

Pipeline Surveillance:
Ex-militant group asks
FG to review OML 30,
OML 34 contracts ⇒PG 6

News Desk

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Balance Reportage for Nation Building

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2023: 'We don't want anyone pulling President's ears,' PDP, APC tackle Obasanjo ⇒PG 4

- You'll attend council of state meeting with Atiku as president
—Dino Melaye mocks Obasanjo
- Obasanjo has always wanted president from South-East
—Omokri



L-R: President Muhammadu Buhari; President of the Senate, Sen Ahmed Lawan and Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila during the Signing of the 2023 Budget into Law by Buhari at the State House, Abuja...on Tuesday.

NIS recue
6 human
trafficking
victims in
Jigawa ⇒PG 7

Morally squalid
Obasanjo attacks
leaders out of
frustration –
Garba Shehu ⇒PG 3

Jonathan,
Douglas, Olu
of Warri make
'Most Reputable
Africans' list ⇒PG 7

Nigeria's rising debt: The way forward ⇒PG 9



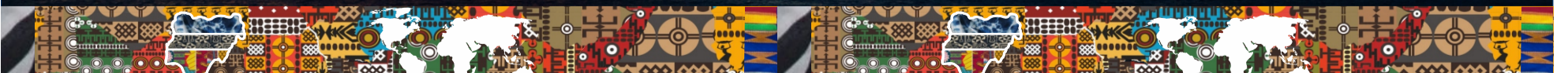
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Morally squalid Obasanjo attacks leaders out of frustration – Garba Shehu



(L-R) Olusegun Obasanjo and Garba Shehu

Thanks for seeking our reaction. Former President Obasanjo is so well known to all that no one needs to describe who he is.

But, four things we will like to say: One is that he will not stop attacking President Muhammadu Buhari because the former President won't stop being jealous of anyone who beats him to a new record in the nation's development process.

President Buhari is ahead of Chief Obasanjo in all fields of national development and to do that is cardinal sin to Obasanjo whose hallucinations tell him that he is the best ever to lead Nigeria and there will never be another one better than him.

President Buhari just completed the world class edifice that is the Second Niger Bridge after three decades of failed promises. It is now awaiting commissioning.

Obasanjo laid the sod for the bridge in his first term as elected President and work never started.

When he sought re-election for his second term in office, he returned to the site to turn the sod for the bridge the second time. When the Obi of Onitsha, forthright and scholarly, reminded him that he had done

this in the past, Obasanjo told the foremost Southeast traditional ruler that he was a liar, in the full presence of the Chiefs and Oracles in his palace.

Obasanjo lied to the Southeast to get their votes. President Buhari didn't get their votes but built the bridge because he believed it is the right thing to do.

Two, President Buhari had been bagging awards and encomiums for trying to do that which the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria says a leader should do: serve one, or a maximum of two terms and go.

President Buhari has been stating and restating that he will supervise a better election than the one that brought him to office and to leave as and when due.

Having tried tenure elongation and failed, Obasanjo's fictitious mind must be telling him that he is the one under attack.

But he is not on President Buhari's radar because experience has shown, especially lately in West Africa where there have been at least three successful coups and many other failed attempts, that third term or tenure elongation is a recipe for political instability.

Furthermore, the totality of

African leaders appointed President Buhari the Anti-Corruption Champion of the continent.

You can't be an anti-corruption champion if "you meddled and bent the rules," carrying the putrid responsibility of what happened to national assets in the name of privatization as documented by the Nigerian Senate in 2011.

As an insight, the Aluminum Smelter Company of Nigeria, ALSCON, which was set up with \$3.2 billion, was sold to a Russian firm, Russal, for a paltry \$130million. Delta Steel, which was set up in 2005, at a cost of \$1.5billion, was sold to Global Infrastructure for just \$30million.

ALSCON got back \$120million for the dredging of the Imo River, which was never carried out.

Three, which is linked to the one above is the growing profile of President Buhari as the Champion of Democracy not only at home and in the West African subregion but the African continent as whole.

As President, Obasanjo destabilized internal democracy by orchestrating impeachment after impeachment of governors

who were not compliant with his highly imperial administration.

As we said sometime back, Mr. Obasanjo's tenure, 1999-2007, represented the dark days of Nigeria's democracy due to a slew of assaults on the constitution.

The former president deployed federal machinery to remove governors Joshua Dariye, Rashidi Ladoja, Peter Obi, Chris Ngige and Ayo Fayose from office.

They were the then governors of Plateau, Oyo, Anambra, Anambra and Ekiti, respectively, unjustly removed using the police and secret service under his control.

Under him, a five-man legislature met at 6:00 am and "impeached" Governor Dariye in Plateau; 18 members out of 32 removed Governor Ladoja of Oyo from office; in Anambra, APGA's Governor Obi was equally impeached at 5:00 a.m. by members who did not meet the two-thirds required by the constitution.

Lawmaking powers of the Rivers State legislature were transferred to the federal parliament to punish Governor Amaechi for shifting his political alliance.

Moreover, he damned the Supreme Court and unlawfully

held back Lagos State revenues due from federal sources on account of his pettiness against Governor Bola Tinubu.

On the other hand, in Washington a few weeks ago, the US President Joe Biden at a meeting with African Heads of States and Government described President Buhari as a champion of democracy and role model for the leaders of African states.

Clearly, Obasanjo has become even more jealous by adopting a vengeful attitude.

Four, to say that "frying pan to fire" is the situation in Nigeria at this time should be read to mean a personal experience to him and we know what that means.

"Hell" for Obasanjo is when a President, any President that comes after him refuses to be his own puppet, to do as he wishes on all matters and at all times.

He then keeps attacking out of frustration. Obasanjo's vengeful attitude towards President Buhari is the height of selfishness and little short of moral squalor.

Garba Shehu is the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media & Publicity

2023: 'We don't want anyone pulling President's ears,' PDP, APC tackle Obasanjo

- You'll attend council of state meeting with Atiku as president —Dino Melaye mocks Obasanjo
- Obasanjo has always wanted president from South-East —Omokri

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) have countered the views of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, following his endorsement of the Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate, Peter Obi, in the forthcoming election.

This comes hours after Obasanjo, on New Year's Day, in a six-page open letter addressed to the Nigerian youth in particular, described Obi as his mentee, saying the former Anambra State governor has an edge in the February 25 election.

"One other important point to make about Peter is that he is a needle with thread attached to it from North and South and he may not get lost," the former president wrote.

"In other words, he has people who can pull his ears, if and when necessary. He has a young and able running mate with a clean track record of achievement both in public and private life."

However, a member of the Strategic Communications Directorate of the PDP Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), Anthony Ehilebo; and a spokesman for the Tinubu/Shettima PCC, Kehinde Bamgbetan criticised the endorsement on Monday when they appeared on Channels Television's Sunrise Daily.

"I have a very strong opposition to anybody who would seem to want to control the president of Nigeria either by a thread or a needle

or by pulling his ears," Ehilebo said. "We want an independent president. We want a president that can take decisions and own his time in government.

"It reminds us of what happened prior to 2015 when he also wrote a letter to instigate Nigerians to change Jonathan because he felt he was no longer in control of Jonathan."

The PDP chieftain likened Obasanjo's message to the 18-page letter he wrote in 2013 and addressed to then President Goodluck Jonathan, in which he told his successor to "forget about 2015."

"We remember that he wrote these letters against then President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and he's now complaining seven and a half years later that we are going from frying pan to fire.

"I would suggest that somebody that put us in a frying pan will sit this one out and allow the Nigerians to make a choice, instead of foisting a subjective opinion on Nigerians," he said.

In a similar vein, Bamgbetan argued that any "self-respecting" presidential candidate in Obi's shoes would not be proud to continue campaigning after Obasanjo's comments.

"For somebody to tell you that you are a needle who must have a thread, you are somebody who he will be pulling your ears, those are very deprecating (words) for somebody to put a president in place.

"Much of what he said on that

occasion, if you look at it very well, they don't even give Mr Peter Obi any modicum of respect. The manner in which he described Mr Peter Obi, if we were in his shoes, would not be something we would take to the bank. We don't even think that was fair to the man," he said.

Responding to the criticisms, the Chief Spokesperson, LP PCC, Yunusa Tanko stated that as a former president, Obasanjo is equipped to know and assess "virtually everybody" he has had dealings with.

"Even at a distance, he can easily measure you with your capacity and your strength and what you have done over the years. He looked at the track record of Obi in Anambra State in a micro situation. "In terms of security, he scored. In terms of infrastructure, he scored high. In terms of accountability, he scored high. In terms of compassion to the people, he scored high – from his own assessment as a former leader which he used as a yardstick," he said.

The Spokesperson and Director, Public Affairs of the Atiku Abubakar/Ifeanyi Okowa Presidential Campaign, Senator Dino Melaye, Monday reacted to the endorsement of the Presidential candidate of the Labour party, LP, Peter Obi, by former President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Dino in a statement he made public on his Twitter handle, mocked the former president's endorsement of Obi. He noted that Obasanjo will attend council

of state meeting with Atiku as president.

