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2027: Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide backs Tinubu's re-election bid

By Dave Oludare Oso

As the 2027 general elections draw nearer, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide has declared its support for the re-election of President Bola Tinubu for a second term in office.

The foremost Igbo socio-cultural group stated this in a statement signed by its Deputy President General, Mazi Okechukwu Isiguzoro, on Sunday, where they appealed to the President to use his executive powers to facilitate the release of the Indigenous People of Biafra leader, Nnamdi Kanu this 2025.

The association stated that the release of the IPOB leader shall serve not merely as an act of mercy, but as a vital catalyst for restoring peace and resolving the current insecurity challenges plaguing the Southeast.

The statement maintained that the South-East deserves a path toward stability, noting that peace cannot be achieved in the shadow of violence and discord.

The apex Igbo socio-cultural organisation also advocated for the acceleration of ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction projects of dilapidated federal roads throughout the South east, under Senator David Umahi as Works Minister, insisting that Southeastern infrastructure remains the backbone of economic progress and social cohesion.

They added that it is non-negotiable that these projects are completed before the end of 2026.

The statement reads, "The Apex Igbo Sociocultural Organisation, Ohanaeze Ndigbo, firmly frames this critical discourse around the sanctity of Nigeria's unwritten gentleman's agreement concerning the rotational presidency between the North and South. This covenant, which stands as a pillar of our democracy, must not only be acknowledged but must be steadfastly upheld to promote equity and fairness amidst our diverse tapestry.

"With the conclusion of an eight-year Northern presidency under former President Muhammadu Buhari, from 2015 to 2023, we firmly assert that it is now time for the Southern region to claim its rightful place at the helm of leadership from 2023 to 2031. This principle of fairness compels us to support President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's bid for a second term in the upcoming 2027 elections.

"In our assessment of the current political milieu, the glaring weakness, disarray, and lack of coherence among opposition political elites expose a perilous landscape for governance.

"Individuals such as Atiku Abubakar, Rabiu Kwankwaso, Nasir el-Rufai, Peter Obi, and Siminalayi Fubara may mean well, but the reality is that their capacity to mount a serious challenge against the APC is dubious at best. It would be a reckless endeavor to engage in political maneuvers that align with figures who offer no substantive plan for progress.

"Ohanaeze Ndigbo cautions that any attempt to co-opt our organisation as a vehicle for misguided political machinations must be met with resolute resistance. The political ambition of the few should not be allowed to hijack the collective aspirations of the Ibo people. We cannot afford to gamble again on opportunistic alliances that have historically undermined our unity. Our people still bear the scars of the ill-fated endorsement of Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi in 2019, a move that has reverberated painfully through our communities and the fabric of our regional integrity.

"In this crucial juncture, we pivot towards constructive action. We urge President Tinubu to utilize his executive powers to facilitate the release of Nnamdi Kanu by 2025. This pivotal step will serve not merely as an act of mercy, but as a vital catalyst for restoring peace and resolving the current insecurity challenges plaguing the Southeast. Our region deserves a path toward stability, and this cannot happen in the shadow of violence and discord.

"Moreover, we strongly advocate for the acceleration of ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction projects of dilapidated federal roads throughout Southeastern Nigeria, under the stewardship of Senator Dave Umahi. Our infrastructure is the backbone of economic progress and social cohesion; thus, it is non-negotiable that these projects are completed before the end of 2026.

"The foundational need for accurate representation in the upcoming 2025 Census must also be addressed, particularly the incorporation of ethnic and religious demographics that reflect the true population of the Igbo people across Nigeria, especially in the northern region. It is our belief that such representation will further empower our voice in national conversations.

"Additionally, the creation of new states within Igbo land—Anioma State in the South-South and Aba State in the Southeast—will enhance our governance, representation, and socio-political relevance.

"We also highlight the urgency of revitalizing the Eastern Economic corridors, which require strategic reinvestment. Initiatives such as the dredging and reopening of Calabar Seaport, the revival of Enugu Coal Mine, and the establishment of the Akwete Blue River Deep Seaport in Ukwa East, Abia State are paramount. Furthermore, upgrading the railway framework from Port Harcourt to Maiduguri and enhancing connectivity within our towns, including Onitsha, Owerri, Okigwe, Abakaliki, and Awka, will solidify our region's economic potential.

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9X3	=	166,223.50
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7X4	=	180,173.50
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6X3	=	82,750.00
6X2	=	52,499.50
5X6	=	123,749.50
5X5	=	110,000.00
5X4	=	76,833.00
5X3	=	66,875.00
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4X3	=	36,499.50
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8X3	=	N/A
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Lagos Assembly impeaches Speaker Obasa, elects 1st female head

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Members of the Lagos State House of Assembly have impeached the speaker, Mudashiru Obasa.

He was accused of multiple statutory and financial infractions.

Obasa was subsequently replaced by his deputy, Mojisola Meranda.

Mrs Meranda, who represents Apapa Constituency 1, was also a former chief whip of the house.

Mojeed Fatai is now the Deputy Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly.

Obasa has been engulfed in a series of controversial circumstances in terms of financial dealings.

The removal comes barely a month after Obasa was accused of allegedly spending N17 billion to fix a gate that leads to the assembly.

The lawmakers subsequently elected Mojisola Meranda, representative of Apapa I, as the new speaker.

Meranda, who took her oath of office immediately, would serve as the first female speaker of the Lagos legislature.

Meanwhile, security operatives have taken over the premises of the Assembly complex.

A member of the All Progressives Congress in the state who pleaded anonymity disclosed to New Daily Prime that the impeachment of Obasa has nothing to do with the upcoming governorship election in the state

"This is unconnected with the 2027 governor election. The lawmakers only stepped in over the embattled speaker's action," he said.

Obasa has been claimed in some quarters to be one of the governorship aspirants inching to succeed incumbent, Babajide Sanwo-Olu in 2027.

Court grants bail to Ooni's ex-queen, Oriyomi, principal

By Friday Omosola

An Oyo State High Court, sitting in Ring Road, Ibadan, has granted bail to Naomi Silekunola, the former queen of the Ooni of Ife, along with Ibadan-based media personality Oriyomi Hamzat and Abdulahi Fasasi, the Principal of Islamic High School.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that the trio were arranged and remanded over a stampede that occurred in December 2024.

The stampede led to the death of 35 children and many being hospitalised.

Justice K.B. Olawoyin of Court 8 issued the ruling on Monday after hearing a bail application filed by the defendant's legal team.

The bail conditions include a N10 million bond and two sureties, each required to provide landed property documents within the court's jurisdiction.

Makinde presents staff of office, certificate to 46th Alaafin-elect

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Oyo State Governor, Engr. Seyi Makinde has officially presented the Staff of Office and certificate of appointment to the 46th Alaafin-elect, Prince Akeem Abimbola Owoade, marking the formal ascension of the new monarch to the revered throne of Alaafin of Oyo.

The presentation of the certificate and staff of office was held on Monday at the Oyo State Government Secretariat in Agodi, Ibadan, the state capital.

Recall that Prince Owoade was announced on Friday by the state government as the Alaafin-elect, to succeed late Oba Lamidi Adeyemi III, the 45th Alaafin of Oyo, who passed on April 22, 2022.

NLC shuts LTV, Radio Lagos, Traffic Radio over minimum wage crisis

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Lagos State chapter of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) on Monday stormed Lagos Television, Radio Lagos/Eko FM, and Traffic Radio, forcibly ejecting workers and shutting down operations.

The Labour union's action was in response to the refusal of the Lagos State Government to integrate the stations' staff into the Oracle system and pay the long-overdue minimum wage.

The development followed the expiration of a fiery three-day warning strike by the stations' workers, which had seen spirited protests earlier in the day.

NLC officials descended on the premises in Agidingbi, Ikeja.

NLC officials descended on the premises in Agidingbi, Ikeja shortly after the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) Lagos Chapel Chairman, Leye Ajayi, wrapped up his impassioned address to the aggrieved staff.

Led by its formidable chairperson, Mrs Funmi Sessi, the NLC delegation stormed into the buildings, halting broadcasts and ejecting remaining workers.

According to her, the move was a strong message to the government that the era of neglecting workers is over.

"We are not fighting the Lagos State Government," Sessi declared, "but we demand an immediate end to the injustice meted out to staff of these stations."

According to her staff of the stations must be integrated into the Oracle System.

