NEWS

LABOUR MATTER

NLC demands tax relief, wage award for workers

• Vows to resist manipulation of elections, voters' intimidation

By **Tony Ailemen,** Abuja

THE NIGERIA Labour Congress (NLC) has reiterated calls on the Federal Government on the need to continue th implementation of the wage award, as well as the tax relief for workers to cushion the effect of the current economic hardships.

In a message to mark the country's 66th Independence anniversary, Joe Ajaero, the NLC President, called on the Federal Government to immediately "seek ways to ppreduce the price of petrol as transportation costs are the central transmission mechanism of inflation in Nigeria.

The workers umbrella union noted that without cutting this chain, any effort to ease the suffering of the people would be futile.

The NLC also demanded immediate implementation of a nationwide wage award for all workers.

It noted that the wage award is not charity, but an emergency intervention against the collapse of real income.

"We demand that this relief reach all workers in federal, state, and local governments", NLC said.

Recall that the wage award was first introduced in 2023 following the high cost of public transportation

As part of its five-point demands, the NLC urged the Federal Government to deliver the tax relief agreed upon during the October 2023 dialogue with labour.

"The tax incentives promised in the Memorandum of Understanding signed between government and labour have not been implemented", it noted.

The labour union also called on the Federal Government to expedite action on the new national minimum wage negotiation, adding that " the current N70,000 minimum wage was already destroyed by inflation before it was implemented. We demand the immediate establishment of a tripartite committee to ensure that a new wage standard for 2027 is formulated and legislated before the year runs out.

"We demand that the government reduce the cost of governance and practise transparent governance. When workers are asked to tighten their belts, the extravagance and waste of the governing class are unacceptable. Government must lead by example", NLC said.

The union also asked the government to invest massively and genuinely in road and social infrastructure, make our hospitals, schools and other social services work. Public education must be affordable, high-quality, and accessible.

"Good roads are a basic precondition for reducing transport costs and improving economic efficiency."

Also on the 2027 general election, the NLC warned all political forces to ensure that the choice of the people must be respected and must prevail.

It stated that the workers would resist any attempt to manipulate elections, intimidate voters, or exploit divisive rhetoric to incite ethnic and religious antagonism, adding that such action "will be unacceptable to workers or all progressive forces.

"We will not forget the politicians who turned a deaf ear to the demands of workers. We will not forget the parties that made promises before elections and abandoned workers after winning power."



L-R: Oluwakemi Jafojo, company secretary; Patrice Alberti, chairman; Marco Storari, managing director; Aliyu Abubakar, director; Priscilla Ogwemoh, director; and Matthew Akinlade, director, during the MRS Oil Nigeria Plc 57th annual general meeting at the Company's Corporate Head Office in Apapa, Lagos, recently.

HORSE-RIDING

Bayero 's procession deepens tension in Kano as supporters destroy Tinubu, Yusuf's posters

By **Adeola Ajakaiye,** Kano

TENSION HAS gripped Kano State following a public procession embarked upon by Aminu Ado Bayero, the 15th Emir of Kano, despite a directive by the Kano State Government, suspending all Durbar processions and horse-riding activities in the State.

The procession, which took place in parts of the Kano metropolis, attracted thousands of residents and supporters of Bayero, with the development raising fresh concerns over public order and security management amid the prolonged dispute over the Kano Emirate stool.

The government had imposed the restriction after an emergency meeting of the Kano State Security Council, citing concerns over possible clashes, threats to public safety and the need to prevent a breakdown of law and order.

The restriction covered traditional horseback processions and related activities within the Kano metropolis until further notice, with security agencies directed to enforce the directive and take lawful action against anyone violating it or engaging in conduct capable of threatening public peace.

Prior to the anouncement of government ban, information gatherd by BusinessDay indicates Bayero and his supporters had embarked on the procession, moving through parts of the metropolis in what was widely seen by some residents of the State, as a direct challenge to the government's restriction.

The development was further complicated by reports of the destruction of billboards and campaign posters belonging to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf and other political figures by some supporters who accompanied Bayero during the procession.