But reacting today, Dino opined: "God will keep Obasanjo alive, and he will attend council of state meetings with Atiku Abubakar as President and Commander In Chief Of The Armed Forces Of The Federal Republic Of Nigeria. I also want to assure him that his honorarium will be paid".

Reno Omokri, a former aide to ex-President Goodluck Jonathan and staunch supporter of the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, Atiku Abubakar, has said that former President Olusegun Obasanjo has always wanted a president from the South-East.

Weighing in on the former president's endorsement of the Labour Party presidential candidate, Peter Obi as his choice candidate for president, Omokri on Sunday night, took to his Twitter page to express his opinion on the matter.

Omokri, who described Obasanjo as a good hearted man, said the former president wants a southeastern president to heal the wounds from the civil war of 1967 to 1970.

Omokri tweeted, "Obasanjo is a good hearted man. He has always wanted a president from SE or close to SE as a way to heal the civil war wounds. In 2007, he wanted Peter Odili, but Yar'adua insisted on Governor Jonathan as VP."

He however added, "What OBJ did won't affect the election!"

Corruption: You are failing as moral authority – Femi Adesina hits back at Kukah

The Special Adviser, Media and Publicity to President Muhammadu Buhari, Femi Adesina has reacted to the statement credited to the Bishop of Kaduna diocese, Hassan Kukah. Kukah had in his Christmas message accused Buhari's administration of nepotism, noting that Buhari has failed in fulfilling his campaign promises to Nigerians

He said the broken promises of Buhari are leaving Nigerians more vulnerable, adding that the corruption he promised to fight has become a leviathan and sadly, a consequence of a government marked by nepotism.

But reacting to the above statement in his article titled: 'Kukah don't cook me nonsense', the presidential spokesperson averred that if Kukah was succeeding in his duty as a priest, then his adherents should be less prone to corruption, and the leviathan should have been slain, or badly wounded.

Expatriating, Mr Femi said if "corruption is still the monster the Bishop claims it is, then he, too, is failing as a moral authority and guide". Below is his words: "Again, he alleged that corruption was not fought, and had become a leviathan. Yes, when corruption creeps under the robes and cassocks of even priests, they would never see it being fought. Just a fortnight ago, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Abdulrasheed Bawa, was guest at the weekly State House press briefing.

"Facts he unveiled were enough to show the yeoman's work being done. But people like Bishop Kukah listen only to themselves, and have no time for alternative reality. So, when the monster is being assailed and being badly wounded, all they still see is the leviathan.

"And by the way, if corruption is rife in a country, is it necessarily just the fault of a President? No. It is the fault of everyone, including the people, the institutions, the family, religious leaders, political leaders, everyone.

"If the Bishop was succeeding in his duty as a priest, then his adherents should be less prone to corruption, and the leviathan should have been slain, or badly wounded. So, if corruption is still the monster the Bishop claims it is, then he, too, is failing as a moral authority and guide."

Jonathan, Douglas, Olu of Warri make 'Most Reputable Africans' list

Former President Goodluck Jonathan, Dr Jennifer Douglas, Managing Partner, Miyetti Law Firm, Ogiame Atuwate, the Olu of Warri and other Nigerians have been named among the 100 Most Reputable Africans.

The 2023 'roll of honour' was released on Monday by Reputation Poll International (RPI), organisers of the annual event on its website.

The ranking released in alphabetical order, featured men and women drawn from diverse sectors across the continent including; leadership, entertainment, advocacy, education and business.

Other Nigerians who made the list include Dauda Lawal, Executive Vice Chairman/CEO of Credent Capital and Advisory, Human Rights activist Aisha Yesufu, Arunma Oteh and Akinremi Bolaji, Director, Legal and Consular, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Another set of listed Nigerians also include Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations, Wally Adeyemo, Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of the Treasury and Mr Cosmas Maduka, Chairman of the Coscharis Group.

Pastor William Kumuyi, Bishop David Oyedepo, Pastor Paul Eneche and Pastor Enoch Adeboye, are four Nigerian clerics who made the list.

According to the organisers, the selection criteria are integrity, visibility and impact.

"The above luminaries are joined by other great Africans who are celebrated for their social impact and social entrepreneurship that are transforming businesses in Africa and affecting lives positively without controversy.

"On Governance and Policy: Kenya's

President, Mr Wiliam K. Ruto, Lazarus Chakwera, President of Malawi and Ivory Coast Senator, Chantal Moussokoura Fanny among others were listed.

"On Business: Egypt's Naguib Onsi Sawiris chairman of Weather Investments's parent company, Ghana's Sir Samuel Esson Jonah Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast, and Nigeria's Dr Dauda Lawal, Executive Vice Chairman and CEO of Credent Capital and Advisory.

"On Human Rights Advocacy, Martha K. Koome, Chief Justice of Kenya, and Nigeria's Aisha Yesufu are featured.

"On Leadership: Ethiopia's President Sahle Work-Zedwe, Nigeria's Dr Paul Eneche, and Ghana's Afua Kyei (the Chief Financial Officer at Bank of England, where she leads the Finance Directorate) are also featured," the organisers said.



Newly decorated Corps Marshal, Federal Road Safety Corps, Dauda Ali Biu (left) and Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustapha in Abuja...on Tuesday.

2023: Bishop calls on Nigerians to be truthful, diligent

The Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Oyo, Most Rev. Emmanuel Badejo, has called on Nigerians to be truthful and diligent in 2023. Badejo made the call on Monday in his new year message titled 'Be Truthful and Diligent: God Will Save Nigeria'.

The Catholic Bishop said the New Year in view of what the previous year had been, called ft Nigerians to be diligent and have a change of heart.

"If we do not change our ways, then nothing is new in the year, we simply cannot continue with a country where crime is tolerated or even rewarded and valour and virtue are punished.

"How does one explain the platitude of the authorities in the face of the

ongoing mayhem and bloodshed in Kaduna and Zamfara and elsewhere in the country?

"How does anyone justify the fact that arrested suspects of the St. Francis Catholic Church Owo in Ondo State mass murder have still not been fully identified or prosecuted? So many are the unattended and unresolved tragedies across the country.

"We, Nigerians, must apply all our legitimate strengths and resources to snatch our country back from the threshold of total chaos; 2023 must be that year of promise.

"We have another opportunity, especially through the general elections to truthfully and courageously choose

leaders who will pursue our common good and not their selfish dreams. So, secure your PVC and vote your own choice. "We must produce leaders with integrity and a good track record, who follow not the logic of the survival of the fittest, but the survival of the weakest, therefore, a nation where truth and justice will reign," he said.

He also urged Nigerians to pay no attention to Prophets of Doom, saying there is nothing wrong with faith religion and prayer which the people have in abundance.

Badejo enjoined Nigerians never to substitute prayer and religion for the opportunity to take Nigeria back from the grip of corruption, selfishness, criminality and other evil practices.

Group hails military for peaceful Christmas, New Year celebrations

A group, Northern Youths Vanguard for Development (NYVD), has praised the Nigeria Armed Forces for contributions toward peaceful Christmas and New Year celebrations.

The group made the commendation in a statement jointly signed by its President, Mr Yakubu Dauda, and Secretary, Mrs Roseline Musa, on Monday in Abuja.

According to the group, peaceful Christmas and New Year celebrations across Nigeria showed that the military was determined to keep its promises to ensure peace in the country.

The group expressed delight that Nigerians, especially those in the North-East, had peaceful Christmas and New Year celebrations.

It urged the people to continue to cooperate with the military through

provision of useful information.

"On the new year eve, banditary kingpin, Gwoska Dankarami, escaped death by the whiskers when air strikes of the Nigerian military targeted his hideout along Kaura Namoda Road in Zurmi Local Government Area of Zamfara State.

"Similarly, troops of 199 Special Forces Battalion hit out at terrorists on the eve of new year along Maiduguri to Damboa Road, killing some of them.

"Reports from the North East is cheering and gives us hope that, very soon, normalcy will be completely restored.

"We in NYVD commend the Armed Forces of Nigeria under Gen. Lucky Irabor for making all this possible.

"We are very hopeful it will get better for the North and Nigeria as a whole," it said.

Police begin investigation into couple's death on New Year's Day



The police command in Ogun has begun investigation into the death of a couple, Mr Kehinde and Mrs Bukola Fatinoye, at Ibara GRA in Ab okuta, on the New Year's Day.

SP Abimbola Oyeyemi, the state Police Public Relations Officer, made the disclosure in an interview on Monday in Abeokuta.

Kehinde and Bukola were burnt to

death when suspected arsonists set their house ablaze on Jan. 1.

One of their children and their housekeeper were also alleged to have been kidnapped by those behind the suspected arson.

According to Oyeyemi, the police will do all within their powers to reveal those behind the dastardly act.

New Year: Bagudu harps on peace, unity

Gov. Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi, has harped on the need for sustainable peace and unity in the state and Nigeria in general, for an enduring national development.

