confirmed dead.

The Zazzau Emirate Council, through its Media and Publicity Officer, Abdullahi Kwarbai, expressed deep sorrow over his passing.

Emir Bamalli described the late Pate as a hardworking and dedicated leader whose loss leaves a significant void in the Emirate.

His remains were laid to rest at Rimin Dodo on Thursday evening in accordance with Islamic rites.

## NCAA imposes 3-month suspension on Max Air over Kano incident

By Musa Abubakar

The Federal Government, through The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), has announced the suspension of operations by Max Air following recent night incident involving the airline's aircraft in Kano.

A Max Air B734 aircraft with registration marks 5N-MBD, had experienced a tyre burst on landing at Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano on Tuesday, 28th, January 2025 at about 2251 hours.

This would be the third incident in the space of three months involving a Max Air plane.

Though the 53 passengers on board were evacu-

ated unhurt, the aircraft was temporarily shut before the runway was reopened by the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) by 8:00 am on Wednesday.

The Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) has also initiated investigation into the occurrence.

However, the regulatory authority, the NCAA, in a statement confirming the incident said it will provide the required support to the NSIB in this regard.

Director of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection, Michael Achimugu in a statement said, "It must be stated that the specific cause(s) of this incident can only be established after the NSIB has conducted its investigation."

He added, "It is instructive to note that the NCAA had commenced organizational risk profiles for each scheduled operator, including Max Air, which is nearing its conclusion.

"However, as a result of this incident, Max Air is suspending its domestic flight operations for a period of three months with effect from midnight, 31st January, 2025, to allow for an internal appraisal of its operations by its management."

Achimugu stated that during the 3-month period, the NCAA will conduct a thorough safety and economic audit on Max Air.

"The safety audit will entail a re-inspection of Max Air's organization, procedures, personnel and aircraft

as specified by Part 1.3.3.3(b) of the Nigeria Civil Aviation Regulations, while the economic audit will critically examine the financial health of the airline to guarantee its capability to sustain safe flight operations.

"The resumption of Max Air's domestic flight operations will be predicated on the satisfactory completion of this audit.

"The NCAA is aware of the inconvenience this action may cause intending passengers of Max Air. However; the safety and well-being of passengers is paramount. Thus, the NCAA appeals for patience and understanding while it ensures the protection of passenger rights."

## Police Arrest Wife, Associates Of Wanted Chadian Terrorist In Kano

The Kano State Police Command has arrested the wife and several associates of a suspected Chadian terrorist, Ahmad Adam Abba, who is wanted for the killing of 17 people in his home country.

The arrests were made on the eve of the National Tijjaniyya Maulud ceremony, held at Sani Abacha Stadium in Kano last week.

Speaking to journalists in Kano on Friday, the Commissioner of Police, Salman Garba, revealed that Abba, who remains at large, had plans to establish a terrorist base in the state.

"The wanted Chadian suspected terrorist escaped out of Nigeria, and we have successfully apprehended three of his associates, including his wife, another Chadian named Jibrin Mohammed, 42 years old, and a Nigerian," Garba stated.

He disclosed that intelli-

gence-led policing had led to the discovery of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), which were recovered during the operation.

"Acting on one of the intelligence reports, IEDs were recovered, and discreet investigations are ongoing," he said.

Garba reassured residents that security agencies were working tirelessly to prevent any threats in Kano.

"Our teams are collaborating closely with other intelligence agencies and the communities to ensure that we are working hand-in-hand to identify any suspicious activities and individuals who may pose a security threat to our society," he added.

The commissioner also emphasised the importance of public cooperation in intelligence gathering, urging residents to report any suspicious activities to the authorities.

"It is vital that we foster trust and cooperation between the police and the communities we serve, as this partnership is essential in combating crime and preventing likely emerging security threats," he noted.

He further stated that patrols and surveillance had been intensified in areas known to be vulnerable to criminal activities.

In addition, Garba said the police command, through its public relations unit, would continue conducting awareness programs to educate the public on security matters.

"Our commitment to ensuring the safety of the people of Kano remains unwavering. We encourage residents to remain vigilant and report any suspicious movements promptly," he concluded.

## FG, Foundation Launch Pilot Feeding Programme In Kaduna School

By Achadu Gabriel

In a significant step towards improving child nutrition and education, the Federal Government through the Renewed Hope National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (RH-NHGSFP), has launched a pilot feeding programme at Jere Tsangaya School in the Kagarko Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

The programme attended by the Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Yusuf Tanko Sununu; key government officials, development partners, and community stakeholders underscores President Bola Tinubu's commitment to

tackling child hunger, enhancing education, and supporting vulnerable communities.

The event held at Jere in Kagarko Local Government Area of Kaduna State is a pilot programme for the RH-NHGSFP model in partnership with Aminu Musa Abdulsalam (AMA) Foundation and Kaduna State Government to ensure that more children in Tsangaya schools and underserved communities benefit from sustainable, nutritious feeding interventions.

Speaking during the launching of the feeding programme, Sununu, who disclosed that over 785 pupils of this institution were enrolled and captured in the National Register, com-

mended the Homegrown School Feeding Programme for demonstrating collaboration with other intergovernmental agencies.

He said: "Mr. President's will is to see that families have enough buffer that can allow them to have the freedom to do their normal activities in the country so that they can contribute positively to the development.

"In this regard, our ministry is ever ready to face that challenge. Let me assure Nigerians, the suspension has been placed following the happenings in the ministry in the last few months.

"That suspension of all social intervention programmes in Nigeria has been lifted by Mr. President.

"I want to assure all the empowered beneficiaries that their dues will soon be settled and we will continue with the programme's grant to the vulnerable groups and other social interventions, such as the Homeschool Feeding Program that we are flagging off today will not only be restored but will come in a better form that will see the advantage by Nigerians so that everybody will have to trust.

"On our part, we assure you that we are going to be transparent enough and very accountable so that we can restore the trust of not only Nigerians but of the international community to the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction so that together

we cannot only walk the talk but we can reach people at their doorstep."

Speaking earlier, the National Programme Manager of Renewed Hope National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, Dr. Aderemi Adebawale, reaffirmed the government's commitment to nurturing the next generation by investing in their well-being and education.

"As we launch this enhanced feeding programme, we are not just providing meals; we are securing the future of our children. The success of this initiative is a testament to what we can achieve through collaboration, dedication, and a shared vision," she said.



