

**G5 governors
have not
endorsed Atiku**
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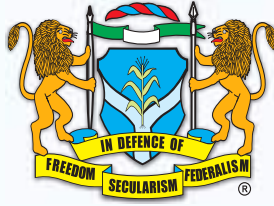


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"I can't be blackmailed over illicit enrichment"

President Muhammadu Buhari has said he cannot be accused of illicit enrichment or acquiring inexplicable wealth while in office.

Speaking on Monday night in Damaturu, Yobe State, he said whoever intends to serve Nigeria

must be prepared for the worst. It was at a state banquet organised in his honour after commissioning a number of projects in the state.

President Buhari reaffirmed that nobody could blackmail him for corruption, saying: "I do

not have one square-inch outside Nigeria."

According to a statement by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mr Femi Adesina, the President restated his vow to serve God and Nigeria until his last day in office and beyond.

He advised Nigerians to

remain patriotic, saying: "As I said more than 30 years ago, we have no other country than Nigeria, we must all stay here and salvage it together."

Noting that the most critical security challenge inherited by the administration nearly

eight years ago was the potent and pervasive threat of terrorism, the President expressed delight that normalcy has returned to affected states in Northeast Nigeria.

He recounted that the threat was particularly pervasive across the Northeast geopolitical zone

with Yobe State as one of the most hit by the terrorists.

He declared that he has fulfilled the commitment made to Nigerians in his May 29, 2015 inaugural address to frontally and courageously tackle Boko Haram terrorists and

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A team from Federal Ministry of Transport inspecting British American flyover bridge, Jos

FG to reimburse Plateau over federal road interventions

By PALANG KASMI

Plateau State government is soon to smile as the Federal Government (FG) has taken steps to reimburse the state over the Federal Road interventions the government has carried out.

The good news was disclosed during a visit to the state by a Federal Government Team, on the verification of state interventions on Federal Road infrastructure.

The team, led by the Minister of Transport, Mu'azu Jaji Sambo and Permanent Secretary Ministry of Works and

Housing amongst others visited Jos to assess the road projects carried out by the Plateau State government with a view to reimbursing the state

They were received by the state delegation led by Chief of Staff to the Governor, Noel Donjur, Commissioner for Works, Hon. Victor Lapang, Head

of Service, Engr. Sunday Hyat, Perm Sec Works, Engr. Alexander Plangnaan and other top government officials.

The Minister disclosed that the team was in the state on the directive of the President based on the submission made by Governor Simon Bako Lalong requesting for the

refund of funds expended by the state government on various Federal road projects and bridges such as the British-American Flyover and dualisation to Lamingo Junction Roundabout which is nearing completion.

Other completed projects inspected include Heipang-Mararaban

Jama'a- British American Junction, Secretariat Flyover Bridge, Polo Roundabout to Farin Gada, and British American Junction Flyover.

Others roads visited by the delegation are the ongoing construction of Demshin-Angwan Dadi-Kalong -Nyak, Shargan-

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News



Buhari

"I can't be blackmailed over illicit enrichment"

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stabilize the country.

"In the Northeast, God has helped us to clear Boko Haram, the economy has picked up and some people are asking me about the achievements of my promise to fight corruption.

"Well, under this system, fighting corruption is not easy.

"When I was in the military, as Head of State, I locked up some people because the Constitution says you must declare your assets and people who couldn't explain the differences in their assets, I locked them up. In the end, I was also locked up.

"So, if you want to serve this country you must be prepared for the worst.

"But one thing that I am

grateful to God for is that nobody can blackmail me.

"I do not have one-square inch outside Nigeria and I intend to stay in Nigeria when I retire from public office," he said.

Reflecting on his journey to the Presidency and re-election, the President said: "between 2003 and 2019, I visited all the local government areas in this country.

"In 2019 when I attempted a re-election, I visited every state and the number of people that came out to see who this Buhari is and was is more than what anybody can pay or force.

"So, I thank God that Nigerians understood me and I made a promise that I will serve God and

FG to reimburse Plateau over federal road interventions

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Angwan Rina road (42.49km) and rehabilitation of Longvel-Yelwa-Mato road (42km).

The Minister described the projects as people oriented and impactful to the citizens of Plateau State and those of other states who use them also.

He said "This visit is by a team that constitutes part of the ministerial committee to assess road projects that were undertaken by the Plateau State government on designated federal highways. It is also to reimburse the state government with monies expended in carrying out such projects".

He also said as somebody who knows Jos very well, he was highly impressed by the quality of the work and would have probably missed his way if he had visited alone despite his familiarity with the city.

Sambo said the Plateau State government needs to be commended for carrying out the projects despite its lean resources, emphasising that for these projects, the reimbursement is timely and in order.

assure Nigerians that they are working tirelessly to ensure that the elections are held in a peaceful atmosphere. Therefore, there is no cause for alarm."

is working with the security agencies to ensure that the elections are successfully held across the country.

"The security agencies have also continued to

G5 governors have not endorsed Atiku -Ortom

Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom, has debunked reports that the G5, a self-style integrity group of five aggrieved Governors of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), has resolved to support the Party's presidential candidate in the 2023 election.

Led by Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, other members of the G5 are Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, Samuel Ortom of Benue, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State and Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia State.

The G5, have withdrawn support from the presidential candidate of their party, Atiku Abubakar.

An online report had claimed that the aggrieved Governors have agreed to support Atiku's bid in the February 25 presidential election.

But Governor Ortom, in a statement issued on Tuesday, by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Terver Akase, described the report as false and a mischievous attempt targeted at embarrassing the "Integrity Governors", who have chosen the path of justice, fairness and equity.

The statement partly read: "We read a fictitious online report, which claimed that the Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom and his colleagues in the

G-5, have resolved to work for the presidential candidate of Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, to win the 2023 election.

"The report is not only false but also mischievous as it is targeted at embarrassing the five Governors, who have chosen the path of justice, fairness and equity.

"Manufacturers of the said report were apparently on a desperate mission to score a cheap political point. The report could not mention the place and date of the said meeting of G-5 Governors.

"The writers only sought to take advantage of the crisis within the PDP for their selfish purposes. Governor Ortom and other members of the G-5 have not endorsed the said presidential candidate.

"When the Governor met with the expanded state caucus of PDP yesterday, January 9, 2023, at the Benue Peoples House, Makurdi, his message to them was crystal clear that the national leadership of PDP has failed to utilise its internal conflict resolution mechanism, which has led to the crisis rocking the party.

"The Governor said during the meeting that if the crisis is not resolved before the elections, he would be left with no other option than to take a stand on the matter.

Deputy Governor of Plateau State, Prof. Sonni Tyoden who received the team on behalf of Governor Lalong said the verification of the projects

being carried out by the committee was evidence that the Rescue Administration has been working.

He said while the state

will be expecting the reimbursement of about six billion naira very soon, it will continue with the projects that are yet to be completed and ensure they are delivered on time and with the highest quality.

We're not a rubber stamp Assembly -Lawan

Senate President Ahmad Lawan has said that the ninth National Assembly did not operate like a rubber stamp in its collaborations with the executive.

He said the Assembly had passed many difficult and complicated legislations because President Muhammadu Buhari gave them all the support they needed to do their work.

The Senate President spoke on Monday in Damaturu, Yobe State at a banquet held in honour of President Buhari on first day of his two-day official visit to the state.

Lawan, according to a statement by his Special Adviser (Media), Ola Awoniyi, in Abuja, said: "Your Excellency, today by the Grace of God, it is almost three and half years that I have been working with you as Senate President.

"In all my years in the National Assembly, I have never worked with any President who never asked that he wanted things done a certain way but I want to admit here that Mr President, you have never asked me to do anything. You believe we should do what is best for our country.

"And when I said that we will continue to work with the executive arm of government, ensuring that the national interest is always our guide and focus, our opposition took me out of context.

"Some of them started writing that we are rubber stamp, that whatever is brought to National Assembly will be approved. I want to say here, that President Muhammadu Buhari never asked anything that is not in the national interest.

"And at the risk of being misquoted by the press, we all know who our President is. Before he became President and while he is still President, Nigeria, Nigeria, Nigeria is his focus, his concern. And that is why we believe that we should continue to work with him. We should support him.

"And in the ninth National Assembly, we have supported the executive arm of government fully because we believe this is one President, one administration, one government that has come to deliver Nigeria, from what happened in 16 years, from mis-governance by, of course, the PDP.

"Today, Mr President, I am proud to say that we have achieved so much working with you in the ninth National Assembly.

"We have passed the most difficult Bills, we have passed the most complicated legislations. This is because you gave us all the support that we needed to do our work in the National Assembly."

Lawan thanked the President for making Yobe

State to witness so much development during his tenure.

He also urged the President to consider establishment of Gum Arabic Research Institute in Yobe and deploy resources to develop Livestock Industry before his exit from power in May.

Lawan said: "Mr President, we have seen so much development in Yobe State during your tenure. Infact, Yobe never had it so good and we are very grateful.

"We have gotten appointments. You can see the high calibre Inspector General of Police and this IG of Police portrays what Yobe can do. Mr President, we still have some of our best still on the line waiting.

"Mr President, Yobe State, like Borno, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto, is on this Gum Arabic Zone. Gum Arabic is a cash crop that gave support to our people before. It is no more giving that support.

"Mr President, if there is one way that we can diversify our economy, Gum Arabic should be given a special position in our administration.

"And I want to say that this belt, from Borno to Sokoto, if we work on the Gum Arabic industry, we are going to earn foreign exchange for Nigeria.

"We spent billions of Naira, hundreds of millions of dollars to import Gum Arabic from other countries. We can do a lot more if we can get the support of Federal Government.

"Your Excellency, we already have a sub-station in Kajuwa, part of Yobe State. That sub-station is rather a research institute sub-station. That research institute is based in Benin, Edo state.

"Mr President, my belief is that Gum Arabic has that important economic value that deserves it's separate research institute because it can transform our country.

"So on behalf of all our people and on behalf of other states, Mr President, I want to urge that before you leave on 29th of May, 2023, let us see how we can make the sub-station in Kajuwa to be the headquarters of the new Gum Arabic Research Institute.

"I believe that that kind of institute will now take a dimension that will support our economy and of course, maybe a consequential result of protecting the environment as well.

"The second issue is the issue of livestock development. Mr President, when you said you will support the livestock industry, some people said it's private business. They shouldn't be supported.

"There is nothing more private than someone setting up a Bank, kill the Bank and then the obnoxious loans will now be taking over by AMCON. AMCON today has about N6trillion of toxic loans on our head.

"Mr President, the livestock industry in Nigeria especially between Borno, Sokoto and of course Yobe is an economy that is worth 33 trillion Naira.

"Incidentally, the most-poor states are in this zone. Where you have a potential of 33 trillion Naira economy, we have no reason to be poor. Mr President, I want to urge you that before you leave, let's deploy some resources to develop the livestock industry.

"We in the National Assembly will support you because we believe that our livestock industry can give us a lot more economic stability because our people will benefit economically and in fact can be another source of billions of revenue generation in Nigeria.

"So on behalf of those of us from this part, from Borno to Sokoto and indeed up to Rivers because almost every part of Nigeria has some livestock, Mr President, let's devote some resources. I don't know how we can get it, but about 300 billion naira can do some magic.

"Our state, the Yobe State is always ready to provide land for grazing reserve and whatever. Any state that desire to participate in the livestock development, Federal Government should support that state. Any state that doesn't want, let that state stay away.

"But we shouldn't deprive states that are prepared to work with the Federal Government to develop the livestock industry in Nigeria."



Lawan



Business & Economy

Excessive yuletide spending and new year realities

The Christmas and New Year celebrations have come and gone, however, excessive spending during the yuletide always lands people in trouble, Paul Okah writes.

THE Christmas celebration is over and many people are returning from different villages, for those who travelled, after the New Year celebration to face realities of life.

In different motor parks, vehicles travelling to cities like Lagos, Abuja, Calabar and Port Harcourt are highly sought after.

Checks revealed that many transportation companies have reduced the cost of transportation to different villages, whereas fares to cities have been hiked due to the rush.

In the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and most cities, businesses are yet to fully kick off as many people are gradually returning to resume their businesses, just as many offices are still offering skeletal offices.

As a result of the high cost of transportation fare and other fanfare that came with the festivities some people had resorted to borrowing money to meet up.

However, after the dust dies some people find themselves practically stranded. In extreme cases, some have had to sell off personal belonging like mobile phones to enable the return to their stations.

Those who cannot afford to sell their personal belonging often stay back in the village until middle or end of January, especially if they are self employed and have no urgent reason to rush back to their base.

For those who succeed in returning to their station despite the odds, they are forced to face the reality of paying school fees for their children, renewing house/shop rents or paying for new apartments, among other expenses.

Similarly, some lose their jobs or have to endure hardship in the face of late or non-payment of salaries by organisations.

For most people sticking to budget remains their greatest challenge. This is more so during festivities as a civil servant, Mr Innocent Kunle, said he spent more than he budgeted during the yuletide and was struggling to survive till the next salary would be paid.

He said: "I don't know what made me to travel home for the Christmas. I would have resisted the temptation as I had to spend more than I budgeted. When I got home, it was as if everyone was waiting for me with one problem or the other needing urgent attention. If it wasn't someone needing money to pay for hospital bill for his wife that just gave birth, it would be another person lacking food for Christmas and so on.

"Of course, in the spirit of Christmas, I had to give what I could for everyone to be happy. I even had to spend at weddings I



didn't even plan to attend before, just that I had to go with friends.

"I didn't need anyone to tell me that the time was up immediately after the New Year as I was fast running out of money.

"I won't lie to you; it has not been funny since my return to Abuja on Monday. Everywhere seems so locked up. I went to the office yesterday, but everywhere was so dry.

"Not many people have returned for the year, but I know things will start to improve from next week. My greatest concern is how to survive this month. I received my salary before travelling in December, so I have to wait for January salary before I can be able to afford certain things or even make better plans.

"Right now, I am hoping to borrow money from friends to be transporting myself to the office before my January salary arrives."

On his part, a businessman, Peter Obiora, said he spent money meant for his house rent and presently hoping for a miracle to augment his rent or face problems with his landlord.

"I honestly didn't have a memorable Christmas because of unexpected expenses. Some things I did not envisage to spend on just kept popping up.

"Children are always fun, so I had to spend on them as many relatives kept visiting with their

children when they learnt that I was home for Christmas.

"My greatest headache now is getting N200,000 to complete my house rent. I pay N500,000 for a one bedroom apartment in Dutse and had the money saved before travelling home for Christmas. However, I had to dip into the money while at home because of unexpected expenses. One of my younger brothers was operated on, so I had to contribute to settle the hospital bill.

"It is not easy to ignore certain expenses especially if one has been away from the village for a long time.

"The cost of living also didn't help matters as those selling in the village hiked prices though it was expected. I am a businessman and know all about making profit with demands. I know I will make the money for my rent by next month when businesses pick up, so I am hoping my landlord will understand.

"Even in business, things will not pick up until middle of the month or even end of the month. This is because many people who are not working will be waiting for transportation fare to come down. The business will continue being in the village until the end of the month when those who travelled to the village must have returned to the city.

"Many people will even be

interested in buying items on credit and pay when they receive their January salaries, so it is usually not easy."

A development economist and board chairman of Amaka Chiuwike-Uba Foundation (ACUF), Dr Chiuwike Uba, said that discipline and proper budgeting will rescue people from the yearly mistake of overspending every Yuletide.

He said: "Christmas, no doubt, is a period of celebration and it comes with so much pressure to spend. Truthfully, by experience, it is evident that a lot of people make extra cash during Christmas.

"How this happens is something I do not have the explanations for. Unfortunately, in the euphoria of the Christmas celebration or rather in a bid to belong, many of us, year in, year out, end up spending all our savings during Christmas. What a world!

"As I stated above, the major reason for over-spending is our quest to belong. Most of us do not want to be seen as not doing well or not belonging to the happening clique. Some go as far as borrowing to achieve the fretting and 'soon-to-be realised' painful (mis)adventure. Most of us are like Nigeria. We increase our consumption every Christmas even when our

revenue is shrinking.

"To address this problem requires budgeting anchored on real planning. There is no idle fund. Any money that is not allocated or used for something will always end up being spent, one way or the other.

"Therefore, I advise people to articulate and write down all their accrued and expected bills before, during and after Christmas. These expenses include the children's school fees, house rents, food items needed in the house for at least 2-3 months after Christmas, some money for emergencies, etc.

"Let me say this: it is not enough to write them down (budget), it is important to make the needed payments for the items listed and keep the money for the emergency somewhere else. Christmas purchases/spending can only commence after the settlement of the bills identified.

"The truth is that almost all the festive spending creates significant waste and causes more sicknesses afterward. Some gifts are significantly unwanted and unappreciated by even those you give them to. Such wastes come at huge costs to the family's budgets and should be discouraged."

Source: Blue Print



Business & Economy

NNPC sells PMS at loss -Sylva

THE Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Chief Timipre Sylva, says the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited is selling Premium Motor Spirit, popularly called petrol, at a loss because of its mandate from the Federal Government as regards PMS subsidy,

Sylva's remarks recently came as oil marketers stated that the supply hitches in the downstream oil sector that often leads to fuel scarcity, might persist till June, based on the government's plan to end petrol subsidy in that month.

The petroleum minister spoke in Abuja at the resumption of the scorecard series (2015-2023) of the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.).

Last week, the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed, said the Federal Government had budgeted about N3.6tn for fuel subsidy till June 2023.

Sylva, while speaking in Abuja, insisted that subsidy had been a burden, but stressed that it was a mandate on NNPC which had made the oil firm to continue selling PMS at a loss.

He said, "The management of the supply situation under this subsidy regime is not easy. We must all agree that so much money is being burnt in our cars, but somehow we have to put funds to continue to keep the country wet."

"Sometimes if you really think deeply you begin to wonder what magic we are doing to be able to keep this country wet consistently. Considering that you buy something, let's say for N10, and you are to sell it at a loss.

"And then you are expected to go back to buy the same thing, and come back again to sell it at a loss. So at every point in time you are looking for more money to continue to buy it, because you're mandated to sell it at a loss."

Sylva added, "So if you are a businessman, look at it from



Sylva

this perspective that you are now in the business where you are mandated to sell at a loss to the public. That is not an easy job, I must tell you."

Respond in to a question on how he would feel when buying petrol at N300/litre, Sylva said he would not feel bad about it.

"If you ask me how I will feel as a private citizen to buy petrol at N300/litre, sadly, I will say I won't feel bad, knowing the actual situation. And if you compare Nigeria to other countries, you will understand," he stated.

The minister added, "When you convert the N300/litre that you are talking about to other currencies, then you will understand. A lot of you travel to the United Kingdom or the United States, how much do you buy petroleum products there? Even in Arab communities that produce crude oil."

He said the cost of the commodity in Nigeria was not as high as what was obtained in other countries, but stressed that the current national consensus was that subsidy on petrol was no longer sustainable.

"Unfortunately we are still in a subsidised regime, which all of us know. As a country, I think it is a national consensus now that subsidy is not sustainable, but together we will get there," Sylva stated.

He said until the cost of petroleum products were market driven, investors would continue to shy away from investing in the downstream oil sector.

"Under a subsidised regime, who is going to invest? If you build a refinery, how is your refinery going to make profit under a subsidised regime? But if you have a market-driven situation, you'll see that a lot of investors will come.

"And the more refineries we have, this problem of access to petroleum products will be a thing of the past," Sylva stated.

The Federal Government on Monday revealed that it had acquired shares in four refineries operating in various locations across the country.

It outlined the refineries to include the 650,000 barrels per day integrated Dangote Refinery in Lagos; 12,000bpd Azikel Modular Refinery in Bayelsa; 5,000bpd Waltersmith Modular Refinery in Imo; and 2,500bpd Dupont Modular Refinery in Edo.

The government also announced that the 60,000bpd component of the Port Harcourt Refining Company in Rivers State, would begin operations in the first quarter of 2023, noting that the facility had been completed.

BAUCHI State, just like most states in northern Nigeria, has had its share of agricultural challenges.

Although farming is one of the mainstays of the state, it is no doubt accompanied with some challenges that sometimes discourage residents from taking to farming.

These challenges include inadequate farm inputs, poor agricultural yields, food insecurity, lack of awareness of healthy food diversity for nutritional balance, malnutrition among others.

However, some organisations such as Oxfam have taken the initiative to champion agriculture revolution in the state to complement the state government's efforts towards boosting agriculture.

Dr Vincent Ahonsi, Country Director of Oxfam Nigeria, at a recent Livelihoods and Nutritional Empowerment (LINE) Project Close-out and Lessons' Dissemination event affirmed that Bauchi farmers face several challenges in their trade.

The event was organised by Oxfam in collaboration with the Canadian Government in Abuja.

He said with this in mind, the Canadian Government intervened by sponsoring a 10 million dollars Livelihood and Nutritional Empowerment (LINE) project implemented by Oxfam in six local government areas (LGAs) of Bauchi State.

According to him, the project agreement was signed between the Government of Canada and Oxfam on March 21st 2016, and the implementation was carried out in Bauchi State.

The project which has been running for six years has empowered 16,598 smallholder farmers in six LGAs of Tafawa Balewa, Alkaleri, Ningi, Darazo, Shira and Gamawa with dry season farming inputs including seedlings, fertilizers and herbicides.

"Oxfam is a world-wide development organization that mobilizes the power of the people against poverty.

"In Nigeria, we also work to influence policy change in favor of the poor and most

Empowering Bauchi farmers through Canada intervention



Mohammed

vulnerable, promoting food security, and supporting small scale farmers to improve the livelihoods of men and women in rural areas.

Ahonsi said the project trained farmers on climate-smart agriculture, engaged in financial inclusion, which is setting up village savings and loans, associations and cooperatives.

He said the project provided no fewer than 1400 boreholes as well as no fewer than 700 pumping machines to facilitate dry season farming in Bauchi state.

According to him, the project is a demonstration of a robust cooperation between the governments of Canada and Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, the Bauchi State Government and Oxfam.

Ahonsi therefore, said the LINE Project was implemented through local partnerships to purposely build the capacity of local stakeholders and NGOs, train small-scale farmers to improve their capacities and knowledge base; and strengthen other local value chain actors.

Ms Djifa Ahado, Head of Development Cooperation, High Commission of Canada to Nigeria, commended the project for

empowering many farmers in rural areas in Bauchi State.

Ahado expressed satisfaction with the performance of the LINE project adding that it ended with very tangible results.

"In retrospect, this project was approved before Canada had launched its feminist international assistance policy. Yet all the project's interventions were designed with women in mind, and were testing ways to reach gender equality in communities, within local government and at the state levels.

Mr Saleh Giade, the Permanent Secretary, Bauchi State Ministry of Budget and Planning, said that the LINE Project recorded huge successes in the selected six local government areas.

Giade said that there were plans to extend the lessons learnt from the project to other local governments in the state.

Some beneficiaries of the project expressed gratitude to Canadian government and its implementing partner, Oxfam, for the privilege they enjoyed.

One of the beneficiaries, Ms Fatima Aminu, said before participating in the project she could barely make ends meet.

She said the knowledge and empowerment she received she was able to engage in dry season farming through which she made some money.

She said Oxfam gave them a pumping machine for irrigation and her farm had more yield, unlike during the wet season farming.

"Oxfam gave us economic trees to plant which is another way of fighting desertification, we were given seeds which we have been replicating, and we were also linked to where we can buy fertilizer at a cheaper rate", she said.

Ms Hajaratu Pisagih, a partner in the Women Empowerment Initiative Bauchi state, said the project touched the lives of many women in the state.

Pisagih said prior to the project, many women were marginalised, however, the project made it possible for women to participate in decision-making and have farms.

She said this has increased productivity and brought a lot of economic resources to their families.

"We also introduced to a savings scheme where we save money, a woman who has never held N5000 of her own got about N300, 000 after the savings and it has put smiles on their families and the communities", she said.

COP27: FG to strengthen ties with W/African countries

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) recently revealed that crude oil production in Nigeria rose to 1.235 million barrels per day in December 2022, representing the highest output since March when the country produced 1.237mbpd.

Figures obtained from the commission in Abuja showed that oil production increased from 1.185mbpd in November to 1.235mbpd in December, indicating that the effort of the Federal Government and security agencies in curbing oil theft was paying off.

Crude oil production in Nigeria had crashed to as low as 0.937mbpd in September last year, which was the lowest output recorded in Nigeria in several years.

The crash in oil production was attributed to the activities of pipeline vandals and oil thieves in the Niger

Delta, a development that also made some international firms leave Nigeria.

Additional figures from the NUPRC showed that crude oil production, without blended or unblended condensates, in January, February, March, April, May and June, were 1.398mbpd, 1.257mbpd, 1.237mbpd, 1.219mbpd, 1.024mbpd and 1.158mbpd respectively.

For the months of July, August, September, October, November and December, the oil production figures were 1.08mbpd, 0.972mbpd, 0.937mbpd, 1.014mbpd, 1.185mbpd and 1.235mbpd respectively.

Recently, President Muhammadu Buhari ordered security agencies to eradicate crude oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta before May 29, 2023, in order to effectively ramp up the country's oil output.

Buhari gave the directive through the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Chief

Timipre Sylva, while addressing troops of the Joint Task Force Operation Delta Safe in Effurum, Delta State, and Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Sylva was quoted in a statement issued in Abuja by his media aide, Horatius Egua, as saying, "Mr. President has mandated us to eradicate crude oil theft. He has directed that no litre of crude oil should be stolen across the country again, especially in the South-South.

"He wants crude oil theft completely eliminated by May 29, 2023, as one of the legacies of his government. This is the message from Mr President. We are not where we want to be, but we are happy at what we are seeing."

Prior to the renewed efforts of the Federal Government in tackling the menace of crude oil thieves, the nation's daily crude oil production was about 900,000 barrels per day.

But with the recent improvements in security

efforts, there has been an increase in oil output, as production has risen to about 1.5 million barrels per day, according to the statement.

Sylva added, "I am happy

to hear that morale is high here. We were here a few months ago to hand over the mandate of Mr. President to you and that is to ensure that there is zero tolerance for crude oil theft in the region."



Buhari



2023 budget of transition and N77trn debt burden

In the past few days the media has been awash with news about the huge debt burden that the incoming government in May 29, would inherit from the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. AFONNE EMMANUEL writes.

IN the past few days the media has been awash with news about the huge debt burden that the incoming government in May 29, would inherit from the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration.

This is coming as President Muhammadu Buhari signed the 2023 budget of 21.83 trillion Naira into law and said the country would pay 1.8 trillion Naira in extra interest if the legislature rejects his loan-to-bond swap request.

A section of the Nigeria media had quoted the Debt Management Office (DMO) as saying that the incoming administration would inherit a debt burden of N77trillion.

Findings by the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), however, revealed that the country's total public debt stock as at Sept. 2022 was N44trillion (103 billion dollars).