Bagudu, who is also the Chairman of the APC Governors' Forum, made the call in his New Year message to people in the state on Monday in Birnin Kebbi.

He said that peace and unity were the most plausible tools of even national development, without which the country would continue to lag behind. According to him, Kebbi is among the most peaceful states in Nigeria owing to the disposition of people of the state that peaceful coexistence is sacrosanct if development is to be achieved.

Two Senegal Lawmakers Jailed Six-month For Hitting Colleague

Two Senegalese opposition MPs were handed six-month jail terms on Monday for physically attacking a female colleague in parliament.

In a case that sparked anguished debate about democracy in Senegal, pro-government legislator Amy Ndiaye was slapped and then kicked in the belly during a chaotic session in the National Assembly.

MPs Mamadou Niang and Massata Samb were each given six-month prison terms after a trial that began on December 19.

They were also each fined 100,000

CFA francs CFA (\$150) and ordered to pay five million francs in damages. Prosecutors had sought two-year terms.

The bust up happened on December 1, during a routine vote on the justice ministry's budget.

It was sparked by remarks Ndiaye had made about Serigne Moustapha Sy, an influential Muslim leader who supports the opposition but is not a lawmaker.

After order was restored, Ndiaye fainted and was given hospital treatment — her lawyer Baboucar Cisse said she was pregnant and

there were fears she could lose her baby.

She has since left hospital but “remains in an extremely difficult situation,” Cisse said.

The incident triggered a fierce debate about parliamentary discourse and attacks on women. It notably coincided with an awareness campaign against domestic violence.

Senegal is widely viewed as a beacon of stability and democracy in West Africa — a region notorious for coups and dictatorships.

Legislative elections in July led to a virtual tie, requiring President Macky Sall's party to forge a coalition to stay in power.

Sall was elected to a seven-year term in 2012 and re-elected for a five-year tenure in 2019. He has not divulged his plans for the next presidential vote, due in 2024.

Niang and Samb, who were arrested on December 15, were not present in court.

“They are going to remain in prison pending an appeal,” one of their lawyers, Abdy Nar Ndiaye, told AFP.

Tambuwal lambasts FG over insecurity

Sokoto State Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal has said at a campaign rally in the Silame local Government area that, it's the responsibility of the federal government to provide maximum security to Sokoto state and all other parts of the country.

The Governor who was speaking at a campaign rally in the Silame local Government area said Sokoto state has over the years suffered much in the hands of Bandits and criminal gangs terrorizing the state, with little or not much support from the federal government.

Tambuwal who is also the Director General of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), presidential Campaign Council, further said PDP Alhaji Atiku Abubakar will tackle the problems of insecurity if elected as president in come 2023 February general elections.

He said Alhaji Atiku Abubakar is the answer to issues of insecurity, banditry in the north, and Kidnapping and killings in the south-south and southeast if elected president.

Tambuwal expressed optimism that if Atiku Abubakar emerged as the next president of Nigeria, he will consider the reopening of the nation's closed borders by APC under President Muhammadu Buhari's APC-led government.

“Atiku will take proper measures against smuggling and address the challenges of insecurity as well as provide Nigerians with basic necessities of life.” Says Tambuwal.

He expressed sympathy for the people of Silame one of the local government areas hits by Banditry and Kidnapping for Ransome in the past.

“Sokoto state is bedeviled by the activities of insurgency, in many local government areas,” we shall do everything within our powers to protect lives and property,” Tambuwal added.

The Deputy Governor who is also the Sokoto North Senatorial candidate of the party, Mannir Dan'ya called on the people of the state to reciprocate the gesture by voting for PDP, adding that many developmental projects had been planned for Silame LGA this year's budget.

The Gubernatorial candidate, Malam Sa'idu Umar Ubandoma pledged to provide purposeful Leadership if given the mandate to lead the state, adding that he would also improve the economic base of the entire local government areas of the state.

The Director General of Sokoto Campaign Management Council, Yusuf Suleiman noted that Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), is the best party that would solve and serve the people from present situations.



Pipeline Surveillance: Ex-militant group asks FG to review OML 30, OML 34 contracts

An ex-militant group, Isourhobo Bombers, has issued a seven-day ultimatum to the Federal Government of Nigeria to address what it described as a discriminative security surveillance contract awarded some individuals without recourse to ex-militants in Isoko and Urhobo lands to wit: OML 30 and OML 34.

The group led by ex-agitator, Major General Titus Deadman made this known in a statement sent to Vanguard, adding that, the FG has deceived the youths of Niger Delta region for too long and that the time has come for them to take their destiny in their hands.

General Deadman urged the Federal Government to within seven days of his statement, award them the



contract for the security of pipeline surveillance in their respective domains, maintaining “the current contract award is discriminatory and totally unacceptable to ex-militants of Isoko and Urhobo extractions.”

“Also, the FG must end gas flaring in both Isoko and Urhobo lands, a development,” he noted, “No longer obtains in developed climes but that government in Nigeria have persistently paid lip service to ending what he described as dangerous

flaring.”

According to him, “An ex-militant leader, who was sent to deceive them to stop the Niger Avengers in 2016 is on their wanted list of the group for allowing himself to be used by the FG to deceive the youths of the two nationalities.”

Deadman said, “All oil exploration activities in Isoko and Urhobo would be disrupted should the government fail to heed this call.

“Don't push us back to the trenches again. Our sympathy goes to those oil workers, who may choose the path of defiance to this ultimatum. Withdraw this surveillance contract and reward it evenly. To be forewarned is to be armed,” Deadman stated.

Missing UK-based Nigerian found dead after four weeks

A United Kingdom-based Nigerian, Taiwo Balogun, 53, who went missing on Thursday, December 1, 2022, has been found dead in a lake in Kent. Balogun from Crayford was last seen near her home in southeast London four weeks ago.

Her body was found in a lake at Bluewater shopping centre in hunt for "vulnerable" missing mother who vanished four weeks ago from home in London, a report by Daily Mail UK said.

The Met Police, on Monday, said a woman's body had been found in a lake in Kent, adding that her death was not being treated as suspicious even though it was unexpected.

The force tweeted: "A woman's body was recovered from a lake near Bluewater Shopping Centre on Friday, December 30. While formal identification awaits, Taiwo Balogun's family has been informed."

"Her death is being treated as unexpected but not suspicious. Our thoughts are with Taiwo's family."

Footage from a CCTV camera showed Balogun at the Lottery stand inside a shop on Crayford Road, Dartford, at around 2:27pm on the day she went missing. In a previous statement, Balogun's family said: "We are very worried about our mum. She is greatly loved and a massive part of our lives."

2023: Obasanjo's endorsement Obi worthless- Onanuga

Bayo Onanuga, Director, Media and Publicity, All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential Campaign Council says the endorsement of Peter Obi, by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, is worthless.

Onanuga said this in a statement in Abuja.

"We read with amusement the endorsement of Mr Peter Obi, the Labour Party presidential candidate by former President Olusegun Obasanjo in his New Year message on Sunday.

"Following calls by journalists from various media houses who asked for our reaction, we decided to make this preliminary statement, though we didn't consider the so-called endorsement to be of any

value.

"We respect the democratic right of former President Obasanjo to support and endorse any candidate of his choice in any election, except that he made it known formally in his new year message.

"Any discerning political watcher in Nigeria knows that Chief Obasanjo's preference for Peter Obi is expected," he said.

This, he said, was especially because Obasanjo had earlier stated his position in various public events, the last being at the 70th birthday of Chief John Nwodo, a former President of Ohaneze Ndigbo in Enugu.

Onanuga said that Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, the APC 2023 presidential

candidate would not lose sleep over Obasanjo's endorsement because he was notorious for always opposing progressive political forces.

He said that the former president did same against MKO Abiola in 1993 presidential election.

"The endorsement is actually worthless because the former president does not possess any political goodwill or leverage anywhere in Nigeria to make anyone win a councillorship election.

"Let alone win a presidential election, he is a political paperweight, he is also not a democrat anyone should be proud to be associated with," Onanuga said.

UITH assault: We record attacks every week – NMA

The Nigeria Medical Association (NMA), Kwara Chapter, has said that it recorded physical or verbal attacks on its members almost every week.

Dr Ola Ahmed, the state NMA Chairman, made this known to newsmen on Monday in Ilorin.

Ahmed lamented that medical doctors in public healthcare facilities across the state and the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH) are being attacked for no cogent reason.

"Attacks on our members have been recorded across different hospitals in the state.

"Several reports, engagement and letters have been written to our employees, especially the management of UITH and Kwara Government, but we have not seen remarkable improvement," he said.

Ahmed revealed that the series of assault is causing psychological trauma for their members as they fear for their lives.

He cited the recent attack on a member of the Association of Resident Doctors, ARD-UITH, by some relatives of a deceased patient.

He also decried the alleged killing of a medical doctor by patient's relative in Delta while rendering services, adding that the Kwara NMA will not wait until that happens in the state.

The chairman however observed that 2022 was a very tough year for all Nigerians due to the economic hardship, as occasioned by high inflation, high cost of goods and services.