She emphasised the disparity between the stations' staff and other civil servants in the state, lamenting their exclusion from benefits enjoyed by mainstream government workers.

Sessi said it is unacceptable that workers in the stations were denied what others in the state service were benefitting from.

10 interesting facts about 1st female Lagos Assembly Speaker

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Lagos State House of Assembly has elected Mojisola Lasbat Meranda as its first female Speaker in history.

Her emergence on Monday followed the impeachment of Mudashiru Obasa, who was accused of financial mismanagement and corruption.

Here are facts about the new female Speaker.

Meranda was born on August 16, 1980, to the family of late Ojora of Lagos, T. A Lawal Akapo and Princess M. A. Lawal-Akapo of the royal families of Ojora, Aromire, Onitana, Oloto, and Oniru.

Her late father was a legislator at the local level before becoming the Ojora of Lagos.

Her brother is the Oniru of Iru land, Oba AbdulWasiu Omogbolahan Lawal.

She attended the Lagos Anglican Girls Grammar School (1992-1996) and Ansar-Ud-Deen Secondary School (1996 -1998). She served as the library prefect and secretary of the press club of her secondary school.

She obtained the West African School Certificate (WASC) examination in 1998.

Meranda obtained an advanced certificate in software development in 2005.

She attended the Lagos State University, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Administration in 2013.

In 2015, she was elected as a member of the House of Assembly.

She was elected Chief Whip of the ninth House of Assembly.

She was elected the Deputy Speaker in 2023.

Gospel singer, Oluwatimileyin Ajayi beheads girlfriend in Abuja

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Police Command has arrested a budding gospel musician, Oluwatimileyin Ajayi for beheading his girlfriend in Abuja.

An intelligence tip-off led security agents to an uncompleted building in the area, which led to the suspect's arrest.

During interrogation, Ajayi allegedly confessed to the crime and revealed that the rest of the victim's body was at his residence.

The incident was confirmed by Comrade Abwami Nuhuson Daniel, Secretary of Orozo Community, on his Facebook page, where he wrote:

"I got the shock of my life as we apprehend a 'Yahoo' ritual with human head (his girlfriend) inside a nylon in Agwan Sarki, Orozo, FCT.

"I thought I just used to watch things like this until I experienced one 'live' today in my community. And this guy said the remaining body of the girl is still in his house. God have mercy on this generation."

This bewildering incident has triggered shocking reactions across social media platforms as netziens could not phantom why someone who posed as a gospel singer could have perpetrated such an heinous act.

Meanwhile, some Nigerians have reacted to the post.

Read some of them below:

@Sadiq90s: "What the heck, bro! Omo, seriously don't trust just anyone. If you have to get married within your family, do it as soon as possible. I'm marrying my cousin."

@winnie_1311: "I tell you this ladies, your body is potent and highly priced..If a guy leaves you because you are not allowing him access to your body let it be. YOU ARE THE PRICE!!"

Court voids Rivers PDP congresses, axes chairman, exco

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Rivers State High Court sitting in Port Harcourt has restrained the People's Democratic Party (PDP) state executives led by Aaron Chukwuemeka from parading themselves as Exco of the party.

Presiding judge, Justice Stephen Jumbo, delivered the ruling on an interlocutory injunction on Monday.

Two Port Harcourt based legal practitioners, Edwin Woko, Love Otuonye, and two others who are members of the PDP filed the case was against the party's National chairman, state chairman, and nine others praying the court to declare null and void the purported PDP local government and ward congresses conducted the 319 wards and 23 LGAs by pro-Wike supporters on 27th of July, 10th August, and 31st August last year

The applicants had contended that all the congresses were done in disobedience to an order of the Rivers State High Court issued on the 16th of July 2024 stopping the PDP, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as well as their agents and privies from conducting congresses pending the hearing and determination of the originating summons already filed.

This ruling is coming on the heels of a similar decision last year which also nullified the ward, local government, and

state executives of the All Progressive Congress (APC) which had produced Tony Okocha.

Some political watchers have viewed the development as a blow to the FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike in his running political battle in Rivers State with Siminalayi Fubara, his successor.

N200bn USSD debt: FG to blacklist 18 banks

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government's axe may fall on some Deposit Money Banks over the non-payment of over N200 billion on Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) to Nigerian telecom operators as the government set to list out names of the defaulting 18 banks on Tuesday (tomorrow).

According to a report from Vanguard, the reason for the public seems to be for the telcos to stop offering the said services that enable their customers conveniently do online banking.

The Central Bank of Nigeria and the Nigerian Communications Commission, in December 2024, issued a final directive to Deposit Money Banks and Mobile Network Operators to resolve the protracted N250bn Unstructured Supplementary Service Data debt dispute.

The directive, contained in a joint circular dated December 20, 2024, was signed by the acting Director of Payments System Management at the CBN, Oladimeji Taiwo, and the Head of Legal and Regulatory Services at the NCC, Chizua Whyte.

The document, according to the report outlined a structured payment plan for clearing the debt and introduced new operational guidelines for USSD services.

Under the terms of the directive, 60 per cent of all debts incurred before the implementation of Application Programming Interfaces in February 2022 must be paid as full and final settlement.

Payment agreements—whether as lump sums or instalments—must be finalised by January 2, 2025, with full settlement due by July 2, 2025.

For debts arising after February 2022, the CBN and NCC mandated that banks pay 85 per cent of all outstanding invoices by December 31, 2024, and ensure that 85 per cent of future invoices are settled within one month of issuance.

The regulators also directed both parties to discontinue all ongoing litigation related to the USSD debt issue, warning that non-compliance would attract stiff sanctions.

"In view of the foregoing, the CBN and NCC hereby direct that all DMBs and MNOs adhere strictly to the outlined payment terms to ensure final resolution of this matter. Failure to comply will result in sanctions," the circular stated.

The move comes amid mounting pressure from telecom operators, who had earlier called for a clear payment framework to address the debt, which has strained relationships between the banking and telecom sectors.

Additionally, the regulators emphasized the transition to end-user billing for USSD services, noting that it would only apply to banks and telcos that meet the outlined payment obligations.

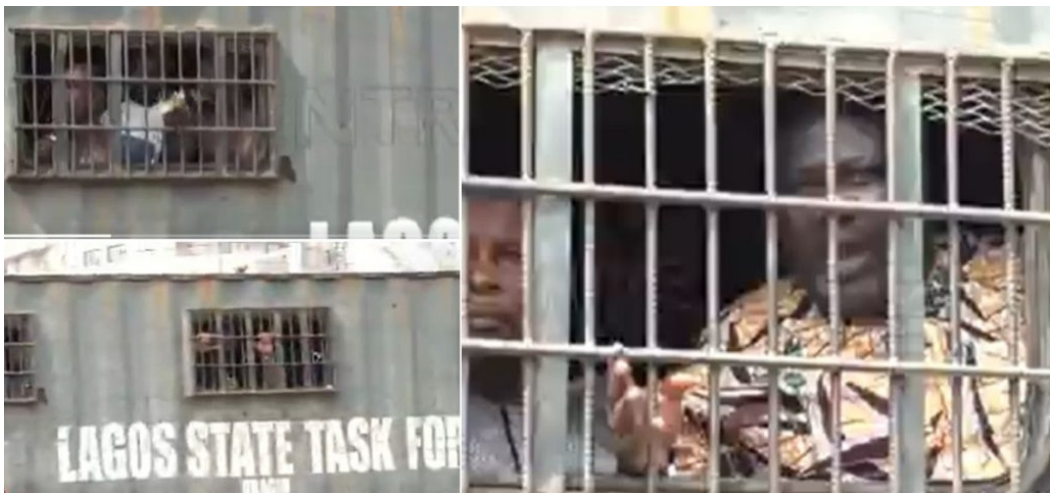
Pending this transition, operators are required to implement a "10-seconds rule," ensuring sessions shorter than 10 seconds are not billed.

The circular further highlighted the opportunity for banks currently using prepaid billing systems to migrate to EUB, subject to regulatory approval.

The CBN and NCC reiterated their commitment to resolving the debt impasse, stating that the measures are aimed at fostering stability in both the financial and telecommunications sectors while ensuring the continued availability of USSD services for Nigerians.

APC members arrested after visiting impeached Lagos speaker

By Dave Oludare Oso



Some All Progressives Congress (APC) members who are supporters of the just impeached Lagos State House of Assembly Speaker, Mudashiru Obasa were on Monday arrested by security agents inside the Assembly complex.