The bulk of the new borrowings is drawn from a loan-to-bond swap (proposed securitisation of Ways and Means Advances) from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and new borrowings to fund the 2023 budget.

The Ways and Means Advances are, however, not within the management and control of the DMO until they are securitised.

Securitisation is the conversion of an asset, especially a loan, into marketable securities, typically for the purpose of raising cash by selling the m to other investors. That is, loan-to-bond swap

If the Ways and Means Advances securitisation request by Mr President is approved by the National Assembly, they can be managed by the DMO, and turned into investable securities like bonds, with a moratorium, long period of repayment and lower interest rates.

And contrary to some misconception, the country's total debt stock comprises both domestic and external borrowings of the Federal Government, the 36 state governments as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

According to Patience Oniha, the Director-General of the DMO, the country's debt would only reach N77trillion when the Ways and Means Advances from the CBN are securitised.

Oniha said that the securitisation of the Ways and Means Advances would enable the DMO to include the debt in the public debt stock thereby improving debt transparency.

She added that the total debt stock included external and domestic debts of the Federal Government, the 36 state governments and the FCT.

"Taking into account a number of on-going activities, the total



public debt stock; that is the external and domestic debts of the Federal Government, the 36 state governments and the FCT would be about N77 trillion.

"The debts that will be added to the public debt data in 2023 include the one trillion Naira Ways and Means Advances to finance the supplementary budget, which has already been approved by the National Assembly (NASS).

"It also includes N22.72 trillion Ways and Means Advances currently under the consideration by the NASS.

"The projected debt stock for May 2023 also includes N5.567 trillion, representing about 50 per cent of the new borrowing of N11.134 trillion in the 2023 Appropriation Act.

"It also includes new Promissory Notes estimated at N1.5 trillion to be issued to settle arrears of the FGN and judgement debts," she said.

She added that estimates for new borrowings by state governments and the FCT are also included.

"From these figures, it is clear that the Ways and Means Advances of N22.72 trillion which represents funds already spent, is the largest source of the increase," Oniha said.

Analysts describe the Ways and Means Advances as a direct engagement between the Federal Government and the apex bank, with the DMO only

able to take charge after the National Assembly approves securitisation of the advances.

According to Opeoluwa Akinyemi, an economist, one way that the Federal Government sources for loan locally is borrowing from the CBN through Ways and Means.

"The advantage of this option is that the debt is serviced in Naira, which we have control over, and CBN act enables CBN to decide the interest rate which could be as little as zero interest rate," he said.

The Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed explained that when the Ways and Means gets legislative backing, it would help reduce the current interest on it to about nine per cent, while also stretching repayment period to about 40 years.

According to Ahmed, at the moment, the Ways and Means is running at interest rates averaging 18.5 per cent.

"So, once the legislative approval is given, it will benefit from a lower interest cost of nine per cent and will benefit from a stretched initiated plan of 40 years with a three-year moratorium which will provide very significant relief to the Federal Government," she said.

Ahmed emphasised that Nigeria was not planning to restructure its debt, adding that the country was committed to meeting its domestic and

external debt obligations.

She said that the government would, however, continue to utilise appropriate debt management tools to streamline the cost and risk profile in the debt portfolio.

The minister said total public debt would rise to 35.3 per cent of GDP from 22.97 per cent with the loan conversion.

"The conversion and new borrowings would also take domestic debt to 70 per cent of total public debt in 2023, from 61.1 per cent currently", she said.

Since 2015, the total amount of money the Federal Government borrowed from the CBN, through Ways and Means Advances to meet fiscal obligation has increased substantially.

Analysts say that such financing of the Federal Government by the CBN has the effect of debasing the local currency, and could worsen inflation.

It has, thus, become imperative for the Federal Government to take aggressive measures to improve revenue generation and curb dependence on domestic and external borrowings to fund its annual budgets.

This will also require a more committed drive towards moving from deficit budgeting annually towards equilibrium and even budget surplus which the country has potential to achieve.

And, as the Buhari's tenure winds down on May 29, Nigerians are hopeful that the next President would take revenue generation and prudent expenditure more seriously, so as to ease the country's debt burden. (NAN)



Ahmed

Politics

I plan to revive the economy

From GYANG PAM

-Tinubu

PRESIDENTIAL candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu says he plans to revive the economy of the country seeing how Nigerians are facing real hardship. Tinubu who said the country is suffering even under the present administration stressed that he will fix it, if elected.

He made the comment Monday at the launch of the presidential and governorship campaign in Yola the Adamawa State capital and assured Nigerians that he will revive the nation's economy, provide employment for the teeming youth, end insecurity and eradicate poverty in every nook and cranny of the country.

Tinubu then congratulated the people of Adamawa for having Binani as their gubernatorial candidate who is considered as a mother, a mentor of men and women, a dynamic Nigerian and a revolutionary politician. He further said Binani is a blessing not only to the people of Adamawa but to the entire Nigerians.

On his part, President Muhammadu Buhari commended the people of Nigeria for their overwhelming



Tinubu

support to the APC from 2015 to date. He urged the good people of Adamawa to ensure that APC emerges victorious in the coming 2023 election. Also speaking, Senator Aishatu Ahmed Dahiru Binani commended the good people of the state for all the support and prayers and promised to provide a purposeful and dynamic leadership in the state. She further expressed her concern the unfortunate situation civil servants,

retirees and the teeming youths have found themselves and promised to make things happen if elected into office.

Director General of the Tinubu for President, and Governor of Plateau State, His Excellency Simon Lalong commended the people of Adamawa for their support and prayers for Binani. He gave assurance of the total support and commitment of all the present and past governors of Nigeria for her victory.

PLATEAU State chapter of People's Democratic Party (PDP) kick started its campaign to the seventeen (17) local government areas of the state yesterday. The state gubernatorial candidate of the PDP, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang, made the disclosure at an interaction with journalists at the NUJ Press Centre Jos.

The gubernatorial candidate who was on a courtesy visit to the Plateau State headquarters of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Jos, disclosed this while speaking to the gentlemen of the press ahead of the campaigns.

He said they were in the NUJ Secretariat to intimate members of the press of their plans to kick start campaign in the 17 local government areas of the state through the three senatorial zones. The goal is for them to market their candidates.

Mutfwang solicited the support of Journalists in reporting their activities.

When elected, Mutfwang, promises to create a new relationship that would see journalists as partners in the development of Plateau State and not the other way round.

"We are not coming for tea party, but to deliver a credible leadership through human management and will have a structured security system that will bring back our 'Home

Plateau PDP guber candidate kick starts campaign

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

journalists in the likes of Mr. Jonathan Ishaku and Dan Agbese. He appealed that they would be glad if the gubernatorial hopeful stated.

"We will attract investors and make Plateau the best state in Nigeria in the area of investment and infrastructure development so that we will boost the economy of Plateau. We call on Plateau people to trust in us and we assure you that we are competent and credible from the presidential candidate down to the state because Atiku is an experienced leader," he assured.

The gubernatorial candidate however described Plateau NUJ as breeding ground for the nationally recognized

journalists on the Plateau would honour their invitation when the need arises.

Responding on behalf of the journalists on the Plateau, the State Chairman of NUJ, Mr. Paul Jatau, while welcoming the team assured them that as journalists, they do not play politics as the profession demands objectivity, fairness and truth.

Jatau promised to focus on the Plateau project and would ensure strict professionalism in their reportage, praying also that the forthcoming elections would be peaceful.



Mutfwang

Sokoto PDP storms Tureta Bodinga LGA

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

THE people of Tureta and Bodinga in their large numbers came out and rolled out the red carpet to receive the campaign train of PDP who were in the state to hold their governorship rally.

Arriving the venue, the party leaders led by the Sokoto State Governor, Aminu Tambuwal, and gubernatorial candidate, Mallam Saidu Umar, generated excitement among the waiting party faithful the moment they laid their eyes on Umar and Tambuwal.

In his remarks, the governorship candidate said, if voted into office, his administration would embark on a consolidation drive to improve and sustain on the noble initiatives of the present administration.

Umar, who is also the Mallam Ubandoma Sokoto, was a bit nostalgic when he said, the moment he set his foot on Tureta Local Government he reminisced his late friend Alhaji Arzika Tureta of blessed memory.

Enunciating the political prowess and influence of Arzika Tureta, Umar said his presence aided the landmark victory of the PDP in the area during the 2019 general elections.

He urged politicians to emulate his sterling qualities of connecting with the downtrodden as his popularity even in death was still evident. He added that the mammoth crowd at the rally confirmed his assertion. Late Arzika Tureta was regarded as the strongman of Tureta politics as he served at different times as

commissioner in the state.

Umar appreciated the people of the area for standing with the PDP, promising to complete all the ongoing projects and initiate more life changing projects in the area and the state as a whole.

Our correspondent also reports that about 4,883 APC members bade farewell to their former party and embraced PDP where they promised to work for the victory of the party at all levels.

Meanwhile, the campaign train in Bodinga received another dazzling and electrifying turnout. Giving out his campaign message to the

massive crowd, a highly elated Tambuwal assured them of the resolve of his administration to sustain projects on key areas - notably education, health, agriculture as well as youth and women empowerment programmes.

Mallam Umar, on his part, urged the electorate to vote for all PDP candidates in the upcoming polls.

He also gave a pass mark to the Tambuwal administration for executing laudable projects that touched the lives of the common man, promising to build on such initiatives for meaningful development.

At Bodinga Local

Government, about 7,580 members of APC dumped the party for the PDP.

APC chieftain leads supporters to PDP

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

THE former Nigeria Ambassador to Jordan and chieftain of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), Faruk Malami Yabo, has defected from the party to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Sokoto State.

Faruk Mallami Yabo the immediate past Ambassador of Nigeria to Iran and Jordan,

announced his defection during the PDP rally in Yabo town.

Faruk Malami was former governorship aspirant of the All Progressive Congress (APC), during the primaries before he stormed out of the venue alleging irregularities in the conduct of the primaries.

Yabo, former Deputy Governorship candidate of

APC while announcing his defection, described his defection to the PDP as homecoming and said, "I have always been a family member of PDP and my defection today is like someone returning back home. I thank everyone who is part of this movement and I promise to help the party emerge victorious in the forthcoming general elections," he affirmed.

While welcoming him, the governor of Sokoto State, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, described the defection of Malami Yabo as the icing on the cake of the party's campaign rally in Yabo town.

He commended the former Ambassador for taking a bold decision in the interest of the people of Sokoto. Tambuwal assured the people of the local government and the state in general that the PDP governorship candidate, Mallam Saidu Umar will build on the successes recorded by his administration.

Also speaking, the gubernatorial candidate of the PDP commended people of Yabo Local Government for coming out in large numbers to receive PDP members.

Governorship candidate of PDP therefore promised to continue with the good work of Tambuwal administration once he emerges victorious in the election.

'I will belittle and remove Mohammed'

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

THE immediate past Wazirin Bauchi, Alhaji Muhammadu Bello Kirfi, has vowed to remove the state governor, Bala Mohammed from office come 2023 election in the same manner he brought him to power in 2019. Kirfi, an elder statesman, stated this for the first time after he was sacked by the state government as Wazirin Bauchi.

A statement from Bauchi Emirate Council said it sacked the former Waziri because of what it described as "disloyalty and disrespect toward the state governor".

A letter signed by the council secretary, Alhaji Shehu Mudi Muhammad and dated 3rd January 2023 confirmed his removal.

Speaking during a media

chat with journalists at his residence in Bauchi on Sunday, Baba Waziri, as he is popularly called boasted that, "The way I brought him into office will also be the way to get him out of power."

He said, "I regard what happens to me as a simple incident because something has been worrying my mind. I am one of those who stood for him to become the governor and i was a little bit disappointed by his performance.

"This is the worse he can do to me, but it doesn't matter because I am not gaining anything from the office of (Waziri).

"I was instrumental in bringing him to power in 2019. At the time when Bala needed the critical support to actualise his political ambition, I was there for him all through. I did all I could to

see that he emerged victorious against a government that enjoyed federal might at that time."

Baba Waziri noted with serious concern that the governor betrayed the trust of all the political gladiators that made huge sacrifices to bring him to power. Adding that nearly four years into the administration, salient issues crucial to the people of the state remained unattended to despite repeated promises.

The octogenarian claims that Governor Bala had fought every single political bigwig in Bauchi that worked for his victory in the 2019 general elections.

"I leave everything to Almighty Allah. He will judge between what is between me and him," he added.

When contacted, the Director of Media and Publicity 2023 PDP Gubernatorial

Politics

Why the G-5 should beware of Tinubu

In my previous piece a few weeks ago, I had sued for the accommodation of the interest of the G-5 governors which is led by Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State. In that piece titled: "Can Ayu make the sacrifice? I advocated for the pacification of the seemingly implacable G-5 governors through the resignation of the national chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, for peace to reign. Writes IFEANYI MADUAKO.

GOVERNOR Wike, having lost both the presidential and the vice presidential positions, can never back down on his demand for the resignation of the national chairman. He has gone too far in his gallery display to swallow his ego for Ayu to remain as the national chairman.

Therefore, the presidential candidate, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, should never expect the G-5 governors, particularly Wike, to lose the latest battle just the way he lost the two previous ones. Atiku should bend backwards to also accommodate G-5's ego and idiosyncrasies.

Atiku and Ayu should not always expect to win every internal battle in the party, especially this extant one. This is the time to stoop low to conquer, it's time to massage Wike's ego for the party to go into the general election in one accord.

Before the end of this January, the national chairman should convene the meeting of the National Executive Council (NEC) of the party where he should announce his resignation to cede the slot to the G-5 to do as they wish. The most important thing is winning the presidential election next month, and every sacrifice is worth making for that to be realized. Being a national chairman of the PDP for even decades without capturing the presidency is useless.

Recent reports speculated that the G-5 and the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, met in London to negotiate an agreement to support each other. Tinubu, through his media office, had denied the meeting. However, the G-5 governors have yet to deny the meeting. The G-5 governors should be wary of Tinubu to save their political future.

Of the five governors of the G-5, four of them are candidates in the forthcoming general election for various positions. First, if they lend their support to Tinubu of the APC, and he eventually wins the presidential election, he will disappoint the G-5 governors.

Since there's a space or interval of two weeks in the presidential election, the National Assembly, the governorship and the State Houses of Assembly elections, once Tinubu collects his Certificate of Return as duly elected, Oyo State will be swept away by the bandwagon effect



G-5 Governors



Tinubu

that would follow suit.

Governor Seyi Makinde will lose his second term even after supporting Tinubu two weeks earlier. Tinubu himself will convince the Oyo electorate to join the central government by supporting the governorship candidate of the APC in the State.

In Abia State, Chief Ikechi Emenike of the APC will also win the gubernatorial election. Senator Orji Uzor

Kalu, the current Chief Whip of the Senate, will join forces with Tinubu and Emenike to defeat PDP in Abia State. In Rivers State, the governorship candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) Sen. Magnus Abe, would be provided with enormous force by Tinubu to win the state by defeating the PDP candidate who's Wike's choice.

Tinubu will sacrifice the APC in Rivers State because of his

frosty political relationship with Rotimi Amaechi. Don't forget that Sen. Magnus Abe is a strong supporter of Tinubu. He was in APC until Tinubu won the presidential ticket, and also played a major role in Tinubu's victory in the primary election.

In Benue State, the governorship candidate of the APC is a very popular Reverend Father. All he needs to win the election is APC winning the presidential election first, then the bandwagon effect will sweep him straight into office seamlessly. The APC may not win in Enugu State because they have a very weak governorship and senatorial candidates unlike the PDP and the Labour Party (LP).

By the way, among the G-5 governors, the governors of Abia, Benue and Enugu States are senatorial candidates. The presidential and the National Assembly elections would be conducted on the same day and

at the same time. Once a voter is accredited to vote, three sheets of ballot papers; the presidential, the senate and the House of Representatives, would be issued to the eligible voter.

How would illiterate voters distinguish or separate the three ballot papers to vote only the National Assembly candidates for PDP and another candidate in Rivers State? How would an old mama in the village be able to make the distinction?

The G-5 governors would shoot themselves in the foot if they go ahead to support Tinubu of the APC. Should Tinubu win the election, Nigeria will be forced to a one-party state because a federal government under the leadership of Tinubu will strangle both the PDP and the LP just like he has done in Lagos State for the past 24 years. A word should be enough for the wise.

"Recent reports speculated that the G-5 and the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, met in London to negotiate an agreement to support each other. Tinubu, through his media office, had denied the meeting. However, the G-5 governors have yet to deny the meeting. The G-5 governors should be wary of Tinubu to save their political future. Of the five governors of the G-5, four of them are candidates in the forthcoming general election for various positions. First, if they lend their support to Tinubu of the APC, and he eventually wins the presidential election, he will disappoint the G-5 governors".

IMAGES

GOVERNOR LALONG SIGNS 2023 BUDGET

Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) last year signed the 2023 budget at the EXCO Chambers, new Government House Rayfield, Jos. Witnessed by the Speaker, PLHA, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Sanda and Chief Judge, Justice David Mann



Governor Lalong (middle) appending his signature on the 2023 budget being watched keenly by the Speaker (left) and Chief Judge (right)



From left are; Commissioner for Lands, Survey and Town Planning, Director General, Research Planning and Documentation and the Head of Civil Service



Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong delivering remarks at the ceremony



Cross section of members of EXCO at the ceremony



A cross section of Commissioners listening to remarks by the Governor



Commissioner of Finance, Dr. Mrs. Regina Soemlat (left) with the Commissioner of Youth and Sports, Hon. Daniel Dung Dalyop



Another section of members of the State Executive Council at the budget signing ceremony



Governor Simon Bako Lalong (2nd left) Speaker, PLHA, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Sanda (left) Deputy Governor, Prof. Sonni Gwanle Tyoden (right) and the Chief Judge, Justice David Mann in a group photograph

Politics

Efforts of anti-graft agencies, INEC to curb vote-buying

Vote-buying has remained a major part of the problems of election management in Nigeria. Twenty four years since the return of democracy in the country, it has remained an obstacle to free, fair and credible elections in the country. Writes ISMAIL ABDULAZIZ.

THE issue has attracted various responses from stakeholders who mostly view it as one of the cankerworms that constitutes brazen assault on Nigeria's democracy.

As Nigeria prepares for the 2023 general elections, the problem of vote-buying is being tackled by various stakeholders, including anti-graft agencies with a view to permanently bury the problem.

Already the Nigerian government has criminalised vote-buying and selling, thus making it easier for security agencies and the courts to deal with culprits.

One of the major stakeholders, the Chairman, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mr Abdulrasheed Bawa described vote-buying as continuous exploitation of large section of the society by politicians.

"Like the proverbial child who traded his future in order to satisfy his immediate, we have consistently witnessed the continuous exploitation of a large section of the society by politicians.

"The vulnerable have continued to remain oblivious of the consequence of vote-buying and selling.

"They fail to realise that when they sell their votes, they also give up their rights to demand for transparency and accountability from elected leaders. "They sell their future and that of their unborn children for an insignificant and greatly undervalued sum," he said.

Analysts listed some consequences of vote buying to include loss of integrity of the elections and elected officials, recruitment of bad leaders, promoting poverty and mortgaging the rights of the electorates to demand accountability.

In spite of these consequences, Nigerians have continued to engage in illegal trading of votes.

According to the Director-General, National Orientation Agency (NOA), Dr Garba Abari, survey-based evidence shows that one in five Nigerians are exposed to vote peddling while almost four in 10 Nigerians are exposed to electoral violence.

To effectively tackle the menace of vote buying, Sections 121 and 122 of the Electoral Act 2022 has made it a criminal offence in the country.

Section 121 (1) of the Act stipulates that: "any person who directly or indirectly, induced any other person to vote or refrain from voting commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of N500,000 or imprisonment for a term of 12 months or both.

"Section 121 (2) stipulates that: "a voter commits an offence of bribery where, before, or during an election, directly or indirectly, by himself or herself, or by any other person, on his or her behalf receives, agrees, or contracts for any money, gift, loan, or valuable consideration, office, place of employment, for his or herself, or any other person, for voting or agreeing to vote, or for refraining or agreeing to refrain from voting at any such election."

A recent research by Good Governance Awareness Initiative (GGAI), an NGO, identified poverty, threats by political parties, lack of proactive measures by security agencies and lack of interest in the electoral process as some of the factors encouraging vote-buying.

The Executive Director of GGA, Ms Maureen Onwukwe said that over the years, elections in Nigeria had been marred by ballot stuffing and snatching,



Yakubu

as well as violence.

Onwukwe, however, said that with the technological innovations introduced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Electoral Act 2022, it will now be extremely difficult for political parties to rig elections in Nigeria.

"That is why politicians now devise vote-buying as another means to manipulate the supposed decision of electorate. "This presents a fresh danger to the integrity and reliability of elections in Nigeria," she said.

Already, INEC has taken measures to tackle the trend and ensure the sanctity of the electoral process. Among the measures taken by INEC was going into partnership with EFCC and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) to arrest and prosecute vote sellers and buyers.

According to INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmoud Yakubu, INEC has also re-configured all polling units to bring the ballot boxes closer to voting cubicles and banned the use of mobile phones and photographic devices by voters while in the voting cubicles.

"We have also intensified our collaboration with the EFCC and ICPC to deal with both the buyers and the takers under the law," he said.

He added that in an effort to curb the menace, the membership of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security was expanded to include the two anti-corruption agencies.

"The two agencies have been deploying their operatives during elections and this effort is paying off.

"For instance, following arrests made during the recent Osun Governorship election held on July 16, the EFCC made arrests and after investigation found evidence to charge the suspects to court in Osogbo.

"We are right now working with the EFCC to ensure their prosecution. I wish to commend the EFCC for this initiative and



Bawa



Owasanoye

assure them of our support at all times," Yakubu said.

Speaking at a one-day stakeholders summit on "Addressing the Influence of Money on the 2023 General Election" last December, Yakubu assured that INEC would not relent in its determination to prevent vote-buying during the 2023 general election.

He however called for concerted actions by citizens to reject inducements to sway their votes through vote-buying and report such cases to INEC and other agencies.

"Financial institutions, religious organisations, traditional institutions, the media, civic bodies and citizens must also join in this fight," Yakubu said.

Also speaking at the summit, Chairman of ICPC, Prof. Bolaji Owasanoye, said vote buying has the tendency to scuttle good governance. According to Owasanoye, a government that is purchased will have no obligation to

the people.

"A faulty and corrupt electoral process emboldens incompetent and corrupt government. They do not have to care about our feelings and our complaints.

"In such situation, impunity will reign and corruption will thrive" the ICPC chairman added.

The Inspector-General of Police, Mr Usman Baba, said the police had devised strategies to arrest and prosecute politicians moving on election days with tonnes of cash to buy votes.

Baba said concerted efforts were being made by the police, as the lead agency in election security management, to ensure that the use of money was not allowed to influence the 2023 general elections.

"We will ensure that at least, this menace is brought to the barest minimum; we will achieve this in synergy with sister security agencies, anti-graft and intelligence agencies and other stakeholders",

he said.

According to Baba, a lot of arrests have been made of persons buying voter registration cards to rig the 2023 elections and some political thugs.

"We will also ensure that the Police X-Squad, intelligence officers and investigators are moved to the field to ensure that politicians moving on election days to buy votes are apprehended and dealt with according to the provisions of the law," he added.

The IGP emphasised that with the measures being taken by stakeholders, the use of money during the 2023 elections will be greatly curtailed.

"We will do all we can within the confines of the law to bring the offenders to book.

"Some politicians spend huge sums of money to get elected to office, thus their priority is to recoup the money they spent during the election.

"The consequence of this is that, those elected provide poor governance and deny the public the benefit of good governance, as they most likely are not the best candidates.

"When elections are influenced by money, credibility of the process is questioned. This leads to rancour and the possibility of violence after the elections," Baba said.

Beyond the arrest and prosecution of the offenders, the anti-graft agencies have also intensified efforts on awareness campaign on the need for Nigerians to shun vote trading.

To facilitate this, the EFCC has entered into partnership with the Committee of Youth on Mobilisation and Sensitisation to undertake grassroots campaigns against vote-buying, cybercrimes and other forms of corruption.

The ICPC has also gone beyond arrest to preventive measures to end vote-buying in Nigeria.

Experts believe that these measures will help to greatly stop vote-buying, ensure free and credible election and the emergence of credible leaders committed to meeting the dreams of a greater Nigeria.

News

Political thugs attack opposition supporters

AS the 2023 general elections draw closer, various intrigues and reactions have trailed party rallies with supporters being attacked in parts of the country as the Police has vowed to deal with sponsors of violence before, during and after the elections.

It should be noted that attacks on campaign rallies of political parties is against the spirit of the peace accord signed by all the political parties, organized by the National Peace Committee, led by former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, and the Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Sokoto State, Matthew Kukah.

In Lagos, Kaduna, Oyo, Enugu, Rivers, Kebbi and Borno States supporters of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All-Progressives Congress (APC) and Labour Party (LP) have been attacked and or either blamed for sponsoring thugs.

Recently, the Inspector-General of Police, Mr Usman Baba stated at a one-day Stakeholders Summit in Abuja on Addressing the Influence of money on the 2023 General Election that concerted efforts are being made by the Nigeria Police as the lead Agency in electoral security management to ensure that the 2023 general elections is hitch free.

Baba who was represented by Assistant Inspector General of Police, Operations, Bala Ciroma said already, some political thugs have been arrested and are being prosecuted in courts.

In Lagos State, our reporter gathered that, the leading All Progressives Congress (APC) was fingered in sponsoring thugs who are attacking opposition parties and causing mayhem during rallies.

A Chieftain of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State, Olaniyi Akinyemi was attacked by political thugs allegedly sponsored by the ruling APC.

The attack which occurred close to the Ikota shopping complex saw people scamper for safety as soon as the incident occurred.

It should be recalled that on Tuesday 25th October, three persons were reportedly injured after suspected political thugs attacked the campaign



Prof. Yakubu

train of the governorship candidate of the People's Democratic Party in Lagos State. Olajide Adediran, popularly known as Jandor.

When Journalists arrived at the scene, Mr. Olaniyi Akinyemi's shattered vehicle was still at the scene of the attack.

According to an eyewitness who pleaded anonymity, the attackers blocked Mr. Akinyemi, shattered his vehicle windows, dragged him out and started pouncing on him.

According to the eyewitness, Mr. Olaniyi Akinyemi who is also the Assistant Secretary of the PDP in Eti-Osa local government area was later rushed to a nearby hospital by a good Samaritan with the help of sympathizers.

Commenting on the incident, Chairman of the PDP, Lagos state, Phillip Aivoji decried the frequent attacks members of the Party have suffered in the hands of the ruling APC and called on security agencies to do more to protect members of the opposition.

The PDP Publicity Secretary in the State, Hakeem Amode, called on the Lagos Commissioner of Police, Abiodun Alabi, Area Commander of Police in the Eti-Osa to do everything possible to fish out those behind the attack.

