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# Report: Over 971 Nigerians abducted in October 2024

**By Dave Oludare Oso**

A report by Beacon Security and Intelligence Limited (BSIL), a security risk management and intelligence consulting company has shown that no fewer than 971 Nigerians were abducted across the country in October 2024.

This comes amid the emergence of a new terror group, Lakurawa in the northwestern part of the country.

According to Daily Post, the data is contained in the 'October 2024 Nigeria Security Report' by BSIL and made available to newsmen on Tuesday.

The report said there's a deterioration of security metrics of incidents, abductions and fatalities in the country, warning that the rising numbers suggested that 2024 was likely to be the worst year in security performance in about a decade.

It explained that the month under review was marked mainly by developments associated with violent activities, including killings and kidnapping for ransom mainly by non-state armed groups (NSAGs), criminal gangs, cult groups, and armed ethnic militias, and social unrest in the form of protests and labour action triggered by the harsh socio-economic circumstances in the country and political activities.

The security firm revealed that data collected indicated that the country recorded a 51% rise in fatalities and 24.42% increase in abductions.

A breakdown of the report according to BEACON INTEL showed Nigeria recorded 861 security incidents, of which 64.92% (559) were attributed to security threats, 24.79% (215) consisted of security forces operations, and 4.99% (43) were attributed to safety incidents from October 1-31, 2024.

In the month under review, the country also recorded 1545 fatalities, with 67.70% attributed to civilian deaths, 25.89% to criminals/non-state armed groups (NSAGs), and 6.40% attributed to security forces and 971 individuals abducted.

In terms of distribution across the country, the North East and North West regions were the most affected by security incidents, which account for 52.03% of the total incidents, respectively, whereas the South East reported the fewest incidents at 7.78%.

"The number of individuals abducted increased from 807 in September 2024 to 971 in October 2024, marking a 20.32% increase and a shift from the 11.03% decline recorded in September 2024.

"The North West was the hardest hit, with 83.83% of all abductions occurring in this region, while the South West region experienced the least number of abductions with 0.21%.

"Of the total number of abducted individuals, Northern Nigeria accounted for 954 (98.25%), while Southern Nigeria accounted for 17 (1.75%)," the report added.

The breakdown also showed that the number of individuals killed increased from 1,022 in September 2024 to 1,545 in October 2024, indicating an increase of 51.17%.

It explained that the variations for the North West (37.93%) and North Central (28.16%) regions had the highest numbers cumulatively, accounting for 66.09% of total fatalities.

The South-South had the lowest fatality rates, at 3.56%. Of the total number of fatalities, Northern Nigeria accounted for (1,283) 83.04%, while Southern Nigeria accounted for (262) 16.96%.

The CEO of Beacon Security and Intelligence Limited, Dr Kabir Adamu in a chat, explained that the country has a weak and ineffective security management system.

Adamu said this explained why the country has not been able to address the root causes and manifestation of insecurities in the country.

The security expert warned that the security situation in the country had really deteriorated, stressing it might result in more fatalities in Nigeria, if the trajectory continues.

He said, "We just published our October report. What it says is that the situation

has really deteriorated, and we are a bit alarmed with the rate of deterioration.

"If it continues at this rate, perhaps what we are likely to get is more fatality in Nigeria in the last 10 months, if this trajectory that we are seeing continues.

"There are three reasons driving insecurity. The socio-economic factor, the cost of living crisis that we are experiencing and other socio-economic issues.

"Then the political issue, for instance, the off-cycle election, and the outcome of the 2023 election.

"For the fact that some people felt aggrieved they didn't get the justice they deserved and now kind of sabotaging the government as it were.

"The last one is the environmental factor; the climate change issue that is causing both internal and external factors in the movement of transhuman, herders, and geopolitics in the Sahel region. Such are responsible for the rise in insecurity.

"Of course, for the fact we don't have a security management system in place to address these factors, both the drivers and the triggers, as well as the root causes are also other factors.

"We have a very weak and ineffective security management system that has not been able to address the root causes and manifestation of insecurities in the country.

"Our criminal justice system is ineffective that people feel that when they complain or take their case, especially to the law enforcement, they are not heard. A significant number of those people will rather pick guns to get their pound of flesh.

# Be objective, CAPPA charges journalists ahead Ondo gov election

**By Helen Okechukwu**

Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), in collaboration with the United Nations (UN), has charged journalists to remain committed ahead of the Ondo State governorship election scheduled for November 16.

CAPPA is a Pan-African organization that advocates for human rights, challenges corporate abuse of our natural resources, and builds community power for inclusive development and participatory governance.

During the pre-electoral lecture session titled Misinformation and Election:" Journalist as Public Educators and Opinion Shapers" held via Zoom on Tuesday, Mr. Robert, the moderator, said the aim of the programme is to shape reportage against misinformation, which is a major problem in Nigeria and the rest of the world.

In an opening remark, Abayomi Sarumi, a representative of CAPPA, enlightened the participants about the role of media in keeping a peaceful atmosphere in Nigeria, especially during election coverage.

Joke Kujenya, the Executive-in-Charge of the Media Mentor Journalism Centre and key speaker of the training, shared insight on the importance of information to journalists, which she described as the lifeblood of a journalist.

Kujenya said, "It encompasses all facts, media, data, and observations. We as journalists rely on investigating, verifying, and reporting stories. This is why the credibility of our information is essential for us to produce accurate, meaningful news at all times.

"We have the ethical obligation to deliver truthful and unbiased reporting on events and issues with the aim to inform and sometimes advocate for the public."

She enlightened the participants on the need for journalists to interpret information truthfully without losing the actual meaning by ensuring it meets standards of accuracy and relevance while upholding values like transparency and accountability.

The multiple award winner employed participants to put lessons learned into practice as more misinformation is highly recorded presently than ethical and accurate information.

Explaining the actual meaning of misinformation, she said it refers to false and inaccurate information with the intent to decisively leave a lasting negative impact on the receiver, among other forms of misinformation.

Highlighting the effect on receivers, she said it has a major impact on voters behaviour and decision-making by undermining public trust in the media and institutions.

Adding that it creates division in the community at large, she urged the participants to be mindful of the content they share while in the field.

Emphasizing the effect, Kujenya said that according to the Pew Research Centre, 70 percent of Americans believe that misinformation is a major problem during elections, while 50 percent of voters reported encountering false information online.

The media expert noted that the 2016 US presidential election increased the number of fake news, closely observed in the 2021 Nigeria general election.

She urged participant journalists to verify information before sharing to the public, noting that journalists are in hurry to deliver news content to the public reflecting in her past as a young journalist then.

Additionally, she told journalists to be acquainted with Media Literacy (ML) to avoid misinformation, stressing the importance of being enlightened with the enablement to detect malicious content.

While speaking, she acknowledged that ML is an empowerment tools aim to build a conducive atmosphere, stating the key roles journalists played during election, especially the forthcoming Ondo State election.

The key speaker charges journalists who will be covering the election to be neutral and objective and to avoid disclosing results without the approval of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) during the course of their duties in the election.

"Journalists play a key role in countering false claims by clarifying

INEC official communication channels and emphasizing the need to rely on verified information, the veteran journalist," Kujenya said.

Kujenya appealed to media houses to remain vigilant in verifying malicious content and claims by integrating fact-checking and employing verifying tools such as DUBAWA.

Also noting the key areas to put into consideration while covering elections, such as understanding their local issues and regional concerns (unemployment, agriculture, and education), aim to drive voters interest.

"Ondo elections are also closely monitored and involve competitive, racist, and high-stakes local and national politics, drawing attention from both the public and the media."

Commending journalists for their efforts, she said, "Nigerian journalists have acted as essential watchdogs, helping to maintain electoral integrity and educate the public on verified information, thereby shaping a more informed and resilient electorate. However, there is room for us to do more, especially in this information overload period where the internet has made everything porous."

She appreciated the organizer in holding this impactful session with reputable journalists to combat misinformation and malicious content.

In attendance were about 45 participants present during the programme

Mr. Lanre Arogundade, a renowned journalist, emphasized the need to hold stakeholders accountable for any violence, alleging them to be involved.

"Every other election holder must be held accountable as far as this election is concerned, and that is the only way we can make progress," Arogundade noted.

# Asset recovery crucial in fight corruption – EFCC Chairman Olukoyede

**By Friday Omosola**

The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ola Olukoyede, has emphasised the critical role of asset recovery in combating economic and financial crimes, calling it a significant deterrent to corruption.

In a statement released on the EFCC's X page on Wednesday, Olukoyede revealed that he made the remarks during an address to members of the House of Representatives Committee on Financial Crimes.

The committee visited the EFCC's headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday for an oversight session.

Olukoyede further explained that if Nigerians fully understood the complexities involved in investigating and prosecuting financial crimes, they would realize that recovering a single billion naira is akin to waging a war.

"If you allow the corrupt or those that you are investigating to have access to the proceeds of their crime, they will fight you with it. So one of the ways to weaken them is to deprive them of the proceeds of their crime. So, our modus operandi has changed tremendously. The moment we begin an investigation, we begin asset tracing. That was what helped us to make our recoveries."

Furthermore, the EFCC boss emphasized that any fight against corruption, and economic, and financial crimes would be ineffective unless it actively contributed to energizing the economy.

"As I made it known on the floor of the Senate in the course of my confirmation last year, the essence of the EFCC mandate is to move Nigeria forward. And I made known my three policy objectives.

"So, we have embarked on these since October last year with the help of my management team and the entire EFCC staff, and I am happy to announce to you that between October last year and October this year, we were able to recover about N250billion in cash, tens of millions of dollars, tens of millions of pounds sterling and other currencies."

He further stated that the Commission delivered an outstanding performance in securing convictions, achieving approximately 3,500 convictions between October 18, 2023, and October 18, 2024.

"In the area of convictions, we have done over 3000 and we also want to re-orientate your minds that it is not only yahoo yahoo. We have evidence, we have many high-profile cases in which we secured convictions.

"I wish to remind everyone that this issue of Yahoo Yahoo thing that some people are treating with kid gloves is a crime that cost the nation over $500,000 (Five Hundred Thousand United States Dollars) in one year and that is what some people are joking about.

"We expect all these because it is obvious that when you fight corruption, corruption will fight back. But we are not perturbed. We will continue to work irrespective of what people say about us, what we know within ourselves is that we will continue to do this work within the limit of our resources and be committed to it."

Mr Olukoyede informed the Committee that, in line with the EFCC's mandate to prevent corruption and fraud, the Commission had placed a stronger emphasis on prevention over the past year.

He assured the Committee that this focus would lead to more effective and cost-efficient results moving forward.

"I believe that the best way of fighting corruption is to prevent it. In the past year, we have had cause to establish a new Directorate called Fraud Risk Assessment and Control (FRAC). The mandate of this Directorate is to work with the Office of the Accountant General to look at the financial releases that go into the MDAs and monitor the implementation of projects because, in the last 20 years, we discovered that we have not done up to 20 per cent of our capital project implementation and execution.

"So, our focus this year is to work with the new Directorate and the National Assembly to see if we can meet up to 50 per cent execution of our capital projects. If we do 50 per cent we will be fine as a nation."

# Oil cabals sabotaging Dangote Refinery – Adeboye

**By Dave Oludare Oso**

The General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, has said that an oil cabal in Nigeria is working alongside international oil companies (IOCs) to undermine the operations of private refineries like Dangote Petroleum Refinery.

Adeboye, who spoke during his address at the November 2024 Abuja Special Holy Ghost service, called on Nigerians to pray for divine intervention against the actions of unscrupulous oil marketers who are intent on causing hardship for the populace.