# Kwara Assembly passes N585bn Budget For 2025

The Kwara State House of Assembly, on Thursday, passed the state budget of N584.693 billion for the 2025 fiscal year.

The passed budget, by the legislative arm, represents an increase of over N44.325 billion compared to the N540.368 billion that was initially pre-

sented by the executive arm.

It was reported that in the approved budget, provisions were increased for critical sectors, including education, health, agriculture, water, housing, youth, works, and transport.

The budget estimate was passed after consider-

ing the report of the House Committee on Finance and Appropriation at the Committee of Supply, laid before the House by its Chairman, Fatimah Arinola Lawal, representing Ilorin East Constituency from the Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Lawal elucidated that the approved estimate con-

tained a recurrent expenditure of over N205.296 billion, compared to N204.711 billion, indicating an increase of over N585 million, while capital expenditure stands at over N379.396 billion, compared to the sum of N335.657 billion presented by the executive, with a difference of

N43.739 billion in increase.

She maintained that the estimate was thoroughly scrutinised, as relevant government ministries, agencies, parastatals, and other stakeholders were invited for clarifications before arriving at the approved budget.

The appropriation bill was read for the third time by the Clerk of the House, Alhaji Kareem Olayiwola Ahmed.

Consequently, the Speaker, Salihu Yakubu-Danladi, directed the clerk to prepare a clean copy of the proposed budget estimate for the governor's assent.



Bauchi state Commissioner of Police, Auwal Musa Muhammad (front) inspecting newly recruited constables during the 2022 batch passing out parade ceremony held at Police Training school Yelwa, Bauchi state on Thursday.

## Senator Moro condemns sealing Of Joy FM By Benue Govt

By Paul Onehi

Senate Minority Leader Abba Moro has condemned the closure of Joy FM, Otukpo, by the Benue State government.

He described the action taken by the government as an assault on press freedom.

This was contained in a statement on Friday by his Media Aide, Mr. John Eche'Ofun.

"Moro condemns the commando-style invasion and sealing off of Joy FM, Otukpo, by officials of Benue State Internal Revenue Service, BIRS.

"Senator Moro describes the forceful closure of the station as an attempt to gag the press, an action he says is unacceptable in the 21st century.

"The senator insists that media houses must be given the freedom to operate as long as they operate within the ambit of the law.

"He identifies with management and staff of the radio station at this trying period and hopes the station will be unsealed without delays for them to continue to carry out their job of information dissemination."



Senator Moro

## Ajaokuta LNG Plants Will Position Kogi As A Key Player In Nigeria's Energy Sector –Governor Ododo

By Nathaniel Gumniba

Kogi State Governor, Ahmed Usman Ododo, has said the establishment of five Mini Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants in Ajaokuta by the Federal Government through the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited and its private sector partners will strategically position Kogi as an energy hub in Nigeria.

Governor Ododo made this statement on Thursday during the groundbreaking ceremony of the LNG plants in Ajaokuta where he emphasized that the project will play a pivotal role in enhancing Nigeria's energy landscape, fostering economic growth, improving energy access, and reinforcing Kogi State's significance in the country's industrial development.

Governor Ododo described the LNG plants as a transformative investment that will not only position Kogi as an energy hub but also stimulate economic activities in the state.

"We are witnessing a historic moment that will rede-

fine Kogi's place in Nigeria's energy sector.

This project is not just about gas production; it is about economic transformation, job creation, and ensuring that our state plays a central role in Nigeria's energy future," Governor Ododo stated.

He underscored the economic impact of the initiative, highlighting its potential for job creation, increased investment, and industrial growth, stressing that his administration's commitment to developing a skilled workforce will find through expression in opportunities being created by new investment in the emerging energy sector.

Governor Ododo commended President Bola Tinubu for his dedication to Nigeria's energy transition and for mobilizing NNPC Limited and its private sector partners including Prime LNG, NGML/GASNEXUS LNG, LNG Arete, Highland LNG, and BUA LNG to establish the LNG plants in Ajaokuta.

He expressed optimism that the LNG plants will become a crucial part of

Kogi's energy infrastructure, significantly reducing carbon emissions while advancing sustainable energy solutions in Kogi state and Nigeria.

"With an initial combined production capacity of over 80 million cubic feet per day, these plants will serve as a key resource for both national and international energy markets," Governor Ododo added.

He described the project as a landmark achievement that aligns with his administration's vision of transforming Kogi into a leading energy and industrial hub in Nigeria.

Governor Ododo further assured that his government remains committed to providing an enabling environment, sustaining peace and security, and attracting more investments to the state.

Earlier, the Group Chief Executive Officer of NNPC Limited, Mele Kyari, emphasized that the LNG plants are part of the Federal Government's strategy to revolutionize the gas sector, positioning it as a key driver of economic prosperity.

Kyari noted that this ini-

tiative is not just a symbolic event but a concrete step towards energy transformation, stressing that all necessary equipment are ready for immediate deployment with assurance that the project would be completed on schedule in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

Kyari further commended Governor Ododo for mobilizing support from host communities, recognizing them as the first beneficiaries of the initiative.

The project, spearheaded by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited in collaboration with private sector partners, aims to enhance domestic gas supply, drive industrialization, and create employment opportunities.

Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas), Rt. Hon. Ekperikpo Ekpo, credited President Tinubu's executive order for fast-tracking the development of the LNG plants.

He emphasized that the project is a direct response to the federal government's push to maximize Nigeria's gas potential and support industrialization efforts.

## NSCDC apprehends four suspected rail line vandals in Plateau

By Paul Onehi

The Plateau command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has apprehended four suspected vandals of railway slippers in the state.

Ishaku Musa, the commandant of the corps in the state, disclosed this during a news conference on Friday in Jos.

Mr Musa said the suspects were apprehended on January 24 at Bukuru, Jos South Local Government

Area (LGA).

"Following an intelligence report, our Anti-Vandals Squad invaded Mai Reke Market, Bukuru, Jos South LGA and arrested four suspected vandals of railway slippers.

"The suspects were arrested alongside a truck containing 33 full lengths and 22 short lengths slippers," he said.

The commandant further said the command would charge the suspects to court upon the conclusion of the investigation.





