

It's fraud: Solido denies ₦10,000 Christmas giveaway Pg.2

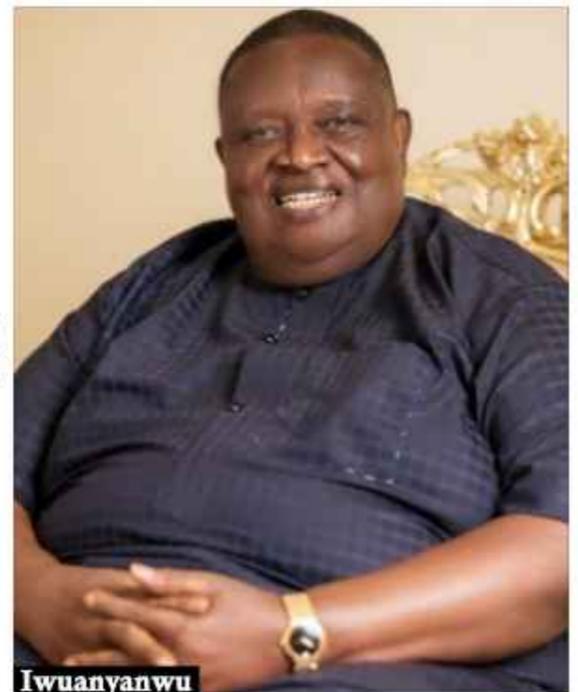
Umuahia North LG revokes all motor park licences Pg.3



Ohanaeze Ndigbo appeals for Nnamdi Kanu Release

 Pg.8

PDP moves to replace 27 defecting Rivers Lawmakers to APC

 Pg.7

Oversea's Japa Crises: FG woos medical students, health professionals to join military

 Pg.7

Presidential candidate of the Labour Party in the 2023 general elections, Peter Obi during a visit to the victims of the recent accidental military air strike on Tudun Biri village in the Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Tinubu, Obi, laud Osimhen Oshoala, others on African Players Award Pg.11
... As FIFA condemns attack on Turkish referee

Finally! Gov. Akeredolu Transfers Power to Deputy Aiyedatiwa, embarks on another Medical Leave Pg.7

Oil Bunkering: NSCDC apprehends suspects, recovers stolen crude in Imo Pg.9
... As Navy arrests fake officer, 2 others in Rivers

News

Anambra NSCDC pledges support against gender based violence

...Reassures commitment to protection of human rights

From Uchenna Ezeadigwe, Awka

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps has restated its commitment to the protection and observance of human rights in all its operations and in the fight against gender based violence against women.

In a press release made available by the Public Relations Officer for the state Commandant, DSC Okadigbo Edwin said that "Mr. Edwin Osuala, the Anambra State Commandant stated this on Tuesday, 12th, December at a breakfast dialogue organized by RoLAC in collaboration with National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Anambra

State to reflect on Human Rights Observance in the state".

Represented by the Command's Spokesperson, DSC Okadigbo Edwin, he said, the Corps is doing all that is humanly possible within the confines of established constitutional means, to ensure that the rights of citizens remained inviolable as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution and in conformity with United Nations Declarations on Human Rights.

"We have carried out at all times the duty imposed upon us by law, by upholding all measures to protecting all persons against illegal acts in adherence to the global best practices on human rights.

"We have also impacted

on our personnel the best practices for communicating and conducting themselves during encounters with members of the public" he said.

Mr. Osuala said the NSCDC firmly believe the importance of incorporating the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into its operations, in order to build trust and confidence with the populace.

"NSCDC as an institution has paid particular attention to actions that foster a relationship of trust between the Corps and the populace through the entrenchment of the rule of law, respect for human rights, fight against discrimination and by extension violence against women.

"We have also tasked our personnel to ensure that rights of suspects are protected and cared for." "We deeply stress the highest commitment of the Corps for the promotion of human rights.

"The Corps also recommit itself to addressing gender based violence with the creation of Gender unit saddled with the responsibilities to preventing the occurrence of gender based violence, providing response services to those who need support and defend those affected by gender based violence among others" he concluded.

He appealed to members of the public to partner the NSCDC in its renewed efforts aimed at ending all forms of gender based violence and ensure timely delivery of justice to the victims.

Expressing his appreciation to officers and men for their commitment and proactive modus operandi in observing human rights, he called for the sustenance of the tempo to earn the needed trust and cooperation between the Corps and members of the public in volunteering useful information on gender based violence to the Corps, thereby contributing to more effective crime fighting and enhancement of justice for victims.

ACTDA set to embark massive enforcement exercise on road side traders in Awka

From Uchenna Ezeadigwe, Awka

Ahead of warning given to those selling or displaying goods and wears along the road in Awka to desist forthwith, the Awka Capital Territory Development Authority (ACTDA) has completed plans to embark on massive enforcement exercise on offenders.

The Manager and Chief Executive Officer of Authority, Mr. Ossi Onuko who issues the order while speaking to newsmen in Awka noted that the authority had regrettably observed the resurface of street traders especially along the new roads con-

structed by Governor Chukwuma Soludo within Awka metropolis.

Mr Onuko explained that the authority had for the past one year continue an onslaught against the street traders who are causing obstruction and gridlock within the city even as he maintained that the activities of the outlaws have defaced the aesthetics of the new road built by the state government.

He mentioned the road where the activities of the street traders have increased in recent times to include the dual carriage Unizik-Isuani-ocha Road, Club Road, Regina Ceali Road, Old INEC

Road, Government House Road and Aroma, Ifite Road amongst others.

According to Mr. Onuko, from this Friday, Awka Capital Territory Development Authority officials will commence a massive destruction of goods and wears which are found to be displayed along the road and advised those engaged in the illegal act to stop immediately as the authority will not only seize but rather destroy such goods to serve as a deterrent to others.

Mr. Onuko further warns Offenders advised to immediately evacuate their goods and services suffer the consequences of their inactions.

'It is fraud' - Soludo denies N10,000 Christmas give-away

Anambra State Governor, Charles Soludo, has debunked a social media message alleging the approval of a cash transfer of N10,000 for Christmas and New Year celebrations.

The governor, through his press secretary, Christian Aburime, in a statement on Monday, described the message as false and warned Anambra people that it may be from people trying to defraud unsuspecting public members.

He warned that the government does not operate any cash transfer programme through unverified online links or applications, adding that the links the fraudsters were sending should not be given any attention.

He said: "The attention

of Anambra State Government has been drawn to a misleading and fraudulent message circulating on social media platforms and various online channels claiming that the government has approved a 'N10,000 cash transfer giveaway' for all citizens for Christmas and New Year celebrations.

"We categorically state that this information is entirely false, misleading, and not authorised by the Anambra State Government.

"The link provided in the message is fraudulent, and members of the public are advised not to open the link as their personal data may be compromised. "The Anambra State Government does not operate any cash transfer programme of this nature through unverified

online links or applications.

"Any official communication or programme initiated by the government is announced through official channels, including verified government websites, press statements, and authorised social media handles.

"We strongly advise the public to exercise caution and refrain from engaging with such fraudulent links or sharing personal information through unverified platforms.

"It is regrettable that individuals or groups would seek to deceive the public with false promises, especially during festive seasons.

"The government encourages citizens to remain vigilant and report such fraudulent activities to the appropriate authorities."

Two communities in Anambra take preventive measures to avert boundary disputes

...Ask Govt to place permanent monument on Boundary Benchmarks

From Uchenna Ezeadigwe, Awka

Two communities have taken preventive steps aimed at securing everlasting boundary peace by asking the state government to place permanent monuments at the agreed boundaries between Enugwu-Agidi and Ukpo communities.

News Echo reports that both communities through their spokespersons during the meeting, affirmed that there is no rancor or misunderstanding of any sort between them, adding that they understand themselves and also inter-marry a lot.

Enugu-Agidi and Ukpo communities made this declaration on Tuesday December 5th, 2023 at the Deputy Governor's Conference Room where they approached the state government to officially institute and gazette permanent boundary delineation between them.

The representatives of both communities were their Traditional Rulers, President Generals and other selected respected Elders of their respective Communities.

In their separate speeches, The traditional Ruler of Ukpo Community, Igwe Robert Eze represented by Ideh N'ukpo Ichie Okwuchukwu Ezeaku maintained that Ukpo and Enugwu-Agidi community have been co-habiting peacefully together without rancor for memorable decades,

which he further affirmed, is one of the the reason both community inter-marry themselves.

On his part, the traditional Ruler of Enugwu-Agidi, Igwe Mike Okeke-Uche towed similar path, affirming that Ukpo and Enugwu-Agidi have no boundaries misunderstanding but have decided to take some preventive steps to avert future boundary conflicts especially now there are palpable urban-rural development.

Responding, the state's Deputy Governor and Chairman, state Boundary committee, Dr Onyekachukwu Ibezim, commended the traditional rulers of both communities, thier President Generals and other selected elders present at the meeting, for being timely precautional in their preventive approaches.

Dr. Ibezim narrated to audience of both communities, state government's intentional moves to resolve all boundary headaches across the 177 communities of the state which he hinted was to smoothen the dividends of Governor Soludo revolutions in governance, evenly across the state.

He assured that "Solution Boundary for peace" initiative by Governor Soludo, across the state will save Enugwu-Agidi and Ukpo communities' money, lives, and encumbrances, urging to cooperate with the state government to institute the lasting peace.

Otti debunks arrest of community leaders

Abia State Governor Alex Otti has debunked the arrest and detention of some youths and leaders in Aba South Local Government.

The Senior Special Assistant to Governor Otti on Public Communication, Mr. Dodoh Okafor, in a statement yesterday, described the story making the rounds as a figment of the imagination of the purveyors of the fake news.

Okafor, who insisted that the governor at no time ordered the arrest of the individuals, said: "Our attention has been drawn to a trending social media report wherein the authors, for whatever purpose, alleged that Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, had some young people and elders arrested after he allegedly invited them for peace talks in Umuahia.

"The fact of the matter is that Governor Otti did not at any time order the arrest of anyone or group of people in connection with any remote or immediate event before and after the launch of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Port Harcourt Road in Aba.

"To begin with, the majority of Ndi Abia from all clans across the state, irrespective of their cultural and religious leanings, are appreciative of Governor Otti's resolve to rehabilitate the long-abandoned Port Harcourt Road, which until its collapse in the mid-1990s, was a major hub for the sale and repair of heavy duty machinery and spare parts, serving Port Harcourt industrial complex, further consolidating Aba's reputation as a major market for manufacturers and big businesses across the country and beyond.

"It is estimated that the collapse and subsequent abandonment of Port Harcourt Road by previous administrations cost the city hundreds of billions of naira in earnings, job opportunities and other missed opportunities.

"It is unbelievable that anyone or group would wish to stand against the resolve of the Otti administration to fix that stretch of road, solve the perennial flooding problems in that part of Aba and make the environment business-friendly once again, as envisaged by the late former Governor Sam Mbakwe of old Imo State, who built the road to expand the frontiers of economic opportunities in Aba."