He said that oil marketers are working hard to obstruct the refinery's operations, following previous sabotage incidents affecting Nigeria's four state-owned refineries.

The cleric reminded the congregation that it was God who inspired Aliko Dangote to create a refinery after many unsuccessful attempts to revive the country's four public refineries, which had wasted billions of Naira with minimal success.

He raised concerns about the continued reliance on fuel imports, despite Nigeria being a significant crude oil producer.

Pastor Adeboye asked, "Are we under a curse? We have four refineries, we poured all kinds of money into them, none of them is working.

"But God raised someone to build a refinery that works. He is not my relative; he is not from my village. He is not even a Christian, but he is a Nigerian who says, 'Why should my people suffer when I have the means to build a refinery that can work?' Now he is refining petrol, and some people want to stop him from selling it, so they can keep importing."

There are reports that the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria, IPMAN has reached an agreement with Dangote Refinery to sell petrol to its members directly.

# Ondo 2024: We'll be transparent, REC assures electorates, stakeholders

**By Agency Reporter**

Mrs Oluwatoyin Babalola, Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Ondo State, has assured electorates and stakeholders of transparency in the Nov. 16 governorship election.

Babalola gave the assurance during the inspection of sensitive materials by major stakeholders at the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) on Wednesday in Akure.

The REC, who said the sensitive materials would be distributed on Thursday, explained that the inspection of the sensitive materials was in a bid to show the transparency of the commission.

According to her, showing the stakeholders the sensitive materials shows that the commission is committed to deliver a free, fair and credible election.

"The reason we invited critical stakeholders such as security officers, political parties, observers, media, among others, to this inspection is to show transparency.

"You can see that they are well wrapped, nobody has tampered with them.

"When we come tomorrow (Thursday) for distribution, we will open them one Local Government (LG) at a time and give them to the electoral officers.

"We will start with the furthest LG so that they can get there on time. When they get to the LG, distribution to registration areas and polling units will start," she said.

Also, Mr Olumide Festus, a People Democratic Party (PDP) agent, and one of the stakeholders inspecting the sensitive materials, said it would go a long way to determine the outcome of the election.

"With these inspection, I believe that election will taking place as scheduled and I can see security agencies particularly here in CBN that they are fully on ground.

"And we too as a party, we are ready for the election and by the grace of God we shall win," he said.

Also, Ms Faith Nwadishi, Executive Director, Centre For Transparency Advocacy (CTA), applauded INEC for its transparency ahead of the election.

"With these sensitive materials, we believe that the election will hold as scheduled," she said.

# Saudi pledges support for Nigeria's economic reforms

**By Friday Omosola**

Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, has pledged support for Nigeria's economic reform initiatives.

Bayo Onanuga, in a statement on behalf of President Bola Tinubu, revealed that the assurance was given during a meeting between the two leaders on Monday in Riyadh. The meeting occurred on the sidelines of the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit.

Discussions between President Tinubu and the Crown Prince focused on potential areas of cooperation, including oil and gas, agriculture, infrastructure development, and the establishment of the Saudi-Nigeria Business Council.

A key item on Nigeria's agenda was a proposed $5 billion bilateral trade facility with Saudi Arabia. Notably, the Saudi Agricultural and Livestock Investment Company (SALIC) has already invested $1.24 billion to acquire a 35.43% stake in Olam Agri, one of Nigeria's leading agricultural firms.

Ongoing negotiations aim to increase SALIC's stake in the company, with the Saudis envisioning Olam becoming a global leader in agro-allied businesses.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman praised President Tinubu's economic reforms, drawing parallels with his efforts to enhance Saudi Arabia's development and stability.

He assured Mr Tinubu of his commitment to fostering the partnerships discussed and directed his team to expedite their realization.

Accompanying the Crown Prince at the meeting were senior Saudi officials, including Prince Abdullah bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz (Minister of National Guard) and Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz (Minister of Defense).

Nigeria's Role in Gaza and Lebanon Conflict Resolution

Meanwhile, the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit renewed Nigeria's mandate as part of the Ministerial Committee tasked with engaging global leaders to resolve the ongoing war in Gaza and Lebanon.

This resolution was part of the outcomes of the extraordinary summit held in Riyadh on November 11, 2024. President Tinubu joined other leaders from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the League of Arab States at the event.

The Joint Arab-Islamic Ministerial Committee, led by Saudi Arabia, was initially formed during the First Joint Arab-Islamic Summit on November 11, 2023. It includes foreign ministers from Nigeria, Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, Indonesia, Palestine, and Jordan.

The summit urged the committee to intensify efforts to end aggression in Lebanon and to submit regular reports to member states through the OIC and the League of Arab States.

Additionally, the committee was directed to engage Global South actors to rally international support for ending the war and the Israeli occupation.

The summit's resolutions emphasised the importance of protecting sea lanes under international law and commended the tripartite agreement among the League of Arab States, OIC, and the African Union to support Palestine.

African Union support for Palestine was particularly lauded, with leaders condemning Israeli military actions in northern Gaza, describing them as "crimes of genocide." Allegations included torture, executions, disappearances, and "ethnic cleansing."

The summit reaffirmed that East Jerusalem is the "eternal capital" of Palestine and called for the unification of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem under a sovereign Palestinian state. It also rejected any Israeli attempts to alter the identity or consolidate the occupation of East Jerusalem.

Additionally, the summit expressed firm support for Lebanon's sovereignty, stability, and the safety of its citizens, underscoring the broader commitment to peace and security in the region.

# Circular Road: Makinde constitutes committee on compensation payment to land owners

**By Oluwatosin Ologun**

Oyo State governor, 'Seyi Makinde, has constituted a monitoring team to oversee the payment of compensation to land owners affected by the acquisition of lands on the first segment of the Senator Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja Circular Road.

A letter signed on behalf of the Secretary to the State Government, Prof Olanike Adeyemo, indicated that the monitoring team is to be headed by the Executive Assistant on Security to the Governor, CP Sunday Odukoya (rtd).

Other members of the committee are: Dr Wasiu Olatunbosun, Commissioner for Culture & Tourism- Member; Mrs Bosede Sodiq, SSA Broadcast Media- Member; Mr A.O. Kolapo, Director of Admin and Supplies, Governor's Office- Member; Mr S.O.A. Olatunde, Deputy Director of Admin and Supplies, Governor's Office- Secretary.

Representatives of the Bureau of Public Procurement and Project Monitoring Agency

According to the letter, the monitoring team's terms of reference include the verification of the list of would-be beneficiaries submitted by the Ministry of Lands, Housing & Urban Development and ensuring that the payments of the compensation are made to the right people.

Earlier, Governor Makinde assured residents from six local government areas affected by the Ibadan Circular Road project that the government will adhere to the initial 150-meter setback established by former Governor Lam Adesina.

Affected residents had previously demanded the cancellation of the Ibadan Circular Road Corridor, citing a government-imposed setback of 500 meters that would lead to significant demolitions and notices on their properties.

# Tinubu returns from Saudi Arabia

**By Friday Omosola**

President Bola Tinubu has returned to Abuja after an official visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where he participated in the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit.

The president touched down at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, on Tuesday at approximately 8:00 p.m., where members of his administration warmly received him.

Among those welcoming him were Chief of Staff Femi Gbajabiamila; Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun; Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike; and Abdullahi Ganduje, Chairman of the ruling All Progressives Congress.

The president was accompanied on the trip by key officials, including Yusuf Tuggar, Minister of Foreign Affairs; National Security Adviser Nuhu Ribadu; Mohammed Idris, Minister of Information and National Orientation; and Mohammed Mohammed, Director-General of the National Intelligence Agency.

# Truck escaping soldiers kills lawyer, 2 others in Akwa Ibom

**By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

It was chaos in Utu Etim Ekpo, Akwa Ibom State, as a flour-filled truck, fleeing military officers, veered off course and smashed into shops.

The collision, which struck at the heart of the Etim Ekpo Local Government Area, left three dead—including a lawyer—and several others wounded.

The incident, as described by locals, occurred around 8 p.m. on Monday when the truck, having jumped the military checkpoint at Nkwot Ikot Ebo along the Iwukem-Etim Ekpo-Abak Road, was chased by a military patrol team before crashing.

An eyewitness, Eno Umanah, who was also a motorcyclist, recounted that the truck, loaded with flour and heading toward Abak from Iwukem, was flagged down at the soldiers' checkpoint at Nkwot Ikot Ebo but the driver, however, ignored the command and continued without stopping.

"The soldiers pursued and overtook the truck, but the driver still refused to stop, speeding towards them. The soldiers scampered for safety, as the truck continued on speed, descending the slope towards the roundabout, and it was impossible to navigate safely at that speed, and the driver lost control and veered off the road, crashing into a line of makeshift shops by the motor park and killed the unsuspecting victims. The lawyer's name is still unknown."

Akaninyene Umanah, a resident from the area, alleged that the road has been the site of many fatalities, including those of worshippers coming back from a church convention. Residents blame the poor design and construction of the roundabout for the deadly incidents.

The civil engineer called attention to the "poor and irregular alignment" of the road, attributing it to the contractors' work. He also claimed that a notable politician from Etim Ekpo had colluded with government officials to change the road's design during its construction years ago.

"I talked about that roundabout years ago, and I was accused of insulting elders of Etim Ekpo.

"That structure needed to be removed from that spot or a proper roundabout reconstructed to save peoples live.

"If you are coming from the stadium to that roundabout, it's very risky due to the sloppy nature of that portion of the road. I hope this is taken seriously with another fatality experienced," he said.

Sources revealed that a female survivor, whose legs were severely mangled in the recent accident, was turned away from both Divine Love Hospital in Utu Ikot Imonte and the Utu Etim Ekpo Government Hospital.

In excruciating pain, the woman was urgently transported to the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital (UUTH), located 45 minutes away from the crash site.

# Libya deports 7 Nigerians, three Ghanaians, others

**By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Seven Nigerians, three Ghanaians, and three Bangladeshis were on Wednesday deported by the Department for Combating Illegal Migration in Libya.

The deportees, who were detained at the Qanfoudah Immigration Detention Centre, were flown out of Libya via Benina International Airport in Benghazi.

The Libya Authority, in a statement on its X handle on Tuesday, confirmed that the individuals were deported for violating Libyan law.

The statement read, "DCIM deported 13 migrants (3 Bangladeshis, 3 Ghanaians, and 7 Nigerians) from the Qanfoudah Immigration Detention Centre via Benina International Airport in Benghazi. All individuals were deported for violating laws in force in the Libyan state."

# What is happening in crypto space in layman's language?

**By Eyitayo Jemimah Ajayi**

Since the early hours of Monday, the crypto space has been experiencing a kind of bull run which is causing the prices of coins to skyrocket.

People are becoming millionaires overnight with this phenomenon. Even the world's richest man, Elon Musk has his net worth increased by a tangible millions. Crypto traders and investors are eating it big. Bitcoin is almost N150 million from being almost N130 million a few days ago.

What is a bull run?

Just like the name implies, it is a crazy progression of the market price. Just like a bull runs fiercely and wild, this phenomenon is also similar to this.

A bull run in the cryptocurrency market refers to a period of sustained price increases across various cryptocurrencies, I'm talking various coins, tokens, NFTs and more. During a bull run, the overall market sentiment is optimistic, and investors are generally buying cryptocurrencies in anticipation of further price appreciation. This can lead to significant price increases, sometimes even reaching new all-time highs.

A bull-run is basically due to various factors e.g, market sentiments, favourable regulatory environment, technological advancements, halving events and a lot more. Just as a bullrun exists, there also exists its opposite, known as bear markets.

