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Sunday Standard



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Problems of changing Nigeria's banknotes



In the next two days, the dateline for the exchange of Nigeria's new banknotes of 200, 500 and 1000 would elapse. The apex bank through its governor, Godwin Emefiele had told Nigerians on October 26, 2022 that new naira notes would be introduced to replace the old ones in these denominations. However, since that announcement three months ago, Nigerians have had a raw deal exchanging the old to new notes. KATDAPBA Y. GOBUM writes on the development. Turn to pages 10, 31.



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The unabated fuel scarcity

Fuel scarcity in Nigeria has become a reoccurring decimal, a situation that is very embarrassing for a country that produces fuel, one of the top members of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries OPEC and a country acclaimed as the giant of Africa.

From the first fuel scarcity Nigeria experienced in 1996 during General Sani Abacha's regime, the reasons for the scarcity have remained the same. Records have it that our refineries were not functional. That was the genesis of the humiliating act of exporting our crude oil to foreign lands to be refined then imported back. Government of the day had no will power to change the narrative.

Experts have defined the act of refining our crude oil in foreign lands as the era that brought in a crop of self centred cabal that held the country's economy at its whims and caprices while they enriched themselves. Unfortunately, the story remains the same.

It is a common belief that before any price hike, there's always a scarcity of the commodity. This has proved true over the years. It is often heralded by panic buying by citizens. And then almost immediately, hoarding by marketers that want to maximise profit.

The current fuel scarcity reared its head as the result of flood that submerged some major roads at the peak of the rainy season, last year, thereby obstructing movement of fuel tankers around the country. However, the fact that it has lingered thus far, when the rainy season is far gone, defies any explanation in that line.

We have observed that since the Federal Government announced its plans to remove fuel subsidy and the hues and cries that greeted it died down, fuel became a scarce commodity across the nation. As a consequence, the pump price has steadily risen as demand is not met. Its attendant ripple effects have made life unbearable for Nigerians.

The Major Oil Marketers Association of Nigeria (MOMAN) attributes the lingering fuel scarcity in the country to high cost of vessels and inadequate trucks to deliver the petroleum products from depots to filling stations across the country. MOMAN blames the scarcity on exchange cost and high logistics, exceptionally high demand and also bottlenecks in the fuel distribution chain.

In our opinion, these are all surmountable and issues that have always existed in the distribution chain. The blame game only makes them suspect in the game of corruption.

Government needs to be proactive in bringing our refineries back to life which will mean refining our crude oil locally. This singular action will save us a lot of hard currency even as our locally trained experts in that field will be gainfully employed. In effect, some bottlenecks will be eliminated out of the system.

Government should prioritise the petroleum industry by making decisions in its best interests and the interests of Nigerians. Over the years, President Buhari has been running the affairs of the industry with no respite, not surprising as he is a novice in that field. The president cannot give it his best even if he was an expert because his hands are already full with running the most populous black nation. We advice that government should provide the enabling environment for investors and the best hands to run it.

We believe that there are so many advantages inherent in privatising the petroleum industry. One of which is promoting healthy competition, making the product available in season and out of season. It may cost higher but that is better than the lingering scarcity.

It has also been observed that some marketers are in the habit of hoarding fuel anytime there is rumour of increase in pump price in the hope of maximizing profit. We plead with their conscience to do the needful to reduce the hardship of the common man.

There is no gainsaying that corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria and the fuel industry is no exception. Everyone in the chain of distribution seem to have their hands soiled, from the government to the distributors. To bring sanity to the system, we implore NNPC to watch with eagle eyes the chain of distribution and to also regulate the price.

It behoves on the present administration to bring sanity to the system because one of President Buhari's campaign promises was that he would reduce petrol pump price.

Direct payment of withheld workers salaries-NLC appeals

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has appealed to President Muhammadu Buhari to direct the payment of all withheld salaries of university workers in the country.

Mr Ayuba Wabba, the NLC President, made the appeal in a resolution reached at the end of the National Administrative Council (NAC) of the congress in Abuja.

It would be recalled that due to "No Work, No Pay" policy of the Federal Government, the salaries of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and others were withheld for the period they were on strike.

"We urged President Muhammadu Buhari as a mark of goodwill to direct the payment of all withheld salaries of university workers.

"The affected university workers are finding it difficult to cope with the prevailing economic challenges in the country," he said.

He said the congress also reiterated the call for a major wage review for workers in the public service.

Wabba said that the review was imperative given the considerably

weakened value of the Naira against all the currencies of the world.

He noted that this has made the cost of living unreasonably difficult for workers and ordinary Nigerians.

According to him, we find it necessary to explain here that there is a world of difference between the national minimum wage review and general wage review.

"Furthermore, it is quite important to remind the Federal Government that the last public sector wage review was done in 2011 and has since expired.

"The need for another review cannot be overstated given the excruciating economic realities in Nigeria today," he said.

Wabba further said the congress also expressed huge concern and palpable alarm on the increasing incidences of citizens difficulties and insufferable stress in accessing basic services and utilities.

"From long petrol queues, to clandestine increases in the pump price of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) also commonly known as petrol, to an illegal hike in electricity tariff, to a debilitating inability to access the newly re-designed local currency.

"There is also the deliberate

roadblocks mounted against citizens who desire to collect their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs).

"These are all signs of a nation in acute dire straits. It is sad, unfortunate and totally unacceptable," he said.

He said the federal government must find ways in addressing the concerned issues.

"On our part as a pan Nigerian, progressive, pro-masses and pro-poor organisation, we would not fold our hands and watch Nigerians being taken advantage of in any manner.

"We call on those whose work it is to provide Nigerians access to affordable public services, amenities and utilities to undertake their responsibilities with utmost diligence and patriotism.

"Nigerian workers and citizens are not slaves. They deserve tolerable and indeed decent living conditions in order for them to continue to make contributions to the arduous task of nation building.

"In light of this, we would want this statement to be a message to all those involved in these mischiefs and evil that we are mobilising our members across the country for a major protest," he said.

We expect open elections in Nigeria -us Gov

Mary Leonard, the United States' ambassador to Nigeria, has expressed confidence in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct free, fair and credible elections on February 25 and March 11.

"Our confidence stems in part from the signing of the Electoral Act of 2022 by President Muhammadu Buhari," explained the American ambassador.

This key legislation strengthened Nigeria's electoral system. For example, through the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), there are proven methods to improve transparency and drastically reduce vote tampering."

According to the News Agency of Nigeria, she urged political parties to adhere to their peace commitment and the September 2022 pledge to ensure a peaceful poll, stressing that the U.S. would stand firm with Nigerian voters' demand and desire for complete transparency and electoral integrity.

Mary Leonard reiterated that

individuals who undercut or undermine the democratic process, including through violence, might be found ineligible for visas to the U.S., pointing out that the American government took steps in the past to restrict, deny or cancel visas.

Elections are the foundation of democracy and the basis for the legitimate transfer of power. We favour no candidate; we favour open, transparent and peaceful process," said Ms Leonard said at the 20th Daily Trust Dialogue in Abuja.

"The U.S has full confidence in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and its ability to organise and conduct credible and transparent elections."

The U.S. ambassador said the media also had a vital role in ensuring that Nigerian voters had accurate news and facts before, during and after (the) election, adding that "we look to all Nigerians to speak out against the use of violence or inflammatory rhetoric."

Ms Leonard said it was also essential that candidates, their parties and supporters did not make rash predictions of victory or instantly claim fraud if they lost at the



Biden

ballot.

She urged candidates and parties to accept the fundamental truth that losing was always possible.

Nigerian Railway Corporation again suspends Abuja-Kaduna train

The Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has suspended services along the Abuja-Kaduna rail corridor due to derailment of the train at Kubwa, Abuja, on Friday.

The source on Friday reported that the train plying the Abuja-Kaduna State route derailed, forcing many passengers to be stranded.

The passenger train was heading to Kaduna from Abuja on Friday when the accident occurred, in Kubwa area of the FCT.

This came a few days after a train plying the Warri-Itakpe route derailed in Kogi State, North Central Nigeria.

The incident happened inside a Kogi State forest.

Several passengers were said to have abandoned the train for fear of being kidnapped.

On January 7, 2023, some

gunmen kidnapped 20 passengers waiting to board a train at the train station in the Igueben Local Government Area of the Edo State.

The NRC Director of Operations, Niyi Alli, who regretted the derailment of the Abuja-Kaduna train, apologised to passengers whose trips were cancelled due to the incident on Friday.

"The Board and Management of NRC regret to inform the general public, particularly our passengers of AK3 and KA4 of today January 27, that the disruption experienced on our Abuja-Kaduna Train Service was as a result of the derailment of KA4 at Kubwa station.

"There was no casualty recorded. We sincerely apologise to passengers whose planned trips were affected by this incident.

"The NRC rescue team has been mobilised to site to re-rail the rolling

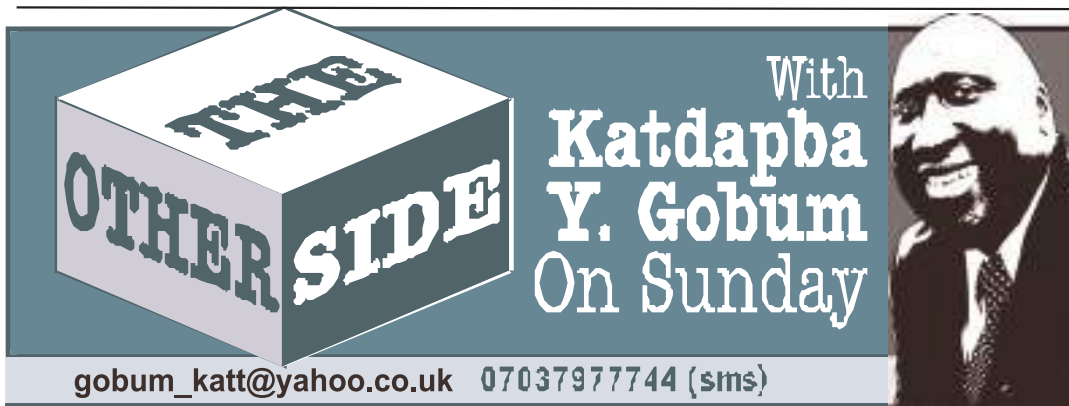
stock and repair the track. Consequently, the Abuja Kaduna Train Service is temporary suspended.

"While assuring early commencement of the service, all inconveniences to our esteemed passengers is highly regretted," Mr Alli said.

The director then expressed the commitment of the management to ensure introduction of additional operational measures nationwide to ensure safe train operations.

Recall that the train service along the corridor resumed operations on December 5, after being suspended for over eight months due to a terrorists' attack on March 28, 2022.

The attack led to the death of eight people with several people injured and over 60 kidnapped.



"Perhaps more than ever before, Nigerian politicians have taken advantage of the situation to use it to their maximum advantage. Suddenly, on account of how Nigerians have come to venerate the 'delegate', there is more to it than meets the eye".

POLITICAL parties in Nigeria in the last few weeks have been engaged in selecting their standard bearers for the various offices they hope to contest for.

A number of issues have come up on account of the exercise and the dramatis persona. And Nigerians are ruing in the most despicable manner over what they describe as the delegate being the problem of Nigeria-and not the politician.

We are not passed the station for which we can get things done right yet in Nigeria. The questions we must ask are: What can we do to get out of the state? What options do we have that we can redeem ourselves? Is it not possible to regain our sanity from what we are used to doing?

It is possible, but the politicians know how to make us swallow what and how they want for other Nigerians. They are the ones that benefit from it. They are the ones that set the rules; so long as they are the beneficiaries. The rules they set only go to support their aspirations; however, they are promoted by those who support their actions.

It is understandable why they continue to maintain the status quo: Power is an elixir. Power gives those in authority legitimacy to climb the backs of the common man to perpetuate themselves. We have had instances where the wishes of the electorate are jettisoned, so long as they give credence to what they want; and majority are not protected everything stands. Could this be the reason why we are where we are today? There are several questions to ask about our future as a people and how we intend to extricate ourselves out of the quagmire.

If there is any word which in the last couple of days, has occupied the political lexicon and space, and perhaps made more Nigerians frustrated to an incredible level, that word is 'delegate'.

Perhaps more than ever before, Nigerian politicians have taken advantage of the situation to use it to their maximum advantage. Suddenly, on account of how Nigerians have come to venerate the 'delegate', there is more to it than meets the eye.

In the build up to the political parties' primaries into various offices to be contested for in the land, a lot of people began to have interest in becoming delegates for the various tiers of governments.

Except for the local government political offices, which have not come up for contest, the ones that have been contested for recently are for the state assemblies, governors, federal legislators and the presidency; it was a tough war for whoever became the governor.

There are states where delegates were not allowed to vote the aspirants of their choice last week. While they waited

The delegate as problem of Nigeria



Mahmood

outside or in the halls where the primaries were held, the outcome was announced to their chagrin that a particular person had won. Those states may need intervention to placate the other numbers before the candidates so pronounced as winners are given their maximum support for the general election next year.

How can this continue if not for the quality of those who are elected delegates? Could this be true that delegates are always from the lower rung of the ladder, and who cannot decide for themselves? I don't believe that because they are not (educated?) they are not able to make informed decisions of their own except if directed.

The truth about our situation is so on account of the manner we are made to play politics. Recently the Peoples Democratic Party held its presidential primaries in Abuja. What ordinary should have taken them into the wee hours of the night was finished before midnight. Nigerians are waiting for that of the All Progressives Party.

What was responsible for this development? Several things came into play, but it is the outcome which should worry Nigerians; and for which the development should send us to the board to think of what to do.

Primaries in Nigeria have, at best, become a lottery. They are unpredictable even as they are dangerous, especially now that money is involved. Those who spend to get the buy-in of the delegates do so not because they are certain. The huge amounts

spent on a delegate should be of concern to us all. In fact, even when they speak to them (delegates) they are not certain they have won them over until the results are announced.

Some of these delegates get elected to for the national conventions to make money. They may deny it, however, no matter how the enterprise is coloured, it boils down to delegates 'always' going for such to make money.

Many Nigerians are aware that national delegates to Abuja returned home financially satisfied. Whether it is true or not, presidential aspirants 'spoiled' the delegates with sums ranging from (N30-33m?). The money was disbursed in hard currency to each of them.

Let us imagine that it is true, the question to ask is: What did they do with the huge sum of money placed in their hands? Did they deserve the huge sum just for being delegates to the presidential primaries? Your guess is as good as mine.

However, somewhere in Sanga LGA of Kaduna State, Tanko Rossi Sabo surprised his constituents by donating a whopping sum of N7 million to his community being proceeds of what he came back with from Abuja. He was among the delegates from Kaduna State who were in Abuja for the National Convention of the Peoples Democratic Party where former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar emerged its presidential candidate.

He was reported to have bought jerseys, paid school fees and hospital fees, distributed some to

some support groups.

Whether he was right to have collected the money is a different ball game. What the people are happy for is the fact that people in his community are smiling and thanking him for coming to their aid. What better thing can that be?

His example is one in a million, as very few are able to do it. There are many who may be mocking him today. It is understandable, but, however sad that the commentary demean us as a people.

The second example is comes from a former lawmaker, Senator Shehu Sani of Kaduna State, who during the governorship primaries of the Peoples Democratic Party in said he was giving no kobo to the delegates for them to elect him. Many people in Kaduna had thought he didn't mean it.

It came to pass and he did not get the ticket to become the standard bearer of the Peoples Democratic Party. Be that as it may, it was a lesson to those who have always won election by giving money to delegates to get them through.

He however calls and refers to them as bandits who are famous for collecting ransom from their victims. Lamenting the outcome of the primaries in Kaduna State, where he secured only two votes and therefore failed in his bid to represent the party at next year's general election. It was Isah Ashiru, who was once a member of the House of Representatives that clinched the PDP gubernatorial ticket for Kaduna State.

In the protest, as was in most states, he alleged that 'the voting process was marred by bribery and corruption with delegates collecting money to vote for unqualified candidates'.

He posited: There is no difference between bandits who collect ransom and delegates who collect money to vote. No one should pay any delegate on my behalf. I don't believe in the political ritual of paying to be elected. That is inconsistent with my ideological and moral beliefs.

The former lawmaker reiterated the fact that he was happy he did not bribe anyone to vote for him. He said: 'I was not unaware of the decadence in our political system and processes that we have helplessly and unconsciously accepted and embraced.'

'My participation is to expose the system and open it for an honest conversation as a way of recruiting our political system from institutionalized corruption, that has made it impossible for credible people to participate in politics and for men and women of honor to emerge as leaders.'

'Literarily, I have not lost the primaries; I've lost a political

bidding process and an auction. We can't continue to recruit, select or elect our leaders through a dishonorable delegate system that thrusts politicians to power weighing on the amount of money they pay to a select few.

'We don't compromise our principles for our politics. The seed of our political system is deeply corrupted. The delegate system ensures and quarantines the accession of criminals to the throne of power.'

'The two clean votes I got without paying out of hundreds, tells much about the impropriety of politics of our country than about myself.'

'If we don't courageously and consciously revolt against cash and carry politics, it's impossible to sanitise our country and impossible for the younger generation to aspire for the position of leadership.'

Somewhere in Bosso LGA in Niger State, Barr Abbas Bello a contestant who lost his election after given delegates the sum of one hundred thousand naira had to order his Director General to retrieve what he gave them. While returning the sum in various envelopes, they asked him never to return to them seeking for any elective position again.

We are in deep problem, and the politician is the major concern for us all. The delegate is induced in various ways with the aim to return home from such conventions smiling to their banks.

However, we must not forget the fact that, it takes all to be on our toes to get our country back on the path of greatness. It should be topmost on our agenda. The National Assembly must get its acts together to set us on the path where seeking political office is opened even to those who cannot induce delegates with money, but with the idea it takes to make us profitable for our tomorrow.

Our laws give credence to only the few in power, and always at the detriment of the rule. While they cannot take action, it is as a result of the bottlenecks placed on the way for things such as that to be handled rightly. While we watch issues being handled in this manner, let us all know that our silence can only work against our resolve for change.

Let the change begin with all us. Let us do what humanly possible work for our good. The good of it is that, the delegates give us who they want; it is left for the electorate to decide who to rule them. Given that scenario, it is possible for Nigerians to know that, the PVC in their possession is the magic wand they have always not used.

**The material is reused for purposes of emphasis.
Editor.**



Security operatives and the offence called hairstyle

THE myriad of problems that an average Nigerian has to contend with on a daily basis, explain the increase in heart related cases. A new name has been given to sudden death. It has been christened 'slump and die'.

Cost of living is ever rising and the take home pay is not commensurate with the harsh realities of our times. A colleague recently analyzed it this way: 'We spend the salary before it comes. We only use it to pay for debt and the vicious circle continues.'

As if that is not enough, students of public universities have to contend with ASUU strike which has become as normal as breathing in the university system. In this predicament and being bombarded left right and centre by security challenges, the last thing these youth need is to be picked at by our security operatives. It is like running to a friend when in trouble only for the friend to do more harm to one than what one was running from.

The issue of marlian came and has recruited most of our youth. Some of them blindly joined the band wagon. Keeping dreads is one of their identities. From the inception of marlian till today, our young boys have been suffering harassment in the hands of security operatives. Stories abound where an innocent young man would be stopped by security men as he goes about his legitimate business and harassed. The greatest lie of the century to these young boys or men is: 'police is your friend'.

Recently, I was a witness as my young boy was picked out of the commercial vehicle we were travelling in from Abuja. We had just passed Tarara. The security man asked the driver to move pass the check point and wait.

I jumped out of the car immediately the car parked and picking my identity card, I hurried to where the security operative was seriously interrogating my son as if he was a criminal. He was armed and also carried along a hefty stick which looked menacing. My heart bled as I rushed waving my ID card. The security



With the number of things we have to contend with on the roads- kidnappers, bandits, hostile communities (if a crisis took place that the driver was ignorant of), armed robbers, reckless drivers, are we to add this to our list? As to be expected, passengers started sharing their experiences. A lady said this issue of harassment of young boys and men almost cost them their lives on a journey she embarked on from Abuja. The security operatives wasted their time barbering 2 young male passengers' hair, not minding the fact that they had a long journey ahead of them. The driver of their car was in so much hurry to cover the dreadful part of the shortcut before dusk that they almost ran into a stationary trailer. That would have been disastrous.



man warned me sternly to stay put or get arrested. Confused, I stopped in my tracks. One of them was approaching from the other side of the check point, so I told him that I was a journalist and I was just doing my job being curious about what was happening and I needed answers.

By that time, the security operative had brought out a scissors and was threatening to cut my son's hair. I looked perplexed wondering what was wrong with my son's hair. It was not dreads, just a hairstyle with the all the sides very low and the front to the middle part full of hair. Is that offensive?

The other security operative reported what I said when he arrived there. Shortly afterwards, my son joined us. It was only then that every passenger entered the car. Most of the ladies had their phones ready to video tape whatever the security operatives planned doing. I took my seat with the solemn promise to write and expose the victimisation that takes place on Nigeria's roads in the middle of nowhere.

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Another passenger said when the security operatives were about to barber his hair, he paid his way through. He said he was lucky he had some cash on him or he would have been disgraced before his girlfriend.

It is not an action that takes place only on our highways, far from prying eyes. This is a common occurrence according to my colleague's experience. In her own case, her son was driving them around Jos town when security operatives made them to park. Her son was asked to disembark and the security operatives barber his dreads unevenly.

This brings to mind Ripji Bala's case who was arrested along with some youth in Hwolshe. Their sin was the fact that they were wearing dread locks. Unfortunately, Ripji Bala lost his life due to a misunderstanding. He was shot dead by the guard on duty who thought they were trying to escape not knowing that they were released.

What has EndSARS achieved if our youth are still harassed by gun wielding security operatives? We are told that the police is your friend. Please, live up to that. The soldiers are our defenders. Please help us to feel secure around you.

Security chiefs, investigate these allegations and bring perpetrators to book. Except if hairstyle is an offence, I see it as a distraction that is pushing our youth to the wall.

Commuters, this is an area of technological advancement. If any passenger is being victimized, video tape and forward immediately. This way, it would put fear in the perpetrators, serve as evidence and deterrent to evil minded ones.

NEWS

Gov Bello counts blessings in 7 years

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Kogi State Governor, Yahaya Bello has expressed gratitude to God for the ability of his administration to eliminate the prevalent out-of-control insecurity and decimated the long-standing tribal, religious prejudices in the last seven years of his leadership in the state.

He said that the administration has also decimated the long-standing divisions along tribal, religious and other fault-lines retarding development in the state. Bello disclosed this in a message to the people of the state as part of activities marking the seventh year anniversary of his New

Direction Administration in the state on Friday in Lokoja. The governor in retrospect, recalled that he made several far-reaching promises on behalf of himself and his team in the new government, in his inaugural speech on 27th January, 2016.

"We promised that change had come to Kogi State and that our people were the proprietors of that change while those of us in government were merely chauffeurs employed by them to drive it.

"We promised that the long-standing divisions along tribal, religious and other fault-lines were over and that fairness, equity and justice to all would be guaranteed. "We swore to eliminate the out-of-control insecurity Kogi was notorious for, back then, and we undertook to make all of Kogi's resources work for all of Kogi's People.

"It has been my privilege and pleasure since that first Inauguration to oversee an accelerated and proportional transformation of our state through innovative thinking and prudent management of all resources - human, financial, material and



Gov. Bello

natural."

He said that his administration did not underestimate the enormity of the work it needed to do to overcome the abysmally low levels of socio-economic development it inherited.

"But we also refused to glorify impossibilities. We met great problems but we also mobilized great courage and inventiveness to solve them together.

"We assembled a multidisciplinary team of consultants to develop our New Direction Blueprint as a governance roadmap to help focus our efforts in executing the promises we made to Kogites", the governor revealed.

He said that his administration had worked assiduously to fulfill the mandate the people entrusted to it for two tenures. And added that the regime had executed life-transforming projects across the length and breadth of the

state from cities to towns, villages and even hamlets.

Some of the projects, he said, include Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH), Osara; Confluence Rice Mill, Ejiba; GYB Model Science Secondary Schools and Muhammadu Buhari Square (Civic Centre) at Lokoja.

Others are, "hundreds of kilometres of urban and rural roads; water supply schemes; a State Universal Healthcare Insurance Scheme and simply uncountable number of projects sited everywhere you look in Kogi State.

The governor however conceded that no single governor could completely rebuild a society within the time available to one administration. "But even if we vacate office today, we can live with a clear conscience, confident that we did our best for Kogites with the time and resources available to us", he said.

NPC trains facilitators

BY HOSEA NYAMLONG

THE Federal Commissioner, National Population and Housing Census, representing Plateau State, Hon. Mrs. Cecilia Dapoet has urged participants to be dedicated and committed. This advice came on the heels of a training they were undergoing to equip them for the 2023 Population and Housing Census at Plateau State Polytechnic Barkin-Ladi, Jos Campus last Friday.

While declaring the workshop open, she was impressed by the number of participants that turned up for the training and admonished them to justify the confidence reposed on them, for only the hard-working participants would be selected for the exercise at the end of the 10 days training.

In a speech by the State Director during the workshop, Mr. Pam Du Deme said that this was the third level of training for the ad-hoc staff that kick-

started from the national, zonal, and state.

He added that at the end of the training of the facilitators at the state level, they would be at the local government level to also train the supervisors and enumerators who would do the fieldwork.

According to him, "the number of facilitators for the training are 943 and 562 Specialized Work Force that have already commenced their training three days ago, bring the total of participants for the training workshop to 1,505".

In separate remarks by the State Training Coordinator of the commission, Prof. Daniel Dabi, and the State Field Coordinator, Mr. Niyi Alayaki, they pointed out that participants would be trained on how to use the tablet computers in the accurate collection of data.

They stressed that the 2023 census would be digital, so participants are required to have the basic computer knowledge and the capability to guide and work it out during and after the census.

They emphasized that the participants are to note that the exercise is a call to national duty and indiscipline would not be tolerated during the training days.

SUNDAY STANDARD reports that the training of the facilitators would take place in three centres within Jos North Local Government Council.

The main centre is Plateau State Polytechnic, Jos Campus. The second Centre at the Institute of Geo-Sciences, Tudu Wada, and its annex in the West of Mines, Jos.

Participants were drawn from all works of life for the training.

POLITICS

Plateau APC ratifies Ishaya Itse's expulsion

THE State Working Committee, SWC, of the All Progressives Congress in Plateau State has ratified the expulsion of Ishaya Itse from the APC.

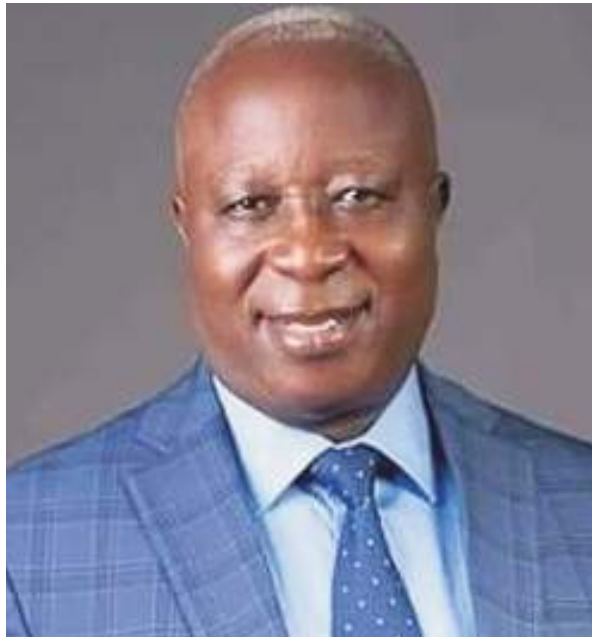
This was contained in a statement signed by Sylvanus Namang, APC State Publicity Secretary.

In a unanimous decision by the 17 members of the State Working Committee at its meeting at the Kalwa House party secretariat in Jos last week, the party acted on the letter expelling Ishaya Itse from his Jos Jarawa Ward of Jos North dated 12th January, 2023.

His expulsion was duly approved by the Jos North Local Government Party Exco on 16th January and in line with the provisions of the constitution of the APC, the State Executive Committee duly ratified his expulsion on Thursday 19th January, 2023.

Ishaya Itse who had been parading himself as a factional Chairman of the party was expelled for, among others, breaching provisions of the APC constitution, anti-party activities, impersonation of party offices or its holders, creating parallel party organ in the state, engagement in fraudulent and dishonest practices and filing an action in court without exhausting avenues for redress.

In ratifying the expulsion of Ishaya Itse, the APC State Working Committee sternly warned that anybody having



Bature

any dealing with him does so at his or her own risk. The party also called on security agencies to keep a close watch on the expelled Itse who could cause serious breach of peace as he has allowed himself to be used as a cheap tool in the hands of detractors of the APC which has a duly elected state exco under the Chairmanship of Hon. Rufus Bature whose election with 35 other exco members was duly conducted by officers from the National Secretariat of the party in October 2021.

The SWC also directed the immediate withdrawal of all

privileges hitherto enjoyed by Ishaya Itse which include membership of the APC Presidential Campaign Council and access to any APC office or functions.

The party further warned those instigating Ishaya Itse to desist forthwith from their nefarious acts or be ready to face the consequences.

The party calls on all its supporters to remain calm in the face of any distraction as it remains ever focused on delivering our candidates from top to bottom during the general elections commencing from 25th February, 2023.

A group, Tinubu/Shettima Grassroots Independent Campaign Council (ICC) has inaugurated its campaign coordinators for the 17 local government areas of Plateau State with a task on them to work and ensure Senator Bola Tinubu and his running mate, Kashim Shettima win the 2023 Presidential election.

Speakers at the event which was held in Jos recently including Barr. Umar Shittien, Shem Damisa, Sunday Biggs, Silas Vem and others urged the coordinators to ensure that they embark on a door-to-door campaign to mobilize people at the grassroots to vote for the Tinubu/Shettima ticket.

In his goodwill message, a Party stalwart, Barr. Umar Shittien urged the people to understand that the Muslim/Muslim ticket is nothing but a strategy to win the election as "religion is irrelevant in politics," but expressed worry about the state of the All Progressives Congress, (APC) the State saying, "all is not well with the APC in Plateau State."

He urged the leadership of the Party to resolve grievances before the election because "no one goes to war with a divided house, you will only have a divided victory."

According to him, "The leader of APC in Nigeria is President Buhari and we

Plateau APC group inaugurates ICC for Tinubu/Shettima



Longap

know how disciplined he is.

Let us be fair, choosing a Presidential running mate from the North East who is a Muslim is not based on religion but based on who can perform. We must stand our ground as members of APC to ensure victory."

He lamented that the scenario that worked against the People's Democratic Party in Plateau State in 2014/2015 is also playing out ahead of the 2023 general elections hence the need for stakeholders in the APC in Plateau State to

ensure fairness, equity, and justice in their dealings with members of the Party.