# Pirates Drove A Lot Of Foreign Music Recording Companies Out Of Nigeria - Stella Monye

Stella Monye, known as the Samba Queen is back to the industry that gave her fame after more than two decades hiatus. Her long absence in the industry was as a result of her son's accident. She narrates her experience and how this affected her music career. Enjoy this interview she had with Sam Orji

**Y**ou have been outside the music industry for a long time, how are you adjusting to the new trend in the sector now?

In the first place, my long absence was due to my son's accident which became so cumbersome because we have to travel from hospital to hospital and so, I really did not have time to pursue my career for almost two decades that I focused on my son's treatment. It's not as if it's over, it's just that I told myself, if you don't go back to work; it will be even more difficult to pay his bills because his medical procedure is systematic and its being done in America. I just told myself, you have to go back to work and combine the two. I gave it time and I have gotten to that point where I can say okay; while it's still going on, I can still work and cushion the effect of raising money for his treatment.

**How has it been carrying the burden of your son's treatment for this long and where has help come from so far?**

I will answer the first question you asked on how I am adjusting back into the business after so many years.

I know it's a generational shift from what we did and what these new generations are doing. There's no competition. I am not competing with anyone because I believe that whatever I am doing now, I have just moved a bit higher. I have gone beyond singing about mundane things and my songs are inspirational songs based on experience, so I have to sing about positive things that can inspire people. Most of the things you will be hearing from me are positive and inspirational songs and it does not mean that all these while, I have not been singing inspirational songs.

Concerning my son, I have gone through a lot of emotional torture looking at him knowing that when he is in pain, I am in pain as well; knowing that this thing happened when I left him at home for national assignment. I feel guilt because if I had taken him along or had stayed with him, it would not have happened. I have even survived heart attack during this process because I also have my own underlying medical conditions. I am diabetic, I have BP and I am managing everything at the same time. Sometimes I call myself a cat with 13 lives. Financially, it's cumbersome, emotionally it's stressful and physically it's demanding. Now that I have to combine my job with it, I have to look forward to tougher days ahead.

**You were on national assignment when this accident happened, was there at a point government, or PMAN or your colleagues came in to support financially?**

At the initial time when this happened I remember when we came back from Abuja, it was difficult because the General Hospital then did not do a good job on the surgery they did on him and that was the genesis of the problem. That was when we started moving him from one hospital to another and my colleagues came out and like I said, at every point there's been little support from here and there. They marched on the road with me to raise funds and at that time, we raised about N1m which did not go anywhere because each hospital we went to demanded much more than that because it was very complicated and complex surgery. I get help from here today, tomorrow I don't get help; it's just being like that.

**Whats the state of his health presently, I believe he is in the final stage now?**



Stella Monye

I pray so because a lot of things happened when we got to America, we had already visited India and Tigrish before we ended up in America all based on recommendations. When we ended up in America, they said they have not seen this kind of thing before because all the surgeries they did have really made things worse. They have really damaged a lot of his organs and there were a lot of technical things they have to perform on him to get him to where he is now. Like I said, he doesn't still have clean bill of health, they are still doing semantic treatment in that when they do one surgery for him, we have to wait for him to heal maybe like six months before we are back on the next one.

Maybe today they are working on his bladder; next time his intestine, or kidney. We are still working and praying that soon they will give him a clean bill of health but funding has been a very difficult part.

**In totally, what did the doctors say is actually the problem with your son?**

What happened is that when he had the accident, it was just one major problem and this now festered to other problems. They do this surgery, there's no success, they will say his bladder is not growing, we have to expand his bladder and something happens, they will say it has kicked his kidney, each time there's always a major organ involved, until everything becomes settled and they will give him clean bill of health.

**I understand you are working on new album 'Iyaanu', how far have you gone?**

I have already completed the 'Iyaanu' album and I was going to set things in motion but 'He prepared me,' took over because it came from another person's effort and they were ready for whatever it takes to push it out.

**Your new song 'He prepared me,' is it out, what inspired the song?**

It's a song written by a song company in America called Far Cry. It was inspired by some of the experiences I have gone through which inspired them to write the song for me. For a long time, I wanted to do the song but I found out that I was not mentally ready for it. However, I told myself that if I don't go back

to work, I will continue to pay for that experience.

So, I went to the studio; I did the song and it came out on September 31.

**Is it a gospel song?**

No. It's an inspirational song.

**Are you going to include the song 'He prepared me' in the album?**

It's a new terrain for me and I will be doing a couple of songs with Far Cry Songs that's the name of the song company. They write songs for artistes. I will be doing a couple of songs with them and you know how these things work, it's not like in our time when you record an album and you will have like 12 songs to have a complete album.

Now, by the time I do all the singles, it will be ready for album compilation which is how it works now, do singles and compile them and it becomes an album, unlike during our days when you have to suffer and include 15 songs in an album and then one becomes a hit.

**Any video on the single?**

Both audio and video came out the same day.

**You studied theater arts which**

I had strong band behind me: Zeal Onyia was behind me, Peter King, they were playing Saxophone, Lagbaja was the bassist, Willy Bestman was the drummer, Remy Kabaka was the drummer and I was in front. I was the one representing Nigeria and because of these great musicians that were behind me everything went explosive.

**took you on stage performances to a couple of places outside the country but you ended up in music, what happened? When did you change your mind?**

It wasn't a change of mind because I was really interested in theater arts. I thought that after my study I would become a TV producer or work with a radio station. I took a lot of interest in music and don't forget that in theater, you do a lot of songs and dancing on stage. I started writing songs that I could use for my stage drama and then I wrote 'Oko mi ye', somebody heard the song and said, 'this one is good; you can make a record out of this. I said I could try and that was how I took my tape to the record company EMI, I dropped it there and never got back to them or asked. So, one day a message came to my father's house that my demonstration tape was no 1 at the panel and they said I should come for my contract. I was surprised, I didn't take the whole thing serious, I went to EMI and the rest is now history. I recorded an album and it became a hit.

**Why would a student write that song, 'Oko mi ye' (my husband please) when you are not married?**

It was inspired by my mum; she endured because she wanted to be with her children. She was really that kind of African woman who told herself that she was not going anywhere even if she has to die looking after her kids because my father was polygamous in nature. My father married more women after my mother, who was the first wife and it was really a battle. So, I have to do a song because of my mum.