Bear markets are periods of decline where the value of cryptocurrencies decline significantly. It is every investors responsibility to reduce trading during bear markets as cryptocurrency market becomes highly volatile, a little more than usual.

A couple of integral factors that are accountable for the current bullrun in cryptocurrency market prices in 2024 are highlighted:

- A major influence in recent times has definitely been the influence of Social media. Social media platforms like Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) play a significant role in shaping market sentiment and driving price movements.
- Some sentiments around economic uncertainty has also been a major factor. In times of economic uncertainty, investors often turn to cryptocurrencies as a potential hedge against inflation and market volatility.
- Some countries have implemented clearer and more supportive regulations for cryptocurrencies, reducing uncertainty and encouraging investment.
- Pro-Crypto Governments: Governments around the world are recognizing the potential of blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies, leading to more favorable policies.
- And finally, we have Blockchain innovations. Continuous advancements in blockchain technology are opening up new possibilities and use cases, attracting developers and investors.

While these factors listed above are only but a few of the many factors that could be responsible. Ensure to always monitor the market as an investor as the crypto market is highly volatile and no one can be held responsible in case of a bad trade.

# Why Nigeria should pass Labour Standards Bill

**By Agency Reporter**

Child labour has remained a challenge to Nigeria and many other countries.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), child labour has surged, with 160 million children now affected.

This trend is most pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa, with a rising number of children, as young as five, engaged in labour, the UN agency says.

Vanessa Phala, the Director of ILO Country Office for Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Liaison Office for ECOWAS, is much more worried that agricultural sector accounts for 70 percent of child labour cases worldwide.

"In Nigeria, the recent survey by the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) echoes this global data, revealing that 39.2 per cent of Nigerian children, aged five to 17, are in child labour, with 22.9 percent exposed to hazardous conditions.

Phala acknowledges that progress has been made in Nigeria in promoting social justice but regrets that framework of the country's labour laws has not kept pace with the evolving dynamics of its economy and workforce.

"For over five decades, Nigeria's primary labour legislation, the Labour Act of 1971, has remained largely unchanged, aside from modest updates in 2004 and efforts in 2014.

"This Act does not fully account for the contemporary realities of the Nigerian workplace, particularly overlooking the informal sector, where a significant portion of the population is employed.

"Much more is required to adequately secure the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work for Employers and workers.

"Gender equality, workplace safety, and protections for those in the informal economy, all demand urgent legislative attention," she argued at a recent function in Lagos.

The official says there is a need for a new Labour Standards Bill that will keep pace with the evolving dynamics of Nigeria's economy and workforce.

She is hopeful that passage of the Labour Standards Bill by the current National Assembly will go a long way to tackle child labour and other forms of unacceptable labour practices in Nigeria.

Phala identifies economic hardship as a major factor pushing families to rely on their children to contribute to household incomes, often in hazardous environments that violate their rights and rob them of a promising future.

She believes that access to quality education and social protection benefits will reduce vulnerability to child labour.

The latest report by the National Bureau for Statistics (NBS) on child labour indicates that Nigeria, with a population of 216 million, has 30.3 percent of the population aged 17 years or less, and 24.5 percent of its population aged 14 years or less.

The 2022 NBS report states that 50.5 per cent of Nigerian children are in economic activities while 39.2 (N24.6 million) are in child labour.

It equally states that 22.9 per cent of Nigerian children are in hazardous work.

According to NBS, Lagos and Nasarawa are the states with the longest average working hours of children aged five to 17 years in child labour, averaging 25.6 hours and 24.3 hours per week, respectively.

The report also shows that Ondo State has the highest number of children in child labour in the agriculture sector, with about 33 percent of children in the state engaged in child labour particularly in cocoa farming.

Olaolu Olaitan, Director of Labour Inspectorate, Federal Ministry Labour and Employment, explains child labour to include forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, use of a child for illicit activities such as production of pornography and use of a child for drug trafficking.

According to her, allowing children to work in farms and factories or hawk goods when they are supposed to be in school constitutes child labour.

The director says that any work likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children, by its nature or the circumstances in which the work is carried out, constitutes child labour and is prohibited.

She is confident that the Federal Government is determined to eliminate child labour, forced labour and other unacceptable labour practices.

She regrets that some parents use their children for labour, urging an end to it.

For Mrs Chinyere Emeka-Anuna, Senior Programme Officer at ILO, advancing social justice and promoting decent work, including elimination of all forms of child labour, will require passage of the new Labour Standards Bill.

Emeka-Anuna emphasises that all human beings irrespective of race, creed or race have the right to pursue both material well-being and spiritual development in conditions of freedom, dignity, economic security and equal opportunities.

She says ILO is committed promoting social justice and human and labour rights across the world.

She emphasizes that productive employment and decent work are key elements to achieving poverty reduction.

She argues that it is not every job that is a job, saying that a job must promote sustainable livelihoods.

She is convinced that decent work provides the tool to advance social justice.

# LASG plans to lift vulnerable residents

**By Helen Okechukwu**

The Lagos State Government (LASG) has taken a bold step through the Inter-Ministerial Committee to boost the Social Protection Policy of its vulnerable residents.

In an intervention programme to be witnessed across five divisions in the state, the state government said they will be embarking on the Social Protection, Stakeholders' Sensitization, and Advocacy Programme, tagged "IBILE SP Campaign."

The initiative is to run from 19 to 28 November.

Towards the implementation of this policy, the state government, through its social media page on Wednesday, announced the committeemen empowering vulnerable groups.

The programme aims to create public awareness on both state social protection programmes and the social register.

The five divisions to share this initiative are Ikeja, Badagry, Ikorodu, Lagos Island, and Epe.

At the flagship engagement in Radio Lagos 107.5 FM, held on Tuesday titled "Ojutaye," Mrs. Oluwakemi Gabadeen Adedeji, the Coordinating Director of the Social Protection Coordinating Department, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, said they have been charged with this responsibility.

"We are in charge of the Single Social Register, so we have comprehensive data on vulnerable persons to ascertain which specific help they require. This is because Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu is passionate about the welfare of citizens," she said.

Explaining further about the awareness, Adedeji said, "We have an Inter-Ministerial Committee in place comprising 33 MDAs. However, we have 20 core ones, including Ministries of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (WAPA), Information and Strategy, and Agriculture and Food Security, among others."

Enlightening the public on their working procedure, Adedeji said the department has a unique reference number for idenfying each applicant with multiple entries with the intention to increase awareness.

She indicated that UNICEF is part of this initiative to promote the IBILE Social Protection Awareness Campaign among residents, and departments are set up to track and monitor this project.

Furthermore, the Director of Women Affairs, WAPA, Mrs. Olufunke Shyllon, disclosed key areas for addressing, which include catering to the needs of vulnerable people such as widows, unemployed women, and out-of-school children.

To reach across the ministry, vulnerable persons are advised to use the provided contact numbers: 0701-361-4224 and 0704-125-2261.

# LASEPA seals churches, business ventures over noise pollution

**By Helen Okechukwu**

In reducing noise pollution in the state, the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA) has announced that various churches and business ventures have been shut down.

The agency noted that enforcement exercise was carried out on Wednesday in different locations within the state.

Noting its commitment in providing and maintaining environmental standards and protecting public health, this enforcement operation was executed.

Areas visited during the operation were Itokin Road, Maya, Erunwen, Elepe Road, Awolowo Way, Ijede Road, and the Igbogbo Road area in Ikorodu.

The affected churches and business ventures are the National Conference of the Calvary Cross, Cherubim & Seraphim Church, Cherubim & Seraphim Church (Asale Agbala), Le Silhouette Hotel, Walik Hotel, and Rhonny's Place.

Others include Obans Events Centre, Stop Over Inn, Bigcat Bakery, Girrong Hotel & Bar, Anjia Prefabricated Construction (Nig) Co. Ltd., Tois Bar & Holiday Inn, a quarry site, and Ambassador Villa.

Tunde Ajayi, the general manager of LASEPA, explained that sealed establishments violated environmental regulations despite several notices sent through the agency.

"We will not permit disregard for our regulations," Dr. Ajayi said this while reaffirming the commission's commitment to maintaining a conducive environment and atmosphere.

The general manager told business owners to abide and corporate with the agency in creating a sustainable state that will be the pride of all.

# Shun illegal dealings, minister warns NSCDC mining marshals

**By Agency Reporter**

Minister of Interior, Dr. Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo has warned the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) Mining Marshals to avoid involvement in illegal mining activities.

The minister gave the warning during the passing-out ceremony of the 3rd batch of newly trained mining marshals on Wednesday in Abuja.

Tunji-Ojo, represented by Ahmed Ja'afaru, Secretary to the Civil Defence, Correctional Fire and Immigration Services Board (CDCFIB), said that the board would not hesitate to sanction any erring personnel.

He warned the mining marshals to abide strictly by the code of conduct and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) guiding the operations of the Corps.

He said that the training of the newly inducted mining marshals was an indicator that the NSCDC was on the right path to fulfilling its responsibilities.

The minister commended the NCDC for its efforts in ensuring the protection of critical national assets and infrastructure across the country.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Solid Minerals, Dr. Dele Alake, said that the collaboration between both ministries had resulted in a significant change in Nigeria's mining sector.

Alake, represented by Imam Ganiyu, Director of Federal Mines, said that there was a need for intensified efforts to generate more revenue for the Federal Government and the establishment of job opportunities within the sector.

In his remarks, NSCDC Commandant General, Ahmed Audi, said that the mining marshals code-named "Operation Hayakin Kogo", were established to provide security to the mining industry.

Audi said that an effective collaboration between security agencies and the ministries in charge of the protection of the mining sector would help to drastically reduce illegal mining activities and dealings.

"Since their inauguration on March 1, the mining marshals have so far arrested over 300 suspects and recovered over 200 mining sites from illegal miners and bandits," he said.

He said that there was the need to deploy more sophisticated equipment for effective policing of the over 1000 detected illegal mining sites across the country.

While congratulating the graduates, the NCDC boss charged them to be diligent, loyal, and focused, adding that there are internal mechanisms to monitor the activities of personnel.

The newly constructed offices of the Commandant General's Special Intelligence Squad (CG's SIS) and the mining marshals were inaugurated during the occasion.

# Makinde to present proposed 2025 Budget on Wednesday

**By Oluwatosin Ologun**

Oyo State governor, 'Seyi Makinde, will present the 2025 Appropriation Bill to the Oyo State House of Assembly, on Wednesday, 13 November.

The governor will present the Budget estimate to the lawmakers at an event scheduled to hold at the House of Assembly Complex, Secretariat, Agodi, Ibadan.

This was disclosed in a statement signed on Tuesday by the Special Adviser on Media to Oyo State Governor, Dr Sulaimon Olanrewaju.

The presentation is coming on the heels of the Stakeholders' Consultative Forum Meetings held across the five zones of the state on the 2025 Budget, where inputs from residents of the state were collated.

Governor Makinde said on Monday that the 2024 Budget performance had reached 64 per cent by November.

# Climate change initiative: IsDB donates $10m to WHO

**By Helen Okechukwu**

To fight against the impact of climate change in low- and middle-income countries, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) has supported the World Health Organisation (WHO) with the sum of $10 million.

The grant donated aims to implement and promote the Health Impact Investment Platform (HIIP) among other initiatives in universal health coverage.

On 12 November, this development came shortly after the signing of the Climate Change Conference (COP29) held in Baku in the effort to show their commitment in building and maintaining stronger primary healthcare and healthy systems.