The arrested persons were taken away from the Assembly premises in a Black Maria on the same day.

They claimed to be APC youths from Agege, the constituency of the impeached speaker.

According to News Central reports, the supporters were intercepted by security personnel and subsequently confined in a Black Maria stationed near the Assembly premises.

In the video posted by News Central, one of the victims speaking from the Black Maria said no fewer than 20 of them are in the vehicle, adding that he has asked the security operatives for the reasons of their arrest but no tangible reasons have been given.

The detainees visibly distressed, have also been calling out for basic necessities such as food and water while awaiting further action from the authorities.

On Monday, members of the Lagos State House of Assembly impeached the speaker, who was accused of multiple statutory and financial infractions.

Obasa was subsequently replaced by his deputy, Mojisola Meranda.

Mrs Meranda, who represents Apapa Constituency 1, was also a former chief whip of the house.

Mojeed Fatai is now the Deputy Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly.

Obasa has been enmeshed in a series of financial infractions.

His removal comes barely a month after he was accused of allegedly spending N17 billion to fix a gate that leads to the assembly.

Makinde inducts 48 perm secs, demands diligence

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, on Monday, inducted 48 newly-appointed Permanent Secretaries into the state civil service held at the Executive Chambers of the Governor's Office, Agodi, Ibadan, with a vow to continue upholding merit in the state civil and public service.

The new Permanent Secretaries comprise 15 from the mainstream, six Inspectors General of Education, six from the health sector, seven from the local government, one from the House of Assembly, one as Surveyor General, nine Tutor Generals, and three executive secretaries.

The governor stated that the appointees went through a rigorous selection process before being appointed to fill the vacancies.

While charging the Permanent Secretaries to excel in their roles and justify their appointment, Makinde emphasized that the state would continue to recognize and promote outstanding individuals in the education sector and local government service in the state.

Makinde also lauded the professionalism of the state Head of Service, Mrs. Olubunmi Oni, in handling the selection and appointment process of the new Permanent Secretaries.

Speaking with journalists after the event, Mr Rotimi Babalola, formerly of the Ministry of Information, and Mr Abdul Waheed Tijani pledged to do their best to support the current administration in the state.

I will prosecute kingmakers opposed to Owoade as new Alaafin – Makinde

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has said he will prosecute kingmakers who are still protesting over the choice of Prince Abimbola Owoade as the new Alaafin of Oyo for bribery except they declared support for the new king.

The governor said this after presenting Certificate of Appointment and Staff of Office as the new Alaafin of Oyo to Owoade on Monday at the Executive Chamber of the Governor's Office in Ibadan.

Governor Makinde, who declared that the Alaafin's stool was important to the entire Yoruba race and not only to Oyo Town or Oyo State, noted, "Those who are, therefore, still hell-bent on destabilising our traditional institution in Oyo Town will be prosecuted over the money they collected unless they go and support the new Alaafin.

"Under my watch, I will make it very clear that the stool is not for sale. It is not a stool for us to toy with."

The governor further maintained that his administration would not play politics with governance, denying that he influenced the selection of the new Alaafin.

Makinde added that the proper coronation of Owoade as the Alaafin would be held in four weeks.

In his acceptance speech, Owoade appreciated the governor, chiefs, and the people of Oyo Town for making his appointment possible.

He sought the support of all to rule well.

Makinde approved the selection of Owoade as the 46th Alaafin of Oyo Town on Friday.

In Friday's statement by the state government, the approval was said to be based on the recommendation, through consultation and divination, of the Oyomesi.

However, Owoade's emergence sparked controversy as five of the seven members of the Oyomesi, also known as kingmakers, rejected his appointment.

In a letter to Makinde, signed by their legal representative, Chief Adekunle Sobaloju, the five kingmakers denied recommending Owoade to the state government.

According to them, they recommended Prince Luqman Gbadegesin as their nominee to the governor.

However, the five Oyo kingmakers – Yusuf Ayoola, (Basorun), Lamidi Oyewale (Sanu), Asimiyu Atanda (Agbaakin), Hamzat Yusuf (Akinniku) and Wakeel Oyedapo, have for about two years been engulfed in a feud with the Oyo State government over corruption allegation leveled against them in respect of the selection of the Alaafin of Oyo.

Edo woman arrested for burning house help's genitals with hot iron

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Operatives of the Nigeria Police Force have arrested a 31-year-old woman identified as Abigail Oluwarotimi for using a hot iron to inflict burns on one Jude Joseph, her 15-year-old house help in Benin, Edo State.

In a statement released by its spokesperson, Moses Yamu, the Edo Police Command said the househelp sustained injuries on his lap and genitals as a result of the incident.

The spokesperson said, "On 11/01/2025 at about 1945 hours, the Command received a report that one Abigail Oluwarotimi 'f' aged 31 years, heated a metal object in fire and used it to inflict burns on her househelp by name Jude Joseph 'm' aged 15 years. As a result, the victim sustained injuries on his lap and genitals."

According to the statement, Oluwarotimi confessed to inflicting the injury of her house help after she was arrested.

The women reportedly blamed her actions on the allegation that the boy molested her children.

The statement said the Commissioner of Police, Edo State Command, CP Umoru Ozigi has shown concern about the development.

Consequently, he has ordered the immediate transfer of the case to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) for a thorough and discreet investigation.

The state Police Command also warned the public against taking laws into their hands while emphasising the importance of allowing the law to take its course.

2025 Budget: NASS to exclude JAMB from FG grants

By Friday Omosola

The National Assembly has resolved to exclude the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) from the Federal Government's (FG) 2025 budget grants, citing concerns about the agency's financial practices.

Lawmakers criticised the apparent contradiction in JAMB's financial operations during an interactive session on revenue projections for 2025, chaired by Senator Sani Musa (APC, Niger East).

JAMB's Registrar, Ishaq Oloyede, revealed that the board remitted N4 billion to the Consolidated Revenue Fund in 2024 but received N6 billion from the FG.

This disclosure sparked outrage among committee members, including Abiodun Faleke, Chairman of the House Committee on Finance, and Senator Adams Oshiomhole (APC, Edo).

Faleke questioned why JAMB, a self-sustaining agency, needed government grants if the board could remit an amount of money.

Senator Oshiomhole further criticized JAMB's expenditures, highlighting N1.1 billion spent on meals and refreshments in 2024.

Other expenses scrutinized included N850 million for security, cleaning, and fumigation, N600 million for local travel, N6.5 billion for local training, and N1 billion allocated to a staff housing scheme.

Oshiomhole demanded a detailed breakdown of these expenditures, labelling them as excessive and unjustifiable.

The session also spotlighted broader concerns over low remittances from Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in 2024.

Senator Sani Musa emphasised the significant gap between the revenue generated by MDAs and their remittances to the federation account.

"This persistent discrepancy hampers the government's ability to fund critical infrastructure and social services," Musa stated, attributing the issue to inefficiency, mismanagement, and potential revenue leakages.

Lawmakers called for stricter oversight of MDAs to address these challenges and enhance fiscal accountability.

House flattened as explosion rocks Imo community

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

There was confusion and panic as a bomb explosion rocked the Umuneke community in Mbieri, Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State on Saturday.

According to News360 Nigeria, the blast occurred at a newly completed family house, reducing the structure to rubbles.

However, the report said no casualties were recorded in the incident.

An eyewitness, who identified himself as Iyke Njoku, said, "The sound was massive as well as the bang. We waited a while and when we didn't see any movement or hear screams, we decided to check, only to see the house in rubble.

"When people from neighbouring villages called to ask us the cause of the sound, that was when we went to check how safe we were.

"The house was a bungalow and the couple just completed it even as they were planning to move in by February.

"It is so painful that all their efforts have become a waste because they can't move in as planned again."

Another resident, Mr. Emma Emeka, said they were jolted by the loud blast.

Emeka said, "We were in our house when we heard a massive sound, just like an explosion. When we rushed out, a newly constructed bungalow was destroyed. It happened so quickly, as nobody saw what triggered it or who was behind it.

"All we heard was the loud explosion; now, we are gazing at the new building of our kinsman reduced to rubble.

"The couple had worked hard to complete the building and were planning to move in this year but they cannot do so again.