**How did you get the name, 'Samba Queen'?**

I was not the one that gave myself the Samba Queen; it was the media, when I did Arigo Samba. After Arigo Samba which is very percussive in style and Samba means percussive, like konga that they play in Brazil. Because of the percussive background, the media named me the Samba queen, from then on I became the Samba queen.

**When you travelled to the Caribbean during one of your tours, they tagged you the bombshell. What really happened?**

I wouldn't know if there was anything special, all I know is that one of my greatest gifts is being able to perform well on stage, being able to interpret whatever I am doing very well on stage. I think I came around with something great from Nigeria.

I had strong band behind me: Zeal Onyia was behind me, Peter King, they were playing Saxophone, Lagbaja was the bassist, Willy Bestman was the drummer, Remy Kabaka was the drummer and I was in front. I was the one representing Nigeria and because of these great musicians that were behind me everything went explosive. It was great because Mariam Makeba was on that tour; she came to represent South Africa including other artists from all over the world were there.

It was the 150th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in diaspora. It was just something to unify all the black people and also celebrate the abolition of the slave trade. It was great, like I said; when you have these people I mentioned behind you, of course; you cannot afford to fail. There were other great artistes and I said, I will go and hide my face but after the performance; the media chose me as the bombshell in that festival.



## The Future Of Teacher Education: Assessing The Relevance Of College Of Education



By Paul Onehi

The proposed transformation of Colleges of Education (COEs) into Universities of Education by the Federal Government has generated significant discussion. While some view this move as an acknowledgement of systemic challenges within the sub-sector, others contend that the institutions have lost their relevance and should be abolished. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether this initiative will increase the attractiveness of education programs to students or simply circumvent the deeper issues affecting the sector.

The establishment of Colleges of Education (COEs) in Nigeria was a direct response to the findings of the Ashby Commission in 1958. The commission's report exposed significant deficiencies in the country's colonial-era education system, particularly in teacher training. Noting that many teachers lacked proper certification and training, the commission recommended the expansion of intermediate education for teachers. Consequently, Advanced Teachers' Colleges were established, which later evolved into Colleges of Education.

They were meant to produce well-qualified teachers for elementary and junior secondary schools to replace the older Grade II Teachers. Teachers from COEs were awarded the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). The four that existed then were Advanced Teachers College, Ondo; Advanced Teachers College, Zaria; Advanced Teachers College, Kano and Alvan Ikoku Advanced Teachers College.

They increased in number gradually.

However, over time, the landscape has shifted dramatically. The teaching profession, once revered, has lost its prestige. Unfortunately, many students now pursue education courses not out of passion or aspiration, but rather as a fallback option.

Nigeria's Minister of Education, Tunji Alausa, recently proposed converting all federal colleges of education into universities of education. This suggestion was made during the ministry's 2025 budget defense at the National Assembly in Abuja. Alausa questioned

the relevance of colleges of education, citing their absence in countries like the United States. He attributed the need for this conversion to the declining interest in colleges of education among students.

The proposed conversion aims to address the waning popularity of teacher training institutions. However, it raises questions about the potential impact on Nigeria's education system. Will this move enhance the quality of education or simply mask underlying issues? Only time will tell.

Alausa noted that despite budgetary allocation to the colleges of education, some of them were having less than 1,000 students.

"Do we need these colleges of education? They don't exist in the United States of America and several other advanced countries. Let us convert them to universities of education," he said.

He noted that in this year's budget for education, N139.3 billion was earmarked for colleges of education and there are 32 federal colleges in the country.

Colleges of Education (COEs) in Nigeria are affected by poor enrollment. Observers said students are unwilling to study education courses because they find them neither attractive nor lucrative. Data from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) shows that application into National Certificate of Education (NCE) programmes are usually the lowest.

A breakdown revealed that between 2019 and 2023, only 211,201 applications were recorded for admission into COEs, universities and polytechnics that are running education programmes, but only 198,798 were eventually admitted. A further breakdown showed that in 2019, 34,138 candidates applied for NCE programmes, but 71,188 were later admitted. Therefore, candidates without interest in education were eventually admitted.

In 2020, Colleges of Education received 80,355 applications, with 49,678 candidates securing admission, resulting in a 40% rejection rate. However, the following year saw a significant decline in interest, with only 15,746 applications received in 2021.

Notably, 30,731 candidates were admitted that year, indicating that many students without a genuine interest in education were offered admission.

The admission trends for Colleges of Education (COEs) reveal a declining interest in National Certificate of Education (NCE) programs. Between 2020 and 2023, the number of applicants and admissions consistently decreased.

In 2022, 52,627 candidates applied for COE programs, with only 35,466 securing admissions. The following year, 2023, saw a further decline, with 28,335 applications received and only 11,735 candidates admitted.

A closer examination of the admission data reveals that NCE programs accounted for a small percentage of total admissions. In 2021, NCE admissions constituted 6.22% (30,731) of the 494,088 total admissions. This percentage decreased to 2.47% (11,735) in 2023, out of 474,765 total admissions.

Furthermore, the quota allocation for NCE admissions was not met in any of the examined years. In 2021, only 6.75% (30,731) of the allocated quota of 454,700 was filled. This underutilization persisted, with 7.56% (35,466) and 2.49% (11,735) of the quota filled in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Despite failing to meet admission quotas, Colleges of Education (COEs) lowered cut-off marks to stimulate enrollment. However, this strategy yielded minimal results, highlighting a deeper issue. The Ministry's proposal to upgrade COEs may address some concerns, but many experts argue that the problems plaguing these institutions run far deeper, requiring more comprehensive reforms.

In a bid to boost the appeal of Colleges of Education (COEs), the Federal Government granted approval to the National Commission for Colleges Education (NCCE) to introduce the Dual Mode system. This system allows colleges to run both degree and Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programs simultaneously. However, this move appears contradictory, as the government is now proposing to convert these colleges into universities.

This raises questions about the gov-

ernment's long-term plan for COEs. On one hand, introducing the Dual Mode system aims to attract more students and enhance the quality of education. On the other hand, converting COEs into universities may undermine their unique role in providing specialized training for teachers and educators.

It's worth noting that experts like Sonny Echono, executive secretary of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), have expressed concerns about the conversion plan, emphasizing the need for more investment in teacher education rather than dismantling existing institutions.