In partnering with WHO and MDBs to develop and invest in healthcare services and provide climate solutions, this initiative, HIIP, was brought to life.

Among other goals, the initiative targets underserved communities, with the aim to foster resilience against emerging health threats and climate challenges.

The donation is said to aid and provide technical assistance to countries, assess investment needs, and design the most impactful health projects.

WHO noted, "These projects will serve as the foundation for co-investment by the MDBs, ensuring that resources are directed toward areas with the greatest potential for positive health outcomes."

As noted in their 14th General Programme of Work, WHO said in the next 4-year, the health organisation aims to strengthen climate resilience via development and implement national adaptation plans for climate change.

Also, WHO pledges to provide 10,000 health facilities and solar electrification with the mission to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable.

WHO announced that this initiative in addressing national health priorities will unlock at least $500 million in health investments across the region with a collective effort to mobilize a total sum of $1.5 billion, focusing on critical areas of concessional loans and grants.

Speaking during the meeting, IsDB President, Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser affirmed that "together, we are fostering a healthier, more equitable future for communities across the globe."

Also, reaffirming its collective efforts and commitment, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, "By working together, we can make a significant difference in improving health outcomes and creating a healthier future for all."

WHO stated, "As we embark on this journey, the IsDB remains committed alongside its partners to fostering partnerships that will enhance healthcare outcomes and improve the quality of life for communities worldwide."

"We are the UN agency for health that connects nations, partners, and people on the front lines in 150+ locations—leading the world's response to health emergencies, preventing disease, addressing the root causes of health issues, and expanding access to medicines and health care."

The 15 countries to benefit from the HIIP phase one initiative are Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Jordan, and Maldives.

Others include Morocco, Senegal, South Sudan, The Gambia, Tunisia, and Zambia.

About IsDB

With over 50-year of impacting nearly 1 in 5 of the world population's lives, IsDB is marked as a major rating agency of the world by AAA and a pioneer with the multilateral development bank (MDB) of the Global South, connecting 57 member countries across four continents.

The objectives of IsDB are to address development challenges, equip people in driving economic progress, achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and create an enabling, planet-friendly infrastructure atmosphere.

# Financial inclusion: 28m Nigerians have no access to banking — CBN

**By Agency Reporter**

ABOUT 28 million Nigerians – mostly in the rural areas – have no access to banking, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has said.

The apex bank Deputy Governor, Financial System Stability, Philip Ikeazor, who stated this, added that the CBN and stakeholders have been working tirelessly to reduce the financial exclusion rate.

The demographics mostly affected by this financial exclusion are: women, youths, rural communities and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

According to him, as a result of these efforts, the exclusion rate had dropped from 46.3 per cent in 2010 to 26 per cent as of last year.

He said: "Despite this progress, there are over 28 million Nigerians who still have no access to formal financial products and services and certain challenges persist."

Ikeazor spoke in Lagos at the ongoing 2nd International Financial Inclusion Conference 2024, with theme: "Inclusive Growth—Harnessing Financial Inclusion for Economic Development".

The CBN Governor, Olayemi Cardoso, said the ongoing recapitalisation of banks comes with several benefits to the economy.

He said recapitalized banks will take bigger risks by capturing underserved markets into the financial net.

In line with its efforts to deepen financial inclusion, the apex bank introduced new minimum capital requirements for banks, the CBN boss said.

Cardoso added: "This strategic move ensures that banks are well-capitalised, enabling them to take on greater risks, particularly in underserved markets.

"With stronger capital bases, banks can provide more loans and financial products to Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), rural communities, and other vulnerable segments that have previously struggled to access formal financial services".

The CBN on March 28 announced a two-year bank recapitalisation, which began on April 1 and is expected to end on March 31, 2026.

The recapitalisation plan requires minimum capital of N500 billion, N200 billion and N50 billion for commercial banks with international, national and regional licences.

Cardoso said the recapitalisation policy, not only strengthens financial stability, but also serves as a catalyst for inclusive growth.

"By enabling banks to extend more credit to MSMEs, we enhance job creation and productivity. Furthermore, with increased capital, banks can invest in technology and innovation, crucial for driving digital financial services such as mobile money and agent banking. These technologies are key to breaking down geographic and economic barriers, bringing financial services to even the most remote areas," he said.

At the event, the CBN launched the Women Financial inclusion Dashboard, Women Entrepreneurs Finance Code and Financial Inclusion of Forcibly Displaced Persons.

The apex bank chief said financial inclusion has the potential to unlock significant economic growth, particularly through the empowerment of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), women and other vulnerable segments of the population.

"SMEs are responsible for over 80 per cent of employment in Nigeria, yet many struggle to access the credit needed for expansion. Financial inclusion for SMEs is essential to unlock the full potential of this sector, and the Nigerian government remains

# Alleged fraud: US court renews Allen Onyema's arrest warrant

**By Dave Oludare Oso**

A United States court has reissued an order for the arrest of Allen Onyema, the Chairman and CEO of Air Peace Limited over a $20 million fraud case that has been pending against him for five years.

According to Premium Times, the federal district court for Northern Georgia, Atlanta, renewed the arrest warrant on 9 October, following the addition of more charges to the case against Onyema and his co-defendant, Ejiroghene Eghagha, the airline's Chief of Administration and Finance.

US authorities filed the superseding indictment on 8 October, alleging obstruction of justice and conspiracy to obstruct justice.

The two counts added to the existing 36 counts of conspiracy, money laundering, bank fraud, credit application fraud, and identity theft. The superseding indictment brought the counts to 38.

Early in October, Onyema was charged 'in a superseding indictment with obstruction of justice for submitting false documents to the government in an effort to end an investigation of him that resulted in earlier charges of bank fraud and money laundering.'

However, the airline in response to the latest indictment insisted on the innocence of its Chairman and Finance Director even as it assured that the fresh charges would not affect its operation.

On the day the superseding indictment was filed, Assistant US Attorney Christopher Huber filed for a new arrest warrant after the first one issued against Onyema in 2019.

On the following day, 9 October, a deputy clerk of the court signed and delivered the new arrest warrant to the US Marshal, the American body that carries out the arrest of fugitives.

Preparatory to the filing of the charges in 2019, Russell Vineyard, a magistrate at the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, issued a corresponding warrant of arrest for Messrs Onyema and Eghagha in Canada.

American prosecutors had sought the warrant to enable Canadian law enforcement authorities to take the suspects into custody if sighted in their jurisdiction.

In another arrest warrant issued on 19 November 2019, Justin Anand, an American magistrate of the same court, ordered the US Marshals Service to take them into custody.

In the 2019 charges, the US authorities accused Onyema of moving suspicious funds from Nigeria to American bank accounts between 2017 and 2018 with the funds allegedly disguised as being meant to be used to purchase aircraft.

The duo of Onyema and Eghaga allegedly applied for export letters of credit for the transfer of funds from a Nigerian bank account to the bank account of Mr Onyema's Atlanta-Georgia-based firm, Springfield Aviation LLC, between 2016 and 2017.

The defendants, according to US prosecutors, applied for the funds purportedly for the purchase of aircraft by Air Peace from Springfield Aviation.

Prosecutors also said the aircraft referenced in each of the export letters of credit sent to the American banks was never owned or sold by Springfield Aviation.

Prosecutors said she "had no connection to the aviation business outside of her role with Springfield Aviation and had no education, training, or licensing in the review and valuation of aircraft, including aircraft components."

In October 2022, the US District Court sentenced Ms Mayfield to three years' probation for her roles in helping to facilitate the alleged fraud.

Prosecutors continue to allege that Onyema founded and used Springfield Aviation "to facilitate large transfers of funds from his Nigerian bank accounts to the United States."

Onyema allegedly moved about $15 million from Springfield Aviation's account with a Wells Fargo Bank branch in Atlanta, Georgia, to his personal savings account with the same bank in 27 transactions in 2017.

Each of the 27 transactions stands alone as a charge of money laundering.

Reacting to the filing of the superseding indictment last month, Air Peace noted in a statement that "both Mr Onyema and Eghagha remain innocent and these are mere allegations, and the case is still in court."

It added that: "Our legal team is fully engaged with the matter and is working tirelessly to ensure that justice prevails. We remain confident that, through due process, the truth will be revealed, and our CEO and co-defendant will be exonerated."

The airline argued that Onyema and his legal team have consistently cooperated with authorities throughout the legal process and that Air Peace continues to operate without disruption, upholding its commitment to delivering top-notch services to its valued customers.

The airline said, "We want to reassure the public that these legal proceedings will not impact the safety, reliability, or day-to-day operations of Air Peace. The dedication and focus of our staff remain steadfast as we continue to provide you with the best aviation experience in Nigeria and beyond."

# Autonomy: FG, govs, LG chairs sign implementation agreement

**By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The Federal Government, state governors, and local government chairpersons have taken a significant step towards the full implementation of local government autonomy with the signing of a technical agreement aimed at empowering local governments across Nigeria.

This agreement, finalised during a meeting of the Committee on Local Government Autonomy, is expected to be submitted to President Bola Tinubu for approval later this month.

The news was confirmed on Tuesday, November 12, by Hakeem Ambali, the National President of the National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), in an exclusive interview with our correspondent.

Ambali revealed that the document outlining the plan for autonomy had been signed and is now set for transmission to the President by the end of November, signaling a crucial milestone in the fight for local government independence in the country.

The latest development comes after a series of legal battles between the Federal Government and state governors over the control of funds allocated to local government areas (LGAs).

In May 2024, the Federal Government, through the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), Lateef Fagbemi, filed a lawsuit challenging the authority of governors to withhold federal allocations meant for local governments and dissolve democratically elected councils to appoint caretaker committees.

In a landmark ruling on July 11, 2024, the Supreme Court of Nigeria ruled in favor of financial autonomy for the 774 local governments in the country, affirming that governors no longer have the legal right to manage or withhold funds allocated to LGAs.

The Court also directed the Accountant-General of the Federation to ensure that local government allocations are paid directly into their accounts, marking a significant blow to the practice of state governments withholding such funds.

As part of the implementation process, the Federal Government set up an inter-ministerial committee in August 2024, tasked with overseeing the application of the Supreme Court's ruling.

The committee, which includes key figures such as the Minister of Finance, Wale Edun; the Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi; and representatives from the Central Bank of Nigeria, state governors, and the local governments, has worked to finalize the technical details of the autonomy framework.

Ambali expressed optimism about the pace of the implementation, noting that local governments are expected to start receiving their allocations directly from the Federation Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC) by the end of November. He also assured that the President was eager to review and act on the document.

Meanwhile, concerns have emerged regarding the financial capacity of local governments to meet the newly approved N70,000 minimum wage for primary school teachers, a key issue raised by the National Union of Teachers (NUT).

The union has voiced doubts over the ability of LGAs to pay the new wage, citing the historical failure of some local governments to implement the previous N30,000 minimum wage.

Reports indicate that in several states, including Nasarawa, Enugu, Zamfara, and Kogi, local government workers have continued to earn as little as N18,000, the minimum wage established in 2011, despite federal efforts to increase the wage at the state and national levels.

In Enugu State, for example, while state workers benefitted from the N30,000 minimum wage, local government employees were excluded from the arrangement.

The NUT's General Secretary, Dr. Mike Ene, emphasized the need for uniformity in wage implementation, pointing out that some governors had resisted paying the minimum wage to local government workers, arguing that local councils were responsible for their employees.

However, Ambali reassured that with the forthcoming autonomy, local governments would have the financial

independence needed to implement the minimum wage.

"The autonomy will allow local governments to negotiate and implement salaries independently," Ambali explained.