The Coordinator of the group, Hon. Alphonso Longap, who inaugurated the coordinators stated that the ICC is an independent group committed to Tinubu/Shettima's victory during the elections and urged Party faithfuls to approach the elections with unity of purpose, win the elections, then sort out its internal differences as the party cannot afford to lose any office to the opposition.

Yakubu Tamai from Bokkos local government area who spoke on behalf of his colleagues appreciated their appointment and promised to work for the success of the Party.

Kick out uncircumcised politicians - El-Buba

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE popular man of God and Overseer of Ebomi Ministry, Prophet Isa El-Buba, has called on Nigerians to brace up and kick out uncircumcised politicians who were threatening their existence using their powers to put everybody under their greed and control in the next election.

He made the call while delivering a keynote address at the Training and Activation of Grassroots Mobilisation Retreat (he Critical Final Phase) organised by Coalition for Better and Brighter Nigeria (CBBN), held at the Ebomi Tower in Jos, the Plateau State capital.

The Prophet, who is the Initiator of CBBN, said, "we have uncircumcised political leaders that are threatening our existence as a nation. They are doing everything by their

powers to put everybody under their greed and control that is why CBBN is in existence to be able to cut off those uncircumcised leaders.

"We really want those uncircumcised political leaders that have no conscience, uncircumcised leaders that have no heart and uncircumcised leaders that are very wicked in their thoughts and actions. CBBN is here to breach the above and all we need do is for God to deliver us.

"If God stands up, He can use one person to do what 10 million people cannot do and that is the spirit that is driving CBBN as individuals. We in CBBN want to bring the birth of a glorious nation called Nigeria. That is the reason why we are networking because it is time to redeem our country from these uncircumcised politicians", he

enthused.

El-Buba, however, expressed concern that, there were category of people who still do not understand what they mean by time were seen during campaigns of some politicians trying to think like the uncircumcised politicians saying, "when they think of campaign, what first came to their mind is what kobo can come to their private pockets and how much they can make of it.

"CBBN is here to close that kind of door so that, such people will have no entry. We will start with Almighty God because God works with plan and His plan is to see that we as human beings succeed that is why we are doing what we've have doing these few weeks.

"Secondly, God work cannot work without absolute faith and you do not have faith in the new Nigeria Project, it will not work for you. You must have faith in it and it is because of the faith that makes you to sacrifice your talents without seeking for payment. You sacrifice your time without looking for applaud from people because you have given your time", he explained.

According to the Man of God, "we are moving up even with the threats we received because we have faith in the New Nigeria and New Nigeria has come. We have started behaving like the New Nigerians because the Bible says, "if you have faith like the mustard seed, you can move mountain". We have two big and intimidating mountains in Nigeria, but we are brave and have faith to move these mountains", El-Buba prophesized.

He therefore, called on Nigerians to wake up from slumber and pick up the challenge of bringing home the

new baby called Nigeria because it was the only Redeemer we have that pick Nigerians from this pit of hell that the

Aliyu vows to provide purposeful leadership

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

The All Progressives Congress (APC) Gubernatorial Candidate Alhaji Ahmad Aliyu Sokoto has vowed to provide excellent and purposeful leadership in Sokoto if elected as Governor in the forthcoming 11th March 2023 gubernatorial election.

He made the statement during the gubernatorial campaign flag-off and presentation of party flags to APC candidates contesting elections at both state and national levels held in Wamako the headquarters of Wamako Local Government Council.

He said the absence of good governance is responsible for insecurity, poor economy, and wanton decay of structures in public schools in the state adding that he will return power to the local government's councils in the state in order to curb crime and bring about the needed grassroots development.

That his administration will give adequate attention to the physically challenged through a policy that will handle their needs such as class rooms.

He condemned the PDP-led administration in the state for its inability to fulfill one-third of its 2015 and 2019 campaign promises made to the electorates in the state.

"The people of Sokoto state have never had it so bad as in the last eight years of the Peoples Democratic Part (PDP) administration, adding that, the state has been backward in all ramifications statistically.

"If APC is given the mandate to

govern the state, we will definitely change the narrative for the better. As governor I will inject life into the state civil service which has since been bastardized, civil servants in the state have been demoralized with little or no passion for the job.

He alleged that the administration of the state is done by proxy, where a crop of individuals take unilateral decisions against millions of state indigenes who were supposed to have been carried along in the art of governance.

He, promised to resuscitate agriculture, education, health, and social welfare, adding that, the PDP's poor policy in the state was responsible for poor turnout in agricultural products as the state government failed to provide fertilizer and other aids like improved seeds, soft loans and chemicals to farmers on time.

In his speech, The Director General of the APC Gubernatorial campaign council and minister of Police Affairs Alhaji Maigari Dingyadi assured that with the large turnout of party supporters at the flag-off rally, he is optimistic victory is on their side.

Maigari said APC is on thank you visit to the electorates and teeming people of the state for their support and loyalty to the party leadership over the years.

Dingyadi further stated that despite eight years out of governance yet APC supporters remain intact, adding that APC would continue to champion the cause of the teeming people of the state by providing meaningful development that would improve

their quality of life.

In his remarks, the APC leader and senator Sokoto central senatorial District, Senator Aliyu Magatakarda Wamako urged eligible Nigerians to vote for credible leaders in 2023 who would provide solutions to the country's myriads of problems, saying that power has now returned to the electorates, therefore, they should collect their Permanent Voters Cards and use them to elect all APC candidates in February and March general elections.

He also stated that the presidential candidate of the APC Bola Ahmed Tinubu, is the only answer for Nigerians, if they need good governance, saying that insecurity, joblessness, and hunger are enough reasons to remove PDP from the act of governance in the state" emphasized.

Earlier in his address, the state party chairman Alhaji Isa Sadeeq Achida expressed delight with the large turnout of supporters at the campaign venue.

He said what he saw is a testimony that APC supporters in the state were very eager to reclaim their stolen mandate." and that what happened in 2019 will never happen again as we have put all machinery in place with a view to ensure that, the forthcoming elections in the state are free and fair.

The days of winning elections with a negligible number of 342 votes are over, "we will cast our votes and ensure that our votes counts," he concluded.



El-Buba

POLITICS

Ortom presents vehicles to Deputy Chairmen, others

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

BENUE State Governor, Samuel Ortom, has presented official vehicles to the 23 Deputy Chairmen of Local Government Councils in the state.

Similarly, the Governor has also presented start-up kits to 43 youths of the state trained in automobile maintenance at the Innoson Kiara Academy, Nnewi Anambra state.

This, the Governor said was part of efforts towards the economic empowerment of youths in the state.

Governor Ortom who performed the ceremony recently at the Benue Peoples House Makurdi also presented 8 buses to various labour unions and organizations in the state to facilitate their operations.

Governor Ortom who described Deputy Chairmen of Local Government Councils as critical in local government administration charged them to maintain the official vehicles, stressing that despite paucity of funds the vehicles were provided to facilitate the discharge of their duties.

The governor said the vehicles were meant to enhance the operations of the various unions as well as support the effective transportation needs of the two palaces of the paramount rulers of the Tiv and Idoma nations.

The labour unions and organizations the Governor presented buses to include the Trade Union Organizations (TUC) Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) Benue Youth Parliament, Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULG) Nigerian Civil Service Union, National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) and Joint Councils, JAAC 1, 2 & 3 in Benue State as well as two buses for the palaces of the Tor Tiv and Och'Idoma.

The Governor in his speech charged graduands from the Innoson Kiara Academy Nnewi, Anambra State to make good use of the knowledge they have acquired from the training.

He pointed out that due to saturation of the labour market and gross inadequacy of white collar jobs, it was important for young people to embrace skills for economic reliance.

"When you start-up and begin to make money, remember to invest again so that you can compete favourably in the industry. Do your best and I look forward to your succeeding in this endeavour that you have undertaken" stressing that the multiplier effect could trickle down as they will be positioned to train more youths.

He enjoined the beneficiaries not to despise their little beginnings, stating that "people adding value in various sectors of the economy started small but they were able to nurture and groom it and



Ortom

worked hard and today, they are a reference point. You too can be one of those reference points tomorrow if you commit yourself and work hard and you are dedicated."

Earlier, Special Adviser, Bureau of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs Barr. Kenneth Achabo explained that a total of N40,730,940 only was expended on the training of youths covering the procurement of modern start-up kits.

He stated that of 50 youths that were selected across the 23 LGAs, 7 voluntarily withdrew from the training while 43 received 6 months intensive training in different spheres of auto correct oriented disciplines such as auto mechanics, auto electrical and electronics, auto fabrication and welding and auto spray painting.

According to him, trainees obtained three different certificates: Certificate in Industrial Training and area of specialty both issued by Innoson Kiara Academy and NABTEB certificate issued by Technical Board.

He also thanked the Governor for approving funds for the purchase of official vehicles for the 23 Deputy Chairmen of Local Government Councils in the state.

Deputy Chairman of Makurdi Local Government Council Hon. Frank Mbashinya in a remark on behalf of his colleagues expressed appreciation to Governor Ortom for providing them with official vehicles and pledged to use them judiciously to add value to governance.



Okoye

THE attention of the (PVCs) to vote, but only the Independent Natural last five (5) digits of their Electoral Commission Voter Identification (INEC) has been drawn to Numbers (VINs).

In a statement signed by Festus Okoye, National Chairman, Information and Voter Education Committee, Permanent Voter Cards INEC, states that Section

From **GYANG PAM, Yola**

FORMER Governor of Adamawa State, Alhaji Jibrilla Umar Bindow has stated reasons for dumping his former party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) for the ruling People Democratic Party (PDP).

According to Bindow, he took the painful decision after deep prayers and wide consultation with family members, stakeholders and faithful followers both within and outside the state.

He described as unfortunate, the events of the 2019 general election and the 2022 governorship primaries among many reasons to which he added was among reasons that remain the main crux of why he is leaving the APC.

"The lack of genuine reconciliation with aggrieved stakeholders within the party in Adamawa State is no longer comfortable to him", he lamented.

Why I dumped APC- Bindow



Bindow

Our correspondent reports on his way out of the APC due to certain irreconcilable circumstances.

SOSG assents 2023 bills, inaugurates Almajiri Board

From **ANENE AIKE, Sokoto**

SOKOTO State governor, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal has assented to two Executive Bills and inaugurated the Almajiri Nizzamiyah Education Model, ALNIZAMO, in the state.

The two Bills are that of Zakkat and Waqf (Endowment) Commission as well as that of Arabic and Islamic Education Commission.

In his address, Tambuwal said the gesture was a great milestone in the history of the Caliphate and Nigeria.

He also stated that the state government was not eradicating almajiri system of education but improving it to a model system.

"The system we are presently implementing is the one that is more acceptable in the world meant to enhance the living standard of its children and improve their educational capacity toward a greater society," he affirmed.

Tambuwal also appreciated the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III and the committee members that worked tirelessly toward ensuring the success of the exercise.

Sultan Abubakar III thanked the Sokoto State House of Assembly, members of the House of Representatives in the state and the committee members for their dedication in ensuring the successful passage of the two bills.

He emphasised the need for governments to accord more priority to the teaching of children in their own mother tongue. That by so doing it will give room for proper understanding of what the children are expected to learn toward attaining a greater future.

Earlier the Guest Speaker, Bashir Galadanchi of Bayero University Kano, said the ALNIZAMO system was the best as it gives full recognition of scholars, students, leaders and Islam.

He said the system was not only to support Almajiri

Education, but an effort toward addressing a lot of the state's challenges in the areas of poverty, hunger and security as well as enhance the living standard of the citizens.

Also speaking, Lawal Maidoki, the chairman, Zakkat and Endowment Commission, described Zakkat and Endowment institution as a means of poverty reduction and economic development.

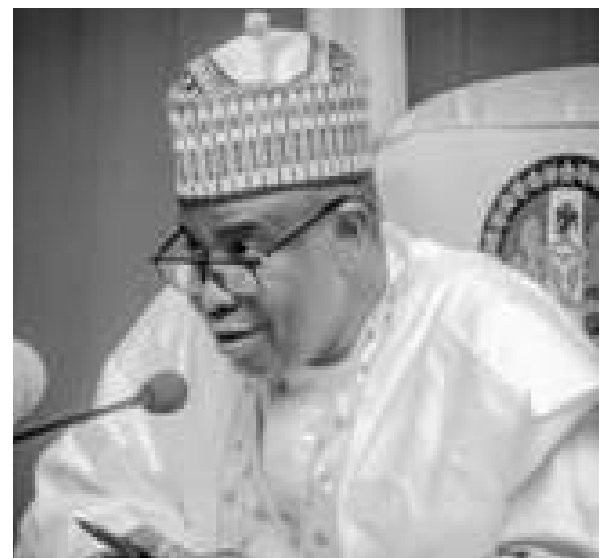
According to him, the importance of the institution cannot be overemphasised especially in the state's present situation.

"This institution will surely address the reported 2022 survey by the National Bureau of Statistics, which revealed that 63 percent of persons living within Nigeria, indicating about 133 million people, are multi dimensionally poor.

Highlight of the event was the distribution of prizes to winners of the 37th state-level Qur'anic recitation competition, 2022 and a reception for the winner of the national Qur'anic recitation.

The winner, Nura Bello, an indigene of Sokoto State, who clinched first position in the state and the county was turbaned "Moddibon Sokoto" by the Sultan.

He said the system was not only to support Almajiri



Tambuwal

47(1) of the Electoral Act, 2022 makes it mandatory that "a person intending to vote in an election shall present himself with his voter's card to a Presiding Officer for accreditation at the polling unit in the constituency in which his name is registered".

The PVC remains the only form of identification at an election. Any intending voter without a PVC will not be allowed to vote. The Commission's policy revolves around NO PVC, NO VOTING.

In addition, the statement adds further that, INEC has a voter verification service - cvr.inecnigeria.org/vvs.

SUNDAY POLITICS

2023 elections: Hopes, fears, and Nigeria's rebirth

Nigeria, this beloved country of tremendous endowments and resources, is passing through the worst turbulent times of its history. Like a dying patient, it is struggling very hard for survival after it had been injected with the vaccines of bad governance by the quack political doctors, who are incapable of diagnosing the symptoms let alone the deadly infection. The laughable thing is their demonstrated pomposity and notorious insistence on being the most crafty as the condition deteriorates, ABDU ABDULLAHI writes.

THIS year's elections, therefore, are like a clinical operation in a democratic theatre for the convalescence of Nigeria or otherwise. Twisted emotions of hopes and fears are already and consistently hiked unabated as the day of political reckoning gathers momentum to finalise who will be the outstanding political therapists to recover and reposition Nigeria appropriately. The attractive stage we are about to observe must ensure eroding the scams of those who mix morality with factual lies and wrongful truths to attain the status of political lords.

It is this judgement day that is putting many politicians asunder and the voters watching with keen interest. It is this golden chance that the voters ought to manipulate and assert their arrogance, kingship and real power to bestow on Nigeria the journey of a fresh and healthy living. It is the right time to discontinue paying political subsidy to those politicians who are not passionate to subsidise our lives through selfless services for which they are mandated and will be accountable to both Allah and the people. It is the material time to save the next generation the dooms and ruins of poor selection of leaders.

We would have to be influenced by the more realistic word 'select' instead of 'choose' in matters of elections because the former is politically indispensable owing to the fact that it is more discerning, while the latter is contextually dormant and too mild that cannot invoke the required political spirit of thoughts and scrutiny. In this busy election era and process, voters should cunningly select between re-writing a new history for Nigeria or consolidating on the eerie and shocking narrative.



Yakubu

In summing the protracted dooms, our dysfunctional systems that have inflicted untold hardships on the masses are the products of mainly corruption and unjingoism perpetuated with impunity overtly by the reactionary pundits.

The fierce assault on these mechanisms has resulted in institutional collapse, consummate decomposition of national development and the country has inevitably been rendered the republic of mass dislocations and destructions. And the eventual remnant of this is the evolution of two distinct nations within the same polity. But a country of two conflicting nations is not feasible and unfit for consistent sustenance.

We must fight those who facilitate and condone inimical

disparities between the secured and the unsecured between ubiquitous deprivation and conspicuous ostentation; between a juggernaut political class conquering national vision and a systematic and overwhelming assault of the wretched of democracy. We must sack the political country where nothing is functioning except corruption, the only kingmaker that has remained unconquerable, the long time evil of the land albeit a loyal ally of millions of Nigerians. Who will not often find it unbelievable that we will stand on this despicable position?

Against this backdrop therefore, 2023 election is the father of all elections in the history of polls in Nigeria for obvious reasons. Nigeria is yearning a paradigm shift from



Okoye

adversity to prosperity. Nigerians, for the first time, are fervently praying for good leaders regardless of party affiliation. It is also a sign of protest that ethno religious and regional dichotomies will not be a catalyst for voting behavior. Some electorates have become politically wiser and will outrightly denounce the syndrome of stomach infrastructure'. It will also be to the credit of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that an improved technological devise for curtailing rigging is going to be operated to enhance election validity.

But on the other hand, there are elated fears of rising insecurity which may hamper the smooth conduct of the elections in some parts of the country. There will also be the danger of votes buying by unscrupulous Nigerians. There will be a demonstration of public apathy by some of the electorates as their yearnings and aspirations have been decimated. As usual, the menace of political thugs will not be a forgone conclusion.

We are already witnessing the highest climax of character defamation amongst most of the opposing sides. I find it extremely difficult to understand the political value of character assassination. It will also be a season of the merchants of religious chauvinism as they have started deploying their weapons of faith destructions that the presidential election will be a referendum between Muslims and Christians to establish numerical power and so

on and so forth.

2023 polls can be defined in terms of what Nigeria deserves and what certain aspiring politicians do not deserve in connection with power and its misuse. This paradoxical hypothesis best suits the general atmosphere of the elections vis-a-vis the rapid drifting of the country to an unknown destination. If Nigeria's tomorrow is worth preserving and revering, then the next election will be a political bulldozer to wreak enormous havocs on the enemies of progress. If on the other hand, the country is surrendered to the politically unfitted rulers, there will definitely be a more complicated illness and Nigeria's chance of survival cannot be guaranteed.

By historical revisitation to generate great lessons therefore, next elections will be a trial of political errors of the past to eschew the mistakes of tomorrow on the part of the voters. It is often said that machines never make mistakes, but they make errors. This is succinctly modelled in the sense that voters should not be liable to committing mistakes that they will regret forever in the next polls and they will be persecuted if they allow the ghost of yesterday's errors to reincarnate, horrify and rob their constructive voting idiosyncrasy in the next elections.

Notwithstanding the encroaching agencies of hopes and fears on our political space, 2023 elections stand as the rebirth of Nigeria through the effective utilisation of votes by Nigerians.

"Against this backdrop therefore, 2023 election is the father of all elections in the history of polls in Nigeria for obvious reasons. Nigeria is yearning a paradigm shift from adversity to prosperity. Nigerians, for the first time, are fervently praying for good leaders regardless of party affiliation. It is also a sign of protest that ethno religious and regional dichotomies will not be a catalyst for voting behavior. Some electorates have become politically wiser and will outrightly denounce the syndrome of stomach infrastructure'. It will also be to the credit of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that an improved technological devise for curtailing rigging is going to be operated to enhance election validity".

SUNDAY PEOPLE

LALONG AT 6TH AND 7TH COMBINED CONVOCATION OF PLASU

Plateau State Governor and Visitor to the Plateau State University (PLASU) Bokkos, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) on Friday last witnessed the 6th and 7th PLASU Convocation ceremony at its Ground Bokkos



Governor Lalong in a handshake with Sen. Joshua Dariye



PLASU Vice Chancellor, Prof. Yohana Daniel Izam (left) showing something of interest to Governor Lalong, Sen. Joshua Dariye, Chairman of PLASU Governing Council, Mgr. Prof. Francis Obiora Ike



Governor Lalong commissioning TETFund projects before commencement of the ceremony



Project commissioned during the 6th and 7th PLASU convocation



Visitor to PLASU, Governor Simon Bako Lalong cutting the tape to officially commission project at the University



Rear Admiral Samuel Bitrus Atukum (left) with Chief Joshua Chibi Dariye at the ceremony



One of the projects commissioned by Governor Lalong



Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong commissioning project, being assisted by dignitaries

Photos: DANLADI DUK

THE role of traditional rulers in our society cannot be overemphasized. Some of them include serving as mediators in times of conflict, ensuring that subjects obeyed the law and seeing to the preservation of all customs and traditions etc. No doubt, traditional rulers possess the authority that makes them command so much respect making it easy for them to serve as link between government and the people. Since they are appointed by government in most cases, it is the responsibility of government to cater for some of their welfare and well-being.

It is in line with this that the Plateau State House of Assembly came up with a legislation. Titled 'A Bill for a Law to Provide for the Renumeration of Appointed Traditional Rulers in Plateau State and for Other Matters Connected, 2022, it seeks to provide for the renumeration of traditional rulers in the state, as well as recognize other categories of chiefs under such renumeration package. The bill also seeks to sustain the payment of renumeration of such traditional rulers pursuant to Section 15 and 16 of the State Chieftaincy Law, 2005.

Following the presentation of the bill before the floor of the House on December 2nd, 2021 it was subsequently committed to the Committees on Land, Survey and Town Planning, Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, and that of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The tripartite committee immediately swung into action, setting in motion mechanisms for consideration of the bill, one of which was a public hearing that was conducted on January 26th, 2022. From the public hearing held, several observations and recommendations were drawn up through the submissions and inputs by the various stakeholders involved.

The stakeholders applauded the ninth assembly for involving a good representation of the public, and for availing them the opportunity to contribute to the development of this important bill before its passage. Some of those present include Plateau State Traditional Council of Chiefs and Emirs, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Plateau State ALGON and Nigerian Farmers Association, Plateau State chapter. Others are Plateau Initiative for Development and Advancement of the Natives (PIDAN), Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Plateau State chapter and the coalition of Civil Society Groups.

After all said and done, the following observations were presented to the House during plenary by the Chairman Committee on Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon. Ibrahim Baba Hassan who is also the member representing Jos North North constituency. Firstly, is that the unfavourable economic situation of the country and that of the state could impede the implementation of this bill when eventually passed and assented by His Excellency, giving the funding of the renumeration as x-rayed hinges on the consolidated revenue which could cause friction between potential beneficiaries and its implementation.

An observation was raised on the current law being used to take care of the renumeration of traditional rulers which stipulates a five percent deduction from the statutory revenue allocation of local government councils, hence should be considered. Also observed is that while initiators of the bill get commended for acknowledging the plight and striving to elevate the revered positions of their traditional rulers, their postulations should be

juxtaposed with the availability of funds, hence there is need for a statistical analysis of the total number of beneficiaries of this gesture, as well as its implication on the consolidated revenue fund of the state in order to weigh its workability.

Notably observed is that there are communities which have female rulers. An example was seen in the case of Shiwer village in Amper district of Kanke LGA, where the stool of the Queen (Maran) is said to be as old as the village itself. According to history, the stool has become a preserve of only female descendants of the Maran with the present Maran known as Diriytmwa Napar Joel. Accordingly, that there was need to have the law to include those communities with female rulers, in



Report on Plateau State traditional rulers renumeration bill



order to also promote gender sensitivity and not deny communities that recognize female as their leaders, and also for the purpose of legal backings and renumeration. That where in the law there is a king, it should be written as 'Kings and Queens'.

Interestingly observed by the committee is the fact that traditional rulers have in recent times become quick targets for banditry and kidnappings due largely to poor

security attention to this class of important personalities whom like women and children, have become most vulnerable in the country. That a new proposal be inserted as 'provision of death benefits to family of deceased traditional ruler' which is five percent of their annual basic salary to cushion the effect of the loss of their bread winner. In addition, all domestic staff to the traditional rulers shall be paid from the five percent allocation to the traditional council. On the use of sirens and flags by

traditional rulers, they shall be restricted to only first class rulers while second and third class rulers will be restricted to the use of flags only. For the others, they shall be restricted to the use of number plates provided by the local government traditional council. Noted also is that each chiefdom is autonomous and as such, no graded traditional ruler should interfere in the affairs of another chiefdom. Lastly, that Clause (10)1 which states that 'an appointed traditional

ruler shall not be deprived of his salary and allowances pending the determination of any court proceedings instituted against him', is capable of breeding prolonged litigation and also pave way for the cost implication for services not rendered if not expunged.

Meanwhile, all first class traditional rulers in the state shall be entitled to thirteen domestic staff each as recommended by the committee while second class will have nine and six for third class chiefs and emirs. In the case of district and village heads, they shall be entitled to four and two respectively. Note that appointment of all the domestic staff shall be tenured while the secretariat and financial staff shall be posted from the local government to the traditional council. Parts of the recommendations however, stipulates that as soon as a traditional ruler passes on and after his burial, selection process for his successor must be initiated immediately.

The committee also recommends that in case of any litigation, a person chosen by the kingmakers may be appointed to oversee the affairs of the traditional council and such a person must not belong to the ruling house and shall draw allowance only payable to the traditional ruler. In the case of acting appointment of traditional rulers, the recommendation states that the executive governor of the state must give his approval or designate a representative to the traditional council and shall be for a period of three months only, except in case of a litigation.

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Problems with changing Nigeria's banknotes

IN the next two days, the dateline for the exchange of Nigeria's new banknotes of 200, 500 and 1000 would elapse. The apex bank through its governor, Godwin Emefiele had told Nigerians on October 26, 2022 that new naira notes would be introduced to replace the old ones in these denominations. However, since that announcement three months ago, Nigerians have had a raw deal exchanging the old to new notes. KATDAPBA Y. GOBUM writes on the development.

PERHAPS one major headache that has confronted Nigeria's apex bank is the issue of how new naira notes would get into the hands of Nigerians. The disturbing signs that came out during the week have had to deal with the difficulties majority of Nigerians have gone through since the exercise began December 15, 2022, when CBN told Nigerians they would access the banknotes.

Both houses of the National Assembly had acknowledged that the Central Bank of Nigeria has the right to determine the nation's legal tender and also recall what was in circulation within a reasonable amount of time with the consent of the President. No wonder, both the Senate and House of Representatives requested for an extension due largely to the non-availability of the new notes.

The House while receiving the report from the adhoc committee established to address concerns

of Nigerians on the new notes headed by House Leader; Ado Doguwa had demanded that the dateline be left until June, claiming that the CBN Act allows for both the new and old notes to be used side by side until June. That may not be possible as the CBN authorities are not giving in to the request.

This is the second time, Muhammadu Buhari as Nigeria's leader has engaged in changing the country's currency. While the context may be different, what took place in 1984 and in 2023, 39 clear years after, tells a story of the journey to ensure that the naira became stable in the midst of the attitude of Nigerians.

The existing notes would cease to be regarded as legal tender by January 31, 2023, and that will be just in a few days. Aware that a major financial situation has hit them, Nigerians from all walks of life invaded the banking halls to access the new notes. They were majorly disappointed, no wonder, there is a directive that

all banks will be opened to customers throughout the weekend of January 28-29, 2023; hoping that the directive can attempt to solve the issue.

Whether that would solve the problems, remains largely to be seen before Tuesday, January 31, 2023. That has not been easy for most Nigerians who remain in the sun on long winding queues to pay into their accounts or exchange them in order to transact business. A visit by our reporter two days running to Barkin Ladi, Mangu and Pankshin where the branches of First bank, Union, Unity and United Bank of Africa are domiciled, there are uncountable customers who kept waiting in the sun to exchange or deposit the old notes.

At several Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and POS centers, some customers have had to return home disappointed. They were stranded for hours, as the banks did not make funds available or were out of use; customers attributed it to lack of

new notes following directive by the CBN to only dispense new notes to customers. Indeed, even more, motorists and petty traders in the last couple of days have exchanged fisticuffs as they were denied the use of the old notes to buy goods and or to be used for transportation.

Some of the customers asked, if the CBN says there are enough new notes to go round why did they not supply to the banks to avoid the rush and loss of hours? Since the dateline was around the corner, most Nigerians have been skeptical of collecting the old notes. Sadly in some banking halls, reports had it that their bulk rooms were filled to capacity with huge 'Ghana Must Go' filled with old notes for deposit. Customers therefore had to spend hours waiting for their turns to make deposit.

The rural areas are mostly hit, as they do not have access to bank services. Some of them will soon be recounting their losses. There is mass movement of rural dwellers to the city centers to exchange the old notes. The Kulen Allah Cattle Rearing Association of Nigeria (KACRAN) through its national leader, Khalil Mohammed Bello called for the removal of Emefiele for 'unleashing untold and unnecessary hardships on numerous Nigerians particularly rural dwellers and our pastoralists'.

In Kano State, the visit of President Muhammadu Buhari had to be postponed due to the difficulties being faced by people in the area to access the new notes.

Some of the customers waited until the eleventh hour when

they realized that the CBN was hell-bent on keeping to the dateline it had set. Such category of customers, who are mostly business men and politicians, had argued that it was possible for the CBN to extend the dateline to enable them make deposits.

In churches, filling stations and most public places, Nigerians went through untold hardships as the old banknotes were rejected. Several businesses remained shut and unattended to by their operators as they had difficulties with no funds for fear of being patronize using the old notes. Such is the hard side of the non-availability of the new notes in the hands of individuals and owners of businesses.

But, in all of the circumstances above and even more, the 'ingenuity' as they say of Nigerians, came to the fore. However, that 'ingenuity' was not positive as the number of 'exchange managers' became rampant everywhere taking advantage of some Nigerians to make profit out of the situation.

For each 1000 naira, the exchange merchants received 200 naira extra off every customer. For as long as it will last, many of them will smile to the bank with their profits made from the enterprise.

Nigerians have asked validly recorded questions why the Central Bank of Nigeria embarked on the exercise. Some Nigerians have accused the government of deliberately inflicting pains on the people, why they go through pains before accessing new notes from the banks.

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NEWS

Lalong offers employment to PLASU First Class graduates

By PALANG KASMI

ELATED by their tremendous academic performance, Plateau State Governor Simon BakoLalong has offered First Class graduating students from Plateau State University (PLASU),Bokkos automatic employment.

The governor made the job offer to the PLASU best-academic- brains on Friday, 27th January 2023 during the 6th and 7th Combined Convocation of the University, held in the premises of the institution in Bokkos.

1,356 graduands from the 9 faculties of the university were awarded different classes of degrees.

In the overall graduands statistics, a total of 16 students bagged First Class degrees, while more than 300 students in each of the graduating sets bagged 2nd Class upper and third class degrees respectively.

Governor Lalong stated that to boost the state's human capital development and in line with his passion for spurring youth empowerment and entrepreneurship, the First Class students are to be offered immediate and automatic employment in the ongoing recruitment exercise of over 1,000 teachers in the state.

"I appreciate excellence and industry, and I am very proud of your performance. I offer you, the First Class students, automatic employment in PLASU".

The Visitor used the opportunity to pay tribute to the former Governor of Plateau State Senator Joshua ChibiDariye, who took the bold step to establish the University despite all odds.

