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For Local Manufacturing: FG Must Take A Step Towards Self-Reliance In Healthcare

EDITORIAL

In a significant stride towards promoting local manufacturing and self-reliance in the healthcare sector, the recent ground breaking ceremony for the second phase of the AMA medical manufacturing plant in Kaduna State marks a crucial moment in Nigeria's journey towards pharmaceutical independence.

Led by Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General (DG) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), this initiative holds the promise of transforming Nigeria's healthcare landscape and contributing to broader economic prosperity.

At the heart of this endeavour lies the recognition of the critical need to bolster domestic production of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment. For far too long, Nigeria has grappled with a heavy reliance on imported medical supplies, leaving its healthcare system vulnerable to disruptions and shortages. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the risks associated with such dependency, underscoring the urgency of building resilient local manufacturing capabilities.

The AMA medical manufacturing plant embodies the spirit of innovation and enterprise that is essential for driving sustainable economic growth. Founded in 2019, the company has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to pioneering advancements in medical manufacturing, with a focus on addressing pressing healthcare needs. The expansion of its facility signifies a significant step towards scaling up production and meeting the burgeoning demand for high-

President Tinubu Launches ' Renewed Hope Infrastructure Fund' To Bridge Infrastructure Gap Nationwide

• Calls For Support For Made-in-Nigeria Products

In a decisive move to address Nigeria's infrastructure challenges head-on, ***President Bola Ahmed Tinubu*** *has in the last one week ushered in a new era of progress with the approval of the* ***'Renewed Hope Infrastructure Fund.'*** *This fund, aimed at bridging critical gaps across vital sectors of the economy, marks a significant milestone in the nation's journey towards sustainable development and prosperity.* ***Enam Obiosio*** *throws more light on it.*

The newly approved Infrastructure Development Fund, aptly named the 'Renewed Hope Infrastructure Fund,'(RHIF), with a strategic focus on sectors such as agriculture, transportation, ports, aviation, energy, healthcare, and education, is to become a transformational means to drive economic growth, enhance local value addition, and create employment opportunities.

Termed as a beacon of promise for Nigeria's future, the fund is slated to channel investments into vital national projects aimed not only to foster economic growth but also make a catalyse for technological innovation and exports.

According to a statement released by Mr. Ajuri Ngelale, the Presidential spokesperson, the objectives of the fund are multifaceted. They encompass

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President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

CBN Raises MPR To 24.75%

Uncovers $2.4bn Foreign Exchange Scam

By Ahmed Ahmed

In a bid to address the persistent challenge of rising inflation, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has implemented a significant hike in the monetary policy rate (MPR), commonly known as the interest rate.

The decision, announced by CBN Governor, Mr. Olayemi Cardoso, during the recent 294th meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) press briefing in Abuja, marks a notable increase of 200 basis points, raising the interest rate to 24.75 percent from its previous level of 22.75 percent.

The move, according to him, is a strategic response to the soaring inflation rate in Nigeria, which reached 31.70 percent in February. By raising the interest rate, the CBN aims to temper the inflationary pressures and stabilise the economy amidst challenging economic conditions.

This adjustment comes on the heels of a similar action taken by the MPC in February, when the interest rate was raised to 22.75 percent. The decision underscores the CBN's proactive approach to managing economic challenges and ensuring financial stability in the country.

While announcing the interest rate hike, Mr. Cardoso also revealed that the CBN would maintain the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) at 45 percent, a measure aimed at managing liquidity in the banking system.

The 294th MPC, the second since he assumed office in September, highlights the ongoing efforts of the CBN to address economic concerns and steer the country towards sustainable growth.

Mr. Olayemi Cardoso, CBN Governor

The next MPC meeting is scheduled to take place on May 20th and 21st, 2024, where further policy decisions would be deliberated.

The CBN's decision to raise the interest rate highlights its commitment to tackling inflation and ensuring macroeconomic stability. As Nigeria navigates through economic challenges, the central bank remains vigilant in its efforts to safeguard the financial health of the nation.

Also, in a startling revelation, the CBN disclosed a significant foreign exchange scam amounting to approximately $2.4 billion, leading to ongoing investigations by law enforcement agencies. Mr. Cardoso made this announcement during the just ended MPC meeting.

He revealed that meticulous forensic audits uncovered numerous discrepancies in foreign exchange forwards, rendering them ineligible for payment.

Deloitte management consultants were engaged to conduct a comprehensive forensic analysis, revealing transactions that failed to meet validation criteria due to issues of authenticity and legality.

Instances emerged where millions of dollars were disbursed without corresponding requests, while some transactions lacked proper documentation.

Consequently, the CBN refused to validate these transactions, prompting law enforcement agencies to initiate investigations into their legality.

Addressing stakeholders' concerns about potential backlogs, Mr. Cardoso assured that the market remains open and transparent for addressing outstanding contractual obligations. The CBN has verified and settled recognised backlogs of forward transactions.

Looking ahead, the CBN anticipates a gradual moderation of inflation rates by May, with measures in place to foster economic growth while maintaining price stability. The committee called for the full implementation of agricultural policies to enhance food supply and urged broader fiscal consolidation to improve tax collection.

Furthermore, he addressed concerns regarding the forex market, advocating for competition and transparency. He criticised restrictions on dairy imports for their oligopolistic nature and emphasised the need for an open and inclusive foreign exchange market.

Regarding cryptocurrency regulation and the recent Binance scandal, Mr. Cardoso clarified the CBN's limited role, highlighting collaboration with relevant authorities. He stated that cryptocurrency regulation falls under the purview of the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Nigeria's Domestic Debt Servicing Hits N4.38trn In 2023

As External Debt Surges By N17.37trn In One Year

By Anita Dennis

The Debt Management Office (DMO) has revealed that the federal government expended a staggering sum of N4.381 trillion in servicing its domestic debt obligations throughout the year 2023.

This was disclosed recently, shedding light on the fiscal challenges and financial commitments faced by the government.

According to DMO, as of December 31, 2023, Nigeria's domestic debt profile stood at a substantial N53.258 trillion, indicating the scale of financial obligations shouldered by the government in servicing its debt portfolio.

A detailed breakdown of the debt servicing expenditure reveals a month-by-month analysis, showcasing the immense financial burden borne by the government.

In January 2023, debt servicing consumed N244.56 billion, followed by N146.4 billion in February, and a staggering N483.14 billion in March. The trend continued with considerable sums allocated to debt servicing in subsequent months, peaking at N1.196 trillion in November, the highest for the year.

The instruments through which this debt was serviced encompassed a range of financial products, including Nigerian treasury bills (NTBs), federal government bonds, treasury bonds, green bonds, Federal Government of Nigeria(FGN) sukuk bonds, FGN savings bonds (FGNSB), and promissory notes.

Notably, federal government bonds accounted for the lion's share of the debt servicing expenditure, amounting to N3.663 trillion.

The DMO's report further delineated the composition of Nigeria's domestic debt, with federal government bonds constituting 83.1 percent of the total domestic debt profile as of December 31, 2023. NTBs followed closely at 12.25 percent, with promissory notes and FGN Sukuk accounting for 2.5 percent and 2.05 percent, respectively.

The revelation underscores the formidable challenge of managing country's burgeoning debt burden, necessitating prudent fiscal management and strategic debt restructuring measures to ensure sustainable economic growth and stability.

Meanwhile, the DMO revealed a staggering increase in the naira value of the federal government's external debt, soaring by N17.37 trillion within a one year.

According to the DMO's external debt report for the fourth quarter of 2023, the naira value surged from N16.703 trillion in December 2022 to N34.073 trillion by December 2023.

This unprecedented surge is primarily attributed to the substantial disparity in exchange rates utilised for calculating loans between the two years.

In 2022, the DMO employed an exchange rate of N448.08/$, whereas in 2023, the rate sky-rocketed to N899.39/$.

This drastic fluctuation underscores the impact of the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) decision to unify the foreign exchange market, coupled with the subsequent revaluation of the naira in 2023.

The CBN's move towards abolishing the fixed exchange rate system and transitioning to a floated currency regime in June 2023 played a pivotal role in driving the surge in the naira value of external debt. While this shift aimed to enhance market dynamics, it inadvertently resulted in a significant rise in the value of the federal government's external debt.

The implications of this unprecedented increase reverberate across various sectors of the economy. The federal government now faces the challenge of obtaining additional funds in local currency to cover the repayment and servicing of these loans, particularly amidst limited and constrained government income. This escalation in external debt could potentially divert funds away from critical sectors such as health, education, social services, and infrastructure towards debt servicing obligations.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the current naira value of the federal government's external debt significantly exceeds the figure reported for December by the DMO. Recent data indicates that the naira closed at N1431/$, representing a staggering 59.1 percent depreciation in the value of the naira between December 2023 and March 2024.

As Nigeria grapples with the repercussions of this exponential rise in external debt, stakeholders emphasise the urgent need for prudent fiscal management, debt restructuring measures, and enhanced revenue generation initiatives to mitigate the adverse effects on economic stability and sustainable development.

Considering the imperative of debt management, stakeholders have emphasised the importance of transparency, accountability, and prudent financial stewardship to navigate the complex terrain of domestic debt servicing and foster long-term economic resilience and prosperity.

President Tinubu Launches 'Renewed Hope Infrastructure Fund' To Bridge Infrastructure Gap Nationwide

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the creation of an innovative infrastructure investment platform to attract and consolidate capital, acting as a catalyst for economic progress. The fund will strategically execute national infrastructure projects spanning diverse sectors, including roads, railways, agriculture, ports, and aviation, among others.