News

Ohanaeze tackles Bode George over Igbo comments

Ohanaeze Ndigbo has tackled Chief Bode George over his comments on Igbo in Lagos.

In a statement made available in Enugu on Monday by Dr. Chiedozie Alex Ogbonna National Publicity Secretary, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide said Bode George alluded to the prevailing pervasive poverty in the country and in his judgment, believes that destruction of peoples' prop-

erty in Lagos is an antidote to poverty.

The statement reads "The attention of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide has been drawn to the remarks credited to Chief Bode George as to "why the Igbo couldn't focus on developing their own states instead of Lagos".

"George went on to ask "what stops Iwuanyanwu from developing the Igbo land instead of developing Lagos?And that "given

the pervasive problem of wide spread poverty among Nigerians, the subject" chosen by Iwuanyanwu "shouldn't be the main focus", etc.

"Chief Bode George made the above remarks as a reaction to the World Press Conference by the President General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Chief Engr. Dr. Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu.

"In the press conference, Chief Iwuanyanwu stated that when Lagos was elevat-

ed as the capital of Nigeria, it attracted persons, groups and governments from all parts of Nigeria and across the world. The Igbo leader pointed out that, Lagos as a federal capital gave rise to multi-ethnic inflow, population explosion and diverse economic activities.

"The Igbo leader commended the Igbo spirit of corporate social responsibility by adding values to whichever environment they find themselves.

Umuahia North LG revokes all motor parks' license

Operation license of all motor parks in Umuahia North Local Government of Abia State, have been revoked by the Council Chairman, Victor Ikeji with effect from December 11, 2023.

This development was contained in a press release made available by Tochukwu Eluwa, the Chief Press Secretary (CPS) to the LGA Chairman.

The press release said that the directive revoking the license of the motor parks was issued by Ikeji during an interactive session he held with heads and operators of motor parks operating within the Umuahia North area.

The press release said the operators of the motor parks were directed to approach

the office of the Special Adviser on Revenue to the local government chairman, to formally apply for license and to get guidelines and requirements for re-licensing.

He warned that apart from money already being paid into the account of the Abia State Board of Internal Revenue, no funds due the local government should be paid to any individual but should be paid into the local government account to be provided.

It was not ascertained if the revocation order was part of the Abia State government's plans to relocate illegal motor parks to approved grounds.

The State government has made it clear that it was determined to relocate illegal motor parks in Umuahia.



Mbah moves to boost arts, culture as he unveils stage play in Enugu

Enugu State Governor, Peter Mbah, has said that his administration is poised to promote arts and culture to make it more viable to contribute to economic development of the state.

He stated that his government would invest in different culture and tourism sites in the state to attract the kind of strategy needed to make the sector revenue yielding one. Mbah disclosed, yesterday, during the unveiling of a stage play, titled, 'The trial of King Ahebi...

The woman who became a man,' written by the Executive Secretary of Enugu State Council for Arts and Culture,

Laurence Ani, and presented, in collaboration with the Enugu State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, that there was enormous opportunities in the culture and arts sector.

Represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Prof. Chidiebere Onyia, the governor emphasized the need for people to begin to see things they considered leisure as economic values.

He disclosed that the play will be produced as a movie, and be shown in cinemas, both locally and internationally, as a means of "repositioning the state as an arts and culture destination."

Otti emphasises collaborative, coordinated approach towards combating GBV in Abia

The Wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs Priscilla Chidinma Otti, emphasised the importance of a collaborative and coordinated approach towards combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during the inauguration of the Abia State Gender-Based Working Group and GBV Response Team in Umuahia on Friday.

Mrs Otti, represented by the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Mrs Ngozi Blessing Felix, noted that preventing and responding to gender-based violence is the cornerstone of the Alex Otti administration's commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

She maintained that the Gender-Based Response

Team (GBRT) aims to guide the Abia State Government's action to coordinate the various sectors involved in the fight against Gender-Based Violence and strengthen the state's response to that.

In response, a member of the gender-based response team, Apostle Innocent Akomas, commended the governor's wife for choosing them and promised that they would carry out their work diligently.

The Gender-Based Working Group/Response Team is made up of thirty-three members, including the Commissioner for Women Affairs, her counterparts in the Ministries of Justice, Health, and Local Government, the Chief Judge of the state, the FIDA, representatives from security agencies, the media, non-governmental organizations, and others.

Otti signs GADA bill into law

Governor Alex Otti has signed into law the Greater Aba Development Authority (GADA) bill, which was passed on December 8 by the Abia State House of Assembly.

The GADA, which is the first bill to be signed into law by the Governor since his assumption of office, seeks to give special developmental focus to Aba and encourage investors, among others. Speaking shortly after assenting to the bill, Otti said establishing the GADA would give Aba special attention as a commercial hub.

The Governor said that Aba combines light manufacturing, heavy manufacturing, micro, small and medium-scale businesses and other trading activities. He congratulated the Speaker of

the State House of Assembly, his colleagues in the House of Assembly and members of the State Executive Council on the passage of the executive bill and stated that with the law, Aba rejuvenation has achieved legal backing to bring about the needed development.

Presenting the bill earlier for the Governor's assent, Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice of Abia State Ikechukwu Uwanna noted that the executive bill was passed into law by the House of Assembly on December 8, 2023.

Shedding light on the newly signed law, the Director-General of the GADA, Mr. Uche Ukeje, described the law as a special vehicle that would drive the development of Aba.

Anambra Govt says revitalization of urban water scheme soon to actualize

From Uchenna Ezeadigwe, Awka

In a recent interview, the Managing Director, Anambra Water Resources Management Agency, Mr. Ikeobi Ejiofor, has expressed the current Government of Anambra State commitment to revitalizing the state's water systems.

He said, "Allocations have been made in the budget by the Governor for the refurbishment of water facilities in Onitsha, Obizi, Otuocha, Awka, Nnewi, others".

He further mentioned that the Executive Council has sanctioned the restoration of the rural water infrastructure, which is currently in progress, emphasizing the

goal of long-term viability. Ejiofor also addressed the ongoing disputes between the Anambra State Government and the employees of the former water corporation, noting that a dedicated committee has been established to audit the existing workforce, identify retirees, and reintegrate those who wish to return.

"This move signifies a deliberate effort to resolve longstanding issues and improve water services for the residents". Meanwhile, some experts has expressed optimism that the revitalization of urban water scheme will go a long way to solving problems of inadequacies of pipe borne and affordable water for Ndi Anambra.

Kanu's release: Ohanaeze exonerates Gov Nwifuru from alleged IPOB indictment

Ohanaeze Ndigbo, the apex Igbo socio-cultural organization, has officially exonerated Governor Francis Nwifuru of Ebonyi State from any involvement in a plot against the possible release of Nnamdi Kanu, as alleged by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

Mazi Okechukwu Isiguzoro, Secretary General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, on Tuesday, in a statement, exonerated Nwifuru from a recent indictment made by IPOB, stating, "Our attention is drawn to the indictments by IPOB that some highly placed political elites have been holding clandestine and nocturnal meetings against the possible release of Nnamdi Kanu.

"However, we are certain that Rt. Hon. Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru, the Executive Governor of Ebonyi State, is not involved in this plot. There must be a mix-up somewhere, and we believe it's a costly mistake to get an innocent man involved in

this indictment." Ohanaeze Ndigbo firmly maintains that Governor Nwifuru is a committed Igbo political leader, dedicated to building upon the progress made by his predecessors and delivering good governance to the people of Ebonyi State.

"While the organisation clarifies that they do not speak on behalf of the Governor of Ebonyi, they believe that it is the responsibility of Igbo leadership to exonerate an innocent man whose name may have been wrongly implicated.

"We assure IPOB that Governor Nwifuru remains concerned about the welfare and well-being of residents and indigenous people of Ebonyi State," emphasised Ohanaeze Ndigbo. "Governor Francis Nwifuru's commitment to serving his people and driving development in Ebonyi State has been widely recognised, and Ohanaeze Ndigbo stands behind his integrity and leadership," it added.

Editorial

Spirit of 'Japa' and the future of Nigeria's Tertiary education

Hobbled by incessant strikes, lack of autonomy and abysmal work conditions, the Nigerian university system is now groaning under a severe shortage of human capital. This is being essentially fuelled by retirements and the massive exodus of academics seeking better opportunities abroad, a phenomenon known as *japa*. President Bola Tinubu, the 36 governors and the ministry of education at the federal and state levels must rise to their responsibilities and show commitment to save the system.

In a recent report, officials at several Academic Staff Union of Universities chapters traced the exodus mainly to the pathetic work conditions in public universities and issues around the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System of the Federal Government. The union at the Federal University of Gusau, Zamfara, stated that the school needed roughly 1,000 lecturers to plug the gaps of those who had left.

A similarly challenging situation prevails at the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, the Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology, Federal University of Kashere, the University of Ilorin, according to the newspaper. This is inimical because education is the bedrock of a virile modern society. Nigeria, with 20.1 million, ranks second highest in the out-of-school children phenomenon.

Apart from the IPPIS saga, the lack of autonomy and bureaucratic bottlenecks prevent individual universities from replacing the lecturers that have retired or left for greener pastures. Many professors are retiring and have no replacement. The ones that are left are seeking greener pastures in countries like Malaysia, Oman, New Zealand, and the US. Therefore, Tinubu should grant universities the autonomy to recruit the needed staff to ameliorate the shorthandedness.

In Nigeria, underfunding is a notorious weakness. Although government budgets for luxury expenditure like buying expensive cars for legislators who spend a term of four years, it only

allocated N2.18 trillion in the 2024 budget of N27.5 trillion. That is insignificant.

Most of the public universities lack adequate halls of residence, lecture halls, and other critical facilities. They are saddled with huge electricity bills and provide alternative power at great cost. This is frustrating.

A 2010 MoU of N1.4 trillion to be serviced in seven years between the Federal Government and ASUU for the revitalisation of the federal institutions and enhanced remuneration is still pending. In the interregnum, the Federal Government keeps compounding the malaise by creating more universities that it cannot fund. Conversely, the United States Department of Education said the government supported the universities in the US with \$201 billion in grants in 2023, an increase of 2.4 per cent, compared to the \$68.3 billion it gave in 1980. That is perceptive. Research England stated that it gave a grant of £2.2 billion to English universities 2017-18. The Higher Education Funding Council for England equally awarded £3.6 billion grants to the institutions in the same session.

It is unfortunate that the same government that has not shown leadership and commitment to the welfare of the universities on the ground reportedly wants to establish 32 more federal institutions.

News Echo posits that, unless Tinubu arrests the situation by reviewing the conditions of service in terms of salaries, allowances, and infrastructure, more lecturers will continue to leave the country.