"The new minimum wage will be fully paid to all local government workers when autonomy is fully in place. The National Labour Congress (NLC) has given a December deadline for all states to comply, and with the autonomy now on track, this issue will be resolved."

As the deadline approaches, tensions continue to build, with the NLC threatening to take action if state governments fail to honor the minimum wage agreement by December.

However, the anticipated implementation of local government autonomy is expected to resolve many of these challenges and provide local governments with the financial and administrative independence they need to function effectively.

In conclusion, the signing of the technical document represents a critical turning point in Nigeria's ongoing journey towards decentralizing power and resources to local governments.

With the expected transmission of the document to President Tinubu, local governments may soon begin operating with the autonomy they have long sought, while workers and teachers in these councils eagerly await the full implementation of wage agreements.

# Grid Collapse: EFCC investigates corruption in Nigeria's power sector

**By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

Corruption within Nigeria's power sector is at the heart of the country's ongoing electricity grid collapses and chronic power supply issues, according to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

On November 12, EFCC Chairman Ola Olukoyede shared disturbing insights during a visit by the House Committee on Anti-Corruption and Financial Crimes to the commission's headquarters in Abuja.

Olukoyede revealed that contractors awarded power supply contracts often engage in corrupt practices by using substandard materials, ultimately leading to widespread equipment failures and the recurrent collapse of the national electricity grid. He cited specific instances where contractors replaced high-quality materials, such as using 5.0 gauge cables instead of the required 9.0 gauge cables, which contributed to the frequent breakdowns of power infrastructure.

"Every time you see the system tripping off, getting burnt, and failing, it's part of the problem," Olukoyede said, expressing frustration over the deep-rooted corruption that has long hindered the sector's development.

The EFCC Chairman's comments shed light on the severe impact of these corrupt practices. The use of inferior materials and equipment in power projects has led to the failure of critical infrastructure, exacerbating Nigeria's electricity challenges.

Olukoyede lamented that the systemic corruption within the sector has created an environment where contractors prioritize profit over quality, leaving Nigerians to bear the brunt of the consequences.

"If you see some of the investigations we are carrying out within the power sector, you will shed tears," he said, emphasising that these malpractices have rendered the power sector inefficient, contributing to Nigeria's inability to provide reliable and affordable electricity.

In addition to its investigation into power sector corruption, the EFCC also uncovered troubling statistics regarding Nigeria's capital project execution. Over the past 15 to 20 years, the country has managed to complete less than 20% of its planned capital projects, a staggering failure that has severely impeded the country's growth and development.

Olukoyede stressed that this failure to execute key infrastructure projects—particularly in the energy sector—has contributed to Nigeria's slow progress. "If we don't address these issues, how can we expect to grow as a nation?" he asked, underscoring the urgent need for better management of capital projects to foster national development.

The EFCC Chairman also outlined the commission's goals for the year, emphasising the need for greater collaboration with the National Assembly and other stakeholders to ensure that at least 50% of capital projects planned for 2024 are successfully implemented.

He highlighted that improving capital project execution is critical to Nigeria's development, particularly in the energy sector.

The visit by the House Committee on Anti-Corruption and Financial Crimes also saw Chairman Obinna Onwusibe calling for closer cooperation between the EFCC and the judiciary to expedite the trial of suspects involved in corrupt practices. Onwusibe pointed to the overcrowded correctional facilities in Lagos, particularly in Kirikiri, where many suspects have been awaiting trial for over a year.

"Justice delayed is justice denied," Onwusibe said, urging the EFCC, the Attorney General's office, and the judiciary to work together to ensure swift and fair trials for those accused of corruption.

Onwusibe also raised concerns about the perception that the EFCC is sometimes used for political purposes, urging the commission to ensure

greater transparency and accountability in its operations to avoid accusations of political bias.

"The negative perception that the EFCC is being used to settle political scores must be corrected," he stressed.

Despite the ongoing challenges, Olukoyede expressed hope that the EFCC's investigations and collaboration with other arms of government could drive systemic change in the power sector.

By addressing the corruption and inefficiencies plaguing capital projects, he believes Nigeria can achieve meaningful progress in improving critical infrastructure, including the power sector, and ultimately foster greater economic growth.

"We need to address the lack of implementation of capital projects," Olukoyede concluded.

"If we can tackle that effectively, we will make progress as a nation. This is a fight we cannot afford to lose."

As the EFCC continues its investigations into corruption in the power sector, including practices that have contributed to the frequent grid collapses, there is growing optimism that these efforts may lead to a more reliable electricity supply for Nigerians—and possibly serve as a model for addressing corruption in other critical sectors of the economy.

# Flash flooding: Lagos to serve shanties evacuation notice

**By Agency Reporter**

The Lagos State Ministry of Environment (MOE) and Water Resources, on Wednesday, said an evacuation notice would be served to shanties around Kuramo waters to address flash flooding in the state.

The Commissioner, Ministry of the Environment, Mr Tokunbo Wahab, made this known while speaking with journalists after an inspection tour of some drainage and projects around Eti Osa Local Government Area with his team.

Wahab who led a team to visit the Kuramo waters, was displeased with the community due to shanties around the area, saying it was of great concern.

Kuramo waters is very strategic for Victoria Island and we have also had conversations with the contractors doing the coastal road that they must allow the outlet to discharge originally the way it should discharge to the Atlantic.

"This is what we came to certify and also ask them to give squatters a notice to vacate so we can clean up this whole neighborhood.

"The community of shanties growing around the Kuramo Waters are major source of concern, security and environmental wise.

"We cannot even account for them. We are not saying you cannot come to stay in Lagos but let them account for you in Lagos so they can plan around you in Lagos like schools, health facilities and other infrastructures.

"For us this is not encouraging, we will serve them the notices and then let them just move so we can take ownership of this place and keep it for our own safety," he said.

He described the inspection tour as a routine inspection that started from Orchid Road in Lekki area of the state.

"Orchid road had to do with system 156 and 157.

"For the past few months, we have had major negotiations with residents and home owners around system 156 and 157 to the extent that they obliterated 156 entirely.

"At this point, there were just two options, to remove those houses and whatever and reinstate 156 to discharge it to Ikota with 157 or they come up with a practicable pragmatic design and they will fund the design to discharge the storm water meant to have been discharged by system 156 and 157 into Ikota.

"The designs were approved and we gave them a ministry officials to supervise so what we did today was to go there and see the extent of work that has been done," he said.

Wahab with his team also inspected Ikota GRA System 44A, checked out the Bill of Quantity (BOQ) prepared by residents to have a middle ground following massive infractions for the construction of a Secondary Collector by the residents.

"The GRA came up with a design also and we have to be sure the design is workable and practicable to help discharge and deflood the whole ecosystem.

"After the back and forth, they agreed and we signed off on it and we also gave them some timelines that the BOQ they came up with, the money must be in the escrow account in the next four weeks," he said.

He explained that the construction would commence in the first week of January 2025 under the supervision of the ministry's engineers after the deposit of the required sum in an escrow account in the next four weeks to demonstrate seriousness.

Wahab also visited Onikoyi Waterfront and the Lagos State Waste Water Management Office, the Lekki Modular Septage Pretreatment Plant, where illegal dredging activities was going on without the Environmental Impact Assessment.

"All the operators will be served immediate Stop Work Order immediately," he said.

On demolition, Wahab said the state does not demolish, adding that in some

instances there were no ways to redesign it.

"In some instances, there are no ways to redesign it, we must remove, for instance system 1 odo Iyalaro, if you are on that right of way we must remove.

"Look at the super infrastructure coming from Opebi linking up the road down to third mainland axis through Ogudu and Maryland, that is something we cannot negotiate.

"All we had to do is to reduce the width to enable us enforce to establish that right of way established since 1974 in Lagos State.

"These are very critical instances but for those that are secondary collectors or channels that we can find a way to discharge water, we do that realistically without also compromising the eco system," he said.

He also assured Lagos residents that the ministry would continue to do its best in managing flooding in the state.

"We were able to manage the flooding better than we were doing in the past, so much work had been done and we won't still rest on our oars.

"A lot of work will still be done so when we take stock next or upper year, we will know we are in a better place than where we were before," he said.

# Plateau education board warns contractors over quality standards

**By Olamilekan Botti**

The Plateau State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) has warned contractors operating within the state that it will not tolerate substandard work or delays in the execution of projects.

The announcement was made by the Executive Chairman of SUBEB, Sunday Amuna, during a formal bid opening ceremony held at the board's headquarters.

This statement sets a clear tone for what the board expects from its partners as it strives to enhance the quality of education in the region.

The event was centred around awarding contracts for the manufacture and supply of plastic classroom furniture for public schools. The contracts are part of the national competitive bidding process which encompasses the third and fourth quarters of 2021 as well as the first quarter of 2022.

Amuna further underscored the commitment of the state government to educational advancement by stating that Governor Barr. Caleb Mutfwang has assembled an enthusiastic team dedicated to delivering high-quality services.

He emphasized the importance of maintaining rigorous standards, declaring that the team would ensure that only top-quality resources reach the students of Plateau State.

Amuna said, "We are resolute in our mission to elevate the standard of education and to ensure that the best resources are provided to our children."

According to reports from our correspondent, the bidding process witnessed participation from five distinct companies vying for contracts related to lots 001 to 003.

The event, which was attended by key stakeholders, included representatives from the media, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), as well as security and anti-corruption agencies.

The transparent nature of this process reflects SUBEB's commitment to accountability and integrity. Over the years, SUBEB has made significant strides in constructing and renovating educational facilities.

However, Amuna acknowledged that many of these structures remained unfurnished, a shortcoming that has rendered the learning environment less than conducive for students.

"It is not enough to build or renovate schools; they must be equipped adequately," he noted, adding, "This lack of essential classroom furniture has been a critical factor hindering effective teaching and learning.

"To address this pressing issue, SUBEB has embarked on this bidding process to procure necessary furniture that will facilitate a more conducive learning environment for pupils. "Our students deserve better.

"Providing them with appropriate furnishings is a crucial step towards improving the overall educational experience in Plateau State."The emphasis on quality and timeliness in project execution is a reflection of the board's broader objective to uplift educational standards in the state.

"By engaging contractors who share its vision of excellence, SUBEB aims to create an environment where students can thrive academically. The warning to contractors serves as a pivotal reminder of the board's unwavering commitment to educational integrity.

"As Plateau State continues to strive for improvement in its educational infrastructure, all parties involved must adhere to the highest standards of performance. The future of education in Plateau hinges on collective accountability and the relentless pursuit of quality.

"With the proactive approach taken by SUBEB, the hope is that students will soon benefit from improved facilities that support their academic journeys, laying the groundwork for a brighter and more prosperous future for the entire state."

"It is not enough to build or renovate schools;they must be equipped adequately,"

# US Army commander visits Chief of Defence Staff

**By Dave Oludare Oso**

General Michael Langley, the Commander of the United States Africa Command, has visited the Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa, at the Defence Headquarters in Abuja.

The Director of Defence Information, Brigadier General Tukur Gusau, noted that the AFRICOM Commander was accompanied by the US Ambassador to Nigeria, Richard Mills, in a statement released on Wednesday.

Gusau, who said Langley commended the Defence Headquarters' strategy in combating insecurity, stated, "General Langley praised Nigeria's approach to tackling insecurity within the country and its strategic leadership role in the sub-region. He also congratulated the Chief of Defence Staff on his appointment as Chairman of the Committee of ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff."

Gusau added that the CDS pledged to collaborate with other nations to eliminate terrorism in West Africa.

He further noted that Musa requested the United States' support in the procurement of weapons and other equipment.