Furthermore, the RHIF will adeptly leverage various financing options, such as concessionary loans, eurobonds, and budgetary allocations, to ensure optimal outcomes for the nation. Emphasis will be placed on securing advantageous arrangements for financing, construction, operation, and maintenance of identified projects.

In its investment strategy, the fund will explore approaches like direct project financing through budgetary allocations and special purpose vehicles (SPVs), as well as co-financing with key institutions and multilateral development bodies. Additionally, equity investments will be considered to maximise the impact of the fund.

With a specific focus on agricultural infrastructure and food security, the fund aims to fortify the nation's agricultural networks, laying the groundwork for robust growth and sustained food sovereignty.

Under the purview of the fund, a comprehensive strategy unfolds, encompassing diverse facets of national development. In the agricultural sector, the focus extends beyond mere cultivation, with plans to establish national food storage facilities, integrated irrigation systems, and modernised ranching practices. These initiatives are poised to revolutionise agricultural logistics and distribution, fortifying food security and amplifying the resilience of Nigeria's agricultural landscape.

In a bid to invigorate Nigeria's ports, a strategic overhaul is imminent. The rejuvenation of port facilities and associated infrastructure is poised to streamline operations, rendering Nigeria a beacon of efficiency in regional trade. Through modernisation efforts and the implementation of advanced monitoring systems, the aim is to attract investments and elevate Nigeria's stature as a pivotal hub for commerce and maritime activity.

Aviation infrastructure stands on the brink of transformation as well, with plans for the revitalisation and modernisation of major airports nationwide. Targeted investments will fuel comprehensive refurbishments, including upgrades to terminal facilities, runway expansions, and the integration of cutting-edge technologies to enhance safety and operational efficiency.

Road infrastructure is set to undergo a renaissance, with strategic projects such as the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Road and the Sokoto-Badagry Road taking centre stage. These initiatives aim to enhance connectivity, optimise transport efficiency, and catalyse economic growth across regions, fostering a more interconnected Nigeria.

Rail infrastructure will also undergo a resurgence, with the Lagos-Kano and Eastern rail lines emerging as focal points for modernisation efforts. The overarching goal is to foster interconnectivity between key urban centres, facilitating the seamless movement of goods and people with unparalleled speed and reliability.

In a move to streamline efforts and maximise impact, President Tinubu took a decisive action to absorb the Presidential Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF) into the Renewed Hope Infrastructure Fund. This strategic consolidation is poised to eliminate bureaucratic inefficiencies, enhance funding opportunities, and expedite project delivery timelines, ultimately benefiting the Nigerian populace.

Also, President Tinubu urged Nigerians to bolster the country's economy by placing importance on locally-made goods, emphasising that this will not only fortify the naira but also contribute to the nation's economic growth.

In a statement issued by Mr. Ngelale, President Tinubu reaffirmed his administration's commitment to enhancing the value of the naira against foreign currencies, particularly the United States dollar (USD).

He highlighted the importance of intentional patronage of Nigerian-made products, asserting that it is essential for increasing the purchasing power of citizens and making every naira more valuable both domestically and internationally.

Mr. President reassured Nigerians of ongoing efforts to sustain the appreciation of the naira against the dollar, accenting the need for stability in the foreign exchange market. He expressed optimism regarding the current positive trend, indicating that interventions in the forex market would lead to increased stability in the coming months.

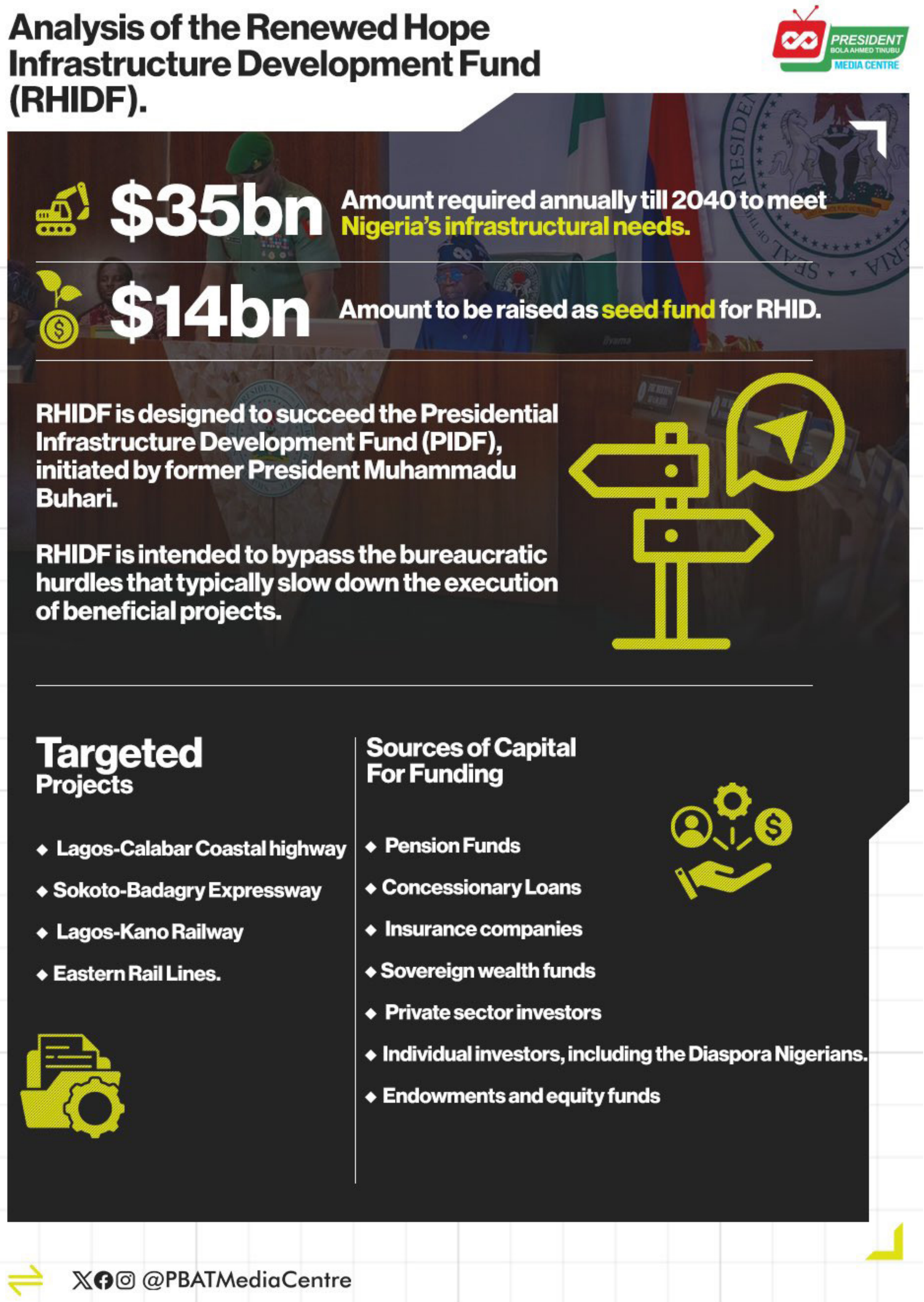
Efforts by the government to mitigate these challenges have yielded positive results, with the naira strengthening significantly in recent weeks, signalling a positive trajectory in the currency's performance.

He underscored the President's determination to ensure sustainable strengthening of the naira, particularly in preparation for forthcoming minimum wage negotiations. He stressed the importance of a stable currency in safeguarding the purchasing power of workers and sustaining economic growth.

To support small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) during this period, President Tinubu also approved several interventions, including the Presidential Conditional Grant Scheme (PCGS) and disbursement of funds through the Bank of Industry (BOI) and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). These initiatives aim to empower over a million Nigerian businesses and provide financial support to SMEs across all local government areas.

Furthermore, the President directed lending towards labour-intensive sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and construction, prioritising industries that contribute significantly to job creation and economic development.

In the light of these measures, President Tinubu urged Nigerians to collaborate with relevant agencies to ensure transparency and accountability in public affairs, highlighting the collective responsibility in safeguarding the nation's economic interests.



In response to this imperative, President Tinubu, in consultation with the Federal Executive Council (FEC), has approved the establishment of the RHIDF, which will be housed within the Presidency.

With a resolute determination to ensure progress and foster equitable development, President Tinubu has directed that projects funded under the Renewed Hope Infrastructural Development Fund (RHIDF) reflect a balanced national spread, ensuring that every Nigerian benefits from the administration's initiatives in the most qualitative manner possible.

Shedding light on this groundbreaking endeavour, Honourable Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mr. Mohammed Idris, emphasised President Tinubu's unwavering commitment to bridging the infrastructural deficit plaguing the country.

At the core of this initiative is the recognition of Nigeria's pressing infrastructure challenges. Mr. Idris highlighted the staggering figures, revealing that the country requires approximately $878 billion between 2016 and 2040 to bridge the infrastructure gap. This translates to an annual requirement of $35 billion, a formidable sum essential for addressing Nigeria's infrastructure shortfall.

The Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Mr. Zaach Adedeji, expounded on the innovative nature of the fund, describing it as a bedrock for driving Nigeria's infrastructure agenda forward.

The RHIDF represents a comprehensive approach to infrastructure development, consolidating existing resources to fuel economic growth and connectivity across various sectors, including transport, agriculture, aviation, and education. With inclusivity as a guiding principle, the fund aims to leave no community behind, fostering progress and prosperity nationwide.

