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THE Nigeria Standard



VOL. 13 NO. 788

WEDNESDAY, February 1, 2023

N200

Email: nigeriastandarddailynewspaper@yahoo.com

2023: Court rejects use of temporary voters cards

A Federal High Court sitting in Abuja, on Tuesday, struck out a suit seeking to compel the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), to allow the use of Temporary Voter Cards or Voters Identification Number (VIN), during the 2023 general elections.

Dated December 29, 2022, the suit was filed by the Incorporated Trustees Of the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law.

The group had claimed to be representing 29 million

registered voters about to be disenfranchised in the 2023 General Election.

The plaintiff's lawyer, M.N Ozoaka, had sought, among other reliefs, "A Declaration that all Persons who have duly registered with the INEC as voters and whose names are contained in the defendant's register of voters and or electronic database of registered voters should not and cannot be deprived of the right and opportunity to vote in the forthcoming general elections fixed for February to March 2023.

"An Order of the Honourable Court compelling the Defendant to release forthwith the Permanent Voter Cards of the Plaintiffs and all members of their class to enable them vote in the forthcoming general election fixed for February to March 2023.

"Or as an alternative, an Order of the Honourable Court directing the Defendant to reprint, distribute and release the Permanent Voters' Cards of the Plaintiffs and all Persons they represent in this suit or

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Buhari



Mahmood



Malami



From left are, APC Vice Presidential candidate, Sen Kashim Shettima, Governor Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa State, D.G. PCC, Barr. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) of Plateau State and Sen. Umar Tanko Almakura recently in Gudi, Akwanga LGA to commiserate with Engr, Abdullahi Sule over the death of his oldest son, Hassan Abdullahi Sule who died recently. Photo: OFFICE OF THE DIRECTORATE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, OF GOVERNMENT RAYFIELD, JOS

Cashless policy to track illicit election financing -Osinbajo

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo on Monday, said an effective cashless policy can help stem the surge of illicit election financing in the country. Osinbajo spoke at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, when he received a delegation of the European Union Election Observation Mission,

led by Barry Andrews, the Chief Observer, who is also a member of the European Parliament.

"I think that what we should be looking at is to provide more infrastructures. The cashless thing has been really advantageous and helps with tracking. That sort of infrastructure is

useful for more financial inclusion and the more financial inclusion you have, the easier it is to track", he said.

Prof. Osinbajo said so much money could be spent without it being tracked under the current election financing practices in the country. Pointing out the serious

difficulty the country faces in controlling election financing because of cash transactions, the vice president said there were still infrastructure issues required to be in place to ensure an efficient and cashless system in the country.

"With cash transactions, it is still difficult to seriously

control election financing", he said.

On the issue of electoral offences, the vice president said there is the Electoral Offences Commission Bill at the National Assembly and expressed hope that it would begin a new regime of dealing with electoral offences which would be helpful.

"By and large, one shouldn't expect INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) to be the investigator of electoral offences.

"I think that law enforcement agencies should be responsible for arresting and prosecuting offenders, State by State.

"Electoral offences are always seen through a political prism;

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otherwise allow them to vote with their old (temporary) voters' cards or registration slips already issued and released to them by the defendant, the affected persons having been duly registered and Captured in the Defendant's register of voters and or electronic database of registered voters."

Ozoaka had told Justice Binta Nyako last Monday, that the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), is designed to read the details of registered voters without PVCs since the VIN is captured on the INEC database.

But INEC's legal representative, Abdul Aziz Sabi (SAN), had urged the court to decline jurisdiction on the matter because the electoral umpire has extended the deadline for collection of PVCs.

He also described the plaintiff's claim that the last six digits of (VIN) can be captured by BVAS, as "mysterious", adding that

INEC guidelines cannot be interpreted narrowly.

Sabi contended that the plaintiff ought to have attached the temporary voter cards of the supposed 29 million people as proof before the court.

In her ruling on Tuesday, Justice Nyako held that the application amounts to an academic exercise because the PVC collection exercise is not over.

"The Commission has insisted that only PVC will be used. This application is hereby struck out.

"Unless you are going to give me the number of PVCs that are uncollected and those remaining, then I can make a decision," the judge told the plaintiff, she held.

Justice Nyako, who noted that the Electoral Act states that any "technological device" can be used at the polls, said in the event many don't get their PVCs, INEC still have time to solve the problem, adding the Commission would have to

Continued from page 1

people will always feel that they are being prosecuted because they belong to a certain party.

"What is more important is that we have to find a system where the police could have a special unit for offences during the course of elections. The Federal High Courts could also have a special jurisdiction to deal with offences and not extend beyond the Federal High Courts", he said.

On the role of the judicial system, the Vice President said more attention should be paid to the monitoring of tribunals and their outcomes, calling for more scrutiny from the National Judicial Council (NJC).

He disclosed that discussions have been had in the past concerning malfeasance on the part of some judges and those found guilty should be brought to the fore.

"There should be sanctions and that way, we would be able to clean up and correct some of the problems", he added.

The EU Chief Observer, Andrews said the Observer Mission would be monitoring

Cashless policy to track illicit election financing -Osinbajo

the forthcoming elections and hoped for a peaceful and fair electoral process.

He added that the team has been in the country since 11th January and would be here till the end of March 2023.

Other members of the delegation include Ms Samuela Isopi, Ambassador, EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS and Mr Thomas Boserup, Deputy Chief Observer, EU Election Observation Mission.



Osinbajo

PENGASSAN calls for revocation of petrol stations licenses

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) has called on the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) to revoke licenses of retail outlets selling above official pump prices

It urged the Federal Government to force marketers and retailers to sell the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) petrol at the official pump prices.

In a statement, it called on the authorities to revoke the licenses of the retail outlets selling above the pump prices.

PENGASSAN said "We hereby call on the management of NMDPRA to compel all marketers and retailers to make the products available at the approved price.

"They should immediately mobilize all their staff in various locations across the country to monitor compliance and anyone found wanting, should have their license revoked to serve as a deterrent.

"Should this collusion go on unchecked, we will not

hesitate to partner with other stakeholders in ensuring that Nigerians are not further exploited. A stitch in time saves nine."

According to the statement, even as there were some markets that comply with the market rules, there were other ones that were sabotaging the process.

It said: "Even though we have some good marketers who tend to play by the rules, others who are overbearing

have deployed methods of creating artificial scarcities in other to hike the price of the product uncontrollably as the prices of the product now sell between N185 to N650 depending on your location and outlet."

The association insisted that there were over 30 days PMS sufficiency in the country; hence there was no basis for the current scarcity and hardship that Nigerians were being subjected to.

Corruption ranking: Nigeria falls four places

Nigeria has fallen four places on the latest Corruption Perception Index (CPI) ranking, released by Transparency International (TI) on Tuesday.

While the country maintained its previous year's score of 24 out of 100 points, it fell from 150th to 154th position out of 180 countries assessed in the 2022 ranking.

In previous years, Nigeria had experienced a consecutive drop in the CPI ranking. It scored 26 in 2019, 25 in the 2020 assessment, and 24 in the last 2021 record.

The CPI is TI's tool for measuring the levels of corruption in the systems of various countries around the world. The maximum points a country can score is 100 points, and the least is zero. Zero signifies the worst-performing country and 100, is the best-ranked.

The report ranks countries on a scale from a "highly corrupt" 0 to a "very clean" 100.

Denmark is seen as the least corrupt this year with 90 points, and Finland and New Zealand both follow closely at 87.

Strong democratic institutions and regard for human rights also make these countries some of the most peaceful in the world, the report said.

However, the report also shows that while Western Europe remains the top-scoring region, some of its countries are showing worrying signs of decline.

The United Kingdom dropped five points to 73 — its lowest ever score. The report said a number of scandals from public spending to lobbying, as well as revelations of ministerial misconduct, have highlighted woeful inadequacies in the country's political integrity systems. Public trust in politics is also worryingly low, it said.

Countries like Switzerland, at 82, and the Netherlands,

which scored 80 points, are showing signs of decline amidst concerns over weak integrity and lobbying regulations — even though their scores remain high in comparison to the rest of the world.

In Eastern Europe corruption is seen as remaining rampant as many countries reached historic lows.

Russia in particular was highlighted as a glaring example of corruption's impact on peace and stability.

Before the invasion, Ukraine, which scored 33 points, had a low score but was undertaking important reforms and steadily improving.

The index rated 180 countries and territories. Somalia was at the bottom with 12 points; South Sudan tied with Syria for second-to-last with 13.

Only eight countries improved last year, among them Ireland with 77 points, South Korea with 63, Armenia at 46, and Angola at 33.

The report also pointed out how after decades of conflict, South Sudan is in a major humanitarian crisis with more than half of the population facing acute food insecurity — and corruption is exacerbating the situation.

In Yemen, at 16, where complaints of corruption helped spark civil war eight years ago, the report said that the state has collapsed, leaving two-thirds of the population without sufficient food in what has become one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

Compiled since 1995, the index is calculated using 13 different data sources that provide perceptions of public sector corruption from businesspeople and country experts. Sources include the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and private risk and consulting companies.

According to Transparency

International Chair, Delia Rubio, global corruption levels have been stagnant for 11 years in a row.

"Corruption has made our world a more dangerous place. As governments have collectively failed to make progress against it, they fuel the current rise in violence and conflict — and endanger people everywhere," said Delia Ferreira Rubio, the chairperson of Transparency International.

"The only way out is for states to do the hard work, rooting out corruption at all levels to ensure governments work for all people, not just an elite few", she added.

Banks must accept old notes after deadline

-Emefiele



Emefiele

The Governor of the Central Bank, Godwin Emefiele, has said commercial banks must accept the old Naira notes even after the expiration of the 10 February deadline.

Mr Emefiele announced this on Tuesday while appearing before the House of Representatives ad hoc committee looking into the implementation of the policy.

The CBN governor said he agrees with section 20(3) of the CBN Act, which provides that commercial banks must accept old notes after a deadline.

Section 20 (3) of the Act says: "Notwithstanding Sub-sections (1) and (2) of

this section, the Bank shall have power, if directed to do so by the President and after giving reasonable notice in that behalf, to call in any of its notes or coins on payment of the face value thereof and any note or coin with respect to which a notice has been given under this Sub-section, shall, on the expiration of the notice, cease to be legal tender, but, subject to section 22 of this Act, shall be redeemed by the Bank upon demand."

Mr Emefiele said commercial banks must accept the money even after the 10 February deadline.

Although Mr Emefiele had on Sunday announced 17 February as the "grace period" for the Nigerians to deposit the money, the lawmakers are insisting that it must be months, not days.

In his speech, Mr Emefiele said "the law which says even after the old currency has lost its legal tender status that we are mandated to collect these money. And I stand with the House of Reps on this. What does that mean? It could have lost its legal tender status which means we have moved on.

"But if you have your money that you have not been able to send to the bank we will certainly give you the opportunity to bring them back into the CBN to redeem it. Either you pay it to your bank account or you want to do an exchange—we will give you. You will not lose your money. This is the assurance I give to Nigerians," he said.

UTME: Personal email compulsory for JAMB registration

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has announced that as from January 31, 2023, no candidate would be registered without the provision of a personal email address.

Also, candidates are therefore advised to get their genuine e-mail addresses before proceeding for UTME registration.

In a statement issued yesterday by the spokesperson of the Board, Dr. Fabian Benjamin, the Board has come up with the measure to ensure that best practices

are strictly adhered to in capturing all relevant data.

The statement said: "The Board noted that this review of its advisory on the ongoing UTME registration is to ensure that best practices are followed in the process of capturing all relevant data pertaining to the candidates.

"The Board added that the latest advisory aside from aiding in eliciting relevant and up-to-date data of candidates, is also imperative for facilitating the transmission of urgent and vital communication to candidates cheaply and efficiently.

"Furthermore, the e-mail provides more flexibility in communication and is a more professional way of reaching out to candidates.

"Candidates are, therefore, advised to get their genuine e-mail addresses before proceeding for UTME registration."

In addition, it said candidates are to ensure that their passwords are kept securely as the Board does not retrieve lost e-mail passwords or change e-mail addresses once registered.



Adamu



Africa: The driving forces behind crypto adoption

The development and acceptance of digital currencies in Africa have been truly monumental. Although in 2022, the digital asset industry saw several high-profile breaches of trust and was largely characterised by volatility, the adoption of cryptocurrencies within the continent continued to grow, writes NADEEM ANJARWALLA.

THERE has also been a shift in reliance on traditional payment systems, creating a preference among young Africans for cutting-edge payment platforms over conventional ones.

Africa, the second-most populous continent in the world with over 1.5 billion inhabitants, boasts a truly diverse and developing economy. According to Chainalysis, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania had among the highest rates of cryptocurrency adoption worldwide, ranking in the top 20 of the global adoption index.

As Web3 real use cases continue to grow, it is critical to comprehend the factors that have fueled this expansion.

Here are a few things to remember.

Remittance payments

Remittances are a major driver of the global economy, with billions of dollars moving around the world each year. In Africa, remittances make up 1.3 percent of GDP and are expected to grow at an annual rate of 5.2 percent through 2025. The World Bank has estimated that there are about 400 million migrant workers in Africa, with about 50 percent of these migrants living outside their home country.

African households receive \$100 billion in remittances each year – more than they spend on education and healthcare combined!

However, it is well known that several African nations now set a cap on the amount that can be transferred as well as charge steep rates. As a result, the number of remittance payments made using cryptocurrencies has been consistently increasing because of lower restrictions and fees, hence causing an upward scale in the crypto adoption rate as shown



by Analysis. A recent study also shows that

"Remittances are a major driver of the global economy, with billions of dollars moving around the world each year. In Africa, remittances make up 1.3 percent of GDP and are expected to grow at an annual rate of 5.2 percent through 2025. The World Bank has estimated that there are about 400 million migrant workers in Africa, with about 50 percent of these migrants living outside their home country."

African cross-region transfers make up a more significant share of its cryptocurrency market than any other region globally, with Sub-Saharan Africa receiving over \$48 billion of estimated remittances in 2019.

Binance is aware of how increasingly people's daily lives are being influenced by the world of blockchain and cryptocurrency as the Web3 market expands and so they continue to add new utilities and functionalities to enhance every aspect of their users' Web3 experience.

For example, its recent product, Binance Pay – a contactless, borderless, and

secure cryptocurrency payment technology, that ensures that users around the world can send and receive crypto across continents. Features such as this, provide increased accessibility of people's own money whenever they need it and further highlight the user-centric character of digital assets.

Fiat devaluation

In recent times, there has been a continuous trend of the devaluation of multiple African currencies, and this has invariably increased the value of the African crypto market. This is because cryptocurrencies have given them the ability to preserve their savings without

having to worry about inflation through stable digital currencies known as stablecoins.

Owing to this, Binance has continued to be one of the most popular and widely recognised platforms in the African crypto market, where Africans can trade bitcoins or exchange their currencies for other stablecoins.

International trade

Cryptocurrencies have also grown to be a vital component of global trade as a result of their increasing acceptance in a variety of settings and nations.

Before cryptocurrency, the cross-border payment bureaucracy was unquestionably a machine that prevented exchanges that could significantly benefit developing nations. Additionally, there is the difficulty of concluding international agreements using various currencies, a problem that is particularly prevalent on the African continent.

Cryptocurrencies make it easier to transfer and receive money internationally, which is a game-changing option for countries with underdeveloped banking infrastructure. Since crypto-based transactions reduce the risk associated with international trading, safety concerns are also improved in this situation.

The data speaks for itself and it is clear that Africans are beginning to adopt new technologies, albeit still early. Considerable progress is also being made in the area of regulation and a stable regulatory environment will drive further support for innovation and solidify budding trust in the industry, leading to long-term growth.

Youth interest and education

Young people account for about 60 percent of the African population and by 2030, young Africans are expected to constitute 42 percent of global youth, according to the World Economic Forum. African youth are eager to explore new opportunities to raise their level of living and generate income. It is impossible to separate the growth of cryptocurrencies in Africa from this group's set of interests and needs considering that several Africans under the age of 25 are looking for the most cutting-edge and reputable industries to invest in.

In addition, the rise of cryptocurrency usage across Africa is aided by regionalised crypto education programs such as the ones Binance offers have indeed helped fuel this interest and led to increased adoption.



Business & Economy

IMF predicts Nigeria's economic growth to hit 3.2%

THE International Monetary Fund says Nigeria's economy is set to grow from 3.0 per cent in 2022 to 3.2 per cent in 2023 due to measures made to address insecurity in the oil sector.

The IMF disclosed this in its World Economic Outlook Update (January 2023) report. It stated that growth across sub-Saharan Africa will moderate at 3.8 per cent in 2023 amid prolonged fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

It said, "In sub-Saharan Africa, growth is projected to remain moderate at 3.8 per cent in 2023 amid prolonged fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, although with a modest upward revision since October, before picking up to 4.1 per cent in 2024.

"The small upward revision for 2023 (0.1 percentage point) reflects Nigeria's rising growth in 2023 due to measures to address insecurity issues in the oil sector. In South Africa, by contrast, after a COVID-19 reopening rebound in 2022, projected growth more than halves in 2023, to 1.2 percent, reflecting weaker external demand, power shortages, and structural constraints."

The Washington-based lender explained that growth in the global economy will slow down in 2023 before bouncing back in 2024. This is as the global fight against inflation and Russia's war in Ukraine weigh on activity.

Growth is forecasted to slow from 3.4 per cent in 2022 to 2.9 per cent in 2023, then rebound to 3.1 per cent in 2024.

According to the money lender, its January forecast is a lot less gloomy than its October forecast and could hint at a turning point, with growth bottoming out and inflation declining.

It said, "Economic growth proved surprisingly resilient in the third quarter of last year, with strong labour markets, robust household consumption and business investment, and better-than-expected adaptation to the energy crisis in Europe.

"Inflation, too, showed improvement, with overall measures now decreasing in most countries—even if core inflation, which excludes more volatile



Ahmed

energy and food prices, has yet to peak in many countries.

"Elsewhere, China's sudden re-opening paves the way for a rapid rebound in activity. And global financial conditions have improved as inflation pressures started to abate. This, and a weakening of the US dollar from its November high, provided some modest relief to emerging and developing countries."

Recently, the United Nations projected that a robust commodities trade and dynamic consumer goods and

services markets would push Nigeria's economic growth to three percent in 2023.

In its own prediction for 2023, the World Bank stated that the Nigerian economy would grow at 2.9 per cent in 2023.

Due to pipeline vandals and oil thieves, Nigeria's crude oil production plunged in 2022. Production crashed to a low of 0.937mbpd in September 2022 but rebounded to 1.235 million barrels per day in December 2022.

Fed govt to deploy PoS agents

THE Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Dr Zainab Ahmed, has said that the Federal Government will deploy Point-of-Sales agents for cash transfers during the National Social Safety Net Programme Scale Up.

She said this while hosting the Executive Director, Angola, Nigeria, South Africa Constituency of the World Bank Group, Ms Ayanda Dlodlo, in Abuja recently.

According to the finance minister, the programme will cost \$800m and will take off in 2023 immediately after the National Assembly approves it.

She said, "There is already a programme for expansion of the social safety net programme. We call it the NASSP-Scale Up. It has been approved by the bank and the Federal Executive Council and provided for in the 2023 appropriation act. What we have now is to get the National Assembly approval and it becomes active."

The finance minister added the federal government is working on expanding the rapid response register as well as working with agents network in the banking system and other financial services for the cash transfer programme.

"We are working on having all of the database required. There is the rapid response register that has been setup and is being expanded. There is also a pipeline of agents network that has been put in place, working in the banking system and other financial services so that on the approval of the National Assembly we will be able to quickly start deploying the funds that would be disbursed by the bank," Ahmed added.

The minister noted that the agents will be deployed so that they can reach rural communities that are not banked.

Confirmation on the World Bank's website that the NASSP-SU was approved by the bank on December 16, 2021, and will run till June 30, 2024.

The \$800m programme is to be implemented by the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development.

Figures from the Central Bank of Nigeria show that there are 1.41 million agents in the country with 1.04 million active PoS terminals as of September 2022.

A CBN document notes that nearly one in two adults do not use any formal (regulated) financial services.

It also discloses that only 47.6 million Nigerians were banked, adding that about 38.1 million were financially excluded.

Data from the National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office show that there were about 12.06 million poor and vulnerable households, which include 49.81 million individuals in its database.

In January last year, the National Coordinator, National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office, Mr Apera Iorwa, in an exclusive interview with The PUNCH said that the Federal Government disbursed about \$300m to the poor and vulnerable in its National Social Register through N5,000 cash transfers in four years.

He also disclosed that two million households had benefitted on an average of five individuals

PETROL consumers have continued to groan under the burden of skyrocketing prices, as Premium Motor Spirit almost hit N400 per litre over the weekend.

Market survey showed that while stations belonging to the Major Oil Marketers Association of Nigeria were selling products at around N190 per litre, stations belonging to members of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria jerked up prices to between N320 and N340 per litre.

National Controller, Operations, IPMAN, Mike Osatuyi, said that price was unlikely to hit N400 per litre.

According to him, his members now buy products at N280/litre at depots.

President Buhari had last week set up a 14-man committee that he would be heading to proffer solutions to the lingering fuel scarcity.

Osatuyi disclosed that the committee would be inaugurated this week.

"With the way the president has set up the committee, Nigerians should expect something good. The committee will work with operators and stakeholders and they will call us for meetings, where we will tell them what to do.

"If NNPC gives us products directly and we don't have to pass through third parties, prices will crash. IPMAN members account for 80 per cent of products in the market. So, why won't they give us products directly? Where MOMAN stations can't get to, our members are there! As of the weekend, we bought the product for N280 per litre before we now add transportation on it depending on the distance. So, we will sell at any price.

Osatuyi alleged that the state oil firm had started to avoid talks with oil marketers, and had since abandoned them to their fate.

According to him, NNPC had failed Nigerians as the firm was

Consumers groan as pump price nears N400/litre



Sylva

completely void of solution to the scarcity, adding that the new Managing Director of the NNPC Retail, Hubbs Stockman had not agreed to meet with them recently to proffer a solution to the petrol crisis.

He claimed the President would not have set up a steering committee if the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited had not failed in its responsibility to address the fuel scarcity.

"There is currently confusion in the downstream sector because NNPC has not been able to address the scarcity. There is no fuel. Even NNPC has not been able to import fuel, because if they have, they will give us. Now, the white man is avoiding us. He does not want to address us. How can you set up a system, yet refuse to meet with us for feedback? I don't know what they are hiding from us. The white man is not open with us," Osatuyi said.

Fuel scarcity has been lingering since the last quarter of last year, with price moving from N165 to over N300 per litre.

Black marketers were also seen making brisk cash, as they hawk petrol in kegs.

A source at the depot said that depot owners increase prices based on the foreign exchange price per day.

"Do you follow forex at the black market at all? Because if you do, you would agree with me, that forex changes every day. If forex changes daily, then, landing costs will also have to change," the source told our correspondent when asked why ex-depot prices of petrol were increasing on a daily basis.

Nigerian youths under the auspices of the Nigerian Youth Congress for Peace and Development had called on the President to disband the leadership of the Nigeria National Petroleum Company to address the lingering fuel scarcity in the country.

The youths, who lamented the suffering which the fuel scarcity had caused Nigerians, also called on the President to suspend all the election processes to tackle the problem.

In a statement issued in Jos on Sunday and jointly signed by its President, Ebi Dennis and the Secretary, Abdul Idi Ladduga, the youths equally gave the President two weeks ultimatum to meet their demands or be ready to face protests from the Nigerian youths until the issues were resolved.

The statement read, "Nigerian Youth Congress for Peace and Development (NYCPD) is saddened by the unbearable level of artificial hardship Nigerians are being subjected to owing to fuel scarcity and the sudden jerk in the price of Premium Motor Spirit by the Nigeria National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC)."

The group said the recent adjustment in the pump price was done without adequate consultation with relevant stakeholders in the oil and gas value chain.

"To our greatest surprise, His Excellency, Chief Timipre Sylva, the Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, like other Nigerians first got to know about the increment of the price from rumour mills. That triggered him to issue a press statement through his Media Adviser, Mr Horatius Eguu, denying the obvious fact of the adjustment and equally assuring Nigerians that President Muhammadu Buhari, hasn't approved the upward review of PMS price. He further assured Nigerians that Mr President has not seen any reason why the price of the product has to go up.

In response to the above, the team said it delegated some of its members to visit NNPC retail to ascertain the extant price of the product.

"To our greatest surprise, NNPC has since adjusted their pump price, the same applies to all Stations owned by Major Marketers. Numerous independent Marketers are selling it above N400 where it is available.

"What we have failed to understand is whether NNPC no longer reports to the Minister of State for Petroleum and Resources, who is the middle man between them and Mr President, who is the senior minister?"

"Is NNPC now in the hands of mischief makers and those planning to discredit President Muhammadu Buhari?"

Osatuyi said that the removal of fuel subsidy and deregulation was the key to resolving the fuel scarcity menace.

"The permanent solution is to deregulate and remove subsidies. Allow the market to be a free market where marketers other than the NNPC will be able to bring in products. Since the government said the subsidy will be removed in June, let's wait and see. But until then, we have to manage," he told [Economic Confidential](#) on Sunday.

Chairman, the Major Oil Marketers Association of Nigeria, Oluvide Adeosun had in Lagos, also told journalists that deregulation of the downstream sector would eradicate fuel scarcity.

"Having subsidised PMS for so long, Nigerian institutions now have a diminished capacity to deal with the current local energy crisis. A disruption in any part of the supply chain causes ripple effects and results in queues at stations. As a country, we must begin the process of price deregulation to reduce this inefficient subsidy," he said.



Business & Economy

AfCFTA can make Nigeria Africa's food basket

On January 1, 2021, the [African Continental Free Trade Agreement \(AfCFTA\)](#), the world's largest free trade area, officially came into promulgation. After more than forty-three years of initial dealmaking, African nations reached an agreement to bring the Lagos Plan of Action to effect, which sought to create an African Common Market, promoting collective self-reliance, writes [Adebayo Adebake](#).

NOW, just two years after they agreed on the AfCFTA, salient questions have emerged from the all-encompassing nature of the concord. Can the AfCFTA make Nigeria Africa's food basket?

Indeed, to what extent can Nigeria leverage this most auspicious agreement to serve the African agricultural complex? This essay examines how the AfCFTA can return Nigeria to a place serving as Africa's food basket.