He also cited the devastating flood that ravaged many states, including Kwara, and later compounded by high cost

petroleum products.

Ahmed stated that the healthcare system was also affected, while observing the poor remuneration, unencouraging condition of service for doctors in the country and inadequate infrastructure to perform duties.

"Many of our colleagues have left the country and the state and many more are ready to leave due to poor working conditions.

"The few of us left are struggling to cope with the difficult working environment, the ever-increasing patient load and at the same time take care of our families," he said.

Ahmed therefore appealed for understanding and patience from people, in following due process in expressing their grievances, adding that doctors will give care with respect and dignity to all.

NIS rescue 6 human trafficking victims in Jigawa

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Jigawa Command, said it rescued six victims of human trafficking in the state.

The NIS Comptroller in the state, Mr Ahmed Bagari, told newsmen in Dutse on Monday that the victims were rescued by men of the command on Sunday.

Bagari, represented by DCI Muhammad Yako, said the victims were rescued at about 6:30 p.m. in an uncompleted building in Babura town, headquarters of Babura Local Government Area of the state.

He explained that the victims, aged between 20 and 35, were intercepted while on their way to Libya en route Niger Republic.

The comptroller added that the victims, five females and a male are from Oyo and Nassarawa states.

According to him, none of the rescued victims was in possession of any

travel document and no incriminating items were found on them during interrogation.

"The victims were rescued on Sunday, the 1st January, 2023 on their way to Niger Republic en route Libya.

"The victims are made up of five females and one male that hailed from Oyo state; only one of them is from Nasarawa State.

The victims are as follows: Olalekan A. Alabi, aged 35; Kehinde adetunde, 26; Afolabi ajibola, 24; Adedoyin Adetoji, 20; Olawuyi Mose bolatimoyo, 35 and Blessing John, 22.

"The victims were rescued in an uncompleted building in Babura town which we believe they were kept by a syndicate," the comptroller said.

He added that the NIS Comptroller-General, Mr Idris Jere, had directed that the victims be handed over to the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) for further action.

Jonathan, Douglas, Olu of Warri make 'Most Reputable Africans' list

Former President Goodluck Jonathan, Dr Jennifer Douglas, Managing Partner, Miyetti Law Firm, Ogiame Atuwatse, the Olu of Warri and other Nigerians have been named among the 100 Most Reputable Africans.

The 2023 'roll of honour' was released on Monday by Reputation Poll International (RPI), organisers of the annual event on its website.

The ranking released in alphabetical order, featured men and women drawn from diverse sectors across the continent including; leadership, entertainment, advocacy, education and business.

Other Nigerians who made the list include Dauda Lawal, Executive Vice Chairman/CEO of Credent Capital and Advisory, Human Rights activist Aisha Yesufu, Arunma Oteh and Akinremi Bolaji, Director, Legal and Consular, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Another set of listed Nigerians also include Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations, Wally Adeyemo, Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of the Treasury and Mr Cosmas Maduka, Chairman of the Coscharis Group.

Pastor William Kumuyi, Bishop David Oyedepo, Pastor Paul Enenche and Pastor Enoch Adeboye, are four Nigerian clerics who made the list.

According to the organisers, the selection criteria are integrity, visibility and impact.

"The above luminaries are joined by other great Africans who are celebrated for their social impact and social entrepreneurship that are transforming businesses in Africa and affecting lives positively without controversy.

"On Governance and Policy: Kenya's President, Mr William K. Ruto, Lazarus Chakwera, President of Malawi and Ivory Coast Senator, Chantal Moussokoura Fanny among others were listed.

"On Business: Egypt's Naguib Onsi Sawiris chairman of Weather Investments's parent company, Ghana's Sir Samuel Esson Jonah Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast, and Nigeria's Dr Dauda Lawal, Executive Vice Chairman and CEO of Credent Capital and Advisory.

"On Human Rights Advocacy, Martha K. Koome, Chief Justice of Kenya, and Nigeria's Aisha Yesufu are featured.

"On Leadership: Ethiopia's President Sahle Work-Zedwe, Nigeria's Dr Paul Enenche, and Ghana's Afua Kyei (the Chief Financial Officer at Bank of England, where she leads the Finance Directorate) are also featured," the organisers said.

What's the worth of Obasanjo's endorsement?



By Fredrick Nwabufo

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo used to be a chimera. His influence was mythical yet sweeping. In the past, Nigeria was too small to contain his stature — as he dominated the horizons across Africa and beyond. He lived up to his legend of being a human Orisa. He is, perhaps, still one of the most respected leaders out of Africa.

But Obasanjo's influence within Nigeria appears to have ebbed over the years. His words seem to have lost lustre and his presence vacant of command. Perhaps, when a masquerade comes out to perform all the time, and sometimes without an invitation, it loses its allure and charm.

From 2007 (after he left office) up until 2014, Obasanjo had his wonder and thunder. His position on national matters mattered and was sought after.

His missives were denominated "letter bombs" for their sheer quality to inflict maximum casualty on the target and sway public opinion.

In 2013, former President Goodluck Jonathan suffered "casualty" from one of Obasanjo's

missives. Obasanjo wrote an open letter which technically put a nail to the re-election bid of Jonathan.

In the letter titled "Before it is too late", Obasanjo accused Jonathan of many malfeasances. He said: "Allegation of keeping over 1000 people on political watch list rather than criminal or security watch list and training snipers and other armed personnel secretly and clandestinely acquiring weapons to match for political purposes like Abacha and training them where Abacha trained his own killers, if it is true, it cannot augur well for the initiator, the government, and the people of Nigeria."

He also accused Jonathan of cleaving Nigeria apart — along the weak seams of north-south and Christian-Muslim. According to him, Jonathan was favouring and promoting his Ijaw kin to the disadvantage of other Nigerians.

Obasanjo's letter was well-celebrated. It was held up as a definitive and summary verdict on the administration of Jonathan. Obasanjo himself was hailed for his "courage and forthrightness", and for his audacity to look power in the eye and spit the truth. But all of that changed after the 2015 elections

owing to his overbearing deportment.

In 2018, just three years after President Buhari came to power, Obasanjo applied himself to his accustomed enterprise. He dispatched an open letter to Buhari, accusing him of incompetence. According to Obasanjo: "The lice of poor performance in government — poverty, insecurity, poor economic management, nepotism, gross dereliction of duty, condonation of misdeed — if not outright encouragement of it, lack of progress and hope for the future, lack of national cohesion and poor management of internal political dynamics and widening inequality — are very much with us today."

In the build-up to the 2019 elections, Obasanjo fired a salvo. He accused Buhari of failing to address insecurity, of nepotism and of sundry ineptitudes. But Buhari earned the endorsement of Nigerians to serve a second time as president.

Obasanjo said: "For over ten years, for four of which you have been the captain of the ship, Boko Haram has menacingly ravaged the land and in spite of government's claim of victory over Boko Haram, the potency

and the activities of Boko Haram, where they are active, remain undiminished, putting lie to government's claim. The main issue, if I may dare say, is poor management or mismanagement of diversity which, on the other hand, is one of our greatest and most important assets. As a result, the very onerous cloud is gathering. And the rain of destruction, violence, disaster, and disunity can only be the outcome."

In 2021, Obasanjo reprised himself in another letter to Buhari. But over time, his take or opinion on national matters has become tepid, vapid, and lacking in magnetism to hold public interest and to sway public opinion. His opinions have lost the power to cause mortal damage. And those who once eulogised him as the incarnation of courage, truth, and honesty are now his fiercest critics.

It seems that Obasanjo wrestles with anyone he fails to control and abominates anyone who resists his impingements.

Has the Eborá Owu been demystified? What is the worth of Obasanjo's endorsement? In the heat of the political liaisons in 2022, Obasanjo's hilltop mansion in Abeokuta, Ogun state, became

a cynosure of political pilgrimage as politicians fell over themselves to seek his endorsement of their bids. The rat race for Obasanjo's endorsement. At the time, supporters of Peter Obi, presidential candidate of the Labour Party, claimed that the former governor had the blessing of Obasanjo. Although Obasanjo concealed his intentions in pretensions of statesmanship, it was well-noised he was favourably disposed towards Peter Obi's candidature.

But the former president has cast aside the veil, and has declared support for Peter Obi, today, January 1, 2023.

The truth is Obasanjo's endorsement cannot take Peter Obi to the presidency. It cannot take him anywhere.

Obasanjo is a big masquerade. His place in Nigeria's political progression is undisputed. When iconic leaders are to be counted, Obasanjo will have a place. But in the cycle of life, there comes a time when the big masquerade will have to retire — when there is no one left in the crowd.

By Fredrick Nwabufo, Nwabufo aka Mr OneNigeria is a writer and journalist.

2023: Obasanjo's endorsement not wishes of Nigerians – PDP

The Atiku/Okowa Presidential Campaign Organisation says the “subjective support” for Mr Peter Obi, the Labour Party (LP) Presidential Candidate, by former President Olusegun Obasanjo is his personal wish.