Another victim of the attack, Oluwadare Bamidele, who is the Labour Party organizing secretary in Ibeju Lekki local government area, claimed that the attacks were premeditated.

He further called on security agencies to protect members of the opposition in this critical

time.

In Kebbi State, Labour Party also lamented that thugs attacked and burnt the food vending business of the Woman Leader of its Presidential Campaign Council, Mrs Florence Ibrahim's in November due to her uncompromising position with the PDP.

Chief Spokesperson of the LP PCC, Yunusa Tanko in a statement in Abuja, on Friday condemned the 25th November 2022 attack on its members in Kebbi State.

Suspected Gunmen numbering about four, on Sunday, attacked members of the Labour Party (LP) who were holding a meeting in Awgu Community, Awgu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

They also attacked ward meeting and burnt vehicles belonging to members of the party at Umuida, Enugu-Ezike, in the Igbo-Eze North local government area of Enugu State who were set for rally.

... As Chairman Riyom tenders 3.2billion

CHAIRMAN of Riyom Local Government, Mafeng Gwallson has presented the 2023 budget proposal to the Legislative Arm of the council for consideration and approval.

Presenting the proposed appropriation bill tagged BUDGET OF STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOLISTIC GROWTH, TWO at the council's Legislative Chamber, the Chairman explained that the proposed budget comprises capital and recurrent expenditures of (3, 253,370,000) three billion, two hundred and fifty-three million, three

hundred and seventy thousand naira only. According to the Chairman, the capital expenditure is put at seven hundred and fifty-six million, five hundred-thousand-naira (756,500,000) while two billion, four hundred and ninety million, eight hundred and seventy thousand naira only (2,496,870,000) accounts for recurrent expenditure. This is slightly higher than the 2022 budget because of the current economic reality. Gwallson disclosed that his administration will continue to be anchored on

CHAIRMAN of Jos East Local Government Council, Pastor Yakubu Izang Ezekiel has presented to the Legislative arm a proposed Budget of Two Billion, Nine Hundred and Thirty-Eight Million, Eight Hundred and Sixty-One Thousand, One Hundred Seven Three Thousand Naira, Eighteen Kobo (N2,938,861,173.18) for the 2023 Fiscal Year. Presenting the appropriation Bill which is tagged "Budget of (CONSOLIDATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH)" at the Legislative chambers, in Angware, the Chairman said the present administration under his watch is desirous of leaving behind lasting legacies that would stand the taste of time. Accordingly, Pastor Izang Ezekiel stressed that the projected available fund stands at Two Billion, Eight Hundred and Twenty Million, Three Hundred and Seventy Six Thousand, One Hundred and Sixty Naira (N2,820,376,160.00), while the Recurrent Expenditure stood at One Billion, Eight Hundred and Ninety Four Million, Eight Hundred and Sixty One Thousand, One Hundred and Seventy Three Naira, Eighteen Kobo (1,894,861,173.18), the Capital expenditure stood at One Billion and Forty Four Million Naira (N1,044,000,000.00) with Budget deficit of One Hundred and Eighteen Million, Four Hundred and Eighty Five Thousand and Thirteen Naira, Eighteen Kobo (N118,485,013.18) to be financed from loan and other financial options, the Chairman Said.

While reviewing the 2022 Budget, The Chairman Opined that the year was full of financial challenges but the Council with cordial working relationship with the Legislators, stakeholders and technocrats, there was significant compliance with the budgetary provisions through prudent management of scarce resources in the aspect of rehabilitation of all official vehicles and purchase of new ones including Toyota

Jos East boss presents N2.9bn 2023 budget



Ezekiel

Hilux for the Council Secretary and Homer bus for Legislative Council.

The Chairman further highlighted that, during the year under review, the Council also acquired Heavy duty Machines to include, Escalator and Bulldozer, while the Council Grader was refurbished and that already have been put to use at Naton- Fusa - Maijuju road with the hope of covering all grader roads while the administration last.

Other interventions according to the helmsman of the Council include, purchased of eleven motorcycles for Security operatives which attracted award by the Plateau State Hunters Association among many other awards, completion of twenty lockup shops at Angware to boost commercial activities, inaugurated revenue committee and constructed revenue and security post at strategic posts to improve collection of revenue, completed electrification projects at Fobur, Federe and replaced nine broken electricity poles at Gada Maigemu Ward destroyed by rainstorm, refurbished Vehicles of District heads Shere, Federe and Fursum, collaborated with operation

Mercy and sunk eleven new bore holes and rehabilitated others broken down across the Local Government Area, installed mobile booster stations and Solar lights in some Communities across the local Government area among many other interventions.

The Chairman who thanked the Legislators for their prompt approval of the previous appropriation bill, equally showered accolades on the stakeholders and technocrats for their prompt support which he said placed the Council higher above others, called on the legislators to accord speedy passage to the 2023 budget proposal to enable meet the yearnings and aspirations of the teaming populace.

Responding, the Legislative leader, Engineer Samuel Iliya Azi assured of the Legislators readiness to give early scrutiny and approval to the appropriation bill to enable the Chairman ardent to it for the betterment of the constituents who gave them their mandate and therefore commended the Chairman for creating level playing field for the two arms to guarantee successes in the year under review and prayed for a more robbust year ahead.

transparency, accountability, and prudence, citing some projects accomplished by his administration.

They include the construction of Box Culverts, grading of roads, renovation of Primary Health Care Clinics, and renovation of the local government Secretariat and Directors quarters which were vandalized during the End-Sars protest.

The Local Government Chairman said, the 2023 budget is designed to focus on the successful completion of ongoing programmes and projects that have a direct bearing on the lives of his people.

The Chairman also

disclosed that regular payment of salary has always been his priority and urge for more support from the workers.

Leader of Riyom Local Legislative Arm, Moses Dachung assured the Council Chairman that the House will give the budget careful and speedy consideration.

The Leader said the House will continue to collaborate with the Executive to enhance more gains recorded by the present administration in all areas of human endeavour and consolidation on the transformation going on across the Local Government Area.

News

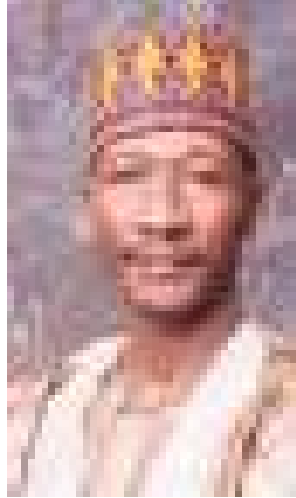
Jos North Council boss bags chieftaincy title

The Executive Chairman of Jos North Local Government Council, Shehu Bala Usman has been conferred with a Chieftaincy title of Dan Masani of Nigeria by the Youth Chiefs of Nigeria.

While confirming the Chieftaincy title to the Council Chairman alongside 13 other awardees at the Tafawa Balewa tomb in Bauchi amidst cheers from thousands of well-wishers, the Leader of the Youth ruling class of Nigeria, Sani Uba Daura said the conferment of the Chieftaincy title to the Council Chairman is due to his efforts in promoting good governance and Youth development as well as promotion of peaceful coexistence in the locality irrespective of religious beliefs.

Sani Uba Daura while congratulating the awardees, said the confinement of the title is a deliberate step towards encouraging them in developing the nation Youths as well as promotion of traditional institutions in the country.

He expressed gratitude to the Youth Chieftaincy grand patron and the Sultan of



Usman

Sokoto Sa'ad Abubakar, the Emir of Bauchi Sulaiman Adamu, Emir of Kano and Oba's and Obi's for their approval to ensure the success of the occasion.

The Chairman of Jos North Local Government Shehu Bala Usman who was flanked at the occasion by top officials of the council, family, friends and political associates, expressed delight with the ruling Council Youth chiefs of Nigeria for finding him worthy of the enormous title of that magnitude.

He said his administration since he was appointed as Management Committee Chairman and currently the Executive Chairman of Jos North Local Government Council, it accorded respect for the Traditional Institution in the area as well as that of the state Council of Chiefs and emirs.

He pledged his continuous determination to collaborate with the Traditional Council of Jos to promote good governance as well as economic prosperity of the locality.

Deputy Leader Jos North Local Government Council, Auwalu Baban Ladan noted that the Council Chairman has done well in improving economic growth and the substance of the peaceful coexistence among the inhabitants of the area thereby restoring trust and confidence among the citizenry.

The representative of the Bauchi state Government, Bauchi and Kano state Traditional Councils also graced the occasion.

Various tradition dance groups spice up the event.



2022: Year of the locust

THE year 2022 has come and gone. What remains are memories of the events that shaped the year and how these events affected the populace positively or otherwise. The year opened with so much promise yet it closed as one that the citizenry wished it never happened. It was in the year 2022 that the Naira, Nigeria's national currency went on a free fall, the worst ever to be witnessed in the history of the country. Indeed, the managers of the economy showed a lack of capacity never before seen. This could however have been deliberate to allow the sharks that man the economy feast on it and bring it to the precarious state in which it is at the moment.

Apart from the free fall of the Naira, 2022 presented one of the harshest periods when the cost of living spiraled out of control and dealt severe blow on the people. Cost of food and living went through the roof and people found it difficult to meet their daily needs. This led to the pauperisation of the citizenry thus making life a lot more difficult for the people.

It was also the year when parents had it tough sending their children to school because of the high cost of school fees charged by proprietors to enable them keep their businesses afloat. As a result, more children left school, swelling the number of out of school children on our streets. This meant too that more recruits were made available to the criminal gangs that controlled most of our ungoverned areas.

2022 also witnessed one of the longest ASUU strikes ever in the history of the Union. Students were made to stay for eight months at a stretch at home because of the disagreements between their teachers and the government. The government's lack of


capacity was made even more manifest when the appointees flagrantly disregarded the instructions of their principal and nothing was done to beat them back into line. Having lost this much time, not much was achieved at the end of the drama where the courts had to intervene to bring succor to the students who had become frustrated and tired of antics of a government which cared less about education. To add salt to injury, many more private universities were established by the government with their unfriendly fee regime which favours only the children of the well to do in the society. This also further confirms the deliberate efforts at pauperising the populace and the lot of some ideas to strengthen and restructure public universities. The army of the unemployed that litter the streets is a testament to the growing threat that the ever-present Boko Haram constitute to the

where would never forget in a devastation caused by insurgency in the North East, Middle Belt area, Eastern and a lot other parts that suffered from the activities of miscreants who masquerade as freedom fighters. So many people have been displaced from their ancestral homes for no fault of theirs and nothing substantive has been done to return them to their lands. Indeed, foreign invaders have had a field day in our country so much so that we have become refugees in our own land.

With 2023 in the horizon, we must start refocusing our priorities and prepare to do what is right. We must strive to recover our country and make it truly a home not some killing fields that have become the lot of some communities in the past 20 years. Some parts of the country have been left to suffer their fate alone and nothing has been done to bring succour to them. Southern Kaduna has become a sort of juggle where government has been absent and its presence not felt at all. Banditry, kidnappings, stealing have become the norm. Nobody sees such crimes as an aberration anymore and do nothing to stop young people from perpetrating them.

We cannot afford to continue in this regard. We must stand up and ensure that the right things are done. Our ballots should determine who we employ to hold in trust political leadership positions. People with impeccable character only should be employed and when they are given the jobs, we must tell them in very clear terms that they must work as servants not the kind of leaders who become monsters once they mount the mantle of leadership. We have to set and get our priorities right once and for all otherwise, we would all be doomed.

“
The army of the unemployed that litter the streets is a testament to the growing threat that the ever-present Boko haram constitute to the youth population. We would never forget in a hurry the devastation caused by insurgency in the North East, Middle Belt Area, Eastern and a lot other parts that suffered from the activities of miscreants who masquerade as freedom fighters.
 ”



**INVITATION TO TENDER FOR
THE EXECUTION OF SOME PROJECTS IN LANGTANG SOUTH L.G.A.**

The Langtang South Local Government Council wishes to invite reputable and competent companies with good track record of performance and experience to tender for the following projects:

LOT 1: Renovation of Mabudi shopping Complex/Motor Park
 LOT 2: Construction of District Head office at Sabon gida
 LOT 3: Construction of Mabudi New Market Shops and open stalls.
 LOT 4: Rehabilitation of Mile-four – Magama Road.
 LOT 5: Construction of Talgwang – Kamkun with spur to Nagane road.
 LOT 6: Acquisition of (4) four Vehicles for official use.
 LOT 7: Renovation of Area Court building at Sabongida
 LOT 8: Construction of classroom blocks at Faya, Timbol, Fajul, Takchang, Dadin kowa, Turaki, Magama, Nagane, Mile four, Jemkur, Bua and Takbol.
 LOT 9: Construction of Box culverts.
 LOT 10: Renovation of Lock-up shops at Fajul.
 LOT 11: Expansion of Earth Dams at Talgwang, Takalafiya, Mile four, Gamakai and Mabudi/Kwaikong Dam's rehabilitation.

CONDITION FOR ELEGIBILITY
 All bids must be accompanied by the following:

1. Evidence of company registration with Corporate Affairs Commission in Nigeria
2. At least current two year tax clearance certificate of the company (2020-2022)
3. Company audited account for the last two years (2019-2020)
4. Evidence of financial capacity or bank support to undertake the project (name address of the bank)
5. Evidence of having successfully carried out similar works.
6. Company profile indicating qualification and experience of key company staff.
7. Proof of company understands the job implementation plan and job methodology.
8. Sworn affidavit that the company is not receivership and none of its directors was ever convicted of fraudulent activity.
9. Evidence of registration with relevant professional bodies.
10. Evidence of registration as a contractor with Langtang South Local Government Council.
11. Evidence of payment of tender bids with Langtang South Local Government Council.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Removal/Reconstruction of existing roofs/structures as applicable.
2. Construction and rehabilitation of roads as specified.
3. Acquisition of specified vehicles.

TENDER DOCUMENTS
 Interested companies should obtain the documents from the office of the Director of Works, Transport, Housing, Lands Survey Town Planning, Langtang South Local Government Council upon the payment of none refundable tender fee based on the lot advertised in bank draft made payable to Langtang South Local Government Council revenue account.

SUBMISSION OF TENDER
 Five(5) bounded copies of the technical and financial tender documents must be submitted in separate envelopes clearly marked 'Technical Bid' and 'Financial Bid' respectively, both put in a third envelop sealed and marked on the right hand top corner **TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL TENDER FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES AND ADDRESSED TO:**
**THE CHAIRMAN,
LANGTANG SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL,
MABUDI
PLATEAU STATE.**

The closing date for the submission of tenders shall be Thursday 7th Jan, 2023 by 12pm. The tenders shall be dropped in a tender box in the office of the Director of works, Transport, Housing, Lands Survey Town planning, Langtang South Local Government Council before opening.

Submission of tenders by post or courier will not be accepted and any tender submitted to the designated location after the stipulated date and time will be consider late and none responsive.

OPENING OF TENDER.
 Opening of tender shall be on Wednesday 8th Jan, 2023 by 10am at the council chamber, Mabudi, Langtang South Local Government Area.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

1. Failure to satisfactorily fulfill the condition requested above will result in the invalidation of tender
2. Langtang South Local Government Council shall reserve the right to verify the authenticity of claims made by tendering parties.
3. Langtang south Local Government Council reserves the right to reject any submission based on unverifiable information
4. All financial bids should be quoted in naira.

SIGNED:
**TPL LADEP NANDOM NANSAH
DIRECTOR WORKS
FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN
LANGTANG SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL.**

News

We will continue to keep the 'alert' flowing-Lalong

BY PALANG KASMI

PLATEAU State Governor, Simon Bako Lalong has promised Civil servants and retirees that his administration will continue to do its best to keep "The alerts flowing" despite sharp fall in funds accruing to the state from the Federal Account.

He also assured that his administration will not leave any arrears, by the time he leaves office in May 2023.

The Governor gave the assurance in his 2023 New Year speech and statewide broadcast to citizens.

The NIGERIA STANDARD reports that the governor had earned the nickname "Governor Alert" after sustaining salary payments,

and clearing inherited salaries and pension arrears from his predecessor in 2015 when he came into power.

He however faced a 5-day warning strike action in December 2022 by Labour unions for his inability to meet up-to-date wages payments.

Governor Lalong told citizens: "My dear Compatriots, the past year has been a challenging one economically not only for us as a state but also as a nation and globally".

"Consequently, we were constrained in many ways from carrying out our capital and recurrent projects as robust as we planned. This was made worse by the dwindling resources accruing to the state from the Federation Account as a result of global economic issues".

"Nevertheless, we did our best in giving priority to critical projects and programmes which we are determined to commission before we leave office".

"To our most esteemed civil servants, I want to specially thank you for your support, patience and understanding in the preceding year which has been a difficult one in terms of state finances".

"Like I mentioned earlier, the sharp fall in funds accruing to the state from the Federation Account has hit all states negatively. In our own case, we have used other sources including deepening our IGR to be able to sustain payment of salaries, pensions and allowances".

"We remain up to date in payment of pensions to our retirees who served us with dignity, integrity and diligence".

"Let me assure you that we will continue to do our best to keep the ALERTS flowing and also ensure that we do not leave any arrears by the time we leave office".

"As you are aware, this administration in collaboration with the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria has provided home renovation loan to over 2,500 civil servants in the approximate sum of three million naira each across Ministries, Departments and Agencies to ease housing



Lalong

challenges they face. This is in addition to the assistance by government to the Nigeria Labour Congress in the purchase of the land for the NLC Housing Project in Jebbu Miango, which I personally performed the ground breaking".

"Government has taken note of the shortfall in manpower and has therefore approved the recruitment of qualified staff for the various MDAs and tertiary institutions to ensure that we have continuity in the bureaucracy for better performance and efficient implementation of government projects and programmes in the service to the people".

"To address the challenge of access to quality, affordable, and prompt healthcare by civil servants and our citizens in general, the Plateau State Health Insurance Management Agency, PLASHEMA has continued to register healthcare services across registered health facilities in the state".

He urged citizens to in the new year that ushers in "The heat of campaigns" for the 2023 general elections seize the opportunity to be eligible to participate and exercise their constitutional rights of freely



NUJ State Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau (left) his Vice, Ayuku Pwasp, NUI Secretary, Mr. Peter Amine, former, NUI State Chairman, Mr. Chris Gyang and the former DOPA to Governor Jonah David Jang, Mr. James Mannok on hand to receive the PDP Governorship candidate on Monday at the NUI State Secretariat, Jos.

THE National Directorate of Employment (NDE), has embarked on settlement of no fewer than 10 beneficiaries of its School-On-Wheels vocational training in Kogi State with operational tools to commence their various trades with ease.

The settlement scheme began with the distribution of basic equipments as starter packs to the beneficiaries who have undergone vocational training in hair dressing, electrical installation, fashion and design as well as carpentry and plumbing.

The Director General of the National Directorate of Employment, Mallam Abubakar Nuhu Fikpo who was represented by the Kogi State Coordinator, Mallam Abubakar Zakari, during the distribution ceremony held in Lokoja recently, said that the gesture is targeted at tackling the menace of unemployment in Nigeria.

"The scheme which is under the Vocational Skills Department is part of the federal government's efforts to lift over 100 million Nigerians out of poverty" the DG said

The facilitator of the resettlement scheme from

NDE empowers graduates of School-on-Wheels

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

NDE headquarters, Abuja, Hajia Jamila Suleiman in her goodwill message, charged the beneficiaries to make good use of the equipments provided them to boost their vocations.

She also reminded them that they are expected to be employers of labour which will serve as a multiplier effect within their immediate society.

In her welcome address,

the Head of Vocational Skills Department, Mrs Lydia Opaluwa admonished the beneficiaries to make judicious use of the equipments for the purpose intended.

Responding on behalf of the beneficiaries, Debola Kehinde said that the equipments will not only add to the growth of their businesses but will also enable them contribute their quota towards the development of Nigeria.



Fikpo

Tallen is committed to development of Nigerian women

BY PALANG KASMI

PLATEAU State Governor Simon Bako Lalong has extolled Nigerian Women Affairs Minister, Dame Pauline Tallen on her 64th birthday. He praised her for constantly advocating for rights of the girl-child and vulnerable groups..

He gave the accolades in a congratulatory message describing her as an advocate that works hard through her office to give women greater opportunities in elective and appointive positions of responsibility.

He said as a thoroughbred

politician and champion of women and human rights who has continued to advocate for social justice in Nigeria, Tallen is passionate about ensuring that the Nigerian woman and the girl-child is equipped with sound education, morals and ample opportunity to manifest her God-given talents and gifts.

"You have been able to do substantially well using your office as the Minister of Women Affairs by standing against gender violence, rape, harmful practices and other discriminatory actions against women", he said.

The governor praised Dame

Tallen for her commitment to the political development of women in Plateau State and Nigeria.

"You constantly advocate for women to be given greater opportunities to contest for elections and also be appointed into positions of responsibility", he stressed.

- Lalong

While wishing her more years of joy, peace and God's blessings, Lalong urged the Minister who is a knight of the Catholic Church to sustain her love for God and passion for the growth of the Church.

Tambuwal appoints heads of scholarship, HSMB

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

GOVERNOR Aminu Waziri Tambuwal has approved the appointment of Hon. Abubakar Sadiq Sanyinna as Chairman Sokoto State Scholarship Board - SA Media has disclosed.

Until his appointment Abubakar Sadiq Sanyinna was the Permanent Member one of the board.

He was a member of the state executive council between 2005 to 2007.

The governor, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri also approved the

appointment of Dr. Abdullahi Ahmad Gada as Executive Director Hospital Service Management Board.

Dr Abdullahi Gada was the CMD Maryam Abacha Women and Children Hospital Sokoto between 2013 and 2015 and Chairman Gada Local Government Council from 2015 to 2018.

A statement signed by the Secretary to the State Government, Mohammad Mainasara Ahmad said all the appointments are with immediate effect.



Tambuwal

Foreign Commentary

Global events that shaped 2022

Future historians may come to regard 2022 as a hitch in history which marked the end of one era and ushered in the beginning of another. Major challenge was the attendant threats of nuclear strikes. And the door closed firmly shut on the U.S policy or strategy engagement with China. ISRAEL N. LAR writes.

The past 12 months did bring some good news, most notable, the Covid-19 pandemic eased in many countries. But overall, 2022 brought more bad news than good news.

Turmoil rocked British politics. It is never good when in United Kingdom, the country reputable as a wise empire that once spanned the global landscape had three prime ministers in just two months and also lost the world's longest reigning monarch. The cause for the turmoil at the 10 Downing Street was the fact that more than fifty members of Boris Johnson's government resigned in July to protest the security endless parade of scandals under his watch. He agreed to resign and was succeeded by Liz Truss. She lasted just forty five days. This makes her tenure the shortest tenure of any British Prime Minister in history. Thus, Liz Truss also had the misfortune of being the last Prime Minister that Queen Elizabeth II asked to form a government.

Furthermore, the bigger problem and the broader case for British turmoil is that the Brexit has not produced the "economic bonanza" that proponents promised.

Humanitarian crisis deepened as Russia's invasion of Ukraine focused attention on Ukraine's citizens fleeing their homeland for security abroad. That coverage helped obscure humanitarian and refugees crisis elsewhere in the world.

In the same vein, according to recent world report, some 32 million people around the world currently are refugees. This means, they have fled their native country because of persecution, conflict or violence. As internally displaced people who have been forced from their home but continue to live in their native country are included, the number balloons to more than 100 million.

More so, the 13 million is higher than the number recorded at the end of 2021 and or equivalent to the combined population of Ireland, New Zealand.

The surge in refugees and internally displaced people is only in part due to the war in Ukraine.

The humanitarian situation in countries like Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Yemen remains desperate without any signs of a resolution in the underline conflicts. A surge in gang violence in Haiti prompted thousands of Haitians to flee overseas and this sparked talk for foreign interventions to restore order.

In November 2022, one bright spot was that the Ethiopian government and Tigrayan leaders signed a peace deal that ended a two year long civil war that had displaced more than 5.1 million people.

However, international relief agencies and private humanitarian organization are worried that the western efforts to help Ukraine were crowding out to take care of humanitarian crises elsewhere.

Iranian protest regime borne out of protest can also be toppled by them. That reality hunted the leaders of Islamic Republic of Iran, who in 2022 saw the most significant change to their rule since they came to power in 1979.

The protest began in September 2022 when "Morality Policy" in Tehran arrested Mahsa Amini, a twenty-two year old Kurdish Iranian woman visiting Iran's capital city for failing to cover her hair properly. She died in Police custody. When the news reached her home town, hundreds of people gathered to condemn her death and Iran's mistreatment of



Zelenskyy



Biden

woman.

The protest quickly spread throughout the country as Iranians across social class and ethnicity came out and matched to the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom." Iranian leader blamed the United States and Israel for engineering the protest though the driving force was the government's political repression, corruption and mismanagement of the economy. The government tried to quell the protest with force.

However, by December according to the reports, Iranian security forces had killed as many as 456 protesters on the streets and the government had begun publicly executing protesters convicted in rushed trials for crimes against the state.

In the same vein, the persistence of protesters in the face of government repression promoted speculations that Iran is in the early stages of a new revolution. Moreover, the regime has shown no sign of splintering, and no one has emerged to lead the opposition.

US - China tensions grow as the great power competition between China and the United States is fully underway.

The Joe Biden administration National Security strategy released in October 2022 made the point bluntly; "China harbours the intention and increasingly the capacity to re- shape the international order in favour of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefits".

However, the United States intends to "win the competition". "The

administration pointed to Beijing's militarization of the South China sea, its support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, its effort to intermediate Taiwan and its rampant theft of intellectuals property as evidence that Beijing's behaviours had forced the United States to abandon its policy of welcoming China' rise.

Furthermore, China's response to USA House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022, highlighted just how tensed relations had grown between the two countries.

In October, Biden equally took a major step to limit China's rise by denying it access to the advanced semi conductor chips and technology escalate to dominating fields like artificial intelligence. Biden also continued to urge friends and allies to take similar tough stance against China.

However, the administration's tendency to trade unilaterally, lacks lustre, trades initiatives and embraces an industrial policy that controls steel jobs from these same friends. In mid November, Biden and Chinese President XI Jinping met on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit. They promised to work to reduce mutual tension and pledge cooperation in areas like climate change and public health.

Nevertheless, mutual suspicious and acrimony are likely to dominate the relationship for years to come.

In late 2021, US and British officials began warning Ukraine. Many European leaders including Ukraine president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, dismissed the idea of



Putin



Kim Un



Guterres

war. But on the 24 February 2022, Russia launched a "special military operation that it said needed to force the demilitarization of Ukraine. To the surprise of the Kremlin and most military experts, Ukraine withstood the initial onslaught and then began to turn back Russian forces.

Moscow abandoned its bid to take Kyiv and shifted to seizing the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine. In September, the Ukraine launched a counter offense that liberated the northern eastern city of Kharkiv. Six weeks later, Russian forces abandoned the southern city.