He also appreciated former Head of State General Yakubu Gowon who laid the foundation block and defied skeptics and threw his full weight behind the university.

According to him, "It is the determination of his government to continue to deploy available resources for the development of both the physical infrastructure and manpower to promote effective teaching, learning and research in the university. "Because of the efforts we have put in so far and with the support of TETFund and the private sector, the University campus has witnessed tremendous growth and transformation in recent times. This has led to establishment of additional four new faculties of Law, Environmental Science, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Education as well as the School of Post Graduate Studies".

In his welcome address, Pro-Chancellor and Chairman Governing Council, Monsignor Francis Obiora Ike congratulated the graduates and said the historic and memorable occasion is to mark the presentation of Honorary Doctorate Degrees and First Degrees on some distinguished personalities and two sets of graduates.

While appreciating the Plateau government for the recent approval given for recruitment of staff and strengthening security in the institution, he appealed for more funding, support and local and



Lalong

international partnerships while assuring that the institution has become one of the fastest growing institutions in the country.

NUJ cautions politicians on the use of abusive words

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE apex body of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), has advised politicians especially the presidential candidates of various political parties to avoid the use of verbal attacks that was overheating the polity and abide by the rules that would stop thuggery before and after the elections.

This came in a communique signed and issued by the National Secretary of NUJ, Shu'aibu Usman Leman (WalinShadalafiya) and made available to SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital at the end of the Special Delegates' Conference of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), held in Kano, Kano State.

The statement said, "the conference advocated the conduct of a credible, free, fair and acceptable 2023 general elections and urged Nigerians to take advantage of the process to elect credible leaders that will steer the ship of state in the next four years.

"The Special Delegates conference particularly challenged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), to strive to meet the yearnings of Nigerians for a smooth, credible, free and fair elections by living and meeting the expectations of the people.

"It urged the electoral umpire to ensure that it fulfills its mandate as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as

Police trains Mobile Commanders on election security management

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Inspector General of Police, IGP Usman Alkali Baba, psc(+), has tasked Police Mobile Force (PMF) Commanders to teach their men how to be professional, firm and decisive during the 2023 General Elections on security management.

This was contained in a press statement signed by the Force Public Relations Officer, Force Headquarters Abuja, CSP OlumuyiwaAdejobi, mnipr, and made available to SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital Friday shortly after the closing ceremony of a two-week



Isiguzo

amended) and the provisions of the Electoral Act 2022. It viewed with concern the overheating of the polity by politicians through all forms of verbal attacks and use of thugs in electioneering.

"It therefore counseled the political class, particularly the presidential candidates of some of the leading political parties to abide by the rules and do away with thuggery before, during and after the general elections", the conference advised.

The conference, however, commended the deployment of technology in the electoral process as backed by the provisions of the Electoral Act 2022, with the aim of

enhancing the electoral system and building the confidence of the people in the conduct of elections in the country.

SUNDAY STANDARD reports that, the Delegates were drawn from the 37 Councils of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), under the leadership of its President, Comrade Chris Isiguzo, to converge in Kano from January 24 to 27, 2023 as it was declared opened by Kano State Governor, DrAbdullahi Umar Ganduje, with a theme: "Conflict Sensitive Reporting and Nigerian Journalism".



combating corruption and all forms of illegality. He appreciated the host Commandant, PMF Training College, IlaOrangun, ACP Wilson Dankwano, PMF staff



Nigeria's food insecurity in 2023

NIGERIANS that may endure hunger for six months from now are about 25 million Nigerians. Acute hunger is a projected increase from the estimated 17 million people currently at risk of food insecurity. The factors that threaten Nigeria's food security are mainly manmade.Continued conflict, climate change, inflation, and rising food prices are key drivers of this alarming trend. Food access has been affected by persistent violence in the north-east states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) and armed banditry and kidnapping in states such as Kat-sina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Benue, and Niger.Climate change is also a major threat to food security in Niger, if Nigeria does not take urgent action to reduce rising conflicts and continually biting inflation across the country.This is based on a report recently released by Cadre Har-monisé, a government-led and UN-supported food and nutrition analysis carried out.

SERAP Sues Buhari Over Electricity Tariff Hike

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has asked a Federal High Court in Lagos to compel President Muhammadu Buhari to direct the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) to reverse recently effected increase in electricity tariff. SERAP is also asking the court, in the suit which is yet to be assigned to a judge, to order President Buhari to direct the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, AbubakarMalami (SAN) and appropriate anticorruption agencies to promptly investigate the spending of public funds as investments and bailouts to DisCos and GenCos since 2005.

Apart from Malami, other respondents in the matter are the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission and the Nigeria Bulk Electricity

Lalong:All Northern Governors Are Behind Tinubu.

Director-General of the All Progressives CongressPresidential Campaign Council and Governor of Plateau State, Simon Lalong has told a mammoth crowd at the All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential campaign rally in Bauchi State that all northern governors are behind the party's presidential candidate,Asiwaju Bola Tinubu.

He said President Muhammadu Buhari's legacy of transferring Bauchi to the Jagaban of Borgu (Tinubu) would be jealously guided by Bauchi APC governorship candidate, Air Marshal Sadique Baba Abubakar (rtd).

NPC begins training of 786,741 workers for census

The National PopulationCommission (NPC) has said 786,741 workers would be trained and deployed for the 2023 Census.In a statement on Tuesday, NPC's Director of Public Aff airs, IsiakaYahaya, stated that this would consist of 623,797 enumerators, 125,944 supervisors, 24,001 data quality assistants, 12,000 field coordinators, 1,000 data quality managers, 1639 centre administrators, and 59,000 LGA level facilitators.

"In preparation for the conduct of the 2023 Population and Housing Census scheduled to begin from 29th March to

2nd April 2023, the National Population Commission has commenced the training of functionaries for the exercise in all states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) from Monday, 23rd January 2023.

Lalong appoints 10 new permanent secretaries

Plateau State Governor, Simon Lalong on Tuesday approved the appointment of 10 new permanent secretaries in the service of the state government to fill the vacancies created following the retirement or resignation of some previous ones.

The new permanent secretaries were Keziah Dung, Yusuf AyubaGimba, Gongden Micah Sunday, Lamu Michael Dennis and Peter Wuyep.

Others included BapmanNaankin Emmanuel, Boniface GwotbitBankshuet, Gotan Benjamin and James, SalamatuRitmwa.

Emefiele Insists on January 31 Deadline

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and members of the National Assembly may be heading for collision, as the apex bank on Friday insisted that there is no going back on the January 31 deadline for use of old naira notes, the same day the lawmakers called

on the apex bank to extend the deadline by six months. Emefiele said that the January 31 deadline to stop the circulation of old naira notes would not be extended.While commercial banks would operate during the weekend.

Compiled by HOSEA NYAMLONG

Feature

Need for medical research through NIMR

Over the decades, the outbreak of diseases have always highlighted the importance of advancement in medical research to curb their spread and negative impact on people. These include the most recent pandemic – COVID-19 – which ravaged Nigeria and the global population. Reigniting Nigeria's hope in medical research through NIMR is the answer. Folashade Adeniran writes.

THE SARS-CoV-2 that causes COVID-19, first reported in Wuhan, China, spread rapidly across the world, prompting the World Health Organisation (WHO) to declare the virus a pandemic due to its devastating impact.

Developed countries and giant pharmaceutical companies within a year introduced vaccines and thereafter, booster shots, to tackle the various variants of the virus.

In a race to reduce the heavy burden of the virus that killed thousands of people daily in most of the reported cases in countries, including the U.S., UK, Japan, Spain and Italy, vaccine nationalism birthed.

Governments of these countries signed agreements with pharmaceutical manufacturers to supply their populations with vaccines before making them available for others.

Even before many of the now approved COVID-19 vaccinations completed their clinical trials, many of these wealthy nations bought several million doses of the ones that seemed the most promising, leaving Africa at the mercy of COVAX.

COVAX, a global vaccine programme, was setup to provide innovative and equitable access to COVID-19 diagnostics treatment and vaccines.

In Nigeria, the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) was among the health institutions in the forefront against the spread of the virus, after recording the first COVID-19 case in Feb. 28, 2020.

The NIMR, established in 1977, conducts research into diseases of public health importance in Nigeria.

A month after the first detected case in Nigeria, the Institute started a free COVID-19 drive through test centre in the country in collaboration with Life Bank and had tested more than 10,000 Nigerians for free.

It also unveiled a Biotech Total RNA Purification Kit, developed by one of its Scientist, Dr Muinat Fowora.

This is Nigeria's first set of local Ribonucleic Acid extraction kits, which expanded the nation's capacity to test for COVID-19.

Also, two of its scientists, Dr



Chika Onwuamah and Mr Joseph Shaibu, developed a SARS-CoV-2 Isothermal Molecular Assay (SIMA), a fast and sensitive point-of-care test for COVID-19 infection using a molecular technique and a SARS-CoV-2 Detection Assay (SCODA), a qPCR assay respectively.

In spite of the institute's emergency response to COVID-19, it also conducted research into diseases of public health importance and developed structures for the dissemination of research findings.

For instance, in 2021, NIMR unveiled a Lassa fever and Yellow fever diagnostics kits – the first of its kind in Nigeria.

Also in 2022 it produced diagnostic PCR and ELISA kits for Monkey Pox, SARS-CoV-2, and Cholera; oligonucleotide synthesis, cloning, and expression of viral proteins.

Similarly, two NIMR laboratories maintained their ISO accreditation and WHO prequalification.

For Prof. Akin Abayomi, the Lagos State Commissioner for Health, government should enable NIMR to conceptualise

research ideas and translate

them into innovations that would advance healthcare delivery.

Abayomi notes that NIMR has the resources required to actualise its mandate as the quaternary research institute in Nigeria.

"NIMR is the quaternary institute and this is equivalent to the National Institute of Health in the U.S and I hope the federal and state government will recognise NIMR for what it is.

"Government must do more to support NIMR in the areas of research that will proffer solutions to our health problem as a nation

"Most of the grant attracted to the institute are foreign grants and there are strings attached to these grants, but if they are internally generated, it will focus more on our problem," he said.

According to a former Minister of State for Health, Olorunibe Mamora, NIMR, continues to impact the promotion of healthcare delivery in Nigeria through some of its research.

Mamora described the various diagnostic kits unveiled by the institute as a ground breaking research work.

"What we are witnessing in NIMR is a system that is working and the government is proud of the institute because this giant stride will continue to aid research in the country.

"Early diagnosis is key and extremely critical to prompt treatment of diseases such as yellow fever and Lassa fever that are of public health concern to Nigeria.

"Diagnosis is the most important step in the management of a patient because you cannot treat what you don't know.

"Yellow fever and Lassa fever, over the years, had resulted in many causalities due to late diagnosis, but measures like this will make diagnosis tools readily available around the country," he said.

Speaking on the institute gains and challenges, Prof. Babatunde Salako, the Director-General of NIMR, says COVID-19 is a blessing in disguise for the institute.

"The negative impact of COVID-19 was felt globally in terms of deaths and the economic halt it created but it was also a blessing in disguise for us in NIMR.

"We were able to support the case detection through our drive through testing ground and production of a locally made test kits for the purpose.

"We did not stop there, we also produced test kits for Lassa fever, yellow fever and Monkeypox diagnostics kits and we have the capacity to produced diagnostics kits for any disease," Salako said. He notes that Nigeria must

begin to fund research work that proffer solutions to diseases that peculiar to it through the establishment of a medical research council.

"There is the need for the establishment of a medical research council to fund research works peculiar to Nigeria.

"Medical research councils all over the world are in charge of research and research funding for most of their countries to fund research in areas of priorities.

"Creating such a council requires that government must give funding specifically for health research and look at areas of priorities, where we have challenges and ways to proffer solutions.

"The council, if put in place can work with the Federal Ministry of Health, on research priorities and policy for all medical institutions in the country."

According to him, funding and inadequate research are some of the problems affecting the institute and if addressed will make the mandates of the institute, which is to conduct research into diseases of public health importance, more realisable.

"The government has done a lot in terms of funding, we are grateful for the improvement; but we still need more to enable us to conduct more research.

"Some of our staff retired and we are yet to get replacements. Some of them also travelled abroad for greener pastures," he said.

(NANFeatures)(www.nannews.ng)

"Also, two of its scientists, Dr Chika Onwuamah and Mr Joseph Shaibu, developed a SARS-CoV-2 Isothermal Molecular Assay (SIMA), a fast and sensitive point-of-care test for COVID-19 infection using a molecular technique and a SARS-CoV-2 Detection Assay (SCODA), a qPCR assay respectively. In spite of the institute's emergency response to COVID-19, it also conducted research into diseases of public health importance and developed structures for the dissemination of research findings".

SUNDAY FEATURE

Corporate social responsibility's role in funding, education support

By HAROUN AUDU

In August of 2022, the UNICEF Education manager, Sokoto office, Miriam Mareso, announced that Nigeria has produced one, among every five out-of-school children in the world, with statistics showing that the government spends only 2.4 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on both health and education combined. This announcement was made against the backdrop of the grim report of Nigeria having the highest number of out-of-school children in the world. And in what looks like a poetic anecdote, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report of 2022 named Sokoto state as being one of the poorest in Nigeria! Education is one of the central indicators of the MPI, which measures years of schooling, school attendance, and quality of schools. It is therefore impossible to divorce the level of attention given to education from the nature of the human capacity development which results. And Nigeria is a clear example of the difference that education can make to the society.

Through the years, there has been a systematic collapse of the education sector. Incidentally, we have also witnessed a staggering rise in the level of criminality and insecurity in the country. We have also seen the Nigerian economy teeter on its legs, which has given rise to historic levels of corruption, desperation, marginalization, suspicion, and deep divisions across the country. When we consider the fact, the Nigeria now has the highest number of out of school children, and we put that side by side with the fact that we are counted to be among the most insecure countries in the world today, is it then a mere case of coincidence, or of empirical correlation? I'll let you be the judge of that. But never in the history of this country, perhaps with the exception of the period of Nigeria's Civil War, has the ideal of Unity Schools been more relevant and urgent and significant. During the USOSA AGM of 2016, which had the theme "Education, National Unity & National Security" the then President, my learned senior colleague, Professor Chidi Odinkalu SAN, reminded these great alumni, that Unity Schools were established and maintained by the Federal Government, as a contribution to both foster skilled human development and as well, as national co-existence. "Today, USOSA has recorded over one million alumni drawn from all over Nigeria and who are active in all walks of life - within and beyond the shores of Nigeria. But Prof Odinkalu also pointed to something very important.

He stressed the importance of reaching out to this vast community of USOSA, especially those in diaspora, to recognize that now is the time to pay back to Nigeria for the huge investment made in your lives, especially at this time when the country is facing existential challenges. To quote him directly, Prof Odinkalu said: "USOSA must foster fraternal relations among products of Unity Schools to the end of seeking improvements in our public education system as a country, and the overall good governance of Nigeria."

Seated here, and amongst your teeming members worldwide, are members drawn from the private and public sector. No one here is in doubt about the massive interventions needed in our education sector - especially in the area of funding, which is a major challenge in the sector. As it is, the state funding of the education sector is still inadequate; in recent years, less than 20% of the national budget has been allocated to Education.

Since 2012, Nigeria's education spending as a percentage of GDP has dropped from 8.6 percent to a mere 5 percent. In contrast, the education spending of countries like Cameroon,



Audu

Zambia, and DR Congo are 15%, 12% and 18% respectively. This is telling and most embarrassing indeed, considering Nigeria's clear advantage in human, financial and natural endowments, when compared to these 3 other Central and Southern African nations.

The Impact of Low Funding Across Nigeria's landscape, the challenges of the inadequate funding are evident: large number of children per class due to inadequate and poorly managed facilities, inadequate learning equipment and tools, and a shortage of qualified teachers, etc.

These challenges are particularly dire in rural and underprivileged communities, where access to education has always been limited. This dire state of affairs has further been compounded sustained conditions of insecurity across a growing number of states in Nigeria, resulting in low enrollment and a high dropout rate. Now don't forget the MPI report I highlighted a short while ago, which equally revealed that 133 million Nigerians are now living in multidimensional poverty.

This high poverty figure, in a country that has one of the highest population growth rates in the world, means that millions of Nigerians are unable to afford any kind of education at all, not to even talk about qualitative education. Put together, Nigeria is going to increasingly record low enrollment of children into schools, a high dropout rate, and poorly educated children. Except and unless there is a deliberate intervention to turn the tide purposefully and visibly in practical, tangible terms.

Benefits of Funding Education One of the central aims of increasing funding for education is, to improve on the quality of education. This is because quality education is critical to achieving a number of outcomes: 1. Personal Development: Quality education enables individuals to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitude (KSA) and values necessary, to contribute to building functional societies and to lead a fulfilled life. 2. Economic Growth: A well-educated workforce is essential for breeding innovation, and for competing in today's global economy - especially in an age of globalization. 3. Poverty Reduction: We are now in a skill economy. Quality education equips individuals with the skills they need to access good-paying jobs and to also create jobs. 4. Social Mobility: After people climb out of poverty, they can achieve social mobility.

Quality education is a vehicle to achieving social mobility and higher standards of living. 5. Promotion of Civic Engagement: Knowledge about rights and responsibilities is integral to proper education. Citizens are better

able to engage with one another within their context and, are able to constructively build the pillars of society (legal, social, customary etc.)

6. Sustainable Development: Quality education promotes ideals and concepts about how to address local and global challenges. The more educated a citizenry is, the more they can participate in discussions about the democratic process, political stability, environmental preservation, gender quality, etc. Corporate Social Responsibility as a Source of Funding for Education Around the world, corporate organisations have increased their participation in the development of the locations where they operate.

This has been through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), through which corporations meet the social and environmental expectations of their host communities. With regards to education, CSR can take the form of funding and supporting educational programmes, initiatives, and institutions.

This can include providing financial support for scholarships, building and maintaining learning facilities, directly providing training and professional development opportunities for teachers/educators, strategic interventions targeting the improvement of educational outcomes by helping to develop or fund the development of learning resources and materials for students. The Need for CSR Funding One of the things we cannot escape, is the growing negative perception which society has developed about the private sector, whose businesses and corporations are now perceived as exploitative, and that they are only focused on profiteering from their customers.

As these perceptions continue to be entrenched, they could reach a height that portends some level of risk to corporations. CSR is therefore becoming increasingly important, to cancel out these negative perceptions - especially where the businesses have actually had a deleterious effect on the communities, on their environment and on their people. And in a country, such as ours which has witnessed a staggering growth in the number of poor people, CSR can, and should be executed by businesses and corporations, from a position of "we recognize that we have an important role to play in addressing the most urgent needs of the country - including the need to address the underdeveloped state of education". I had mentioned three ways CSR could be used to fund education: Fund educational programmes Fund educational institutions Fund educational initiatives 1.

Funding educational programmes:

This targets the individuals. It addresses personal development as a precursor to societal well-being and economic stability, growth, and development. It helps to break the cycle of poverty and engender social mobility. In countries where there is still a lot of gender bias, exclusion and inequality, educational programmes are tools for addressing such issues, and for creating social equality

2. Funding educational institutions: This helps the nation, and it is critical to providing quality education. When institutions such as schools and universities are adequately funded, students are provided with the resources, facilities, and equipment they need to succeed.

Plus, institutions are responsible for the delivery of curriculum, hiring and training of teachers, and providing the infrastructure for learning. Inadequate funding of institutions leads to overcrowded classes, insufficient resources, facilities and equipment, and a shortage of instructors.

In short, it creates a shortage of all the supporting cast required to deliver quality education. 3. Funding educational initiatives: there are several modern educational initiatives which, if adequately funded, can improve the quality and accessibility of education in Nigeria: a.

Technology-based learning: Online learning, for example, helps to increase access to education and provides flexible options for learning

b. Vocational and Technical Education: More funding can be put into modern vocational and technical education programs that align with the needs of the global economy, which can provide students with practical skills and knowledge for the modern workforce. c. STEM Education: As more and more states adopt STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), CSR funding can become a way through which organisations are seen to contribute to the promotion of innovation and the preparation of young Nigerians for the jobs of the future

d. E-learning: CSR can target the adoption of e-learning platforms which can be accessed by students and teachers - online and offline - to provide education in a flexible and cost-effective way, and to enhance the quality of education. e. Modern Teacher Training and Professional Development: CSR can be used to specifically sponsor the professional development of teachers, equipping them with relevant skills and knowledge for the education needs of students today. f. Curriculum Development: As the Federal Ministry of Education strives for the adoption of modern curricula in its schools, organisations can partner with the government towards the overhaul and reform of curricula that conforms to the needs of the 21st century. g. Public-Private Partnership: The PPP model can be further exploited to improve the quality of education.

Corporations need only target specific areas where they can intervene to improve and increase the quality and access to education. Benefits of Funding Education to Organisations and Businesses 1. Social Impact: The first obvious benefit is that corporations are directly helping to create a better country for themselves. This is because, improving the lives of individuals and communities leads to the development of the country, produces a better educated workforce, and a wealthier populace. And this increases the prospects for productivity, trade, and investments.

2. Reputation: Investing in education helps to promote trust and loyalty between communities and corporations. It also creates a positive image and reputation for organisations, and this can be a way to foster better, stronger relationships with members of the community.

3. Access to Talent: Funding helps to create a better-educated workforce, which leads to an increase in the pool of talented, skilled, more productive, more innovative, and qualified workers available to the corporations. This not only increases the probability for competitiveness, but corporations are more likely to attract and retain talent

4. Compliance and Risk Management: Corporations who invest in education as a form of CSR are demonstrating their commitment to comply with extant laws and regulations and thereby, to avoid legal and business risks (perceptual) within their operating environment. Some of the ways corporations can increase their CSR Support and Funding for Education in Nigeria.

Through Partnership and Collaboration: Corporations can partner with non-profits and government agencies to increase their funding and support for education. Collaboration can help to leverage resources and expertise, and consequently the impact of CSR initiatives.

2. Transparency and Accountability: Corporations can increase CSR support and funding for education by being transparent and accountable about their CSR activities. These should include, reporting on outcomes and impact, and subsequent engagement with stakeholders to gather feedback and input; and it allows corporations to identify areas where increased support and funding have yielded positive results, which incentivizes them to fund more initiatives.

3. Education-specific CSR Initiatives: Organisations and businesses can increase CSR support by developing specific CSR initiatives that focus on education. This can include providing scholarships, building, and maintaining educational facilities, and providing training and professional development opportunities for teachers, etc.

4. Employee Engagement: They can increase CSR support by engaging more of their employees in their CSR activities, encouraging them to volunteer their time and skills to support education-related causes. This can help to increase the impact of CSR initiatives and foster a culture of engagement and responsibility among employees.

5. Public and Media Engagement: Lastly, Corporations and organisations can increase awareness and support for their CSR initiatives by engaging with the media and the public, to raise awareness of the importance of education and the impact of CSR initiatives, thereby encouraging others to get involved. Last word... Finally, allow me to end with this statement by Anita Roddick, which I encountered sometime ago, and it resonated with me powerfully. It says: "There is no more powerful institution in society than business... The business of business should not be [only] about money; it should be about responsibility.

It should be about public good, not private greed". Also, Brian Gosschalk CEO of MORI was quoted in Financial Times to have said: "Stakeholders want companies to make a profit, but not at the expense of their... wider community". Thank you for listening to my rambling thoughts this evening, and God bless.

A discussion paper presented by Haroun Harry Audu FNIPR MNIM RPA LLM BL PGDTH (Marketing Communications Consultant, Legal Practitioner & Public Affairs Strategist) at the Unity Schools Old Students' Association Executive Retreat; on Friday 27th December 2022, CANDELLUX Imperial Hotel & Suites, Abuja, Nigeria

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OUR world is changing and evolving, and knowledge is growing with it. Knowledge may expire when superior knowledge comes to the fore. A Long time ago, when the use of the computer was introduced in our workspaces, it was a big deal. Many felt that there was no need to embrace this change while others embraced it. Slowly but surely, computer literacy and the use of the computer with Microsoft office suite became a prerequisite for every employment, and we all had to double down and learn how to use it. Microsoft word, excel, power point and the rest of the package are now part and parcel of our everyday work life. The job of the typist became extinct. With the advent of data science, artificial intelligence and robotics, some jobs will certainly become extinct depending on how technologically advanced we choose to become as a country. In many parts of the world, robots are already replacing human beings in the workspace. This is good for the employer and bad for the employee, depending on your skill set.

The ability to embrace good knowledge positively is very important in our society, especially if that knowledge is going to change the way we live. Today, data science and Artificial intelligence are the hot topics globally. It is important that we grow knowledge in these areas as a state and as a nation in order to be viable especially in the labour market of tomorrow. I have a feeling that gradually, these may become like the Microsoft office suite and a basic understanding of these may be a prerequisite for tomorrow's jobs. This is why I think that parents who are introducing their children to data science and artificial intelligence are quite futuristic. I also salute the adults who see the need to upscale their knowledge so as to be market ready when big opportunities arise.

I had the rear privilege of studying data science and business analytics last year. It was very very difficult, it was time consuming, it is the most daunting thing I have ever done in my life but it is worth it. One thing I observed was that most of my friends told me that coding is only for little children. I wish that this was correct. When I tell them that they should also enroll in adult schools, they feel like I am wasting my time. I simply smile when I cannot convince them because I know the gold mine that I am sitting on right now.... In my class, we had lawyers, doctors, managing directors of oil firms, bankers, researchers, pharmacist, businessmen and women. Anyone and everyone who works where there is information management that has to do with any type of data management was in that class.

Age is not a barrier in education. Most of our lecturers in my Data Science class were way into their sixties. Professors. One of our Lecturers is a Nigerian engineer, banker and data scientist in the USA, in his late forties, who has won many Hackathons and earned thousands in dollars. As much as 60,000 USD and more in one hackathon. He has also worked in many industries as a data scientist. You name it. The level of difficulty in these studies is certainly not designed for little children but like every thing in life, it can be adapted to suit children since everything has its A to Z. The children are our future, so starting them off now is very important but that does not mean that adults are exempted and cannot update their skills sets especially in the area of technologically inclined knowledge.

Furthermore, we are in a society that is slowly but surely moving towards robotics and artificial intelligence. A few weeks ago, I spoke about the advantages that

robots have over humans in human resource management. Humans are not machines. Our humanity is critical to us, our emotion and thinking. Robots do not feel emotions. They do not fall sick, they do not procrastinate. All these could mean a high return on investment as it would cut out the inconsistencies associated with human labour. Intellectually, robots are now being programed to compete with humans to the point where some employers prefer robots to humans and this cuts out sick leaves, maternity leave, absence and the likes. I will share more details on

cross that line from absolutely primitive motion to motion that resembles animal or human behavior." - J. J. Abrams
Fundamentally created in the early 1950s, robotics, today, is well-known as a self-operating machine with precisely trained and learned inputs, and its prevalence is omnipresent. The evolution of robotic intelligence shows a wide range of hierarchy since the time it was first created. Introduced to be deployed in factories for industrial use, it isn't easy to find a sector where robotics is not used today. In the initial days of its advent, robots



Artificial intelligence as the new oil



these shortly.

We can either become proverbial ostriches and pretend that we do not know this, or we can gain better understanding by getting involved. Gaining understanding is also critical to our acceptance of a new thing by weighing its pros and cons. I know one thing for a fact. The use of data, when not equitably gathered, processed, analyzed, and visualized, can have dire consequences in our decision-making process. In fact, the quality of our decision making becomes more informed if it is data based and the data is correct. Someone once wrote a book called "how to lie using data". I thought it would be interesting to read the book or how this works, not so that I can use data to lie but to know when I am being lied to. Studying data science has empowered me to know if this is true or false.

The data today is in billions such that our traditional ways of processing data does not cut it anymore. Courses such as Big Data helps us process data in their billions. Something that the human brain and eyes cannot do without involving the machines. This could be country wide, industry-wide or companywide. This could also be in the business or political environments. It makes all the difference when we use data analytics in our business and politics. In fact, any form of political analytics or analysis that does not present hard data is still in its infancy as far as modern day global politics is concerned. Data can be quantitative or qualitative. Both can be analyzed.

Data science, artificial intelligence and robotics are all inter-related. The following excerpts will give us a deeper understanding of these concept and why as a state, we need to start growing our youth in Plateau State in these areas and equipping them for the global labour market because these are the new oil."

"The Robotics are beginning to

were merely designed for performing a trained set of repetitive tasks. By then, robotics was operating exclusively on Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. The 2000s trace the utilization of Artificial Intelligence in digitally programmed industrial robots. The global scenario has widely changed since then. Skillful integration of Machine Learning (AI) and robotics has been developed to advance the alleged ambit of robotic intelligence, enabling it to attain a sound human vision to detect potent stimuli. Huge algorithms and datasets go into this process of evolving the robotics potential into a human-like vision.

The discipline of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning is as prevalent as electricity in the modern contemporary world, and thus its use in robotics is also gaining importance. Precise machine learning processes are being used to train robots and improve accuracy. Artificial intelligence teaches functions like spatial relations, grasping objects, computer vision, motion control, etc., in robots to make them understand and work on unseen data and situations. These functions can be broadly accommodated into four categories:

Vision- with AI at work, robotics attains the capability to visualize and detect patterns that they have never hitherto encountered. AI not only smoothens detection but also works on these patterns with far more accuracy than conventional robotics.

Grasping- machine learning and artificial intelligence provide direction to the robots with knowledge of the most powerful position to grasp an object.

Motion Control- control of locomotive parameters becomes extremely crucial to provide a human-like figure to a robot. Machine Learning is a gift to robotics in this aspect as it enables obstacle awareness and dynamic interaction.

Data is the key to any project; only correct data make it successful.

The current generation of blending machine learning and robotics allegedly seems to be the most powerful combination in the history of technological innovations. A completely new era of automation is set to disrupt every possible institution of human civilization. AI-driven robots are considered more efficient than the ones without this technology. For instance, the industrial sector stands as the biggest consumer of functions like robotics and further automation, saving time and human effort and ensuring validity, accuracy, and minor errors. In such an occupied workspace, one cannot risk the security of the place with basic traditional robots. This is where artificial intelligence and machine learning come into the picture. AI provides robots with adequate computer vision and motion control to better understand the environment and act accordingly.

Similarly, machine learning conditions the robots in such a way that with timely evolution, they learn from their own mistakes, thus preventing constant human intervention and parallel effort. This ensures adaptability in robotics. Along with these implications, AI and ML certainly make manufacturing activities more efficient, especially for big labor-intensive companies; it also improves the available potential of robots.

Different branches of technology are combined to train robots to bring them to this level of functioning, such as deep learning (a subset of machine learning), image annotation techniques, semantic segmentation, etc.

Applying Machine Learning And Artificial Intelligence In Robotics In Various Sectors-

As highlighted above, AI and ML improve the efficacy of robotics, and in the current global scenario, it has left no sector untouched. Here is a glance at some sectors where robotics is deriving assistance from AI and ML.