Mr. Adedeji elucidated on the fund's key objectives, emphasising its role as an innovative infrastructure investment vehicle designed to attract and consolidate capital. Strategic investments, according to him, will be directed towards critical national projects spanning key sectors such as coastal roads, railways, agricultural infrastructure, ports, and airports. By securing advantageous financing arrangements, the RHIDF is poised to maximise the impact of its investments, propelling Nigeria towards sustainable development and economic advancement.

As Nigeria embarks on this transformational journey under President Tinubu's leadership, optimism abounds for a future defined by robust infrastructure, shared prosperity, and boundless opportunities. With the launch of the RHIDF, the stage is set for a new chapter in Nigeria's development story, one characterised by renewal, hope, and progress.

EDITORIAL

For Local Manufacturing: **FG Must Take A Step Towards Self-Reliance In Healthcare**

CONTINUES FROM COVER

quality medical supplies, not only within Nigeria but across the African continent.

Surely, sustaining initiatives like the AMA medical manufacturing plant requires a multifaceted approach and ongoing commitment from the federal government. We believe that the government has to take some measures to ensure the long-term success of local manufacturing in the healthcare sector.

On such note, we believe that the government should continue to enact supportive policies that spurs local manufacturing and create a conducive business environment. Such as providing tax breaks, subsidies, and regulatory assistance to encourage investment in the pharmaceutical industry.

Also, investing in infrastructure such as power, transportation, and logistics is crucial for the efficient operation of manufacturing facilities. The government should prioritise infrastructure projects that directly benefit the healthcare sector, ensuring reliable access to utilities and transportation networks.

Another step the government should adopt is developing a skilled workforce, which is an essential ingredient for the growth of the manufacturing sector. The government should not relent to invest in vocational training programs and educational initiatives focused on healthcare manufacturing, ensuring a steady supply of qualified personnel.

More so, supporting research and development in the pharmaceutical sector is vital for innovation and product diversification. The government must allocate funds for research and development grants and collaborate with academic institutions and industry partners to foster innovation in healthcare manufacturing.

We are of the opinion that the government must ensure the quality and safety of locally manufactured healthcare products. The government should strengthen regulatory bodies such as National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to enforce quality standards and conduct regular inspections of manufacturing facilities.

Moreover, we suggest that facilitating market access for locally manufactured products is also crucial for their commercial success. The government could support domestic manufacturers by promoting their products in public healthcare facilities, providing preferential procurement policies, and facilitating export opportunities.

The federal government must not forget collaborating with the private sector, we trust it is essential for driving investment and innovation in healthcare manufacturing. The government should foster public-private partnerships (PPPs) to leverage private sector expertise, technology, and funding for the development of manufacturing infrastructure.

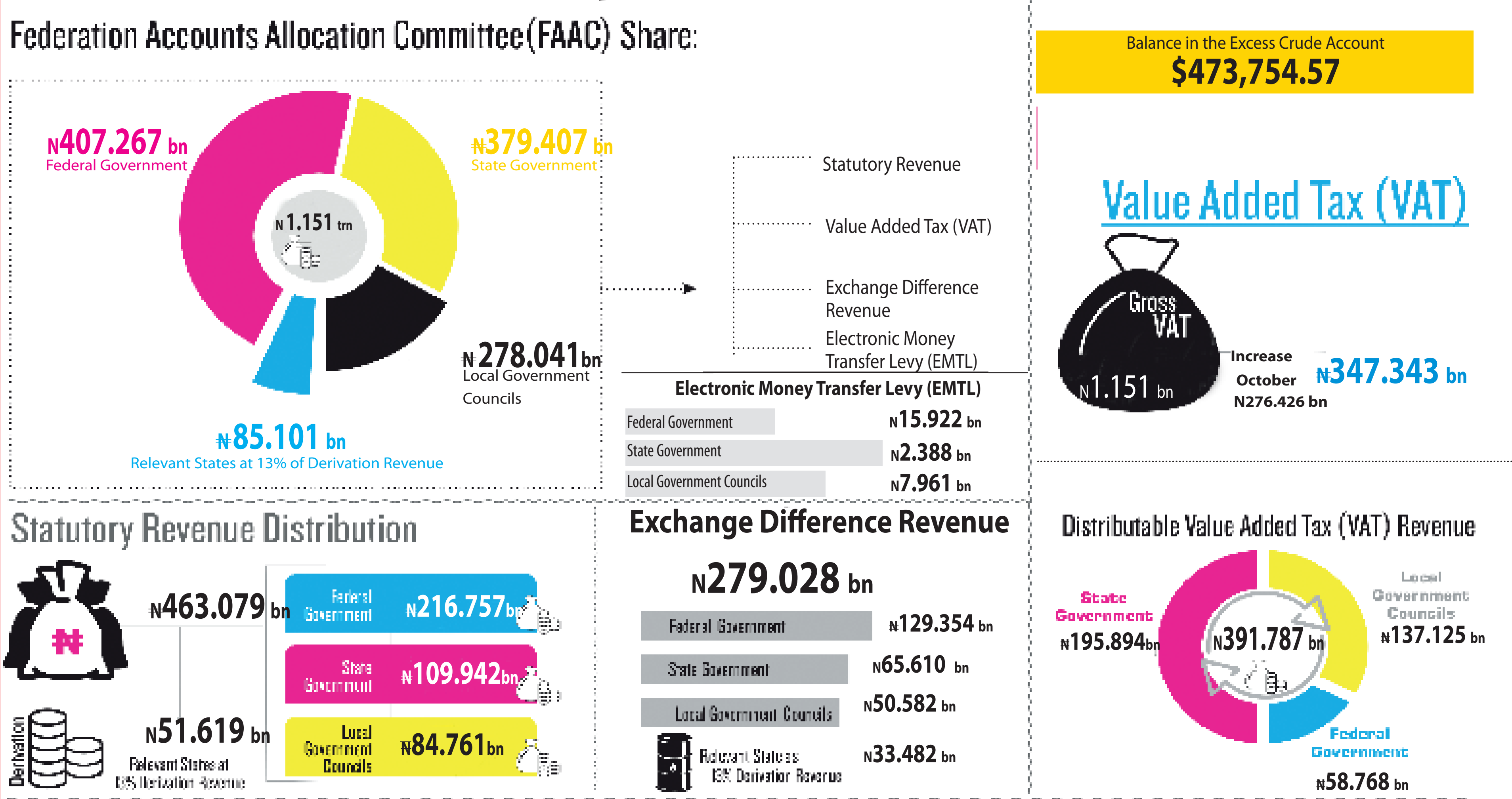
Furthermore, we proposed that regular monitoring and evaluation of local manufacturing initiatives are necessary to assess their impact and identify areas for improvement. The government should establish mechanisms for tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) and soliciting feedback from industry stakeholders to inform policy decisions.

No doubt that the timing of this initiative is particularly auspicious, as it aligns with broader efforts to revitalise the country's industrial sector and reduce dependence on imports, couple with the fact that the global economy is wrestling with supply chain disruptions and geopolitical uncertainties, so, prioritising self-sufficiency in critical sectors such as healthcare assumes greater significance.

However, realising the full potential of the AMA medical manufacturing plant requires sustained commitment and collaboration from all stakeholders. Challenges such as infrastructure bottlenecks, regulatory hurdles, and skilled labour shortages must be addressed comprehensively to ensure the success of this initiative. Additionally, concerted efforts are needed to promote research and development in the pharmaceutical sector, fostering innovation and enabling the production of a diverse range of essential medicines.

By implementing these measures, the government could create an enabling environment for sustained growth and competitiveness in the local healthcare manufacturing sector, ultimately improving access to essential medical products and driving economic development.

FAAC Shares N1.15 trn February 2024 Revenue To FG, States And LGCs



The tax landscape in January 2024 witnessed significant increases in CIT, import duty, petroleum profit tax (ppt), and oil and gas Royalties. However, VAT, export duty, EMTL, and CET Levies experienced considerable declines. This mixed performance reflects the evolving nature of Nigeria's revenue generation capabilities and the impact of global and local economic dynamics on tax collections.

FG Eyes $17bn GDP, 2.3m Jobs In Oil, Gas Sector

Kingsley Benson

In a bid to revitalise the nation's oil and gas sector, the federal government has announced ambitious policy reforms aimed at creating 2.3 million jobs and bolstering the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) by $17 billion.

These initiatives, spearheaded by President Bola Tinubu, are projected to attract up to $10 billion in fresh investments while streamlining operations within the industry.

The newly implemented policies, disclosed recently, are designed to significantly reduce the contracting cycle from a staggering 38 months to under six months. Additionally, the introduction of new tax incentives aims to incentive investors and enhance the overall attractiveness of the sector.

Addressing the press in Kano, Mr. Mohammed Idris, Honourable Minister of Information and National Orientation, highlighted the transformational impact of these reforms. He emphasised that upon full implementation, the reforms would lead to a substantial increase in gas supply, generating an additional billion cubic feet per day.

Furthermore, Mr. Idris underscored the significance of the policy directives in reducing operating costs within the oil and gas sector, which currently stand at 40 percent higher than the global average. This reduction in costs is poised to enhance efficiency and competitiveness, thereby fostering sustainable growth and development.