However, Ukraine might seek to reclaim Crimen which Russia seized

in 2014. However, Russian invasion exposed significant geopolitical divisions.

Western nations rallied behind Kyiv. China and most countries in global south did not, despite their insistence that national boundaries are sacrosanct. Some even blamed the invasion on NATO expansion.

Meanwhile, the rest of the world struggled to adopt to the surprise shock, supply disruptions and food shortages triggered by Russians brazen aggressions.

These and many other events that occurred in 2022 to mention but a few, may continue into 2023 and beyond.

Foreign News

Chinese foreign minister to visit Africa

China's new foreign minister Qin Gang is starting his term with a weeklong trip to five African countries, its foreign ministry announced.

Qin, who until recently was ambassador to the United States, will visit Ethiopia, Gabon, Angola, Benin and Egypt from January 9 to 16, spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a daily media briefing on Monday.

In Egypt, Qin will also meet the secretary-general of the Arab League.

The new foreign minister is following in the footsteps of his predecessors, who have for more than 30 years started each year with a trip to Africa.

"It shows that China attaches great importance to the traditional friendship with Africa and the development of China-Africa relations," Wang said.

Qin, 56, was appointed foreign minister on December 30. He succeeded Wang Yi, 69, who has replaced Yang Jiechi as the government's top foreign policy official.

Some commentators have called the China-Africa



Qin Gang

cooperation a symbiotic relationship from which both parties stand to gain. But there have also been controversies about a perceived "debt trap" and China's "palace diplomacy" - funding huge infrastructure projects for African governments to secure influence within their ranks.

And as the United States and France look to rebuild relationships with Africa just as Russia's sphere of influence is widening, China has been strengthening its footing on the

continent.

The moves demonstrate the increased need to woo Africa at a time of growing global tension and a potential "new Cold War", said Stephen Chan, a professor of world politics at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

"France, Russia, the US and China are all courting African countries - both for diplomatic support in organs like the UN, but also as economic and political allies and partners," he told Al Jazeera.

CLASSIFIED documents from Joe Biden's time as vice president were discovered in November by the US president's personal lawyers at a Washington think tank, a White House lawyer has said.

Nearly 10 documents were found at Biden's office at the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement, CBS News reported on Monday, adding that US Attorney General Merrick Garland had asked the US attorney in Chicago to review the classified documents which were handed over to the National Archives.

The classified material was identified by personal lawyers for Biden on November 2, days before the midterm elections, Richard Sauber, special counsel to the president, said in a statement on Monday.

The Penn Biden Center is named for Biden, who periodically used the office space from mid-2017 until the start of his 2020 presidential campaign. The White House Counsel's Office notified the National Archives on the day of the discovery of those documents, Sauber said, adding the National Archives took possession of the material the following morning.

Sauber also said the documents were not the subject of any previous request or inquiry by the National Archives.

The documents were discovered when Biden's personal lawyers

Classified documents discovered at Bidens office

"were packing files housed in a locked closet to prepare to vacate office space at the Penn Biden Center in Washington, DC", Sauber said. He added the White House was cooperating with the Justice Department and the National Archives.

The Justice Department, the National Archives and the think tank did not respond to a request for comment. Biden was vice president under then-President Barack Obama from 2009 to 2017.

Sauber's statement did not mention the number of classified

documents, what they contained or their level of classification. CBS News reported that they did not contain nuclear secrets.

Representative Jamie Raskin, the top Democrat on the House of Representatives Oversight Committee, said in a statement that Biden's lawyers "appear to have taken immediate and proper action" after finding the documents.

Raskin said he had confidence Garland will "make an impartial decision about any further action that may be needed".



Biden

Russia controls pounded salt mine town- UK

RUSSIA is "likely" to finally control most of the salt-mining town of Soledar in Ukraine's east after a months-long battle with Ukrainian forces, the UK's Ministry of Defence says.

Russian troops and the mercenary Wagner Group have made advances in the past four days, the UK says.

Soledar is near Bakhmut, where Ukraine is also locked in a bloody battle.

President Zelensky said there was "almost no life" in Soledar, with "no whole walls left".

He also said "the whole land near Soledar is covered with the corpses of the occupiers".

"This is what madness looks like," he added.

Soledar - which had a population of around 10,000 before the war - may be seen mainly as a stepping stone to capturing Bakhmut, and its strategic value is questionable.

But a US official said last week that Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Wagner Group's founder, wants control of the large salt and gypsum mines in the area.

The UK said part of the fighting had focused on entrances to the 200km-long disused tunnels and that both Russia and Ukraine "are likely concerned that they could be used for infiltration behind their lines".

Mr Prigozhin has confirmed

his interest in the mines, calling them "the icing on the cake" in the strategic importance of the Bakhmut area.

He described them as a "network of underground cities" that can hold "a big group of people at a depth of 80-100 metres", and can also allow tanks and other military vehicles to move freely.

However, Britain believes Russia is "unlikely" to take Bakhmut itself immediately due to Ukraine's "stable defence lines".

Meanwhile, a senior military official from the US Department of Defense said on Monday there was a "good portion" of Soledar in Russian hands.

Fighting around Bakhmut has been going on for months, and the US official described the most recent exchanges as "savagely".

Two British nationals have gone missing in the region and were last seen heading to Soledar.

UK nationals Andrew Bagshaw (L) and Christopher Parry (R) were doing voluntary work, police said, but have not been heard of since Friday.

In his nightly address, Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky expressed his thanks to soldiers defending Soledar,

saying their resilience "won additional time and additional strength for Ukraine".

According to a Facebook post by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, soldiers on Monday repelled attacks near 13 population centres - including Soledar and Bakhmut.

Despite the long and intense battle, Oleh Zhdanov - a highly respected military analyst in Ukraine - believes that neither Soledar nor Bakhmut are especially important from an operational point of view.

Mr Zhdanov said in an interview on Monday with the

Ukrainian newspaper Gazeta that Russia "is trying to prove to the whole world that its army is capable of winning".

Russia has suffered several setbacks in Ukraine since its invasion nearly a year ago - including losing control of the only regional capital it had managed to capture.

Meanwhile, the Institute for the Study of War, a US-based think-tank, has said that Mr Prigozhin "will continue to use both confirmed and fabricated Wagner Group success in Soledar and Bakhmut to promote the Wagner Group as the only Russian force in Ukraine capable of securing tangible gains".

Israel's Netanyahu ahead with hard-line agenda

PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new government has wasted no time implementing its ultra-nationalist agenda, including adopting a seemingly petty ban on displaying the Palestinian flag and shaking the foundations of Israel's democracy with a proposed legal assault on the Supreme Court.

After barely two weeks in power, the most hard-line and religious government in Israel's history already is fomenting divisions at home and barreling toward conflict with the Palestinians and Israel's allies abroad.

Just days after taking office, his national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, visited Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site - a hilltop compound revered by Jews and Muslims. While Ben-Gvir respected existing norms that bar Jewish prayer at the site, the visit was seen by many as a provocation given his past calls for giving Jewish worshippers greater access. It drew Palestinian condemnations and angry statements from the United States and Israel's own Arab allies.

Netanyahu has also taken aim at the internationally recognized Palestinian leadership in the occupied West Bank. Palestinians successfully lobbied the U.N. General Assembly to seek a legal opinion from the International Court of Justice on Israel's policies in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, and the Israeli government responded with a



Netanyahu

series of punitive measures.

Some of the steps have hit the Palestinians hard, such as withholding some \$40 million in tax revenues and instead using the money to compensate Israeli victims of Palestinian violence. There are also plans to halt development in Palestinian villages in Israeli-controlled parts of the West Bank.

Other moves have been more symbolic, such as revoking the VIP privileges of top Palestinian officials and banning displays of Palestinian flags inside Israel.

Israeli authorities over the weekend even broke up a

meeting of Palestinian parents discussing their children's school conditions in east Jerusalem. Israel claimed the leader who has been placed in charge of West Bank settlement construction.

Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges, was willing to turn over authority to his partners because they share his animosity toward a legal system they believe is elitist and hostile.

It is widely believed that the legal overhaul, spearheaded by Justice Minister Yariv Levin, a close confidant of Netanyahu, will eventually lead to dismissal of the charges against the prime minister.

So far, the Biden administration has issued a series of cautious statements stressing the deep ties with Israel while reiterating the U.S. commitment to a two-state solution.

Israel's new Arab allies in the Persian Gulf, particularly the United Arab Emirates, could also play a key role. The 2020 Abraham Accords between Israel and four Arab countries are among Netanyahu's proudest accomplishments, and he has said he hopes to add regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia to the list.

The UAE criticized Ben-Gvir's visit to the Jerusalem holy site, and according to Israeli media reports, delayed Netanyahu's plan to visit.

But any damage to relations was minor. The UAE is hosting Arab and Israeli and American diplomats this week ahead of a major regional summit expected this spring.



Putin

By OLATUNDUN TEJUOSO

QUALITY policy making, planning and administration, and decision making are the bedrocks of stable and developed nations. But the eccentricities of governance in today's world has it that national development should be hinged on data that is well gathered and up to date. This is where a population census fits. With the coming 2023 population census, Nigeria might get to sort a big part of its national puzzle with data guiding its resource allocation...

Data, big data, rules the world. Central to our collective prosperity are tonnes of ones and zeros that underline modern power brokering, policy formulation, and optimal decision making. Data is the first resource pulled in responsive governance, people-centred politicking, and the quest for national development.

Proper data management engenders sound policies, which make stable nations. Yet, data – the core of information and inference – is not just stumbled upon. There is a science (as there is an art) to the gathering of data. On the national and international fronts, data gathering and “exploitation” are more pronounced as nations seek stronger grasps of the panorama of people, territories, and social phenomena.

Throughout history, nations have needed to mine the data-rich ore that their citizenry presents and population censuses have always been the most reliable go-to. Population censuses have helped nations paint integrated pictures of ever-changing societies, whilst providing suitable and broad databases for comparison and projections of demographic and psychographic data.

Population censuses largely trump other statistical methods of gathering national data. With a population census, the social and economic features of the highest to the lowest administrative or geographical levels are revealed, the overlaps and intersections between the public and private sectors are laid bare, long periods of development are easily and accurately tracked, and recurring and dynamic patterns of national living are revealed. Indeed, a population census is a nation's shot at mirroring and understanding itself.

Population censuses have spanned civilisations. History traces the root of population censuses to the 17th century, in the quest for better resource allocation. Ireland has been conducting population censuses since 1841. India had its first census in 1872, while the USA had its first in 1790. Africa too has not been out of the fray, with South Africa holding its first census in 1911 and Nigeria having its first in 1866.

Nigeria's population censuses do not paint a great picture. From 1866 to 1991, censuses in Nigeria were marred by restrictions, tampering with figures for gerrymandering, deliberate falsification of census figures, disruptions caused by political instability, ethnic clashes, and a dearth of skilled personnel and technical know-how for data collection and management.

It is unthinkable that Nigeria



Why Nigeria needs another population census

keeps making its decision using a database as dated as 2006. The 2006 census pegs Nigeria's population at 140 million. Today, the United Nations disagrees, estimating Nigeria's population well above 200 million people, given its tracked population explosion. As such, it could be inferred that Nigeria does not have a clear estimation of its population. This has culminated in the adverse lag and failure...

The last population census that Nigeria had in 2006 was deemed fair, in comparison to the previous ones, as it was the first population and housing census the country had. The 2006 census was carried out using the Global Positioning System and Satellite Imagery to map out Geo-Referenced EAs, and it was a first for Nigeria. Yet, claims of irregularities and falsified figures still soiled the 2006 census. Since 2006, Nigeria has failed to conduct another population census. Africa's most populous country is four years behind its census. By implication, Nigeria is yet to mirror itself in over 15 years.

A new census has been slated for 2023 and some N532 billion has been budgeted for its execution. With the exigencies of previous censuses in Nigeria, and the yearnings for true growth and development by the Nigerian citizenry, it is, now more than ever, pertinent that the Nigerian government has a viable national database to work with.

It is unthinkable that Nigeria keeps making its decision using a database as dated as 2006. The 2006 census pegs Nigeria's population at 140 million. Today, the United Nations disagrees, estimating Nigeria's population well above 200 million people, given its tracked population explosion. As such, it could be inferred that Nigeria does not have a clear estimation of its population. This has culminated in the adverse lag and failure that human and developmental policies suffer in Nigeria.

The lack of a comprehensive and detailed data on its population also accounts for the lack of accurate

demographic, social, and economic growth indicators, which hamper policy implementation in Nigeria. Vital indicators such as birth, mortality and population growth rates in Nigeria's lowest administrative or geographical levels are missing. More so, the country has no concrete or viable record of immigrants. What it has been working with are estimates, with low degrees of precision.

Banking on the 2006 census, Nigeria lacks a viable database needed to build population and workforce projections, neither does it have a database needed to study social phenomena. This negatively spills over to policy analysis, national programme management, resource allocation, revenue estimation, governmental contracting, and the strides towards national equity and inclusion.

Nigeria needs a population census that would help it understand its people. Not only are the upper echelons of power brokers separated from the lower units in Nigeria, there exists an astounding unawareness of the realities of the grassroots that stems from the dearth of quality data on localities. As the 2006 census, to some extent, failed to capture Nigerians living in the innermost nooks of localities, the lives and modes of living of a good chunk of Nigerians remain undocumented.

Perhaps a new population census is the important step Nigeria is yet to take to tackle its housing problems. 2006 till 2022 is a long time. As such, the housing data

gathered more than a decade ago needs to be updated to meet today's needs. Nigeria needs data on housing units, as well as their facilities and features, as they relate to living conditions. Updated data is also needed to work out well-defined housing policies.

As migration and immigration remain central to a nation's population policy, Nigeria needs a population census that helps it grasp the estimates of its migrants and immigrants. Nigeria needs a database that provides clear and precise estimates of the distribution and characteristics of its immigrants and expatriates. With that, Nigeria will be able to build better workforce projections.

Perhaps a new population census is the important step Nigeria is yet to take to tackle its housing problems. 2006 till 2022 is a long time. As such, the housing data gathered more than a decade ago needs to be updated to meet today's needs. Nigeria needs data on housing units, as well as their facilities and features, as they relate to living conditions. Updated data is also needed to espouse indicators on house conditions and the extent of their relationship with public services.

A new population census will also provide Nigeria with a comprehensive modern framework for buildings, houses and households. This will ultimately bleed into the design and use of samples for conducting various household surveys. In turn, it will

have a positive reflection of the accurate measurements of the various phenomena to be investigated, such as mortality, fertility, and migration, which are the basis of calculating population growth rates and estimates of a post-census population. A new population census would also help provide Nigeria with data on the features of the public and private sectors, so as to draw up housing plans and define various needs in the future.

Furthermore, Nigeria equally needs a clear definition of the conditions of economic and social enterprises in the public and private sectors, in terms of the legal status, economic activity and workforce size by gender and nationality. A population census is the best shot at getting this data.

Quality policy making, planning and administration, and decision making are the bedrocks of stable and developed nations. But the eccentricities of governance in today's world has it that national development should be hinged on data that is well gathered and up to date. This is where a population census fits. With the coming 2023 population census, Nigeria might get to sort a big part of its national puzzle with data guiding its resource allocation, revenue estimation, formulation of economic policies, provision of social amenities, and determination of population density.

Olatundun Tejuoso writes from Lagos.

“Nigeria needs a population census that would help it understand its people. Not only are the upper echelons of power brokers separated from the lower units in Nigeria, there exists an astounding unawareness of the realities of the grassroots that stems from the dearth of quality data on localities.”

EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

Reason why gratitude increases intimacy

By **WIDIAN NICOLA**

COUPLES come to therapy for several reasons: communication issues, inequity in the relationship, financial issues, and parenting style differences, among many others.

What I have discovered, and what many other therapists recognized, is that problems with the laundry are rarely about the laundry, the dishes, or the groceries. Sometimes, "you did the laundry wrong" is code for something much deeper.

Often it is a sign that points towards an unmet need in the relationship.

As a therapist, I often encourage the couples with whom I work to cultivate the skill of "generous reinterpretation." Hearing what the partner might be saying beyond and beneath the words that just came out of their mouth.

Until partners learn to communicate exactly what they need or exactly how they feel to one another explicitly, it is helpful to note that criticism about inadequately folded laundry in many instances might be about something entirely different.

Using the two words "thank you" can elevate the closeness of couples

Similarly, work with couples includes helping partners cultivate –

Most importantly, though, is adopting and using the two words (and all that is included in their meaning) that can elevate the bond, intimacy, and closeness of couples, that is, "thank you."

Gratitude has improved psychological health and physical health, reduced aggression, and increased mental strength. I would argue that the use of "thank you" (and meaning it) on a regular, consistent basis has the capacity to enhance intimacy significantly.

5 reasons why saying thank you increases intimacy

Saying "thank you" shifts our perspectives

Rather than focusing on what we perceive as our partners' negative or less-than-perfect qualities, a thankful posture, along with the expression of gratitude through the use of the words "thank you," shifts our perspective to the positive, attractive qualities our partners possess.

Perhaps your partner's inability to fold the laundry properly can also be seen as your partner's willingness to learn and participate in a task that has not been practiced for years. "Thank you," then, can be a means of acknowledging our partners' gifts, efforts, and desires.

Rather than fixating on what is not being done right, a simple "thank you for all you do to make our home comfortable" can go a long way.

Saying "thank you" can help our partners heal

Many people become trapped in cycles of shame when criticized. To emphasize our partners' value, worthiness, and adequacy, saying "thank you" mirrors the true, loveable nature of our partners. In other words, we can reflect on what our partners can often miss about themselves.

A comment like, "thank you for sharing your life with me. I feel like the luckiest person alive to have you along on this journey" can be invaluable.

Even and especially in the seemingly smallest moments of gratitude, we find healing. It is the frequent, consistent gestures that make the most significant difference.

Saying "thank you" can make us better communicators

Saying "thank you" pushes us to examine what we are truly thankful for and, subsequently, how we communicate that to our partners.

For example, although seemingly trivial, thanking your partner for going grocery shopping can also reveal gratitude for many other things beneath and beyond grocery shopping.

In other words, when we can reflect on the meaning of our partners' efforts, we can also see our partners' desire to invest



in developing a shared relationship.

The groceries, as with the laundry, is rarely about the groceries. In this case, the groceries can reflect a more meaningful connection and mutual desire to serve one another.

When we can truly see and appreciate our partners' efforts, especially when we are consciously and thoughtfully looking, we become better at communicating and thus, connecting.

Saying "thank you" reinforces new patterns

Breaking old communication patterns can be challenging for many couples. So can practice new ones. When one partner attempts to change and succeeds, hearing the words "thank you" can be a powerful motivator for continued change.

The next time your partner listens to your experience rather than reacts, try, "thank you for listening. I felt heard and understood, and I'm grateful to be able to share my feelings with you."

This "thank you" can motivate your partner to continue in the new pattern. More importantly, both of you can see the substantial benefits of the communication shift, which can reinforce the trust that a new pattern can be effective and draw you closer.

Also Watch: How to Find Happiness in Your Marriage

Saying "thank you" empowers us

Cultivating an attitude of gratitude, as the cliché goes, can be empowering. As you foster the ability to see the gifts you have at your disposal, particularly in your

partnership, it becomes easier to see what is possible. Rather than a naive Pollyanna approach, gratitude, and subsequently, saying "thank you" for what you see are the gifts in your life.

These can empower you and your partner to reach for more connection, intimacy, and closeness within and outside of the relationship.

While strangers and friends frequently utter the words "thank you," the intentional, mindful expression of gratitude within the two words elevates their significance.

In other words, saying "thank you" helps us – not just our partners – find joy in what we have and the journey, rather than where we might feel stuck and hopeless.

Start by saying thank you

When you begin to take your partner for granted, become somewhat complacent in the relationship, or find that you have lost a sense of gratitude for your partnership, begin by taking a grateful posture. Saying "thank you" can be a powerful way of seeing your partner differently and, consequently, the laundry.

Want to have a happier, healthier marriage?

If you feel disconnected or frustrated about the state of your marriage but want to avoid separation and/or divorce, the marriage.com course meant for married couples is an excellent resource to help you overcome the most challenging aspects of being married.

Material things

Obviously, some things in life are worth more than they cost. It's true that sometimes we can't help but brag about the new car we just bought or the new phone we just bought for a low price. Parks and Recreation may not tell you this, but your partners don't want to know about how you've been taking care of yourself. It can make you look like you're too focused on how much money things are worth instead of how important they are. The best frill is being unobtrusive. You should try to spread it all over your talks.

Goals for the Future

You might think it's crazy, but there is science behind the fact that you're more likely to reach your long-term goals if you don't tell anyone else about them. At the point when you tell others what you want to do in the future, you almost feel like the satisfaction of achieving the goal has been taken away from you. Accordingly, you don't work as hard to get it. As long as you don't talk about your goals, though, you have a much better chance of getting them done. What's more, when you've done that, you can tell the whole world about it.

In this case, your income

Only people who work at your bank should be able to find out more about how much you make. It's not a good idea to talk about able to stop them. That way, you won't be in a situation where you don't know how much you're getting paid.

money in public because no one can tell what anyone else's financial situation is. It might look like you're bragging about something that doesn't have any real

value. Cash, as well as information about accounts, can break up relationships in a bad way. When your financial situation is made public, people start to look at you in different ways without you being able to stop them. That way, you won't be in a situation where you don't know how much you're getting paid.

Great things have been done.

Some people say that good deeds always bring good luck. That's true, but if you start bragging about it, it changes into a completely different story. You should never be afraid to do well. In this way, you're taking away the good you've already done. Many of the world's best humanitarians aren't well-known for a good reason. There should be more attention paid to those you're helping and less to yourself when you do something kind. In this way, you're taking away the good you've already done. Many of the world's best humanitarians aren't well-known for a good reason. There should be more attention paid to those you're helping and less to yourself when you do something kind.

Problems in the family

If it's your distant family or your close family, keep the issues under wraps, no matter who they are. Try not to get people's trust mixed up. As someone who is close to these people, you've been told about these secrets. They haven't let you tell them to everyone in your group of friends, though. They had faith in you, and breaking that faith is the most terrible thing you could do. Be aware of what others know that you don't. Because of this, you can expect them to treat you the same way.

THE EYE'S WORLD

With *Henrietta Gonzuk*

Living

Great ways to plan for the New year

ARE you looking to start the New Year off on the right foot? Planning is a great way to ensure that you make the most of your time and achieve your goals.

Planning for the New Year ahead can be daunting, but here are some ways to make it easier.

Set aside some time on your own or with your partner to assess what has worked well for you in the past year. Also consider what could be improved and how you could do things differently next year.

Putting all of these goals down on paper will make them feel more real and achievable. If you have trouble sticking to your goals, try setting smaller ones that you can achieve in a shorter time period. Happy New Year! May it be the best one yet!

Take stock of relationships

Think about your romantic and friendship goals. What do you want to achieve with the people in your life? How can you improve those relationships in the new year?

Financial planning

First, think about your finances and what you want to do with them at the start of a new year. Plan your finances for the upcoming year by making a budget and sticking to it.

Decide how much money you want to allocate to different areas such as groceries, transportation, eating out and entertainment. This will keep you focused on your goals while helping you stay within your limits.

Make a realistic new year resolutions list

It's tricky changing a bad habit and sticking to a new one. If you simply write a list of negatives that you're not allowed to do, such as eating sugar then you may be setting yourself up for failure.

Instead, create a list of

positives that you want to achieve such as drinking a glass of water 30 minutes before meal times. Try to make **smart goals** - i.e. those that are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely**.

The best way is generally to set one New Year resolution only and to stick to that rather than a whole host of new goals. Reward yourself when you reach certain milestones (i.e., if you write 10 pages in one night, reward yourself with an hour of TV).

Declutter your closet and home

Get organized - declutter your home, office, or workspace and create a system that works for you. Clearing the clutter is one of the best ways to improve productivity and overall wellbeing.

Whether you're clearing out physical items or digital files, organization can help make traditional and remote work easier, more pleasurable, and more efficient. Start with small steps - set aside some time each week to review and discard unwanted items, or pare down digital files so you can use them in a logical way.

Create a storage system that works for you - think desk drawers, bookshelves, color-coded folders - whatever will best support maintaining a clutter-free environment. A little bit of effort expended now pays off in long-term efficiency gains. It helps keep your space working for you instead of against you.

Focus on healthy habits

Good sleep is key to achieving any weight loss goals and optimizing general health. Keep your bedroom free of any electronic devices. Try to wind down 1-2 hours before bedtime



by reading a book, taking a warm bath, listening to music or meditating.

If you find it hard to resist temptation when eating out, go to restaurants that only serve healthy food until you've achieved your ideal weight. Some places are even alcohol free.

Get fighting fit

Are you planning to lose weight or gain muscle in the new year? You need a plan for that, too!

It's a popular time of year to join a gym but first ask yourself if that's your favourite form of exercise. You're more likely to

stick to something that you really enjoy.

Learn something new

Seize the New Year by planning to learn a new skill. There are lots of resources online.

Whether it's a musical instrument, language or a sporting skill, trying something new will energize you for the whole year. There may well be additional benefits like making new friends and getting fitter, or increasing your level of concentration.

The start of a new year is the perfect time to make positive changes in your life. Self-help books can offer lots of guidance and advice on how to attain this. People interested in mental health can find many beneficial texts that discuss strategies for mindfulness and self-care.

Start travel planning

It is also a good time to plan your travel for the year. If you want to go on a couple of trips, make sure that you save up now. There are many great deals to be had if you book in advance, and some airlines offer significant discounts when tickets are bought well in advance.

Do you have any trips planned already? You'll also want to consider if there are any places that might be off limits because of political unrest or travel restrictions.

Whether you prefer to use a paper planner or online calendar, we suggest inputting key dates first like national vacations and school holidays.

With careful planning, you can maximize your time away by booking off dates either side of some national holidays. Just make sure to reserve the flights

and accommodation as soon as possible, since they're likely to be expensive at these peak periods.

Write your goals down

Write down your goals so you can refer back to them throughout the year. By putting pen to paper and recording our goals, you create a blueprint for success that can be referred back to throughout the year for encouragement if needed.

Whether it be 5-year plan milestones or short-term targets, setting goals is an important part of growth that allows us to track our progress from day one. Writing down ambitions also helps formulate a routine that, with discipline, has proven effective in achieving said objectives. Treat yourself to some stylish stationery for a bit of extra motivation!

Setting and achieving goals is a process that takes time, effort, and planning. But it's worth it! By taking the steps outlined above, you can set yourself up for success in the new year.

The New Year isn't the only time to make resolutions. It should be a year-round process of taking stock of your life and planning how you want things to go. You don't have to do all these important tasks at once - take one step at a time.

Set aside time each week to review your progress and adjust your plans accordingly. Having a plan for success is essential to achieving any goal, but without setting aside time each week to review your progress and adjust plans accordingly, you could find yourself in an unhelpful cycle of self-sabotage.