The nature of food imports in Africa

The African Continent consists of 54 countries and over 1.4 billion people, so the African populace's dietary needs must be significant. Let's examine the reality of the outsized nature of the African food industry by factoring in the import needs of the continent on certain major foods.

Take Wheat, for instance. While the African population increased by 32% between the 2007-2008 and the 2018-2019 planting seasons, African continental wheat imports increased by 68% over the same period, surging from 27.3 million tonnes of wheat imports to 47 million tonnes.

On rice imports, the continent imported around 16.6 million metric tons of rice in the 2020-2021 trade year, with most of the rice going to sub-Saharan Africa. North Africa stood more self-sufficient in rice production, having imported only one million metric tons of rice out of the cumulative African rice imports of 16.6 million metric tons.

Food imports are relatively large across all major food sectors in Africa. African import statistics on palm oil, poultry meat and proteins, vegetable oils, ethanol, condiments and sauces, and many other nutritional sources underscore Africa's ever-growing appetite, mainly as the continent's population increases at an exponential rate.

Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa has been singled out as having a "spiraling" food import bill. This was after the region spent \$43 billion on food imports in 2019 alone.

That's enough financial firepower that could have bolstered critical infrastructure in the region and attracted value in other tangential areas crucial to the needs of the people in the region. This may be why



Adebayo

some observers of the African economy have concluded that Africa has a major challenge with feeding itself.

Nigeria's opportunity to be Africa's food basket

Egypt, Algeria, South Africa, Morocco, and Nigeria all account for 50% of Africa's total food imports. Egypt contributes 15% of Africa's food imports, Algeria contributes 12%, South Africa contributes 9%, Morocco contributes 7%, and Nigeria contributes 7%.

However, the regime of the AfCFTA presents Nigeria with a remarkable opportunity to turn its status around from a major net importer of food in Africa to a major net exporter of food to other African countries well-balanced on the AfCFTA scale.

Intra-African trade currently stands at about 13-15%. This figure is measly compared to the 60% regional trade achieved by Europe, 40% regional trade in North America, and the 30% achieved in South East Asia. Nigeria can take advantage of the low intra-African food trade by boosting exports to other African countries.

However, the axis forces of inadequate trade-related infrastructure, lack of financial access, restrictive customs procedures, and excessive political uncertainty will all

have to be defeated before Nigeria can take her pride as Africa's food basket. This is a more workable reality considering that the Lagos Plan of Action was held in Nigeria.

Recommendations on how Nigeria can become Africa's food basket

The challenges impugning Nigeria's efforts to be Africa's food source include inadequate trade-related infrastructure, restrictive customs procedures, policy uncertainties, and poor financial flows, amongst many others.

To become Africa's food basket, Nigeria will have to fix the following trade lacuna:

1. Providing adequate trade-related infrastructure:

The World Bank confirms that large-scale transport infrastructure between countries can reduce transport costs and supercharge internal and external trade-related infrastructure.

Nigeria will have to invest more heavily in its trade-related infrastructure to become Africa's food basket. This includes fixing its dilapidated ports, harbors, rail and road infrastructure.

2. Creating open customs procedures:

Nigeria closed four of its land borders in August 2019, only to reopen them to intra-African trade in December 2020. The Nigerian government stated that the move was to reduce smuggling, dampen the illegal inflow of small arms and

drugs and protect local manufacturers. However, to export more food to other African countries, Nigeria will have to exercise a more flexible border policy with its neighbours.

Indeed, it remains a counter-intuitive logic to expect to serve as the food basket of the African continent if Nigeria's borders are closed and unpredictable. In this case, technological necessities around the Nigerian border will have to be improved so that a smooth interchange of trade around the border can ensue.

3. Providing policy certainty

Nigeria has a penchant for invoking trade wrath on its neighbors when it feels like it. In August 2019, the country closed its land borders rather unexpectedly, preventing trade access between many west-African businesses and their Nigerian customers, and vice-versa. The Olusegun Obasanjo presidency of 2003 also imposed an import ban on Ghanaian textiles, starch, and plastics. The reason was that Nigeria could promote local industrialization and substitute imported goods.

Nigeria's trade policy with its neighbours will have to be straightened out more smoothly to become a food source for the African continent. Erratic policy shifts that take neighbours and trading partners unawares will have to be eschewed for a more progressive trade stance.

In conclusion

The AfCFTA presents Nigeria with a promising opportunity to reduce its hefty food import bill and trade more efficiently with its neighbors. The government can and should ultimately maximize this opportunity to make Nigeria the continent's food basket.

However, Nigeria must seize this chance and make the requisite trade-related adjustments as early as possible to take advantage of the AfCFTA, become Africa's food basket, and limit its reliance on oil exports.

"Intra-African trade currently stands at about 13-15%. This figure is measly compared to the 60% regional trade achieved by Europe, 40% regional trade in North America, and the 30% achieved in South East Asia. Nigeria can take advantage of the low intra-African food trade by boosting exports to other African countries. However, the axis forces of inadequate trade-related infrastructure, lack of financial access, restrictive customs procedures, and excessive political uncertainty will all have to be defeated before Nigeria can take her pride as Africa's food basket. This is a more workable reality considering that the Lagos Plan of Action was held in Nigeria. Recommendations on how Nigeria can become Africa's food basket. The challenges impugning Nigeria's efforts to be Africa's food source include inadequate trade-related infrastructure, restrictive customs procedures, policy uncertainties, and poor financial flows, amongst many others."

Politics

APC House of Reps candidate denies use of thugs

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), for Idah Federal Constituency in the Eastern Senatorial District of Kogi, David Zacharias through his campaign council has denied the alleged use of Thugs against the opposition People's Democratic Party.

The David Zacharias Campaign Council, at the weekend, clarified that its activities is devoid of molestation of any political party as insinuated by the Peoples Democratic Party in the federal constituency.

Director General of the council, Alhaji Danjuma Odiba refuted claim by the PDP that its candidate was intimidating its party members.

The DG in a statement on behalf of the federal lawmaker, David Zacharias who is seeking for reelection into the national assembly, said that he has nothing to do with the issue of thuggery as published in some sections of the social media.

According to him, the malicious publication was purportedly authored by sahara reporters, a known fake news media outfit orchestrated to mislead the general public.

The statement described the report as not only laughable, but a confirmation that Sahara Reporters is an idle "news" platform known for fake news, misinformation and disinformation.

The statement read in parts "We wish to state categorically and emphatically that the Honourable member representing Idah federal constituency, Hon David Idris Zacharias as a respected politician has never had thugs and will never start having them now.

"The devilish and cheap allegation that David Zacharias led thugs to destroy the PDP party secretariat or had his followers to dispossess members of the drowning PDP of their personal effects is not only false, but a misleading, devilish, malicious, fake and dangerous concoction from the imagination of the writer and their sponsors.

"In the past few weeks, Hon. David Zacharias even though he has all the confidence and assurances of his supporters and good people of Idah federal constituency of being reelected, has been touring every part of the constituency canvassing for votes. Is this the man who will send thugs to destroy an opposition that is not viable and practically absent?

"It will not be out of place to say that the opposition PDP in Idah federal constituency and its House of Representatives candidate are already shivering over the wide acceptability, massive followership, intimidating turnout at campaign rallies and heartbreaking defeat that is already eminent come



Adamu

February 25th, 2023.

"We consider the sponsored publication by the PDP as one coming from people acting under illusion, a party under serious election fever anticipating defeat in the February 25th election. The intention is simple! To cause disaffection and tarnish the reputation of the lawmaker who has been peaceful, faithful and hardworking.

"This fallacious and poorly written fake news will not distract the campaign council or Hon. David Zacharias from focusing on the task ahead, which is to win the coming election overwhelmingly and convincingly with shocking margins capable of causing the PDP candidate heart attack". The statement expressed assurance that the scholarship schemes, market women empowerment schemes, employment facilitation and empowerment opportunities already created by the lawmaker are enough tangible evidence to show the opposition that they have no place in the coming election.

He therefore urged the teeming supporters of Hon. David Zacharias to remain calm, faithful and peaceful.

The statement also called on

Maren commiserates with former speaker Alams

From JIDAUNA YANUNG & DORCAS PANKYES, Abuja

The member representing Mangu/Bokkos federal constituency in the National Assembly Hon. Bulus Solomon Maren has commiserated with the family of the former speaker, Plateau state House



Alams

security agencies to watch closely the opposition, saying they have devised new tactics to cause disaffection within the polity ahead of the election which they are already losing.

BOLA Tinubu, presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), has said that he played a significant role to ensure the presidency shift the deadline for the use of old naira notes.

Tinubu made the remarks when he led other members of his campaign team on a courtesy call on the Oba of Benin, Oba Ewuare II, in Benin City.

The APC presidential standard-bearer said he has in the past few days been intervening on behalf of petty traders so that they won't suffer the difficulties that may be occasioned with the scarcity of new naira notes.

"Let me apologise to all the chiefs, respected leaders and traditional rulers for waiting since

AS preparations for the 2023 general elections gather momentum, more than 400 members of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) recently decamped to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Mushere West of Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau state.

The decampers said they decided to leave the party as a result of lack of direction and focus from the party.

The decampers spoke at the flag off campaign and commissioning of some projects by Hon. Solomon Maren, member representing Mangu/Bokkos federal constituency in the National Assembly, revealed that the eight years of APC has brought untold hardship and poverty to the people.

Honorable Maren who received the decampers expressed gratitude to them for taking a wise decision at this time that the general election is at the corner.

He reminded them on the need to vote PDP from the presidency down to the House of Assembly.

Maren stated further that the umbrella of the PDP is wide

Over 400 APC members decamp to PDP in Bokkos

From JIDAUNA YANUNG & DORCAS PANKYES, Abuja

enough to contain everybody proceeded to commission and give them a sense of some of his projects which cut belonging. across various parts of the

The lawmaker them communities.



Maren

Naira: Tinubu explains role in deadline extension

morning till now. This is not intentional but because of your cousins, wives selling garden egg, carrots roasted corn need money and if naira is canceled, and we fail to intervene, then we have failed in our duty.

"We have been on this for three days. And, suddenly, in the afternoon, out of great respect, the presidency considered our request for extension. I was running back and forth calling him. So that's what we have been doing. Luckily, even though we didn't get everything we wanted, we got an extension for a number of days," he said.

Tinubu, who said he was at the Palace to seek the monarch's blessings ahead of the presidential poll,

press corps in Abuja said the late Titus mother was an outstanding and committed woman and prays eternal repose of the departed.

According to the release, Representative Maren accompanied by his wife and other stakeholders of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) said the deceased was an accomplished mother who lived a purposeful life.

He said, "I received with sadness the news of the passing of your mother, Mama Dinatu, who lived a fulfilled life considering her achievements and contributions to humanity.

The lawmaker further said, "our prayers and thoughts are with the Alams family during this period of grief".

Hon. Maren then prayed God to give the family the fortitude to bear the loss.

have been selling gas. We are going to end those anomalies and Edo will be a center of economic activity for us. The artefacts are back but they made so much money out of it. Where is our share? We must house them and turn it to an arts and exhibition center, we will develop the museum. I will contribute, we will respect the culture and the museum will be built," he said.

Responding, Oba Ewuare II thanked the former Lagos State governor, the presidency and the Edo State government for their respective commitments and support towards the success and construction of the Benin Royal Museum that will accommodate artefacts.

The Benin Monarch pointed out that the museum would be sited outside the palace ground for easy accessibility to tourists.



Tinubu

Politics

2023: X-raying Atiku, Tinubu, Peter Obi's chances

Section 134 (2) of the 1999 Constitution as amended makes it clear that a Presidential candidate shall be deemed to have been elected as the President if he wins simple majority votes and also secures not less than 25 per cent of the votes cast in at least two-thirds of all the states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). So, candidates need to win from more than two zones. BODE OLAGOKE, ABDULRAHMAN ZAKARIYAU and PAUL OKAH examine the chances of the leading candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives congress (APC) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) in the six geo-political zones.

WITH less than 30 days to the presidential election, the PDP presidential candidate has been consulting with various stakeholders, campaigning zone by zone in addition to holding town hall meetings to interact with the electorate.

The six geo-political zones in Nigeria are North-east, North-west, North-central, South-south, South-east, and the South-west. As contained in the prospective voters' data released recently by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 93.4 million eligible voters in the six zones will determine the fate of the leading contenders.

In the Commission's statistics, the voters' spread shows that the North-west has the highest number of registered voters with 22,255,562, followed by the South-west with 17,958,966 prospective voters. Occupying the third position is the North-central which now has 15,363,731 eligible voters.

The electoral body's figures also show that the South-south has 14,440,714 registered voters, while the North-east has 12,542,429 and the South-east maintains the bottom spot with 10,907,606 registered voters. Further breakdown by states showed that Lagos has the highest number of registered voters with 7,060,195, followed by Kano with 5,921,370 and Kaduna, with 4,335,208.

PDP is in control of 14 states out of 36 states across the six zones. The states are Oyo, Osun, Edo, Delta, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Enugu, Abia, Benue, Taraba, Bauchi, Sokoto, and Adamawa. This means that they control two states out of the six states in South-west, four states out of the six in the South-south states, one out of the six states in the North-central, three out of the six states in the North-east and one out of the six states in the North-west.

Also, a political analyst, Aminu Mohammed, speaking on phone said "Atiku's chances in the North-east are very bright. He hails from Adamawa state in the North-east, and his political party, PDP, is in control of three out of the six states in that zone. So, he stands a chance in the zone.

"Aside from this, their Christian population is more in the North-east than in other parts of the North. So, with the Muslim-Muslim ticket of APC, Atiku will benefit from protest votes."

For the North-west, Mohammed said, "Considering the insecurity problem in the zone and the inability of President Buhari's administration to address it, Atiku may get significant votes from Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto, and some other parts of the zone."

According to Ojo, Atiku may lose in the North-central because APC is in control of most of the states in the zone including the President Buhari factor.

"The majority of the North-central states are governed by APC - from Kwara to Kogi to Niger, down to Plateau and Nasarawa. I think the only North-central state that is under PDP is Benue state. So, five out of six belong to APC. If you look at it, even if it's about religion, the governors of Kwara, Niger, Kogi, and Nasarawa states are Muslims. So, the only Christian governor among the five states that APC controls in the North-central is from Plateau state.

"So, I want to believe that the governors don't have to threaten, neither does Tinubu have to threaten the political appointees in these states that they must vote APC or they will not get contracts. So, for me, it's as good as saying that the majority of the APC governors will work for the success of the APC presidential candidate in the North-west.

"APC will win most of the North-central states, including the FCT which is also part of the North-central. So, I want to believe that the majority of the voters in these states would toe the line of APC.

"PDP and Atiku will struggle to get the number of required votes in the North-central. He will struggle to win any of the North-central states, including Benue, because the Benue state governor, Samuel Ortom, is one of the G5 Governors group and they are not working for Atiku. So, I'm not sure the



North-central is sure for Atiku. Hence, objectively speaking, most of the North-central's states are likely going to be won by the APC presidential candidate."

In his view, a political scientist and president, Political Science Teachers Association of Nigeria, Prof. Hassan Saliu, said in theory, all the candidates stand a chance to be declared winners or losers.

Speaking in a phone interview with our correspondent, he said, "At the level of practice, for me, Atiku stands a good chance. Though Atiku is banking on the North-west, North-east, and the North-central, he also needs votes from the South-south. If he wants to win, he must look beyond the Northern zones. He must look towards the South too. And I think he is working hard behind the scene using all kinds of strategies.

On whether or not the G5 governors will affect his chances in the South, Prof. Saliu said, "You have to put the two on the scale. Which one comes first? Win the zone or the majority of the votes? The first is for Atiku to win the majority of votes, and then get 25% of the votes from other parts of the states. So, Atiku and PDP's calculation is to win in the majority; so this may not affect him."

On his part, a former national chairman of the National Democratic Party (NDP), Chudi Chukwani, said Atiku's chances in the South-east, and South-west, and South-south depend on the level of mobilisation.

"PDP is still strong in the South; so, I believe some states in the South will vote for PDP. But it depends on the level of mobilisation that Atiku can do. Atiku can challenge and defeat Tinubu and Obi in the South, while they can also challenge him and win in the North."

For the Director of Communication of Atiku Campaign Organisation, Dele Momodu, the former vice-president will win the February 25 presidential election.

Momodu told Blueprint Weekend that, "Atiku will win. With the network of friends and political structure that took the former vice-president 30 years to put in place across the six geo-political zones, I can assure you that he will win this election."

Like all other major contenders, Bola Tinubu has been going across the region and states to canvass for the votes and support of the electorates ahead of the election, whether the massive supporters seen everywhere he has gone to campaign will eventually turn to vote is another ball game.

According to the INEC, the seven states of the North-west have the highest number of voters culminated to above 12 million. Out of this, nine million voters are youths.

The North-west political zone is, however, unpredictable this time around for any political party considering the candidacy of a rooted Rabiu Kwankwaso of NNPP from Kano state. Although the APC seems to have the upper hand politically because out of the seven states it controls six while the main opposition controls only Sokoto state with significant

presence in other six states.

While the major challenger of Tinubu, the former vice-president, hails from the North-east of Adamawa state, his running mate, Kashim Shettima, is lucky to hail from an APC-rooted Borno state with a favourable Yobe state to complement. In the six North-east states, therefore, APC will convincingly win in Borno, Yobe and Gombe while PDP might take convincing victory in Adamawa, Taraba and Bauchi states.

Over the years, North-central had always been a determinant political region, but the entrance of a third-force of Labour Party will reduce the strength of the ruling APC to Niger and Kwara states. Tinubu might eventually win Kogi state with a slight margin while PDP and LP will dig it out in Nasarawa, Benue, and FCT. Therefore, Tinubu's chances in North-central cannot be equated to 50 per cent.

The six Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Delta and Edo used to be strongholds of the PDP, but the entrance of Peter Obi in this coming election will no doubt reduce the dominance of the PDP. For Tinubu, therefore, the best to struggle for is 25 percent in Cross Rivers and Edo states. In Cross River, the sitting governor, Ben Ayade's influence will do the magic while the resentment for Governor Godwin Obaseki and the political strength of former governor Adam's Oshiomhole will secure 25 percent for Tinubu in Edo North.

For obvious reasons, Tinubu is expected to win landslide in the six states of Yoruba land. But like in the South-south, the entrance of Peter Obi of Labour Party will, to some extent, reduce the number of votes Tinubu would have naturally garnered in the South-west.

Apart from being a Yoruba man, Tinubu's party is in control of four out of six states. Even in Oyo state where a PDP governor is in control, the sympathy of "blood is thicker than water will be played out."

The five South-east states which used to be in control of the PDP have been swept off because of entrance of Peter Obi who is the son of the soil. For Tinubu and APC, the struggle to secure a mandatory 25 percent in South-east will be a Herculean task.

Although when asked to comment on the challenges confronting the party's chances at a press conference held recently at the APC PCC headquarters, in Abuja, the Director of Strategic Communications, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, said from all indices, APC campaigns across the country have received total acceptance with mammoth crowds everywhere the team has visited.

Alhaji Idris was asked to respond to the claim by the former President of the Senate, Bukola Saraki, on the chances of PDP in the South-east.

Speaking during an interview on Arise TV's The Morning Show, Saraki had said: "South-south is a strong PDP area. We will do very well in South-south, South-east, the challenge we have there, of course, is Labour Party.

"But we will still do well in the South-east and take our 25 percent. We will do well in North-central, we will do well in North-west and North-east," he said.

Alhaji Idris, however, said: "The APC campaign absolutely has no challenge across Nigeria. In fact, what you see are challenges with the opposition parties. Our candidate has gone to everywhere and you see the mammoth crowd that has come out to receive him everywhere he has gone in this country and the train is moving, there are no challenges at all.

"If there are challenges we will let you know, but for now APC is coasting to victory; we are sure of what we are doing; we are sure of the kind of acceptance our presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, is getting across Nigeria and we hope and pray that come May 29, 2023, he will be sworn in as President of this country."

Also responding, the special adviser, media, communications and public affairs, Dele Alake, said if the Labour Party is major change to the PDP in the South-east, it is to the APC advantage.

He said, "Let me just say that we have no challenges across the political zones. The challenge of the PDP specifically in the South-east is to our advantage. We have no challenges at all. We are coasting home to victory."

A political analyst in Anambra state, Mr. Charles Chukwu, said the election will be a walk-over for Tinubu as he has shown more acceptability than Atiku of the PDP and Obi of the Labour Party as well as other candidates for the presidential election.

He said: "From every indication, Tinubu stands a better chance because he has greater support base with greater numerical strength than Atiku and Peter Obi combined.

"Remember that regardless of whatever anybody may say against Tinubu, the Yoruba nation perceive him from the same leader prism they perceived Obafemi Awolowo. In contemporary Nigerian politics, Tinubu has the largest followership in the South-west. If election was conducted in the South-west for Tinubu and Obasanjo, the former president will lose woefully. This is why his endorsement of Peter Obi doesn't make any sense to us, political analysts.

"Even members of the opposition parties in the South-west will vote for Tinubu. That's the extent of Tinubu's popularity in the South-west. You can go and check. Don't mind all the propaganda against Asiwaju; he is loved by many Nigerians.

"In the entire North, the Buhari factor will be of immense advantage to Tinubu even as he has on his own something of a cult-like followership in the North, because of the men he built in that region over the years. Put differently, Buhari has over 12 million votes' bank in the North which he had maintained since 2003 when he made his debut in the presidential election.

"This over 12 million votes will automatically go for Tinubu in

reciprocation of Tinubu's support for Buhari in 2015 and 2019. The Northerners I know are highly appreciative people. They see the 2023 election as an opportunity to payback Tinubu for his massive support for Buhari. Remember during the APC presidential primaries, Aisha Buhari reminded her husband of his promise to Tinubu and that it was too late to renege on the promise.

"She also celebrated Tinubu's victory at the primaries. Before then, Northern APC governors had resolved that power must shift to the South. While they banded equity as their reason, they had Tinubu at the back of their minds. That's Northerners for you. They hardly default in agreements even gentleman agreement."

He continued, "In the South-east, remember that Imo and Ebonyi are APC states today. They weren't so in the previous general elections. Hence, Tinubu is sure of victory in the two South-east states of Ebonyi and Imo. The governors of these states; Umahi and Uzodimma, are political forces that no one can dismiss with a wave of the hand. So, if Buhari won the Presidency in 2015 and 2019 with little or no votes from the South-east, you can imagine what will happen in the 2023 presidential election now that APC controls two states in the South-east.

"Again, the South-east won't churn out reasonable votes this time around because of pervasive insecurity and threats to life with sit at home declaration every now and then by ESN/IPOB criminal faction led by Simon Ekpa. This will then be a big loss to Atiku and Obi, who see the South-east as their stronghold.

"Besides the IPOB/ESN threats, Atiku has lost the goodwill he had in Igbo land. In 2019, the Igbo voted massively for him because they saw him as an in-law and by extension a brother based on his marriage to an Igbo woman, but the news today is that he has divorced the woman. Remember too that in 2019 his running mate was Peter Obi, but now he ignored Nd'Igbo and picked Okowa from the South-south.

"A major odd against Obi is that the Hausa/Fulani North will never forgive Nd'Igbo for accusing their herdsman of the killings in the South-east, whereas it was the ESN/IPOB criminal terrorists that are responsible for all the killings in the guise of unknown gunmen as has been confirmed by security agencies and other investigative bodies."

On his part, a legal practitioner based in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state, Mr. Theophilus Madu, said Peter Obi has no business contesting the 2023 presidential election and so will fail woefully as a result of many factors.

He said, "Peter Obi is making victory easier for Tinubu by reducing the chances of Atiku because he has greater supporters among the PDP. Obi will not win the presidency. There is no way he will win. The South-east, which ordinarily should be his stronghold, is already messed up politically by ESN/IPOB terrorist criminals.

"The North and the West do not trust Obi because he has not condemned the criminal activities of his Igbo Biafra criminals, who have turned the South-east to a slaughter house of their own brothers; neither has Obi promised in his campaigns to fight ESN/IPOB when he becomes president, unlike Buhari who openly said he will fight and defeat Boko Haram in his 2015 campaign promise.

"So, this attitude of Obi makes many Nigerians, particularly the North and West, to see him as complicit in the ESN/IPOB criminality terrorism in the South-east. His Hero beer company has Biafran logo - the rising sun as trademark. Why won't he be suspected?"

"Again, Obi is relatively known in the North just as Kwankwaso is relatively known in the South. Datti, the running mate of Obi, is also relatively known in the North. So, Obi won't get any significant votes in the North and the South-west. He will, however, make an impact in the South-south because of the Igbo population in this geopolitical zone. He will manage to get some votes in Lagos too and Abuja because of the same Igbo populations there. That's the situation."

IMAGES

LATE SP DAVIDSON LAR WAKE KEEP

Wake keep in honour of late SP Reverend Davidson Musa Lar was held at ASPC Church, Mobile Police 8 Barracks, Jos



Rev. SP Francis Obasi, Preacher at the service (middle) flanked by other men of God at the wake keep



Mr. Matthew Kaju (2nd left) Mr. Alew Taleeb (left) with Nde Emmanuel Kayi Gogwim (right) at the service



Widow, Mrs. Yemisi Davidson Lar (left) flanked by children of the deceased



Cross section of late Davidson Musa Lar's relations



Cross section of Kungiyar Sabon Rai Don Kowa rendering songs at the service



Lucy Chindaba (right) with other PPC staff at the service



Sympathisers at the wake keep service



Mrs. Yemisi Davidson Lar, wife of the deceased and daughters during the wake keep in honour of their father

PHOTOS: JOHN LAR

Politics

1999-2023: Election trends in Nigeria

There have been six major political campaigns and elections in Nigeria since 1999 when the new democratic arrangement started and for which the 1999 constitution has served as the basis for determining the electoral combinations, writes BUNMI



Obasanjo



Yar'adua



Jonathan

THE past 24 years may be a short time in the history of a nation, yet it provides some glimpses into how the political system has fared. Perhaps it can serve to elucidate certain pointers to future political campaigns, elections and winners of major political offices, especially for the presidential election of February 2023.

Despite several voting periods that take place at irregular intervals, the presidential election is uppermost in people's estimation for voting. It is also the four-yearly cycle when most other elections are held – gubernatorial, the Senate and House of Representatives at the federal level, and the house of assembly at the state level.