1. Healthcare-AI robotics is increasingly disrupting and transforming the healthcare market. ML-driven robotics is already a massive part of the healthcare chain, including function testing, surgery, research, data integration, etc. AI robotics is widely used to track patients' health status, form a continuous supply chain of medication and other essentials around the hospital, and design

custom health tasks for patients. AI and robotics are aiding the healthcare sector by providing assisting robots, precise diagnosis, and remote treatment. Robots' proactive analysis allows them to detect minute and complex patterns in a patient's health graph. Robots driven by machine learning are actively used in hospitals for micro-surgeries such as unclogging blood vessels. One of the biggest gifts of AI robotics to the healthcare industry is its operation in remote

areas. Treatment in remote areas has been a major loophole in the medical sector for a long time. Robots can solitarily undergo several clinical tasks. Technology like bot-pill is a marvel of AI robotics.

2. Agriculture-Integrating AI, ML, and Robotics provide agronomists with useful and actionable insights to help improve their farm productivity. By attaining this information, farmers ensure high yields and low operational costs, thus, stepping towards farm success. The primary fundamental of introducing robotics in farms is cutting down back-breaking labor efforts by automating farm activities like irrigation, seed distribution, pest control, and harvesting; you name it, and you have it. This renders the growers with much more time to focus on productive tasks. Emphasizing a major advantage of robotics of ensuring precision, it helps mitigate wastage of land potential, thus making a place for effective land use. Robotization of the green economy can help monitor quality enhancement, environmental conservation, and so on. The agricultural colony is gradually shifting towards these technologies, ensuring huge farm success in the wider picture. This creates a need for constant growth in AI-generated robots to improve the global agriculture scenario. The seeding of AI and robotics will result in sustainable development, which is also the focus of the UN and the world.

3. Warehouses-Big companies with even larger warehouses are big consumers of robotics as it cuts operational time and intermediate costs. High-tech sensors allow these automated devices to operate independently in these huge warehouses. The sensors include visual, auditory, thermal, and haptic sensors. The introduction of the latter two in robotization is a gift of AI that ensures safety through a better perception of the surrounding. In a nutshell, these sensors are the decision-making body of the robots. Automated guided vehicles (AGVs) or automated guided carts (AGCs) are utilized for transporting stock from one place to another in a warehouse. The corporate world today works day and night, and therefore the presence of systems like AGVs or AGCs sustains 24*7 working with similar costs. Aerial drones are another innovation used in warehouses that sustain quick scanning and optimization of the current inventory within no time and with minimal effort. There are some clear benefits of adopting robotics-minimal errors, adaptability, safety, etc. robots are trained human-like figures which operate on acquired algorithms, thus, avoiding mistakes. Safety is a major advantage of robotics as it prevents workers from undergoing dangerous tasks such as pulling stocks from a height. Hence, robots take away mundane and risky tasks from workers.

To be continued

WE are continuing our series on why Jesus came and what His presence to this earth means to the human race. Our purpose here is to focus on Jesus and His core anointing. We take our theme text from Luke 2:9-11 which reads.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

The angel Gabriel was sent to describe Jesus as the saviour because that was his job description. The core anointing of the Lord Jesus Christ is to save and we should never out-grow this revelation. To save means to deliver, preserve and to break the dominion of the devil.

The saving work of Jesus has to do with reconciling sinful man back to God; making as many that will receive Him, members of God's family that you should make heaven your eternal home and to also anoint you to live out the fullness of God's plan and purpose for your life in this world as though the devil didn't exist.

The power of God that destroys yokes and lifts burdens is on Jesus; when you become a believer in Jesus, that same anointing rests upon you and this anointing is the answer to any question in life. God has freely made available this anointing to all of mankind by inviting you into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ starting by receiving Him as your Lord and saviour and master.

Again when you become born again that anointing on Christ rests upon you. The Bible says in 1 John 5:4-5 **For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**

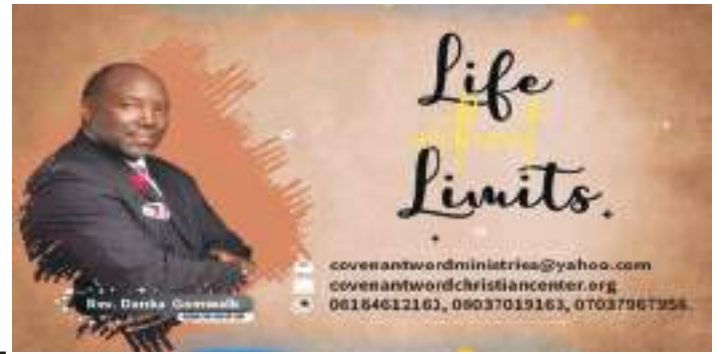
1 John 4:4 says, **Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.** Friends, being a Christian; a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is not just a normal thing. Col. 1:12 tell us that you are removed from the authority of Satan and brought under the authority of Jesus Christ in His kingdom. You carry His life and nature

and DNA spiritually and then you carry the anointing of the Christ upon your life.

This is why we call people who are born again Christians as it means you are now united and share in that anointing and you can live your life fearlessly in the face of disease, insecurity, etc. again, His core anointing is to

and you will find in a nutshell what this anointing upon the Christ Jesus does in the life of anyone that will believe it.

Psalm 103:1-5 says **'Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3 Who forgiveth all**



He has made us his righteousness



save.

Ladies and gentlemen, that was the announcement that angel Gabriel, the arch angel, made to the lowly shepherds in that Judean night. He informed them that the anointed one has arrived – the only one that can deliver man totally from satanic affliction; the only one that can guarantee your destiny – the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the blessed invitation we make to all as we charge you to give your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter what your background is or whether you were born into a Christian home; what matters is that you need a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

It doesn't matter what your religious background is, you need to meet Jesus one on one. Jesus is not a religious figure – He is the Saviour and He is the Christ. There is no one like Him under heaven. The Bible says in Acts 4:12...**for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.**

Now, we have previously talked about how this anointing functions and the functioning areas: first, this anointing delivers from sin; secondly, this anointing delivers from sickness and disease and infirmity of the flesh and the body. Thirdly this anointing delivers from poverty, want and lack. Fourthly, this anointing delivers from destruction.

You can go to Psalm 103:1-5

thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Verse two says **'Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:** So there are benefits to receiving Jesus and waking in this anointing. You can only be blessed for receiving Jesus. This is not a question of argument but a question of results.

Verse three then says **'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;** talking about the forgiveness of sin as well as deliverance from sickness and disease. Verse four goes on to say, **'Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;** the word redeemed

here means to buy you back and remove you from a place where destruction can come to pass in your life. And the word destruction here means to be delivered from a pit, danger and trap of the enemy.

Satan's intention of setting pitfall is not only to cause you to miss eternity with Christ in Heaven, but also to cut off the power of God from your life in this earth so he can be free to feast on you and your family; God forbid! Glory to God that Christ and the anointing He carries is our refuge and this is open to every human being that will receive it.

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that **God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.** So when Christ took our sin on the cross, He paid in hell and that means anyone that receives Him does not have to go to hell. But not only that, He has given us what we call righteousness. Righteousness can be understood as our right to

stand before God without a sense of guilt or condemnation of inferiority complex.

Righteousness means we have been made right with God and our rightness with God brings rights and privileges with it. So everyone that has accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, enters into the blessedness of righteousness. God looks at you the same way He looks at Jesus. God looks at you and ticks your name and says, this one will not be condemned because Jesus has paid for them and they have received what He has done for them by accepting Him as Lord and Saviour.

The Bible says in Proverbs 12:28, **In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.** Glory to God forevermore! This means that, spiritually speaking, the nature of sin has been removed from you (the nature of sin is called spiritual death). It is that nature that condemns men to hell, but when you become born again, the nature of death is removed and the life of God is put in you and that life is called righteousness.

The second benefit is that you are removed from under the authority of darkness and Satan no longer has the right to afflict you. It is as you believe these things that they are activated in your life. Philemon 1:6 says **that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.**

Therefore, there is no spiritual death in righteousness, and also, in this life, Satan has no right to cut short your life. Praise the Lord.

To be continued

"Satan's intention of setting pitfall is not only to cause you to miss eternity with Christ in Heaven, but also to cut off the power of God from your life in this earth so he can be free to feast on you and your family; God forbid! Glory to God that Christ and the anointing He carries is our refuge and this is open to every human being that will receive it".

INTERNATIONAL

Israel raids: Why so many Palestinians killed?

The writer breaks down the reason for the sharp increase in the number of Palestinians killed by Israel in recent months. **AL TAHZENA AN** writes.

ISRAEL has continued to step up its near-daily raids across the occupied West Bank, killing numerous Palestinians over the past year.

The spike in killings comes as part of intensified nightly raids by Israeli forces, particularly in the northern occupied cities of Jenin and Nablus, under the banner of crushing limited Palestinian armed resistance.

Civilians confronting the army during raids and uninvolved bystanders have been killed, as well as Palestinian fighters in targeted assassinations and during armed clashes.

More than 170 Palestinians, including at least 30 children, were killed across the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem last year. In January 2023 alone, at least 29 Palestinians including five children have been killed.

The UN said that 2022 was the deadliest year for Palestinians since 2006, but 2023 is already on course to surpass that, if the number of deaths stay at the same level, and there is now the potential for a full-scale uprising among Palestinians, particularly in the wake of Israel's new far-right government, which came into power at the end of December.

Tensions on the ground have kept escalating since the May 2021 Palestinian popular "outburst" that swept across the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel.

It began with protests against forced displacement of Palestinian families in the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah and led to a war with the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad armed groups in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Israel's crackdown included the targeting of fighters affiliated with these groups in the West Bank.

A string of individual attacks by



Israeli forces have conducted near-daily raids in the occupied West Bank as part of an operation called 'Break the Wave'

Palestinians also killed 19 people in Israel between March and May.

While the state of armed resistance in the West Bank was largely dismantled by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel following the end of the second Intifada (uprising) in 2005, the city of Jenin and its refugee camp re-emerged in 2021 as a centre of armed resistance, and Nablus followed suit.

Israel then launched its military campaign called "Break the Wave" in March 2022, which has

directly led to the high number of Palestinian casualties.

Israel says it is targeting fighters, but unarmed civilians, including children, are often killed during the raids.

Israel has also attacked the blockaded Gaza Strip this year. In August, a three-day assault killed at least 49 Palestinians, including 17 children.

In September, the first of a handful of armed resistance groups announced itself as the "Jenin Brigades".

Other groups have also

emerged, such as the Nablus Brigades, the Lions' Den, the Balata Brigades and, most recently in Jenin, the Yabad Brigades.

While small in number, these groups have come to pose a challenge to the Israeli army during raids and arrest operations by responding with live fire and engaging in armed clashes.

They also carry out shootings at Israeli checkpoints which have led to an increase in the killing of soldiers and settlers in recent months.

The increased raids and killings of Palestinians were a policy under the previous government of centrist Prime Minister Yair Lapid.

Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians, particularly in Nablus, sharply increased during this period, with the military accused of doing little to stop the attacks, and settlers calling for a heavier Israeli military crackdown on the northern West Bank.

The new far-right Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has given prominent roles to members of the Israeli far-right, including some, such as Itamar Ben-Gvir, who have expressed support for Baruch Goldstein, a Jewish Israeli who killed 29 Palestinians at the Ibrahimi Mosque in 1994.

Ben-Gvir is the national security minister, with control over Israel Border Police's division in the West Bank.

Another far-right figure, Bezalel Smotrich, was given control of COGAT, the Israeli army body in charge of administering the West Bank. Smotrich has openly encouraged violence against Palestinians. His role means that he oversees the already extremely restricted rules over Palestinian construction in Area C of the West Bank – approximately 60 percent of the territory that is under full Israeli military and civil control.

Many Palestinians have criticised Israel for the raids, accusing Israel of using its military campaign to carry out unlawful killings without accountability.

Several of the killings have caused particular outrage among Palestinians, including one in December, when a 16-year-old girl in Jenin was shot dead on the roof of her home during an army raid.

Other cases include the killing of an 18-year-old student on his way to school, and a 15-year-old while she was in a car.

In May, Israeli forces also killed Al Jazeera's veteran Palestinian correspondent Shireen Abu Akleh while she was covering a raid on Jenin.

More than 9,000 Palestinians have been injured by Israeli forces in the West Bank since the start of the 2022, according to the UN.

International bodies and politicians have also chimed in to express "concern" over Israel's lethal use of force.

Source: Al Jazeera



Netanyahu



Abbas

INTERNATIONAL

US military kills top ISIL leader

THE United States military has carried out an operation that killed a senior ISIL (ISIS) leader in northern Somalia, US officials said.

A statement by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Bilal al-Sudani, a US-designated ISIL leader in Somalia and "key facilitator for ISIS's global network", was killed in the operation.

It added that the operation was approved by President Joe Biden earlier this week and carried out on January 25.

"Al-Sudani was responsible for fostering the growing presence of ISIS in Africa and for funding the group's operations worldwide, including in Afghanistan," Austin said.

There were no other details about the operation given, including how the US forces carried out the operation or even how many American soldiers were involved. US officials told Reuters news agency anonymously that 10 of



Biden

al-Sudani's associates were also killed in the operation.

In 2012, al-Sudani was sanctioned by the US Department of Treasury for his role in facilitating financing for foreign fighters to travel to an al-Shabab training camp.

A Somali government offensive, which began in

August 2022 against al-Shabab after the election of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, was also made significant gains.

But the group, which has been fighting since 2007 to topple Somalia's government and impose its strict interpretation of Islamic law, has responded with a series of

Blinken head to Mideast as escalating violence grows

SECRETARY of State Antony Blinken will travel to Egypt, Israel and the West Bank this weekend, the State Department announced Thursday, as the U.S. expressed alarm about escalating violence after Israel's single deadliest operation in the West Bank in two decades.

Blinken's visit to Israel has been planned for weeks, but the Israeli raid on a West Bank refugee camp earlier Thursday — which the Palestinians say killed nine people, including a 61-year-old woman — will likely dominate his talks in Jerusalem and Ramallah. The Israeli military also fatally shot a 22-year-old Palestinian later in the day.

The trip, the second by a senior U.S. national security official this month, had already been expected to be fraught with tension over disagreements between President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, particularly on the Palestinian conflict. Thursday's raid and the subsequent outcry are expected to make the visit even more difficult.

The top U.S. diplomat for the Mideast said the administration was urging both sides to de-escalate tensions in the wake of the raid and decried a Palestinian announcement that they would cut off all security cooperation with Israel as a result.

Barbara Leaf, the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, said U.S. officials had been in touch with top Israeli and Palestinian officials since the incident happened to stress the importance of calming the situation. She said the civilian casualties reported in Jenin were "quite regrettable."

But, she also said the Palestinian announcement that it would suspend all security cooperation with Israel in the aftermath was a mistake, as was a Palestinian vow to bring the matter to the United Nations and the International Criminal Court.

"Obviously, we don't think this is the right step to take at this moment," Leaf told reporters on a conference call. "We want to see them move back in the other

direction. We don't think it makes sense" to go to an international forum now, she said. "They need to engage with each other."

Blinken will hold talks with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Cairo on Sunday before going to Jerusalem and Ramallah on Monday and Tuesday to see Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, the State Department said.

He will be the second top Biden official to visit Israel this year, following national security adviser Jake Sullivan, who made the trip just last week as U.S. concerns were growing over the violence as well as the direction of Netanyahu's new right-wing government.

"With both Israeli and Palestinian leaders, the secretary will underscore the urgent need for the parties to take steps to deescalate tensions in order to put an end to the cycle of violence that has claimed too many innocent lives," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

In another statement later Thursday, Price again emphasized the "urgent need" for Israelis and Palestinians to "prevent further loss of civilian life, and work together to

Myanmar military announces strict new election law

MYANMAR'S military, which seized power in a coup almost two years ago, has announced a strict new law on political parties that is likely to raise further questions about the fairness of elections promised by August.

The law, replacing legislation from 2010, bars parties and candidates deemed to have links to individuals or organisations "designated as committing terror acts" or seen as "unlawful".

Parties that want to contest the national election will also need to secure at least 100,000 members within three months of registration and have funds of 100 million

improve the security situation in the West Bank."

The trip was announced just hours after the Israeli raid on suspected terrorists at the refugee camp in the West Bank city of Jenin.

After the raid, Israel's defense minister directed forces in the occupied West Bank and on Israel's border with the Gaza Strip to go on heightened alert as Hamas, the Islamist militant group that controls Gaza, threatened revenge.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority said it had halted security cooperation with Israel and would file complaints about the raid with the U.N. Security Council, International Criminal Court and other international bodies.

Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians have soared since Israel launched the nightly raids in the West Bank last spring, following a spate of Palestinian attacks. The conflict has only intensified this month, as Netanyahu's government came to office and pledged to take a hard line against the Palestinians.

In Jerusalem and Ramallah, Blinken will also underscore the importance the U.S. attaches to maintaining the status quo at the flashpoint Jerusalem holy site known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as

Myanmar kyat (\$45,500), 100 times more than previously. The money has to be deposited with the state-owned Myanmar Economic Bank.

The law, signed by coup leader Min Aung Hlaing, was published in the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar on Friday.

The military detained elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi and seized power on February 1, 2021, in the wake of an election that returned her National League for Democracy to office in a landslide.

The generals claimed without evidence that there was fraud in the poll. International

AFTER spending nearly a decade in a camp for the displaced in South Sudan's Juba, Mayen Galuak hopes that Pope Francis's visit to the capital city next week will inspire political leaders to finally restore peace, allowing him to go home.

The 44-year-old entered the United Nations camp, just a few kilometres from his residence, in search of safety three days after conflict broke out in 2013.

In the ensuing years, he has watched as South Sudan's leaders forged peace deals and broke them; as militias carried out and denied ethnic massacres; and as relentless conflict pushed parts of the country into famine.

The 86-year-old pontiff is flying to Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), home to 45 million Catholics, on Tuesday. On Friday, he heads to Juba, the capital of South Sudan, where he will be joined by the leaders of the Anglican Church and the Church of Scotland.

The six-day trip was originally planned for July 2022 but was postponed after

Haram al-Sharif, where clashes have frequently erupted, Price said.

The Biden administration has serious concerns over the composition of Netanyahu's government that includes several far-right Israeli politicians who are opposed to some of the administration's fundamental Mideast policies, including a two-state resolution to the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Like Sullivan, Blinken does not plan to meet with the most controversial of those Cabinet members, according to U.S. officials.

In Egypt, Blinken will raise human rights issues along with the unstable security situations in Libya and Sudan, the State Department said.

South Sudan hope's pope visit will bring peace

Pope Francis suffered problems with his knee, which have recently forced him to use a wheelchair.

There were also concerns about his planned visit to the east of the DRC, where dozens of armed groups — including M23, which recently came within several miles of the commercial hub of Goma — roam.

The new itinerary no longer includes a trip to Goma, the capital of the North Kivu province, although the pope will meet victims of the conflict while in Kinshasa.

The Vatican's envoy to the DRC has said the trip will remind the world not to ignore decades-long conflicts.

"We are in a bad situation ... since 2013, we have not seen any good peace," said Galuak, who says he cannot travel to his birth home in South Sudan's north because of the risk of attack. Sporadic clashes continue to kill civilians throughout the country.

South Sudan gained independence in 2011. Two years later, conflict erupted when forces loyal to President Salva Kiir clashed with those loyal to Vice President Riek Machar, who is from a rival

ethnic group.

Top of Form

Women have led the protests sparked by the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini

The women-led protests against Iran's clerical establishment were sparked by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who was detained by morality police on 13 September for allegedly wearing her hijab, or headscarf, "improperly".

They have spread to 160 cities in all 31 provinces and are seen as one of the most serious challenges to the Islamic Republic since the 1979 revolution.

Iran's leaders have portrayed the protests as "riots" instigated by the country's foreign enemies. However, the overwhelming majority of protesters have been unarmed and peaceful.

So far, at least 475 protesters have been killed by security forces and 18,240 others have been detained, according to the Human Rights Activists'. It has also reported the deaths of 61 security personnel.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council has said that more than 200 people have been killed, including members of the security forces.



Pope Francis

UN condemns M23 rebel offensive on DRC town

THE United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has condemned an offensive by M23 rebels in the east of the country that forced 450 people, including women and children, to seek refuge around its base in Kitshanga town.

"The M23 must cease all

hostility and withdraw from occupied areas, in accordance with the roadmap set out in the Luanda mini-summit," the mission, known by its acronym MONUSCO, said.

The Kitshanga attack is a new offensive by rebels who have seized areas of eastern DRC's North Kivu province in a rapid onslaught since May that threatened the provincial

capital, Goma.

The armed uprising has inflamed regional tensions, with DRC accusing neighbour Rwanda of backing and sponsoring the Tutsi-led rebellion. United Nations experts and the European Union have accused Rwanda of backing the M23.

The government of Rwanda has denied any involvement.

Regional leaders brokered an agreement in November under which the rebels were meant to withdraw from recently seized positions by January 15 as part of attempts to end the fighting that has displaced at least 450,000 people.

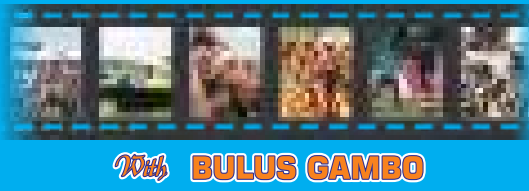
But a UN internal report said the rebels were flouting the ceasefire.

Two witnesses who fled Kitshanga and joined the throng of refugees at the MONUSCO base said the rebels had taken control of the town.

A spokesman for the DRC government and the army did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The M23 said in a statement that it was obliged to intervene to protect Tutsis in Kitshanga and other areas.

Amid widespread international criticism of the coup and sanctions from the United States and other



Mach-Hommy: Paying it forward

THE process of speaking with Mach-Hommy is nearly as labyrinthine as his music. After spending days navigating a network of anonymous calls and dead ends, an assistant passed me the number to one of hip-hop's most elusive artists. Mach wanted to speak en route to a video shoot in L.A., but filming had already begun by the time I called. An hour and a half later, a little after 1 a.m., my phone rang. In a flash, a figure in all white with a Haitian flag tied across his face beamed in via FaceTime.

The New Jersey-based Haitian-American rapper is used to working at a prolific clip from the shadows. Most of the nearly two dozen projects he's released since his 2016 breakout HBO (Haitian Body Odor)—which he initially promoted and sold himself via Instagram—still aren't available on streaming services. Their scarcity has built a cult of personality further amplified by Mach's raps, tightly constructed yet freely floating through hip-hop's past and present like ghosts in Gore-Tex jackets. The sales of HBO and Mach's decision to sell subsequent projects for thousands of dollars through services like Bandcamp made every album a collector's item and set a trend that the new generation has followed to this day.

With two critically-acclaimed albums, Mach finally brought his vicious wordplay to a much larger audience last year. Both *Pray For Haiti* and its spiritual followup *Balens Cho* (Kreyol for "hot candles") received more traditional releases, appearing on streaming services right away. Last year's big push was, in part, meant to draw support for Mach's countrymen in Haiti.

Multiple times throughout our conversation, he stressed that his share of equity from *Pray For Haiti* and his recent "\$payforhaiti" single with Montreal producer Kaytranada will go to the Pray for Haiti Trust Fund, which will be dedicated to education and building a technology institute for young Haitian children. "We talking about a place where potable drinking water is a serious problem," he says. "There's no work of art that could take the place of a home to live in or public waterworks or electricity. It's a work in progress, and until we start to cross some serious thresholds with these efforts, it really won't mean much of anything to anyone on the ground suffering."

Putting a finer point on it, he says bluntly, "If niggas wanna do me a favor, play *Pray For Haiti*, man. It's not about the album cycle being done—this is people's lives we're talking about." At this point in Mach's career, the music is about more

Mach-Hommy: Look man, I hate to be the voice of reason, but I'm still waiting for the turn-up. Don't get me wrong: My day ones stay with a lead pipe in their backpack and are ready to tear shit down like football hooligans in Manchester. But more people need to start getting in tune. You can show that you like it. Nobody's gonna cancel you.



YOU begin "Tunnel Vision" from HBO saying you want your python trench coat, and you're still looking for it five years later on "The 26th Letter" from Pray For Haiti. Do you feel like you've earned it?

I earned 10,000 python trench coats. I don't want no flowers. I just want my coat. Some people say you gotta do that for yourself, so it's actually getting made right now. It would've been cool to receive it as a gift, but hey.

I'm also a designer, so I understand the process of what goes into that coat. Think about the surface area of a python's body. How many pythons you need to do that? I don't want a python print—I want a python skin trench coat. You're not gonna get it in yards, you're only gonna get it piece by piece. And it takes real skill to put it together and make it look seamless to the untrained eye. It's definitely a work of art and something to aim for. You gotta be ambitious because most people is gonna be dispossessed by the price of a sleeve.

How did your recent song with Kaytranada, "\$payforhaiti," come together?

Again, everything I do gotta fall into place naturally. The hip-hop scene in Montreal and Quebec is brolic, son. It's one of the meccas outside of the U.S. lowkey. They're really serious about it out there. Kaytranada got better beats than a lotta cats in the underground. I'ma keep it real: The boy Katy is clear, but I don't know if other

people will hear that other side of him. He already knew what I was into. We definitely caught a wave with ["\$payforhaiti"] and splashed the joint up, but people don't understand his range. We got some deep cuts that I don't know if y'all will get to hear, but they out there

I'm so blessed because the universe got things set up for me that I didn't even know about. I walk into the room, and he already had shit ready and waiting for me. When it's natural and it's supposed to happen, that's how it happens. It's just grace, grace, grace, a transference of grace.

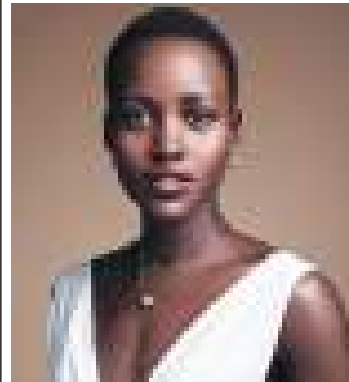
You were one of the first rappers to set high price points on your music, inspiring a newer generation of musicians to be confident in the value of their art. How does it feel to see so many artists utilizing a blueprint you helped create when it comes to making and marketing music?

Beautiful. That shit bled into the periphery and made its way to the core. For a long time, this particular iteration of spoken word that we call hip-hop has been marginalized and kept on the outskirts like some type of illegitimate third cousin or something. But you see a lot of the practices get adopted by entertainers across the board. I won't say names, but you see pop stars doing this shit, son. When you avant-garde and a



Continued on page 26

Most beautiful black actresses, singers



Lupita Nyong'o

(Born March 1, 1983) is an actress, film and music video director of dual Kenyan and Mexican citizenship. Her role in the film "12 Years a Slave" was widely acclaimed, earning her the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress, among numerous other awards and nominations.

Beyonce Knowles

(born September 4, 1981 Houston, Texas, U.S.) is an American recording artist and actress. Her father - African American, and his mother - Creole.



Lisa Bonet

(Born November 16, 1967) is an American actress. She is best known for her role as Denise Huxtable Kendall on the long-running NBC sitcom *The Cosby Show*, and originally starring in its spinoff *A Different World*. Her African-American father, Allen Bonet, is an opera singer.

Dorothy Dandridge

(November 9, 1922 - September 8, 1965) was an American actress and singer. Dandridge was the first black actress to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress. She performed as a vocalist in venues such as the Cotton Club and the Apollo Theater.



Halle Berry

(Born August 14, 1966) is an American actress and former fashion model. She won an Academy Award for Best Actress in 2002 for her performance in *Monster's Ball*, becoming the first and, as of 2014, the only woman of African-American descent to win an Oscar for a leading role. She is one of the highest paid actresses in Hollywood and has been involved in the production side of several of the films in which she performed. Berry is also a Revlon spokesmodel.

Lena Horne

(June 30, 1917 - May 9, 2010) was an American singer, actress, civil rights activist and dancer. Both sides of her family were a mixture of European American, Native American, and African American descent.

Continued on page 26

EYE'S ON THE WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Parenting

Stopping children's attention seeking behavior

By: PAMELA LI

It's normal for kids to want attention from their parents and also sometimes from other adults.

However, some children insist on constantly being the center of attention. They may go out of their way and use annoying behavior to get noticed.

It can be frustrating and problematic when these kinds of behavior become excessive.

What Is Attention-Seeking Behavior?

When attention-seeking problem behaviors aren't met with the desired social attention, they may escalate into risky acts, which becomes a problem over time.

When children act out to seek attention, they are actually seeking c

This attachment-seeking behavior looks exactly like attention-seeking behavior in infancy. A baby might cry, whine, fuss, or move toward a parent seeking proximity.

When a baby receives warm, sensitive, and responsive parenting in response to their attachment behavior, a secure attachment forms. Early parenting that meets a child's emotional needs leads to a secure attachment and a lower level of attention-seeking behavior late.

These children develop a sense of trust in their parents and feel confident that they will be there for them as their secure base. They have high self-esteem and develop independence as they grow.

Therefore, older children who seek attention are looking for ways to connect. The pursuit of attention is actually the pursuit of relationships.

The problem arises when attachment-seeking behavior



becomes overly attention-seeking, disruptive, or dangerous.

Examples of Attention-Seeking Behavior in Children

- Temper tantrums over little things
 - Whining or crying
 - Interrupting
 - Asking for help with simple tasks that don't require additional assistance
 - Sympathy or praise-seeking by sharing exaggerated stories
 - Lying or arguing
 - Constantly showing their work or achievements for recognition
 - Acting like a clown or comedian
 - Risky behavior that can put them in danger such as standing on a table
 - Damaging properties
- Attention-seekers' behaviors are characterized by their emotional dependence on the validation, praise, and emotional reassurance of others.

How to Stop Attention-Seeking Behavior in Children Do not ignore

A child who throws tantrums or cries easily for every little thing is likely looking for connection rather than the thing itself. Punishing them or treating them as misbehavior will push them farther away and not fulfill their needs.

Some children will stop their attention-seeking behavior temporarily when they are ignored.

But this only fixes the symptoms, not the underlying problem. Because the need to connect has not been met, the bad behavior will return over and over again.

Call it out

Giving your child attention doesn't mean you condone it.

Call out the unwanted behavior with empathy.

"Junior, I've noticed you've

been upset easily this week over little things. Are you truly upset about this candy, or are you upset about me?"

It shows that you have paid attention to them when you say this.

Moreover, you are narrating the issue to help your child express themselves so they will use words rather than acting out.

Help them identify the issue

If you ask your attention-seeking child directly, they will sometimes be able to confirm the issue immediately.

However, other times they may not be aware of the true cause. It is especially true for children who are very young.

In this case, you will need to help them discover what the real issue is.

Take a look back at the week that just passed.