Editorial

Matters arising from PVC collection

THE Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had after its retreat in Lagos last month finalised the procedure as well as the timetable for collection of PVCs across the 36 states of the federation.

THE Commission said it has devolved PVC collection to the 8,809 Registration Areas/Wards from 6th January to 15th January, 2023 after which the exercise will then revert to the local government offices of the Commission until the 22nd of January, 2023.

IN line with this, Nigeria's electoral umpire, INEC, had announced that individuals can collect their PVCs between 9am and 3pm daily including Saturdays and Sundays.

THE exercise has since been kick-started across the country but reactions show that the PVC collection has been a mixed bag of success as well as problems. In some places, it has not been a smooth sail with numerous complains emanating from some of the collection centers. Some of the challenges range from people not getting their PVCs, long queues as a result of the turnout of people, and a host of others, while in some places it has been seamless.

ALTHOUGH there are challenges here and there, INEC has said it has been on its toes and is coming up with mechanisms for interventions as the problems arise. For instance, in order to see that more people are being attended to, the Commission has in some instances extended the time of operations to 5pm as against 3pm. Also, the electoral umpire had disclosed that the Resident Electoral Commissioners, RECs, have been empowered to be proactive.

ONE notable fact that has been observed across the country is the fact that there has been a massive turn out of people at the collection centres which is quite commendable, particularly the youth who have not only registered but are struggling to collect their PVCs which is a departure from what was obtainable in the past.

INEC, however, needs to step up its game and ensure they right all the wrongs if the January 22, 2023 deadline is to be maintained.

SOME stakeholders have said some very critical areas they need to find solutions to as soon as possible is in the area of the collection process being clumsy, and not organised. There are also calls from different quarters on the need for INEC to engage the services of ad hoc staff to enable them meetup with the deadline.

FOR exercise to be successful therefore, the electoral body should deploy more resources both human and material so as to nip the challenges in the bud, which include inadequate officials to manage the mammoth crowd, among others, being experienced at the moment in the collection centres.

ALSO, it is hoped that just as there is a massive turn out of people to collect their PVCs, that the same will be seen on election days, that people will not just struggle to collect the PVCs but will actually put them to use.

CONTENTMENT is said to be the state of happiness and satisfaction and also being grateful to what one has.

However, some individuals take to crime and other vices as a result of discontentment.

Parents should inculcate a habit of talking to their children as they grow on the need to be contented and also share the little they have with others for there is great gain in Godliness with contentment. For we brought nothing into the world and cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and do good, we will be contented.

A Jerad Anthony Higgins, An American rapper popularly known as JuiceWorld in his song titled, anxiety, he expresses gratefulness for the gift of life, he said money doesn't really matter to him, although he has money, but still struggling with anxiety heartbreaking and substance abuse.

My point is, despite his wealth he is still facing issues. We often envy celebrities and people who are living in affluence without considering the fact that they are human like us as also have physical, psychological and emotional issues.

Furthermore, Bible verses should be read in Christians homes in order to help children in their spiritual growth, which include Hebrews 13:5, and I Timothy 6:6-8, Luke 12:15 and so on.

The spirit of contentment often results to true happiness therefore, it is expected that for one to strive to be contented, no significant amount of gratification can be compared to being happy. While being contented brings about peace of mind, most especially with one's dear ones.

Pause for a minute and have a deep thought to see how misappropriation of public funds are being done by public officials due to discontentment. Does it mean they do not have enough? With all the assets they have in their possession, what else do they want to acquire?

All these is due to their selfish interests without even considering the poor who are living in object poverty and feeding from hand to mouth and do not have any hope of getting their next meal.

We often talk about ways to eradicating corruption in Nigeria, when the monster behind it is discontentment.

Sensitizing the general public on the damaging effects not such vices can go a long way in eradicating corruption in Nigeria.

Furthermore, when we settle

for unhealthy and unfulfilling limitation of what we really desire our appetite can begin to get out of control whose consequence forces us to either give in or indulge in social vices that will lead to a bitter end.

But the truth is if you chase money in order to be contented it will only plunge you into destruction and will alienate you from God and people around you little by little until strangles you.

Let us try to focus our attention on doing good such as

Contentment the great virtue

helping people improve in the overall interest of our society.

Jonathan Rabo Dammo,



writes from the Plateau Department of Mass State Polytechnic Jos, Communication.

Child abuse and neglect

should be bought up strictly and with religious training which in most cases favours the male above female children. Some parents, having entrusted their children to religious teachers, never visit them or inquire about them and subsequently the children are forced to the streets to beg or become food vendors. The mallams often move some of these almajiris from city to city as beggars while some end up as prostitutes.

The Muslim religion which prohibits girls from becoming pregnant before marriage recommend that a girl should take a husband before her second menstruation. The

tradition of early marriage is very difficult to change and has led to abusive practices which are condoned by some parents. May parents send their children out to the streets to trade in order to make enough money for their mothers to buy house-hold goods for them when they marry. It is for this reason that some children may thus be exposed to any kind of suitors and. Hawking by boys and girls is now widespread and parents clearly recognize that the practice spells dangers for the children.

In the eastern and western part of Nigeria children may attend

morning or afternoon school and hawk goods out of school hours. Some are even exposed to trading on the streets the whole day to make income for their families.

Although most Nigerian children return home at the end of the day, a growing number, including girls, have been confined to a life of street children whose future has already been destroyed by the same society they all belong and depend for care and succor.

By Mu'azu Adam Hudu
Is an IT student from Federal Polytechnic Bauchi

Flouting of government order by truck drivers in Jos

IT appears government's directives are no longer respected in our society today because of how reluctant and unserious the system is. It is sad that, this lukewarm attitude has become a habit in each and everyone of us to the point laws are mere directive and not a rule.

However, recently, the Plateau State Government had issued press statement banning truck drivers from plying the road in the heart of Jos city from 6am to 6pm, but it was no order was issued at all. You see these truck drivers without regards to the constituted authority's order in the state breaking the law at any time of the

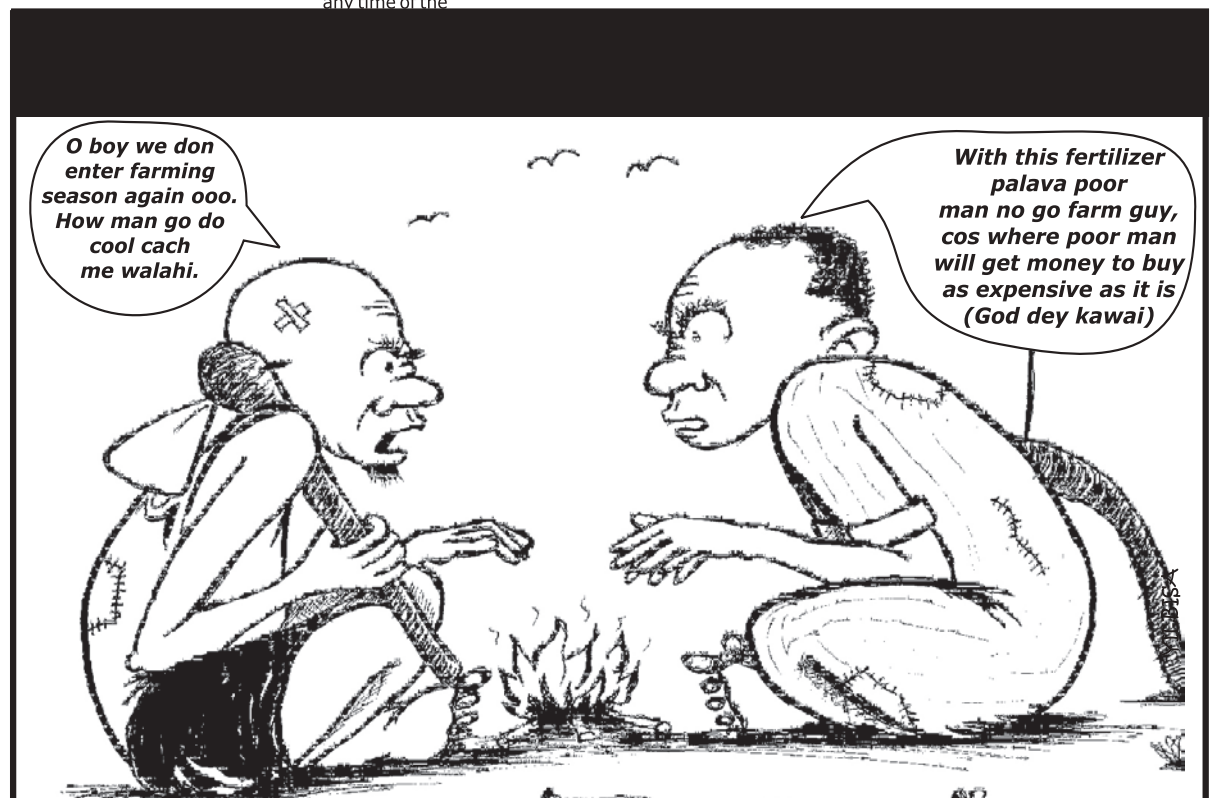
day. This action has generated a lot of argument because many lives have been lost daily as a result of their reckless driving. No week goes by without reports of truck running into moving small cars, buildings and roadside shop. It would be recalled that, the Polo Roundabout has been a "pit trap" to these truck drivers whose truck lose control.

It was in this regard that the Executive Governor of Plateau gave a restricting order to these drivers to save the lives of citizens, but it seems they are above the law. Unfortunately, the agencies saddled with the responsibility of arresting flouting this order are not doing much to control this ugly situation.

They are always busy concentrating on cars and tricycle riders who are using the road legitimately and allowing these truck drivers plying at odd hours against the government's directive making it looks as if there were no laws restricting them from plying the road in the day time.

Stringent actions should be taken by the State Government to put a stop to this unlawful act. A Special Squad should be caved out specifically to handle that aspect of disrespect. Again, a heavy fine as high as #20,000 to #30,000 should be charged on whoever flouts the law. This will generate huge reveue to the state government and also save the lives of citizens.

Written by Golching Golei Jenta-Adamu



Opinion

Regulating social media towards peace building

JULIUS TOBA-JEGEDE

CAN the social media space be regulated in a manner that it will give young people the opportunity to unleash positive energy on the society without stifling their voices? Experts say it is possible.

Youths constitute the bulk of those who use the social media space for interactions, empowerment and self-actualisation.

They have leveraged advancements in information and communication technology as a medium of communication. Among the leading social media in Nigeria are Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

While youths may have limited political power to champion their views they can harness the potential in the social media to promote peace in the Nigeria.

Although the social media has its own negative sides, it also comes with numerous advantages, such as facilitating access to mentorship, socialization and creativity.

Through its networking mechanisms, social media spreads news faster than and has wider reach than the conventional media.

It encourages group participation in discussions and activities thereby providing a platform to push critical information and nurture ideas.

Youths can take advantage of this unique social propagate positive atmospheres such as peace and nation building.

While many young people have used social media to create wealth, education and sourcing information and entertainment, many have used it to propagate violence conducts and other social vices.

Experts say the Federal

Government has a role to play in re-channeling youths' social media culture and orientation from the negative to the positive through proper regulation.

The federal government is cognisant of this as demonstrated by the Minister of Information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed.

In June 2021 while appearing before a public hearing organised by the House of Representatives Mohammed asked the lawmakers to amend the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) act to empower the agency to regulate social and online media.

The minister said: "Internet broadcasting and all online media should be included in this because we have a responsibility to monitor contents, including Twitter."

Similarly, in June the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) also announced a draft document for the Code of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries and Conditions for Operating in Nigeria.

The code seeks to, among many others, compel online platforms to provide any backend information to assist government agencies for the purpose of investigating and prosecuting users who breach the provisions of the code.

Reinforcing these thoughts, Dr Bakut Bakut, Director-General, Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, IPCR, said: "Preventing the conflict of tomorrow means changing the mindset of the youth today."

Bakut, who said this while delivering an address of welcome at a conference in Abuja recently, said the youth could be redirected to use the social media as a tool for peace

building.

According to him, youths use social media more frequently and are more likely to become victims of violence and can also be recruited by extremists.

The two-day conference, which was organised by IPCR in collaboration with the University of Ilorin Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, CPSS, had as its theme, "Youth, Social Media and Community Peace building."

"This is a significant issue because technology can either be a medium through which terrorists recruit young people or a means through which young men and women can help in building peace.

"Although young people are crucial players in peace building, they have been excluded from the process and are instead thought of as 'manipulable' tools for violent conflicts and social unrest," he said.

Bakut recalled the #EndSARS protest of October, 2020, which was organised by Nigerian Twitter users largely made up of youths against police brutality.

He said it demonstrated that social media was dangerously spiraling out of control and a breeding ground for fake news, hate speech, misinformation and online incitement of unrest, hence the need to regulate it.

He said the conference offered opportunities for fresh ideas to gain the youth's support for community peace building initiatives and incorporating social media, especially given the current insecurity concerns in Nigeria.

Prof. Sulyman Abdulkareem, the immediate past Vice-Chancellor, University of Ilorin, while corroborating Bakut's view said regulating social media would curb online abuses and engage youths to promote peace.

Speaking on the topic, "Social Media Use and its implications on Community Peace building Among Nigerian Youths," he said that social media regulation was the best way to ensure that youths used social media positively.

Represented by Prof. A.L. Azeez, Dean, Faculty of Mass Communication, University of Ilorin, Sulyman said the social media must be regulated if the youth's recklessness in using social media space would be drastically curtailed.

"How can we make the youth to use the media positively; to empower themselves while at the same time deploying it for peace building? The best way is by controlling and regulating the social media space.

"The regulation and control of social media space on grounds of humanity, peace and security are ostensibly plausible as such justifications have been invoked in Pakistan, Malaysia and India.

"This is why many scholars of communication and peace have intensified their support and agitation for a legal framework for regulating Nigeria's social media space through the social media bill," he said.

The former vice-chancellor said that social media platforms should be used to facilitate virtual dialogues among stakeholders towards achieving peace and security.

"The youth's use and adoption of social media should be aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence among various ethnic groups.

"Through social media, the Nigerian youth should build strong consensus on issues that affect their lives and wellbeing.

"No meaningful socioeconomic and human development can take place in a nation where its youth are preoccupied with sharing divisive and inciting rhetoric on social

media," the don said.

Prof. Eghosa Osaghae, the Director-General, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), underscored the need to directly engage the youth on peace building.

"One of the ways that we can push these kinds of conversations concretely, going forward, would be to invite the youth to be part of this kind of debate," he said.

According to him, the Nigerian policy paper defines the youth as someone who is between the age of 15-30, which means he or she is under custody and not yet autonomous.

"I will however extend that definition to mean that the youth is a social category, so a youth is he or she that a particular person says he or she is, notwithstanding age.

"So if you have a consciousness of being young or old, that's who you are. There are people who are 40 but they already feel they are old, so let it be with them that they are old", he said.

Prof. Oyeronke Olademo, Director, Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, urged adults to use social media platforms to counter the negative narratives about youths and the country.

"For me, curbing the excesses of the youth on social media and redirecting them to peace building, requires that older persons should flood the cyber space with positive narratives.

"This will overwhelm any negative narratives or fake news, which the youth may spread on these platforms," she said.

Experts say while it is important to regulate the social media space caution should be applied in doing so to avoid gagging the media, infringing on free speech and fundamental human rights. (NANFeatures).

By FREDRICK NWABUFO

The tyranny of the vocal minority

CONCERNING are the chronic onslaughts by supporters of Peter Obi, presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), against citizens from the South-east who do not support his bid. They threaten to cause harm, curse, and use every vile instrument in Frankenstein's toolbox to drive fear and intimidate differing voices. Such hate and prejudice should not be found among well-meaning citizens.

It must be their way or the highway to hell. These are intellectual indigents who have secured residence on different social media platforms. They maul and bludgeon anyone who differs from the herd. According to them, death is the penalty for differing. But this insidious mob can have their say; they cannot have their way.

While Bola Ahmed Tinubu, presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), has steadied his campaign on critical issues - economy, security, education, healthcare and the like - some other presidential candidates have been dutiful in advancing hate and fake news.

It is dispiriting that some young people enlist themselves into morbid mobs to tear down divergent voices for some assumed political messiahs. Patriotism is defined around the choice of candidate, and not on allegiance to national ideals. It is very unfortunate.

Youth unemployment should be a critical issue this season. The current unemployment rate is put at 33%. It is really concerning. There is no doubt that this is a vector of a spectrum of social anomalies. With a youth population of over 120 million, it is imperative that young people are at the heart of policymaking in Nigeria.

In his Action Plan conceptualised as 'Renewed Hope', Tinubu delineated seminal elements to harnessing youth potential. He says, as president, the youth will not be exploited to do the bidding of the government. He says his administration will aim to cut the youth unemployment rate in half within four years through entrepreneurship and job creation, as well as through social and political empowerment.

On the entrepreneurship and job creation plank, Tinubu says his government will work with the Central Bank of Nigeria to develop suitable incentives to encourage commercial banks to target low-cost loans towards a given quota of youth-led enterprises. He says commercial banks will also be encouraged to ensure their loan application processes are simplified and give greater priority to young people with marketable ideas, and that federally owned and affiliated banking institutions will immediately be mandated to develop similar schemes for young entrepreneurs.

This is clearly a plan and an antiserum to the contagion of youth restiveness and delinquency. It is disturbing that young people on the internet resort to promoting ethnic and religious prejudices, and passing sentences, threats, and curses on those whose political choices are at variance with their preference.

The APC presidential candidate says there will be an increase in intergenerational, business mentoring and cooperation, with two million volunteer entrepreneurs and professionals across the nation committed to working with the youth to find employment, hone job skills and create

businesses.

This is clearly a plan and an antiserum to the contagion of youth restiveness and delinquency. It is disturbing that young people on the internet resort to promoting ethnic and religious prejudices, and passing sentences, threats, and curses on those whose political choices are at variance with their preference.

Concerning are the chronic onslaughts by supporters of Peter Obi, presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), against citizens from the South-east who do not support his bid. They threaten to cause harm, curse, and use every vile instrument in Frankenstein's toolbox to drive fear and intimidate differing voices. Such hate and prejudice should not be found among well-meaning citizens.

Chukwuma Soludo, governor of Anambra State, became a casualty of the Obi Red Army when he only confirmed the obvious. In an interview in 2018, Peter Obi had claimed he invested \$20 million in International Breweries on behalf of Anambra State while he was governor. This is a company he has interest in.

But Soludo said Peter Obi's purported investments in Anambra are worth next to nothing.

It is disturbing that despite the promise of issues-based campaigns by contending political parties, the entire political expedition is dissolving into a free-for-all with divisive methods, slander, and fake news deployed, particularly by opposing parties.

He said: "I think there was something I read about somebody speculating about whatever

investment. With what I've seen today, the value of those investments is worth next to nothing. So, let's leave that aside."

It is disturbing that despite the promise of issues-based campaigns by contending political parties, the entire political expedition is dissolving into a free-for-all with divisive methods, slander, and fake news deployed, particularly by opposing parties.

The rippling of a fake statement purportedly emanating from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) alleging a probe of Tinubu is a clear breach of the sanctity of the campaigns. Although INEC quickly torpedoed the fake statement, the attempt underscores the predatory and sinister complexion of our politics.

As I often say, if we divide the country during the campaigns, we will have to live with the consequences of presiding over a divided people. If the purpose of seeking power is for the good of all, then we must begin by keeping the campaigns clean. What is the good of power when the next government will spend the next four years struggling to mend fences and managing diversity without success? We will only be reinventing a parlous wheel. If we sow hate during the campaigns, we will reap hate afterwards. The travails of the past years should teach us not to make campaigns about ethnic and religious prejudices, threats, curses, slander, and fake news.

The parties going down this scorched and serpentine path, must beat a retreat.

Fredrick Nwabuo, a.k.a Mr OneNigeria, is a writer and journalist.

News

Police Command parades two sets of kidnappers

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

PLATEAU State Command of the Nigerian Police has paraded a 22 year old, named Ashiru Ibrahim (M) of Angwan Rogo suspected to be the kidnapper who kidnapped a 4 year old Abubakar Sadiq Nazifi of Zam Sam, Abuja Mata Rikkos in Jos-North LGA of the state.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Bartholomew N. Onyeka, psc(+) disclosed this while parading the suspected kidnapper and some criminal elements who have been terrorizing communities at the Police Headquarters Jos, the state capital recently.

The Commissioner said, "on the 21/12/2022 at about 0140 hrs, while acting on a impeccable information from a reliable informant, arrested one Ashiru Ibrahim 'm' aged 22 years old of Angwan Rogo, Jos, who was suspected to have kidnapped one Abubakar Sadiq Nazifi 'm' aged 4 years old of Zam Zam, Abuja Mata Rikkos, Jos.

"On 19/12/2022, he was arrested by hawk-eyed Police operatives attached to 'A' Division of the Command at Leichester Hotel Area in the process of collecting Three Million Naira ransom from the victim's parents.

"Upon interrogation, the suspect made some useful disclosure that led to the rescue of the victim from the kidnappers' den unhurt. Further investigation led to the arrest of his accomplice, one Bashir Saleh 'm' of Rikkos, Jos who initiated the kidnap. The case is still under investigation", he disclosed.

Similarly, the Command also paraded eight (8) suspected kidnappers named; Naandem Dennis (30 years), Bitrus Gideon Daboki (42 years), Zakka Tashak (48 years), Tashak Peter (52 years), Aaron Dowang (70 years), Chinkinan Aaron (47 years), Titus Dayil, (25 years) and (8) James Adamu, (53 years) for criminal conspiracy, extortion and kidnapping of one Talatu Dayil Ayuba and Dangnan Danladi to unknown destination.

According to the CP, "on 24/09/2022 at about 0930 hrs, a case of kidnapping was reported at the Anti-Kidnapping Unit of the Command by a complainant that some unidentified gunmen invaded his brother's compound at Gidan Dabat Village, Qua'anpan LGA, on 22/09/2022 at about 2200 hrs and kidnapped his wife, one Talatu Dayil Ayuba and Dangnan Danladi both females to unknown destination until ransom of Two Million Naira was paid to their captors before they were released.

"On receipt of the report, the anti-kidnapping operatives swung into action and arrested the following suspects in connection with the kidnap; (1) Naandem Dennis aged 30 years, (2) Bitrus Gideon Daboki, 42 years old, (3) Zakka Tashak, 48 years old, (4) Tashak Peter, 52 years old (5) Aaron Dowang, 70 years old, (6) Chinkinan Aaron, 47 years old, (7) Titus Dayil, 25



Batholome

years and (8) James Adamu, aged 53 years both males of Gidan Dabat Village of Qua'anpan LGA, Plateau State.

"Upon interrogation, the suspects confessed to have conspired and perpetrated the crime and collected the sum of 2 million Naira as ransom. The suspects will be charged to court as soon as investigation is completed", he assured.

Onyeka therefore, enjoined the peace loving people of Plateau State to make their own security a priority by avoiding night hour's journeys

and isolated routes. "I have put in place all necessary security measures to ensure a hitch-free celebration throughout the festive periods and beyond.

"I call on residents of Plateau State to trust us with timely information so as to continue to nip crimes in the bud. I cannot end this address without appreciating the zeal and tirelessness of the members of the forth estate of the realm who make sure that our efforts always receive the publicity they deserve", he stated.

He also wished the country well in the general elections scheduled for February and March this year. "We pray that the polls would be peaceful and successful, so that Nigeria would maintain her reputation as a bastion of peace and stability," the Special Envoy of the Republic of Burundi, who came with a message, in the course of fuel, by the Burundi leader, President Buhari said he knew what it felt like for a country to suffer from energy shortage. He, therefore, promised that he would get the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Ltd. to look into the request.

President Buhari had earlier on Tuesday in Abuja signed the 2023 Budget of N21.83 trillion and the 2022 Supplementary Appropriation



Buhari

THE council Chairman of Mikang Local Government Area, Hon. Augustine Bako, has disbursed another set of scholarship funds to over three hundred (300) students who are indigenes of the local government studying in three higher institutions in Plateau State.

This took place at the Joshua Dariye Multipurpose Hall Jos campus of the Plateau State Polytechnic Barkin-Ladi recently, where beneficiaries from the University of Jos, Plateau State Polytechnic Barkin-Ladi and Veterinary Research Institute Vom trooped in.

While addressing the beneficiaries, the Council Chairman said, "on assumption of office in October 2021, I test ran the scholarship scheme by randomly selecting a number of over one hundred students cutting across the four districts of the local government. This was due to the shortfall of subvention from the Federal Government.

"In January 2022, I continued with the scheme by starting with the Plateau State University Bokokos and in March, students of FCE Pankshin were also successfully screened and paid, while those of Federal Polytechnic Bauchi and College of Agriculture Garkawa took their turns in June that same year where in the first one year of my administration, over five hundred students of Mikang origin have benefited from the programme.

"It will interest you to know that today's programme covers three schools: University of Jos, Plateau State Polytechnic Barkin-Ladi and Veterinary Research Institute Vom respectively with over three hundred beneficiaries. Even in the midst of the financial crisis, I have taken bold steps to impact our electorate with some

Mikang Chair disburses scholarship funds

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

projects that are imminent to their livelihood", he highlighted.

According to him, "You will agree with me that the scheme is far away from politics, religion and ethnicity. I want to appreciate those who were involved in the screening exercise and the subsequent selection for using the unique formula that has brought us here today. For those of you who could not make the list this afternoon, it is expected that you will be in the supplementary list.

"This programme is a challenge to those who do not value education, but I urge you to encourage them to join you. I am always at your service and our unity is paramount. Please stay

out of trouble and face your studies. Make the 2023 election free, fair and successful", Bako charged.

Earlier, the Chairman of Scholarship Scheme, Joseph Makum, congratulated the beneficiaries and urged them to use this golden opportunity to develop themselves because they were not the most qualified or special students but it was a privilege for all of them in the various institutions.

Responding on behalf of the beneficiaries, President, Mikang Students Association (MIKSA) Jessica Rimimi Dole, thanked the chairman for the good gesture. She said that "It is not a right, but a privilege that we will not forget in a hurry. We promise to make you proud.



I look forward to peaceful polls, retirement - Buhari

President Muhammadu Buhari says he looks forward to peaceful conduct of this year's general elections, and retirement, since he has satisfied the constitutionally required two terms in office.

The president said this at the State House, Abuja, when he hosted the Special Envoy of President Evariste Ndayishimiye of the Republic of Burundi, who came with a message, in the course of week.

Buhari said Nigeria would support Burundi in diverse ways as necessary, saying this would be in the spirit of African solidarity and brotherliness.

The Minister of Finance, Budget and Economic Planning of Burundi, Mr Audace Niyonzima, said his president sent goodwill for the New Year to Nigerians and President Buhari.

Bill into law.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the 2023 budget is the last to be prepared by the present administration as it winds up.