The Spokesperson of the organisation, Mr Kola Ologbondiyan, said in a statement in Abuja that Obasanjo's wish did not reflect the opinion or position of overwhelming majority of Nigerians across the country.

He however said while the former president was entitled to his personal opinion; as remarkable as it may appear, it remained individualistic.

He added that the wish could not redirect Nigerians from their determination to rally with the more experienced, more proficient and more accepted Presidential Candidate of PDP, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, to rescue and rebuild the nation.

Ologbondiyan said surprisingly in the face of the alarming challenges facing Nigeria, which

required a tried and tested hand, Obasanjo was not suggesting a candidate with experience in governance at the national level.

Ologbondiyan said that in any case, Obasanjo's opinion could not sway Nigerians remembering he made similar endorsement in last election.

He added that it would be extremely difficult for Nigerians, particularly the youth demography, to accept Obasanjo's opinion as the solution to the myriad of challenges facing the nation today knowing the reality of the country today.

“Our campaign holds that none of the Presidential candidates has the experience, capacity, tenacity of purpose, presence of mind and readiness to serve like Abubakar.

“Abubakar remains the most widely accepted candidate, whose choice is not predicated by sectional, tribal, ethnic or religious sentiments or the endorsement of any individual, high or low.

“This is predicated by record of ability and performance, authentic vision, honesty and character; physical and mental capacity; the very indices set by the former President,” he explained.

Ologbondiyan said it was instructive to state that every claim by Obasanjo on the success of his administration is a reflection of the performance of Abubakar as his Vice President and Chairman of the National Economic Council.

This, he described as the period during which our nation achieved unprecedented economic growth to become one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

“It therefore amounts to a disservice for the former president to make subjective suggestion.

“This is even when it is clear that if a hand like Abubakar with their shared experience is brought to the forefront of governance, our nation will be rescued from this current sullen state,” asserted the spokesman.

2023:NDYC cautions Nigerian youth, women to reflect, vote wisely

As the 2023 General Elections gathers momentum, a non-profit making organization, Niger Delta Youth Congress, NDYC, yesterday has cautioned Nigerian youth and women to reflect and vote wisely instead of being cajoled by some politicians who do not mean well for them.

In a statement signed by the National Coordinator, Israel Uwejeyan, the Congress pointed that hardship occasioned by different factors have overtime brought misery to Nigerians who were only remembered when it is time for elections.

According to the statement, the youth of Nigeria have the power to shape the future of Nigeria via their Permanent Voter Card, PVC, by electing credible and selfless leaders who are transparent, accountable, and committed to improving the lives of all citizens.

Uwejeyan said: “All Nigerian youths and women are to use this time to reflect on the importance of their vote in the forthcoming general election.

“The youth and women of Nigeria have the power to shape the future of

our nation by choosing leaders who are transparent, accountable, and committed to improving the lives of all citizens.

“As we prepare to head to the polls, it is crucial that we carefully consider the candidates and their track record of serving the public. We must demand integrity, honesty, and a commitment to transparent governance from those seeking to lead our country.

“We must also recognize the importance of our own participation in the democratic process. By exercising our right to vote, we can ensure that our voices are heard and our interests are represented in government.

“This festive season, let us take the time to educate ourselves on the issues that matter most to us and the candidates who will best address them. Let us use our votes to create a brighter future for ourselves and for all Nigerians.

“We encourage all Nigerian youths and women to make their voices heard at the ballot box and to choose leaders who will work tirelessly to build a stronger, more prosperous nation for all.”

2023: Our support for Tinubu is total – APC members in Diaspora



The All Progressives Congress Committee of Diaspora Chairmen (APC-CDC) has affirmed its commitment to mobilise Nigerians to ensure victory for the party's presidential candidate, Sen. Bola Tinubu, in the Feb. 25 election.

The committee in its New Year message signed by Prof. Adesegun Labinjo and Mr Bola Babarinde, the APC CDC Chairman and General Secretary respectively, said that 2023 would birth renewed hope for all Nigerians.

Wishing Nigerians a Happy New Year, the group commended party members in all Diaspora chapters for their commitment, dedication and loyalty which they said would not be taken for granted.

“The APC-CDC is 100 per cent committed to the Tinubu/Shettima ticket and would be supporting the Diaspora Directorate to deliver on its mandate in ensuring the mobilisation of resources, both human and material from the Diaspora towards the realisation of the Tinubu/Shettima aspiration.

“The APC-CDC has donated campaign materials and souvenirs already while promising to do more in the year 2023 to support the Tinubu/Shettima presidential campaign,” it said.

The committee said that President Muhammadu Buhari had laid a solid foundation for Nigeria and the party.

It said that the APC-CDC appreciated Buhari's leadership and support towards the APC ticket.

“We will continue to support the country, our party and its leadership as led by Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu and all NWC (National Working Committee) members.

“We are elated that our President Muhammadu Buhari is ready to join us on the campaign trail to campaign for the incoming President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. We also gearing up in Diaspora to be part of this campaign train.

“We pray 2023 will usher in progress, excellent health and success for all,” the group said.

2023: Kola Abiola promises to restore Nigeria's fortune, aspirations

Presidential candidate of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Mr Kola Abiola, has promised to restore the fortune and aspirations of Nigerians, if elected president in 2023.

Abiola made the promise while speaking on Monday during a novelty football match organised by PRP in Kwoi, Jaba Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

The PRP presidential candidate stated that there was need for Nigerians to vote for their future, adding that “2023 election is not about sentiment. “We will serve as bridge builders that would restore the future of our dear country,” he added.

Abiola noted that PRP was poised to sustain the legacy of the party's founding fathers, including his late father, Moshood Abiola, Aminu Kano, Balarabe Musa, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe amongst others.

“These are people that have been selfless and have lived their lives



for the common good of the people and it is a challenge for myself and my vice presidential candidate, Arch. Haro Zego.

“We have a reputation to protect, we are bound and enticed by the

legacies of the past regimes or godfathers to account to.

“We will bring a difference, sincerity and true governance and make policies that would uplift every Nigerian,” Abiola said.

Full deregulation will curb fuel smuggling — Experts

Some oil and gas experts on Friday said full deregulation of the downstream sector of the petroleum industry was the only sustainable way to curb smuggling of petrol to neighbouring countries. The experts said in interview in Lagos against the backdrop of frequent smuggling of petroleum products outside the country.

Mr Ademola Adigun, an energy consultant, said market liberalisation remained the best option to reduce smuggling of petrol outside the country.

Adigun said competition was the most effective way to control market forces, adding that the best sanctions would not replace the need for price equalisation.

“The best sanctions will not replace the need for price equalisation. The key is still market liberalisation. “The best option is to allow market forces to control the price,” he added.

Mr Robert Dickerman, the Executive Director, Pinnacle oil and gas Ltd., said ending subsidy payment to marketers would curb smuggling of petrol to other countries.

According to him, if government stops payment of subsidy, the problem will be solved immediately.

Ayodele Oni, Partner, Broomfield Law Practice, said crude oil theft (referred to as illegal bunkering) remained one of the biggest challenges facing the Nigerian oil and gas sector.

Oni said illegal bunkering in Nigeria was the largest globally by volume, with up to 20 per cent of Nigeria’s oil output systematically stolen, illegally refined, sold or diverted.

According to him, “To curb this cankerworm, the federal government may need to adopt the following strategies: tighten security around the Niger Delta region, more scrutiny within export terminals in Nigeria.

“Government also needs to liaise with the local governments where the crude oil assets are located, adoption of modern technologies to monitor pipelines and track crude oil transportation and ultimately, developing Nigeria’s refining capacity, amongst others.” The expert said the adoption of these strategies would in no small measure help to curb the illegal bunkering of petrol to neighbouring countries.

Savings bonds: DMO announces 2023 first offer

The Debt Management Office (DMO) on Monday announced as its first bonds issuance for 2023, two Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) Savings Bonds for subscription.

According to a statement by the DMO, one is a two-year FGN Savings Bond due in Jan. 11, 2025, at the interest rate of 9.600 per cent per annum.

The other is a three-year FGN Savings Bond due in Jan 11, 2026, at the interest rate of 10.600 per cent per annum.

The DMO said that the opening date would be Jan. 3, while the closing date would be Jan. 6, and

settlement date, Jan. 11, while coupon payment dates would be April 11, July 11, Oct. 11 and Jan. 11.

“They are offered at N1,000 per unit subject to a minimum subscription of N5,000 and in multiples of N1,000 thereafter, subject to a maximum subscription of N50 million.

“Interest is payable quarterly while bullet repayment (principal sum) is on maturity,” it added.

The DMO said that FGN Savings Bonds qualified as securities in which trustees could invest under the Trustee Investment Act.

“They also qualify as government



securities within the meaning of Company Income Tax Act (CITA) and Personal Income Tax Act (PITA) for tax exemption for pension funds.

“They are listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange Limited and qualify as liquid asset for liquidity ratio calculation for banks,” it said.

Consumers reject NAICOM’S directive on 3rd party insurance, call for reversal

The Insurance Consumers Association of Nigeria (INSCAN) has called on the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) to reverse its directive on the increase of third Party Motor Insurance Premium in Nigeria.