In 1999, only two major candidates contested the presidential election. They were Olusegun Obasanjo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Olu Falae of the Alliance for Democracy (AD). With Obasanjo polling 18.7 million and Falae having 11.1 million of 30.2 million total votes cast, the trend for the presidential elections to date appeared to have been set, whether by design or simply by happenstance.

Since the 1999 election, only two to three political parties have had prominence in presidential elections. Although many registered political parties presented candidates for the presidential election, the votes have favoured a very limited number of parties. Many parties share a measly number of votes, as will be shown in the following explanation.

In the 2003 presidential election, coming four years after 1999, three major parties shared an overwhelmingly large number of votes although a total of nine parties were registered for the election. The topmost winners were the People's Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). PDP's Olusegun Obasanjo polled 24.4 million, ANPP's Muhammadu Buhari had

12.7 million and APGA's Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu got 1.2 million votes. The six remaining political parties divided among themselves the left-over four million votes, making a total of some 42 million votes cast.

The number of political parties contesting the presidential election in 2007 increased significantly to 25. However, similar to the outcome of the four years of the immediate past election, only three parties took almost all the votes cast in the election. PDP's Umaru Musa Yar'dua got 24.6 million, ANPP's Muhammadu Buhari had 6.6 million and Action Congress of Nigeria candidate, Atiku Abubakar, received 2.6 million. The next party came a distant fourth with 608,803 votes of the total number of 61.5 million votes cast.

Four years later in 2011, there were 20 political parties registered for the presidential election, a reduction from the previous 25 parties of 2007. The outcome was not different though, as only three parties featured prominently in the final results. PDP's Goodluck Jonathan had 22.5 million, Congress for Progressive Change, CPC's candidate Muhammadu Buhari took 12.2 million of the votes and Action Congress of Nigeria's Nuhu Ribadu had two million of the 39.4 million total votes cast. ANPP's Ibrahim Shekarau came forth with less than a million votes.

In 2015, the number of political parties decreased to 14 and two parties dominated the results of the voting in the presidential election. After three losses in the previous elections, Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) won with 15.4 million votes and PDP's Goodluck Jonathan came second with 12.8 million. The third position was taken by African Peoples Alliance's candidate Adebayo Ayeni who had 53,537 votes that were not significant. The total number of votes cast was 33.4 million.

Although the presidential election of 2019 witnessed an increase in the

number of political parties to 39, the largest ever, the results again showed two political parties with an enormous number of votes. Similar in many ways to the outcome in 2015, APC's Buhari led with 15.2 million and PDP's Atiku Abubakar got 11.2 million. The third contestant Felix Nicolas of the Peoples Coalition Party only had 110,196 votes. The 36 other parties had nothing important to show for the 28.6 million total number of votes cast.

With the benefit of the results of the six past presidential elections, what is the likely outcome of the presidential election, coming only a few weeks away? Currently, the foremost presidential candidates are PDP's Atiku Abubakar, APC's Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Labour Party's Peter Obi and New Nigeria Peoples Party's Musa Rabiu Kwankwaso. How will voters favour them on February 25, 2023 at the presidential election?

There are 18 political parties registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the election which reflects a sharp drop compared to 2019 when 39 parties contested the presidential election. According to INEC, the number of registered voters has increased from about 84 million in 2019 to about 93.4 million in 2023, marking a considerable rise.

There are 52.8 million males to 47.1 million females registered, a ratio that is similar to the situation in 2019. The registered youths stood at 51.1 percent in 2019 for ages 18 to 35. The new figures released by INEC indicated a change in the age brackets. The data shows age 18 to 34 at 39.6 percent of registered voters and the age group 35 to 49 has 35.7 percent registration. If the two age brackets are combined as 18 to 49 they will form over 75 percent of registered voters, almost reflecting the actual demographic dominance of young people in Nigeria's population. This article does not delve into how demographic delineations have affected voting patterns in past elections.

In the past six presidential



Buhari

elections, despite a large number of registered political parties by INEC, two political parties dominated in 1999, 2015 and 2019 whilst three parties had the most prominence in 2003, 2007 and 2011.

There is no major alteration in the profiles of the foremost candidates for presidential elections of 2023. The leading contenders are traditional politicians who have shared several similar political platforms or belonged to the same political groups. The major political parties and their campaign promises or agenda do not differ substantially from previous ones. The ongoing campaigns by political parties for the 2023 election so far reflect a pattern similar to the past six presidential elections since 1999.

Also, the ratio of registered voters by gender and age appears similar to

the past situation. Although more people are poised to vote given the increase of some 10 million in the number of registered voters in 2023 compared to 2019, the level of interest of voters to cast their ballots on Election Day and their accessibility to the actual voting points are unknown factors yet.

The situation is such that the play and cast has not changed. But is the audience the same too? As we look ahead, the conclusion seems obvious that the trend in election results will continue and that two to three parties will dominate election outcomes in 2023. Two and at most three political parties will have large absolute figures in votes. The constitutional provision on how parties' votes are spread across states and other criteria on national representation in 2023 will require further analysis.

News

Plateau Police Command receives 231 newly posted constables

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

Plateau State Command of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), has received over two hundred and thirty-one (231) newly recruited Police Constables after passing out through a vigorous training at the Police Training School and were set to be posted across the seventeen local governments Local Government of the state.

This took place at the Plateau State Police Headquarters, Monday where they were received by the State Commissioner of Police, Batholomew Onyeka, in line with the Inspector General of the Police's directive. Out of as they out the 231 newly recruited constables, thirty-five (35) are female officers.

Addressing the newly posted constables, the state State Commissioner of Police reminded them that they were now not on their own as they used to be, but were products of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and should be professional in carrying out their legitimate duties duty in line with the Police Code of Conduct through community policing.

He charged them to exhibit decorum in their behaviour and stand in defence of Nigerians whose hope lies in their hands. "You saying, "you are now not on your own, you are your under constituted authority and any infractions you engage in, you would be held responsible for it. So we expect the best behavior from every one of you.

"You would be posted to your local Local government areas as directed by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) in line with the policy of the Force force that upon your recruitment and passing out, your are going out to the rural areas to complement the efforts of the Divisional Police as well as the Area Commanders that are in-



Alkali

charge charged of the areas", he disclosed.

However, Onyema advised the female police constables Female Police Constables to observe observed a decent dress code in accordance with the Police. "Do saying, "do not wear anything that would project you in bad light. Dress, dress decently always and ensure you adopt the hair that is approved by women police because you have your dress dressed code".

Responding shortly after the address by the commissioner State

Commissioner, a female constable Constable officer, Adela Susan, said, she was thankful to God for the chance given give to her to serve Nigeria as Nigerian Police. "It saying, "it was my dream to be a police officer Police Officer and I will give my best in defence of my country and in service to humanity.

On his part, Joshua Pam, who is one of the male constables constable, promised to stand for justice and sanity that would ensure sincerity and honesty in carrying out his duty to give the Nigerian police Police a new face that could be trusted

'WUS Cultural Festival preserves culture'

FROM PETER TITLE, Panyam

The 2023 'Pus Wus' Cultural Festival Wus' cultural festival which was hitherto suspended for the past two years was last Saturday celebrated in grand style amidst pomp and pageantry.

The yearly festival which was organized by Panyam people saw sons and

daughters of the area as well as well-wishers converge converged in the area to celebrate with kinsmen.

Speaking during the occasion, the chairman Chairman of the occasion, Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Habila Joshak (rt), commended the people of the area for sustaining the festival.

According to him, he was

proud to identify with the people and stressed stressing that it was only through such festivals that upcoming generations would be able to know where they were and where they are going.

Represented by Chief Joseph Gwankat, the retired police officer called on all and sundry to be law abiding so that enjoying other communities would want to emulate the people of Panyam. He pointed out that saying such occasions bring brings the people together for good.

He promised to always assist in his own little way to ensure that the people's culture and custom do does not go into extinction.

Executive Chairman, Mangu Local Government Council, Honourable Daput Minister Daniel commended the people of Panyam for setting the pace and urged them to be security conscious conscious at all times.

The chairman Chairman who was represented by the council secretary, Council Secretary, Hon. Anderson Keswet praised the people of Panyam saying such occasions unite unites the people. He and called on them to come out en masse to vote in the coming general elections.

According to him, the local government council was doing everything possible to provide dividends dividend of democracy to the door steps of the people and urged the people to reciprocate the gesture by living peacefully with each other.

The President, Mwaghavul

PLSG plans to end NTDs



Ehanire

state State free of the Neglected Tropical Diseases and to eliminate NTDs, achieve national National targets and significantly improve the life expectancy and quality of life of Plateau people People. It is our collective responsibility to confront equality and put an end to these diseases that are entirely preventable", he highlighted.

Nimkong, also disclosed that, the Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are a diverse group of 20 conditions conditions 1 that were mainly prevalent in tropical areas where they mostly affect impoverished communities and disproportionately affect women and children. And

Development Association (MDA), Chief Joseph Kyeden Gwankat commended the people of the area for their resilience and maintaining the tempo saying MDA would at times support communities that organise organizes such occasions which was aimed at fostering unity amongst the people.

Mishkaham Mwaghavul, Da. J ohn Putmang Hirse who was highly elated said the 'Wus' Festival festival was the first to usher others in Mwaghavul land.

He described the youths as the pillar of the society and enjoined them to desist from the consumption of illicit drugs known as 'Goskolo' saying that it kills as well as retard retard the development of the society.

Mishkaham Panyam while welcoming all and sundry appreciated Plateau State Government for citing legacy project, and the Mangu bye pass project in his domain.

He appealed for the speedy completion of these projects explaining that saying it would go a long way in easing the traffic congestion in Mangu town and as well meet the health needs of the citizenry.

Mr Dauda A. Daskut, Chairman, MDA Panyam in an address also commended the organisers for a job well done.

In a vote of thanks, Mr Samuel Dapel thanked all the invited guests for finding time to grace grace the occasion despite their tight tight schedules.

To the organisers, Mr Dapel urged them to keep the tempo saying they expect next year's festival to surpass that of the 2023.

and that, these diseases cause devastating health, social and economic consequences to more than one billion people.

According to the Commissioner, "the World Health Organization (WHO) has published a document aimed at supporting countries, international organisations and partners to work together to identify common grounds to maximize efforts that will control and eliminate neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

"One health approach for action against neglected tropical diseases 2021-2030 is that it. This ensures cross sectoral approaches and tackling associated mental health and other issues such as stigma and discrimination. The epidemiology of NTDs is complex and often related to environmental conditions.

"All these factors make their public health control challenging. These diseases include: Buruli-ulcer, dracunculiasis (Guinea-worm disease), Lymphatic Filariasis, Onchocerciasis (river blindness river blindness), rabies rabies and other ectoparasitoses, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, snakebite envenoming, trachoma, among others", he explained.

The Commissioner, however, disclosed that Nigeria was one of the most endemic countries in the world for NTDs with an estimated 100 million people in the country at-risk for at least at least one NTD according to international charity Sight Savers.

He added that, "Plateau State with the support of The Carter Center has made tremendous progress in curtailing the effects and transmission of some of these NTDs especially with regards to guinea Guinea-worm (GWD), Onchocerciasis, Lymphatic Filariasis, Trachoma, and leprosy.

DSS intercepts bank syndicates, bank officials for selling new Naira notes

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

The Department of State Services (DSS), has intercepted some members of organised syndicates syndicates involved in the sale of the new redesigned Naira notes note while in the course of its operations to ensure due process in the ongoing currency swap across the country.

This came in a press

statement signed by the Public Relations Officer, Department of State Services National Headquarters, Abuja,

Peter Afunanya PhD fsi and made available to THE NIGERIA STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital Monday.

The statement stated that, "the Department of State Security (DSS) hereby informs the public that it has

intercepted some members of organised syndicates syndicates involved in the sale of the new redesigned Naira notes. In the course of its operations in this regard in parts of the country, it was also established that some commercial bank Commercial Bank officials are aiding the economic malfeasance.

"Consequently, the Service warns the currency racketeers to desist from this ignoble act. Appropriate regulatory authorities are in this same vein, urged to step up monitoring and supervisory activities to expeditiously address the emerging trends.

"It should be noted that the Service has ordered its Commands and Formations to further ensure that all persons and groups engaged in the illegal sale of the notes are identified. Therefore, anyone with useful information relating to this is encouraged to pass the same to the relevant authorities.



Emefiele

News

Ministry recommits to propagating the gospel

By JIDAUNA DARING

GENERAL Overseer of the Sacred Temple of God Prayer Ministry (STGPM), Prophetess Asabe Sunday Ibrahim has reaffirmed of the ministry's readiness to continue preaching the word of God to individuals, families and the world.

Prophetess, Ibrahim stated this during the ministry's ten years anniversary and foundation laying of 2500 capacity auditorium, held at the ministry's site along Lamingo junction Jos, Plateau State, on Sunday.

She expressed joy and also described the celebration as God's faithfulness to the ministry. Looking back at the challenges they had passed through at the beginning before it was fully established in 2012 with good vision and mission, she thanked God for all their achievements.

The general overseer explained that the ministry's belief in Trinity, to pray constantly to God and deliver the captives from bondages, to establish prayer ministries across cities as directed by God and assist the people to discover their God given talents and how to use such for the glory of God, has always been their drive.

Prophetess Ibrahim also stated that the mission statement of the ministry is to make heaven, bringing back the lost sheep of God into his vineyard, to accomplish holiness reflected through our lifestyle among others.

Prophetess, Ibrahim said that the idea which led to the establishment of the ministry was conceived through God ordained dreams as many things were revealed to her even when she was just a little girl.

She added that the ministry started at the family level before it was later expanded to its present



Asabe

status with large number of followers.

She maintained that the ministry is currently progressing in winning more souls for Christ as its main target. And noted that the ministry has been registered with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and she is also backed-up with a license to operate as an ordained pastor in God's Vineyard.

The general overseer also advised Christians to concentrate on propagating the needed gospel of Christ to those who may still be operating from the dark zone instead of condemning other people's denomination or ministry.

In his sermon during the event, Evang. Daniel Jackson appreciated the ministry for finding him worthy to bring forward the word of God to the people and prayed for more progress, particularly in the area of spreading the gospel to those who are yet to know Christ.

Evang, Jackson who took his

reading from Exodus 25:1-7 among others, challenged believers to always give cheerfully for the work of God at all times.

He told the congregation that the God we serve is a God of possibilities, urging Christians to always look up to God. He added that it is only the people of God that can build the house of God. He further explained that all those who build the temple of God would not be forgotten for the work they have done.

Earlier in her welcome remarks, Chairman of the Planning Committee, Margret Dunga Akutse thanked the general overseer for finding them worthy to serve in the anniversary's committee. She also appreciated all the invited guests and members of the ministry for gracing the epoch making event.

THE NIGERIA STANDARD reports that the event featured songs ministrations from different groups, foundation, freewill donations and cutting of the anniversary cake among others.

Commissioner mourns Leadership Newspaper correspondent

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Kogi State Commissioner of

Information and Communications, Mr. Kingsley Fanwo has expressed shock over the sudden death of Mr. Sam

Egwu, a reporter with the Leadership Newspaper in Kogi State. Sam Egwu, according to the commissioner, was a seasoned journalist whose immense contributions to the pen profession in Kogi State cannot be quantified.

"I urge the Correspondents' Chapel of the Kogi NUJ Council and the body of journalists in general to find comfort in the fact that Elder Sam Egwu (as he's fondly called) has used his pen to create a positive change in the society.

"His death is a rude shock, but we hope that the beautiful memories shared during his sojourn here on earth will comfort us at this difficult time."

Hon. Fanwo prayed God to give the family the strength to bear the loss.



Bello



Suffering and smiling

THE conditions which Nigerians are going through at the moment could be likened to Fela's hit song 'suffering and smiling'. Nigerians are suffering yet smiling. Look at the long queues being experienced as a result of the change in our national currency, the Naira. People are made to spend long hours struggling to deposit their old currencies for new ones through no fault of theirs but because of a policy that government is supposed to have thought through seriously before implementing.

So much manhours are being wasted on queues to swap the old notes for new ones which are practically and apparently not available. To make matters worse, the currency saga has become brisk business for some unscrupulous bankers and their cohorts who have turned it into an avenue for extorting fellow Nigerians. But the good news is that some of these demons in human form have been arrested by law enforcement agencies. Our plea is, however, that the long arm of the law must not spare such individuals and should not treat them with kid gloves so as to make examples of them to serve as deterrent to others.

POS operators are themselves milking the people dry. Being the closest to the people they have taken advantage of the sordid situation and are "making market." For them to help you swap your currencies you part with as much as 10% of whatever you need them to exchange for you. They are so mean that Shylock in the days of old could appear to be a saint when compared with them. Sadly, these are the same people that have continued to criticize our leaders. They call these leaders all manner of names and claim they are responsible for the plight in which the country has found itself. Yes, these leaders should be held to account for their misdeeds, but are the citizenry any different? Put on the same scale, ordinary people themselves cannot claim to

be different. How can an ordinary Nigerian inflict so much pain on his fellow without feeling any qualms? But that is the state in which we are at the moment.

That is just one aspect of our national life. What about the petroleum sector? Since October of 2022, long queues have refused to disappear from our streets and the cost of PMS has hit the roof. Nigerians not only spend hours on long queues but sleep at PMS service stations to buy fuel to power their cars and other machineries. We have been told times without number that the subsidy regime has become unsustainable and that once subsidy is removed, fuel (PMS) will be readily available.

Unfortunate, subsidy has been one amorphous and ambiguous term used to confuse people and enhance corruption. Since the Gowon regime subsidy has been a constant on Nigeria's economic landscape. Indeed, the Babangida regime popularized the term and removed the amorphous subsidy several times yet, it has constantly come back to punish Nigerians for reasons only our economic minders can explain.

Sadly, our country is one of the largest producers of crude oil, a major ingredient in the production of PMS. One will not be wrong to conclude that our country needs to undergo a major surgical operation if it is to transform and serve the citizenry. The present crop of leaders has shown they lack the capacity to turn things around for the good of all. They must, therefore, be made to give way to a new set of leaders who can and should bring in fresh ideas to grow the country.

Sadly, our country is one of the largest producers of crude oil, a major ingredient in the production of PMS. One will not be wrong to conclude that our country needs to undergo a major surgical operation if it is to transform and serve the citizenry. The present crop of leaders has shown they lack the capacity to turn things around for the good of all. They must, therefore, be made to give way to a new set of leaders who can and should bring in fresh ideas to grow the country.

This was even made clearer by the unfortunate and sad ASUU strike which lasted for eight months and which up till date has not satisfactorily been resolved. Public university students were made to bear the brunt in a fight that had nothing to do with them. Just like other aspects of our national life, education has been comatose and is struggling for breath and looking for the space to flourish and grow. The only thing our government is adept at is the constant and continuous establishment of private universities with their suffocating school fees regimes which the ordinary Nigerian cannot afford.

This is not to talk about the issue of kidnapping for ransom which in itself has become a thriving industry. No one is safe anymore and there is nowhere to hide. Insurgency, which had made the people weary has also had its toll on the people. This is not to talk about other crimes and criminalities in our land. Nigerians are, indeed, on a roller coaster ride and unless something drastic is done and on time, we run the risk of disintegration. The signs are ominous and clear for everyone and unless we are playing the ostrich, we cannot claim not to see them. This era of suffering and smiling must of necessity stop and we must begin to change our ways.

News

Cashless system helps in tracking election financing – Osinbajo

VICE President Yemi Osinbajo says a cashless policy, when effectively operated in Nigeria, can help stem the surge of illicit election financing by making it possible to track funds.

Osinbajo's spokesman, Laolu Akande, in a statement on Monday in Abuja, said the vice president received a delegation of the EU Election Observation Mission led by Mr Barry Andrews.

The EU Chief Observer is also a member of the European Parliament.

"I think that what we should be looking at is to provide more infrastructures.

"The cashless thing has been really advantageous and helps with tracking.

"That sort of infrastructure is useful for more financial inclusion and the more financial inclusion you have, the easier it is to track.

"So much money can be spent without it being tracked under the current election financing practices in the country."

Osinbajo acknowledged the serious difficulty in controlling election financing because of cash transactions.

According to him, there are still infrastructure issues required to be in place to ensure an efficient cashless system in the country.

"With cash transactions, it is still difficult to seriously control election financing."

On electoral offences, the vice president said the Electoral Offences Commission Bill was at the National Assembly.

He said he hoped that it would begin a new regime of dealing with electoral offences which would be helpful.

"By and large, one shouldn't expect INEC to be the investigator of electoral offences.

"I think that law enforcement agencies should be responsible for arresting and prosecuting offenders, state by state.

"Electoral offences are always seen through a political prism; people will always feel



Osinbajo

that they are being prosecuted because they belong to a certain party.

"What is more important is that we have to find a system where the police could have a special unit for offences during the course of elections.

"The Federal High Courts could also have a special jurisdiction to deal with offences and not extend beyond the Federal High Courts."

On the role of the judicial system, Osinbajo said that more attention should be paid to the monitoring of tribunals and their outcomes, calling for more scrutiny from the National Judicial Council.

He disclosed that discussions had been had in the past concerning malfeasance on the part of some judges and those found guilty should be brought to the fore.

"There should be sanctions and that way, we would be able to clean up and correct some of the problems," he said.

In his remarks, Andrews said that the mission would be monitoring the elections coming up next month and hope for a peaceful and fair electoral process.

According to him, it is the 7th time the INEC is inviting the EU Mission to monitor the

elections, adding that the team had been in the country since Jan 11 and will be around until the end of March, 2023.

Other members of the delegation include Ms Samuela Isopi, Ambassador, EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS and Mr Thomas Boserup, Deputy Chief Observer, EU Election Observation Mission.

UN expresses concern over fake news, hate speeches

AHEAD of the February 25 national elections in Nigeria, the United Nations (UN) has expressed serious concerns

THE Federal Government has again raised the alarm over increase in the use of fake news and disinformation to destabilise the electoral process and plunge the nation into crisis.

The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, said the worrisome trend was being perpetrated by destabilising agents, some of them linked to the opposition.

Mohammed made this known on Tuesday in Abuja at the 21st edition of the President Muhammadu Buhari' (PMB) Administration Scorecard Series (2015-2023).

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports the scorecard series, organised to showcase the achievements of the PMB Administration featured the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Adeniyi Adebayo.

Mohammed said the increasing wave of fake news and disinformation, permeating especially the social media space, in the run-up to the general election portended danger.

He recalled that he reiterated the same challenge at several fora including two previous editions of the scorecard series.

Mohammed reassured that the government would not stand by and allow "some miscreants with access to phones and data" to destabilise the country."

Mohammed said: "I am



Mamood

NRC Resumes Kaduna-Abuja Train Services

THE management of the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) has resumed train services on the Kaduna-Abuja route, they however appealed for four days after it suspended operations on the route.

The first train departed from the Kaduna-based Rigasa train station to Abuja at exactly 7 am on Tuesday morning with a few passengers.

NRC on Friday suspended operations on the Kaduna-Abuja route following the derailment of an Abuja bound train that occurred at Kubwa in the nation's Federal Capital Territory (FCT) on the same day.

Some of the passengers who expressed happiness with the resumption of

the train services said the suspension disrupted their activities for the few days it lasted.

They however appealed to the management of NRC to put all the necessary measures in place to forestall a future occurrence of the train derailment or any other security breach.

One passenger, Mahmood Bala, told Channels Television that the resumed services were commendable.

"It's good but the truth of the matter is that the government should be conscious about the security of not only the passengers but the security situation of the country.

Opposition deploying fake news to destabilise polls- FG



Adamu

therefore warning the purveyors of fake news and disinformation to desist.

"The government is not and cannot be helpless because we have a range of options to checkmate the use of fake news and disinformation.

"We are looking at the best

options to ensure that agents of destabilisation do not thwart the success of the elections with their unscrupulous resort to fake news and disinformation."

NAN reports that after Mohammed's opening remarks, Adebayo gave the scorecards of his ministry. (NAN) (www.nannews.ng)

UN expresses concern over fake news, hate speeches

expressed these reservations on Monday, in her keynote address at the open plenary sessions of the State of the Nation Dialogue organised by the Nigerian Bar Association.

Speaking via a live broadcast on the 2023 elections in Nigeria, Muhammed said the UN "continues to witness attacks on electoral institutions, fake news, hate speeches based on religious and ethnic identities since the political campaigns began."

She maintained that the UN's common objective is to ensure credible, free and fair elections in Nigeria.

Mrs Muhammed commended the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for achieving great strides in increasing the

credibility and transparency of the Nigerian electoral process.

"The increase in the registration of voters is encouraging and shows Nigerians are enthusiastic about the electoral process," she said.

Muhammed appreciated the NBA for organising the dialogue, saying the "importance of this forum cannot be underestimated."

The UN official advised that Nigerian political leaders must be ready to develop the country and encourage an inclusive, fair and just society.

"The only option for our nation to survive is sustainable development. Society must be inclusive," she said, explaining that the number of women vying for office continues to be in decline.

Muhammed urged the next presidency to increase the number of women in government as it is obtained in other parts of the world.

She said there was need to build strong institutions, recognise the indispensable role of the judiciary and ensure the rule of law.

In his welcome address, the NBA President, Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau, said the association's primary call is to serve the course of justice.

He said the NBA invited all the presidential candidates to the dialogue because they, including lawyers, owe Nigerians leadership and interaction.

On his part, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustapha, advised the next president of Nigeria to focus on doing his part in taking Nigeria to greater heights.

INEC to meet with NNPC over fuel supply

THE Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), says it plans to meet with the leadership of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) to ensure adequate fuel supply during the 2023 general election.

Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, the Chairman, INEC said this at a consultative meeting with the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in Abuja on Tuesday.

He said that the meeting was to fashion out ways of ensuring adequate supply to prevent disruption of INEC plans for general election.

"The commission shares your concern about the fuel

situation in the country and its impact on transportation on election day.

"The truth is that our arrangements may be negatively affected by the non-availability of products.

"For this reason, the Commission will this afternoon meet with the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) to look into ways to ameliorate the situation.

"I wish to assure Nigerians that we will continue to engage every national institution for the success of the 2023 General Election," Yakubu said.