Executive Secretary of NCCE, Prof. Paulinus Chijioke, also note that, the development was targeted at improving access to teacher education, addressing low enrollment, and ensuring quality production of professional teachers in the country.

Chijioke also stressed the need to continue to elevate the status of the teaching profession, ensuring that it attracted the brightest and most passionate individuals.

Contributing on the issue, Deputy National President, National Parent Teacher Association of Nigeria (NAPTAN), Chief Adeolu Ogunbanjo, said, "Colleges of Education came at that time because of the need to have professional teachers. We have had so much of them. But unfortunately, they are neither here nor there. They are not graduates. NAPTAN supports the proposal to upgrade the colleges to universities.

Then with this, the teachers should be well trained so that education's quality will improve. Of what use is NCE if it is not serving its purpose again? They have probably outlived their relevance and usefulness. When they were created, a special salary was created for them. We had so many of them. Now, they cannot be classified as ND or HND. They are neither here nor there. So, they should be turned to universities so that there would be no discrimination against any programme.

"Since government wants the colleges upgraded, it should be ready for robust funding. So that we won't start producing NCE holders in universities. Government should do the needful on proper funding."



## Strategic Land Use Evaluation: The Game-Changer in Nigeria's Economic Rebirth

By ESV. FOLASHADE FOLAKEAJALA

Land and landed resources which is a benevolent gift to man, constitutes an integral component of the natural and built environment. Its unique contribution to human existence have remained significant judging from the economic standpoint of production. Tracing back from the early ages of stone era to the contemporary age of industrialization, land have been distinguished as factor of production that renders necessary support to man's social and economic endeavors. The demand for land in the rapidly urbanizing world with an ever-increasing population have been intense now more than ever. Concerns on how best to utilize land have consistently occupied the thoughts of decision makers across the globe.

Competitive land uses including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural and other

special functions which can be put to land which is a scarce economic commodity have resulted to stiff competition among various players in the land market. Amidst the intensity of land utilization by diverse users with varying motives, is the growing challenge of land misuse and under-utilization. Land's economic potential to function profitably in the domain of wealth creation have not been fully explored due to poor land use analysis. The use of land for purposes that do not fit a specific site or creates adverse impact on adjoining land uses have been the major issues facing developing countries.

Developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) faced with rising economic difficulties, dearth of skilled land experts and inadequate land management technologies have consistently suffered from problems of inefficient monitoring and regulation of land uses and development. In Nigeria, the issues of unplanned

development which stimulates urban sprawl, slum and ghetto formation have ultimately influenced property values negatively. The resultant effect of having declining property values due to unwise land uses have been

Collaborating with professional bodies like the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV) can create the possibility for continued training of staffs in government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).

reflected in public finance domain particularly revenue generation through land-based taxation. Not having sufficient ability to guide policy-makers on appropriate land use hampers economic revitalization through optimal land value capture (LVC).

Informed decisions on land use planning through adequate evaluation techniques including cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and environmental impact assessment (EIA) aided with advanced computer technology would present alternatives with the highest and best uses (HBU) suitable for a specific land at a given point in time. Policy-makers in the real estate and construction industry through sound decision making process that is based on proven outcomes will deliver development projects that are sustainable with prospects for economic viability. The government in developing countries like Nigeria can accumulate wealth from well-planned land uses which presents

huge financial benefits that can be tapped from by virtue of enhanced capital values of property investment built on sites that supports the proposed or intended use.

Nigeria with a great endowment of land and mineral resources can possibly make out the best uses from its economically scarce resources by harmonizing the critical inputs of qualified experts in land and environmental economics like the Estate Surveyors and Valuers, Urban Planners and other professionals in the land related discipline. The government can unearth the latent talents of its workforce in the land profession by ensuring strengthened partnership with professional bodies. Collaborating with professional bodies like the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV) can create the possibility for continued training of staffs in government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).

## The Revolutionary Impact of Disruptive Internet Technologies in Land Use Sustainability

By ESV. FOLASHADE FOLAKEAJALA

Land utilization in a world constantly shaped by advanced digital technology have remained dynamic in the modern age. Unique changes reckoned in contemporary communication systems have increasingly disrupted the norm of global business practice across diverse fields. The emergence of cutting-edge solutions in the world which have now been transformed to a global village, is unarguably the game-changer in present land management practice including Estate Management, Urban Planning, Land Surveying and other associated fields.

Land's function in the built environment as a unit of decision-making for private or public investment, makes it a special commodity that requires active management in terms of coordination, supervision and monitoring. How-

ever, owing to its geographically fixed nature, the issue of heterogeneity have affected the ability of regulating and monitoring land use over a given space and time. The globalization of real estate business operations as enabled by the power of real-time internet facilities on the world-wide web have significantly transformed the approach of land management from manually operated analogue system to automatically controlled digital systems.

The advent of disruptive digital technologies with internet access have provided spatial decision support to land experts who now leverage on computer applications to simultaneously manage lands that are scattered across different geographic locations. Software programs such as Web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) linked with Artificial Intelligence (AI) like the Artificial Neural Networks (ANN) and Fuzzy Logic have made it possible for land use

data to be analyzed swiftly for decision-making in terms of suitability, safety and sustainability. In developed countries, land policy makers through smart internet technologies have identified and addressed problems including patterns of urban development, distribution

Through enhanced communication infrastructure delivery and sound education program on real estate, Nigeria will have a pool of skilled human capital resources whose contribution to the digital economy will be valuable and well placed on the global business map.

of land title and ownership, housing types, condition and so on.

Developing countries in sharp contrast to their counterparts in developed country have not been able to completely embrace the application of these innovative technologies in their land practice for numerous reasons bothering mainly on socio-economic problems. Challenges encountered in developing countries like Nigeria have been erratic power supply, inadequate spatial data infrastructure, poor penetration of internet, high cost of data subscription and little or no technical know-how. Against this background, the use of advanced information and communication technology (ICT) have been limited, thus creating a lot of operational difficulties in real estate business practice. There is need to address these problems in order to make a name among global leaders in the digital economy.