This is contained in a letter signed by its National Coordinator, Chief Yemi Soladoye, and made available to newsmen on Sunday in Ibadan.

NAICOM had recently issued a policy directive on the increase of third party motor insurance premium in Nigeria by 200 per cent.

The INSCAN demanded the reversal of the directive, saying it amounted to deliberate breach of the fundamental Principle of Utmost Good Faith and other decent regulatory principles guiding Insurance practice.

“We hereby write with respect to your Circular No.: NAICOM /DPR/ CIR.46/2022 dated Dec. 22, 2022, increasing the third party motor insurance premium in Nigeria by 200-400 per cent for different categories of motor vehicles.

“And by implication, giving only one

week notice to the insuring public of Nigeria to comply.

“We demand the reversal of the directive as it amounts to deliberate breach of the Fundamental Principle of Utmost Good Faith and other decent regulatory principles that guide insurance practice,” it said.

The association said NAICOM failed to understand the full implications of its directive, saying those at the receiving end were insurance consumers who provided the accrued income to the entire Insurance Industry.

It said that NAICOM’s reliance on the comparison of what was paid as premium in other parts of the world as basis for premium increment burden on Nigerians was tantamount to daylight robbery on consumers.

“Though, you threatened to sanction your Insurance Operators that fail to comply with your directive come Jan. 1, yet, the truth is that operators and NAICOM will benefit from the windfall accrued from the directive.

“The insurance consumers are, in the real sense of it, the ones being sanctioned,” it said.



Nigeria's rising debt: The way forward



By Chinyere Joel-Nwokeoma

Most governments, multilateral organisations and the private sector across the world usually resort to borrowing to bridge revenue shortfalls and infrastructure financing.

It is, therefore, understandable that the Federal Government borrows to finance budget deficits, specific projects and refinance maturing debt obligations.

However, Nigeria's growing debt profile has been an object of discourse and concern for stakeholders in recent times. Indeed, the country's public debt has been under scrutiny for the rate of growth, debt service to revenue ratio and how it is utilised.

For instance, the total debt stock which stood at N7.50 trillion in 2012 had grown to N42.80 trillion as of June 30, 2022.

This has brought the Debt Management Office (DMO) under the spotlight, with the federal lawmakers recently accusing the agency of unrestrained borrowing.

However, the paucity of funds to implement Nigeria's budget over the years due to dwindling revenue has remained a major reason for the country's rising debt.

Data from the DMO as of September 30 showed Nigeria's total debt stock had risen to N44.06 trillion from N42.80 trillion in June, on the back of borrowings by the federal and state governments.

The figure, according to the DMO, was made up of total domestic and external debts of the Federal Government, all state governments and the Federal Capital Territory.

A breakdown of that figure showed that total domestic debt stock during the period stood at N26.92 trillion, while the total external debt stock stood at N17.15 trillion.

The DMO attributed the increase in the debt stock to "largely new borrowings by the Federal Government to part-finance the deficit in the 2022 Appropriation Act, as well as, new borrowings by sub-nationals.

However, speaking at the Capital Market Correspondents Association of Nigeria (CAMCAN) 2022 workshop recently, the Director-General, DMO, Ms Patience Oniha, stressed the need to operate an efficient tax administration for Nigeria to tackle its debt and revenue challenges.

Speaking on the theme: "Nigeria's Public Debt – Some Considerations," Oniha explained that such efficient tax administration must ensure greater compliance with remittances and shun all forms of evasion.

She stated that revenue challenge remained one of the most critical policy issues of the Federal Government, which was threatening the nation's debt sustainability.

Oniha noted that the outlook of both the local and international markets was already becoming tighter with rising interest rates.

She, therefore, stressed the need for the country to urgently moderate its new borrowing and ensure that public debt was sustainable by increasing its revenue base and rationalising expenditure.

Oniha said although the nation's total public debt to GDP of 23.06 per cent as at June, was still within Nigeria's self-imposed limit of 40 per cent and the World Bank/IMF recommended limit of 55 per cent for countries within Nigeria's peer group and 70 per cent for ECOWAS countries.

However, she argued that debt service to revenue was extremely high, an indication that urgent steps needed to be taken to boost the nation's revenue

and enhance public debt sustainability.

"Nigeria's public debt stock has grown consistently over the past decades and even faster in recent years. Consequently, debt service has continued to grow.

"Nigeria's low revenue base compounded by dependence on crude oil resulted in budget deficits over the past decades. Efforts at increasing non-oil revenue are yielding positive results.

"Dependence on borrowing and low revenue base are now threatening debt sustainability. With a low debt to GDP ratio, Nigeria's debt service to revenue ratio would have been low if revenue was strong," she said.

According to her, most countries have placed emphasis on taxation as a principal source of funding for the government while the reverse is the case in Nigeria.

Besides taxation as a source of revenue generation, she stated that borrowings must be tied to projects that would generate commensurate revenues to service loans used to finance the projects.

Oniha also recommended that physical assets such as idle or under-utilised property could be redeveloped for commercialisation to generate revenue.

"Urgent actions are required to moderate the level of new borrowings and ensure that the public debt is sustainable through accelerating the growth in revenues, sale of government assets.

"The outlook shows that both the local and international markets are becoming tighter and interest rates are rising, thus priority should be less on borrowing and more on revenues from oil and non-oil sources," she said.

Corroborating her views, Prof. Uche

Uwaleke, president, Association of Capital Market Academics of Nigeria (ACMAN), said the country's huge debt burden would get worse if government revenues did not grow significantly next year.

Uwaleke urged government to take advantage of the current favourable international crude oil price by decisively tackling oil theft and ramping up production to meet OPEC's quota of about 1.8 million barrels per day.

"With respect to non-oil revenue, the implementation of the government's strategic revenue growth initiatives will go a long way in boosting revenue.

"This involves improvement in collection efficiency by revenue collection agencies such as the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and the Customs.

"It also includes effectively taxing digital transactions and properly accounting for all proceeds against the backdrop of the recent controversy surrounding the unaccounted proceeds of stamp duty on electronic transfers," he added.

Uwaleke said the Federal Government should put in place measures using technology to ensure that collections by revenue-generating MDAs were properly monitored and duly remitted to the coffers of the government.

"These agencies should be given realistic targets and those unable to meet them without satisfactory explanation should have their Chief Executive Officers replaced.

"In the long run, more attention should be paid to diversifying revenue sources including privatisation of selected government enterprises and exports of commodities and finished products outside oil and gas," Uwaleke said.

Mr Ambrose Omordion, the Chief Operating Officer, InvestData Ltd., said

the case of Ghana should be a lesson for Nigerian leaders and economic managers.

"There is a saying that wise men learn from the mistakes or failures of others. What is happening to Ghana should be a lesson for Nigeria's leaders and economic managers.

"Despite the current situation of Ghana, its borrowing reflected on economic expansion and capacity before this ugly state.

"Nigeria's economy has contracted with huge borrowing instead of expanding with high cost of debt servicing to the detriment of capital projects and enabling business environment to drive the expected economic growth and progress.

"To reverse this trend of borrowing, the government should look inward and start with full and solid public private partnership, selling off abandoned assets, reduce high rate of taxation but widen tax net, drive economic diversification, provide security to attract foreign and local investments," Omordion said.

He also called on the government at all levels to reduce high cost of governance, restructure governance system with real economic reforms and changes in 2023 and beyond.

Based on the above submissions, the nation's public debt stock will continue to grow if governments at all levels fail to change the narratives on ways to boost revenue base even as the country prepares for the 2023 general elections.

The major task before whoever emerges president come 2023 should be ways to increase revenue generation to reduce borrowing mainly for budget deficits.

Nigeria cannot continue to do things the same way and expect a different result, a stitch in time saves nine.



Chimamanda Adichie Excited As Obi Of Onitsha Attends Coronation

Award-winning novelist, Chimamanda Adichie, has expressed excitement at the presence of the Obi of Onitsha, Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe, in her hometown, Abba, Anambra State, during her coronation last Friday. Adichie, who shared photos of the Igwe on Monday, said, "I was delighted and deeply honoured to welcome the Obi of Onitsha, Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe, to Abba as I received the title of 'Odeluwa' from HRH Igwe LN Ezech of Abba."

"Thanks for making our son feel fatherless," Adewumi Shifau tells actor Mustapha Sholagbade

Adewumi Shifau, mother of Nollywood actor Mustapha Sholagbade's first son, Yasir, has called him out for not being present in their son's life as she wished him a happy birthday on Sunday.

The makeup artist ironically 'thanked' the actor for coming to check on their son and for 'making him feel the fatherly love' he had shown to his other sons.

Adewumi also thanked the actor for making her feel like a failed mother and making their son feel like a fatherless child.

Part of her statement reads, "Happy birthday, owo baba yasir, thank you for always coming to check on your son. Thank you for making him feel the fatherly love you showed to your other



sons.