The Ministries of Education and Finance should allow universities to employ the hands they need. The FG should clear the backlog of lecturers' salaries, increase research grants, and training for lecturers, and grant the tertiary system full autonomy to manage and run their affairs to stave off a full-blown education crisis.

The world is leaving Nigeria behind; Tinubu must act now.

Our Team

EDITORIAL

Publisher
Larry Kingsley

Managing Editor
Bright Okereke

News Editor
Anthony Ogbekile

Reporters
Ikenna Orioha
Glory Ugochukwu
Oluchi Ofurum
Adaora John

Correspondents
Dan Maduagwu Okey (Umuahia)
Uchenna Ezeadigwe (Awka)
David Eze (Abakiliki)
Godson Nwosu (Port Harcourt)

Contributors/Columnists

Justina Nkechi
Livy-Elcon Emereonye

Production

Alex Nnamdi Chukwu
Ngawuchu Don Divine
Owor Charley

ADMINISTRATION

General Manager
James Kalu

Operations Manager
Patricia Nwoye

Web Administrator
Bismark Ibegbulam

Circulation Team
Innocent Onyehialam
Raphael Obioha
Eugene Nwachukwu
Chigozie Ihezuo

Legal Adviser
H. O. Ogbusu

Vision

To pioneer new ways to serve the public and provide credible reports across all media platforms.

Mission

To inspire and promote exceptional journalism, innovation and excellence through a quality newspaper which is reliable and accountable.

Opinion

Nnamdi Kanu's Release: A Bridge Too Far?

By Anthony Ogbekile

The leader of the Federal Government proscribed-Indigenous People of Biafra, (IPOB) Mazi Nnamdi Kanu will, after over two years of extraordinary rendition and solitary confinement under the custody of the Department of State Service, (DSS), have his fate decided by the Supreme Court of Nigeria in Abuja on Monday, 10th of December, 2023.

A reminder of the chain of events? You would recall that the IPOB leader was on June, 27th of July 2021 arrested and renditioned to Nigeria from Kenya and has since been in the DSS facility. Kanu who was initially arrested for 11 court charges was allegedly said to have jumped bail in 2017 following the reports of the invasion of his country home by the Nigerian Army, an incident that reportedly claimed no fewer than 28 people. It was a sequel to the unprecedented incident that Kanu resurfaced in Israel a year later. Meanwhile, upon his rearrest and rendition back to Nigeria, fresh 16-count charges were brought up by the Federal Government of Nigeria against the IPOB's leader. Nonetheless, different courts of competent jurisdiction including a Federal High Court sitting in Umuahia, the Abia State capital, ordered the Federal Government to pay the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu, N500m as damages following his illegal abduction and human rights abuse. The court also ordered the Federal Government to return him to Kenya, from where he was extradited to Nigeria on June 19, 2021.

The court presided over by Justice E.N. Anyadike, insisted that the extradition of Kanu from Kenya without recourse to the legal process was a flagrant abuse of his fundamental human rights. Kanu, through his counsel, Aloy Ejimakor, had approached the court challenging his extradition from Kenya on June 19, 2022. Ejimakor told the court that the suit was sui generis (of a special class) and was primarily aimed at redressing the unlawful expulsion or extraordinary rendition of Kanu, which is a clear violation of his fundamental rights under Article 12(4) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, as well as Chapter IV of the Nigerian Constitution.

Similarly, a High Court sitting in Enugu, on Thursday, asked the Nigeria Federal Government and South-East Governors to pay the sum of N8,000,000,000.00 (Eight Billion Naira) to the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. The court also mandated the



Kanu

respondents to apologize to Kanu for the infringement of his fundamental rights.

"Ordered the Respondents, jointly or severally, to issue official Letter(s) of Apology to the Applicant (MAZI NNAMDI KANU) for the infringement of his fundamental rights; and publication of said Letter(s) of Apology in three (3) national dailies.

"Ordered the Respondents to, jointly or severally, pay the sum of N8,000,000,000.00 (Eight Billion Naira) to the Applicant (MAZI NNAMDI KANU), being monetary damages claimed by the Applicant against the Respondents jointly and severally for the physical, mental, emotional, psychological, property and other damages suffered by the Applicant as a result of the infringements of his fundamental rights by the Respondents", Justice A. O Onovo, said.

Additionally, the court declared as unconstitutional, the proscription and designation of IPOB as a terrorist organization by the Federal Government and the South East Governors.

The ruling was a sequel to a suit brought before the court by the IPOB legal team led by Aloy Ejimakor, challenging the 2017 proscription of IPOB as a terrorist organization.

The court also declared as unconstitutional, the proscription and designation of IPOB as a terrorist organization by the Federal Government and the South East Governors.

The ruling was a sequel to a suit brought before the court by the IPOB legal team

led by Aloy Ejimakor, challenging the 2017 proscription of IPOB as a terrorist organization.

Meanwhile, having declared the IPOB's leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu freed and acquitted by various Courts sitting in Nigeria, it still baffles many right-thinking citizens of the world why the Department of State Service still holds him hostage.

It is against this background that a lot of questions beg for answers: Have Igbo People abandoned their own? What is Kanu's fate come December 10, 2023, at the Supreme Court? Who is behind Kanu's lingering ordeals?

Recall that ahead of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, speculations were brought up that the release of Kanu would alter the presidential aspiration of the Igbo people through Mr. Peter Obi. Some believed that with Obi as the President, Kanu's freedom be facilitated and made much more possible among other expensive speculations. Meanwhile, the Buhari-led administration has given way to

President Bola Tinubu which has triggered further questions about the circumstances surrounding the continuous detention of Kanu.

In a recent reaction to the prevailing development, the lead Counsel to the IPOB's leader, Mike Ozekhome (SAN) was spotted praying for God's intervention in Kanu's case. The distinguished SAN made several declarations ahead of the 10th of December, 2023, a day to remember in the entire Igbo land, Nigeria, and the world at large. Should the Supreme Court rule against the IPOB's leader, Nnamdi Kanu, what happens next? Will Igbo people turn their back on him? Recall that the governors of the states in the Southeastern region of Nigeria have tirelessly proposed a political solution to Kanu's case. A proposition that to date is yet to materialize. Against all odds, the IPOB's Leader has remained resilient, resolute, and indefatigably optimistic in the camp of his oppressors. Anticipating what unfolds on the 10th of December, 2023 as many still ask if

Meanwhile, having declared the IPOB's leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu freed and acquitted by various Courts sitting in Nigeria, it still baffles many right-thinking citizens of the world why the Department of State Service still holds him hostage.

News

Christmas: Outrage as air ticket prices to S/East surpass N500,000 for return trips

As the yuletide season approaches, air passengers travelling to the South Eastern part of Nigeria are confronted with sky-high ticket prices, surpassing N500,000 for return trips.

While routes like Lagos-Abuja, Lagos-Port Harcourt, and Lagos-Uyo have maintained pre-yuletide fares, airfares to South Eastern destinations have surged significantly.

Monitoring various air-

lines, it was observed that return tickets from Lagos to Anambra on Air Peace are priced at N533,600. Similarly, Lagos-Enugu and Lagos-Owerri return tickets are at N343,200 and N533,600, respectively.

United Nigeria Airlines charges N441,000 for Abuja-Anambra return trips, while Lagos-Anambra, Lagos-Enugu, and Lagos-Owerri tickets cost N520,500, N441,000, and N520,500,

respectively.

Dana Air, which solely services Owerri in the Southeast, offers return tickets during this period for N400,000. Despite the exorbitant prices, airlines have reportedly sold out their seats for the festive season.

The surge in airfares has been attributed to factors such as inflation, foreign exchange fluctuations, airlines facing trapped funds, and soaring costs of jet A1.

During peak periods like yuletide, travellers opt for expensive airfares due to insecurity, preferring air travel over land transportation. Speaking on this, Olumide Ohunayo, Secretary General of the Aviation Round Table Initiative (ARTI), noted that current exchange rates justified the escalated fares.

He emphasized that ticket prices globally are influenced by demand and timing of purchase, and Nigeria's domestic market adheres to similar principles.

However, Ohunayo predicted a return to average fares by January, highlighting the need for airlines to secure more aircraft leases to meet high demands during the season.

His words: "The airfare is justified because we are in the festive season and any passengers who didn't buy a ticket three months ago will pay the N350,000 one way fare. "The same aircraft, some passengers will pay N80,000, N100,000 because they have

planned their travel ahead.

If you are travelling anywhere in the world at this period, the ticket goes up astronomically. "Aviation products are always in dollars and Nigerian airlines earn in Naira, however, with the current exchange rate, the airfare we are seeing now is not unexpected.

"What we can encourage is to see if we can have more airlines or the fewer airlines available can get wet lease aircraft to augment high de-

mands during this season." Supporting this sentiment, the former commandant of Muritala Mohammed International Airport, Group Captain John Ojikutu (rtd), attributed the increased fares to the depreciation of the Naira against the Dollar and the quadrupled cost of aviation fuel.

Ojikutu advised the government to categorize airports based on passenger traffic and enforce operators to deposit forex charges into a central

bank account, ensuring transactions are in Naira equivalents.

"The dollar rate against the naira is about thrice what it was about 12 months ago so also is the cost of aviation fuel four times what it was six months ago so should you expect the air fares not to be less than thrice what it was six months ago?

"Note that costing of aviation services is globally rated against the Dollar and should justifiably reflect the Economic reality," he noted.



King and Queen of Africa, Victor Osimhen and Assisat Oshaola on Monday night in Marrakech, Morocco after both Nigerians were crowned Male and Female Players of the Year in Africa by CAF.

2023 Anti Corruption Day: Group calls for collaborative effort in fight against corruption

By Grace Ofurum

As the world marks 2023 Anti-Corruption Day, a nongovernmental Organization, Christian Fellowship and Care Foundation has reassured of its commitment in the fight against corruption at all levels of Governance and to raise a society that values transparency, Accountability and inclusivity.

This was made known during a press conference held at their office complex in Owerri last weekend. The Campaign Manager, Mr Clinton Ezeigwe while addressing newsmen said the Organization is aimed at enhancing anti corruption and social reform and disclosed that the 20th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is symbolic as it reinforces the collaborative effort geared toward the eradication of corrupt practices.

He maintained that the launch of the project since 2023 has recorded tremendous result however, noted

that the fight against corruption has its challenges as one out of five individuals has indulged in bribing their way through to access public services.

Also, 124 Countries remain static in corruption index which pose as a major concern. According to Ezeigwe, the Organization runs with a project. "Enhancing Anti Corruption and social inclusive Reform in Nigeria, a USAID funded initiative anchored by ANEEJ and implemented by palladium Under the Strengthening Civic and Local Engagement (SCALE) project which is aimed towards condemning, combating, fostering an environment conducive for peace, security and development.

The theme of this year's celebration which focuses on the intrinsic link between anti corruption policies, peace, security and development is in line with the Organization's collective mission and underscores the vital role that combating corruption plays in creating prosperous and peaceful

society.