While signing the budget, the president said the aggregate expenditures of N21.83 trillion were increased by N1.32 trillion over the initial proposal of N20.51 trillion expenditures by the executive.

On the supplementary appropriation bill, the president said the 2022 Supplementary Appropriation Act would enable the administration to respond to the havoc caused by the recent nationwide floods on infrastructure and agriculture sectors.

Buhari said his decision to sign the 2023 Appropriation Bill into law as passed by the National Assembly was to enable its implementation commence without delay, considering the imminent transition process to another democratically elected government.

He, however, directed the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning to engage with the legislature to revisit some of the changes made to the budget proposal.

The president directed the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning to work toward early release of the 2023 capital votes to enable MDAs commence the implementation of their capital projects in good time.

According to him, this is to support efforts to deliver key projects and public services

as well as improve the living conditions of Nigerians.

On the Finance Bill 2022, the president expressed regret that its review as passed by the National Assembly was yet to be finalised.

The president expressed the belief that the next administration would sustain the early presentation of the annual appropriation bill to the National Assembly to ensure its passage before the beginning of the fiscal year.

Buhari expressed deep appreciation to almighty God for His grace, while commending the continuing resilience, understanding and sacrifice of Nigerians in the face of current economic challenges.

President Buhari also hosted Gov. Hope Uzodinma of Imo at the Presidential Villa Abuja, where the president approved the deployment of advanced technology to tackle insecurity in the South East.

Uzodinma, who spoke to State House correspondents after the meeting with President Buhari, said he was at the villa to thank the president for the various supports and assistance given to the state.

According to him, with the president's approval, advanced surveillance equipment will soon be delivered to the region that will enhance the fight against insecurity without collateral damage.

On Jan. 5, the president also met with the governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Delta, Sen. Ovie Omo-

Agege.

Omo-Agege, who spoke to journalists after the closed door meeting, dismissed the notion of a firm grip of Delta by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

He said: "Delta is very ripe for the taking," adding that it was a misconception to tag Delta a PDP state.

"That is a very serious misconception to tag Delta State, a PDP state. Delta is very ripe for the taking. We're determined to achieve this."

The Chief Executive Officer of the Pinnacle Oil and Gas Ltd., Peter Mbah, who paid a thank-you visit to President Buhari on Friday, identified lack of adequate investment in the downstream sector as the cause of the perennial fuel scarcity and its attendant long queues in filling stations across the country.

Mbah, who is the PDP governorship candidate in Enugu State in the forthcoming election, said in order to bridge the gap, the Pinnacle Oil and Gas had invested about a billion dollar to address the stagnation of investment in the downstream sector.

The president concluded the week with a closed door meeting with Gov. Babagana Zulum of Borno.

Zulum, speaking with State House correspondents after the meeting, boasted that his state had been secured for the conduct of the February and March general elections.

He assured the voting public of their safety before, during and after the elections. (NAN)(www.nannnews.ng)

News

Buhari, Lalong,, Tallen, others flag off Binani's campaign

By PALANG KASMI

NIGERIA'S President Mohammed Buhari has kept to his promise to be a part of the governorship campaign to flag off the only Nigerian female candidate, Sen. Aisha Binani in Yola, Adamawa State.

The campaign rally which took place on Monday, 9th January 2023 at the Mahmud Ribadu Square Yola was also to flag off the Presidential campaign bid of the APC presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, and his running mate, Sen. Kashim Shettima.

The rally attracted key party supporters including the National Chairman, Sen. Abdullahi Adamu, the Presidential Campaign Council Chairman, Governor Simon Bako Lalong of Plateau State, Ministers, Governors, Senators, political office holders, business men and women and stakeholders from the public and private sectors across the country.

Buhari in his remarks at the rally called on Nigerians to give their votes to his party's presidential candidate, Asiwaju Tinubu.

Buhari urged the citizens of Adamawa State to equally vote the first female APC governorship candidate, Aishatu Binani who he said will lead the state credibly based on her good leadership records.

Raising the hands of the two candidates, Buhari said, "I am here to present to you the presidential candidate of our party, Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the governorship candidate in Adamawa, Aishatu Binani".

He said he is confident Tinubu will ensure security, education and health care for Nigerians and work hard to give food security, education, which are all elements of good governance".

The party's National Chairman, Sen. Abdullahi Adamu said the promise that the APC had made to Nigerian women has finally come into fruition with Binani's candidature.

He assured that with the people's support, Binani will lead Adamawa State as governor, while Asiwaju Bola Tinubu will lead the country as president after the 2023 elections.

Tinubu, the APC presidential candidate popularly called 'Jagaban' in his remarks called for support to Binani. He stated that the APC wants to be the first party to send the first female elected governor in the country to the State, Yola.

The presidential candidate assured of security, jobs creation, employment, and banishing poverty in the country.

"We will get you employed and engage the citizens' with job creation opportunities" Tinubu assured. And added that "I have worked so much for all of you. Nigeria is blessed, and we will ensure that there is an end to hunger and poverty".

His running mate Kashim Shettima appreciated the President for his solidarity for the inclusion of women in politics.

"Today you will tell Nigerians that you love women. It is from Adamawa that you took your wife, a beautiful and humble kindhearted woman".

"And it is in Adamawa that you will produce the first female Governor of Nigeria, Aisha Binani, by the grace of God".

"We are going to support her to



Buhari

be the brand new female Governor for Nigeria," he said as he also urged Nigerians to give them the chance to lead the oil-rich nation.

The Director General of the APC Presidential Campaign Council, and Plateau Governor Simon Bako Lalong who chanted, "Women, today use your day" called out all the female stakeholders including wife of APC Vice Presidential candidate, Nana Shettiima, Nigeria's Women Affairs Minister, Dame Pauline Tallen, politicians, key office holders, wives of former politicians, among others to drum their support for Binani.

The women all took turns to speak and called for support from all Nigerians to make Binani's governorship ambition come into fruition.

While praying for her victory, the Minister for Women Affairs specifically described the emergence of Binani as "A call

from God" and urged Adamawa women and people to make history.

In her remarks, at the APC Adamawa State Presidential and Governorship campaign rally, Sen. Aishatu Binani, flanked by all party stakeholders on the podium expressed gladness that Adamawa State will be on the political limelight if she is voted alongside Kashim Shettima who hails from the state.

She used the forum to extend an olive branch by calling on her contenders who lost out in the primaries, and court cases including all aggrieved parties to shield their grievances and come and join hands with her, for the sake of the party, to build a formidable force as one family to win the governorship elections.

She assured of a better economy, end to salary challenges faced by civil servants, if they vote her and the APC presidential candidate Tinubu.

Kogi govt explains reason behind querying monarch

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Kogi State government has shed more light on the imbroglio between it and the paramount ruler of Ebiraland, Dr Ado Ibrahim. It explained that the monarch was merely asked why he deliberately refused to grace the visit of the president, President Muhammadu Buhari when he visited the state to commission Bello's legacy projects. A statement issued on Monday evening by the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Barrister Salami Momodu Deedat Ozigi stated that since the royal father has decided to make the matter which otherwise would have been private, a public one, the state government therefore has a duty to brief the general public on the issuance of the query.

The Commissioner explained that the royal father flagrantly refused to receive the President at the newly renovated and befitting official palace, choosing instead to remain in his personal house. The statement read "It has become highly imperative to brief the general public on the issues surrounding the issuance of letter of query to His Royal Majesty, Alh. Dr. Ado Ibrahim CON, the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland.

This is because, what ordinarily should have been an

official process has been made public by the recipient of the query and as such the public deserves to be abreast with the truth and isolate it from falsehood." The Commissioner said that "the reconstructed palace of Ohinoyi of Ebiraland which was commissioned by the President and Commander-in-Chief of Nigerian Armed Forces has all along been the official palace/residence of successive Ohinoyi of Ebiraland".

According to him, "It is on record that when President Muhammadu Buhari GCFR visited Okene in the year 1984 as a military Head of State, it was in the same palace that he was received by the then Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, late Alh. Sanni Omolori. The palace has been remodeled and reconstructed to a magnificent edifice that every son and daughter of Ebiraland could be proud of". However, he said that "the current Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, His Royal Majesty, Alh. Dr. Ado Ibrahim CON opted, on his own, chose to stay in his personal house and use it as a palace. That does not erase the fact that there is an official palace built over the years for Ohinoyi of Ebiraland.

Lalong charges on restoration of peace

By DUMAH RANDONG

Governor Simon Bako Lalong of Plateau State says efforts to restore peace and build a better nation requires the contribution of all Nigerians.

The governor stated this at the interdenominational Church service to mark the Armed Forces Remembrance Day celebration at Saint Monica Catholic Church, State Low cost, Rantya Jos, Sunday.

The inter-denominational Church service celebrating the Armed Forces Remembrance Day brought together Christians from a cross different denominations, military and para-military to observe a special prayer for the fallen heroes, ex-service men as well as those still in service for their contribution to the unity of the country.

Represented by his Deputy, Professor Sonni Tyoden, Lalong said the annual event was in recognition of efforts in keeping the country united.

Government, he said, has been doing its best to support the military in its struggle to fight insecurity and stressed that the contributions of all Nigerians would also serve as a morale booster to the service men.

General Officer Commanding 3rd Armoured Division, Rukuba, Jos, Major General Ibrahim Ali represented by Brigadier General David Kurmi said as they pray for the fallen heroes, peace of the country, children of the

fallen heroes and ex-service men must be put into focus. Chairman, Nigerian Legion, Plateau State, Colonel Sati Yilwat represented by Col. Livinus Laplit expressed gratitude to God and all Nigerians for their continued support.

Earlier in a sermon, the priest of Saint Monica Catholic Church, Rantya, Rev Fr Friderick Wukari said the journey to salvation may be difficult but Christians must remain focused.

Wukari added that Nigerians must show sincerity first in celebrating the fallen heroes as well as be ready to sacrifice for the growth and development of the nation.

Other personalities at the occasion were the Speaker, Plateau State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon Yakubu Sanda, Secretary to the Government of the state, Professor Danladi Atu, former military Governor of the state, Rear Admiral Bitrus Atukum, heads of para-military agencies in the state and some top government officials.



Lalong

Governor interacts with Muslim clerics

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

GOVERNOR Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State has solicited for prayers and support from religious leaders in order to ensure peaceful

conduct of 2023 general elections in the state.

Bala made the plea while interacting with Muslim clerics at Sultan Sa'ad Abubakar Hajj Camp in Bauchi recently, where he acknowledged the role of religious leaders in ensuring peaceful coexistence. And therefore appealed to them to guide their subjects on the need to conduct themselves and be lawful before, during and after the elections.

According to the governor, he accommodated ideas and suggestions from religious leaders in formulation and implementation of policies and programmes, noting that the step has contributed to the success of his administration in the state.

Bala Mohammed who highlighted his administration's record of achievements that is connected to their prayers, solicited their support for his re-election bid to consolidate on the achievements being recorded.

Sheikh Salihu Sulaiman Ningi, Malam Bala Isah and Malam Mustapha Baba Ielah who spoke separately on behalf of clerics expressed satisfaction with the governor's leadership style and promised to support his administration for the overall development of the state.

The event was well attended by Imams from the Juma'at Mosques across the state and featured goodwill messages and special prayers for the state and the country as a whole.



Kirfi

News

I'll use the title to develop Gamai women-Lady Ari

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

DIRECTOR Marketing, of the Plateau Radio/Television Corporation (PRTVC), Lady Victoria Selbyen Ari, who was recently conferred with the title of Ba'al Sharap of Gamai (Defender of Gamai Women) by the Long Goemai, Miskoom Martin Muduutrie Shaldas III, has promised use the title to unite and develop Gamai women through programmes that would change their lives.

She stated this Thursday while in an interview with THE NIGERIA STANDARD in her office in Jos, the Plateau State capital shortly after her conferment with the title. This took place in Shendam during the Bit Gamai.

Lady Ari who is the wife of the Director General of Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Sir Joseph Ntung Ari, said, "first, I want to appreciate and thank God, the Long Gamai, Miskoom Martin Muduutrie Shaldas III and the Gamai nation for the recognition given to me with the bestowment of the Ba'al Sharap Gamai (Defender of Gamai women).

"I also wholeheartedly appreciate and thank my husband, whose support towards my activities may have informed the decision of the recognition. As the Ba'al Sharap Gamai (Defender of Gamai women), I will draw up programmes aimed at uplifting the status of our womenfolk and children.

"I will in collaboration with the traditional institution, ensure more women participation in the Gamai activities in general through whatever ways God desires. I am calling on all the women to support me so that together we can succeed.

"By the grace of God, I will



Shaldas

support the Gamai women and will be there for them because the meaning of the title bestowed on me is "The Defender of Gamai Women". So, I will make sure every Gamai woman is known everywhere because they are industrious.

"I will make sure they go to school and ensure that they are supported through programmes that will develop them. I am not the only Gamai woman that her husband has contributed to the development of Gamai nation to deserve this title even as Tarok. But I am sure they want to pursue the course of unity that was why I think they gave me the great responsibility", the Ba'al Sharap pointed out.

The director also thanked the Traditional Council for recognizing her husband and conferring him with the title of Kurnajam Gamai (Minister of Defence) of the Gamai nation. She prayed that more women

would be conferred with titles because "the appointment goes to show that the role of women in the development of the society is being recognized.

"This is a prove to the fact that the role of women toward peaceful coexistence is very dear to the Long Gamai and the entire Gamai Traditional Council. I will ensure that the confidence reposed in me will bring unity and development to Gamai women and the entire Gamai nation through skills acquisition programmes", Lady Ari assured.

THE NIGERIA STANDARD observed that, just like the military practice where a General's wife in the army can be ranked as a Field marshal, the Gamai Traditional Council towed the line by conferring the title of Ba'al Sharap to Lady Ari after conferring her husband with the title Kurnajam Gamai (Minister of Defence) accordingly.

THE Police Command in Rivers says it has rescued 12 victims of child trafficking during a sting operation on two suspected baby factories in the state.

The command's spokesperson, SP Grace Iringe-Koko, said in a statement in Port Harcourt on Tuesday that policemen also arrested four suspected operators of the baby factories.

She said the victims, consisting of two adult males and 10 pregnant women, including teenagers, were forcefully kept in the factories after they were brainwashed by the operators.

She said "On Jan. 7 at about 4:45 p.m., we received credible intelligence on the activities of a child trafficking ring in Igwuruta and Omagwa communities in Rivers.

"Upon receipt of the intelligence, the command's C41 Intelligence Unit operatives raided two houses (factories) at Igwuruta and Omagwa communities where victims of child trafficking were kept.

"In the operations, four suspected operators of the factories, including two men and two women were arrested by our operatives," she said.

Iringe-Koko, who revealed the identities of the victims

Police raid baby factories, rescue pregnant victims



IGP Alkali

and suspects, said the suspected child traffickers were led by a 40-year-old woman from Igwuruta community in the state.

According to her, the pregnant victims were aged between 15 and 29 at the time of their rescue.

"Investigation reveals that when the victims are delivered of their pregnancies, the syndicate leader takes the babies and pay the victims N500,000.

"All the victims confessed that they were lured into the illegal sale of their children because they were promised money to meet their financial challenges.

"The case has been transferred to the command's Criminal Investigation Department while efforts are ongoing to track and arrest those who had already bought children from the factories," she added.

The command spokesperson said a Honda Pilot SUV with registration number: Lagos FST 607 AX was recovered from the leader of the syndicate. She called on members of the public to come forward with credible information about the activities of criminals in their areas or call the command's emergency numbers: 08039213071 and 08098880134.

Police recover stolen Toyota Highlander Jeep

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Plateau State Command of Nigerian Police Force (NPF), has recovered a stolen Toyota Highlander Jeep belonging to one Engr. Pam Dung Gyang 'M' of Hwolshe community in Jos-South Local Government Area of Plateau State.

This is due to its resolve to deal with criminals in the state especially car snatchers.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Alfred Alabo disclosed this to press men in a statement made

available to THE NIGERIA STANDARD in Jos, the state capital Thursday shortly after recovering the car on January 5, 2023 at about 0130hrs, when the Command received the report of the theft.

The statement stated, "the hoodlums threatened the owner of the car with a gun at NNPC Filling Station and eventually whisked the vehicle away. On receipt of the report, Eagle-eye police operatives of

the Command led by the officer in charge of Anti-Kidnapping Unit, SP Emmanuel Zangina, gave the criminals a hot chase. They trailed them to Kano State where they abandoned the vehicle and fled when they discovered that they were aggressively pursued by the Police.

"The vehicle has been recovered while efforts are on to nab the suspects. In view of the above success and recent ones, the Commissioner of Police, Plateau State Command, CP Bartholomew N. Onyeka, psc (+) has refined the operational template of the Command where criminals are at the disadvantage side and will hardly escape when they commit any crime.

"The CP has also sounded a serious warning to criminals that they should leave Plateau State or have themselves to be blamed as the long arm of the law will not rest until we get them arrested and prosecuted.

He also urged all residents of the state to go about their lawful businesses as he assured them of their safety and adequate security at all times".

Primary school teachers embark on indefinite strike

PRIMARY school teachers in Kuje Area Council, FCT, on Monday, embarked on an indefinite strike over the alleged failure by the Council's Chairman to reach agreements with the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT).

The Chairman of the Kuje branch, Mr Audu Lucky, disclosed this in a statement signed by four union executives and issued to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Kuje on Tuesday.

Lucky said that the teachers

in Kuje were no longer ready to be taken for granted until their demands were met by the Executive Chairman of Kuje Area Council, Mr Abdullahi Sabo.

He said: "The union observed with dismay the non compliance with the Council Chairman to address the backlog of the Local Education Authority (LEA) teachers' outstanding entitlements."

Lucky added that the union had sent a letter to Sabo, with a reference number, NUT/169/5/138, dated 3/1/2023, while a letter of ultimatum dated 2/12/2022, was also sent to him.

He said: "In view of the above, the union leadership is calling on all LEA Primary schools teachers in Kuje Area council to proceed on an indefinite strike action with effect from Monday, 9th Jan, 2023, until further notice.

"LEA Kuje primary school teachers are hereby directed to comply with this directive, please."

Lucky listed the demands to include: The payment of salaries to 2018 recruited teachers whose salaries were abruptly stopped by the council Chairman in

September 2022.

"Submission of the agreed template of payment of LEA teacher's arrears to the JAAC Secretariat and continuation of the payment to Concerned teachers.

"Payment of salary to 2022 reabsorbed teachers, who have been working through January to December 2022 without salary."

According to Lucky, based on these demands, the branch and state organs of the union requested to meet with the Council Chairman but he refused to meet with them.

He affirmed that the union

had directed all primary schools teachers in the area to stay away from their duty posts while parents were advised to keep their children and wards safe at home.

All efforts by NAN to get the comments of Sabo proved abortive as he did not return various telephone calls made to his line, just as he did not reply two SMS messages sent to him.

However, the Chairman of the FCT Universal Education Board, Dr Alhassan Sule said the board was doing everything humanly possible to amicably resolve the crisis.

FG debunks report of likely cancellation of 2023 Polls

THE Federal Government on Tuesday assured Nigerians that the 2023 general elections will hold as planned.

The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed gave the assurance in Abuja at the 17th edition of the "President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) Administration Scorecard Series (2015-2023)"

Mohammed was reacting to a widely-circulated report, credited to an INEC official, that the 2023 general elections face a serious threat of cancellation due to insecurity.

The minister said there is no cause for alarm over the fake

report as all hands are on deck to ensure peaceful and credible conduct of the polls.

"The position of the Federal Government remains that the 2023 elections will be held as planned. Nothing has happened to change that position.

"We are aware that INEC is working with the security agencies to ensure that the elections are successfully held across the country.

"The security agencies have also continued to assure Nigerians that they are working tirelessly to ensure that the elections are held in a peaceful atmosphere," the minister



Adamu



By **KENNETH DARENG**

Nakande: The mindset of a trouble shooter

community. The agenda to relocate the hospital from Jos Metropolis is against the law passed by the National Assembly which has been associated to by President Muhammadu Buhari on 21st July, 2022 because the law specifically situated the Hospital in Jos not any Local Government within the state, just as Federal Polytechnic was situated in Shendam and the Federal Medical Centre was situated in Wase.

"Our community is indeed aggrieved by the intention of the CMD, and sees the attempt as a sign of hospitality to our community, which was a major catalyst in voting Governor Lalong and the APC into power in 2015 and 2019. Similarly, Governor Lalong scored 537,050 votes out of which 117,443 came from Jos North alone.

"The hostility this action may engender is serious enough to sabotage the success of the APC in plateau state in 2023. It is unfortunate that while the Governor claims to be with the APC, he is indirectly fighting the party, like he did during the rerun election for Bassa/Jos North Federal Constituency Seat.

"The action of the Governor shows that his segregation against our community is getting worst and gangrenous in his heart, in that he has attacked the community in so many directions economically, socially and politically, using different tools."

However, it is pertinent at this juncture to ask the so called Equity Forum Chaired by Mallam Dasuki Salihu Nakande, a former Minister these questions begging for answers; By the way, which community is the Forum referring to? Because Jos North Local Government Area, is made up several communities and non is specifically mentioned in their letter whose signatories suggests they are all from a small enclave of people who do not mean well for the overall peace, Unity and development of Plateau state.

Recent statements credited to the former Minister by the media relating to issues of sensitive security implications particularly on certain decisions taken by the Plateau state Government readily comes to mind. For instance, the one made on the Jaiz Bank agreement with

the state Government on the burnt Jos Main Market and hosts of others.

Perhaps one may also ask; where was this equity Forum when part of the land belonging to the University of Jos, a Federal Government property was forcefully occupied by Agwan Rogo community in Jos North, where was this group when the Land belonging to the state Government at Fillin Tsukuwa, Bauchi road Jos, forcefully occupied by Hausawa in that community, and what happened to the one at Yan Shannu Community all in the same Jos North of plateau state. For the avoidance of doubt, Let the Forum check the Niki Tobi Report of 2001 for details.

I even thought that as a Forum that Prides itself with the name "Equity" should have made some noise when some vital assets like the Central Bank Zonal Headquarters, NIPOST, MTN and others were relocated from Jos to Bauchi state. However, this is like a Kettle calling the pot black or better still, what is good for the goose is equally good for the gander which should not be the case for now.

Although not holding brief for Governor Lalong, but as a bonifide citizen of Plateau state from the Jos North, I condemn any attempt to blackmail the Governor on the issues raised by Forum. After all, the Equity Forum failed to give a breakdown



of the votes by each community in the 2015 and 2019 elections which is always bragged about that may affect the outcome of the 2023 elections in the state.

It is rather disappointing that Mallam Nakande's is perhaps ventilating his frustrations of having been force by selfish interest to decamp from the AI Progressive Congress (APC) to the the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). His rantings now is nothing short of being dishonourable especially for someone of his standing as a former Minister who is refusing to be a statesman, a clear departure from the good virtues of his late father whose legacies of fairness, decency, uprightness, unity and peaceful disposition is today being thrown to the dust bin of history by a group of whose selfish motive is to divide, mislead and incite the peace loving people of Jos North and Plateau state people against one another.

PEOPLE of honour are by their conduct seen as morally correct, honest, morally ethical, principled, righteous, right minded, and full of integrity. Such people also serve as good conscience of the society which they guide with venerable values while promoting an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence among the populace.



By **HOSEA NYAMLONG**

Effects of oil bunkering on the economy

arms against the government and engaged in criminal activities, such as hostage taking, destruction of oil facilities, oil theft, sea piracy and oil bunkering.

Nigeria lost \$3.2 billion in crude oil theft between January 2021 and February 2022, according to the statistics presented at a recent meeting held in Abuja between the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), Oil Producers, Trade Union, and the Independent Petroleum Producers Group (IPPG) to discuss crude oil theft.

Similarly, the number of illegal refineries coming up every day is worrisome, because such nefarious activities have destroyed many farmlands, aquatic life and severe pollution.

The life expectancy of citizens within these region have being compromised, leading to lower life expectancy due to the criminal activities of oil bunkers.

In April this year many lives were lost as a result of illegal oil theft in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area in Imo state were over 110 people died via a fire explosion in the creeks. Majority of the victims were youths

On 8th August, the Nigerian Navy was reported to have investigated the activities of a water vessel, MT Heroic Idun, owned by Hunters Tankers as domiciled in Norway, which was sighted in Akpo oil field in Rivers state suspected to have entered the field without authorisation and with the intent to illegally lift crude oil.

The captain was said to have been uncooperative and fled from the area. The vessel was eventually apprehended by the authorities in Equatorial Guinea, working with the Nigerian Navy. According to the Nigerian Navy, the vessel had not commenced lifting oil from the field before it was apprehended.

The Federal Government in a bid to sustain receipt of oil rent had rid the Niger Delta of these criminal activities by deploying military troops to the region to arrest the criminals.

Oil theft is usually carried out by oil experts not by the common citizens. Notwithstanding, the havoc of such activity is heavily causing the national economy a fortune if not checked; the country is brought down to its knees. The situation portends danger for the country's social-economic losses development.

Today, Nigerias economy largely depends on crude oil earnings, which need to be protected from all quarters in the country.

It has been alluded that all these problems associated with oil theft in the country is as a result of lack of functional refineries in the country that would process the crude oil.

Currently, Oil bunkering is becoming a lucrative business that the locals

the economy viable in the region

It is reasonable for Niger Delta indigens to own the process of protecting the oil facilities in their communities with a robust synergy, with the regulators, Ministry Of petroleum resources including and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC).

Despite these measures by the Federal Government observers are not confident in the ability of the Nigerian government to effectively block these huge leakages caused by few individuals. The moribund state of refineries and the activities of illegal oil bunkering refineries and crude oil theft has plagued the oil sector for so long without much efforts to stop the menace.

It seems that the effects is biting hard now more than ever, at a time when a significant portion of the country's revenue is going into debt servicing and petrol subsidy, with no solution in sight.

from the oil producing states would want to take part and get rich quick in no distant time has taken the minds of youths away from meaningful businesses.

Many stakeholders had raised the alarm on the massive losses being incurred on a daily basis and the danger of such on future investments in the industry.

As a matter of urgency government needs to commence the full implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act bill, in relation to the operational gazette between the hosts communities and oil companies in order to give them a reasonable percentage, instead of the current 3% derivatiation.

Again, government should collaborate with the oil companies to provide social amenities to the communities of the Niger Delta, by giving soft loans to small scale business owners to keep

CRUDE oil theft has grown into a huge monster, threatening the Nigerian, economy day by day. The illegal activities of oil bunkering assumed a new dimension with the advent of agitation for resource control by the Niger Delta militants in the region. Primarily, the agitation was for the demand for social amenities, infrastructure and increase in derivation fund from the Federal Government. However, when the Federal Government is not able to meet up with all demands, some youths in their communities took up

By CHINAGOROM UGWU

ON a cloudy Saturday afternoon in mid-September, 2022, Patrick Ogbonna, a resident of the Awhum community in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, wore a smiling face, as he emerged from the famous Awhum water cave in the community, where he had gone to pray.