"Also, people in neighbouring villages heard the sound and wondered where the blast came from. We all slept with one eye open for fear of attack."

Female passenger arraigned for disrupting Abuja-bound Ibom flight

By Dave Oludare Oso

For disrupting an Ibom Air flight from Uyo to Abuja on 8 January 2025, and causing its cancellation, a female passenger has been charged to court and granted bail.

According to the Director of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection, Michael Achimugu, who disclosed this on Monday, the incident, described as "unruly behaviour," affected 89 other passengers and caused significant disruptions to the airline's operations.

Reports have it that an unruly passenger last Wednesday disrupted Ibom Air flight operations scheduled to depart Uyo for Abuja International Airport at 1730hrs and prevented its takeoff.

It was reported that passengers had been informed during check-in that, due to weight restrictions, some or all of their luggage may not arrive on the same flight.

The airline said passengers with luggage above 20kg signed indemnity forms while those whose bags were in the region of 20kg were informed that their bags would arrive on the next scheduled flight.

The aggrieved passenger noticed that her bag was not among the luggage loaded into the bowels of the aircraft and then angrily stepped down from the aircraft.

She asked to be allowed to pick her handbag from the cabin, only to get in there and block the aisle, insisting that the flight would not depart without her bags, according to the NCAA.

Attempts by the Aviation Security (AVSEC) personnel and the pilot to de-escalate the situation were unsuccessful.

As a result, the flight was cancelled when Uyo's airspace closed for the day.

"The airline had to provide immediate refreshment, transportation, and accommodation for passengers at great and avoidable cost," Achimugu added.

He revealed that the airline suffered financial losses and operational disruptions.

"This means that the airline would have catered twice for the same flight," he said.

"Added to this was a scheduling challenge that will take days to normalize."

In a fresh update, Achimugu disclosed that the passenger would face prosecution and be penalised.

Achimugu disclosed, "The regulations state firmly that no provocation justifies violence at the airport. Certain acts, especially holding up the movement of an aircraft through means of violence, could be interpreted as terrorism depending on the severity (to be determined by the police).

"She was taken to the police and was in detention for two nights. She has been charged to court but granted bail. That was the last information I got from the airline and later today (Monday), I will get further information.

"I intend to hold a meeting with Avsec and FAAN because there seems to be room for improvement in the protocols for handling unruly passengers.

" It is when things like this happen that we see the lapses and areas where we need to improve. Because the response should have been quicker and the action should have also been faster. This that happened is preventable, very preventable. But no point at the moment excuses the woman for what she did and that is why she will face the full wrath of the law."

Aiyedatiwa frees 40 prisoners to celebrate 60th birthday

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State has extended the hand of mercy to 40 inmates serving various jail terms by setting them free

According to the state's Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Dr Olukayode Ajulo (SAN), the pardon highlights the governor's dedication to mercy and rehabilitation.

The pardons, granted on the recommendation of the Advisory Council on the Prerogative of Mercy, include the outright release of 15 convicts effective Sunday, 12 January 2025

A statement titled, "Aiyedatiwa Pardons 40 Prisoners to Celebrate 60th Birthday," and signed by the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Ebenezer Adeniyan, disclosed the development.

In addition to the releases, several death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment, while other inmates had their sentences significantly reduced.

Dr Ajulo, who also chairs the advisory council, explained that these decisions were informed by careful deliberations, considering the nature of offences, the inmates' age, health, behaviour, and duration of incarceration.

"This compassionate gesture underscores Aiyedatiwa's unwavering commitment to extending grace and mercy to these convicts," Ajulo stated.

"It represents a vital component of his administration's ongoing justice sector reforms. The signing of the release orders coincides with the governor's 60th birthday, marking a significant occasion with an act of grace," the statement said.

The governor's act of mercy coincided with a sombre moment for the state, as the governor chose to forgo birthday celebrations in honour of the late Secretary to the State Government, Tayo Oluwatuyi (Tukana), who passed away last weekend.

"Governor Aiyedatiwa's actions align with Section 212 (1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), which empowers state governors to exercise the prerogative of mercy.

"The Council's recommendations were enriched by insights from correctional authorities, legal experts, and respected community leaders, ensuring fairness and compassion in the decision-making process," the statement added.

Earlier, President Bola Tinubu congratulated Governor Aiyedatiwa on his 60th birthday.

In a statement on Saturday, by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu commended Aiyedatiwa's unwavering commitment to political ideals and grassroots development, hailing his exceptional political journey and dedication to public service.

The statement partly read, "President Bola Tinubu rejoices with Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State on his 60th birthday tomorrow, January 12, 2025,"

"President Tinubu commends Aiyedatiwa for his unwavering dedication and political consistency, beginning from his membership of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in 2011.

"His steadfastness throughout the party's metamorphosis and final transition to the All Progressives Congress (APC) exemplifies his loyalty, dedication, and commitment.

"Aiyedatiwa's impressive political trajectory is a testament to the potential and possibilities in Nigerian politics."

Tinubu added that Aiyedatiwa's governance achievements, particularly his landmark electoral victory in 2024, paved the way for significant advancements in the health and education sectors, positively impacting the lives of Ondo State residents.

NAF investigates civilian deaths in Zamfara airstrike incident

By Olamilekan Botti

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has officially launched a comprehensive investigation into reports of accidental civilian casualties following a recent airstrike in the Zurmi Local Government Area of Zamfara State. The airstrike, conducted on Friday as part of Operation Hadarin Daji, was aimed at dismantling the stronghold of armed bandit groups terrorizing communities in the region.

Preliminary reports emerging from the scene suggest that at least 16 civilians lost their lives during the operation. Among the victims were members of the Zamfara Community Protection Guard (ZCPG) and local vigilante groups who had been working alongside security forces to defend their communities against violent criminal gangs.

Eyewitness accounts indicate that the airstrike, which targeted known hideouts of bandits loyal to the infamous terrorist leader Bello Turji, may have inadvertently struck areas occupied by civilian defence groups. This tragic development has sparked widespread concern and calls for accountability from local leaders and human rights organizations.

In an earlier statement, the Nigerian Air Force praised the operation for its success in neutralizing several high-ranking members of Turji's network. The military also reported the rescue of numerous kidnapped victims who had been held captive by the bandits. However, the reports of unintended civilian deaths have cast a shadow over the operation's achievements.

Air Commodore Edward Gabkwet, the NAF Director of Public Relations and Information, assured the public that the Air Force is taking the matter seriously. "We are deeply concerned about the reports of civilian casualties during our recent operation in Zamfara. A thorough investigation has been initiated to determine the facts surrounding the incident. The Nigerian Air Force remains committed to adhering to the highest standards of professionalism and minimizing harm to civilians during combat operations," Gabkwet stated.

Community leaders in Zurmi have expressed grief and frustration over the incident, urging the government to take greater precautions in future military operations. "While we appreciate the efforts of the military in tackling the menace of banditry, we cannot afford to lose innocent lives in the process. Our local security volunteers are risking their lives to protect this community, and their loss is devastating," said a local chief who wished to remain anonymous.

Human rights organizations have also weighed in, demanding transparency and accountability. Amnesty International Nigeria called for a detailed and impartial investigation, emphasizing the need for the military to prioritize civilian protection in conflict zones.

The tragedy comes amid intensified military campaigns across Nigeria's northern regions, where armed bandits have wreaked havoc for years, engaging in mass abductions, killings, and destruction of property. Zamfara State, in particular, has been a hotspot for violent criminal activity, prompting ongoing security operations aimed at restoring peace and stability.

As the investigation unfolds, many are watching closely to see how the Nigerian Air Force will address the findings and prevent future incidents. The outcome will be critical in maintaining public trust in military operations and ensuring that the fight against terrorism does not come at the expense of innocent lives.

The Nigerian government has yet to release an official statement regarding the civilian deaths, but pressure is mounting for swift action and comprehensive reforms in the conduct of military air operations.

FG moves against religious extremism in South West

By Dave Oludare Oso

Following recent religious activities that have been breeding strife and tension in parts of the South West region of Nigeria, the federal government has initiated moves to probe the developments and avert a possible breakdown of law.

According to a Nigerian Tribune report, the government was getting concerned about reports linking groups and personalities to extremist activities and religious tension capable of fomenting crisis if allowed to continue unchecked.

Two recent events that happened in Oyo State have triggered suspicions that extremist activities might be creeping into the South West zone, originally regarded as the bastion of religious harmony.