Moreover, he provided updates on the progress made in addressing security concerns in the Niger Delta region, a pivotal area for Nigeria's oil production. He noted a marked increase in NLNG cargoes, with shipments rising from an average of 16 cargoes in 2023 to 21 cargoes in the first quarter of 2024.

In terms of production, Mr. Idris revealed a significant increase in Nigeria's oil output, climbing from 1.22 million barrels per day in the second quarter of 2023 to 1.6 million barrels per day in the first quarter of 2024. This surge in production reflects the government's commitment to enhancing productivity and maximizing the nation's oil resources.

He urged Nigerians to remain steadfast in their support for President Tinubu's administration as it continues to address the myriad challenges facing the nation. He expressed confidence that with concerted efforts and strategic reforms, Nigeria's oil and gas sector would emerge as a key driver of economic growth and prosperity.

The unveiling of these comprehensive reforms marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's quest to harness the full potential of its oil and gas resources, signalling a new era of progress and prosperity for the nation.

FG To Establish Compressed Natural Gas Park At Ajaokuta Steel Company

By Kingsley Benson

The federal government has unveiled plans to establish a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) park at the Ajaokuta Steel Company in Kogi State.

According to the government, this is a part of efforts to promote green energy and alleviate the challenges faced by Nigerians following the removal of fuel subsidy.

The announcement was recently by Prince Shuaibu Audu, Honourable Minister of Steel Development, through a statement issued by Lizzy Okoji, his media aide, in Abuja.

He stated that the initiative falls under the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 'Renewed Hope Agenda', aimed at easing the burdens of citizens and contributing to the global shift towards energy transition.

According to the Minister, the establishment of the CNG park at Ajaokuta Steel Company is a strategic move to leverage existing infrastructure, including the natural gas line from Warri to Ajaokuta, the Metallurgical Training Centre, engineering workshops, and the 10,000 housing estates in Ajaokuta environs. This initiative is poised to enhance accessibility to clean and cost-effective sources of energy, thereby promoting sustainability and economic development in the region.

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) primarily consists of methane and serves as an alternative fuel for vehicles.

It is compressed to less than one percent of the volume it occupies at standard atmospheric pressure. President Tinubu's approval of the Presidential CNG Initiative (Pi-CNG) in August 2023 aligns with the government's commitment to revolutionising transportation and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

The Pi-CNG initiative aims to deploy over 11,500 new CNG-enabled vehicles and provide 55,000 conversion kits for existing petrol-dependent vehicles. By embracing CNG-powered vehicles, Nigeria seeks to actively contribute to a cleaner and healthier environment while addressing the challenges posed by the removal of fuel subsidy.

As the government continues to prioritise green energy initiatives, the establishment of the CNG park at Ajaokuta Steel Company marks a significant step towards achieving energy sufficiency and promoting sustainable development across the nation.

The stakeholders anticipate that this initiative will not only alleviate the energy challenges faced by Nigerians but also stimulate economic growth and environmental conservation in the long run.

FG Raises N475.67bn In March Bond Auction

By Anita Dennis

The Federal Government of Nigeria has successfully raised N475.67 billion in its March 2024 bond auction, making advantage of, the current rally in rising rates to attract robust investor interest.

The auction, held on March 18, 2024, by the Debt Management Office (DMO), witnessed overwhelming participation from investors, signalling confidence in the nation's economic stability and growth potential.

While the amount raised in March 2024 is slightly higher than the previous auction in January, which amassed about N418.197 billion, it falls short of February's remarkable N1.49 trillion. However, there has been a consistent increase in offered rates, escalating from an average of approximately 15 percent in January to around 20 percent in March.

The auction featured three offerings: a new three-year bond, along with the reopening of seven-year and 10-year bonds, all of which garnered remarkable demand. Notably, the 19.94 percent FGN MAR 2027 three-Year Bond and the 19.00 percent FGN FEB 2034 10-Year bond attracted significant attention from investors.

The three-year bond, offered at N150 billion, received bids totalling N264.628 billion, resulting in an allotment of N151.928 billion at a marginal rate of 19.94 percent. This represents a substantial subscription rate, nearly 76 percent above the offered amount, indicating investors' bullish stance on Nigeria's debt instruments.

Similarly, the 10-year bond, also offered at N150 billion, garnered bids amounting to N298.600 billion, leading to an allotment of N275.850 billion at a marginal rate of 20.45 percent. The substantial over subscription underscores strong confidence in the country's long-term economic prospects and stability.

Although the reopening of the seven-year bond saw relatively less overwhelming subscription, with bids totalling N51.786 billion against an offer of N150 billion, it still demonstrated healthy demand.

The DMO allocated N47.886 billion at a marginal rate of 20.00 percent, indicating a strategic preference among investors for a balanced approach between short-term gains and long-term security amidst market fluctuations.

The successful bond auction holds significant implications for Nigeria's economic landscape. It provides essential capital for the federal government's developmental and infrastructural initiatives, while also reflecting investors' appetite for higher-yield investments and confidence in Nigeria's economic management and policy direction. Furthermore, the willingness to lock in higher rates for longer terms suggests anticipation of inflation control and a stable interest rate environment in the foreseeable future.

The auction results underscore a broader trend of rising rates, with investors actively seeking opportunities promising higher returns in a stable economic environment. As Nigeria navigates these dynamics, stakeholders remain optimistic about the country's economic prospects and its ability to attract investment amidst evolving market conditions.

FEC Approves Construction Of 28 Roads, Bridges Worth N1.2trn

By Edmond Martins

The Federal Executive Council (FEC) has greenlit the construction of 28 roads and bridges across Nigeria, totalling over N1.267 trillion in investment.

The decision, announced by Honourable Minister of Works, Engr. Dave Umahi, comes in the wake of the council's meeting held on Monday, March 25, 2024.

Engr. Umahi revealed that the projects received FEC's stamp of approval after undergoing scrutiny by the Bureau of Public Procurement(BPP) and obtaining Certificates of No Objection.

Among the approved projects is the construction of the Buruku bridge spanning the Katsina Ala River in Benue State, with a budget exceeding N83.7 billion. Additionally, FEC gave the go-ahead for the construction of a 91.432-kilometer road in Saki, Oyo State, valued at N144 billion.

However, one project, the road construction from Biu-Kanga-Gaya to the border of Niger Republic, amounting to approximately N158 billion, was deferred by FEC.

In a bid to address Nigeria's infrastructural deficit, FEC also authorised the establishment of an infrastructure fund, to be known as the 'Renewed Hope Infrastructural Fund'.

This decision follows a stark realisation that Nigeria would require over $878 billion to bridge the infrastructural gap in the country.

The approval of these projects and the establishment of the infrastructure fund signify the government's commitment to accelerating infrastructural development nationwide. With Nigeria grappling with infrastructural challenges spanning transportation, connectivity, and accessibility, these initiatives aim to enhance economic growth, stimulate investment, and improve the overall quality of life for citizens.

Stakeholders and citizens await the implementation of these projects with anticipation, hoping that they will translate into tangible improvements in infrastructure and propel Nigeria towards sustainable development and prosperity.

NEWS IN PICTURES

NDIC's delegation led by the MD/CE of the NDIC, **Mr. Bello Hassan,** including the ED/Operations, **Mr. Mustapha M. Ibrahim;** ED/Corporate Services, **Mrs. Emily C. Osuji;** Head Legal Department, **Mr. Henry Fomah;** and Director Communication and Public Affairs, **Mr. Bashir A. Nuhu;** with the Chairman of Economic and Finance Crimes Commission (EFCC), **Mr. Ola Olukoyede,** and the EFCC management staff at the EFCC Headquarters in Abuja.

Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) **Mr. Bello Hassan** receives a commemorative plaque from the Chairman of the Economic & Finance Crimes Commission (EFCC) **Mr. Ola Olukoyede** during the NDIC Management's visit to the EFCC Headquarters in Abuja.

NDIC Reaffirms Commitment To Prosecute Those Contributing To Bank Failures

Emphasises Partnership With EFCC To Curb Financial Crimes In The Banking Sector

The management team of NDIC with the members of the executive council of the Nigeria Economic Society (NES) during the courtesy visit to the Headquarters of NDIC in Abuja.

By Majeed Salaam

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that those who contribute to the failure of banks are properly investigated and prosecuted.

Mr. Bello Hassan, Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive of the NDIC, made the reaffirmation in his remarks during the recent courtesy visit of the NDIC management to the Executive Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mr. Ola Olukoyede, at the EFCC Headquarters in Abuja.

Mr. Hassan, in a release by Mr. Bashir A. Nuhu, Director, Communication and Public Affairs, explained that the NDIC plays a critical role in combating financial crimes within the banking sector through its mandate which includes bank supervision and liquidation of licensed banks.

The ultimate objective, he stated, is to protect depositors' funds and ensure the stability of the financial system.

The MD/CE of the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC), **Mr. Bello Hassan** (2nd left); President of Nigeria Economic Society (NES), **Prof. Adeola Adenikinju** (2nd right), with the Executive Director Corporate Services of the NDIC, **Mrs. Emily C. Osuji** (1st left), and Executive Director Operations of NDIC, **Mr. Mustapha M. Ibrahim** (1st right), during the courtesy visit by the Executive Council of NES to the Headquarters of NDIC in Abuja.

He commended the EFCC for its relentless efforts in the fight against corruption and financial crimes, emphasising the indispensable role it plays as a key member of the Task force on Implementation of the Failed Banks Act which is chaired by the NDIC.