The foundation stated that corruption poses a threat to peace in the society as it gives room for divergent reactions which is inimical for the stability of the society especially when public funds are mismanaged, bribery becomes a rule and institutions are undermined, it impedes on the potentials of the society. According to the foundation, "when public resources are diverted for personal gain, bribery becomes a norm and institutions are undermined, the fabric of society is weakened". "The erosion of trust in public institutions can lead to social unrest and undermine the foundation of a stable and peaceful Community." From its findings the Organization reveals that tackling corruption is expedient as it will pace way for an environment conducive for peace and security. It recognises that corruption also serves as breeding ground for discontent and social unrest and threatens the stability of communities.

Our members are dying, pay our severance package – Obiano's Aides to Soludo

Aides of former Anambra State Governor, Willie Obiano have urged the incumbent, Charles Soludo to pay their severance packages. The aides made the plea during a reunion meeting held in Awka on Sunday. According to the aides, no fewer than 42 appointees of Obiano have died within two years of leaving office.

They lamented that their colleagues died without receiving their severance allowances and called on Soludo to facilitate the payment of their severance allowances. Obiano had a month ago, made the same call, insisting that the payment and appointment of some of his aides into Soludo's government were part of the condition under which Soludo was supported to succeed him.

The Anambra State Deputy Governor, Onyekachukwu Ibezim, a former political appointee under Obiano and who was at the function urged the former aides not to despair but to trust in God.

He said even Governor Soludo was a former appointee to Obiano, so there was no

reason to panic. Meanwhile, Soludo, has defended the country's current economic situation, saying that President Bola Tinubu's administration inherited a dead economy.

Soludo stated this while commenting on the current naira-dollar exchange during an interview on Channels TV's Politics Today on Thursday night. The former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) faulted the apex bank for illegally printing money in total violation of the 2007 Act governing the financial institution.

He maintained that Tinubu inherited a dead economy many Nigerians saw as standing. He said, "We must realize where we were coming from. We sat here in this country and saw the monetary authorities literally printing money.

And to prevent us from getting to where we are today, that was why we had an explicit clause that prevented the Central Bank from landing recklessly, granting ways and means to the federal government.

"We explicitly put into the law that you can't grant the federal government more than 5% of the previous year's actual revenue. And that so granted must be retired by the end of the year in which it was granted. And when the federal government fails to retire, the central bank is forbidden by that law from further advancing ways and means.

That was the law 2007 act of the Central Bank. "But we sat all of us Nigerians watching the CBN illegally and brazenly violating that act year on year and kept on printing money.

That is when advance money is not backed by nothing; you just credit the federal government with trillions N4 trillion, N10 trillion, N15 trillion and we kept going.

"I said it before. This particular government inherited a dead economy from a micro economic point of view, this government inherited a dead horse that was seen standing but people didn't know that it was dead. I think it's important for Nigerians to understand this."

Christmas Cantata: Good kiddies World of Entertainment hosts Imo children

By Grace Ofurum

As part of the activities marking the yuletide celebration, Good Kiddies world of Entertainment has Organised a Music Cantata for Secondary schools across Imo State.

The event which took place at the Imo state Arts and Culture complex in Owerri witnessed variety of scintillating music by over 15 secondary schools across the state who performed in different songs. Speaking at the epoch making event, the CEO Good Kiddies world of Entertainment Eziada Chiooma Anyanwu Okorie (Auntty Chiooma) said the event started five years ago and has made much impacts in the

lives of the children.

She disclosed that the mission of the Organization is to advance creative skills and talents of the children and providing them with unforgettable moments and recreational entertainments.

Also amongst its objectives is to raise awareness of the importance of children's involvement in educational entertainment. She stated the Organization will also hold Father Christmas party that will last for 2 days and Urged parents to support the initiative by bringing their children as lots of gifts and fun will be on display.

While interacting with newsmen, Rev. Fr Bonaventure Adimso one of the guests at the event said the

Christmas Cantata is a way of bringing children closer to God, disclosing that it's a well Organized program that took so much commitment on the part of the CEO as well as the participating schools.

He described the Organiser as a gift from God to humanity, multi talented and has impacted lots of lives through her philanthropic gestures and prayed God to continually sustain her efforts.

The Christmas Cantata witnessed the presentation of special rendition to the delight of many by invited Choral groups who did various genres of Christmas music and others, it also witnessed a dance performance by the popular Omenimo Cultural Troupe and others.

News

PDP moves to replace 27 defecting Rivers Lawmakers to APC

The national leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party has written to the Independent National Electoral Commission demanding fresh elections to replace the 27 lawmakers in the Rivers State House of Assembly who defected to the All Progressives Congress on Monday.

This was made known in a press statement signed by the party's National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba. The lawmakers cited division within the PDP as the primary reason for their defection to the opposition APC. The affected lawmakers are said to be loyal to the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike.

According to Ologunagba, the seats of the defected lawmakers have become vacant owing to the fact that they contested elections on the platform of the party in their respective constituencies.

Citing the country's con-

stitution, he said, "The seats of the respective 27 former lawmakers have become vacant by virtue of the provision of Section 109 (1) (g) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended). "For the avoidance of doubt, Section 109 (1) of the 1999 Constitution provides that 'a member of a House of Assembly shall vacate his seat in the House if ... (g) being a person whose election to the House of Assembly was sponsored by a political Party, he becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that House was elected."

"Because of the above constitutional provision and its clear interpretation by the Supreme Court, the 27 defected members of the Rivers State House of Assembly have vacated and lost their seats, rights, privileges, recognition, and obligations accruable to members of the Rivers State House of Assembly. "The PDP, therefore, de-

mands that the Speaker of the Rivers State House Assembly immediately comply with the provision of the Constitution by declaring the seats of the 27 former lawmakers vacant."

He maintained, "In view of the vacancy now existing in the 27 state constituencies in Rivers State, the PDP demands that INEC should, within the stipulated period under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), conduct fresh election to fill the vacancies. "Our party cautions that the former lawmakers should stop parading themselves as members of the Rivers State House of Assembly as such would amount to impersonation with serious criminal consequences."

The party further implored the people of the state to remain steadfast and loyal to democracy and the rule of law, especially during this time. For the avoidance of doubt, Section 109 (1) of the 1999 Constitution provides

that 'a member of a House of Assembly shall vacate his seat in the House if ... (g) being a person whose election to the House of Assembly was sponsored by a political Party, he becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that House was elected...'

"Because of the above constitutional provision and its clear interpretation by the Supreme Court, the 27 defected members of the Rivers State House of Assembly have vacated and lost their seats, rights, privileges, recognition, and obligations accruable to members of the Rivers State House of Assembly."

"The PDP, therefore, demands that the Speaker of the Rivers State House Assembly immediately comply with the provision of the Constitution by declaring the seats of the 27 former lawmakers vacant."

He maintained, "In view of the vacancy now existing in the 27 state constituencies in Rivers State, the PDP demands that INEC should, within the stipulated period under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), conduct fresh election to fill the vacancies."

"Our party cautions that the former lawmakers should stop parading themselves as members of the Rivers State House of Assembly as such would amount to impersonation with serious criminal consequences."

Tinubu finally directs Akeredolu to transfer Power to Deputy

President Bola Tinubu has directed ailing Governor Rotimi Akeredolu of Ondo State to transfer power to his deputy, Lucky Aiyedatiwa. However, the transfer of power will be done by electronic signature (e-signature) as the ailing governor is too weak to sign any document.

Tinubu reportedly told people at the meeting he had summoned to resolve the leadership crisis in Ondo on Monday that Akeredolu was incapacitated and could not sign a letter anymore.

It was reported that President Tinubu had summoned the state deputy governor, Aiyedatiwa and House of Assembly Speaker, Olamide Oladiji to Aso Villa in Abuja for an urgent meeting slated for Monday.

Sources had told newsmen that Tinubu would ask that the deputy governor should be allowed to act as governor, to resolve the leadership crisis in the state. Monday's emergency meeting was the second one summoned by the President to resolve the leadership crisis in the state following the governor's absence from office since July 2023. The meeting at the instanc-

e of Tinubu was due to mounting pressure from the civil society organisation Take-It-Back, which had threatened to commence mass protests across Ondo State from Saturday, December 16 to demand Akeredolu's resignation.

Apart from Aiyedatiwa and Oladiji, Akeredolu's son, Babajide, who was appointed by the governor in November 2021 as the Director

General of the Performance and Project Implementation Monitoring Unit, Office of the Governor of Ondo State (PPIMU), was one of those present at the meeting.

The senator representing Ondo South, Jimoh Ibrahim, was also present. Sources told newsmen that it was first agreed that the State House of Assembly should invoke the doctrine of necessity to make Aiyedatiwa the acting governor, but some of those present pleaded with President Tinubu that it would humiliate the ailing governor.

"During the meeting, it was agreed that the State House of Assembly should invoke the doctrine of necessity and make Lucky Aiyedatiwa the Acting Governor, but the Speaker and Senator Jimoh Ibrahim pleaded that the ailing governor would be humiliated," one of the sources said.

"The son (Babajide) then promised to go and obtain his father's e-signature to pen a letter to the State House of Assembly, transferring power to the deputy governor."

Sources at the meeting also disclosed that someone raised concern that since there was already a case of forgery established in handling the affairs of the state, it would not make sense for power to be transferred through such dubious means.

It was reported on Sunday that a pro-democracy organisation, Take-It-Back Movement convened by Omoyele Sowore would organise a town hall meeting in Akure on Saturday, December 16 to call for Governor Akeredolu to resume office or resign.



Peter Obi speaking with Journalists during a visit to the victims of Military airstrike at the Barau Dikko Teaching Hospital in the state capital on Tuesday.

FG woos medical student, health professionals to join military

The federal government is wooing medical students and other health professionals to join the military in order to boost the number of medical personnel in the services, and reduce the effect of japa syndrome in the service.

The Minister of State for Defence, Bello Matawalle, said this on Tuesday December 12, during Defence Health Maintenance stakeholders meeting in Abuja. Matawalle, who was represented by the Permanent Secretary, Dr Abubakar Kana, said government is also set to build a world class veterans hospital in Abuja to cater for the health needs of retired military personnel in the country.

He said it was part of the reform being undertaken by the government to establish the Armed Forces Medical College. He said: "Part of

the reform is to increase the number of military medical personnel, consultants and interns.

"Already we have concluded arrangements to build 100 bed accommodations at 44 Reference Hospital in Kaduna for interns. "This is geared towards building the armed forces medical college. This is not to just train the medical doctors but nurses and other health personnel.

"The japa syndrome has also affected the armed forces. To solve this problem we are visiting universities to encourage medical students to join the military. We want to entice them by providing them with good incentives. "Before now it rare to see military personnel receive medical care outside the military hospital, but that has changed. We want to bring back that lost glory.