"Thank you for always making yasir feel his daddy's absence everytime his mate are showing off their dad in school. Thank you for always making him to ask for his dad jawe Owo baba Yamir.

"Thank you for always come and shoot in our area even if I was there, but never bothered to ask me to bring him or call grandma to check on your FIRST SON.

"Thank you for always making the boy think I'm a failed mother, thank you for always making him feel like a fatherless child, thank you for always think because he is a Nigerian citizen he means nothing to you.

"Thank you for always make me regret that no matter how you struggle with a man, he will never show your child the true definition of fatherly love."

Alex Ekubo made me apologise publicly — Ex-fiancée, Fancy Acholonu reveals

Fancy Acholonu, ex-fiancée of Nollywood actor Alex Ekubo, has revealed that the actor convinced her to apologise publicly.

Acholonu made this known on her Instagram page when a curious follower asked her if she was convinced to make the post.

"Did Alex convince u to make that apology post? I saw something on the blogs. If he did. Sis, that is extremely manipulative. You should run for your life he only wanted to use for revenge."

She responded by saying, "Yes, he

did. It's true. I fell for it. My eyes are now fully open. I'm at peace & now have a full understanding"

Acholonu also revealed that she is not back with the actor, when another follower asked, "Are you and Alex back together?"

She responded "No." The model also said, "he wanted all this public talk, so let him have me finally really talking. I NEED TO PROTECT MYSELF. I'm someone's child. My family is worried. I need to be brave for my future husband and children to see I was not a weak woman. You are not in my shoes so you won't understand."

PEBEC stages play to address bureaucratic bottlenecks in businesses

The Presidential Enabling Business Council (PEBEC) on Sunday staged a play, "Welcome To Easiland: The Future Is Here", to enlighten Nigerians, particularly entrepreneurs, on how bureaucratic bottlenecks are addressed by the government.

The play staged at the Landmark Event Centre, Lagos, portrays how businesses in "Easiland", likened to Nigeria, are sabotaged and ways to do things right.

Dr Jumoke Oduwole, Special Adviser to the President on Ease Of Doing Business, said that the play was also part of activities to mark the fifth anniversary of PEBEC.

According to her, PEBEC is a council that works on bureaucratic bottlenecks and legislative interventions for small and medium sized enterprises.

"As you saw from the play, those are realities that we have captured over the time. These are the realities that the team worked with.

"From the play, you saw some of the reforms that we have implemented. Sometimes, some errant officers will try to sabotage the reforms and we urge people to also lodge complaints.

"We have received a lot of compliments and we have also received a lot of complaints concerning the saboteurs within the system," she said.

Oduwole said the play was initially staged in Abuja during the Independence Day weekend after which people requested that the play be brought to Lagos.

"We had to squeeze it into the budget

so we could bring the play to Lagos over New Year's day just to celebrate the season and also to give hope and inspiration to Nigerian entrepreneurs.

"This is to enlighten them, as a lot of them don't know about the reforms. You saw the reforms at the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and the Customs. A lot of things are going on that people don't know about," she said.

Oduwole said that the play was adopted as a form of enlightenment having realised that Nigerians love comedy and drama, adding that it was the perfect way to deliver the message.

She further encouraged the people to use report.gov.ng to lodge complaints if the reforms did not work, as feedbacks would be necessary to address bureaucratic bottlenecks.

According to her, the Ease of Doing Business is something that is here to stay and there is no need to know anyone in government to get the required services.

"People don't need to know Ministers or someone at the presidency. There is need to have an enabling environment where the legislative and regulatory bottlenecks are removed.

"Government parastatals' websites are working. You can use the technology to do your processes, your permits, nobody will tell you happy weekend or anything just to extort you.

"That is the message that we're preaching. And we want it to be entrenched in people's hearts. We want them to demand it as a right and we want government to deliver it as our responsibility, so that's what we're doing here today," she said.



Notice on Revised Cash Withdrawal Limit



Dear Customer,

Following the recent review of cash withdrawal limit by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), please note the following directives which take effect from Monday, January 9th, 2023:

The maximum weekly limit on cash withdrawal across all channels by individuals and corporate organizations per week shall henceforth be N500,000 and N5,000,000 respectively.

Withdrawals above these limits shall attract processing fees of 3% and 5% respectively.

Third party cheques above N100,000 shall not be eligible for payment over the counter (OTC), while extant limits of N10,000,000 on clearing cheques still subsist.

Only denominations of N200 and below shall be loaded into the ATMs.

For seamless transactions, please make use of our alternate banking channels namely:



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Ghanaian experts advocate for science at UN Biodiversity Conference



Some Ghanaian experts who participated in the recent United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Montreal, Canada have called for the prioritisation of science and technology as the sure way to encourage socio-economic development.

Dr Justina Dugbazah who is the Coordinator of the African Union's High-Level Panel on Emerging Technologies says the world is advancing at a fast pace technologically, and Africa cannot afford to be left behind.

"When it comes to the harnessing of innovation and emerging technologies, this is actually what underpins emerging socio-economic development. If you look at all the development subsectors, be it agriculture, health, or education, harnessing innovations play a big role,"

she told Joy News in an interview.

"When you take agriculture, one can talk about drones that help identify the fertility of the soil, water level in the soil, and all that. And also one can look at biotechnology when it comes to crops.

"It's really important for African countries to be involved in negotiating such issues that are crucial to the growth of the countries," Dr Dugbazah added.

She observed there is a large gap that exists between research and policies across the continent that needs to be fixed.

"There is the need to bridge the research, innovation, and policy gap. And this can only happen if we engage each other in the ecosystem," she noted.

The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, deliberated on measures the world needs to take to protect the planet, and avoid situations where living things are destroyed in the environment due to human development activities.

It also served as the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP-MOP 10), and the Fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol (NP-MOP 4).

During the meeting from 7th to 19th December, governments from around the world came together to agree on a new set of goals to guide global action through 2030 to halt and reverse nature loss.

Dr Daniel Osei Ofosu who is a Research

Scientist at the Biotechnology and Nuclear Agricultural Research Institute (BNARI) of the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission (GAEC) observed that one major technology that can help protect the environment is biotechnology or genetically modified organisms (GMO) technology.

"Essentially, we are looking for innovative tools to help us protect the environment. We cannot continue to look at only the conventional tools that we all have. One of the key drivers of biodiversity loss is the cutting down of virgin forests and the need to expand our farming practices," he observed.

"Using tools like biotechnology, we are able to produce the best crops on very limited space that reduces the need for us to clear new areas.

"It also helps us to maintain the biodiversity that we have when we reduce the use of pesticides through biotechnology so nontarget organisms are not affected by the use of these pesticides. So innovative tools are necessary to help maintain the biodiversity that we have," he added.

Chairman of the governing board of Ghana's National Biosafety Authority, Prof. Charles Antwi-Boasiako, told a side event at the conference that Ghana is already adopting biotechnology and GMO tools to help improve agriculture and preserve the environment.

"Ghana approved genetically modified cowpea (which is resistant to some pests) for consumption in 2022. Next year, approval will be given for GM rice (which is nitrogen efficient, water-use efficient, and salt tolerant)," he said.

Historian Hails Alex Iwobi's Father, Chuka 'Mehallah'

Nigerian historian and lawyer, Nze Ed Emeka Keazor, has taken his followers down memory lane as he shared a photo of footballer, Alex Iwobi and his father, Chuka 'Mehallah' Iwobi.

Keazor, who shared the dated photo on Sunday, revealed some of the exploits of the older Iwobi.

Calling the senior Iwobi by his 'Mehallah' nickname, the historian described him as one of the most rugged and skilful midfielders at the University Of Nigeria, Nsukka, in the early to mid 80s.

He tweeted, "Perspectives- when young people see this pic, they see Alex Iwobi



and his elderly dad. I, on the other hand see the mighty Chuka 'Mehallah' Iwobi, one of the most rugged and skilful

midfielders at UNN, where we were both contemporaries in the early to mid 80s - and his son. Life..."

Adegoju's death, monumental loss- 3SC



The management of Shooting Stars Sports Club (3SC) has joined other stakeholders in mourning the death of Prof. Festus Adegoju, State Chairman of the Nigeria Football Coaches' Association (NFCA). This is contained in a condolence message by 3SC Chairman, Mr Babatunde Olaniyan, on Monday in Ibadan.

Adegoju, a renowned coach, popularly known as Festo, died on Sunday evening in Ibadan.

Olaniyan described the demise of

Adegoju as a rude shock and huge loss to the football fraternity.

"We received the news of the passing away of the Chairman, Nigeria Football Coaches' Association, Oyo State Chapter, Prof. Festus Adegoju, with shock.

"It is disheartening that the cold hands of death snatched him away from us at a time when his contributions were still needed.

"However, while we deeply mourn his exit, we take solace in the fact that he lived a good life and that he has gone to rest

with his maker," he said. Olaniyan expressed condolences to the coaches association, football family as a whole and prayed that God would console and give his family the fortitude to bear the monumental loss.

"Our heartfelt condolences go to the coaches association and the football family as whole.