Did you spend enough quality time with your child?

When they came to show you something, were you too busy looking at your phone?

Did you ignore them to speak with other adults instead?

If there were moments like that, ask them directly.

"Are you upset that I didn't look at the beautiful airplane you made when you showed it to me yesterday?"

"Are you crying because you want me to draw with you instead of just handing you crayons?"

Make a plan

After identifying the problem, work on a solution together.

Here is an example.

"Mommy works from home. While I am here, I may not be able to play with you at this time. What if we make a plan to draw together after dinner every day?"

Address the problematic behavior

Once your child is calm and you

occurring in the first place by using proactive strategies.

Make an effort to spend time with them and give them undivided attention on a regular basis.

Notice and encourage positive behavior

It is not necessary for a parent to shower their child with attention to demonstrate their love.

Something as simple as praising your child's appropriate behavior or having a 10-15 minute snuggle can go a long way in showing them that you care and are paying attention to them.

Assess priorities

Oftentimes, parents pay attention to negative behaviors but still cannot stop them. That usually happens when they have the wrong priorities.

Parents tend to address the undesired behavior first because their priorities are to stop it.

They scold the child, emphasize the exact rules, and use consistent consequences. They do all of these without attending to their child's needs first.

This shows the child that they and their needs are not as important.

This kind of attention does not meet the child's need to connect.

If you are struggling with this, consider reversing the order you address the issues. Follow the steps above to connect before you correct.

Final Thoughts on Attention-Seeking Behavior

Changing your child's behavior over time requires patience. Don't give up when it doesn't seem to work at first.

Children don't learn to walk, speak, or behave overnight. It is important to have age-appropriate developmental expectations.

When things become too difficult or too much, don't hesitate to seek help from professionals such as child psychologists. Child therapy and family therapy can help.

References



EVIE'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Health

Eating bananas on empty stomach

SHOULD we eat banana on an empty stomach? Find out the answer here along with some side-effects of bananas.

Bananas are sometimes the go-to food when we feel hungry and don't have any solid meals at hand. Bananas are extremely healthy, fulfilling, and tasty. Most people love to eat them, especially before workouts as a quick energy-boosting snack. Similarly, a lot of people have bananas in the morning as breakfast. But should we eat bananas in the morning on an empty stomach?

When we sleep the body stays in fasting mode. You don't eat anything for several hours, which drains your energy and in order to replenish that you should have something energetic in the morning. While bananas are definitely healthy and satisfying, these aren't the ideal breakfast food. Despite being loaded with essential nutrients, it is not good when consumed on an empty stomach.

Here are some reasons why everyone should not eat bananas on an empty stomach:

Bananas have natural sugar content, which might increase blood sugar levels. Thus, diabetes patients must avoid eating bananas in the morning. Others should avoid overconsumption of bananas on an empty stomach as it might abruptly spike blood sugar levels.

Bananas have high magnesium content, which can disrupt metabolism and hamper the digestive system. Besides, high



magnesium also affects heart health and so, it is better to avoid. Patients of hypertension and other cardiovascular issues must not consume bananas in the morning.

If consumed, have them with cereals, berries and dry fruits to neutralise harmful components.

Possible side-effects of eating bananas on an empty stomach

Digestive issues
Bananas are rich in fibre and so, they are extremely fulfilling. While fibre is good for digestive health, its overconsumption can disrupt gut microbiota. Consumption of fibre in the morning on an empty stomach can trigger gas, flatulence, stomach cramps and constipation. Do not eat more than one banana in the morning.

Inhibition of mineral absorption

Consuming more than one banana on an empty stomach can hamper the body's mineral absorption process. Your body might not be able to absorb minerals like iron, zinc, and calcium. This can lead to mineral deficiencies. Thus, avoid consuming bananas or eat them in limits.

May cause irregular heartbeat
Since bananas contain a high amount of potassium, its excessive consumption can cause hyperkalemia, which can increase the risk of muscle weakness, irregular heartbeat, and paralysis. This is why heart patients must consult their doctors before consuming bananas.

How to Eat Bananas On An Empty Stomach

Sometimes, we don't have any option but to have bananas in the morning. In such a case, consider these tips to negate the side effects of eating bananas on an empty stomach.

Have bananas with yoghurt, porridge, cereals, peanut butter,

berries, and herbs. Eating bananas alone can cause issues. Incorporating these things would neutralise the acids released by the stomach. This would cause less damage.

- Besides, doing so would also prevent a sudden spike of sugar.
- You can have a banana shake or

smoothie instead to enjoy the benefits with lesser risk.

Bananas are extremely beneficial but these can be bad in certain cases. It is best to avoid eating bananas on an empty stomach or have them with milk, nuts, yoghurt, etc. to optimise their benefits.

Source: Healthnews.com





Reality Bites

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Save Patience Engom's life, family cries out

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

HOPE is never lost, and it is the last thing we should ever lose says a popular adage.

That is simply why the family of Mrs. Audu Patience Shawuya Engom, who is critically ill battling with advanced ovarian cancer at Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Plateau State, have cried out for help from organisations and spirited individuals to raise N6 Million Naira (N6,000,000) that is required to help save the life of their wife.

The patient who came all the way from Nasarawa State, has been in the hospital for over three weeks now but her medical reports indicate that she had first undergone surgery since 2021. However the illness still persisted. She was then brought back to JUTH and now needs to buy doses of Chemotherapy amounting to six million naira to save her life.

Her husband, Mr. Engom Victor Oppah, of Akwanga LGA of Nasarawa State, who expressed worry on how to raise the funds to save his wife's life said "We have first been here in 2021 when my wife had surgery and after that, we received two pieces of chemotherapy before we were discharged".

"After that procedure, they asked us to do city scan which we have done. Now they said we should raise six million naira (6,000,000), to continue with the treatment".



"But based on the current situation and after spending so much finances on her treatment, we do not have the money, and the problem is still persisting so we came back to the hospital on the 8th of January 2023 to access medical care. Since then, we have been on admission".

"As it is now, we have raised just three hundred thousand naira (N300,000) from some philanthropists with the help of

someone who took the campaign to the social media, and we are hoping that people will come to our aid".

"I am appealing to organisations and individuals to come to our aid and save the life of my wife", Mr Engom, who is a farmer cried out.

He further disclosed that the recent test showed that, the situation is now worse and the cancer cells have spread and progressed more, compared to the time they first came into hospital in 2021. Now, Doctors say her liver has enlarged up to 29 centimetres and it has reached an advanced stage, affecting other organs in her system.

He commended the Nurses and Doctors for the prompt attention and services rendered to his wife during the lingering period of her ill health and how they are still trying their best to save her life.

JUTH Public Relations Officer, Mrs. Bridget Omini, confirmed to our correspondent that, the Chief Medical Director of Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Dr. Pokop Bupwatda is aware of the situation and has approved that they seek for help from organisations and spirited individuals to come to their aid and save her life.

The JUTH PR Officer said, "it is true that the patient is laying in Ward 9 here with Ovarian Cancer. They have written requesting for financial backing

and of course, we do not allow people to come in here to just to do that, except an official letter of approval is given, which the CMD has approved".

"However, Omini confirmed that the situation of Patience is critical and the patient is laying on the sick bed struggling for her life.

Omini also said that an account of the patient is available for well spirited individuals and organisations who value life and have the compassion to help and save the life of Patience.

Donate to save a life Audu Patience Shawuya, (Wife to Engom Victor Oppah) needs N6 Million Naira to care for her

medical needs.

N1000 naira from 6000 people can do the magic.

You can donate more if you can. Patience is from Akwanga-Nasarawa State, and an alumni of Angbazo Memorial Comprehensive College Aweyi, ERCC College of Health Technology Alushi, Nasarawa State University, keffi.

She works with the Nasarawa State Government as a nutrition officer and has been married for 15 years without a child. Our friend, wife, sister and colleague needs us, Let's do this for humanity, let's do this for Patience, Donate to:

Audu Patience Shawuya, Access Bank, 0035187120.



EVIE'S WORLD

With *Henrietta Gonzuk*

Relationship

Avoiding consequences of perfectionism in relationships

By **LEVANA SLABODNICK**

The first time that I suggest to a client that they are a perfectionist, they usually take it as a compliment. They assume it implies success, drive and being good enough. They soon learn that perfectionism is not usually a quality that is helpful to them.

What is Perfectionism?

Perfectionism is often deeply rooted in anxiety and lack of self-acceptance. The need to feel that your every action is perfect leads to constant feelings of failure. After all, who among us is perfect? Perfectionism can also lead to giving up, not trying new activities or learning new skills for fear of failure. Some perfectionists would rather not try something new to avoid truly accepting their flaws. The anxiety that surrounds perfectionism can be debilitating to some. Sufferers might experience panic attacks, irritability and depression. Their efforts to be perfect are a means to control the anxiety that results from failure. It can be very challenging for a perfectionist to face their limitations. Perfectionism often causes conflicts in surrounding relationships. The question becomes:

What happens when you are married to a perfectionist?

When one person is easily affected by failure and has unrealistic standards for themselves, these expectations often spread to those around them.

For anyone who is married to a perfectionist, think about the areas of conflict between you and your partner.

- Do you feel criticized often?
- Does your partner express disappointment in you regularly?
- Is your partner somewhat controlling over areas of your life because they don't trust you to accomplish tasks to their standards?

These can be signs that your partner is experiencing anxiety related to handing over control to you. Remember, perfectionism is fueled by fear of failure and if your partner doesn't think you can complete a task perfectly, it will increase their anxiety. You may argue with your partner about letting you do things your way or just give up control to avoid conflict altogether. Neither of these strategies are best for either of you long term. Your partner may become exhausted and overwhelmed by all the tasks before them and you may become resentful of their behavior. On the other hand, those who challenge the perfectionism might find the conflict increasing over time with no resolution in sight.

This may seem like a no-win situation for those going through it. What can be done to work through the perfectionism in the individual and as a couple?

Here are some tips to help you set boundaries and reduce conflict related to perfectionism:



. Identify the problem

We can't fix a problem if we don't know what it is. If this. If you suspect that your partner is struggling with perfectionism, bring it up in a kind and compassionate manner. The more you know about the issue at hand, the easier it will be to figure out the next step.

The perfectionist in the relationship will need to learn coping strategies to manage their anxiety and to increase their self-confid

communication.

. Know your boundaries

For the partner that is married to a perfectionist, it is important for you to hold on your beliefs and standards without being negatively affected by your partner. You may need individual counseling to learn this skill. When your partner is critical or wants to take over a task because their anxiety is overwhelming, gently remind them of where their anxiety ends

and your beliefs begin. Compromise is a wonderful tool in marriage, but sticking to your guns can be as well.

Working through perfectionism in a marriage is undoubtedly hard work. I believe that when both partners are determined to make a relationship work, they can emerge from their challenges with a stronger, healthier and less perfect marriage than they ever could have expected.

Consider individual and/or marital counseling.

Working with a licensed professional who specializes in anxiety is invaluable in improving the challenges that are present. Marital counseling is often a good idea if both partners are unsure about how to change the previous dynamic in their relationship that the perfectionism caused. An outside, professional perspective is very helpful and often necessary to make sure that both partners can meet each other's needs..

Communication is key

As in all aspects of marriage, honest and clear communication can be the difference between a strong marriage or a struggling one. As difficult as it may be to open up about the effects of perfectionism, it is important that both partners feel that they can be heard and validated. Communication can build understanding, compassion and respect between partners. Make sure to schedule time for regular



BUSINESS WORLD

Steps to achieve 'the decade of gas'

Nigeria is a study in contradiction. It has the largest proven gas reserve in Africa yet faces a significant challenge in providing access to gas for a majority of its citizens and businesses. On top of this, it occupies an unenviable position as one of the top seven gas-flaring countries in the world, according to the World Bank. The tale would be unbelievable if it was fiction. ELVIS EROMOSELE writes.

SADLY, the reality is grim. Oil-producing companies burn off millions of cubic litres of natural gas during oil production. They use a fancy term, gas flaring, to describe it. It doesn't however take away from the fact that the action, gas flaring, is a glaring waste of a wasting resource. It also impacts negatively on the environment, human health and the cost of gas. It needs to be stopped.

Over the last couple of years, governments have sought to curtail incidents of gas flaring, increase the use of gas and boost revenue from it, all with varying degrees of success.

To highlight the commitment of the federal government to boost the domestic use of gas among Nigerians as the primary energy source President Muhammadu Buhari declared the 'Decade of Gas' (January 1, 2021, to 2030). An integral part of the process is the development of gas infrastructure, with the construction of the 614km Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano gas pipeline the number one starting point.

The goal is simple, to increase the domestic utilisation of LPG and CNG, commercialise gas flares, develop industrial gas markets and increase gas-to-power. Related policies which are already in the works include the National Gas Expansion Programme and the Autogas policy.

The government must invest in building pipelines and distribution networks to reach residential and business areas and improve access to LPG.

Experts argue, however, that despite the government's best efforts to increase the distribution of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), also known as cooking gas, a large number of Nigerians still rely on firewood and charcoal for cooking with the attendant damage to the environment and impact on the climate.



Now one of the main reasons for this is the lack of infrastructure and distribution networks for LPG. Many areas in the country do not have access to gas pipelines, making it difficult for residents to obtain cooking gas. We'll require a study to explore the risk associated with the current gas tank retail marketing method. Additionally, the cost of LPG is prohibitively high for low-income households, who make up the bulk of the population. Figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) show how deep the poverty is – 63 per cent of persons living in Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor. It's a grim picture.

GlobalData reports that by weakly enforced penalties. It flaring, rather than utilising gas for power generation or other domestic needs, Nigeria and other nations involved in such acts, could lose up to \$82 billion a year globally. Other countries in this unholy group include Algeria, Angola, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, the US and Venezuela. They accounted for over 87 per cent of all flared gas in 2020.

Independent sources reveal that Nigeria flared an average of 11.1m³/bbl of gas in 2021. The issue here is that the Nigeria Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme (NGFCP), which seeks to curb the act, has loopholes along with low and

needs to be tightened and strengthened to make it more effective. Nigeria had 208.62 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of gas reserve as of January 2022, according to the Commission Chief Executive (CCE) of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), Gbenga Komolafe, an engineer. However, the development of gas, especially for domestic use, is still relatively low.

The price is still in the skies for many potential users. Right now, the concern is that with the rising cost of cooking gas, the domestic utilisation of LPG may decline. It remains to be seen how this will impact the achievement of the 'Decade of Gas' objectives.

There are several steps that the government can take to increase access to cooking gas for Nigerians. As a concerned citizen and cooking gas user, here are my thoughts on five things that the government can do to improve access to natural gas:

Firstly, the government must invest in building pipelines and distribution networks to reach residential and business areas and improve access to LPG. Secondly, while the country has significant natural gas reserves a lack of investment in the sector has led to low production of LPG. It is time for the government to encourage investment in the

sector to increase domestic production and thus curb the importation of LPG.

In addition, to demonstrate the resolve to improve the use of gas among citizens, the government can look at providing subsidies for LPG to make it more affordable for low-income households. This will make it more accessible to those who currently are unable to afford it.

Furthermore, since reports indicate that Nigerians are unaware of the benefits of using LPG as a cooking fuel, the government can launch a campaign to educate citizens on the benefits of LPG and how to safely use it.

Finally, the government must create an enabling environment to encourage private sector participation and investment in the LPG industry. This will increase the availability of LPG and possibly help drive down prices.

With the implementation of these measures, Nigeria can truly increase access to cooking gas for a majority of its citizens and reduce the country's dependence on firewood and charcoal. This will not only improve the quality of life for citizens, but it will also help the environment by reducing deforestation and air pollution caused by the burning of firewood.

Source:Businessday

"Experts argue, however, that despite the government's best efforts to increase the distribution of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), also known as cooking gas, a large number of Nigerians still rely on firewood and charcoal for cooking with the attendant damage to the environment and impact on the climate. Now one of the main reasons for this is the lack of infrastructure and distribution networks for LPG. Many areas in the country do not have access to gas pipelines, making it difficult for residents to obtain cooking gas. We'll require a study to explore the risk associated with the current gas tank retail marketing method. Additionally, the cost of LPG is prohibitively high for low-income households, who make up the bulk of the population. Figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) show how deep the poverty is – 63 per cent of persons living in Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor. It's a grim picture."

BUSINESS WORLD

CBN bans dollar payment for domestic transactions

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has said it will no longer allow payment for dollar charges on transactions made within Nigeria either with the newly introduced National Domestic Card scheme, Afrigopay or existing foreign debit cards, popularly known as ATM cards.

"We will only pay dollars for charges on transactions that are done with domestic or foreign cards outside Nigeria," CBN governor Godwin Emefiele said at the virtual launch of the card scheme yesterday. The card was launched by the CBN in conjunction with Nigeria Inter Bank Settlement Systems (NIBSS) Plc.

Mr Emefiele said NIMC, the Central Bank of Nigeria and Nigerian banks will work together to see to how to desegregate the transactions to ensure "we would only made charges or fees for international transactions that are conducted on both this card, Visa or Mastercard as they are known today."

Emefiele said the reason is not because there is preference for the new domestic card, but that what is most important is that Nigeria doesn't have much foreign exchange.

"And we will ban payment of charges for domestic transactions from the Nigerian foreign exchange market at some point in very near future," Emefiele said, signaling a new twist in online transactions in Nigeria.

He said the CBN and its partners coming up with a deadline for the existing card schemes in the country after which they will no longer be eligible for domestic transactions.

Noting that the domestic card scheme avails the country "the sovereignty of our data" in addition to coming at a lower cost, Emefiele said it was also a way to conserve the scarce foreign exchange in the country.

"At this time of foreign exchange challenges that persists globally it is important that that we have this card to ensure that all card transactions, online transactions where you're using cards will now effectively immediately begin to go on the Nigerian National Domestic system.

"At some point in the next few weeks, I'm sure that the CBN will come up with the cut off which will mean that all domestic



Emefiele

transaction all domestic transactions that are going to be conducted in Nigeria will have to be through the Nigerian domestic cards.

On her part, CBN deputy governor, financial system stability, Aisha Ahmad who also serves as the Chair of the board of NIBSS, noted that with the launch of Afrigopay, "a lot of opportunities are being created within the ecosystem, and there is more opportunities that will be brought back by this Afrigo card.

"So, leveraging its industry position, NIBSS and with a strong regulatory backing of the Central Bank of Nigeria,

Afrigo card has been brought up. I think it is important to also explain what the corporate structure for delivering this card looks like.

"The company Afrigopay Financial Services is a domestic Card Scheme. Duly licenced by the Central Bank of Nigeria is an affiliate of NIBSS but it is constructed as a distinct legal entity, with its world class management team to deploy and operate the domestic scheme for the benefit of the industry.

"As we work to conclude connectivity and onboard all of the financial institutions. We'll see further details on this in due course."

Rural communities will be affected by CBN deadline, says El-Rufai

GOVERNOR Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna state has asked the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to extend the January 31st deadline for the acceptance of the old Naira notes, stating that the timing is too short.

El-Rufai was of the opinion that many rural dwellers who do not have access to financial services will be mostly affected by the decision.

Speaking in an interview with reporters in Kubau local government area of Kaduna state, the governor insisted that it is impossible for local farmers and traders in most of the communities in the state to meet up with the CBN deadline on depositing their old Naira notes, as some of the local government areas do have any bank presence, and therefore are not financially included.

While he expressed support to the redesigning of the currency by the CBN, El-Rufai says that the rural communities must be

given more opportunity to exchange their old Naira notes even as he said that access to bank branches is limited in rural

communities and therefore charges the central Bank and other financial institutions to find a way of swapping



El-Rufai

UK cuts tariffs on Nigerian exports

THE UK government on Wednesday said it had cut tariffs and extended duty free trade in goods exported from Nigeria

Mr Ben Llewellyn-Jones, Deputy British High Commissioner to Nigeria said this at the launch of the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) which took place at Eko Hotel and Suites, Victoria Island, Lagos.

Llewellyn-Jones said the scheme would help to boost Nigeria's non-oil exports in line with the Federal Government's wider trade policy objectives and take off in April 2023.

He noted that the scheme would reduce import costs by over £750 million per year, thereby reducing prices, and increase choice of UK consumers and businesses as well.

"The UK Government has reduced the tariffs of 90 per cent of goods that Nigeria would export to our country and has also provided preferential trading scheme for range of other exports that the country might have.

"We have reached out to small and large businesses in different parts of the country and this is intended to help exporters and other people in the trading business to make the



Adebayo

United Kingdom an export destination.

"This would also serve as an opportunity to grow the non oil and gas sector in Nigeria and create jobs in the country, and most importantly, we are reaching out to people at the grassroot level so they can know what we are doing.

"The DCTS is much more generous and simpler than the existing Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)," he said.

Llewellyn-Jones revealed that the trade volume between both countries for year 2022 was 2.2 billion pounds, noting that the oil and gas sector accounted for majority of the trade.

He stressed on the importance of expanding the market and diversifying into other sectors including exportation.

"We have to change focus to non oil sector but this takes time, but we are working with experts from Nigeria Export Promotion Council and the Federal Government to grow the economy through expanding of its export.

"The key challenges for exporters is finding key partners in the UK to sell their products but we are working on ensuring that we link exporters with potential buyers so as to ensure there is enough demand and supply," he said.

Mr Simon Calvert, Senior Adviser, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) noted that Nigeria

does not require international conventions to enjoy the benefits under the DCTS.

He added that the UK government would help exporters to access finances through its financial institutions.

He noted that by making the rules of origin more generous, neighbouring countries can easily make use of components from Nigeria in their Duty Free Exports to the UK

"Cutting tariffs for Nigeria would ensure that 3000 new products are duty free for the first time as the average existing tariff on these goods is seven per cent, meaning these changes make Nigerian exports more competitive in the UK.

"Many tariff reductions are on value added goods such as processed sesame oil, cotton clothing and cocoa butter and paste and complement existing duty free trade on raw products.

"We have made it simpler for Nigeria to get and retain these enhanced tariffs by removing the need for Nigeria to ratify and implement certain international conventions," he said.

Damola Olatosu, an official with Boston Consulting Group, said that opportunities in the exporting market remained underutilised.

She said that the country could grow its exports to the UK by increasing production on certain products like cocoa, cotton, fertiliser, cashew amongst others.

ENTREPRENEUR WATCH

WITH CELESTINE D. ATTSAR

Magic phrases for potential investors

So, 2022 has come and gone, leaving its mark, good or bad, on our businesses. Regardless of the economic challenges that came with last year and the uncertainties attendant new years', your small business is still thriving and you believe it is about time to get your feet through the door and begin to pitch your business and ideas to potential investors in a bid to foster expansion in one way or the other. BRAIN ESSIEN writes.

TRUTH be told, pitching your company, business or ideas to investors, be they Bankers, Crowd Investors, Angels, Venture capitalists, Private Equity or even Startup-focused Investment Clubs, can be intimidating, especially when the fate of moving your small business forward rests in the cold hard cash in their hands or bank accounts. Perhaps, you have considered this one critical task for your business daunting enough that you have continued to put it off or you just keep praying that one of these categories of investors miraculously falls into your lap one fair-weathered day.

Well, guess what, they won't, for so many reasons, at least, not just by magic or turning up the charm on your part anyway. So, while every investor will have their requirements, some being more stringent than others, and be looking for ideas, concepts, or business models that align with their personal, and business interests or strategies, here are the 20 magic words that will get potentials, even those who might at first not have an interest in your business fielding to have a chat with you about a partnership.

Start-up the experience: Of course, a great majority of us are probably starting our first businesses and are still garnering the requisite experience worthy to call ourselves hardened entrepreneurs, however nothing wards-off potential more than when this is your first solo run. Is that a bad thing, you may ask, and the answer is 'no'. But just like hiring companies these days search out employees with requisite subject matter experience, well, guess what, so do seasoned investors. So, if this is your first rodeo and you have only been at it a year or so, perhaps it might be best to stay at it a few more years to be able to argue, intelligibly, with even the most hardcore of investors and possibly win their trust and investment.

Management Quality: Not only does experience matter, but that of your team. The reason why investors want to see, not a one-man business, but a team of eggheads vested in the different departments that make your business tick. So, as much as the idea of finding a business partner or partners may seem repulsive to you, guess what you will eventually need them, might as well grit your teeth and accept the fact that you can't go this alone. You need people with as much if not more experience than yourself to help your business grow and find those all-important investors.

A Minimum Viable Product (MVP): Having a product is no longer the story for many an investor. Everybody has a product, but the question is how tried and tested is. Have all the glitches in business delivery and customer satisfaction been worked out? Is it something feasible and physical the investor can feel, see, touch or taste to determine for themselves if it is worth staking a claim to? If the answer is 'no' then perhaps you are not quite ready just yet.

Product Life Cycle: So, it is not just enough to have an MVP, investors want to know what its lifecycle is. In essence, the longer the lifecycle, or in



other words, the more often a customer has to use or come in contact with your product or service, requiring such things as after-sales service, etc, or anything that makes that one product or service bring in residual income besides the initial purchase, the more attention an investor will offer you.

Customer Quality and Quantity: Nothing excites a potential investor more than when you not only have a nice long list of existing clients to show them but also show that they are happy to continue using your product or service, maybe even at a higher charge. Now, what potential investor can say 'no' to that kind of potential?

Serviceable Obtainable Market: Contingent on existing customer quality and quantity, might you be able to show, from your existing business model and inflow of course, that a much larger Serviceable Obtainable Market still exists out there for the taking, and you will most probably have investors queuing at your door, cheques and wallets in hand because the more astute of them know that this spells the next magic words...

IPO Capability: Ah! Sweet words for even the less canny investor for certain. Nothing gets an investor's hands itchy to own a piece of your business when you show and can prove your business has IPO capability, why, you may ask? Simple. Most investors are looking for 10x their returns and nothing brings much better, faster, or easier.

Operational Stability: IPO-able aside for a minute shall we, before getting to the top of the business food chain, investors want to see that your business has a certain level of stability, not just staffing turnover and market vagaries, but in the most important fact of your business, the income statement. Thus should you run a seasonal business, perhaps it is time to chalk up the number with an

added product/service or two during the down seasons, no investor likes to see one-off sporadic inflows and then continuous outflows. It kills the vibe!

Thus, Continuous Sales and Profit Consistency: Need to be a buzzword in your business or else you may find nothing but uninterested investors no matter where you may turn.

This thus leads to having A Diversified Product/Service Portfolio, because nothing badger the eyes and ears of most investors than a mono-product company. The risks of a single product are just too great!

Quick Market Penetration and Adoption: Perhaps this should come right before IPO-able because if your business or idea cannot penetrate your target market quickly, remember you have competition lying in wait and readying to pick up your slack, nor does it enjoy quick adoption to keep the wheels of business progress churning speedily and loudly then guess what? Yep, you probably already have – potential investors, out the door

Solid Sales and Distribution Structures: It's a no-brainer. To be able to move products quickly and engender quick adoption, you need to show you have an unshakable distribution structure, be it through the internet or third-party brick-and-mortar resellers. If unwholesome delivery time lags still exist in your business then it might be time to either tighten it up or explain to a potential investor why you think his/her money can help your business improve on this, with considerable returns to them of course.

Healthy Profit Margins: Of course, making N0.50k profit on a product is still profit, but what investor do you know would like to take the risk of having the all too dreaded word – competition, come into the fray and undercut your pricing by even 1%? So, nothing assures an investor his/her money is in the right business when you can show that it would take,

but an act of God, to affect your profit margins. You are certain to win many of them indeed.

Stringent Competition Analysis: In the eternal words of an anonymous investor, "their market is always there, show me your competition. It is they I worry more about..." Thus, nothing calms the hearts of potential investors when they know that you know who your competition is and what makes your offering unique, and worth buying theirs.

Stringent Financial Reporting & Projections: Let's face it, what investor would give you the time of day if he/she finds you are terrible at managing your company's finances or make bloated projections, perhaps in a futile bid to impress? Remember the Quality Management part? Same inferences, and thus maybe it is time to partner with or engage the services, of a seasoned bookkeeper. Your potential investors will probably think more highly of you.

Patents and Intellectual Properties: Remember the guys lying in wait to pick up your slack? Yep, the competition. Even unpatented software can quickly become theirs, and your potential can quickly become their potential. So, should you wish to keep investors interested in helping see your business grow, proclaiming legal rights to intellectual property always does the trick.

Bottom-up Market Analysis: Most entrepreneurs are quick to make the statement, 'If the market size is X large, and we are thus able to corner but 10% of it, then we'll be in the green for the rest of our days!' Well, guess what, investors, or at least the more seasoned and 'moneyed' of them, are no longer appeased by such novice talk. The reason is, it is one thing to be optimistic before a business hits the ground, but quite another when it finally does and everyday realities come reeling in. So, to get investors better interested in having a serious conversation with

you about putting some money down, nothing spells a better experience than when you can show them a bottom-up analysis starting with the most pragmatic, disciplinary approach, stemming from your current business inflows, market positions, customer insights and product testing/maturity.

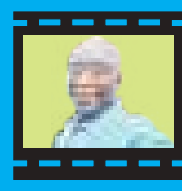
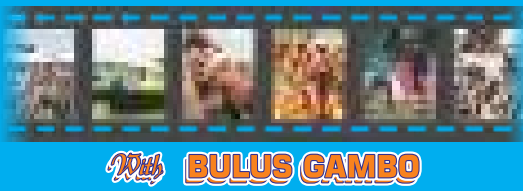
Co-Investors: Co-investors?! But should this not be a turn-off for most investors, you may scream? It is quite the opposite. Showing potentials that you have other interested potentials, only tells them one thing, if someone out there is taking investing in your business seriously, why perhaps they should too?

A well-written Business Plan: Okay, it's all nice and nifty if you can pull off telling investors how your business has all of the above mentioned in 5 minutes or less, but you must remember, most of these types are quite busy and have some many things pulling at them and in so many directions. Being able to offer a properly drafted business plan not only helps them better picture your ideas later when they are less busy, but it also offers them something to show to others particularly when you are not looking. Remember, business is interconnectivity. A potential may not invest for whatever reason but a well-written business plan can always be passed along to someone else they think might have an interest in your business. So, stay prepared and have it readily available online where you can.

A catchy Pitch Deck: Sometimes, all you need to say is, 'I have a pitch deck and this will only take 10-15mins of your coffee break'. Now, who wouldn't give you 10 minutes of their time especially if you are buying the coffee?!

Now, be sure to read [the article](#) on pitch decks and your wealth of knowledge to Series A. There are lots of useful nuggets that will benefit you.

Best of luck in 2023.
Source: Nairametrics



Mach-Hommy: Paying it forward

Continued from page 18



trendsetter, people follow. That's what happens when you lead. The real problem is when it doesn't get reported in the press. I like to see the reaction, the response, and I like to see people adopt and repurpose. The only thing I'd say is to acknowledge the origins.

You gotta know the history.