"We want to build a world

class medical facility for veterans in Abuja. "It is part of the reform of the federal government. But it is not only about the facility but also about care and strengthening the military health system in Nigeria.

The Minister said that the establishment of Defence Health Insurance is a worthwhile investment that is well positioned to provide the full length of coverage for both serving and retired military personnel, and their families. He said: "The role of the armed forces is to protect the integrity of Nigeria, and anybody that enrolls in the armed forces has put his or her life on the line, hence there is no need to limit the coverage of health insurance for the armed forces."

"People that have served this country shouldn't be paying for maintaining their health from their pockets. "We have written to President Bola Tinubu on the need to remove Defence Health Insurance from the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)."

NAFDAC busts 240 shops manufacturing fake wines, drugs in Aba market

National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), on Tuesday, called for the temporary shut-down of Cemetery Market, Aba, Abia State for proper sanitization following the huge discovery of fake products manufacturing centres.

The raid which started on Monday, continued on Tuesday, NAFDAC intensified efforts to get the market safe from fake, expired and harmful products. Mr Martins Iluyomade, Director of NAFDAC South-East Zone while addressing journalists on Tuesday said that they got information that something was happening at the market, did their background checks and discovered that horrendous things were happening there.

"What's happening here is worse than Boko Haram. We saw how too many shops were converted into manufacturing centres for all manner of wines, expensive

drinks, and revalidation of date for expired products.

"We have the cooperation of the state government and so far we've discovered 240 shops used for this illegal manufacturing of fake consumables. About ten persons have been arrested and the arrest is still ongoing. "What we have moved out from here, four trailers cannot carry it.

It shows the extent we've gone so badly as a country and the extent of dangers these people are creating. "No wonder we have all manners of health issues and the funny thing is that we use our money to buy this evil. Our DG is not leaving any stone unturned in getting rid of fake products in our market.

"I will suggest that this market be shut down for now until we sanitize this market for a while. We've written to appropriate authorities to that effect and we think it's the right thing to do because

when people are around, everywhere is rowdy." The Coalition of South-East Youth Leaders (COSEYL) frowned at the development, describing it as man's inhumanity to man, which it says should not be treated with kid gloves.

Comrade Goodluck Ibem, Leader of COSEYL called on the National Assembly to find a way to amend the constitution to ensure that nothing less than a capital punishment is inserted as a legal consequence for producing and marketing fake products.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, OKOLI CHINENYE BLESSING, an adult, and a native of Aguluzigbo Anaocha LGA of Anambra State now wish to be addressed as UDEGBE CHINENYE BLESSING. The General Public, especially the United Bank for Africa (UBA) for the purposes of my Bank Verification Number should take note.

News

Off-cycle elections: Vote buying, violence remain sore points – CDD

Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), said vote buying and electoral violence remained the sore points in the Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi governorship elections.

Dr Jack Johnson, Member of the CDD Election Analysis Centre (CDD-EAC) made this known in Abuja at a news conference on the off-cycle elections. Jackson said that the CDD-EAC, had been observing the off-cycle elections in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi with a deployment of over 150 fact-checkers and observers in all three states, as well as a team of data clerks, reviewers and analysts in its situation room in Abuja. He said that overall there was early commencement

of polls as well as the usage of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), however, there were several reports about voter inducement across all three states.

Observers reported incidents in PU 1, Ward 8 and PU 11, Ward 1 in Sagbama LGA in Bayelsa West. "In Bayelsa Central, vote trading was reported in PU 16, Ward 6 in Yenagoa LGA, PU 22, Ward 13 in Southern Ijaw LGA with reports of voter inducements ranging from N5,000 – N22,000, including other items such as wrappers.

"In PU 30 and 31, Ward 13, along with money, rice was also shared to buy votes." we are concerned that there were allusions that it might be linked to the delayed flood and subsidy

palliatives that state governments only started distributing two days ago."

Jackson said that CDD observed that in Kogi, there were reports of vote buying in PUs 004, 038 and 039 in Ward A of Lokoja LGA, where party agents were allegedly sharing out money to voters upon confirmation that they voted for their party candidates.

He further said that the two major parties' agents were reported to have engaged in vote buying, with N2000 to N3000 shared and same at PU3 Mbutu Ward, Aboh Mbaise LGA as well as PU11, Civic Centre Ward, Mbaitoli LGA. He added that in PU 7, Central School UmuNakanu Ehime LGA, in Imo, there were reports that INEC ad hoc staff

were given monetary inducements by party officials.

He said that incidents of vote buying were concentrated in Mbaitoli-Ezinihitte, Owerri West and Njaba LGAs with the highest number of collected PVCs amongst the LGAs in the state with 150,012 and 134,192 cards."

Jackson said that regrettably, electoral violence remained a sore point in this election. He added that electoral violence was reported in Dekini LGA, specifically in Agala Ogane PU, Anyigba town, a thug was reportedly shot and killed by military officials while fleeing in an attempt to snatch a ballot box.

"There was a similar attempt in Ganaja PU, Ajao-

kuta LGA where the LGA chair was apprehended by voters. "In Yenagoa LGA, observers reported that one person was shot at Famgbe community and, in PU 24 Ward, voting ended abruptly when thugs destroyed election materials at about 11:45 a.m. "We note that in these area polling units, there was little or no presence of security officials.

"Similar instances were reported in Brass PU 7 Ward 7, observers reported that there were no security agents as late as 10:19 a.m. in spite of voting having started." Jackson said CDD also noted some election irregularities as well as fake news.

He said that days to the election, it was consistently

claimed that the SDP candidate in Kogi, Murtala Ajaka, stepped down from the race and on the morning of the election, a false message was circulated that Ajaka was disqualified because of his running mate's certificate controversy.

He added that there was a similar situation in Imo, where a video was circulated that purportedly showed the PDP's candidate, Sam Anyanwu, had stepped down and endorsed the incumbent governor of the APC.

He, however, said that the video was similarly debunked but not before it had been widely reported on social media and on news platforms.



Following the recent demolition of some houses in Abule Ado area of Lagos State by the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), the Senator representing Anambra South Senatorial District, Dr Patrick Ifeanyi Ubah, CON and the Director-General of South-East Governors Forum, Senator Uche Ekwunife, CON, met with the Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu at the State's Governor's Lodge, Asokoro, Abuja.

APC S'East Natl Vice Chairman describes Uzodimma as man of grace

By Ikenna Orioha

As the Governor of Imo State, Senator Hope Uzodimma, marked his 65th birthday anniversary on December 12, 2023, the South East APC National Vice Chairman, Dr. Ijeomah Arodiogbu, has described the Governor as a man of grace, positing that the celebration was a glorious event.

He said the Governor has the grace of God having been highly blessed, favoured and inspired by God in all human endeavors, saying his 8 years in the Senate and as Governor were designed and ordained by God, who he added crowns Kings.

In a chat with our reporter in Owerri on Tuesday, the APC stalwart said the Governor merits God's bliss and strength because he

loves, peaceful, kind, calm, easy-going, prudent, tolerant, thoughtful, generous, diplomatic and democratic.

According to the sound and renowned medic, "Your Excellency, your 65th Birthday Anniversary is a Joyous and Fulfilled event because you have been largely blessed and favoured by God Almighty given to your love, fairness, goodness, kindness, godliness, joviality, calmness, lead-

5 die in Anambra club shooting – Police confirm

The Police Command in Anambra, has confirmed the killing of five persons after Sunday's shooting at a nightclub in Oba in Idemili South Local Government Area (LGA) of the state.

The state Commissioner of Police Aderemi Adeoye, said this when he spoke with the News Agency of Nigeria on Tuesday in Awka. Adeoye said that the victims included two members of a local vigilance, a bouncer and two fun seekers.

He said that the owner of the club was also abducted

by the attackers. Adeoye described the incident as unfortunate and vowed to hunt down the perpetrators. "We got a distress call at about 2a.m., Monday, the DPO Oba Division led police officers and members of local vigilance group to the scene, but the attackers had already fled the scene.

"The police Rapid Response Squad from Awkuzu was on patrol in the area from 6p.m., to midnight before moving to other parts of the state and the incident happened after the team left the area. "Five persons were killed, they include, two vigilance group members, one bouncer and two clubbers.

"The owner of the hotel was abducted in the process," he said. Adeoye said that the police had yet to make arrest on the incident, adding that investigations had commenced to unravel the attackers.

"We have seen a pattern; the gang was responsible for a similar incident where the victim's body was dismembered about two weeks ago in Ihiala. "We have an idea of the axis they are operat-

ing from, we are going to crack them down, no arrest has been made and investigation is ongoing.

"Oba has always been a flashpoint because of the thriving nightlife, lots of hotels and strategically located, so we intend to deploy additional assets and personnel to that axis, especially this yuletide, to make sure criminals do not make life miserable for people," he said.

"The decay in values is not strange to the people but unfortunately, we have to live with the consequences, this is one of the reasons why the public enlightenment agencies were created.

"Investigation has shown that most of the money you see on display in night clubs are not legitimately earned, most are proceeds of crime, so we all have work to do, a law enforcement agency, we will continue to do our part."

Mr Chidozie Nwangu, a native doctor known as 'Akwa okuko tiwara aki' was kidnapped in his hotel room in Oba in July in a similar attack which resulted in the killing of two security guards.

Labour Party formed out of anger – Bode George

... Urges Peter Obi to return to PDP

Chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Bode George, said the Labour Party, LP, was formed out of anger. Due to this development, George said LP lacked the structure to win national elections.

Addressing journalists, he called on the 2023 LP presidential candidate, Peter Obi, to return to the PDP. Accord-

ing to George: "The Labour Party doesn't have the roots. I have traversed every state in the country, there is nowhere you will not know or hear about our party, because it carries the full colour of Nigeria.

"The LP was a movement; they don't have a solid root. LP came out of anger, it doesn't have the kind of root we have. LP is a wind. Where

was Obi? We can still talk to him, if he wants to. "I have no iota of tribalism in my blood. I stand to fight for inclusiveness for all Nigerians in the political process of this country and especially in this party where some of us have suffered great injustice for the fight of equity and justice for all.

"As leaders of the party, we must not pander towards ethnic affiliation because PDP is the only true national party."

ership charisma, pragmatism and dexterity.

"Your Excellency, as we rejoice with you, we submit and pray that God Almighty who kept and strengthened you to witness another brighter year, would sustain you and direct you positively as you render absolute governance to the edification of Imo State".

Arodiogbu however pledged his continued unalloyed support to the Governor as he works to the collective success of the state.