According to the report, highly-placed officials of the government said security agencies have been alerted to the suspicion that a rising wave of extremism was taking place in the South West Zone.

To that effect, the sources said a strict order has gone to the security agencies to nip the trend in the bud.

Also, it was gathered that besides the threat of extremist groups and terrorists who have been trying to penetrate the zone through the Old Oyo National Park and the Kamoko Forest, which stretches from Kaduna, Niger and Kwara states and links the Oyo National Park, there are reports that some extremist groups are also moving to infiltrate the South West and spread religious hate.

The security teams were reported to have interrogated a pro-Sharia group which threatened recently to launch Sharia Court in Oyo Town.

According to sources, in the last weeks of December 2024, security operatives questioned a number of persons said to be linked to the plan to launch Sharia in Oyo Town.

It was gathered that the Sharia proponents told the operatives that their original intention was to establish a Sharia Panel to entertain civil matters like marriage, divorce, and inheritance, and because they also agreed that the trust of courts are constitutional matters.

It was also gathered that security agencies had apprehended a traditional religion worshipper known as Ifagbemi for allegedly desecrating the Quran.

The said Ifagbemi, whose full name is given as John Olanrewaju Ifagbemi had made an offensive post on Facebook about the Quran and had also planned to do the same about the Holy Bible in an attempt to promote his brand of traditional religion.

A source who confirmed Ifagbemi's arrest dismissed attempts by some Facebook users to paint the arrest as an attack on Ifagbemi's religion, saying that Ifagbemi's actions, which could trigger religious disharmony in the area, have nothing to do with secularity.

"Hanging on secularism is faulty," the source said.

In another development, the Fredrick Fasehun-led Oodua People's Congress (OPC) has urged all the six South-West governors to treat as a security emergency the building of camps inside Yoruba forests by insurgents and terrorists fleeing from the North, promising to help security agencies deal with the menace without delay before it is too late.

Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State had, during the 2025 annual inter-faith service which took place in Ibadan, raised the alarm that insurgents and terrorists fleeing from military bombardment in the North, were relocating to the state and other states in South-West and building camps in the forests there.

President of the socio-cultural group, Otunba Wasiu Afolabi (alias Askari), in a statement, copy of which was made available to newsmen on Sunday, recalled that the foreign terrorists had always said that after conquering the North, the South would be next, adding: "Now, it is happening."

He assured that his group was adequately equipped physically, militantly, technologically and spiritually to confront these foreign invaders, saying that what OPC was "demanding from South-West governors is the necessary invitation, equipment and support to do what needs to be done to wipe out this menace of foreign criminals.

"We have the men and capacity to confront these foreign invaders physically, militantly, technologically and spiritually. All we are demanding from South-West governors is the necessary invitation, equipment and support to do what needs to be done to wipe out this menace of foreign criminals," he said.

"Enough is enough of paying lip service to the issue of tackling insecurity. Peace is the most important thing in any society. Without security and peace, no society can make progress. With the alarm sounded by His Excellency, Governor Seyi Makinde, all hands must be on deck to wipe out this existential threat to our collective welfare and send these evil people to hell or wherever they came from.

"The Federal Government led by President Bola Tinubu must not play politics with this matter. Tinubu must lead from the front and mobilise the armed forces to align with Amotekun, OPC, vigilantes, hunters, Agbekoya and Sunday Igboho's team to face this dangerous threat to our collective peace and existence.

"Let it be clear that although Yoruba people have nothing against the Nigerian Fulani, with whom we have enjoyed centuries of a cordial relationship, we will not concede an inch of our land to foreign elements masquerading as herdsmen whose pastime is to kidnap, rape, plunder and kill our people. OPC and the Yoruba race will never ever allow such a wicked agenda.

"For starters, the governors must insist that all herdsmen and foreigners should move out of the forests, games reserves, forest reserves, and farm settlements in line with the 2021 order issued by the late governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu. After that directive has been reissued, any group found camping in the forests will be regarded as terrorists and summarily dealt with accordingly. A word is enough for the wise," Otunba Afolabi said.

NPF warns against refusing to assist officers in distress

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has issued a stern warning to citizens, stating that failing to assist police officers under attack could result in imprisonment or a fine.

The warning comes amid rising concerns about the state of police-citizen relations, spurred by a viral video showing a tense confrontation between a police officer and a woman.

In a series of tweets posted on Sunday, the NPF's Public Relations Officer, Muyiwa Adejobi, referenced the Police Act of 2020, which mandates citizens to offer assistance to officers who are under assault or resistance while on duty.

He emphasised the legal ramifications of neglecting to help officers in distress, pointing to Section 99 of the Police Act 2020, which makes it a punishable offence to refuse aid. Penalties include a fine of up to ₦100,000, a prison sentence of up to three months, or both.

Adejobi further stated that the punishment for individuals who directly assault or obstruct police officers is even more severe, citing Section 98 of the same Act. Those found guilty could face a fine of ₦500,000 or up to six months in prison.

Additionally, the Force's spokesperson drew attention to Section 42, which obligates citizens to assist police officers, judges, or magistrates in arresting suspects or preventing their escape when reasonably called upon to do so.

The remarks follow growing debates surrounding the relationship between Nigerians and their police force, with citizens questioning the role they should play in supporting law enforcement.

The viral video, which reignited conversations about police conduct and public trust, has heightened concerns regarding the risks of intervening when an officer is in danger, particularly given the public's mistrust of police due to instances of misconduct.

Despite these concerns, Adejobi's statement was clear: neglecting to assist a police officer is not only morally wrong but also legally punishable.

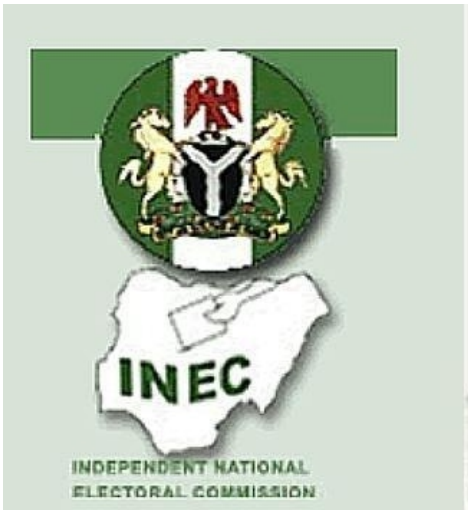
This warning from the NPF calls for citizens to take responsibility in protecting law enforcement officers while serving as a reminder of the serious consequences of inaction.

The development raises a critical question for the NPF: how can they reconcile the enforcement of the law with the need to rebuild trust between the police and the public?

In a country where police-citizen relations have often been fraught with tension, this challenge remains as pertinent as ever.

Divergent reactions trail INEC's N125bn request in 2025 budget

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has sparked mixed reactions from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and major opposition parties over its recent budget request of approximately N125 billion for 2025.

INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu, made the request on Friday while presenting the commission's budget proposal before the Joint Committee on Electoral Matters at the National Assembly Complex.

The funds are intended to cover INEC's operations in 2025, as well as to initiate preparations for the 2027 general election.

The request has prompted sharp criticism from the opposition, while the ruling APC has called for a detailed breakdown of the funds.

Opposition Parties Raise Concerns

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has accused INEC of planning to use the funds to reward officials involved in alleged electoral misconduct.

PDP Deputy National Youth Leader, Timothy Osadolor, condemned the request, labelling the N125 billion as "reward money" for electoral mismanagement.

He expressed dissatisfaction with the electoral body's track record in recent elections, saying, "Despite the promises of technological improvements, we all saw what happened during the presidential and gubernatorial elections. Now, the commission is asking for reward money."

Osadolor went on to question the need for such a substantial sum, particularly given the country's economic challenges and the fact that 2025 is not a general election year.

He argued that INEC had no moral justification for requesting such a large amount, pointing out the over N200 billion the commission had already received over the last three years for elections.

Similarly, the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) has urged INEC to implement cost-cutting measures to alleviate the financial burden amid Nigeria's economic constraints. NNPP National Publicity Secretary, Ladipo Johnson, emphasised the need for the commission to explore cost-saving alternatives, such as collaborating with banks for voter registration, which could save substantial costs.

Johnson expressed concern over the timing of the request, noting that 2025 is not a general election year and questioned the justification for such a large budget proposal.

He called on the National Assembly and other relevant bodies to critically review INEC's demand.