C'mon, son. For instance, imagine the name

Tesla beginning and ending with an electric car. And no one knows anything else about the name and it doesn't spark the slightest curiosity. It's just like, "Oh yeah, Elon Musk" and that's it. Beginning and end. But [inventor Nikola Tesla] died like 100 years ago, son. And I'm still alive and working. It's cool but I guess we're failing to acknowledge where things come from.

You said earlier that you don't want flowers, but is there a difference between getting flowers and being acknowledged?

When people talk about flowers, it's more so like things you should be able to do for yourself. You can tell yourself you're the greatest. You can get up in the mirror and say some affirmations or meditate or commune with God. I'm talking about actual facts. We dug the hole and poured the concrete in 2016. Now, there's an edifice that towers over the landscape and casts a shadow over half the city, but we're gonna act like the elephant isn't in the room, right? It's not opinions, taste, and preference; this is actual fact. I came, I saw, I conquered, and I'm still here.

When all is said and done, what do you want the Mach-Hommy legacy to be?

Excellence in the face of adversity.



Most beautiful black actresses, singers

Continued from page 18



Gugu Mbatha-Raw

(Born 1983 Oxford, Oxfordshire, England, UK) is an English actress. Her father is an African doctor, originally from the Republic of South Africa. Best known for the role from the film *Living with the Enemy* and *Choice of Straws*.

Николь Шерзингер / Nicole Scherzinger

(Born June 29, 1978) is an American singer-songwriter and television personality. She then joined burlesque-inspired girl group *The Pussycat Dolls* as lead singer. Her father is of Filipino descent, and her mother is of Hawaiian and Russian descent.

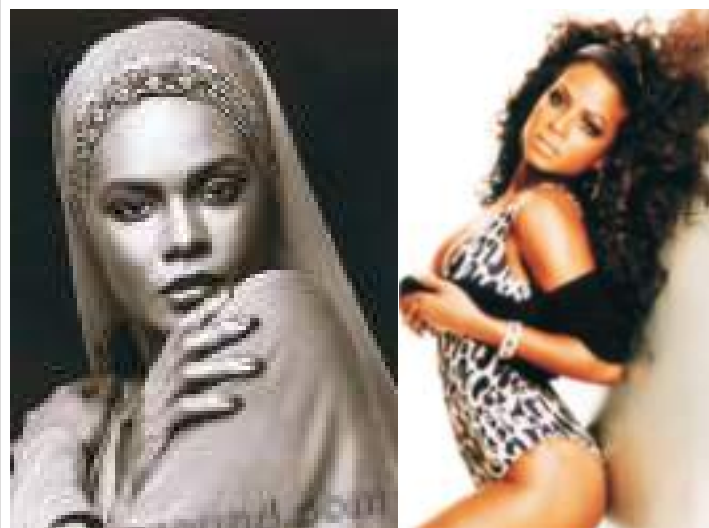


Joy Bryant

(Born October 18, 1974) is an American actress and former fashion model, who is currently starring as Jasmine Trussell in the NBC family drama *Parenthood*.

Катерина "Кэт" Грэхэм / Kat Graham

(Born September 5, 1989, Geneva, Switzerland) - American actress, singer, model, record producer and dancer. Best known for the role of Bonnie Bennett from the TV series *"The Vampire Diaries"*. Has Liberian roots on his father.



Tamara Dobson

(May 14, 1947 - October 2, 2006) was an African-American actress and fashion model.

Christine Milian

(Born September 26, 1981) is an American actress and singer-songwriter. Born to Afro-Cuban parents.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Lawyer sues CBN, seeks extension for old notes

January deadline set to end the use of the old notes. Mr Aloba, a professor of law, asked the Federal High Court in Abuja to stop the CBN from making 31 January deadline for old 1000, 500 and 200 naira notes. AMEH EJEKWONYILO writes.

SPECIFICALLY, the plaintiff begged the court to issue an order, "extending the duration where the old notes cease to become legal tender to period of three weeks when the redesign notes will be sufficiently dispense by the commercial banks."

He listed the CBN, its governor, Godwin Emefiele, and the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) as defendants.

Mr Aloba acknowledged in an affidavit deposed to by Musa Damudi, that the central bank had on 26 October, 2022, announced the introduction of redesigned N200, N500 and N1,000 banknotes into the financial system.

The plaintiff lamented that the less-privileged Nigerians were yet to have the new naira notes that were unveiled last November by President Muhammadu Buhari.

Mr Aloba accused money deposit banks of failing to make the redesigned notes available to their customers.

He said as of 25 January, he was still given the old notes on the counter and through the Automatic Teller Machine (ATM).

The plaintiff further noted that shopping malls in Abuja are rejecting the old notes, while ATM daily limit withdrawal is pegged at N20,000.

He contended that the terminal date of 31 January for old notes "is discriminatory against the rural dwellers, poor and less-privileged persons in the society, as politically exposed persons are paid with the redesigned notes."

The lawyer admitted that the "cashless policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria is innovative and welcome development, but the rural dwellers



that constitute bulk of the population do not have access to internet and banking facilities."

"We respectfully submit that the dateline January 31, 2023 for phasing old Naira notes is of grave constitutional importance for the economic survival of the vast population that constitute the entity called Nigeria.

"The percentage of persons with lower educational background and

economic realities of rural dwellers and some Local Governments in Nigeria without a single bank is high", the plaintiff argued.

Citing plots by the State Security Service (SSS) to arrest Mr Emefiele over allegations of terrorism financing, Mr Aloba said the situation resulted in "uncertainty as to the full implementation of the redesigned naira notes."

The Federal High Court in Abuja, had

declined an exparte application by the SSS in which it sought to arrest the CBN, a move many Nigerians have attributed to the apex bank's monetary policy to redesign Nigeria's legal tender, the naira.

The standoff between the SSS and Mr Emefiele lingered on until the latter's return to Nigeria. He arrived into the country on 13 January and later met with Mr Buhari.

Many Nigerians have criticised CBN's naira redesign policy, with the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu, saying the policy was intended to scuttle his presidential ambition.

With Tuesday as the deadline, Nigerians in their numbers have thronged the banks in major cities across the country to lodge their old bank notes.

The scramble by many Nigerians to meet the 31 January deadline has been chaotic as many of them flood banking halls with huge cash in old notes to exchange them with the new ones.

Others are seen on long queues at the few ATM points having the new naira notes in different parts of the country to have access.

Amid the scarcity of the new notes and with CBN's adamant stance of sticking to the 31 January deadline, many Nigerians are no longer able to perform basic transactions as business owners have stopped collecting the old notes.

No date has been slated for the hearing of the suit.



NEWS

Commercial motorcyclists reject old Naira notes

From
ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

FOLLOWING the rejection of the old Naira notes by commercial motorcyclists, commuters in Sokoto now bear the burden even as they get stranded.

Majority of commuters in Sokotometropolis were left stranded as commercial motorcyclists popularly known as okada riders continue to reject old naira notes from passengers saying, "What do you expect us to do with the money we cannot spend in the market."

Investigations revealed that many passengers have no alternative than trek to and fro their long distance destination.

A b u b a k a r Y a b o, a commercial motorcyclist while reacting to the development said his members decided to stop accepting the old naira notes due to the time frame as announced by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

He explained that most of the filling stations in the state have stopped collecting the old naira notes from his members that is Okada Riders.

According to him, most of the filling stations have stopped selling fuel and a few of them dispensing are requesting the new notes. "It's better we stopped collecting it so as not to fall victim," he exclaimed.

Also reacting, **Mallam Sidi**, a resident of the state said he decided not to allow his children to go to school as a result of old naira notes that



Emefiele

his daughter trekked for about 5km while returning from school due to the non-availability of new naira notes.

Sidi said "She couldn't see bike after closing from school and she had to trek about 5km coming back home. I pitied her and told her not to go to school due to the stress she went through the previous day.

Meanwhile, there are serious queue in almost all the bank ATMs in the state as residents scramble for the new naira notes.

THE NIGERIA STANDARD also learnt that there were long queues of customers in almost all the branches of banks within the metropolis such as UBA, First Bank, Zenith Bank, Polaris, and Access Bank etc.

NLC, FMBN commission 100 houses

From **ANENE AIKE, Sokoto**

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has in collaboration with the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) commissioned 100 housing units at Angwarkose in Sokoto metropolis for civil servants in the state. In his address during the commissioning ceremony, the Managing Director of FMBN, Mr. Madu Hamman called on civil servants in Sokoto to key

into the NHS, which is a mandatory contribution scheme that requires Nigerian workers in both public and private sectors.

In his speech, the Executive Director Finance and Corporate Services, Zubaida Umar Hamman said the commissioning stands as affirmation that the NHF scheme is meeting its mandate of providing access for homeownership to the overriding majority of the

GOVERNOR Samuel Ortom has appealed to industrial unions especially Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) at the Benue State University Makurdi to shelve their planned industrial action.

He enjoined them to always explore other ways of resolving issues with management of the university and state government rather than embarking on strikes.

The Governor who made the appeal during a thanksgiving service in his honour held at the BSU Good Shepherd Catholic Chaplaincy, Makurdi reaffirmed the commitment of his administration to continue placing the university on first line charge, stressing that "education of the Benue child must not be treated with levity."

The Governor said he was properly briefed on outstanding issues with industrial unions at the university and state government will continue to show sincere commitment to resolving all issues for the growth of the institution.

"My appeal is that we find a middle ground on resolving issues and avoid the temptation of always embarking on strike," the governor stated.

He lauded management of the university under the

Ortom appeals to unions to shelve planned strike

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

leadership of its Vice Chancellor, Prof. Tor Iorapuu for steering the affairs of the institution, stating that "I am happy you have been able to manage the university without any major issues" and urged management to sustain the tempo.

Governor Ortom who congratulated the university for attaining 30 years stated that he was proud of achievements the university has continued to record since its establishment.

According to the governor, it was a deliberate approach to encourage growth of the university that state government has approved the institution's takeover of the Makurdi Zoological Garden, JS Tarka Foundation as well as the Agriculture Development Corporation (ADC) along Makurdi-Aliade road for academic research and other purposes.

The governor thanked the Chaplain of the Good Shepherd Catholic Chaplaincy, Rev. Fr. RemigiusIhyula and Christian community for organising the



Ortom

thanksgiving service to offer prayers for him as he was gradually rounding-up his tenure in office.

He noted that amidst the travails, his administration was sustained by prayers of the Church and solicited constant prayers to overcome the challenges of his administration.

He particularly applauded the Catholic Church for adding value to humanity through collaborative efforts in the areas of education, health services and character formation, noting that the Church has never deviated from its mandate.

Governor Ortom also used the moment to commiserate with the university community over the death of one of its pioneer staff, Prof. Armstrong MatiuAdejo who died a few days ago, stating that he was saddened as the deceased university don was his personal friend and taught him in the university.

Vice Chancellor of the Benue State University, Prof. Tor Iorapuu in his remarks said the university was lucky to have unhindered access to the governor, stating that the governor's move to expand the university was unimaginable.

He particularly expressed profound appreciation to the governor for giving approval to the university to take over Agriculture Development Corporation, JS Tarka Foundation as well as the Makurdi Zoological Garden saying the facilities will be useful for the university's research purposes.

Earlier in a homily, Vicar General, Pastoral of the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, Rev. Fr. Moses Iorapuu who represented Bishop Wilfred Anagbe pointed out that endless love flows from the mystery of the cross. He stated that we give thanks to God because of the mystery of the cross which symbolises victory.

While urging Christians to develop friendship with Jesus, the cleric cautioned against divisions in the Church which he said will destroy the victory of the cross that unites all Christian faithful.

Rev Fr. Iorapuu admonished politicians to have the courage of St. Paul the apostle to stop their followers from destroying others.

Court declares null and void election of athletes representative

From **Dorcias Pankyes, Abuja**

A High Court of the Federal Capital Territory sitting in Abuja has declared null and void the election of Athletes Representative into the broad of Handball Federation of Nigeria, sixteen months after the process was conducted for the emergence of Udale Joseph Haruna to the position by the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development.

Presiding Judge of Nyanya Division of the Court, Honourable Justice Edward Okpe in his judgment on January 16, 2023 ruled that the electoral process which produced the former occupant of the position (Udale Joseph Haruna) did not conform with extant provisions of guidelines to accommodate the interest of the Claimant, Sammy Abua, his team mates and the vast majority of players in tiers of National Handball

League of the HFN.

Honourable Justice Edward Okpe also ordered co-defendants in the case, **M o h a m m e d HarunaMaigidansama** - immediate past Secretary of the HFN and Sunday Dare- Minister of Youth and Sports Development Minister or their successors to issue fresh guidelines for the election while the latter has been ordered to conduct fresh elections within 30 days to accommodate the interest of the Claimant, his team mates and all players in all tiers of the National Handball Leagues of HFN.

First Defendant in the case, **M o h a m m e d HarunaMaigidansama** was ordered by the court to pay cost of the suit to the tune of 500,000 (five hundred thousand Naira only) to the Claimant Sammy Abua . Counsel to the Plaintiff, Terence Vembe, Esq who is 1st Vice Chairman, Benue State Handball Association described the judgment as a welcome development which will reset sports

polity in the country

"Cases of this nature are often brought forward by aggrieved parties in the sports sector for justice to take its course. This will surely serve as a reminder to all the vibrancy of Nigeria Judiciary System to adjudicate all issues of grievance. Majority of players were desolate and mobilized to the venue of the elections to disrupt it but we pleaded with them not to take laws in their hands and they obeyed. We are happy that the disenfranchised players have been vindicated."

Terence VembeEsq, an ex-handball international and seasoned administrator admonished Nigerians to seek justice as the Nigerian project requires all to play their roles and make the country greater.

Recall that the National Sports Federations Elections held in September 2021 in Abuja with that of Handball Federation raising much dusts than expected after the re-election of Sam Ocheo as President.



Oriwola

2023 Census: NPC warns staffers against partisanship, laxity

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE National Population Commission (NPC) has warned enumerators and staffers against partisanship and laxity during the 2023 census exercise.

Prof. Habibat Isa-Jimoh, Kogi NPC Federal Commissioner, gave the warning during the inauguration of a 3-Day Specialized WorkForce and State Facilitators Training, held at Lokoja metropolis. Isa-Jimoh said that the 2023 census was so crucial to the federal government such that it would not tolerate any attempt by anyone to rubbish it in anyway.

Represented by state NPC Director, MrOjoAbiodun-Titus, the Commissioner said, "the government and international community is waiting to have a correct, credible, and acceptable census for national development purpose."

"Therefore, any attempt to rubbish this census exercise with partisanship and laxity as done in 2006, shall meet with stiff consequences and penalties. "We expect that when you are going out to the field, make sure you don't have any link with any political structure especially putting on T-shirts and caps of political parties. "As field workers or enumerators, you should place Nigeria first and above money and do this work without any form of laxity, because a successful, credible and acceptable census will benefit you at the end as a citizen," headmonished.

Also speaking, Prof. MakanjuoleOsagbemi, National Monitoring Consultant to the commission, tasked the participants to take the training serious so as to get the knowledge that would help in getting the census right this time around. He implored them to put in



Bello

their best to give the best to the nation, "which is why we shall seriously monitor your work out there at the field. Moreso, we don't want anything to go wrong." DrNnamdiIfeanyi, NPC State Field Coordinator said that all enumerators would be paid there monies in full and as when due, therefore they

should not tow with the national assignment.

Ifeanyi said, "we respect all our field officers including enumerators, staffers and monitors from whom we expect nothing but the best, for a successful and acceptable census to the government and the international community.

Group opposes hike in FUL school fees

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

A Group under the aegies of Parents of students of Federal University Lokoja, have raised alarm over the proposed hike in the student's school fees without recourse to the current economic situation in the country. Group under the aegies of Parents of students of Federal University Lokoja, have raised alarm over the proposed hike in the student's school fees without recourse to the current economic situation in the country.

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The group who protested vehemently carrying placards of various inscriptions, said the protest would continue until the management of the university reverse the increment.

The leader of the group, Mr Moses Abraham who made the call while addressing newsmen in Lokoja on Tuesday, said the increment in school fees which is

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Plateau State University Bokoos is set to graduate over one thousand, three hundred fifty-two (1352) with six first class honour degrees tomorrow on the occasion of 6th and 7th Combined Convocation in line with the University Commission.

The Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Yohanna Daniel Izam, disclosed this yesterday while addressing journalists at the pre-convocation media briefing, held at the Senate Chamber of the University Bokoos.

He said, "the convocation will feature the award of honorary Doctorate Degrees on 3 notable Nigerians: Professor Ochapa C. Onazi, Chairman of the implementation Committee for the establishment of the Plateau State University and pioneer Chairman of the Governing Council, Professor Jonah IsawaEliagwu, a foremost Middle Belt educationist and Dr. ZereAwosika, the Chairman, Board of Trustees

PLASU graduates 1352 students, 6 first class degree



Izam,

of Access Bank, Nigeria Limited and a pharmacist of note, respectively.

"At this Convocation Ceremony, we will be graduating 658 students for

2018/2019 academic session and 694 for 2019/2020 academic session, bringing the total to 1,352. Of this number, 2018/2019 academic session has six first class honour degrees, one hundred and fifty nine second class upper honour degrees, three hundred and sixty-six second class lower degrees respectively, one hundred and twenty five third class honour degrees and two pass degrees.

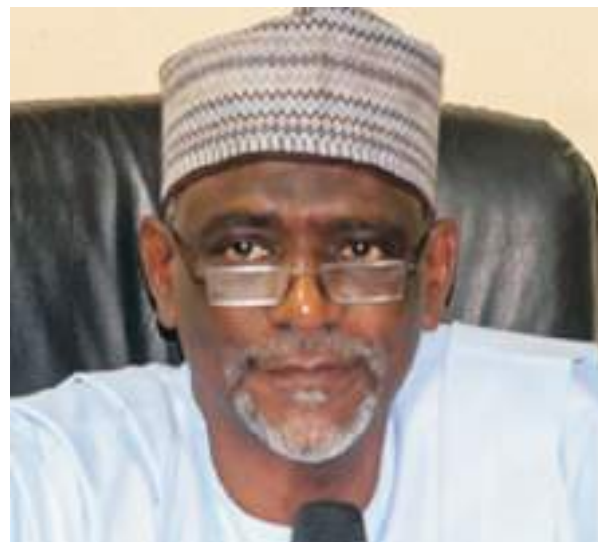
"For 2019/2020 academic session, we have seven first class honour degrees, one hundred and ninety three second class upper honour degrees, one hundred and forty three second class lower honour degrees, one hundred and twenty seven third class honour degrees and four pass degrees in that order", Izam highlighted.

He also disclosed that the convocation would be proceeded by the Convocation Lectures, Thursday titled "Education: The Foundation for Peace, Unity and Economic Development" to be delivered by Professor NanvenGambo, Vice Chancellor of Karl Kumm University Vom.

There would also be the commissioning of notable projects completed within his tenure which include, the Faculty of Law, Post Graduate School, Faculty of Education, proposed Faculty of Agriculture. Others include the PLASU Rock Garden, the legacy project which is a tourist attraction, a medical centre and recreation thinking site for students, staff and various visitors.

However, the convocation proper would be on Friday February 27, 2023 at the institution's Mini Stadium.

Guests expected include dignitaries where dignitaries like the Governor Simon BakoLalong as the visitor.



Adamu

almost 300 percent was orchestrated to deny parents and Nigerian masses the chance of acquiring university education for their children.

Highlighting the breakdown of the current hike in the students' fees, Abraham explained that, the remedial course which used to cost N50,000 as school fees is now N100,000 while fees for new intake student which was formerly N56,000 now moves to N188,500.

He added that the fees for new intake art/social sciences hitherto fixed for N55,000 has been increased to N183,500 just as returning students are expected to pay N113,000 against the former fees of N47,000.

According to him, student accommodation per bed space which was charged for N20,000 before has been hiked by the Vice Chancellor to N60,000 while the GST hand book sold to students at N1,500 per copy now increases to N6,500.

menting further, the parents spokesman said the increment was too much for parents to bear and called on the federal government through the Minister of Education to prevail on the Vice Chancellor to reverse the hike in the fees before he collapses the only federal university in Kogi State.

"The Vice Chancellor is a civil servant and we expected that he should be aware of the current

economic situation the people of this country are passing through. How can people pay their children's school fees with the current increment when sources of income remain stagnated," he lamented.

Another parent who expressed her feelings over the hike in the fees, Madam Florence Anachebisaid "when the federal government established the university few years ago, we were happy but the current Vice Chancellor wants to deny us the opportunity to train our children. This is because since he came, he has virtually increased all charges and now the school fees."

Reacting to the protest, the Public Relations Officer of the University, Mr Daniel Iyke said there has not been any official release of any increase in the university charges.

He pointed out that the federal government due to the current economic situation cannot effectively fund education sector, noting that there has been an increase in charges from one university to another. He stressed that if the Federal University Lokoja is trying to consider an increase, it should not be totally out of place.

"However, it will be important for parents, students and the public to give us benefit of the doubt and be patient before the official release of any document to that effect," he said.

New Naira notes: CBN extends services to Saturday

From GYANG PAM, Yola

The commercial banks have been told to approach the apex bank when their stocks are exhausted and more so, the Central Bank has since



Emefiele

extended its services to Saturdays.

In a chat with some newsmen recently, the Director Internal Audit Department of the CBN Headquarters Mrs. Lydia Alfa says no one should reject the old notes for now as the closing date is sacrosanct till the 31st day of January 2023.

According to Madam Lydia Alfa, the banks have been told to fill their ATMs with new notes and failure to do that will be sanctioned.

"Defaulting banks will be sanctioned for sabotaging the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)," she says.

Answering a question, the Internal Auditor said it would not pre-empt how much new notes have been supplied to the state but what has been

expected.

Lydia however said in a response to a question that so far no bank has been sanctioned for any default or lapses.

"We have gone round some ATMs and they were dispensing new notes and more so both POS and super agents are relating with the banks", says the Director.

Speaking further, the Director reiterated that the CBN was moving towards a cashless accounting system.

And responding to a question, she said her men are in the localities to educate the people on the old notes.

She however frowned of the lackadaisical attitude of our people who rush at the last minute thus congesting the banks.

The director was in company of the Branch Manager, Mr. SanusiSah.

NEWS

Senate gives legal backing to PRODA

From
JIDAUNA YANUNG Abuja

THE Senate has taken a major step to give legal backing to the Project Development Agency (PRODA) by passing the bill to that effect for seconding.

The bill, sponsored by Senator Frank Ibezim, representing Imo North on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC), seeks to give Project Development Agency, Enugu State, legal backing to function optimally.

The agency which was established in 1971 by the defunct East Central State was charged with the broad function of generating and catalyzing industrialisation by carrying out industrial research from the laboratory stage to the pilot plant stage, and by rendering consultancy services to government, industry and individuals.

Speaking on the objective of the bill, Ibezim said when and if PRODA gets the legal backing it requires, it would be very effective to carry out the right functions in research and development in the South-East where they have lots of need to showcase natural products.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives has directed the Clerk to the National Assembly (CAN) to transmit the 35 bills that have so far met



Lawan

the requirement of the provisions of Section 9(2) of the constitution to Mr. President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation for assent in line with the provisions of the Acts Authentication Act.

It also urged the following state Houses of Assembly: Gombe, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kwara, Oyo, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, and Zamfara; that are yet to forward their resolution on the bills to do so in fulfillment of their constitutively imposed legislative obligation to the constitution amendment process.

The directive was consequent

upon a motion by the Chairman of the Committee on Rules and Business, Rep. Abubakar Fulata and seventy others, which was seconded by Rep. Sani Bala.

Presenting the motion, Fulata noted that "Section 9(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) provides that an Act to alter the provisions of the constitution can be passed only when it is supported by 2/3 majority of members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and approved by the 24 state Houses of Assembly".

THE Senate has failed to approve the N22.7 trillion Ways and Means restructuring request by President Muhammadu Buhari, contrary to expectations of Nigerians.

The apex legislative chamber has also adjourned plenary till February 28, when it will reconvene after the conduct of the presidential elections.

It was highly anticipated that the request would be considered and approved by the Chamber before vacating Thursday, to enable members participate in the ongoing political campaigns and presidential election.

Senate fails to approve Buhari's restructuring request

From
JIDAUNA YANUNG Abuja

Indication emerged that the request had hit the rock when it was not enlisted in the day's Order Paper among other legislative items scheduled for consideration by the law makers.

SUNDAY STANDARD learnt that the required details on the fund were not provided by the Minister of Finance, Zainab Ahmed and the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr. Godwin Emefiele.

President Buhari had in a letter to the Senate shortly before it went on Christmas and New Year recess, sought for restricting of the N22.7 trillion Ways and the Means advances from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) within the last ten years.

"Ways and Means" are loans or advances by the Central Bank to the Federal Government to enable it cater for short term or emergency finance to fund delayed government expected cash

FMBN inaugurates 100 housing estates for workers

From
AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

The Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria, recently, inaugurated 100 housing estates in Lokoja built for federal workers in Kogi State on Owner-Occupier Loan services.

The housing project under the National Affordable Housing Delivery Programme was initiated by the FMBN in collaboration with the Nigeria Labour Congress, Trade Union Congress and Nigeria Employer's Consultative Association to ease the ability of providing shelter for workers across the country.

The Executive Director Loans and Mortgage Services

of the Bank, Lukman Olayiwola Mustapha while speaking during the commissioning ceremony, disclosed that the 100 housing estate comprises of three, two and one bedroom flats.

"This is a facility to National Housing Fund contributors through Mortgage Banks, granted 6% interest over a maximum of 30 years. It is aimed at boosting provision of affordable housing" he said.

He commended Governor Yahaya Bello for the provision of land for execution of the project and other support that led to its successful delivery.

Mustapha also praised MAHFAS Engineering Limited that handled the project for timely completion.

The Group Managing Director, MAHFAS Engineering Limited, Alhaji Sule Salau in his welcome address, described the housing project as a laudable one which will go a long way in improving the living standard of the beneficiaries.

He appealed to the federal government not to relent in initiating development scheme that will help solve

Nigeria's housing crisis. Governor Yahaya Bello who performed the commissioning ceremony, expressed joy that the housing project which he flagged off two years ago has been realised.

Governor Bello who was represented by the Secretary to Kogi Government, Dr. Mrs Folashade Ayoade Arike lauded President Muhammadu Buhari's led administration for the great initiative of National Housing Fund aimed at providing Nigeria's workers with sound accommodation.

According to the Governor, "this welfare package for Nigeria workers will not only enhance their living condition but boost their productivity in service delivery"

He assured that the state government will key into the federal government's gesture of providing enabling environment such as good shelter for workers.

In their separate goodwill message, representatives of the Kogi State NLC and TUC, appreciated the federal government's efforts in housing development and appealed for more of such gesture in the years ahead.

Family cries out for financial assistance

BY **EZEKIEL DONTINNA**

THE family of Mr. Victor Oppah Engom, whose wife is critically ill battling with ovarian cancer at Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Plateau State, has cried out for help from organisations and spirited individuals to raise six million Naira (#6,000,000) that would help save the life of their wife, Mrs Patience Shawuyah Engom.

The patient who came all the way from Nasarawa State, has been in the hospital for over three weeks now and has first undergone surgery since 2021 but the illness still persists and she was brought back to JUTH and now needs to buy doses of chemo amounting to six million Naira to save her life.

The husband of the cancer patient, Mr. Engom Victor Oppah, of Akwanga LGA of Nasarawa State said, "we were here in 2021 when my wife had surgery and after that we received two pieces of chemo and we were discharged. After that, they asked us to do city scan which we have done.

"They said we should raise six million naira (6,000,000), to continue with the treatment and because we do not have the money, the problem persists and we came back to the hospital on the 8 of January this year and since then, we have been on admission.

"As it is now, we have raised just three hundred thousand naira (#300,000) from some philanthropists with the help of someone who took the campaign to social media and

we are hoping that people will come to our aid. I am appealing to organisations and individuals to come to our aid and save the life of my wife", he cried.

Engom, disclosed that the recent test showed that the situation now was worse than when they first came in 2021 because her liver was now enlarged up to 29 centimetres and it has reached an advance stage affecting other organs in her system. He commends the nurses and doctors for the prompt attention and services rendered all these while.

Speaking to the JUTH Public Relations Officer, Bridget Omini, she confirmed to our correspondent that the Chief Medical Director of Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Dr. Pokop Bupwatda was aware and has approved that they seek for help from

organisations and spirited individuals to come to their aid and save her life.

She said, "it is true that the patient is laying in Ward 9 here with Ovarian Cancer. They have written requesting for financial backing and of course, we do not allow people to come in here to just to do that, except an official letter of approval is given which the CMD has approved this".

PARE sensitizes communities, youths, against electoral violence

From
AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja.

PASTORAL Resolve (PARE), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) has called on Nigerians, especially youths, to eschew political and electoral violence that could adversely affect the conduct of free, fair, credible and acceptable elections in the country.

Muhammad Munji Sanusi, Programme Manager of PARE, an NGO implementing the Community Initiatives to Promote Peace (CIPP) Project in Kogi and five other states, made the call in Lokoja at the weekend.

It was at a one-day town hall stakeholders sensitization meeting on Prevention of Violence Before, During and After February 25 General Elections, organised by PARE under the CIPP Project, funded by USAID with Mercy Corps providing technical support.

Sanusi reminded Nigerians that election processes were meant to provide opportunity for the citizens to make informed choices in selecting leaders to whom they would surrender their collective mandate to provide quality leadership.

He said election periods should not be seen to present opportunities to unleash violence from incubated conflicts as it was neither a time to kill or cause harm but a process, for selecting leaders that would lead a nation.

The Programme Manager said that with about 29 days to the elections, community members, the electorate and particularly,

youths in Kogi should opt for and embrace peace and look forward to a peaceful election. According to him, the aim of the town hall meeting is to build capacities and develop a strategy for communities to adopt in ensuring that the upcoming elections are peaceful. He said, "Our major objective in the CIPP is promotion of peace in the communities."

Sanusi however observed that ethnic and religious affiliations have dominated the Nigerian political landscape for too long without any positive impact and urged politicians and the electorate alike, to steer away from the centrifugal pump that is further dividing the country.

Also speaking at the occasion, Mr Hamza Aliyu, Executive Director, Initiative for Grassroots Advancement (INGRA) said that violence during elections could be mitigated by addressing local dynamics especially in lopsided opportunities for representation.

Aliyu said that the programme was timely as it tended to build the capacities of community members to appreciate and deal

with electoral violence related issues when they arise.

He urged them to avoid creating enmity over political leanings adding that elections come and go but the communities remain and individual relationships also remain.

Mr Israel Edwin Okpe, Senior Programmes Officer of PARE said the CIPP project was being implemented in six states of the Federation including Kogi, Benue and Plateau in North Central; Kano, Kaduna and Katsina in the North-West.