Gusau said, "In his response, the CDS thanked the AFRICOM Commander for taking the time to visit Nigeria and assured him of the Armed Forces' commitment to cooperate with other nations in the sub-region to eradicate all forms of terrorism and crime.

"General Musa also sought greater defence cooperation with the United States, particularly in training, intelligence sharing, and facilitating the procurement of necessary platforms from the US."

# Ondo Governorship Election: Oyebanji rallies Ekiti indigenes for Ayedatiwa

**By Friday Omosola**

Ahead of Saturday's governorship election in Ondo State, Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji has urged Ekiti indigenes residing in Ondo State to support Governor Lucky Ayedatiwa, the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate.

Speaking at a solidarity rally held in Akure on Tuesday, Governor Oyebanji expressed confidence in Ayedatiwa's ability to secure a landslide victory across all 18 local government areas of the state.

He commended Ekiti indigenes in Ondo State for uniting behind Ayedatiwa, describing their endorsement as a testament to their commitment to progressive governance.

Governor Oyebanji, accompanied by key government officials, including the Deputy Speaker of the Ekiti State House of Assembly, Bolaji Olagbaju, and Special Adviser on Political Matters, Chief Jide Awe, emphasised the importance of collective efforts in ensuring Ayedatiwa's success.

Governor Oyebanji highlighted Ayedatiwa's developmental strides since assuming office, asserting that the governor has been relentless in driving remarkable progress across Ondo State.

He urged voters to re-elect Ayedatiwa, emphasizing that such a victory would reaffirm the influence and leadership of President Bola Tinubu in the southwest.

Oyebanji praised Ekiti indigenes for their active participation in the electoral process, particularly in obtaining voter cards, which he described as vital tools for victory.

He also commended APC aspirants in Ondo State for their unity and commitment to the party's success, urging them to remain steadfast in their support for Ayedatiwa.

"The election is an opportunity to demonstrate our collective love for President Tinubu and former Governor Rotimi Akeredolu. Winning convincingly is not just essential; it is our duty to keep Ondo State within the progressive fold," Oyebanji stated.

Chief Jide Awe, Special Adviser to Governor Oyebanji, lauded the governor's efforts in establishing a platform for regular engagement with

Ekiti indigenes in Ondo State.

He urged them to actively participate in governance to benefit from the dividends of democracy.

Similarly, APC Chairman in Ondo State, Ade Adetimehin, praised Oyebanji for his leadership, reiterating the historical bond between Ekiti and Ondo States.

Delivering Ayedatiwa's message of gratitude, Adetimehin assured Ekiti indigenes of reciprocal support during Ekiti's next governorship election.

The rally underscored the APC's commitment to consolidating its hold on Ondo State and advancing the legacy of progressive governance under Ayedatiwa's leadership.

# Gunmen kill two soldiers at Abia army checkpoint

**By Dave Oludare Oso**

Two soldiers were killed when gunmen attacked an army checkpoint at Ekenobizi, a border community between Abia and Imo states in Umuopara, Umuahia South Local Government Area on Wednesday morning.

According to a military source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, the attack occurred around 6:18 am.

The source said the gunmen arrived in a white Lexus (350/400) model, although the exact number of attackers could not be confirmed.

Lieutenant Colonel Jonah Unuakhalu of the Joint Task Force South East Operation UDO KA confirmed the incident in a press release on Wednesday.

He said: "In the early hours of today, 13 November 2024, troops of the Joint Task Force South East Operation UDO KA, deployed at a checkpoint along the Umuahia – Owerri Road in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, came under attack by the irredentist group, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed affiliate, the Eastern Security Network (ESN).

"During the attack, the gallant troops were able to repel the assault, forcing the attackers to retreat in disarray with gunshot wounds, abandoning one Sienna and one Lexus Jeep used in the attack. However, in the ensuing firefight, two soldiers paid the supreme price."

The Joint Task Force appealed to residents of the South East, particularly those in Abia State, for credible information to help track down the fleeing attackers and combat criminal elements in the region.

The force reiterated its commitment to protecting lives and property in line with global best practices and the rules of engagement.

# How new tax regulation will boost economic transparency – Expert

**By Agency Reporter**

A tax expert, Dr. Titilayo Fowokan, has expressed excitement on the recently gazetted withholding tax regulation titled, 'The Deduction of Tax at Source (Withholding) Regulations, 2024', maintaining it aligned with international best practices in taxation as it will enhance business operations and economic transparency.

Fowokan, who said this in a statement, declared that the alignment will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of tax collection in the country, which becomes effective January 1, 2025.

She said, "The revised legislation offers rate reductions and full withholding tax exemptions for businesses, including SMEs with annual turnovers up to N25m."

"The regulation clarifies the application of withholding tax for unincorporated entities, particularly those operating in the informal sector, explaining that transparency aims to eliminate confusion and ensure that these businesses understand their tax obligations," Fowokan said.

According to her, "It also separates resident from non-resident businesses operating in Nigeria, thereby enhancing the ease of doing business. The regulation makes a clear distinction between Nigerian and foreign companies, ensuring compliance with tax laws for all entities. It outlines specific procedures for transactions in Nigeria, highlighting that the application of WHT varies between related and unrelated businesses."

Fowokan underscored the need to educate the public about their rights and responsibilities under the new WHT regime to improve compliance, noting that withholding tax is an advance payment of income tax, not a separate tax and warned that non-registered taxpayers still have tax obligations and may incur penalties for non-compliance.

"As a service provider, taxes are deducted from your payments and sent to the tax authority, serving as a credit against your annual tax liability," she stated.

She further mentioned that the new regime ensures WHT does not exceed a company's profit margin, allowing

low-margin firms to pay as little as two per cent on their transactions.

She viewed the development as a crucial step in protecting and recognising low-income businesses, like practices in other countries.

Fowokan noted that while the new regime adds responsibilities for taxpayers, it ultimately provides valuable benefits.

"The WHT schedule now mandates taxpayers to separate related-party and third-party transactions, track vendors from countries with double taxation agreements, and document deductions. Withholding agents must also complete forms to verify deductions and remittances for vendors' credit claims," she explained.

# Gov Okpebholo dissolves board

**By Friday Omosola**

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has disbanded the executive boards, agencies, and parastatals within the state's public service.

In a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Fred Itua, the governor confirmed that the dissolution took immediate effect.

Governor Okpebholo also instructed all affected appointees to promptly hand over any government property in their possession to the most senior public officer within their respective ministries, departments, and agencies.

The statement read, "It is hereby announced for the information of the general public that the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has approved the dissolution of the executives of all boards, agencies, and parastatals in the Edo State Public Service, with immediate effect.

"In addition, all permanent secretaries appointed from outside the state public/civil service and all political appointees are hereby relieved of their appointments.

"Accordingly, all affected appointees are to hand over all government properties in their possession to the most senior public officer in their respective ministries, departments, and agencies."

# Army announces burial arrangements for Lagbaja

**By Friday Omosola**

The Nigerian Army Headquarters has announced the funeral arrangements for the late Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Taoreed Lagbaja.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that President Bola Tinubu announced the passing of Lagbaja, who died at the age of 56 following a brief illness.

In a statement issued by the Acting Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Olufemi Oluyede, the burial activities will begin on Thursday, 14 November, with a service of songs at the Army Headquarters Garrison Parade Grounds at 5:00 PM.

On Friday, 15 November, a funeral service will take place at the National Christian Center, Abuja, at 10:00 AM, followed by interment at the National Military Cemetery, Abuja, at 2:00 PM.

Meanwhile, Osun State Governor Ademola Adeleke has received a high-powered military delegation as part of preparations for the burial.

Governor Adeleke described the planned state burial as a fitting tribute to the late army chief, whom he called 'a bright star of Osun and Nigeria that dimmed too early.'

He noted that Lieutenant General Lagbaja's service to the nation would forever be remembered.

While receiving General Kamal Ishola Yusuf and seven other serving generals in his office, Governor Adeleke commended President Bola Tinubu's decision to grant a state burial for the deceased.

He also praised the army's commitment to completing the four community projects initiated by the late Army Chief.

"I thank Mr President for approving the state burial for our late brother. We also appreciate the message from the army representative that ongoing community projects initiated by General Lagbaja at Ilobu, Ifon and Erin Osun would be completed. We will follow up on this", the governor pledged.

At the palace of the Olobu of Ilobu, Oba Ashiru Olaniyan, Governor Adeleke urged community leaders to sustain peace as a tribute to the late Lagbaja.

"Whenever we spoke, the late General always emphasised the importance of peace among his people. Even in death, his message remains that the people of Ilobu and Ifon should live in harmony and unity," Governor Adeleke stated.

He added, "Let us honour our late brother's memory by maintaining peace. We cannot afford any further bloodshed. It is time to view one another as one people and work together for the development of our local government and state."

Earlier, General Yusuf, who led the military delegation, presented a condolence letter from the military leadership to the Governor and briefed him on the burial arrangements for the late General.

He described General Lagbaja as a frontline leader who achieved significant milestones during his brief tenure as Chief of Army Staff.

Governor Adeleke, accompanied by Deputy Governor Prince Kola Adewusi, Chief of Staff Kazeem Akinleye, and members of the State Executive Council, later led the military delegation to the Lagbaja family residence. There, prayers were offered for the repose of the late General's soul.

# PICTORIAL: Popular Abuja fitness centre up in smoke

**By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

The popular fitness centre, Eco Fitness Hub, in Gwarinpa, Abuja was Wednesday morning razed by fire .

TVC reports that the fire, which erupted on Wednesday, has engulfed large portions of the facility, though the cause remains unknown.

No casualties have been reported as of the time of filing this report.

# Dangote: IPMAN members load petrol N990/litre

**By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) has reached a landmark agreement with the Dangote Petroleum Refinery, signaling a potential shift in the country's fuel distribution and pricing structure.

With more than 30,000 members set to buy petrol directly from Dangote's refinery in Lekki, Lagos, this deal is poised to transform Nigeria's fuel landscape, offering consumers relief from soaring prices and supply chain inefficiencies.

Under the new arrangement, IPMAN members will have the option to purchase Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) at a rate of N940 per litre if transported via vessels, or N990 per litre when using trucks to bring the fuel to their depots.

This pricing model eliminates the middlemen—such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and depot owners—who have traditionally added significant costs to the price of fuel.

According to IPMAN President Abubakar Garima, the new deal could lead to a price drop of up to N50 per litre across the country, with some regions potentially seeing prices as low as N1,150 per litre.

This development comes as a major boost to Nigeria's fight against the persistent fuel scarcity that has plagued the country in recent years.

"By eliminating third-party intermediaries, we expect that the cost of petrol will drop significantly," Garima told Channels Television. "The reduction could be up to N50 per litre, and in some areas, it could be even more."

The agreement also marks a significant step toward the full deregulation of Nigeria's petroleum sector. IPMAN's new direct-supply model will help stabilize the fuel market, improve availability, and foster more competitive pricing by reducing the logistical hurdles typically associated with importing petrol.

The deal also includes diesel and kerosene, products which will also be supplied directly from Dangote Refinery, further reducing reliance on third-party suppliers.

IPMAN Vice President Hammed Fashola emphasized the potential long-term benefits of sourcing petrol domestically: "Once we are getting the fuel we need directly from Dangote Refinery, there is no reason for Nigeria to continue importing petrol."

As Dangote Refinery gears up to enter international markets, exporting over 200,000 metric tonnes of petrol abroad, the refinery's production capabilities are expected to grow. Despite currently producing less than a third of Nigeria's domestic fuel needs, Dangote Refinery's capacity of 650,000 barrels per day is poised to play a pivotal role in both Nigeria's domestic and international fuel markets.