Ohanaeze Ndigbo Leadership appeals for Nnamdi Kanu Release

The apex Igbo socio-cultural organisation; Ohanaeze Ndigbo has made a special appeal for the release of the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu who has been in the custody of the Department of State Services (DSS) since June 2023. A statement by the President General, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, stated that the release of Mazi Kanu "does not constitute any threat to our democracy or social cohesion and peace." Recalling that the court had earlier ordered the release of Kanu, the Igbo leader appealed to President Bola Tinubu to assist in the release of the Biafra agitator, adding that his continued "incarceration of Kanu has created unnecessary excuse for terrorism in a region which has hitherto lived in peace and pursued their occupation wherever they are with patriotic zeal." The Statement reads: I want on behalf of all Igbos worldwide to appeal to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, Sen. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR to use his good office to direct for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's case is well known to all

Igbos and Nigerians. It is the belief of many that the release of Nnamdi Kanu does not constitute any threat to our democracy or social cohesion and peace. Besides, a Nigerian Court has passed a judgement directing that Nnamdi Kanu should be released. Many Nigerians from the 36 States and Abuja have also made appeal for his release. As the President General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo and the Leader of Igbos worldwide, I brought this matter up to a joint meeting of South South, South West, South East and Middle-Belt of Nigeria and they unanimously endorsed that Nnamdi Kanu should be released. I hereby make a passionate appeal to our President Sen. Bola Ahmed Tinubu to assist to procure the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. This will be a highly prized Christmas Gift to the Igbos of Nigeria and all other Nigerians who are committed to a peaceful and secure country. The incarceration of Kanu has created unnecessary excuse for terrorism in a region which has hitherto lived in

peace and pursued their occupation wherever they are with patriotic zeal. We recollect with sadness that this region was a theatre of war. The war claimed the lives of many Nigerians. In addition, businesses and properties were completely destroyed. In 1970 when the war ended, the Igbos returned completely impoverished. I warn that all parties should avoid anything that could once again make Igboland a theatre of war. I further advocate that in addition to the release of Nnamdi Kanu, the Federal government should adopt a non-kinetic approach to the security problem in the South East. I, in collaboration with the Governors and other Leaders in the South East of Nigeria call for amnesty to those who at the moment are expressing all forms of agitation in the South East; and that they will be given opportunity to earn a dignified livelihood. God bless and protect our President Sen. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR. God bless Federal Republic of Nigeria.

News

Customs begin probe of officer demanding bribe at Lagos Airport

A female officer of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has been caught on camera demanding N5,000 bribe from a passenger at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport.

Online reports that the officer had insisted that she would collect N5,000 from the man, who said he would only give her N1,000.

Reacting in a statement on Tuesday, the NCS National Public Relations Officer, Abdullahi Maiwada, said the agency is diligently investigating the incident at Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos, "where an officer was observed soliciting N5,000 bribe from a passenger."

Maiwada said this behaviour "has rightfully raised public concern, and we are committed to ensuring full accountability."

According to him, the preliminary investigation had revealed that the incident transpired at the new terminal, within the departure hall of the Murtala Mohammed International Airport Lagos, adding that it was captured on video by the involved passenger.

"The recording reveals an inappropriate request for N5,000 in exchange for expeditious processing of customs procedures," he confirmed.

The statement read further: "We wish to confirm that the Officer implicated is indeed a member of the Nigeria Customs Service, properly assigned to the Murtala Mohammed International Airport Area Command."

"The NCS strongly condemns this unprofessional conduct and is dedicated to upholding the highest standards of professionalism.

A comprehensive investigation is underway to scrutinize the incident thoroughly, and appropriate actions will be taken.

"Such behavior is entirely inconsistent with the core values of our service, and we are resolute in maintaining a transparent and accountable customs operation.

"We encourage passengers and the public to report any instances of misconduct or corruption promptly. These reports are crucial in upholding the integrity of our service and ensuring that officers adhere to the highest ethical standards."

The PRO assured that the NCS is unwavering in its commitment to fostering a culture of transparency and accountability. "The outcome of the investigation will be communicated to the public at the earliest opportunity," he stated.



Nigerian Customs Service officers.

Illegal Bunkering: NSCDC apprehends suspects, recovers stolen crude in Imo

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has apprehended five suspected oil bunkers and impounded four vehicles in connection with the arrests, in Imo.

The Commandant of the NSCDC in Imo, Matthew Ovy, disclosed this while parading the suspects in Owerri, on Tuesday. About 30,000 litres of Automotive Gas Oil (diesel) were also recovered from the suspects.

Ovy said four suspects and vehicles were arrested during an operation conducted by the Special Intelligence Squad of the corps' Commandant-General, Ahmed Audi, on December 8, following a tip-off. He added that one more suspect and a vehicle were further arrested by the anti-vandal team of the NSCDC in Imo at 4:00 AM on Monday, December 11.

According to him, the suspects were arrested at the Abacheke and Agwa communities of the Ohaji-Egbema and Oguta Local Government Areas of the state re-

spectively.

The commandant further said the command has largely decimated the activities of vandals in the state and would not rest on its oars until they are reduced to the barest minimum.

"In the past, they used to move with trucks but now they use salon cars and smaller vehicles, meaning that we have really decimated them and they are now in hiding.

"With the C-G's combined team and holistic synergy with sister agencies, we'll nip this in the bud", he said. He, however, said that the suspects will be prosecuted after investigations.

He called on Imo residents to report suspected crimes to security agencies to enable them protect the lives and property of Nigerians. One of the suspects, Mr Kingsley Ngwoli of the Ohaji-Egbema LGA, said he bought the petroleum product along Abacheke Road, Oguta, without knowing that it was the product of illegal bunkering.

Oil theft: Navy arrests fake officer, 2 others in Rivers

The Nigerian Navy said its operatives have arrested three suspects, including an imposter who impersonated a naval officer for allegedly issuing forged documents to facilitate illegal oil bunkering activities in Rivers State.

The Commander, NNS Pathfinder, Commodore Desmond Igbo, disclosed this while parading the suspects before newsmen after which they were handed over to the police in Port Harcourt on Monday.

Commodore Igbo said the suspects were facilitating fake oil approval for a vessel 'MV Mother Gabriini' when they were intercepted on November 8, 2023, by the Nigerian Navy Forward Operating Base in Bonny Island.

According to Igbo, the crew presented a fake NNS Pathfinder oil approval, and upon discovery, the Base sprang into action to apprehend the persons involved in the illicit act.

He disclosed that the suspects were trailed and arrested in different locations after a one-week sustained intelligence-led operation.

He said amongst the arrested suspects was an imposter who impersonated naval personnel to conduct illegal escort and security in events within Rivers State, saying two camouflage uniforms and other military gear were recovered from his house.

Commodore Igbo stated, "In pursuance of the Chief of the Naval Staff strategic directive, NNS Pathfinder has sustained its efforts

at curbing crude oil theft and illegal bunkering.

"The sustained effort of the Base has denied the criminal elements freedom of action. As a result, these criminal elements involved in this economic sabotage have resulted in a new tactic of issuing forged documents to facilitate illegal bunkering activities.

"These three suspects were arrested for facilitating a fake oil approval for MV Mother Gabriini. The vessel was arrested on 8th November, 2023 for suspected illegal bunkering activities by FOB Bonny.

"During the preliminary investigation, the crew presented a fake NNS Pathfinder oil approval. Accordingly, the Base sprang into action to apprehend the persons involved in forging the Base oil approval."

Continuing, he said, "The suspects before were trailed and arrested in different locations after a one-week sustained intelligence-led operation.

"It is pertinent to state that one of the suspects, Mr Williams Nweale is also an imposter. He impersonates naval personnel to conduct illegal escort and security in events within Rivers State. Two Camouflage uniforms and other military uniform items were recovered from his house."

Igbo warns oil thieves and other criminals within the State to change their ways, saying the Base will stop at nothing to ensure that they are arrested and prosecuted.

He also advised residents to continue to support the Base by providing useful information about criminal activities around them.

Speaking after receiving the suspects, the Divisional Police Officer of Rumelumini Division, CSP Olufunke Opayemi, assured that he will continue the investigation, saying upon conclusion the suspects will be charged in court.

FIFA condemns attack on Turkish referee

FIFA chief Gianni Infantino on Tuesday, called the attack on a Turkish football referee by the president of top-flight club Ankaragucu "totally unacceptable".

The Turkish football federation suspended all leagues indefinitely after referee Halil Umut Melcer was punched by Ankaragucu

president Faruk Koca after Monday's 1-1 draw with Caykur Rizespor.

Infantino condemned the attack in a statement on social media.

"There is absolutely no place for violence in football, on or off the field.

"Events following the Turkish Super Lig match between MKE Ankaragucu and Caykur Rizespor are totally unacceptable and have no place in our sport or society.

"Without match officials, there is no football.

"Referees, players, fans, and staff have to be safe and secure to enjoy the game, and I call on the relevant authorities to ensure that this is strictly implemented and respected at all levels," Infantino said.



Infantino, FIFA President

Four suspected criminals arrested, pistol recovered in Enugu

Enugu State Police Command has said, in the last two weeks, it arrested four suspected criminals and recovered locally fabricated arms and ammunition. The command also revealed that it recovered ATM cards used by criminals to defraud bank customers whose genuine cards must have been swapped.

The spokesperson of the command, DSP Daniel Ndukwe, said operatives foiled a robbery attempt in the state capital on December 7, when they arrested a 29-year-old male suspect and recovered one locally made pistol, while his accomplices fled the scene. He said on November 26, operatives arrested a 26-year-old male, also in the state capital, and recovered a locally fabricated double-barreled pistol.

In a related development, operatives on routine stop-and-search duty, along the Enugu-Onitsha expressway, arrested a 22-year-old male, who had two live cartridges on him.

Ndukwe said further that operatives, in conjunction with security guards at a commercial bank,

arrested a 26-year-old male in the state capital on December 6, for swapping the ATM cards of bank customers.

"Several ATM cards bearing different names were recovered from him. He confessed he had engaged in ATM swapping for some time. His gang members, however, escaped."

He added that Commissioner of Police in Enugu State, Kanayo Uzuegbu, reaffirmed commitment of the police to maintain security, law and order, especially during Yuletide.

"The commissioner enjoins citizens to remain law-abiding, be vigilant, and continue to support the police with information to rid the state of criminals," Ndukwe said.

Read
&
Advertise
in
News Echo

The Tech Column

BIOMETRIC TECHNOLOGY IN EVERYDAY LIFE: STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN INNOVATION AND PRIVACY

By Ulysses C. Ebizie & Dr Mrs Ijeoma Emeagi (Nee Agwamba) (FNCS)

These days, biometric technology has become a seamless part of our everyday existence, changing the way we interact with the digital world. These technological advances, which range from the widely used fingerprint and face recognition systems to the complex world of voice verification, present both enormous hurdles and unmatched convenience. This paper investigates the growing significance of biometric technology, exploring its uses, praising its advantages, and critically analyzing the issues surrounding its widespread incorporation.

Facial recognition technology is proof of the amazing progress that has been made in the field of identifying technology. This biometric modality is widely accepted and adopted because it makes it simple for people to verify their identification with a quick glimpse, which is useful for both protecting equipment and accessing sensitive locations.