He said that the participants to the town hall meeting were drawn from members of peace committees in Bakumba, Gadan-Sagari, Adankolo and Lokongoma communities in Lokoja Local Government and were being sensitized on the need to be peaceful during elections.

"Election violence affects them all directly or indirectly. So, we are using this avenue to call on our community members to be peaceful. This is because when people are not informed they tend to take laws into their hands", he said.



SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Problems with changing Nigeria's banknotes

Continued from Page 10

The Central Bank of Nigeria is reported to have given four reasons why it decided to redesign the naira notes: They include, but may not be limited to the following; as have been widely reported.

The Naira note was redesigned to address the issue of individuals who have made currency fraud their main source of income. People who have hidden money they have stolen, for instance, would either find a way to change it by taking the money out or would not need it given the change in the value of the Naira.

The currency change also aims to deal a fatal blow to the growing kidnapping and ransom industry.

The change in the notes is also said to aid in lowering the rate of inflation.

The change in the Naira notes is also intended to control the amount of money in circulation.

Right from the inception, the Finance, Budget and National Planning Minister, Zainab Ahmad took a swipe at the announcement of CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele. She had warned that 'if implemented, the redesigning would portend great consequences for the nation and its economy'.

But in less than forty eight hours after the announcement, another official from the apex bank said the naira redesigning exercise was approved by President Muhammadu Buhari.

The planned policy Godwin Emefiele said, 'was in line with Sections 19, Subsections a and b of the CBN Act 2007, upon which the Management of the CBN sought and obtained the approval of President Muhammadu Buhari to redesign, produce, and circulate new series of banknotes at N200, N500, and N1,000 notes'.

According to the CBN governor, by international best practice, the redesign of notes should be every five to eight years, "and the currency in circulation had been in use for 19 years, with spiraling challenges on the economy, especially on security and counterfeiting'.

'Part of the functions of the central bank is currency issuance and distribution within the country. Central banks are required to redesign, produce and circulate new local legal tender every five to eight years, but the naira has not been redesigned in the last 20 years. On February 28, 2007, as part of economic reforms, N20 was issued for the first time in polymer substrate, while the N50, N10 and N5 banknotes; as well as N1 and 50 kobo coins were reissued in new designs, and the N2 coin was introduced.

'Also, on September 30, 2009, the redesigned N50, N10 and N5 banknotes were converted to polymer substrate following the successful performance of the N20 (polymer) banknote. Similarly, the CBN, as part of its contribution towards the

celebration of the 50th anniversary of Nigeria's Independence and 100 years of its existence as a nation, had issued the N50 Commemorative polymer banknote on September 29, 2010; and the N100 Commemorative banknote on December 19, 2014'.

Senator Opeyemi Bamidele had asked the minister during a budget defense session: "To me, the policy may be a well conceived one, but the timing going by realities on ground, is very wrong as the Naira may fall to as low as N1,000 to a US dollar before January 31, 2023 fixed for full implementation of the policy."

And she had answered saying she was not aware but heard it from the media as any Nigerian; saying thus: We were not consulted at the Ministry of Finance by CBN on the planned Naira redesigning and cannot comment on it as regards merits or otherwise.

While inaugurating the new naira banknotes, the President commended Emefiele and his deputies for the initiative, adding that 'international best practice requires central banks and national authorities to issue new or redesigned currency notes every five to eight years. However, it was now almost 20 years since the last major redesign of the country's local currency was done'.

Given all the explanations above by the President and the CBN governor, it is the

expectations of the Nigerian government that the menace of hoarding banknotes outside the system and by far, the most disturbing problem; curb the shortage of clean and fit notes in circulation would be a thing of the past.

Also, the government hopes that by the exercise, it would address 'the increase in counterfeiting of high-denomination Naira banknotes'. Nigerians are yet to witness if that desire by government would be met.

Worried by the development, the Nigeria Governors Forum, NGF had recently summoned through a virtual with the Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele over the redesign of new naira notes. Apart from the sentiments that come in the wake of the CBN decision, some analysts are of the view 'that the initiative would be positive for the economy'.

The virtual meeting, with an agenda titled 'The Economic and Security implications of naira redesign and withdrawal policy', is reported to have lingered for some time now. The discussion which NGF noted, 'promises to foster participation and dialogue between various stakeholders including governments and civil society organizations to come out with a solution to the lingering issue'.

The President, Muhammadu Buhari was convinced by the CBN that the period of three months for the exercise was not short. For

Buhari: "People with illicit money buried under the soil will have a challenge with this but workers, businesses with legitimate incomes will face no difficulties at all." That may be true to some extent, considering what Nigerians are going through, the stakes are higher than it was envisaged in October 2022.

The development has no doubt brought untold hardships for the generality of Nigerians. As at press time, the National Assembly as well as Nigerians made passionate appeals for the reversal of the policy on withdrawal limits by individuals and organizations. While Nigerians want the dateline extended for a period, the National Assembly is interested in both.

The appeal appears to have fallen on deaf ears, as the Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Godwin Emefiele and his colleagues at the apex bank may have made up their minds, however with the unseen hands of the federal government or so it seems. Many invitations by the National Assembly for him to appear before them have proven abortive; the last being by the House of Representatives which was tacitly turned down through a letter by CBN Director in charge of Corporate Communication, Mr. Osita Nwanisobi as he was said to have traveled to Dakar for an economic summit with the President.

METRO-FOCUS

Checking the excesses of mobile shop hawkers in Jos

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

Over the years, the service of mobile hawkers who abound in Jos city and major towns especially around beer parlours or markets have become suspect. Observations have revealed that all that glitters is not gold. It may sound unbelievable that most of the mobile shop hawkers (aka Yan-Michika) are the major suppliers of all manner of illicit drugs in the capital city of Jos, Plateau State currently.

As simple and modest their operations as hawkers may seem to be in the open, the underneath is beyond what everybody can imagine. Yes, from the outside, what they move around with looks normal and innocent. But the things.

But investigation reveals that, apart from the sweets, chocolates and pack of cigarettes that cover the frame they move around with, there is more to it in the inside because there are all manner of drugs behind the seen that many will not notice.

Speaking to one Mr. Danjuma who preferred to be known with one name said, "I have on several occasions seen young people coming to buy tramol, alabakum and codine from these Michika boys who sometimes rest in front of my shop. When I asked one of them who seems to be close to me, he said it is not these cigarettes, condoms, sweet and chocolates that give them money.

"He revealed to that, the fastest money making business is selling these drugs because majority of youth are into drug usage and they are making it. I could not believe him but when he showed me most these drugs, the only I recall their names are tramol, codine and alabakum because they are common drugs we know, but for others I have never seen or known before.

"I still notice that not all of them sell such illicit drugs. Some few of them sell condoms and man power and not tramol or codine,



but majority of them are into that business. This has increased the level of drugs consumption in the area because they move around to even slum and they can be easily accessed".

On her part, a mother of two boys who pleaded anonymity said, "I keep wondering how one of my sons used to get these drugs easily. I have banned him from going out the compound by engaging him in domestic work so that he will not have access to these drugs, but within a twinkle of an eye I will see him already dosed.

"I did not know that these Michika boys passing close to my house are into the business until one, I saw my son exchanging what looks like pleasntry but an exchange of something so, I shouted at my son and something fell down. When I rushed to pick it I was shuck to see that it was tramol.

"If I had not witnessed that, nobody would make me to believe that these boys sell such illicit drugs around the area. I was so shuck and mad at them that day. Sincerely speaking,

government must do something to check where the source of these drugs are so that, it will reduce this habit of drugs usage among our young ones. As a mother, I am so bitter and in pains right now", she cried out.

It is truly a thing of great concern these days in the beautiful city of Jos, because drug usage has become the order of day even with the relentless monitoring efforts by drugs enforcement agency to cope the indiscriminate drugs usage among our youth.

One begins to wonder how these drugs are being smuggled into the state without being notice. Although, we appreciate the efforts of National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) for

ensuring that sell of drugs is drastically reduced in our neighborhood, but more needs to be done because it is becoming a threat to our corporate existence.

There is the need for the agency and other security agencies to apply stop-and-check style on these mobile shop hwakers so that, the increasing level drugs consumption will completely be eradicated. This has affected so many young people because it is accessible at any point in time.

This is not to take off their businesses, but to ensure sanity and also save the lives of our ones whose future we must protect. All we are saying is for them to trade what is genuine and legal and not the way round because the replying effects of this is gradually

consuming us.

You need to know that the cause of neighborhood theft that is threatening our communities is not far from drugs. They are some of the attributes of drug usage because when these young boys lack what they can use to buy the drugs, definitely, the next neighbour will be the victim and it is increasing day by day.

Something need to be done drastically so that, our communities would be save. Government cannot do it alone. It is our collective responsibility as a people to ensure that selling of drugs around neighborhood stops by monitoring and reporting same to the authorities charged with this responsibility. May God help us!

"It is truly a thing of great concern these days in the beautiful city of Jos, because drug usage has become the order of day even with the relentless monitoring efforts by drugs enforcement agency to cope the indiscriminate drugs usage among our youth. One begins to wonder how these drugs are being smuggled into the state without being notice. Although, we appreciate the efforts of National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) for ensuring that sell of drugs is drastically reduced in our neighborhood, but more needs to be done because it is becoming a threat to our corporate existence."

SUNDAY PEOPLE

LALONG AT 6TH AND 7TH COMBINED CONVOCATION OF PLASU

Plateau State Governor and Visitor to the Plateau State University (PLASU) Bokkos, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) on Friday last witnessed the 6th and 7th PLASU Convocation ceremony at its Ground Bokkos



Governor Lalong delivering his convocation speech



Procession of visiting Vice Chancellors with other dignitaries into the Convocation ground



Commissioner of Higher Education, Prof. Bernard Matur (right) congratulating Prof. Jonah Isawa Elaigwu after his conferment of honorary Doctorate Degree



Acting Director, PLASU Advancement and Linkages, Rev. Fr. Andrew Dewan (left) decorating Dr. (Mrs.) Ajoritsedere Josephine Awosika with Doctor of Business Administration and Ethics



Prof. Ochapa Onazi (right) embracing each other with his wife after the conferment



Doctorate Degrees recipients, Prof. Ochapa Onazi, Prof. Jonah Isawa Elaigwu and Dr. (Mrs.) Ajoritsedere Josephine Awosika at the convocation



Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) putting heads together with his Deputy, Prof. Sonni Gwanle Tyoden (left)



All Progressives Congress (APC) Governorship candidate, Dr. Nentawe Yilwatda with the PLASU Chairman of the Governing Council, Mgr. Prof. Francis Obiora Ike

Photos: DANLADI DUJAK

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Procedures for obtaining driver's licence

THE National Driver's Licence (NDL)

The National Driver's Licence (NDL) is a legal document that confers on a person the right to drive. The NDL has gone through various developmental stages in line with the needs and challenges at various times from the booklet type to the single laminated form up to the current upgrade of PVC.

Classes of the National Driver's Licence

The National Driver's Licence is categorized into the following ten classes;

- A. Motorcycle
- B. Motor vehicle of less than 3 tonnes gross weight other than motorcycle, taxi, stage carriage or omnibus.
- C. A motor vehicle of less than 3 tonnes gross weight other than motorcycle.
- D. Motor vehicle other than motorcycle, taxi, stage carriage or omnibus excluding articulated vehicle or vehicle drawing a trailer.
- E. Motor vehicle other than a motorcycle or articulated or articulated vehicle.
- F. Agricultural machines and tractors.
- G. Articulated vehicles.
- H. Earth moving vehicles.
- J. Special, for physically - challenged persons.
- V. Convoy driving (persons engaged in driving senior government or political office holders in stream driving).

Learner's permit

A learner's permit is an initial authorization by law permitting an intending driver's licence applicant to proceed in the first instance with requisite training for a period of 3 months from the date of issue. The permit is to be renewed. The permit is

to be renewed twice to qualify for driving test conducted by the Vehicle Inspection Officers (VIO).

Procedure for Learning to Drive including the following:

- a. Applicant must not be less than 18 years old or above 70 years old.
- b. Obtain form MVA 15 (Permit).
- c. Pay prescribe fee.
- d. Attend a certified driving school and complete 26 sessions of driver's training
- e. Obtain a pass from the driving school with third issue learner's permit.
- f. Drive for 3 months accompanied by an instructor who is a licensed driver. Affix plates displaying the red letter "L" sign at the front and rear of your vehicle.

Obtaining a Driver's Licence

Please note that it is unlawful to obtain a driver's licence in proxy. An applicant for driver's licence must go through these stages personally. Applicants shall:

- i. Not be less than 18 years of age or above 70 years old.
- ii. Have completed driving school training and certification.
- iii. Visit www.frsc.gov.ng or www.nigeriadriverlicence.org to complete the application online with relevant information.
- iv. Print out the completed application form and generate payment code.
- v. Pay prescribed fee at designated banks.
- vi. Note that online payment is possible in some states.
- vii. Register payment with the Board of Internal Revenue (BIR) /Motor Licensing Authority (MLA).
- viii. Avail self for testing (with relevant documents) to

a testing officer.

ix. Present Certificate of Visual Acuity Test to Testing Officer.

x. Ensure that Testing Officer approves the application showing class of licence.

xi. Proceed to Driver Licence Centre (DLC) for biometric capture.

xii. Obtain temporary licence issued by DLC which expires in 60 days.

NOTE: unsuccessful applicant is allowed one month to improve knowledge and skill and represent self for re-evaluation. A message must be sent to the applicant to pick up licence before the 60 days expiration.

Commercial Driver's Licence

A Commercial Driver's Licence (CDL) is a licence issued to professional drivers. The procedure for obtaining the CDL is similar to that of the National Driver's Licence (NDL) except for the following:

- i. Must not be less than 26 years of age.
- ii. Must possess any of the other classes of driver's licence.
- iii. Must be a member of road related professional association or possess a letter of employment as a driver.

Convoy Driver's Licence.

In addition to the requirements for Commercial Driver's Licence, those that drive senior government officials and political office holders in stream during convoy are required by law to be certified by law to for such after going through a specialized training organized by the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC). They use class V Driver's licence.



NEWS

UNICEF appeals for domestication of Child Protection Law

From Abbas Gungura, Bauchi

Ms. Cristian Munduate, the UNICEF new Country Representative in Nigeria has appealed to Bauchi State Government to accelerate the domestication of Child Protection Law and its implementation in the state.

The UNICEF Nigeria representative made the appeal during interaction with journalists at UNICEF Field Office, Bauchi, Nigeria during her familiarization visit to the state recently.

She explained that children protection law is all about guaranteeing the right of children to grow, learn, develop, to be protected and to reach their full potentials in life.

Ms. Munduate also urged journalists to join hands and seriously advocate for the Child Protection Law by

enlightening citizens on its benefits through their various organizations.

While reacting to the menace of severe acute malnutrition as it affects children, Ms. Munduate said that efforts should be geared towards adopting preventive measures to mitigate malnutrition in children.

"Severe Acute Malnutrition does a permanent damage in the life of the child even if it is cured. This could be seen in stunted growth in children which affects their intelligence coefficient in life.

"One of the cost effective ways of preventing malnutrition in children is the practice of placing the child on exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of birth", said Ms. Cristian Munduate.

The Country Representative further said that UNICEF is exploring

avenues on how to get the private sector key into the production of Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) that is being used to cure children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM).

On the persistent negative indices associated with basic education of children, Ms. Cristian Munduate confirmed that UNICEF will support the government at both national and subnational levels to identify the training needs of teachers with a view to enhancing their capacity to impact quality teaching to pupils.

While appreciating journalists efforts in partnering with UNICEF in propagating better life for children and women, Ms. Munduate appealed to government at all levels to increase investment in maternal and child health, water, sanitation, hygiene, and basic education to children and women.

NGO scores Bauchi very low in the provision of WASH

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

AN NGO popularly known as Women Development Association for self- sustenance unfolded that only two percent of the population in Bauchi State have access to safely managed water.

This was disclosed by Mr. Sukumun N. Ezekiel, the programme manager of the NGO in Bauchi during a stakeholders meeting at Bauchi Emigrate Council on health matters and other related hygienic services.

He informed that in schools, health care centers and public domains access to basic wash services are very low in percentage levels with the following parameters; 18 percent, 7 percent and 3 percent access respectively.

The aforementioned statistics are alarming according to him and they have revealed that Bauchi State still has a long way to go to sustainable development goals target 6 of ensuring access to adequately clean and hygienic efficient water services for all by the year 2030, he said.

The manager confirmed that with good hygienic services practice recommended as the first line of defense in the prevention of Covid-19 and other prevalent infectious diseases, Bauchi State is still performing very low in the provision of portable water supply and basic hygiene services and



Mohammed

sanitation according to the research, he added.

The programme manager also added that water, sanitation and hygiene national outcome routine mapping survey also indicates that 21 percent of the population still practice open defecation, causing contamination to the surrounding environment and water bodies. This leads to serious water pollution by 74 percent of the population.

Mr. Ezekiel has also noted that in the meantime, millions of states' population across Nigeria including women and persons with deformities remain vulnerable to diseases such

as Covid-19, as Nigeria continues to record infectious and new variants across the globe.

He emphasizes that according to NCDC, as at 14th July 2022, Bauchi State has 1,952 laboratory confirmed cases and 24 mortality rates.

The programme manager reiterated that 257,637 cases have been confirmed nationwide with 4,206 on admission and mortality rates of 3,144.

According to him, latest update from NCDC has indicated that Covid-19 cases across Nigeria surged by 67 percent between June and July, 2022.

NEWS

Chairman embarks on free medical services again

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Council Chairman of Qua'an-Pan Local Government Area, Hon. Ernest Abner Da'a, has embarked on another round of a free comprehensive medical and surgery services to the people of his local government area.

This came in a press statement signed by the Special Adviser to the Chairman on Media and Public Affairs, Stephen Sarki Musa, and made available to SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital, yesterday.

The chairman disclosed that "another round of a free comprehensive medical and surgical services organized by the council for the people of the locality and environs will commence on Tuesday January 31 to February 5, 2023 in 5 centers across of the LGA.

"The programme will hold simultaneously in Kwalla, Kwande, Namu, Kwa and Doemak and the official flag off will take place at the Pedong and Maternity in Namu town on January 31 which will be 6 days of free medical outreach commencing from 8:00 am to 4 pm daily.

"For easy access to free medical outreach at the 5 different zones simultaneously, with the one in Zone A holding at the Cottage Hospital Kwalla; Zone B at Peter Bawa and Anna



Da'a

Memorial Clinic Kwande; Zone C at the Pedong Clinic and Maternity Namu; while the Primary Health Care Centre Kwa will host Zone D, with the exercise for Zone E; which will be strictly for eye surgery and glasses and will hold at the Primary Health Care Centre Doemak", he highlighted.

Da'a, however, said the exercise is in fulfilment of some of his campaign promises of putting smiles on the faces of the people at the grassroots, adding that the free medical and surgical services is going to be robust and comprehensive and admonished them to cooperate with the health personnel to ensure adequate and qualitative service delivery.

He appealed to the people to take advantage of the decentralization of the

exercise by patronizing the centres closest to them and urged them to conduct themselves in orderly manner.

Direct payment of withheld salaries of varsity workers – NLC

THE Nigeria Labour Congress(NLC) has appealed to President Muhammadu Buhari to direct the payment of all withheld salaries of university workers in the country.

MrAyubaWabba, the NLC President, made the appeal in a resolution reached at the end of the National Administrative Council (NAC) of the congress in Abuja.

It would be recalled that due to "No Work, No Pay" policy of the Federal Government, the

WORKERS of the Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST) staff are threatening to embark on industrial action from Monday, January 30th over alleged abandonment by the Federal Government . Advertisement

The protesting staff urged the Federal Government to urgently intervene before the industrial action commences.

The General Secretary of the Senior Staff Association of Statutory Corporations and Government-Owned Companies, Ayo Olorunfemi, led the protest on Friday.

According to Olorunfemi, several staff members of the service have not been receiving any form of capital funding from the Federal Government in the

NIPOST workers to embark on strike Monday

last 15 years.

He also asked the government to beam its searchlight on the finances of the agency.

"All we are saying is this: Reform must be open; [it] must be clear. Our fear must be addressed and the reform must be in the overall interest of Nigeria. Any reform that is targeting some individuals will not be accepted.

"Therefore, this is another process. We have been going on strike and they have been talking to us to suspend them," he said.

But this time around, according to Olorunfemi, the industrial action is targeted solely at actualising a much-

needed reform process.

"We expect a suspension of the process. Let the next government come and follow due process in ensuring that we have a sustainable reform procedure.

"We're expecting that a percentage, even if it is not more than two percent of that fund, be released to NIPOST for infrastructure and the welfare of staff.

"Immediately the so-called Finance Bill was passed into law, the money was packed away. One naira has not been given to NIPOST and NIPOST is not on any capital budget of the Federal Government," he said.

reiterated the call for a major wage review for workers in the public service.

Wabba said that the review was imperative given the considerably weakened value of the Naira against all the currencies of the world.

He noted that this has made the cost of living unreasonably difficult for workers and ordinary Nigerians.

According to him, we find it necessary to explain here that there is a world of difference between the national minimum wage review and general wage review.

"Furthermore, it is quite important to remind the Federal Government that the last public sector wage review was done in 2011 and has since expired.

"The need for another review cannot be overstated given the excruciating economic realities in Nigeria today," he said.

Wabba further said the congress also expressed huge concern and palpable alarm on the increasing incidences of citizens difficulties and insufferable stress in accessing basic services and utilities.

"From long petrol queues, to clandestine increases in the pump price of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) also commonly known as petrol, to an illegal hike in electricity tariff, to a debilitating inability to access

the newly re-designed local currency.

"There is also the deliberate roadblocks mounted against citizens who desire to collect their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs).

"These are all signs of a nation in acute dire straits. It is sad, unfortunate and totally unacceptable," he said.

He said the federal government must find ways in addressing the concerned issues.

"On our part as a pan Nigerian, progressive, pro-masses and pro-poor organisation, we would not fold our hands and watch Nigerians being taken advantage of in any manner.

"We call on those whose work it is to provide Nigerians access to affordable public services, amenities and utilities to undertake their responsibilities with utmost diligence and patriotism.

"Nigerian workers and citizens are not slaves. They deserve tolerable and indeed decent living conditions in order for them to continue to make contributions to the arduous task of nation building.

"In light of this, we would want this statement to be a message to all those involved in these mischiefs and evil that we are mobilising our members across the country for a major protest," he said. (NAN)

Cash swap: CBN deploys 200 agents

BARELY three days to Jan. 31 deadline for old naira exchange, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has engaged 200 agents to fast track its cash swap policy in Jigawa.

The CBN on Monday embarked on currency swap programme in rural communities as part of plans to phase out old naira notes and enhance collection of new bank notes.

The programme is being implemented by the CBN official monitors and Deposit Money Banks (DMBs).The Director Human Resource, CBN Headquarters, Hajiya Amina Habib stated this at a news conference on Saturday in Dutse.

She said the daily cash swap limit is N10,000 and transfer per head, adding that amount above N10,000 would be treated as deposits.

The gesture, she said, was aimed at increasing circulation of the redesigned naira notes, especial in rural areas.

"Within Jigawa state, we have about 200 agents engaged because we've noticed that in rural areas, we have unbanked communities as banks have no physical presence in those area, hence the need to have agent banking services.

"The agents are actually representing the banks in those communities providing financial services to the people like opening accounts, accepting monies on thier behalf so that the rural dwellers are able to lodge or withdraw.

"We're making a lot of impact in the rural areas from the feedback we're getting, and our staff and the super agents are in various locations across the state to monitor the situation, and to ensure that the new naira notes circulate," she said.The director further urged residents of the state to begin using mobile apps, like transfer, Point of Sale (POS), amongst others for cashless transaction.

According to her, the apex bank will encourage people, especially rural dwellers to open bank accounts to enhance financial inclusion."Financial inclusion is actually on the increase in terms of the number of people that are opening up bank accounts to put thier monies and this very good for the economy".

On alleged rejection of the old naira notes by some traders and PoS operators, Habib warned that the old notes still remain legal tender until the Jan. 31."The CBN has done a lot and is



Emefiele

still doing a lot in terms of sensitisation that the old notes are still legal tender up to the 31st of January.

"You should still accept it as legal tender and be able to deposit them in banks". (NAN)

Shut down schools to allow students vote -Reps

THE House of Representatives has requested that the Federal Government close tertiary education institutions so that students can actively participate in the coming general elections.

The National Universities Commission, the National Board for Technical Education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education, and the Federal Ministry of Education were all asked by the House to instruct all tertiary institutions to suspend academic activities during the election period.

Furthermore, the lower chamber resolved that the Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC) make special arrangements for students to obtain their Permanent Voters Cards (PVC).

These resolutions followed the adoption of a motion moved by Ibrahim Tukura (APC, Kebbi) on Thursday during plenary.

The presidential and National Assembly elections are set for February 25, while the governorship and Houses of Assembly elections will take place on March 11.

Tukura, who proposed the motion, stated that 3.8 million newly registered voters are students, accounting for "40.8 percent of the total number of

newly registered voters."

He added that "these students who constitute 40.8 percent of the newly registered voters, have their polling units sited in states outside their campuses, thereby necessitating travelling outside their respective institutions to vote in the 2023 elections."

According to Tukura, the mode of distribution of PVCs affects students as well. As a result, he advocated for a special PVC collection for students.

"The students are busy with academic activities and the Independent National Electoral

Commission is engaged in distributing PVCs at the wards across the 774 Local Government Areas of the federation which deprives students of the opportunity to collect their PVCs," he said.

As a result, the House directed the Tertiary Education and Electoral Matters Committees to work with the agencies to facilitate the process and report back to the House within one week.

When Speaker Femi Gbajabiamila called it into question, the lawmakers overwhelmingly supported the motion.

SUNDAY SPORTS

Who will be Chelsea's new midfield destroyer?

By Krishan Davis

GRAHAM Potter's midfield overhaul will be centred around one or two big-name signings, but who is the ideal candidate to transform the team?

Chelsea have stayed true to their Kings Road roots with their thriftless January transfer spree, but while their luxury attacking acquisitions have dominated the headlines, a new midfield enforcer is top of their shopping list.

It's no secret that it is an area of the pitch that has needed a revamp for some time, with current incumbents Jorginho, N'Golo Kante, Mateo Kovacic and Ruben Loftus-Cheek regularly struggling for either form, fitness or both.

Among the plethora of options in the shop window, three have stood out in particular - although the Blues' expensive taste means none are included in the January sales.

Chelsea seem to have honed the options down to Enzo Fernandez, Moises Caicedo and Declan Rice and, such are the funds at the disposal of their new owners, it may not even be a case of either/or.

None will come cheap, but which of the club's main midfield targets is best placed to step into Graham Potter's side?

There was a time when a move to Chelsea appeared inevitable for Declan Rice, but if the Blues now want to bring back a player who they infamously shunned at academy level, they will need to wrangle his gaze away from table-topping Arsenal.

Labelling Rice a defensive midfielder would be doing him a disservice; since breaking into the West Ham first team, he has adapted and developed his game to become an almost-complete box-to-box Premier League midfielder. Although he isn't a regular scorer, Rice's goal and assist numbers belie his attacking influence at West Ham, where he creates roughly one chance per game in the Premier League.

The 24-year-old strangely doesn't feel like the most glamorous signing, perhaps as a result of his Englishness and the unglamorous work he often carries out for the Hammers, and the extent to which Rice would be transformative for Chelsea's midfield is debatable - especially given his club's plight this season.

But as a proven performer in England's top flight he represents a safe bet, and remarkably he would cost similar to - if not less than - the other names on this list at £80 million (\$98.5m).

History dictates that it is rarely a good idea to splurge big money on the breakout star of a major tournament when the dust has barely settled on the event, but Chelsea REALLY want Fernandez and could be willing to meet his £106 million (\$130m) release



Jude

clause to get him.

In truth, it's difficult not to get swept up in the hype. Despite being just 22, the boy can do it all.

Fernandez averages more than 100 attempted passes per game in the Primeira Liga, doesn't shirk a challenge, regularly creates opportunities for his team-mates (seven assists so far this season) and is a goal threat himself - as he demonstrated with his stepover and sublime curling finish against Mexico at the World Cup.

Although there is a risk attached - as is always the case with a big-money signing, especially from a so-called lesser league - when you consider who could truly be transformative, Fernandez ticks the box.

Chelsea lack midfielders who make enough of an impact at both ends of the pitch, and Fernandez has the potential to change that with immediate effect.

Moises Caicedo

Links to Moises Caicedo were inevitable once Graham Potter was named Chelsea manager back in September.

Another monumental success story for Brighton's scouting department, Caicedo has been a revelation since breaking into the first team midway through last season.

Like Rice, stats certainly don't tell the whole tale of the 21-year-old's playing style; a defensive midfielder in the truest sense who lives for crunching sliding tackles, the Ecuador international is also

crucial in launching attacks from deep and progressing the play. Don't believe us? Have a look at his pinpoint, sweeping switch of play against Everton.

Chelsea certainly lack a player with his attributes when Kante is out injured - which is becoming increasingly often - and Caicedo could be his successor.

In normal circumstances, this would seem a shrewd signing regardless, but his eye-wateringly inflated £75 million (\$93m) valuation is justifiably a deterrent, even for the free-spending Blues.

When options like Rice and Fernandez are available for a similar fee, this doesn't seem like a cheap alternative.

Who would best compliment Jude Bellingham?

Away from Chelsea's search for a new anchor, they are also in the market for a more advanced central operator in an overhaul of their midfield.

Alongside basically every other elite club in Europe, Jude Bellingham will be the man who tops their list of targets in the summer. They face a hell of a

battle to sign him, but their spending so far under Todd Boehly's stewardship suggests they will be up for the fight.

As such, the club's new transfer strategists - technical director Christopher Vivell and director of global talent and transfers Paul Winstanley - will be searching for players they feel will best compliment Bellingham's coveted skillset.

This is perhaps where Rice stands out as the best option. Bellingham excelled alongside the West Ham talisman at the World Cup in a well-balanced midfield three including Jordan Henderson, marauding forward as his two colleagues did more of the dirty work. That kind of setup would suit Chelsea nicely with Rice slotting in alongside Kovacic or Kante, with Bellingham ahead of them.

By the same token, Caicedo could fill a role which is similar to the one he plays for Brighton, although it would inevitably take more time for him to develop a rapport with the England international.

Fernandez, on the other hand, is perhaps too similar in profile to Bellingham for them to supplement each other. Rather than just sit, the Argentine has shown in his fledgling career that he is not content to watch attacks

from afar - he wants to advance and make attacking contributions too. Indeed, his league goal, assist and chance creation stats are not dissimilar to Bellingham's so far in 2022-23.

By signing Fernandez, Chelsea could negate the need to even pursue Bellingham and save themselves time and some serious cash.



Fernandez

SUNDAY SPORTS

Ighalo unfolds what happened before World Cup qualifier

Nigerian international Odion Ighalo has detailed what transpired two hours before the Super Eagles' encounter against Ghana.