Mr. Hassan elaborated on the existing partnership between the two organisations which led to the establishment of the NDIC Help Desk in the EFCC in August 2022. As a result, he stated that a total number of 10 high profile cases referred to the commission are currently under investigation.

The NDIC boss called for enhanced collaboration in the recovery of depositors' funds to ensure that liquidation dividends are paid to depositors whose monies were lost as a result of bank failures.

He, therefore, solicited for the return of recoveries made by the EFCC on behalf of the NDIC to the corporation's coffers in order to facilitate the timely reimbursement of depositors.

Mr. Olukoyede emphasised the interconnection between criminal activities and bank failures, urging NDIC and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to intensify oversight to prevent the risk of bank failure.

He pledged the EFCC's commitment to deepening collaboration and synergising efforts in combating financial crimes, thereby safeguarding the integrity of Nigeria's banking sector.

CBN Scrutinises Banks Over N20trn Loan

By Kingsley Benson

The Central Bank of Nigeria(CBN) has taken firm regulatory actions to inspect over N20 trillion worth of loans taken by bank insiders, major owners, and shareholders.

The CBN Governor, Mr. Olayaemi Cardoso, has dispatched teams of special examiners to thoroughly review the financial records of major banks.

As the first quarter of 2024 comes to a close, many banks have yet to release their full year 2023 financial reports due to CBN's stringent oversight measures aimed at curbing financial irregularities within the banking sector.

Banks are now required to obtain final approval from the CBN before making their audited reports and accounts public, a move aimed at halting questionable financial practices.

It has also been revealed that a significant portion of outstanding loans held by bank owners and insiders are non-performing, with many denominated in foreign currencies.

The devaluation of the naira by 70 percent against the dollar since June 2023 has further exacerbated the situation.

In a recent rating action, Fitch ratings predicted a rise in impaired loans within the banking sector, particularly following the currency devaluation.

This has placed additional pressure on banks, with some such as First City Monument Bank (FCMB) and Union Bank of Nigeria (UBN), at risk of breaching capital requirements.

Mr. Cardoso, characterised as a professional akin to the United States (US) Fed Chair, Jerome Powell, remains resolute in his commitment to cleansing the Nigerian banking sector of corruption.

The Nigerian banking sector has faced mounting criticism for its alleged involvement in economic crimes, with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) estimating that 70 percent of financial crimes in the country could be traced back to banks.

Investor sentiment towards banking stocks has remained cautious since the beginning of the year, with Mr. Cardoso signalling a departure from past practices at the CBN.

The Nigerian Exchange (NGX) banking index has underperformed compared to other sectors, reflecting investor concerns amid the ongoing regulatory scrutiny.

NDIC In A Meeting With NES Assures Support For Resilient Financial System

By Edmond Martins

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening and improving its efforts towards the stability of the nation's financial system in the face of recent economic challenges.

The Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive (CE) of NDIC, Mr. Bello Hassan, said this during the visit of the Executive Council of the Nigerian Economic Society (NES) led by its President, Prof. Adeola Adenikinju, to the NDIC's management in Abuja.

Mr. Hassan emphasised the critical role of NDIC in stabilising the banking sector and instilling public confidence in the financial system through its bank supervision, distress resolution and depositor protection activities.

In a statement by Mr. Bashir A. Nuhu, Director, Communication and Public Affairs of NDIC, the NDIC boss noted the corporation's significant achievements, saying that the achievements and contributions of the corporation have directly contributed to fostering a robust economy, especially amidst prevailing economic challenges.

Mr. Hassan also pointed out that both the NES and the NDIC have shared objectives and commitment to fortifying the nation's financial system and advancing economic resilience.

He underscored the crucial role of NES in addressing contemporary economic challenges, citing the wealth of expertise and research resources within the Society.

Mr. Hassan, therefore, pledged the corporation's support towards NES activities and called for greater collaboration in knowledge sharing, research, and capacity-building initiatives leveraging on the collective expertise of both bodies.

Mr. Bello Hassan (l), Managing Director and Chief Executive (MD/CE) of the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) presents the corporation's research publications to the President of the Nigeria Economic Society (NES), **Prof. Adeola Adenikinju,** during the courtesy visit of the executive council of NES to the headquarters of the NDIC in Abuja.

While appreciating the NDIC's consistent support towards the NES, Prof. Adenikinju commended the corporation for its significant contributions to the financial sector.

He explained that the society, which is made up of experts and researchers that specialise in different aspects of the economy, has been at the forefront of shaping economic policies for Nigeria's development since 1957.

He said that the society remains committed towards contributing recommendations to address current economic challenges.

Prof. Adenikinju also revealed that the NES's forthcoming 65th Annual Conference scheduled to take place in September this year will provide a veritable platform to engage with scholars, experts, captains of industry, key stakeholders and decision makers to examine critical economic issues and make actionable recommendations to address them.

The theme of the conference is 'Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria: Imperatives, Implications and Impacts.'

He welcomed the NDIC's support and said that it would go a long way in strengthening the NSE's contributions to the current governments efforts in economic policy reform.

NCS Postpones 25% Penalty On Improperly Imported Vehicles

Extends e-Auction Portal Access To Holders Of Joint Tax Board TINs

By Musa Ibrahim

In a bid to alleviate economic hardships and foster compliance, the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has announced the suspension of the 25 percent import duty penalty imposed on improperly imported vehicles.

The Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, issued the directive for this suspension as part of broader strategies to rejuvenate the economy.

Mr. Abdullahi Maiwada, the National Public Relations Officer of the service, recently conveyed this development in a statement, highlighting that the suspension of the penalty is accompanied by a 90-day window, effective from March 4, 2024, to July 5, 2024.

He said that the development is for the regularisation of import duties on specific categories of vehicles.

Mr. Maiwada emphasised that the objective behind the suspension is to ease economic hardships and regulate compliance among stakeholders, including vehicle owners, importers, and agents. He urged them to seize the opportunity within the designated time frame to regularise import duty payments.

Improperly imported vehicles, often brought in through land borders with neighbouring countries like Benin and Niger, have been a long-standing issue in Nigeria.

Mr. Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, Comptroller-General of Customs

Many of these vehicles evade proper documentation and levy payments at customs, leading to the imposition of the 25 percent penalty when owners attempt to register them. The suspension of this penalty aims to provide relief to affected individuals and streamline import duty processes.

This announcement by the NCS comes amidst efforts to address the demands of Nigerians amidst a cost-of-living crisis in the country.

Earlier in the month, in response to concerns regarding inconsistent import duty assessment levies, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) issued a directive advising the customs to adopt the closing foreign exchange rate in the official window for import duty calculations.

The CBN's directive aims to provide clarity and reduce business uncertainty by ensuring that import duty assessment is based on a consistent foreign exchange (FX) rate.

By aligning import duty calculations with the closing FX rate on the date of opening Form M for importation, the CBN seeks to mitigate disruptions in pricing and overall business operations caused by irregular changes in import duty rates.

Overall, these measures represent collaborative efforts between government agencies to address economic challenges and enhance transparency and compliance in importation processes, ultimately contributing to Nigeria's economic stability and growth.

In another development, the NCS announced a significant expansion of its e-auction portal, now allowing individuals with a valid Joint Tax Board (JTB) Tax Identification Number (TIN) to participate in auction activities.

This move was recently revealed through an official statement posted on the verified NCS X account.

Previously, the participation in the e-auction portal, launched on January 15, 2024, was restricted to individuals with a valid Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) Tax Identification Number (TIN), verified on tax promax.

However, with the recent update, holders of JTB TINs now have the chance to register and engage in auction activities facilitated by the Customs.

The NCS emphasised the importance of this expansion, noting that it opens doors for a wider range of Nigerians to access and acquire goods through the e-auction platform. By extending access to holders of JTB TINs, the customs aims to promote transparency, and efficiency in its auction processes.

Interested participants are required to sign up on the e-auction platform using an active email address and pay a non-refundable fee of N1,000 through the platform. Bidding on the portal is open every Tuesday from 12 noon to 6 pm, with each bid incurring a participation fee of N1,000. Winners of bids must make payments within three days and collect items from the designated terminal.

The NCS reiterated that auctioned items are sold 'as is,' with no provision for replacement or refund. Additionally, prompt payment of a 7.5 percent valued added tax (VAT) and a refundable container deposit (if applicable) are mandatory for all winning bids.

By embracing holders of JTB TINs, the NCS aims to enhance accessibility and promote broader participation in its auction processes, ultimately benefiting a larger segment of the Nigerian populace.

FG Introduces A Single- digit Tax System

By Chiamaka Okpala G.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has issued a directive for establishing a single-digit tax system, limiting the maximum number of taxes to nine.

The directive, slated to take effect following the completion of the Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms' work, aims to simplify Nigeria's tax structure, potentially reducing the tax burden for individuals and businesses alike.

Currently, the country operates with a multitude of taxes, but the President's directive seeks to streamline this complexity, fostering a more conducive environment for businesses to thrive and bolster economic growth, as outlined by Mr. Dare Adekanmbi, Special Adviser on Media to the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) chairman.

Mr. Zacch Adedeji, the Executive Chairman of FIRS, announced the directive during a recent meeting with the management team of Guinness Nigeria in Abuja.

Mr. Zacch Adedeji, Executive Chairman of FIRS

He emphasised the FIRS's commitment to expanding the national tax base rather than introducing new taxes or escalating existing ones.

Mr. Adedeji highlighted the FIRS's revamped operational structure, which prioritises a customer-centric approach. Taxpayers are now categorised based on size to receive tailored support and benefit from a centralised hub for tax-related matters.