Support from the African Democratic Congress

In contrast, the African Democratic Congress (ADC) has expressed support for INEC's request, citing the challenges the commission faces due to the undemocratic behaviours of Nigerian politicians.

ADC National Chairman, Ralph Nwosu, argued that the N125 billion request reflects the burden placed on INEC by the nation's political environment, which often involves election-related litigation and the management of electoral violence.

Nwosu acknowledged that while the sum may seem large, the commission's role in maintaining Nigeria's democracy justifies adequate funding.

He highlighted that INEC's responsibilities extend beyond merely conducting elections and include overseeing party primaries and managing electoral disputes. According to Nwosu, the financial demands placed on INEC are a direct result of the excesses of Nigeria's politicians.Labour Party Supports INEC's Request with Reservations

The Labour Party (LP) also aligned with Nwosu's stance, recognising the challenges INEC faces in overseeing elections.

LP National Legal Adviser, Kehinde Edun, noted that many Nigerians do not fully appreciate the volume of work INEC handles. However, Edun expressed caution, pointing out that public concerns about the commission's ability to deliver credible elections have undermined trust in the process.

He called for a thorough examination of INEC's spending, urging that the funds be used judiciously to enhance the credibility and efficiency of future elections.

While acknowledging the need for adequate funding, Edun stressed that Nigerians would only be satisfied if the funds translated into more transparent and reliable elections

APC Urges Scrutiny of INEC's Request

The ruling APC, on the other hand, has called for a careful review of INEC's budget proposal. National Publicity Director of the APC, Bala Ibrahim, emphasised that INEC's responsibilities go beyond organising elections.

The commission also monitors party activities, registers voters, and scrutinises political party reports and records. Ibrahim stated that INEC must provide a detailed breakdown of how the requested funds will be allocated, particularly since there are no general elections scheduled for 2025.

What Obaigbena did with $230m First Bank loan – Otedola

By Dave Oludare Oso

Chief Femi Otedola, the Chairman of First Bank Holdings has revealed what the publisher of ThisDay newspaper, Nduka Obaigbena did with the $230 million loan he obtained from First Bank Limited.

Sources said Otedola made the revelation after meeting with President Bola Tinubu in the United Arab Emirates.

The First Bank chief, in a statement he issued on Sunday after the meeting with Tinubu, said Obiagbena used the $230 million to fund the presidential bid of the embattled former governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele, and luxury travels among others.

He said, "My attention has been drawn to articles published by ThisDay (on Thursday, January 9 and Friday, January 10, 2025), clearly instigated by Mr. Nduka Obaigbena filled with baseless allegations aimed at smearing my reputation.

"It is unfortunate that Mr Obaigbena has resorted to such tactics simply because he has been asked to repay his $230 million loan.

"This loan, facilitated with the help of the former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Mr Godwin Emefiele, was purportedly for the operation of an oil block which he obtained without competitive bidding.

"However, the funds were diverted for personal use-funding Mr Emefiele' presidential aspirations, acquisition of luxury properties abroad, the operation of a private jet, and an extravagant $68 million spent on jet rentals in just four years.

"Mr Obaigbena's profligacy is well known, as is his penchant for using his media platforms to blackmail and silence those who hold him accountable.

"As Chairman of First Bank Holdings, my primary responsibility is to protect the interests of the bank's shareholders and depositors.

"The actions initiated in the courts are necessary to recover funds that belong to depositors and ensure corporate governance.

"Mr Obaighena's penchant of blackmailing people to escape accountability must end, especially when depositors' money is at stake.

"My commitment to upholding the integrity of the financial system and protecting depositors outweigh any cheap attempts at blackmail.

"Let me remind the public that my integrity is not in question.

"As Chancellor of Augustine University and a benefactor of Save the Children Fund, I continue to dedicate my wealth to noble causes.

"I will not allow unscrupulous elements to derail the efforts of First Bank to recover loans or jeopardize the financial security of our shareholders.

"To all stakeholders, I assure you that I remain steadfast in my mission to protect First Bank's integrity and ensure its continued success.

"Media blackmail will not deter me from this responsibility."

But Obaigbena's company, General Hydrocarbons Limited, has said it is not owing First Bank Limited $225 million.

In a statement by its Director of Strategy and Operations, Abdelmuizz Bello, the company, which is into oil and gas, said a moratorium is in place pending the commercial production of oil for which the loan was taken.

The statement addressing a newspaper publication said: "Please refer to your story entitled 'Court Freezes General Hydrocarbons' Accounts over (Alleged) $225.8m Debt to First Bank' and published in your platform of January 10/ 11, 2025, as well as other misleading and malicious stories on social media.

"The report alleged that a Federal High Court in Lagos has frozen the accounts of General Hydrocarbons Limited (GHL) in all financial institutions in Nigeria and restrained the banks from releasing funds to the company owned by Mr. Nduka Obaigbena, the Chairman of THISDAY/ARISE Media Group over alleged outstanding indebtedness amounting to $225,802,379.79m to First Bank.

"Find below a detailed breakdown of the issues in dispute between GHL and the First Bank of Nigeria (FBN):

"GHL vs FBN: Background to Current Situation

"1. We entered a legally binding, enforceable Subrogation Agreement with First Bank on May 29, 2021, with FBN agreeing to fund GHL's exploration, production and development of OML 120 in exchange for sharing profit from oil proceeds from the OML in a 50:50 ratio after statutory payments and taxes over 8 years. The FBN 50% share will then be used to pay down its non-performing loans of about $718 million which was discounted to $600m to resolve its solvency issues therefrom.

"2. In its quest to stay afloat, the FBN loan was sold at $600 million as an Eligible Banking Asset (EBA), with comfort from GHL; the FBN then collected the cash from Assets Management Company of Nigeria (AMCON) with which they rebuilt the bank without meeting GHL's needs.

"3. The FBN non-performing loan arose from FBN's unsecured and reckless lending to Atlantic Energy under separate Strategic Alliance arrangements, in which GHL had no nexus to or connection with. The agreements made it clear that the Non-Performing Loan had nothing to do with GHL beyond the fact that 50% of profits from OML 120 due to FBN under the Subrogation Agreement will be used by FBN to

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FBN under the Subrogation Agreement will be used by FBN to settle the hole created in its books by the Non-Performing Loan (NPL). For clarity, Atlantic Energy operated OMLs 26, 30, 34 and 42 – very different from GHL's OML 120.

4."The agreements signed with GHL enabled the FBN to return to good standing as follows:

"a. Instead of declaring a loan loss of N302bn at the then exchange rate, the signing of the tripartite agreement with GHL enabled FBN to declare a profit of N151 bn ($377.5 million) for the year ending December 31, 2021. GHL signed the agreement trusting and believing that the FBN which it thought was a bank with integrity, would comply and continue to comply with its obligation to fund OML 120; FBN's failure and refusal to do so has opened a challenge to its audited financial statement. Given its non-compliance with conditions precedent for its return to profitability, could those profits remain valid? And were investors in its current rights issues duly informed?

"b. FBN's market capitalization before the agreement was N256.6bn. Had it declared a loss of N302bn, the bank would have had a negative capital of N46bn. FBN then immediately realised profitability from the GHL's subrogation agreement. GHL signed the agreement believing and trusting that the FBN as a bank with integrity would comply and continue to comply with its obligations to fund OML 120; but it has clearly not done so.

"c. Following the agreements with GHL, FBN's market capitalization of N256.6bn, more than tripled to over N900bn as of 30th November 2024.

"5. Essentially, GHL's grouse is FBN's failure to meet its agreed and executed financial commitments which GHL had believed would be made, when it signed the agreement resulting in critical challenges for the development of OML 120.

"6. Although FBN had disbursed $185 million, the way and manner of the disbursement which was agreed to be 5 days after funding request, sometimes lasted up to 70 days after funding request; service providers led by Schlumberger, Baker Hughes and Century that were supposed to be paid at the same time for various interventions were paid sporadically at different times, resulting in massive losses in day rates and downtimes, leading to inefficiencies and losses of over $147 million, including an arbitration award to one of the service providers.

"7. It is important to note that FBN's credit and risk team verified and approved all contracts and invoices due to the contractors engaged for the development and operations of the oil mining lease and made payments directly to these contractors and service providers.