Newsnow said that, The former Watford FC player revealed that after training for days with the same formation, he was informed he would not be starting against the Black Stars of Ghana.

He stated that the starting strikers for the replay of the World Cup qualifying game against Ghana were him and Victor Osimhen in the formation that the squad practiced.

The Super Eagles were not given the chance to represent the African continent in Qatar, as the tournament concluded in a dismal defeat.

Even though the 2022 World Cup is over and the Qatar event has wrapped up, the disappointment of missing out on the global competition has not yet been forgotten.

However, the Al Hilal forward said in a conversation with Oma Sports TV that there are contentious matters going on behind the scenes with the Super Eagles squad.

"There is so much going on in the Super Eagles. I am the



Ighalo

guy who does not talk much, and I don't create problems. I'm on my lane, and that's why I'm in Saudi Arabia; I do my thing and live my life. I don't want issues," he said.

Ighalo is one of the Super Eagles' best scorers, and the team needed his experience as a striker—most crucially, in the Super Eagles' game against Ghana—but things did not work out as expected.

"They told me two hours before the game that I was not going to start. We were having lunch, and they had to call me out that we want to this and that. Even the coach did not call me," he continued.

He added, "I said no problem. Senior man, no problem, he is the coach, my prayer is that whatever the formation is, we win the game. God just said we were not going to the World Cup."

Golf: Nigeria's No. 1 five shots back at Meristem Open

NIGERIA'S number-one ranked professional golfer, Kamalu Bako, Thursday made a slow start on the opening day of the Professional Development Golf (PGD) Tour managed by Meristem Securities.

Newsnow said that, Bako, who is outside of the top 10 on the leaderboard will have to pay catch-up as he is five shots adrift of the joint leaders on the first day of action at the Lakowe Lakes Golf and Country Estates in Lagos

At the end of the opening day of action, four players registered 69, three under par to set the tone for a thrilling weekend of action.

Ikoyi Club 1938's duo of Sunday Olapade and Francis Epe kept the charge from the home front while Kouame Richard from Ivory Coast and Vincent Torgah from Ghana joined in sharing the spotlight of the opening day.

Femi Olagbenro, Golf Manager at the host club said the performance of the players frankly described the quest for regular playing

time by the professionals.

"The scores today are encouraging and fully speak to the need for active playing time by the professionals. The PGD Tour will complement whatever other stakeholders have on the plate for professional golf development and I am confident the scores will even get better," he said.

In the fifth place, two shots off the four first-round leaders are Friday Akpodiette, while Gift Willy, Enoch Owusu, Mohammed

SAMSON Siasia's hope of overturning his five-year ban for alleged match fixing by FIFA suffered hiccups on Thursday as a U.S appeals court has dismissed the case.

The former Nigerian player and coach had dragged the world soccer governing body before the court, seeking to overturn his lifetime ban, later reduced to five years for match fixing.

But in a 3-0 decision on Thursday, the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan said Samson Siasia did not show why a trial court in New York had jurisdiction over his case.

FIFA had in 2019 imposed the lifetime ban, saying Siasia violated its code of ethics over a bribery scheme for Australian league matches. The ban prevented Siasia from using his U.S. Soccer Federation coaching

Siasia loses suit seeking to upturn FIFA bank



Siasia

license to work.

However, Siasia, an Atlanta resident sued FIFA in August 2021, saying the evidence was "grossly insufficient" and that the ban violated his due process rights under the U.S. Constitution.

But the appeals court said

Siasia did not show that FIFA was "essentially at home" in New York, or agreed to be sued there because it banned his use of what Siasia called his "New York" coaching license from its alleged New York "agent," U.S. Soccer.

Waldrum picks Ebi, Oshoala, 21 others for Revelation Cup

Head Coach Randy Waldrum has called up 23 players of Nigeria's Super Falcons for next month's

Revelation Cup Tournament to be staged in Leon, Mexico City, among them Captain Onome Ebi, Spain-based forward Asisat Oshoala and long-time number one goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie.

Newsnow said that, hosts Mexico, Nigeria, Costa Rica and Colombia are the participating teams at the tournament in the State of Guanajuato, with matches between 15th - 21st February, and with the objective of preparing the contestants for the 9th FIFA Women's World Cup finals in Australia and New Zealand this summer.

Nine -time African champions Nigeria will play their first game of the tournament against hosts Mexico starting at 4pm Mexico time (10pm Nigeria time) on Wednesday, 15th February, three hours after the opening match between Costa Rica and Colombia.

On Saturday, 18th February, the Falcons will be up against Colombia at 1pm Mexico time (7pm Nigeria time), before Costa Rica square up against the host nation.

Costa Rica will be Nigeria's last opponents, both teams locking horns as from 5pm Mexico time (11pm Nigeria time) on Tuesday 21st February, before hosts Mexico and Colombia draw the curtain on the four-nation tourney.

Nigeria's delegation to the tournament will depart the country's shores on Saturday, 11th February. The Super Falcons will tackle co-hosts Australia, Olympic champions Canada

and debutants Republic of Ireland at what will be the biggest FIFA Women's World Cup finals ever, this summer in Australia and New Zealand.

ALL THE INVITED PLAYERS:

Goalkeepers: Chiamaka Nnadozie (Paris FC, France); Yewande Balogun (AS Saint-Etienne, France)

Defenders: Onome Ebi (Levante Las Planas (Spain); Osinachi Oshale (Sportivo Alaves, Spain); Ashleigh Plumtre (Leicester City, England); Glory Ogonna (ALG Spor, Turkey); Rofiat Imuran (Stade de Reims, France); Michelle Alozie (Houston Dash, USA); Oluwatosin Demehin (Stade de Reims, France); Akudo Ogonna (Rivers Angels)

Midfielders: Halimatu Ayinde (FC Rosengard, Sweden); Christy Ucheibe (SL Benfica, Portugal); Ngozi Okobi-Okeoghene (Eskilstuna United, Sweden); Rasheedat Ajibade (Atletico Madrid, Spain); Toni Payne (Sevilla FC, Spain); Jennifer Echegini (Florida State University, USA); Regina Otu (AS Saint-Etienne, France)

Forwards: Asisat Oshoala (Barcelona Femenin, Spain); Esther Okoronkwo (AS Saint-Etienne, France); Ifeoma Onumonu (NY/NJ Gotham FC, USA); Chinwendu Ihezuo (Rayadas Monterrey, Mexico); Francisca Ordega (CSKA Moscow, Russia); Uchenna Kanu (Tigres Femenil, Mexico).



Super falcons in one of their glorious outings

SUNDAY SPORTS

Australian Open:

Rybakina, Sabalenka reach Melbourne fina?

IMBLEDON champion Elena Rybakina has another shot at a major title after reaching the Australian Open final where she will meet Belarusian fifth seed Aryna Sabalenka. BBC SPORT said that, Rybakina, 23, won 7-6 (7-4) 6-3 against Victoria Azarenka, ending the two-time champion's hopes of winning the title 10 years after her last triumph. Sabalenka beat Poland's Magda Linette to reach her first major final. The powerful 24-year-old won 7-6 (7-1) 6-2 against her



Rybakina

unseeded opponent. Sabalenka was the heavy favourite to beat 30-year-old Linette, who had never been past the third round of a Grand Slam event before, and grew in confidence as the match wore on.

After losing three times in major semi-finals, Sabalenka's relief was evident after securing her place in Saturday's showpiece against another big-hitter.

"I wouldn't say I started really well but in the tie-break I found my rhythm and trusted myself and started going for my shots," said Sabalenka, who is on a 10-match winning streak after lifting the Adelaide title.

Rybakina, seeded 22nd, will contest her second major final after her triumph at the All England Club last year.

"I'm super happy to be in the final and play one more time here," she said.

"It was different conditions, I couldn't play aggressive tennis and couldn't go so much for my shots but I was happy to win.

"I got a lot of experience from Wimbledon and I want to come on court [for the final] and enjoy the moment."

Rybakina has been one of the most unheralded Wimbledon champions in recent history as a result of her low profile and a ranking that is artificially low because points were not awarded at the All England Club last year.

At Melbourne Park, the tall

Kazakh - who was born in Moscow and represented Russia until she was 19 - has been reminding people once again of her outstanding talent.

At the US Open last year, Rybakina said she did not "feel like" a major winner because she was ranked outside of the world's top 20 after points were stripped because of Wimbledon banning Russian and Belarusian players.

Rybakina was also stuck on a small outside court for her Australian Open first-round match - although she insisted she "did not care" - but since then there has been no escaping the threat she posed in the draw.

She was responsible for knocking out world number Iga Swiatek in the last 16, either side of other notable wins against 2022 runner-up Danielle Collins and 2017 French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko.

Big serving has been one of the keys to her success and it teed up what many expected to be a fascinating contest against 33-year-old Azarenka, who has been one of the best returners in the game over the years.

Rybakina laid down a marker in the first game of the match with three aces and produced another comfortable hold before 24th seed Azarenka - absorbing her opponent's power which helped her switch defence into attack - broke for 3-2.

An instant reply swung the momentum back to Rybakina but, as she tried to serve out

the set at 5-3, her first-serve percentage suddenly plummeted.

That enabled Azarenka to fight back to 5-5 and earn three break points in the 11th game, only for Rybakina to regain her composure to hold and providing confidence to take control of the tie-break.

Azarenka was not helped by several costly errors and they continued in the second set as Rybakina imposed herself with two breaks for a 5-2 lead.

While she could not serve out the match, Rybakina sealed victory with another break and - rather fittingly - produced a low-key celebration.

Rybakina's win ended the prospect of an all-Belarusian final in Melbourne before Sabalenka ensured the eastern European nation - whose flag she cannot play under because of its support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine - would be represented.

Sabalenka has previously said "no-one supports war", adding she was "really disappointed" politics had interfered with sport after Russian and Belarusian players were banned from Wimbledon last year.

While Sabalenka says having "zero" control over the war helps her "stay strong", her success will lead to more discussion about a divisive political issue in sport.

Amid the ongoing controversy, her focus has been on finally reaching the major final which her talent

ONLY 12 of the 132-man field were able to complete the first-round of a weather-affected opening to the Dubai Desert Classic on Thursday.

BBC SPORT said that, heavy overnight rain left the course unplayable for more than six hours at the start of the day, before bad light later led to play being suspended.

Thomas Pieters topped the leaderboard on five under but had three holes still to play to complete his first round.

World number one Rory McIlroy was on two under after 15 holes.

Belgian Pieters sat a stroke ahead of six players including England's Tommy Fleetwood, who was in the same playing group as McIlroy, and American Patrick Reed, who had two holes still to play.

Weather-affected classic opening sees only 12 players

The pre-tournament build-up was dominated by a spat between Reed and McIlroy, which emerged after Reed threw a tee towards McIlroy after being snubbed on the practice range.

McIlroy said he had not seen the tee but added that he had not been impressed at being subpoenaed on Christmas Eve by the lawyer who is representing Reed in a defamation lawsuit against several media members and organisations.

However, the spotlight quickly moved on to the weather, with players informed in the early hours of Thursday morning that Emirates golf

club was "inaccessible" and told not to travel to the course because several roads were flooded.

A few hours of dry weather and a massive clean-up operation ensured play could begin at 13:15 local time, although half the field were unable to get on the course at all and will start their first round on Friday.

Of the fortunate dozen players to get through 18 holes, English trio of Matthew Jordan, Daniel Gavins and Oliver Wilson were the clubhouse leaders, having completed four-under 68s shortly before play was suspended because of darkness.



Rory McIlroy is bidding for a third victory in the event

Kenyan runner banned for five years over doping

KENYAN road runner Betty Wilson Lempus has been banned for five years from competing after being found to have twice violated World Athletics anti-doping rules.

BBC SPORT said that, Lempus, 31, is best-known for smashing the Paris women's half-marathon record on 5 September 2021 - the date that a sample she gave tested positive for the banned metabolite Triamcinolone Acetonide.

She then falsified medical documents to explain the presence of the metabolite, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) found in a report.

She has been disqualified from the Paris half-marathon and all races since, the AIU said.

The punishment is two years for the doping violation and four for the attempt to cover it up, but a year was subtracted from the ban owing to Lempus' admitting to doing both.

Lempus had claimed that she

had been injected with Triamcinolone Acetonide at a Kenyan hospital some 16 days before the Paris race. But in June 2022 the Medical Superintendent from the hospital in question stated that though Lempus had been present that day, she had not received "an intramuscular injection of Triamcinolone Acetonide at the hospital on this date".

"The official also cited other discrepancies, including false hospital documents (including address and phone number) and that the doctor, whom Lempus claimed attended to her, is not employed at the hospital," the AIU report stated.

"Confronted by the AIU with this evidence in October 2022, Lempus admitted to Tampering."

The Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya worked alongside the AIU to conclude the case, which has once again highlighted the issue of performance-enhancing drugs being used by some of the country's elite athletes.

"We are pleased to conclude this case, especially because this athlete almost got away with her attempt to dupe the authorities and to cheat other runners out of their rightful rewards," said AIU Head Brett Clothier.

"This is the right and fair outcome, and it's a signal to all that the AIU takes its mission extremely seriously and will pursue every angle in seeking to reach the truth."

Srdjan filmed at Australian Open with Putin supporters

NOVAK Djokovic's father Srdjan has been filmed posing for pictures with supporters of Russia president Vladimir Putin at the Australian Open.

BBC SPORT said that, Srdjan Djokovic was pictured with a man who was holding a Russian flag carrying Putin's face, and wearing a T-shirt printed with the pro-war Z symbol.

Russian and Belarusian flags and symbols have been banned at Melbourne Park since a Russian flag was displayed during a match between Ukraine's Kateryna Baindl and Russia's Kamilla Rakhimova on the opening day.

There was a show of support for Putin after Serbian Djokovic's quarter-final win over Russian Andrey Rublev on Wednesday evening.

A Russian flag bearing Putin's image was displayed outside the Rod Laver Arena by a group of fans wearing Serb colours.

Chanting support for Russia, some had Serbia's flag wrapped around their shoulders.

In a statement, Tennis Australia said: "A small group of people displayed inappropriate flags and symbols and threatened security guards following a match on

Wednesday night and were evicted.

"One patron is now assisting police with unrelated matters.

"Players and their teams have been briefed and reminded of the event policy regarding flags and symbols and to avoid any

situation that has the potential to disrupt. We continue to work closely with event security and law enforcement agencies."

In 2022, Russian and Belarusian players were banned from competing at Wimbledon because of the invasion of Ukraine.



Srdjan Djokovic (left of the centre three) was filmed with supporters of Russia president Vladimir Putin on Wednesday night

SUNDAY SPORTS

Honouring the real-life 'Rocky' who floored Muhammad Ali

83-year-old Chuck Wepner stands 6ft 5in tall, with broad shoulders and heavily knuckled hands; bone calluses serve as reminders of a life spent punching. His vocation as a fighter scarred other parts of his body, too. "I was a big bleeder. I had 328 stitches in my career. My nose was broken nine times in 16 years. And, uh, it never fazed me, you know?" Wepner tells BBC Sport, with a shrug.

IN fact, so likely was his face to suffer injury in the ring that he eventually adopted the nickname others gave him as an insult.

The Bayonne Bleeder - Bayonne being the New Jersey town that Wepner still calls home - was a fighter who lived up to his billing.

So maybe it was fitting that the most famous bout of his career came soaked in claret.

"Tony Perez was the referee for my fight with Muhammad Ali," remembers Wepner of their 1975 meeting.

"After I got knocked down, he says to me: 'Chuck, you're bleeding too much.'

"I said, 'No way, give me this round. Let me finish the fight, I'm all right.' So Tony says: 'OK Chuck, how many fingers do I have up?'"

"I look at his hand and say: 'How many guesses do I get?'"

Despite Wepner's protests and to the dismay of the febrile, 15,000-strong crowd inside Ohio's Richfield Coliseum, the referee stopped the fight just 19 seconds shy of the end of round 15.

He needed 23 stitches after the bout and took home a mere 15th of Ali's purse but, as with much of Wepner's life, to focus on his injuries was to miss the greatness of his achievement.

As a 36-year-old part-time heavyweight from 'nowhere' New Jersey, Wepner was a 10-1 outsider prior to the Ali fight. He had never before trained under a dedicated coach. But he confounded expectations with his performance.

Not only did he last nearly the full distance with the reigning world champion and one of the greatest to have ever laced up gloves, Wepner also became only the fourth person in history to knock Ali, who had destroyed George Foreman just 10 months prior, to the canvas.

One spectator - watching via closed-circuit television in a Los Angeles movie theatre - was so inspired by Wepner's underdog pluck and the ninth-round knockdown of Ali, he rushed home to sketch out a character for a new screenplay he had in mind.

After his other screenplays were all canned and with a final chance to pitch a new idea, the writer returned to the draft, creating a redemption story about an over-the-hill boxer in a 'frenzied three-and-a-half-day flurry of creativity'.

The movie adapted from the screenplay went on to become the highest grossing film of 1976, a winner of three Oscars in 1977, a career launchpad for creator Sylvester Stallone and one of the most famous stories of modern times.

For Wepner, the man whose blood and bravery inspired the character of Rocky Balboa, it was just the start of the next chapter.

At the Dennis P Collins Park, a strip of grassy playground on the banks of Newark Bay across the water from New York, the local mayor addresses the crowd.

When the last name is mentioned in the company of Sinatra and Springsteen, the four hundred or so people in attendance cheer and applaud the local hero in their midst.

The man himself, dressed in yellow tracksuit and cap, nods and smiles from his position between boxing



Wepner became only the fourth man to knock down Muhammad Ali during the great's professional career

greats Larry Holmes and Gerry Cooney, who have also turned out to honour their friend on his big day.

As a brisk wind blows in across the water, the black cloth shrouding the soon-to-be-unveiled statue of a young Wepner flaps against the 2,500lb of bronze beneath.

"Well, I was actually born in New York," Wepner confesses. "I moved to Jersey when I was a year and a half old, after my mother and father split up. My mother raised us here in the projects after that."

And it was on the streets of Bayonne, a stone's throw from Collins Park - where dockers, mobsters and oil refinery workers mixed - that Wepner began to learn his trade.

"Where I grew up, there were always two or three gangs," he says. "And, more or less you had to go up there and beat up the toughest guy to survive, which I did. I'd have a fight almost every week."

And it wasn't just brawn. Wepner was a promising athlete too, playing for his high school basketball team in local tournaments. However, when he found out that "more money could be made beating up people", he committed himself to boxing.

A three-year stint in the marines held up his progress for a while - Wepner enrolled illegally at the age of 15 after seeing the movie *Battle Cry* and convincing his mother to add her signature to his "phony papers" - but when he entered the New York Golden Gloves amateur competition as a 220lb 18-year-old, he found it to his liking.

In Madison Square Garden, Wepner broke the nose of local talent 'Bob the Pistol' and beat James Sullivan, a police department champ from Staten Island, on his way to the title of 1964.

He turned professional straight after, embarking on a 52-fight career that would see him victorious in 36 bouts and fighting such ring luminaries as Buster Mathis, George Foreman, Joe Bugner, Ernie Terrell and Muhammad Ali.

But it was his mid-career fight against Sonny Liston, in 1970, that Wepner felt would be his ticket to the big time.

"I thought I was gonna take a shortcut," Wepner says. "Well, it

wasn't much of a shortcut for me, 'cause Sonny was too big and too tough.

Aside from the broken bones, every stitch he received in his career was administered with nothing more than ice to quell the pain.

"Those hurt," he adds. "But I psyched myself up for it. Almost every fight, I knew I was gonna get cut. Eight or 10 stitches? That was just a nick!"

Being willing to die in the ring, Wepner admits, was another key piece to his armoury.

"Jesus, absolutely. I would go in there ready to die," he says. "Matter of fact, after the Liston fight, I was in a semi-coma and I was in shock; my doctor told my mother I was pretty banged up. I really thought about whether I wanted to continue. But then I thought, I gotta try, I gotta try again. I gotta give it one more shot."

He returned and, after two victories and three losses, Wepner then went on an eight-fight winning streak between 1972 and 1974 that brought him to Don King's attention.

King billed the bout between Wepner and Ali, at the Richfield Coliseum, as the "Give the White Guy a Chance" fight.

In a golden era of heavyweight boxing dominated by black men, King cynically felt he could draw a wider audience if Ali was pitted against a white American opponent for the first defence of his new reign.

But King's hope for a grudge match, a battle between the races, fell foul of Wepner's admiration for his opponent.

The following day, after James Brown blundered through the national anthem forgetting many of the words and turning the end of the song into a call-and-response with the audience, Wepner put aside his blossoming friendship with Ali and started putting into action a plan to win.

"My strategy was to press him, tire him out, at least for the first four or five rounds, maybe take him in the later rounds," Wepner says.

"So I pressed him, I threw body punches. I should've won three or four of those rounds. But the judges, with Ali, you gotta knock him out to beat him."

The crowd, expecting a drubbing of the challenger, started to respond to

Wepner's unexpected guile. Instead of cheering "Ali! Ali!" they started getting behind the underdog, with shouts of "Chuck! Chuck!" echoing around the arena.

Buoyed by the support, Wepner had spotted a gap in Ali's defence. In the ninth round, he pounced to exploit it.

Wepner slipped under the champ's left jab to land a body shot with his right that sent Ali reeling back and on to the canvas.

Ali's corner later argued Wepner had tripped their man and Ali had lost his footing, but Wepner remains adamant.

"Strike me dead, I dropped him," he says. "I hit him with that punch and you can hear it on the replay, I landed solid all the way up to my shoulder. He was off balance and I dropped him and he knew it."

Watching Ali get back up from his position in the neutral corner, Wepner noticed a change.

He says: "I could see his eyes and I thought: I've really got him angry now! That's when he started counter punching and swearing at me."

Riled by the slight of being dropped, Ali relentlessly tore into Wepner, the crowd cheering for the underdog to hold on and go the distance.

Ali's punishment brought Wepner up 19 seconds short.

The fame that came from his epic defeat by Ali and his association with the Rocky movie placed Wepner's life on a new path.

In a bid to cash in, King arranged Wepner to 'fight' wrestling legend Andre Rene Roussimoff - more commonly known as 'Andre the Giant' - on an Ali undercard at New York's Shea Stadium. Wepner, albeit in a staged contest, lost after being counted out.

It was far from his most unusual opponent.

Later in his career, Wepner twice took on a performing bear called Victor in wrestling matches in a New Jersey bar.

Wepner was thrown across the ring after agitating the animal with repeated jabs to the head.

He took on other gigs, alongside his boxing work.

To bolster his work as a bar-to-bar salesman for Allied Liquor, he also "solved problems" for people who were owed money.

"Let's say I did a couple favours for friends of mine, you know," Wepner says. "I used to go around and ask people politely [about the money they owed] and then maybe I have to smack them in the face or something."

But after his retirement from boxing in 1979, things spiralled south. Wepner partied and took a lot of cocaine, a combination of which led to him failing an audition to appear in *Rocky II* alongside the now-superstar Stallone.

In 1985, he was convicted of possessing narcotics and sentenced to 10 years in jail, a verdict that sent him to Newark's Northern State Prison.

Prison would be the fight of many men's lives, but not for Wepner.

"Give me a break. It was fine," he says. "Everywhere I went, the guys were singing: 'Champ, Champ!' And saying to me: 'How are you doing, Chuck?'"

"You know, I was with the right people [in prison], you might say - I wound up in a unit with some of the guys from the neighbourhood. I knew them, they knew me."

After volunteering to run the prison boxing team, a venture that failed because of a "lack of talent", Wepner was given parole after three years.

Then came the lawsuit against Stallone.

Wepner, previously uncredited, sued for compensation for his part in inspiring the Rocky franchise.

The case was settled for an undisclosed amount in 2006.

It gave Wepner the right to say he was officially the man the film was based on, and the chance to make a film about his own life without legal reprisals.

It was duly released in 2016.

"The most moving thing about Chuck's story is not the Rocky part, it's how he took on everything that came at him," said actor Liev Schreiber, who played Wepner in *Chuck*.

"He fought his own demons that were harder than any of those great heavyweights he fought. And he won because of his tenacity and his heart."

"Every time Ali hit him in the mouth with that incredible jab, he seemed to get happier. You can't kill a man like that. That was Chuck's indomitable spirit."

Captured on screen, it has taken Wepner longer to be immortalised in bronze.

Long-time friend Bruce Dillin - owner of Bayonne's Dillin Tires, a car garage with a cluttered waiting room that serves as the unofficial Chuck Wepner museum - is one of the committed few to fight his corner.

Under portraits of the Bayonne Bleeder, press clippings and a framed pair of boxing shorts that Dillin admits Wepner most likely never actually wore, the garage owner reveals the idea of the statue originally started as a joke.

It struck Dillin at this moment that a statue to immortalise his friend not only had widespread support, but was long overdue.

After all, a statue of Sylvester Stallone's character had been given pride of place at the top the steps of Philadelphia's Museum of Art since 1980.

More than two decades and countless fundraisers later, finally the real-life Rocky has been given the same honour as his fictional persona.



January 29, 2023

NFF President claims national teams will 'be back'

THE President of the Nigeria Football Federation, Ibrahim Gusau, has revealed that Nigeria's national team will return to winning ways.

The President claims that his government is making every effort to guarantee that the national teams reclaim their former glory.

With the exception of losing the opportunity to represent Africa in the Qatar 2022 World Cup, the Super Eagles could only brag of winning the AFCON competition since 2013.

The Super Falcons won their most recent title in 2018 after beating South Africa in the championship game.

Gusau said in a statement published on the NFF website that his administration would keep making decisions that would restructure how teams played their games.

"The present NFF administration will continue to fashion and implement policies that are targeted at re-engineering the Nigeria game, in order to pull it back to the top. The process requires a lot of hard work and focus and we are determined to do the needful," he wrote.

His administration seemed to be more focused on enlisting players who are passionate about representing their nation; he said that his administration will develop Nigerian football from the ground up.

"As we have enunciated now and again, the vision of this new team is to build our football from the grassroots with vigour and with a sense of purpose. We are putting the nuts and bolts together and very soon the drive will commence powerfully." He continued.

The Super Eagles are rated 35th globally and 5th in Africa in the FIFA rankings, while the Super Falcons are ranked 45th globally. Gusau, though, is prepared to put the teams back on top.

"Our National Teams have been up there before and will be back at the very top sooner than later. This year, the Super Eagles, Super Falcons, Olympic Eagles, Flying Eagles and Golden Eaglets have major tournaments at hand, and we are focused on preparing the teams adequately to get good results from their various engagements and tournaments," he added.

While Nigeria's emphasis will be on the Super Falcons, who will represent Africa at the 2023 World Cup in New Zealand, the reform is anticipated to begin when Jose Peseiro prepares the Super Eagles for the next AFCON competition.



Super Eagles of Nigeria

Meanwhile, Former Nigerian forward Baldwin Bazuaye has suggested that the country should brace up for more disappointments in football as nothing has been done to improve the current state of things in the sport.

Bazuaye expressed dissatisfaction at what could be described as the marginalization of players who ply their trades in the Nigerian Premier Football League.

The former Bendel Insurance coach even argued that there are players who could do better than their foreign counterparts, but have not been given the opportunity.

"We should expect more disappointments, we have not gone back to the drawing

board," Bazuaye told FL. "The foreign professionals are not better than the home-based, take NPFL players to more games and competitions."

"There are good players here, but they do not have the opportunities. We should not differentiate the home-based from the foreign professionals."

"We have the best of the home-based, we need to give them a chance, we have to step on people's toes to get to where we want, we have the answers, we have to do what is right, we need to take the locally based players to more competitions."

In another development, former Super Eagles coach Samson Siasia has lost his suit against the world football

governing body FIFA in an Appeal Court in the United States.

Siasia, who also played for the Nigeria national team before becoming a coach, was seeking to overturn a lifetime ban, later reduced to five years, for fixing matches.

As reported by Reuters, a 3-0 decision was awarded in favour of FIFA on Thursday at the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan.

The court ruled Siasia did not show why a trial court in New York had jurisdiction over his case.

In August 2021, PREMIUM TIMES reported how Siasia's travails started when he was approached by a match-fixer, Wilson Perumal, in 2010, while seeking a job

with an Australian club.

In one of the handful of emails exchanged between Perumal and Siasia and sighted by this paper, the Siasia appeared eager to get the job he was being offered despite some of the illegal clauses being pushed by the match-fixer.

"You have a reputation as a silver medalist coach at the Beijing Olympics. I wish to be transparent with you in this matter. I am going to take over a club. I want to engage you as the head coach. It is an Australia 'A' league team."

"You know my nature of business. I will personally bring in 5 Players and dictate the show. You will do your coaching job and play along. I will not drag you into what I am doing. My players will

take instructions from me. You will have just close one eye and do your coaching job. There is no relegation in this league. No one can fire you. What amount will u be asking for as salary," Perumal said in one of his emails to Siasia.

Though seeking to know the extra details of the monetary terms he was being offered, Siasia was also cautious in his approach.

"Am I going to pay taxes on this amount if agreed, and what about signing on fees, accommodation, and car," Siasia asked.

"Also need to know about flight tickets for me and family. I will be waiting for your soonest response because I have other offers am looking at," Siasia added in one correspondence.

The evidence established against Siasia by FIFA led to his ban, which effectively prevented him from using his U.S. Soccer Federation coaching license and also barred him from any other involvement in football globally.

Siasia, an Atlanta resident, sued FIFA in August 2021, saying the evidence was "grossly insufficient" and that the ban violated his due process rights under the U.S. Constitution.

But the appeals court said Siasia did not show that FIFA was "essentially at home" in New York, or agreed to be sued there because it banned his use of what Siasia called his "New York" coaching license.

The unsigned decision upheld a Manhattan trial judge's October 2021 dismissal of Siasia's lawsuit even as FIFA maintained the claims by the former Nigeria international were

"Super Eagles in good hands with Osiemhen"

SUPER Eagles striker, Odion Ighalo, has reiterated that the senior national team is in safe hands with the prolific goal scoring form of Victor Osiemhen.

Ighalo stated this in an interview with Omasports TV, where he noted that the Napoli striker has the capability of shouldering Nigeria's goal scoring responsibility.

Speaking about his future with international football, the Al Hilal striker disclosed that Jose Peseiro, who succeeded Austin Eguavoen in May 2022, tried to lure him back to the squad to bring his expertise to the team.

"We have the best Striker

absolutely in Africa, if not in the world, we have Victor Osiemhen, so why would I stress about National? The national team is in safe hands.

"But you know I'm not going back because now I want to concentrate on my club. The body is not like it used to be, and the young Lads are doing so well, so I wish them well."

"It's a dicey I can't imagine, but I'm a Nigerian I'll still love to play for my country, but now I don't think I want to do that, you know, even the new coach that came in messaged me, called me and all that. Said I should make a decision if I want to come back I said I would let him know."



Ighalo