Beyond tax reform, he also stated that the President's economic agenda encompasses various initiatives aimed at stimulating growth. These include the launch of a consumer credit scheme to bolster purchasing power, plans for a simplified payment platform for businesses importing goods to reduce costs and delays, and the 'Renewed Hope Infrastructure Fund' targeting transportation network enhancements.

In response, Mr. Adebayo Alli, Chief Executive Officer of Guinness Nigeria, reassured the chairman of FIRS that Guinness remained committed to investing in the country. At the same time, he sought assurances from the tax authority regarding its role in aiding the economic recovery efforts and steering the economy back on track.

IMF Develops Transparency Code For Central Banks To Enhance Accountability, Policy Effectiveness

By Jennete Ugo Anya

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has introduced a transparency code aimed at assisting central banks worldwide in assessing and enhancing their practices to foster transparency, accountability, and policy effectiveness.

According to the fund, the IMF's Central Bank Transparency Code (CBT) serves as an international benchmark, enabling central banks and their stakeholders to align their transparency practices with global best practices.

It is designed to bolster transparency and accountability within central banks without imposing governance standards.

The CBT operates on a comprehensive 5-pillar framework, encompassing transparency principles concerning central bank governance, policies, operations, outcomes, and official relations with governments and other agencies. These principles offer high-level guidance, complemented by three levels of detailed transparency practices: core, expanded, and comprehensive.

The newly introduced report by the IMF underscores the relevance of the CBT to all member countries' central banks, considering their diverse backgrounds, legal frameworks, governance arrangements, and levels of economic and financial development. This tailored approach enables central banks and their stakeholders to evaluate transparency practices in light of country-specific circumstances.

Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the IMF, emphasised the significance of strong governance and independence for central banks. She highlighted the importance of central bankers having control over budgets and personnel, free from easy dismissal based on policy views or actions taken within their legal mandate.

She emphasised that when central banks and governments effectively fulfill their respective roles, better outcomes are observed in controlling inflation, promoting growth and employment, and mitigating financial stability risks.

Georgieva reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to supporting policy-makers in navigating the evolving challenges faced by central banks worldwide. She highlighted the IMF's strong backing for central bank independence, highlighting the provision of tailored technical assistance to member countries aimed at enhancing governance and legal frameworks.

In her address, Georgieva underscored the importance of central bank independence as a cornerstone of effective monetary policy. She revealed that the IMF has incorporated independence as an explicit pillar in some of its financing programs, collaborating with member countries to implement measures that measure and achieve independence effectively.

The IMF has introduced innovative approaches to measure central bank independence, based on aspects identified as crucial through a recent survey of central banks. Additionally, the development of a transparency code by the IMF aims to empower central banks to assess and enhance their transparency practices, further reinforcing accountability and trust.

Georgieva stressed the significance of collaborative efforts between central bankers, government leaders, legislatures, and the public in preserving and strengthening central banks' roles in combating inflation and promoting economic stability and growth in the long term.

Amid mounting pressures on central bank independence, including calls for premature interest rate cuts and risks of political interference in decision-making and personnel appointments, Georgieva emphasised the importance of resistance from both governments and central bankers. She cited an IMF study spanning from 2007 to 2021, which demonstrated that central banks with strong independence scores were more successful in managing people's inflation expectations, thereby contributing to lower inflation rates.

The study underscores the critical role of central bank independence, which has become increasingly paramount across countries at every income level. By upholding independence and strengthening collaborative efforts, central banks can effectively navigate challenges and fulfil their mandates to ensure economic stability and growth for years to come.

Subsidy Removal Spurs Record Allocation Of N10.14tn To FG, States, LGs

By Musa Ibrahim

The removal of subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) has so far driven up statutory revenue allocations from the federation account, totalling a staggering N10.14 trillion in 2023.

This has marked an increase of N1.93 trillion compared to allocations in 2022, according to data released by the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI).

NEITI has attributed this surge to President Bola Tinubu's removal of the fuel subsidy in May 2023, which led to a significant hike in petrol prices.

Following the President's declaration, petrol prices soared from N198/litre to approximately N500/litre, subsequently impacting revenue remittances to the federation account.

The breakdown of the allocations revealed that the federal government received N3.99 trillion (39.37 percent), while the 36 states and 774 local government councils shared N3.585 trillion (35.34 percent) and N2.56 trillion (25.28 percent) respectively.

The report highlighted a 23.56 percent increase in total disbursements compared to 2022, attributed to improved revenue remittances resulting from the subsidy removal and the floating of the exchange rate by the new administration.

Despite the overall increase, the distribution of revenue varied among the tiers of government, with states and local governments experiencing higher percentage increases than the federal government. Notably, Delta State received the largest share of allocations, followed by Rivers and Akwa-Ibom states.

Derivation revenues, particularly significant for mineral-producing states, played a crucial role in boosting allocations. However, solid minerals producing states did not receive derivation revenues in the last quarter of 2023 due to the need for revenue accumulation before sharing.

The report also emphasised the importance of fiscal prudence, economic diversification, and investment in enhancing revenue generation and reducing dependence on oil revenues.

Overall, the surge in revenue allocations underscores the significant impact of policy decisions on the nation's fiscal framework and highlights the imperative for strategic economic management to ensure sustainable development and financial stability.

President Tinubu Establishes Presidential Economic Coordination Council, EET

By Jennete Ugo Anya

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has taken significant steps towards enhancing Nigeria's economic governance framework with the establishment of two key entities: the Presidential Economic Coordination Council (PECC) and the Economic Management Team Emergency Taskforce (EET).

In a statement released on Wednesday, March 27, 2024 by Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Mr. Ajuri Ngelale, it was revealed that President Tinubu initiated the creation of the PECC and EET to streamline economic planning and implementation processes.

The PECC, chaired by President Tinubu himself, comprises 31 members drawn from key government officials and representatives from the organised private sector. This council is poised to serve as a high-level platform for coordinating economic policies and strategies aimed at driving sustainable economic growth and development.

Membership of the PECC include Vice President Kashim Shettima as Vice-Chairman; President of the Nigerian Senate, Sen. Godswill Akpabio ; Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum, Mr. AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq ; Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Wale Edun; Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr. Olayemi Cardoso; Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Hon. Abubakar Kyari; Honourable Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Mr. Festus Keyamo, and Honourable Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Mr. Atiku Bagudu.

Others include Honourable Ministers of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Mr. Bosun Tijani; Honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Mrs. Doris Uzoka-Anite; Honourable Minister of Labour and Employment, Mrs. Nkiruka Onyejeocha; Honourable Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Mr. Adegboyega Oyetola; Honourable Minister of Power, Mr. Adebayo Adelabu; Honourable Minister of State Gas, Petroleum Resources, Mr. Ekperipe Ekpo; Honourable Minister of State Oil, Petroleum resources, Mr. Heineken Lokpobiri; hounourable Minister of Transportation, Sa'Idu Alkaliand Honourable Minister of Works, Engr. David Umahi.

The PECC, which also comprise 13 key members of the organised private sector, joining for a period not exceeding one year, subject to the President's directive, include Alhaji Aliko Dangote; Mr. Tony Elumelu; Alhaji Abdulsamad Rabiu; Ms. Amina Maina; Mr. Begun Ajayi-Kadir; Mrs. Funke Okpeke and Dr. Doyin Salami.

Other PECC members from the private sector are Mr. Patrick Okigbo; Mr. Kola Adesina; Mr. Segun Agbaje; Mr. Chidi Ajaere; Mr. Abdulkadir Aliu and Mr. Rasheed Sarumi.

Additionally, President Tinubu established the Economic Management Team Emergency Taskforce (EET) with the aim of addressing immediate economic challenges and ensuring the efficient execution of economic strategies.

This task force, composed of key government officials and industry leaders, is mandated to formulate and implement a comprehensive emergency economic plan for 2024, covering the next six months, for immediate execution within two weeks of its formation.

The membership of the task force includes Mr. Edun, who serves as the Chairman, along with other key Honourable Ministers such as Mr. Bagudu; Mr Adedalu; Mr. Kyari; Mr. Tunji Alausa, and Mrs. Anite.

Additionally, it comprises officials such as the Governor of Niger State, Mr. Mohammed Umar Bago; Executive Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Mr. Zach Adedeji; Director-General (DG) of the Budget Office of the Federation, Mr. Ben Akabueze; Group Chief Executive Officer(GCEO) of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited, Mallam Mele Kyari; DG of the Nigeria Economic Summit Group (NESG), Mr. Frank NwekeII; Special Adviser to the President on Energy, Mrs. Olu Verheijen and prominent economists such as Dr. Bismarck Rewane and Dr. Suleyman Ndanusa.

The statement further elaborates that the Economic Management Team (EMT), established in October 2023 and chaired by the Coordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance, will now serve as the working group under the PECC. During the six-month mandate of the EET, the EMT's monthly meetings will be suspended.

The Chairman of the EMT may call upon any Federal Minister or Head of Agency as needed to provide updates on key programs and developments affecting the economy.

These teams will complement existing economic governance structures such as the National Economic Council (NEC) chaired by the Vice-President. Over the next six months, the EET will prioritise the rapid implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of critical initiatives to advance Nigeria's economic objectives under the Tinubu-led administration.

The formation of the PECC, under President Tinubu's Chairmanship, along with the establishment of the EET led by the Chairman of the EMT, reflects a unified strategy aimed at enhancing Nigeria's economic management architecture for improved performance.