However, as IPMAN works out the logistics of the deal, including payment modalities and other technical arrangements, consumers will have to wait a little longer for the immediate impact on fuel prices and supply.

"We are still finalizing the necessary documentation to begin lifting fuel directly from Dangote," confirmed Chinedu Ukadike, IPMAN's National Publicity Secretary. "While we don't have a specific start date yet, the good news is that we've been granted permission to begin soon."

The partnership between Dangote Refinery and IPMAN marks a significant turning point in Nigeria's petroleum industry. If successful, it will not only alleviate the fuel crisis but also bring much-needed price stability and availability, while reducing the country's dependency on imported petroleum products. As Nigeria's refining capacity continues to grow, the nation may be on the cusp of a fuel market transformation that will benefit both consumers and the economy.

# Niger Rep invites Russian firms to exploit uranium, other resources

**By Agency Reporter**

Niger Republic wants Russian firms to invest in uranium and other natural resource production, its mining minister said on Wednesday, amid an ongoing dispute with former colonial master France.

French nuclear group Orano halted uranium output in Niger last month as relations soured with the military junta that seized power in July 2023.

"We have already met with Russian companies that are interested in coming to explore and exploit Niger's natural resources… not only uranium," mining minister Ousmane Abarchi told Russia's Ria Novosti press agency in an interview.

"With regards to French companies, the French government, via its head of state, has said it does not recognise the Niger authorities," he said.

"Does it seem possible in this case that we, the State of Niger, accept that French companies continue to exploit our natural resources?"

Abarchi's comments come with several West African countries recently having downgraded historical ties with France, turning instead towards Russia and other countries for strategic partnerships.

Niger's military rulers have vowed to revamp rules regulating the mining of raw materials by foreign companies in what is the world's seventh-largest uranium producer.

Orano has denounced a withdrawal by the junta in June of a permit for one of the largest uranium deposits in the world, Imouraren, and the impossibility of exporting the raw material since Niger's

border with Benin was closed for what Niamey says are security reasons.

# Reps moves to secure sustainable funding for NYSC

**By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program may soon see a significant boost in funding, thanks to a new bill currently under debate in the Nigerian House of Representatives.

The proposed NYSC Trust Fund (Establishment) Bill 2024 aims to create a sustainable financial structure to improve the training, empowerment, and overall operations of the NYSC, with a focus on addressing youth unemployment and skills development in the country.

The bill, introduced by the lawmaker representing Nasarawa/Toro Federal Constituency of Nasarawa State, was first read in the House two weeks ago and is set for further debate in the coming weeks.

The proposed Trust Fund will focus on a variety of key areas, including the training and skills acquisition of corps members, the provision of necessary equipment, and the development of orientation camps and other NYSC facilities nationwide.

At the heart of the proposed bill is the establishment of a dedicated Trust Fund that will help address the challenges facing the NYSC. According to Section 2(1) of the bill, the fund will be used to support various activities, such as the empowerment and training of corps members, improvements to NYSC camps and facilities, and the overall enhancement of the program's operational efficiency.

The bill's sponsors argue that the proposed fund will be critical for modernizing the NYSC, making its programs more effective, and better equipping corps members to contribute to Nigeria's economic and social development.

The establishment of a board to oversee the fund's administration will also ensure that funds are used efficiently and that policies for training and empowerment programs are properly regulated.

One of the most significant goals of the bill is to address Nigeria's high levels of youth unemployment. By equipping corps members with practical skills and knowledge, the Trust Fund aims to narrow the growing skills gap in the country.

Furthermore, the bill emphasises the promotion of entrepreneurship and self-reliance, encouraging young Nigerians to create their own job opportunities instead of relying solely on traditional employment routes.

"The NYSC is not just about national service, it is about shaping the future of our nation by empowering the youth," said the bill's sponsor.

"With this fund, we hope to bridge the skills gap, promote entrepreneurship, and ultimately contribute to reducing unemployment in the country."

The bill also outlines plans to expand the scope of NYSC's initiatives, which would include the development of new programs and services aimed at improving corps members' employability. With a steady stream of funding, the NYSC would be able to offer more comprehensive training programs and vocational courses, allowing young Nigerians to develop practical, job-ready skills in diverse fields.

The fund will not only support the NYSC's core activities but also expand its capacity to contribute to national development by directly linking the program's initiatives with the federal government's broader economic and social development objectives.

The bill has received widespread support from lawmakers, many of whom see it as a necessary step in addressing Nigeria's youth unemployment crisis and improving the country's human capital. However, the key question remains: Will the government secure the necessary funding to ensure that the Trust Fund is sustainable in the long term?

Critics of the bill have raised concerns over how the Trust Fund will be financed, particularly given Nigeria's ongoing fiscal challenges. While the bill has the backing of legislators, it will require substantial political and financial support from the executive arm of government to succeed.

As the debate continues, the bill's sponsors remain optimistic that it will pass through the legislative process and be implemented effectively, especially given its alignment with the federal government's goals for national development.

"The NYSC Trust Fund is a critical investment in the future of Nigeria," said one lawmaker. "If we want to make real progress in reducing unemployment and empowering our youth, this fund is an essential tool."

# Alleged bullying: FG suspends 13 FGC Enugu students

**By Agency Reporter**

The Federal Government has suspended 13 students of the Federal Government College in Enugu State for six-weeks for alleged bullying in the school.

This is contained in a statement in Abuja on Wednesday by the Director of Press and Public Relations in the ministry, Folashade Boriowo.

The Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa ordered the suspension of the students based on a viral video showing some students of the school engaging in acts of bullying.

Alausa, reaffirmed the ministry's unwavering commitment to maintaining a safe and conducive learning environment in all federal schools across the country.

According to him, a recent report received by the Federal Ministry of Education highlighted the bullying incident at the FUC, Enugu, which raised significant concerns about safety and discipline within the school environment.

"The findings of the ministry, the incident involved the gang assault of an SS1 student (a day student) by a group of students on Nov. 7.

"The incident came to light showing the circulation of a disturbing video on social media platforms.

"In response, the Federal Ministry of Education established a disciplinary committee to investigate the matter.

"Based on the findings, all 13 students involved have been placed on a six-week suspension pending the report of the investigative committee."

The minister also directed the School Based Management Committee (SBMC) to collaborate with security agencies to conduct a thorough investigation, including possible affiliations with external groups.

He added that immediate measures have been implemented to enhance security at the College by engaging law enforcement agents while also reviewing existing safety protocols.

"Additionally, counseling and rehabilitation support will be provided to address all forms of problems while promoting their reintegration into a positive school environment," he said.

# Africa asks the West to honour climate change commitments

**By Agency Reporter**

African leaders said categorically on Tuesday at the World Leaders Climate Action Summit (WLCAS) in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital, that they are taking steps to reduce carbon emissions but will be unable to meet climate goals without funding from wealthier nations.

"We cannot reach our climate goals alone, we call on our global partners to honour their commitments ensuring accessible concessional financing for sustainable development in Africa without unsustainable debt," Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo said.

Addressing the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP29 summit, Akufo-Addo said his country has planted 50 million trees and undertaken forest restoration efforts covering 721,000 hectares of land since 2017, aiming to cut emissions by 64 million metric tonnes by 2030.

He noted that achieving this target requires investments of $10-15 billion, but despite financial and technical challenges, Ghana is committed to meeting Paris Agreement goals across agriculture, transport, forestry, and energy, among other sectors.

SEVERELY IMPACTED

He said Ghana encourages electric vehicle use and has raised $800 million through carbon credit trading with countries like Switzerland and Sweden.

Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa said his country has been severely impacted by climate change, particularly through El Nino-induced droughts.

"Zimbabwe bears the scars of climate change and is currently experiencing one of the most devastating El Nino-induced droughts in history," he said.

Mnangagwa said the drought has impacted nearly every aspect of life in Zimbabwe, prompting the government to declare a national disaster in April.

'HALF MEASURES'

"The time for half measures is over. We all have a duty to fully implement our agreements," he said.

Togo's President Faure Gnassingbe stressed the need for genuine climate justice, calling for shared but differentiated responsibilities among nations.

"Africa is paying the harshest price for climate change… we contribute small amounts in terms of emissions but we incur the most severe impact. It is our ecosystems of food security that are bearing the brunt of this

crisis," Gnassingbe said.

He said the need for climate justice is urgent and can no longer be ignored. "As leaders, each and everyone's responsibility should move beyond promises to concrete actions."

CLIMATE FINANCING

Guinea -Bissau's President Umaro Sissoco Embalo said COP29 is taking place amid a global climate crisis that requires urgent and coordinated action.

"We must have a political will to take responsibility and collectively address the current challenges with the necessary spirit of cooperation and solidarity," Embalo stressed.

He called for an urgent need for fair and accessible climate financing for developing countries as a priority and necessary condition to enhance resilience and adaptation.

President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo expressed concern about climate financing, stating: "The new goal for climate financing must be based on scientific data that takes into account the needs of developing countries."

# NIWA clears Lagos waterways of hyacinths ahead of yuletide traffic

**By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) has launched a major initiative to clear water hyacinths and other debris from Lagos' busy water channels.

The clearance project, which began this week, is part of efforts to ensure smooth and safe navigation for boat operators and passengers as holiday travel ramps up.

According to a statement released on Wednesday, November 13, the Lagos Area Manager of NIWA, Sarat Braimah, explained that the ongoing project will focus on key waterways in Lagos with heavy boat traffic, starting with the Omu Creeks and Ikorodu Water Channels.

The Omu Creeks have already been cleared, while intensive clearing activities are now underway in the Ikorodu channel, which is expected to take at least a week to complete. These efforts will involve the removal of invasive water hyacinths as well as waste disposal, in line with the agency's safety and navigation mandate.

Braimah highlighted that the Yuletide season, typically marked by a rise in water transport, also sees a resurgence of water hyacinths along the city's waterways.

These aquatic weeds, which can obstruct boat traffic and pose safety hazards, are particularly problematic during this period. She noted that while the hyacinths often reappear, the proactive clearance effort is essential to ensure safe passage for all waterway users, particularly as traffic on the waterways is expected to increase.

"As we approach the Christmas season, with an anticipated rise in boat traffic, we want to ensure everything is in order," Braimah said.

"We are working diligently to clear the waterways of weeds and waste, allowing for smoother navigation during the holiday period and beyond."

The ongoing project, which is being carried out by NIWA staff and river marshals, will extend beyond the Ikorodu channels to other high-traffic areas such as the Badagry and Apapa water channels.

However, the Ikorodu channel remains the top priority, as it serves as a major route from which weeds spread to other parts of Lagos' coastal communities.

Braimah acknowledged that the project is resource-intensive and requires significant manpower, but assured that NIWA is fully committed to ensuring the waterways are ready for the festive season.

# Oshiomhole's son named health commissioner, sparks debate

**By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi**

In what some observers see as a potential nod to his political benefactors, Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State has nominated Cyril Oshiomhole, son of the prominent political figure and former governor Adams Oshiomhole, as Commissioner for Health. This nomination, alongside other appointments, has sparked a wave of speculation across Edo State, with many citizens questioning whether the governor's decisions are rooted in merit or political loyalty.

Adams Oshiomhole, a towering presence in Edo State's political landscape, served as governor, led the All Progressives Congress (APC) as its national chairman, and now sits as a senator. His son's appointment to such a vital position raises questions about Governor Okpebholo's intentions, with some suggesting this could be a gesture of loyalty to a key political ally and mentor. Observers note that this appointment could be seen as a way for the governor to solidify his support from Oshiomhole and his faction of the APC, whose backing might be crucial for Okpebholo's political stability and future ambitions.