The Nigerian government in

the bid to improve the efficiency of land use for quality investment in a manner that promotes sustainability should consider developing robust spatial data infrastructure (SDI) by building a solid partnership with tech-oriented countries having trained specialist in information technology. The Ministry of Education in synergy with professional bodies like Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV) and relevant academic unions regulating higher institutions offering Estate Management and Valuation should close the skill gaps by introducing sound curriculum and programs that meets modern day reality and skill demand.

Through enhanced communication infrastructure delivery and sound education program on real estate, Nigeria will have a pool of skilled human capital resources whose contribution to the digital economy will be valuable and well placed on the global business map.

## A Plea For Harmony: Kaduna, Our Shared Home

By Godwin Anyebe

The whispers coming out of Kaduna are deeply troubling. Reports of communities segregating along religious lines, with Christians leaving one area and Muslims another, paint a grim picture of a society fracturing at its core. If these reports are true, it is a stark indictment of our collective failure to build a truly inclusive and harmonious society. This is not how it is supposed to be. This is not the Kaduna we should accept.

Kaduna has a long and complex history, marked by periods of both peaceful coexistence and devastating conflict. The wounds of

past violence are still raw, and the scars remain visible. Yet, amidst this history, there has always been the potential for a different narrative – one of mutual respect, understanding, and shared prosperity. This potential is now being threatened by the insidious forces of division.

The idea that people should feel compelled to leave their homes simply because of their religious beliefs is anathema to everything we should stand for. It violates the fundamental principles of human dignity and freedom of religion. It creates an environment of fear and mistrust, where communities are pitted against each other, and the

fabric of society is torn apart.

Both Christianity and Islam, the two dominant religions in Kaduna, preach peace, compassion, and brotherhood. Both emphasize the importance of tolerance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. How then can we reconcile these teachings with the reality of communities segregating themselves along religious lines? How can we claim to be people of faith while allowing prejudice and hatred to fester in our hearts?

The truth is, we cannot. We must confront the uncomfortable truth that religious identity has been weaponized for political and personal gain, fueling division and

conflict. We must reject the narratives of hatred and division that seek to define us. We must instead embrace the values of empathy, understanding, and mutual respect.

The responsibility to build a harmonious Kaduna rests on all of us. Religious leaders have a crucial role to play in promoting interfaith dialogue and fostering understanding between communities. Political leaders must prioritize inclusive governance and ensure that all citizens are treated equally, regardless of their religious affiliation. Community leaders must work to build bridges between different groups and promote peaceful coexistence.

But ultimately, it is the responsibility of each and every individual to reject prejudice and embrace tolerance. We must learn to see each other not as members of different religious groups, but as fellow human beings, sharing a common humanity and a common destiny. We must recognize that our diversity is not a weakness, but a strength.

The path to healing and reconciliation will not be easy. It will require courage, empathy, and a willingness to confront our own biases and prejudices. But it is a path we must take if we are to build a better future for ourselves and for generations to come.





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## I Met My Ex-Husband At 14 Years, Married At 18, Divorced At 21- Blessing CEO

Stories by Sam Orji

Controversial relationship expert Blessing Okoro aka Blessing CEO, has opened up on her broken marriage. The relationship therapist pointed out that she met her former husband at the age of 14 but officially got married to him after she attained the age of 18 years, which is the legal age for marriage.

She made this revelation in a video she shared on her Instagram page

She said her marriage forced her into adulthood pre-

maturely because she gave birth to the only child of the marriage through a caesarian operation and the scar is till with her though she also agreed that the man groomed her to make her what she is today.

I was 14 to 15 years old when I met my ex-husband who was 14 years older than me. I got married to him when I was 18 and I divorced him when I was 20. He groomed me and I was a virgin. He was the first man I ever met, he groomed me and married me but guess what? I left. That's why there

is a blessing CEO today. I had a son for that man and the first ever scar on my body was my C-section scar. She explained.

Blessing CEO noted that the early marriage denied her of her youthful experience as she was forced into adulthood early in life. I never experienced a youthful phase because I was so young and had to mature quickly. I was never involved in the typical dating scene.

She further revealed that the marriage only lasted for three years as she left the marriage at the age of 21 but could

not conclude the divorce process until five years later.

Blessing explained further, Even after I left the man at 21, he stressed me until I was 26 on that divorce matter. It took me 5 years to get a divorce and custody, he threatened me. I had to wait for us to properly get a divorce before I could move on with my life. Even when I left, society shamed me.

The relationship expert however encouraged women in toxic relationships or marriage to exit when necessary not minding what the society will say about them.



## RHOL: Dabota Lawson explains why she Wants To Avoid The Ikeji Siblings



In episode 2 of The Real Housewives of Lagos, Dabota Lawson, revealed her reasons for not wanting a close relationship with the Ikejis following an incident where the paternity of her child was challenged in a piece written by Laura's sister.

"I never want to cross anyone like that again in my life," she said. She emphasized how difficult it was to face the pressure for the piece posted in relation to her daughter,

while empathizing with what Carolyn had faced during her own share of intense public scrutiny. You impressed me with your apology to Laura, but I expected a better

response from Laura, she disclosed. She confessed that she was expecting a more emotional response from Laura as opposed to the unmoved gesture given.

On the other hand, Carolyn did not care for her response. Whether she apologizes or not, it is up to her. For me, it was a healing moment, she added.

Carolyn further explained that her apology stemmed from her upbringing and a deep-seated belief in the importance of owning up to one's mistakes. She also acknowledged that Laura likely wanted to move on from the incident and focus on her family.



## Hold Toke Makinwa Responsible If Anything Happens To Tubaba VDM



Sensational social media critic Martins Vincent Otse, popularly known as Very Dark Man, has alerted the public to hold media personality Toke Makinwa, responsible if anything should happen to popular singer Innocent Idibia aka Tubaba.

He made this statement following a post from Toke, after 2Face's divorce announcement from his wife, Annie. The media personality had in her reaction to the news

of the divorce, described the singers announcement as unfair and declared that We will fight for her.

Reacting to her comment, the social critic warned Makinwa against any attack on the singer, who also has made some startling revelations about his frustrations in the marriage.

In a trending video on social media, VDM said, It seems all the Nigerian women have had a meeting to throw hate on

2Face. First thing first, if anything happens to 2Face, we go pick all of una, especially Toke Makinwa. Make nothing touch 2Face ooo. Yes, because all I see here is double standards.

You will recall that the legendary singer and the 'African queen' crooner, Tubaba, recently shocked the social media space after he announced his divorce to his actress wife Annie Idibia via his Instagram page.