He had become one of the regular visitors lately to the cave, which also has a waterfall.

For over two years, Mr Ogbonna battled for his life. A colleague in his place of work in Rivers State, South-south Nigeria, had poisoned him.

He said the poison almost paralysed him, forcing him to seek spiritual help from several native doctors in other states.

Mr Ogbonna said he was shocked when a native doctor he visited in Imo State, South-east Nigeria, told him he (the native doctor) could not "handle" his ailment because a "superior power" exists in his (Ogbonna's) home town.

The native doctor asked him to visit the water cave in his community, Awhum, and dip himself in the water to get healed.

"When I got to the waterfall, I prayed according to directives I received, because I was asked to pray there with pure mind and narrate how the ailment started," Mr Ogbonna said.

"I entered the water, and it washed me. That was how I got myself back. (I am now) healthy".

The cave, a massive outcrop of granite rock forming a narrow space, provides a captivating sight.

It is the first contact before the waterfall.

The tall rock is said to be about 30 meters (98 feet) high from the ground, with water flowing through another footpath formed by a boulevard of the granite rock. Visitors juggle through the water flowing through the narrow footpath to access the waterfall.

The water is warm in all seasons, according to visitors and residents of the community.

It takes about five minutes to trek from the cave to the waterfall.

At the cave, water cascades endlessly from atop the rock, forming a stream at its base.

Apart from being a tourist attraction, the water flowing in the cave is said to have some kind of "healing powers" and is capable of "dispelling" evil forces wherever it is sprinkled, the villagers said.

This, they say, has turned the cave into a place of prayer for Christians and non-Christians, where visitors dip themselves inside the stream for a miracle.

People in groups – like prayer groups from different churches – regularly visit the stream too.

Erected at strategic points in the cave, are statues of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ and other biblical figures. Several visitors, especially members of the Catholic Church, are often seen praying in front of the statues.

Some visitors engraved their names on the walls of the rock inside the cave. They believe that doing this would attract miracles.

Located in a forest, the area around the cave is dark green and wet. It is extremely calm and quiet, save for the occasional chirping of birds.

"People come here for exhibitions, picnics. People come for camping and prayers as well. Couples who are looking for a child, they get a child after coming to this place. If you come to this place with a clean heart, your problems are solved," Uchechukwu Oba, a resident of a community.

"A lot of people who have come to this place like blind or crippled people, as soon as they get into this water, the blind will see, the cripple will stand and walk," said Mr Oba, who is the chairperson of a youth

group, Awhum Youth General Assembly.

But the stream, according to the youth leader, does not heal sicknesses "incurred as punishment for abominable acts".

He said some Chinese tourists visited the cave in early September. Other foreigners have been visiting too, according to residents.

The cave has also become a choice location for the shooting of movies, the residents said.

Onyekachi Onah, a resident of Ebonyi State, had grappled with an

keg for her use back home.

Another visitor, who identified himself as Paul, said he has been visiting the waterfall for over 15 years, travelling from Lagos State, South-west Nigeria, to Enugu State.

Mr Paul owns a Christian ministry in Lagos. He does visit the cave with worshippers from his ministry.

"But for today, I came here for a private prayer programme".

He planned to spend three months praying at the cave and

Cave where Nigerians visit for leisure and healings



avalanche of family problems which she believed were "spiritual attacks".

She was moved to visit the cave in search of her own "miracle" after listening to the testimonies of others.

"I was scared because I did not expect what I saw. The whole place was bushy. The thing is looking like (a) house, but it is stone," the mother of three said of the cave.

"Only the water falling on you, and

waterfall, according to him.

"The water falling there heals people. On one occasion, one of the visitors from my ministry, who was poisoned, drank this water and vomited the poison," Mr Paul said.

He said the speed at which one receives healing or any other miracle in the cave depends on the level of one's faith.

Like others, Mr Paul usually fetches

Awhum community, the water cave is managed by a Catholic organisation, Our Lady of Mount Calvary Monastery, which is close to it.

Visitors (excluding indigenes of the community) to the cave and waterfall pay a fee before they are allowed access.

The monastery has rooms for rent at the rate of N2, 000 per night for



you will be swimming inside the water, you will enjoy the place," she said, excitedly.

Mrs Onah said she dipped herself inside the water and also fetched a

water from the cave and takes it back to Lagos. He said he uses the water to "dispel evil forces".

Although it is owned by the

visitors to the cave.

A security guard said there is usually an increase in the number of visitors to the monastery during



festive periods like Christmas and Easter.

One monk attributed this to the ongoing renovation of the monastery. Atuchi, said the cave has existed "so long", and that the history of how it came about was unclear.

He said the community took refuge inside the cave during the Nigerian Civil War, and that bombs could not destroy the cave.

Another community leader, James Ugbor, said traditionalists managed the place before the monks arrived around 1975.

Mr Ugbor said when the cave was managed by traditionalists, people could not go in there alone because of the fear of an encounter with some unknown spirit beings.

Some Christian clerics too had turned the cave into a venue for "prayers and deliverance sessions" for people believed to be possessed by evil spirits.

But the monastery reportedly resisted their activities and subsequently banned any visit to the place without approval from them.

Pilgrims are to be in a group before they are allowed access into the water cave, an official, who asked not to be named, said.

The Awhum water cave has the potential to become a major tourist site in Nigeria. It is for the relevant authorities to first look into the challenges facing it and then consider elevating the site to a deserving status.

Nigeria's tourism sector accounted for 34 per cent of the GDP and about 20 per cent of the nation's employment creation in 2017, the Chief Executive Officer of the National Bureau of Statistics, Yemi Kale, said in 2018.

Also, the Managing Director of Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authority, Adesoji Adesugba, contributed about \$1.5 billion to the country's economy.

The Commissioner for Culture and Tourism in Enugu State, Ugonna Ibe, said, "For tourism to thrive, like at the Awhum Waterfall, there should be security, power supply, and accessible road."

He recommended that a holiday resort and a hotel should be built close to the cave.

The commissioner said a delegation sent by the federal government, during the 62nd Independence Anniversary, visited the cave and similar tourist attractions in the state, but nothing has been heard from them.

"Not just in Enugu State, but (successive) Nigeria governments too have not realised it (the importance of tourism) simply because we are neck-dip into crude oil. And soon, the oil will finish," he said.

A tourism expert, Bolaji Suen, said to assure people of security and safety, the government could set up a vigilante group for the cave.

"That will give people peace of mind to visit the place," he added.

"Tourism is part of life. Whenever we are close to nature, we are close to God. So, nature refreshes our mind, our spirit and makes us feel at home," he said.



IMAGES

PDP GOVERNORSHIP CANDIDATE VISITS NUJ

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Governorship Candidate, Plateau State, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang and his team on Monday paid courtesy call at the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Secretariat, Jos



Barr. Caleb Mutfwang (middle) delivering his message



Cross section of members of the pen profession listening to speeches



NUJ State Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau (standing) making remarks



A cross section of members of the Governorship candidate entourage



Cross section of some PDP officials that accompanied the Governorship candidate



Mr. Pam Musa, NUJ Assignment editor anchoring the event



From left are, NUJ National Auditor, Ladi Emmanuel, NUJ State Secretary, Peter and NUJ State Vice Chairperson, Avuku Pwaspo



Barr. Caleb Mutfwang, PDP Governorship candidate, members of his entourage, NUJ Chairman, Paul Jatau and other Journalists in a group photograph after the visit

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Odd World

'World's hottest granny says younger men at her feet

GINA Stewart has been dubbed the 'world's hottest grandma' and she's currently single, despite having countless offers from men of all ages who are keen to take her out.

A woman who has been dubbed the 'world's hottest grandma' has revealed she's currently single and open to finding a partner - despite having men of all ages falling at her feet.

Gina Stewart, 52, said she isn't necessarily on the hunt for love, but she would be happy if she happened to meet someone that she clicked with well enough to start a romance.

The model, from Australia, insisted that as a mum she's "careful" about who she lets into her life, so she would have to meet someone special before she could consider long-term plans such as introducing him to her family.

'I'm a good-looking mum - married men ask me out when I'm toy shopping for my kids'.

She told the Scottish Sun: "I'm single and I think as I have become older and I have a daughter, I have become careful as to who I let into my life.

"I'm not actually looking for anyone in particular, I believe that if I'm destined to find love it will happen and I will just fall in love probably when I least expect

it." Gina hasn't been on a date for some time, as she explained that she was previously "attached to" a close friend of hers who sadly passed away last year.

And if she was to find someone new, the woman said, it would likely be a younger man, as although she's open to dating people of various ages, she gets the most offers from younger blokes.

She added: "To be honest, so many younger men love older women, I probably get more requests from the younger generation than my generation. The oldest I have dated was in the late 50s and the youngest was in their 20s.

"I haven't actually dated since a close friend who I was attached to passed away last year. But 2023 looks promising and anything can happen."

Meanwhile, Gina previously claimed she has daily cold showers to thank for her youthful looks, as she said they help to speed up her metabolism and improve her hair and skin.

She explained: "I have been an avid user of cryotherapy over the years and can highly recommend any type of cold therapy but it can be extremely expensive.

"The cheaper alternative is to take cold showers every morning, after your usual morning shower to reap the amazing health benefits. Start with a 30-second cold shower after your regular shower each morning and work up to two minutes for full effect.

"Scientists have found evidence that exposure to cold speeds up metabolism. Another benefit of exposing your body to cold is that it reduces inflammation, swelling, and sore muscles.

"Therefore, many athletes use ice baths and other types of exposure to cold as a means to speed up recovery after physical exercise.

Woman mortified after discovering date is married thanks to clue in bathroom

Woman shares 'worst first date' as she meets with boring bloke who gave her the creeps

Source: The Mirror



2023: Never should we be blindfolded again

SO, we are really in 2023, thank God for the manifestation of His mercy and unending glory over our lives.. Despite the intrigues and manipulations of the enemy, God in His continual tenderness spared our lives to witness yet another historical year. This time, I am hopeful that it would be a promising year which by the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will pull us out of all these present impetuous socio-economic and political doldrums bedeviling the nation, but only if and when we decide so. Truly, but for God, many of us would have been consumed by self-inflicted inhuman tornadoes and satanic devices of last year.

It took yours sincerely quite a long duration to come to terms with the reality of the fact that this much anticipated year, 2023 has finally unveiled itself. The crossover from 2022 to 2023 is one of the most memorable occasions which would continue to linger on my mind for decades to come. It will linger for quite a long time after witnessing preventable circumstances which led to the death of many innocent Nigerians all these past painful months.

The year 2022 certainly was full of drama, castastrophic intrigues and unending calamity. In fact, not many of us had high hopes that we would survive the teething problems which bedeviled this nation last year. While many citizens attributed the consistent hardship facing this nation as end-time signs, I have been telling all those who cared to listen that the end of this world cannot start in Nigeria. In the midst of several doomed predictions, my prayer has always been for God to provide an opportunity for the citizens of this nation to rewrite their wrongs.

Half way through the year 2022 after situations became quite uneasy, several Nigerians who gave up eventually ended up either leaving the shores of this country in search of greener pastures or committed suicide. Many others who summoned rare courage to swallow the pains and stayed back holding-forth a mustard seed faith hoping that situations could improve are still battered beyond comprehension. The drift in our nation's socio-economic and political fabric has left most vulnerable citizens traumatized in gruesome pains ever imagined in the annals of our nation's history. Yet, we are still pretending that all is well with us and this country. The viel of nepotism, religious bigotry and other acts of personal aggarrandizement have refrained us from decoding the precarious disposition of the nation.

The last twenty-four years of our democratic experience in Nigeria has been but that of hell on earth, the last eight years have been more precariously disheartening. Even though some of the challenges facing the country were inherited from the previous administration, not much was achieved by the present administration towards finding effective and efficient remedies in eliminating them.

Consequently, the common man on the street was left in the lion's den while the rich and the mighty wallow in extravagant wealth. As the gap between the rich and the poor began to widen-up, the cost of living navigated for the worse.

From our problematic disposition of insecurity necessitated by cruel acts of insurgency, kidnappings, armed robbery and other violent acts of social vices, the intellectual incapacitation of authorities to dealing with indicators of economic depression and inflation eventually affected many households. Nigeria also suffered from avoidable workers' strikes here and there which did not speak well of its integrity before comity of nations.

Sad enough, all these problems emanated not because of lack of both human and natural resources to solving them but

because of our administrative ingenuity, nepotism, corrupt characteristics and unpatriotic approach to dealing with such crucial issues. To say the least, Nigeria is sinking today not because of lack of resources but that we have irresponsible leaders who only care about themselves, cronies and mistresses more than the rest of us.

Just this week for instance, the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit reported that state governments withdrew N701, 54billion cash in seven years between 2015 and 2022 while the Federal Government withdrew N225.72billion. It also noted that all the 774 local government areas in the country also withdrew the sum of N156, 76billion within the same period.

Consequently, the Intelligent Unit was forced to take stringent measures including prohibiting cash withdrawals from accounts belonging to both the Federal Government, its agencies, states and local governments. Interestingly, the Unit also took this decision so as to enforce guidelines and policies for the mitigation of money laundering, terrorists financing, proliferation of weapons and predicate crimes.

Yet in the same vein, this week, it was disclosed that Governors of 28 states who are leaving office on May 29, 2023 or running for re-elections and the Federal Capital Territory have piled up about N5.8trn sub-national debts amid economic crunch. This unpalatable debts profile according to the report was based on figures and analysis of the Debt Management Office.

Accordingly, these sub-national debts are or have been classified into domestic-borrowings from local creditors and external-borrowings from foreign or international creditors like the World Bank. Sad enough, as it is, the sub-national domestic debts were put at about N4.38trn while their external debts were put at about \$3.15bn or N1.42trn based on the exchange rate of the Central Bank of Nigeria of N449.53 to a Dollar.

This unpalatable statistics of consistent withdrawals with nothing physically tangible to show for it speaks volume of the kind of leaders we have in this country. It speaks volume of the degree of intellectual imaginativeness inherent in the attitude of our stylish leaders these days.

As we approach the general elections in 2023 however, this is an ample opportunity for our citizens to correct the wrongs of the past. After analyzing the deliberate systematic damage done us by the political class since the inception of the current democratic dispensation, the denizens of this country must shine their eyes.

That is the more reason why the citizens must shun any and all kinds of inducement which would derail them from doing the needful. As we go into this year's general elections, the citizens of this country must have it at the back of their minds that it would this time not be business as usual.

This time around, only competent individuals based on their commitment and sincere purposeful leadership including past result-oriented credentials would be supported. Unlike what was obtainable in the past, no religious and or ethnic consideration should be given any political candidate who has no interest in the socio-economic and political advancement of our dear country.

Thus, any candidate who has any dubious character or is discovered to have amassed unjustifiable wealth to the detriment of the nation should be thrown out of the system for our own good. For Nigeria to be great again, we must all sacrifice the best we can and embrace one another to channel a productive and strategic way forward for the sake of our future generations. Therefore, the 2023 general elections will possibly afford us yet another great opportunity to rewrite the wrongs of the past, God's willing if we chose to do so.

Feature

Karl Kumm University: Day Vwang community honoured Prof. Bogoro

EACH year, communities across Nigeria as the New Year begins usually come together to celebrate their cultural festivals. In most if not all cases, any such celebration attractively encapsulates the rich cultural heritage of the people of any of such communities hosting this historical event. Such an event also tends to bring to bear both the rich historical, cultural and traditional norms which distinguish these diverse ethnic nationalities God has brought together in the aftermath of the creation and or amalgamation of this country. Evidently, many of these groups had existed together before the emergence of pre-colonial Nigeria but subsequently divided by both colonial and post-colonial boundary lines.

Be this as it may, however, the people of Vwang community who are of the Berom ethnic group have rich cultural and traditional activities which when displayed catch the attention of many individuals both within and outside their domain. This year, the Vwang community held its Jogo Shei Pas 2023 with the sole aim of unleashing the rich culture and traditions on both invited guests and other distinguished personalities who attended the occasion.

The event also afforded the community ample opportunity to stage a fund raising event for the installation of ICT/Internet Service Center and development of community secondary schools in the area. The ceremony which was held at the Dangashet Football Field opposite Gwom Rwey Palace Vom in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, witnessed the presentation of awards to many distinguished individuals who contributed immensely to the development of the area. Amongst the beneficiaries of the numerous awards, is the former Executive Secretary of TETFund, Prof. Suleiman Bogoro, OON who was given the award of Gbong Swa Vwang, (Worthy Friend of Vwang). This award was given to him in appreciation of his tremendous efforts towards ensuring the emergence and sustainability of the Karl Kumm University, Vom.

The Karl Kumm Univeristy also known as KKU, was established by the Church of Christ in Nations, (COCIN) to further consolidate on its role in providing quality education to the citizens of Nigeria.

By BULUS GAMBO

Indeed, for several decades now, the Church has continued to make a positive impact on the lives of the entire citizens of this country. Basically, from primary to several secondary schools, COCIN has continued to deliver on its anticipated obligations of holistic salvation of mankind.

A few years ago, the church decided to float a university so as to ensure that the teeming population of this country gets the very best of education as anticipated in this contemporary era. This desire led to midwifing the KKU named after one of the early Christian missionaries and founders of the church, Dr. Karl Kumm of blessed memory.

Today, the tertiary institution has continued to blossom even as more efforts are being made towards ensuring that the institution kick-starts academic activities soonest. Kudos to the role continuously played by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees (BoT), Prof. Suleiman Elias Bogoro, OON, the management and the Vice Chancellor of the University, Prof. Nanven Gambo, for their doggedness towards ensuring that the institution emerges as one of the best private owned universities in the country. The university is not only anticipated to be a pacesetter but an institution that would further bridge the gap in terms of providing effective and



Prof Bogoro

various fields of endeavor and call on others to emulate them." He noted that "the New Year celebration in Vwang is quite unique as it is famous, glamorous and colourful. It has become a strong weapon for fostering unity, friendship, peaceful coexistence. No doubt,

service."

According to him, "The year 2023 is a very important year in Nigeria. I therefore urge all of you to perform your civic responsibilities by collecting your PVCs and fully participate in the general elections and also ensure that you are counted in the Population and Housing Census coming up during the year. Politicians must conduct their campaigns peacefully by avoiding violence, thuggery, vote buying, selling of PVCs and apathy. We should as usual take advantage of our large number to determine the right leaders to lead us."

The coming of Karl Kumm University which is the first university in the area has provided a substantial opportunity for the development of the area. Aside providing business opportunities, the institution will also expand job opportunities for many natives of the area. As a classical university in contemporaneous

times, Karl Kumm University is presently regarded as one of the best things which has happened to the citizens of the area.

In his contribution at the event, the Plateau State gubernatorial Candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP) Caleb Mutfwang acknowledged the critical contributions of Prof. Suleiman Bogoro to the educational sector of the nation and other leadership areas of human endeavor adding that "Prof. Bogoro, our elder brother has distinguished himself as one selfless leader who has done a lot to the admiration of Nigerians."

Mutfwang noted that if given the mandate to govern the state, he would do his possible best towards transforming the state into one of its kind in no distance time noting that though the act of governance is not easy, his blueprint would salvage the state from its present socio-economic and political predicament.

In his remarks, the award recipient, Prof. Suleiman Bogoro appreciated Vwang community for finding him worthy of such a magnificent award noting that "this particular award would ginger me to do more for both the university and the entire Vwang community."

Prof. Bogoro disclosed that efforts have been intensified towards ensuring that Karl Kumm University conducts matriculation for fresh students of the institution very soon adding that appeals were also intensified for Vom Christian Hospital to be upgraded to a teaching hospital for the sake of the institution which will also be realistic very soon.

Amongst those present at the occasion was the Vice Chancellor of Karl Kumm University Vom, Prof. Nanven Gambo who expressed happiness over the award given to the esteemed and philanthropic minded chairman of the Board of Trustees. Gambo expressed confidence that the university would soon emerge as one of the best universities in contemporary times driven by the triple helix



Prof Bogoro discussing with PDP Gubernatorial Candidate, Caleb Mutfwang

efficient quality education to the citizenry.

In appreciation of the significant and worthwhile role played by Prof. Suleiman Elias Bogoro, the Vwang community decided to honour him with the award. Speaking during the ceremony, His Royal Highness, the Gwom Rwey Vwang, Gyang Gutt Balak explained that "Let me seize this opportunity to congratulate our illustrious sons and daughters and Prof. Suleiman Elias Bogoro who are to be honoured at this occasion for achieving feats in their

the celebration is fast growing to become one of the best tourist attractions in Plateau State and beyond, especially the motorcade carnival. The cultural display which you are also about to witness will surely serve as a tonic for the serious business of 2023. You are also reminded that the occasion will also have a fund raising of N30 million for the installation of ICT/Internet Service Center and development of community secondary schools; in addition to honouring of some of the personalities who have distinguished themselves in



Prof. Nanven Gambo, VC, Karl Kumm University with a guest



2023: As Lalong leads the APC PCC

FOR the Director General (DG) of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), Governor Simon Bako Lalong has ushered in the new year 2023 with the resumption of series of campaign rallies.

As a key strategist and political player, the PCC DG has after the yuletide break been leading campaigns across states by chairing the processes.

On January 4th, the DG led the Presidential campaign team to the ancient city of Kano where they received an overwhelming support by millions of party supporters who flooded the streets in excitement.

Aside other rallies, Lalong the DG actively led his team and party stakeholders to Adamawa State on 9th January 2022 to flag off the presidential and governorship campaign of the party.

The Adamawa rally was unique being that the Adamawa State governorship candidate, Aishatu Binani is the only female governorship candidate from the party.

The rally attracted the presence of Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari who said he sees her ambition as an opportunity for his government and the APC party to make history by producing the first elected female governor in Nigeria.

Governor Lalong's voice echoed as he called the female stakeholders present at the rally including Minister for Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen, wife of APC running mate, Nana Shettima, and others to come out to the podium and drum their support for Binani.

Shortly after, the APC PCC DG ushered in the party's male stakeholders to come out and display their support for Binani.

The DG was visibly dancing and displaying steps of the popular "Jagaban song", together with the APC Presidential candidate, Tinubu, who also displayed his dancing skills to party supporters. Lalong ushered in President Buhari, the Presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu and his running mate, Sen. Kashim Shettima, the party's National Chairman, Sen. Abdullahi Adamu, Dame Pauline Tallen and other stakeholders to give their remarks, urging citizens to support the APC Governorship and Presidential candidates.

"Raise your hand if you are giving your vote to send Binani to the state house", said Tinubu as he chanted "Sai Binani" in Hausa.

Buhari who equally chanted party slogans said he was in Adamawa State to raise the hand of two candidates, Binani and Tinubu to woo voters to support their political ambition.

The APC Presidential train heads to the next campaign destination, Yobe State on the 10th of January.

Before resumption of the campaigns, the Governor marked the 2022 end-of-year yuletide celebrations at his hometown Nyak, Ajikamai in Shendam Local Government Area.

He attended cultural festivals, the Bit Gamai and the 28th 'Bit Pol' Cultural Festival on 1st and 2nd January respectively including church service held in the new year, for 'Gamai' sons and daughters, and a meeting with party stakeholders.

During the New Year service he attended at St. Stephens Catholic Church, Ajikamai, Lalong had congratulated his kinsmen and citizens of his state for being alive to witness a new year, and prayed for a better year in 2023. "This is my last new year as a governor. Subsequently, I will be coming as an Ajikamai son," he told his kinsmen and supporters.

He called for a peaceful 2023 elections and called on the people to vote for the APC in the upcoming 2023 general elections as he sang one of his favourite popular songs in Hausa: "Alherin Allah ne, shi ya kawo mu, bi ikon mu ba." This means "It is God's grace that has brought us thus far not by our own doing".

Being the peace advocate he is known for, Lalong called for peace and unity and urged citizens to eschew all forms of divisions of ethnicity. He also mourned the late Pope Benedict the xvi, thanking God for all he had done for the church, and the peaceful repose of his soul.

But speaking earlier during the service, Rev. Fr. Peter Maigari used the forum to appreciate the Governor for nominating him to enroll for studies on the 9th of February 2022 at the prestigious Nigerian institution National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru.

Narrating his experience, the priest said: "The Governor sent me to school to learn something about policy making. Not because I am a politician or your political ally but because he wanted me to know about policy making".

"I have gone, I saw and conquered and what I have learnt about local governance, I have put it into use", Fr. Maigari disclosed to the congregation during the service.

He used the forum to dedicate the book he wrote about

Local Governance and LGA Administration, a case study of Plateau.

Impressed with the outcome of his educational sojourn, Governor Lalong advised that the book should be made available to Local Government employees to read and add knowledge to their work.



News

Electorates express dissatisfaction over PVCs

By DUMAH RANDONG and JIDAUNA DARING

AS Nigerians count-down some few weeks to the 2023 general elections. Some electorates of Jenta Adamu ward in Jos North Local Government Area (LGA) of Plateau State have expressed dissatisfaction with the slow distributions of the ongoing collections of permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) by the INEC staff posted to the ward.

According to the electorates who spoke with THE NIGERIA STANDARD at St Luke's Primary School West of Mines Jos, on Monday, described the level at which the exercise is currently going as an attempt to deliberately disfranchise some electorates during the forthcoming polls in February 25 and March 11,

2023 respectively, saying that such attempt will not be accepted as far as their rights are concerned.

It was also gathered that some of the electorates who have been coming to the Collection Centre and could not get the PVCs, attributed one of the contributory factor that is making the collection process difficult to impartiality by some individuals who volunteer to control those on queue for the collection of the PVCs.

They added that the serial number giving to the people on the queue on the basis of first come, first serve is not observed so as to ensure smooth collections of the PVCs, since the exercise started last Friday.

Also bearing his mind on the

exercise, Mr. Tongs Ishaya Bwede said that based on what he saw, over 2000 PVCs are expected to be collected by the electorates across 47 pulling units of Jenta Adamu ward. He added that over 500 PVCs have so far been collected.

Bwede also described the exercise as very slow if not improve before the INEC official given closing date which is January 15, 2023. He appealed to the INEC to extend the said deadline so that people can get their PVCs.

Also speaking with our correspondents on some of the challenges observed on the same PVCs collections, Mr. Mulapshak Istifanus said that the population is much for only two INEC staff to handle the distribution, and called on INEC to as a matter of urgent public important create or add more collection Centre's for the ward.

Istifanus emphasized the need for INEC to create more awareness to the people on the collection of the PVCs, saying that some electorates are not properly inform about the ongoing distribution. He called on INEC to use available channels of communication that can reach out to all electorates in the country.

THE NIGERIA STANDARD reports that all effort to speak with the INEC staff at the collection Centre prove abortive as the staff declined comments.