FG Partners With NSIA On Procurement Of Radiotherapy Equipment For Cancer Centres

By Jennete Ugo Anya

In a bid to enhance cancer treatment and care across Nigeria, the federal government has announced plans to collaborate with the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) in the acquisition and maintenance of radiotherapy equipment for cancer centres nationwide.

The Director-General (DG) of the National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment, Prof Usman Aliyu, unveiled this during the City Cancer Challenge Initiative Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement Workshop recently held in Abuja. Prof Aliyu, representing the Honourable Minister of State for Health, Dr. Tunji Alausa, emphasised the critical role of radiotherapy in cancer treatment, highlighting its capacity to cure, prevent recurrence, and alleviate symptoms.

According to Prof Aliyu, the NSIA-Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) cancer centre boasts the country's top-notch cancer equipment. The government aims to replicate this standard across other centres, aligning with President Bola Tinubu's directive to upgrade six cancer centres spanning the six geopolitical zones.

"The Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof Muhammad Pate, aims to mirror the exemplary standards observed at LUTH across other regions," Prof Aliyu stated.

He cited the NSIA platform's track record of minimal breakdowns, attributing it to the centre's exemplary equipment maintenance protocols. He estimated the NSIA-LUTH's equipment to be functioning at 80 percent to 90 percent excellence, serving as a benchmark for nationwide replication.

Mr. Aminu Umar-Sadiq, MD/CEO NSIA

The decision comes amidst escalating cancer incidence rates in Nigeria, posing a significant public health challenge. Citing the 2022 Global Cancer Observatory report, Prof Aliyu highlighted 127,763 new cancer cases diagnosed, with 79,542 cancer-related fatalities in Nigeria.

This partnership between the government and NSIA signifies a concerted effort to bolster cancer treatment infrastructure nationwide. By prioritising the procurement and maintenance of advanced radiotherapy equipment, the government aims to enhance access to quality cancer care, ultimately mitigating the burden of the disease on the Nigerian populace.

The workshop, convened to galvanise efforts in the battle against cancer, drew attention to the necessity of collaboration among stakeholders.

Prof Aliyu reiterated the significance of collective action, emphasising the imperative of synergy to ensure optimal care for cancer patients not only in Abuja but throughout Nigeria.

"By engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders, we can leverage resources, expertise, and bridge existing gaps within our healthcare system," Prof Aliyu asserted, underscoring the workshop's pivotal role in charting a path forward.

Dr. Dolapo Fasawe, the Mandate Secretary for Health Services and Environment Secretariat in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), echoed this sentiment, stressing the foundational importance of the workshop to the project's success.

She emphasised its role in shaping subsequent phases and aligning objectives to address the burgeoning cancer challenge effectively.

"This initiative will mobilise communities across the FCT, educating them on early cancer signs and bolstering awareness," Dr. Fasawe affirmed.

She expressed confidence in the administration's commitment to identifying and rectifying gaps contributing to the high cancer mortality and morbidity rates.

Mrs. Sophie Bussman-Kemdjo, Director of Africa and Europe at City Cancer Challenge Foundation, outlined the organisation's strategy.

Operating in 15 cities globally, the foundation plans to adapt tested frameworks to enhance cancer care in the FCT. She emphasised the establishment of a governance body to oversee implementation and prioritise needs through collaborative efforts with stakeholders.

"This approach ensures localised interventions tailored to the FCT's unique challenges. We aim to support existing initiatives and foster partnerships to amplify impact," Mrs. Bussman-Kemdjo explained.

The workshop concluded with a collective commitment to leverage partnerships, expertise, and resources to confront the cancer epidemic head-on.

With a renewed sense of purpose and collaboration, stakeholders are poised to advance towards comprehensive cancer care and reduce the burden of the disease on Nigerian communities.

The collaboration underscores a commitment to improving healthcare infrastructure and addressing critical health challenges, positioning Nigeria on a path towards comprehensive cancer care and management.

Nigeria Moves To Ban Importation Of Syringes To Boost Local Production

By Anita Dennis

In a significant development for Nigeria's industrial sector, the African Industries Group has announced the completion of its iron ore mining and processing plant in Gujeni, Kagarko Local Government of Kaduna State, marking the country's entry into iron and steel production, crucial for the construction sector.

During a plant tour, there were Honourable Minister of Mines Solid Minerals, Mr. Dele Alake and Honourable Minister of Industry, Trade, and Investment, Mrs. Doris Nkiruka Uzoka-Anite.

Mr. Alake commended the company for its commitment to local value addition, stressing the importance of processing and refining minerals domestically rather than exporting them raw. He lauded the plant as the largest FDI in Nigeria's mineral sector, with an estimated investment of $600 million, presenting a tangible step towards economic restructuring.

Echoing this sentiment, Mrs. Uzoka-Anite highlighted the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment's focus on steel as pivotal for industrial revitalisation and infrastructure development. She emphasised the necessity of prioritising steel due to its critical role in infrastructure development, which in turn would rejuvenate industries.

She also accented the imperative need for the approval of the infrastructure development fund to facilitate accelerated growth in the sector, enabling the construction of essential infrastructure such as roads and rail lines.

At the tour, Mr. Alok Gupta, the Group Managing Director of African Industries Group, emphasised the journey that began in 2016 with community development agreements and land acquisitions.

This journey, according to Gupta, has now culminated in the establishment of a fully integrated iron ore processing plant boasting a capacity to produce 6 million tons of steel annually.

Mr. Gupta highlighted the plant's significance as Nigeria's largest non-oil foreign direct investment (FDI), representing a pivotal step towards utilising the nation's resources for economic prosperity.

He highlighted that the direct reduced iron (DRI) produced at the plant would serve as a direct substitute for ferrous scrap, currently utilised as raw material for steel production in Nigeria.

Additionally, Mr. Gupta underscored the creation of 4,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities for Nigerians, alongside investments in the development of the host community.

Nigeria With African Industries Group Begin Steel Production

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ADVERT RATE

COLOUR

PRODUCT		
Size	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
F/P	620,300.00	46,522.50
H/P	392,100.00	29,407.50
Q/P	245,100.00	18,386.25
14.5x5	400,000.00	30,000.00
14.5x3	320,000.00	24,000.00
10x6	560,000.00	42,000.00
10x5	540,500.00	40,537.50
10x4	360,100.00	27,007.50
9x6	505,000.00	37,875.00
9x5	482,350.00	36,176.25
9x4	360,000.00	27,000.00
9x3	260,000.00	19,500.00
8x6	406,000.00	30,450.00
8x5	390,600.00	29,295.00
8x4	310,300.00	23,272.50
7x6	355,000.00	26,625.00
7x5	345,100.00	25,882.50
7x4	270,800.00	20,310.00
7x2	250,000.00	18,750.00
6x4	240,000.00	18,000.00
6x3	180,000.00	13,500.00
6x2	102,100.00	7,657.50
5x6	261,000.00	19,575.00
5x5	240,000.00	18,000.00
5x4	191,300.00	14,347.50
5x3	150,600.00	11,295.00
5x2	90,000.00	6,750.0
4x4	158,500.00	11,887.50
4x3	120,00.00	9,000.00
4x2	70,000.00	5,250.00
3x2	55,000.00	4,125.00
2x2	37,000.00	2,775.00
2x1	25,000.00	1,875.00
1x1	8,500.00	637.00

PUBLIC NOTICE POLITICAL		
Size	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
F/P	578,838.55	43,412.90
H/P	328,329.84	24,624.74
Q/P	158,498.88	11,887.42
14.5x5	234,558.65	35,183.80
14.5x3	284,858.44	21,364.38
10x6	388,303.80	29,122.78
10x5	323,586.50	24,268.98
10x4	258,869.20	19,415.20
9x6	349,473.42	26,210.50
9x5	291,227.85	21,842.08
9x4	232,982.28	17,473.68
9x3	174,736.70	13,105.26
8x6	310,643.04	23,298.22
8x5	258,869.20	19,415.20
8x4	207,095.36	15,532.16
7x6	271,812.66	20,385.94
7x5	226,510.55	16,988.30
7x4	181,208.44	13,590.64
7x2	90,604.22	6,795.32
6x4	155,321.52	11,649.12
6x3	116,491.14	8,736.84
6x2	77,660.76	5,824.56
5x6	194,151.90	14,561.40
5x5	161,793.24	12,134.50
5x4	129,434.60	9,707.60
5x3	97,075.95	7,280.70
5x2	64,717.30	4,853.80
4x4	103,547.66	7,766.08
4x3	77,660.74	5,824.56
4x2	51,773.84	3,883.04
3x2	38,830.38	2,912.28
2x2	25,886.92	1,941.52
2x1	12,943.46	970.76
1x1	6,471.72	485.38

BLACK AND WHITE

PRODUCT		
Size	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
F/P	475,200.00	35,640
H/P	310,300.00	23,272.5
Q/P	152,500.00	11,437.5
14.5x5	312,150.00	23,411.25
14.5x3	286,500	286,500
9x6	252,400.00	18,930.00
9x5	301,000.00	22,575.00
9x4	240,600.00	18,045.00
9x3	225,500.00	16,912.50
8x6	330,000.00	24,750.00
8x5	265,650.00	19,923.75
8x4	235,550.00	17,666.25
7x6	215,000.00	16,125.00
7x5	155,000.00	11,625.00
7x4	150,300.00	11,272.50
7x2	135,000.00	10,125.50
6x4	148,100.00	11,107.50
6x3	120,800.00	9,060.00
6x2	80,000.00	6,000.00
5x6	155,000.00	240,000.00
5x5	180,000.00	180,000.00
5x4	102,100.00	
5x3	115,000.00	
5x2	120,000.00	
4x4	102,300.00	7,672.5
4x3	80,000.00	6,000.00
4x2	50,000.00	3,750.00
3x2	38,000.00	2,850.00
2x2	27,100.00	2,032.5
2x1	70,000.00	70,000.00
1x1	6,100	457.5