## Eucharika Anunobi Urges Couples To Stay Committed In Marriage

Legendary Nollywood actress Eucharika Anunobi, who is now an evangelist - winning souls for Christ, has advised couples going through marital crises against divorce except when it becomes life threatening.

She encouraged couples to take time to work on their marriage, pray and invite God into their situation.

She also recommends retreats, suggesting that if they cannot go as a pair, they should go alone. The actress emphasized that couples

should do everything to make their marriage work, improve on their communication and relationship instead of giving up on each other. She added that divorce should come as a last resort, only in life-threatening situations.

The actress cum evangelist dished out this piece of advice in the wake of singer Tubaba's divorce announcement to his actress wife - Annie Idibia.

The actress, who was once married, said that she has learnt from the experi-

ence of her broken marriage and she is ready to get back to family life if the man she loves comes her way.

In the last couple of years the entertainment industry have witnessed a gale of divorces from entertainers like singer Harrysong and Alexer, comedian Ayo Makun, popularly known as AY and his ex-wife Mabel, actor Yul Edochie and his estranged wife May, and comedian Bright Okpocha, also called Basketmouth and his wife, among others.



# 12 Years Of Agony: Abdullahi Iliya's Struggle For Survival With Untreated Burn Wounds And Tragic Losses

Abdullahi Iliya is above 20 years old and has been nursing open wounds he sustained as a result of burns in his two legs. He has been battling with the wounds for 12 years without proper treatment and the condition of his legs are getting deteriorated, limiting his chances of survival. To worsen his condition, his parents both died few months after the incident, leaving him stranded without a caregiver.

In this interview with our correspondent \*Samuel Luka\* , Abdullahi narrates how he has been battling with life in such a serious health challenge. Excerpts :

**A**buja Post: Tell us your name, address and age

Abdullahi: My name is Abdullahi Iliya and I live in Wuntin Dada Community, Jos Road, Bauchi state. I am above 20 years.

Abuja Post: What happened to your legs? I can see wounds all over them.

Abdullahi: I was caught up in a fire incident which broke out in one filling station along Jos Road, Bauchi about 12 years ago. I have been battling with this wounds since then up to this day that I am talking to you and the little assistance I used to get from some people is no longer there because the treatment has taken a very long time and I lack the money to go for proper treatment. As a result of this problem I couldn't continue in school since the incident happened. My life is been wasted and my hope for better living is crippled due to this lingering health challenge.

Abuja Post: what are your parents doing about it?

Abdullahi: My parents have died. When the accident occurred, I was rushed to the hospital where I was given some first aid, I was administered a drip, we couldn't continue with the treatment in the hospital and was taken to herbalist by my caregivers because they were aggrieved that no Doctor came to check on me. So they took me away in anger. My father and mother died about a month after the incident. I was left at the mercy of neighbors who have tried their best by helping with what to eat. As it is now, I live alone in a very small room with nobody to look after me, even to feed or cloth is a big

challenge to me. The little assistance I used to get from some people is no longer there because the treatment has been prolonged.

Abuja Post: What happened to your educational pursuit after the incident?

Abdullahi: This thing happened to me while I was still in JSS three, we were about to sit for junior WAEC but I couldn't make it because of the condition I found myself. I couldn't continue in school since the incident happened, I didn't anticipate that the wounds will continue up to date, I am afraid that my life is wasting away and hope dashed due to this lingering health challenge confronting me. My parents have died, living me with no one to take care of me. I rely on well meaning people within the community who often assist me with food, I don't have the health to go out and hustle for myself.

Abuja Post: How have you been managing the wounds?

Abdullahi : That's how I live with it, any time I am given money by a good Samaritan, I rush to chemist to buy some pain killers and other medicines. Of recent, there was only one person called Alassaini who used to help me with money to buy drugs but now he has a lot of burden on him.

Abuja Post: How did the fire incident occurred?

Abdullahi : One fateful day, we were doing some menial work in one filling station when someone made a mistake that caused fire incident which affected us, that was in 2013. When the incident happened, we were rushed to specialist hospital here in Bauchi and we were received at the emer-



gency section where they administered drip on me, then we had no issue with money for the treatment but my caregivers were upset that no Doctor cared to check on me, so they decided to take me to herbalist for further treatment. After the herbalist used some herbs on me, I got relieved, but the wounds failed to heal after some time. They took me to different herbalists but to no effect. I would have love that they take me back to hospital now, but honestly speaking, since my parents have died and with no relatives who are financially sound to shoulder the expenses, I have no option than to continue to suffer.

Abuja Post: How are you coping with life now?

Abdullahi : For me, life is terrible considering my present condition, I have nothing but always relying on what comes from God through good Samaritans, I know that the problem is taking me this long because of lack of adequate treatment, and I am sure that if properly treated, it will be healed and I will bounce back to good health to achieve my life dreams.

Abuja Post: Do you have any plea or appeal to make?

Abdullahi: I want to plead with the Bauchi state government or well-meaning Nigerians to help me with the resources to go back to the hospital in order to have the wound properly treated. Let me have a renewal of hope by getting sponsors of my treatment because I don't have anybody close to me that can help me out, even to get food to eat is very hard. I can be reached through this medium.

## 'Pirates Drove A Lot Of Foreign Music Recording Companies Out Of Nigeria'



At a point, a lot of your contemporaries like Mike Okri, Alex O, Majek Fashek, Ras Kimono and others left the country, what happened that made them to leave?

One of the reasons is that the pirates were very hard on our generation. Secondly, most of the recording companies were already folding up because of the piracy issue and they were selling the companies off. It was only when the white men were managing those companies that they did well. As soon as they started selling the companies to the black people things became a bit difficult for them to cope with the economy because the pirates were really at work that's why they were not really making much.

When the white people were here they were bringing money from their country to run the business, they did not really bother about the pirates. So, everything started wobbling at that point and when the companies

started folding some of our generation left for greener pastures. That was when Kenny Ogungbe and Dayo Adeneye now came into the music scene and started changing the narratives with other younger artistes, but few of us stayed back.

The way you people sang in your days, you touched on issues happening in the society unlike what's happening now when artistes talk basically about nothing that makes no moral sense at all. Is it the change in trends or because this is what the society wants?