Foreign Commentary

How Russia misread Germany's growing influence

Two years ago, Moscow eyed a US-German standoff over the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline as a litmus test of transatlantic power. **NIC ROBERTSON writes.**

RUSSIA had invested heavily in the 750-mile undersea pipeline linking it to Germany and wanted to increase global sales and ramp up economic leverage over Europe and its power-hungry heavy industries. Germany, a leading consumer, was on board from the get-go. Washington was not.

The United States didn't want the new, high-capacity subsea supply to supplant old overland lines that transited Ukraine, providing vital revenue to the increasingly Westward-leaning leadership in Kyiv.

Russia reasoned that if Washington blocked Nord Stream 2, which it ultimately did, then it would show that European power no longer flowed through Berlin, but actually via the White House.

Fast-forward two years, and reading that transatlantic dynamic post-Angela Merkel, and particularly post-Russian President Vladimir Putin's failing invasion of Ukraine, has become one of the most pressing political questions vexing the Kremlin.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz won thunderous applause in Germany's Bundestag on Wednesday as he flashed a rare moment of steely leadership.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's refusal, in his words, "to be pushed" to go it alone in sending tanks to Ukraine – instead standing his ground and demanding US President Joe Biden join him in the venture, risking Putin's wrath – has shown the transatlantic power dynamic has shifted.

Europe has been slow to respond to the deep fissures in US politics and the uncertainty another Trumpian-style presidency could wreak on its allies. Decades of a reasonably unshakable reliance, if not complete trust, in the US, has been replaced by stubborn European pragmatism – and Germany leads the way.

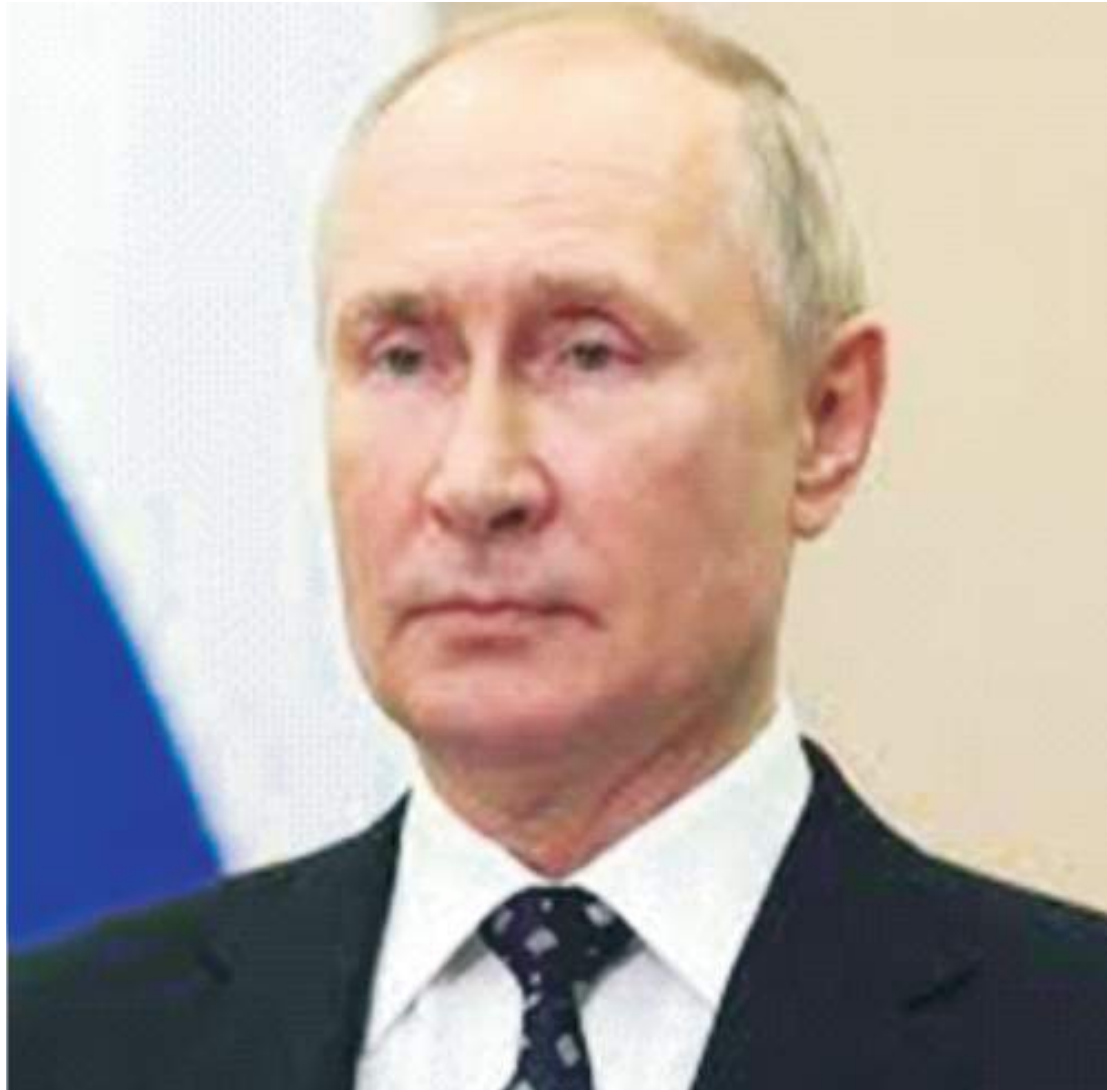
Former Chancellor Merkel was Europe's moral compass. Scholz has found unexpected metal in his ponderous, often stop/go/wait traffic-light governing coalition and won thunderous applause in Germany's Bundestag on Wednesday as he flashed a rare moment of steely leadership.

At their summit in March last year, NATO leaders agreed to equip, arm and train Ukraine to NATO standards. It wouldn't be a member, but the message to Moscow was unequivocal: In the coming years, Ukraine would look and fight like it was in NATO.

Ukraine's ongoing metamorphosis from legacy Soviet force to NATO clone hasn't just been about the mechanics or even diplomacy of getting tanks, fighting vehicles, air defenses and artillery, it's been about bringing NATO member states' near-billion people along with their politicians. Scholz made that point in parliament.

"Trust us," he said, "we won't put you in danger." He spelled out how his government had already handled Russia's aggression and how fears of a freezing winter and economic collapse were not realized. "The government dealt with the crisis," he said, adding: "We are in a much better position."

The applause at each step of his



Putin

carefully crafted speech spoke as loudly as his words. In short, Scholz got it right for Germany, bringing with him a population typically averse to war and projecting their own power, and deeply divided over how much they should aid Ukraine in killing Russians and potentially angering the Kremlin.

If in Europe Scholz seems to have wrestled some vestige of influence over America in the Ukraine war, in Moscow they don't believe his new vigor changes much.

But if in Europe Scholz seems to have wrestled some vestige of influence over America in the Ukraine war, in Moscow they don't believe his new vigor changes much.

Andrey Kortunov, director general of the Russian International Affairs Council, says that in Moscow, "most people believe Biden calls the shots."

Indeed, rather than Germany having more leverage, he says, "the American leadership looks stronger than ever."

Nevertheless, Russia's diplomats have been shoveling their animus toward the West into the public arena on both sides of the Atlantic.

Russia's ambassador to Germany said Berlin's move to send tanks was "extremely dangerous" and accused Scholz of refusing "to acknowledge its [Germany's] historic accountability to our people for the horrific crimes of Nazism." Meanwhile his counterpart in Washington accused the White House of "blatant provocation" and Biden of being intent on the "strategic defeat" of Russia.

Dmitry Medvedev, former Russian president and deputy chairman of its national security council, has said Russia would never allow itself to be

defeated and would use nuclear weapons if threatened.

Oddly, closer to the Kremlin, statements are less bellicose, signaling that Putin is perhaps cooling to nuclear escalation.

Responding to Biden and Scholz's decision on tanks, Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said it adds "tension to the continent, but it cannot prevent Russia from reaching our goals."

Members of the German government, among them German

Chancellor Olaf Scholz (back right), listen as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addresses them via videolink in the German lower house of parliament on March 17, 2022 in Berlin.

The mixed messaging has some Muscovites with after the announcements by Biden and Scholz on tanks confused. Some said Russia would win regardless, and lumped the US and Germany together as the losers, but a significant proportion

were worried about the war, dismayed at the heavy death toll and frustrated that Putin ignored their concerns.

How much Scholz is aware of Putin's softening popularity or whether he believes it relevant at this moment is unclear, but his actions now, sending tanks, may help ease Putin's iron grip on power.

From being late to recognize Russia's threat, reorient Germany, reinvigorate its military, and ramp up weapon supplies to Ukraine, the pragmatist Scholz has now signaled Germany is very much in play – and, indeed, wants hands on the controls.

He said Germany would "coordinate" supplies of the Leopard 2 from allies to Ukraine, a power invested in him by German legislation preventing any purchaser of the country's war-fighting hardware to pass it on to a third state.

With Scholz shouldering his way to the diplomatic helm, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky may find his territorial ambitions to restore the entirety of Ukraine's sovereignty including Crimea, before peace talks with Putin, constrained.

The German chancellor has been at the forefront of friendly leaders wanting a speedy end to the war and the restoration of economic stability to Europe.

Longer debates about the next military moves for Ukraine could be coming and will likely signal to Zelensky that weapons supplies will be on more of a German leash, and less unilaterally led by Washington.

This shift in the power dynamic may not change the way the war is fought but could impact the contours of a final deal and shape a lasting peace when it comes.

Source: CNN



Steinmeier

Foreign News

Ukraine: 'Putin threatened me with missile strike

THE then-prime minister said Mr. Putin told him it "would only take a minute".

Mr Johnson said the comment was made after he warned the war would be an "utter catastrophe" during a "very long" call in February 2022.

The claim made is to examine Mr Putin's interactions with world leaders.

Mr Johnson warned Mr Putin that invading Ukraine would lead to Western sanctions and more Nato troops on Russia's borders.

He also tried to deter Russian military action by telling Mr Putin that Ukraine would not join Nato "for the foreseeable future".

But Mr Johnson said: "He threatened me at one point, and he said, 'Boris, I don't want to hurt you but, with a missile, it would only take a minute' or something like that. Jolly.

"But I think from the very relaxed tone that he was taking, the sort of air of detachment that he seemed to have, he was just playing along with my attempts to get him to negotiate."

President Putin had been "very familiar" during the "most extraordinary call", Mr Johnson said.

No reference to the exchange appeared in accounts of the call given by both Downing Street and the Kremlin.

From the 2014 seizure of Crimea to the invasion of Ukraine, this is the inside story of a decade of clashes - as told by the Western leaders who traded blows with Putin's Russia.

It is impossible to know if Mr Putin's threat was genuine.

However, given previous Russian attacks on the UK - most recently in Salisbury in 2018 - any threat from the Russian leader, however lightly delivered, is probably one Mr Johnson would have had no choice but to take seriously.

Boris Johnson received a call from President Putin the day after he met Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv

Nine days later, on 11 February, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace flew to Moscow to meet his Russian counterpart, Sergei



Boris Johnson has said Vladimir Putin threatened him with a missile strike in an "extraordinary" phone call in the run-up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Shoigu. The BBC documentary Putin Vs the West reveals Mr Wallace left with assurances that Russia would not invade Ukraine, but he said both sides knew it was a lie.

He described it as a "demonstration of bullying or strength, which is: I'm going to lie to you, you know I'm lying and I know you know I'm lying and I'm still going to lie to you.

He said the "fairly chilling, but direct lie" had confirmed his belief that Russia would invade.

As he left the meeting, he said Gen Valery Gerasimov - Russia's chief of general staff - told him "never again will we be humiliated".

Another significant encounter in the months leading up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine was with CIA director William Burns, who landed in Moscow on 2 November 2021.

Mr Burns had been circling the Russian capital for hours, as heavy fog prevented his landing, but when he finally arrived at the Kremlin he discovered Mr Putin was not there. Instead, he was sheltering in the southern Russian city of Sochi amid a spike in Covid

infections. The pair spoke over the phone. The CIA director said he was direct in laying out the message President Biden had sent him to deliver: the US knew what Mr Putin was up to and he would pay a heavy price if he launched such an invasion.

He said the Russian president did not deny planning was underway and listed grievances about Ukraine and the West.

Less than a fortnight after the UK defence secretary left Moscow, as tanks rolled over the border on 24 February, Mr Johnson received a phone call in the middle of the night from President Zelensky.

"Zelensky's very, very calm," Mr Johnson recalled. "But, he tells me, you know, they're attacking everywhere."

Mr Johnson says he offered to help move the president to safety. "He doesn't take me up on that offer. He heroically stayed where he was."

Putin Vs the West will be broadcast on Monday 30 January on BBC Two at 21:00, and will be available on the iPlayer in the UK.

NEARLY three months after announcing his campaign, the former president made his first campaign foray out of his adopted home state of Florida.

In New Hampshire, he addressed a meeting of the Republican Party and announced the outgoing state party chair would be a senior adviser to his campaign. And at the state capitol in Columbia, South Carolina, he received the endorsements of the state's governor, Henry McMaster, and Senator Lindsey Graham.

The latter, a Trump confidante who expressed some disillusionment after the Capitol riot on 6 January 2021, is now back firmly in the fold.

In both stops, Mr Trump touted what he said was his record of success during his presidency and attacked President Joe Biden's record on crime, immigration and the economy.

Across the street, Todd Gerhardt, a Republican district executive committee member from nearby Charleston, sold honey in Trump-shaped plastic bottles.

Mr Gerhardt was an early supporter of Mr Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, organised a rally for him on South Carolina's posh Kiawah Island, and recently visited the former president's Mar-a-Lago estate for a fundraiser and to provide his honey for the campaign's gift bags.

He said Mar-a-Lago had a festive atmosphere as the Trump team geared up for the coming fight and he dismissed concerns that Republican voters, in South Carolina and across the US, might be looking for a different nominee this time around.

Earlier in the day, at a street market a few blocks away from the capitol, however, Mr Trump's visit to Columbia seemed hardly to register. A patron at a local coffee shop groused about it being inappropriate for the former president to hold a campaign event on state property, but most did not even know he was in town.

It's no coincidence that the first two stops of Mr Trump's third presidential campaign were

2024: Trump in the race

South Carolina and New Hampshire. The two states could prove to be central to Mr Trump's strategy to retake the White House.

While Iowa is the first state to hold a Republican presidential nomination contest in 2024, Mr Trump finished third there in 2016 and the evangelical Christians who dominate the state's Republican electorate could be eyeing other possible candidates, like former Vice-President Mike Pence and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

New Hampshire and South Carolina, however, provided Mr Trump with a one-two punch that catapulted him to the front in 2016 - a lead he never relinquished.

They could do the same in 2024. In fact, every Republican presidential nominee since 1980 has won the South Carolina primary, making it unique among the traditional early-voting states.

South Carolina could prove to be a unique challenge for Mr Trump this time around, however. He faces potential challenges from Senator Tim Scott as well as the state's former governor, Nikki Haley.

If this is a pivotal moment for Mr Trump, it comes at a time when public opinion polls are starting to stabilise for him after his support dropped in the aftermath of Republicans' disappointing results in November's midterm congressional elections.

An Emerson Poll conducted earlier this week found 55% of Republican voters supporting Mr Trump, well ahead of the 29% for

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who has not announced a presidential bid but is viewed to be the former president's most formidable rival. A Monmouth poll in December had Mr DeSantis ahead by double-digits.

Earlier this week, Meta announced that it was lifting the suspension it had placed on Mr Trump's accounts in the aftermath of the attack on the US Capitol by his supporters. Although the former president has yet to resume posting to his accounts, his return could provide yet another opportunity for voter outreach - and fundraising - as his still minimally staffed campaign gears up for its 2024 run.

If rallies and Facebook donations were the fuel for Mr Trump's past White House bids, his South Carolina stop was a different kind of operation.

With only 300 announced attendees, it was a decidedly low-key event compared to his typical arena gatherings, with their carnival atmosphere. Attire tended toward sport coats and dresses, not Make America Great Again hats and Let's Go Brandon t-shirts.

To win a third Republican presidential nomination, however, Mr Trump will need the support of the political rank-and-file in states like New Hampshire and South Carolina, as well as his rally-going loyalists. And while Mr Trump's national polls show continued strength, a recent South Carolina survey had nearly half of Republican voters expressing a preference for "someone else" besides Mr Trump.



Trump

Blast Pakistan's Peshawar mosque

MORE than a dozen people have been killed and many others wounded in an explosion at a mosque in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar, according to officials.

The Peshawar police said at least 25 people were killed in the blast at least 140 others were injured.

The blast took place at the mosque where a large number of people had gathered for prayer, police official Sikandar Khan told Reuters news agency on Monday.

"A portion of the building had collapsed and several people are believed to be under it," Khan added.

Army soldiers and police officers clear the way for ambulances rushing toward a

bomb explosion site, at the main entry gate of police offices, in Peshawar, Pakistan.

The police said details were emerging the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber.

"We are also getting details ... the suicide bomber himself was sitting in the front row of the congregational prayer inside the mosque," he added.

A 38-year-old police officer Meena Gul said he was inside the mosque when the bomb went off. He said he doesn't know how he survived unhurt. He could hear cries and screams after the bomb exploded.

There were more than 150 worshippers inside the mosque when the bomb went off, Gul added.

Nichols' lawyer urges lawmakers on urgent police reforms

THE lawyer representing Tyre Nichols' family has called on the US Congress to pass urgent police reform legislation in the wake of his death.

Mr Nichols, 29, was fatally beaten by five police officers in January.

Speaking to US media, Ben Crump urged President Joe Biden to use Mr Nichols's death to gain support for the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.

And he said Mr Nichols's mother was coping with her son's loss by hoping that his

death could lead to change.

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act was introduced in 2021 after Mr Floyd was killed by a white police officer kneeling on his neck for more than nine minutes. His death sparked international protests.

The bill would see a federal ban on the use of chokeholds by police and make it easier to bring charges against offending officers.

Lawmakers in the House of Representatives - which was then controlled by the

Democratic Party - passed the bill in March 2021, but it was later held up by opposition in the Senate.

Derrick Johnson, the president of the NAACP civil rights group - also called on legislators to take action.

But the Republican House of Representatives Judiciary chair Jim Jordan warned politicians to not rush legislation.

"These five individuals did not have any respect for life... I don't know if there's anything you can do to stop the kind of evil we saw in that video," he told NBC's Meet the Press programme.

Mr Nichols died three days after an encounter with police at a traffic stop

A childhood friend of Mr Nichols said the BBC his legacy would be preserved through legal reform. Angelina Paxton said he "always wanted to change the world".

Ms Paxton said Mr Nichols was "very passionate about Black Lives Matter".

On Saturday, the Memphis Police Department disbanded the so-called Scorpion special unit of which the police officers now

charged with murder were members.

The unit was a 50-person team that was tasked with bringing down crime levels - particularly car thefts and gang-related offences.

The five officers - Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Desmond Mills Jr, Emmitt Martin III and Justin Smith - were fired from the Memphis police force last week.

Four of the five posted bail and were released from custody by Friday morning, according to jail records.

Lawyers for Mr Martin and Mr Mills have said their clients will plead not guilty.

In an interview with BBC News on Friday, Memphis Police Chief CJ Davis said the Scorpion unit was created to be "more responsive" and "more proactive" to gun violence in the city. But she acknowledged that the officers who brutally beat Tyre Nichols "decided to go off the rails".

Shelby County Sheriff Floyd Bonner Jr said two deputy sheriffs who "appeared on the scene following" the confrontation have also been suspending pending an internal



Nichols

Feature



Tinubu



Obi



Atiku

By MICHAEL OWHOKO, Ph.D

2023 Using your votes to reconstruct, reshape Nigeria

As Nigerians file out to elect a new president on February 25, it is imperative to remind electorate that a country's future and destiny are shaped by choice of personality they elect as president. Entrusting a country's leadership and resources to someone with impaired vision and dubious national disposition will be a tragedy.

In context, the Nigerian President is one of the most powerful in the world given the scope of responsibilities and powers as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution. With 68 items on Exclusive list and, mere 12 items on Concurrent list of the constitution, the destiny and future of Nigerians are in the hands of one man – the president.

Since man is a product of his thought process, the president's style of administration will be conditioned by his character. This means that wellbeing of citizens, prosperity and wheels of development of Nigeria are contingent upon the demeanor and capacity of the president.

A president with integrity and clear national vision devoid of materialism and ethnic prejudice can change a country, like we saw in Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew. The choice of Nigerian voters should be premised on this standard. Nigeria cannot afford to entrust its leadership and resources upon a colourless personality to determine its destiny.

Nigeria requires a president that is capable of steering the country away from tragedy to optimism. Prosperous nations are not configured from heaven. They are products of selflessness and commitment of those in leadership. Electing a person without vision, capacity, integrity and empathy as president, will amount to sacrificing the collective wellbeing of the people on the altar of incompetence.

Therefore, as you vote for president of your choice, let Nigeria's overall national interest guide your decision. Your

personal survival depends on it. Do not allow ethnicity, religion, emotions and primordial sentiments to influence your choice. A wrong choice at this critical period of Nigeria's democratic journey will mean further erosion of citizens' dignity, both home and abroad. Incompetence, ethnic nationalism, nepotism and greed as evident in poor management of the economy, insecurity and corruption are factors that have kept the country prostrate. These elements are responsible for leadership failure, stunted growth, and poverty in the country.

It is therefore critical to vote for a candidate with requisite capacity to deliver on the aspirations of Nigerians. Failure to do this, will mean no lessons have been learned from current widespread hardship.

As a voter, ask yourself this honest question. Has your living condition in the last eight years improved or dipped? Without subterfuge, Nigeria has been on the downward swing in all critical facets of socio-economic space.

This is evident in the increasing number of those falling into poverty bracket as reflected in the growing penury rate in Nigeria.

The 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index survey carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) together with its partners captured this vividly. According to the survey, 63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor, out of which 65% of the poor (86 million people) live in the North, while 35% (nearly 47 million) live in the South.

The poor Nigerians under reference here are not politicians but majority of voting public.

Unfortunately, hope that Nigeria will get out of this mess soon had been dashed by President Muhammadu Buhari when he asserted that he had done his best for the country, even in the face of growing debt profile, inflation, unemployment,

corruption, insecurity and capital flight. This is the mirror image of the country's leadership capacity.

When this is juxtaposed against recent report by the Debt Management Office on the nation's debt, then Nigeria is in big trouble. The Debt Management Office (DMO) stated in December 2022 that Nigeria's public debt had reached N44.6 trillion. When viewed against the backdrop of Nigeria's revenue-to-debt service ratio, which The Economist Intelligence Unit described as the worst in the world, it means that Nigeria is in crisis. With high debt-service ratio and dwindling revenue, provision of infrastructure is relegated, compounding the woes of Nigerians.

Voters should therefore not repeat the mistake of the past. Those who voted in previous elections based on ethnic and religious lines had no inkling that their fortunes will plummet. Today, many of those voters have been humbled by poor performance of the economy as depicted by the misery index, particularly inflation which has eaten deep into their pockets.

They have become victims of their own decision.

Obviously, wrong choice of candidates has been unhelpful to the future of this country. Check your conscience and reflect on the number of Nigerians that have lost their lives in the last eight years, either through insecurity or poor management of the economy or suicide. Also, think about the number of businesses that have closed shop, or the growing band of single parenthood resulting from broken marriages. All these have their roots in poor handling of the nation's economy.

As part of the consequence, there has been mass exodus from Nigeria. Voters must note that, to "japa" or flee abroad is no solution. Of all those leaving or escaping from the country to seek greener pastures overseas, only less than five percent achieve their aspirations. Over 90

percent of these Nigerians struggle to make ends meet, regretting decisions to relocate.

In one of my trips to London a few years back, I went to Kaycee's Bar, a popular Nigerian joint in Holloway, where Nigerians hangout, and where sometimes, Nigeria's independence celebrations were held. While there, I met two Nigerians at the underground disco section.

They begged for money, saying they were trapped and would like to return to Nigeria. I was touched, and parted with a few pounds assupport. This is just one of the tales and ugly experiences from Nigerians abroad.

Ironically, while majority of Nigerians are reeling in excruciating effect of poverty, the president, governors and other elected officials are swimming in affluence with high quality lifemade possible by manipulative access to public treasury, despite managing the economy aground. Politics in Nigerian is the surest way to break out of poverty.

Voters should know that the president and governors do not spend their salaries while in office. Their bills are borne by government, including feeding at members of their extended families are relocated to the Villa or government house to enjoy from these privileges. This cannot happen in advanced democracies. Yet, in midst of this, the average Nigerian toil day and night to stay afloat.

At the last World Cup in Qatar, the President of Liberia, George Weah, watched his son, Timothy, starred for the United States of America. It is most unlikely a Nigerian President will allow his son to play football game for fear of injuries. He will rather make his son a billionaire through award of indirect contracts or presidential favours.

Underpinning motive of politicians is not to serve but to acquire power to accumulate wealth. Without empathy, they multiply poverty through fiscal indiscipline and extravagance

while fraudulently feeding fat on the nation's resources.

This is why voters must liberate themselves from this hopeless life of poverty and frustration caused by leadership greed and bankruptcy.

With 48 million youths out of a total of 93.5 million eligible voters, couple with the poor, credible leaders can be elected, but politicians exploit their vulnerability, using ethnicity, religion and handouts as inducements to manipulate them. Voters should be reminded that these office seekers would move on to oil their profligate life styles, leaving the electorate to suffer the consequences of their choice.

Nigeria has the resources to pull the country out of poverty but leaders are indifferent. As long as they can access good healthcare and send their children abroad for quality education, they care less about the masses who are left to contend with low quality education, poor healthcare system, erratic electricity and bad road network.

If the resources of the country are effectively harnessed and deployed, particularly in a restructured political system which is best suitable for a plural society like Nigeria, the country will quickly recover from current economic woes. But leaders with entrenched interests are opposed to this arrangement, preferring the status quo, for selfish reasons.

Voters must therefore rise in unison and vote out ethnic bigots and visionless persons without integrity and capacity as president, failing which, they have no other persons to blame but themselves. February 25, 2023 has provided another opportunity, so, be resolute and courageous. Vote conscientiously to reconstruct and reshape Nigeria in order to restore its corroded dignity.