Read Also: 'I'll not betray you,' New Edo Governor assures citizens

Read Also: BREAKING: Shettima, Sanwo-Olu, others arrive in Edo for Okpebholo's inauguration

Cyril Oshiomhole's qualifications include a Bachelor's degree in Medicine and Surgery from Ahmadu Bello University, followed by a Master's in Public Health from Tulane University, with a focus on Environmental Health, Toxicology, and Disaster Management. While he brings impressive academic credentials and specialized training from esteemed institutions such as Harvard University and Queen Mary University in London, his appointment comes amid a backdrop of political intrigue.

Additionally, Governor Okpebholo has nominated former national assembly member Samson Osagie as Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, a seasoned politician with ties to the APC establishment. Barrister Musa Ikhilor has also been appointed Secretary to the State Government (SSG), adding to the list of political insiders now poised to take on key state roles.

These appointments come at a time when Edo State faces significant challenges, including economic difficulties, youth unemployment, and critical infrastructure needs. Many Edo residents wonder if these high-profile nominations will translate into tangible development or if they are merely political maneuvers to appease powerful figures. Governor Okpebholo's administration will be closely watched by the public, who are eager to see whether his governance will address the state's pressing issues or primarily serve the interests of his political allies.

Only time will reveal whether these appointments are steps toward progress for Edo State or strategic moves to consolidate power within the state's political elite. For now, the people of Edo remain vigilant, hopeful that Governor Okpebholo's choices will ultimately prioritize the public good over political ties.

# Prophetess arrested over mother, child's death in Ondo church

**By Dave Oludare Oso**

A prophetess, Mrs Folashade Adekola, has been arrested by the Ondo State Police Command, over the death of a woman, Jumoke Adesuwa and her newborn baby inside the church.

Confirming the incident on Tuesday, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Funmilayo Odunlami, said the prophetess was arrested and taken to the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department for further investigation.

It was gathered on Tuesday that the deceased bled to death from complications after childbirth inside the suspect's church located in the Oke-Aro area of Akure, the state capital. The baby was said to have also died immediately.

The PPRO said the suspect was arrested by the men of the command after the deceased's brother reported the matter at the police station.

She said, "The case was reported by the deceased's brother, that the sister died after childbirth in the church and the prophetess is already in custody. Investigations are still ongoing."

A family source narrated that someone from the church called the family to inform the deceased's husband that his wife had been delivered of a baby. The deceased's husband called a family member and both rushed to the church.

He said, "When we got there, they were told that the baby died after childbirth but that the mother was alive. On sighting the deceased, we saw her in a pool of blood, bleeding profusely. So, we rushed her to a nearby hospital.

"Due to her condition, she was rejected at three hospitals and she died in the process of reviving her in the last hospital that admitted her. To our surprise, we got to the church to collect the baby's remains and found the corpse in a room. The condition of the room was very worrisome as it did not look like a delivery room.

"We approached the Oke-Aro Police Station in Akure to report the case which led to the arrest of the prophetess in charge. The remains of the woman have been deposited at the mortuary."

# Bobrisky's saga, reflection of institutional issues – FG

**By Dave Oludare Oso**

The Minister of Interior Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo has said that he believes the Bobrisky saga is a reflection of institutional issues in the country.

The minister spoke on Tuesday's edition of Channels Television's Politics Today.

Bobrisky, a popular cross-dresser whose real name is Idris Okuneye, has been embroiled in a saga over his jail time for naira abuse.

In a viral audio, the cross-dresser claimed to have paid some officials of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) to get special treatment in prison.

According to Tunji-Ojo, the incident which had dominated conversations for months, is a reflection of institutional issues.

He said, "When you have an insittutional problem, you don't just provide a knee-jerk approach to solving it.

"We set up that committee to look into all the issues, beyond Bobrisky, beyond people absconding. it is a whole instutional issue."

Tunji-Ojo said reforming Nigeria's institutions is the way forward in resolving similar issues that may occur in the future.

"We cannot transfer today's problem to the future," the minister said.

A blogger, Martins Otse, known as VeryDarkMan, had alleged in viral audio clips that some officers of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) collected ₦15 million from Bobrisky during his naira spraying ordeal in April for the anti-graft agency to drop money laundering charges against him. After that, a court sentenced him to six months imprisonment in April 2024. The cross-dresser was released in August.

The blogger also alleged that Bobrisky paid some millions of naira to secure a choice place in prison.

Bobrisky has since denied the allegations while the EFCC and NCoS had ordered investigations into the allegations by the blogger.

The House of Representatives also waded in and invited those involved for a probe while the Federal Government suspended some NCoS senior officers.

On September 30, 2024, Tunji-Ojo, inaugurated a committee to probe allegations of gross misconduct against the NCoS.

Thereafter, the panel said it "did not find any evidence thus far that suggested that Okuneye slept outside the custodial centre during the period of his imprisonment, which was from 12th April 2024 to the 5th August 2024, which is a six-month correctional sentence with the usual remission applicable."

# Shettima, Tunji-Ojo, others storm Akure for Aiyedatiwa

**By Friday Omosola**

Kashim Shettima, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, Babajide Sanwo-Olu and Olayide Adelami

Ahead of Saturday's governorship election in Ondo State, the All Progressives Congress (APC) held a grand rally in Akure on Wednesday.

The event, which took place at the Democracy Park, was headlined by Vice President Senator Kashim Shettima and attended by governors, ministers, lawmakers, and other senior party officials.

The final campaign rally saw a united APC presenting a strong and energetic push to secure victory.

Speaking to a large crowd of enthusiastic residents, Vice President Shettima, who represented President Bola Tinubu, emphasised the party's commitment to Ondo's development under the Tinubu administration.

He urged the people of the state to vote for continuity and progress under APC leadership.Shettima also praised Ondo residents for their unwavering support for the party, assuring them that APC would continue to prioritize critical sectors such as the economy, infrastructure, education, and healthcare.

"Ondo has two senior ministers under President Tinubu's administration and just last week, the President approved the establishment of a teaching hospital for the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA). This is because of the love Mr. President has for Ondo State", the Vice President said.

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa and his deputy, Olayide Adelami [PHOTO CREDIT: Facebook]

After being presented with the APC flag from National Chairman Abdullahi Ganduje reflected on his journey and expressed gratitude for the support of his late predecessor, late Rotimi Akeredolu.

READ ALSO: BREAKING: Shettima, Sanwo-Olu, others arrive in Edo for Okpebholo's inauguration

Governor Aiyedatiwa stressed that his administration had just begun addressing the state's needs, stating, "You haven't seen anything yet. With your support, we will achieve even greater things together. I urge you all to vote for APC on Saturday for a stronger, more prosperous Ondo State."

Outlining his vision, Governor Aiyedatiwa pledged policies aimed at boosting economic growth, ensuring food security, improving infrastructure and social services, and strengthening state security.

APC National Vice Chairman for the South West, Isaac Kekemeke, and State Chairman, Ade Adetimehin, rallied the crowd, urging supporters to amplify the APC's message within their local communities across the state.

The Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, emphasised the APC's commitment to securing victories in all 18 local government areas of the state.

Lagos State Governor and Chairman of the APC National Campaign Council for Ondo, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, addressed the crowd, urging party supporters to maintain peace on election day and ensure victory for the APC.

READ ALSO: Gov Aiyedatiwa commissions reconstructed Alape-Araromi seaside road

APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Ganduje, reaffirmed the party's commitment to a decisive win in Ondo, assuring Governor Aiyedatiwa of the party's full support to deliver all 18 local government areas.

"This election is about political unity and strength," Ganduje said as he presented the APC flags to Governor Aiyedatiwa and his running mate, Olayide Adelami, symbolising the party's endorsement and determination to win the gubernatorial seat.

Earlier, Governor Aiyedatiwa expressed his gratitude to the Deji of Akure, Oba Aladetoyinbo Ogunlade Aladelusi, for rallying support among fellow obas and chiefs within the traditional institution.

He said their collective backing, coupled with a strong turnout, was vital for him and the APC.He added that the Vice President's 's visit to the Deji's Palace was a gesture of appreciation to the traditional rulers for their endorsement and for motivating the people to vote in his favour.

The APC governors present included Abiodun Oyebanji of Ekiti, Dapo Abiodun of Ogun, Hope Uzodima of Imo, and AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq of Kwara.

Other key figures at the event included Minister of Youth Development Ayo Olawande, Minister of Blue Economy Adegboyega Oyetola, Secretary of the National Campaign Council Senator Ovie Omo-Agege, former Edo State Governor Senator Adams Oshiomhole, and former Edo State Deputy Governor Philip Shuaibu.

READ ALSO: Ondo 2024: We'll be transparent, REC assures electorates, stakeholders

# Makinde presents N678.086bn 2025 budget to Oyo Assembly

**By Oluwatosin Ologun**

The Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, has presented a total 2025 budget sum of ₦678.086 billion (N678, 068 767 332.18) to the Oyo state House of Assembly for legislative consideration and approval.

While capital expenditure as contained in the budget takes 51 percent of the total budget, recurrent expenditure stands at 49 percent.

The governor, in his address before the presentation on Wednesday, November 13, tagged the 2025 budget "Budget of Economic Stabilization".

"So, today, I stand before you, Mr Speaker Sir and the Honourable Members of this House to present the Oyo State 2025 Budget of Stabilisation. The goal of this budget is to consolidate the economic gains we engineered through the 2024 Budget of Economic Recovery and translate them into more tangible benefits for our people.

READ ALSO: N80,000 Minimum Wage: Oyo Assembly applauds Makinde's worker-centric approach

"Here in Oyo State, it has always been our pride to ensure that every kobo approved by this house is used to drive sustainable development in the State. The Oyo State 2025 Appropriation Bill is not going to be any different. We are even more determined to ensure that our people get more benefits from the implementation of this budget," he said.

According to the budget estimate, N343 billion was appropriated for capital expenditure, which represents 50.59percent of the total budget, while N335 billion naira budgeted for recurrent expenditure represents 49.4 percent of the total budget.

"Mr Speaker Sir, Honourable Members of the House, permit me at this point, to present the Oyo State 2025 Appropriation Bill that will support the new minimum wage, and power further investments in our economy, education, healthcare and security sectors.

Governor Seyi Makinde presenteing the total 2025 budget sum of ₦678.086 billion (N678, 068 767 332.18) to the Oyo state House of Assembly for legislative consideration and approval [PHOTO CREDIT: Oluwatosin Ologun]

"We are proposing a budget of six hundred and seventy-eight billion, eighty-six million, seven hundred and sixty-seven thousand, three hundred and thirty-two-naira, eighteen kobo. (N678,086,767,332.18)," he added.

READ ALSO: Makinde to present proposed 2025 Budget on Wednesday

Makinde said N152 billion has been appropriated for the infrastructural development of the state, which he noted took the largest percentage of the budget with 22.4 percent.

Also, education received N145 billion, which represents 21 percent of the total budget. Health got N59 billion, which represents 9 percent while agriculture got N18 billion, representing 3 percent of the budget.

"We strongly believe that this budget will '

live up its name as the economic stabilisation that will support our Oyo State Roadmap for Sustainable Development 2023-2027.

les into the faces of investors, smallholder farmers, micro and small entrepreneurs, our teachers and other public servants, our parents, our children, our youths, and all residents of Oyo State," Makinde stated.

The govenor added that the 2025 budget proposal represents 35 percent increase compared to the 2024.