"The allegations of a diversion of the monies advanced to GHL are therefore befuddling and without merit as payment were made by FBN directly to service providers after vetting and approval by its credit and risk teams – At the end of the day, FBN became a conflicted lender, risk manager and operator at the same time when it got involved in vetting, approving and paying all invoices. At the same time, FBN also approved and later appointed a CFO for GHL, taking full responsibility for all financial disbursements.

"8. It is important to also mention that the oil block is over 75 kilometres offshore Nigeria, with a Floating Production Storage and Offloading ("FPSO") that requires transportation and logistics support with over 250 personnel on the FPSO and the associated submersible rig. This has involved heavy logistics planning with over 500 helicopter sorties, engagement of platform supply vessels, security vessels, mooring vessels, etc., which were provided daily over the course of the last 40 months. All these expenditures, including food, were vetted, approved and paid directly by FBN's credit and risk teams.

"9. In view of the approval process for the funds put in place by FBN, and the payment made directly to contractors and service providers, the allegation of diversion contained in some publications is therefore wicked, malicious, false, injurious and libellous.

"10. It is important to note that the disbursed loan of $185 million is not due for repayment. The loan is still within the moratorium period as per the Facility and Tripartite Agreements. The loan is only due when there are profits to be shared 50:50 from commercial oil production.

"Clearly, there is need for much more money which FBN has refused to provide. Instead of performing its role as a lender who was saved from the abyss, FBN is trying to bully and force GHL out of the transaction and take over the oil bloc, using its directors and other proxies with this clearly induced crisis.

"11. It is also instructive to note that First Bank has made no demand for repayment of the facilities until after the fact a few days after they lost in court, as they know that the loan is not due for repayment.

"12. Clearly, FBN is either illiquid, unable or unwilling to fund the project as agreed after they had made profits upfront.

"13. GHL is seeking to exercise its options under the agreement to find new lenders and partners that can be efficient and cost effective to save the project for Nigeria, should FBN remain intransigent. The Subrogation Agreement contains a clause that allows GHL to seek for alternative financing in the likelihood FBN is unable to provide such financing.

"14. Following FBN's non-performance under the terms of the Subrogation Agreement, GHL was left with no option but to approach the court to seek injunctive reliefs and protective orders to secure its commercial and economic interests and find resolution via arbitration.

"15.GHL approached the Federal High Court and after arguments by both sides, obtained the following injunctions against First Bank on December 12, 2024:

"a. An order restraining FBN from obstructing or preventing GHL from obtaining or securing loan facilities or funding necessary for the exploration or operation of OML 120.

"b. An order restraining FBN from making any calls or demands, or taking any steps whatsoever to enforce any security, receivables, instrument, finance documents or assets of GHL which have been charged as security.

"c. An order restraining FBN from appointing an operator, asset manager or any person/institution of the same/similar ilk in respect of OML 120, pending the hearing and determination of the arbitration proceedings between GHL and FBN.

"16. Despite the existence of a subsisting court order, FBN, using the same lawyers who lost at the Federal High Court presided over by Justice Allagoa, went to another judge of coordinate status, during recess without disclosing the earlier judgement, to obtain an interim Mareva injunction restraining GHL and its shareholders from operating their accounts over a purported and unfounded debt of $225.8 million. The FBN had since weaponised the Mareva injunction which it procured on December 30, 2024, to confuse the public and befuddle the issues. A clear abuse of the court process. This impunity is now back before the Federal High Court, Lagos.

"We believe that sooner or later, justice will be served."

Uneasy calm over omission of Lagos-Calabar coastal road from 2025 budget

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

There is growing concern over the omission of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Road from the 2025 budget proposal presented to the National Assembly by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The project, which has been a cornerstone of President Tinubu's infrastructure plans and has sparked significant debate since its inception last year, was expected to cost approximately N16 trillion.

The project's omission from the budget has raised questions about its funding. Initially, the federal government indicated that it would be financed through a public-private partnership (PPP) arrangement.

In February 2024, the Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved a N1.07 trillion contract for the construction of the first phase of the project, which includes a 47.47-kilometre dual carriageway with five lanes on each side and a train track running down the middle.

In his statement, Minister for Works and Housing, David Umahi, clarified that the FEC had approved the procurement of the project under the Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Financing (EPC+F) model in favour of High Tech Construction African Limited. He further revealed that efforts had been made to secure funding, although challenges persisted.

Umahi noted that the ministry had approached President Tinubu for additional support, requesting that the federal government fund the first phase of the project, which runs from Ahmadu Bello Way in Lagos to the Lekki Deep Seaport. The President approved this request, and the procurement of the first 47.47-kilometre section was successfully secured under a contract valued at N1.067 trillion.

Despite these developments, the source of funding for the project remains unclear, as it was notably absent from the 2025 budget proposal. This omission has led to further concerns, particularly as the

Federal Ministry of Works received a total capital allocation of N1.07 trillion in the budget, which raises the possibility that funds for the coastal road may need to be reallocated from other critical infrastructure projects.

BudgIT, a civic-tech organisation known for its work in promoting transparency in public finance, has raised alarm over the omission. In a statement released via its X handle, BudgIT warned that the absence of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Road from the budget could result in a reallocation of funds from other important projects, potentially undermining the integrity of the budget and hindering its effectiveness.

BudgIT's Communications Associate, Nancy Odimegwu, expressed concern, stating, "This omission implies that if funding for this project materialises, it will likely necessitate reallocating funds from other critical projects, potentially hindering their implementation and impacting the budget's credibility."

The organisation also criticised aspects of the 2025 budget, particularly the lack of detailed breakdowns for some ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). BudgIT noted that in previous years, the National Assembly had inserted numerous projects into the budget, often without proper planning or alignment with the country's long-term development priorities. In 2021, for instance, 5,601 capital projects were added during the National Assembly's review of the Appropriation Bill. This figure rose to 6,462 in 2022 and a staggering 7,447 in 2024, amounting to N2.24 trillion in additional costs.

While the National Assembly has the constitutional authority to modify the executive's proposed budget, BudgIT emphasised that such modifications often distort the original intent of the budget and undermine its long-term effectiveness.

The organisation called for greater responsibility from lawmakers to ensure that the national budget serves the country's development goals, rather than being shaped by short-term or narrow interests.

Ahead of the budget review, BudgIT urged lawmakers to prioritise the national interest, ensuring that the approved budget stimulates economic activity, fosters macroeconomic stability, and promotes equitable development across Nigeria.

The group also stressed the need for the budget to address the needs of the country's most vulnerable populations, particularly in terms of poverty alleviation and social equity.

17 years old arrested for defiling neighbour's eight-year-old daughter

By New Daily Prime

The Ogun State Police Command has detained 17-year-old Jamiu Adebayo for allegedly defiling his neighbour's 8-year-old daughter in the Aregbe neighbourhood of the state capital, Abeokuta.

New Daily Prime obtained information indicating that the defendant lured the survivor into his parents' living room, instructed her to undress, and then sexually assaulted her.

The leadership confirmed the incident, stating that they were conducting a thorough investigation to ascertain the circumstances of the crime and that they had arrested the suspect.

Omolola Odutola, the spokeswoman for the Oyo State Policy Command, said on Sunday that the survivor's mother, who was only known as Olabode, was not home when neighbours called to report that her daughter's private areas were leaking blood. She noted that the survivor initially claimed that her parents' neighbours had caused the injuries.

Olabode told the police that she was horrified and terrified when she arrived at the scene and saw blood streaming from her daughter's intimate areas. Our correspondent discovered that all attempts to persuade the girl to reveal the cause of the bleeding had been unsuccessful, as she insisted on providing the same justification she had given to her neighbours: that a stick had injured her private areas.

After more coercion and duress, the survivor allegedly told her mother that a 17-year-old Adebayo who lived in the next block had raped her. According to the command, the survivor admitted that the suspect had enticed her into their living room, where he allegedly climbed on top of her and sexually assaulted her.

According to Odutola, "The suspect told the survivor to change into another pair of pants after bringing her to their bathroom to clean the blood." Additionally, he persuaded her to lie by claiming that a stick had injured her private areas.

Investigators quickly acted and captured the culprit. We have sent medical paperwork to the victim and her mother for assessment and documentation. There are now preliminary investigations underway

Similarly, the police command detained Hassan Wasiu, 55, in September for allegedly raping his neighbour's 13-year-old daughter at his flat on Falowo Street, Makun, in the state's Sagamu region.