Don't also forget that music is evolving. We still have a lot of them that are still singing positive songs like Tubaba, Psquare, Asake and a whole lot of them still sing great songs. We don't have music soldiers like Fela Anikulapo Kuti and Sunny Okosun, all these people that sang liberation songs.

The musicians of nowadays their orientation are different, the way they reason is different, and their morals standard are different. Things happening now never happened in our time, nothing like record companies, social media was not there. They practically own their own labels now and get all their money online, so they're making money because the pirates cannot go online. CD is phasing out because people don't use it anymore and nothing for pirates to lay hands on, so this generation is in a better position now. It's a great development and it depends on what you listen to. There's a particular song from Buju and I hear a lot of great songs

from Buju, for me, I choose who to listen to because that's who I want to listen to

Tell us any current artiste you will like to work with especially females

The first person that came to my mind is Tiwa Savage. I could do my stuff with her and she would give a good interpretation. She has her own style of singing which I love very much and I know that anything she handles, she does that in her own unique way. I was working on it but somewhere along the line we lost touch and my son's accident became a major distraction. I couldn't go on with it, but if the opportunity comes, I will love to do collaboration with some of them including the male.

You have not tried your hands on full time acting in movies

I acted at some point. I acted in Caravan of Life, which was an NTA TV series and most of the acting was at the earliest part of my career. I did some Nigerian movies with the NTA. I did Magun, not long ago, I did Agbode Meje, (Cross road), a Yoruba movie

When I went into music, I didn't have the full time to go into acting. I love acting and I know I can act. I am really considering it, to see if I can go into full time acting but I still believe my music may not give me the opportunity. I am not competing with anyone; I will play my music the way I will think it will come out well. Its Gods grace that will propel you, not the kind of song you sing. I will be in my own class not to start dragging with these genres. If somebody invites me to an occasion I will come and perform.





Mrs. Olabisi Joseph

## Board Games: LASUBEB Partners National School Sports Federation

Stories by Paul Onehi

The Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board (LASUBEB) recently played host to the President of the National School Sport Federation, Mrs. Olabisi Joseph who was on a collaborative visit to the Board to discuss preparations for the upcoming National School Board Games particularly chess games scheduled for all schools in the Federation.

The visit aimed to strengthen cooperation between LASUBEB and the National School Sport Federation in promoting sports development at the grassroots level.

Mrs. Olabisi Joseph emphasised the importance of engaging young learners in

sports, highlighting that such activities not only improve their physical and mental health but also foster values such as teamwork, discipline, and leadership.

"We are excited to collaborate with the Board in organising this year's National School Board Games. The competition provides an excellent platform for pupils to showcase their talents, develop essential life skills, and represent their states in future sporting events," Mrs. Joseph stated during the meeting.

The Executive Chairman of LASUBEB, Dr. Hakeem Shittu, had earlier warmly welcomed Mrs Joseph and her team, and expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership. He emphasised that sports play a cru-

cial role in the holistic development of pupils, adding that the Board has been committed to promoting sports alongside academics in public primary schools.

"We recognise that fostering a balance between intellectual and physical growth is essential for shaping well-rounded individuals. This collaboration with the National School Sport Federation will further strengthen our efforts in providing opportunities for our pupils to excel not just academically but also in sports," Dr. Shittu said.

He assured Mrs. Joseph that LASUBEB would provide full support for the event, including ensuring that schools have access to the necessary sports facilities and resources.

## UEFA Champions League Knockout Play-Off Draw Revealed

The draw for this season's UEFA Champions League knockout phase play-offs was conducted on Friday, setting the stage for high-stakes clashes in February.

Eight teams have already secured direct qualification to the Round of 16 following the conclusion of the league phase.

These teams include Liverpool, Barcelona, Arsenal, Inter Milan, Atletico Madrid, Bayer Leverkusen, Lille, and Aston Villa. They will resume their campaign in March.

Meanwhile, teams that finished between 9th and 24th in the league standings will compete in a two-legged play-off next month to fight for a place in the next round.

Brest vs Paris Saint-Germain, Feyenoord vs AC Milan, Juventus vs PSV, Monaco vs Benfica, Manchester City vs Real Madrid, Celtic vs Bayern Munich, Sporting CP vs Borussia Dortmund Club Brugge vs Atalanta.

The matches promise thrilling encounters as Europe's finest compete for a coveted spot in the round of 16.



## Farming Is Better: Frustrated Fans Lash Out At Ex-Super Eagles Coach Finidi George As Title Hopes Fade

Finidi George and Rivers United have failed to win any of their last four matches in the league.

Frustration is mounting among Rivers United fans as the team continues to struggle in the Nigerian Premier Football League, NPFL, failing to secure a win in their last four matches.

The latest disappointment came on Thursday when Rivers United managed only a 2-2 draw against Bendel Insurance at the Adokiye Amiesimaka Stadium, leaving supporters questioning the direction of the club under head coach Finidi George.

The match saw Rivers United twice come from behind to level the score, but it was not enough to satisfy the home crowd.

The visitors took an early lead through Meyuwa Oritseweyimi in the

sixth minute, putting pressure on the Pride of Rivers.



Ubong Friday equalised with a stunning strike from 25 yards out in the 34th minute, but Uche Collins restored Bendel Insurance's lead just four minutes into the second half.

Handsome Surveyor's close-range goal in the 51st minute salvaged a point for Rivers United, but the overall performance left much to be desired.

This draw has dropped Rivers United to third place in the NPFL standings, now seven points adrift of leaders Remo Stars after 21 matches.

The fans did not hold back their disappointment, taking to social media to voice their frustrations. Comments ranged from "Most useless club in NPFL" to "Farming is the better option," highlighting a growing discontent with the team's lack of progress.

One fan lamented, "I was disap-

pointed. There was so much time to score the third goal and win the game. The league is there for the taking now for Remo Stars." Such sentiments reflect a wider concern that United's title hopes are fading as they struggle to find form.

Looking ahead, Rivers United will face Heartland in Owerri on Sunday, a critical match that could determine whether they can regain momentum in their season. With fans increasingly restless and expectations high, Finidi George faces mounting pressure to turn things around and restore faith in his leadership.

Both players and coaching staff will need to rally together to meet the aspirations of their supporters and reclaim their position as title contenders in Nigerian football.