Dr. Mike Owhoko, Lagos-based journalist and author, can be reached at

THEY'RE SOW WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Parenting

Smart ways to handle teacher troubles

It's hard to know what to think (or do) when your child comes home clearly upset, or with a specific beef. "You hear things like, the teacher plays favorites, we all get punished if somebody's bad, Some of the complaints can be about social issues—for instance, there's a problem with another child and the teacher isn't stepping in, said..

Depending on your style and whether or not your child is particularly sensitive, it may be tempting to advise him to grow a pair. More likely, however, a part of you will want to elbow your way into the classroom.

T o t a l l y understandable—although more likely to get you branded as the cuckoo mom to be humored than to resolve the problem. Instead, use our step-by-step guide to sorting out your child's trouble with his teacher.

Play reporter

Sometimes kids will make generic claims, like "The teacher's mean to me." You want to find out what that means. "unpacking" what your child is saying. Try to get as much detail as possible.

Ask, "What exactly did she say? What was happening in the class when she said it?" (You might want to inquire casually, so your child doesn't clam up or exaggerate.) "Mean" might mean "She makes me do my work," in which case you could explain that the teacher is trying to show the kind of behavior you need to have at school; after all, some things are very reasonable under the circumstances, but they may not seem that way to a 6-year-old. The idea is not so much to uncover "the truth" of what went down but to get a more concrete sense of what your child is seeing.

Play advocate

Tell your child that you're going to write down what she's saying so you can go have a conversation with the teacher.

"Let the child understand that you, her teacher, and the principal are partners working to help make school a great experience for her."

It's your child's feelings you're dealing with. Until you talk to the teacher, you don't have the whole picture. You might also be able to give your older kid some tools to handle the situation herself. Suggest options, such as approaching the teacher after class and pointing out, for instance, that she doesn't think she gets called on very often. Sometimes the teacher may not be aware of how your child feels.

Play the diplomat

If you decide you need to speak with the teacher, set up a time (not at dropoff or pickup), and go in as someone seeking help in solving a problem. Using inclusive language is important. Say something like "I'm coming to you with a problem I don't completely understand, but I'm hoping together we can best figure out ." Here's where you



explain what your child told you and when, using his words as often as possible.

Despite your light touch, the teacher might feel criticized—some people are sensitive, particularly beleaguered, tired and underpaid educators who do occasionally deal with parents who are a little overzealous on behalf of their perfect little angels. Do your best to reassure her that you're not blaming her.

Ideally, the teacher will shed light on why your child feels as he does, and you can have a mutually informative conversation that will help her teach your child most effectively. If your child says the teacher "never" calls on him, when you talk to her she might tell you that your son often knows the answers, but she's trying to give the shier kids a chance.

A pleasant face-to-face helps in other ways: The teacher will see you as an ally and be more likely to confide in you, of course. But if the teacher is, let's say, better suited to another line of work, you're sending her a signal that you're paying attention and are involved. If the teacher is, in fact, singling out your child, a little I'm-onto-you might be enough to get her to lay off.

Play tattletale

No one wants to go to the principal's office, and that includes parents, but if you've raised your concerns with the teacher several times and you feel she isn't doing her best to resolve the problem, you have a choice to make: You can decide to turn the unpleasant situation into a sometimes life sucks, kiddo" learning opportunity for your child, or you can go over the teacher's head. The first tactic,

while perhaps not as just as the second, might ultimately be what's best for your kid. The truth is, most kids will do fine" even if they don't like their teacher. Ask yourself, is she learning what she needs to be?

Explain how you've tried waiting and discussing it with the teacher, but what's going on is interfering with your child's education. Depending on the principal's style, she either will arrange for you to have another conversation with the teacher or will speak with him herself.

When things reach this point, of course, you may not exactly be the teacher's pet parent, which may cause problems for your child. But if it's something important, as in case, advocating for your child is more crucial than being labeled the annoying mom.

Play hardball

If you suspect the teacher is taking her frustrations out on your child, especially after you speak to the principal, that's the time to make it clear to the principal, firmly and calmly, that you're not going

away. As a last resort, request a change of classroom. Schools are very reluctant to do that, but may if a child is truly suffering and the situation is unlikely to change.

If you do nothing but defend your child and don't investigate the issues, you are not helping matters". "But if a problem is repeated year after year and you've done what you need to do with your child, you know it's the school."

Source: [Parents.com](https://www.parents.com)



EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With *Henrietta Gonzuk*

Living

Taking the right path in life

HAVE you ever wondered if you're on the right path in life? I think everyone does at one time or another.

If you think about it, you've probably noticed that you don't spend a lot of time pondering this question when things are going really well.

That's because there's a certain sense of ease when you're heading in the right direction that doesn't feel like it needs to be questioned. You just go with the flow effortlessly and without hesitation because things just seem to be working out as they should.

Some people describe it as having a sense of just knowing that things are the way they are supposed to be. But even if you're on the right track, sometimes you may feel like your life is going nowhere, and end up with very little energy and no real motivation in things that you used to be motivated in.

How To Tell If You're on the Right Path – or Not

Things start aligning for you.

When you're on a course that's taking you where you want and need to be, it can be as if the universe starts sending you what you need to accomplish your goals.

People or events show up to support and further your cause. Required money comes in from a donation or an unexpected source. Things just seem to fall into place and work out.

You don't allow obstacles to stop you.

Being on the right path doesn't mean everything will automatically and magically fall into place 100 percent of the time. But when obstacles do arise, you'll often find yourself diving right in and coming up with creative solutions on how to overcome or work around them.

Consider an opposite situation: have you ever been in a miserable job or a horrible, failing relationship that you absolutely KNEW you wanted to leave? Think about how thrilled you'd have been if an opportunity had shown up that provided you with a perfect



excuse to make an easy escape.

You care less than usual about what other people think.

When you're feeling aligned and in the flow that comes with it, you'll feel less of a desire to seek the approval of other people. You won't need to get confirmation as to whether or not what you're doing is acceptable or right because you'll already be able to feel it.

While you might still seek opinions, advice or feedback from people you respect, criticism from naysayers will be easier to get over – or to even completely dismiss.

You feel motivated, energized, and excited about what you're doing and where you're headed.

You're proud of what you're doing and you get very excited to talk to others about it. You look forward to waking up in the morning and feel eager to get

back to the task. Is this happening for you? Take this as a good sign that you're doing exactly what you should be doing!

Decision-making seems easier when you're on the right path.

Deciding between two options or what your next best steps should be is often easy when you're on the right track. Even if you're unaware of it, heading in the right direction and feeling good about it usually means that you've tapped into, and are able to access, your intuition.

You lose track of time doing what you're doing.

When you look up and see that you've lost a few hours or more, you can bet what you're working on is truly in line with your soul's desires.

Hard work doesn't feel hard – but rather, it's exciting, rejuvenating, and energizing.

Some people describe themselves as going into a sort of creative trance: losing hours or a whole day when they're working on something that lights them up and feeds their soul.

Your overall "bad stress" levels are low.

Even if you're required to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, you feel excited and motivated instead of stressed out and overwhelmed.

If you've ever been at either end of this spectrum, you can clearly tell the difference. Being in "bad stress" situations take a toll on you, mentally and physically. Whereas being busy and active in something you love, pumps you up and feeds your energy and drive to get

things done.

Your health seems to support you.

Chronic stress raises the level of cortisol and other hormones in your body that ultimately lead to a weakened immune system. Studies link stress to digestive disorders, headaches, insomnia, depression, and anxiety.

This makes it easy to understand how the reverse would also be true: **a reduced stress level means a healthier immune system and a stronger ability to fight off illness and disease.** Thus, leading to feeling healthy, strong, and ready to find the right path in life.

There's no need to compromise your morals or beliefs.

When you're choosing the right path in life for you and your soul, you won't feel like you're selling out, or doing things that you'll later have to apologize for or regret.

A key way to determine if your actions align with your soul's

purpose is to check in with how you feel after a long stint of working. When forging down a path of alignment, you may feel tired at the end of the hour, day or week, and that's okay! Being a woman or man on a mission requires a LOT of mental and physical energy and we all need to rest.

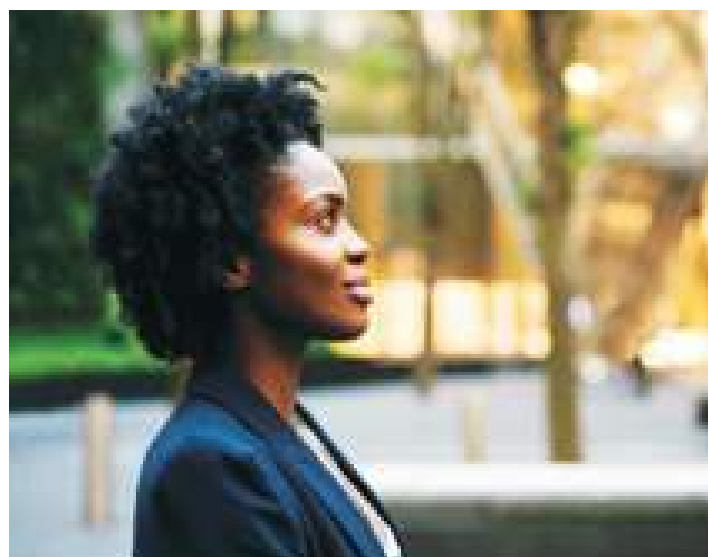
Are You on the Right Path?

Ultimately, **deciding which path to take, and whether it's right for you, is something only YOU can determine.**

There isn't necessarily only one right path for each individual as many roads may lead to the same destination.

Circumstances and direction can change along the way and there's certainly NO rule that says you have to stay locked into any particular course of action. The important thing to remember is that, if you notice you're questioning whether or not you're on the right path, the fact that you're asking might be a good indication that a change is needed.

Source: Everyday Power.



Editorial

On old naira notes extension swap

PRESIDENT Muhammadu Buhari's approval of the extension of the dateline for the swap of old naira notes for new ones as requested by Central Bank of Nigeria has brought great respite to Nigerians. Buhari had given the CBN governor permission for the extension of the swap to February 10 to enable more Nigerians deposit their old naira notes after which it ceases to be a legal tender.

THE development came amidst palpable fears as a result of the scarcity of the new notes. Retailers and traders have been rejecting the old notes which have greatly affected businesses across the country. CBN which is the regulatory body should ensure the availability and accessible of the new notes and ensures it reaches the masses in rural areas.

THE scramble by many Nigerians to meet the initial dateline of January 31 had been cumbersome as most of them flooded banks with huge cash in old notes to exchange with new ones without success. Others throng ATMs on daily basis, joining long queues, sometimes for days, just to have the new naira notes.

THE CBN before bowing to the pressure had insisted that the dateline for the validity of the old 200, 500 and 1,000 naira notes remained unchanged. In a swift response however, the CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele explained that out of N3.23 trillion currencies in circulation, N2.7trillion is still in people's homes. The apex bank had however, retrieved N1.9 tr naira in circulation.

THE currency redesign programme as explained by Emefiele was necessary to enable more efficient monetary policy decisions alongside curtailing banditry and ransom taking adding that for about 19 years, the CBN hadn't redesign the naira which should normally have been done within five to eight years window.

KICKING against this development, The House of Representative ad hoc committee had described the new date as mere political gimmick to further deceive Nigerians and worsen their economic and social lives. The committee had insisted that commercial banks must accept the old notes three months after the expiration of the dateline.

WE hold the strong opinion that Nigerians should, also, as a matter of concern, change their attitudes towards last minute rush at every given opportunity. The lukewarm attitude that was exhibited by some citizens during the voters' registration and collection of Permanent Voters' Cards (PVCs) seems to be replicating itself. Nigerians must be disciplined and learn to do things when they should and should not always wait till the last moment before rushing to act under pressure.

SUCH scenario mostly gives room for fraudulent tendencies by those who are supposed to discharge their legitimate duties with every sense of sincerity. The present situation has brought brisk business to most bankers who collect extra charges from customers who have come for transaction. Bank authority should check the attitudes of bankers and agents who exploit Nigerians. The DSS deserves commendation for arresting criminally minded bankers that were caught in the act of swapping old naira notes for new notes at a price in Abuja. This will deter others.

AT this rush period, Nigerians are at risk of playing into the hands of miscreants who have devised means of producing fake notes. It makes it difficult to identify which is genuine and fake.

NIGERIANS must be mindful of the way they handle the new naira notes. Past experience has shown that we rough handle our money and mutilate them by not properly managing them. We spray at occasions and trample on them as if they are not our legal tender. Some keep them in places that are not conducive thereby putting Nigeria's legal tender at risk.

POLITICAL apathy is said to be the way in which citizens show lack of interest and are non-chalant attitude towards political activities of their country and other which includes elections, civic responsibilities.

I therefore wish to appeal to the general public through this medium to exercise their franchise by participating in political activities and exercise the right to vote as a political right. However, some of the causes of political apathy include discrimination of fellow human beings to be specific women.

In a situation where decisions based on the group, ethnic group, social class, most people consider themselves as superior to others in the society and that women should not be voted into power, they see women as inferior while themselves as superior. Meanwhile, such attitude makes several or most women not to participate in politics.

It is worthy to note that, we are all equal in the hand of the creator. Illiteracy amongst citizens triggers lack of interest in politics whereby the populace are ignorant of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a country. They also view government as the property of a few wealthy and influential elites.

For instance, during elections some illiterates might not participate in because they believe their candidate would not win.

Furthermore, Religious beliefs and doctrines of some peoples does not permit them to go into politics. They view politics which it is viewed as a dirty game with indecent and corrupt people which compromises their belief in God. Hence they are discourage indirectly.

There is however the need for the present government to sensitize the general

public by organizing a campaign, seminars on the need to participate in political activities and for election concerns the general public both the literate's and the illiterates, who shun political activities and also vote wisely have shown that:

49.4 percent of people believe that votes do not count in Nigeria.

Need to discourage political apathy

28.7 per cent are discouraged due to unfulfilled promises made by politicians while

14 per cent believe that there is corruption in the system.

7.9 per cent see violence during elections as an obstacle.

However, religious institution, should encourage its members to participate in politics and religious leaders should not see the government as full of corrupt government officials and should view politics as a dirty game in

which believers should not participate.

By Jonathan Rabo Ganmo, writes from Plateau State Polytechnic Jos, Department of Mass Communication.

The culture of youth restiveness

POLITICAL violence is becoming a global phenomenon which many nations try to contend with within their political system.

This can be in form of crises in the society particularly during elections where most politically related violence are always attributed to the teeming youths that are supposed to be the backbone of every society. Due to idleness, lack of education, unemployment, poor orientation and greed of the political class our youth are becoming vulnerable in our society.

Another factor which reinforces violence in African political system is the desperate attitude of African politicians, the desperation to win election and occupy political offices by all means is a major cause of political violence.

In some cases, it is the contestants who in their quest for political powers organize some youths and provide arms that will be use to enforce fear during election

and it is said that "when two elephants fight only the grass suffer". It is simply the youths who are at the middle of those desperate fellows aspiring that are being use against each other and even to the civilians who are peacefully exercising their rights to vote for a representative with pure intention and hoping to choose a credible candidate that will protect their interests.

During campaigns, the money and offer of some materials to the voters have become the order of the day across African nations. It is also a factor responsible for continued spread of political violence. The level of poverty on the continent is such an intimidation where the innocent youths may be recruited for violence which is done just to survive. The politician use of huge amount of money during electoral campaigns in form of gift to the poor especially those in the rural areas just to win peoples votes is not good for

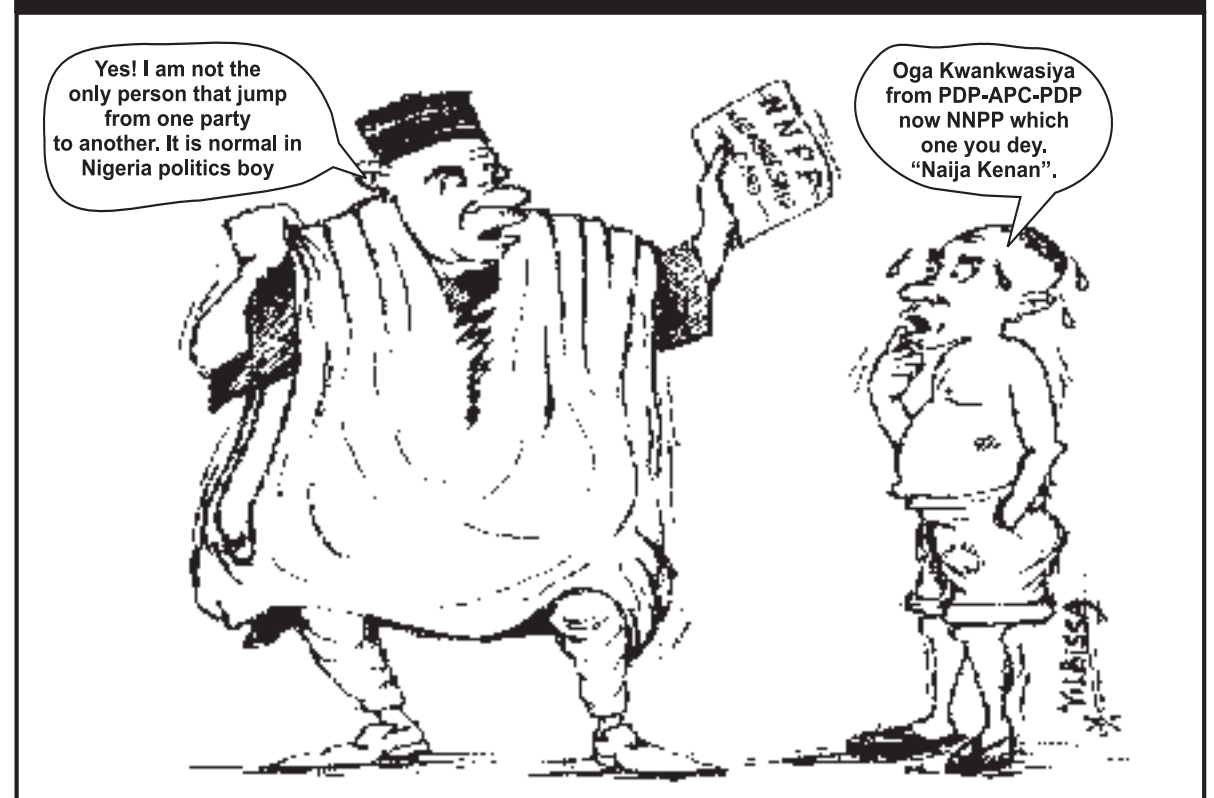
the people and democracy. Who would then be on ground during election to snatch ballot boxes and cause confusion, specifically, the youths are targeted as instruments of perpetuating violence and their hearts are poisoned with money and other items which can make them participate and not be concerned of the danger involved in executing such acts.

For this phenomenon to discontinue, there must be a favourable, peaceful atmosphere for citizens to participate in the country's democracy and be able to elect their representatives peacefully without any molestation. The youths should therefore be cautioned on accepting any gift from politicians or be used as violent instruments to disrupt any peaceful election process in the country.

Gloria Jared is an IT student from Kwararafa University, Wukari.



Standard Cartoon



Opinion

The groaning syndrome

By
MICHAEL JIMOH, THEWILL

IT is not only the P alphabet that connects pastors, politicians and the police. They also share similarities in their behaviour, attitude towards those they ought to counsel, govern and protect. Findings by THEWILL show that more often than not Nigerians are almost always hard done by – by those in whom they place their trust for spiritual guidance, proper governance, security of lives and property. Michael Jimoh reports...

Sometime in December 2021 in a white garment church in Akure Ondo state, a worshipper, Bukola, approached her pastor for deliverance. Whatever for has never been quite clear. She was five months pregnant. Probably fearful of a miscarriage, the woman took her case to the man of God and overseer of the church where she worships.

It was a Wednesday, a day the church in question used to have special prayer and delivery sessions. The programme had ended that day by the time Bukola got there. The unnamed man of God assured her all would be well. Declaring that the list, prescription given to the woman in her hospital was too long, the pastor instructed her to make a photocopy. She did and returned to the church. "He then said I should take it to the altar. While I was sitting down, he started pressing my stomach and asked how many months my pregnancy was and I said five months."

By some funny coincidence, Bukola and the preacher man were alone in the church on that day. "He said he was going to do some spiritual work on me before my delivery," Bukola recalled the man of God saying. "He stood up and entered a room. He later called me to enter and I did."

The "spiritual work," it turned out, was a carefully worked out plan by the supposed man of God to seduce and bed the expecting woman.

Alone with Bukola in a room within the church premises, he commanded her to remove her clothes. Like most

women would in the presence of an adult male not their husband, she timidly obeyed. Before she knew it, the pastor brought out anointing oil and proceeded to massage her private part with it.

Not done, he told the woman the baby in her womb was not in the right position which he opted to correct. How did he do it?

Hear the woman herself: "He asked me to open my legs and dipped his middle finger with oil in my private part," Bukola said. "He said my baby was in a vertical position instead of horizontal. He said he would put oil in my private and would help me insert it with his private part so that oil would get into the baby."

Continuing the man of God's tale of deception, Bukola said the pastor "then rubbed oil on his private part and had sex with me. He said he was not supposed to do it but he helped me because my husband was not around."

Whether the anointing oil got the baby in the rightful position is hard to say. But what did happen was the man of God got himself into trouble. "It was later after he had sex with me that I came to my right senses," Bukola recalled to the police in Akure, as if she'd just woken up from a hypnotic state.

For Bukola Dakolo, wife of singer song writer, Timi Dakolo, it took her decades to wake up from her hypnotic state, for her to "come to her senses," as she later said. In her own case, her pastor and close friend of her family raped her at her family home. She was just sixteen!

Now a full grown adult, Bukola narrated how, in her teens, celeb

preacher, Biodun Fatoyinbo of Commonwealth of Zion Assembly used to come around her family. One early morning, Fatoyinbo duly visited. Nobody was home, even Bukola's mother. A mentee of Fatoyinbo whom the young Bukola depended on for everything from counseling to inspirational books, her sibs were upstairs asleep when the man of God arrived. After forcing himself on her, Bukola recalled, Fatoyinbo went to his car and returned with a bottle of Krest Bitter lemon for her to drink, telling her at the same time that "you should be happy that a man of God did this to you."

Probably worried about the teenager's depressive state after the act, Fatoyinbo, Bukola said, told her not to worry: "You'll be fine. This thing is not a new thing. Men of God do this."

If that was a personal confession, Fatoyinbo couldn't have been more correct. In 2015, a lady called Stephanie Otopo let it be known that she had an affair resulting in a pregnancy with Pastor Johnson Suleiman of Omega Fire Ministries. In her telling, she and the pastor spent time alone in a hotel where "they had intercourse among other practices."

But one man of God, Pastor Chukwuma Nkwocha Nkwocha of Tongue and Fire Restoration Ministry, at least owned up to camping and defiling more than a dozen under-aged girls in his church. Following complaints about his proclivity for minors, the Lagos State Police Command surprised him by raiding his church premises on Jacob Taiwo Street, Oshodi. What was the charge against Nkwocha? Having unlawful carnal knowledge of some of the girls.

Cases of Nigerian men of God taking advantage of parishioners or those under their custody – either through sex or by any other means – abound such that compiling them can fill a sizeable tome.

Like the predatory pastors, the police browbeat and intimidate Nigerians for even the flimsiest of offence and sometimes for no offence committed at all. Sometimes they even kill innocent Nigerians just for spot.

Gbenga Raheem and his wife, Bolanle, a lawyer, were in the company of their niece when the police waved them down at a check point in Ajah. They didn't stop. A police inspector, Vandi calmly shot the person on the passenger seat. It was Bolanle who was hit. She was pregnant with twins when Vandi shot her. Doctors could not save her and her unborn babies. The case is presently in court.

To begin to document the brazen brutality of the police against Nigerians can equally fill a sizeable tome. In fact, it was on account of their numerous atrocities against civvies, their lack of empathy for those they are meant to protect, of their extra judicial killings and arbitrary arrest and detention of innocent Nigerians that led to the wave of uprisings across much of the country in October 2020 aka ENDSARS protests.

Fed up with the excesses of the police, Nigerian youths rose up with one voice against the law enforcement agents and, by extension, the Federal Government, an unexpected protest that shook the country right to its very foundation. Enough is enough, they hollered from the rooftops and on the streets. Though without guns or the Bible to intimidate and stupefy

Nigerians with, politicians also lord it over those they should otherwise court for success during elections.

In fact, of all the three Ps, politicians have the greatest influence over the lives of Nigerians for the very reason that they call the shots because they are in government – from the local to state and federal government.

To be sure, not every Nigerian falls under the spell of dubious men of God looking to just reaping them off. For instance, if you don't much care for their sermons, however sugar-coated or apocalyptic, you can call their bluff and see through them for what they are. Armed with your rights as a citizen and a law abiding one, for that matter, chances are you might never have anything to do with the police let alone become a victim of their intimidation and shake downs. Last Thursday, for example, Arise TV beamed to Nigerians and the rest of the world two mid-afternoon rallies at Abakaliki Ebonyi state. The first was of the governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress followed shortly by that of flag bearer of the Peoples' Democratic Party, Atiku Abubakar. With his wife by his side, party loyalists did what they are expected to do: vote for our candidate for a better Nigeria, they all chorused.

Of course, Nigerians themselves have known better. Ask any eligible voter his opinion of the average Nigerian politician and your guess is as good as ours. And yet, they can't do without politicians or those in positions of authority, which makes the social contract between the two much worse.

Politicians are also not beyond using the religious big stick to whip the masses into line. In a sense, it is if they are in cahoots with the pastors and just like them, the resort to prayers to solve practical problems.

Celebration mood: Between love and lust

By TOPE SUNDAY

GLOBALLY, Valentine's Day is celebrated on February 14 every year. In Nigeria, the Day is celebrated with fanfare; lovers are seen sticking together displaying love. But is the Day for love or lust; TOPE SUNDAY asks in this report.

The majority of Nigerians, particularly the youth celebrate Valentine's Day and on February 14, the major streets where the celebration look; and eateries, cinemas, and other fun places play hosts to the lover birds, who would be all out to show and appreciate love given to one another.

Valentine's Day

Some of the people celebrating Valentine's Day do not know how the day came into existence. An article 'Valentine's Day 14 February' sourced from <https://www.rosesonly.com.au/>, says Valentine's Day is named after Saint Valentine, a Catholic priest who lived in Rome in the 3rd Century. There are many stories about St. Valentine and over time these stories grew into the legend we know today.