Mahmood

By DUMAH RANDONG

Tyoden charges couples to emulate Mary and Joseph

PLATEAU State Deputy Governor, Professor Sonni Tyoden has admonished couples to imbibe the perfect example of Joseph and Mary in the Bible who lived in peace with great affection for one another as the secret for a successful marriage.

Tyoden who spoke at the wedding solemnization of Joseph Samuel Banwat and Mary Vondip at the COCIN Headquarters Church in Jos, last Saturday.

It was a joyous day for the couple and the parents as guests from within and outside the state gathered to witness the celebration of love between the groom and the bride.

The Deputy Governor who was among personalities at the occasion, shared in the joy of the couple for nurturing their courtship to maturity and advised them to live together in love as Mary and Joseph in the Bible.

The wedding of Joseph Samuel, son of Pharmacist Samuel Banwat, Elder brother to the immediate past Chief Medical Director, CMD of the Jos University Teaching Hospital, JUTH, Professor Edmond Banwat also had in attendance, COCIN President, Rev Dr Amos Mohzo and top



Tyoden

executives of the Church.

Qualifications and education as the highest priority. But Officiating clergy, Rev. Moses Chagumi likened the husband's marriage to a wife with love just as Jesus bonded on each and urged loved the church.

The husband to allow God to use him to give to his wife whatever he has to give her.

No background, according to the cleric should be the basis for the choice of a partner, noting that society wished the couple a successful married life.

Sports

By DAFYDD PRITCHARD

Bale, arguably Wales' greatest, departs

IT was a moment Welsh football had been dreading for what felt like an age, a long-looming inevitability that a nation had put to the back of its mind for fear that it might actually become true.

And yet when it finally arrived, Gareth Bale's announcement of his retirement still came as a shock of seismic proportions. This was a day Wales could see coming - just not this soon.

Speculation regarding Bale's future had raged for years, dominating the final stages of his glittering career at Real Madrid and following him at the past two major tournaments with Wales.

Optimists clung to the fact that he had departed the World Cup with the vow that he would "keep going as long as I can and as long as I'm wanted". Some dreamed that he might even have carried on forever; there were times when he did seem immortal.

But there is no escaping time. While 33 might be a relatively young age to retire, Bale had been showing signs of slowing as his body bore the toll of a superhuman 17-year career.

Logic suggested this day would come but, then again, Bale had kept defying logic to conjure moments of magic even as he appeared to be losing some of his powers of old.

His retirement marks the end not only for arguably the finest player Wales has ever produced, but also the beginning of the end for the greatest era in the country's footballing history.

Bale elevated Wales to new heights, embodying his nation's rise from lowly underachievers to major tournament regulars.

In doing so, he transcended his sport, a phenomenal athlete whose global renown brought Wales to the world's attention.

To quantify such an impact is a near-impossible task and, although boiling Bale's career down to numbers and achievements is reductive, they bear repeating.

Real Madrid made him the world's most expensive footballer when they bought him from Tottenham for £85m in 2013 and, during nine years in Spain, he scored more than 100 goals on his way to helping Real win a staggering five Champions League and three La Liga titles.

His trophy cabinet also includes a plethora of individual accolades, such as two PFA Player of the Year awards and the Football Association Footballer



Bale

of the Year.

Then there is Bale's peerless Wales career, ending as his country's all-time leading male scorer with 41 goals from 111 appearances, another national men's record.

Impressive as all those feats are, though, they are only part of Bale's story. You had to watch him in action to truly appreciate his brilliance.

Bale was more than the leading character in a film of his blockbuster career; he was the man who kept writing his own barely plausible scripts and, most stunningly of all, kept bringing them to life with displays of otherworldly powers.

To rewatch showreels of his goals for Tottenham is to be mesmerised by a heady cocktail of supreme athleticism, mazy dribbling and outlandish long-distance shooting.

At Real Madrid, his goals were as awe-inspiring as they were important, from the audacious run from his own half in the 2014 Copa del Rey final win over Barcelona to the jaw-dropping overhead kick against Liverpool that helped clinch victory in the 2018 Champions League final, one of the greatest goals in the competition's history.

And yet for all the gilded splendour of his club accomplishments, Bale was arguably at his most heroic when playing for Wales.

Having made his debut as a 16-year-old in 2006, Bale

endured a testing introduction to international football as Wales sat outside the top 100 in the world rankings as recently as 2011.

But as the figurehead for his country's golden generation, alongside the likes of Aaron Ramsey and Joe Allen, Bale took Wales to stratospheric new heights.

He was their top scorer in qualifying for Euro 2016 - ending a 58-year absence from major tournaments - and produced a series of stellar displays in France as Wales soared to an historic first semi-final.

After captaining Wales to qualification for the next European Championship - where they again reached the knockout stages - Bale then led his country to their holy grail, a first World Cup since 1958.

His evolution as a player during this period illustrated what a singular and transformational talent Bale was.

Whereas his fearsome pace and direct running tormented opponents on the way to Euro 2016, Bale had to adjust to life without those physical weapons six years later, but still possessed the unique quality required to score all three of Wales' goals as they defeated Austria and Ukraine to finally qualify for the World Cup.

As disappointing as Wales were in exiting last year's tournament at the group stage, it was fitting that Bale's

final goal for his country would prove to be Wales' first at a World Cup since 1958.

Like his team-mates, coaches and fans, Bale was left deflated by Wales' performances in Qatar and, as he waved goodbye to the supporters after the defeat against England, there was a sense that a more final farewell was on the horizon.

As time passes, that despair will dissipate. Bale can look back with pride at the integral role he played in taking Wales to a first World Cup for 64 years.

The same applies to his time at Real Madrid. A rancorous end will fade from memory when he reflects on a trophy-laden nine years in Spain which made him the most successful British footballing export of all time.

Club football might be the sport's dominant form but, to Bale, there was nothing better than representing his country.

After scoring his spectacular overhead kick in Real Madrid's Champions League final win over Liverpool in 2018, his first thought after the final whistle was to grab the Welsh flag and drape it around his shoulders as he walked around the pitch for a lap of honour.

A year later, having faced criticism from fans and media in Spain for a perceived lack of commitment as he struggled with injuries, Bale further incurred their wrath by saying: "I definitely have a bit more excitement playing for Wales."

That was nothing compared to the fury in Madrid when, after sealing qualification for Euro 2020, Bale was pictured laughing next to his Wales team-mates who were holding a banner which read: "Wales. Golf. Madrid. In that order."

It was effectively the end of his increasingly fraught relationship with Real but, for Wales fans, it only increased the appeal of their hero, an unapologetic champion of Wales.

Few people, sporting or otherwise, have done more to raise Wales' profile across the world than Bale.

As he announced his retirement on Monday, it was telling that Bale wrote a separate message for his country.

"I shared a dressing room with boys that became brothers and backroom staff that became family," he said.

"I played for the most incredible managers and felt the undying support and love from the most dedicated fans in the world. Thank you to every one of you for being on this journey with me.

"So for now I am stepping back but not away from the team that lives in me and runs through my veins after all the dragon on my shirt is all I need."

There are players who can inspire teams, others who can carry them to glory and rarer still are those who become synonymous with their clubs or countries.

Sports



Dignitaries during the Golf Kitty

Asiko emerges overall winner of Rhino Golf Tourney

By ANDRE BISYIT

Akson Asiko has emerged the overall winner of the Rhino Golf and Country Club Mediam Amateur Golf Tournament by scoring 131 net over two days to beat the other contenders to go home with a new brand Tricycle.

Addressing the participants at the closing ceremony of the two days Kitty at the Maxuel Kube Contentment 3 division Rukuba Barrack, Governor Simon Bako Lalong of Plateau State reaffirmed his administration's commitment and determination in promoting peace and security through sports and other avenues to enable the state move forward.

Represented by Hon. Dan Manjang, Commissioner for Information and Communication, Lalong emphasized his government has achieved in promoting peace and security in the state.

He disclosed that in the past people were afraid of coming to the state due to insecurity.

"In the past people are afraid of visiting the state because of insecurity, but when we came on board, we ensured that peace is restored, that is why when people come they don't want to leave the state", he said.

Governor Lalong further commended the General Officer Commanding 3 division and also the Commander Operation Safe Heaven for ensuring that the government achieved its set goals on peace and security, adding that organizing the tournament will give the hidden talents the opportunity to showcase themselves.

Also, Major General S.I. Ali, General Officer Commanding 3 division and also the Commander Operation Safe Heaven opined that the aim of organizing the tournament is to promote the game of golf and enhance military, civilians relationship.

General Ali, who is the Patron of the club, assured that the championship will be an annual event and will be better

as it progresses.

In their separate remarks, Hon Latep Dabang, Vice Captain of the club, AVN Danbaba, Chairman Board of Trustees of the club assured that they put in their best to

the game of golf and commended Governor Lalong for creating the the atmosphere for sports to move to the next level, not only in the state, but in the country at large.

FORMER Napoli defender Maurizio Domizzi feels Victor Osimhen should be on penalty duty for Napoli.

Goal said that, the Serie A leaders had two penalties in their 2-0 victory over Sampdoria on Sunday but Osimhen, the league's leading scorer, did not take any of them with Matteo Politano stepping to the spot for the first while Elif Elmas took the second.

Politano missed his penalty which was saved by the goalkeeper but Elmas had no such problems as he made the points safe with eight minutes remaining.

Article continues below That was after Osimhen had given Napoli a 19th-minute lead with a great finish inside the box for his 10th Serie A goal of the season and Domizzi is wondering why the club and league's top scorer is not on penalty duties.

"The penalty taker issue? It's a bit strange that someone like Osimhen doesn't take penalties, he's the leading striker and the most prolific," said Domizzi as quoted by *Tuttonapoli*.

"Evidently either he or whoever on the staff will have decided differently. Usually, the penalty taker is chosen by the coach only partially, it is above all the teammates who choose and recognise the true

'Osimhen should be taking penalties for Napoli'

penalty taker of the team. It's more a question of character and personality, not just technique."

Osimhen has scored only once from the spot this season with Napoli coach Luciano Spalletti rotating the penalty duties among him, Politano (scored four), Elmas (2), Hirving Lozano, Piotr Zielinski and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia all

who have scored once.

The Nigeria international could have increased his tally considerably had he been taking penalties consistently given Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez, M'Bala Nzola of Spezia and Bologna's Marko Arnautovic, who are two goals behind him in the Golden Boot race, are among the penalty takers for their clubs.



Osimhen

Bosso drops 10 players over age discrepancies

LADAN Bosso, the Flying Eagles coach, has sent 10

players home due to age discrepancies and falsified

documents. Newnow said that, the

35-man squad was invited by the Nigerian Under-20 coach yesterday in advance of the AFCON competition that will take place next month.

the team.

However, according to owngoal, six of the players who had dual passports with different ages were also sent packing.

However, the majority of the players on the list are from academies rather than the Nigerian League One and the Nigerian Professional Football League (NPFL) (NLO).

It has been said that the screening, scheduled for Monday, January 9, 2023, will involve a careful examination of his boys as he gets them ready for the competition.

A member of the team's backroom staff revealed to Own Goal that the majority of the elite league's players were discovered to be "above age" and some had issues with their documents in response to the question of why NPFL players failed to dominate

Most of these players who were impressive but "above age" were screened out as the goal is still to assemble a team for the future.

Egypt will host the event, which is scheduled to take place from February 19 to March 11, 2023.

Bendel Insurance victory in Uyo excites Alli

THE victory recorded by Bendel Insurance in the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) season opener against former champions, Akwa United, has thrilled the Chairman of Edo Sports Commission, Yusuf Alli.

Newsnow said that, he said the victory is a sign of many good things to come.

Bendel Insurance secured a 2-0 victory at the Nest of Champions in Uyo, on Sunday, to send a signal to other teams in the abridged NPFL league of its determination to secure a continental ticket this season.

Goals from Imade Osarenkhoe and Divine Nwachukwu gave the 'Benin Arsenal' all three points to the coach Monday Odigie-led Bendel Insurance.

Speaking with The Guardian yesterday, Alli, a former African champion in the long jump, stated that the victory would encourage Edo State government to invest more on the team.

"I said before the

commencement of the NPFL that we have a team that is capable of getting a continental ticket this year. I know that the NPFL is a big and tough league, but the players and technical crew have won our respect. I believe Bendel Insurance is still work in progress irrespective of this big result in Uyo.

"The people of Edo State

are happy with their performance. I thank the state government, particularly, the Deputy Governor for his morale and financial support for the team. I have told the players and their coaches not to allow this victory get into their head. We need more wins to scale through this abridged league," Alli stated.



Bosso



Sports

Wins for Boulter Miyazaki and Burrage

KATIE Boulter was among three Britons to win on Tuesday in the first round of qualifying for next week's Australian Open but Liam Broady lost in Melbourne.

BBC SPORT said that, Boulter edged out American Caroline Dolehide 6-3 3-6 7-6 (10-5).

Lily Miyazaki beat American Hailey Baptiste 6-4 7-5, with Jodie Burrage easing past Elysia Bolton of Australia 6-2 6-4.

But Broady was defeated 6-3 6-7 (4-7) 7-6 (10-7) by Ecuador's Emilio Gomez after a near three-hour battle.

Katie Swan lost to France's Jessika Ponchet and fellow Briton Ryan Peniston was beaten by Canadian Alexis Galarneau.

Miyazaki will take on Jang Su-jeong of South Korea in the second round of qualifying on Wednesday.

Burrage faces Czech Barbora Palicova later on the same day, with Boulter playing Russian teenager Polina Kudermetova.

Elsewhere in the women's



Boulter

singles qualifiers, Czech teenager Linda Noskova, finalist at this year's Adelaide International 1, suffered a shock defeat by Canadian Katherine Sebov.

Britons Harriet Dart and Emma Raducanu are already in the women's singles main draw, although 2021 US Open

champion Raducanu is still recovering from an ankle injury.

Cameron Norrie, Dan Evans, Kyle Edmund, Andy Murray and Jack Draper are in the main draw of the men's singles at the opening Grand Slam of the year, which begins on Monday.

PRODUCED a stunning 10-under-par 63 to overturn a seven-shot deficit and win the PGA Tour's Tournament of Champions in Hawaii by two shots.

BBC SPORT said that, the Spaniard, who bogeyed the first, picked up five shots in four holes to overhaul Collin Morikawa, who stumbled with three bogeys on the back nine.

Morikawa, who led the field by six heading into the final round, closed with a one-under 72 to end on 25 under.

"I needed to play good and he needed to make a couple mistakes," said Rahm.

"If you told me at the beginning of the round, after that bogey, I was going to do what I did I don't know if I would have believed you."

It was a third win in six starts for Rahm - after winning in Spain and Dubai late in 2022 - and an eighth PGA Tour title. He also collected \$2.7m from the \$15m (£11.8m) purse at Kapalua.

The Tournament of Champions, which had a

Rahm comes back to win tournament in Hawaii



The victory was Jon Rahm's 17th worldwide

limited field of 39 players, was the first of 13 events that have an 'elevated' status on this year's PGA Tour schedule, giving them increased prize money and a demand on the top players to compete.

Rahm's round started badly. The 28-year-old missed a seven-foot par putt on the first to fall eight shots behind Morikawa but had five birdies in his next eight holes to improve to 21 under par after nine.

However, Morikawa also had a solid front nine, with three birdies taking his score to 27 under at the turn.

Rahm, the 2021 US Open winner, then had three successive birdies from the 12th before carding an eagle three at the par-five 15th to move within one of the lead.

Moments later he was joint leader, benefiting from Morikawa thinning a bunker shot across the 14th green and dropping his first shot of the tournament.

"It was really unfortunate because I was feeling great about my season and I was feeling really good with the preparation I did physically," said Raducanu, who has been working with Andy Murray's former physical trainer Jez Green in a bid to make herself less injury prone.

"I just had an accident on the court, I don't know what I could have done to really prevent that."

Raducanu had an injury-blighted 2022 season, retiring from five matches, but said she was injury-free and feeling "good" following an exhibition match in December.

16th after a superb drive left him with a 55-yard pitch for his second. He misjudged the spin on his ball and it ended up 70 feet from the hole and he could only three-putt from there.

Rahm suddenly led by two and picked up another birdie on the 648-yard par-five last hole after finding the green in two shots and two-putting from 65 feet.

Morikawa also completed the final hole in four shots but his birdie proved scant consolation with Rahm completing the biggest comeback victory in the tournament's history.

"You work so hard and you give yourself these opportunities," said the 2021 Open Championship winner, who matched the PGA Tour record held by seven other players of squandering a six-shot lead in the final round.

"I just made three poor swings, really, at the wrong times. It's never a good time to put a poor swing on it, but sometimes it works out and these never worked out."

"I don't know what I'm going to learn from this week, but it just didn't seem like it was that far off. It really wasn't. Yeah, it sucks."

Fellow Americans Tom Hoge (64) and Max Homa (66) were joint third on 23 under.

England's US Open champion Matt Fitzpatrick ended alongside Masters winner Scottie Scheffler - who could have returned to world number one with a higher finish this week - on 21 under after both carded three-under-par 70s.

Raducanu hopes to be fit for Australian Open

EMMA Raducanu says she hopes she will be fit for this month's Australian Open but is trying "not to expect too much".

BBC SPORT said that, the 20-year-old Briton retired from her second-round match at the ASB Classic in Auckland on Thursday after slipping and rolling her left ankle.

The Grand Slam begins next Monday, with the full extent of the 2021 US Open champion's injury yet to be diagnosed.

"We'll see hopefully by Monday or whenever the tournament starts," Raducanu said.

"We're just taking it a day



Raducanu

at a time and not trying to expect too much at this point."

Raducanu left the court in tears last week after rolling her ankle during the

second set against Slovakia's Viktoria Kuzmova, with the score 6-0 5-7.

The world number 75 is hoping to improve on her second-round exit in her Australian Open debut in 2022.

"It was really unfortunate because I was feeling great about my season and I was feeling really good with the preparation I did physically," said Raducanu, who has been working with Andy Murray's former physical trainer Jez Green in a bid to make herself less injury prone.

"I just had an accident on the court, I don't know what I could have done to really prevent that."

Raducanu had an injury-blighted 2022 season, retiring from five matches, but said she was injury-free and feeling "good" following an exhibition match in December.

Draper through, Evans & Edmund out

BRITON Jack Draper reached the last 16 of the Adelaide International 2 but compatriots Dan Evans and Kyle Edmund were knocked out in straight sets.

BBC SPORT said that, Draper eased past Italian Lorenzo

Sonego 6-4 6-2, while fifth seed Evans lost 7-5 7-5 to unseeded American Mackenzie McDonald.

Kyle Edmund was beaten 6-4 7-5 by sixth-seeded Serb Miomir Kecmanovic.

In the women's event, 2022 Australian Open finalist Danielle Collins beat Karolina Pliskova 6-2 6-4.

And in a battle between current and former Wimbledon champions, Kazakhstan's 2022 winner Elena Rybakina lost 6-3 7-5 to Czech Petra Kvitova.

There are two ATP-WTA Adelaide Internationals this month as players gear up for next week's Australian Open, with Novak Djokovic and Aryna Sabalenka winning the titles in week one.

Draper, who will compete at the Australian Open for the first time, will face American eighth seed Tommy Paul or Australian lucky loser Christopher O'Connell in the

next round.

The top four seeds - Andrey Rublev, Pablo Carreno Busta, Karen Khachanov and Roberto Bautista Agut - were given byes into the last 16.

In the women's draw, American Collins continued her fine form and cemented her status as one of the favourites for the Australian Open singles crown with a straight-set win over former world number one Pliskova.

Collins will face Jil Teichmann in the next round after the Swiss qualifier defeated 2021 French Open finalist Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 7-5 6-4.

It was the Russian's first match for eight months after sustaining a knee injury last summer.

World number one Iga Swiatek and third-ranked Jessica Pegula had been due to play this week, but both pulled out after their exploits at the United Cup with Poland and the United States respectively.





Quest



writer

President Muhammadu Buhari

FRAGMENT

As our security agencies continue to make the country proud, we must continue to assist our patriotic forces by providing the much needed community intelligence. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that Nigeria remains safe and peaceful for us all. Therefore, we have a duty and obligation to support our troops and intelligence agencies by being alert and reporting anything suspicious. The fight against insurgency in the North-East region has continually recorded very clear wins in the past year. The Federal Government, and the Borno State government, have started the journey of returning internally displaced persons to their ancestral homes earlier taken by the insurgents. Also, over 82,000 insurgents with their families have surrendered to the Nigerian military.

President Muhammadu Buhari

'I pray next president would pick up the baton'

MY fellow countrymen and women, a very happy and prosperous New Year to you. First, I would like to thank and honour the Almighty who saw us through the year 2022 and has given us the opportunity to see another year. Each New Year is an opportunity to reflect on the past year, reposition, and move forward with the New.

As we celebrate the opportunity to be alive in the year 2023, we must also acknowledge the passing away of our brothers and sisters who didn't make it into this new year. May their souls rest in perfect peace.

This year is particularly important to me because this message is in essence valedictory. After having the honour of serving you, my compatriots, for the last seven plus years, my tenure as your President in the most revered tradition of our ongoing and maturing democracy must necessarily come to an end. In the next five months, we would have gone to the polls and elected a new president along with new governors and a plethora of other elected officials at both the national and state levels. All these electoral and democratic principles are working in concert because of the transcendent beliefs, beyond partisan politics, of you the great citizen of Nigeria. In addition is my personal commitment and executive promise to see to the letter that the 2023 elections being diligently conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission will be free and fair. The collective electoral will and votes of Nigerians will be fulfilled, even in the twilight moments of my watch. Reflecting on year 2022 allows us as a government to examine our legacies of successes and challenges. As we celebrate our wins and review obstacles, we all must understand that governance is a continuum, which still places a transitional responsibility on this administration to provide for the incoming government a non-partisan and objective roadmap for 2023. We as Nigeria; one country united under the will of God and actively growing as an indivisible entity, have been enabled year after year, decade after decade, to weather all stormy waters and emerge stronger and better where others have fallen and disintegrated. This has made us a unique nation across the globe and our continent.



Buhari

In the year 2023, Nigerians go to the polls to exercise our right to vote and elect a new Administration; it is an important year for our country to ensure that we have another smooth transition of government, to whoever the people have decided upon. This administration's landmark Amended Electoral Act will ensure that we have free and fair elections across the nation. We as Nigerians must also take responsibility to ensure we participate in ensuring that the 2023 elections are free and fair by not engaging in anti-state activities and other nefarious acts that may affect the run of the polls. We must also resist every attempt to be used by politicians to create unrest in any form to disrupt the elections. We, as government will ensure such activities are met with the full force of the law.

As our security agencies continue to make the country proud, we must continue to assist our patriotic forces by providing the much needed community intelligence. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that Nigeria remains safe and peaceful for us all. Therefore, we have a duty and obligation to support our troops and intelligence agencies by being alert and reporting anything suspicious. The fight

against insurgency in the North-East region has continually recorded very clear wins in the past year. The Federal Government, and the Borno State government, have started the journey of returning internally displaced persons to their ancestral homes earlier taken by the insurgents. Also, over 82,000 insurgents with their families have surrendered to the Nigerian military. A number of surrendered insurgents are currently being processed by the rehabilitation (Operation Safe Corridor) programme. The fight against banditry, kidnapping and other crimes in the North-West and other regions is gaining momentum and showing very clear results. One of which is the resumption of Train Service along the Kaduna to Abuja corridor.

In the aftermath of the #EndSARS, our administration took heed and instituted the ongoing Police Reform programme based on a new Presidential Vision for Policing in Nigeria. This new vision is framed in a clear road map that transcends the tenure of this administration and it is predicated on six principles: a) Building Trust and Legitimacy b) Leadership, Accountability and Oversight c) Technology and digital media d) Community

Policing and Crime Reduction e) Officers Training and Education f) Funding, Officers' Welfare, Wellness and Safety.

This reform programme is very much in its foundational phase but has recorded noteworthy successes in improving police welfare and their emoluments. Other gains have been the ongoing training of 500 police cadet trainers to enable a better training regimen for the 2022 first batch of the 10,000 new cadets with an additional 10,000 set for 2023. In support of these reforms has been the provisioning of new material for the Nigeria Police to steadily improve on its constitutional responsibility to enforce law and order, protect lives and property as well as street level peace and security.

Despite the ongoing global economic crisis, we have been able to weather the storms. Inflation across the globe is at its highest, the Federal Government has been resolute through its economic interventions to remain above water during this period. 2022 brought a combined impact from ongoing wars and aftereffects of COVID-19. Though creating its own fiscal challenges, we have continued to subsidise our energy costs to buffer households from inflationary pressure of high energy costs. In 2023, we are focused on building on our Gross Domestic Product and sustain the huge surge in the non-oil GDP growth.

The Nigerian Start up Bill has been passed as an Act. This is considered a huge step in lowering our unemployment figures by boosting job creation and supporting the entrepreneurial drive of our youths. If you recall in my 2021 New Year speech, I had mentioned the need to secure the future of our youth recognizing that our young people are our most valuable natural resource, at home and abroad. In this regard, we worked with the legislature to develop an enabling law to turn their passions into ideas that can be supported, groomed and scaled across regions. 2023 will see the implementation of the Nigerian Start Up Act nationwide. The year 2023 would, indeed, be a time when we would work to solidify on delivering key strategic priorities under our "SEA" - (Security, Economy and Anti-Corruption) Agenda. Some of the key priority

areas we would direct our attention and strengths to include:

a. Focus on SECURITY; we will continue to engage, push back and dismantle the operations of both internal and external extremist and criminal groups waging war against our communities across the Nation. We will also focus on ensuring that free and fair elections would be held come February 2023. Our security forces are working in partnership to ensure the wins we have got in war against insurgency, banditry, secession and other crimes are sustained and more wins acquired.

b. For the ECONOMY; our focus would be on maintaining and building economic growth through the national economic diversification agenda that supports the goal of national food self-sufficiency and growth in non-oil sources. The ongoing infrastructure revolution by our administration will see us deliver the key projects across the Nation in power, rail, roads, ports and technology.

c. ANTI-CORRUPTION: On the anti-corruption drive of our administration, we have created new records in this fight, growing from 117 convictions in 2017 to 3,615 convictions as at December 2022. We as a government are committed to ridding our nation of all forms of corruption, through the collaboration with all the arms of Government to effectively prosecute this fight. As we welcome the New Year, let us look with hope to 2023, a year to move forward as a nation towards unity, progress and prosperity. I offer my own personal felicitations, mindful of the various opinions and interpretations of our executive legacies. I welcome and accept both the accolades and criticisms in equal measure secure in the conviction that I did my best to serve our dear country Nigeria and I pray that the next President will also pick up the baton and continue the race to make Nigeria one of the leading countries of the world by the end of this century. Long Live the Nigerian spirit of oneness, togetherness, and unity. Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria. A happy and prosperous New Year.

God bless you.

Excerpt of President Muhammadu Buhari's New Year message of 2023 which happens to be his last as president.