The destruction of the political materials has added a political dimension to an already sensitive traditional dispute, raising concerns that activities surrounding the competing claims to the Kano Emirate stool could spill into wider political and social confrontation.

Bayero has subsequently apologised over the destruction of properties during the procession, distancing the traditional outing from acts of vandalism attributed to some of his supporters.

However, the incident has renewed concerns among stakeholders over the capacity of authorities to manage large gatherings linked to the emirate dispute, particularly where rival political and traditional interests intersect.

The Kano Emirate crisis centres on competing claims involving Bayero and Muhammadu Sanusi II, with the two camps maintaining separate claims to the traditional institution following the controversial changes to the emirate structure.

NIGERIA @66

Yilwatda, Mark differ on Nigeria's direction, task ahead

By **Saawua Terzungwe,** Abuja

NENTAWE YILWATDA, National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), and David Mark, National Chairman of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), have urged Nigerians to reflect on the country's 66-year journey, but offered contrasting emphases on its current direction and the task ahead.

Yilwatda in a statement on Wednesday by Abimbola Tooki, his Special Adviser on Media and Information Strategy, said Nigeria's independence anniversary should celebrate the resilience of citizens while acknowledging the progress recorded under President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms.

He said the administration inherited a difficult economy and took "politically difficult" decisions, including petrol subsidy removal and foreign-exchange reforms, which he said were beginning to produce measurable signs of stabilisation.

"We acknowledge the progress that has been recorded and, more importantly, recognise that the work is not finished," Yilwatda said.

He stressed that reforms must ultimately translate into better incomes, jobs, food security and opportunities.

But Mark in a separate statement by Kola Ologbondiyan, his Special Adviser, Media and Publicity said the anniversary should be a period of sober reflection and renewed commitment to justice, security and shared prosperity.

"At 66, our nation has every reason to celebrate, but we must also reflect deeply on our journey as a people," Mark said. He urged leaders to strengthen democracy, uphold the rule of law and place national interest above sectional considerations.

He said Nigeria's diversity should remain a source of strength, insisting that visionary leadership and responsible citizenship were essential to overcoming the country's challenges.

"Together, with courage, sacrifice and sincerity of purpose, we can build a nation that future generations will be proud to inherit," Mark said.

NIGERIA AT 66

Tinubu vows to bring down cost of living as Nigeria turns 66

• Defends 'painful' reforms

By **Tony Ailemen,** Abuja

PRESIDENT BOLA Tinubu is targeting a reduction in living costs as the administration under his watch clocks another year, especially through the various reforms initiated so far.

The president, who stated this in his nationwide broadcast on Thursday, noted that for too long, previous economic policies had ensured that Nigeria was undermined by choices that postponed difficult decisions and allowed deep economic distortions to grow.

He recalled that by "2023, poverty was rising, and hope was nearly gone."

Tinubu likened Nigeria to a sick patient who receives the terrible news that he has cancer.

"His doctor explains that the treatment will be difficult and painful, but it equally offers a strong prospect of recovery. The patient has a choice. He can begin treatment, endure its discomfort and fight the disease. Or he can ask only for morphine, dull the pain and leave the cancer to spread"

He defended his administration, saying that leaders before him chose morphine while praying for a miracle that never came.

"They hid from difficult truths and passed the consequences from one generation to the next."

He stated that rather than act the ways previous leaders did, his administration resolved to do things differently.

"We chose to excise the cancer. The reforms that followed were difficult. The side effects were real. Yet, we must never confuse the medicine with the disease.

"Our reforms did not create the weaknesses in our economy. They confronted them."

In apparent reference to his critics and the alternative they offer, President Tinubu urged Nigerians not to accept any steps that will take the nation back to the era of subsidy.

"As certain influential but regressive voices would have us abandon the treatment and return ourselves to the abuse of addictive subsidies, we must resist their siren song. We must remember why we began this journey and how far we have already come", he said.

He declared that there are undeniable evidence that Nigeria's economic outlook has improved.