It notes further that at the time of Valentine's life, many Romans were converting to Christianity, but the Emperor Claudius II was a pagan and created strict laws about what Christians were allowed to do.

"Claudius believed that Roman soldiers should be completely devoted to Rome and therefore passed a law preventing them from marrying. St Valentine began to marry these soldiers in secret Christian ceremonies and this was the beginning of his reputation for believing in the importance of love.

"Eventually, Valentine was found out and jailed for his crimes against Claudius. While imprisoned, Valentine cared for his fellow prisoners and also his jailor's blind daughter. Legend has it that Valentine cured the girl's blindness and that his final act before being executed was to write her a love message signed 'from your Valentine.' Valentine was executed on 14 February in the year 270," the article read.

The proclamation

It continues: "It wasn't until more than 200 years later that February 14 was proclaimed St Valentine's Day. By this time Rome had become Christian and the Catholic Church was determined to stamp out any remaining paganism. A pagan fertility ritual was held in February each year and the Pope abolished this festival and proclaimed 14 February Saint Valentine's Day, thus establishing this feast day on the Catholic Calendar of Saints.

"The poet Chaucer in the Middle Ages was the first to link St Valentine with romantic love. This was the beginning of the tradition of courtly love, a ritual of expressing love and admiration, usually in secret. This custom spread throughout Europe and stories grew about a High Court of Love where female judges would rule on issues related to love on 14 February each year. Historians believe that these meetings were in fact gatherings where people read love poetry and played games of flirtation."

Ugly incidents

Despite the recorded positivity about the Day, there are also some reported cases of rapes and other violations while celebrating the day. Blueprint Weekend recalls that a 27-year-old graduate of the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Soladoye Ige, was arrested in March 2015 by the disbanded Special Anti Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Ondo state Police command for allegedly raping an 18-year old lady on Valentine's Day.

Ige, who claimed to be a member of the Eiy secret cult group, was living in Owo, where he was also studying at the time of the incident. He paraded by the then state Police Commissioner, Mr. Isaac Eke, and reportedly confessed to have raped his girl friend to enjoy the last Valentine's Day, after his victim refused to be persuaded to

go to bed with him.

Also, in 2017, Valentine's Day celebration left two young men dead in Obi town of Obi local government area of Nasarawa state. According to a report, the incident occurred when one of the lovers trailed his rival, whose name was given as Aliyu, and stabbed him in the stomach. The unsuspecting Aliyu had offered his killer a handshake not knowing his rival was armed and wanted him dead.

Reports had it that the culprit attempted to run to safety but could not evade the rampaging irate youths who caught up with him, poured petrol on him and set him ablaze.

A family member of the late Aliyu who simply gave her name as Aisha, recalled how her brother was rushed to the Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital in Lafia, where he gave up the ghost.

Mixed feelings

Despite the ugly incidents ascribed to its celebration, a businessman, Mr. Rex John, told Blueprint Weekend that Valentine's Day is meant to show and express love, adding that it is supposed to be a day when people show love by sharing gifts.

He said: "Valentine's Day is a day to show love, and it is a day when people show love by sharing gifts, to appreciate human's existence and appreciate people around you. It is a day to let people around you know that they are loved

However, a civil servant, Mr. Abdulrasak Alapoti, described the Day as the celebration of immorality, adding that as a Muslim, he does not believe in its celebration.

"The Word 'Valentine' came from many beliefs that Valentine's Day is named after Saint Valentine of Rome, a beloved martyr who was executed on February 14 in the 3rd century A.D. However, there were several men known as St. Valentine who were executed during the reign of Roman Emperor Claudius Gothicus. During a time when Christians were persecuted often, the execution of religious advocates known as

martyrs grew.

"The stories of religious heroism by St. Valentine were honoured by the Catholic Church with the celebration of St. Valentine's Day. Every February 14, millions across the globe send their loved ones heart-shaped cards and Valentine's chocolates to express their love and affection.

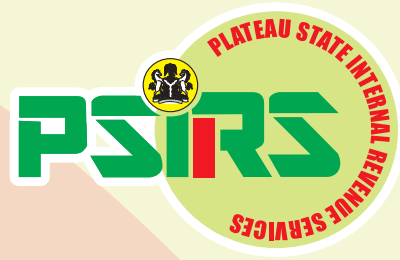
"This doesn't apply to Muslims. Muslims don't celebrate Valentine's Day. According to Islam, it's not permissible for a Muslim to celebrate any of the festivals of the Kuffar, because festivals come under the heading of sharing issues which are to be based on sound texts.

"Muslims say Valentine's Day is a jahili because of the Roman festival, which continued to be celebrated until after the Romans became Christian. This festival became connected with the Saint known as Valentine who was sentenced to death on February 14, 270 CE. The Kuffar still celebrates this festival, during which immorality and evil are practiced widely," Alapoti said.

A Catholic, Ms. Somtochuckwu Cynthia, who told this medium that though she celebrates the Day, youths have misunderstood the purpose of the celebration.

She said: "I'm a Catholic and I believe in the celebration of St. Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day is actually a day to show love, and to be shown love. Yes, but over time, the youth have decided to misunderstand the purpose of the whole celebration. A lot of people think it is a day to sleep with women, a day to commit fornication and all that.

"But it's totally different. You can go to the Motherless homes, and you can surprise somebody in need. You can even show love as little to your security man; that's what it is supposed to be. My message to those who are still playing on the blind bicycle is that if you like to continue showing love; that is your own (issue). I don't have any motivational speech for anybody, anything you want to do, do it. But stay awake, and be very careful."



Plateau State Internal Revenue Service

Congratulatory Message

The Executive Chairman, **Mr. Dashe Arlat Dasogot**, The Board, Management and entire Staff of Plateau State Internal Revenue Service wish to send our congratulations to **Mrs. Salamatu Parlong and Mr. Zitta Wuyep** on your well deserved appointment as Permanent Secretaries in the Plateau State Civil Service.

Your excellent antecedents over the years as a Director and Assistant Director respectively with the Plateau State Internal Revenue Service have put you in good stead for these exalted appointment and many more to come in the future.

We at PSIRS cannot agree less with the Executive Governor's well thought out appointments which will in no doubt turn around the fortunes of the State Civil Service.

We pray this will spur you to even achieve greater feats for the State and the Nation. Once again, Congratulations.

Signed:
Dashe Arlat Dasogot Fcti, Fcna
Executive Chairman, PSIRS



Mr. Zitta Wuyep



Mrs. Salamatu Parlong

News

Police say Azare explosion not terrorist attack

THE Police in Bauchi State on Monday said the Jan. 22 explosion in Azare, the headquarters of Katagum Local Government Area of the state, was not a terrorist attack.

The Commissioner of Police in Bauchi State, Mr Aminu Alhassan, stated this in Azare when Gov. Bala Mohammed visited the Emir of Katagum, Alhaji Umar Farouk II to commiserate with him and the people of the area over the incident.

According to him, the explosion was from dynamites kept in an old structure for over 30 years by a construction company.

He said the people in the area were trying to clear the bushy old structure by putting fire on it, which led to the explosion of the dynamites.

The Commissioner explained that although the explosion destroyed the structure, affected a school and a place of worship, there was no casualty recorded.

He urged the people of the area as well as the state at large to remain calm as the situation was under control, adding that the structure had been cordoned.

Gov. Mohammed said he was in the area to commiserate with the Emirate over the explosion and robbery of a Point of Sale (POS) operator in Zaki Local Government Area of the state on Friday where four people were injured and



Alkali

hospitalised in the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Azare.

He said his administration was conscious and passionate about security of lives and property of the people of the state.

"The Bauchi State government is ready to ensure safety of lives and property in the state and we will also double our efforts to make sure that those that are far away from the state capital are given special consideration.

"I would like to appreciate His Royal Highness, the Emir of Katagum for being passionate about the security of the people in the Emirate.

"We, as a government,

promise to provide more support to the security agencies in the state, to enable them to perform their duties effectively," he said.

Responding, the emir lauded the governor for his prompt response to the issue, adding that his actions had demonstrated that he was passionate about the well-being of all the people of the state.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the governor visited the explosion site as well as the victims of the robbery at the Federal Medical Centre, Azare, where they were receiving treatment.

SMALL Scale Women Farmers Organisation of Nigeria (SWOFON), Kogi Chapter has honoured Dr. Sani AbdullahiOzomata, State Coordinator of Agro-processing, Productivity Enhancement and Livelihood Improvement Support (APPEALS) with an Award of Excellence Performance in appreciation of his contributions towards women empowerment.

The Kogi State Coordinator of S W O F O N , HajiaSafiyaYahaya while presenting the award to Dr. Sani AbdullahiOzomata in his office in Lokoja on Tuesday, appreciated him for a grant of N2 million for the procurement of farming inputs made available to some individual women in the state.

She described Dr. Sani AbdullahiOzomata's kind disposition and contributions to the upliftment of womenfolk as laudable saying that it is good to give honour to whom it is due.

HajiaSafiyaYahaya praised ActionAid Nigeria for its support through advocacy to the women group to enable it embark on capacity building of women in the 21 Local Government Areas of Kogi State.

"Our activities for women empowerment with the support of ActionAid Nigeria cut across all the wards in the 21 Council Areas of Kogi"

SWOFON honours agency coordinator over women empowerment

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

SWOFON Coordinator disclosed.

Responding, the Kogi State APPEALS Coordinator and beneficiary of the award, Dr. Sani AbdullahiOzomata, said that the gesture will spur him to do more for the womenfolk in the state.

"I am happy that I am being appreciated. I really value the recognition but I must confess that I am only a contributor. We did it together and the success story goes to all of us. I will not relent in ensuring that women have their place in

the society.

"I will continue to ensure that the right people get our support. The essence of APPEALS Project is to create job, wealth and boost food security.

"I am also assuring you people that those women that have not benefited from our women empowerment will be considered in our future engagement.

"Please don't shortchange yourselves and try to make best out of the benefits by investing your proceeds for the betterment of your existence," Dr. Sani AbdullahiOzomata admonished.



Bello

I can't leave my home to bush - Gobir

Sen. Ibrahim Gobir (APC Sokoto-East) has debunked the that he will be defecting to PDP before the 2023 general

FROM ANENE AIKE, SOKOTO

elections. "I cannot leave my house and go to stay in the bush rather I am staying put in APC. staying put in APC," he pointed out.

Gobir, who is the Senate Majority Leader and Chairman, APC Senate Caucus, made the clarification while speaking to our Sokoto correspondent in Sokoto.

The lawmaker, a former governorship aspirant in the 2022 primary election said the APC was the only home he has and nothing can send him out of it even by threat.

He said "The assertion that Sen. Gobir is defecting to PDP is misleading, to leave my own home to the bush or what, I don't move from one

political party to another. It's not in my character".

"Moreover", he said, "getting a mandate to contest or not cannot take me to another place while I am comfortable in my own home." He added that "I am a member of APC and will continue to support our candidates to ensure the party wins in the 2023 general elections for the best of our people and democracy".

Gobir added that " the Nigerian political atmosphere had since pointed out APC as the party to lead the country following its acceptance by the greatest majority following the caliber of people defecting to the party. I can boldly say that all our candidates are waiting for swearing- in on May 29, 2023.

"Our party is truly accepted by Nigerians, which is an indication that the year 2023 elections will only be an endorsement of all APC candidates," he affirmed.

On the new Naira notes, the Senate leader called on "Nigerians to remain calm, saying the lawmakers are doing their best toward addressing the situation as the Naira notes redesign policy has nothing to do with politics. So Nigerians should remain calm as we are all there to protect them," he emphasized.

PLSG commiserates with Gov Sule



From DUMAH RANDONG, Lafia

immediate family to be strong in the face of their trying moments.

The Emir of Lafia, Justice Mohammed Sidi Bege who responded on behalf of the governor and people of the state, appreciated the delegation for the show of concern in their time of grief.

The Emir noted that Plateau State was still home and closest neighbor who always identify with them in good and difficult moments.

Among the delegation were

the Gbong Gwom Jos, Jacob Gyang Buba, Mishkaham Mwaghavul, John Hirse, the Emir of Wase, Mohammadu Sambo Haruna, some elders in the state, Arc Pam Dung Gyang, Nde Joshua Waklek, some Commissioners and Special Advisers.

Our correspondent reports that the delegation was on arrival received by Governor Abdullahi Sule, his Deputy, Emmanuel Akabe and Emir of Lafia, Justice Mohammed Sidi Bege as well as some top government officials at the Government House, Lafia.

Sule

PLATEAU State Deputy Governor, Professor Sonni Tyoden, Monday led a high powered government delegation to commiserate with the government and people of Nasarawa State over the demise of Hassan Sule, son of the state governor, Abdullahi Sule.

On the delegation to sympathize with the governor on behalf of Governor Simon Lalong were some top government officials including

the Council of Chiefs and Emirs at the Government House, Lafia, the state capital.

Presenting the condolence message, the Deputy Governor described the death at age of 35 years as devastating.

He said death was inevitable and such it could come at any time and encouraged them to accept it as the will of God.

Tyoden explained that as brothers and neighbors, Plateau State will continue to identify with Nasarawa State and urged the governor and the



Sen Joshua Chibi Dariye (right) with commissioner of Youth and Sports, Hon. Daniel dung Dalyop, PLASU, Registrar, Mr Yakubu F. ayuba and APC House assembly candidate, Hon dickson Yusuf chollom at the 6th and 7th convocation ceremony recently at PLASU, Bokkos,

Feature

TETFund: Revamping local books publishing

To be better equipped for the tests that the years in school will bring, read a textbook. To prepare for the tests that life will bring, read a book. The importance of books in general cannot be over emphasised. RAHMA OLADOSU writes.

GENERALLY, around 130 million books have been published in the history of humanity; a heavy reader will at best get through 6,000 in a lifetime. Most of them won't be much fun or very memorable. Books are like people; we meet many but fall in love with few. Perhaps only thirty books will ever truly mark us. They will be different for each of us, but the way in which they affect us will be similar.

Book is a fountain for national integration and development, the grand index of technology, government, politics, religion, economy, sociology, medicine, and engineering to mention a few. It is a veritable source of information to teachers and students, a goldmine of knowledge for researchers and scholars, and a fountain of pleasure and leisure to general readers.

Now, the quality, quantity and diversity of books produced by a society are important indicators of that society's level of development. This is solely because a book is seen as a catalyst for mental growth and social integration.

Having laid enough emphasis on books and its importance, Book Publishing holds the most importance because the book publishing industry has a tremendous impact on the society. According to Lai Oso (2000), "Book Publishing is a serious business, a benchmark of a nation's education, one of the basement blocks in cultural building, and an important index of national development." Book Publishing is an effective vehicle for development and positive change in the behavioural attitude of the people. It is the nerve centre of education and it helps people to gain full control of their environment.

Looking back, the history of Book Publishing in Nigeria can be traced to the establishment of the very first publishing press in Calabar, in 1846, by Rev. Hope Waddel of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission. The Press was used to print Bible lessons and later arithmetic books for schools. In 1854, another missionary based in Abeokuta, Rev. Henry Townsend, of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), established a Press. Five years later, in 1859, he used it to print the very first newspaper in Nigeria, Iwe Irohin. Thereafter, notable Nigerians like Herbert Macaulay established the first indigenous newspaper in 1926, called Lagos Daily News. Also in the same year, Daily Times made its debut.

In many Nigerian tertiary institutions, textbooks are the most used source of research but rarely do the students find comprehensive materials in our locally published textbooks and would most times proceed to make use of textbooks by foreign publishers. Textbook publishing is a holistic process which includes negotiation with authors and/or



their agents, design of books in conjunction with printers, book production, publicity and sales through booksellers and retailers – collectively known as the book trade.

However, in the last two decades, the Nigerian indigenous publishing industry has experienced a downturn due to numerous challenges facing the industry. Nigeria now shares with other developing countries a variety of problems bedeviling the book publishing industry, including: inability to provide adequate numbers of high-quality books, book piracy, proliferation of unqualified author-publishers, lack of capital, and so on.

I believe the time is ripe for revamping academic textbook publishing in Nigeria in general and in the higher education sector in particular. It is therefore worth emphasising that ensuring quality research outputs from seasoned academics in credible textbooks with a reputable international standing is an entrepreneurial

activity that requires nurturing of ten books in different fields of study in the nation's textbook publishing in the universities.

In recent times, a very popular misconception is that book publishing will die in the face of the on-going development in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). However, according to Oso, et al (2009), "Globally, traditional books will still be in use. In fact, electronic innovations will aid book publishing, it cannot kill it. It is therefore reasonable for publishers to think of how to apply the new technology to enhance book publishing."

To put a total end to this misconception and in order to address the appalling book crisis in Nigeria's university textbook insufficiency, plagiarism and breaches in copyrights, availability of home-grown quality publication is a sure first step. Taking this first step, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) through the 'Higher Education Book Development Project'

The Minister of Education, Malam Adamu Adamu, who unveiled the books, said the Federal Government was working with a view to ending the dominance of foreign books in tertiary institutions across the country and further said that the dependence on foreign academic publications in tertiary institutions of learning portended great danger to the nation's education sector, adding that boosting indigenous authorship would address this problem. While commending TETFund for establishing the project to tackle scarcity of tertiary level textbooks, the minister hailed the Fund for putting in place the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) whose mandate includes collaboratively working with the agency to ensure quality books are churned out by Nigerian authors.

Showing excitement in the progress of the project, the

Executive Secretary of TETFund, Arc. Sonny Echono, expressed delight over the quality of the 10 books and said additional 30 books sponsored by the Fund would be unveiled before the end of the year. He assured of the readiness of the agency to sponsor production of 50 textbooks in 2023.

The fundamental purpose of book publishing is basically to extend the frontiers of knowledge from one generation to the other and to bring about continuous intellectual development. Publishing is channelled towards promoting learning and expanding knowledge. Based on this premise, the issue of book publishing must be taken more seriously than before.

However with TETFund's Higher Education Book Development Project, it is safe to say that the Nigerian government has indeed borrowed a leaf from their foreign counterparts on book policies to encourage locally published textbooks for tertiary institutions

Rahma Oladosu is a Staff Writer with the Economic Confidential



BY KENNETH DARENG

LAST year has been described by many Nigerians as one of the worst the country has seen in recent times because it was characterized by so many challenges either that of insecurity, poverty and other factors that pushed many people into traumatic experiences with damming consequences.

And like a hangover, Nigerians have entered the year 2023 with the same baggage of a declining purchasing power among the down trodden in the society, where electricity outage, surge in prices of food, cooking gas and long queues at petrol filling stations are just enough to break the hope of the strongest faith of a citizens to that of and hopelessness in a country that is ranked among the elite club of oil producing countries in the world and occupying a top spot in Africa.

Despite a steady rise of crude oil in the international market since last year due to the ongoing Russia/Ukraine war, the situation in Nigeria is giving everyone extreme cause for concern, nervousness, uncertainty and volatility.

So disturbing is the fact that filling stations are selling Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) i.e

petrol which is sold at different prices above the government approved N165 per litre. Even some of the NNPC Mega filling stations are selling at between N165 and N180 depending on the location while other independent filling stations are dispensing the commodity at between N310 and N320 and

energy experts, a higher oil prices should be able to favour oil producing countries, such as Nigeria as this should also be able to guarantee higher revenues as a boost to its national, reserves as well as comfortability in terms of its budgetary spending. However, Nigeria's economic



Rising oil and gas prices: May boomerang

above depending on the location.

To fill a 12kg cooking gas cylinder, one requires nothing less than N10, 000, which previously was sold at N4, 000 while other products such as Kerosine, gasoline have gone up by as much as 60 percent between last year and now.

And by implication, the high cost of petroleum products have now affected all sectors of the nation's economy particularly the transport sector whose impact is largely felt by farmer and small scale business enterprises who depend solely on it for their activities.

In the case of the Nigeria farmers, such scarcity is affected cost of powering farming inputs such as tractors, generators and harvests machines as well as processing machines apart from the cost of transporting farm produce from the farms to the markets.

Such factors have also added to the hardship of the citizens especially with these trends affecting the cost of food items in the market which is hitting the roof tops by each day.

However, going by the current crude oil prices in the international market of between 70 and 80 US dollars per barrel, it is expected that Nigeria's revenue should have by now improved to an extend of making some turn around maintenance of our ailing refineries. According to the

development is still at a crawling stage either due to endemic corruption and lack of a sustained favourable policy framework within all sectors and while the economy itself depends on oil revenue sources, such has not even translated to any meaningful impact in the midst of scarcity and lack affordability of the product by its populace.

Development and projects in the oil and gas sector should be measured by how it has been able to strengthen the nation's foreign exchange earning which can also be used to finance investment in critical sector of the national economy such as; health care, education as well as the provision of infrastructure projects such as roads, rail lines and ports to facilitate trade.

The lack of investment in infrastructure has for many years continue to affect the nations direction towards tapping its vast human and economic potentials as compared to some African oil giants such as Angola, Algeria and Libya whose citizens are enjoying the dividends of massive investment in the oil and gas sector.

It is quite an embarrassment that Nigeria being a member Of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is experiencing high proportions of fuel scarcity and a sad situation where only few individuals can drive to a filling station to buy petrol or gas for even cooking such a downward

trend suggests that Nigeria is lacking in so many areas that requires complete overhaul of its policies and strategies that will improve the quality of lives of its citizens interms of job creation and other opportunities that can build its economy.

Speaking recently on Bloomberg Television on the rising crude oil prices, the Minister of State for Petroleum, Timipre sylva, maintained that Nigeria is in a comfort zone in terms of oil prices which stood between \$70 and \$80 per barrel.

"By implication, any thrashing may not be too good for the country" which also means that the body language of President Muhammadu Buhari's government is to sustain the subsidy regime even if it is for the sake of the forthcoming general elections which the ruling party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) wants to retain power at the Federal level as well as in most state of the federation.

Recently, the National Assembly, had approved President Buhari's request of N4 trillion as subsidy payment in the current fiscal year. Yet there are concerns that the country's inability to meet its oil production quota as approval by OPEC may limit the gains from the rising oil prices in the global oil market.

However, what Nigerians want for now is how these oil revenues can impact positively on their lives. They are not interested in

figures or theories, they want to buy fuel at just an affordable rate and with a guarantee that the products can be seen everywhere.

Above all, it is time for the Federal Government to seize this opportunity of the gains in oil and gas prices to show Nigerians that this God given product is not a curse but a blessing that should be enjoyed for the good of all Nigerians.

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The consequence of political imposition

given election in the country.

As a nation, to ensure a sound and sustainable democratic practice in Nigeria, politicians must do away with the tradition of imposing candidates that may not be the of the people to contest any elections so as avoid hatred, confusion and chaos.

This, if strictly adhere to would no doubt enable the electorate to go to the polls and elect candidates of their choice that would represent them at different level of government.

It is also true that the electorate are always at the receiving end, especially as regards being deprived of their rights when it comes to what they are supposed to enjoy particularly in times of developmental issues.

In fact, what seem to more alarming is this unfortunate practice is the agenda of sharing resources meant for development to some cabals or so called godfathers, especially those who imposed

imperturbable candidates on the electorate besides those who holds the permanent voters cards (PVCs) in their hands.

Politicians should as a matter of fact know that imposing candidates on the electorate does a lot of harms in a democratic environment, especially for good governance.

The root of at which some unpreferable candidates often imposed on the electorate are right from primary levels where such candidates are mostly

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Politicians should as a matter of fact know that imposing candidates on the electorate does a lot of harms in a democratic environment, especially for good governance. The root of at which some unpreferable candidates often imposed on the electorate are right from primary levels where such candidates are mostly selected with the aid of money bag politicians

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selected with the aid of money bag politicians by the so called delegates who are often selected not elected some party's flag-bears through the highest bidders, not on the side of credibility of the candidate as alluded above.

It is also an established fact that the activities of the so called godfathers are purely always anti-people because such candidates are imposed to do nothing, but to divert government funds to themselves instead of embarking on

developmental projects that would have direct bearing on the lives of the people.

In this order, Nigerians should equally imbibe the culture and courage of voting candidate base on their conscious. The era of taking or collecting salts, season-cubes, among others should be a gone one during the forthcoming polls that is just at the corner.

In fact, for our democracy to continue growing in a matured way, step by step, our elected leaders must imbibe the culture of coming closer and interacting with their electorate, instead of changing their sim cards used when selling for votes to another sim cards that the electorate will not have access to them again among other uncalled negative attitude towards their people.

Bye and large to address their ugly practice, Nigerian electorate must rise-up to the challenge of fighting the so called godfatherism to sustain democratic governance in Nigeria.



By JIDAUNA DARING

AS Nigerians begin the count-down to the much awaited 2023 general elections. Electorates should on their part ensure that they elect candidates base on their credibility not on party's lines.

This is because politics of imposing candidates particularly during elections sometimes among some selfish politicians in Nigeria has become a thing of concern to the electorate in any

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE development of every society depends on the quality of its leadership and its ability to understand the concept of strategic planning. It is certain that the challenge most societies grapple with today is not far from lack of sound leadership that can explore all positive avenues that would bring growth to the societies.

However, It is possible that the Plateau State Cooperative Federation (PLASCOFED) saw that there exists a worrying deficit in the way leaders operate in their respective cooperative societies and thought it wise that, there is need for the leadership of Cooperative Societies in the state to understand how to manage their various societies effectively.

The training which was in collaboration with GIZ International, PLASCOFED engaged all Management committees of Cooperative Societies on two days Strategic Planning and Group Identity through situational leadership model that would have solid foundation to strengthen their respective organisations.

It was quite rich and educative because it gave the participants avenue to ask questions in order for them to understand the rudiments of managing their investments properly for them to yield progressive results for cooperative societies on the Plateau and that, they will be able to compete with Western Nigerian States who have rose to meet the international community.

Presenting the first paper titled: "Strategic Planning & Team Role", at the Group B PLASCOFED Leaders Retreat at NUJ Secretariat Jos, the State capital where there were 32 participants at the training workshop, the President of PLASU Cooperative Society, Daniel Dangwong Pam, said the objectives of the training was for leaders to understand the meaning of vision, mission, goals and objectives as well as its usefulness.

He also listed some objectives to include; for participants to understand the meaning of values and principles and its usefulness, understand strategic planning and what role values and principles play respectively.

He was able to highlight the vision statement to set the direction for the organization, describes its future which then provides

the purpose and what you want to become and to aspirationally promote growth internally and externally among other visions.