Similar to this, fingerprint scanning has developed into one of the mainstays of security for personal devices. Because of its correctness and dependability, it has established itself as a reliable and effective way to protect sensitive data, make payments, and secure cellphones, simplifying and strengthening day-to-day interactions with technology.

A relatively new but quickly expanding aspect of biometric technology is voice authentication, which adds a unique security layer. This modality, which presents a strong barrier to illegal access, improves safe access to apps and services by utilizing the uniqueness of each individual's voiceprint.

Benefits of Biometric Technology

There are numerous intrinsic benefits to biometric technology. The most important of these is the increased security it provides. By their very nature, biometric authentication techniques are safer than password-based systems and greatly reduce the possibility of unwanted access.

Biometric authentication is efficient and convenient, providing a seamless user experience. The need to memorize complicated passwords disappears when using touch, glance, or voice commands to unlock devices, make payments, or get access to secure areas.

Furthermore, there has been a noticeable decline in fraud as a result of the biometrics integration. The difficulty of reproducing biometric data serves as a strong barrier against identity theft and unauthorized access in financial transactions and identity verification.

But there are also practical and ethical issues with this technological advancement. The possibility of privacy violation is the most pressing of these worries. Sensitive biometric data collection and storage raises important concerns about usage, sharing policies, and security measures against unwanted access.

The issue of security vulnerabilities is also quite important. Although biometric technology is generally safe, because biometric identifiers are irreversible, there is always a risk of data breaches and manipulations. For this reason, strict cybersecurity measures are necessary.

The terrain is made more complex by ethical considerations. The use of biometrics in surveillance systems in public areas has sparked discussions over tracking, consent, and the misuse of biometric data. It becomes imperative to strike a balance between the benefits of technology advancement and the protection

of individual rights.

Privacy Concerns

Because biometric technology collects and uses personal data, there are a number of privacy problems related to it. Biometric data presents a persistent risk once compromised, unlike passwords that are changeable. Critics contend that the increasing use of face recognition technology, in particular, casts doubt on the concept of privacy in public areas by raising the possibility of ongoing surveillance. The use of facial recognition technology by public and private organizations has drawn criticism for perhaps violating people's rights to privacy and freedom of movement.

Furthermore, worries regarding data sovereignty and possible exploitation are raised by the sharing of biometric data across borders and among different entities. In a world when corporations operate across borders and are internationally interconnected, creating a comprehensive framework that protects personal privacy rights while promoting technological innovation is a difficult task.

Legislators and IT developers need to work together to create strong legal frameworks and ethical standards for the gathering, storing, and use of biometric data in order to allay these worries. Clear procedures outlining the processing, storage, and sharing of biometric data can foster public confidence and allay privacy concerns.

Security Vulnerabilities and Mitigations

Despite being praised for its security features, biometric technology is not immune to cyberattacks. If security flaws are taken advantage of, they may allow for illegal access or improper use of biometric information. Concerns include everything from the possibility of centralized database hacking to the use of advanced methods, like deepfake assaults, to manipulate biometric systems.

It is essential that cybersecurity measures continue to evolve in order to address these vulnerabilities. Strong encryption techniques, safe storage practices, and frequent security audits can all greatly improve biometric systems' resistance to cyberattacks. Large-scale data breaches can also be reduced by the creation of decentralized biometric authentication systems, in which biometric data is kept locally on devices rather than in a centralized database.

Furthermore, through spotting and stopping unusual patterns or attempted breaches, the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms into biometric systems can strengthen security. The continual endeavor to remain ahead of changing cyber threats necessitates the implementation of both adaptive security solutions and continuous monitoring.

Ethical Considerations in Biometrics

Beyond privacy and security issues, biometric technology raises greater ethical issues with regard to societal ramifications. Concerns concerning the fair and appropriate use of biometric technology are raised by their growing prevalence.

The possibility of bias in biometric systems, especially in facial recognition technologies, is an important ethical problem. Research has demonstrated that racial and gender bias is present in several face recognition algorithms, which causes increased error rates for



particular demographic groups. When implementing biometric technologies in law enforcement, recruiting procedures, or other crucial sectors, this raises worries about discriminatory behaviors and the reinforcing of preexisting societal biases.

Diversity and inclusion must be given top priority in the development and testing of biometric algorithms in order to overcome these problems. The correct application of biometric technology should be guided by ethical frameworks to make sure that it doesn't unintentionally reinforce or worsen social injustices.

Furthermore, a key component of the moral application of biometrics is consent. People ought to be able to decide for themselves how their biometric information is gathered, kept, and utilized. Maintaining individual rights and choices requires both education on the implications of biometric technologies and clear and informed consent methods.

Finding Harmony in Innovation and Privacy

Finally, the integration of biometric technologies into daily life is a trend that is here to stay. Its advantages in terms of ease and security are indisputable. However, a precise balance needs to be kept in order to completely reap these benefits. The appropriate development and implementation of biometric technology should be guided by strong legislation, clear policies, and a continuous ethical dialogue to ensure that its widespread use is consistent with societal values and upholds the rights of individuals to privacy.

To fully utilize biometric technology in our daily lives, we will need to develop extensive regulatory frameworks and maintain an unflinching commitment to ethical norms as we traverse this ever-changing landscape. Policymakers, technology developers, and the general public must work together to create a future where the advantages of biometrics are realized while upholding people's fundamental rights and dignity. This entails striking a balance between innovation and privacy. This cooperative approach will be crucial in creating a society where advancements in technology are equated with moral responsibility and the welfare of the community, despite constantly changing problems.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The article expertly navigates the impact of biometric technology, emphasizing the delicate balance between innovation and privacy. It calls for a collaborative approach, urging legislators and technology developers to establish robust legal frameworks and ethical standards. The article highlights the urgency of addressing biases in biometric systems and emphasizes the need for continuous dialogue to ensure technological progress aligns with societal values. Moving forward, proactive measures, transparent policies, and a commitment to ethical norms will be crucial to create a future where the benefits of biometrics are realized while upholding individual rights and dignity.

SPORTS



Osimhen breaks 24-yr jinx, claims CAF POTY award ... Hails Amunike after winning CAF player of the year award

Super Eagles and Napoli striker Victor Osimhen as well as Super Falcons forward Asisat Oshoala won big at the 2023 CAF Awards, sweeping the men and women's player of the year awards for Nigeria at the Palais des Congrès in Marrakech, Morocco on Monday.

It's the first time one country will produce winners of both awards.

Osimhen was named the winner of the CAF Player of The Year Award, becoming the first Nigerian to win the award since Nwankwo Kanu in 1999, just as Oshoala claimed a record-extending sixth Women's Player of The Year as the most successful women's player in Africa.

Osimhen and Oshoala's triumphs capped a brilliant night for Nigeria after Super Falcons goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie won the women's Goalkeeper of The Year, while the Falcons were also named the Women's Team of The Year.

The only upset for Nigeria on the night was Super Falcons Deborah Abiodun losing the Women's Young Player of The Year award to Morocco and Lille defender Nesryne El Chad. Metz and Sengela's Lamine

Camara won the men's category.

The honours were decided based on votes by media representatives, coaches and captains of national teams.

After reclaiming the CAF Women's Champions League for their second title in the three years of the competition, Mamelodi Sundowns were named the Women's Club of The Year, while Al Ahly also won the men's category as a reward for winning a record-extending 11th CAF Champions League title in June.

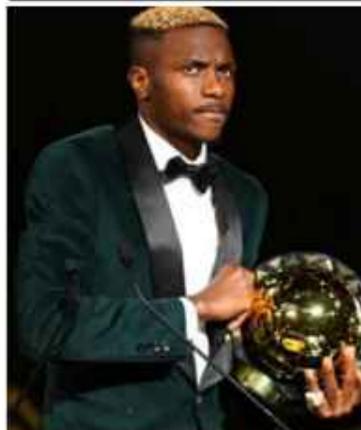
Meanwhile, the 2023 Africa Men's Player of the Year, Victor Osimhen, has hailed Nigerian legend, Emmanuel Amunike, who tutored him as a U-17 player and paved the way for his illustrious career.

Osimhen thanked Amunike, his mentor, for playing a pivotal role in shaping his career. He said, "Good evening ladies and gentlemen. First of all, I want to say thank you God for everything.

Special thanks goes to Emmanuel Amunike. Without him, I don't think I would be standing in front of you guys holding one of the most prestigious awards in world football. It's a dream come true for me."



Osimhen with Oshoala (left) and Nnadozie (right).



Osimhen



Amunike

... As Tinubu, Obi, lauds Osimhen, Oshoala, others on African Players award

President Bola Tinubu has congratulated Nigeria's Super Eagles forward, Victor Osimhen, on winning the CAF 2023 Men's Player of the Year award.

Tinubu also celebrated the remarkable achievements of Asisat Oshoala of Nigeria's Super Falcons, who clinched the 2023 CAF Women's Player of The Year for the sixth time, and Chiamaka Nnadozie, who was awarded the Woman Goalkeeper of the Year, as well as the Super Falcons for emerging the Women's National Team of the Year.

This commendation was contained in a statement signed by the Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Ajuri Ngelale on Tuesday. He commended the players for their outstanding performances on both national and international stages, describing them as sources of pride to the nation and an inspiration for aspiring footballers across the continent.

He stated, "Watching the great ambassadors of Nigeria stand atop the podium as the African Footballers of the Year, in the men and women categories, on Monday night in Marrakesh, Morocco, has strengthened our belief that with hard work, perseverance, and the help of God, everything this nation needs for greatness is within us and available to us. "I commend Victor and Asisat for not forgetting their roots and days of humble beginnings in the game they love so much and for acknowledging the role of indigenous coaches in shaping their careers.

"I join all Nigerian fans in praying that this well-deserved honour will be

the beginning of a continued journey filled with success, triumphs, and the fulfillment of all your footballing dreams."

Also, the Labour Party presidential candidate, Peter Obi, has congratulated Victor Osimhen and Asisat Oshoala on their emergence as the 2023 African Players of the Year, in the men and women categories respectively. The former Anambra State Governor also celebrated Chiamaka Nnadozie who bagged the 2023 Confederation of African Football Women's Goalkeeper, and the Nigerian Female football team.

In a series of tweets on his X handle on Tuesday, Obi wrote, "I like to join all other sports lovers in the country to sincerely congratulate the Nigeria duo of Victor Osimhen and Asisat Oshoala for emerging African Players of the Year, in the men and women categories respectively this year.

"I also celebrate Nadozie Chiamaka who won the 2023 CAF Women's Goalkeeper of the Year award and our Nigerian female football team, Super Falcons, who won the 2023 CAF award for the National Team of the Year. "We are all proud of their awards, which bear witness to their innate talents, passions for growth, and determination for success. "My sincere desire is that every Nigerian youth will have the needed enablement to explore and develop their talents, and skills and live to fulfill their dreams, and by so doing, help to contribute to the development of our nation."