"We pray that God consoles and give his immediate and extended family the fortitude to bear the monumental loss," he said.

Aboubakar heading to Old Trafford?

Reports from England say Manchester United are seriously considering the signing of goal pocher Aboubakar Vincent from Saudi Arabia 'Aboubae' who will be 31 on January 22nd 2023 is among top January targets for United as they hunt for striker according to British media



Adelaide International: Novak Djokovic receives positive welcome back to Australia

Novak Djokovic received a positive welcome back to Australia as he made a rare doubles appearances at the Adelaide International.

The Serb was deported prior to the 2022 Australian Open because of his Covid-19 vaccination status.

He and Canada's Vasek Pospisil were beaten 4-6 6-3 10-5 by Tomislav Brkic and Gonzalo Escobar on his

return. The 21-time Grand Slam champion enjoyed overwhelming support from the crowd throughout the match, greeted by cheers and chants of "Novak, Novak" as he made his way on to court.

The 35-year-old, currently ranked world number five, stayed behind after the defeat to sign autographs and take photographs with fans.

Martina Navratilova: Tennis legend diagnosed with throat and breast cancer

Martina Navratilova has been diagnosed with both throat and breast cancer.

The 18-time Grand Slam singles champion, who previously had breast cancer in 2010, will start treatment in New York later this month.

Navratilova, 66, said both cancers had been caught at an early stage.

Navratilova noticed an enlarged lymph node in her neck during November's WTA Finals in Fort Worth, Texas.

A subsequent biopsy revealed stage one throat cancer.

During the tests, a lump was also discovered in her breast, which was later diagnosed as an unrelated cancer.

"The double whammy is serious, but fixable, and I'm hoping for a favourable outcome," she said. "It's going to stink for a while, but I'll fight with all I have got."

Navratilova was due to cover this month's Australian Open from the Tennis Channel studio, but will instead make some occasional remote appearances.



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⇒ PG 15

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Balance Reportage for Nation Building

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Appraising operational successes of the military in 2022

By Sumaila Ogbaje

Nigeria has continued to contend with a number of internal security challenges ranging from insurgency and terrorism in the North East, banditry and kidnapping in North West and North Central, oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta and separatists agitation in South East and South West.

In spite of these security challenges, Nigeria has recorded remarkable improvement in security administration in 2022. The Armed Forces of Nigeria has remained steadfast in restraining peace and security across the country, and had deployed troops across the 36 states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to tackle all forms of security threats, in collaboration with other security agencies.

The strings of military operations across theatres of operations have lessened the various security threats and impacted positively on the lives of citizens and national development in general.

Although there are close to eleven thousand deaths recorded in 2022, most of the deaths have been due to military actions not from activities of non state actors.

In North Eastern Nigeria, the activities of Boko Haram and Islamic States West Africa Province (ISWAP) have been largely tamed.

The destruction caused by the 13-year insurgency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa are being addressed, with millions of displaced persons returning home.

Since the beginning of 2022, the tempo of military operation in the North East under the Joint Task Force Operation Hadin Kai (OPHK) has escalated, leading to mass surrender of Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists and their family members to troops in different fronts.

Available record revealed that more than 82,000 terrorists and their families have so far surrendered due to the intensity of military onslaught against them. More than 60,000 of those who surrendered did so in 2022, alongside their wives and children.

The onslaught also led to the capture of hundreds of terrorists across the region.

Today, about 900 arrested terrorists are awaiting prosecution, while thousands of the terrorists including their commanders, collaborators and logistics suppliers have been killed in land and air operations.

The successes recorded in the various operations conducted in the region by the military has

facilitated the return of peace and stability in most parts of the North East.

This is attested by the fact that most Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have returned to their ancestral homes while several farmlands hitherto inaccessible due to activities of terrorists, are now being cultivated.

According to the Theatre Command, OPHK, the operations also facilitated the rescue of 11 Chibok school girls who have been in captivity since 2014.

The first of the girls rescued, Hauwa Joseph, was intercepted along with her child at Ngazua in Bama on June 12, followed by Mary Dauda and her child rescued at Gava in Gwoza Local Government Area on June 14, while Ruth Bitrus and her child escaped from Ukuba Boko Haram terrorists camp in Sambisa and was rescued by troops in Bama on June 27.

On July 25, troops also rescued two Chibok girls named Kauna Luka and Hanatu Musa with their children at Aulari in Bama general area, while Aisha Grema who was pregnant was rescued with her four-year-old child in Bama on Aug. 21.

The seventh Chibok girl to be rescued was Falmata Lawal and her child on Aug. 30, in Bama general area. On Sept. 1, 2022, troops also rescued Asabe Ali and her child who escaped from a terrorists' camp in Gazuwa, Bama while the ninth Chibok girl, Jinkai Yama was rescued along with three children in Bama on Sep. 2.

Additionally, Yana Pogu and her four children became the 10th Chibok girl rescued by the military in 2022, while the eleventh was Rejoice Senki, who also had two children with her.

The eleven girls rescued in 2022 were listed on the roll of the abducted Chibok School girls as numbers 18, 46, 41, 38, 7, 11, 3, 12, 20, 19 and 70.

Similarly, the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has had a very remarkable year in 2022, conducting a total of 1,398 sorties to counter insurgency and banditry across the country.

The Air Officer Commanding, Special Operations Command, AVM Abubakar Abdulkadir, said that NAF had flown over 1,950 hours during various operations between January and December in the North East and North West regions to tackle banditry and insurgency.

NAF intervention in the North West led to the elimination of many top terrorists and bandit commanders, while hundreds of kidnapped citizens were rescued.

There was also massive arrest of bandits' collaborators by troops of Operation Hadarin Daji in Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kaduna States.

Similarly, there have been several air bombardments by the air component of Operation Whirl Punch on many identified terrorists hideouts in Kaduna state with scores of terrorists including their top leaders neutralised.

As the intensity of military operations increased, the Defence Headquarters in November declared 19 terrorists wanted and placed N5 million bounty on each of them.

The wanted persons are notorious bandits and terrorists that have been terrorising Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara states. Subsequent operational activities through land and air interdictions revealed that some of the wanted bandit kingpins were killed in Katsina and Zamfara.

In the North Central, troops of Operation Safe Haven also recorded a lot of successes in both kinetic and non-kinetic operations in Plateau and part of Kaduna states.

One of the high moment was on Oct. 29, when troops repelled an attack by Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists on Wawa Military Cantonment in Borgu Local Government Area of Niger.

A coordinated land and air operations led to the killing of six of the terrorists and capture of 18 others while their equipment were captured and destroyed.

Also in 2022, troops of the Guards Brigade successfully apprehended about 60 hoodlums planning to cause security breach in the nation's capital on the eve on the Independence Day celebration.

However, there were some unfortunate ambushes in the FCT in which the lives of two officers and four soldiers were lost in July, just after the attack on Kuje Custodial Centre, which created panic in the territory.

The military and other security agencies were able to quickly bring the tensed situation under control and effectively countered the fake terror alerts issued by the United States and United Kingdom embassies in Nigeria.

To underscore the seriousness with which Nigeria views the security challenges, the National Security Council met three times in July to appraise the security situation and set target for the military and other security agencies. It's the first time in the history of the country that the council met three times in a month.

The effects have been monumental in terms of degrading insurgents, bandits and terrorists across the country.

In the Niger Delta region, the military joint task force, code-named Operation Delta Safe (OPDS), has during the year, destroyed 37 militant camps and over 1,883 illegal oil refining sites in the region.

According to the Commander, OPDS, Rear Adm. Aminu Hassan, 699 suspects were arrested in the effort to secure the operations of oil and gas companies in the Niger Delta as well as safeguard the people of the area.

The operations helped to save over N53 billion worth of crude oil, diesel, kerosene and petrol; destroyed not less than 37 militants and sea robbers camps and recovered 90 assorted illegal weapons and large caliber ammunition.

In the South East, the military has continued to confront the activities of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra and its militant wing, the Eastern Security Network, with remarkable successes.

On the whole, the armed forces of Nigeria has largely gained the upper hand against enemies of the state across the country in 2022.

It is instructive to note that attacks on troops' locations and ambush on their convoys have also reduced drastically in the course of the year.

These successes were propelled by enhanced joint operational planning and execution of the plans by all the three services, as well as improved synergy with other security agencies in the country.

There was also enhanced intelligence gathering and sharing as acknowledged by the Chief of Defence Intelligence, Maj.-Gen. Samuel Adebayo recently.

He said the agency has continued to carry out its mandates conscientiously with positive outcomes, adding that it prioritised technical and communication aspects of intelligence in support of armed forces operations and activities within and outside the country.

Adebayo said the DIA had also successfully dominated the threat environment with a combination of special intelligence operations and non-kinetic activities which had recorded degrees of successes and continued to deny the enemies of state, the cohesion and capabilities to operate.

"As we continue to review our activities, in 2023 the Agency intends to refocus its tactical and technical intelligence drive on all frontiers to sustain the gains.

"So far, the result across all theatres has been significantly rewarding," the defence intelligence chief said.