According to the allegations, the defendant had enticed the survivor into entering his room in order to defile her. Before being taken to the Olabisi Onabanjo University Teaching Hospital in Sagamu for medical treatment, the New Daily Prime gathered that the survivor was bleeding excessively.

Nigeria's crude oil production rises – OPEC Report

By Dave Oludare Oso

Data sourced from the newly released Monthly Oil Market Report (MOMR) by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) indicated that Nigeria's daily average oil production rose by 152, 000 barrels per day last November.

The OPEC MOMR for December 2024 revealed that the country's production, including condensates rose by 11 per cent, from 1.333 million barrels in October to 1.486 million in November 2024.

The analysis puts the daily increase to 152, 000b/d and about one million barrels increase between October and November last year.

This is as the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) in its latest oil production data, indicated that on a month-on-month basis, daily average oil output in December 2024, declined by 1.35 per cent from 1.690 million barrels per day recorded in November 2024, to 1.667mbpd.

Data from the Commission also indicated that daily peak oil production in December 2024 was 1.79mbpd while the lowest daily production was 1.57mbpd.

Cumulatively, oil output in December 2024, was 51.69 million barrels, a marginal increase of 1.9 per cent when compared to 50.71 million barrels produced in November 2024.

Further analysis of the data showed that the highest oil output in December 2024 was recorded at Forcados Terminal at 8.49 million barrels followed by Bonny Terminal, 7.78 million barrels and Qua Iboe, 4.15 million barrels.

The data showed without condensate, daily oil production was 1.484 million, indicating that Nigeria, again, failed to meet its oil production quota of 1.5mbpd allotted to it by OPEC.

The December 2024 average daily oil output also means that Nigeria failed to meet the 1.7mbpd benchmark set for the 2024 budget all through the year.

NUPRC data on daily average production showed that oil production including condensate in January 2024 was 1.64mbpd; February, 1.53mbpd; March, 1.44mbpd; April, 1.45mbpd; May, 1.47mbpd; June, 1.50mbpd; July, 1.53mbpd; August, 1.57mbpd; September, 1.54mbpd, October, 1.54mbpd; November, 1.69mbpd; and December, 1.67mbpd.

2024 fire outbreaks cost Nigeria over N67bn,100 lives, says FFS

By Friday Omosola

The Federal Fire Service (FFS) has revealed that fire incidents across Nigeria in 2024 resulted in property losses estimated at N67.1 billion and claimed over 100 lives.

This was disclosed by the Controller General of the Service, Abdulganiyu Jaji, during a press conference at the FFS headquarters in Abuja.

Jaji further noted that despite the losses, the Service saved property valued at N1.94 trillion during the year.

He added that the Service saved over 30,890 lives.

Jaji further highlighted the increased risk of fire outbreaks during the harmattan season, attributing this to low humidity.

He urged fuel station operators, petrol tanker drivers, gas refilling stations, and the general public to strictly adhere to safety protocols and guidelines to prevent further tragedies.

Outlining the Service's plans for 2025, Jaji pledged to enhance operations through strategic initiatives, improved efficiency, and the adoption of advanced technologies, including the National Fire Detection and Alarm System (NAFDAS) and the N-Alert fire alarm app.

He also appreciated President Bola Tinubu for approving the procurement of state-of-the-art firefighting equipment and the modernization of the National Fire Academy.

Additionally, Jaji called on Nigerians to support the repeal and re-enactment of the Fire Service Act of 1963, noting that such reforms would strengthen the Service's capacity for effective service

Edo Election Tribunal to begin full hearing on Ighodalo vs Okpebholo case Wednesday

By Friday Omosola

The Edo State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal has scheduled full hearings for Wednesday, January 15, 2025, on the petition filed by Asue Ighodalo and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

The petition challenges the declaration of Governor Monday Okpebholo of the All Progressives Congress (APC) as the winner of the September 21, 2024, gubernatorial election.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that Farouk Adamu, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) returning officer declared Okpebholo a a winner.

Adamu said Okpebholo, a serving senator at that time scored 291,667 votes to defeat his closest rival, Ighodalo who polled 247,274 votes.

The hearing adjournment came after INEC and Governor Okpebholo, the 1st and 2nd respondents in the case, filed an application requesting a postponement.

Ighodalo and the PDP are disputing INEC's declaration of Okpebholo as the winner of the election.

The tribunal, presided over by Justice Wilfred Kpochi, had initially adjourned proceedings on December 21, 2024, to Monday, January 13, 2025, after completing pre-hearing sessions.

However, at Monday's resumed sitting in Benin City, the tribunal's Assistant Secretary, Dayo Dahunsi, presented a fresh application from the respondents requesting a further adjournment to Wednesday.

The application cited the lead counsel for the respondents' prior commitment to appear before the Supreme Court on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, for a case scheduled for a definite hearing.

Although the petitioners' counsel, Oladipo Oshinowo, representing lead counsel Ken Mozia, expressed readiness to proceed, he did not oppose the adjournment.

Josephine Ogagaworia, representing the APC, the 3rd respondent, also did not object to the postponement.

Following the submissions, Justice Kpochi adjourned the case to Wednesday.

The hearing is expected to address the petitioners' grievances and the respondents' defence over the September 2024 governorship election results.

Minister says Seyi Tinubu is qualified to be Lagos governor

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Minister for Youth Development, Ayodele Olawande, has weighed in on growing speculation that Seyi Tinubu, the son of President Bola Tinubu, may run for the governorship of Lagos State in 2027.

During an appearance on the Mic On podcast, Olawande affirmed that Seyi Tinubu is fully qualified to seek the position.

In his remarks, Olawande stated, "He's not too young to become a governor," highlighting the readiness and capability of the President's son to take on such a significant role.

Olawande also praised Seyi Tinubu's qualifications, describing him as a well-trained young man who has made considerable contributions to the development of other young people long before his father ascended to the presidency.

"He is committed to leadership and willing to ensure that things work for Nigeria," the minister added, underscoring Seyi Tinubu's dedication to public service.

The comments come amid increasing speculation and rumors that Seyi Tinubu could contest the governorship seat of Lagos State in 2027, a position once held by his father from 1999 to 2007.

These rumors gained further traction in 2024 after the Coalition of Nigerian Youth Leaders (CONYL) and other groups publicly endorsed him for the role.

However, Olawande was quick to clarify that Seyi Tinubu has not been involved in the campaigns or made any public statements about his intentions.

"Seyi is not the one engineering the campaign to become the next governor of Lagos State," he emphasised.

Despite the minister's remarks, the question of Seyi Tinubu's potential political future remains an intriguing topic of conversation as Lagos State gears up for the next election cycle. As of now, the young Tinubu has yet to address the swirling rumors directly.

2027: No political alliance with Atiku, El-Rufai, says SDP Chairman

By Friday Omosola

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) has described as untrue, speculations about a possible alliance with Atiku Abubakar, the 2023 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate and Nasir El-Rufai, the former governor of Kaduna State, ahead of the 2027 general elections

The National Chairman of the party, Shehu Gabam disclosed this during an interview on "Politics Tonight", a programme on Television Continental.

Gabam emphasised that the SDP's primary focus remains on building its structures and offering Nigerians credible alternatives.

On his interactions with El-Rufai, Gabam described the former governor as a notable figure whose influence has stirred concerns among political players.

However, he distanced the SDP from any political ties with him, stating, "El-Rufai is a major force, but my relationship with him is personal, not political. Some individuals exaggerate his presence to generate unnecessary controversies."

He criticised the failures of both the All Progressives Congress (APC) and PDP, urging Nigerians to demand transparency and accountability from the administration of President Bola Tinubu.

Expressing concerns over the current administration's policies, Gabam highlighted the disconnect between the government and the struggles of ordinary Nigerians.

He pointed to the rising cost of living, food insecurity, and transportation challenges as pressing issues.

He further condemned the President's reliance on advisers who, he claimed, fail to present an accurate reflection of the nation's struggles.

Gabam also accused the federal government of using state institutions to intimidate critics, citing his experience of having his security details withdrawn without explanation.

The SDP chairman urged the federal government to reconsider its policies, particularly those that negatively impact the welfare of citizens.

Reaffirming the SDP's commitment to providing viable alternatives, Gabam said, "Our competition is legitimate and within the law. We are focused on addressing the issues that matter most to Nigerians and offering solutions that reflect their realities."