Pam, however, disclosed that a strong vision helps team to focus on what matters the most for their organisations and also

organisations, individuals having similar interest and specializations when they come together on a common platform to form a team.

"Team and team work must be encouraged at workplaces as it strengthens the bond among the employees and the targets can be met at a faster pace.



PLASCOFED trains cooperative executive on leadership quality



PLASCOFED president and secretary in a group photograph with some participants at the training.



Participants putting their head to achieve a common goal.

stimulates innovation that would be a purpose-driven organisation that envisions success as a whole, because they know what success means for their organisations when they follow the rules and visions adequately.

He, therefore, highlighted the importance of working together in teams saying, "every employee is dependent on his fellow employees to work together and contribute efficiently towards the growth of the organisation. No employee can work alone, but he or she has to seek the help of his colleagues to accomplish the tasks efficiently.

"It has been observed that the outcome comes out to be far better when employees work in a team rather than individually as every individual can contribute in his best possible way. In



Team work by participants

Workload is shared and individuals feel motivated to perform better alongside his team members. It is imperative that when above principles are injected into

the various Cooperative formations as an organisation, it will go a long way in bringing every cooperator on board", the PLASU Cooperative President

enthused.

One of the Facilitators from the University of Jos Cooperative Society, Emmanuel Ibi-Kuzhu, who presented a paper titled: "Group Identity & Group Life" disclosed that it was to make organisational development training that would improve the capacity of their organisations to better serve its members.

The facilitator who earlier engaged the participants in group exercise said, it was for the participants to understand the difference between groups and teams and introduced organisational leaders/members to theoretical aspects of how organisations (associations, groups, teams) work saying, "it shows organisations how they can work better by developing some elements of a strategic plan for the organisation.

He commended the participants for the impressive turn out for the training and for the show of commitment and full participation in the training processes as well as the exercises carried out which demonstrated how they need to build their respective organisations, urging them to step down all they have learned to their members.

Earlier, the PLASCOFED President, Mrs. Mershak Hannatu, appreciated GIZ International for their sacrifice to have earlier trained them which prompted their stepping it down to Management Committee of various Cooperative Societies in the state and prayed that the workshop would be used to develop cooperative societies on the Plateau.

There were questions and answers sessions where participants were fully involved. It is our prayer that, the knowledge the participants have garnered during the training would have positive change in the way we run our cooperative activities in the state where it will make us self-reliant for the development of Plateau State and Nigeria at large.

IMAGES

LATE SP DAVIDSON LAR LAID TO REST

The funeral service of late Superintendent of Police, Reverend Davidson Musa Lar service took place last weekend at the ASPC Church, Mopol 8, Jos



Casket conveying the remains of late Davidson Musa Lar SP being brought into the church in by officers of the Nigeria Police Force



General Secretary of New Life For All (NLFA) Evangelist Nuhu Dauda with international members



Dr. Gideon Barde (left) with Mr. Matthew Kuju (right) and Mr. Alfred Akwe at the funeral service



Dr. Gideon Barde, Nde Emmanuel Kayi Gogwim with Nde Clement Wambutda and wife at the funeral service



Barr. Ayuba Burki Gufwan, Adviser to Governor Lalong on Persons with Disabilities, brother to late Davidson and other relations



Plateau State Council NUJ Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau delivering the NUJ condolence message, left is wife of the late officer, Mrs. Yemisi Davidson Musa Lar and children



Cross section of clergymen at the service



Brother to the deceased, Pastor Tongnan Clement Lar condoling their mother, Nana Esther Lar

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Odd World

'My dating history is awful'

JADE Asha, 34, from London - dubbed the 'real-life Bridget Jones' - has had her fair share of dating disasters, from the time she got called 'grandma' to the night she drunkenly knocked over a waitress in a bar.

When Jade Asha came out of a four-year relationship, she drowned out her heartbreak and disappointment in her love for romantic comedies. After hitting online dating apps, Jade quickly went from watching Bridget Jones on her television screen to becoming a real-life version of her.

Singleton Jade was set on finding 'the one' but instead she faced a string of dating disasters - including the guy that called her 'grandma' and the date that ghosted her. Reflecting back, Jade, 34, told the Mirror: "On one date, I drank too many Long Island iced teas and was so drunk that by 5pm I had blacked out, fallen over and knocked the waitress over too."

The actress and writer experienced the highs and lows of single life during her twenties, from going wild with her friends to being rejected by guys not worth her time.

"One of my dates was a bodybuilder - not my usual type and three years my junior. He called me 'grandma' - it was a joke, but a bad joke that friend zoned him immediately," she recalled.

"He took me to a casino and spent most of the night ignoring me in favour of the fruit machines.

"I wasn't too bothered but, drink in hand, I casually played a machine and won £200. So the night wasn't a complete loss."

On a different date, Jade got invited to a nice restaurant but the guy whipped the menu out of her hands and demanded another - "as he had a Groupon voucher he wanted to use".

Another dinner was going okay until halfway through the evening, she realised she'd dated his older brother.

Not long after, Jade thought she had truly turned a corner when she matched with a man who ticked all her boxes - but he sent her crazy.

"I lost my head. I didn't follow any of the so-called 'rules of dating' - common sense was out the window. I didn't recognise myself," she said.

"I became obsessive in my need to know more about him. We had three or four amazing dates and then he ghosted me.

"I learned a painful lesson that however much you like someone, you can't force them to like you."

Jade's wild dating years taught her a lot about love and eventually led her to meet her husband at the age of 30, who she's now expecting a baby with.

Source: *The Mirror*



Nigeria, our beloved nation is fatally bleeding

AS it is; the current global directory pertaining to the aggressive fight against hunger and deprivation is unsatisfactorily discouraging around the world. This is more so bearing in mind the foul-tasting statistics of the ever-increasing number of universal citizens being horrendously incarcerated in an absurd cobweb of destitution as a result of both humanly and naturally created abject poverty ever imagined in the annals of humanity history but for the 1929 economic depression era. Most hit are the peopling of developing nations where almost all desirable facilities including architectural framework for human survival, socio-economic and technological advancement are gone with the wind; entirely lacking or completely archaic.

Over successive years however, the selfish, greedy and fallacious manifesto and desires of our heartless leaders couple with their unrepentant acts of personal aggrandizement have stagnate and further worsen our economic well-being and developmental status leaving the common man at the receiving end. Today, we cannot distinguish between the horrendous and excruciating sufferings meted our forefathers during the brutal decades of colonial subjugation with what we are facing as a people today in a holistically perceived 'liberated' contemporary democratic nation of ours, Nigeria. If the truth should be told; our beloved nation is bleeding beyond imagination and if care is not taken it may nosedive into oblivion.

Just recently, a group of one hundred Non Governmental Organizations across the world had to join forces in an open letter calling on global leaders including other relevant stakeholders to help bring to a standstill the devastating consequences of global hunger even as new analysis has indicated that 17 percent of global population are likely to need more humanitarian aid by next year 2022.

The Global Humanitarian Overview of 2022 released by the United Nation's Office of Humanitarian Affairs this past week had strongly warned that over 274 million people could be in need of humanitarian assistance by next year, this is up to 235 million people in 2021 and 168 million people in 2020.

But again when one comes to think of this pending scenario more closely, Nigeria, our beloved nation may not survive this avoidable doom if one maybe permitted to say so. This is because, the country presently is ranked ninth on the index humanitarian crisis according to the number of people in need with about 1.1 billion dollars required salvage the 8.3 million people presently critically in need of compassionate assistance by next year.

So far, the unpalatable depreciating level of excruciating and berserk suffering of the citizens of this country cannot be overemphasized. As it is nowadays, most citizens of this nation are finding it difficult to get three square meals a day not forgetting the unpalatable pressing bills of power supply and or children's school fees hunting most homes.

Though the Federal Government has signed the new minimum wage for civil servants in the country months back, not all the state governments have kept fate with this consensus enabling their respective civil servants to enjoy it. Alternatively, many of these civil servants have been rationalized resulting in inflicting more pains and financial difficulties on innocent families and the entire citizenry.

Even though more graduates are produced by our universities year in and out, most of them are never employed but for a handful few who knows someone who knows someone in the country. No doubt, this resultant unemployment saga has continued to brew complex social vices confronting the nation this very moment.

Yet in the midst of this difficulties, it seems the leaders of this country have not found the right and more convincing positive mechanism of tackling this issue once and for all. While the entire population is wallowing in abject poverty, what is dear to our leaders and policymakers is the continuous borrowing philosophy which may at the end leave us the worse for it.

Please, don't get yours sincerely wrong, there is nothing wrong if a nation decides to borrow funds for developmental purposes, however my reservation is based on the fact that I have not seen anything tangibly done with all the mouth watering funds borrowed by Nigeria in the past. While the debts keep piling up, our entire population have been left at the mercy of an improvised system perhaps only friendly to the political elites who have kept on putting us into more of such troubles.

As if this is not enough, I recently learnt that President Mohammedu Buhari is about to borrow another humongous amount of funds; this time around, the amount had already been approved by the National Assembly. Left for me, since there has been absolutely nothing to show for it as far as the developmental status of previous collected loans are concerned; we must not go for another fund which basically would be a suicide mission.

But again, what do we have to say on the intension of the President Buhari's led government's intension of removing fuel subsidy by next year? What about the palliatives anticipated to be dished out to some of the citizens of this country to help cushion the effects of this policy? Are these mechanisms quite realistic in the face of daunting challenges we as a people have found ourselves in today?

Left to me, most of the economic policies presently implemented by this incumbent administration has left much to be desired. Even though on paper, economic experts including other stakeholders could argue that they are well intended, its implementation has not been that encouraging as the many gaps created have questioned the credibility of the process.

Unfortunately, we will sooner than later face another humanitarian crisis in this country which if care is not taken would keep us on the edge path of retrogression and or retardation. Though the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Sadiya Umar Farouq has reiterated the need for developed countries to honor the promises made in 2009 of mobilizing 100 billion dollars yearly to support climate action in developing countries including responding to a more challenging humanitarian landscape, me think much more needs to be pragmatically done to help our vulnerable masses.

Agreeably, the challenges of climate change are contributive factors to this humanitarian calamity, our leaders must also justify most of the economic policies presently implemented in the nation. Our leaders have not done enough in reducing the widening gap between the poor and the rich and or reduced the unappreciable level of administrative ingenuity inherent in many of such policies which are detrimental to our interest and corporate existence as a people.

As clearly indicated, most of these policies have consequently left the peopling of this country the worse for it and by next year if nothing is done to save the country from this humanitarian crisis, Nigeria as a developing nation may witness another massive structural and infrastructural failure ever imagined in the annals of our nation's history. In the light of this unfortunate development coupled with the intended subsidy removal, our various stakeholders and leaders of thoughts must re-channel their energy towards ensuring that the minds of the citizens of the nation are at complete rest without any anxiety particularly in the midst of these present daunting challenges.

View Point

ACRC: Five years of God's faithfulness

The steadfast love of God and His mercy never seizes even as the Christendom has continued to face all sorts of daunting challenges in contemporary times. Indeed, but for God, the prevailing challenges which have continued to bedevil the entire body of Christ would have overwhelmed us all. What has however gladdens the hearts of the people of God is the obvious fact that the gates of hell has not and will never prevail against the church. BULUS GAMBO, writes.

TODAY, the Christendom has continued to appreciate God for the tremendous way and manner He has continued to rise incredible men and women of God mandating them on strategic vision of reconciling humanity with their creator. About five years ago, God in His infinite mercy mandated the General Overseer of the Ark of Covenant Restoration Center Worldwide, Dr. Isah Harry Yanshiyi to restore dignity to mankind which started with the formation of a fellowship group in Lafia, Nasarawa State, to reconcile and restore mankind to God. Based on God's divine mandate to His disciples to "Go and restore my people back to me that are despised, rejected with the message of righteousness," the General Overseer of the church led by the Holy Spirit on the 6th of June, 2017 in his hotel room in Lafia started implementing God's vision bestowed on him which subsequently witnessed the establishment of a church called the ARK where many shall never lack, be in sickness and never see oppression when they identify with this task.

Evidently, the established focal analogy as directed by the Almighty God was to ensure that "many shall come into this assembly in their thousands; anyone who enters the ARK genuinely shall surely be restored from all manner of afflictions, barrenness, lack, oppression, of darkness, and where the wealth of my people shall be restored. I have given you all that it takes for the gates of these things to be opened"

Consequently, the center was and is still effectively and efficiently through divine mandate to become a place of reconciliation and restoration of humanity back to God as the commission is



Prof. Arch-Bishop Emmanuel Jatau presenting an award to the General Overseer Ark of Covenant Restoration Center Worldwide, Dr. Isa Harry Yanshiyi, while his wife Lydia Yanshiyi watches in appreciation

doggedly standing for righteousness, holiness, restoring God's people back to Him, building a people that shall be pleasing to God, making God's people prosper, deliverance from all oppression of the devil and kingdom stewardship.

Since 2017 when the General Overseer of the Ark of Convent Restoration Center Worldwide, Dr. Yanshiyi was mandated with this incredible mission in the Lord's vineyard, many achievements have been recorded to the glory of God. What has continued to baffle many who have come in contact with this Man of God is his simplistic and servant-leader character. Yanshiyi has not only shepherd his flock very well but also continued to stand by them during their moments of trials.

As a solid prophet of God whose word and blessings on his congregation has continued to germinate impacting many lives, the General Overseer has no doubt stood in the gap praying for his ministry and the nations of the world. His distinctive and outstanding character has also presented him as a vibrant spiritual leader who is ever ready to give his all for the benefit of humanity.

Interestingly, within the span of these five years, the Ark has grown and expanded having three branches in three different states namely, Lafia, Kaduna and Bauchi. The church has also increased in numerical strength, spiritual growth, as two services are being held every Sunday at the church headquarters, including the creation of 14

Home-cell Fellowship centers.

This aside, the church has Basic Foundation School for new entrant, development of church operational manual and creation of more functional church units which consists of counselling, evangelism, prayer, welfare and re-branding departmental fellowships. But again and to the glory of God, the church was able to conduct successful ceremony of the graduation of first set of Basic Foundation School, evangelical outreaches to unbelievers, series of training and retreats for workers/workforce and took decisive measures to curb indiscipline through the creation of disciplinary committee.

It is in the light of this development that the church decided to hold its 5th Anniversary and Thanksgiving Service at the Rock Garden, Plateau Hotel, Jos, the Plateau State capital so as to also gather financial resource to help facilitate the actualization of the proposed ARK of God Restoration Center Church Auditorium. This center if and or when fully constructed and commissioned is anticipated to further consolidate on the mandated placed on the shoulders of the Man of God in furtherance of the propagation of the word of God to the unreached nations of the world.

Speaking during the 5th year anniversary commemoration, the General Overseer of the Ark of Convent Restoration Center Worldwide, Dr. Isah Harry Yanshiyi explained that "Today's event is quite significant and unique day in our lives as a commission/church as given by God. This year unmistakably vide by God's inspiration of the Holy Spirit gave me the theme as "Our month of turning point". This we shall achieve by holding every word of God in high esteem,

Meticulously, carrying out the mandate and expecting tangible results in our lives."

According to him, "Beloved, I want to believe that we all enjoyed the spiritual level with which the Lord has taken us into the past five years. The testimonies and fingers of God that we have enjoyed are more than enough to tell of the Lord's goodness and faithfulness towards us in the Ark. For you to be in the Ark, you must be spiritually awakened, stabilized and focused. It is not gainsaying that today, the body of Christ is desecrated by love of money, power and fame. I am not deceived or carried away by the vibrancy of prayers or speaking in tongues but by sacrifice, righteousness and consecration. The days are evil. I am a man of mantle not title."

Dr. Yanshiyi further explained that "We have maintained and shall always be voracious for the word, unquenchable fire of prayer and continuously engage in praise and worship of God. Our spiritual temperature must always go up. Our language is restoration, hope, faith, gratitude, possibility, positivity and victory. Talking is proposing, but acting is achieving, nothing makes nothing. Therefore, may you be stirred by the Holy Ghost to contribute meaningfully and sacrificially towards the mandate of the Ark."

In his sermon, the Guest Speaker, Bishop Timothy Kume noted that Christians must always be encouraged in the act of giving so as to receive their blessings from God knowing too well that it is a spiritual law.

Taking his Biblical text from the book of Deuteronomy 16: 16, the guest speaker admonished Christians to remain dogged knowing too well that no matter the situation confronting them, God will never disappoint all those who diligently serve Him adding that "all we need to do is to operate under the remarkable principles of God."

Contributing in his vote of thanks, Chairman of the Anniversary and Thanksgiving Committee, Engr. Joshua David thanked all who contributed to towards the actualization of the event and prayed God to bless all those who contributed in one way or the other towards the success of the programme.

Highlights of the epoch making event included an anointed service where the congregation was significantly blessed to experience showers of blessings in the next coming decades. Some gospel groups who ministered during the occasion included the Bazata International Group, Police Band Jos and the Ark of Covenant Restoration Voices International Jos choir.



Guest Speaker, Bishop Timothy Kume and Professor Arch-Bishop Jatau at the event



Lalong's new year gifts to PLASU at 6th and 7th Combined Convocation

ON January 27th 2023, all roads led many distinguished personalities, politicians and educationists from within and outside the state to Plateau State University (PLASU) Bokkos for its 6th and 7th combined Convocation Ceremony.

Among them was Plateau Governor and Visitor to the school, Simon Bako Lalong, his deputy Prof. Sonni Gwanle Tyoden, a former Federal Permanent Secretary and Chairman, Board of Directors of Access Bank PLC, Dr. Dere Awosika, founder of the Institution, former Plateau Governor, Chief Joshua Chibi Dariye, former Vice Chancellors and stakeholders of the university.

Many students, parents and well wishers, also attended the event held at the institutions stadium premises.

The Convocation for the two sets awarded 1,356 students with degrees in various disciplines, of the number 16 came out tops with first class degrees.

Honorary Doctorate Degrees were also awarded to 3 deserving and notable personalities: Prof. Ochapa Onazi, Chairman of the implementation Committee for the establishment of the University and pioneer Chairman of the Governing Council, Prof. Jonah Isawa Eliagwu, a foremost Middle Belt Educationalist and Dr. Dere Awosika, Chairman Board of Trustees of Access Bank, Nigeria Limited and a Pharmacist of repute.

But for PLASU, there was more gains from the event, as the Plateau State Governor announced new year gifts to the Institution, students and their First Class graduating students.

At the forum Governor Lalong was commended by many speakers including the Vice Chancellor Prof. Yohanna Izam, Chairman Governing Council Monsignor Prof. Francis Obiora for reviving the university from comatose and investing resources as well as synergising with the Federal Government and the private sector to create support for the university, to make it be on its foot again after it was shut down by the previous administration.

Governor Lalong was excited as he spoke to the students and said he was glad the institution which had gone into oblivion when he assumed office in 2015 had now achieved milestones that can make it compete favourable above its peers.

He praised the students for their brilliant academic performance and to the 16 first class graduates he offered them immediate employment in the institution.

As if that was not enough, in the Governors usual precedence of encouraging the students, he donated cash gifts to each of first class students the sum of 500 thousand Naira and overall best in each of the sets another 500 thousand Naira.

His words as he announced the job offer "To each of the first class students I offer you employment".

"Head of service, I urge you to do that immediately".

"If you like, you can use that employment and further your education but as far as I am concerned you are now staff of PLASU". He told the students.

He expressed disappointment at how the former state government closed down the university and said he had to continue from where former Governor, Joshua Dariye left. Lalong glowingly paid tribute to Dariye for taking the bold step to establish the university despite all odds.

He said before leaving office, Dariye had established an accounting Department and put a prize because he is an accountant with a passion for encouraging students to follow his professional line.

"I have also therefore continued the precedence, today, I have followed suit and will do same

by ensuring that the faculty of law is established before I leave office"

"I pray that whoever comes in as governor would continue the precedence and I pray that whoever comes in will not attempt to close this university as was experienced in the past, an act that caused a great set-back to the growth of the university".

Lalong further commended Nigeria's former President, Gen. Yakubu Gowon for believing in the vision and supporting him by accepting to lay the foundation of the University even when many critics and skeptics were against it, with an avalanche of petitions against him to deter him (Gowon) from laying it.

He also recalled how last year early 2022, Gowon was again accused for coming to lay the foundation for the British American flyover a project initiated by his administration, with some people accusing Gowon of accepting financial enticement to support a fruitless venture.

"But by Gods grace, today as you can see, the bridge is almost completed and will be commissioned next month", Lalong said.

The Governor went further to donate 3 cows and 1.5 Million Naira to students to celebrate their successful graduation and urged first class graduands to live up to their name and raise up in their different to someday become future Vice Chancellors and distinguished academic luminaries in their different fields of endeavour.

He also promised to address challenges of electricity and other challenges affecting the institution.

The Governor equally announced a donation of N1bn Naira to the University from Dr. Awosika, one of the Honorary Degree awardees, who had to leave the event earlier and fly back to catch up with other pressing engagements.

But earlier, in her remarks after accepting the Honorary Degree award, the Access Bank BOT Chair expressed happiness for being elevated to become a member of PLASU.

Mrs Awosika expressed with nostalgia her early days while working in Jos and how she built her career in the state before her marriage took her out.

The Bank BOT Chair promised to support the institution to record more successes to make it an institution to be reckoned with in the country.

Lalong in his usual soft jovial manner had also said while presenting his speech that if not because she had left the scene earlier, he would have boldly asked to find out if she has any daughters left "So that our men can come and marry them".

Lalong at the historic event also went round to commission some projects: The advancement linkages and strategic partnership office complex, Lalong Rock Garden and park, TETFund intervention project and school of Post Graduate Studies to commence in 2023, Block of offices classrooms and laboratories.

He commended TETFund, The Federal Government, Local Government Chairmen, Wells spirited individuals and donors, and other stakeholders for supporting the state-owned institution that was established on 7th March 2005 in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State to grow so fast within a very short space of time.



News

INEC, NGO seek increased women's participation in electoral process

THE SOS Children's Villages Nigeria in collaboration with the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria has called for increased women's participation in electoral process.

The call was made at the training for women and other marginalised groups on peace building, mitigation, human rights, gender and participation, on Monday, in Ibadan.

The guest speaker, Dr Esther Sanya, the representative of the National Council for Women Societies (NCWS), Oyo State chapter, said that there had been growing recognition of untapped capacity and talents of women in political leadership.

Sanya noted that women's engagement in politics would help to advance gender equality.

"Research indicates that

whether a legislator is a male or female has a distinct impact on his or her policy priorities.

"There is also strong evidence that as more women are elected to office, there is a corollary increase in policy making that emphasises quality of life and reflects the priorities of families, women, ethic and racial minorities," she said.

Also speaking, Mr Lateef

Ariori, the Director, Child Welfare Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social inclusion, said that women should be given substantial consideration in the design and execution of political participation process.

Ariori charged women organisations in the state to work toward promoting gender equality among candidates, election officials,

observers and other electoral participants.

"Women have a responsibility to oversee the electoral process because gender equality and true democracy fundamentally depend on women's political engagement," Ariori said.

Earlier, Mrs Catherine Ogwu,

the Gender Desk Officer, make 2023 general elections Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Oyo elections in the history of state, urged the women not to

sell their votes or be intimidated during the forthcoming general elections.

She noted that the current training featured lectures and presentations from different women groups in the state.

US group tasks media on professionalism in 2023 polls reportage

THE US Institute of Peace (USIP) on Tuesday in Abuja, urged the media to ensure thoroughness and due diligence in their reportage of the 2023 general elections.

USIP'S Interim Country Manager, Dr Chris Kwaja, said in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the public relied largely on the media for credible information about the polls.

Kwaja said that it was the duty of journalists to conduct due diligence on news sources and contents before publication.

"The information we push out

to the public can incite violence, it can also mar the electoral process.

"The media should be prepared to portray the truth and counter narratives capable of undermining the electoral processes.

"So the media should carry out due diligence, balance their reports and ensure that contents are not harmful to the society," he said.

He further urged the media not to forget their critical roles in the electoral process, saying that they should mobilize, educate and correctly inform the citizenry.

"It is also expected that as a cornerstone democracy institution, the media should moderate political discourse and direct the path for peaceful engagements.

"Journalists should not allow themselves to be used as tools to cause division or incite violence within the system," he said.

Kwaja said that the elections had saddled the media with the responsibility of promoting social cohesion and discipline among politicians and Nigerians generally.



Mahmood

Sports



Nineteen-year-old Alcaraz (right), the youngster who looks best placed to stop Djokovic in 2023, beat the Serb in the Madrid Open semi-finals last year - their only meeting

Why can't the young guns stop Djokovic?

By JONATHAN JUREJKO

SHORTLY after 35-year-old Novak Djokovic dispatched another considerably younger player to win a 22nd Grand Slam title, his coach Goran Ivanisevic was asked how long the new Australian Open champion could stay at the top level.

"Definitely two, three more years," said Ivanisevic, who has helped Djokovic win seven of his major titles.

"His level is unbelievable. He is from outer space. His brain is working different."

Djokovic, who turns 36 in May, showed all facets of his greatness on the way to beating 24-year-old Stefanos Tsitsipas in Sunday's Melbourne final.

The Serb has won five of the past seven Grand Slams he has played in, although this victory came in a tournament where Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz - the world number one before the event and new leader of the next generation - was ruled out through injury.

BBC Sport analyses why Djokovic remains so difficult for the younger players to topple.

Pretty much every younger opponent talks before a match about treating Djokovic like any other opponent - playing the man and not the name.

But how many truly believe it and don't get overawed?

Greece's Tsitsipas was the last of four players at least a decade younger than Djokovic to be beaten by him in Melbourne.

In the past four years Djokovic has lost only five of the 45 matches he has played against opponents under the age of 23.

Djokovic has won six of his seven Grand Slam finals in that period against players born in the 1990s, with Russia's Daniil Medvedev landing the younger generation's only success in the 2021 US Open.

Tsitsipas insists Djokovic's stranglehold on the younger players isn't a "curse".

"I don't see this as something annoying. This is very good for the sport, to have competitors like him, to have champions like him," said Tsitsipas, who has lost his past 10 meetings with Djokovic.

Whether Tsitsipas sincerely thinks that is a different matter. If he does, it feels like he is an exception.