PUBLIC NOTICE POLITICAL		
Size	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
F/P	435,178.08	32,638.36
H/P	254,538.96	19,090.42
Q/P	131,226.90	9,842.02
14.5x5	38,040.56	2,853.04
14.5x3	232,825.87	17,461.94
10x6	319,512.00	23,963.40
10x5	266,260.00	19,969.50
10x4	213,006.00	15,975.46
9x6	287,560.80	21,567.06
9x5	239,634.00	17,972.56
9x4	191,707.20	14,378.04
9x3	143,780.40	10,783.54
8x6	255,609.60	19,170.72
8x5	213,008.00	15,975.60
8x4	170,406.40	12,780.48
7x6	223,658.00	16,774.36
7x5	186,382.00	13,978.66
7x4	149,105.60	11,182.92
7x2	74,552.80	5,591.46
6x4	127,804.80	9,585.36
6x3	95,853.60	7,189.02
6x2	63,902.40	4,792.68
5x6	159,756.00	11,981.70
5x5	133,130.00	9,984.76
5x4	106,504.00	7,987.80
5x3	79,878.00	5,990.86
5x2	53,252.00	3,993.90
4x4	85,203.20	6,390.24
4x3	83,902.40	6,292.68
4x2	42,601.60	3,195.12
3x2	31,951.20	2,396.34
2x2	21,300.80	1,597.56
2x1	10,650.40	798.78
1x1	5,325.20	399.40

SPECIAL POSITION	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
FPS 6x2	1,291,193.44	96,839.50
BPS 6x2	923,375.00	69,253.12
STRIP (FRONT) 2X6	1,322,912.50	99,218.44
STRIP (BACK) 2X6	1,037,500.00	77,812.50
STRIP (INSIDE) 2X6	218,460.38	16,384.52
EARPIECE (FRONT) 2X2	517,094.30	38,782.08
EARPIECE (BACK) 2X2	405,145.10	30,385.88
EARPIECE (INSIDE) 2X2	240,000.00	18,000.00
CENTERSPREAD (FULL)	3,320,000.00	249,000.00
CENTERSPREAD (HALF)	1,992,000.00	149,400.00
CENTERSPREAD (STRIP)	594,300.00	44,572.50
DOUBLESPREAD	2,982,952.00	223,721.40

WRAP	Rate	Vat (7.5%)
FULL WRAP	41,500,000.00	3,112,500.00
10 X 6	28,620,690.00	2,146,551.76
HALF PAGE (FRONT)	20,800,000.00	1,560,000.00
5X6 (FRONT)	14,312,344.00	1,073,425.80
4X6 (FRONT)	11,448,274.00	858,620.56
2X6 (UNDER MASTHEAD	7,262,500.00	544,687.50
2X6 (FRONT POLITICAL)	1,560,000.00	117,000.00

LOOSE INSERT	
RATE PER 1,000 SHEETS	60,000.00
HANDLING CHARGE (SINGLE)	1,000,000.00
HANDLING CHARGE (SINGLE)	1,000,000.00

GENERAL INFORMATION

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WITHIN ABUJA
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Monday 1st - Sunday 14th April, 2024

67TH EDITION

Nigeria's Tax Revenue Growth, A Testament To Economic Resilience

POLICY BRIEF

with

ENAM **OBIOSIO**

In the fourth quarter of 2023, Nigeria experienced a significant surge in tax revenue, earning a staggering N2.33 trillion from value added tax (VAT) and company income tax (CIT).

This surge, marked by a substantial increase in VAT collections by 26.61 percent and a notable decrease in CIT by 35.40 percent, paints a vivid picture of the country's economic resilience amidst various challenges.

This increase in revenue, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), undoubtedly underscores economic resilience and potential.

The quarter-on-quarter increase of 26.61 percent reflects not only a robust domestic consumption pattern but also a significant contribution from foreign VAT payments and import VAT. This demonstrates Nigeria's integration into the global economy and its ability to leverage international trade for revenue generation.

Sectors like agriculture, mining, and quarrying have emerged as frontrunners in contributing to this growth, demonstrating the diverse sources of tax revenue available in the country.

Also, the year-on-year comparison, with a staggering 72.12 percent increase in VAT collections from Q4 2022, furthers the resilience and potential for expansion within Nigeria's tax base.

The significant increase in VAT collections, particularly in sectors like agriculture, mining, and quarrying, carries several positive economic implications:

It is evident that the rise in VAT collections suggests heightened economic activity within these sectors. This increased activity could be attributed to factors such as improved productivity, higher demand for goods and services, and increased investment. As economic activity expands, it creates opportunities for job creation, income growth, and overall prosperity.

It is clear to say that a surge in VAT collections indicates an increase in consumer confidence and spending. When consumers are more confident about the economy's prospects, they tend to spend more on goods and services, driving up VAT revenue. Increased consumer spending, of course, would go a long way to stimulate demand across various sectors of the economy, leading to further economic expansion.

Also, the growth in VAT collections may harness both domestic and foreign investors to allocate resources towards sectors that are experiencing robust growth, such as agriculture, mining, and quarrying. This increased investment, I must say, could spur further development, technological advancement, and innovation within these sectors, leading to long-term economic benefits.

I believe that the more sectors contributing to VAT collections reflects a more balanced and diversified economy. Relying on multiple sectors for revenue generation obviously reduces dependence on any single industry, making the economy more resilient to sector-specific shocks or downturns. It also signifies progress towards achieving a more sustainable and inclusive growth trajectory.

More so, higher VAT collections translate into increased revenue for the government, which could be allocated towards public infrastructure, social programs, and investment in key sectors. This boost in government revenue should contribute to fiscal sustainability by reducing budget deficits, enhancing public service delivery, and fostering economic stability.

Though, the significant increase in VAT collections, particularly in sectors like agriculture, mining, and quarrying, carries several positive economic implications, it is expedient for the federal government to sustain the growth in these sector in order to foster their long-term development and contributing to the overall economic growth and prosperity of the Nation.

The government should put in place various policies and initiatives aimed at supporting these industries and fostering their long-term development.

I believe that if the government should invest in infrastructure such as roads, railways, and ports, it will go a long way to support the growth in these sectors. This is because adequate infrastructure is crucial for enhancing productivity, reducing transportation costs, and attracting investment in sectors like agriculture, mining, and quarrying.

Also, if the government should provide accessible and affordable financing options for smallholder farmers, miners, and quarry operators to invest in modern equipment, technology, and inputs, this will enhance further growth in these industries. This is because access to finance could help improve productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness within these sectors.

Likewise, the federal government should allocate resources towards research and development (R&D) initiatives aimed at promoting innovation, technology adoption, and sustainable practices within agriculture, mining, and quarrying. My position is based on the fact that investing in R&D could lead to the development of new techniques, products, and processes that enhance productivity and competitiveness.

It is clear to say that a surge in VAT collections indicates an increase in consumer confidence and spending

More so, the government should implement training programs and capacity-building initiatives to equip workers, farmers, and miners with the skills and knowledge necessary to adopt modern practices, improve efficiency, and enhance productivity. Investing in human capital development could lead to a more skilled workforce and increased sectoral growth.

Moreover, the government should also implement supportive policies and regulatory frameworks that create an enabling environment for growth and investment in agriculture, mining, and quarrying. This includes measures to streamline bureaucratic processes, reduce red tape, and provide incentives for private sector participation and investment.

Additionally, I believe the government could promote value addition and processing activities within agriculture, mining, and quarrying to enhance the value of raw materials and increase their marketability. Encouraging investment in processing facilities and value-added activities can create additional employment opportunities, increase income levels, and stimulate economic growth.

In order to ensure the growth in these sectors that are environmentally sustainable, the government should implement regulations and policies that promote responsible and sustainable resource management practices. It would be reasonable to consider measures to mitigate environmental degradation, promote reclamation and rehabilitation efforts, and enforce compliance with environmental standards.

Furthermore, the government should facilitate market access for products from agriculture, mining, and quarrying sectors through trade agreements, export promotion initiatives, and market diversification efforts. Expanding market opportunities can increase demand for goods and services, drive sectoral growth, and enhance competitiveness.

I believe that by implementing these strategies and initiatives, the government could sustain the growth momentum in sectors like agriculture, mining, and quarrying, there by fostering long-term development and contributing to overall economic growth and prosperity.

The increase in VAT collections, particularly driven by growth in sectors such as agriculture, mining, and quarrying, signifies positive economic momentum. It underscores the resilience of the economy and provides opportunities for further growth, job creation, and sustainable development. However, it is essential for policy makers to ensure that this growth is inclusive and sustainable, with measures in place to address any challenges or disparities that may arise.

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All correspondence to Editor: **Enam Obiosio** (08058334933); D2-32 Atiku Abubakar Crescent, Cityview Estate, Dakwo, Abuja;
E-mail: info@fmfinsights.com; **Website:** www.fmfinsights.com