Fans congratulate Falcons for Team of the Year award

Nigerian fans have taken to social media to praise the Super Falcons after they were named the Women's Team of the Year at the CAF 2023 Awards off the back of an impressive showing at the Women's World Cup on Monday.

Nigeria's brave ladies bowed out of the competition in the round of 16 after losing to England on penalties after normal and extra time ended barren. The Super Falcons ended their Mundial campaign without losing any match in regulation time and they were the only undefeated African national. They did not lose a match in their three group B games as they drew Olympic champions Canada, shock co-hosts Australia, and settled for a point against the Republic of Ireland.

After they were announced winners, Nigerians took to social media platform X to praise the Falcons.

Akpati Nshiegbe is of the opinion that the Falcons were clear winners and unmatched by other African teams. "There is actually no match. Your World Cup display was what no African country can match easily," Nshiegbe wrote.

Merrick Olu believed the honour was well deserved following their achievements in the time under review. Another Nigerian Mark Umah echoed his sentiments writ-

ing, "Well deserved, unbeaten at the World Cup."

Serene Smart congratulated the players, "Congratulations to our great women." More fans congratulated the Falcons with @Official_Savior writing, "Congratulations, the ladies making us proud." Agatha Atagher also wrote, "Congratulations, girls. Always rooting for you all."

Another fan, Babawale Aduroja stated, "Congratulations Super Falcons of Nigeria are the Team of the Year." Another fan with the username, @odyniyi was disappointed that NFF President Musa Gusau picked up the award for the Falcons instead of allowing one of the players present to do so.

"But why did the Chairman rob the ladies the privilege to receive their hard earn award. Onome, Nnadozie, Oshoala, Abiodun were present for GOD sake. Despite all the shege NFF put them through."



Super Falcons

My father didn't want me to play football

- Nnadozie

Winner of the 2023 CAF Women's Goalkeeper of The Year award Chiamaka Nnadozie revealed her father didn't support her football career when she started, PUNCH Sports Extra reports. Nnadozie said this on the podium after receiving her award at the ceremony in Marrakech, Morocco.

The Paris FC goalkeeper won ahead of Morocco's Khadija Er-Rmichi and South Africa's Andile Dlamini. "I just want to use this great opportunity to say a very great thank you to the organisers and also for remembering the female goalkeeper this year," she said. "I also want to say a very big thank you to the Nigerian football president for everything he has done in the Nigerian league and female football. I am a product of Nigerian female football.

"Also, thank you to my club, Paris FC for all the encouragement and thanks to everyone who voted for me and who nominated me.

"And to all the young girls who grew up in Africa, dreaming of becoming footballers one day—believe me, dreams do come true.

"My Dad never wanted me to play, but I am sure he is going to see this tonight and he is going to be happy. "Keep dreaming; keep working hard. Thank you."

Nnadozie, however, missed out on the CAF Women's XI to South Africa's Andile Dlamini.

The 23-year-old was instrumental to Nigeria's spirited run at the last FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, helping the Super Falcons reach the round of 16 before they were knocked out by England on penalties. At club level, she was also prolific between the sticks for Paris FC, guiding them to the group stages of the Women's Champions League with her penalty shootout saves. She began her career at Rivers Angels in Nigeria before joining the French club in 2020.



Nnadozie

NAFDAC busts 240 shops manufacturing fake wines, drugs in Aba market

Pg.7

Otti signs GADA bill into law

Pg.3

OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT TINUBU

By Edwin Clark

Urgent need to resolve Ondo political impasse. Dear Mr. President, My letter may come to you as a surprise because I am not from the South-West geopolitical zone, Ondo State in particular. But as a senior citizen of our dear country, I sincerely believe that we have a duty to give you support and advice in all ramifications, particularly in solving the insecurity issues facing the country, and anything that can escalate it, in all parts, especially in the North-West. Every effort, should, therefore, be made, in this regard, to avert any crisis in any part of the country.

The on-going impasse in Ondo State can be likened to what happened when our dear late President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, was very ill, and did not transmit a letter to the National Assembly in accordance with Section 145 of the 1999 Constitution, to enable the then Vice President, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to act as president. I wish to recall that during the time, the nation was almost grinding to a halt because there was no one administratively in charge of the affairs of the country. Various groups such as the Save Nigeria Group, led by Pastor Tunde Bakare and Nobel Laureate Prof. Wole Soyinka, socio-cultural organisations, ethnic organisations including some northern group, the South-Western group led by Bishop Emmanuel Gbonigi, the Ohanaeze Ndi-Igbo, etc, rose up to protest in Lagos and Abuja. It was as though the nation was rudderless. It was at this stage that former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, rose up to the occasion when he summoned a meeting of some persons comprising late President Shehu Shagari, late Interim Head of State, Ernest Shonekan, late Dr. Alex Ekwueme, one time Vice President of the country, three former Chief Justices of Nigeria namely Alfa Belgore, Mohammed Uwais and Idris Legbo Kutigi. Others included Lt. Gen. T. Y. Danjuma, rtd, late Mallam Adamu Ciroma, late Alhaji Ahmed Joda, late Chief Solomon Lar and myself. Prof. Jerry Gana and Senator Jonathan Zwingina served as Secretaries. The meeting was held at the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja. This group became known as the Eminent persons Group. At the meeting, Justice Alfa Belgore came up with the idea of Doctrine of Necessity in order to solve the constitutional logjam the nation was facing. He explained to the group what the doctrine means, and we whole heartedly accepted it as the only panacea to the problem. General Yakubu Gowon then delegated a committee of 5 persons led by late President Shehu Shagari because he had an international assignment to attend to outside the country. The delegation submitted the letter containing the suggestion to the NASS and



Tinubu

the then Vice President. The Senate under the leadership of David Mark, as Senate President acted on the suggestion of the eminent persons group and declared Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, Acting President under the Doctrine of Necessity on 9th February, 2010. The House of Representatives followed suit by also adopting the Doctrine of Necessity. On 10th February, 2010, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was declared Acting President. At this time, our dear President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was still at Saudi Arabia receiving medical treatment. On 24th February, 2010, President Yar'Adua was brought back to the country under the cover of darkness, still very ill, and taken to the Villa, unknown to the Acting President. However, while President Yar'Adua was at the Villa "recuperating", Dr. Jonathan continued to act as the President of the country. Unfortunately, President Yar'Adua could not make it. He died on 5th May, 2010. On 6th May, 2010, Dr. Jonathan was sworn in as President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria, in accordance with constitutional provisions.

Today, we are again faced with a Constitutional debacle. First of all, I wish to thank Mr. President for your intervention into the Ondo State crisis, both as President of the country and as leader of your political party, the APC, in the manner you handled the matter. Your Excellency attempted to be fair and just to all parties concerned, viz, the Legislature, the executive and the entire Ondo people, when at the end of the marathon meeting you held with them, and where every body bared their mind, you directed that: All parties should work together; That the ailing Governor of the State, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu should remain in office, while the Deputy

Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, retaining his position, should preside over the executive; That status quo should remain and no member of the Executive should be sacked. That the Deputy Governor should withdraw his case against the Speaker and the members of the State House of Assembly; That the Legislative arm should also abandon their decision to impeach the Deputy Governor, and should also withdraw all actions they previously took to counter the Deputy Governor's action in the State capital Akure. However, what is confusing to some of us, is how the Speaker of the House of Assembly told his members that the Deputy Governor is to sign an unwritten resignation letter, without stating what should give rise or what gave rise to that action. And whether the Speaker has the powers to direct such resignation.

Mr. President I think there is need to act fast because we have seen that despite your good intentions, the crisis is brewing much tension rather than abating. There is a growing agitation for and against each of the parties. I listened to the argument of Barrister Kayode Ajulo, SAN, saying that whatever action that took place at the Villa, was unconstitutional and that there was enough provision in the Constitution to resolve the crisis. He went further to talk about the inability of Governor Rotimi Akeredolu, whom he described as his friend, to perform his duties as Governor of the State whilst recuperating in his personal house in Ibadan, Oyo State. He went further to state that the signature on the memo allegedly sent to Governor Akeredolu was forged, as he said he is very conversant with the Governor's signature. He in fact suggested that the signature should be subjected to a forensic examination. I also read at Page 6 of Saturday 6th December, 2023, Vanguard Newspaper, a report written by the Ondo State Commissioner for Energy and Mineral Resources to the Deputy Governor of the State titled: "Forgery of Mr. Governor's Signature on official document", to the Deputy Governor, stating that the Governor Akeredolu's signature on the document is forged. He said: "I write to bring to your attention a critical matter that requires immediate action. It has been confirmed that the signature of Mr. Governor on a certain document has been forged.

"The irregularities in the signature were first observed when a file from my ministry was returned through the office of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG). This is the only file that has been returned so far out of the five files that were sent for Mr. Governor's approval about two months ago." But the Ondo State Commissioner of

Information and Orientation, Mrs. Bamidele Ademola-Olateju, featuring on the Arise television, debunked Barr. Kayode Ajulo, SAN's claims. She said the Governor's signature was not forged. She said "Nobody forges the signature of Mr. Governor. As of today, we have to work for the progress of the state. Those mischief makers should desist from doing so. "The State Attorney General, Mr. Charles Titiloye, speaking in the Punch Newspaper of 5th December, 2023, also stated that the Governor's signature was not forged, describing the "claims as baseless".

Like I stated earlier, this matter is building up tension. It is, therefore, my opinion that Mr. President as leader of his ruling APC political party, may want to amend his earlier terms of settlement. And since there is no constitutional provision for such quagmire, because under Section 5 (2) of the Constitution, the State Governments are autonomous and are not subsidiaries of the central government. They are fully in charge of their State. It is only National Assembly that is empowered to do so under Chapter 1, Part 2, Section 4 Legislative Power which states that: The National Assembly shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Federation or any part thereof with respect to any matter included in the Exclusive Legislative List set out in Part 1 of the Second Schedule to this Constitution. The power of the National Assembly to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Federation with respect to any matter included in the Exclusive List shall, save as otherwise provided in this Constitution, be to the exclusion of the Houses of Assembly.

Let me add that beyond any constitutional provision and your leadership of your political party, the APC, it is Your Excellency's moral obligation as father of the country to use your good office to intervene and resolve all manner of political crisis around the country. The action of the Ondo State House of Assembly by going to court to prevent the National Assembly from interfering in the matters of the State House of Assembly is also escalating the issues. Every facet of Ondo State is currently sharply divided; the executive and legislative arms all have people either supporting the Governor or the Deputy Governor. Finally, Mr. President, I wish to state that we have enough insecurity in the country, which has largely stretched our security forces. This is why you must urgently and firmly act in the current situation in Ondo State, under a doctrine of necessity. And if I may add, also in Rivers State, for which I will be addressing a separate letter to you in the next few days. I will continue to pray for your well being and success.