It has been telling that Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev and

American Tommy Paul - the players whom Djokovic made light work of in the Australian Open quarter-finals and semi-finals respectively - discussed the dread which players feel when seeing his name in their part of the draw.

Rublev, 25, laughed when he said after his last-16 win that he wished Djokovic was in the opposite side - but it was no laughing matter as he became increasingly despondent on the way to a straight-set beating.

"A lot of players have a lot of respect for his game," said 25-year-old Paul, who was also despatched in three sets.

"No-one really wants to see him on their part of the draw."

When the going gets tough on court, Djokovic gets going.

That is particularly relevant in the biggest moments of the biggest matches and is a key reason why he has won 22 of the 33 Grand Slam finals he has played.

Tsitsipas said Djokovic, who saved 23 of 29 break points during the Australian Open, including two of three in the final, is a player who "pushes you to your limits" on the court.

"He's very important for us that want to get to his point one day. Getting our asses kicked is for sure a very good lesson every single time," he said.

"He has made me a much better player. He has made my levels of concentration higher and higher every single time I get to play him."

"You have to be really involved and you have to be dedicated to the game when you play against him."

Everyone has a game plan going into a match against Djokovic. Executing against someone of his talent is another story.

As Paul put it after the semi-final, Djokovic can make them "play so bad".

The American offered some insight into his tactics and how Djokovic neutralised those plans.

"I wanted to serve and volley some. I didn't serve and volley once," he said.

"When I did make my first serve, I felt like he was returning it to the baseline. I was automatically on defence."

"I wanted to throw in drop-shots. I didn't get an opportunity to do any of that because he was hitting so deep."

"I wanted to change up pace with my slice. I missed my first three slices of the match. I was like 'all right, I'm going to start hitting my backhand, I'm not slicing well'."

"He didn't let me do all those things because of things that he did so well."

Djokovic has long appreciated the need to take care of his body to prolong his career and achieve success into his 30s.

He has regularly cited changing to a gluten-free diet more than a decade ago as a recipe for his success.

While he does not consider himself a vegan, Djokovic steers clear of eating meat, fish and other animal-based products.

Taking up yoga and a daily routine of stretches has been key in helping maintain the extraordinary elasticity which he continues to show when chasing down balls on the court.

"The way he's taking care of his body, the way he approach about everything, the food, it's amazing. It's unbelievable, the level," said

Ivanisevic.

When Djokovic outlined his reasons last year for not having a vaccination against coronavirus, he said he wanted to be "in tune with my body as much as I possibly can".

He added he had "always been a great student of wellness, well-being, health, nutrition".

With success comes scrutiny and Djokovic often finds himself at the centre of drama - whether it is of his own making or not.

Last year he was unable to defend his Australian Open title after being deported from the country following a row over his Covid-19 vaccination status.

Djokovic had also been hampered by a hamstring injury at Melbourne Park, which Ivanisevic reckoned

would have ruled out "97% of the other players".

"If I turn back the time two and a half weeks ago, I wasn't really liking my chance with the way I felt with my leg," said Djokovic.

"Then it was just a matter of survival of every single match, trying to take it to the next round."

Another curveball was thrown his way before Friday's semi-final against Paul.

His father Srdjan was pictured outside Rod Laver Arena with supporters of Russian president Vladimir Putin, creating a controversy which Djokovic said was "not pleasant" to deal with.

Nevertheless, he managed to put all these distractions behind him as he levelled Rafael Nadal's record of men's majors.



Djokovic stretches for a ball in the Australian Open final

Sports



Kwara United

NPFL: Mohammed gets two-game ultimatum

KWARA United head coach, Abdulazeez Mohammed has been given a two-game ultimatum to turn around the fortune of the team or get booted out.

NPFL NEWS said that, the Harmony Boys are yet to record a win in the Nigeria Premier Football League this season after four matches.

The Ilorin club were thrashed 3-0 by Enyimba in Aba on Sunday.

Kwara United have drawn two and lost two of their opening four games.

General Manager of the club, Bashir Badawiy

stated that henceforth the management of the club will not tolerate any negative result from the team.

"The team has no excuse not to perform, going by the commitment of the government, the determination of the management and the sacrifice by the fans, supporters and stakeholders," Badawiy said in a statement released by the club's media team.

"And that was why we have decided to give the team a two-match ultimatum. They should rather perform or give way. We are playing in a

dangerous league, the Abridged League, and we cannot tolerate this kind of result."

Kwara United will host former champions, Plateau United in their next league game at the Lekan Salami Stadium, Adamasingba, Ibadan on Wednesday.

Shooting Stars record first victory against El Kanemi

SHOOTING Stars Football Club of Ibadan and Sunshine Stars FC of Akure on Sunday recorded their first wins of the ongoing 2022/2023 Nigeria Professional Football League

THE concluding fixtures of the Nigeria Premier Football League, NPFL matchday four were played across different centres on Sunday.

NPFL NEWS maintained that, five home wins and three draws with 11 goals were recorded in the eight encounters.

Enyimba and Lobi Stars were the teams with the highest scoreline during Sunday's home games.

The Peoples Elephant bounced back from last weekend's loss to Plateau United with a comprehensive 3-0 win over Kwara.

Lobi Stars recorded their third consecutive win against newcomers, Bayelsa United

Big win for Enyimba, Lobi stars

with an identical scoreline Emeka Obioma's brace and a debut goal from Adebambo gave the Elephant some respite after the disappointment in Jos.

For Kwara United, their woes continue as they are now the only club yet to score in the 2023 season.

The Peoples Elephants came in front in the 11th minute from Emeka Obioma's tap in to Sadiq Abubakar's through ball.

Meanwhile, Enyimba doubled the lead from Adebambo who scored his

debut goal against his former club seven minutes later.

However, the floundering Kwara United failed to reduce the deficit after Ayobami Junior wasted a goal-scoring chance in the 25th minute.

Another attack from the Harmony boys was poorly delivered by Bright Etagbara, whose shot was saved by John Noble in the 33rd minute.

The hosts couldn't add their third goal after Obioma's shot went wide four minutes later.



Enyimba

(NPFL) season.

Both club sides won their games on Match Day 4 of the season to bolster their positions in the middle of the table in their respective groups of the competition.



Shooting Stars

Group B.

They have six points, with one win and three draws from four matches after scoring four goals and conceding three.

Enyimba International of Aba were 3-0 winners over visiting Kwara United of Ilorin to move into third place behind Remo Stars of Ikenne in Group A.

Other Group A matches have Akwa United of Uyo beating visiting Plateau United of Jos 1-0, while hosts Gombe United drew 1-1 with Nasarawa United of Lafia.

Hosts Lobi Stars of Makurdi whipped visiting Bayelsa United of Yenagoa 3-0 in Makurdi in a Group B fixture to move into second place in the group.

Niger Tornadoes of Minna stayed in third place in Group B in spite of drawing goalless with visiting Rangers International of Enugu in Kaduna.

Hosts Wikki Tourists drew goalless in Bauchi with Doma United of Gombe to remain bottom of Group B.

Both Bendel Insurance of Benin and Rivers United of Port Harcourt lead groups A and B respectively after emphatic wins on Saturday.

While Bendel Insurance beat visiting Remo Stars 3-0 in Benin, Rivers United were 2-1 winners over hosts Dakkada FC in Uyo.

'Osimhen same as Drogba but must stop diving'

VICTOR Osimhen is "the same level as Didier Drogba" but needs to stop diving if he wants a Premier League transfer, says Jose Mourinho.

Goal said that, the current Roma boss got another good look at Nigeria international Osimhen during his side's latest outing in Serie A, with the talented 24-year-old netting a stunning goal in a 2-1 victory for Napoli over the Giallorossi. Osimhen has found the target on 15 occasions through 20 appearances this season, leading to talk of interest from the likes of Manchester United, and former Red

Devils boss Mourinho - who worked with Ivorian frontman Drogba at Chelsea - has told a much sought-after talent what he needs to do in order to thrive outside of Italy.

Mourinho told reporters when asked for his take on Osimhen: "He is of the same level as Drogba, but Didier didn't dive. If Victor changes, then OK. I'd buy him if I was at a club with a lot of money. However, if he does go to England one day, he needs to change, because in Italy they put up with this sort of behaviour, whereas in the Premier League, they'd come down hard on him."

Mourinho added on what he said to Osimhen after a

meeting in Naples: "I told him that he scored a wonderful goal and needs to stop diving so much. His goal was fantastic, he did the same thing when we met earlier this season, so he's a fantastic player. But he mustn't dive."

Napoli have Osimhen tied to a contract through to 2025, so are under no pressure to sell, but their resolve may be tested in upcoming transfer windows as the African superstar continues to see his stock rise.

In 16 Serie A games played this season, Osimhen has already equalled his

best tally of goals scored in a single campaign in the Big-5 European Leagues: 14 (as in the 2021/22 season, but in 27 appearances).

Manchester United are expected to be in the market for another No.9 in the summer of 2023, having acquired Wout Weghorst on a short-term loan deal in the January window, and there is plenty of speculation to suggest that the Red Devils will turn their attention to Osimhen as a long-term option to lead the line at Old Trafford.

10th Australian Open my 'biggest victory'-Djokovic

NOVAK Djokovic says winning a 10th Australian Open to equal Rafael Nadal's record 22 Grand Slam men's titles is "the biggest victory" of his life.

Djokovic, 35, beat Stefanos Tsitsipas in Melbourne having missed last year's event after being deported because of his Covid-19 vaccination status. He also had to deal with a hamstring injury and a row involving his father.

"Only the team and the family knows what we have been through in the last four or five weeks," said the Serb.

"I would say this is probably the biggest victory of my life, considering those

circumstances."

Djokovic was overcome with emotion after sealing a straight-win over Greek third seed Tsitsipas on Rod Laver Arena.

After climbing into the box to celebrate with his team and family, he broke into tears and laid down in the middle of them as the magnitude of his achievement hit home. Djokovic continued sobbing under his towel when he returned to his chair on the court.

The win sees him return to world number one for a record-extending 374th week from Monday.



Sports



Fernandez

Chelsea make new £105m offer for Fernandez

CHELSEA have returned with a bid worth £105 million (\$130m) for Benfica midfielder Enzo Fernandez. Goal said that, having failed to get a deal over the line at the beginning of January, Chelsea have reignited their interest in Fernandez with the transfer window almost shut. The Telegraph report that the Blues have tabled a £105m offer to Benfica for the Argentine, and are optimistic that they will be successful with their approach before the transfer deadline. The current offer meets the buy-out clause inserted into Fernandez's Benfica contract, but sees the fee staggered

across one larger payment and five smaller instalments. The report states this leaves room for negotiation, but with the money offered, Chelsea are hopeful it will be enough to convince Benfica to finally let Fernandez go. If the deal is done for that fee, Fernandez would smash the British record transfer fee set by Jack Grealish when he moved to Manchester City in 2021, while also eclipsing the £97m club-record fee they paid to re-sign Romelu Lukaku from Inter. Chelsea have been in hot pursuit of Fernandez ever since the window first opened, with the World Cup's Young Player

of the Tournament making no secret of his desire to leave for Stamford Bridge. Benfica, though, have remained resistant to selling their star man thus far, despite him agreeing to a move at the beginning of the month. Much like their entire January, Chelsea are braced for a frantic few days as the window slides shut. Any move for Fernandez could possibly hinge on Conor Gallagher's potential transfer to Everton, with the Toffees submitting a bid for the English midfielder. It could also signal the end of their pursuit of Moises Caicedo, who is seemingly trying to force an exit from Brighton.

THE international friendly match between Nigeria and Zambia at the U20 boys' level will now hold at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja on Saturday, 4th February.

Initially, both countries' football-governing bodies had agreed on a two-match tour for 27th and 30th January respectively.

However, issues of logistics and the compunction on the Young Chipolopolo to process their entry visas into Egypt for the forthcoming Africa U20 Cup of Nations before leaving Zambia forced a postponement.

Zambia's U20 delegation is

Flying Eagles to play Zambia in pre-AFCON friendly

still in Lusaka and will now only be able to play one match against the Flying Eagles, before proceeding to Dakar for a game against Senegal on Tuesday next week.

Both Nigeria and Zambia will face a country from the other's region in Egypt, with Nigeria drawn against Mozambique (alongside host nation Egypt and Senegal) in Group A, while Zambia will face Benin Republic (alongside Tunisia and The Gambia) in Group C. Uganda, Central African Republic, South Sudan and

Congo make up Group B. Seven-time African champions Nigeria will fly to Morocco on Wednesday next week for their final round of preparations.

Coach Isah Ladan Bosso's wards have been in flaming form in recent weeks, lashing a slew of teams in friendly games.

Bosso's wards were worthy champions of the WAFU B U20 Championship in Niamey, Niger Republic in May 2022, winning all their five matches in the competition.



Flying Eagles of Nigeria

NPFL: Wikki hand coach two-match ultimatum

THE management of Nigerian Professional Football League clubs Kwara United and Wikki Tourist have handed their respective coaches a two-match ultimatum to overturn their team's poor run in the NPFL or get sacked, The PUNCH reports. This comes after both teams failed to end their winless runs in their match-day four encounters amid disappointing displays. The Harmony Boys, who are yet to record a win this season after four matches — two defeats and two draws — were thumped 3-0 by Enyimba in Aba on Sunday, just as Wikki were held to a

goalless draw at home by newly promoted Doma United at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium, Bauchi.

The result sees both teams languishing in the relegation zone of their respective groups, with Kwara placed 19th in Group A of the NPFL log with two points from their opening four games, while Wikki are rock bottom of Group B with just a point from four games.

The General Manager of Kwara United, Bashir Badawiy, revealed that the management would not tolerate any negative result from the team

as they play in the "dangerous" abridged NPFL league.

"The team has no excuse not to perform, going by the commitment of the government, the determination of the management and the sacrifice by the supporters and stakeholders," Badawiy said. "And that is why we have decided to give the team a two-match ultimatum. They should rather perform or give way. We are playing in a dangerous league, the abridged league, and we cannot tolerate this kind of result."

Gattuso leaves Valencia after seven months in charge

Valencia manager Gennaro Gattuso has left the La Liga club after just seven months in charge at the Mestalla.

BBC SPORT said that, the former AC Milan and Napoli boss Gattuso, 45, signed a two-year deal when he was unveiled last summer.

But Valencia have lost eight of his 18 league matches in charge and sit 14th, just a point above the bottom three, after Sunday's loss at Real Valladolid.

Valencia said former Italy midfielder Gattuso's departure had been "decided by mutual

agreement".

His exit leaves Los Ches searching for a fifth manager in less than three years.

Valencia stalwart Voro Gonzalez will take charge of the team in the meantime in his eighth stint as caretaker manager of the club.

Meanwhile, Paris St-Germain are in advanced talks with Chelsea over a permanent or loan move for Morocco forward Hakim Ziyech.

Ziyech, who excelled in Morocco's run to the World Cup semi-finals in Qatar last year,

has made only four Premier League starts this season.

PSG are also in talks with Inter Milan for defender Milan Skriniar, whose contract expires this summer.

Ziyech, 29, was Chelsea's first signing following their transfer ban in 2020, arriving from Ajax for £33m.

However, they have signed forwards Mykhailo Mudryk, David Datro Fofana, Noni Madueke and Joao Felix this month, in addition to signing England's Raheem Sterling last summer.

Doping Nigeria's junior athlete cries for help

NIGERIA'S U.S.-based Junior Athlete Caught in Doping Scandal Cries for Help Before he travelled to America on scholarship a few years ago, high jumper, David Aya, promised his auntie, who, despite her health challenges, was able to raise some money for the junior athlete to travel, that he would do 'small jobs' in America to raise money to support her. Rather than keeping to his promise of studying and doing 'some small jobs,' Aya allegedly started doping and was caught. "I am so concerned about my auntie, who gave me money to travel," Aya said, while narrating his ordeal. The world seems to have crashed on him after he tested positive to banned substances. He has been slapped with a four-year career ban, the scholarship he won to study in an American university has equally been suspended, and now, he is pleading with Nigerians to come to his aid to pay for legal services to reduce or quash

the ban and resume his career and studies. According to Mainlandmetronews.com.ng, Aya was handed a four-year ban, a long time for a high jumper to be out of action. Being out of action for that long could lead to weight gain, which could make it difficult for him to return to fitness after serving his term. "As a first offender and a junior athlete, I believe that four years is long," Aya said. "I am not yet an elite athlete, I have not been to the Olympics yet. It is harsh and I want Nigerians to help so that I can pay for legal counsel." Aya revealed that he volunteered to do the dope test on his own, because when the Nigerian junior team was going to the World Athletics Junior Championships in Colombia, they were ordered to undergo dope tests before they could be part of the team. "I did three dope tests and it was the middle one that gave me this problem. Before we went to Colombia, nobody told me I had issues with my test. I did not know anything. It was when I got to America that they sent me a letter that I had failed a test and my world came crashing."

The high jumper said: "I was like banging my head on the wall trying to know exactly where things had gone wrong, because I know very well the implications of using drug enhancing performance. "It was then a doctor asked me if I had eaten pork. I told him yes. He said to me that pork meat can cause a spark of steroids in the system if it is mixed with some other healthy

supplement I might be taking. "A nutritionist friend of mine also asked me the same thing. All the vitamins I have been taking are not on the WADA list, and so, it was a rude shock to me. I didn't have all this information.

"They say ignorance is no excuse in law. I just hope that I can get a good lawyer that can help get me out of this mess," he said. Speaking on Aya's case, Athletics Federation of Nigeria Medical and Doping Director, Prof. Ken Anugweje, described what happened to Aya as regrettable.

"But rules are rules made by the World Athletics and these rules are adapted from WADA.

"It is based on the substance found in the system more than any other consideration. Some substances warrant only public warnings, but what was found in Aya's body warranted the lengthy ban. These are prescribed sanctions by the athletics body.

"The claim that he ate pork is a long story because it is no longer valid. It is a claim that has been made before by athletes who tried to hold on to something that has to do with clenbuterol.

"In the past, some countries used steroids to fatten their cows and pigs. Those are no longer an excuse. Where did he eat the pork and who sold the pork to him?

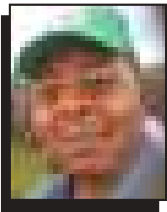
"We know Aya very well. He used to come to the High Performance Centre in Port Harcourt to train. It is very unfortunate what happened to him," Anugweje stated.



David Aya



Quest



writer

BALATA TAKAYA, PhD

FRAGMENT

"Firstly, a very key factor is his educational preparation and moral upbringing. Mission schools were not the best equipped and primary and secondary education institutions in the country in his time. But there is something about them that the well-provided government schools could not match: they imbued into their pupils a moral principle that they were being raised as special human agents or tools in the hands of God for service to humanity. They are to adopt god-like attitudes towards all mankind irrespective of their religious faith, ethnic backgrounds or places of origin. As such God desires them to excel in academic endeavors because the more industrious they became, the better their contributions in their chosen career fields. One can thus imagine the motive force that could drive a rural native boy from the remote back-hills of the daunting mountain ranges of Pankshin, scaling all odds and deprivations, to graduate with a First-class degree in the rare field of Zoology, with specialization in entomology and from Nigeria's premier University of Ibadan. J.D. Gomwalk was morally determined to serve God by practically proving his excellence in every facet of public service he was deployed."

BALATA TAKAYA, PhD

Gomwalk's visionary imperatives: Egalitarian nationhood template

Continued from last week

HE embarked on citizen welfare social equalization policies in both the educational and health sectors by providing massive scholarships to deserving under-privileged students at home and abroad and the construction of divisional general hospitals for free medical services to all citizens

He embarked on aggressive and sustainable political penetration strategies by creating robust print and electronic media to ensure two-way communication between the Government and the governed, thereby, the collection of public opinions and gauging of the true heart-beat of citizens. In addition to strengthening radio services, the establishment of the **Benue-Plateau Television Service** and the **Nigeria Standard Newspaper** towards that end became the most acclaimed state government effort of the time nationwide.

He embarked on aggressive sports development to further lift and sustain the image of the state through the active formation of quality sports clubs and the construction and renovations of stadia in Jos and the divisional headquarters of the state

He initiated an ideological direction and formal orientation of all public office holders, beginning with his commissioners and other political appointees, towards the imbibing of the new culture of governance based on the principles of:

Public office as public trust and Unalloyed service delivery to the common man

The principles of Social Justice and the Rule of Law as guidelines of public service at all levels of government

Ensuring equity and equal opportunities to all citizens

Equitable consideration in the distribution of services and in project locations among the twelve divisions of the state

Ensuring that public officers, both in their private and official capacities, endeavor to foster the spirit of brotherhood and unity among citizens, devoid of ethnic or religious considerations, among the people groups of the state What was the secret that enabled J.D. Gomwalk to blaze so many tracks and leave such indelible giant footprints on the sand of time? My rather shallow views here may only complement the more exact answers from anybody's closer experience and deeper understanding of this legend of our time.

Firstly, a very key factor is his educational preparation and moral upbringing. Mission schools were not the best equipped and primary and secondary education institutions in the country in his time. But there is something about them that the well-provided government schools could not match: they imbued into their pupils a moral principle that they were being raised as special human



JD Gomwalk

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Secondly, as argued at length above, J.D. Gomwalk, as a person, was a **visionary-realist leader**. These are rare qualities that are personal gifts from God to individuals like Gomwalk for the benefit of mankind if and when such blessed souls have the public heart to put them to use. Needless to add, J.D. Gomwalk did the unexpected in a non-civilian, non-partisan leadership environment and left a huge legacy behind for posterity to emulate.

The third secret of this celebrated achiever lies in the fact that he got into public service with a **god-nature mindset to serve and not to be served**; to For better national integration, he encouraged all

Nigerian citizens of other states residing and doing business in Benue-Plateau State to exploit their full citizen rights including full property rights, access to all public welfare amenities and safety of their enterprises. To this effect, he set up a special Task Force Committee to: Ensure the return of over 1,440 already documented property abandoned by Igbo nationals who fled the state during the civil war, to their rightful owners.

Safe-guard and repair/rehabilitate such other property that were yet to be reclaimed by the returnee owners Collect appropriate rents and keep accountable custody of same in favor of their absentee owners until they returned.

Undertook "come-back home" tours of the then East-Central State to assure the Igbo nationals who fled the North that they would be wholeheartedly welcomed back to Benue-Plateau State in the spirit of national integration, national healing and inter-state cooperation

He initiated inter-bloc cooperations through **peer-review** and **peer-learning** processes via inter-state visits among friendly governors. Governor Ogbemudia of the then Bendel State became his most valued soul-mate in this case. But equally important were his frequent inter-state tours and counter-engagements with governors Asika of East-Central State, Audu Bako of Kano state, etc in this vein.

There are myriads of other significant achievements of Governor Joseph Dechi Gomwalk

that have not been highlighted here both for lack of space and avoidance of undue monotony. But the above few are enough indications for us to ask, "how much can one man achieve within such a short span of time?" But more importantly, these milestones of rapid development unarguably highlight him as a phenomenal *go-getter*.

An Idiographic Profile of an Icon "work while the light [was] shining", not to merely ride the crest of power as vain celebrity, which he could have chosen to do if he wished to manifest the lazy trait of most futile leaders who tread the path of failure when in public office. In the fourth place, **Gomwalk used even his private quality time to meditate, visualize and plan his official tasks ahead of every work day.** As devoted leader committed to serve, J.D. Gomwalk, even from eye-witnesses accounts about him, literally never slept even in his non-office hours. He was always in search of solutions to problems that bedeviled the communities under his charge. Even while in bed, he never rested until he found foolproof solutions for the problems by himself, one at a time.

Fifthly he, being never a mere theoretician, thoroughly did his homework before he embarked on any project. In the sixth place, **J.D Gomwalk led from the front.** He never totally relied on merely issuing of verbal or written instructions to his subordinates or even contractors, whether or not he trusted their capacity to deliver as at when due. He encouraged them by being their "sometimes by surprise site visits. Seventh place, J.D. Gomwalk had a burning urge that propelled him to **serve and uplift the down-trodden people group** under his care".

In my view, all the above people-oriented idiographic checklist of his goal fetching approach to governance and his achievements provide an adequate insight into his character for the construction, therefrom, of a **practitioner manual** for an alternative leadership model. As such, we took this much and space to highlight his style of leadership here for the ease of justifying ai categorizing it as belonging to a leadership style usually referred to as **Servant Leadership**. The search that led us to suggesting the **Servant Leadership** construct for application in secular governance in Nigeria was in fact driven by the need to fill the glaring absence of any set of moral codes or principles that should stand as alternative guidelines for ethical behavior by leaders in public office that should be in clear contrast with the extant **Amirate Leadership** tradition which, since her amalgamation, Nigeria became *acculturated* thereto.

The Sources of Servant Leadership Template
Servant Leadership as espoused

here is a reflective synthesis from the messianic mission, teachings and exemplary practices of the Lord Jesus Christ. Firstly, His mission on earth was foretold in a landmark prophecy by Prophet Isaiah when he **foretold of Jesus' Ministry in the following words:**

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord"

Secondly, prior to the commencement of the Ministry, it is on record that His forerunner, John the Baptist, had similarly affirmed the intent of that same prophecy as referring to his principal, Jesus Christ, who was the anticipated messiah and for whom he was only a fore-runner:

"(As) it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying. The and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"

But please get me right; to avoid any form of doubts, I wish to implore the audience not to misconstrue the **servant leadership** philosophy as an exclusive Christian religious indoctrination, notwithstanding that it derives from Jesus' teachings. Rather, it should be appreciated as a universal moral principle applicable to the affairs of mankind irrespective of faith, ideological affiliation or cultural backgrounds. Besides, it is based on the same principle that has already made tremendous positive impact on the affairs of the world. Notably, it is the servant leadership philosophy that underpins the United Nation's life-changing **Bill of Rights** which comprise, among others, the **Universal Freedoms**, the principles of **Social Justice** and **Human Rights**; declarations which all its (UN) member countries have adopted for incorporation as integral part of their constitutional provisions (e.g. Nigeria's **Directive Principles of State Policy**) for good governance. From the foregoing, therefore, we can glean the following salient qualities that constitute the template of a **Servant Leadership** disposition in political participation, governance and public service delivery:

The Mountains Shall be made Low

In every society, institutions that once served good purposes may grow obsolete yet untouchable as to view every change or innovation as unacceptable deviations from the norm that must be blocked.

To be Continued week